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**THE BRAND IMAGE, MEANS OF
COMMUNICATION IN GRAPHIC DESIGN.
THE CONCEPT OF STYLIZATION**

- PhD Thesis Abstract -

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Argument	5
I. Landmarks in the evolution from sign to brand image	8
I.1. Influences of modern fine arts	10
I.2. The sign means communication	13
I.3. The world of symbols around us	16
II Ancient Egypt, the Vienna Secession and Picasso, landmarks in stylization. From ornament to logo and brand image	21
II.1. Ancient Times – so far and yet so close	21
II.1.1. Aspects of Egyptian stylizations	25
II.1.2. Aspects of Assyrian stylizations	32
II.2. Secession - the maximum synthesis in the creation of a monogram logo	34
II.3. Line and gesture – Picasso and Klee	36
II.4. From ornament to logo and brand image	39
II.4.1. Origins, present times, perspectives	39
II.4.2. Themes, preferred images in ornamental design used in the creation of a logo – the lion	41
II.4.3. Exuberance and the refinement of ornament	45
II.4.4. The acanthus leaf – a favorite element in the visual metaphor	50
III The visual alphabet of logo images	52
III.1. The dot	52
III.2. The line	57
III.3. The surface	65
III.4. The shape	68
III.5. The space	70
III.6. Visual communication in ambiance	71
III.7. Aspects of composition	74
III.8. Abstract versus figurative in logo design	81
III.9. Stylization - a possible classification	84

IV	The concept of stylization –synthesis and suggestion	91
IV.1.	Beauty of spontaneous gesture	97
IV.2.	Pictorial elements in logo design	99
IV.3.	Elegance, color and exuberance.....	100
IV.4.	The binomial of rigor and freedom.....	106
IV.5.	The refinement of the line with equal width	109
IV.6.	The expressivity of flat frontality	110
V	The brand image in our days	112
V.1.	Creating a logo. Criteria in choosing a logo	112
V.2.	The logo and its beginnings	118
V.3.	The logo in car industry	119
V.4.	The logo in the public memory	121
V.5.	The logo and the cultural institutions	123
V.6.	The promotion of products and trends in logo design	124
V.7.	Present day trends – related techniques, exercises and methods in logo design	126
V.7.1.	Origami	126
V.7.2.	Tactile logos	128
V.7.3.	Arabesque	128
V.7.4.	Classical modernism	129
V.7.5.	Icons	130
V.7.6.	Geometry lesson	130
V.7.7.	Typographic logos	131
V.7.8.	Street Art	131
V.7.9.	Puzzle models	132
V.8.	The importance of rebranding	132
V.9.	Logos for organic products	134
V.10.	Logos and computer era.....	135
V.11.	The Internet – the new interactive electronic environment for advertising and visual presence of logos	141
VI	Brand image and logo in Romanian design. Analytical landmarks of personal achievements in the visual field.....	143
VI.1.	A famous predecessor – the bull’s head	143
VI.2.	The emblem of Iasi	146
VI.3.	"The discreet charm of symmetry" – Romanian royal monograms - proficiency in monogram design	149
VI.4.	"A symphony of letters"-style and exuberance in monogram design for the Romanian National Bank and the Ministry of Finance	154
VI.5.	The beginning of a century – famous names in the Romanian environment	158
VI.5.1.	The Socec bookshop logo	158
VI.5.2.	I.O.R. – a discreet suggestion	159
VI.5.3.	The Guban logo	160
VI.5.4.	Logo of Nicolina workshops, Iași	162
VI.5.5.	Monogram of Tractorul Factory, Braşov	163
VI.6.	The Romanian logo at the beginning of the 20th century, integrated in the European visual phenomenon	164

VI.7.	„Red Horizons” – twinkles in a sea of grey	165
VI.8.	The evolution of the brand image after 1989	168
VI.9.	Portrait sketch: Bogdan Dumitrache, graphic designer Brandient România	168
VI.10.	Analytical landmarks of personal achievements in the visual field	171
	VI.10.1. Stylization through elaborate design – contour	171
	VI.10.2. Gestural – calligraphic stylization	175
	VI.10.3. Patterns – texture stylization	176
	VI.10.4. Three-dimensional stylization.....	178
	Instead of conclusions	179
	References	181
	Addendum with images	184

Abstract

The first chapter – *Landmarks in the evolution from sign to brand image* – starts by defining the concept which lies at the basis of this thesis – „the brand image” – a concept placed in the domain of art and visual perception from the very beginning. Then there are presented some very useful explanations on „logo”, „trademark”, „symbol”, „monogram”, „graphic code” and there are enumerated different contexts for the terms „mark”: „water mark”, „trademark”, „wordmark”.

The subchapter I.1 – *Influences of modern fine arts* – reviews in several analyses of different creations the major contributions of modern art in the process of stylization, of going beyond the border between bi-dimensional and three-dimensional, for example the works of the famous sculptors A. Giacometti and C. Brâncuși, of the painter Paul Klee and from the minimalist movement and De Stijl. All these made possible the transition from rich volumetric works to minimalist symbolism, in which the stylistic expressivity is not at all reduced and even to the synthetic character of contemporary logos.

In the second part of the first chapter – *The sign means communication* – the accent is laid on the power of expressivity, on the semantic load of certain images fully stylized, mentioning that the origin of each brand image or logo lies in a model from nature. Nature and the reality around us is very rich in meanings which are communicated by means of senses, on condition that people are receptive to these messages, often sent in tiny details. Perceiving these messages as symbols, the artist transposes them in creative, graphic works in a higher and higher degree of stylization.

In the spirit of the same idea of *communication*, the subchapter I.3 – *The world of symbols around us* – discusses the necessity and the presence of certain symbol-images which are easily perceived and fulfill the function of a universal

language (simplistic drawings used to depict, for example, a telephone booth) or individualize the products of a famous brand, almost overlapping its own concept (eg. Bidimensional or three-dimensional logos from Peugeot, Mustang, Jaguar or Apple). The logos of other products which are less famous could be analyzed with the same interest, finding them in everyday life which gives their meaning and finality.

The second chapter: *Ancient Egypt, the Vienna Secession and Picasso, landmarks in stylization*, depicts and illustrates the evolution of art in three important moments, three successive stages in the transition from ornament to brand image. The first subchapter – *Ancient Times – so far and yet so close* – refers to the major characteristics of Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures and bas-reliefs which make use of natural models, giving them a maximum expressivity and artistic value. Egyptian art could be considered the first stage of stylization, long preceding the contemporary design of figurative logo and lending it several elements.

In the perspective of the chronological succession, the subchapter II.2: *Secession - the maximum synthesis in the creation of a monogram* – with the help of a remarkable monogram (*Wiener Werkstatte*), underlines the major contribution of compositional works in the Austrian environment, integrated in Art Nouveau, to establish major landmarks in the development of logo design and to develop the figurative meaning. This contribution is clearly seen in the drawing of the letter, in the sober, austere, linear, rectangular rhythm of the Secession landscape.

The third subchapter – *Line and gesture – Picasso*, presents a series of stylized animal representations accomplished by the great master, whose genius was equally present in sketches, not only in oil paintings. The dominant linear aspect of his sketches, the sinuous curves of supreme relevance could be a precious model for the contemporary logo designers and what they want to achieve with a minimum of artistic means but with maximum effect.

The title of the fourth subchapter – *From ornament to logo and brand image* – is eloquent for the theme under study. The first sequence approaches the importance of decorative arts and medieval heraldry as sources of the present day logo design. The two periods have in common the tendency to present the ornamental elements in miniature and to concentrate the symbol-images, as well as the *plane and frontal* character of the representations. Another similitude, a thematic one this time, makes

the topic of the following section: the predilection to choose figurative images with symbolic value from nature. The example of the *lion* is analyzed from a comparative perspective – its significance in decorative arts and then its graphic and stylistic representations in brand images. As regards ornamentation, there are identified the methods of graphic representation of certain natural, fantastic or artificial forms, in different environments and periods (especially the Eastern one) and they all have in common the compact presentation of details. The fourth part of this subchapter, entitled *The acanthus leaf – a favorite element in the visual metaphor* is dedicated to the idea of perennality of certain metaphors or visual allegories which are present in the ancient and medieval stylizations and which are currently integrated in logo design.

The third chapter of this work – *The visual alphabet of logo images* – analyzes in turn the major elements of artistic language. In the first subchapter, the *dot* is considered from a wide, symbolic and integrating perspective: philosophical, geometrical, religious, artistic. From the artistic point of view, the dot is regarded as an expression of concentricity (exemplified in images), an expression of static form and as an organizing factor of space, an element which is generated in its turn by the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes.

The second subchapter – *The line* – assigns it as the first element of the visual artistic expression, due to its supreme ability to render the soul vibration. While the point represents the static element, the line means life, movement and time. The line can exist by itself, but most often, in nature, it is rhythmically associated with other elements. There are presented the characteristics of the line, the evolution of its representations, from the incised line in stone to computer graphics, as well as the taxonomy depending on the position and space criterion. For each of the three types of lines – vertical, horizontal and diagonal – there is given a semantic and symbolic interpretation as well as an accurate analysis starting from a few examples of logos.

In a natural sequence, subchapter III.3 is dedicated to the *surface*, which is the result of an accumulation of lines or the trajectory of a line in motion. We know from the very beginning that the accent will be laid on the bidimensional character of the surface, which is characteristic to graphic design, not on the three-dimensional one. In the stylization necessary for the creation of the logo, the surface, the spot plays an important role and takes the shape of an artistic element with a very strong

visual effect. It can be accomplished in the multitude of its representations, as well as its inner part, by means of the plane character, vibrating texture, chromatic vibration or surface defined by gradient.

Subchapter III.4 – *The Shape* – begins by its definition, an accurate one – „the aspect of an object sufficiently characterized on the outer part”, as well as a metaphorical one – „the first anchor in chaos”. There is made a distinction between „stiff” and „elastic” forms, the latter being described as intelligent forms, plenary configurations of life. This paper aims to study those forms created by humans when the main creative impulse was the emotion stirred by beauty as well as aspects related to the necessity or the precise use of an object-shape in everyday life.

The fifth part of this chapter approaches *Space*, starting from the scientific notion of essential dimension in the physical existence, it is later defined in an artistic context as a frame of expression for both 2D and 3D. There are invoked classical dichotomies: virtual/real space, sacred/profane space, private/public space. For the primitive man, as well as for the modern man, the space can have an emotional or mental charge, illustrated in the visual representations that he used to embellish the immediate reality. Due to the duality created between form and function, modern design is very close to decorative arts, especially to architecture, but the main differentiating criterion is seriality / uniqueness.

Subchapter III.6 – *Visual communication in ambiance* – discusses the modern urban space as a proper environment for the designers’ creativity. Their purpose is to facilitate the understanding of certain messages in the context of great urban, multiethnic, multilingual crowds as well as to find the most adequate symbols and colours for the public places so that their creations would respond to the functional and esthetic requirements at the same time.

The following subchapter – *Aspects of composition* – shows the fact that in the accomplishment of a graphic-design work all the general principles of composition concur to a defining demand: their function to send a definite message. The new element of graphic-design is the text, namely the letter; although it is the result of a drawing, the letter ends up as a distinct visual entity. The aspects of composition refer to the equilibrium between text and image as well as to surface, shape and dimensions of the graphic material, symmetry, composition axes, proportions and chromatics.

There are mentioned two different directions in logo design which are referred to in III.8: *Abstract versus figurative in logo design*. The approaches in the non-figurative field are very interesting. Even though they are abstract, they point to a figurative trait, stimulating the viewer's imagination to find a real, definite correspondent. There are made analyses for a series of elegant logos in the area of non-figurative, abstract notions, minimalist treatment and constructivism.

The last part of this chapter – *Stylization - a possible classification* proposes a definition of stylization: „simplification, graphic layout of natural elements” and a detailed taxonomy, illustrated with examples from the personal work of the author, depending on the various methods and means – line, dot, surface, abstract character and interpretation of the natural model which can be small, average or big as well as the graphic code: geometric (made the with ruler and compass), free drawing, standard or in vector, or even gesture drawing. There are presented the main methods of stylization: flattening – frontality; the division of the whole; geometrical approach; visual order; concentration on miniatures; accent laid on interpretation; metaphor; allegory; solarization.

Chapter IV – *The concept of stylization – a synthesis and suggestion* aims to pinpoint the equation to be used in logo design, a definition of minimal type which brings together its major elements: Order – Synthesis – Impact (shock) – Suggestion, elements which are firmly subordinated to the function of sending messages. Order refers to the layout of the components of the logo-image on the basis of a system of rules established by the artist. It is conceived not as a layout respecting a certain pattern, a geometrical grid, but as a basis for harmony, a syntax of reason and synthesis. The first subchapter, *The beauty of the spontaneous gesture*, remains in the area of order and harmony, in an illustration and analysis of a logo (the Dakar rally) thus showing the exciting paradox of order and harmony in an apparent ”disorder”. The general graphic approach and the stylization code have a great impact due to simplicity: a flexible line in a slightly free-caligraphic brush.

Subchapter II.2 – *Pictorial elements in logo design* analyzes an outstandingly accomplished logo (of Leopold Museum in Vienna) in the stylization of a feminine character from the work of Egon Schiele. The result is a simple artistical image, strong and eloquent for the characteristics of the works hosted by the museum, amongst which a vast collection Egon Schiele. From the point of view of the form-

message binomial, the logo is a classic one: an asymmetrical association between image and writing, without the piquancy created by visual accidents from the letters or other forms of artistic or chromatic exhibitionism.

The following subchapter includes three attributes – *Elegance, colour and exuberance* – which could briefly define the visual and artistic image sent by the contemporary coat of arms of certain regions in France and Belgium. The logos of two regions, Oost-Vlaanderen and West-Vlaanderen are comparatively analyzed: the former is characterized by elegance and freedom, nevertheless belonging to the classic, acknowledged register, the former belonging to the gestural drawing, traced practically in a few seconds with a pen. The Vlaams Brabant logo is also gestural, in an equally thick line, slightly shivered, expressing dynamism. In contrast, the logo of Antwerpen is very sober, with an austere geometry and chromatics, but it sends a strong, positive and lively message on the whole. The French territory is less rigorous than the Belgian one from this point of view, as it is dominated by a maximum exuberance and fantasy. The logos of Lorraine, Rhône Alpes, Alpes Côte d'Azur regions are part of the multicoloured, high intensity chromatic contrast approaches.

Under the title *The rigour and freedom binomial*, subchapter IV.4 presents two unprecedented examples from the contemporary brand image design. The first belongs to the Oxford Company of Film and Television, which imposes itself in distinction, equilibrium and harmony. Its impact comes as well from the association of certain totally opposed elements: concave/convex, static/dynamic, non-circular curves /circle. The second logo, similar to the previous one in the encryption methods belongs to Vlaamse Opera in Antwerpen. The artistical and emotional impact of the image is exceptional. Even though it is nonconformist, the logo is in perfect harmony with the sumptuous, ornamented architecture, due to its proportion, equilibrium, chromatic contrast and warm simplicity of the drawing.

The following part of the same chapter, *The refinement of the line with equal width*, due to the discussed models highlights the expressive valences of the line with equal width (apart from light/shadow, volume, colour) which are less known. The analyzed example is the modern and stylized version of the old coat of arms of Amsterdam. The graphic-designer preferred a minimalist – synthetic approach for the exuberant image as regards the ornamental details, without losing its poise. The

methods used by the artist are geometrization, layout and emphasis on the compositional trajectories by means of very thick lines which increase the decorative character.

The last part of this chapter: IV.6. *The expressivity of flat frontality* – remains in the Dutch territory to analyze the touristical logo „Amsterdam tourist board”. The image is considered one of the best in the frontal representation and the flatness of the letter which has an important visual contribution in the expressive tensions created by the contrasts between flat surfaces and miniature rhythms.

Following the historical and comparative approach from the second chapter, chapter V – *The brand image in our days* anchors deeply logo design in the context of image demand which characterizes contemporary society. In this context, in which art should inevitably relate to the economic side, logo design has to face many challenges.

V.1. *Creating a logo. Criteria in choosing a logo.* Before designing the most appropriate logo for a corporation, there should be made a SWOT analysis and be familiar with its history and traditions. The power of any logo resides in the original concept and it should be faithful to it and face the times as rebranding is very expensive. There are presented in turn the 22 laws of branding formulated by Al Reis, the designer; among other things, they refer to expansion/contraction, advertising, quality, name, title, form, colour, consistency, singularity. For a successful logo design there should be abided these laws.

Subchapter V.2. *The logo and its beginnings* reviews the first products from the beginning of the 20th century which had a brand image (AEG household appliances, Pelikan ink, so on), as well as the movements which revolutionized modern graphics (the works of Viennese artists, printing Mallarmé’s poetry in graphic conditions which did not respect the printing conventions) and opened the ways to logo design.

The analysis of the contemporary brand image starts from a few famous car logos (V.3. *The logo in the car industry*): Opel, Rover, Ford, Mercedes, Subaru, Mitsubishi, Rolls Royce, Ferrari, Volvo. The conclusion is that these designs go beyond the marketing strategy, entering the realm of purely esthetic, provocative aspiration which could live longer than the object it symbolizes.

Subchapter V.4. – *The logo in the public memory* treats exactly this persistence of the brand image in people's memory. A company with long-rooted traditions, as Pepsi has used for almost seven decades different graphic variants on the theme of the original logo, variants adapted to times but never changing fundamentally neither the chromatic nor the initial idea, sometimes even using retrobranding.

Moving on from a traditional commercial product to the cultural field, subchapter V.5 approaches *The logo and the cultural institutions*, underlining the growing necessity of several cultural (universities, libraries) or public institutions (town halls, parliaments, governments) to individualize their image and to illustrate their main characteristics and attributions.

Subchapter V.6 – *The promotion of products and trends in logo design* – treats about logo design in the context of launching on the market certain products in a category of already acclaimed products. This is a real challenge for designers as they have to illustrate the originality of the new products as well as its belonging to the common brand. As regards trends, designers are much more receptive to the history of design and style movements, while trends live shorter and shorter.

The following subchapter reviews the main *Present day trends – related techniques, exercises and methods in logo design*. It is about the logos based on the theme of *origami* (very suitable for the corporation monograms), *tactile logos* (where texture should be illustrated visually), *arabesque* (the corporate identity is presented starting from a beautiful item, such as Arabic calligraphy), logos from the field of *classic modernism* (pure, functional forms, abrupt contrasts), *pictograms* (the spine of non-verbal communication), *geometric logos* (complicated geometries, in bright, even aggressive colours), *typographic* (eloquent due to the mere elegance of the font), *Street Art* (practically accomplished with Adobe Illustrator) and the *Puzzle models*.

Subchapter V.8 – *The importance of rebranding* analyzes a series of big brand cases (Knorr, Ariel, Danone) which had to rebrand their image so as not to lose their position in the market.

An important trend in the present day logo design is that of *Logos for organic products*, when the ecological products and representative brands have started to be highly appreciated.

The last two subchapters: V.10. The Logo and the computer era and V.11. The Internet – the new interactive electronic environment for advertising and visual presence of logos speak about modern technology as an instrument in the creation and multiplication of logos (computer graphics software: Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Fotoshop, Corel Draw, Adobe Flash, graphics tablet, electronic pen) as well as promotion environment for the brand images (the presence of brands on-line).

The Romanian environment as a field of logo design and the analysis of the personal creation are the topics of the last chapter – *The brand image and logo in Romanian design. Analytical landmarks in personal achievements in the visual field*. This presentation could start only by the presentation of *A famous ancestor – the bull's head* . The well-known and valuable stamp, in its two editions is a sort of symbol-seal due to its composition of visual synthesis. The seal, the distinct sign applied on an object which renders individuality to the creator / owner, is rightly considered the ancestor of this logo.

Dedicated to the same Moldavian territory, subchapter VI.2 – *The emblem of Iași* describes different moments in the evolution of the emblem belonging to the town of Iasi, from the first images of a horse symbolism to the image of two crowned lions from the period of Grigore Ghica IIIrd, to the tower guarded by two dolphins from 1851, up to the emblem from the period between the wars when the horse is present again, this time a white horse next to a crown against a red background. All the variants are analyzed from a graphic and compositional point of view.

VI.3. „*The discreet charm of symmetry*”. *Romanian royal monograms - proficiency in monogram design*. The monogram represents one of the most beautiful means of expressing titles and persons. The monogram has evolved and its initials are nowadays even the brand image of certain institutions, organizations, companies (eg *YSL*). The common element of monograms, regardless of age, remains the concern for individuality, beauty, visual order, equilibrium, symmetry. For the Romanian environment, some of the most beautiful and well-designed monograms are the ones with Al.I. and his wife, Elena Cuza, as well as those with Queen Maria.

Subchapter VI.4 – *"A symphony of letters" - style and exuberance in monogram design for the Romanian National Bank and the Ministry of Finance* is dedicated to monograms but this time corporate ones. The monograms of the Romanian National Bank from different periods of time are real works of art (the

graphics on the bills circulating in 1941 was by Grigorescu himself, the great painter) are characterized by elegance, sobriety, creativity and superb details.

The following subchapter – VI.5. *The beginning of a century – famous names in the Romanian environment* presents a series of traditional logos: the distinctly elegant one of Socec bookshop; the simple image of an old and famous Romanian factory I.O.R. (Romanian Optical Enterprise); a logo of an obsolete charm, that of Guban, the shoes factory from Timisoara; a very geometrical one, the logo of Nicolina Workshops from Iasi and the logo of ”Tractorul” Factory from Brasov.

The conclusion of these initial forms of the Romanian logos is presented shortly in subchapter VI.6 – *The Romanian logo at the beginning of the 20th century, integrated in the European visual phenomenon*. Obviously, the Romanian creations from this field cannot be taken out of the wider European context.

VI.7. –”*Red Horizons*” – *twinkles in a sea of grey*. The period of time following the communist rule was not a favorable one for the creation of visual identity as the free competition market was suppressed and the private property dissolved. Still, some subterfuges were skillfully found. Thus, in 1969, at ”N. Grigorescu” Institute there was founded a department of graphic-design, and in the practical course, the students created the logo for RATB București. Another interesting logo created during the communist period was the one for Electromureș products.

Subchapter VI.8 - *The evolution of the brand image after 1989* underlines briefly the implications of the changes occurred in December 1989 on the field of Romanian logo design by a widened horizon, a change in mentality and avalanche of informational flow.

Subchapter VI.9 – *Portrait sketch: Bogdan Dumitrache, graphic designer, Brandient România* aims to accomplish an original presentation of one of the most famous Romanian logo designers (creator, among others, of the logo and package for ”Zuzu” milk) and his conception about modern logo design and the conditions which should be fulfilled.

The last subchapter is dedicated to *Analytical landmarks in personal accomplishments in the visual field*. The main characteristic could be the concern to sketch the essential and give personality to the drawing, interest in the natural models, as this was also the reason for choosing this topic for the PhD thesis. In the

field of artistic-compositional expression, in time, there have been framed four main directions: *stylization in outline drawing* (with a special position for the lion, horse, elephant, inspired by Egyptian and Assyrian art), *gesture-graphics stylization*, *patter-stylization of texture* (which happily combines with the passion for numismatics) and three-dimensional stylization, generated by computer software.

The conclusions of this paper are far from being resolutions or irrevocable sentences, as the field is extremely wide and exciting, it remains open. Hence, *Instead of conclusions* highlights the perpetual character and the beauty of the logo, of this "tiny and yet such a strong image", even in modern times, when the symmetry of human anatomy was dethroned by dynamics and asymmetry of tension. The text of the paper is illustrated by a rich addendum without which the offered examples and analyses would remain in the stage of bare theory, lacking substance.

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