

Когніція. Комунікація. Дискурс. 2024, 28, 58-77

<https://periodicals.karazin.ua/cognitiondiscourse>

<https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2024-28-04>

Стаття надійшла до редакції 01.05.2024,
рекомендована 21.06.2024.

AN INTERMEDIAL PERSPECTIVE FOR EKPHRASIS: HOW PHOTOGRAPHS CONTRIBUTE TO WRITING ABOUT ARTISTS

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Article citation: Lunyova, T. (2024). An intermedial perspective for ekphrasis: How photographs contribute to writing about artists. *Cognition. Communication. Discourse*, 28, 58-77. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2024-28-04>

Abstract

This paper examines the relationships that emerge in the process of meaning-making in the anthology *Writers on artists* (Minton, 2001) between photographic portraits of the artists and other images and verbal textual components. The findings demonstrate that as indexes, the photographs of the artists testify to the artists' real existence; as icons, these photographs contribute to the representation of the artists' uniqueness. Through these two roles, the artists' photographic portraits ensure the status of the ekphrasis in the essays as "actual ekphrasis" (in Hollander's terms). In interaction with the biographical notes, the photographs of the artists highlight their uniqueness. As elements in the multimodal complexes "artist's photo & artist's bio", the artists' photographs enter into the relationships of similarity and contrast with the writers' photographs in the multimodal complexes "writer's photo & writer's bio", which are instrumental in creating symbolic dialogic space for the discussion of the works of the visual arts in the essays. Those photographs that are photographs of the artists' painted or drawn portraits rather than people themselves establish strong semantic links with descriptive ekphrasis. Some of the objects captured in the artists' photographs can contribute to descriptive ekphrasis. Those photographic portraits that offer psychological characterization of the artists work in synchrony with interpretative ekphrasis. The photographs that can symbolically evoke schemata of knowledge which have high relevance for ekphrastic interpretations and metaekphrastic discussions strongly support meanings generated in the essays. The photographs that are likely to be interpreted symbolically contribute most significantly to the meaning-making in the essays.

Key words: *verbal text, essay, visual arts, photograph, portrait, ekphrasis, metaekphrasis, biography, description, interpretation.*

1. Introduction

Writing about arts comes in various forms: besides being diverse in terms of genre, texts about arts may incorporate different pictorial elements. The collection of essays about the visual arts entitled *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) is a multimodal project: it comprises verbal texts, reproductions of the works of the visual arts and photographs of artists and writers. The multimodal nature of this anthology comes as no surprise since ultimately "all communicative situations and all media types are multimodal" (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022, p.3). In her *Foreword* to the anthology, A.S. Byatt



reviews the essays and briefly discusses the reproductions included in the collection revealing the roles of both (Byatt, 2001, p. 6). However, she does not consider photographic portraits. Karen Wright does not mention photographs in her *Introduction* (Wright, 2001, p.7) to the book either. Notwithstanding the absence of the articulated statement of the reasons for including photographic portraits in the anthology, they are used consistently throughout the whole book and occupy conspicuous places at the top of the first page of each essay. Hence comes the question of the role of the artists' photographic portraits in the meaning-making in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001).

This present study addresses this question from the standpoint of intermedial approach to studying relationships between photographs and verbal texts which they are included into (Böger, 2015; Fjellestad, 2015; Straub, 2015). The essential instruments for disentangling complex multimodal structure of the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) are borrowed from Elleström's "Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations" (2001) in which he differentiates between media products, technical media of display, and basic and qualified media types.

Following Elleström (2001), the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) can be identified as a media product that has potential for communication of meaning. Analysed in terms of technical medium of display (Elleström, 2001), the anthology can be described as specially arranged combination of visually perceptible images and signs (letters) printed on the paper pages. In terms of the basic media types, the anthology comprises still images "most often understood as tangible, flat, static, visual and iconic media products" (Elleström, 2001, p. 55) and visually represented verbal texts. Finally, in terms of qualified media types, the anthology is a complex of photographic portraits and reproductions of the works of the visual arts (as more specific instantiations of still images) and essays and biographical texts (as instantiations of visually represented verbal texts).

The objective of the study is to reveal what relationships are established between photographic portraits of the artists and other visual and verbal elements in the anthology *Writers on artists* (Minton, 2001) in the process of meaning-making.

The main aim of this research is to zoom in on the relationships between ekphrasis and semantically related extracts in the essays about the visual arts on the one hand and accompanying photographs of the artists on the other hand, which to our knowledge have not been subjected to analysis yet.

To reach this aim, my **tasks** are to elucidate relationships between a) photographic portraits of the artists and brief texts covering their biographies, b) photographic portraits of the artists and photographic portraits of the writers, c) photographic portraits of the artists and ekphrasis in the essays, d) photographic portraits of the artists and essay extracts that accompany and/or go beyond ekphrasis.

2. Method

The methodology of this study is developed via synthesis of several research approaches connected with the explorations of meaning-making and communication in the situations where visual images and verbal texts are involved.

2.1. Theoretical background

This research is primarily grounded in intermedial and multimodal studies (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022; Clüver, 2007/2016; Elleström, 2021; Rajewsky, 2005) and following Elleström (2021) is developed on the assumptions of cognitive foundations and semiotic nature of meaning-making and communication. Thus, it also capitalises on cognitive studies into meaning in literary texts (Gavins & Steen, 2003; Semino, 1995; Stockwell, 2002) and semiotic studies that accord with the cognitive approach (Eco, 1984). The analysis of the meaning components in the essays of the anthology *Writers on artists* (Minton, 2001) is performed in this study with the help of the concept of schemata as structures of knowledge (Semino, 1995; Stockwell, 2002, pp. 75-87).

The analysis of photographs is based on the works of Barthes (1981), Lefebvre (2002), and Sontag (1977/2019). In particular, following Lefebvre (2002), the roles of photographs are studied in terms of their capabilities of acting as indexes, icons and (under special conditions) symbolic representations. Sontag's observation that "photographs are as much interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are" (1977/2019, p. 5) is taken into consideration to scrutinise symbolic roles of photographs. Barthes' notion of the "air" (Barthes, 1981, pp. 107-110) is used to deliberate peculiarities of the photographic portraits in the anthology. Based on Freeland's (2007) study of the portraiture in painting and photography, the following four functions of photographic portraits are discriminated: evidence of accuracy, testimony of presence, psychological characterization, and revelation of the essential "air" (in Barthes' terms).

To explore the relationships between the verbal text and the works of the visual arts, I dwell upon the studies of ekphrasis (Barry, 2002; Heffernan, 1991; Elsner, 2002; Horstkotte, 2017; Krieger, 2019; Mitchell, 1994). As the limits of the article make it impossible to go into a detailed discussion of the nature and typology of ekphrasis, I would like to provide a working definition of ekphrasis adopted for this study. I understand ekphrasis as a verbal representation of the directly observable (material side) and/or inferred (symbolic side) of works of the visual arts that by their nature are representations of reality.

Being a complex phenomenon, ekphrasis is discussed with the help of a range of terms, which include *description* and *interpretation*. Researchers take different approaches to examining the relationships between ekphrasis, description, and interpretation. While Carrier treats ekphrasis and interpretation as opposites with ekphrasis rendering the story of a painting and interpretation providing a "systematic analysis of composition" (Carrier, 1987, p.21), Koopman claims that "in an ekphrasis one cannot distinguish between interpretation and description" (2014, p.10). In my research, I understand description and interpretation as two modes of ekphrasis and differentiate between ekphrastic description and ekphrastic interpretation. Ekphrastic description stands for verbal account of what one can see in a painting, drawing, sculpture or installation and/or what material means (colours, type of paint, layers of paint, composition, etc.) were used by an artist to produce a representation of the world in their work of art. Ekphrastic interpretation means explication of the meaning of a painting, drawing, sculpture or installation.

The concept of ekphrasis is accompanied in this study with the concept of metaekphrasis, which we introduced together with Professor Vorobyova to account for such textual passages that have semantic relationships with ekphrasis within a coherent text (Vorobyova & Lunyova, 2020, pp.341-343). On the one hand, even though metaekphrasis does not provide a direct description or an interpretation of a work of the visual arts, it creates important semantic context in which ekphrasis functions. Accompanying ekphrasis, metaekphrasis contributes information instrumental for understanding of ekphrastic description or interpretation. On the other hand, going beyond ekphrasis, metaekphrasis establishes meaningful connections between discussion of art and life in a particular text.

2.2. Material

The anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) contains 39 essays out of which 38 essays deal with paintings, drawings, sculptures, installations and thus are "'visual still images' (non-temporal)" in Elleström's terms (Elleström, 2021, p. 56) and 1 essay deals with films, i.e. is a "'visual moving image' (temporal)" (Elleström, 2021, p. 56). As the representation of "the arts of time and the arts of space" (Elleström, 2021, p. 4) in the anthology is misbalanced, with the second type been discussed in only one essay, this study is based on the analysis of the body of 38 essays. Each of these essays is devoted to one artist.

2.3. Procedures

The following discrete although interconnected research procedures were applied in this study:

- 1) identification of characteristic features of the photographic portraits of the artists,
- 2) analysis of the placement of the photographic portraits of the artists on the pages of the book,
- 3) identification of the functions of the photographic portraits of the artists,
- 4) elucidation of the meanings generated in the verbal texts,
- 5) explication of the semantic relationships between photographic portraits of the artists and verbal texts.

3. Findings

In this section, I will present my findings in the order that corresponds to the research tasks. I will precede this by a brief explanation of the layout of the blocks with the visually perceptible still images and printed texts on the pages of the book. The illustrations were included in this article to visually represent artists' characteristic styles that will hopefully create the context facilitating comprehension of the article.

All the verbal and pictorial information in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) is organised following the same layout. Each essay begins with a new spread. The left-hand page displays the name of the artist in large bold font at the top and the name of the writer in smaller font beneath it. Besides the font size, the artist's name is made more conspicuous by being printed black while the writer's name is printed grey. Both pages of the spread are vertically divided into two parts of different width. The narrower strips go along the outer margins of the pages and are separated from the inner wider parts with thin black vertical lines. This narrow strip on the left-hand page is devoted to a brief biography of the artist while the narrow strip on the right-hand page is given to a brief biography of the writer. The artist's photographic portrait is placed at the top of the left-hand page narrow strip and the writer's photographic portrait is located at the top of the right-hand page narrow strip (see Fig. 1 for the schematic representation of the layout of the first spread of each essay in the anthology *Writers on Artists* [Minton, 2001]).

Each essay includes several reproductions of the works of the visual arts accompanied with their titles and technical information (the year of creation, medium, size, and ownership). While photographic reproductions of paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations are provided in full colour, the photographic portraits of the artist and writers are printed in sepia. This colour contrast arguably highlights the fact that the essays focus on the works of the visual arts rather than on the personal lives of the artists and discuss artists' biographies only as much as some aspects of those can illuminate artists' works.

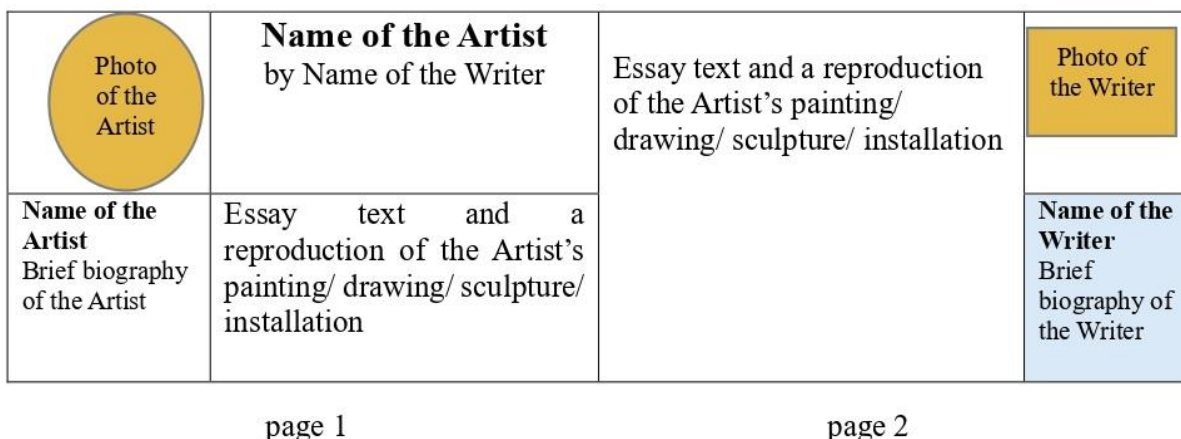


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the layout of the first spread of each essay in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001).

3.1. Relationships between photographic portraits of the artists and brief texts covering their biographies

Preceding brief biographic texts about the lives and works of artists, their photographic portraits simultaneously testify to the fact that these artists were or have been real people and provide representations of the artists' individual appearances. Indeed, the photographs successfully give a "proof of presence" (Freeland, 2007, p. 100) and certify that these artists exist(ed). Furthermore, all of the photographic portraits give quite a good idea of what the artists look(ed) like irrespective of the size of the image. Some portraits only show the artist's head, e.g., the photo of Stuart Davis (Minton, 2001, p. 110), or the head and torso, e.g., the photo of Henri Matisse (Minton, 2001, p. 94), or almost the whole body, e.g., the photo of David Hockney (Minton, 2001, p. 24), or the whole body, e.g., photo of Robert Motherwell (Minton, 2001, p. 174). None of these photographic portraits distorts the artist's look. Since the portraits render the artists "distinguishable and recognizable" (Freeland, 2007, p. 100), they succeed in acting as "accurate likeness" of the persons (Freeland, 2007, p. 100).

It is important that although uniform in their shape, size, and colouring, all the photographs in the anthology differ from one another. In particular, the artists have very different expressions on their faces, e.g., Howard Hodgkin is looking intently in the camera (Minton, 2001, p. 148), Richard Billingham is smiling (Minton, 2001, p. 224). Some of the artists have various objects: Damien Hirst is captured in a cap (Minton, 2001, p. 122), Ed Ruscha is photographed with a book (Minton, 2001, p. 302). Besides, the artists appear against different backgrounds, for example: Richard Billingham is shown against (almost) one colour (blurred) background (Minton, 2001, p. 224), Salvador Dali stands against a wall (Minton, 2001, p. 116), Barrie Cooke is pictured with a landscape at the background (Minton, 2001, p. 328), Tracey Emin stands in front of city buildings (Minton, 2001, p. 204), Jasper Jones is captured in front of a part of some frame (Minton, 2001, p. 166), Robert Motherwell sits in front of some furniture (Minton, 2001, p. 174), and Jeff Koons is shown in front of some indiscernible objects (Minton, 2001, p. 40). Although small, these unique features of photographic portraits contribute to representing the uniqueness of the artists.

The biographical notes in the anthology predominantly focus on professional aspects of the artists' lives and provide information that is directly relevant to their work. In particular, it includes the education they obtained, the influences they experienced, the art movement they belonged to, the style they developed, the techniques they used, the meaning(s) they expressed in their works, the most important painting they created, and the exhibitions they participated in (see Table 1 for the examples). This information is concise, matter-of-fact, and predominantly in neutral style; the sepia subdued colour scheme of the photographic portraits corresponds to it very well.

The only exception that appears in the anthology is the biographical note about Henry Darger (Minton, 2001, p. 252), which instead of the information types discussed above, provides facts about the artist's personal life, e.g.:

- (9) *"Throughout his life, he worked at menial jobs and attended Mass as often as five times a day"* (Minton, 2001, p. 252).

The reason for this is Darger's exceptional life in comparison with the other artist's presented in the anthology as Darger did not get any formal artistic education and his work only became known after his death. Darger's photographic portrait, however, stylistically does not differ from the rest of the artists photographs.

Table 1

Types of information in biographical notes about the artists in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001).

Types of information	Examples	
	Artist	Biographical information
education	Larry Rivers	(1) <i>“He took up painting in 1945, studying at the Hans Hofmann School, and with William Baziotas at New York University”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 72)
artistic influences	Piet Mondrian	(2) <i>“Mondrian moved to Paris in 1912, where he was influenced by the early Cubism of Picasso and Braque.”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 184)
art movement	Robert Rauschenberg	(3) <i>“Although he played an important role in the transition of Abstract Expressionism to Pop Art, Rauschenberg’s art defies categorization”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 230)
style	Cy Twombly	(4) <i>“Twombly’s innovative, non-objective style of painting and drawing developed during the ’50s, when he employed squiggles, calligraphic lines, words, and numbers – a unique style sometimes described as “handwriting” or “doodle art”.”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 130)
technique	Howard Hodgkin	(5) <i>“Using asymmetrical patterns and strong, decorative colors, he incorporates remembered details – patterns, items of clothing, the light and space of a particular place – in his work.”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 148)
symbolic meaning	Tracy Emin	(6) <i>“Emin’s work is confessional in nature.”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 204)
important paintings	Jasper Johns	(7) <i>“He painted his first flag picture in 1954 [...]”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 166)
exhibitions	Willem de Kooning	(8) <i>“In 1968, de Kooning returned to the Netherlands for the opening of his retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam.”</i> (Minton, 2001, p. 296)

The background of the photographic portraits of the artists can highlight their occupation through featuring some works of visual arts. For example, paintings can be seen at the background of the photographs of Sydney Nolan (Minton, 2001, p. 8), David Hockney (Minton, 2001, p. 24), Larry Rivers (Minton, 2001, p. 72), and Jackson Pollock (Minton, 2001, p. 272), while Constantin Brancusi sits in front of some sculptures (Minton, 2001, p. 256). Moreover, some artists are shown with their professional tools: David Hockney – with paintbrushes (Minton, 2001, p. 24), Henri Matisse – with a palette and paintbrushes (Minton, 2001, p. 94), Jackson Pollock – with a can of paint and a paintbrush (Minton, 2001, p. 272). It is reasonable to argue that paintings or sculptures at the background and brushes, cans of paint and palettes in the painters’ hands function in these photos as both direct realistic representations of the artists’ typical activity and symbolic rendering of their being artists.

To sum up briefly, the photographic portraits of the artists represent their identities via functioning as indexes and icons. While being uniform in their overall style, defined by the shape, size, and colour scheme, the photographic portraits of the artists succeed in representing artists uniqueness since they do not follow any single way of portraying a person (i.e., there is no “standard” background, posture or facial expression). When photographic portraits feature works of the visual arts or artists’ tools, these elements iconically confirm the artists’ occupation and symbolically strengthen textual representation of their biographies as artists.

3.2. Relationships between photographic portraits of the artists and photographic portraits of the writers

Within the layout of the essays first pages, the photographic portraits of the artists and the writers are placed in such a way that they create a type of visual opposition. Different shapes of photographic portraits heighten this contrast — photographs of the artists are cropped into ovals and photographs of the writers are placed in rectangles approximating squares. Such a design evokes the idea that the works of the artists and writings about these works by the writers are essentially distinct things. Photographs of the writers are as diverse as photographs of the artists are, thus the writers are represented as unique individuals as well.

Since photographs of the writers are related with short biographical notes similarly to the photographs of the artists, it makes sense to consider relationships between multimodal complexes “artist’s photo & artist’s bio” and “writer’s photo & writer’s bio”.

The biographical texts about the writers essentially comprise information about their involvement with the arts and their accolades (see Table 2 for the examples). These biographical texts are visually highlighted being placed on the light blue background against the rest of the pages kept white. Such visual foregrounding provides more prominence to the writers’ highly respectful status, which implies that their essays in the anthology contain worthy writings.

Table 2

**Types of information in biographical notes about the writers in the anthology
Writers on Artists (Minton, 2001).**

Types of information	Examples	
	Writer	Biographical information
involvement with the arts	Norbert Lynton	(10) “ <i>During the 1960s, Lynton was the London correspondent for Art International, and from 1965 to 1970, the art critic for London’s The Guardian</i> ” (Minton, 2001, p. 175)
accolades	Michael Hofmann	(11) “ <i>His many honours include the Cholmondeley award, the Geoffrey Faber memorial Prize, the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award for translation, the PEN/Book of the Month Club Translation Prize, and the Independent’s Foreign Fiction Prize.</i> ” (Minton, 2001, p. 83)

The spatial placement of the multimodal complexes “artist’s photo & artist’s bio” and “writer’s photo & writer’s bio” on the book spread opposite each other with the essay about the visual arts located in between iconically creates the dialogue space where the interaction between artists’ essentially visual works and writers’ essentially verbal pieces happens.

Interestingly, two persons in the anthology are represented as both an artist and a writer. They are David Hockney (as an artist [Minton, 2001, p. 24], as a writer [Minton, 2001, p. 17]) and Patrick Heron (as an artist [Minton, 2001, p. 24], as a writer [Minton, 2001, p. 139]). In both cases the photo of the person as an artist differs from the photo of the person as a writer while the biographical text about the person as an artist and the biographical text about this person as a writer contain the same information being slightly paraphrased. As a result, in both pairs of photographs each portrait comes to symbolically represent a different aspect of a personality.

3.3. Relationships between photographic portraits of the artists and ekphrasis in the essays

First and foremost, all the photographic portraits of the artists in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) contribute to strengthening the understanding that ekphrasis in the anthology is “actual ekphrasis” – the type of ekphrasis, which was singled out by John Hollander in contrast with “notional ekphrasis”, as cited in (Barry, 2002, p. 155). Indeed, as the artists whose works are

discussed in the essays were/ are real people, their paintings, drawings, sculptures, installations are also real – “genuine” but not “purely fictional” (Barry, 2002, p. 155).

Firstly, photographic portraits of the artists can support descriptive ekphrasis. There are two such portraits in the anthology *Writers on Artists*: that of Paul Cézanne (Minton, 2001, p. 138) and the one of George Seurat (Minton, 2001, p. 196). Both photographs are actually photographs of the artistic representations of the painters: Paul Cézanne’s is a photo of a painting and George Seurat’s is a photo of a drawing. In both cases, the original artworks have distinctive visual features: Paul Cézanne’s painted portrait was executed with clearly seen brushstrokes and George Seurat’s portrait was drawn with a crayon and bears its characteristic traces on the drawing surface. Both the essay about Paul Cézanne (Heron, 2001, pp. 138-147) and the essay about George Seurat (Raine, 2001, pp. 196-203) include ekphrastic descriptions of the brushstrokes or texture of their paintings or drawings, e.g.:

(12) *“So when Cézanne resolved visual realities into countless groups of delectably ordered strata of fragmented brushstrokes lying parallel to one another he was magnifying something seen. But the stacks and shelves and clusters of square-ended parallel brushstrokes are not an invented arbitrary abstraction: they are the intuitive magnification of fragmented stratification which his remarkable eye saw hinted at absolutely everywhere in the visible world.”* (Heron, 2001, p. 139).

(13) *“Using the texture of the paper as a central part of the process, Seurat’s conté crayon develops its image as if the paper were light-sensitive. The result look like a photographic detail enlarged to a grainy shimmer.”* (Raine, 2001, p. 197).

In extract (12), Heron describes Cézanne’s characteristic brushstrokes as being essential to the painter’s creative output. Through literal and metaphoric descriptions, he evokes the schema PAINTED BRUSHSTROKES. In extract (13), Raine describes Seurat’s drawings in terms of the effect achieved on the surface of the paper and evokes the schema GRAINY SURFACE. Cézanne’s and Seurat’s portraits in the anthology illustrate these schemata.

Fig.2 and Fig.3 below illustrate Cézanne’s characteristic brushstrokes and Seurat’s crayon technique.

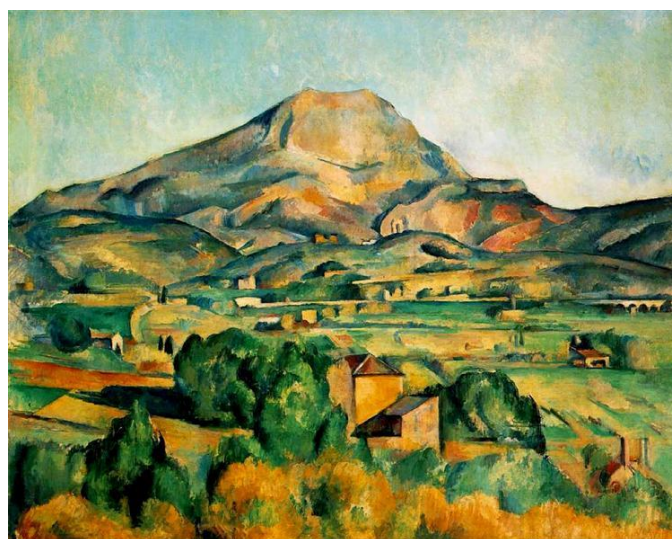


Fig. 2. Cézanne, P. (c. 1895). *Mont Sainte-Victoire* [Oil on canvas]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/paul-cezanne/mont-sainte-victoire-3>



Fig. 3. Seurat, G. (1884). *Artist at work* [Crayon on paper]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-seurat/artist-at-work-1884>

Secondly, those photographic portraits of the artists that provide some psychological characterization as information on the “personality, emotions, or attitudes” of the person who was photographed (Freeland, 2007, p. 101) can contribute to interpretative ekphrasis. For example, Paula Rego’s portrait in the anthology (Minton, 2001, p. 62) shows her emotional state and character. In her photograph, the painter is slightly smiling and looking upwards. She emanates confidence, certainty, empowerment. It is the schema POWER that Germaine Greer uses to explicate the meaning of Paula Rego’s body of work (one of Rego’s characteristic drawings is reproduced in Fig. 4), e.g.:

- (14) “*Women’s paintings are rarely powerful, for the culture of the west has no representational language to express the power of femaleness. Paula Rego is a painter of astonishing power, and that power is undeniably, obviously, triumphantly female. Her work is the first evidence that I have seen that something fundamental in our culture has changed; the carapace has cracked and something living, hot, and heavy is welling through. The process in Rego’s work is dramatic [...]*” (Greer, 2001, p. 62).

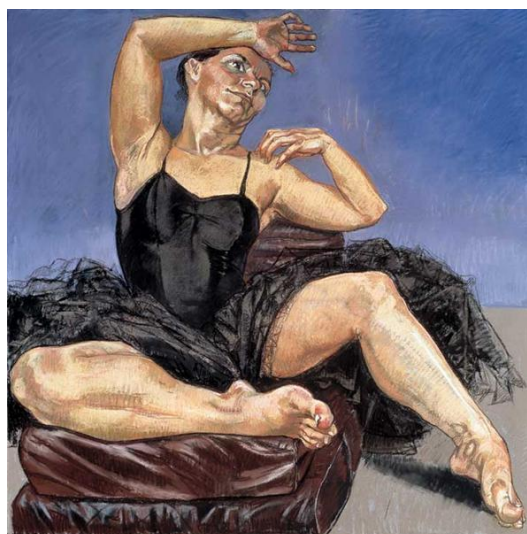


Fig. 4. Rego, P. (1995). *Dancing ostriches* [Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/paula-rego/dancing-ostriches-1995>

In extract (14), the schema POWER is foregrounded through multiple instances of verbalisation by the means of both lexical units (*powerful, power*) and a metaphor (*the carapace has cracked and something living, hot, and heavy is welling through*). The extract offers interpretation of Paula Rego's creative output.

3.4. Relationships between photographic portraits of the artists and essay extracts that accompany and/or go beyond ekphrasis

When the key meaning component of the essay plays an important role in both its ekphrastic and metaekphrastic parts, the photo of the artist whose works are discussed in the verbal text, may resonate with it. For example, the essay about Pablo Picasso (Hockney, 2001, pp. 16-23) is accompanied with the photo of the artist as an old man (Minton, 2001, p. 16). The schema OLD AGE performs the key role in descriptive and interpretative ekphrases in Hockney's essay about Picasso. Thus, the visual representation of the painter himself and the verbal text about his creative output work in unison.

Picasso's photograph in the anthology captures him in an alert state. The artist is looking straight into the camera with an expression that is a mixture of making a certain statement and asking a question. The lit cigarette in his hand evokes the situation of a period of contemplation or a conversation or both. The schemata THINKING and DELIBERATION that are evoked through these details of the artist's photograph, correspond to Hockney's metaekphrastic argument that Picasso was highly aware of what he was doing as an artist even in his old age (as proved by one of Picasso's late works in Fig. 5 below), e.g.:

- (15) *“Anyway, I drove back with Douglas and discussed the paintings with him. He went ranting on, “No, no” He was just senile. He didn't know what he was doing.” But I didn't believe it! I didn't think any artist of that calibre would spend twenty years just repeating himself: and I didn't think Picasso had done so.” (Hockney, 2001, p. 20).*



Fig. 5. Picasso, P. (1967). *An artist* [Oil on canvas]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/pablo-picasso/an-artist-1967>

In extract (15), Hockney renders his discussion with the art critic Douglas Cooper. He reports Cooper's negative evaluation of Picasso's late works as being below the standard because they were produced by a demented artist. Hockney counters this idea expressing high respect for Picasso's calibre as an artist. Along with that Hockney concludes his essay with the statement that Picasso was capable of extremely complex cognitive operations when he was a very old man, e.g.:

- (16) *“In his old age, Picasso went on making discoveries. He just couldn’t stop. About 1963 he made a whole lot of new discoveries.”* (Hockney, 2001, p. 23).

The photograph of the artist in the anthology may also evoke concepts that are important in metaekphrastic discussion of the artist’s professional development and career. For example, the focused expression on Jackson Pollock’s face in his photograph in the anthology (Minton, 2001, p. 272) resonated with the schema SEARCH with the help of which Martin Gayford describes Pollock’s development and failure as a painter, e.g.:

- (17) *“But to understand what he was searching for, and why, it is helpful to go back to Mexican muralists.”* (Gayford, 2001, p. 281).

The schema SEARCH also plays an important role in Peter Fuller’s essay about Sydney Nolan (Fuller, 2001, pp. 8–15). In particular, it is evoked in Sydney Nolan’s response to Fuller’s question whether he *“consciously rejected that kind of modernism”* (Fuller, 2001, p. 11), e.g.:

- (18) *“I was really nudging my way through what I felt was a false dilemma – it seemed that you had representational art, or you had abstract art; but, for me, that was a pointless battle. What you really had to look for were painting that had this invitation or lure. That is where art has persisted; you can’t pin it down to any of these categories. It’s an attraction of the thing in front of you which attracts you before you realize you are attracted.”* (Fuller, 2001, p. 11).

In extract (18), Nolan expresses his conception that a work of art should have a unique quality of attraction a person’s attention (*invitation, lure, attraction*) and insists that for an artist the search for such a quality (*What you really had to look for*) is much more important than finding his position concerning various types of art (*you had representational art, or you had abstract art*).

The photograph of Sydney Nolan in the anthology (Minton, 2001, p. 8) evokes the schema SEARCH via the captured moment of Nolan’s intently looking through binoculars at something that might be an art object, possibly in the process of being created. The likelihood of the scrutinised object to be pertaining to art is supported by the presence of other works of the visual arts in the photograph.

When the schema ORIGINALITY is used by David Sylvester to characterise the creative practice of Marcel Duchamp, it is echoed by the unconventional representation of the artist’s photograph(s). In his essay, Sylvester (Sylvester, 2001, pp. 102-109) makes the point that Duchamp was different from the majority of other artists in that he avoided repeating himself, e.g.:

- (19) *“[...] Duchamp, in noble contrast to practically every other professional artist in history, preferred inaction to repetition.”* (Sylvester, 2001, p. 106)

Besides the photograph of Duchamp wearing a shirt and a tie, the anthology features his second portrait on the same page (Minton, 2001, p. 102). It is of the same shape (oval) and the same size and has verbal explanation *“Prose Sélavy, ca, 1920-21, (Duchamp’s alter ego)”* (Minton, 2001, p. 102). In it, Duchamp looks like a young coquettish woman. The connection between the two photographs is heightened by their placement on the same page. At the same time, the second photo has a double status of representing the artist himself and being as work of art as it is printed in black-and-white rather than sepia and has attribution *“Photograph by Man Roy”* and technical information about the size and ownership (Minton, 2001, p. 102), which is characteristic of the reproductions of paintings.

In the anthology, an unconventional choice of the photograph of an artist supports the unconventional evaluation of his works. For example, the photograph of Salvador Dali looks quite surprising, as it is not one of the well-known images of the artist as a mature person, but a picture of him as a very young man (Minton, 2001, p. 116). In this photograph, Dali does not have his

characteristic moustaches, his face is shaved clean, and he looks rather surprised. In her essay about Dali's work, Wendy Beckett argues that his creative output should be evaluated without widespread prejudice (Beckett, 2001, p. 116), and when approached without undeserved admiration, Dali's output turns out to be meaningless, e.g.:

(20) *“The tragedy is that Dali had [...] the talent necessary to communicate real imaginative truth, that which is at the center of all great art. But his self-absorption rarely lets him achieve what in theory should have been possible to him.”* (Beckett, 2001, p. 121).

In this metaekphrastic passage, Beckett attributes Dali's failure to produce positively evaluated “*great art*” to his inability to be concerned about others (an example of Dali's work in Fig. 6 questions this argument). This conclusion is supported in the essay by the argument that Dali's behaviour can be interpreted as that of a child whose biggest desire is to be the centre of attention, e.g.:

(21) *“Dali seems to have been like a small child who needs desperately to be noticed. He sought out the shocking: if spitting upon his dead mother's image would attract attention, he was a prolific and boastful spitter. Again, like an anxious child, he reveled in bodily fluids and the more lurid consequences of death.”* (Beckett, 2001, p. 116).



Fig. 6. Dali, S. (1927). *Harlequin* [Oil on canvas]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/salvador-dali/harlequin-1927>

The photographic image of the artist as a very young man illustrates Beckett's point very well. And it resonates with Beckett's metaphoric claim that Dali “*died young creatively*” (Beckett, 2001, p. 121).

Besides, the photograph of the artist in the anthology might contribute to supporting the stylistic peculiarities of the essay. For example, Howard Jacobson's essay about Andy Warhol (Jacobson, 2001, pp. 50-61) is styled as a fictitious diary of Warhol's spirit that visits his own exhibition after the death, e.g.:

(22) *“So there you are kiddo, there's life after death.”* (Jacobson, 2001, p. 51).

In his photograph, Andy Warhol looks quite eerie (Minton, 2001, p. 50). The close examination of the photograph makes one think that it is actually a photograph of Andy Warhol's wax figure because

one can spot a plaque with Andy Warhol's name on the wall behind the figure. Thus, both the photograph and the essay evoke the schema DEATH and schema LIFE AFTER DEATH that are crucial in styling the essay as a diary of the spirit of the deceased person.

The photograph of Jean-Michel Basquiat (Minton, 2001, p. 290) contributes to the stylistics of Harland Miller's essay about him (Miller, 2001, pp. 290-295) in a much subtler way. Miller shapes his essay as an account of his missing a chance to meet Basquiat (one of his works is reproduced in Fig. 7). The text has neither ekphrasis of Basquiat's works nor evaluation of his creative output. Miller indirectly makes a point of the importance of Basquiat's art via admiring the fact of Jean-Michel Basquiat's photograph appearing on the cover of *New York Times Magazine* when Basquiat was a very young artist (Miller, 2001, pp. 290-291). Instead of ekphrastic description or interpretation, Miller recounts how he went to the USA and happened to meet Basquiat's father in a restaurant, caught a glimpse of Jean-Michel passing by the restaurant window on a bicycle, got invited to have dinner with the Basquiat family, but never made it there. Miller's essay is tinted with sadness over the exclusive but elusive opportunity that was lost. In the photograph, Jean-Michel Basquiat is standing in front of the wall, which bears a curved vertical mark (Minton, 2001, p. 290). It is impossible to tell whether the mark is a random scribble or a part of graffiti. Therefore, the photograph evokes an idea of an art object eluding the observer.



Fig. 7. Basquiat, J-M. (1981). *Bird on money* [Acrylic and crayon on canvas]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-michel-basquiat/bird-on-money>

4. Discussion

As it follows from the results presented above, all the photographic portraits of the artists in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) give testimonies to the artists' existence and provide representations of their unique appearance. Besides, some of them offer some psychological characterization of the artists. However, none of the photographs of the artists evoke their unique "air" (after Barthes) as representation of "the unique personality and demeanour of someone we know very intimately" (Freeland, 2007, p. 102). This stands in perfect harmony with the biographical texts, which are geared towards professional rather than personal representation of the artists and the essays focused on the works of art.

The role that photographic portraits of the artists can play in contributing to meaning-making in the essay can be further explored by comparison of the same essay published in different editions with different photographs of the artist. The corpus of the texts I use in my study of essayistic writing about the visual arts includes one of such essays – it is Julian Barnes' writing about Edgar Degas (Barnes, 2001, pp. 158-165; Barnes, 2020, pp.160-169). In the anthology, the text is entitled "*Edgar Degas*" (Minton, 2001, p. 158) while in the collection of Barnes' essays *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art* it is given the title "*Degas: and Women*" (Barnes, 2020, p. 160). The texts are predominantly

the same with a few differences that include omissions, additions and rephrasing. The photographs that accompany these twin texts are completely different. The one in the anthology features Degas as a young man looking quite confident and a bit ironic. The painter is smartly dressed and is elegantly holding gloves in his hand (Minton, 2001, p. 158). The photograph in the collection *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art* in comparison is much bigger. It takes approximately 1/3 of the page, with the rest of the page left blank (Barnes, 2020, p. 163). This photograph has a complex composition: Edgar Degas in his old age is sitting on the steps of a building, three young women are standing behind him holding branches with leaves in their right hands, and two very young boys are sitting one step below the painter and bowing their heads to him and holding their hand as if for a prayer. Degas looks quite weary and despondent and overall is presented as a sulky person.

While both texts follow the same rhetoric of questioning the validity of discussing Degas' (un)likely misogyny when discussing his art, the textual differences add subtle shifts, e.g.:

(23) “*Could anything be plainer? Can't get it up; hates women; behaves oddly with models; rubbishes women in his art*” (Barnes, 2001, p. 159).

(24) “*Could anything be plainer? He's got a small one (and/or can't get it up); behaves oddly with models; hates women; rubbishes them in his art*” (Barnes, 2020, p. 160).

While the change of the place of the phrase “*hates women*” in the sentence (24) as compared with (23) can be attributed to purely stylistic decision – to avoid the repetition of the word *women*; the addition in (24) of extra information about the artist's body and his hypothetical sexual predicament (*He's got a small one*) draws more attention to the artist himself than to his paintings and drawings. Together with the title, which gives prominence to Degas' relationships with women, the photograph of old Degas with young women and boys and this textual addition result in foregrounding the discussion of the artist's personal life over the aesthetics of his paintings and drawings (one of which is represented by Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Degas, E. (1885-1890). *A Grecian dance* [Pastel]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/edgar-degas/a-grecian-dance-1890>

The comparison of the publications of the same essay with and without the artist's photograph can shed further light on the role of the photographic portrait in the meaning-making. Siri Hustvedt's essay about Giorgio Morandi is published with the artist's portrait in the anthology (Hustvedt, 2001, pp. 262-271) and without it in the collection of her essays *Mysteries of the Rectangle* (Hustvedt, 2005/2006, pp. 121-133). In the anthology, Giorgio Morandi is featured in profile with old-fashioned round glasses on his forehead (Minton, 2001, p. 262). He is looking tired, and he is focusing intently on something. The photograph gives impression of Morandi as a skilled artisan examining the work. The verbal texts of the essays are the same in both editions, although the essay in *Mysteries of the Rectangle* has a modified title: it is not just *Giorgio Morandi* (Minton, 2001, p. 262) but *Giorgio Morandi: Not Just Bottles* (Hustvedt, 2005/2006, p. 121). This specification (*Not Just Bottles*) is very important for the meaning of the essay as Hustvedt focuses on the interpretation of Morandi's plentiful works that represent bottles (Fig. 9 is one of the artist's characteristic works). Hustvedt argues, that through these paintings Morandi offers his unique version of the truth of this world, e.g.:

(25) *And yet, if there's one thing I've understood about art in general, it's that there are thousands of different ways of getting at the world and what we experience as its truths. In Morandi's case, the path to that truth was by the way of "more bottles."* (Hustvedt, 2001, p. 271; Hustvedt, 2005/2006, p. 133)

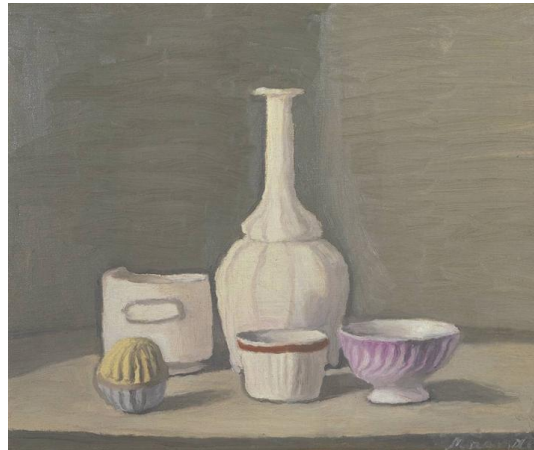


Fig. 9. Morandi, G. (1946). *Still life* [Oil]. Retrieved from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/giorgio-morandi/still-life-1946>

One of the claims that Hustvedt puts forward in her essay is the statement that Morandi was engaged in offering a new way of looking at things, e.g.:

(26) *"Giorgio Morandi is in the business of subverting the conventions of seeing."* (Hustvedt, 2001, p. 270; Hustvedt, 2005/2006, p. 131)

And it is this claim that her ekphrastic representation of Morandi's paintings is built upon, e.g.:

(27) *"In the last paintings, the relations between objects and empty space, between solid form and air, between the edge of one thing and another is persistently questioned."* (Hustvedt, 2001, p. 270; Hustvedt, 2005/2006, p. 131)

Hustvedt's main idea developed in the essay that through his patient and painstaking observation and painting Morandi was able to offer aesthetically important objects is strongly supported by his photograph as an artisan.

As it follows from my previous analysis, a photograph of an artist can make a feasible contribution to the meaning-making in the essay if something in this photograph can be interpreted symbolically. And indeed, it is very hard to find any contribution to the meaning-making of, for example, photograph of Jeff Koons (Minton, 2001, p. 40) to the essay by Matthew Collings (Collings, 2001, pp. 40-49) since this photograph features nothing that can be rendered symbolic interpretation. It is a head photo of the artist with a neutral expression against some vague blurred background.

On the one hand, if an object in the photograph that can potentially get interpretation relevant for the meaning of the essay is not conspicuous, its potential for contributing to meaning-making in the essay remains very weak. For example, in the photograph of Barrie Cooke there is a little portion of landscape behind the artist (Minton, 2001, p. 328). Seamus Heaney's essay about the painter (Heaney, 2001, pp. 328-333) makes references to the landscape in both metaekphrastic account of the artist's life, e.g., "*the salmon rivers of the north-west and the pike lakes of the Irish midlands*" (Heaney, 2001, p. 328) and ekphrastic descriptions of his paintings, e.g., "*What is being registered is an original, creaturely delight in rivers and rocks [...]*" (Heaney, 2001, p. 328). Although the landscape in the photograph can iconically represent the artist's environment or symbolically indicate his favourite theme, being just a small part of the photograph, it is unlikely to attract readers' attention and inspire their scrutiny.

On the other hand, if an object in the photograph is clearly seen and cannot fail to be noticed, but the essay makes no reference to the same/similar object, such an element of the photograph does not acquire any symbolic interpretation. For example, Chaïm Soutine stands with a dead chicken in the photograph included in the anthology (Minton, 2001, p. 288) but there is no reference to a chicken or other birds in the essay about Soutine's painting (Paulin, 2001, pp. 288-289) thus the image of the dead bird does not interact with the meaning-making in the essay.

In sum, the potential of photographic portraits of the artists to be "interpretation of the world" (Sontag, 1977/2019, p.5) is realised in the anthology *Writers on Artists* (Minton, 2001) as their contribution to meaning-making that happens on its pages under the condition that some semantic links can be established between these photographs and verbal texts of the essays.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationships that emerge in the process of meaning-making in the anthology *Writers on artists* (Minton, 2001) between photographic portraits of the artists and photographic portraits of the writers, biographical notes about the artists and the writers, and essays, which comprise ekphrastic and metaekphrastic components in the discussion of the artists' creative output.

The research has revealed that photographic portraits of the artists act as indexes, icons and also as symbols and contribute to the meaning-making via testifying that the artists really existed, demonstrating their unique features and symbolically representing artists' *métier* or ideas relevant for the discussion of their works of art.

Together with the biographical notes, the photographs of the artists represent the artists as unique individuals professionally engaged with the visual arts. It is the individuality of every artist that is highlighted by their photographic portraits. The multimodal complexes "artist's photo & artist's bio" are juxtaposed in the anthology with the multimodal complexes "writer's photo & writer's bio". In their similarity, these two types of multimodal complexes foreground the uniqueness of the works of the visual arts and writings about these works. The visual and semantic differences between these two types of multimodal complexes symbolize the difference between the arts and the writings about them. The positioning of the multimodal complexes "artist's photo & artist's bio" and "writer's photo & writer's bio" in the layout of the pages spread in the anthology creates symbolic dialogic space between the visual images and the verbal texts.

Being indexical and iconic images of the real artists, their photographs in the anthology contribute to the understanding that the ekphrasis in the essays is "actual ekphrasis" (in Hollander's

terms). The photographs of the artists that are photographs of their artistic representation in a painting or a drawing have strong semantic links with descriptive ekphrasis since these photographs demonstrate such characteristic features of the works of the visual arts as brush strokes and the look of the surface. Furthermore, the objects in the photograph can be considered in relations with the descriptive ekphrasis in the essay. Those photographic portraits that provide some psychological characterization of the artists can contribute to interpretative ekphrasis.

The potential of the photographs to be interpreted symbolically enables them to semantically interact with both the ekphrastic and metaekphrastic components of the essay. In particular, such photographs can evoke schemata that are highly relevant for ekphrastic interpretation and metaekphrastic discussion of the works of the visual arts. Furthermore, unconventional evaluation of the works of the artist in the essay can be supported by the choice of an unusual, i.e. less well-known to the wider audience, photograph of the artist. The stylistic peculiarities of the essay can also be supported by the artist's photograph. Overall, the photographs that make the most significant contribution to the meaning-making in the essays about their art are the photographs that are susceptible to symbolic interpretation.

The approach developed in this study can be applied to the examination of meaning-making in multimodal products that comprise verbal texts and visual still images of various types as, for example, Edmund de Waal's memoir *The hare with the amber eyes: A hidden inheritance* (2011). Such kind of *further research* will help to refine the research procedures suggested in this paper and contribute to understanding of meaning-making in multimodal products that contain visual and verbal components of various types.

Acknowledgments

This research has been made possible thanks to the grant from the British Academy and CARA within the Researchers at Risk Fellowship Programme.

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ЕКФРАЗИС В ІНТЕРМЕДІАЛЬНІЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВІ: РОЛЬ ФОТОГРАФІЙ В ТЕКСТАХ ПРО МИТЦІВ

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Як цитувати (стиль ДСТУ 8302:2015): Lunyova T. An intermedial perspective for ekphrasis: how photographs contribute to writing about artists. *Cognition. Communication. Discourse*. 2024. № 28. P. 58-77. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2024-28-04>

Анотація

Статтю присвячено вивченню зв'язків, які виникають у процесі смислотворення в англійській антології «Письменники про художників» (Minton, 2001) між фотопортретами художників та іншими зображеннями і вербальними текстовими компонентами. Результати дослідження демонструють, що функціонуючи як індекси, фотографії художників свідчать про реальне існування художників; як іконічні знаки, ці фотографії сприяють репрезентації унікальності митців. Завдяки цим двом ролям фотопортрети художників забезпечують статус екфразису в есе як «актуального екфразису» (у термінах Голландера). У взаємодії з біографічними нотатками фотографії художників підкреслюють унікальність цих особистостей. Як елементи мультимодальних комплексів «фото художника та біографія художника», фотопортрети художників вступають у відношення подібності та контрасту з фотографіями письменників у мультимодальних комплексах «фото письменника та біографія письменника», що сприяє створенню символічного діалогічного простору для обговорення творів

образотворчого мистецтва в есе. Ті світлини, які є фотографіями не реальних людей, а намальованих портретів митців, утворюють міцні смислові зв'язки з дескриптивним екфразисом. Об'єкти, зображені на фотографіях художників, можуть підтримувати дескриптивний екфразис. Фотопортрети, які надають певну психологічну характеристику художників, підтримують інтерпретаційний екфразис. Фотографії, які завдяки символічній інтерпретації здатні символічно репрезентувати певні схеми знання, котрі мають високу релевантність для екфрастичних інтерпретацій та метаекфрастичних дискусій, потужно підтримують смисли, згенеровані в есе. Найбільший внесок у смислотворення в есе роблять ті фотографії, які мають високий потенціал бути інтерпретованими символічно.

Ключові слова: *вербальний текст, есе, візуальні мистецтва, фотографія, портрет, екфразис, метаекфразис, біографія, опис, інтерпретація.*

Стаття надійшла до редакції 25.04.2024, рекомендована 20.06.2024.