From Sacred Script to Contemporary Calligraffiti: Written Symbols, Encoded Meaning, and Visual Perception in the Works of Oleksandr Zinoviev

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the transformation of written signs from instruments of verbal communication into autonomous elements of visual expression. It considers historical and contemporary relationships among symbolic writing, runic systems, Cyrillic vyaz', calligraphy, graffiti, and calligraffiti, with particular attention to readability, legibility, symbolism, composition, and semantic interpretation.

The study employs a qualitative practice-based and visual-semiotic methodology. Its empirical material consists of selected works from the artistic practice of Oleksandr Zinoviev, including calligraffiti, monumental painting, graphic art, public-space interventions, and body art. The works were selected purposively because they demonstrate distinct mechanisms through which written signs are transformed: integration of text into a culturally recognizable symbol, semantic transformation of an existing urban inscription, encoding of philosophical or culturally significant texts, and adaptation of a letter-based visual language to different physical media.

Two case studies receive particular attention. The first is a composition in which the text of the National Anthem of Ukraine is incorporated into the form of the Ukrainian Tryzub against a blue-and-yellow background. The second documents the transformation of an obscene public inscription into a calligraphic composition containing the message "Do not shout about how one should live — simply show it."

Drawing on semiotics, multimodality, visual communication, typography, and cultural-memory studies, the article proposes an analytical distinction between visual recognition, legibility, readability, symbolic recognition, and semantic interpretation. It further proposes a two-stage model in which an artwork may first be encountered primarily as visual form and subsequently reinterpreted after its encoded textual content is disclosed.

Because this is a practice-based study rather than an empirical audience study, the model describes the visual and conceptual structure intended by the artist and the interpretive possibilities generated by the works; it does not claim to demonstrate universal viewer responses.

The analysis suggests that reduced textual readability does not necessarily eliminate communicative meaning. Instead, calligraffiti can redistribute meaning across visual form, linguistic information, cultural symbolism, and contextual explanation.

Keywords: calligraffiti, calligraphy, graffiti, visual communication, written sign, symbol, Cyrillic vyaz', runes, visual perception, text encoding, monumental art, street art, cultural memory.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the fundamental systems through which human beings record and transmit information. Yet written signs have never functioned exclusively as neutral carriers of linguistic meaning. Their shape, scale, rhythm, material, arrangement, and position can themselves become meaningful.

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This dual capacity places writing at the intersection of verbal and visual communication. As Barthes (1977) demonstrated in his discussion of relations between image and text, verbal and visual systems can interact rather than functioning as completely independent channels. Mitchell (1994) similarly challenges a rigid division between words and images, emphasizing the complex relationships between verbal and visual representation.

The distinction is especially relevant to calligraphy and calligraffiti because the letter simultaneously belongs to a linguistic system and possesses a visible physical form.

Contemporary calligraffiti intensifies this duality. Letters can be connected, compressed, repeated, rotated, superimposed, or incorporated into larger structures until conventional reading becomes difficult. The viewer may consequently encounter a composition first as an image and only subsequently recognize or learn that it contains language.

For analytical purposes, several related concepts must be distinguished.

Legibility refers primarily to the ability to distinguish individual letters or characters.

Readability concerns the ease with which a sequence of written signs can be read as continuous linguistic information.

Symbolic recognition refers to identification of a culturally established form, such as the Ukrainian Tryzub, even when the internal components of that form are not individually readable.

Semantic interpretation refers to the attribution or reconstruction of meaning after linguistic, cultural, contextual, or explanatory information becomes available.

Typography has long demonstrated that visual organization affects access to linguistic information (Bringhurst, 2012), while multimodal theory emphasizes that meaning may be distributed among several modes rather than communicated through language alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The central research question of this study is therefore not simply what happens when text becomes “unreadable,” but more precisely:

How does the communicative function of written language change when linguistic signs are transformed into complex visual structures whose meaning is distributed across form, text, cultural symbolism, and contextual information?

The empirical basis of the study is the artistic practice of Oleksandr Zinoviev, a Ukrainian artist from Zaporizhzhia whose work combines letter-based constructions, stylized written signs, calligraphy, calligraffiti, monumental art, and body art.

The object of the study is the written sign as an element of contemporary visual art. Its subject is the transformation of verbal messages into visual and visual-verbal codes within Zinoviev’s artistic practice.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine how written language in contemporary calligraffiti can move from immediately readable communication toward a visual-verbal structure while retaining, transforming, or redistributing semantic meaning.

The study pursues several interconnected objectives: to examine historical precedents for the interaction of writing and ornament; to distinguish readability, legibility, symbolic recognition, and semantic interpretation; to consider calligraffiti as a multimodal visual-verbal practice; to analyze the transformation of written messages in selected works; to examine artistic intervention in pre-existing urban inscriptions; and to develop an analytical model describing the relationship between initial visual perception and subsequent semantic interpretation.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study draws on several complementary theoretical traditions.

Semiotics provides a framework for understanding signs not as isolated objects but as elements participating in systems of meaning. Eco (1976) emphasizes that interpretation depends upon cultural codes and conventions rather than residing automatically within a physical sign.

Social semiotics extends this principle by treating meaning as culturally and socially organized. Halliday (1978) established language as a social semiotic system, while Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) developed a multimodal approach in which visual composition itself participates in meaning-making.

This is especially relevant to calligraffiti because linguistic content is not the only mode operating within the work. Scale, color, direction, spatial organization, rhythm, cultural symbolism, and the physical surface may contribute simultaneously.

The relationship between writing and image is further informed by Barthes (1977) and Mitchell (1994), whose work makes it possible to approach the verbal and visual not as mutually exclusive categories but as interacting systems.

Typography provides another necessary distinction. A text can retain identifiable letterforms while becoming difficult to read continuously, and a composition may preserve the visible traces of writing even when individual linguistic units become difficult to identify (Bringhurst, 2012; Drucker, 1995).

Finally, the analysis of urban works draws upon scholarship concerning graffiti and public space. Graffiti and street art exist within material, social, and spatial environments rather than as isolated images (Schacter, 2014; Young, 2014; Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017; Ross, 2016).

Together, these approaches allow the works to be analyzed as multimodal constructions rather than simply as examples of decorative writing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **qualitative, practice-based, visual-semiotic case-study methodology**.

The position of the artist-researcher requires explicit clarification. Because the author is also the creator of the analyzed works, he possesses direct knowledge of the texts incorporated into them, the process of their construction, and the artistic intentions behind them. This provides access to primary information unavailable to an external researcher.

At the same time, artistic intention cannot be treated as evidence of actual audience response.

Accordingly, this article distinguishes between three analytical categories:

1. **documented characteristics of the artwork** — visible formal elements, materials, location, incorporated text, and documented before-and-after conditions;

2. **artist-researcher interpretation** — the conceptual intention and encoding strategy described by the creator;

3. **viewer interpretation** — possible reception by an audience, which remains a hypothesis unless supported by separate empirical audience research.

No surveys, interviews, eye-tracking experiments, or controlled reception studies were conducted. Statements concerning viewers therefore describe possible interpretive pathways afforded by the works rather than experimentally established psychological responses.

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Selection of artworks

The works were selected purposively rather than randomly. Inclusion required that a work demonstrate at least one of the following analytical conditions: transformation of readable language into visual structure; combination of linguistic and culturally recognizable symbolic codes; documented transformation of an existing public inscription; use of encoded culturally or personally significant text; or transfer of the same letter-based artistic language across substantially different physical media.

The National Anthem/Tryzub composition was selected because it combines linguistic, chromatic, and heraldic information.

The urban fence intervention was selected because photographic documentation preserves both the pre-existing inscription and the transformed surface, allowing direct comparison.

The mantra and Shevchenko compositions were selected because they demonstrate different relationships between linguistic content, cultural reference, and visual encoding.

The body-art examples were included to test whether the same formal principles remain identifiable when the support changes from a static planar surface to a moving human body.

Analytical procedure

Each selected work is examined according to five variables:

1. Legibility: To what extent can individual signs or letters be distinguished?

2. Readability: To what extent can the linguistic sequence be read without external explanation?

3. Visual organization: How are line, scale, rhythm, density, repetition, direction, and spatial hierarchy used?

4. Symbolic and cultural recognition: Does the work employ forms, colors, texts, or references that can be associated with particular cultural systems?

5. Semantic interpretation: What additional meaning becomes accessible when the encoded text or artistic intention is disclosed?

These variables provide a consistent analytical framework for the case studies that follow.

WRITING BETWEEN INFORMATION AND IMAGE

A written sign possesses at least two simultaneously available properties: it belongs to a linguistic system, and it exists as visible form.

In conventional reading, visual recognition normally serves linguistic comprehension. The reader recognizes letters in order to move rapidly toward words, sentences, and meaning.

Artistic transformation can change this hierarchy.

When letters are compressed, overlapped, rotated, connected, enlarged, or incorporated into larger structures, their legibility and readability may decrease while their visual prominence increases.

This does not mean that meaning automatically increases as readability decreases. Rather, the mode through which meaning is accessed changes.

The present study therefore uses the term **semantic delay** to describe the interval between encountering a visual composition and obtaining sufficient information to interpret its concealed or transformed linguistic content.

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Semantic delay should not be understood as a universal psychological effect. It is an analytical description of a structural possibility built into an artwork.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DECORATIVE WRITING AND VISUAL CODE

Historical writing systems provide useful precedents for understanding the simultaneous verbal and visual functions of writing.

Cyrillic vyaz', for example, employed compression, ligature, abbreviation, and ornamental organization. Such historical practices demonstrate that readability has not always been the only priority in the visual organization of written language.

Runic systems provide a different historical example of writing embedded within material and cultural practices. Runes could appear on objects and monuments and participate in functions associated with naming, commemoration, ownership, identity, or other culturally specific forms of communication.

These historical examples must, however, be contextualized carefully.

The present study **does not propose a direct historical genealogy from runic writing or medieval Cyrillic vyaz' to Zinoviev's contemporary calligraffiti**.

No such continuity is demonstrated here.

Instead, these traditions are used comparatively to establish a narrower principle: written signs have repeatedly existed in cultural situations where their visual organization and symbolic context matter alongside linguistic content.

This distinction prevents historical material from functioning merely as decorative background while avoiding an unsupported claim of direct artistic succession.

CALLIGRAFFITI AS MULTIMODAL VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Calligraffiti occupies a hybrid field between calligraphy and graffiti.

From calligraphy it draws attention to line, gesture, rhythm, manual execution, and the individuality of written form.

From graffiti it draws scale, spatial intervention, interaction with architecture, and the use of writing within public visual environments.

From a multimodal perspective, however, its meaning cannot be reduced to either source.

A calligraffiti composition may communicate simultaneously through language, visual rhythm, color, scale, spatial position, cultural reference, and the material character of its support.

Within Zinoviev's practice, written signs frequently cease to operate as isolated letters and become components of larger visual constructions.

A simplified model of this artistic process is:

VERBAL SOURCE → GRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION → COMPOSITIONAL INTEGRATION → VISUAL-VERBAL OBJECT

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The interpretive process should be distinguished from the production process. Depending on the work and the viewer's prior knowledge, interpretation may involve:

VISUAL ENCOUNTER → RECOGNITION OF FORM OR WRITING → CONTEXTUAL DISCLOSURE → SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION → REINTERPRETATION OF FORM

The second sequence is a theoretical model developed from the formal organization of the selected works. It is not presented as an empirically demonstrated sequence followed by every viewer.

CASE STUDY I: THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF UKRAINE ENCODED WITHIN THE TRYZUB

The first case study combines three distinct signifying systems: the blue-and-yellow colors associated with Ukraine; the form of the Ukrainian Tryzub; and the text of the National Anthem of Ukraine.

The significance of this work lies precisely in the fact that these three elements have different degrees of immediate accessibility.

Color is visually accessible without reading.

The Tryzub can function through symbolic recognition for a viewer familiar with Ukrainian national imagery.

The anthem functions linguistically, but its integration into the composition substantially reduces conventional readability.

This creates a useful distinction between **recognizing the symbol** and **reading the text from which the symbol has been constructed**.



Figure 1. Oleksandr Zinoviev. Calligraphic composition containing the text of the National Anthem of

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Ukraine integrated into the form of the Tryzub against a blue-and-yellow background. The three annotated analytical levels are chromatic code (blue/yellow), heraldic form (Tryzub), and encoded linguistic material (anthem text). Author's work and primary artistic material.

In Figure 1, the three levels operate simultaneously but should not be treated as interchangeable.

At the level of **chromatic recognition**, blue and yellow establish an immediate visual association with Ukraine for viewers familiar with the national color code.

At the level of **symbolic recognition**, the overall organization forms the Tryzub.

At the level of **linguistic readability**, however, the composition behaves differently. The anthem is not presented as an ordinary sequential text. Its words and letters have been transformed into components of the larger heraldic form.

Consequently, the work does not require us to claim that an uninformed viewer can independently "discover" the anthem.

Without supplementary information, a viewer may recognize Ukraine and the Tryzub while remaining unaware of the precise identity of the incorporated text.

Once a caption, artist statement, or other contextual source identifies that text as the National Anthem of Ukraine, the same visual structure becomes available for a second interpretation.

The lines that previously functioned primarily as graphic material can now also be understood as transformed linguistic material.

The analytical sequence is therefore more accurately expressed as:

VISIBLE FORM → SYMBOLIC RECOGNITION → CONTEXTUAL DISCLOSURE → SEMANTIC REINTERPRETATION

rather than assuming automatic decoding.

The composition consequently demonstrates a multimodal relationship among verbal, chromatic, and heraldic codes. In terms of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal approach, meaning is distributed across modes rather than carried by a single component.

From the perspective of semiotics, the cultural competence of the viewer also matters. As Eco (1976) makes clear, signs are interpreted through codes and conventions. Recognition of the Tryzub requires particular cultural knowledge, just as identification of the concealed anthem requires either sufficient readability or additional contextual information.

The work can therefore be understood as a form of **semiotic compression**: several culturally related but functionally distinct carriers of meaning are organized within a single visual object.

CASE STUDY II: TRANSFORMATION OF NEGATIVE TEXT IN PUBLIC SPACE

The second case study concerns a pre-existing urban surface containing graffiti and obscene or vandal inscriptions.

Its importance for the present research is methodological as well as artistic because photographic documentation preserves the surface before intervention.

The original state therefore provides a visual baseline against which the later transformation can be compared.

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This makes the case substantially different from a work created on an empty canvas.

The artist does not begin with a neutral field. He responds to an already existing visual and linguistic environment.



Figure 2. Urban fence before artistic intervention. Photographic documentation of the pre-existing graffiti and vandal inscriptions. This image functions as the visual baseline for comparison with Figure 3. Primary documentary material.

Figure 2 establishes the initial condition of the site.

The surface contains multiple unrelated inscriptions and graphic marks. Their placement is additive rather than organized into a unified composition, and the wall functions as an accumulation of independent interventions.

For the purposes of this case study, the photograph is not used to make assumptions about the intentions of the unidentified people who produced the original inscriptions.

Its role is documentary: it records the visual state of the surface before Zinoviev's intervention.

This distinction is important because the analysis concerns observable transformation rather than speculation about the motivations of previous writers.



Figure 3. Oleksandr Zinoviev. The same urban surface after artistic intervention. The pre-existing inscriptions are incorporated into or replaced by a monumental calligraffiti composition containing the encoded message "Do not shout about how one should live — simply show it." Author's work.

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Comparison of Figures 2 and 3 provides the clearest documented evidence in the study of transformation over time.

The first transformation is **visual**:

heterogeneous pre-existing inscriptions → organized monumental composition

The second is **semantic**:

pre-existing negative/obscene textual environment → deliberately constructed philosophical statement

The intervention is therefore more than surface decoration.

It changes both the formal organization and the intended verbal content of the site.

The phrase **"Do not shout about how one should live — simply show it"** is significant because the artist does not merely erase the previous language. He introduces another linguistic statement in response to the existing environment.

This can be understood as a form of semantic reprocessing of public space.

Research on graffiti and street art emphasizes that meaning is inseparable from location and urban context (Schacter, 2014; Young, 2014; Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017). The significance of this intervention therefore lies not only in the resulting image but in the relationship between the previous state, the artistic action, and the transformed site.

Figure 4. Oleksandr Zinoviev. Calligraffiti composition on an urban fence. Written forms are integrated into a large-scale geometric and calligraphic structure, demonstrating the adaptation of the artist's letter-based system to monumental public space. Author's work.



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FROM REMOVAL TO TRANSFORMATION: CALLIGRAFFITI AS URBAN INTERVENTION

The documented intervention makes it possible to distinguish three different responses to unwanted writing in public space:

Preservation leaves the existing inscription unchanged.

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Removal physically eliminates or covers it.

Transformation uses the existing condition as the starting point for another visual and semantic statement.

The third model is most relevant here.

The artist functions not only as a producer of an image but as an editor of an already existing visual field.

Importantly, the original condition does not survive physically in the finished surface, but it survives through photographic documentation. Figures 2 and 3 therefore operate as a comparative pair and make the transformation independently visible to the reader.

A TWO-STAGE MODEL OF PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

The case studies suggest that visual perception and semantic interpretation should be separated analytically.

The proposed model contains two principal stages.

Stage I: Initial Visual Perception

At the first stage, the viewer encounters the visible characteristics of the work: overall form, line, scale, color, rhythm, contrast, density, spatial organization, and any immediately recognizable symbols.

Recognition of writing may occur without the writing being fully readable.

Likewise, recognition of a cultural symbol does not necessarily entail understanding all linguistic material incorporated into it.

Stage II: Semantic Disclosure and Reinterpretation

At the second stage, additional information becomes available. This may occur through partial reading, prior cultural knowledge, a caption, an artist statement, curatorial explanation, or another paratextual source.

The viewer can then reconsider the already-seen composition in relation to the newly available linguistic or cultural information.

The model can therefore be represented as:

VISUAL ENCOUNTER → FORM/WRITING RECOGNITION

followed by:

CONTEXTUAL OR LINGUISTIC DISCLOSURE → SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION → REINTERPRETATION OF THE VISUAL FORM

This formulation deliberately avoids treating “discovery” as an automatic response.

The study proposes the model as an analytical description derived from the construction of the artworks and the artist-researcher’s practice. Empirical reception research would be required to determine whether actual viewers follow this sequence, how frequently they do so, and how cultural background affects their responses.

PRAYER, MANTRA, WISH, AND CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT TEXT AS VISUAL MATERIAL

The distinction becomes especially important in works containing prayers, wishes, mantras, literary texts, or other culturally meaningful verbal material.

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The significance of such works should not be confused with a scientific claim that particular symbols produce supernatural or physiological effects.

This article makes no such claim.

Instead, it examines how knowledge of an encoded text can affect the cultural and semantic interpretation of a visual object.



Figure 5. Oleksandr Zinoviev. Calligraphic composition containing the Ukrainian phrase “Прислуховуйся, але не слухай” (“Listen, but do not obey”). The composition combines stylized calligraphic structures, elements described by the artist as influenced by Cossack shorthand, Slavic cursive traditions, Arabic-calligraphy-inspired forms, and rune-like graphic elements. Author’s work.

Figure 5 is particularly useful for distinguishing historical reference from contemporary artistic transformation.

The work should not be interpreted as a reconstruction of an authentic historical writing system.

Rather, different visual references are reorganized within the artist’s contemporary authorial language.

The phrase remains the semantic source of the composition, while its conventional sequential readability is deliberately reduced.

The visible structure therefore operates at several levels.

Some elements can be recognized as writing-like forms; others operate primarily as ornament or graphic rhythm. Knowledge of the encoded phrase adds another interpretive layer.

This is precisely why the distinction between legibility and semantic interpretation is necessary. A viewer may recognize that a composition contains writing without being able to read the phrase. Conversely, once the

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phrase is supplied in a caption, its semantic presence can become relevant even if the individual signs remain difficult to decode visually.

The term **"visual amulet,"** where used in relation to such works, should consequently be understood as an artistic and cultural metaphor rather than as a scientific assertion of supernatural efficacy.



Figure 6. Oleksandr Zinoviev. Calligraphic composition dedicated to Taras Shevchenko. The name "Шевченко" (Shevchenko) occupies the central part of the composition, while the text of his poem "Заповіт" ("Testament") is transformed into surrounding golden calligraphic structures. Author's work.

The Shevchenko composition demonstrates another relationship between linguistic content and cultural symbolism.

Unlike the Tryzub composition, its principal cultural reference is literary rather than heraldic.

The name **"Шевченко"** functions as an explicit identifying element, while *Zapovit* provides the larger textual source incorporated into the composition.

The work therefore combines different degrees of textual accessibility within a single visual field.

The central name can operate as an identifying anchor, while the surrounding text undergoes greater calligraphic transformation.

This hierarchy is analytically significant because it demonstrates that readability need not be uniform across an artwork.

The composition can direct the viewer from a comparatively accessible cultural reference toward a more visually encoded textual field.

In this sense, the work exemplifies multimodal organization within writing itself: different textual components perform different visual and semantic functions.

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTIC HANDWRITING AS A SYSTEM

Across the selected works, several recurring formal strategies can be identified: dense interweaving of written elements; transformation of letters into ornamental structures; rhythmic repetition; combination of geometric

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and organic lines; use of text as a compositional foundation; and adaptation of similar visual principles to different scales and surfaces.

These recurring characteristics allow the works to be considered as parts of an individual visual system rather

than isolated experiments.

However, describing this system as recognizable should not be confused with an empirical claim that viewers can reliably identify the artist from anonymous examples.

Within the present study, **recognizability** refers to recurrent formal characteristics identified through comparative analysis of the selected works.

WALL, CANVAS, AND BODY AS DIFFERENT SIGNIFYING SURFACES

The material support affects the way a written sign operates.

A canvas establishes a bounded and relatively stable field.

A monumental urban surface introduces architecture, scale, location, and public visibility.

The human body introduces curvature, movement, temporality, and anatomical structure.

The same letter-based strategy therefore cannot simply be transferred unchanged from one medium to another.

Its spatial behavior changes with the support.





Figures 7–8. Examples of Oleksandr Zinoviev's body art. Calligraphic and sign-like structures are adapted to the anatomy and movement of the human body. The images demonstrate how the artist's letter-based visual language changes when transferred from a static planar surface to a mobile three-dimensional support. Author's work. In Figures 7–8, the relationship between writing and surface changes fundamentally.

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The marks follow anatomical forms and alter their spatial relationships as the body moves. Unlike a wall or canvas, the support is neither flat nor completely static.

The body-art examples therefore provide evidence for the **adaptability of the artist's formal system**, but they do not by themselves establish how audiences interpret the signs.

That question would require a separate reception study.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND VISUAL MEMORY

Written language also participates in cultural memory.

Assmann (2011) describes cultural memory as dependent upon symbolic forms through which communities preserve and reactivate culturally significant knowledge. Aleida Assmann (2011) similarly emphasizes the role of cultural media and archives in preserving and transmitting memory.

Within this framework, language, alphabet, national symbols, and culturally significant texts can become materials through which cultural identity is visually represented.

The National Anthem/Tryzub work provides the clearest example in the present study.

A sequential national text is transformed into a spatial composition while the Tryzub and blue-and-yellow color structure maintain immediately available visual references to Ukraine.

However, the different components should again be distinguished analytically.

The national symbol can be visually recognized without the anthem being linguistically decoded. The precise identity of the incorporated text may depend upon contextual disclosure.

Cultural memory therefore does not reside exclusively in the hidden text or exclusively in the visible symbol. In this work, it is distributed across the relationship among linguistic source, visual form, national color, cultural knowledge, and explanatory context.

RESULTS

The comparative analysis produces several findings.

First, the selected works demonstrate that **legibility, readability, symbolic recognition, and semantic interpretation are related but distinct analytical categories**.

Second, reducing readability does not automatically eliminate linguistic meaning. Instead, linguistic content may remain structurally present while becoming dependent upon contextual disclosure for precise identification.

Third, the National Anthem/Tryzub case demonstrates the simultaneous operation of three modes: chromatic recognition, heraldic recognition, and encoded linguistic content.

Fourth, the before-and-after urban intervention demonstrates a documented transformation of both visual organization and intended semantic content. The photographic pair makes this change independently observable rather than dependent solely upon the artist's description.

Fifth, the mantra and Shevchenko compositions demonstrate different ways of organizing relationships between culturally significant text and visual form.

Sixth, the body-art examples demonstrate that the artist's letter-based visual strategies can be adapted to substantially different material supports.

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Finally, the analysis supports a two-stage interpretive model:

STAGE I — VISUAL PERCEPTION

form → color → spatial organization → recognition of writing/symbol

STAGE II — SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION

contextual disclosure → identification of encoded content → reinterpretation of previously perceived form.

This model represents an analytical framework derived from the selected artworks. It does not claim to describe an experimentally verified universal sequence of viewer behavior.

DISCUSSION

The results help clarify the central question of the study: what happens when a written sign moves away from conventional readability and toward visual form?

The answer cannot be reduced to the statement that text simply "becomes an image."

Instead, several dimensions can change independently.

Individual letters may become less legible. A sequence may become less readable. At the same time, the overall composition may become more visually recognizable as a cultural symbol.

Semantic information may remain present but become dependent upon cultural knowledge or contextual explanation.

This distinction corresponds with semiotic and multimodal approaches that understand meaning as distributed across several interacting sign systems rather than contained in a single isolated code (Eco, 1976; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The National Anthem/Tryzub composition makes this particularly clear.

Its meaning does not depend on the viewer independently deciphering every letter. Blue and yellow, the Tryzub, and the knowledge that the anthem is incorporated into the work operate differently.

The work therefore demonstrates not the replacement of meaning by form but the **redistribution of meaning across several modes**.

The urban intervention demonstrates another mechanism.

Here the key transformation is not primarily between readability and abstraction. It is between two states of the same physical environment.

The before-and-after documentation allows the reader to compare these states directly and observe the transition from heterogeneous vandal inscriptions to an organized calligraphic composition containing a deliberate new message.

The two case studies consequently demonstrate different applications of the proposed framework.

In the Tryzub work, analysis centers on layered cultural and linguistic codes.

In the fence intervention, analysis centers on spatial and semantic transformation.

The historical discussion of runes and Cyrillic vyaz' should also be understood within this narrower theoretical purpose. These traditions are not presented as direct predecessors of Zinoviev's work. They demonstrate historically that writing can possess visual, symbolic, material, and linguistic functions simultaneously.

Contemporary calligraffiti operates in a different historical and cultural environment and must therefore be analyzed as a contemporary practice rather than as a continuation of medieval or ancient writing systems.

The principal conceptual contribution of the study is consequently the distinction between **visual encounter and semantic interpretation**.

Reduced readability does not itself prove increased communication, deeper engagement, or a particular psychological response.

What it does create is the structural possibility for visual form and linguistic information to become accessible through different pathways and at different moments.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The principal limitation of the study arises from its practice-based character.

The artist and researcher are the same person. This provides privileged access to artistic intention, production processes, and encoded content, but it also requires clear separation between authorial intention and audience reception.

The present study therefore does not claim that actual viewers necessarily interpret the works according to the proposed two-stage model.

A second limitation concerns the purposive selection of artworks. The examples were selected because they clearly demonstrate the phenomena under investigation and should not be treated as statistically representative of calligraffiti as a whole.

A third limitation concerns historical comparison. Runic writing, Cyrillic vyaz', calligraphy, graffiti, and contemporary calligraffiti belong to substantially different historical and cultural contexts. The present article compares selected formal and communicative principles without claiming direct historical continuity.

Future research could test the proposed analytical model empirically.

One group of participants could encounter an encoded composition without explanatory information and describe what they recognize, whether they perceive writing, and what meanings they attribute to the image.

The same participants could then receive the relevant caption or explanation and examine the work again.

Comparing the two responses would make it possible to investigate whether contextual disclosure actually produces the reinterpretive process proposed here.

Further studies could also compare viewers with different cultural backgrounds, measure the relationship between legibility and semantic interpretation, and examine the role of captions, curatorial texts, and other paratextual information in understanding encoded artworks.

CONCLUSION

Written signs can operate simultaneously as linguistic information and visual form.

Contemporary calligraffiti makes this duality particularly visible because it deliberately works at the boundary between reading and seeing.

The analysis of Oleksandr Zinoviev's selected works demonstrates several distinct mechanisms through which this occurs.

In the National Anthem/Tryzub composition, linguistic, heraldic, and chromatic codes are integrated into one structure. The Tryzub and national colors can provide visual recognition, while identification of the encoded anthem may require additional contextual information.

In the urban intervention, calligraffiti transforms an already existing public surface. The before-and-after documentation demonstrates both formal reorganization and semantic replacement.

The mantra and Shevchenko works demonstrate further relationships between culturally significant texts and degrees of readability, while the body-art examples demonstrate the adaptability of the same broad visual language to a mobile three-dimensional surface.

The study therefore proposes that calligraffiti should not be analyzed through a simple opposition between "readable text" and "abstract image."

A more precise model distinguishes **legibility, readability, symbolic recognition, contextual disclosure, and semantic interpretation**.

Within this framework, a written sign that ceases to be immediately readable does not necessarily cease to participate in communication. Rather, the relationship among its linguistic, visual, and cultural components changes.

The proposed two-stage model — initial visual perception followed by contextually informed semantic reinterpretation — provides a basis for analyzing this process while avoiding unsupported claims about universal viewer response.

Further empirical audience research is required to test how this model functions in actual reception.

The boundary between writing and image should therefore be understood not as a fixed dividing line but as a field in which verbal and visual modes can overlap, separate, and recombine.

In Zinoviev's practice, that field becomes the principal space of artistic experimentation.

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PRIMARY ARTISTIC AND DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL

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