

Events

IMG2019. Graphic Sciences for a Project with Great Cultural Scope

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Some years ago, Vito Cardone, in the first issue of the renewed *XY Critical review of studies on the representation of architecture and the use of image in science and art*, in digital form, asked why publication of the journal, “a place of critical and wide thought, not only regarding architectural representation but also on the usage of pictures in arts and science” [Cardone 2016, p. 13], had been interrupted for fifteen years. His answer was this: probably because the scientific design community, folded back on itself in search of a disciplinary identity, was not then ready to address “a cultural opening that exalted the multidisciplinary” with the aim of “recomposition of knowledge, which can be obtained by filling the gap between humanistic and scientific cultures” [Cardone 2016, p. 17].

Due to such considerations, Vito Cardone met with Alessandro Luigini the following year in Bressanone, in the Faculty of Education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. This was not only to extend ritual greetings to the first edition of IMG Immagini. During his presidency, the UID had also strongly supported the creation of this conference—international, interdisciplinary, and itinerant—and with it the network of scholars and researchers that were committed to focusing scientific discus-

sion on the images that we consume, produce, share, transmit and spread on a daily basis; images that are increasingly intertwined with our existence and our research experiences.

Images that, compressing the extremes of the conflict between the apparently irreducible strategies of scientific and aesthetic thought, have assertively traversed the entire twentieth century knowing how to hold together reason and body, thought and desire. This conflict is originally a constituent of design perennially stretched between thought based on the difference and rigour of measurements and thought based on the similarity and uniformity—even perceptual—of forms. For thirty years at least, these images have reopened studies into their centrality, studies united by a methodological approach that holds together icons and practices of viewing and looking, and which comprises both ‘making’ and ‘using’ images, incorporating social interaction and cultural phenomena according to a specific viewpoint [Pinotti, Somaini 2016].

The so-called ‘iconic turn’ regarded a vast body of knowledge that used the image as a category of investigation in and of itself, encompassing imagination and imagery and the inherent double nature of each image—material and mental, thing and idea, truth and error—

in the same hive of activity Wunenburger 1999 and 2008]. Paradoxically, this iconic turn was not instead manifested with the same intensity in studies on design, where an awareness of the need to address, understand, and govern this ‘multiplication of images’ had not been fully established. This lack has been corrected by the IMG conferences, which, with their “radically innovative perspective”, have reaffirmed above all a specific aspect of the disciplinary area: it is “not only architecture, but also the elaboration of visual images” whose horizon falls within “an single broader cultural area” [Cardone 2016, p. 25 and p. 19].

The conference could not avoid being interdisciplinary, a place for meta-communicational relationships and pooling of different representatives of knowledge and experience regarding images. It has therefore moved a project of “great cultural scope”, that of gathering, into one large cultural area where “all of those that, in the academic field, work on these themes; and of which the current segments can be sub-areas or specializations” [Cardone 2016, p. 25].

The area still needs to be *de-nominated* in order to be able to distinguish and design it, as in all processes aiming at building knowledge and scientific communities. In closing his article, Vito Cardone reflected on this same question:



Fig. 1. The mood of visual identity at IMG2019 – GRAPHICS.

“In Italian it could be defined also as *scienza e tecnica della rappresentazione visiva* (visual representation science and technique), or, if someone could be frightened by the word “science”, *teoria e tecnica della rappresentazione visiva* (visual representation theory and technique). [...] A really like the name “Graphic Science”. And I believe that, sooner or later, many will reach it” [Cardone 2016, p. 25].

And thus, Vito Cardone, with the same spirit of Bressanone, would also be in Alghero (fig. 1). The second edition of the *International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination* was held on 4 and 5 July 2019 on the splendid Alghero campus of the Department of Architecture, Design, and Urban Planning at the University of Sassari. Its primary

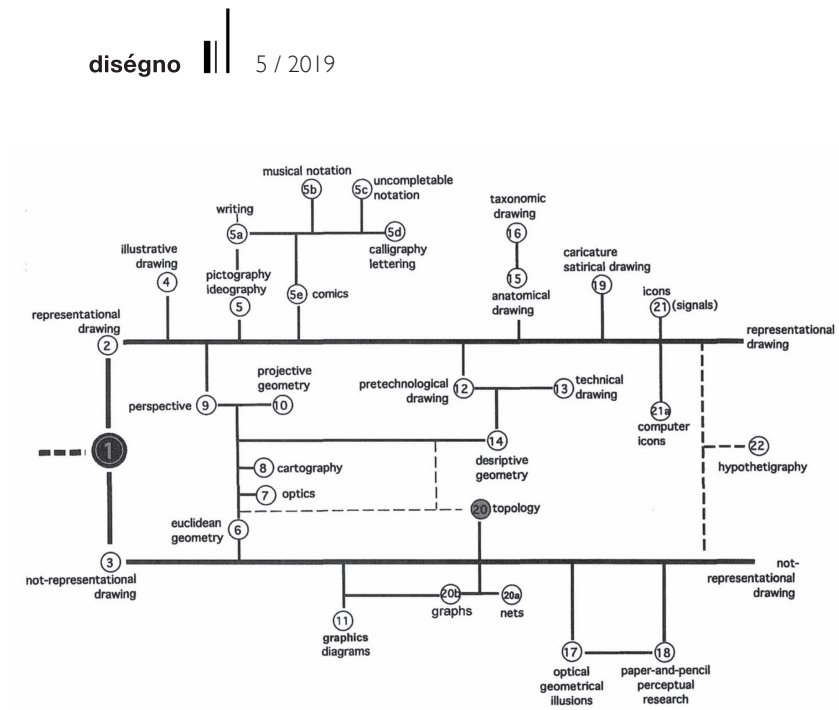


Fig. 2. The tree diagram of graphic productions developed by Manfredo Massironi (from Massironi 2002 p. 3).

scope was “to recompose the elements present in the international panorama of research in the field of studies focused on the production of images that can be expressed through the expression Graphic Sciences. According to this hypothesis, the Graphic Sciences would not be configured as a single discipline with monolithic methods and univocally and preventively determined objectives, but rather as a set of fields of study with a non-unitary repertoire of interests” [Cicalò 2019, p. 29].

For this purpose, the conference adopted a suffix rather than a keyword which is at once also an extension: *-graphics*, indicating the nature of the subjects where attention would be focused and the domain covering the themes proposed for study and investigation. The suffix

-graphics was proposed and refined according to multiple meanings and languages through organization into seven focus areas (*-graphics* for communication, *-graphics* for visualization, *-graphics* for description, *-graphics* for storytelling, *-graphics* for learning, *-graphics* for thought construction, *-graphics* for the project) in order to embrace the fields of architecture, design, representational creativity, the sciences, the arts, pedagogy, and psychology.

In confirmation of its strongly interdisciplinary nature, the conference was supported by the *Unione Italiana per il Disegno* (UID), the *Società Italiana Design* (SID), the *Società Italiana di Pedagogia* (SIPED), the *Associazione Italiana di Psicologia* (AIP), and the *Associazione italiana design della comunicazione visiva*

(AIAP). After the introductory welcome speeches by representatives of the university and department, the conference began with the opening speech by Enrico Cicalò, coordinator of IMG2019. Following this, the two days saw the participation of keynote speakers in the plenary sessions who are internationally recognized but tied to the Region hosting the conference, including Giuliana Altea, Plinio Innocenzi, Gavino Sanna, Baingio Pinna, and Giovanni Lussu, as well as a dense succession of talks in the three parallel sessions.

The call for papers and call for images, the latter an innovation of the second edition, was responded to by about 180 authors from 9 different countries. Of the 120 full papers received, a double-blind peer review led to the selection of around 70 for oral presentation in the thematic parallel sessions, to whose definition the authors themselves unknowingly contributed. In fact, the network of researchers on the programme committee understood the IMG2019 conference not only as a collection, albeit a scientifically relevant one, of papers and images, but as an explor-

atory research experiment. The goal was to try to define the body of knowledge surrounding a suffix, *-graphics*, therefore defining the knowledge as 'Graphic Sciences', through the method of gathering and analysing data in response to the conference call itself.

With regard to the call responses, the committee was therefore able to refine the suffix *-graphics* by defining six main fields of interest in Graphic Sciences, which were therefore assumed as themes of the parallel sessions: graphic thinking and learning; drawing, geome-

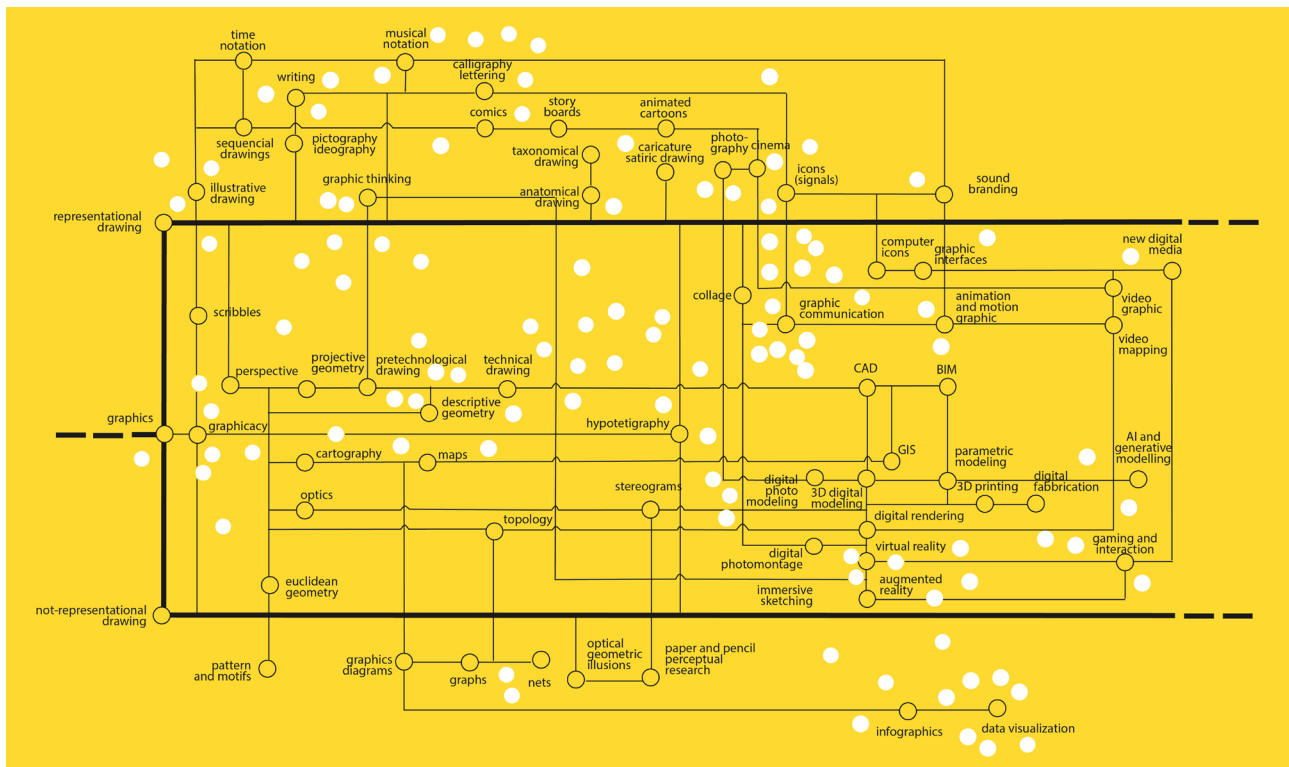


Fig. 3. The map visualizing the taxonomies of the fields and subjects of study of Graphic Sciences, developed by Enrico Cicalò based on responses to the conference call.

try, and history of representation; digital modelling, virtual and augmented reality, gaming; graphical languages, writings, and lettering; graphic communication and digital media; and visualization of data and infographic.

Starting with the themes, united in that they all pertain to the sphere of production, analysis, and interpretation of images in the various fields of application, the experiment made through the conference ended by visualizing the

taxonomies of the fields and subjects under the study of Graphic Sciences. The result is a 'geography' of Graphic Sciences, which is at once a hypothesis for its genealogy, and which, inspired by Manfredo Massironi's graphical representation (fig. 2) could result in none other than a map, a diagrammatic image of the hypotheses about the Graphic Sciences of IMG2019 and a visual index of the conference (fig. 3). The full papers were published in English

by Springer and the article abstracts, together with the images sent in response to the call for images, were published on the online editorial and open access platform PUBLICA (publicapress.it). A selection of the best articles presented at the conference will be published in an extended version of the second issue of the scientific publication *IMG Journal* (img-network.it), inaugurated precisely for the conference and whose publication is expected in April 2020.

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