

Cover illustration: Statue of Rasmus Kristian Rask (1787-1832), the Danish linguist, sculptured by Andreas Paulsen 1882. The sculpture is housed in Fyns Kunstmuseum.

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INTRODUCTION

by
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In this special issue of RASK, we happily present a number of articles based on presentations given at the 8th Nordic Systemic Functional Linguistics Workshop. This workshop was held at the University of Southern Denmark in the fall of 2012 with the support from Stiftelsen Clara Lachmanns Fond and the Department of Language and Communication at the University of Southern Denmark. The theme of the workshop was *Place as text – texts about places*.

The workshop itself was a great success with a number of outstanding presentations and lively discussions, and as a yearly recurrent workshop, it emphasized the close relations between scholars in the Nordic Association of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is originally based on Halliday's understanding of meaning, an understanding given the label 'social semiotics' (cf. Halliday 1978). In social semiotics, a certain meaning is at the same time intersubjectively negotiated and semiotically given through its relation to other meanings in a system. System is key, since in social semiotics, meaning is not based on the sign by itself (as in e.g. Saussure's work), but on sign systems. 'Text' can be considered the manifestation of choices from one or more sign systems (be they language, image, music, design), i.e. as the instantiated product of choices made from the vast potential of choices available within those systems (cf. Halliday 1978: 40). Since sign systems – and the texts construed as their manifestations – are regarded as sociocultural phenomena,

social semiotics emphasizes the interdependency between text and the (sociocultural) context.

Halliday's idea of a social semiotic description of language was the onset for social semiotics and systemic functional linguistics. During the last 20 years, social semiotics has evolved from being a purely linguistic endeavor to being a multimodal enterprise. In multimodality, an act of meaning making – any text – integrates several semiotic systems; that is to say, communication happens through a number of meaningful activities, which not only involve language but other semiotic systems as well (see e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen 2001; Baldry & Thibault 2006). At the core of the multimodal perspective lies the assumption that pictures, paintings, drawings, movies, buildings, clothing, music, etc. communicate, just as clauses do (see e.g. O'Toole 1994b, 2004; Riley 2004; O'Halloran 2004; Stenglin 2009; Pang 2004; van Leeuwen 1999). Any description of semiosis – and any analysis of a text – should, therefore, take every semiotic system deployed into account – which, in fact, is done in all the articles of this special issue of RASK: in order to analyze how a place 'means' as a text or how a text deals or interacts with the concept of 'place' or 'space', every author looks at several semiotic systems, irrespective of whether the 'place' in question is the purely fictional result of our imagination or something as tangible and prosaic as a public rest room.

In the first article, **Cindie Aaen Maagaard** takes architects' pictorial visualizations of planned urban settings as a case for posing a question particularly vexing to narratologists: how can a monophasic visual image – a static picture representing a single scene in a single moment in time – give rise to a narrative, when narrative is defined by a multi-phase temporal progression? Maagaard explores how a social semiotic approach to pictorial analysis can provide means to understand this process. The focus of the paper therefore is not urban narratives as such, but an inquiry into temporality in pictures (which focuses less on the thematic content of these images than on their semiotic meaning making).

The pictorial visualizations serve as point of departure for a discussion of two issues addressed by postclassical narratology. The first issue is that of prospective narrative, the narrative sense-making of the future, which challenges the narrative tense paradigm, that of considering narrative as the retrospective activity of creating meaningful, causal connections among temporally and spatially discrete events. The second issue is the problem of accounting for narrative interpretations of monophase images. This issue falls within the postclassical narratology's inquiry into whether, and if yes, how, narratological categories – many of which are derived from analyses of verbal narratives – can be useful in understanding narrative in other media; how can a non-temporal medium compel a temporal logic.

In her article, Maagaard explores how features of images encourage inferences of temporal progression. In particular, she suggests that the concept of modality can be key in helping us understand both of the issues mentioned above, as it provides a conceptual bridge between them.

In the next article, **Trine Brun Petersen** presents her work on how physical structures, understood both as architecture and the design of interiors and furniture, contribute actively to the establishment of a social 'order'. This occurs by way of patterns of action which are either encouraged or discouraged by the structure. The article presents a case study of the State Prison of Eastern Jutland, a Danish closed prison inaugurated in October 2006, where the design of the architectural firm of Friis & Moltke represents an ambition to realize a new, modern kind of prison service. The article focuses on the prison as both an expression of a new approach to penal services and as a building type in which social relations are staged and given shape through the physical setting. The overall disposition of building elements, the structure of the unit office and the choice of furniture are analyzed in the light of both what they indicate about penal policies and how they contribute to a certain 'social choreography', understood as certain preferred patterns of action inscribed in the

structure and interiors of the building. The study draws primarily on a body of theories exploring the relationship between architecture, ideologies and patterns of action and the study is rooted in design research, a relatively new field of academic enquiry. The article aims to combine the study of material objects with theories from cultural studies and sociology, thus making a preliminary attempt to view design analysis in relation to multimodality and social semiotics.

Through an analysis of Anders Svor's statue of the Norwegian whaling pioneer Sven Foyn, placed in Tønsberg in Southern Norway, **Eva Maagerø and Aslaug Veum** explore the meaning potential of a monument and the dialectical relationship between a monument and its surroundings, seen as a text and a context (cf. Halliday 1989). By employing O'Toole's (1994a) three-level rank system of analysis, the authors describe the meaning making of the statue at the levels of 'work' (the statue as a unity), 'figures' (the distinct elements of the statue) and 'members' (the distinct parts of the figures). On each level, the statue is analysed in terms of O'Toole's three metafunctions of visual art: the representational, the modal and the compositional (based on Halliday's ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions). As regards the relationship between the text (the statue) and the context (the surroundings), the authors conclude that certain layers of physical contexts are of importance in encounters with sculptures; since these layers combine with time, they therefore evoke historical contexts in different ways. Both the physical context and the temporal context are significant for a monument's interpretation just as the monument itself contributes to the interpretation of its physical surroundings.

Per Holmberg deals with spatial aspects of traditional writing technologies, from inscriptions in stone to the printed page. He argues that writing technologies, by their potential of connecting texts as artifacts and human bodies in space, have an interpersonal, disciplining function that tends to be overlooked by researchers. Whereas hitherto,

the tenor of discourse has been theoretically construed as relations between the human participants in a discursive activity (the term 'interpersonal' being taken strictly etymologically to mean 'relations between persons'), Holmberg presents a complementary perspective on this traditional view. Writing technology is not just something used in mutual relations between human beings: writing technology, including the semiotic artifacts produced by this technology, inserts itself into our interpersonal relations, sometimes in powerful ways. Readers are bodily placed in relation to written texts in quite different ways than are interacting speakers. The article outlines some of the principal differences between the interpersonal relations that are established between human bodies in speech, and the relations between those bodies and artifacts in the shape of written texts such as books, posters, monuments, papers, digital screens etc. This argument is elaborated using two examples of technological innovations in writing: the rune stone and the classroom. Drawing on the contextual theory of social semiotics, the article suggests that, in order to better understand the connections between text, body and space, written texts should be seen as potential participants in interpersonal relations.

In his article, **Søren Vigild Poulsen**, taking Martinec and van Leeuwen's analytical concept of the non-linear Ideal-Real model as his point of departure, discusses how to construct a model of meaning dichotomies between idealized (or generalized) information and realistic (or practical) information on websites.

The non-linear Ideal-Real model is a diagram that maps out non-linear conceptual structure of new media products (such as websites, mobile applications and other digital interactive media. According to Martinec and van Leeuwen (2009), new media products are construed around semantic patterns connecting different semiotic modes (i.e. semiotic systems for meaning-making) such as image, language, sound, etc. into meaningful wholes. One of these patterns is the dichotomy of Ideal-Real. While innovative, the Ideal-Real model proposed by Martinec and van Leeuwen is

also a model calling for theoretical and analytical investigation. In his article, Poulsen argues that the model needs to be informed by social semiotic multimodality theory (Martinec and Van Leeuwen 2009), systemic functional linguistics (Martin 1992, Martin & Rose 2007) and cognitive schema theory (Johnson 1987, Hurtienne & Israel 2007). Furthermore, he posits that the model must be able to represent the Ideal-Real meaning dichotomy on two levels: on one level as an abstract semantic relation between two kinds of information, and on another level as a spatial structure. The article is structured around a theoretical discussion of the concept of the Ideal-Real model, but in addition, an analysis of two webpages illustrates the theoretical points.

In the next article, **Christian Mosbæk Johannessen** presents a first approach to corpus-based studies of graphic form. The author demonstrates how a corpus-based study of a graphic practice can be carried out using a descriptive scheme for graphic form with two systems, SHAPE and ENSHAPENING, in concert with a fractal-derived principle of self-similar organization according to which shape and enshapening features have smaller shape and enshapening features nested within them.

The article investigates toilet signs as graphic phenomena and examines how Abdullah and Höfner's (2006) categories of 'icons' and 'pictograms' cash out in practices of announcing the presence of public toilets in the urban environment. The work is based on the assumptions that (1) a public toilet pictogram can be assigned status of autonomous text irrespective of its material situatedness in or around an actual toilet space, (2) public toilet pictograms as texts are constrained by graphic conventions that have emerged out of graphic acts over long ranging time spans as performers have enacted graphetic articulation, and (3) toilet pictograms are the material result of an articulatory event. The corpus is described using a scheme, the categories of which are explanatorily justified by graphic conventions reflected in graphic production technology.

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