Esperanto, graphic archetypes, *biophilia*

**Ruggiero Lenci**

Today we have the idea that the iconic language is that of the computer age, based on a symbol of decipherable meaning with a global immediacy, part of a virtual world that has definitively forfeited humanity on the banks of that long-awaited Esperanto wanted by Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, with very beneficial effects, but that in young people even of the same language makes the spoken word almost obsolete, being this a collateral unwanted effect. These iconic/informatic dowels in our computers, tablets, mobile phones, etc. are perceived today in a completely different way from the symbols used until the 70s and beyond. They are enzymes or amino–acids, agents that perform various functions for us. Each of them is a small robot, a good friend who keeps us company and that, when necessary, helps us to find information, to make a reservation, a little fun, etc. What is interesting here on these powerful proactive dowels is on the one hand their historical/evolutionary connection symbol–meaning, which is why it is necessary to call Esperanto and the graphic archetypes in the field, on the other to understand if and how the real city as a whole can find an advantage from these iconic/informatic dowels in our computers, tablets, cellular phones, etc. It is useful to make an ontological leap towards the biophilic hypothesis of Stephen Kellert, that could open possible scenarios of interaction between proactive symbols and territories not only urban/environmental *tout court*, but also psychological–behavioral–perceptive, which stimulate a fluid–dynamic use of the city and its spaces. Analyzing graphic archetypes — according to an XYZ vision — and using some of them under this key within *biophilia*, can be useful to humanize the city, transforming it psychologically, with the help of green, art and architecture, into a friendly organism, in whose tissues rendered alive and not irritating, the human fluid feels protected, wrapped and participant.

**Keywords:** biophilia, graphic dowels, humanization.

The iconic language, which from the 70s onwards has generated that multiplicity of symbols immediately decipherable and/or memorable, giving impetus to the spread of the computer era, has definitively won its battle by imposing itself as a new script for a, by now mature, grammar of Esperanto. The explosive phenomenon generated by this new language must be studied with great attention to its global scope — especially for the newest generations — in order to understand how it is used only to speed up some human activities and how much is rooting in the complex synapses of the horizontal social exchange, expanding the sharing of intentions, but at the same time reducing the cultural verticalization. In 1967 Herbert McLuhan and the graphic designer Quentin Fiore gave rise to the idea that ‘the medium is the message’, a concept that was already present in the ideas developed between 1872 and 1887 by the Polish ophthalmologist Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof — the creator of Esperanto, whose pseudonym was just Doktoro Esperanto — not by chance therefore an expert in the visual apparatus. The purpose of Esperanto was and is to make people dialogue through an expressive language understandable by all humanity, which avoids the misunderstandings that are often the origin of quarrels: *Homaranism* therefore, which in Esperanto means Humanitarianism, is above all a philosophy of sharing and free circulation of ideas. From this background comes the Paderborn method (named after the University of Paderborn in Germany), used for teaching foreign languages to children, that provides for the preliminary learning of a simple language, Esperanto, in order to make the study of a more complex foreign language.

This language, which was so successfully affirmed from Zamenhof forward, gave rise to the development of a graphic art in which the symbol–message is the dominant role, or a direct icon–linguistic relationship — which now tends to reduce the margins of communication uncertainty between the symbol and the message to zero. All this is very evident today with computers and mobile phones, in which they have established themselves — following an evolutionary process that recalls that of natural selection — those icons that are more tenacious because more comprehensible to the community in a global sense. But without wanting to go further into this theme, to let imagine what impact this me diantely decipherable and/o memorizabili dando impulso alla diffusione dell’era informatica, ha definitivamente vinto la sua battaglia imponen
done in una cultura verticale. Nel 1967 Herbert McLuhan e il disegnatore grafico Quentin Fiore hanno dato luogo all’idea che “il me dio è il messaggio”, concetto di fatto già presente nelle idee sviluppate tra il 1872 e il 1887 dall’oftalmologo polacco Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof – il creatore dell’Esperanto, il cui pseudonimo era appunto Doktoro Esperanto – non a caso quindi un esperto dell’apparato visivo. Scopo dell’Esperanto era ed è far dialogare i popoli per mezzo di una lingua espressiva comprensibile da tutta l’umanità, che evitasse gli equivoci e le malcomprensioni che sono spesso all’origine delle liti: l’Homaranismo, che in Esperanto significa Umanitarismo, è innanzi tutto una filosofia di scambio tra il simbolo e il messaggio. Tutto ciò è molto evidente con i computer e i telefoni moderni che hanno definitivamente traghettato l’umanità sulle rive di quel tanto atteso Esperanto voluto da Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, dagli effetti altamente benefici ma che nei giovani anche di medesimo idioma rende la parola parlata ormai quasi obsoleta, effetto collaterale questo ovviamente indesiderato. Tali tasselli iconici/informatici presenti nei nostri computer, tablet, cellulari ecc. vengono oggi percepiti in modo del tutto diverso da come lo erano i simboli fino agli anni ‘70 e oltre. Sono degli enzimi o amminoacidi, degli agenti che svolgono svariate funzioni per noi. Ognuno di essi è un piccolo robot, un buon amico che ci tira compagnia e che, all’occasione, si trovi in aiuto per trovare un’intervista, un’autobus in affitto, per effettuare una prenotazione, un piccolo divertimento, ecc. Ciò che qui interessa di questi potenti tasselli pro–attivi è, da un lato, il loro rapporto storicoco/evolutivo significante–significato, cosa per la quale è necessario chiamare in campo l’Esperanto e gli archetipi grafici, dall’altro, capitare se e come la città reale nel suo insieme possa trovare giovamento, oltre quindi alla dimensione miope dei monitor small, large e x-large. In tal senso è utile operare un salto ontologico in direzione dell’ipotesi biofilica di Stephen Kellert, che possa aprire a possibili scenari di interazione tra simboli pro–attivi e territori non solo urbani/ambientali *tout court*, ma anche psicologico–comportamentali–percettivi, che stimolino in un fuo–dinamentico della città e dei suoi spazi. Analizzare gli archetipi grafici – secondo una visione XYZ – è usare alcuni in tal chiave all’interno dell’esperientia, può rivolgersi utile a umanizzare la città tramformandola psicologicamente, con l’aiuto del verde, dell’arte e dell’architettura, in un organismico, nei cui tessuti resi vivi e non irritanti il fluido umano si senta protetto, avvolto e partecipante.

Parole chiave: fluido–dinamico, tassello grafico, umanizzazione.

Il linguaggio iconico, che dagli anni ‘70 in avanti ha generato quella molteplicità di simboli immediatamente decifrabili e/o memorizzabili dando impulso alla diffusione dell’era informatica, ha definitivamente vinto la sua battaglia imponendo un nuovo modo di pensare alla verticalizzazione culturale. Nel 1967 Herbert McLuhan e il disegnatore grafico Quentin Fiore hanno dato luogo all’idea che “il me dium è il messaggio”, concetto di fatto già presente nelle idee sviluppate tra il 1872 e il 1887 dall’oftalmologo polacco Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof – il creatore dell’Esperanto, il cui pseudonimo era appunto Doktoro Esperanto – non a caso quindi un esperto dell’apparato visivo. Scopo dell’Esperanto era ed è far dialogare i popoli
has had on some of the major icons in our cities. Think, as an example, of the six-legged dog of the AGIP of 1952 by Luigi Broggiini and Giuseppe Guuzzi who conveys the idea of energy and speed through the proliferation of the number of legs, of the red flame (turned backwards with the head by Enrico Mattei because considered too aggressive) and the bizarre hair also strongly energetic. One thinks also of Franco Grignani’s Pure Wool brand of 1964 when the International Wool Secretariat (IWS) – founded in 1957 by sheep farmers in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Uruguay, who hold 80% world wool production – entrusted him with the task of designing the famous Woolmark brand. In the months before 1964 Grignani was influenced by the advertising of Miller shoes, by Andy Warhol, in which he perceived the presence of a white space that in his same words “wasted around” the advertised object: a white that traumatizes the eye and, in so doing, attracts it. It is undoubt- ed that Andy Warhol from the 60s onwards will play a fundamental role in the incorporation in the graphics, art and society, of the principles of recursion ‘pattern’ similar to itself that dynamically pervades the surface, idea magnificamente represented in his very modern opera *The great scare of Kanagawa* (1830–31).

Consider also the abstract hominids, other animals and objects by Keith Haring (1957–90), designed to describe, also in a ‘global’ language, human activity and conflicts. Simple and immediate messages that interpret with a playful spirit and simple traits a plurality of themes of our era, including friendship, love, happiness, but also social injustice, capitalism, nuclear rearmament, drugs. Also in the drawings of Haring it is the eye that, insinuating itself between the graphic lines of the figures, separates them and, in doing so, makes them sharp and defined, playing a fundamental role in generating in the mind of the visitor the idea of tessellation of the surface. It is worth mentioning that Keith Haring, mindful of Esher’s drawings and influenced by the work of Warhol, Grignani, Broggiini–Guuzzi, and the studies of Roger Penrose, embodies the ideas of Esperanto–Homarism and the global village through a continuous graphic sign that is always similar to itself, surpassing the ‘E’ of Cape- grassi and generating a myriad of symbols that can sometimes be read as abstract depictions of plants in the city of Piranesi, with buildings, alleys and humanized historic centers. It is a perva- sive, fractal, stylized, abstract human tissue that takes hold of the XY two-dimensional surface describing with a universal and onomatopoeic graphic language the places and thoughts nestled in the labyrinth of life. Already in 1830 the Japanese master Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) in his *The great scare of Kanagawa* (1830–31) represented in his modernissima opera *La grande onda di Kanagawa* (1830–31).

Passando all’attualità, Stefan Sagmeister e Jessica Walsh, partner a New York di uno dei più importanti studi contemporanei di graphic design e installazioni, ripercorrono tutte le tappe appena accennate secondo un’ontogenesi che ricapitola la filigenesi, quindi secondo il ‘lan- go percorso compiuto nel tempo dagli artefici grafici, all’evoluzione del loro aspetto geo-

---

**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**
Ruggero Lenci, scultura *Furor Mathematicus*, 2017–2018; bronzo, 0,70h x 0,70l x 0,20 cm, Roma. © L’autore.

**Figure 3**

---

**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**
Ruggero Lenci, scultura *Furor Mathematicus*, 2017–2018; bronzo, 0,70h x 0,70l x 0,20 cm, Roma. © L’autore.

**Figure 3**

---

**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**
Ruggero Lenci, scultura *Furor Mathematicus*, 2017–2018; bronzo, 0,70h x 0,70l x 0,20 cm, Roma. © L’autore.

**Figure 3**
Turning to current events, Stefan Sagmeister and Jessica Walsh, principals in New York of one of the most important contemporary studios of graphic design and installations, retrace all the steps just mentioned according to an ontogeny that recapitulates the phylogeny, then according to the “long journey made over time by graphic archetypes, to the evolution of their geometric, morphological, chromatic and semantic appearance, as well as their invasion of the field in every kind of figurative expression”. Their designs for Aizone (a brand belonging to Aishti, a Lebanese brand of luxury goods stores) made together with the body painter Anastasia Durasova, represent a flow of organic lines that come to life in the model’s body. Here too, as in the graphics of Franco Grignani, are created tessellations of optical rhythms in which the eye and the mind are tricked, generating that sense of estrangement that leads to hypnosis: real technical challenges for retina photoreceptors and for translation systems in bi-electric signals that the optic nerve transmits to the brain (modulation and subsequent demodulation). The creations of the SagmeisterWalsh agency combine impeccable graphic-artistic quality with the almost scientific research of the mechanisms of perception. In the search for Ol-
graphic archetypes and the city is useful to make a leap of about 250 years to the Campo Marzio by Giovanni Battista Piranesi in which a hyper urban fabric is generated by a copious series of diachronic architectures of invention. An analysis of these imagined urban fabrics reveals an extraordinary variety of spatial situations typical of the domain of architecture and of graphic signs. The Piranesian relationship between the black lines of the buildings’ plants and the white that surrounds everything is definitely a graph- archetype that, as seen, has been taken up by both Grignani and by SagarmenteWalsh and by Haring in the aforementioned works, and by others as well. And it is precisely starting from the genius of Piranesi, optimus princeps of the graphic sign, which derives the painting titled Plantae ecclesiariae, which a possible variation of Campo Marzio is proposed on the theme of the admirable work of the great engraver. In this thematic variation the planimetric signs of the buildings are enveloped by a fluid that is generated by a dense network of human beings with long hair, a continuous humus that represents a brand of the London Underground, by Frank Pick, Albert Stanley, Edward Johnston, 1908-19. © The author.

To better understand the possible links between graphic archetypes and the city it is useful to

Ruggero Lenci – Esperanto, graphic archetypes, biophilia

Figure 7 Olimpia Zagnoli, The art of nearby, Milan; an illustration for “La Repubblica” on the theme of friendship, betrayal and innovation. © Olimpia Zagnoli. Available at: https://www.olimpiazagnoli.com/works/repubblica/5/.

Figure 8 Katsushika Hokusai, La grande onda di Kanagawa, 1830−31 ca., xylography, 25,7x37,8 cm, Hakone (Japan). A multiscalar recursive pattern similar to itself generates dynamism. Available at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsushika_Hokusai.

Figure 9 Ruggero Lenci, Ascot, 2012; mixed technique on canvas, 60x85 cm, Roma. Tiling of human figures. © The author.

Figure 10 Il “Roundel”, the famous brand of the London Underground, by Frank Pick, Albert Stanley, Edward Johnston, 1908-19. © The author.

...to demodulation). The realizations of studio SagarmenteWalsh unisono an’impeccable quality grafico-artistic to the research quasi scientific of the meccanisms of the perception. In the research of Olimpia Zagnoli to Milan, the tassellatura of the superfi ci e si affida invece a tinte piatte realizzate con colori spesso primari che raffi guranno brani di gioiosa umanità oppure figurazione di acrobatici abbracci riferibili, in quanto a sfumature concettuali, ad alcune opere di Joan Miró, quindi ad altri registri. E vero, peraltro, che alla proliferazione dei nuovi registri grafico-simbolici o di quelli re-

Ruggero Lenci – Esperanto, archetipi grafici, biophilia


Figure 7 Olimpia Zagnoli, La svanita realtà, Milano; un’illustrazione per “La Repubblica” sul tema dell’amicizia, del tradimento e dell’innovazione. © Olimpia Zagnoli. Disponibile da: https://www.olimpiazagnoli.com/works/repubblica/5/.

Figure 8 Katsushika Hokusai, La grande onda di Kanagawa, 1830−31 ca., xylography, 25,7x37,8 cm, Hakone (Giappone). Un pattern ricorsivo multiscalar simile a se stesso genera dinamismo. Disponibile da: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsushika_Hokusai.

Figure 9 Ruggero Lenci, Ascot, 2012; tecnica mista su tela, 60x85 cm, Roma. Pannellatura di fi gure umane. © L’autore.

Figure 10 Il “Roundel”, il celeberrimo marchio della metropolitana di Londra, di Frank Pick, Albert Stanley, Edward Johnston, 1908-19. © L’autore.

...fatica a orientarsi. Tutto ciò a causa di un logo sbagliato, del tutto estraneo alla cultura dell’e-

speranto. Altri esempi si possono trovare nella grafica delle segnalazioni stradali non sempre chiare, come nel caso delle indicazioni degli aeroporti: la sagoma dell’aero, che somiglia a una freccia, dovrebbe essere sempre orientata verso l’alto, oppure con la punta verso la devia-
zione per l’aeroporto, e mai in senso opposto come invece spesso accade. Inoltre, un fenomeno così complesso come una città e/o un ricco paesaggio urbano, difficilmen-

...te può trarre soddisfazione sintesi in un simbolo grafico che invece nasce come riduzione–astra-
zione di significati in grado di essere percepiti all’istante. Se da un lato vi è da augurarsi che i simboli non si impongano sul paesaggio urba-
no, perturbano o naturalistico che dovrebbero rappresentare – cosa peraltro come appena ac-
cennato impossibile nella sua totalità e richiez-
za – dall’altro invece città e paesaggio possono continuare a essere e divenire sempre più fonte di ispirazione per rappresentazioni imperiali sulla riduzione/astrazione del segno grafico–piuttosto-informatico. Quanto sopra amplia gli ambiti della ricerca includendo in essa una rapp-
resentazione urbana che faccia uso di modalità legate all’Esperanto–Homaranismo, al Villaggio globale, al concetto che il medium è il messag-
gio, a un pattern grafico in evoluzione, tutte re-
alità che creano sfide per l’occhio e per il nervo ottico, che rappresentano enigmi per il cervello e che commuovono il cuore.

Per meglio comprendere i possibili legami tra archetipi grafici e città è utile compiere un salto
of spaces designed even more than any construc-
tion material, spatial morphology or affirmation
of the designer's ego of time in charge. To explore
architecture in a biophilic key is necessary to ex-
tend the project field of interest to issues that
involve a wider feeling than the pursuit of visual
beauty alone, extending the project's objectives
to the multiple social, psychological, functional
and behavioral needs of the human being, all is-
sues that should not be neglected at the time of
its implementation. It is also necessary to imagine
the architecture or a part of the city always full of
a swarming and dynamic humanity, constantly
recalling to the mind of the designers and of the
sociologists/psychologists the multiple activities
and interactions that will take place in the spaces
in progress of design. It would also be useful
to analyze the project and all its urban surroundings
according to the principles of fluid dynamics engi-
neering, submitting the architecture in evolution
to an examination of the human flows that 'will
flow in its vessels' and that will flow into the inte-
rior and exterior spaces of the building. The com-
plex interactions between people in places must
then be unveiled, evaluating the quality of the par-
ticular spatial situations co–responsible for trig-
gering dynamics that are destined to assume more
or less positive values. It follows that, through a
conscious and coherent planning of the spaces of
architecture, the development of causal and par-
ticipatory behaviors according to the Behavioral
Architecture principles is stimulated. To this end
it becomes essential to consider the theme of in-
teractivity between people from the initial stages
of the project, so as to set up a new architecture
as a theater in which to establish participatory
relationships and promote a fruitful exchange of
experiences and knowledge between generations.
The term biophilica has been used for the first time
by some doctors in the early 1900s, then was later
taken up by Erich Fromm in 1964 to describe the
psychological tendency to be attracted by all what
is alive, being then proposed again in 1984 by Ed-
ward O. Wilson, who detects in the human being
the innate tendency to concentrate his own inter-
ests on the vital processes. Biophilica, that means
love for life, in architecture does not start accord-
ing to Stephan R. Kellert from the need to dec-
orate buildings and cities, but to support nature
as an essential source of our life. It is therefore a
matter of relating with the natural world around
us, which is at the basis of all our activities.

The biophilic hypothesis is based on the the-
oretical ideas of Darwin and evolutionists and
on empirical research conducted in the second
half of the twentieth century, including those of
Roger Ulrich in Sweden. The hypothesis holds
that the human being is genetically connected
and bound to all that is vital, in a biological, emo-
tional and cultural sense. The conclusion is that
since humanity is genetically linked to nature and

4. An interesting contribution in questo senso si trova in
DE RUBERTIS 2013.

Figure 11 Ruggero Lenci, Plantae ecclesiarum, 2017, acryllic on
canvas, 200x300 cm, Rome. Variation on the theme of the
work Campo Marzio by Giovanni Battista Piranesi. © The author.

Ruggero Lenci – Esperanto, graphic archetypes, biophilia

Figure 11 Ruggero Lenci, Plantae ecclesiarum, 2017, acryllic su tela, 200x300 cm, Roma. Variazione sul tema dell’opera
Campo Marzio di Giovanni Battista Piranesi. © L’autore.
getting a sense of place and coherence amongst the spaces of the architecture, it was stimulated to develop systems of environmental awareness and participation, and in parallel with the principles of the Behavioral Architecture, at a fine scale, to develop a model that allows for a top-down and bottom-up approach to the design of the space and the recognition of the landscape as an interface between nature and the built environment. This approach was then refined to the point where it became possible to develop a new type of architectural practice, which was then termed biophilic design. In this approach, the focus is on the relationship between the human being and their environment, and on the recognition that the environment can influence the human being's behavior, preferences, and well-being. The concept of biophilic design is rooted in the idea that humans have an innate affinity for nature and that the presence of natural elements in the built environment can have positive effects on human health and well-being.

References/Bibliography