





Are red, green or blue highlighted ads in telephone directories more effective than ordinary ones, in the sense that they attract more attention of potential customers among the users of the respective telephone directory? The following paper reports the results of an experimental study pointed at this question.

According to Gallup (1935, cf. Anastasi, 1964), the success of an advertisement may be measured by finding out how well it is remembered by a viewer. Thus, we will consider, in the following study, the recallability and recognizability of ads by human subjects.

## method

After some preliminary studies on the recallability and recognizability of different ad texts, we ran two main experiments.

In the first one, subjects were presented single telephone directory pages which contained each, only one ad at a certain position on the page (top left, bottom left, center, top right, bottom right), highlighted in a certain color or not at all highlighted, i.e., black and white.

Thereafter, subjects were questioned for their memories, and we counted how many red, blue, green or not highlighted ads they recalled and recognized, and whether a specific position of an ad gave it an advantage of being remembered.

In the second study, subjects were also presented telephone directory pages, and asked to recall specific ads from their memories, or to recognize them among others. However, this time there were up to five ads to be memorized on a single page, partly highlighted in different colors. In this study, we controlled the order of presentation as an additional variable.

All ads presented were about equally easy to understand with respect to their text (as assured in the preliminary studies for the selection of stimulus material). Thus, we avoided that ads could be memorized

better or worse just because of differences in the difficulty of the text they contained.

Subjects were recruited by means of an ad in the local newspaper. Their age varied between fourteen and seventy-four years, and they came from a large variety of professions.

## results

**Experiment 1** • In the first study, thirty-four subjects participated in three sections in each of which they were presented five telephone directory pages each of which contained one ad which was highlighted in green, red, blue or not at all. At the end of each section, the subject was asked which ads he or she recalled, and thereafter which one he or she recognized among a set of other ads.

### 1. Color

To analyze the data with respect to the effectiveness of color, we first calculated, for each level of color (red, green, blue or none = white), the probability and expected number of recalls and recognitions under random conditions, i.e., if all hits were just by chance, and if all highlightings including the white one were equally effective.

The observed frequencies for *red* highlighted ads are slightly higher than the expected ones which indicates that ads highlighted in red are remembered better than expected under random conditions.

The opposite is true for *blue* highlighted ads. The respective frequencies are lower than expected by chance, i.e., they are less well recalled and recognized than under random conditions.

However, these two tendencies are rather small differences which do not reach statistical significance. For *green* and *non*-highlighted ads we observed no systematic deviation of observed frequencies from expected frequencies at all.

On the other hand, if we group all ads highlighted in color together, and compare them to those without highlighting, we find that the highlighted ads altogether are both better recalled and better recognized, a tendency that reaches statistical significance but only for the dependent variable "trade" (line of business).

### *2. Position of the ad*

Ads in the position "top left" are recalled, in general, significantly better than in other positions, and ads in position "bottom right" are significantly less well recalled than in other positions. The same tendency holds for recognition but does not reach statistical significance.

### *3. Sequence of presentation*

The position of an ad in the sequence of presentation of five pages also influences the quality of recall and recognition. Thus, ads on the fourth page in the sequence are less well recalled and recognized, and those on the fifth page are better recalled and recognized. However, this difference reaches statistical significance only for recall, and not for recognition.

**Experiment 2** • In Experiment 2, subjects were shown ads highlighted in different colors and non-highlighted ones in competition on the same page. Subjects were run in three groups:

Group 1: Sixteen subjects saw, each, ten ads highlighted red and five ads highlighted green (Condition 1). Sixteen other subjects were shown the same ads but with “red” and “green” interchanged, i.e., ten highlighted green, five highlighted red (Condition 2).

Group 2: Forty subjects saw fifteen ads highlighted red and fifteen non-highlighted ads, in Condition 1: Ten ads highlighted red and five non-highlighted, in Condition 2: Ten non-highlighted and five highlighted red.

Group 3: Thirty subjects were shown ten red, ten green and ten non-highlighted ads (Condition 1 and 2: five red, five green and five non-highlighted ads, each).

### *1. Color*

In Group 1, ads highlighted green were better recalled and better recognized than red ones. But the difference between these two colors is not large enough to be statistically significant. Both red and green highlighted ads would be approximately equally successful in being remembered by the readers if they are presented in competition.

A significant difference between non-highlighted and red highlighted ads occurs in Group 2, both for recall and recognition. The red highlighting is clearly superior. Sixty-one percent of all recalled ads, and fifty-six percent of all recognized ads were highlighted red.

The results in Group 3 are compatible with those reported above, although it is not possible to compare these Groups directly, because of the different internal conditions. These thirty subjects recalled ads highlighted in red and green much better than expected under chance, with little difference between these two colors. The non-highlighted ads are considerably less well recalled under the influence of the competing highlighted ads (twenty-five percent of all recalled ads were non-highlighted, seventy-five percent of them highlighted). In the recognition condition, these differences are confirmed, but here the differences are not large enough to reach statistical significance.

So far, we have seen that highlighting of ads in color considerably improves the advertising success, in different groups and conditions. However, this statement has to be restricted in the light of another result of our study: If there are five ads on the same page of which four are highlighted in color, then the remaining non-highlighted one is much more often recalled (thirty-one percent of all recalls) than expected under random conditions. This is a confirmation of the Von-Restorff-effect, well-known in psychology and explained by an orienting reflex (Köhler and von Restorff, 1933; Sokolov, 1960). We could not find out, in the frame of this study, whether this holds for all possible positions of the ad on the page.

In addition to the results reported so far, we also compared the findings with a page under Condition 1 and the corresponding page under Condition 2. Only one significant difference of this kind was observed in Group 1: These pages contained a red or a green highlighted ad in positions "top left" and "bottom left," respectively. The ad in the position "bottom left" was considerably better recalled (ninety percent of all recalls) if it was highlighted in green.

In Group 2, a non-highlighted ad in position "top left" was better recalled than the same ad in the same position if it was highlighted in red (eighty-eight percent of all recalls) if there was another non-highlighted ad in the center of the page and if there were red highlighted ads in the other three positions. Interchanging the colors on the same page resulted in a substantially higher rate of recall for the red highlighted ad in the center position (eighty-two percent of all recalls) than in the opposite condition. This result may be interpreted together with the finding that, among five ads, a highlighted one is better recalled than the others since in both cases a minority of ad styles gains better recall frequencies.

In Group 3 a red highlight in position "top right" was superior to a green one (complementary condition: non-highlighted) if there were three non-highlighted ads in positions "center," "bottom left" and "bottom right" on the same page. The proportion of recalls of a red highlighted ad in position "top right" relative to all recalls of the same ad is as high as seventy-eight percent. This result is also reached by an ad highlighted red in the same position (complementary condition:

non-highlighted) if there is a non-highlighted ad in position "top left" and if the other positions are occupied by green highlighted ads. An ad highlighted green in position "bottom right" is less well recalled (twenty-one percent of all recalls) if there is an ad highlighted red in position "top right."

Except for these relations, we found no significant differences in the comparison of individual pages. These results might be an indication of an interaction between the variables "color" and "position."

## *2. Position of the ad*

Experiment 2 has shown that, with the presentation of two, three or five ads on the same page, the position "top left" promises the best advertising success, contrary to the results of Experiment 1. This holds not only for recall but also for recognition of ads. The recall rates for ads in this position are partly up to forty percent whereas only twenty percent would have been expected by chance. Ads on the right hand side of a telephone directory page seem at disadvantage both in recall and in recognition.

## summary of results

All results reported above refer to the whole ad, i.e., to the sum of recall and recognition frequencies for all of its elements. In most cases (except for the last name of the advertiser) there are no statistically significant differences between the elements of the ad. Thus, the results of our study may be summarized as follows:

*1. One ad on a page to be highlighted (or not):*

a) Ads highlighted in red are more effective than ads highlighted in green or not at all; ads highlighted in blue are less effective than the others.

b) Ads highlighted in color result in more advertising success than non-highlighted ones.

c) Ads in the position "top right" result in a higher advertising success than those in other positions.

*2. More than one highlighted ad on the same page:*

a) Ads highlighted in red or green reach about the same advertising success if they occur together.

b) Ads highlighted in red are more effective than non-highlighted ones if they occur together.

c) Ads highlighted in red or green are more effective than non-highlighted ones if these three kinds occur together on the same page.

d) If an ad is highlighted in a different color than the other ads on the same page, it reaches, on the average, a better advertising success.

e) If an ad occurs at the left hand side of the page (especially top left), it reaches an above average advertising success.

Thus, it seems useful to coordinate the choice of highlighting and positioning of an ad on a telephone directory page in accordance with the positions and highlightings of other ads on the same page. If these are not known before the advertiser's choice has to be made, a highlighting in color is preferable to non-highlighting, and the positions "top left" and "bottom left" are preferable to all other positions.

Note that all these recommendations are based on statistics, i.e., our statements are probabilistic, and not necessarily true in each individual case.

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**Book** \Book\, *n.* [OE. *book*, *bok*, AS. *b?c*; akin to Goth. *b?ka* a letter, in pl. *book*, writing, Icel. *b?k*, Sw. *bok*, Dan. *bog*, OS. *b?k*, D. *boek*, OHG. *puoh*, G. *buch*; and fr. AS. *b?c*, *b?ce*, *beech*; because the ancient Saxons and Germans in general wrote runes on pieces of beechen board. Cf. *Beech*.] **1.** A collection of sheets of paper, or similar material, blank, written, or printed, bound together; commonly, many folded and bound sheets containing continuous printing or writing.

**Review** \RE • VIEW"\, *v. t.* [imp. & p. p. *Review?d*; p. pr. & vb. n. *Reveiwng*.] [Pref. *re-* + *view*. Cf. *Review*, *n.*] **1.** To view or see again; to look back on. [R.] ``I shall review Sicilia." - Shak. **2.** To go over and examine critically or deliberately. Specifically: (a) To reconsider; to revise, as a manuscript before printing it, or a book for a new edition. (b) To go over with critical examination, in order to discover excellences or defects; hence, to write a critical notice of; as, to review a new novel. (c) To make a formal or official examination of the state of, as troops, and the like; as, to review a regiment. (d) (Law) To re["e]xamine judicially; as, a higher court may review the proceedings and judgments of a lower one. **3.** To retrace; to go over again.

## Sloppy "Scholarship" — *The Century of Artists' Books*

reviewed by Richard Kostelanetz

*The Century of Artists' Books*  
by Johanna Drucker  
New York: Granary Books, 1995  
ISBN 1-887123-01-6  
377 pages, hardbound,  
illustrated, \$35

I've never before had the occasion to review a book mostly in terms of what it says (or in this case doesn't say) about my work; but I find no better way to reveal the limitations of Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books* and would rather not resort to the ruse of getting someone else to elaborate my objections, more superficially "acceptable" though that appearance might be. At least in discussing my own efforts in this medium, Drucker's book appears to be an inadvertent illustration of my suggestion in *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (1993) that, "When a professor writes three words about an avant-garde subject, one of them is likely to be superficial and a second to reveal ignorance, even if the

writing comes accompanied, as it usually is, by encomia from other academics."

Drucker's definition of "concrete poetry" speaks of "forging an unity between the visual and verbal aspects of a work." This definition does not accurately summarize the initial "concrete" manifestoes, although it does describe many examples anthologized under the "concrete" label. Drucker continues, "Concrete poets take the concept of materiality of language farther than earlier experimenters, trying to forge inseparable bonds of meaning and presentation through visual form." Once again, the first part of this sentence ("materiality of language") reflects concrete theory; the second, about visual form, does not. My Dictionary says that, "[concrete poetry] aims to reduce language to its concrete essentials, free not only of semantic but syntactical necessities. The true concrete poem is simply letters scattered abstractly across the page or a succession of aurally nonrepresentational (and linguistically incomprehensible) sounds."

Drucker's critical fuzziness accounts for why my own books are initially classified as "concrete," right after Eugen Gomringer (one of the original theorists), Ernesto M. de

Melo e Castro and John Furnival, though I've never used that epithet to define my own work, clearly preferring "visual poetry" in essays reprinted in *Twenties in the Sixties* (1979), *The Old Poetries and the New* (1981), and *Wordworks: Poems New and Selected* (1993), among too many other places. (One moral of this story is that you can't reprint something often enough if you want academics to see it, contrary to the bias against "multiple submissions"). Needless to say, perhaps Furnival's work is likewise more visual than concrete. Were Drucker to reinterpret my poetry, she might find the "concrete" epithet applicable to my book *Solos, Duets, Trios & Choruses* (1991), but it isn't mentioned.

"Kostelanetz," she writes, "characterizes these 'concrete' works as 'emphasizing the fragmentation of language,'" but that last phrase sounds unfamiliar to me as well as untrue. (Drucker didn't locate it, when I asked about its source.) She sees in my poetry a "seemingly endless number of approaches to the deconstruction of language," which I don't think true either, flattering though it might be. It would be more correct to thick, hand-sized paperback edition, which has one event to a page, she seems not to know the tabloid-sized newsprint version, whose pages contain many of the same events (in the same sequence). What makes this omission disappointing is that the purpose of the two-edition *One Night Stood* is discovering whether the same precise text in radically different formats can generate different reading experiences.

Were Drucker more familiar with book-art books of mine published in the 1980s and 1990s, she might have noticed that the short entries in *One Night Stood* foreshadow my later, more developed interest in scrupulously minimal fictions that have been published in many magazines since the early 1980s and collected in a 1994 book of that title. On page 352 Drucker cites the "Edizioni Amodulo, n.d." edition of my *Accounting* without acknowledging that I have long identified that edition as defectively incomplete (e.g., in any list of my "Book-Art Books" or "Archae Editions" for the last decades), instead certifying the 1973 edition published by PN Books. She seems not to know other books of mine containing numerals arrayed in expressive shapes, such as *Exhaustive Parallel Intervals* (1979), which is incidentally featured in the Robert C. Morgan essay acknowledged in its entirety on 332 of her footnotes. (This reflects a scholarly failure to seek out examples evidently known to her. Thorough research is not

among her developed skills.) She seems not to know my photograph book *Reincarnations* (1984), my loose-leaf books *Rain Rains Rain* (1976) and *And So Forth* (1979), or the narratives collected in *Short Fictions* (1974) and *More Short Fictions* (1980), all of which are still in print, even though the first could have been acknowledged around her page 213 and the last pair around her page 270.

Drucker seems likewise unaware of my oft-reprinted manifesto on "Constructivist Fictions" and thus of the several books (1974-1991) exemplifying the principle. This accounts for why she can suggest in her first footnote on page 332 that the epithet "suprematist" might be more appropriate to *Inexistences: Constructivist Fictions* (1978), whose square pages beyond the initial two are wholly blank. Though superficially persuasive within the limited evidence she presents, this caveat depends upon her ignoring those other "constructivist" books that likewise have square imagery and/or format. With this larger context for *Inexistences* in mind,

she might have accounted for how a resonant verbal frame, printed on the cover and opening pages, can give meaning, in the tradition of conceptual art, to the absence of ostensible content. Perhaps this last theme would have become more apparent if Drucker had known the likewise nearly-all-blank companion to *Inexistences*, a larger and thicker book also published in 1978, *Tabula Rasa*, which clearly is sub-titled "A Constructivist Novel."

Need I say that I didn't intend for Professor Drucker (Yale) to illustrate so vividly my characterization of academic avant-garde criticism or to inadvertently waste more words about her mistakes and ignorance than she wrote about me. I wanted to like this book because I agree with her general emphasis on book-art, rather than illustrated books, painter-writer collaboration, "livres d'artists" or other bastardized forms. Her commentary does introduce a large number of practitioners, though omitting, at times conspicuously, John Cage, Alain Arias-Misson, Jean-Francois Bory, Manfred Mohr, Don Celender, Paul Laffoley, Wally Depew, M. Vaughn-James, Claes Oldenberg, Michael Kasper, Allan Kaprow, Barbara Rosenthal, R. Murray Schafer, Carol Stetser and Merce Cunningham-Frances Starr, all of whom I've discussed in essays that someday ought to be collected into a book. "Definitive" this book isn't.

More than once Drucker's text reminded me of anthologies of mine that she seems not to know — *Imaged Words & Worded Images* (1970), *Future's Fictions* (1973) or *Breakthrough Fictioneers* (1973) — all of which are still in print and perhaps available in better university libraries. Wishing her ignorance and illiteracy was limited to my books, I nonetheless noticed on page 106 her reference to "John Dos Passos's text from his novel *Metropolis*," which sounds like a thoughtless translation back into English of his Manhattan Tranfer, and her recurring insecurity about commas that are both inserted and omitted to excess. My predispositions notwithstanding, the level of error and ignorance here does become provocative, especially to anyone familiar and concerned with the subject. Perhaps Drucker did better in her discussion of other book artists and that the next book on this needlessly neglected subject will be better, at least by me.

Richard Kostelanetz continues to produce book-art books, including *Woodworks: Poems Selected and New* (BOA, 1993), *Minimal Fictions* (Asylum Arts, 1994), *Ecce Kosti* (Archae, 1996) and *Openings* (Depth Charge, 1996).