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Actiones secundum fidei*

Antithesis and metaphoric conceptualization in Banksy's graffiti art

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In this article, we describe how antithesis and metaphoric conceptualization interact with each other and which rhetorical effects this interaction brings about. We illustrate this interaction with an analysis of seventeen graffiti artworks by Banksy, who uses the contraposition of visual elements that are characterized by opposite semantic and affective values. This article contributes to the expanding field of empirical studies of visual/pictorial metaphors and antitheses, in which artworks are interpreted according to conceptual dynamics and not only in relation to their thematic, semiotic and representational properties.

Keywords: antithesis, visual/pictorial metaphor, conceptual interaction, art, Banksy

1. Introduction

The idea of examining pictorial material within the theoretical framework first advanced by Black (1954, 1979), Ortony (1979) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) results from the central role that metaphors play in a number of important conceptual and cognitive processes (see Gibbs, 2008). The change of perspective of metaphor from an ornamental and rhetorical device to a broader view has allowed researchers to identify conceptual metaphors in various applications, for instance concerning thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), the representation of attitudes, judgments and prejudices (Meier & Dionne, 2009), and in the reproduction and communication of ideologies (see Charteris-Black, 2004, 2012; Goatly, 2007; Musolff, 2004, 2016). Metaphor is a concomitant of thought and is pertinent to both verbal and non-verbal (visual and auditory) dimensions.

* Latin for “We act according to what we believe (ourselves to be).”

Modalities that go beyond the verbal/textual include for example images, gestures, music and multimodal representations such as films. However, painting, photography and graffiti art have been largely neglected by the metaphor research community (but see Sontag, 1977; Forceville, 1988). The present contribution represents an initial step towards filling this gap by examining Banksy's graffiti art. Based on a selection of seventeen artworks available from the official Banksy website, we identify metaphoric conceptualizations according to the representational dynamics described by Forceville (2008, pp. 464–468). Recently, Cornevin & Forceville (2017) have also suggested that metaphor can be used in association with other visual/pictorial dynamics that contribute to expanding the conceptual and rhetorical potential of metaphor itself. One of these dynamics is 'antithesis' (Tseronis & Forceville, 2017a), a structure that places contrasted or opposed terms in parallel (see Fahnstock, 1999, pp. 46–47). In our analysis of Banksy's artworks, we try to show how metaphor and antithesis interact and what rhetorical effects this interaction can bring about. We also discuss the main conceptual tendencies that orient the construction of these artworks while going beyond their thematic, semiotic and representational properties.

2. Theoretical background

Ortony (1979) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980) are credited for a major shift in the perception of metaphor; rather than an ornamental and rhetorical construction based purely on language use, metaphor is viewed as a prevalent conceptual and cognitive process (see Gibbs, 2008). The consequences of this change can be seen in a series of research contributions highlighting the role of metaphor in dynamic thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), in social cognitive approaches (Landau et al., 2010), in the capacity to represent attitudes, judgments and prejudices (Meier & Dionne, 2009), and in the rhetorical creation and reproduction of ideologies (see Charteris-Black, 2004, 2012; Goatly, 2007; Musolff, 2016). The impact of similar applications has led a growing number of linguists and cognitive scientists to claim that the human mind is inherently structured around conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Since metaphor refers to several cognitive and socio-relational operations, a large number of studies have explained how metaphor is expressed concretely in modalities that go beyond verbal and textual cues. Thus, metaphor has been analyzed in visual/pictorial modalities (Forceville, 2006; Poppi & Kravanja, 2017),¹ in relation to gesture (Cienki & Müller, 2008;

1. According to the above mentioned authors, the terms *visual* and *pictorial* can be regarded as synonymous.

Poppi & Kravanja, 2017), in musical stimuli (Zbikowski, 2009) and in multimodal representations such as films, animations and TV commercials (Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2012a, 2012b; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Poppi, 2018; Poppi & Urios-Aparisi, 2019).

Regardless of the specific modalities involved, the rhetorical, conceptual and cognitive role played by metaphor lies in the representation of a more abstract and less familiar domain (usually called the 'target') in terms of a more concrete and familiar one (the 'source'). The application of metaphor to non-linguistic modalities allows us to identify some important research trends. With particular regard to visual/pictorial representations, we discern at least two main tendencies. First, although conceptual metaphor may be conveyed by any visual/pictorial means, most of the research has focused on advertisements (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Van Mulken et al., 2010) and representations such as cartoons and comic strips (Bounegru & Forceville, 2011; Refaie, 2003; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). Apart from some sporadic exceptions (like Forceville, 1988; Poppi & Kravanja, 2017; Rothenberg, 2008), metaphor studies have rarely addressed how conceptual metaphors can be conveyed in the domain of visual art. Second, since metaphor is frequently a tool for conceptualizing abstract elements in terms of concrete domains, a lot of research concerns semiotic analyses about how to identify a *single* target domain and a *single* source domain for every visual representation interaction, as well as the nature of this relation. In general, studies in line with the groundbreaking contributions of Forceville (2002, 2008) take into account how the domains interact on the visual/pictorial level and aim to describe the semiotic and representational dynamics occurring between them. In this sense, these analyses are conducted using *isolated* examples that are rather arbitrarily selected to reach some wide-ranging generalizations about how conceptual metaphors operate. In the present article, by contrast, we examine how metaphors convey visual representations within a *series* of related examples that constitute our corpus data, similar to Bounegru & Forceville's (2011) analysis of metaphors in cartoons.

Another trend that has emerged in the last years considers the interaction of metaphor with other conceptual and rhetorical processes. While the vast majority of studies have taken into account the relation between metaphor and metonymy on the visual and multimodal levels (see Forceville, 2009; Sweetser, 2017; Urios-Aparisi, 2009), only recently has metaphor been addressed in the light of other processes such as allegory (Cornevin & Forceville, 2017; Crisp, 2005, 2008) or antithesis (Tseronis & Forceville, 2017a). As Fahnestock (1999, pp. 46–47) claims, antithesis is a structure that places contrasted or opposed terms in parallel. However, parallelism may not be enough for representing an antithesis as metaphor too is based on a parallel structure inviting comparison (Fahnestock, 2003;

Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Teng & Sun, 2002). As Tseronis & Forceville (2017a, p.168) claim:

Interpreting a configuration as an antithesis requires the identification of a contrast (negative comparison) either between the two entities placed in a parallel structure or between the ideas to which these two entities give rise.

On the textual level, an antithesis can materialize by using pairs of opposed terms (e.g., *good* vs. *evil*), contradictory terms (e.g., *clean/unclean*; *polite/impolite*), or correlatives (e.g., *buying* and *selling*), as claimed by Fahnestock (1999, p.48) and Tseronis & Forceville (2017a, p.167). At the visual level, antithesis seems to operate through “the spatial juxtaposition of opposites in symmetrical relations” (Buckland, 2015, p.50) and through “condensed or even diagram-like rendering of the relationship among a set of terms, a relationship that constitutes the argument and that could be expressed at greater length” (Fahnestock, 1999, p.24). The rhetorical potential of antithesis has been described by Tseronis & Forceville (2017a, pp.169) in relation to the capacity to “convey a claim for which further support is advanced”, to “convey the argument in support of a contested claim” or to “refute or anticipate counter-arguments of the audience” (see also Tseronis & Forceville, 2017b). As a further possible function, we put forward the potential of the association between metaphor and antithesis to emphasize the emotional impact and salience of certain representations (e.g., painful and horrific meanings) or to trigger curiosity in reference to elements of ambiguity and incongruity. In this sense, we claim that an antithesis can possibly interact with a metaphor by producing a rhetorical impact that the metaphor alone would probably not be able to have with such effectiveness.

Based on the above, we are going to explore how antitheses and metaphors are expressed in the art of Banksy, an iconic street artist.² This approach allows us both to expand metaphor analysis, as currently practiced by our colleagues, toward visual art and, in particular, a sub-genre (street art) that has not yet been addressed and to take into account the role that antithesis plays in Banksy’s artworks.

3. Banksy’s graffiti art

Banksy, the nickname of an anonymous street artist allegedly born in 1974 in Bristol, UK, is one of the most well-known contemporary street artists practicing today (Manco, 2002). Banksy’s graffiti art is generally characterized by satirical

2. We acknowledge that part of Banksy’s rhetorical impact can also relate to the use of irony, but we have decided not to include irony in this analysis.

murals aimed at political and societal issues (Ellsworth-Jones, 2013). Although these stencil-based artworks are often destroyed because of their inherent provocative nature towards governments and corporations (Johnston, 2014), they have gained a worldwide cultural, symbolic and economic value (BBC News, 2014). Often considered as a 'guerrilla artist' or an 'art terrorist', Banksy and his graffiti have acquired part of their popularity precisely because of their illegal nature. While the graffiti has been exhibited in art galleries, Banksy seems to prefer urban settings such as streets, buildings, national monuments, uninvited museum spaces, and zoos (Stephens, 2006). In this sense, the anonymity serves the purpose of eluding control and police intervention (Collins, 2007). Although other fellow street artists such as Bambi, King Robbo and Nick Walker have embraced Banksy's style and modalities of intervention, none of them has achieved similar popularity and influence. The critical approach taken by Banksy and his impact on the society can be summarized by a painting named "Slave Labour" (Figure 1)³ which was sold in 2013 for over £ 750,000 at a private auction in London (Reyburn, 2013). This artwork, which symbolizes child labour through the portrait of a young sweatshop boy sewing a Union Jack, was discovered on a Poundland store (a cut-price chain store). The artwork gained such tremendous popularity and economic value because it followed the scandal in which a seven-year-old Indian boy was found working 98 hours per week earning just 7p an hour to produce items for Poundland (Smith, 2010).



Figure 1. "Slave labour"

3. As with most of Banksy's works, the name of the artwork is purely indicative since the artist does not provide official titles.

4. Material and methods

4.1 Material

In order to analyze Banksy's graffiti art, we have examined seventeen artworks taken from the official Banksy website (<http://www.banksy.co.uk>). The selection of these particular artworks from the bulk of Banksy's production is based on our aim to show how metaphor and the combination of metaphor and antithesis operate. Although our examples cover both purely visual (monomodal) and verbal-pictorial (multimodal) metaphors/antithesis, we do not use this distinction in our analyses. In this regard, for simplicity's sake, we use visual metaphor/antithesis as an encompassing concept.

4.2 Methods

In our analysis of the seventeen artworks, we rely on Forceville's methodological approach (2008, pp. 464–468) to identify as visual/pictorial metaphors those constructions in which:

- i. “an object is metaphorized because of the visual context in which it is placed” (*contextual metaphor*);
- ii. “two objects that are normally distinct entities are physically merged into a single gestalt” (*hybrid metaphor*);
- iii. “[t]wo objects are represented in their entirety in such a way that they are made to look similar” (*pictorial simile*);
- iv. “[a] phenomenon experienced as a unified object or gestalt is represented in its entirety in such a manner that it resembles another object or gestalt even without contextual cues” (*integrated metaphor*).

Tseronis & Forceville (2017a, pp. 168) provide the theoretical framework we adopt here concerning the identification of antithesis in visual contexts based on three criteria:

1. “Two states of affairs, entities or persons are present, which are known to be, or are cued, as opposites,”
2. “in a parallel structure that makes salient the differences between the two,”
3. “with the aim of raising an awareness of diametrically opposed viewpoints, ideas, or interests associated with the two states of affairs, entities or persons in the given context.”

Conceptual metaphors are formulated by following the canonical structure *A IS B*, in which the “less concrete/familiar /underspecified” entity is the target (*A*) and

the “more concrete/familiar/specified” one is the source (B). Conversely, antithesis is described according to the formulation x vs. y .

5. Analysis and results

In this section, we present our analysis of the artworks in terms of their semiotic and conceptual functions. As we will show, most of the conceptualizations are related to contradictory and antithetical domains that achieve a certain rhetorical ideological aim.

5.1 Metaphors and antitheses in Banksy's graffiti art

1. A SECURITY DEVICE IS A NON-URBAN ENTITY

In the two examples shown in Figure 2, we can see how two different entities that are part of an urban landscape such as a CCTV camera and a security siren are creatively framed within a different context.



Figure 2. “Ostrich” (left) and “Girl with a pearl earring” (right)

Specifically, the CCTV camera becomes contextualized through the representation of an ostrich's head. The corresponding metaphor can be summarized, quite simply, as A SURVEILLANCE CAMERA IS AN OSTRICH'S HEAD. In similar terms, the image on the right presents the popular painting “Girl with a pearl earring” by

Johannes Vermeer in which the iconic pearl is replaced by a yellow security siren according to the metaphor *A SECURITY SIREN IS A PEARL EARRING*. In these examples, Banksy seems to express his wish to reinterpret devices that evoke meanings of control and security into more neutral or even aesthetically pleasing non-urban entities. Since we do not expect ostriches and earrings to be, or to contain, such security/monitoring devices, this contributes to giving these metaphors a disturbing nature, suggesting that we are all monitored everywhere. Banksy seems to be suggesting that surveillance devices have such a prominent place in our ordinary lives that they can easily be disguised as domains with more positive connotations. In this sense, the metaphorical representations work with an antithesis in showing how security/monitoring devices can be merged into a single gestalt (hybrid metaphor) with two entities sharing nothing in terms of projected characteristics, such as an animal (*AN OSTRICH'S HEAD*) or an ornamental piece of jewelry (*A PEARL EARRING*).

2. *A BARCODE IS A CAGE*

In the artwork shown in Figure 3, Banksy depicts a big feline escaping from a circus cage.



Figure 3. “Barcode and leopard”

One of the most striking aspects of this picture is that the bars of the cage are portrayed as a barcode. The association between the cage and the barcode is justified

both by the irregular thickness of the bars and by serial numbers. The BARCODE domain may be interpreted as homogenization, with the subsequent meaning that homogenization is a controlling and limiting condition, in the same way as captivity. The conceptual construction that homogenization (BARCODE) is as controlling and limiting a condition as captivity (CAGE) has a breaking element in the big feline, which might be interpreted as representing the indomitable spirit of freedom that cannot be trapped. In this sense, the big feline, as a prototypical carrier of values and ideals, contrasts with the 'homogenization is control' meaning implied by the conceptual metaphor A BARCODE IS A CAGE. In this example, an abstract term homogenization, here represented by a BARCODE, assumes a more concrete expression in the form of a CAGE. As the artwork and its metaphor express, the antithesis CAPTIVITY VS. FREEDOM operates through a visual contextualization (contextual metaphor) of two entities that represent two opposite meanings such as A CAGE – in the sense of being trapped, 'lack of freedom' – and the big feline, which by escaping expresses the idea of 'freedom.' In this case, metaphor and antithesis operate together in order to provide a larger number of meanings, which the metaphor alone (A BARCODE IS A CAGE) could not provide.

3. AN ABANDONED URBAN ENTITY IS AN OBJECT OF INTEREST

Another set of examples in which there is a contradiction between domains concerns the juxtaposition of two entities that clearly show signs of decay and abandonment.



Figure 4. "Cowboy" (left) and "Spies" (right)

On the one hand, the image on the left of Figure 4 presents what looks like a section of a damaged wall; on the other hand, the image on the right shows an abandoned and broken phone box. In these two artworks, Banksy's intent would seem to be to give to such abandoned urban entities a livelier condition. In metaphorical terms, if the image on the left can be summarized by the metaphor *A DAMAGED WALL IS A TOY*, the image on the right may refer to *AN ABANDONED PHONE BOX IS AN OBJECT OF INTEREST*. Specifically, while the broken section of plaster assumes the shape of an animal that the boy rides like a cowboy, the phone box becomes an object of interest for a small group of individuals that resemble secret agents who might be telephone tapping. In these examples, which constitute two cases of integrated metaphor (Van Rompay, 2005), Banksy highlights how abandoned and shabby urban entities can be reinterpreted in terms of domains that can trigger positive feelings (the child riding like a cowboy) and interest (the secret agents who show interest in the phone box). Although the work that represents secret agents tapping the phone box can also be associated with Orwellian practices such as spying on conversations, we only want to highlight here how abandoned urban entities can be reinterpreted as an entity that can attract interest, going beyond its attributes of desolation and neglect. And these interpretations tie in with the larger theme, as we show in other examples, of Banksy's interests in how technology is potentially dangerous, invading one's privacy.

4. *A FAST-FOOD CUSTOMER IS A CAVEMAN*

In this next artwork, a caveman is portrayed as holding a tray with what looks like fast-food.

The conceptual metaphor conveyed in Figure 5 lies in the integration of two domains – *FAST FOOD* and *A CAVEMAN* – that belong to different contextual fields. In this example, the domains are in an antithetical relationship, namely 'modernity' (*FAST FOOD*) versus 'very ancient past' (*CAVEMAN*). Unlike Figures 2 and 4, where the antitheses were more interpretative, the antithesis in this artwork is more stereotypical. The counterposition *PRESENT VS. PAST*, or *MODERNITY VS. ANTIQUITY*, represents the use of two opposite elements that we have only discussed so far in Figure 3 in the representation of 'freedom' and 'lack of freedom.' What Banksy seems to express is a criticism of the fast-food culture, here represented by a *FAST-FOOD CUSTOMER*, which is associated with the condition of cultural and civil backwardness. The concept of the *CAVEMAN* may represent these meanings, but it also conveys an image of fast-food as a primitive habit instead of an expression of some form of modernity. In that respect, several antitheses seem to be relevant, for example *HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY* nutritional habits or *ADVANCED VS. BACKWARD* scientific insights into the relationship between food and health.



Figure 5. "Caveman"

5. A WEAPON IS A NON-WEAPON

In these two examples, the process of metaphorization takes into account two domains that do not belong to the realm of weapons but are placed in a specific visual context.

Specifically, the image on the right in Figure 6 shows two characters from Quentin Tarantino's movie "Pulp Fiction" in which the guns are replaced by bananas. Similarly, the prototypical image of a protester – in the act of throwing what could be a stone or a Molotov cocktail – is reinterpreted with a bouquet of flowers. The contrastive substitution of a non-weapon in an image that includes a



Figure 6. “Flower Molotov cocktail” (left) and “Pulp Fiction” (right)

weapon allows the artist to remove violence-associated meanings from iconic representations. Clearly, in the example, the use of antithesis is part of the metaphorical representation. In conceptual terms, the metaphors *A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL IS A BOUQUET* and *A GUN IS A BANANA* summarize Banksy’s seeming intent to downplay the dramatic load of these images. A further interpretation might also consider the ridiculous nature of violence itself. Paraphrasing the possible meanings of these artworks, Banksy seems to suggest something like: “What if discontented protesters threw flowers at their opponents instead of Molotov cocktails; and gave bananas to each other, rather than point a gun at them?” Thus, we suggest, Banksy here wants to emphasize the ridiculousness of violence in the world by using a clear antithesis *MOLOTOV COCKTAIL VS. BOUQUET OF FLOWERS*.

6. *A SHOPPING BAG IS A NATIONAL FLAG*

Although Figure 7 can be associated with the *POPULATED ENTITY IS AN ABANDONED URBAN ENTITY* metaphor, because an old electric installation is used as a structural base for a pictorial element, a further conceptualization seems to be predominant.

As Figure 7 shows, a small group of children is staring at what looks like a shopping bag from the British multinational retailer Tesco while they are holding their hands on their chests. Figure 7 evokes official events where citizens of a country sing the national anthem while paying respect to the flag. If, in representational terms, the conceptual metaphor *A SHOPPING BAG IS A NATIONAL FLAG*



Figure 7. "Tesco bag"

seems fairly clear, what needs further explanation is the general meaning conveyed by the artwork. Considering the young age of the subjects and their reverent attitude towards the SHOPPING BAG, we may conclude that Banksy intends to highlight how, for the youngest generations, consumerism (here metonymically represented by the Tesco shopping bag) is their real nationality. In this sense, the concept of nationality may stand for the complex values and attitudes in which the youngest generations believe. In terms of antithesis, the contrast between SHOPPING BAG and NATIONAL FLAG can be suggested in terms of an almost worthless 'commodity' versus an awe-inspiring collective value such as 'nationalism.' Although this antithesis does not present a neat opposition such as 'freedom'/'lack of freedom' (Figure 3) or 'modernity'/'ancient past' (Figure 5), this example seems to communicate a strong opposition between two entities that share nothing in terms of characteristics.

7. A REFUGEE IS AN ICONIC CHARACTER

Banksy has created a series of artworks in an attempt to express his ideas and concerns about the European migrant crisis. These two examples give rise to clear metaphoric conceptualizations.



Figure 8. “Steve Jobs” (left) and “Raft of the Medusa” (right)

One artwork shows Steve Jobs – the iconic co-founder of Apple Inc. – in the shape of a refugee seeker. The artwork, sprayed on a wall in the Calais refugee camp called ‘the Jungle,’ serves to highlight how Steve Jobs himself was related to the condition of migrants (since Jobs’s biological father was a Syrian migrant). The bland black bag, a symbol of poverty and instability, contrasts antithetically with a Macintosh computer, a symbol of innovation and progress (INNOVATION VS. POVERTY). In this sense, the metaphor THE REFUGEE IS STEVE JOBS lends the refugee the status of an iconic character. A similar process takes place in the other artwork where the famous painting “The Raft of the Medusa” by Théodore Géricault is associated with a modern tragedy in which the survivors ask for help from a luxury yacht in the distance. In this case, the survivors of the Medusa represent how sea tragedies, such as the one of the immigrants in the Mediterranean, cannot be identified with any specific historical period, but belong to the history of mankind in terms of a constant or recurring event. Hence, the construction REFUGEES ON A BOAT ARE THE SURVIVORS ON THE RAFT OF THE MEDUSA stands for the attempt to give an iconic meaning to THE REFUGEE IS STEVE JOBS. In these artworks, the antithesis associates two subjects that have nothing in common other than being human beings with a certain impact on the media. If, on the one hand, the REFUGEES are a mass of nameless people, on the other hand, both STEVE JOBS and the SURVIVORS ON THE RAFT OF THE MEDUSA are identified as iconic and prototypical representations.

8. *A CHILD IS A SECURITY GUARD*

In line with the juxtaposition of contradictory and antithetical domains used by Banksy to convey complex political and social messages, a further example is the artwork in which a young girl is searching a soldier.



Figure 9. "Security girl"

The rhetorical meaning of the artwork in Figure 9 concerns the younger generation as the only authority, to the point of exerting control over figures (such as soldiers) that are prototypically regarded as an expression of social powers. By conceptualizing a *CHILD* in terms of a *SECURITY GUARD*, Banksy performs an antithetical reversal of roles and positions, according to a perspective that sees children as the only authentic authority (*ADULT* vs. *CHILD AUTHORITY*). In this sense, the artist claims that children's innocence dominates the adult values of security and control. From this perspective, the use of the antithesis is relevant to conveying a strong meaning, which a metaphor alone could hardly have recreated with the same effectiveness.

9. *THE HUMAN ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITY IS A BRITTLE OBJECT*

The artwork in Figure 10 presents the symbol of a supranational organization such as the European Union, identified symbolically⁴ by its flag.



Figure 10. “EU”

The abstract nature of the symbol is reduced to a BRITTLE OBJECT. In the artwork, a manual worker breaks one of the stars of the European Union flag by using a hammer and chisel. In a similar way to the “Tesco Bag” (Figure 7), this artwork shows how Banksy puts in antithesis two elements that share few characteristics and belong to opposite domains such as ‘abstract’ (European Union) and ‘practical’ (or ‘concrete’) entities (something brittle). The antithesis could be described as ABSTRACT AND SOLID VS. CONCRETE AND BRITTLE. As some metaphor scholars have claimed (Kövecses, 2010, pp.91–92), the idea of associating an abstract domain such as THE HUMAN ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITY with a BRITTLE OBJECT serves to highlight its inherent fragility. In this sense, Banksy conveys the idea that

4. In line with Forceville (2013), the flag can also operate metonymically, inasmuch as many symbols have been described as being rooted in metonymy.

even institutions that seem to be of crucial importance and that are responsible for reassuring stability may collapse.

10. *STATUE OF LIBERTY IS A CHILD*

Similar to *A CHILD IS A SECURITY GUARD*, a further artwork that gives children a symbolic meaning is Banksy's conceptualization of the Statue of Liberty in terms of a young girl picking her nose (Figure 11).



Figure 11. "Freedom girl"

The decision to emphasize this particular gesture – in association with the lack of poise and elegance of the clothing compared with the canonical image of the statue – not only highlights the innocence of the notion of freedom, but also works antithetically (*VULGARITY* vs. *DIGNITY*, i.e., the vulgarity of picking one's nose vs. the political dignity of the Statue of Liberty). The metaphor *THE STATUE OF LIBERTY IS A CHILD* not only personifies freedom, it also connects the concept of freedom to positive values associated with the semantic field of childhood.

11. *PROHIBITION IS A TOY*

In line with the reinterpretation of *SECURITY DEVICES* in terms of more neutral or even aesthetically pleasing non-urban entities, the two artworks in Figure 12 present a similar conceptualization.

Two pairs of children are playing with two prohibitions, "Graffiti is a crime" and "No ball games," respectively, with the intent of using a spray can or of playing



Figure 12. “Graffiti is a crime” (left) and “No ball games” (right)

a ball game. The conceptualization of the two PROHIBITIONS in terms of A TOY reinterprets a symbol of control and constraint as a prototypical expression of fun. A crucial element that establishes the contextual metaphoric conceptualization regards the functional similarities between the PROHIBITION and the TOY. If, on the one hand, the children on the left in Figure 12 are willing to take the depicted spray can to use it, the children in the right image, on the other hand, use the ban as an actual ball. In terms of antithesis, the artwork refers to the juxtaposition between a ‘ball’/‘graffiti’ and something that denies their meaning, for instance the prohibition to ‘play ball’ and to spray ‘graffiti.’ This antithesis could be described as AUTHORIZATION VS. PROHIBITION.

12. A TV SET IS A PET (A FIGURE OF AFFECTION)

In this artwork, Banksy portrays a young girl in an affectionate moment in front of a TV set (Figure 13).

The artist conceptualizes a commodity – central in children’s lives – as an object of warm feelings. The metaphor A TV SET IS A PET (A FIGURE OF AFFECTION), as affective as a puppy or a fluffy toy, is used by Banksy as an element of criticism of the role that media addiction has on young generations. A similar approach has been adopted in the conceptualization of A SHOPPING BAG IS A NATIONAL FLAG, in which the artist uses the image of a common Tesco shopping bag to denote the impact that consumerist society has on children. In this sense, A TV SET IS A PET (A FIGURE OF AFFECTION) plays an analogous role, but highlights the role of TV. The affective nature of the relationship between the little girl and the TV set is clearly expressed by the warm and playful hug and an expression of joy.

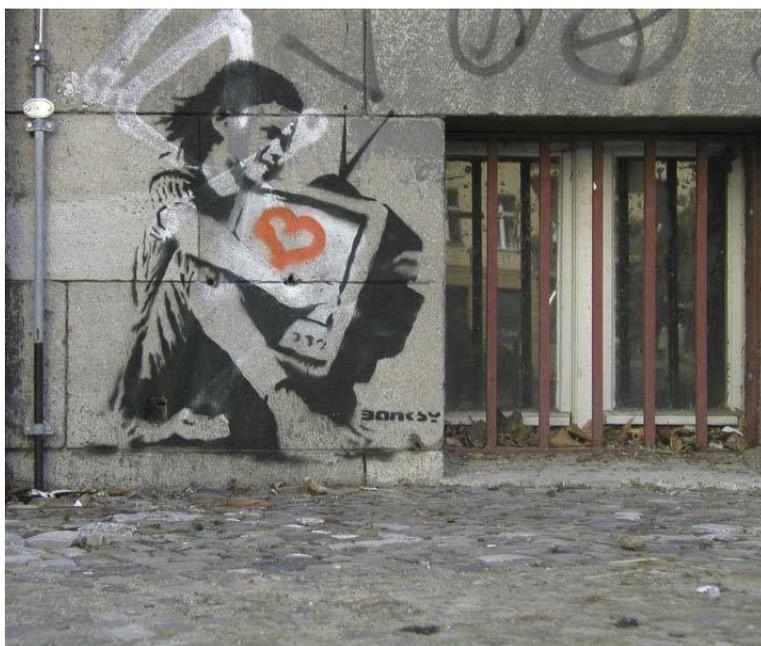


Figure 13. "TV girl"

6. Discussion and conclusion

In this article we have explored antitheses and metaphors in a selection of seventeen of Banksy's graffiti artworks. By following a process of metaphor identification based on Forceville (2008), we have identified a series of pictorial metaphorical conceptualizations representing Banksy's artistic and contextual perspective. As we anticipated, and as most of the artworks clearly show, Banksy tends to create his artworks by a contraposition of visual elements that are characterized by opposite semantic and affective values. This construction – according to a definition by Fahnestock (1999) – places contrasted or opposed terms in parallel with the aim of achieving particular rhetorical functions. For instance, if the artworks that represent the NON-WEAPON IS A WEAPON metaphor put in opposition objects that aim to offend (e.g., A GUN and A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL) and non-offensive entities (e.g., A BANANA and A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS), a similar contrast operates in the metaphor A REFUGEE IS AN ICONIC CHARACTER. In fact, the image of unknown and nameless entities such as refugee seekers is associated with famous and iconic characters, events and works of art (e.g., STEVE JOBS and THE RAFT OF THE MEDUSA). A similar approach is expressed by the SHOPPING BAG IS A NATIONAL FLAG metaphor where an inexpensive, disposable and consumerism-related object (A SHOPPING BAG) is contrasted with a highly symbolic and emotional one (A NATIONAL FLAG).

The counterposition used by Banksy seems also to involve the actual functions of the domains. For instance, the artworks that employ the conceptualization of PROHIBITION IS A TOY present a reversal of how the depicted objects are used. The pairs of children shown are using the two prohibitions 'Graffiti is a crime' and 'No ball games' specifically with the intent of using a spray can and of playing a ball game. In this sense, the prohibition sign for a game becomes an object in the game itself. If these examples represent an attitude toward counterposition a further tendency associates the attributions of higher meanings and values with common products and commodities. A Tesco SHOPPING BAG assumes the valence of a patriotic symbol such as a NATIONAL FLAG. Banksy produces a similar effect in depicting a CAVEMAN holding a tray of fast food, thereby attributing to FAST FOOD itself a dimension of primitiveness and backwardness. In this example, the artwork gives to common products such as fast food a quality and a symbolic meaning that goes beyond their material value. A similar effect is brought about in the images that employ the TV SET IS A PET (A FIGURE OF AFFECTION) metaphor. By considering a TV set as a general expression of media involvement, Banksy attributes to such a symbolic commodity a further, non-literal meaning. A young child is portrayed in an affectionate hug with the TV set, showing how the media have become so pervasive in children's everyday lives that a TV set can play the affective role of a puppy or a fluffy toy. Finally, a further tendency that may be observed in Banksy's graffiti art is the frequent use of children as its main subjects. Banksy's reference to children serves the purpose of voicing criticism of encompassing systems such as consumerism (A SHOPPING BAG IS A NATIONAL FLAG) and media entertainment (A TV SET IS A PET / A FIGURE OF AFFECTION), both of which victimize the younger generation. In addition, as the artwork involving the metaphor A CHILD IS A SECURITY GUARD indicates, a child can serve to express a role reversal, by showing how an adult form of power and control (the soldier) can become the victim of its own authority. In this sense, the figure of a young girl represents the opposite to the meanings that are prototypically associated with military forces (i.e., 'innocence'/'playfulness' vs. 'experience'/'seriousness'). The association between children and similar denotative features is also expressed in the STATUE OF LIBERTY IS A CHILD metaphor. In the artwork, age, innocence and playfulness are projected onto the notion of LIBERTY.

As our analysis has shown, metaphor plays a crucial role in giving shape to Banksy's artworks and in representing the meanings that the author wants to convey. It has also shown the importance of analyzing antitheses along with the metaphors in visual artworks; the specific examples selected help us understand how a conceptualization can be expressed visually and which meanings can be associated with it. While visual metaphor studies tend to discuss arbitrarily selected material for the sake of theoretical issues, we have aimed to contextualize our analysis within a series of select examples in order to show how the presence

of concept and content tendencies can be exploited by a particular artist. This article should be regarded as a further attempt to expand the studies of visual/pictorial metaphors and antitheses, a growing body of work in which artworks are also interpreted according to conceptual dynamics and not only in relation to their thematic, semiotic and representational properties.

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