



FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Exhibition catalog
and collaterals

RESEARCH

About the project:

The Project is based on the famous essay by Roland Barthes which introduces the theory of Post-structuralism by tracing its journey from structuralism.

The concept behind the exhibition catalog is to understand/decode signs present in our culture that have gained wide acceptance and popularity through its image/branding/signs.

From their roots in sheer arbitrary to the new found meaning in the popular culture, it stands as the target of understanding the multiplicity of meaning associated with these brands and their branding/ways of communication.

This exhibition catalog is a collection of works by artists that capture a pivotal shift in the way of seeing and perceiving. The works within the catalog focus on the cultural signs that have gained wide acceptance and popularity, charged/influenced by the biases present in our culture to derive meaning from it.

There is usage of techniques of cliché, parody, pastiche, appropriation, and satire to build a narrative that is beyond what the artist of an independent cultural sign intended to communicate to begin with. Found in translation aims to draw attention to a way of embracing the structuralist perspective of giving meaning to things only in relation to a system/culture it exists in, or what surrounds it but at the same time taking in the post-structuralist perspective that meaning is not only reliant on what is just present Infront of us but also by what is absent, giving the viewers the opportunity to explore the multiplicity of meanings inherent in these signs.

The catalog focuses on the artists/designers such as Banksy, Ai Wei Wei, Corita Kent, Ron English, Wang Guangyi, Andy Warhol etc who embraced and justified this process of creation of meaning not through nothingness but by altering the lens through which we view these pre-existing cultural codes and signs. In doing so it explores what lies beyond the surface and opens up a new array of possibilities characterized by a lack of objectivity, and instead enhancing the objective with deferred meanings, hidden stories, and alternative interpretations.

Brief summary of the essay:

The Death of the Author is an essay by Roland Barthes that highlights a perspective of the structuralist approach in the analysis of a cultural text and lays the foundation of the post-structuralist approach in doing so. Roland Barthes seeks to question the obsession/reliance of scholars or readers on the author's intention and the reason behind an individual cultural text in order to arrive at its one true/definitive meaning when analyzing it. He draws attention to the imperfections/biases present in every man-made institution, narrative devices, character traits, etc. He does this by attempting to persuade the reader/viewer to not think of the author as some divine creator of meaning from nothingness but simply as someone who has utilized pre-existing ideas and concepts to weave a unique/original narrative. He questions the notions of active authorship by bringing forward the poststructuralist foundations, that is to do away with any preoccupation with the author's intention; that may transform the text into an expression of sorts for the author hiding within it more than what is visible to us on the surface and in doing so embrace the power present in the multiplicity of meaning. As a result, Barthes suggests the focus be shifted on the reader than the author, for every reader brings a similar number of pre-existing notions when reading a cultural text and thus the process of true signification through which meaning is communicated relies not just on the author but the reader as well. The essay is concluded not just by accepting the death of the author but also, the birth of the reader.

Decoding the essay in detail:

Death of the Author

1967

Roland Barthes - Cultural & literary theorist

[Barthes Anthology - Image, music, text]

- Abandoned structuralism
- Embraced post-structuralism

Theory of analysing culture & literature

Structuralism

- The meaning we derive from a cultural text relies ~~on~~ upon much wider cultural codes & ideas

- ~~A~~ refusing analysis of individual cultural texts as self contained objects but to consider the wider cultural codes & meaningful systems of which that cultural text was a part of.

Post structuralism

Barthes questions -

The meaning that we derive from any individual cultural text is so reliant on wider cultural codes & systems. Should we really give that much credit to any individual author at all?

From the essay -

'A text is not a line of words releasing a single "Theological" meaning (The "message of the author-God") But a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original ~~at~~ Blend & clash.'

'The author's only power is to mix writings.' The inner "thing" he thinks to "translate" is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words.'

[Decode] - Here Barthes is arguing that no cultural text can ever truly be original, ~~and~~ as it

draws upon narrative devices, character traits etc from pre-existing books, films, televisions etc

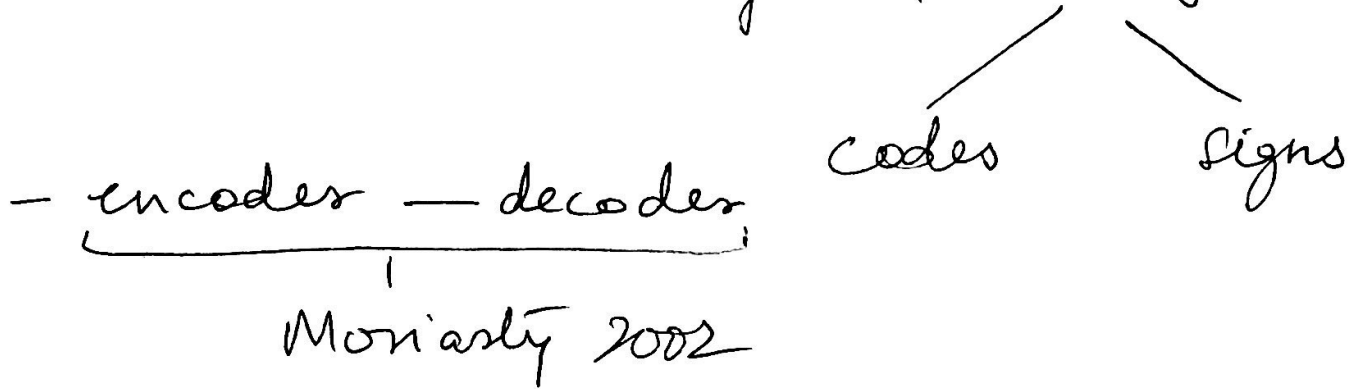
Barthes in this argument is suggesting that we might more accurately consider an Author some kind of a divine creator of meaning from nothingness but instead a sort of collage maker - piecing together pre-existing ideas in a unique & original way.

→ 'In ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose "performance" - the mastery of the narrative code - may ~~be~~ possibly be admired but never his "Genius".'

* meaning in such societies someone might be celebrated for their articulation of a story but no one is interested in whether they created the meanings present within that or not.

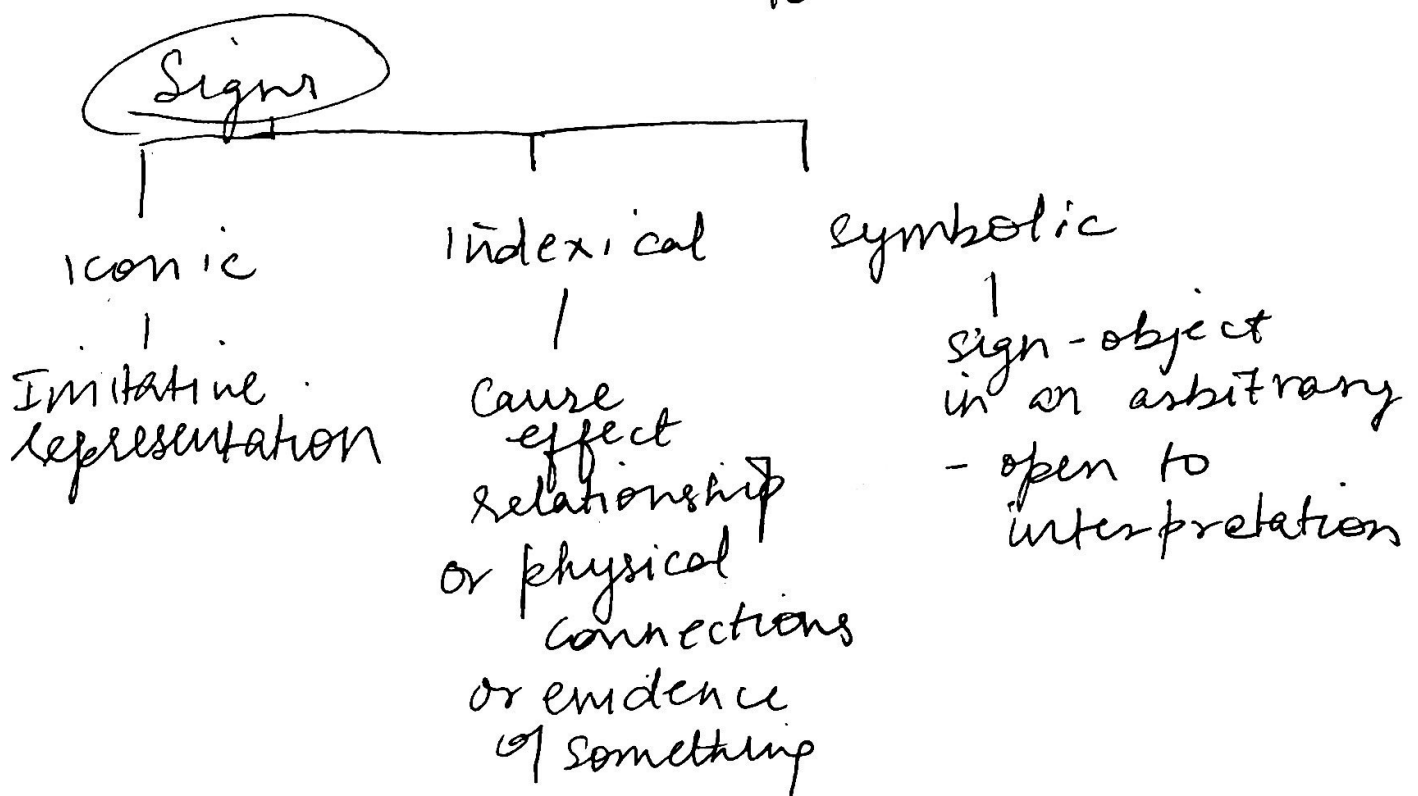
The Structuralist perspective in the essay:

Semiotics — study of signs / symbols
— exchange of messages



— Charles Sanders Peirce's

representman — object — Interpretant
sign what it refers to viewers interpretation



- Altering the meaning of a pre-existing narrative
- working in the traditions of the pre-existing versions of that narrative means that very few are interested in anything that they created themselves.
- Texts in our contemporary culture tend to hide their influences & seek to present themselves as original.
- Barthes argues that the process is still very much the same. Active authorship is more of an assembling different influences rather than some kind of a process of creating something from nothing. Hence, ~~we~~ we should refer to the creator of a literary text not as an author but a scriptor.

* 'The scriptor no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he

draws a writing that can know no halt: [...] The book itself is only a tissue of signs.'

- Barthes in doing so is not attacking the skill that the creation of a cultural text undoubtedly involves, he is asking us to reconsider how we think of that act.

→ The 'Intentional Fallacy' (*)

When analysing any cultural text we should not be too preoccupied with what the author's intentions were.

For Barthes - literature scholars have been too preoccupied with uncovering an author's intention in the meaning of a text.

- (*) 'The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent Allegory of the Fiction, the voice of a single person, the "Author" "confiding" in us.'

- through this approach that the text is itself is simply a flawed expression of a set of meanings which the author themselves holds on to. In this mode, the goal of any analysis is almost to look through the text to seek what meanings it is that the author is still clinging to.
- Acc to Barthes this restricts the analysis of the work - limiting a way of looking at things. Succumbing to such an approach where one is only interested in analysing the authors intention behind a piece of text relies on two assumptions -
 - First, that it is possible to uncover what an artist intention with a cultural text was
 - Second, that that meaning is the objectively correct meaning of that text.

→ Barthes seems to refuse BOTH in the Death of the Author

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The Post-structuralist perspective in the essay:

Barthes does not suggest that trying to understand an author's intention with a text is ~~not~~ not an interesting pursuit, but he argues strongly that to arrive at a definitive conclusion is near impossible.

- He then draws upon the impossibility of deriving an author's intention to suggest that maybe a cultural text does not have an objective meaning at all. For, just as the author brings all those pre-existing texts they've seen, all those cultural codes & the pre-existing influences to the text when they create it.

So does the reader bring a similar amount of pre-existing notions when they read it.

This means that the meaning that any given reader will derive from a text ~~at~~ will be different of that of any other.

- ⊛ 'A text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures & entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused & that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author.'

The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed:

- Barthes argues that the process of signification through which meaning is communicated, is only truly completed when a text is read & any given reader will have a different reading of it & thus any text has multiple meanings

- He doesn't call this a defeat of literally analysis, instead he sees it as a truly freeing notion in which the emphasis is shifted away from the writing & creation of texts & towards the experience of the reader.

⊕ The most important part of the essay is not so much the death of the author but instead the birth of the reader

Understanding Structuralism

- While many of the ideas within the death of the Author draw upon ideas that extend ideas from Structuralism, it is in pronouncing the birth of the reader that Barthes really lays the foundations for post-structuralism to begin.

Structuralism

- focuses on analysis of cultural texts in ^{terms of} relationship and individually.
- Based on the presence of consistent structures which inform how these texts are created as well as the meanings that we derive from them.
- Requires us to view culture in the broadest sense possible & not as a series of disconnected books, films etc.

Eg: Genre - set up certain expectations

1950s France - Ferdinand de Saussure (linguist)
- study of language.

Diachronic linguistics
Study of evolution of lang
over time

→ Synchronic linguistics
Study of how a lang
operates at a fixed point in
time.

Saussure - (on language)

④ The bond between the signifier & the signified is arbitrary (Random)

- Why do we call a tree a tree & not something else. What about its hints leaves or branches

- It is all based on a sort of agreement.

- language is therefore a self contained system, and words rather than acting as descriptors of certain actions, or objects etc they work on principle of Differentiation

⑤ The conceptual part of linguistic value is determined solely by relations & differences with other signs in the language.

PAROLE - An individual verbal utterance or written word, phrase or sentence

- It only comes to hold meaning due to their relationship with other phrases or utterances in the wider linguistic structure called the 'LANGUE'

LANGUE - The linguistic system as a whole.

Analyzing what & how a given Parole come to mean something can only be achieved with reference to the langue of which it is a part.

- Language is inherently structural & determined by relationships & differences to the analysis of culture.

- We can only understand how an individual cultural text - like Parole - comes to mean by observing its relationships with other ~~cultural~~ texts in the broader langue of cultural.

Structuralist culture criticism

- Robert Scholes (2 distinct approaches)

[uncovers grammar or Poetics of literature or film or other narrative forms.]

high structuralism

Grand claims about how cultural texts infer meaning

- Semantic relationships within a text

low structuralism

practical & immediate claims about how cultural texts infer meaning

- Myths, Poetics (Lévi Strauss)

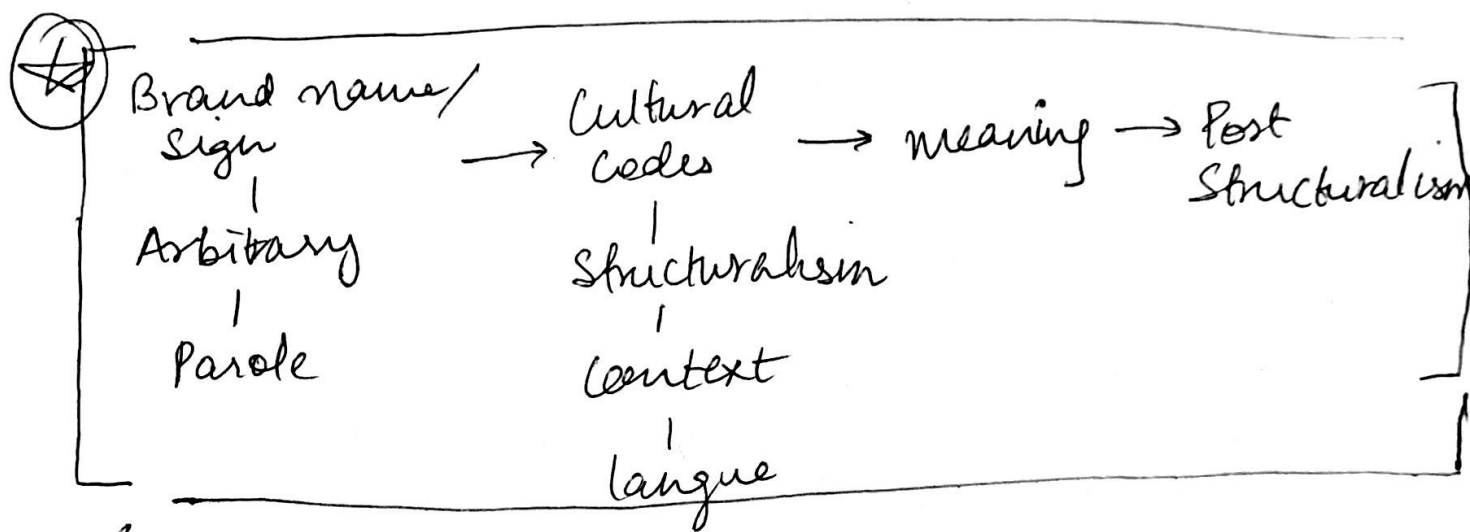
- Vladimir Propp - human storytelling

- Plot functions - constant elements of tales.

High Structuralism

- focusses on semantic relationships within a text
- ~~suggests~~ semantics - having relationships with the other words present in a sentence, 'Each word will ~~do~~ have relationships with other words in the language that do not occur at this point in time, but are capable of doing so. [HAWKES 1977, Emphasis in original]
- Meaning of text is derived from semantic relationships, images, sound, words & upon ideas dominant in the wider culture they are part of.
- Content is essential to infer the meaning of a text.

Barthes - cultural codes - Any piece of knowledge that is so widely accepted by the society that a cultural text can kind of use it as a shorthand to invoke certain meanings



Saussure -

Language, Structuralism.

↳ fundamentally arbitrary & rather than allowing us to express our experience of the world in some kind of objective manner, instead shapes how we come to know the world

Acc to Barthes - the meaning we derive from cultural texts is heavily influenced by & relies upon the dominant structures of thought of the societies in which they are produced then it raises questions about

Understanding Post-structuralism

why these structures exist.

It prompts us to ask -

- In whose interest such structures exist
- who do they serve
- How they might change over time

Structuralism ——— does not question

descriptive It informs

→ Structuralists are hesitant to answer such questions, confining themselves instead to simply describing what they saw & it is this hesitancy that led to structuralism being challenged by a new theoretical movement known as Post-Structuralism.

Post-Structuralism

Language & all other forms of communication systems such as images & video etc are less perfect at expressing our thoughts & ideas ~~than~~. They simply replicate our thoughts in the mind of the reader or viewer & in doing so most modes of communication are prone to misinterpretation as

or encourage alternative interpretation of what we were trying to express when we first wrote, said or recorded something.

- PS asks what this means for the practice of analyzing cultural texts & questions whether it is ever possible to arrive at a ~~given~~ definitive interpretation of a given text etc.

- PS also asks that in a society where most of our thinking about the world is done through language, it is ever possible to arrive at objective truth or whether the implicit biases surrounding race, gender, & other concepts present in our linguistic & other communicative systems might shape our understanding of the world too.

- Highlights the flaw of language.
Phrases like - "if you see what I mean" or "in a manner of speaking" there is an underlying sense that we are not really in control of the linguistic system.

language is an imperative system of communication but it often leads to miscommunication as well as to a perfect articulation of what we want to express.

- ~~Anxiety~~ of Imperfect nature of language is at the core of Post structuralism & it extends this view to the 'languages' of art & culture

→ The death of the Author

The essay develops on the very same notion by Roland Barthes, 1967.

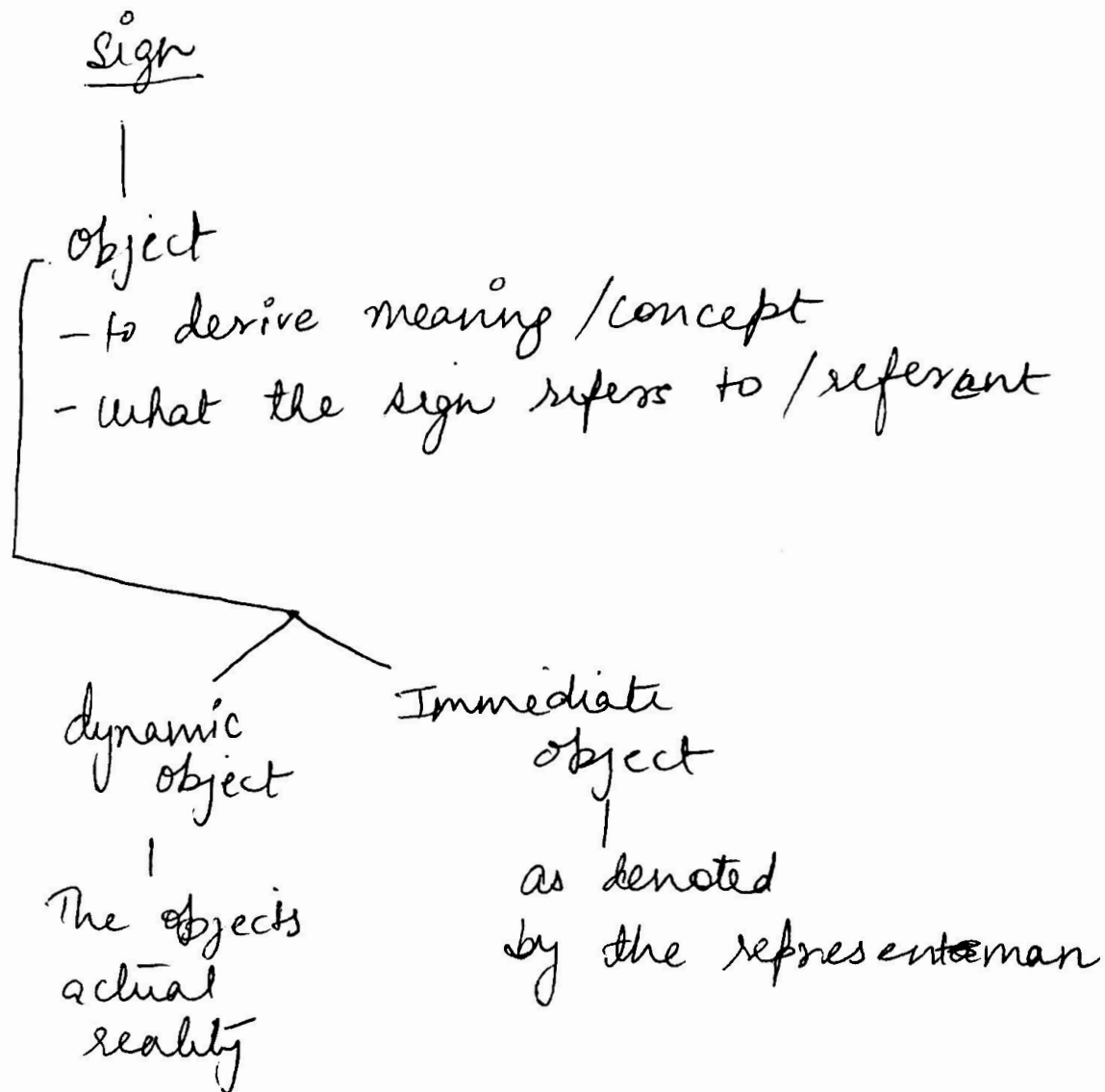
In which he questions previous scholars' obsession with analyzing cultural texts with the goal of identifying what it was the author intended it to mean. In

Such approaches Barthes argues, 'the explanation of a work ... The author "confiding in us." (~~The~~ Essay " ")

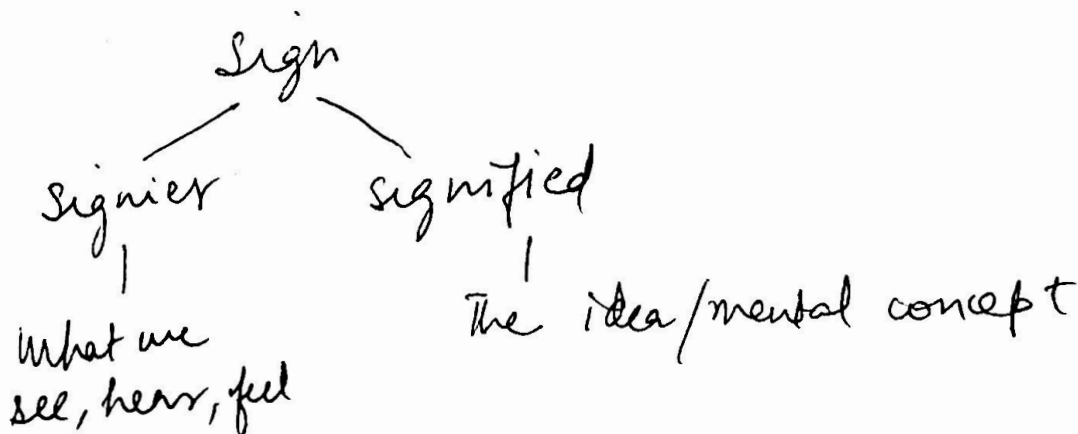
- Barthes asks that if language is imperfect is it ever possible to arrive at an understanding of a text that is 100% accurate to that intended by author
- He also asks if that is the most useful goal to aim for? since most people who interact with a given text do not come to it with an extended knowledge of the authors life or artistic properties
- If we just interact with the text to decipher what the author intended to communicate then in that process we end up ignoring the rich, meaningful possibilities ~~present~~ beyond the authors intention, whatever that may be.
- PS is skeptical that any text has any objective or final meaning but focuses on the possible multiplicity of interpretation.
- PS encourages us ^{not} to pursue some kind of definitive meaning but to celebrate the many & multiple meanings that a given cultural text might invite

- PS positions the critic, or reader as more
imp than the person or people who created
that text.
- PS pushes us to focus less on the life &
opinions of the author behind the text
but to the text in front of us itself &
embrace the surface of meaning present
within it.
- Meaning relies on not what is just as
present in front of us but also by what is
absent
- Any use of a given term always carries
within it the 'trace' of the opposite
- Deconstruction does not contend that a
text can mean anything at all but it seeks
to draw out the hidden meanings beneath
its surface

Understanding signs and semiotics



Ferdinand De Saussure - founder of Modern linguistics



Popular brands and their taglines

Taglines - Brands

Coca cola - open happiness [""* terms & conditions apply]

McDonalds - im lovin' it [im livin' it]

KFC - its finger lickin good

Disneyland - the happiest place on earth

Nike - Just do it

Uber - Move the way you want

Staples - That was easy

Walmart - Save money. Live better

Burger King - Have it your way

Apple - Think different [think indifferent]

Lays - Betcha cant eat just one
[Betcha cant eat this one]

The Newyork times - All the news thats fit to print

Target - Expect more. Pay less
[Expect no more. Pay relentless]
[" some more. " "]

Understanding signs present around us:

Copy right

100% off

50% off

Sale

CC

C

TM

Trademark

Barcode



ND
No derivatives
works

creative commons licence



Attribution

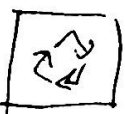
others can copy, distribute,
display perform remix
your work if they
credit your name as
requested



- Fragile goods inside



- handle with care



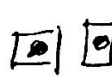
- Recyclable



- Flammable materials



- Temp - sensitive goods



- Veg / non veg



- Capitalism



Share Alike

others can
distribute your
work only under
a license
identical to the
one you have
chosen for your
work



- Non commercial

others can copy,
distribute, display, remix
or perform your work but
for Non-com purposes

Understanding the multiplicity of meaning through famous brands in our culture:

McDonalds

- Mascot Ronald McDonald
- Golden arches
- Red white stripes
- Red smile
- I'm lovin' it
- ~~Q~~ Happy meal
- Big Mac
- Red hair
- Red yellow white

Coca cola

red stripe/Ribbon open happiness*
Font
the letter 'C'

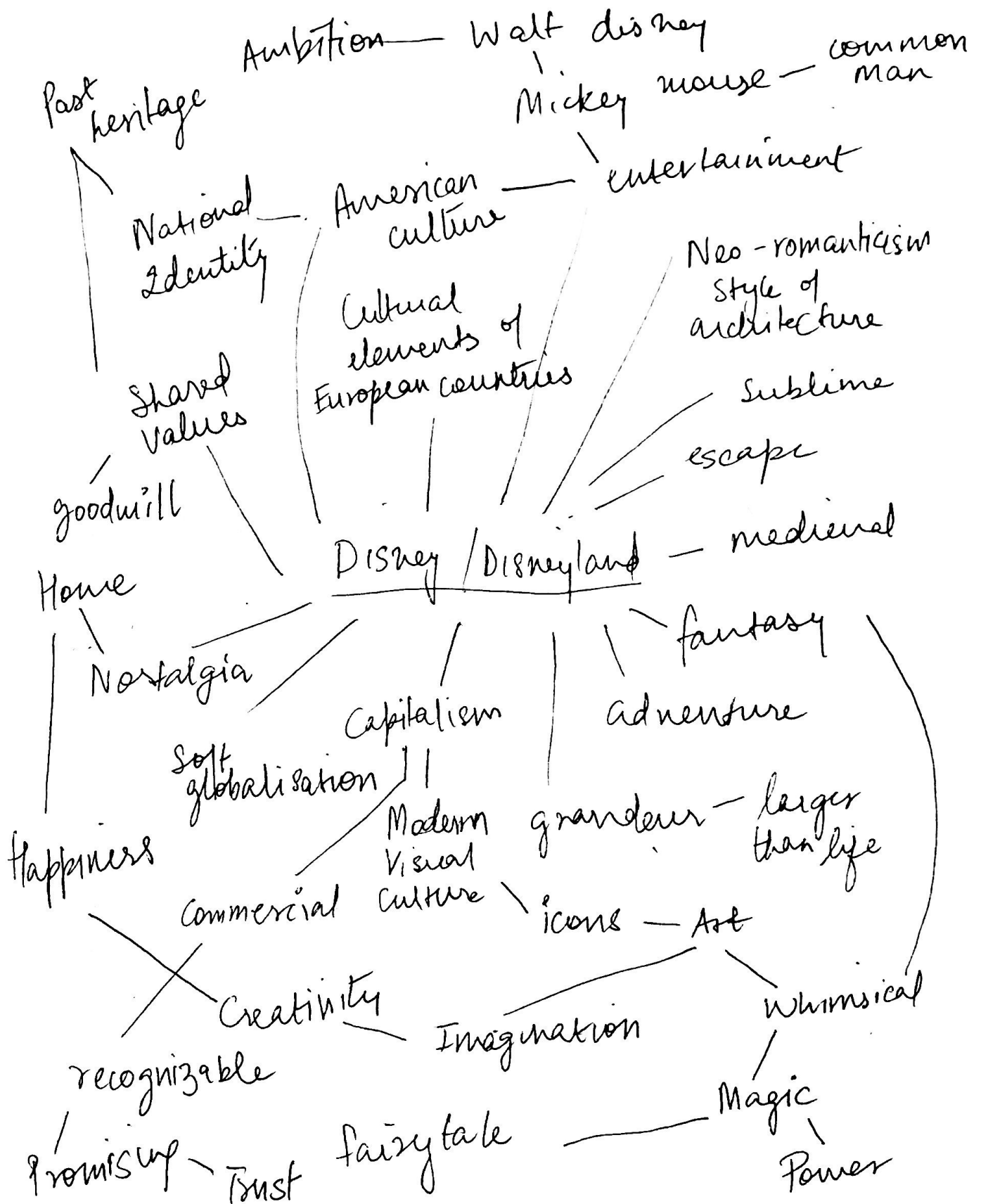
terms &
conditions
apply

Conflict? Ubiquitous? domination?

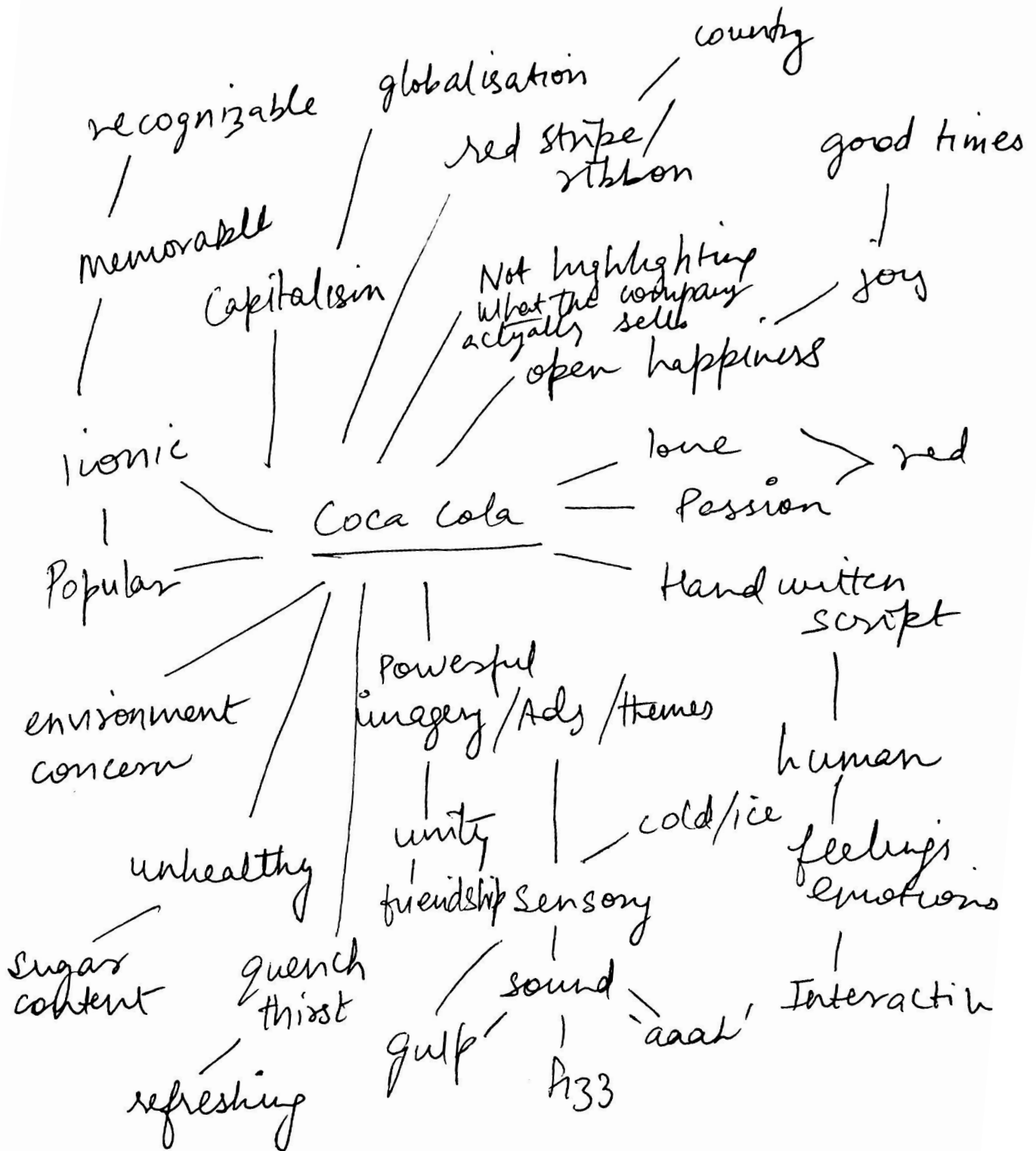
Happy water? > H₂O? Conquer?

Commerce? Colonize?

Multiplicity of meaning in Disney:



Multiplicity of meaning in Coca-cola:



Multiplicity of meaning in McDonalds:

McDonalds Semiotics -

(M)

letter M

- im lovin' it

- Burger, fries: Conventional

- Golden arches: Structural

- cheap fast food: Contextual

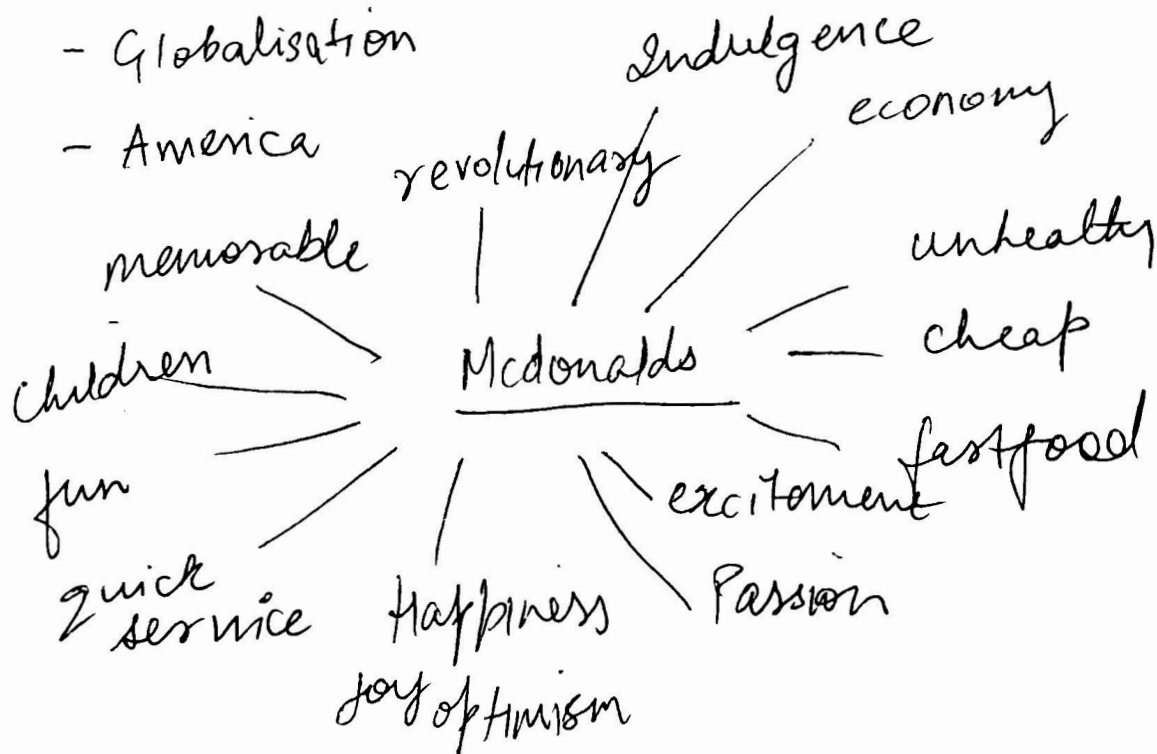
- Inviting, welcoming, friendly: Performative

- obesity, health

- Capitalism

- Globalisation

- America



[yellow is the most popular color among 5-12 yr olds]

[red - longest wavelength
- causes forceful & expansive behavior]

[red - color of fruit-readiness to eat]

Exploring multiplicity through cultural signs and type:

What
Why
Who
When
Where

YES AND
YES AND
YES a^e_p
YES AS
YES d^s
YES

LIFE



LIFE

LIFE



LET'S GO

LIKE

LINE



TIME
PRIME

PRO LIFE RATE



PRO FILE



Exploring type for the catalog:

SERVED

SERVED



SERVED

OPEN

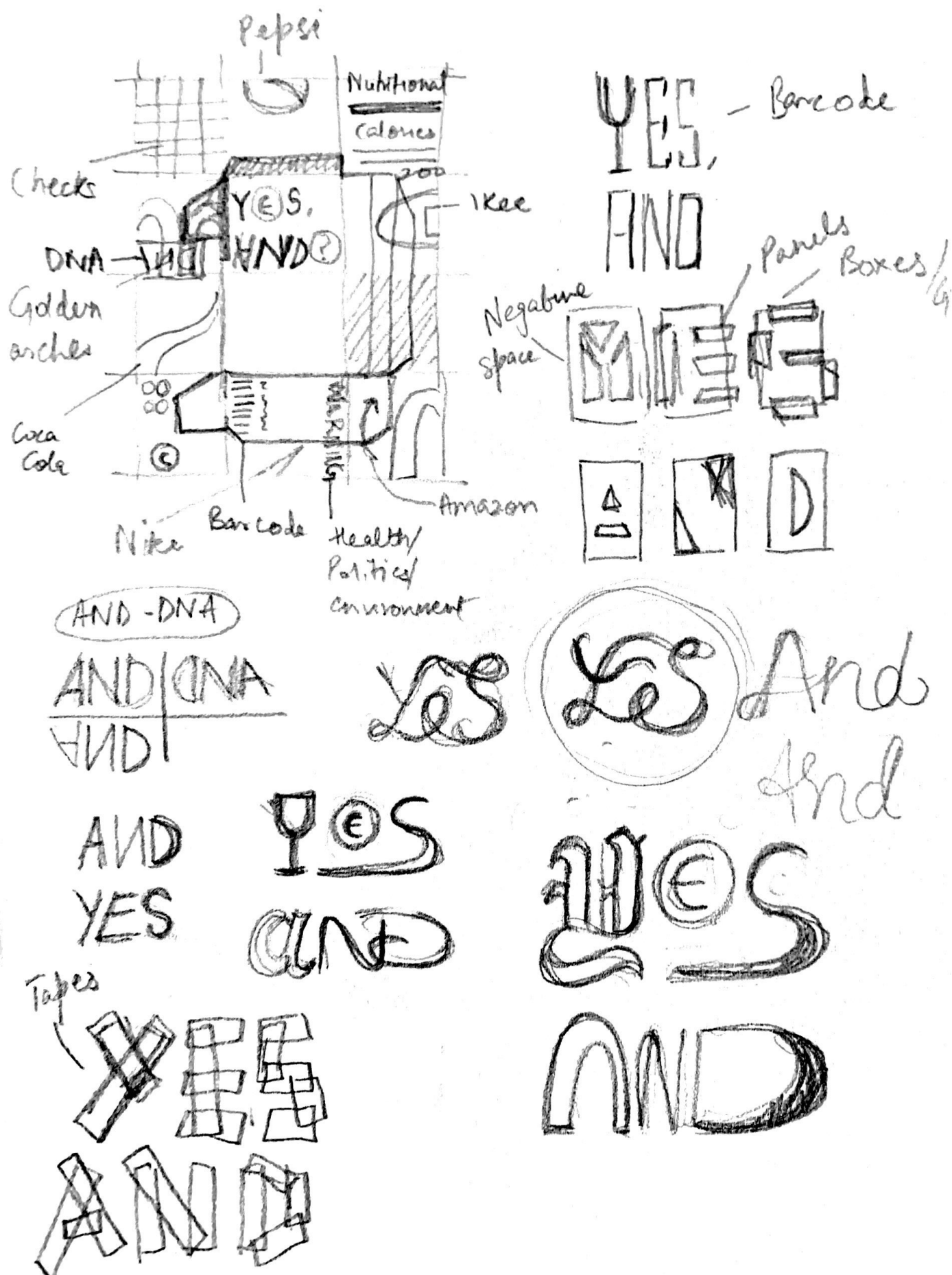
SERVED

SERVED

Broken
happiness

OPEN HAPPINESS

Exploring type for title design of the catalog:

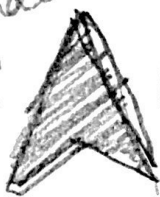


Fragile material



freeze

Handle with care



1/2 Veg/Non Veg Symbol
No additive



Braille

Y	.	11	10	01
E	.	01	01	10
S	.	11	11	10
A	.	10	11	11
N	.	00	01	01
D	.	00	10	10

Semaphores

Y	-	↖	↗
E	-	↖	↗
S	-	↖	↗
A	-	↖	↗
N	-	↖	↗
D	-	↖	↗

Sign language

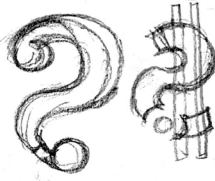
Y	-	W	W	W
E	-	W	W	W
S	-	W	W	W
A	-	W	W	W
N	-	W	W	W
D	-	W	W	W

YES
AND

?



X + ?



? + \$

Asterisk



AND

AND

FOUND IN
TRANSLATION



AND
AND

YES
AND

FOREWORD

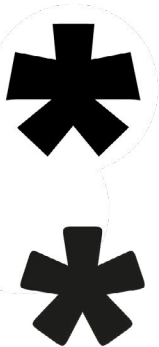


YES,
AND

CO

YES
AND

AND



U

FOUND IN
TRANSLATION

Exploring visual language for the catalog:

