

A Socio-Semiotic Analysis of the Symbolic Aspects of American Sculptures

Noor Qassim Mahmoud

E-mail: noor.qasem2301@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Asst. Prof. Ibtihal Mahdi. Al Tameemi (Ph.D.)

E-mail: ibtihalaltameemi@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

University of Baghdad- College of Languages

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Abstract:

Sculptures as physical objects are constructed from various materials to commemorate or remember a significant person or an event that plays a crucial role in the historical and cultural heritage of a particular community. The current study delves into the semiotic aspects of American sculptures, focusing on statues and monuments. Whereas previous studies have examined public sculptures from a historical and aesthetic perspective, based on various theoretical frameworks, without conducting a comprehensive analysis of their symbolic elements. This study tries to bridge this gap by providing a more holistic understanding of the sculptures' symbols. The present study aims to investigate and interpret the symbolic aspects embedded within images of four American sculptures, collected from various websites, from a social semiotic perspective. It also aims to identify the main functions of these symbolic elements in representing the principles of American society. Accordingly, the social-semiotic approach is employed to analyse the selected images, represented by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) model, in terms of representational, interpersonal, and compositional meta-functions, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

This investigation reveals that American sculptures communicate meaning systematically, whereas there is a preference for using compositional over the other meta-functions, indicating that the viewer is more interested in how the components are arranged within an image. Moreover, these sculptures represent various functions and serve as a means of communication that encompasses semiotic elements; each represents a particular symbolism, and collectively conveying a specific meaning. The researcher concluded that the symbolic aspects of American sculptures portray the ideals and values of their respective society through historical, cultural, social, and political functions. Additionally, embedding various semiotic elements within sculptures effectively contributes to the visual communication and reinforcement of meanings within a specific culture.

Keywords: social semiotics, symbolic aspects, sculptures, American sculptures, visual grammar.

1. Introduction

Green (2023, p.23) indicates that the United States possesses a considerable array of monuments, including the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, which are located on the National Mall; Mount Rushmore is situated on federal land; the Statue of Liberty is at the nation's gateway; and others. As mentioned in Executive Order (EO) 13934, an official directive from the President of the United States to federal agencies, *Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes* (2020), since its establishment, Americans have constructed statues in public places, honouring distinguished figures who established and safeguarded the republic. These monuments commemorate the narrative of American history and embody its highest ideals: reverence for those who came before, affection for liberty, and the pursuit of a perfect union (p.1).

Since these sculptures create visual communication, the researcher examines four American sculptures from the social semiotics perspective by applying the theoretical framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) *Visual Grammar*. The current study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1-What are the symbolic aspects and their meanings in the images of American sculptures?
- 2- What are the functions of those sculptures, and how are they represented?
- 3- Which meta-function is the most predominant in analysing the selected images to convey meaning?

Accordingly, examining the semiotic elements within the images of American sculptures could lead to misinterpretation and a lack of comprehension, as the symbolic significance of American sculptures may embody distinct social values that differentiate them from those found in the Middle East. This research aims to analyse the symbolic aspects of four American sculptures' images, particularly statues and monuments, through the lens of social semiotics. Additionally, it aims to identify the most important purposes behind those symbolic elements that reflect the values of their respective society.

Thus, the researcher hypothesises the following: First, American sculptures are not just three-dimensional structures, but they are a mode of communication composed of symbolic aspects, and each symbol visually conveys a specific meaning. Second, sculptures are visual semiotic components that function to represent historical, cultural, social, and political values. Third, sculptures can be, like language, a means of communication governed by grammatical structures to convey meaning.

This study is significant in expanding the realm of intercultural semiotic studies by investigating the symbolic aspects of public American sculptures using a social semiotic approach from an Eastern perspective. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will be a worthy addition to linguistics, cultural studies, and those interested in semiotics.

2. Previous Studies

Several scholars have studied sculptures, and these studies provide a foundation for this research:

Plunkett (2020) discusses the Northern (Union) and Southern (Confederate) monuments, focusing on American culture related to the Civil War, by comparing and investigating their meanings and impact on modern society. This study employs a comparative model based on a quantitative historical approach. Plunkett concludes that Southern memory shows apparent shifts over generations, but Northern historical memory has changed minimally. Unlike the South, which still has an intense respect for Confederate symbols, the North has no close ties to its history. Plunkett's study has limitations: it relies on data derived from the *Historical Marker Database*, which could miss important monuments. Furthermore, focusing on long-term trends could miss the rapid changes in public sentiment influenced by current issues. A study by Ciccone (2022) analyses the relationship among monuments, identity, and memory, emphasising Yusef Komunyakaa's poem "Facing It," which reflects on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. This study is based on phenomenological theory, utilises a framework that integrates literary analysis, psychoanalysis, and critical theory to evaluate the influence of these aspects on interpreting monuments. Ciccone concludes that monuments are complex locations of remembrance that inspire different ideas on cultural trauma and identity. It is limited to a specific case study of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and is not necessarily applicable to other sites or monuments. Whereas Bowcher, W. L., & Yameng Liang, J. (2022) analyse the interpersonal meaning in statutes. This study employs a combination of diverse analytical tools, including Kress and van Leeuwen's Framework (Reading Images) for visual design analysis, O'Toole's Framework (The Language of Displayed Art), insights from studies on (gesture, body language, and facial expression), and Systemic Functional linguistics. The researchers conclude that this study provides an essential strategy for comprehending how the statues, on a personal level, are connected with the viewers. As a study limitation, it is noted that the interdependence of various meanings of textual, interpersonal, and experiential meanings is briefly discussed.

Previous studies have employed various frameworks to investigate public monuments from historical, socio-political, phenomenological, and psychoanalytical perspectives without thoroughly examining the symbolic aspects of significant American sculptures. The current study tries to bridge this gap by applying Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar as the theoretical framework, which offers a more comprehensive understanding of historical, cultural, social, and political values.

3. Literature review

3.1 Social semiotics

The concept of “social semiotics” was first proposed by Halliday in 1978, asserting that language is intrinsically linked to society, in which he examines language interactions within the framework of social context. Jamil & Al-Tameemi (2023, p.171) explain the semiotic resources as they are defined by Halliday (1978, p.192), “the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically—with our vocal apparatus; with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc.—or using technologies—with pen, ink, and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors, and sewing machines, etc.” Social semiotics is distinct from conventional semiology; it stresses that an image is a social process rather than a product of a single, solitary creative activity (Rose, 2012). As stated by Lami (2022), “Kress and van Leeuwen’s approach starts from a social base. In their view, the meanings expressed by speakers, writers, printmakers, photographers, designers, painters and sculptors are first and foremost social meanings, even though they acknowledge the effect and importance of individual differences” (p.32). Thus, the researcher examines the symbolic aspects in American sculptures, for they can be seen as a mode of meaning communication. According to Riegl (1903), a *sculpture* is an artistic medium that involves the formation of three-dimensional pieces composed of plastic or hard materials. Caves (2005) has defined a *monument* as a physical structure that conveys cultural, historical, and artistic significance while Bonțeanu (2010) and Turner (2003), explain that a *statue* is a physical form that portrays humans or animals; it is a constructed representation designed to honour prominent figures, events, or actions from the past. Furthermore, the word “statue” is generally included under sculpture and monument; Bonțeanu (2010) considers both terms as synonyms, although they have technical differences. In this context, the researcher uses these three terms, considering that sculptures are integral to statues and monuments, and these sculptures serve as the central point. For instance, the *Statue of Liberty* is both a sculpture and

a monument, comprising a large statue of a woman that symbolises freedom.

4. Methodology

The researcher utilises a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, since this study employs the social semiotics approach to analyse the embedded meaning within American sculptures. Creswell (2013) suggests that mixed research methods are relatively new and developing in the health and social sciences, involving a combination of statistical trends and stories to study human and social problems. This method permits a comprehensive analysis, aligning with the framework offered by Kress and van Leeuwen's model of *Visual Grammar*.

4.1 Analytical Model

The methodology of this study employs Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) *Visual Grammar* as a framework, which is based on Halliday's social semiotic approach to language. This framework was first proposed in 1996 and subsequently modified in 2006 and 2021, as outlined in their book, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. They renamed Halliday's meta-functions to *representational*, *interpersonal*, and *compositional*. Hereinafter, the three meta-functions are described below in detail:

Representational Meta-function: This meta-function focuses on individuals, places, and objects depicted in a picture, referred to as "*the represented participants*" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.48). This level is carried on either by *narrative* and/or *conceptual processes*. Processes and circumstances can form the narrative structure. Within *the action process*, the represented participants perform an action, and they can be *an Actor*, the doer or from whom or which the vector departs, and *a Goal*, the participant at whom or which *the vector* is directed. There are two types of action processes: *non-transactional action process* occurs when images have only one represented participant, *only an Actor* (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 58-60). On the other hand, images that feature two participants, an actor and a goal, are referred to as *a transactional action process*. It can be either *bidirectional*, meaning that a vector connects two interactors or participants, and each one plays two roles simultaneously (Actor and Goal), or *unidirectional*, when a vector connects two interactors or participants, but each one performs only one role.

Narrative images can also include secondary participants who are related to the main represented participants through circumstances rather than vectors. These circumstances are *setting* (the participants are related to the setting in different ways), *means* (it is formed by the

tool with which the action is executed) and *accompaniment* (it is a participant in a narrative structure which has no vectorial relation with other participants), (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp.60-61,70-71).

Regarding *the conceptual structure*, the participants' representations are built on their *class, structure or meaning*. This structure is divided into three categories: *classificational processes* relate participants to each other in (a "kind of" relation) and can be either *covert taxonomy* (equally displayed) or *overt taxonomy* (hierarchical purpose) (pp.76-78). *Analytical processes* represent participants as (parts of a whole relation), in which the participants have the roles of a *carrier* (the whole) and any number of *possessive attributes* (the parts) (p.83). Finally, *symbolic processes* describe (what a participant means or is); they can be *symbolic attributive processes* where two participants: a *carrier*, the part whose meaning or identity is established in the relation, and a *symbolic attribute*, the part which represents the meaning or identity itself, or *symbolic suggestive processes*, which only have a *carrier* whose meaning and identity are not being conferred but are coming from its qualities (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 105-107).

Interpersonal Meta-function: This meta-function represents the complex relationships between the represented participants (RPs) and interactive participants (the viewers) through three dimensions: *Contact* is divided into two types in an image: *Demand* when RP is looking directly at the viewer; hence, the viewer feels connected strongly with the RP and *Offer* when RP is looking outside the image or at something or someone within the image. In this case, the viewer is motivated to consider what the image offers (2021, pp.116-118). *Social distance* is related to the size of the frame and distance (*extremely close shot-intimate distance, close shot-close personal distance, medium close shot-far personal distance, medium long shot-close social distance, long shot-far social distance, very long shot-public distance*). As the shot gets closer, it creates a sense of intimacy, whereas a more extended shot creates a more impersonal and distant feel for the viewer (2021, pp. 123-124). The last dimension is *an attitude*, encompassing two types of images: *subjective* and *objective*. *Subjectivity for the horizontal angle* is divided into two types: *involvement for the frontal angle*, in which the viewer is involved with RPs, and *detachment for the oblique angle*, where the viewer is described as being detached and not engaging with RPs. (2021, pp.129, 134, 136). Meanwhile, *subjectivity for the vertical angle* is divided into three types: *Viewer power* for a high angle, *equality* for an eye-level angle, and *representation power* for a low angle. *The objective point of view* can be *action orientation* for the frontal angle,

the angle of maximum involvement, and is oriented towards action. While *knowledge orientation* is for the top-down angle, the angle of maximum power. It is oriented towards ‘theoretical’, objective observation, and it contemplates the world from a god-like point of view (2021, pp.138-140).

Modality: This concept encompasses two types: *naturalistic modality*, which refers to how the visual representation is close to or true to representing reality, such as photos taken by a camera, and *scientific or abstract modality*, which portrays reality in an abstract mode, such as diagrams or geometric shapes. Modality is perceived through the use of *validity markers*, including *colour saturation*, *colour differentiation*, *colour modulation*, *contextualization*, *representation of detail*, *depth*, *illumination*, and *brightness* (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 156-159).

Compositional Meta-function: It relates the representational and interpersonal meanings of the image to each other through three interrelated systems: *information value*, which is represented by *left* and *right*, *top* and *bottom*, *centre*, and *margin*. The elements on the left side function as *given*, something the viewer already knows, while the elements on the right side are identified as *new*, something unknown by the viewer (2021, pp.181, 187). On the other hand, the elements at the top are presented as *ideal*, the idealised or generalised essence of the information, while the bottom part, known as *real*, presents particular and down-to-earth information. Finally, *the centre* is for the elements that are placed in *the middle*, as *the core* component with which all other elements are connected and from which they derive meaning and coherence, and *the margins* for those that are set in *the surroundings*, subservient to the centre (2021, pp.191, 201, 218).

Saliency can create a hierarchy of importance among elements, selecting some as more important and worthy of attention than others, by perceiving factors such as *size*, *sharpness of focus*, *tonal contrast*, *colour contrast*, placement in *the foreground* or *background*, *overlapping*, and *cultural considerations*. Finally, *framing* can be described as “The stronger the framing of an element, the more it is disconnected from its immediate environment and presented as a separate unit” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 182, 205).

Materiality: *Colour* is a semiotic mode and has a specific role in each meta-function. At *the representational level*, colours indicate a spatial link between the RPs in the foreground and background and can be used to denote people, places, and things. On *the interpersonal level*, the image producer associates colours with an intended meaning to the viewer, while on *the compositional level*, colours play

significant roles in salience and framing (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 240-241).

5. Data selection

The current study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. The procedures start with the qualitative method, which is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) framework and then the quantitative one, which relies on the rate of each tool that enhances the present study findings. The researcher selects four American sculptures from various websites. These sculptures represent a crucial and significant role in their respective societies, also they belong to different periods, arranged by the year of their erection from oldest to newest. See Table 1, which contains detailed information for each American sculpture:

Table 1: *This table shows the images of four American sculptures in detail*

No.	Title of the sculpture	The sculptor's name	Date of the sculpture's erection	Place of the sculpture
1	The Statue of Liberty	Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi	1876 – 1886	Liberty Island in New York Harbour
2	Medici Lion Statue	F. Romanelli	1925 – 1927	St. Augustine, Florida
3	Mount Rushmore National Memorial	John Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum	1927 – 1941	Black Hills of South Dakota
4	The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial	Felix W. de Weldon	1944 – 1954.	Arlington, VA

5.1 Qualitative Analysis

Image No.1

The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the people of France over one hundred years ago in recognition of a friendship established during the American Revolution. Lady Liberty was often the first symbol that European immigrants saw upon arriving in New York Harbour. Immigrants often viewed the statue as a symbol of the liberty they sought in the United States (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Statue of Liberty National Monument, n.d.). This statue, constructed by the artist Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, is located on Liberty Island in New York Harbour, within New York City.

Regarding *the narrative level* within *the representational meta-function*, the robed Roman woman (an actor) engages in some form of activity, creating (a vector) by her raised arm, which holds the torch (the goal), representing *a transactional, unidirectional action process* since each element represents a role. According to *the conceptual level*, this image has *an analytical process* since it can be interpreted as a part-whole framework: the Statue of Liberty is the carrier, which functions as the whole entity, while the architectural pedestal, the torch, the crown, the robe, and the carried tablet represent (possessive attributes) that constitute the whole monument. In terms of *the symbolic process*, this image involves a symbolic attributive process. Here, the robed woman is the carrier that symbolises the values of liberty, and the other symbolic attributes (the architectural pedestal, the flamed torch, her crown, the robe, and the inscribed tablet) are all the main parts that confer liberty symbolism to the statue.

Each symbolic attribute has a signification: the woman figure represents the ancient Roman goddess of liberty, Libertas (Sutherland 2003); the architectural pedestal raises and gives grace to the statue of a standing woman; the flaming torch signifies emancipation of the state and society; carrying the torch means that liberty enlightens the roads of all societies; her crown comprises two parts, the first part that touches her head is called the diadem, which is similar to a halo and traditionally symbolises the ideas that the lady stands for, this diadem includes twenty-five windows where people can proudly stand, the second part is the nimbus, or seven rays, which traditionally represent rays of light that enlighten thoughts of freedom, they also radiate in different directions to signify the seven continents and the seven seas worldwide; this makes her a world citizen who is not specific to the United States and spreads freedom values; the classical mantle that covers her body is gathered upon the left shoulder, thrown over the undergarment, and dropped in folds upon the feet, representing the values and traditions of liberty. Additionally, Bartholdi, the sculptor, was a student of the Neo-Classical art movement. Hence, he intentionally dressed the statue in a traditional Greco-Roman *Pala* and *Stolla* to signify liberty, which was the clothing worn by free people in ancient Greece and Rome. Her left hand holds the tablet, which is inscribed with the date of the American Declaration of Independence from Britain, "4th July 1776", in Roman numerals. The broken chains under her feet symbolise liberation from oppression. Finally, the existence of people under the statute ensures that these principles must be transmitted to societies worldwide.

Within *the interpersonal meta-function*, the RP, which is the Statue of Liberty, looks directly at the viewer, establishing a *demanding process*; this means the viewer is fully engaged in examining the central figure and is asked to relate to the embedded values within the monumental components. Regarding *the social distance*, this image is captured from a *long shot* depicting *formal and impersonal* interactions between the viewer and the RP. *Formally*, the viewer is positioned at a *distance*, which shows respect and awe, while *impersonally*, the viewer examines the statue and is directly related. Additionally, this statue is taken from a *very long shot*, which indicates a *public distance* since it is surrounded by people. From *the subjective point of view*, this image features a *frontal horizontal angle* that evokes a sense of the viewer's Involvement with the robed woman. On the other hand, from a *low vertical angle*, the statue represents power over the viewer, who looks up at it, creating a sense of authority over the surroundings. Moreover, from *an objective point of view*, this image depicts the statue from a *frontal angle*, an angle of action orientation where the viewer is maximally involved, as the sculpted figure raises her hand and holds the torch to illuminate the path of liberty.

According to *modality analysis*, this image depicts a *highly naturalistic modality* due to the details of the statue, such as the folded robe, the woman's facial features, and the flaming torch; all these elements together represent a real-life structure, which means a true representation. Since modality judgements are social, American citizens who know the statue's environment recognise this image as an actual monument and a significant landmark on Liberty Island in New York City. For them, it is not only a statue, but it signifies the essence of democratic principles, which they admire and evaluate. *The validity markers* support *the naturalistic modality*; this image employs a *moderated saturation*, as indicated by the greenish robe and the calm blue sky. The camera angle *focuses* solely on the standing woman, without further depicting the surrounding environment, such as views from the island, which *decontextualises* the statue from its setting and represents it as a *symbolic element*. This image features a high level of *detail*, due to the folded robe, the flared torch, the writing on the tablet, and the intricate details of the sculpted face. Finally, the interplay between the light and shadow gives the statue more *depth* and makes it more real for the viewer.

In terms of *compositional meta-function*, *the information value* of the element positioned at *the top*, the flaming torch, represents the flame of liberty as *an idealised* symbol. Meanwhile, the components at *the lower part* of the image (the pedestal and people) function as

real. Centrally, the statue dominates the visual medium, attracting attention to the statue's values of democracy and freedom, while *the margins* (the sky with some green trees) reinforce the viewer's focus on the robed woman. In this image, the statue makes a high *salience*, which is realised by some important factors; the statue's colossal *size* indicates the statue's significance as leading liberty to society; this statue is positioned with *sharp focus*, drawing the viewer's attention; *the tonal contrast* between the light and shadow areas creates more depth in the visual scene; *the colour contrast* between the light blue sky against the statue's greenish colour and its pedestal, and between the golden flame against the background draws more attention to the upper side of the statue; the statue is positioned in *the foreground*, resting on the architectural pedestal, enhancing the hierarchy of the visual scene while the blue sky dominates *the background* and representing the statue to be in focus; this statue provides an important *cultural symbolism* inherited in the history of America as holding the principles of liberty and democracy. According to *framing*, the architectural pedestal provides a moderate framing that separates the robed woman from the ground characteristics and elevates the represented ideals this statue carries. On the other hand, the clear blue sky weakens the framing of the standing statue, indicating that the statue is strongly tied to its symbolic environment.

In *materiality, colour analysis* can be recognised within the three levels; *in the representational meta-function*, colours denote a locative relation between the primary and secondary participants in the background and foreground. The statue is distinguished as the central component due to its greenish colour, which is considered to be the result of copper oxidation over time; this oxidation is evidence of the statue's age and persistence. While the background elements (the blue sky and the green trees) function as secondary participants, the blue sky symbolises openness, and by combining it visually with the statue, it personifies limitless liberty. *In the interpersonal meta-function*, colours communicate a specific meaning to the viewer; the statue's greenish oxidation colour gives those immigrants hope for freedom as soon as they arrive in America; the yellow flame communicates a sense of strength in holding the flame of liberty; finally, depicting the sculpture within the blue sky indicates the statue as a wise figure whose main duty is to carry the liberty principles to enlighten societies. *In the compositional meta-function*, colours have a significant role in *salience* and *framing*, determining how the components in the visual scene are arranged to communicate meaning; the greenish oxidation colour contrasts with the background blue sky, making the statue as the main component and more salient than the

other surroundings, as well as drawing the viewer's attention, which is then directed towards the torch; the blue-sky weakly frames the central statue and relates it to its surroundings to create a broader comprehension of the liberty values.

Image No.2

Shaup (2010) explains that *the Bridge of Lions* is situated in the heart of St. Augustine's historic district, Florida, which claims to be the "Oldest City in America." It spans between the City of St. Augustine and Anastasia Island. The bridge was named after the two copies of the marble *Medici lion statues* that a prominent businessman donated in the 1920s. Those sculpted lions guard the bridge; they are named "*Fiel y Firme*," which means "*Faithful and Firm*," and stand proudly at the entrance to the bridge, inviting visitors to cross and enjoy the sights of St. Augustine.

In *the representational meta-function*, this image depicts *a narrative action process* since the lion serves as (the actor), which creates (the vector), an action towards the ball, while the ball beneath the lion's claw functions as (the goal); this interaction between them clearly shows the lion's dominance. This image represents *a transactional, unidirectional action process*, where each individual assumes a role: the lion as the actor, the ball as the goal, and the vector that departs from the actor. In *the conceptual process*, this image can be described as *analytical*, which includes (a part-whole relation), since it involves two categories of participants: the lion as (a carrier), the whole entity, while the writing on the pedestal, the lion's realistic representation: the detailed fur, a muscular shape with a powerful look, the paw on the ball, and the detailed mane, all of these are (the possessive attributes), the parts that complete the lion's symbolism. This image can also be referred to as *the symbolic attributive process* since the lion acts as the carrier. Additionally, the ball, the realistic presentation, and the pedestal represent the (symbolic attributes). Each symbolic attribute holds significance: the ball under the lion's paw symbolises its dominance; the detailed fur, muscular shape, and powerful appearance signify strength; the detailed mane represents majesty; and the inscription on the pedestal conveys historical value.

Regarding *the interpersonal meta-function*, this image represents *an offer* encouraging the viewer to analyse and consider the sculpture's significance. Within *social distance*, this image was taken from *a long shot* that represents *far social distance*, as it captures the entire sculpture with certain contextual elements (sky, water, boats). This *formal and impersonal distance* enables the viewer to perceive the sculpture within its wider surroundings. This image represents *a*

subjective point of view, as the sculpture was captured from *an oblique horizontal angle*, which evokes a feeling of detachment rather than personal interaction with the sculpture. However, an apparent *eye-level angle* signifies equalisation, establishing a harmonious interaction between the viewer and the sculpture.

This image exhibits a high level of *naturalistic modality* due to its detailed representation, including the intricate depiction of the lion's mane, the clear inscription on the pedestal, the distinct features of the background elements, the shadows, and the highlights that accurately reflect the outdoor environment.

Information value is utilised in this image in terms of *the Compositional meta-function*. The elements on *the left side* (the ocean, the port, and a small number of individuals) are categorised as given since they are recognisable components of St. Augustine. Elements at *the top* are regarded as *ideal* (the vast and infinite sky with the upper part of the lion's sculpture), highlighting the magnificence of the lion's presentation as an ideal entity. Whereas components at *the bottom* are regarded as *real*, providing more precise information, the writing on the pedestal, "P de L 1924 ST. AUGUSTINE," provides the viewer with specific details regarding the sculpture's history and location. This sculpture is positioned at *the centre*, which makes it the most prominent component and engages the viewer's interest. At the same time, *the margins* around the sculpture offer a contextual background. A *saliency* feature is realized by some *factors*: the sculpture's large *size*, compared to the surroundings, makes it the most prominent component in the image; the sculpture is perfectly *focused*; the lion's white marble makes a *colour contrast* that distinguishes it from the surroundings; the sculpture is positioned in *the foreground*, while (the sea, dock, people, and boats) are situated in *the background*. The lion *overlaps* the pedestal it is placed on, making it stand out against the contrasting plain background. Finally, as a *cultural symbol*, a lion commonly represents power, dominance, and protection. Concerning *framing*, the concrete pedestal creates a distinct separation between the lion's sculpture and its surroundings, thereby establishing a clear distinction between the foreground and the background. This strong frame makes the sculpture a self-contained unit of communication.

The colour analysis within *materiality* can be perceived at three levels: In *the representational meta-function*, the white colour of the lion's sculpture contrasts strongly with the surrounding components: the blue sky, the darker tones of the dock, the water, and the boats, making it the central participant. In *the interpersonal meta-function*, the sculpture's white marble can be seen as a representation of

innocence, authority, or royalty. In *the compositional meta-function*, the lion's white colour distinguishes the lion's sculpture from the background components, making it more salient and strongly framed.

Image No.3

Mount Rushmore National Memorial is located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Four presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt – were selected for the memorial due to their significant roles in the United States' history. Those iconic presidential faces are 18 meters (60 ft) high and carved into the Harney Peak Granite (Graham 2008)

Within *the representational meta-function*, participants are not connected by a vector, indicating the absence of a *narrative action process*. However, the secondary participants are related to the main RPs by *circumstance*: The Black Hills, as the natural *setting*, enhances the conceptual significance by integrating those figures within a historically important location for several Native American tribes. *The means* are represented by granite, which symbolises these leaders' lasting reputation. The surrounding environment can be seen as *the accompaniment*, emphasising the glory of the monument. In *the conceptual structure*, both the *covert taxonomy* (equally displayed) and the *overt taxonomy* (hierarchical purpose) of *the classification process* can be added. The four presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt) can be analysed as *covert taxonomy* since they are all curved with a similar emphasis on size and positioning, indicating a deliberate intention to present those leaders as equally fundamental to the nation's history. According to *an overt taxonomy*, the ordering of each president implies a hierarchy of influence. George Washington is positioned on the far left, from where Western societies start reading, occupying the superordinate position since he was the first American President and is considered the father of America. While the rest of the presidents occupy a subordinate role, each one forms a hierarchical significance according to their historical role. This image also depicts *an analytical process*; the giant curved presidents' faces serve as the carrier signifying the whole structure; the surrounding landscape represents the possessive attributes (the parts) that create a feeling of respect and awe. Within *the symbolic attributive process*, the entire monument featuring four sculpted presidential faces functions as the main carrier. Consequently, they are (symbolic attributes), and each statue symbolises an American leader with certain beliefs, values, accomplishments, and history: George Washington symbolises the *birth* of America; Thomas Jefferson represents *expansion*, which is connected to the Louisiana Purchase; Abraham Lincoln Exemplifies the *preservation* of the nation in

confronting the challenges of the Civil War; Theodore Roosevelt embodies *the development* of the country (He promoted the construction of the Panama Canal). Their arrangement indicates a chronological flow of American periods, running from the establishment to the growth and safeguarding of the country.

Regarding *the interpersonal meta-function*, the figures' gazes are described as *an offer* that encourages the viewer to consider the historical aspect of each figure. About *social distance*, this image can be best described in terms of *formal and impersonal distance*, captured from *a long shot*, which invites viewers to consider these figures as grandiose embodiments of American history rather than as individuals with whom one would establish a personal connection. From *a subjective point of view*, this image is captured from *a frontal horizontal angle*, engaging the viewer in face-to-face interaction with the monument's historical and symbolic significance. From *an objective point of view*, this image exhibits *a frontal action orientation*; this orientation can be understood conceptually, rather than physically, as representing the historical influences of those presidents over the physical motion. This image exemplifies *the naturalistic modality* due to the details of the leaders' faces and the surrounding nature (the sky, the mountain, the rocks, and the trees) that depict an actual location. *The abstract modality* is also employed since the faces are sculpted accurately, while the rest of their bodies are abstracted, making the viewer think more deeply about this monument.

Concerning *information value* within *the compositional meta-function*, the term *given* refers to George Washington's sculpture, which is placed on *the far left*; this position symbolises his influential role in establishing the United States. Then, moving, passing by Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, then reaching Theodore Roosevelt's sculpture, which is positioned on *the far right*, functioning as *new*. Since the elements at *the top* of an image are considered *ideal*, the high elevation of the four sculpted presidential faces with the open blue sky physically and symbolically places them within perfection. At *the bottom*, the mountain's base with some trees and rocks symbolises what is *real*, such as consolidating their principles. The Mount Rushmore monument is *centrally* positioned, capturing the viewer's attention to concentrate on the presidents and their symbolic arrangement. Additionally, *the margins* serve to strengthen the monumental significance visually and symbolically. *Saliency* can be realised by the massive *size* of the sculpted faces, rendering the leaders to be the most prominent participants. Those sculptures are captured in *sharp focus*, which sets them apart from the

landscape. *The colour contrast* is made between the greyish tone of the monument against the blue sky and green trees. Positioning the four sculptures in *the foreground* while other components are located in *the background* brings the viewer's interest to look first at the sculptures. The placement of each sculpture *overlaps* with the mountain, confirming they are the dominant figures in the image. Finally, those iconic sculpted faces within the surrounding background signify *a cultural symbolism*. The rocks surrounding the monument *frame* it strongly, creating a unified unit of information that isolates each sculpted leader, as they are all independently understood and interpreted.

Materiality can be perceived through *colour analysis* within each level; in *the representational meta-function*, the four sculptures' granite colour visually links the foreground where the sculptures are located with the mountain and blue sky in the background; this facilitates the viewer's comprehension of the presidents' historical narratives. In *the interpersonal meta-function*, the granite colour indicates their strength and immortality. In *the compositional meta-function*, the green trees at the bottom represent a natural framing, which directs the viewer's attention to the central figures and makes the central figures more salient.

Image No.4

Iwo Jima Memorial, officially called the *United States Marine Corps War Memorial*, is one of Arlington, VA's most popular visitor sites. According to Nalty and Crawford (1995), this iconic war memorial symbolises a grateful nation's esteem for the honoured dead of the United States Marine Corps. The sculptor Felix W. de Weldon was inspired by a photograph depicting the Marines raising the second flag on Mount Suribachi. The names and dates of principal Marine Corps engagements have been burnt into the granite in gold lettering.

Although this monument consists of six individuals, only four represented participants are shown prominently from this angle. According to *the narrative action process* within *the representational meta-function*, this image represents the four soldiers as (the main actors); they are the initiators of the action (the vector), which is formed by the soldiers' arms, bodies, limbs, and gestures, making a diagonal line that connects the actor to the American flag (the goal). This image depicts *a transactional, unidirectional action process* since each individual assumes a role, the soldiers as (the actors), and the flag as (the goal). However, those RPs are also related to each other by *the circumstances*: The background elements (the clouded sky and the trees) characterise *the setting*, contrasting the sculpted components to be more prominent in the foreground; The flagpole

represents *the means*, a tool that raises the American flag and simultaneously connects the actors (the soldiers) to the goal (flag); the rocks under the soldiers and the inscriptions on the memorial base serve as *the accompaniments*. In terms of *conceptual process*, this image has a *covert taxonomy* within *the classification process* since the soldiers' relative size, orientation, and placement in the monument are equally displaced; they are members of the same group, which is the United States Marines, their arrangement creates a visual balance, and they are all sharing the same purpose which is raising their country's flag. Concerning *the symbolic attributive process*, the soldiers function as carriers, while the raised flag, the rough rocks, the inscriptions, and the black granite base serve as symbolic attributes that confer meaning (of unity and courage) to those soldiers. Each symbolic attribute has a signification: The flag has the characteristic of being more salient, and its central location attracts the viewer's attention. Abduljabbar (2024, p.31) states that non-verbal signs are employed more often than verbal ones within national flags, as they can express ideas and communicate extensive information concisely, encompassing a nation's core values, history, events, and identity. As stated by Jaskulowski (2015, p.6), the American flag's fifty stars represent the number of states which comprise one nation and symbolise unity. The central raising flag symbolises the victory announcement; the way that marine soldiers holding it signifies unity; the rough rocks of Mount Suribachi embody the battlefield; the Marines' names inscription has a historical indication and finally, the black granite base works as a means to raise those soldiers highly, symbolically putting them in a stature place.

Within *the interpersonal meta-function*, the sculpture represents *an offer* since there is no direct contact between the RPs and the viewer, making an invitation to think of the memorial sculpture's symbolism. Concerning *the social distance*, this image can be analysed in terms of *far social distance (long shot)*, which creates a sense of formality and respect towards the monument. The soldiers' actions, their whole body, and their position within the entire composition are shown clearly; hence, the viewer serves as an observer, being the one who honours the memorial. From *a subjective point of view*, the monument utilises *a frontal horizontal angle* in which the viewer is physically and emotionally involved in the soldiers' action of raising the American flag and fully engaged with its symbolism. *The low vertical angle* gives the sculpture a powerful representation since the viewer looks upwards at the soldiers and the raised flag, whose colossal size symbolises their strength and sacrifice. On the other hand, this sculpture depicts *an objective*

attitude; in *the frontal angle*, the viewer is highly involved within the vectors (the action of raising the flag along with their gestures) to reinforce his/her comprehension of this cooperation between them.

This image is *highly naturalistic*, it represents a real historical incident based on a famous photograph of the World War II battle. It was taken by news photographer Joe Rosenthal: the U.S. victory at Iwo Jima, a small island in the Pacific Ocean near Japan. Those sculpted figures embody a real group of USA Marines who raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi after a long fight on the island. Regarding *the validity markers*, the image generally contains *full-colour saturation*, while the monument itself is sculpted in dark bronze, a monochromatic colour that signifies strength. The natural background shows full *contextualization*, where the sculpture is presented in a real location to reinforce the connection with its surroundings. The image features *a highly detailed* representation that can be seen within the natural elements in the background, the marines' postures, and the folds of their uniform. The raised American flag and the open sky provide a sense of *depth* for the sculpture, while the image's *illumination* is presented by the light and shadow interplay, where the sunlight is used to highlight the sculpture's details. Hence, all those markers intensify the image's truthfulness and realism.

The information value in terms of *the compositional meta-function* is represented as follows: at *the top part*, the raised American flag, in combination with the blue sky, has *an idealised* association of patriotism and victory, while at *the bottom*, the sculpture's black granite base, where the soldiers climb over the rough rocks, has *a real* representation of the hard reality and the human cost of this war; the monument is *centrally* positioned, engaging the viewer's attention to its narrative's essence of sacrifice, strength, and victory; finally, the background landscape serves as *the margins* that enhance the monument's interpretation within its setting. The Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial) is the most *salient* and prominent component in the image's composition which is reinforced by some *factors*: the soldiers with the raised American flag are of considerable *size* within the image; the bronze sculpture is represented with *a high focus* that clearly shows the soldiers' expression and their uniforms; the dark bronze sculpture makes *a tonal contrast* against the blue sky, while the American flag (red, white, and blue) makes *a colour contrast* with other dark tones; the sculpture is positioned in *the foreground* while the blue sky and green trees are placed in *the background*; the soldiers *overlap* with each other, leading the eyes to their collective movement in raising the flag; and this memorial has

strong *cultural symbolism*. There is a lack of *framing* between the open blue sky and the sculpture; these two elements are blended to symbolise the figures' high eminence. The soldiers' arrangement, which enhances their collective identity, refers to a weak framing that indicates the sculpture's connectedness with its surroundings, symbolising their heroism and shared history. The sculpture's pedestal creates strong visual framing that separates and elevates the soldiers from the ground (isolating them from their surroundings), reinforcing their symbolic significance as sacred souls who sacrificed for their country. Additionally, the flag functions as an element that divides the composition into two visual parts: the soldiers' fighting and the raising of the flag; both symbolise unity; this strong framing reinforces that the sculpture is an independent unit of information that commemorates a historical heroism memory.

The memorial's image employs the *colour* strategy as a semiotic mode. *At the representational level*, colours are used to reinforce the narrative of the whole monument. The dark bronze of the six soldiers, as the main participants, enhances the idea of honouring and respecting their sacrifice. The other secondary components, the blue sky with the white clouds, indicate a sense of their immortality, and the colours of the flag refer to their identity as American figures fighting for their country. *In the interpersonal meta-function*, the colour conveys meaning to the viewer. The monument is made of dark bronze, representing the U.S. Marine soldiers' bravery. This colour, at the same time, conveys an eternal sense; their sacrifices have to be always remembered. The blue sky, on the other hand, contrasts with the dark colour and enhances the monument's idealism. Jaskulowski (2015) argues that national flags are symbolic and almost sacred objects. Therefore, the American flag's red colour refers to blood and sacrifice, while the blue could refer to heaven and bring to mind associations with the concept of America as a chosen nation (pp.6,7). Together, all these colours symbolise American patriotism. Within *the compositional meta-function*, colours play a crucial role; the flag's colours contrast with the dark bronze colour of the soldiers and the black granite of the sculpture's base, which in turn contrast against the background elements (the brightness of the blue sky and the green trees). This makes the whole monument more *salient* and draws the viewer's attention directly to those central figures and then upwards to the raised flag. Meanwhile, light and shadow interactions determine *the framing* within the image; such interplay can be seen within the sculpted figures, connecting them visually as a cohesive component.

5.2 Quantitative Analysis

This section briefly details the statistical distributions of the main visual categories and their subcategories. This quantitative analysis of four American sculptures’ images is enhanced by the qualitative analysis done above. Table 2 below shows that the four images have no variation in the frequencies of modality and materiality.

Table 2: The Statistical Distribution of Modality and Materiality

Materiality By colour analysis within three meta-functions	1	1	1	1	4	4	6%
Modality Naturalistic modality	1	1	1	1	4	4	6%

Table 3: The Statistical Distribution of Visual Categories of The Selected Images

Compositional	Framing			1	1	1	1	4	23	34%	
	Saliency			1	1	1	1	4			
	Information value	Margin/centre			1	1	1	1			15
		Bottom / real			1	1	1	1			
		Top/ ideal			1	1	1	1			
		Right / new					1				
		Left / given				1	1				
Interpersonal	Attitude	Objective	Top-down angle						9	8%	
			Frontal angle		1		1	1			
		Subjective	Vertical	Low angle	1			1			0
				Eye-level angle		1					
				High angle							
			Horizontal	Oblique		1					
	Frontal	1			1	1					
	Social distance		Very long shot/ public		1				5		
			Long shot/ far social		1	1	1	1			
			Medium long shot/ close social								
		Medium close									

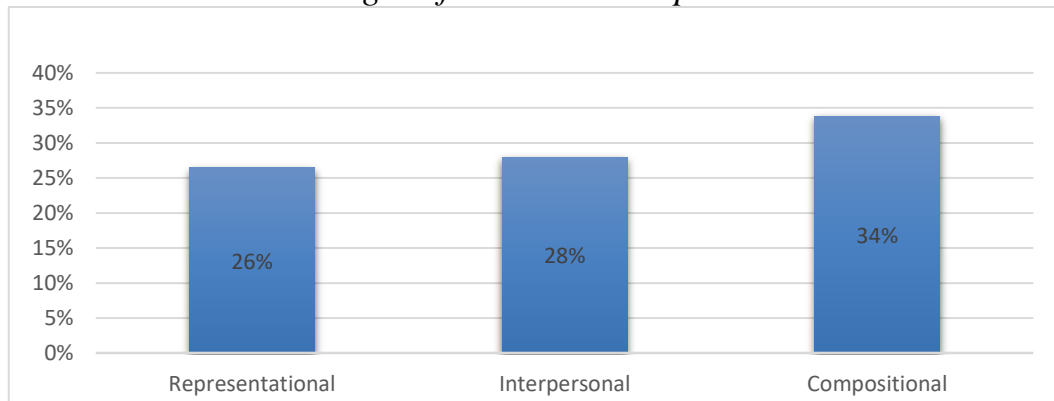
			shot/ far personal							
			Close shot/ close personal							
			Extremely close shot/ intimate							
	Contact		Offer		1	1	1		4	
			Demand	1						
Representational	Conceptual	Symbolical		1	1	1	1	9	18	26%
		Analytical		1	1	1				
		Classification				1	1			
	Narrative	Circumstances	Accompaniments			1	1	9		
			Means			1	1			
			Setting			1	1			
		Reactional	Non-transactional							
			Transactional							
		Action	Non-transactional							
	Transactional		1	1		1				
The sculptures				The Statue of Liberty	Medici Lion Statue	Mount Rushmore	The U.S. Marine Corps	Frequencies	Total frequencies	Total percentages

Table 2 shows that at the level of modality analysis, naturalistic modality has a total of 4 frequencies, the same result as materiality analysis.

Table 3 shows the frequencies of the three meta-functions, their categories, sub-categories, and minor sub-categories. The representational meta-function, collectively with narrative and conceptual processes, has 18 frequencies in total, while the interpersonal meta-function includes contact, social distance, and attitude with 19 total frequencies. On the other hand, 23 total

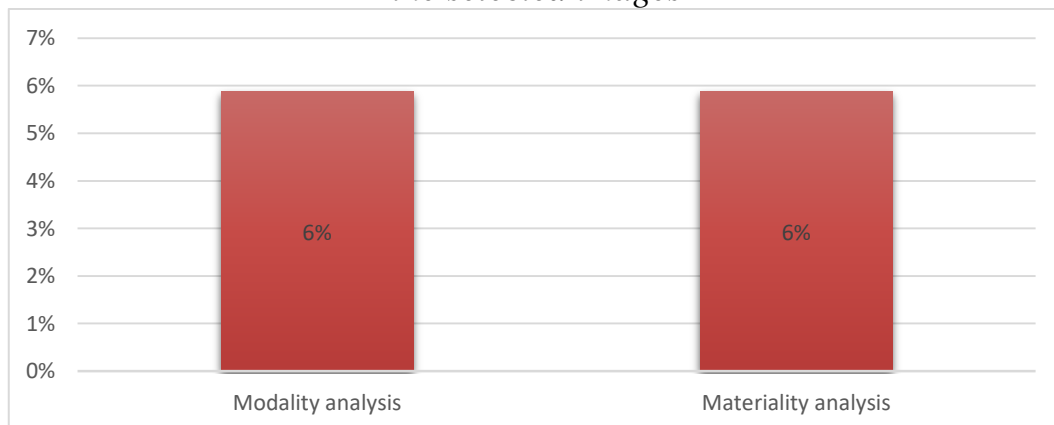
frequencies have been recorded for the compositional meta-function, including information value, salience, and framing.

Figure (1): *The distribution of visual categories in the selected images of American sculptures*



From the quantitative analysis of the selected images of American sculptures, the researcher's findings show that there is a preference for using compositional over the other Kress and Van Leeuwen's meta-functions, which makes the highest frequency 33.82%, approximately 34%, compared to interpersonal 27.94%, approximately 28%, and representational 26.47%, as mentioned in Figure (1). The compositional high frequency confirms that the viewer is more interested in how the components are arranged within an image by concentrating on the information value, salience, and framing, which leads to a coherent meaning since the compositional level combines both representational and interactive meta-functions. Another preference, respectively, is the interpersonal meta-function, which has a 27.94%, approximately 28%, which means that the viewer is interested in the complex relations between the represented participants and the viewers. Finally, the representational meta-function accounts for 26.47%, indicating that the viewer is less interested in the actions and reactions of the represented participants.

Figure (2): *The distribution of modality and materiality analysis in the selected images*



The above figure illustrates the modality and materiality analysis, which explains that the selected images represent a naturalistic modality with a 5.88%, approximately 6%. This indicates that the selected images are close to true in representing reality. Simultaneously, materiality has the same percentage, which means that the colour is fulfilled within the three meta-functions.

6. Discussion:

The findings have answered the research questions by applying Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar as the theoretical framework for examining four images of American sculptures from the social semiotics perspective. The first question is, "What are the symbolic aspects and their meanings in the images of American sculptures?" The qualitative analysis reveals that the selected sculptures' images incorporate semiotic aspects, where each semiotic element signifies a specific symbolism; when combined visually, the sculptures produce a distinct narrative. This is explained in detail in Table 4 below:

Table 4: *The Semiotic Elements and Their Interpretations in The Selected Images*

No.	Sculpture	Semiotic elements	Meaning
1	The Statue of Liberty	The female figure	Represents the ancient Roman goddess of liberty, Libertas
		The robe	The traditions of liberty/ The clothing that free people wore in ancient Greece or Rome
		The tablet is inscribed, "4th July 1776" in Roman numerals	The date of the American Declaration of Independence from Britain/ It is similar to a keystone; liberty is like the keystone element in a free society
		The torch	The freedom flame
		The diadem	The principles that the lady stands for
		The seven rays	Rays of light / The seven continents and the seven seas
		The broken chains	Liberation from persecution
		The pedestal	Gives grace to the standing statue
		The copper oxidation	The statue's age and persistence over the years
		Huge size	Awe and honour
		The blue sky	Limitless of liberty/ new hope for immigrants

2	Medici Lion Statue	The detailed mane and prominent muscles	Reinforces realism
		The ball	The world
		The pedestal	Supremacy over the area
		The white marble	Royalty
		The writing on the pedestal, "P de L 1924 ST. AUGUSTINE,"	Reinforces the history and location of the sculpture
		The blue sky	Serve as enduring keepers
3	Rushmore National Memorial	The four sculpted faces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - George Washington signifies the foundation and independence - Thomas Jefferson symbolises expansion -Theodore Roosevelt represents development -Abraham Lincoln portrays unity as well as equality
		The mountain	The Black Hills, this mountain is considered to be a sacred site by Native Americans—the Sioux—who lived and still live in this area
		The granite	Signifies the endurance of American values
		Huge size	Represents the glory of American history
		The blue sky	Wisdom is related to those presidents' principles
4	The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial	Six figures	American Marine soldiers
		The flag	patriotism
		Raising the flag	The victory announcement/ The unity of the nation
		The rocks	The rough battlefield
		The black granite base	Raising the soldiers highly
		The inscription "Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue." And opposite, on the base: "In honor and in memory of men of the United States Marine Corps who have given their lives to their country since November 10, 1775."	Commemorates fallen Marines
		The blue sky	Reinforces their bravery and sacrifice

The employment of materials and styles not only provides aesthetic influence but also plays a significant role in conveying social values. The choice of white marble, basalt, granite, and bronze was intentionally made to create lasting symbols to be transmitted throughout generations.

The second question: “*What are the functions of these sculptures, and how are they represented?*” The researcher finds that within Image No.1, the sculpture *The Statue of Liberty* represents historical, cultural, and political functions. The monument is strongly related to its history when Frenchman Édouard de Laboulaye in 1865, moved by the recent abolition of slavery in the U.S., proposed presenting a monumental gift from the people of France to the people of the United States to commemorate the centennial of the Declaration of Independence and celebrate the close relationship between France and America. Additionally, Ellis Island, the site of the statue, represents the most prominent instance of governmental immigration and public health operation, being the most active and the largest of its era. The “island of hope, the island of tears” presently signifies the American story of immigration, the cultural richness of the United States, and the contribution of immigrants to U.S. society. In 1965, it was announced as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2018, pp. 5, 7). Consequently, this statue represents the political cooperation between France and the United States. Glassberg (2003) explains that the Statue of Liberty has occupied an important place in American popular culture as a staple of advertising and commercial art, a figure in popular entertainment (music and film throughout the twentieth century), a popular tourist attraction, and a favourite object of imitation in folk art, dramatic re-enactments, and souvenirs.

In Image No.2, the sculpture “*Medici Lion Statue*” refers to historical, cultural, and social functions. Historically, the Bridge of Lions connects St. Augustine and Anastasia Island. Additionally, the inscription on the pedestal, “*P. de L. 1923 ST. AUGUSTINE*,” refers to the heritage history of the location. “*P. de L.*” refers to the Spanish explorer “Ponce de León” who discovered Florida (In 1513, he landed on the coast of Florida at a site between Saint Augustine and Melbourne Beach), “1923” represents the year of Bridge of Lions’ construction that starts in 1923 and finished 1927, the last reference “*ST. AUGUSTINE*” is the city name where the sculpture is located. There are two lion statues, each positioned across the other at the front gates of the bridge; this positioning indicates a cultural symbolism in which these two sculptures can be seen as guardians for the bridge entrances on both sides. Both sculptures relate the viewers to the city

where they are located, representing the social function that provides a shared identity and pride. On the other hand, the background components (the blue sky, the sea, the dock, people, and boats) reinforce the sculptures' historical, cultural, and social symbolism.

In Image No.3, the historical, cultural, social, and political functions are evident in the "Rushmore *National Memorial*" sculpture. Historically, the monument commemorates significant events in American history by sculpting the faces of four prominent presidents. George Washington, the first American president, was the first of the four to be carved on Mount Rushmore. His main achievements included his struggle for freedom during the American Revolution, during which he effectively established the new nation on a stable and reliable course. He chaired the Constitutional Convention that established the United States Constitution in 1787. He had exceptional personal leadership qualities and was a practical statesman; prudence was the most prominent aspect of his character. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, was a pioneering American in various fields of science; his habits and temperament were those of a scholar. He was a philosophical statesman, a patron of the arts, and the leading figure in the classical revival of architecture in the United States. The most notable achievement as president was the purchase of the vast Louisiana territory, which doubled the young republic's land area. Abraham Lincoln was the man who maintained the Union, liberated the enslaved people, and gave his country a new birth of freedom and a government (by the people and for the people). Liberalism was the essence of his mind. He was a statesman replete with the uncommon virtues of humility and mercy. Theodore Roosevelt was the last to be sculpted on Mount Rushmore. His career encompassed roles as a political reformer, trustbuster, rancher, soldier, writer, historian, explorer, hunter, conservationist, and vigorous executive of his country. He took action to prevent a waste of national resources. His administration witnessed the construction of the Panama Canal, assumed greater responsibilities in the Caribbean, and expanded the United States' naval power. Culturally, the monument signifies the American values of democracy, liberty, and the accomplishments of those significant presidents. Socially functioning by emphasizing the importance of unity and democracy for the American citizens, and Mount Rushmore commemorates American greatness and creates a sense of national pride. From a political point of view, the monument signifies the authority of the prominent American leaders who have influenced American history.

Image No. 4: The historical, cultural, social, and political functions predominate in the sculpture “*The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial*.” Historically, the memorial depicts an actual incident that occurred during World War II, capturing a specific moment from the *Battle of Iwo Jima* in 1945. Culturally, according to Robertson (2019, p. 9), since the monument was illustrated from a photograph taken by Associated Press photographer Joseph Rosenthal of the flag-raising on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, on February 23, 1945, it was widely disseminated in magazines, newspapers, posters, and postage stamps. This image inspired patriotism and resolve among war-weary viewers on the American home front. Imprinted in the collective memory of veterans and the general public, the Iwo Jima flag-raising became one of the most memorable scenes from U.S. history. All these together have a cultural impact. Socially, the Marine Corps’ act of raising the flag reinforces the unity and national identity among American citizens. By sculpting six Marines, the political side is reinforced, representing American power and the influence of military and political identity throughout and after the battle. To sum up, each American sculpture represents various functions, as explained in detail in Table 5 below:

Table 5: *The Prominent Functions in The Selected American Sculptures*

No.	Sculpture	Historical	Cultural	Social	Political
1	The Statue of Liberty	✓	✓		✓
2	Medici Lion Statue	✓	✓	✓	
3	Rushmore National Memorial	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial	✓	✓	✓	✓

The third question is, “*Which meta-function is the most predominant in the analysis of the selected images to convey meaning?*” By examining the four images of American sculptures quantitatively, the researcher finds that the compositional meta-function makes a higher percentage (33.82%, approximately 34%) than the interpersonal (27.94%, approximately 28%) and representational (26.47%). It is confirmed by the compositional high frequency that the observer is more concerned with the arrangement of the components within a picture. This is accomplished by focusing on the information value, salience, and framing, which leads to a consistent meaning.

8. Conclusion:

This study conducts a mixed-method analysis, i.e., qualitative and quantitative, utilising Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar as a theoretical framework for examining four images of American sculptures (The Statue of Liberty, Medici Lion Statue, Rushmore National Memorial, and The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial) and by focusing on the three meta-functions (representational, interpersonal, and compositional). This model provides a deeper comprehension of how the American sculptures communicate meaning systematically and perform as complex semiotic resources. Moreover, it becomes evident how the selected American sculptures powerfully depict the values of their societies through the social semiotics investigation.

By answering the research questions and considering prior findings, the qualitative analysis reveals the following: Firstly, the selected American sculptures are three-dimensional constructions that serve as a communicative medium, incorporating diverse semiotic aspects, each representing distinct symbolism, collectively conveying a specific meaning. Thus, Table 4 validates the first hypothesis: "The American sculptures are not just three-dimensional structures, but a mode of communication composed of symbolic aspects, and each symbol visually conveys a certain meaning." Secondly, those sculptures represent various functions; each is employed differently, as explained in Table 5, which validates the second hypothesis, which reads, "Sculptures as visual semiotic components function to represent historical, cultural, social, and political values." On the other hand, the quantitative analysis reveals that the compositional meta-function has the highest frequency, 33.82%, approximately 34%, compared to interpersonal, 27.94%, approximately 28%, and representational, 26.47%. This higher frequency indicates that the viewer is more interested in how the components of each sculpture are arranged and enhanced by other elements (background and margins) within an image by concentrating on the information value, salience, and framing, which leads to a coherent meaning. Hence, this finding validates the third hypothesis: "Sculptures can be, like language, a way of communication ruled by grammar structures to convey meaning."

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Image 3: HD wallpaper: United states, New York, Statue of Liberty National Monument. (n.d.). [Online Photograph]. In Wallpaper Flare. <https://www.wallpaperflare.com/united-states-new-york-statue-of-liberty-national-monument-wallpaper-exdwm>

Image 4: Iwo Jima Memorial. (2022). [Online Photograph]. In Capital Bikeshare. <https://ride.capitalbikeshare.com/attractions/iwo-jima-memorial>

Appendix

Image No.1

The Statue of Liberty



Image No.2

Rushmore National Memorial



Image No.3

Medici Lion Statue



Image No.4

The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial



تحليل اجتماعي سيميائي للجوانب الرمزية للمنحوتات الأمريكية

نور قاسم محمود

E-mail: noon.gasem2301@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

ا.م.د. ابتهاج مهدي عبد الكريم التميمي

E-mail: ibtihalaltameemi@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

جامعة بغداد / كلية اللغات / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

المستخلص

تُصنع المنحوتات، باعتبارها أجساماً مادية، من مواد مختلفة لتخليد أو التذكير بشخصية بارزة أو حدث مهم يشكل دوراً حيوياً في التراث التاريخي والثقافي لمجتمع معين. تتناول هذه الدراسة الجوانب السيميائية للمنحوتات الأمريكية، مع التركيز على التماثيل والنصب التذكارية. بينما تناولت الدراسات السابقة المنحوتات العامة من منظور تاريخي وجمالي، بالاستناد إلى أطر نظرية مختلفة، دون إجراء تحليل شامل لعناصرها الرمزية، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى سد هذه الفجوة من خلال تقديم فهم أكثر شمولية للرموز التي تتضمنها هذه المنحوتات.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تحليل وتفسير الجوانب الرمزية الموجودة في صور أربع منحوتات أمريكية من منظور سيميائي اجتماعي، والتي جُمعت من مواقع إلكترونية متنوعة. كما تهدف إلى تحديد الوظائف الرئيسية لهذه العناصر الرمزية في تمثيل مبادئ المجتمع الأمريكي. وبناءً على ذلك، تم اعتماد المنهج السيميائي الاجتماعي لتحليل الصور المختارة، باستخدام نموذج كريس وفان ليوين (2021) من حيث الوظائف الميتا-تصويرية التمثيلية والتفاعلية والتركيبية، بالاعتماد على المنهجيتين النوعية والكمية.

تكشف هذه الدراسة أن المنحوتات الأمريكية تتقل المعاني بشكل منهجي، حيث يُلاحظ تفضيل استخدام الوظيفة التركيبية على الوظائف الميتا-تصويرية الأخرى، مما يشير إلى اهتمام المتلقي بكيفية ترتيب المكونات داخل الصورة. فضلاً عن ذلك، تمثل هذه المنحوتات وظائف متعددة وتستخدم كوسيلة تواصل تحوي على عناصر سيميائية؛ فكل واحدة منها تمثل رمزية معينة، وتُسهّم مجتمعة في إيصال معنى محدد. وقد توصل الباحثون إلى أن الجوانب الرمزية للمنحوتات الأمريكية تجسد المثل والقيم الخاصة بالمجتمع الأمريكي من خلال وظائف تاريخية وثقافية واجتماعية وسياسية. وكذلك فإن دمج عناصر سيميائية متعددة في المنحوتات يسهم بشكل فعال في التواصل البصري وتعزيز المعاني داخل ثقافة معينة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السيميائية الاجتماعية، الجوانب الرمزية، المنحوتات، المنحوتات الأمريكية، النحو البصري.