

A Thousand Words - Visualization of information for emotional and spiritual connection

"Strengthening Christian Higher Education in an era of Global Transformation"
IAPCHE's 8th International Conference

Subtheme Addressed: Pedagogy

Presentation Format: Round Table

Description: In a fast-paced world of information overload and globalization, visualization through visual imagery can be used to create authentic connections with students and strangers; enhancing understanding, credibility and trust in a deeper than academic level. How can images communicate abstract, complex ideas and emotions? How is imagery used in the Bible, and how does it translate to our technological era?

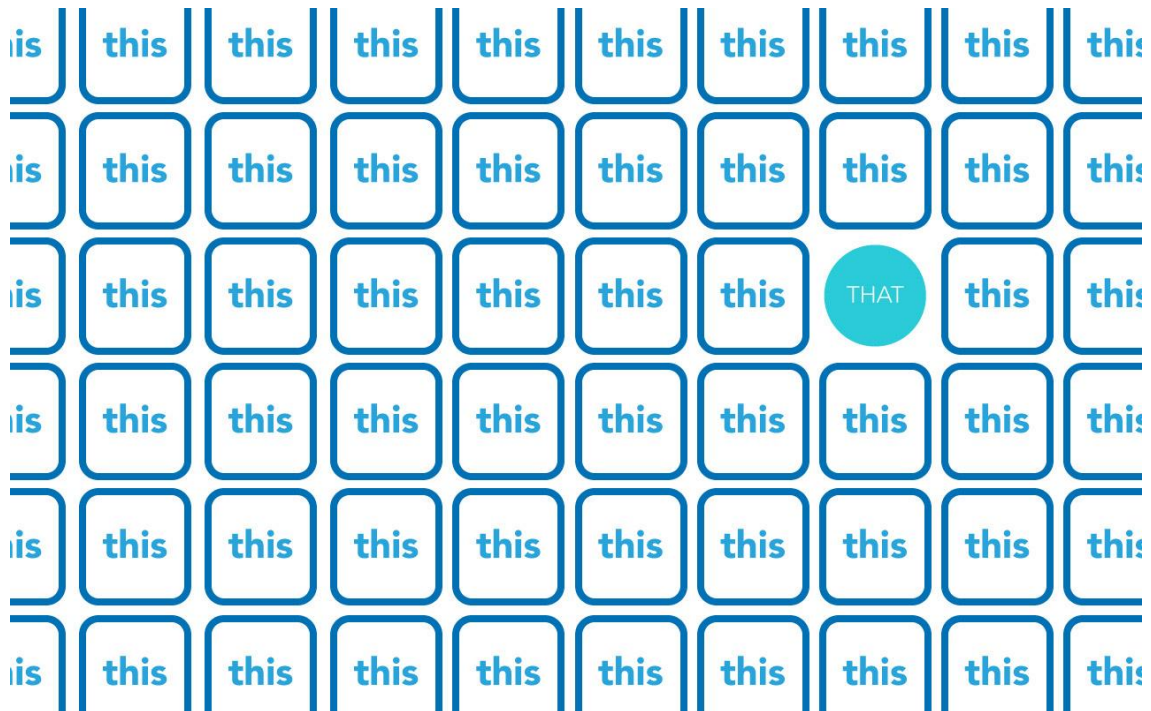
In the beginning was the word.



Communication determines our human nature. Our ability to convey complex, meaningful messages through words is one of the fundamental aspects that shape our society. We do amazing things with our word: We talk, we try to understand each other, to understand the world we live in, we analyze and study the things

that surround us, we write things down in textbooks and repeat them in classrooms, we document history, we tell stories, we imagine and create and share new fictional worlds in books and movies.

Our modern society is built around our need to transfer ever-growing information.



Information overload. However, new technology is changing the way we process information. It has enabled us to produce and send incredible amounts of data in short periods of time, and is growing exponentially. We are efficient, fast, automatized. Access to information is universal, and these are amazing beneficial aspects. However we desensitize, we get used to this pace. We have little time and more things to see and we are always in a hurry.

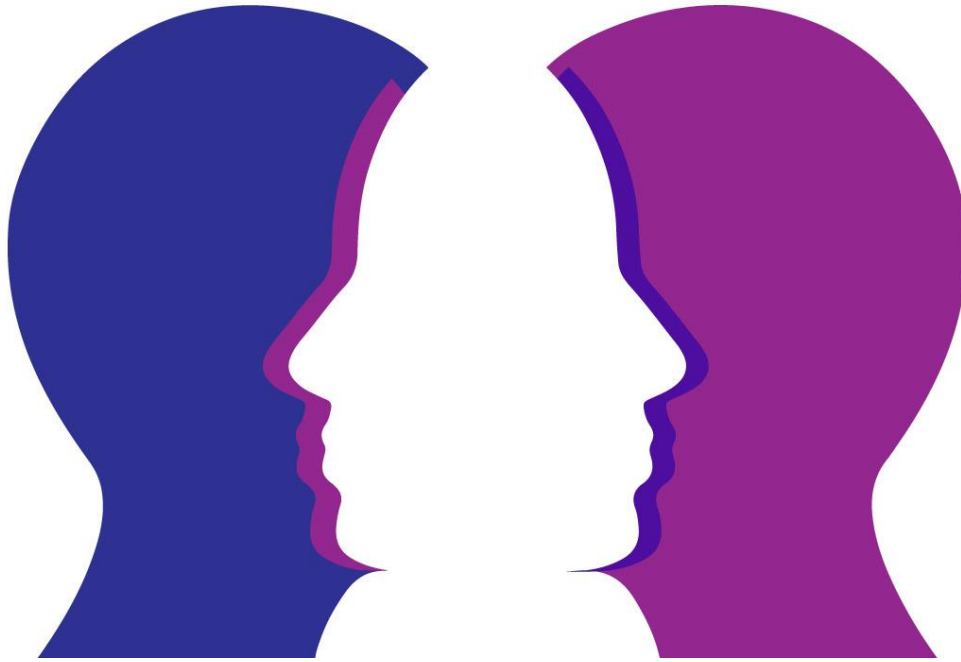
So how can we stand out? How do we capture and pause and take the time to really connect with students? How do we interact with students immersed in this new way of life and how do we use it to our benefit?

And then there was light...



We are visual creatures. I work with *visual communication*. Our brain processes far more visual information than any other kind. We like to look at things; we have a desire for beauty and wonder.

We are creative creatures. When God spoke, our world was created, word was materialized; it was transformed into something real; it became something we can see and touch, something we can experience. And this ability was also a gift from God to man, we create and innovate. Visualization is the process of transforming data into visual imagery, a creative process of reflection and selection that is design.

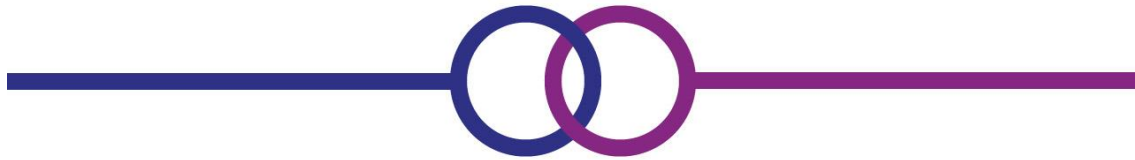


Images connect. The creative process starts with empathy. When we use images we are using a more universal language, enabling us to communicate in a simplified but deeply significant way. In visualization we find a way to be a bridge between Different ages, different cultures, different languages, different levels of education, visual language is universal and easy to interpret.

How do we practice empathy? We need to look outside ourselves, to be curious and to sensitize to the world that surrounds us. To ask questions, to explore, to seek authentic connections. We live in an era of 'do-it-yourself', of 'believe-in-yourself' and 24-hour connectedness that surely has amazing benefits, but instant access to so much knowledge creates an individualistic self.

Images are friendly. We use (and over-use) images for all forms of communication because we discovered how effective they are. Images are fast and effortless to decode while being able to maintain complex meaning. Brands and advertising know and take advantage of this because images engage; they make people want to talk.

Images talk about emotion. To create authentic connections we need to feel human, we need to dive beneath the surface and understand human emotion. Emotion is important because they make us human, they make things feel real and they create a connection of trust.



We are seeking to create authentic connections, to make things relatable, understandable and to engage, to convey more than just information. How do we transform data to information, information to knowledge and knowledge to wisdom? This last step is particularly difficult to conceptualize: What is wisdom?



The bible gives us examples of visualization. The stories in the bible often use metaphors and narrative to create visual imagery in what they are saying:

- The Clay and the Potter.
- The Fountain of Life.
- The Bread and the Wine
- Spit and Mud
- The Cross

These are visual representations that we can relate to. They are simple and easy to understand, but carry deep, abstract, complex significance. They also make us want to talk about them, to engage in conversation and analyze over and over.

Like Poetry. The creative process is like poetry: we must reduce the number of words we use so it is more accessible. We choose our words, and use rhymes and metaphors to create interest and engage in conversation. We understand and talk about emotion.

