The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images. (Bloomsbury Advances in Semiotics)

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Drawings and sequential images are an integral part of human expression dating back at least as far as cave paintings, and in contemporary society appear most prominently in comics. Despite this fundamental part of human identity, little work has explored the comprehension and cognitive underpinnings of visual narratives- until now.

This work presents a provocative theory: that drawings and sequential images are structured the same as language. Building on contemporary theories from linguistics and cognitive psychology, it argues that comics are written in a *visual language* of sequential images that combines with text. Like spoken and signed languages, visual narratives use a lexicon of systematic patterns stored in memory, strategies for combining these patterns into meaningful units, and a hierarchic grammar governing the combination of sequential images into coherent expressions. Filled with examples and illustrations, this book details each of these levels of structure, explains how cross-cultural differences arise in diverse visual languages of the world, and describes what the newest neuroscience research reveals about the brain's comprehension of visual narratives. From this emerges the foundation for a new line of research within the linguistic and cognitive sciences, raising intriguing questions about the connections between language and the diversity of humans' expressive behaviours in the mind and brain.

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