



# The work of Escher as learning of **visuality**

## La obra de Escher como aprendizaje de la visualidad

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### Abstract

In my dissertation I propose to consider certain works by Escher as a contribution to the understanding of our visual perception. For people who are dedicated to the visual arts in general, and Graphic Design in particular, some of Escher's engravings entail a teaching that allows them to direct their visuality towards artistic expression. Through visual resources, the work of this artist invites vision to recognize itself in a reflexive gesture on the processes of visual perception, promoting the learning of visuality. Thus, in Escher's work we witness the unleashing of the dynamic between teaching and learning, if the contemplative gaze opens itself to the apprehension of its own generative elements of meaning from contact with the work of art. I approach these elements from what Bruno Ernst called in his treatise *The Magic Mirror* of M. C. Escher as "impossible figures" within the field of "the projection of three-dimensional space on the surface", an expression also coined by Ernst and which, from his position, corresponded to a mathematical topic in Escher's graphics. The so-called "impossible figures" imply impossibility outside the visual field, that is, they are only realizable through visuality, which is how the distinctive features of the visual arts become manifest. Reviewing Ernst's investigations into Escher's work from a phenomenological semioaesthetic perspective allows us to theoretically base the visual formation of those who study Graphic Design in particular and visual arts in general.

**Keywords:** visuality, semi-aesthetics, figurative possibility, pictorial turn, work of art

### Resumen

*En mi disertación propongo considerar ciertas obras de Escher como una aportación a la comprensión de nuestra percepción visual. Para las personas que se dedican a las artes visuales en general, y al Diseño Gráfico en particular, algunos grabados de Escher entrañan una enseñanza que les permite encaminar su visualidad hacia la expresión artística. Mediante recursos visuales, la obra de este artista invita a la visión a reconocerse a sí misma en un gesto reflexivo sobre los procesos de la percepción visual, propiciando el aprendizaje de la visualidad. Entonces, en la obra de Escher asistimos al desencadenamiento de la dinámica entre enseñanza y aprendizaje, si la mirada contemplativa se abre a la aprehensión de sus propios elementos generativos de sentido desde el contacto con la obra de arte. Abordo dichos elementos a partir de lo que Bruno Ernst denominó en su tratado *El espejo mágico* de M. C. Escher como "figuras imposibles" dentro del campo de "la proyección del espacio tridimensional en la superficie", expresión también acuñada por Ernst y que, desde su postura, correspondía a un tópico matemático en la gráfica de Escher. Las llamadas "figuras imposibles" implican la imposibilidad fuera del campo visual, es decir, que sólo son realizables por la visuality, con lo que se manifiestan los rasgos distintivos de las artes visuales. Revisar desde una semioestética fenomenológica las indagaciones de Ernst en torno a la obra de Escher permite fundamentar teóricamente la formación visual de quien estudia Diseño Gráfico en particular y artes visuales en general.*

**Palabras clave:** visualidad, semioestética, posibilidad figurativa, giro pictorial, obra de arte

## ◆ Introduction

**W**orks of art teach us how to perceive. Because they are primarily based on the sensible, they become the aesthetic object par excellence. On the other hand, graphic arts invite us to learn about visuality. Based on the phenomenological maxim that we learn to see the world, this learning requires the intervention of artistic work. “It is true that the world is what we see and that, nevertheless, we need to learn to see it” (Merleau-Ponty, 2010, p. 18). The need to learn to see the world rests on the need to orient ourselves. At this point, the distinction between seeing and looking is crucial. While the act of seeing leads to orientation, the act of looking opens us up to the world. In this way, looking fosters the spontaneity with which visual perception opens up to the world, while orientation is developed by our vision. Visuality thus entwines a network of tensions between the actions of seeing and looking that are recognized as the dynamism between the intelligible and the sensible, respectively. My dissertation is made up of three parts. In the first, I describe the concepts that semioesthetics has developed on visuality, outlining the point of view from which I approach the study of Escher's works. The second justifies the choice of Escher's works for study and describes the processes by which the figurative dimension of his engravings makes visible realities that are only possible in the visual field, thereby showing the constitutional conditions of the visual arts. Finally, the third section summarizes Escher's contributions to the learning of our own visual perception because it shows the processes of figurative visibility and plastic visualization in a turn towards the image.

## ◆ Semioesthetics of visuality

In order to circumscribe the approach from which I approach the study of Escher's works, I define the concepts that phenomenological semioesthetics has developed on visuality. This discipline is not separate nor is it a particular theoretical branch, but rather the convergence of knowledge around meaning, considering it on the basis of the human construction of reality and approaching it from three different approaches, given its complexity.

Certainly, semioesthetics has been defined as “a semiotics in charge of studying sensitive experience and at the same time fostering it, in a kind of withdrawal or contagion in which the object of study is presented or reproduced in the very form of the research and in the writing of its results” (Solís Zepeda, 2021, p. 85). Therefore, semioesthetics contributes to our didactic zeal because it sensitizes each student around their visual perception. Furthermore, it involves the interweaving of two disciplines: semiotics with Saussurean roots and aesthetics with Husserlian roots. Both fields of study draw from the same phenomenological source. Although the adjective phenomenological is redundant for the aesthetics inherited from Husserl, it will not be so with the semiotics coming from Saussure; consequently, the precision of phenomenological is valid for semioaesthetics because it emphasizes its interest in studying immediate experience and strives to return to things themselves with the purpose of accounting for the meaning that emanates from their intentionality.

In the first instance, semioaesthetics aims to account for the conversion process that goes from sensory impressions to meaning: “A fundamental and continuous problem is to process these sensory impressions to convert them into meaning. This conversion (...) is carried out through the mediation of the body” (Dorra, 1997, p. 29). Through the body, sensory impressions become meaning. The body thus transforms them under two conditions: the first is to be a perceiving and perceived body at the same time, while the second is to have the feeling as the basis of perceiving.

Phenomenology recognizes that the perception of the world is prior to all thought, that is, the world appears ordered thanks to my perception and thought then tries to elaborate this organization that is presented to me: “When I perceive, I do not think about the world, it organizes itself before me” (Merleau-Ponty, 1966, p. 91). My perception organizes my worldly experience without resorting to the mediation of thought, it does so spontaneously.

Seeing oneself, becoming “visible to oneself.” Our perception requires not only being of the world, but also being of the body in which it is found, which is, at the same time, perceptible and perceiving. This first vicarious condition of perception extends to visuality: “where a visible person begins to see, he becomes visible to himself and through the vision of all things, where he persists (...) the indivision of the one who feels and the felt arises” (Merleau-Ponty, 1986, p. 17). He who feels is also felt and in this indivision the fold of the body emerges in feeling. Visuality, specifically, articulates the visible condition of the body with the sighted subject in the impossibility of not being seen when he sees. On the contrary, if “the vision of all things” (Merleau-Ponty, 1986, p. 17) happens in experience it is thanks to the fact that the body is woven with the same visible material of all things; but it is distinguished from

them because it sees them. The visible-sighted person comes from the encounter between the sentient and the sensed:

The sentient body has its other in the sensed body, its other with which it continually encounters itself. Curiously, if everything is sensible for the sentient body, and if it finds in the sensible its natural prolongation, the body itself, however, cannot be felt except as a split, as otherness. When it comes to feeling one's own body, familiarity meets strangeness. It is as if the sentient body lived the paradox that every sensation that it incorporates into its feeling it incorporates as sameness except the sensation of the body itself: the self, presenting itself as such, cannot be received except as another. (Dorra, 1999, p. 258-259)

The splitting of feeling underlies the splitting of perceiving, although between feeling and perceiving there is an underlying elementary difference that goes from the continuous to the discontinuous, that is, feeling overflows perceiving, while perceiving establishes limits for feeling.

The subject “[a]t perceiving the there where things happen, he perceives the here of his perceiving body, which is, at its core, a sentient body. It could be said that he perceives in this way because his body, tense, feels —and feels— in this way. The body runs through a range of tense sensations and from this tension it goes from one perception to another” (Dorra, 2005, p. 111). The second vicarious condition of the body of being sentient and perceiving establishes a tension where feeling intensifies carnal sensitivity and perceiving extends bodily intelligibility.

Starting from the hypothesis of schematism “understood as a mediation between the sensible and the intelligible” (Zilberberg, 1999, p. 114), Ruiz Moreno (2014, p. 163) defines visibility as “a value of perception whose valences would be the visual in intensity, which would have looking as an action and the gaze as an organ of execution, and the visible in extensity, which would have seeing as an action and vision as an organ of execution”. But he warns that it is not necessarily “the meaning generated by the action of looking and seeing is the same as that generated by other actions of perception” (Ruiz Moreno, 2008, n.p.). In this way, the actions of perception, although they establish communication and exchanges between each other, do so based on the constitutional difference of each one. For its part, for aesthetics, the work of art is considered the aesthetic object par excellence because it has its being in the sensible, hence “what the aesthetic object communicates to us does so through its presence, at the very heart of what is perceived” (Dufrenne, 1982, p. 53). It should be noted that the aesthetic, on the other hand, is found in both the temporal and spatial determination of the experience: “The aesthetic (...) refers to the temporal-spatial foundation of any experience rather than to the sensitivity of the person who has it” (Rivas López, 2021, p. 52). Thus, the approach to the work of art from the perspective of phenomenological semioesthetics is always done by

privileging and prioritizing the perceptual presence of the work to attend to what it communicates. The plastic text in Greimas (1990) is conceived as an aesthetic object by Dufrenne (1982) because it returns to its very perception, putting the supposed idea represented in the work in parentheses: “the aesthetic object is nothing other than the perceived work of art, and precisely of an object that demands nothing more than to be perceived” (Dufrenne, 1982, p. 56). Following Dufrenne (1982), the selection criterion for Escher's works for our study lies in circumscribing them in their very perception. If the contributions of Ruiz Moreno (2008) and Greimas (1990) are taken into account, the strategies deployed from its visuality can be distinguished in the approach to the work of art, both the figurative ones that imply the visible, as well as the plastic ones that imply the visual. Phenomenological semioaesthetics thus establishes the distinction between the logic of the visible and the aesthetics of the visual.

Vision iconizes, but the gaze opens the way to the recognition of the plastic dimension. An iconizing reading makes the plastic signifier invisible—as Greimas (1990) states—but a reading of the plastic text makes the visual visible through the correspondence between the figurative meaning and the plastic signifier. The work of art recognized as a plastic text by semiotics makes an image of the becoming meaningful of sensory impressions:

The reading of the plastic text seems to consist of a double deviation: certain meanings postulated during the figurative reading are detached from their figurative formants to serve as meanings for the plastic formants in the process of constitution; certain features of the plastic signifier are detached at once from the figurative formants in which they are integrated and, obeying the autonomous organizational principles of the signifier, they become plastic formants. (Greimas, 1990, pp. 39 and 40)

The double deviation in the reading of the plastic text implies, on the one hand, figurativizing the plastic formants, investing them with a meaning, as is the case of the works where we recognize the color stain. There the “stain” has become the meaning of the chromatic as a plastic formant in a figurative reading. On the other hand, it implies autonomizing the plastic signifier to show that the formants function even when separated from their figurative formants.

But also as if, sometimes, in the face of—as Merleau-Ponty would say—a “coherent deformation” of the sensible, a second reading, revealing the plastic forms, went to meet the iconizable forms and recognized there chromatic and eidetic correspondences, “normally” invisible and, in general, other more or less “disfigured” formants to which it would hasten to attribute new meanings. In this way, it can be said, painting begins to refer to its own language. (Greimas, 1990, p. 76)

In these terms we can appreciate that Escher's work "begins to refer to its own language" (Greimas, 1990, p. 76) if it reveals how the plastic forms correspond to the iconizing ones, making their eidetic categories visible. Then, the plastic reading attributes new meanings to "disfigured" formants that, in Escher's case, have been recognized by Ernst, through an iconizing reading, as "impossible figures".

### ❖ The figurative possibility: methodology

In what follows, I explain the choice of Escher's works for study and describe the processes by which the figurative dimension of his prints makes visible realities only possible in the visual realm, showing the constitutional conditions of the visual arts.

Since the influence of the Alhambra on Escher's work has been extensively studied, I will limit myself to a brief mention of interest regarding the supposed impossibility:

Escher was deeply impressed by the intricate patterns he saw and the fabulous geometric precision of the creators of this 14th-century Muslim palace. He spent many days studying the detailed patterns and periodicities, and came to develop his own synthesis of symmetry and impossibility. (Barrow, 2017, pp. 87-88)

Indeed, the art of the Alhambra gave him the necessary guidelines on the symmetrical partition of space, while also giving him the opportunity to contemplate plastic strategies autonomous from the iconizing reading. It is certainly impossible to refer the meaning of our three engravings Belvedere, Cascade and Relativity outside of these. Let us begin with Belvedere (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Belvedere.  
Source: Ernst, 2007. Work by M.C. Escher, 1958. Lithograph located in the Escher Museum, in the Palace of The Hague, Netherlands.

According to Ernst's reading (2007, p. 90): "In Belvedere, it is clear from the start that the building we see cannot be the building it appears to be, since the latter could not exist in reality." In short, the existence of the building referred to only acquires the possibility of visual existence at the borders of the engraving.

A segmentation between up and down shows the supposed normality of architectural design (see figures 2 and 3): "If we cut the drawing in half with a horizontal line, we will see that both halves are completely normal. It is the combination of both that results in something impossible" (Ernst, 2007, p. 91). Rather, the composition of these halves provides a space of its own for vision, a unique possibility of visibility.



Figure 2. *Belvedere, detail.*  
Source: Ernst, 2007.



Figure 3. *Belvedere, detail.*  
Source: Ernst, 2007.

In his interpretation, the author resorts to the comparison of visuality with other forms of perception to argue the impossibility of the crossing made by the pillars in *Belvedere*: “Perhaps the possibility of holding the figure in one’s hands is a pure chimera – for the simple reason that such a figure cannot exist in space” (Ernst, 2007, p. 91). However, this figure does exist in visual space and, in fact, shows that this spatial form in its meaning does not depend on physical space. Although Ernst refers to the hands and, with them, to tactile and motor perceptions, he only emphasizes with the expression “pure chimera of possibility” that *Belvedere* creates between its lower pillars a space deprived of visuality, where vision is oriented on the condition that the gaze opens a path between them.

In both *Belvedere* and *Cascade* we observe that something crosses through the pillars that are in front and behind at the same time (see figure 2). In the case of *Belvedere* it is the staircase (see figure 3), while in *Cascade* (see figure 4) it is the water. “The kinship between *Belvedere* and *Cascade* is obvious: the cubic structure underlying *Belvedere* owes its existence to the – intentionally erroneous – connections between the corners of the cube” (Ernst, 2007, p. 92). The risk of following Ernst in his statement about the “erroneous” connections in *Belvedere* consists in overlooking the fact that the supposed intentional error links this work with *Cascade* as two spaces where visuality questions itself.



Figure 4. *Cascada*.  
Source: Ernst, 2007. Work by M.C. Escher, 1961. Lithograph located in the Escher Museum, in the Palace of The Hague, Netherlands.

From Ernst’s perspective, which seeks to give meaning to art outside of its very expression, we omit that *Belvedere* and *Cascade* coincide in



creating spaces that can only be traversed by vision and to which only the gaze is open, but which are strange to reason: "In the concept of Strange Loops, the concept of infinity is implicit, because what else is a strange loop but a way of representing an endless process in a finite way? And infinity plays a vast role in many of Escher's drawings" (Hofstadter, 2003, p. 17). Thanks to the fact that in *Belvedere* and *Cascade* the iconizable forms of architecture correspond to eidetic formants coming from linear perspective, we attend a strange loop in which these works by Escher begin to refer to their own language by making visible the correspondence between the plastic and the figurative. Certainly, following the path of the figurative meaning, we observe a cyclical development of the water that falls in a cascade after going up the gutters, with the fall of the waterfall being what generates the upward movement of the water in the wheel. In this way, the waterfall feeds itself: "Escher's genius consists in having been able not only to conceive, but to represent, black on white, dozens of worlds half real and half mythical, worlds full of Strange Loops that he places before the eyes of the beholder as if inviting him to penetrate them" (Hofstadter, 2003, p. 17). The mixture between the mythical and the real that Hofstadter notes comes from an iconizing approach to Escher's work, where the effect of meaning is found in the strange loop, which can be appreciated from the plastic reading as the turn that the graphic arts give when referring to the structure that supports them and that is none other than visual perception. On the lithograph *Cascade*, Hofstadter (2003, p. 13) speaks of "its eternally descending loop of six stages or steps," considering the edges of the tribar as each stage of the loop. According to Ernst (2007, p. 91): "This impossible figure [the tribar] can "exist" thanks to certain incorrect joints of perfectly normal elements, that is, it can only exist as a drawing." It is important to note that the visible fall of water implies two of these steps and that it occurs between the joints of the tribar. The recognition that the latter can only exist as a drawing appeals to the reading of the plastic text and to the main implication that the visual has in reality, that of making us see:

Argument-based definitions of paradoxes are at odds with psychologists' own description of illusions as "visual paradoxes," such as Roger Penrose's triangle. The triangle has three equal sides and therefore three equal angles. But if you ask how big the angles are, you simply "see" that each angle is greater than 60 degrees. Since the angles in a triangle must add up to 180 degrees, it is only half possible to believe that the angles are greater than 60 degrees. But it is not possible from the visual impression. Psychologists think the dissonance is irresolvable because our visual system is compartmentalized. (Sorensen, 2007, pp. 21-22)

The logic of the visible feeds the paradox. The intelligibility of the tribar or Penrose triangle through the formulation of concepts raises the discrepancy with what has already been seen because the definition refers to a polygon, the triangle, while the tribar is made up of prisms with

a quadrangular base in foreshortening. In this way, the aesthetics of the visual allows us to access the work that the tribar does in our vision and which consists of showing us that our visual perception organizes the appearance as a figure, and provides structure even to what is logically incoherent, not only because our perception precedes reason, but because the sensible supports the intelligible. For Ernst (2007, p. 92), “the idea that a waterfall could better illustrate the absurd nature of construction” rests on the assumption that the construction of the engraving must remain in all respects similar to an architectural construction outside the engraving. However, for visual perception, Escher's construction, far from being absurd, becomes suggestive of a process that only becomes comprehensible in the gaze with what vision carries out: the path of the flowing water witnessing the possibility that, thanks to the pillars that are behind and in front at the same time, the waterfall rises on itself, allowing the water that is below to also be above. In this way, Waterfall makes us see the ubiquity of the water above and below at the same time, while Belvedere shows us the ubiquity of the staircase behind and in front at the same time.

The understanding of the tribar and, therefore, of Waterfall, is found in its perception and not in its conceptualization. On the other hand, for Ernst (2007), *Relativity* is part of Escher's explorations of linear perspective and not so much of what he calls “impossible worlds” (see figure 5). However, the structure on which it is based is the same as that of *Cascade*, namely: the tribar, but with the difference that in *Relativity* it is about the simultaneous apprehension of spatial divergences through the articulated superposition of points of view: “Here [*Relativity*] three completely different worlds have been fused into a compact unit” (Ernst, 2007, p. 51). These worlds are not completely different because figuratively they seem very similar and could even pass for the same world seen from different perspectives. In addition, again, this work, like the other two, exposes a particular process of the visual arts that consists of articulately bringing together “in a compact unit”, but organized, three points of view in a single composition.



Figure 5. *Relatividad*.  
Source: Ernst, 2007. Work by M.C. Escher, 1953. Lithograph located in the Escher Museum, in the Palace of The Hague, Netherlands.

Thanks to the rules of linear perspective, the three points of view cohabit around the tribar. In principle, three vanishing points outside the pictorial plane govern the foreshortening: “Relatividad is constructed with three vanishing points that are outside the lithograph and form an imaginary equilateral triangle that surrounds it” (González Mateos, 1998, p. 89). Then, the proportional decrease towards the vanishing points provides coherence to the figurative elements. Thus, through the technique par excellence of classicism, Relatividad provides a momentary realism to its figurative elements to later recombine them according to the visual aesthetics of the tribar.

The logic of the visible that governs linear perspective now serves to show the aesthetics of the visual, proper to the plastic arts, which consists of making the visible visible. The composition between the tribar and the linear perspective in Relatividad reveals that the spatial organization in graphic arts depends on plastic elements, such as straight lines, which in Greimas (1990) will be recognized as pointed eidetic categories of the plane of expression. Thus, the appearance of volume as a figurative element depends on the specific way in which the eidetic categories are organized and, therefore, the disposition of an element that is behind can be seen in front with the change of point of view (and in this it coincides with Belvedere in making behind what is in front) or, as occurs in Cascada, what is above can be seen below by changing perspective.

Hofstadter (2003, p. 110) also agrees with the affirmation of figurative impossibility and observes that in Relatividad “frankly impossible images appear.” However, this impossibility emerges if we try to reproduce outside the engraving what we see inside it: “One settles there, amused and intrigued by the steps, each oriented in its own capricious direction, and by the people who walk in contradictory walks on the same staircase” (Hofstadter, 2003, p. 110) (see figure 6). Once again, the iconizing reading ignores with adjectives such as “capricious” and “contradictory” the function that the figurative meaning fulfills when referring to the plastic signifier. The direction of the steps shows that the foreshortening has the capacity to fold the visible spaces and, in this fold, the visual aspect of linear perspective is exposed. The walks emphasize the visibility of the visual fold. The visual image in the three engravings analyzed reaches its greatest possibility of expression by putting into crisis the similarity of the work of art with the external visible reality.

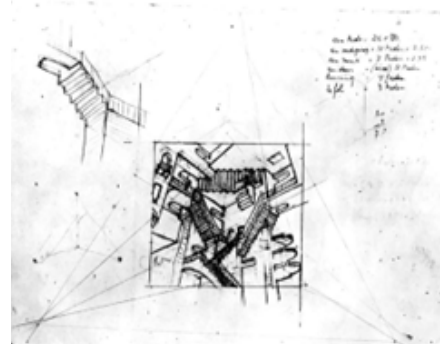


Figure 7. *Sketch for Relativity showing the three vanishing points, 1953.*  
Source: Ernst, 2007.

### ◆ Visual learning: results

Escher's contributions to the learning of our own visual perception are synthesized around the possibility of evidencing the figurative strategies deployed by the logic of the visible and the plastic strategies structured by the aesthetics of the visual, all in a turn towards the image.

The supposed impossibility of the figurative in the three Escher engravings that we have studied is found outside of them. Returning to the work itself shows us that its figurative possibility is visible thanks to the visual dimension. Following the terms of Ernst and Hofstadter, Escher makes us see the impossible, but, in terms of phenomenological semioaesthetics, returning to the work itself shows us the possibilities that visibility has of making its own processes visible if it resorts to the plastic dimension to question the figurative. These are works that question their visibility and put the representative function of the graphic work of art in crisis.

The phenomenological gesture of returning to things themselves is conducive to “the pictorial turn” or “turn towards the image”, defined as “a postlinguistic rediscovery of the image as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourses, bodies and figurality” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 23). It is not enough to say that Escher’s work has been crucial in the emergence of the pictorial turn by putting into crisis the relationship of visibility with verbality and other forms of perception, such as tactility, thanks to the figural complexity of his work, but it must be emphasized that he also establishes an interplay between visual perception and the apparatus of the plastic arts, particularly with engraving.

The turn towards the image has opened two paths for research: on the one hand, it sees the image as a place where social, historical and cultural aspects converge, so its analysis provides elements to understand the environment; but, on the other hand, it shows that it has its specific way of shaping reality and expressing it, which

makes it possible to think that there are other different ways of doing so, in addition to the verbal. The turn indicates a process of transformation from a culture of words to a culture of images, which not only causes changes in communication but, above all, in the ways of approaching reality. (González Ochoa, 2023, p. 154)

The pictorial turn in Escher's work consists in showing us forms of reality that can only be grasped in the visual image. It is interesting to emphasize that the approaches to the work of this artist that Ernst and Hofstadter carried out through the mathematical approach are still anchored to "a culture of words" because they continue to conceive art as representation where verblivity establishes the meaning of the work, based on its similarity with the visible world outside the work itself.

The Escher works studied here allow us to understand that our visual perception finds in the plastic arts the possibility of giving an account of itself through figurative developments that put the concept of representation in the arts in crisis because, by referring to its plastic composition, the similarity with the world perceived outside the work is blurred; in addition to the fact that these developments generate experiences of visuality, where the implication of other perceptual and even verbal forms hinder understanding. In this regard, the semioaesthetic approach helps us to understand the need to foster sensitive experience at the time of studying it. In this way, people dedicated to the graphic arts will be able to find useful resources for the artistic formation of their visuality in the understanding of engravings such as those of Escher, whose greatest lesson consists in showing us, through graphic resources, that visuality becomes reflexive in the plastic arts because it is recognized in them as the structure that supports them and the system that accommodates them.

Because it is from the world, visuality also learns from itself to express forms of apprehension proper to the visual arts. It is interesting to emphasize that self-absorbed visuality cannot account for its organization because the act of seeing is only achieved by recovering the image that comes from the gaze, so the plastic arts emerge as the condition of possibility for visuality to open itself. Consequently, semiotics, aesthetics and phenomenology base their theories of visuality on the study of the plastic arts because they recognize in these expressions visual teachings.

In contrast, the studies of Ernst and Hofstadter on which I have developed the contrast with semioesthetics show the effects that the enunciated has on the visible. One of these effects consists of the resistance that the images of *Belvedere*, *Cascade* and *Relativity* manifest before the adjectives of impossible, absurd and contradictory because it is entirely possible to see how above is below and the seamless interweaving of back and front or the coherence with which the various points of view are organized on a single plane. More than contradiction, from its aesthetic condition, the image turns towards its complexity by showing the

articulation of opposites. Escher's graphics contribute to the postlinguistic development of both plastic and figurative strategies.

The visual training of Graphic Design students finds theoretical support in semioesthetics if, in principle, learning implies a sensitive apprehension of graphic works. Specifically, the Escher works that we have studied teach visuality that graphic space gains autonomy through the ubiquity of up-down and back-forward. Artistic practice necessarily requires fostering sensitive experience at the time of studying it, with the purpose that the resulting work transmits its meaning to whoever contemplates it and, for these reasons, semioesthetics, as "a semiotics in charge of studying sensitive experience" (Solís Zepeda, 2021, p. 85) is appropriate to elucidate, with the support of the phenomenology of perception, the way in which Escher's work occurs as a learning of visuality.

## ◆ Conclusions

The Escher prints we have reviewed manifest the epitome of what visual culture studies often call the "pictorial turn" because they address their own significant elements through visual resources. In terms of phenomenological semioaesthetics, they make their visual strategies visible, that is, they show how it is possible to make something visible.

What Ernst, Hofstadter and other authors agree in describing as "impossible" in Escher's work implies, in any case, impossibility outside the visual field, that is, they are only realizable through visuality, thereby revealing the distinctive features of the visual arts. More than the creation of impossible figures, Escher works on the passage from the unseen to the visible in his works from the figurative path, which in the plastic arts finds its counterpart in visualizing the invisible.

Of course, mathematics has served as the immediate approach with which Escher's works have been studied and is consistent with the primary way of approaching graphic arts through an iconic reading that takes the logic of the visible as a guide. However, we have also found that from this approach the appreciation of Escher's artistic work is limited to formulations around the absurd, the impossibility, the paradox and the strange loop.

In general, each work of art plays a crucial role in learning our perception by manifesting the sensitive materiality of meaning. In particular, the Escher works we have reviewed materialize the visual meaning of graphic arts. Starting from the angle of the aesthetics of the visual, we appreciate the plastic strategies deployed in the works studied with which they turn towards the image from the image itself. Phenomenological semioesthetics allows us to understand and make others understand that visuality is the system that unites the plastic arts and, consequently, gives them their underlying structure. In conclusion, through the study of Escher's works, visuality learns its own possibilities of expression. ●

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