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A Reflection on the Visual Aspects of Muharram from the Perspective of Haptic Perception (Case Study: Isfahan - Muharram 2023)

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Abstract

Problem statement: The impact of a city's visual qualities on its audience is a significant concern for urban planners. This is particularly evident in the setup of occasion-specific images. Every year during the month of Muharram, cities across Iran install visuals appropriate for this period. The use of religious elements and components to enhance the influence of individuals in urban spaces is a key focus in this context, directly affecting the quality of presence and perception of the audience. Analyzing and examining the daily lives of citizens in such a setting is highly important in social history studies. In Isfahan, extensive advertising was carried out by the municipality for Muharram 2023. In the installed images, a common visual element, specifically the tear, was prominently highlighted. This study seeks to answer the question: What characteristics do the displayed occasion-specific works have, and what meanings do they convey to the audience?

Research objective: explanation of the visual aspects of Muharram in the contemporary social environment.

Research method: This study is qualitative in nature and based on a descriptive-analytical approach. The method of data analysis was qualitative, considering the content, and based on visual perception and haptic perception.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that the display of occasion-specific works with the central theme of mourning engages not only the visual sense but also other senses of the audience. Through the resulting haptic perception, a sensory relationship between the viewer and the urban space is formed. With the increase in the number of participants in the scene, a type of collective sensitivity emerges, playing a significant role in fostering communal participation.

Keywords: *Isfahan, Muharram 2023, Occasion-specific works, Tear, Mourning, Haptic perception.*

Introduction

In Iranian cities, various visual elements are used to mark the month of Muharram. Black and green flags are among the most common items displayed on doors and walls across different cities and areas. Some of these flags are adorned with prayers and

religious phrases, while others are decorated with the names of Shiite Imams and prominent figures of the Karbala event, such as Imam Husayn (AS), Hazrat Abolfazl (AS), and Hazrat Zaynab (SA). Although these works share common functions and themes, they are highly diverse in form. During this period, the city's visual culture became filled

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with a variety of symbols and signs appropriate to the concepts of mourning and martyrdom.

Urban planners and officials, recognizing the importance of the city's visual space, designate various locations for displaying such works. In Isfahan, specific places are set up for the installation of posters and banners, showcasing diverse works on different occasions. The displayed works contain both visual and textual elements and are often placed in high-traffic areas such as crossroads and city squares. The authors' observations during Muharram 2023 indicate the use of particular visual symbols in these works, which are related to the central theme of mourning and prominently feature the element of the tear. Given the importance of the city's visual space, this study aims to analyze the works displayed during Muharram 1402 SH (July 2023) and address the question: What characteristics do the occasion-specific posters and banners displayed in Isfahan during Muharram 2023 have, and what meanings do they convey to the audience?

Research Background

Several studies have been conducted on visual space and environmental advertising. Among them, Shekaraby et al. (2019), in their article "The Impact of the Power of Environmental Advertising on Changing the Identity of Metropolises and Citizens; A Study of the City as a Filmic Space within the Framework of Benjamin and Lacan's Views", discuss the encounter of the citizen as a flâneur with the multitude of images present in the urban space. This flâneur, like a director, edits a film in his mind. This film, by creating a surreal space, stimulates the audience's desire to acquire goods. Hashemi Fesharaki et al. (2022), in "Examining the Effective Dimensions in the Model of Cultural and Social Environmental Advertising Effectiveness", focus on the content of the messages in the advertisements, asserting that the principle of honesty in advertising necessitates that the message be presented clearly, transparently, and without complexity. In this study, creativity is considered one of the most important aspects of environmental

advertising. The public's understanding of advertising, which can be effective in achieving advertising goals such as education, participation, and the like, is another factor highlighted in this study. Rezaei et al. (2021), in the article "The Role of Urban Symbols and Elements in the Development of Tourism in Khorramabad", concluded that urban elements predict a very small percentage of changes in tourism development and that urban identity has a very minor mediating role. Nikdel & Aram (2021), in "A Comparative Study of Urban Element Design with an Approach to Urban Identity in Iran and the World", identified the most important factors influencing the physical identity of urban elements as being historical and native aspects, design, form, and architecture.

Several studies have been conducted on the theoretical approach of this research, namely the role of seeing and the power of haptic visual perception. Kaymaz (2012) in the article "Understanding Space" discussed the influence and importance of visual perception on environmental perception and compared its greater importance to other senses. In "Capacities of Haptic Perception in Iranian-Islamic Art and Its Application in Cinematic Expression: Case Study: The Green Fire Film", Sayyad et al. (2020), referred to the film "The Green Fire" and the features of haptic visuality in Iranian-Islamic art, analyzed and explained these aspects in the film. Shahcheraghi (2010), in the article "The Persian Garden and The Architecture of Mindfulness" examined the impact of planting systems, water, and buildings on each other and the enhancement of sensory richness in the garden environment. Ghahramani et al. (2014), in "The Embodiment of the Spectator in the Haptic Space of Film" attempted to explore the body-centered and haptic theory of film. Hasanpur (2021), in the article "Tactile Perception and Analysis of Social Photos" highlighted the sense of touch as one of the important senses for understanding visual arts and argues that even visual perception can be understood within the tactile chain. This study addresses the metaphorical

and physical functions of the sense of touch in analyzing family and private photos.

The body of research shows that the experience of human presence in the city and the impact of space on citizens have drawn the attention of researchers and cultural scholars in recent decades. The interaction between humans and the city is one of the main topics in this field. However, the connection between urban space and religious culture in contemporary Iran, and the quality of the city's visual space during religious mourning periods, is a thought-provoking topic that, despite its significance, has received less attention from researchers. This study highlights the importance of this issue and aims to reflect on this topic by studying the occasion-specific posters and banners of the Muharram period, thereby elucidating part of the cultural appearance of contemporary Iran.

Theoretical Framework

Today, the way of seeing and perceiving plays a decisive role in cultural and social relations. The perspective and manner of looking at an image can convey various concepts, which can fundamentally influence the process of conducting research. Over the past two decades, this topic has drawn the attention of many researchers and theorists in the humanities, leading to the development of numerous concepts surrounding visual perception and its reception. For instance, in the article "The Centrality of the Eye in the Western Culture", Chris Jenks argues that since the Renaissance, seeing, looking, and knowing have become intertwined (Rose, 2015; Jenks, 1995). This focus on visual perception as the central aspect of empirical knowledge has led to the neglect of other senses, a phenomenon known as optical vision.

With the expansion of critical discussions and discourse analysis in the twentieth century, a new approach called haptic visuality has emerged in response to optical vision. This approach not only considers the "visual" sense but also the capacities of physical and tactile perception. These tendencies emphasize that vision is not purely a visual act

but can also be haptic, sensory, and embodied (Paterson, 2007, cited in Sayyad et al., 2020).

The term "haptic" was first used by art historian Alois Riegl. In his treatise "Late Roman Art Industry", Riegl considered haptic as a tactile sense related to vision (Paterson, 2007). Haptic involves empathy, proximity, touch, sensory participation, and tactile communication (Sayyad et al., 2020). Haptic vision is a flexible and unstable form of looking that tends to move and flow rather than focusing on a single subject. It seeks to feel and touch rather than merely identify and recognize (Marks, 2000, cited in Ghahramani et al., 2014). Haptic reception creates close, sensory, and intimate relationships with images, inviting the viewer in (Marks, 2002, cited in Sayyad et al., 2020). In haptic perception, it is often emotional reactions and feelings that are evoked. The dynamic between matter and feeling forms a space that Deleuze and Guattari describe as "where matter ends and feeling begins" (Paterson, 2007).

The importance of other senses in visual perception has been highlighted by theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Walter Benjamin, among whom Benjamin's views are particularly noteworthy regarding the visual space of the modern city. Although Benjamin does not provide a complete theory of how and what quality of perception exists, his studies on the physical nature of perception when encountering various texts are worth considering. According to Benjamin, art can and should be an impactful experience. An experience like standing in front of a painting, encountering a sculpture, or walking through a building, where even if physical touch is not allowed, it should at least touch us (ibid., 2007). This concept of being touched by art is further elucidated in another of his notes regarding the sensory and psychological effects of films that invade the viewer's safe space, such as the convincing structure of sound when a gun is fired, transforming it into a tactile quality perceived by the observer, thereby affecting them. This emotional metaphor demonstrates how the

observer or audience is tangibly impacted by the world (Benjamin, 1999).

This idea is also reflected in Benjamin's extensive writings on *flânerie*. Benjamin speaks of the *flâneur's* desire to immerse himself in the sensory intensity of the modern metropolis. This desire stems from his way of perceiving this space and involves a multi-sensory and physical experience (Berard, 2018). The study of images and cityscapes in Benjamin's works, such as in the book "One-Way Street", which narrates his scattered observations in various urban spaces, opens up a multifaceted and dynamic space for the reader and reproduces the emotional effects of being present in these spaces. Benjamin establishes an interactive and reciprocal relationship between the *flâneur* and the city, where each plays a role in shaping and completing the concept of the other. He believes that the sensory perception and tactile knowledge of the *flâneur* in the labyrinth of the city are prerequisites for modern experience and perception. This perception is based on touch, tactile sense, and immediate physical and sensory contact (Sayyad, 2021).

The urban space consists of multiple fragmented and changing views that allow for movement and relocation of the subject. This space corresponds to the haptic space, which finds meaning in connection with the presence of the subject and simultaneously engages all their senses. Deleuze and Guattari describe this space as one of freedom and liberation (Ghahramani et al., 2014).

Given the importance of haptic visuality in spatial perception, the following discussion will study the banners and photographs of Muharram, 1402 SH (July 2023) in the city of Isfahan.

Research Method

This study is qualitative in nature and based on a descriptive-analytical approach. The required information was collected through fieldwork and documentary methods. The statistical population of this study consists of banners and photographs related to the theme of mourning, in which this

concept is prominently highlighted by the element of the tear. Tear-shaped forms installed in various urban areas were also considered in this study. The selected study samples include 6 photo boards, 4 banners, and 3 tear-shaped forms that were installed in squares, crossroads, underpasses, and mourning processions. The method of data analysis was qualitative, considering the content, and based on visual perception and haptic perception.

Corpus Study

In commemoration of the Muharram mourning ceremonies, a collection of religious elements was designed and installed in the city of Isfahan. The authors' investigation during Muharram 2023 revealed that the element of tears was prominently featured in these works. The most significant part of these works includes six photo boards depicting women, men, and children, which were installed in the main squares or intersections of the city. The boards were placed in locations that were previously used for advertisements, and the reservation number for each advertisement was also displayed above each board. Additionally, banners with various texts and tear-shaped forms were publicly displayed in different parts of the city for one month by the municipal organization. These works constitute the corpus of this research.

• Banners

The banners with Ashura themes were installed vertically and are generally rectangular, with the shorter side being about one-fifth of the longer side. The background colors of the banners are red and black. As previously mentioned, the element of tears is one of the visual symbols present in these banners. A large tear, in a color different from the background, is depicted at the top of the banners. The tear-like shape is adorned with text such as "Ya Abalfazl," "Ya Hussein Shahid," or "Ya Zainab al-Hawra." Other written texts, such as "This flood is the flood of your mourning tears" and "We shed tears drop by drop until we become an ocean," are also seen below the large tear form. Surrounding the large tear

adorned with text, smaller tears in a different color, resembling raindrops, are depicted. The name of the Isfahan Municipal Organization is also inscribed on all the banners (Fig.1).

• **Billboards**

In addition to the banners, the same images of tears and accompanying texts were displayed on film and photo billboards throughout the city. Apart from these billboards, a large curtain was installed opposite the municipality building in Imam Hussein Square, featuring large-scale paintings of the Karbala event in the style of coffeehouse paintings. This billboard depicted various themes, including battles between warriors and soldiers from both sides, headless bodies, and holy figures distinguished by halos of light. Several people were also shown observing these events. The texts on this billboard included: “And this sealed secret will become a tale for the world”, “Ya Aba Abdullah al-Hussein”, and “Nasrun min Allah wa Fathun Qareeb” (Victory from Allah and imminent conquest). Additionally, the phrase “I fear that the tears in our sorrow will tear the veil” was prominently written in large red letters across the entire billboard (Fig. 2).

• **Tear-like forms**

Another installation for Muharram in the city includes tear- or droplet-shaped forms placed in underpasses and highways of Isfahan. The background of the tear shapes is black, with the text in red. The texts on either side of a tear are identical, featuring phrases such as: “Aba Abdullah al-Hussein”, “Zainab al-Hawra”, and “Ya Abalfazl”. These three texts are repeated consecutively in all underpasses (Fig. 3).

• **Photo boards**

Photos and portraits of mourners in the squares and intersections are another notable aspect in this context. These photos are placed within frames designed for advertisement reservations. The photos can be categorized by gender into male and female, and by age into three groups: elderly, middle-aged and young, and teenagers and children. Elderly individuals, regardless of gender, have both hands placed on their chests. The background of these images is black. The text “Ya Hussein” is seen in the black background, and the phrase “Buy us for the sake of these few tears” is seen in the green background (Fig. 4).



Fig.1. 2023 Muharram Banners in in Isfahan City. a) banners installed at Entrance of Isfahan Municipality, b) banners installed at Entrance of Isfahan Municipality, Imam Hussein Street, c) banners installed at Norbaran Intersection, Bozorgmehr Street, d) banners installed at Allameh Amini Street, near the administrative complex. Source: Author’s archive.



Fig. 2. Coffeeshouse Painting Curtain, Imam Hussein Square, Isfahan. Source: Author’s archive.

Middle-aged individuals, regardless of gender, are depicted crying. The man’s face expresses sorrow and grief, while the woman, holding a child, has her hands over her eyes, indicating she is weeping. The same textual phrases are seen in these images as well (Fig. 5).

The third category consists of children and young people. A young boy is depicted performing self-flagellation with chains and crying, while a young girl is shown holding a bowl up and also shedding tears (Fig. 6).

• **Moqeb**

The comparison of these images with previous examples demonstrates that in the photography of children and youth, in addition to sorrow and tears, the element of dynamism and movement has been emphasized in the composition of the desired image. In contrast, previous examples have predominantly depicted stillness and submission.

In all the photographs, the municipal emblem is

visible at the bottom of the image, and some images also display textual advertisements indicating that this location is reserved for advertisements. This signifies that these places are designated for advertisement placement.

“Moqeb” is a place set up for accommodating citizens, primarily established by the municipality. However, during the first ten days of Muharram, these “Moqeb” were extensively erected throughout the city, playing a significant role in citizens’ perception of the atmosphere and environment of Muharram. A brief description is given of these “Moqeb” and their effective role in citizen’s perception of the environment and space of Muharram.

“Moqeb” are usually decorated with banners, flags, and green and black cloths. The “Moqeb” depicted in Fig. 7, like other examples mentioned, is adorned with tears and, in addition to mourning, is offering tea or syrup to the citizens and mourners.

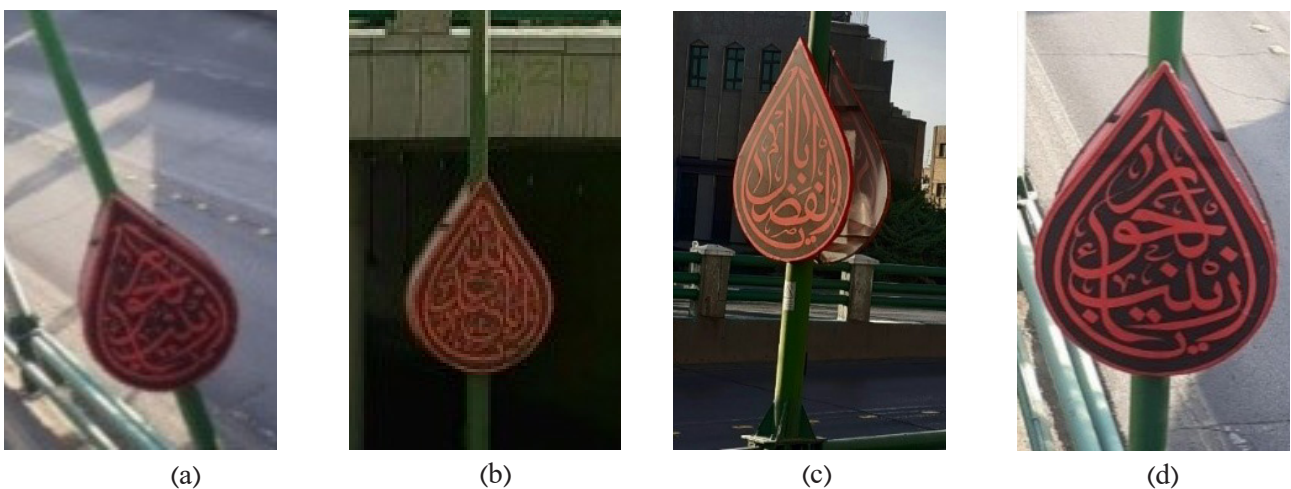


Fig. 3. Use of Tear-like Forms. a) Underpass at Ahmadabad Square, b) Tear with the name Ya Aba Abdullah al-Hussein, c) Tear with the name Ya Abalfazl, d) Tear with the name Ya Zainab al-Hawra. Source: Author’s archive.



Fig. 4. Photo boards featuring elderly individuals with the phrase "Ya Hussein" in a black background and "Buy us for the sake of these few tears" in a green background. Source: Author's archive.



Fig. 5. Photo board featuring middle-aged individuals with the textual phrase "Ya Hussein" on a black background and "Buy us for the sake of these few tears" on a green background. Source: Author's archive.

Analysis of Visual Elements and Textual-Written Content in the Corpus

The authors' experiences from conducted survey studies indicate that the abundance of mourning symbols and signs -such as flags, billboards, Moqeb, and images- creates a diverse yet sorrowful atmosphere in the city, further intensified by the sound of lamentations and the extensive use of black. In the Moqeb set up throughout the city, mourners are served items like tea, syrup, and dates, and in many of these places, the scent of burning incense can be detected.

Amid the flow of lights, sounds, colors, advertisements, and various images that are part of the city's everyday landscape, the teardrop-shaped forms set up in different parts of the city for the month of Muharram draw the attention of passersby. These teardrop forms are sometimes used collectively and sometimes individually. The arrangement of teardrops in a collective manner can represent a flood or sea, which is frequently mentioned in the text and serves as a metaphor for endless weeping. This theme aligns with the notion of a flood of tears; tears that spread throughout the city, engulfing it like a flood. Given the timing of these installations during the mourning of Muharram, the teardrops can be directly associated with the grief and sorrow

prevalent during this period. Among the black teardrops, there are textual elements mentioning Imam Hussein (AS), Lady Zainab (SA), and Abbas ibn Ali (AS), which further allude to the rituals of Muharram. The coloring method also emphasizes this concept, as black in Islam and Shia tradition signifies mourning and grief, and red signifies the blood of Imam Hussein (AS) and martyrdom (Mohammadpur & Shahizadeh, 2012). The continuity between the occasion of these installations (the mourning of Muharram) with the names of the individuals and the metaphorical concept of a flood of tears can be seen as a ritual mechanism, linking it to the notion of movement and uprising—the Karbala uprising and the mourning and uprising of a city for the events of Karbala.

The concept of a flood of tears is also evoked in the banners, with the widespread depiction of teardrops as a metaphor for the sea. Besides visual texts, the written texts also variously reference this flood of tears. Some of these texts are attributed to well-known individuals, while others are not as recognized.

The written text "We shed tears drop by drop until we become a sea", seen on banners with a black background, is attributed in some blogs to Reza Karimi. The full verse reads: "With all the particles



Fig. 6. Photo board depicting children and young people, accompanied by the textual phrase "Ya Hussain" in the black background, and the text "Buy us for the sake of these few drops of tears". Source: Author's archive.



Fig. 7. A Moqeb set up on one of the streets of Isfahan city during Muharram 2023. Source: Author's archive.

of the world we become harmonized / We shed tears drop by drop and become a sea / We recite Nudba Dua (invocations) so that the sky may rain / We become the eyes of expectation in both worlds". However, the written text "This flood, the flood of your mourning tears", written on banners in red, is attributed to an unknown individual, sometimes mentioned as Amir Teimouri in some blogs. The authors' survey in the city's space indicates that these texts are also repeated in mourning laments, transforming sorrow and tears into a pervasive and fluid subject in the city's environment.

The textual inscription found in Fig. 2, which reads: "I fear that our tears may reveal our sorrow / This sealed secret may become known to the world", is a couplet from Hafez's Ghazal 226, which is about love for the beloved. The background of this text contains visual elements depicting scenes from the

events of Karbala, with the name of Imam Hussein (AS) in another part of the banner. By connecting these elements, i.e., the simultaneous reading of the text and its background, it becomes clear that the beloved referred to is Imam Hussein (AS). The element of "tears" in this text repeats the common theme seen in other banners and visual elements displayed throughout the city, and this might be the reason for the use of this couplet.

The emphasis on the phrase "I fear that our tears may reveal our sorrow", which highlights the theme of tears and makes it a key element, reveals, on a deeper level, the love for Imam Hussein (AS).

Another textual inscription that is repeated in the photo boards is a couplet by Mohammad Hossein Bayatloo: "Buy us for the sake of these few drops of tears / We know nothing but how to cry". The word "buy", given the other textual inscriptions mentioned in this writing and the context in which it is used can be related to the concept of intercession and mediation. In this context, shedding tears for Imam Hussein (AS) is presented as a way to seek his intercession.

The virtue of tears in Islamic culture is highlighted in various verses, including: "Let them laugh a little: much will they weep: a recompense for the (evil) that they do" (Quran, Tobe, 82) and "They fall on their faces, weeping, and it increases their humility" (Quran, Asra, 109). Moreover, in Shia belief, shedding tears for Imam Hussein (AS) holds a special place, as the tragedy of Karbala is considered the greatest calamity in Shia history and humanity's history, warranting much weeping. It is narrated from Imam Ali (AS) that: "Whoever weeps for the disrespect towards Imam Hussein (AS) and the Prophet's (PBUH) family, God will not make that eye cry on the Day of Judgment and will grant them His special grace" (Collection of Hadiths of Ahl al-Bayt, 2011). It is also narrated from Imam Sajjad (AS) that: "Whoever sheds tears for the tragedy of Karbala, Paradise is their abode" (Majlesi, 2010). Understanding this great tragedy is beyond human imagination, and its

impact is so profound that it affects not only humans but also other beings. It is said that at the time of his martyrdom, not only humans but all creatures wept (Karim Khani, 2008; Vojood & Ebrahim-zadeh Rajaei, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned points, the fixation on the element of tears and the concept of mourning is the central theme of the elements installed in Muharram 2023 in the city of Isfahan. The textual and visual elements together highlight the social organization of Shia discourse and its most striking aspect, i.e., martyrdom and mourning, as a key point.

On the 9th and 10th days of the month of Muharram, with the enthusiastic presence of mourners, other visual symbols such as Alams (flags), Kotals (banner-like structures), and mourning flags were added to the city's visual space, creating a diverse atmosphere along with the sounds of drums, cymbals, and trumpets. In many places, the smell of frankincense mixed with the scent of rosewater could be perceived, and the flow of symbols related to Muharram and mourning created a multifaceted and diverse environment in the city. In many cases, believers would touch the Alams and flags to seek blessings by running their hands over them.

These elements and symbols can be considered based on the type of sensory perception as shown in Table 1.

Explanation of Meaning Based on Sensory and Haptic Visual Perception

Considering that the city is the backdrop for daily life, the display of these works in urban spaces gains significant importance. Various groups live in the city, engage in different activities, and wander around. The city is filled with images, goods, and numerous printed words that convey various messages and meanings to its citizens. A citizen is a flaneur, a wanderer, who becomes immersed in a fluid space through the movement and sensations created by different visual elements. The city becomes an object or fragment for viewing; these visual fragments, composed of city and street

views, together create an extensive panorama-like image. These fragmentary images construct the concept of the city (Shekaraby et al., 2019), which itself is a vast visual image (Deutsche, 1996). Meanwhile, the experience of walking in this space, which incorporates the element of time, transforms into a transient experience with the movement of various city scenes and views. The constant speed and change of external stimuli provoke feelings within individuals and affect them. The multiplicity and diversity of these views and perspectives turn the city into a display screen, creating a cinematic space through movement and sensations in urban pathways. This diversity has increased continuously since the 20th century. As Paul Virilio asserts, since the 20th century, the city has become a screen, and the boundary between cinema and the city has vanished (Virilio, 1991).

The city space, like cinema, influences its audience. The continuous visual, spatial, and sensory impacts of the city engage the various senses of its citizens. The path of movement, looking, and watching in the urban space creates conditions similar to montage viewing in cinema for citizens. By walking and moving, they start assembling different visual fragments together, much like a filmmaker editing these visual pieces side by side (Shekaraby et al., 2019). Benjamin emphasizes that an individual's sensory organs in cinema and the city are caught in a series of collisions and shocks. In a severe encounter within the individual, neural pulses flow intensely like "battery energy" in a continuous sequence (Benjamin, 2006). Therefore, in cinema and the expanse of the city, extensive and continuous visual, spatial, physical, and sensory impacts are created that influence the perception of the present individuals.

Based on the corpus study developed in previous sections, in the city's expanse and the emotional space created by various visual elements, the citizen perceives the diverse displayed objects with different senses. The mind follows these phenomena in the

diverse city space and begins to connect images across squares and pathways.

This perspective changes from different angles and evokes various emotions in citizens based on the displayed works. The idealized images of individuals focusing on ritual mourning (Figs. 4 to 6), which utilize elements such as sorrow and tears and are publicly displayed in the city, impact the viewer’s mentality. The individuals depicted in these photos do not appear too affluent or too impoverished. Such individuals can be observed in various regions and different social fabrics, significantly influencing empathy. In fact, one of the outcomes of being in this space is the identification of people present on the street with the characters in the images. Viewers of any age and gender find a likeness in one of the images and see themselves in it.

The combination of visual elements in banners, tears, and photos indicates a preferred meaning in the composition of these works, guiding the viewer towards it. This meaning, forming the central point of all visual elements, is sorrow and mourning. People interacting with these areas are engaged not only visually but also through other senses. The presence of “Moqebes” (mourning stations) that play elegies and offer votive offerings and refreshments to those present on the street reinforces this. The concept of coherence in the making and transfer of meaning, through the use of the tear element in various visual and verbal texts, creates a cohesive space centered around mourning and sorrow, which can profoundly affect attendees regardless of their

motives and mentalities. Field surveys by the authors during Muharram 2023 and the recording of experiences and observations confirm this claim. Furthermore, the experience of wandering in the city, like the film experience, is a public and collective one, where “individual reactions are predetermined by the collective reactions of an audience that seeks to achieve the same collective reaction” (Benjamin, 2011). Benjamin believes that in the city and cinema, “individual perception is continually placed in interaction with group perception” (Hacke, 2010, cited in Ghahramani et al., 2016). In the city, like in cinema, spectators react collectively and experience group sensitivity when present in various gatherings. In this state, the citizen is no longer a solitary observing subject but becomes part of the collective body.

According to Table 1, in such spaces, sensory elements are engaged at various levels. The individual is drawn into the city’s public space, which is a sensory flow of images, colors, smells, tastes, and sounds. The presence of a large number of mourners during Muharram transforms them from a single body to a collective body. In the present corpus study, the process of engaging various senses, the perception obtained by these senses, and their combination and synthesis by the mind are illustrated in Fig. 8.

In this corpus study, the audience, by being present in the city scene and passing through underpasses, squares, and streets, gains a new perception aligned with the haptic view. According

Table 1. Sensory Elements Present in the Corpus Study Source: Authors.

Types of Level		Sensory Elements
Level One	Visual-Tangible Elements	Volumetric Images Tears, Banners, Alam (flag), Kotals.
		Printed Images Figurative: Images of Various People. Verbal-Written Text
Level Two	Auditory Elements	Music Sounds: Drums, Cymbals, Trumpets - Elegy Recitation.
Level Three	Elements Related to Other Senses	Taste: Food Items Related to Nazr (Vows).
		Tactile: Seeking Blessings - Haptic Sensation Related to Sight and Touch. Olfactory: Smell of Esfand (Wild Rue) and Rosewater.

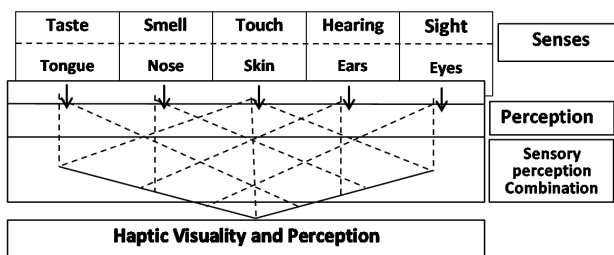


Fig. 8. Haptic Visuality and Perception in the Corpus Study. Source: Authors.

to haptic approaches during film viewing, the viewer becomes a wandering spectator with a gaze—a moving observer who wanders through the scene (Bruno, 2002). Engaging the senses with space, texture, surface, and scene details leads to haptic perception. In contrast, in optical viewing, the spectator observes from a distance with a fixed gaze. Haptic viewing forms a close and intimate connection with the scene and its elements. In haptic viewing, the subjectivity of the spectator dissolves, and they interact with the space of the image, film, or city (Ghahramani et al., 2014). Based on the authors' observations and as detailed in previous sections, the arrangement and placement of banners, billboards, and tears in underpasses create a coherent conceptual continuity in the viewer's mind. It's akin to a film composed of various scenes that engage multiple senses and induce a type of haptic visuality in the audience.

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Conclusion

The examination of the banners displayed during Muharram 2023 in the city of Isfahan reveals the extensive use of the element of tears in these works. The prominence of the tear element in various displays installed in city squares, intersections, and underpasses is closely linked to the concepts of sorrow, mourning, and lamentation. The visual transformation of the city, which plays a crucial role in the audience's perception, is a significant aspect of this study. The analysis indicates that the interpretation of these works deepens with the presence of citizens, engaging not only their visual sense but also their other senses.

Haptic perception, which establishes a physical and sensory connection between the viewer and visual elements, enhances the interaction of citizens with their environment. The coherence in the making and the transfer of meaning, emphasizing the element of tears and the theme of mourning during Muharram 2023, has led to a deeper connection between the audience (citizens) and the mournful atmosphere of the city. This has played a fundamental role in spreading the feeling of grief and mourning. The emergence of collective sensitivity is one of the outcomes of such programs, significantly contributing to the collective participation of citizens.

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