

The Symbolic Transformation of Real Images in Designing Magazine Covers

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Abstract

The symbolic transformation of real images in designing magazine covers is achieved through the technical processes employed by the designer for rhetorical purposes, which contribute to the intellectual processing by transforming a real image into a symbol that encapsulates its underlying meaning. This results in the creation of new elements and meanings for the image through fresh ideas in content, thus ensuring continuity and coherence in the magazine cover. Based on this, the researcher identified the research problem with the following question: What is the symbolic transformation of real images in designing magazine covers? The researcher defined the research objective as uncovering the symbolic transformation of real images in designing magazine covers. The most important findings reached by the researchers include the following: The symbolic transformation of real images is manifested through design processes by their ability to manipulate and distort, exaggerate, introduce unfamiliarity, integrate, and combine various stylistic features in their clear digital artistic effects in terms of size and eye-catching form. From the cover image, a message is conveyed to the recipient, addressing them and emphasizing through it that the main form of the cover has managed to leave a literal impact on the recipient by symbolizing the figure being referred to. This is also intended to directly clarify the impact of the form on the recipient, in order to convey the idea. As for the most important conclusions reached by the researcher in light of the research results, they are as follows: The symbolic transformation of real images dominates the magazine cover through design processes, utilizing manipulation, distortion, exaggeration, unfamiliarity, integration, composition, and diverse stylistic elements in its clear digital artistic effects, which have been referred to new meanings. The aim is to directly elucidate the impact of the form on the recipient to convey the idea.

Keywords: Transformation, Symbolism, Realistic Image, Graphic Design.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

First: Research Problem

The designer possesses the ability to innovate, renew, and express in a way that serves the utilitarian value of design, turning the design work into an innovative product consisting of new unfamiliar structural elements. Additionally, the designer's imagination utilizes intellectual reserves in design through these elements, which represent a reflection of reality. The designer works to direct them in different ways that enable them to convey the message's content to the recipient. The reception levels vary depending on the cognitive culture and artistic experience of both the sender and the recipient, including symbolic transformation within the scope of modern digital design variables and techniques. Design has taken on an intellectual character manifested through the visible formation of structural elements that have surpassed the boundaries of traditional approaches, establishing new ideas that represent a visual discourse carrying intellectual meanings that enhance the constructive aspect of design. This is especially true concerning magazine covers, as they interact as artistic works and their connection to intellectual and aesthetic content.

The designer transforms the real image into new structural elements, relying on sensory perception, imagination, and everything that can enrich their mental capabilities. This allows the designer to benefit from them as diverse information that opens up new fields in design. Thus, the transformation process achieves the basic motives to respond to changes and achieve creativity in all stages that symbolic transformation has gone through, through changes and variations. Through these concepts, the researcher shows the designer's ability in symbolic transformation, exercise creative imagination, and innovate in structural elements.

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The researcher notes that there are newspapers and international magazines that have become dominant and occupy a significant space in the recipient's mind through their distinctive style in design and production techniques. Therefore, the names of these magazines have become a distinctive mark within the intellectual system of many recipients, as their names have become a firm identifying identity in the recipient's mind. This led the researcher to focus on the research community: so it is possible for the problem of his research to be formulated through the following question: What is the symbolic transformation of the real image in designing magazine covers?

Second: The Importance of Research

The importance of research lies in the following aspects:

Theoretical Significance: This research can contribute to enriching the cognitive and intellectual aspects for learners in the field of graphic design, including students, researchers, and academics, to support theoretical aspects and scientific research.

The Practical Importance: This research may contribute to enhancing the experience of designers and professionals in the field of graphic design, as well as artistic and media institutions and relevant organizations, to benefit from it in their current work and future projects.

Third: Research Objective: The current research aims to uncover the symbolic transformation of the real image in designing magazine covers.

Fourth: Research Boundaries: Subjective boundaries: The symbolic transformation of the real image. Spatial boundaries: British * Magazine (The Week) Temporal boundaries: For the period (2022)

Fifth: Terminology Definition

Transformation Linguistically

Transformation is a gerund form of the verb "to transfer". This gerund indicates transformation and transferring something to something else. So, saying "I transferred the thing from its place" means "I shifted it from its place." (Al-Qamoos Al-Muhit, page 373)

Terminology

Transformation is what takes the place of another thing, and what substitutes for it. In imagery, transformation means making one image replace another, thereby conveying the idea of substituting ideas. (Laland, 2001, page 474)

Procedurally

It is a process carried out by the designer in the recipient's mind, through new ideas, to indicate things or people, describing changes and alterations that achieve continuity and coherence in the magazine cover design."

Symbolism

Defined by (Al-Bustani) as: "Symbol, emblem, and indication, all are symbols" (Fouad Afram, page 70).

In Terminology

Defined by (Siza) as a sign referring to the thing we are pointing to, often relying on the commonality of ideas due to the prevalence of the law of association. (Siza Qasim, 1986, page 28)

Symbolic Transformation

Procedural Definition

It is the transformation of real images to elements to express new meanings of symbols and connotations through the creative imagination possessed by the designer and the utilization of the design idea through design processes in the magazine cover.

Chapter Two

First Topic: Symbolic Transformation in Design

First: The Concept of Transformation in Design

Transformation in design is closely related to the changes that occur in the design process through functional use and the possibility of continuous and variable transformation in the design. Despite its relative stability, it varies according to the style or design system that has the flexibility to subject the form to functional requirements in design, thus achieving the intended goal. The form, as an aesthetic utility value, (transforms or changes according to new requirements, trends, and design theories) (Al-Taweel, 2005, page 68). This encourages the designer to stimulate and direct the imagination to formulate specific systems required for new transformations to logical solutions. Design work contains a number of terms that the designer uses to create a state of change within and outside the design work.

Transformation requires a new approach to make shapes, images, and drawings subject to observation, interpretation, and prediction, characterized by inclusiveness and generalization that goes beyond subjectivity in the approach. Based on this, the creation of an appropriate artistic discourse language that suits the nature and function of the system is achieved. Thus, Transformation entails a change in the characteristics of the design work from one structural form to another, which may not be subject to any standard or criterion but is determined by the artist's subjectivity (designer's) and the functional values to which the design work is transferred, creatively and authentically.

Shapes in design represent a reflection of reality, and the designer works to transfer these shapes to a new and unfamiliar form, in ways that enable him to convey the message content to the recipient. It has a functional and aesthetic value that influences his perception through various stylistic forms, including amplification, simplification, abstraction, reduction, and others, as well as repetition, which achieves aesthetic pleasure and utility, as shown in Figure (1).



Figure (1)

The designer's utilization of an unfamiliar form and its employment through a new transformation in an attractive depiction from the real form in its artistic aesthetic format to a symbolic transformation within a design system achieving the desired function.

Moreover, what transformation represents in design (from real contents and apparent meanings is nothing but an intellectual indication of the designer's ability to control his expressive tools, how to adapt them, and highlight their aesthetic features within the overall design structure, aiming to create new transformations, stimulate imagination, and form unexpected new shapes, drawings, and images). (Afifi, 2001, page 34).

Therefore, transformation in design is a technical performance in which the designer constructs through innovative new ideas and unique perspectives that express inherent conceptual potential, a symbolic alternative to a realistic image. The purpose is to achieve a specific design goal.

Second: The Concept of Symbol, Sign, and Indication

The symbol has significant importance throughout history (as it represents a tool that reveals the subconscious mind's stored images and deep human ideas. It serves as a possible means of expressing emotions, and the most prominent example of this is the pictorial writing of Prehistoric humans) (Shamout, 1993, p. 125). Symbols represent a state of transition of elements into a new composition, primarily involving the transformation of independent images into new ones (This transformation occurs through diagnostic images that later evolve and become associated with agreed-upon words and sounds. Thus, writing is essentially a symbolic attempt that employs a set of shapes symbolizing specific meanings, aiming to connect the image with the meaning). (Al-Jubouri, 1992, p. 80). Therefore, various and diverse concepts of the symbol have emerged through different philosophers' interpretations, each interpreting it according to their own perspective.

According to Saussure, (the linguistic symbol is based on a pair of terms represented by the signifier and the signified. He emphasized that symbols are not entirely arbitrary; for instance, the symbol of justice - the scale - cannot be arbitrarily replaced by any other symbol, such as a cart. Therefore, the symbol, for him, represented a sudden collision and union between two separate worlds, each of which was distinct individually. However, once a connection was established between a part of the world of thought (the signified) and a part of the world of sounds (the signifier), their relationship became so intertwined that it formed a complete mutual dependence) (Saussure, 1984, pp. 91,90).

This is because the symbol is a term rich in ideas and meanings, providing complex intellectual and design possibilities. Political and economic events associated with significant symbolic connotations can express philosophical meanings and purposes. In design, everything has a specific meaning, as objects lacking symbolism have no place in the design work.

Therefore, the transformation in design is a technical performance in which the designer constructs through innovative new ideas and unique perspectives expressing inherent conceptual potential, providing a symbolic alternative to a realistic image. The purpose is to achieve a specific design goal.

Third: Symbolic Transformation of Real Images

Design may encompass a transformation and discursive dimension. The work of design cannot be understood as a coherent and harmonious entity without considering the concept of symbolic transformation. It is worth noting that the concept of transformation has surpassed its traditional meaning, extending into the field of text linguistics.

The real image is a simulation of reality based on the designer's ability to select and choose from the vast amount of details present in reality. The cover derives its content from the subject and its intricate details, which the designer deliberately refrains from altering or modifying, as doing so would distort reality. Therefore, (the transformation to the real image occurs through the ideas in the designer's mind, in which he employs for the recipient's understanding. It only remains for the recipients to stimulate their memory to facilitate communication, and that transformation signifies the relationship between the design work on one hand and the things and situations in the external world indicated by the designer on the other). (Afifi, 2001, p. 25)

Since design, by its nature, (is a symbolic representation, it transfers life from the realm of vague thoughts, feelings, consciousness, and perception to the level of aesthetic awareness, as manifested in the design work. This renders the design work open to observation, contemplation, and scrutiny, and it opens up horizons for dialogue through knowledge, generated by the designer's talent, refined by design experience and experimentation). (Anne, and Farid Zamar, 1980, p. 150).

It is thus a universal language with a significant impact on conveying the message, expressing an idea and content for a specific emotional, social, or general situation, through new and diverse transformations, while maintaining the moral privacy.

The real image serves as a spoken language through the design work, containing expressive content about the event and the idea. Every form and composition deliberately includes a visual symbolic transformation, through bodily gestures of the presidential figure, presented in a contrasting manner to reality. As shown in Figure (3).



Figure (3)

This is attributed to the fact that (the symbolic transformation of the real image relies on a specific dynamism within the structure of the cover, penetrating the content of conventional expression to a transformation beyond the familiar through internal transformations in the relationships between elements to formulate a different visual statement. It introduces complex intellectual and design processes to the design, as political events associated with significant symbolic connotations possess the ability to express philosophical meaning and purpose. In essence, everything has a specific meaning, and items lacking connotations have no place in the design work). (Al-Babyli, 1998, p. 87).

Therefore, transformation in design renders the design more interpretable and clear, as it confirms the meaning or unveils a broader one. It serves as an artistic means to express the design idea.

Hence, the symbol has become a concept widely used in various artistic fields due to its multifaceted meanings, connotations, and connections that stimulate and distinguish human consciousness from other living beings. It refers to a world of imagination, contemplation, and sensory perceptions that are linked to the mind in a continuous effectiveness to connect form with content, achieving the intended purpose. The symbol is an independent art form that is used to approach similar or analogous things conceptually, highlighting them as a new system consistent with a theme extracted from diagnostic processes whose identity remains unchanged by the repetition of form or the renewal of depiction.

Second Topic: The Structure of Magazine Cover Design

First: Design Concept and Creative Imagination

The concept plays a significant role in design, and ideas vary according to design necessity. The purpose of putting these ideas together is to provide answers to questions directed by the objectives of the magazine cover. This is because the concept of the graphic designer is to (employ the designer's idea to achieve visual communication, as all the processes of the design operation are essentially aimed at the main design function). (Al-Kubaisi, 2002, p. 61), and the idea can be innovative if the graphic designer applies it in different contexts, which means thinking in similar worlds but in a different way to obtain new ideas. The design concept carried out by the designer should therefore strive for modernity, authenticity, and creativity to be new and unfamiliar, enhancing its value. The idea in magazine cover design is characterized by the following features: (Iyad, 2008, vol. 1, p. 21)

Blending scientific facts with mental facts.

Gaining credibility through successful application.

Characterized by clarity.

Providing a real solution to the nature of the problem.

The idea in magazine cover design is the cornerstone upon which the design achievement manifests, and finding an innovative idea depends on the designer's thinking, awareness, and design experience. Crafting the design concept is based on principles that reflect the characteristic of the design achievement.

Imagination plays an important role in stimulating and activating mental abilities in discovery, experimentation, construction, and connection by relying on experience to reach mental images that simulate reality, even if they do not exist in it. It has the ability to establish intellectual visions and create abstract symbols. (Arnold, 1967, p. 56) Many designers tend to immerse themselves in deep thinking, contemplation, and imagination to create worlds where reality (sensory perceptions) blends with images associated with worlds that are akin to dreams and visions crafted by the human imagination (the designer). This aids in fostering imagination and the mental visualization that leads to uniqueness, innovation, discovery, and breaking away from the familiar. Because fundamentally, the idea is (the means to achieve the purpose of the design achievement, shaping it relies on the imaginative ability and self-experience of the designer, drawn from the rich visual repertoire stored within them. Additionally, it depends on their ability to evoke and borrow what is useful from it, developing it for the benefit of expressing the idea, which can only be possessed by those who have a broad understanding of the design process, to be as big as the influencer that drove its activity). (Muhammad, 2000, p. 22), So the graphic designer seeks to integrate with the material to achieve the formulation of the design accomplishment in the form of ideas, symbols, and images to achieve the functional and aesthetic goal and to provoke the recipient. Imagination is one of the fundamental processes that humans resort to in their pursuit of innovative and unconventional ideas, perceptions, and experiences.

Theoretical Framework Indicators

The symbolic transformation of the real image in the magazine cover is manifested through altering some of the structural units, resulting in new meanings and unfamiliar shapes that diverge from reality.

Symbols play a crucial role in creating a distinctive and continuous language of dialogue for bringing peoples together, maintaining their abstract and condensed identity, and preserving their specificity in cultural and intellectual communication.

Symbolic transformation is reflected in changes in the methods used by designers to introduce partial modifications to the magazine cover. This is achieved through techniques such as proportional enlargement, or presenting the design concept in a manner that diverges from reality, employing movement and sequence to embody meaning.

The designer expressed the design concept on the magazine cover through unexpected, provocative, and exaggerated symbolic transformation, characterized by exaggeration and detachment from reality. This accumulation of experience in the designer enables the selective incorporation of such images and shapes, referring them to an expressive communicative reality that enhances the recipient's understanding of the message.

Chapter Three

FIRST: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The two researchers adopted the descriptive method for analytical purposes, given its suitability to the subject of the current study, allowing for analysis procedures aimed at achieving the research objectives and reaching conclusions.

Second: Research Society

The current research society consisted of designs for covers of the American magazine "The Week" issued weekly for the year 2022, comprising a total of 48 magazine cover samples.

Third: Research Samples:

The researchers utilized the purposive non-probability sampling method, according to the research requirements. Approximately 22% of the total research population was sampled, resulting in the extraction of 2 samples. These samples were selected for analysis to fit within the scope of the research.

Model (1)



The magazine cover featured the use of images representing the figure of Putin, positioned in the center of the cover, with President Zelensky standing behind Putin. The magazine's name was employed at the top center of the cover, while the headlines and textual content occupied the left side of the cover, in white color tones.

Symbolic Transformation Components

The designer intentionally utilized the image of President Putin and President Zelensky symbolically by depicting Putin tearing the Ukrainian flag in an exaggerated manner, within a system that conveys an unfamiliar symbolic meaning, aimed at introducing new meanings, connotations, and symbols that were evident in Putin's image as he angrily tore the Ukrainian flag, with President Zelensky standing behind him. The cover story translated into "Putin's attempt to control Ukraine." The idea was presented symbolically and directly. As for the image of President Zelensky, it was portrayed differently by restraining him with ropes wrapped around his body behind President Putin, aiming to draw the viewer's attention to new

interpretations of behavior to continue expressing the events through this character, represented in the prevailing image on the cover. Both images displayed elements of manipulation, distortion, exaggeration, unreality, unfamiliarity, fusion, and various stylistic features in their clear digital artistic effects, captivating in size and shape. From the cover image, a message was conveyed to the viewers, directly addressing them and affirming that the main cover image managed to leave a literal impact on the viewers by symbolizing the depicted character, aiming to directly illustrate the impact of the image on the viewers and convey the idea.

The Design Concept

The concept effectively addressed the presented topic by directly engaging the audience to clarify the event depicted as the "war," providing expressive support that aligns conceptually with the main title. The design concept emerged with a meaningful and cohesive visual interpretation that bridged the gap between reality and the unfamiliar through design manipulations of the realistic image in a manner divergent from reality. This was achieved by manipulating and distorting the image using various digital tools to create a new symbolic meaning. The designer exaggerated President Putin's angry expression as he tore the Ukrainian flag, while President Zelensky appeared restrained behind him, creating a significant impact on the viewer. This sequence guided the viewer's gaze between the two figures, adding an interactive element between the designer and the viewer. It captured the viewer's attention and added dynamism by depicting President Putin's movement. The designer linked the choice of tearing the flag, symbolizing sovereignty and authority, with the depiction of President Zelensky being restrained, maintaining coherence within the design elements to ensure balance on the cover

Model (2)

General Description



The main component of the magazine cover is the depiction of President Biden in a roller coaster carriage, with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell behind him on the right side of the cover. Fear is evident on their faces, while Biden appears to be smiling. The United States logo, accompanied by the phrase "Seal of the President of the United States," is positioned along with the American eagle, part of the U.S. emblem, with one of its wings covering one eye, symbolizing fear of the carriage sliding down the Rollo Caster track. The main title occupies the right side of the cover with a white tone, while the textual content is represented in blue.

Symbolic Transformation Components

The designer relied on crafting a symbolic representation distant from realistic images to express spontaneity and naturalness. This approach endowed the design with symbolic values that resonate emotionally in a clear and distinctive manner. It was manifested in the image of President Biden in a

roller coaster carriage, smiling. The designer resorted to digitally processing the images on the cover using visual and conceptual effects without compromising the underlying meaning behind the subject's idea. This led to the formulation of a new visual style, giving the design an unfamiliarity that prompts the viewer to contemplate in order to reach an interpretation and understanding of the magazine's content within a framework beyond conventional visual norms and traditional design structures.

Design Concept

The cover idea reflects the current state of The American economy which is suffering from inflation and the possibility of heading towards a recession. The designer embodied their concept by breaking away from the conventional formulation in design construction to emphasize the importance of the event depicted on the cover. A captivating element of the concept for both the idea and the recipient is the symbolic connotations that affirm the meaning of that symbolism, allowing the recipient to sense the communicative message and influence his emotions. The designer employed phrases about the state of the American economy, declining spending, and demand to pose a question about whether the United States is heading towards a recession. This signifies a direct emotional action that calls for expressing the event's content through an unexpected symbolic transformation, such as the appearance of the eagle, which is part of America's emblem, covering one of its eyes with its wing to express fear of the roller coaster carriage derailing. The designer relied on activating his retrieval memory to build his visual image. The images and shapes employed had a presence by being situated in time and space, giving them expressive power on the cover.

Chapter Four

FIRST: RESULTS

The symbolic transformation of the real images emerged through design processing, showcasing their ability to manipulate, exaggerate, create unrealism, unfamiliarity, amalgamation, composition, and various stylistic features in their clear digital artistic effects in size and eye-catching form. From the cover image, the designer conveyed a message to the recipient, addressing them and affirming that the primary form of the cover was able to leave a literal impact on the recipient, indicating the character referenced, which is intended to clarify the impact of the form directly on the recipient, to convey the idea. As in all models (1-2-3-4).

The designer relied on symbolic representation, which was far from real images, to express spontaneity and authenticity. This approach endowed the design with significant symbolic value that resonates emotionally in a clear and distinctive manner. The designer resorted to digitally processing the images as a visual treatment on the cover, employing stylistic and intellectual effects without compromising the underlying meaning behind the subject matter by redirecting it to a new visual formulation. As seen in models (1-2).

The designer deliberately aimed to stimulate the imaginative capacities of the recipient through symbolic representations and their psychological effects, harnessing their ability to create associative relationships between form and content. This approach leads the recipient into an imaginative world of mental images, linking the innovative design elements in reciprocal semantic relationships that achieve clarity and unity in the design. As seen in models (1-2).

The designer derived the concept of the magazine cover from the real-life political event, expressing it through unexpected, provocative symbolic transformations. These transformations were depicted on the characters' faces in an exaggerated manner, far from reality. This can be attributed to the accumulated experience of the designer, which provided fertile ground for selecting such images and shapes and referring them to a communicative expressive reality that enhances the audience's understanding of the communicative message. As seen in models (1-2).

SECOND: CONCLUSIONS

The symbolic transformation to real images predominates on the magazine cover through design manipulations, including exaggeration, surrealism, blending, and various stylistic elements in their clear digital artistic effects. These elements were employed to convey new meanings, intended to directly impact the recipient and convey the idea effectively.

The designer relies on symbolic representation, which is distant from real images, to express spontaneously and naturally. This approach imbues the design with significant symbolic value that resonates with emotions in a clear and distinctive manner. The designer resorts to digitally processing images as a visual treatment in the cover, employing both stylistic and conceptual effects without compromising the underlying meaning behind the subject matter by transferring them into a new visual form.

The concept of the magazine cover derives from the current political event in reality, aiming to express it through unexpected, provocative, and symbolically charged transformation, diverging from reality to enhance the understanding of the communicative message by the recipient.

Third: Recommendations

The need to show cultural, political and social issues in Iraq in a way that turns them into symbols that mimic international magazines at the level of employing real images in local and governmental magazines.

Emphasis on making Iraqi and local magazines have symbolic dimensions that indicate transformation through form according to the topic or event that requires it.

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