

# Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ Album Covers at Asm (Arif Sağ Music) Company

## Asm (Arif Sağ Müzik) Şirketi'nde Yer Alan Arif Sağ Albüm Kapaklarının Göstergebilim Analizi

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### ABSTRACT

Semiotics is a branch of science that studies various indicators. From the past to the present, we encounter semiotics in almost every area of life. The aim of semiotics is to explain, make sense of, interpret and analyze the fields it examines with its unique methods. Fields such as cinema, music, architecture and literature are important disciplines in terms of communication tools, and graphic designs related to or using these disciplines also contribute significantly to these fields. The aim of this study is to determine how compatible the album covers of Arif Sağ, which belonged to the ASM Company between 1990-1998, are compatible with the field of semiotics by using content analysis method. In this context, the information was classified according to the years and the cover design and album names were evaluated in terms of semiotics. As a result, in this semiotics-oriented study, it was concluded that the visual designs of Arif Sağ's album covers did not show any significant progress from 1990 to 1998, but this was related to the technology of the time.

**Keywords:** Album cover, Arif Sağ, Arif Sağ music company, semiotics, Turkish folk music

### Öz

Göstergebilim, çeşitli göstergeleri inceleyen bir bilim dalıdır. Geçmişten günümüze kadar, hayatın hemen hemen her alanında göstergebilimle karşılaşırız. Göstergebilimin amacı, kendine özgü metotlarla incelediği alanları açıklamak, anlamlandırmak, yorumlamak ve analiz etmektir. Sinema, Müzik, mimari, edebiyat gibi alanlar, iletişim araçları açısından önemli disiplinlerdir ve bu disiplinlerle ilişkili veya onları kullanan grafik tasarımlar da bu alanlara önemli katkı sağlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, 1990-1998 yılları arasında ASM Şirketine ait olan Arif Sağ'ın albüm kapaklarının göstergebilim alanıyla ne kadar uyumlu olduğunun içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak belirlenmesidir. Bu bağlamda bilgiler yıllara göre tasnif edilerek kapak tasarımı ve albüm isimleri göstergebilimsel açıdan değerlendirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu göstergebilim odaklı çalışmada, Arif Sağ'a ait albüm kapaklarının görsel tasarımlarının 1990'dan 1998'e kadar önemli bir ilerleme göstermediği, ancak bunun zamanın teknolojiyle ilişkili olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Albüm kapağı, Arif Sağ, Arif Sağ music şirketi, göstergebilim, Türk halk müziği

## Introduction

In the realm of business, firms embark on a process known as marketing to develop raw materials or services, aiming to achieve their goals and implement changes (Gürbüz and Bozkurt, 2016, p. 2). Marketing, as highlighted by Durmaz (2022, p. 7), is primarily focused on ensuring customer satisfaction by tailoring products to meet customer preferences. Central to marketing is the role of products and services provided to consumers, perpetually evolving to meet changing needs (Obalıoğlu, 2017, p. 9). The selling process encompasses all activities directed towards the sale of products or services, with environmental factors like air temperature and location being pivotal (Gürbüz and Erdoğan, 2007, p. 116).

In recent times, the convergence of marketing, graphics, and graphic design has gained prominence in the sales process, extending its influence to diverse domains such as the music industry and album covers. The term "graph" refers to shapes aiding understanding and explanation (Namal, 2019, p. 54), while graphic design is defined as the art of conveying messages through visual communication (Alpaslan, 2006, p. 61; Toprak, 2012, p. 71). This artistic discipline strives to present messages aesthetically, combining images and text harmoniously (Arıkan, 2008, p. 10), encompassing the arrangement of words and images for public communication (Çaydere, 2015, p. 34).

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The intersection of graphic design and music is particularly pronounced in today's world, where music serves as a crucial communication tool. Music groups and artists leverage graphic design in various aspects, including concert posters, album covers, and stage designs (Vodinalı, Çanakçı, and Sazak, 2022, p. 3). Notably, protest music, especially since the 1960s, has seen extensive use of graphic design by many music groups (Yılmaz, Özbek, and Özdemir, 2019, p. 58).

To enhance the comprehension and historical trajectory of Turkish Music, a systematic and structured discipline was deemed essential (Aycil and Çubukcu, 2022; Okcu, 2023). A scrutiny of the Turkish music landscape unveils a discernible transformation in the trends of album covers within Turkish Folk Music. Prevalently, up until the mid-1990s, album covers prominently showcased personal photographs. However, a prevalent issue was the lack of graphic coherence and the prevalence of incompatible designs, potentially stemming from technological constraints of that era. Despite these challenges, there existed innovative album covers that not only defied the norm of photograph-centric designs but also laid the groundwork for future trends.

The efficacy of graphic design in attracting attention, especially among children, is underscored by the importance of creative elements. For products targeting children, the use of imaginative design elements captivates their attention rapidly (Çaydere, 2015, p. 346). The contemporary emphasis on visuality necessitates careful consideration of factors such as color and photo selection, text placement, and overall harmony in album design (Vodinalı, Çanakçı, and Sazak, 2022, p. 24).

A semiotic analysis, based on Saussure's theory, is employed to interpret graphic design on album covers. Semiotics, a concept deeply rooted in various fields, involves the study of signs categorized as "signifier" and "signified" (Arslan, 2021, p. 1). This research delves into the semiotic analysis of Arif Sağ's album covers, a prominent figure in Turkish folk music, released by ASM (Arif Sağ Music) between 1990-1998. By examining color features, word placement, and naming conventions, the study aims to decipher the meaning behind elements on the album covers.

Several questions guide this exploration:

- What contributions has ASM made to the music market?
- What characterizes Arif Sağ's album covers at ASM between 1990-1998?
- Do these album covers align with semiotics principles?
- To what extent do color usage, photograph selection, picture depiction, artist and cover name positioning on the album covers harmonize with each other and fulfill their intended purpose?

The evaluation of album covers in the context of graphic design

not only influences visual taste but also shapes the narrative and story conveyed by the album cover image in today's consumer society.

### Related Researches

In their 2022 study, Vodinalı, Çanakçı, and Sazak delved into the "Semiological Analysis of Turkish Folk Music Album Covers in the Kalan Music Company between 1993 and 2010." Employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, they meticulously classified and tabulated 18 album covers based on the concepts of signifier and signified. The findings revealed that album covers spanning 1993-1996 reflected the artist's vibrant world, featuring portrait photographs and symbolic representations of Anatolian women. Conversely, covers from 1997-2003, predominantly showcasing the artist in the foreground, were deemed semiotically inappropriate. However, covers from other years were found to align with semiotic principles, effectively fulfilling their intended purpose.

In 1997, Serbezler explored the graphical aspects of music album covers in their master's thesis, scrutinizing designs from the 20th century. The research underscored the impact of music and art movements on cover designs for social events. A meticulous analysis encompassed design elements, semantic expressions, and the use of color and text formatting in selected album covers.

A 2019 study by Yılmaz, Özbek, and Özdemir scrutinized Pink Floyd's album covers, including "Ummagumma," "The Dark Side Of The Moon," "Animals," and "The Division Bell," employing Roland Barthes' semiotic principles of denotation and connotation. The results showcased Pink Floyd's penchant for cover designs reflecting the philosophy and emotion of their songs, effectively communicating ideas to the listener through music and design, solidifying their status as one of the most discussed bands of all time.

Yıldız, in a 2021 Master's Thesis, explored the semiotic analysis model of iconic symbols in cinema art, focusing on religious indicators originating from Pagan beliefs. The study revealed the persistent use of semiotics from ancient times to the present, with films reflecting a timeline extending to the New Age, incorporating reform movements from the Middle Ages. Despite transitioning from the Middle Ages to the New Age, traces of modernization and the influence of scholastic belief and the Renaissance persisted in Goya's Ghosts.

Batu, in their 2022 Master's Thesis, addressed challenges in translating musical structures into graphic language and album cover designs across music genres. The study interconnected basic music elements with design principles, illustrating how these elements manifest in graphic expressions. The research emphasized that when translating musical features into visual elements, the design's focus on formal features harmonizes with music, yet

struggles to fully convey its structural and dynamic aspects. The study highlighted elements such as dark-colored backgrounds, typography forms, and the choice of light or dark tones attempting to convey the general characteristics of music, maintaining consistency across various musical genres. Differently, Gulen (2022) investigated social types in Attilâ İlhan's poems.

## Research Method

### Model of the Research

This study employs Saussure's semiotic theory, categorizing signs into signifier and signified groups. The primary objective is to assess the compatibility of Arif Sağ's album covers, associated with the ASM Company from 1990 to 1998, with semiotics, utilizing the content analysis method. Information is systematically organized based on years, and the assessment involves the analysis of cover design and album names through a semiotic lens. The research data is collected using the scanning method, involving a detailed examination of album covers within the specified timeframe. The findings obtained from this examination are then subjected to content analysis.

### The sample of this study

The study focuses on Arif Sağ's album covers released by the ASM Company between 1990-1998. Given Sağ's annual album releases, a sampling method is deemed unnecessary. The entire population comprises all Arif Sağ album covers during the specified years.

### Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, a comprehensive examination of 9 album covers published by ASM Company between 1990-1998 was conducted through Arif Sağ's archival scanning, accompanied by interviews on the subject. The album covers were subjected to analysis using two classification methods, namely, the signifier and the signified, as devised by the semiotic theorist Saussure. In this approach, elements such as individuals, objects, locations, colors, and text were systematically classified and subsequently coded. A table was constructed to assess the semiotic appropriateness of the album covers during the specified years.

### Biography of Arif Sağ

Arif Sağ was born in Erzurum in 1945 and has been playing baglama since his childhood (Sağ and Erzincan, 2009). He settled in Istanbul in 1961 and later became a student of Nida Tüfekçi at the Aksaray Music Society (Apaydın, 2019, p. 18). Nida Tüfekçi's thoughts on Arif Sağ are very valuable and remarkable;

*"During the years we were in Istanbul, I also taught at the Aksaray Musical Society. We had around 150-200 students. Among them, such talented bright children emerged. Arif Sağ is my student from there. Arif slept with his saz. It's almost as if he has become*

*one with his instrument. He has worked hard. Even if he entered the market or something later, he knows what he is doing"* (Öztürk, p. 4).

Arif SAĞ started to work as a lecturer at Istanbul Technical University Turkish Music State Conservatory (ITUTDK) in 1975 and worked in this institution until 1982. Between 1987-1991, he was a deputy of Ankara for 5 years and became the first professional music artist to be a deputy. Arif Sağ made a name for himself not only in Turkey but also in Europe, introducing folk songs and baglama to Europe. Arif Sağ gave a concert with the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra in 1996 and contributed greatly to the promotion of baglama and Anatolian music to the west. He performed this concert with the support of the President of Germany. In addition, Arif Sağ has a rich talent in terms of local attitude, traditional expression skills and emotion, as well as technically mastering baglama (Apaydın, 2019: 18). In particular, Sağ is an artist who has made a difference and left a mark with his traditional expression skills and local style, as well as with his own unique motifs, which he added to the folk song "Şekeroğlan" (Öztürk, p. 4). He gave concerts in 12 different cities (Haydar Göğercin, personal interview, 28.11.2022).

Nida Tüfekçi made the following statements about the concerts held in Europe;

*"We went to the Netherlands together in January 2000. We gave 11-12 concerts with Spanish guitarist Tomatito in the Netherlands. Tomatito does not know Turkish music, because Tomatito is Spanish, he does not know any other language. But Arif Sağ and Tomatito communicated with the language of music. They only rehearsed together for half a day. With that half-day rehearsal experience, we gave 11-12 concerts"* (Haydar Göğercin, personal interview, 28.11.2022)."

In addition, his concerts with the Karadeniz Filarmoni Orkestrası (Black Sea Philharmonic Orchestra) in 2002 were met with great interest. Meanwhile, Arif Sağ is an artist who carries the baglama as a solo instrument to concert halls. Namely, Arif Sağ mentioned in one of his interviews that people looked at him strangely while he was walking around in Istanbul with baglama. In fact, Arif Sağ states that he changed this point of view when he insulted the elites as peasant music for baglama (Ersoy, 2009, p. 5-6). In the interview Arif Sağ gave to Rüyakoğlu, he defines virtuosity with a short and concise sentence; the virtuoso manages the emotions (Yürükoğlu, 1993, p. 37). In other words, being a virtuoso or mastery is not something that can be gained simply by playing an instrument quickly or technically. The important thing is to be able to influence the listeners and to manage their emotions musically. In 2003, he gave concerts with Marcel Khalife under the name of "Peace Concerts".

He has been involved in hundreds of 45 records and many albums both as a director and as a performer. In addition, as a commen-

tator/artist, he has prepared nearly 50 records of 45 records and many solo albums. In addition to performing baglama, he also made important studies on instruments such as kaval, violin and rhythm. He presented these performances to music lovers with the album “when the drums are played “ in Turkish: Davullar Çalınırken” (Sağ and Erzincan, 2009).

Apart from these, Arif Sağ; He performed the “Muhabbet” series with Musa Eroğlu, Muhlis Akarsu and Yavuz Top. In addition, they made albums such as “Resital I and II” together with Musa Eroğlu. Apart from these, he has signed many solo albums such as “İnsan Olmaya Geldim”, “Halay”, “ Duygular Dönüştü Söze”, “Yol Ver Dağlar”, “ Davullar Çalınırken “ and “ Direniş” (Apaydın, 2019, p. 18).

### ASM (Arif Sağ) Company and Its Historical Process

Founded in 1988 by Haydar Göğercin, ASM (Arif Sağ Music) Company has tried to preserve its perspective on culture and art, even though its name has been changed to Güvercin Music since then. Haydar Göğercin, the founder of ASM and Güvercin Music Company, expressed the company's business policy and history as follows (Haydar Göğercin, personal interview, 28.11.2022);

*ASM (Arif Sağ Music) Company was founded in 1988. It continued its activities until December 31, 1988. On 31 December, after Arif Bey said that I am leaving this job, we said that it would not be appropriate to use the name ASM (Arif Sağ Music). We changed the name of ASM to Güvercin. There was already Güvercin Music Company. We merged the two companies. We continued as Güvercin Music. The entire ASM repertoire continued under the Güvercin Music Company. So we have all the old repertoire.*

*ASM 1988'den 2000 yılına kadar varlığını sürdürmüştür. Hala ismi ASM olmasa da ASM kültürünü devam ettiriyor; kültüre bakış açısını, sanata bakış açısını, Music çizgisini vs korumaya çalışıyor.*

*ASM existed from 1988 to 2000. Although its name is still not ASM, it continues the ASM culture; It tries to protect its point of view on culture, its point of view on art, its musical line, etc.*

*In the past, album cover design was not done in our industry. In the past, there was a factory called “Raks”. There was also a factory called “Nora” (Nora still continues). Factories had a graphics service. We would give them photographs, and they would write on the photographs. At that time, there was no aesthetic cover design. Turkey was not that advanced in technology anyway. Later on, we started to intervene in the cover designs ourselves. As the graphic designer profession became more widespread, we found graphic designers and started working with them privately.*

## Results

The first sub-problem is “What are the contributions of ASM company to the music market?” The answer to the question has been sought. Founded in 1988, ASM company continued its activities

under the same name until December 31, 1988. As Arif Sağ had left the company, the name of the company was changed to Güvercin Music Company after 31 December 1988. Güvercin Music, which existed at that time, and ASM company merged and continued to work as Güvercin Music. In short, although the name of ASM has changed, from 1988 to 2000, the company gathered under one roof and continued its activities under the name “Guvercin Music”

**Table 1.**

*Semiotic analysis of Arif Sağ's works*

Album name Album adı	Year	Used Colors	Designer	Photographer	Producer Company
<b>Gurbeti ben mi yarattım?</b>	1981	Black, white, red.			San Plaque Cassette Audio and Video Center
<b>İnsan olmaya geldim</b>	1983	Black, white, red.	Türker Advertising	Studio Sedat	Arı Production
<b>Muhabbet 1-5 (Muhlis Akarsu, Musa Eroğlu ve Yavuz Top ile birlikte)</b>	1983	Black, white, red.			San Plaque Cassette Audio and Video Center
<b>Halay</b>	1988	Red, white, black and gray			A.S.M music production
<b>Duygular Dönüştü Söze</b>	1990	Black, pink, yellow, white			Stereo music
<b>Türküler Yalan Söylemez</b>	1990	black, gray, white		Shot at F-Sound Studio in Germany (Photographer unknown)	A.S.M music production
<b>Biz İnsanlar Kerbela</b>	1990	Black, white, red, yellow.		Taken at church in London (Photographer unknown)	A.S.M music production
<b>Resital 1 (Musa Eroğlu ile birlikte)</b>	1990	Yellow, black, red, brown and white			A.S.M music production
<b>Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin</b>	1991	Red, Grey, White, Black, Brown			A.S.M music production
<b>Halaylar ve Oyun Havası</b>	1992	Black, white, red.			A.S.M music production
<b>Direniş</b>	1993	Black, gray, red and white	A.S.M music production	Behzat Şahin photography studio	A.S.M music production
<b>Umut</b>	1995	Red, green, yellow, brown, gray, orange	Şibel and Özgür Arcan	Yavuz Yaralı	A.S.M music production
<b>Seher Yıldızı (Belkıs Akkale ile birlikte)</b>	1996	Blue, purple, black and white	FRS printing graphic services	İlyas Akkuyu	A.S.M music production
<b>Concerto For Bağlama</b>	1998	yellow, brown, orange	Russian graphic artist Alex Volgin	İlyas Akkuyu	
<b>Golden Bağlama With The İstanbul State Symphony Orchestra (Erdal Erzincan ve Erol Parlak ile birlikte)</b>	1999	black, yellow, white			A.S.M music production
<b>Dost Yarası</b>	2002	black, white, yellow			Bay Music
<b>Davullar Çalınırken</b>	2005	black, yellow, brown			İber Music
<b>Anadolu Döktürmeleri</b>	2006	Red, white, black yellow, brown			Akbaş Music
<b>Ezo Gelin – Dizi Müziği</b>	2007	red, yellow, white			Mert Music
<b>Şekeroğlan – Saz ile Oyun Havaları</b>	2011	white, red, turquoise, brown, black			Mega Music

The purpose of the ASM company is to collect lesser-known cultures and music genres in a single archive and bring them to the music market. In line with this purpose, it has reprinted the 78 cycle stone plaques by overhauling them. It is also the first company in Turkey to publish and market gramophone records into CDs. In addition to this, it started the series “with the poems of the poets in their own voices” and contributed to the poetry community culturally. It brought together important poets such as Fikret Otyam, Can Yücel, Kemal Özer and Arif Damar with poetry lovers. In short, ASM company has served the country with cultural works

such as folk music, poetry and fairy tales. ASM company (today's Güvercin Music company) continues to work under the name of Güvercin Music.

The second sub-problem, "How are the album covers of Arif Sağ at ASM (Arif Sağ Music) Company?" The answer to the question has been sought. When the album covers belonging to Arif Sağ are examined; it is thought that the album covers are not professional, there is no identity and image work of the artist, and the reason for this is that the album cover designs were made by different painters and graphic artists. In short, it was seen that the album covers were generally incompatible, as they were made by different graphic artists, painters and photographers.

In the fourth sub-problem, an answer was sought to the question of whether the harmony between the colors used on the album cover, the photographs preferred, the pictures designed, the position of the artist and the cover name on the album cover serve its purpose.

### (1990) Türküler Yalan Söylemez (Sözlü ve Enstrümantal) Folk Songs Don't Lie (Oral and Instrumental)

The cover photo of the album titled "Türküler Yalan Söylemez (Sözlü and Instrumental)", which was released in 1990 under the label of ASM (Arif Sağ Music) Company, was taken at F-Soundstudio in Germany. There are Arif Sağ, Emre Saltık, Ozan Emekçi, Mehmet Koç, Hasret Gültekin, İhsan Güvercin and Talip Şahin in the photograph. When this photograph is evaluated in terms of "signifier", the following finding has been reached: the name of the album and the names of the artists in the album are in gray on a black background. On the album cover, it is seen that seven people are together and there are two speakers, a voice recorder and a pen in front of them.

**Table 2.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "Türküler Does Not Lie (Oral and Instrumental)" Album Cover

Indicator	Signifier	Signified
Album cover		
Ground	Black floor	They have a group illuminated from the darkness and gathered for a purpose, and they have
Person	7 people side by side	
Article	Pen, two speakers	
Place	Registration room	
Colour	Black, gray, white	
Text	The names of the artists in the album and the album (folk songs do not lie).	

From the perspective of "signified" it is noteworthy that there is a group that is illuminated in the dark and that Arif Sağ and Hasret Gültekin are at the center. It is thought that posing together emphasizes unity/togetherness, and especially the hands on the shoulders emphasize friendship/brotherhood. Therefore, the album cover and album title are incompatible in terms of semiotics. Because there is no thematic harmony between the image and the name of the album cover. If the dark and light theme is perceived as false and true, it can be thought of as compatible with the visual name.

### (1990) Biz İnsanlar-Kerbela (We the People – Karbala)

1990 yılında Arif Sağ tarafından yapılan "Biz İnsanlar -Kerbela-" albüm kapağının fotoğrafı, Londra'da bir kilisede çekilmiştir. Fotoğraf "gösterenler" açısından değerlendirildiğinde; sanatçının ismi kırmızı renkle yazıldığı, albümün isminin ise sarı renkle yazıldığı bariz şekilde göze çarpmaktadır. Ayrıca sanatçının siyah beyaz çekilmiş portre fotoğrafının, elinde bağlama ve önünde mikrofon ile siyah zemin üzerine yerleştirildiği, mekânın kapalı konser veya etkinlik alanı olduğu ve sanatçıyı dinleyen topluluğun olduğu görülmektedir.

The photo of the cover of the album "We People -Karbala-", produced in 1990, was taken in a church in London. When the photograph is evaluated in terms of "signifier"; it is obvious that the artist's name is written in red and the name of the album is written in yellow. In addition, a black and white portrait of the artist with a lacing in his hand and a microphone in front of him is placed on a black background. It is seen that the venue is a closed concert or event space and there is a community listening to the artist in the environment.

From the point of view of "signified", the fact that the artist who gave a concert in the church was illuminated with a spotlight indicates that the artist has an enlightened view; because he looks white, it evokes the idea that the artist represents the public, is clean and honest. He draws attention to the word "Karbala" in the title "We Humans -Karbala-". It reminds us of the Karbala event in the Muslim world. The Karbala incident is an event that took place in the city of Karbala, Iraq, on 10 October / Muharram 680. The Karbala incident, carried out by Yazid supporters, surrounded Imam Hussein and his followers. Yazid supporters also left Imam Hussein and his followers hungry and thirsty and left them to die. Yazid supporters massacre Imam Hussein and his relatives who want to reach water. As a result of this incident that took place between Yazid and Imam Hussein, Imam Hussein was murdered. As a result of this, the people were deeply affected and this event, which was engraved in the minds of the people, also found a place in folk literature and was told from generation to generation (Durbilmez, 2016, p. 1).

**Table 3.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "We People-Karbala" Album Cover

Indicator	Signifier	Signified
Album cover		
<b>Ground</b>	The dim interior and community dominated by darkness	Pain, commemoration, integration
<b>Person</b>	A man and spectators with a binding in his handle in his hand	The artist who is bright and the audience in expectation
<b>Article</b>	Microphone, microphone feet, microphone cable binding, feet and chair,	The integration of the equipment and instrument that supports the artist with the artist
<b>Place</b>	Indoor concert or event area	The community shared the message and sadness in the performance of the artist
<b>Colour</b>	Black, white, red, yellow	Red integrated with messages in Karbala and co -culture
<b>Text</b>	Artist's name and album name (Arif Sağ, we people -Kella-)	

Background with dark and dim space; It is thought that the theme in the title of the album was chosen as a traditional architectural identity, describing a historical event. It was tried to show sadness in the theme given with the audience community and the integrity of the place. The Karbala incident, not being a party to the authority of that period and the massacre, the attitude of commemorating and telling the event; Since it is seen as an act of courage equivalent to being marginalized and even subjected to new sanctions, the poets who narrated this event were seen as heroes and special people beyond being musicians. In the image, the musician is illuminated under the spotlight. Since the past, the musicians who have been telling about the Karbala event have become integrated with the audience and have been tied to the rituals as if they had sworn to tell this event together. These rituals are described in places such as Cem Houses and music rooms, and it is said that there are even elegies in Iran who receive a salary from the state. It can be said that the album title and album cover are compatible in terms of semiotics.

### (1990) Bağlama Resitali 1 (Baglama Recital 1)

This album cover, released by ASM company in 1990, played and sung by Arif Sağ and Musa Eroğlu, was evaluated in terms of "signifiers". In the picture, it is seen that the name of the album is written in red on a yellow background, and the names of the album artists are written in yellow on a black background. On the album cover, there are three photographs, two of which belong to the album artists and one of them is a baglama photograph.

**Table 4.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "Bağlama Recital 1" Album Cover

Indicator	Signifier	Signified
Album cover		
<b>Ground</b>	Black, yellow	The floor that emphasizes artists
<b>Person</b>	Two men, one in the hands of one	
<b>Article</b>	Connecting	Connecting the element that imagines the element
<b>Place</b>		
<b>Colour</b>	Yellow, black, red, brown and white	Depth
<b>Text</b>	Album name and names of artists, (Baglama recital -1, Arif Sağ, Musa Eroğlu)	

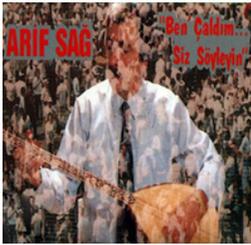
When it is analyzed in terms of "signified", the borderless culture that nourishes art and artists is given with a black space. It can be said that the baglama photograph on the cover is in the foreground and that the baglama represents the union of both artists. It is understood that the photograph of Musa Eroğlu in the lower right corner of the cover is intended to highlight the artist's mastery in this subject. In the poses given by the artists, besides Signifier seriousness and mastery, it is noteworthy that the artists sunk into the baglama. The unique stances and gazes of the figures that define the concept of pioneer in folk culture are emphasized.

Within the scope of semiotics, the title of the album overlaps with the cover; It can be said that the baglama's presence in the middle of the artists gives the listener an idea about the sanctity, seriousness, and traditionality of baglama and about the album.

### (1991) Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin (When I Play, You Sing)

According to the information I obtained from the personal interview, it is known that the photo of this album cover was taken from the "Gülhane Concert" performed by Arif Sağ in İstanbul/Gülhane. When the album cover titled "Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin", played and sung by Arif Sağ and directed by ASM Company in 1991, is examined in terms of "signifier", it is seen that the two photographs are combined. It is seen that the background appears to be of a community, and the featured photo is of a man playing baglama. In addition, the name of the artist and the name of the album are signified in red on a gray background.

**Table 5.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "I Stole, You Tell" Album Cover

Album cover		
Indicator	Signifer	Signified
Ground	Light coffee, gray	community
Person	One man with a binding, community	The integration of the artist and the people
Article	Connecting	The artist's works live in the people
Place	Square	Integration
Colour	Red, gray, white, black, brown	Energy, innocence,
Text	Artist name and album name (Arif Sağ, I stole you tell)	

From the "signified perspective", there are two photos of the artist taken during the concert on the album cover. It can be said that these photographs represent the artist and the public as a whole, that the works of the artist have a recourse to the public, and that the album title "When I Play, You Sing" is related to the photograph. Therefore, it is seen that the community represents unity, the artist is one of the people, and integrates with the people. It is noteworthy that this photo taken from the concert area was placed on the album cover. Unity and democratic organization are important with reference to marginalization, the pursuit of rights and some sad events based on historical pasts, which are among the important feelings expressed by the culture that feeds the artist. This album cover, in which the name of the album reflects the photograph and especially the artist, can be considered compatible in terms of semiotics.

### (1992) Halaylar ve Oyun Havası "Halay and Folk Dances"

When the album cover of "Halaylar ve Oyun Havaları" directed by Arif Sağ, released in 1992 with the ASM label, is examined in terms of "signifiers", it is seen that the background is white, the artist's name is red and the album name is black.

When the album cover is examined in terms of "signified", it is thought that the background color being white evokes feelings such as innocence, truthfulness, purity and naturalness. It is thought that the reason why the artist's name is written in large font, capital letters and red is to arouse energy and attract attention. When the album cover and the name are evaluated together, it cannot be said to be compatible in terms of semiotics. However, it can still be said that it is compatible as it gives an idea about the artist.

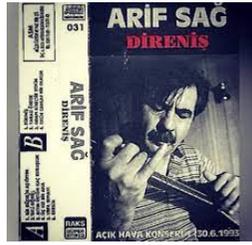
**Table 6.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "Halaylar ve Oyun Havası" Album Cover

Album cover		
Indicator	Signifer	Signified
Ground	white	innocence
Person		
Article		
Place		
Colour	Red, black, white	Energy,
Text	Artist Name and Album Name (Halaylar and Game weather in Arif Sağ Administration)	

### (1993) Direniş (Resistance)

In 1993, the cover photo of the album "Direniş", played and sung by Arif Sağ and the cover design was made by the ASM company, was taken at Behzat Şahin's photography studio. When the cover photo is examined in terms of those who show it, there is a man who seems to be focused on playing baglama with baglama in his hand. When you look at the cover in general, it is seen that black and gray tones are dominant.

**Table 7.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ's "Resistance" Album Cover

Album cover		
Indicator	Signifer	Signified
Ground	black	Power and expression
Person	A man with tying in his hand	Master, artist
Article	Connecting,	Unifying element
Place		
Colour	Black, gray, red and white	Seriousness,
Text	Artist Name and Album Name (Arif Sağ, Resistance),	

On the album cover, it is seen that the artist's name is written in gray tones, and the name of the album is written in red tones. It is seen that the picture on the album cover and the works in the album were taken from a concert on 30.06.1993, Open Air Concert.

When examined in terms of “signified”, it can be said that the feelings of sincerity, mastery, tradition and sincerity are reflected in the artist’s playing the baglama. It can also be said that the dominance of gray and black tones on the album cover evokes feelings such as seriousness, balance, reconciliation and power. In addition, it can be said that the artist’s wearing a modest T-shirt reflects the feelings of sincerity and sincerity. When the album cover and the name are evaluated together, it may not be said to be compatible with each other in terms of semiotics, but when the red color is considered as a resistance, it can be said to be compatible with the visual name.

### (1995) Umut (Hope)

The graphic design of the album cover of the album called “Umut”, which was performed in line with the wishes of ASM company, played and sung by Arif Sağ in 1995, was designed by Sibel and Özgür Arcan, and Yavuz Yaralı painted it. When the album cover is evaluated in terms of “signifiers”, a man with a tie in his hand, a sapling in green and a tree are seen on a light yellow background (placed on a tree). The name of the album is seen written in yellow tones on the barren soil. It is seen that the name of the artist is written in red tones.

**Table 8.**

*Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ’s “Umut” Album Cover*

Indicator	Signifer	Signified
Album cover		
Ground	Light yellow	To produce,
Person	A man with tying in his hand	Mastery, love for tradition
Article	Connecting, sapling, tree	Integration, producing and designing the future, hope
Place	Natural space	Hope, bread, expectation, power
Colour	Red, green, yellow, brown, gray, orange	Nature, Yield, Hope, Attention, Energy, Action
Text	Artist Name and Album Name (Arif Sağ, Umut)	

When evaluated in terms of “signified”, the heap to the left in the composition indicates that the picture was produced by a painter, not a designer, or that a compositional error was made. It can be said that the aim of giving the natural space barren in the background is to emphasize that green vegetation has an important place in our lives. The artist’s integration with the tree and the artist’s being in the same composition with the sapling can be explained as “thinking well, looking to the future with hope, and the artist comes from a root like a tree and grows and develops

gradually”. It can be said that the purpose of drawing the artist in the same composition with the tree reflects the level of mastery that the artist has achieved as a result of gradual growth/development, and the dominance of white colors reflects the artist’s innocence. In short, in this composition, the artist is depicted as a master with an identity that integrates, produces, develops and pioneers with his art and baglama. It can be said that the intensity of these attributions is due to the fact that the artist grew up in a culture where images of master-apprentice, pioneer and innocence were glorified. As a result, when the album cover and album name are evaluated together, they are compatible in terms of semiotics.

### (1996) Seher Yıldızı (Belkis Akkale ile Birlikte), Daystar (with Belkis Akkale)

The cover photo of the album “Seher Yıldızı”, sung by Arif Sağ and Belkis Akkale, released in 1996 with the ASM label, was made by İlyas Akkuyu and the cover design was made by FRS printing graphic services. When the “Seher Yıldızı” album cover is examined in terms of “signifier”, a man playing the baglama with his eyes closed and a woman with their eyes closed are performing a duet.

**Table 9.**

*Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ’s “Seher Yıldızı” Album Cover*

Indicator	Signifer	Signified
Album cover		
Ground	Purple, dark	Deep thought, horizon
Person	A man with a binding and a blindfold	Qatarsis (pleasure from art), the unifying power of art
Article	Connecting	Mastery Traditionalism The way of expressing emotion
Place	Dark outdoor	The effect of art on the masses
Colour	Blue, purple, black and white	Philosophy, inward emotions, the communication power of art
Text	Artist Names and Album Name (Arif Sağ/Belkis Akkale, Seher Star)	

When evaluated in terms of “signified”, the positioning of the figures is given with a perspective that draws the audience in. Closed eyes mean a lot. The eye has added itself to the perspective and has become a part of the composition. So the eye has completed the image. As a graphic photography technique, this gives the audience the suggestion that “you should be included in this scene”. When the album title and cover are evaluated together, it can be said that it is compatible in terms of semiotics.

### (1998) Concerto For Bağlama (Bağlama için Konçerto)

İlyas Akkuyu made the cover photo of the album «Concerto For Bağlama», which was released in 1998 with the ASM label and played and sung by Arif Sağ, Emre Saltık and Talip Şahin, and the graphic design was done by Russian graphic designer Alex Volgin. When evaluated in terms of “signifier”, the album cover called “Concerto For Bağlama”, three men are seen holding a bağlama in their hands, and it draws attention that they wear a uniform suit. It is seen that the name of the album is written in English in orange tones and different fonts are chosen in different sizes.

**Table 10.**  
Semiotic Analysis of Arif Sağ’s “Concerto For Bağlama” Album Cover

Indicator	Signifier	Signified
Album cover		
Ground	brown	Traditionalism,
Person	Three men with binding in the hands	The unifying element of art, producing together, sharing
Article	Connecting, suit	Traditional images, seriousness, responsibility, modernity
Place		
Colour	Yellow, brown, orange	Typography, pleasure, excitement
Text	Artist names and name of the album (Arif Sağ, Erol Parlak and Erdal Erzincan - Concerto for Bağlama)	

Considering “signified” perspective, although it is a traditional piece, care has been taken to give it a modern look by referring to the universal language of music. We see this care on the typography figures, that is, in keeping the composition up and in the choice of fonts. According to Sönmez (2022, p. 29), “Typography is the illustrated form of a written idea. Typography is the most effective way of conveying the feeling of the idea by enlivening the wishes of the reader, thanks to the fact that the design is full of emotion and drama.” In addition, it can be said that the choice of suits also supported this perception. When evaluated in terms of semiotics, it is thought that the album cover and name are compatible.

### Discussion

In this research, an examination was conducted on 9 album covers produced by Arif Sağ within the period of 1990 to 1998 under the ASM (Arif Sağ Music) Company, utilizing semiotic theory as the evaluative framework. The analysis revealed that the album titled ‘Halaylar ve Oyun Havası,’ released in 1992, lacks semiotic coherence when considering both the cover and the title together. Conversely, other album covers demonstrated a commendable

level of conformity to semiotic principles. Saussure’s semiotic theory, employing the classification method of ‘signifier’ and ‘signified,’ was applied to categorize the album covers into six groups: human, object, place, ground, color, and text. The images within these groups were shaped and interpreted based on this classification, forming a conceptual evaluation of the ‘signified,’ presented in tabular form. Additionally, the tags of the 9 album covers are presented in a table according to the respective years.

Examining the cover of the 1990 album ‘Türklüler Yalan Söylemez (Oral and Instrumental),’ unity is emphasized, particularly through the depiction of hands on shoulders, symbolizing friendship and brotherhood. However, a semiotic incongruence is observed between the album cover and its title, attributed to a lack of thematic harmony. Nevertheless, if the dark and light theme is interpreted as falsehood and truth, respectively, semiotic harmony can be discerned.

The album cover of ‘We People-Karbala,’ released in 1990, portrays the artist illuminated by a spotlight, signifying not only representation of the public but also evoking concepts of cleanliness, purity, and honesty. The dimly lit background suggests a historical context in alignment with the album’s name. Consequently, the album title and cover exhibit compatibility in terms of semiotics.

Bağlama Recitali 1,’ released in 1990, features folk songs performed by Arif Sağ and Musa Eroğlu. The cover highlights a central bağlama photograph, positioning Arif Sağ on the upper left and Musa Eroğlu on the lower right. The centrality of the bağlama is interpreted as representing and uniting both artists, emphasizing traditionalism. The artists’ stances, looking indifferent directions, evoke feelings of seriousness and mastery. Overall, semiotically, it is concluded that the album title and cover align, and the centrality of the bağlama serves to convey a traditionalist impression to the listener.

In the scrutiny of the album cover titled “Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin,” released in 1991, a composite of two photos from a concert setting is evident. The visual representation, depicting the artist intertwined with the audience, suggests that the artist’s creations derive significance from the public. In essence, the emphasis is placed on portraying the artist as part of the community, highlighting unity. Consequently, it is observed that the album title resonates with the cover photo, affirming compatibility in terms of semiotics. To summarize, the album cover, accentuating the artist, aligns semiotically.

Analyzing the album cover for “Halaylar ve Oyun Havası,” released by ASM company in 1992, the absence of graphic design or a photograph is noted. The artist’s name is prominently written in red, large fonts, aiming to convey energy and attract attention. The evaluation of the album cover and name together suggests incongruence. However, the compatibility can be asserted considering

that the large, red font of the artist's name contributes to forming an impression about the artist, despite the overall incompatibility of the cover and name.

Exploring the album "Resistance" from 1993, where the artist is portrayed playing the baglama, it is evident that the artist exudes mastery, evoking sentiments of traditionalism and sincerity. Dominated by black and gray tones, the cover and name, when considered together, lack semiotic compatibility. However, the foregrounding of red emphasis and the red album name contribute to semiotic alignment.

In the examination of the album cover for "Umut" from 1995, a leftward composition accumulation is observed, indicating a potential artistic error. Nevertheless, semiotic compatibility is maintained between the album cover and title.

For the album "Seher Yıldızı (Together with Belkis Akkale)" in 1996, the arrangement of figures appears designed to captivate the audience, particularly with the deliberate concealment of the female figure, prompting viewers to mentally complete the visual. This design implies a message of audience involvement and completion of the imagery in their imagination, resulting in semiotic compatibility between the album title and cover.

The album cover for "Concerto For Baglama," released by ASM company in 1998, showcases a blend of traditional and modern elements in line with the album's name. Notably, the typography art exemplifies a fusion of modern and traditional aesthetics. In the semiotic evaluation, it is concluded that the album cover and name demonstrate compatibility.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this semiotic analysis reveals a lack of significant evolution in the visual designs of Arif Sağ's album covers from 1990 to 1998, attributed to technological constraints of the time. Suggested avenues for future research involve exploring the alignment of album covers with album content and investigating whether lyrics correspond with the visual elements. This study, rooted in semiotics, presents a potential model for scrutinizing album covers across artists and music genres within the ASM context. Surveys and field research could further enhance semiotic analysis, positioning this study on Arif Sağ's album covers as a valuable contribution to the broader academic community.

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### Internet Resources

URL-1: [https://www.facebook.com/guvercinfan/about\\_details](https://www.facebook.com/guvercinfan/about_details)

### Personal Interview

Göğercin, Haydar, 28.11.2022. İstanbul

## Yapılandırılmış Özet

Günümüzde, işletmeler pazarlama stratejilerini kullanarak belirledikleri hedeflere ulaşmayı amaçlarlar ve bu süreçte müşteri memnuniyetini sağlama önemli bir rol oynar (Gürbüz ve Bozkurt, 2016: 2). Müşteri memnuniyeti, ürünlerin müşteri tercihlerine uygun şekilde tasarlanması ve sunulmasıyla artar. Özellikle genç kitleleri cezbetme amacı güden ürünlerde, grafik tasarımın hayal gücüne dayalı unsurları kullanarak dikkati hızla çektiği bilinmektedir (Çaydere, 2015: 346). Albüm tasarımında renk seçimi, fotoğraf kullanımı, metin yerleşimi ve genel uyum gibi faktörlerin dikkatlice düşünülmesi, günümüzde görselliğin ön plana çıktığı müzik endüstrisinde giderek daha kritik hale gelmiştir (Vodinalı, Çanakçı, ve Sazak, 2022: 24).

Bu çalışma, pazarlama, grafik tasarım ve müzik endüstrisinin etkileşimini ele alarak, Türk Halk Müziği albüm kapaklarındaki değişen trendlere odaklanmakta ve özellikle 1990-1998 yılları arasında Arif Sağ tarafından ASM şirketi altında yayınlanan albüm kapaklarının semiotik analizini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Analiz, Ferdinand de Saussure'un semiotik teorisinden ilham alarak, Arif Sağ'ın albüm kapaklarındaki grafik tasarımın anlamını çözümlenmeyi hedeflemektedir.

Bu çalışma, önceki benzer çalışmalardan ilham alarak tasarlanmıştır. 1993-2010 yılları arasındaki Kalan Müzik Şirketi'nde yapılan "Semiological Analysis of Turkish Folk Music Album Covers" başlıklı çalışma (Vodinalı, Çanakçı, ve Sazak, 2022) ve 20. yüzyılın müzik albüm kapaklarının grafiksel yönlerini inceleyen 1997 tarihli bir tez (Serbezler, 1997) bu çalışmanın temelini oluşturmuştur. Bu önceki çalışmalardan elde edilen bulgular, grafik tasarımın görsel zevk üzerindeki etkisi ve albüm kapağı görüntüsü tarafından iletilen anlatının günümüz tüketici toplumunda nasıl şekillendiği konusunda önemli perspektifler sunmaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Arif Sağ'ın 1990-1998 yılları arasındaki albüm kapaklarını semiotik açıdan analiz ederek, ASM'nin müzik pazarındaki katkılarını ve tasarım unsurlarının müşteri memnuniyeti hedeflerine ne ölçüde hizmet ettiğini anlamaktır. Ayrıca, Türk Halk Müziği albüm kapaklarındaki değişen trendleri belirlemek ve bu trendlerin genel grafik tasarım anlayışına olan etkilerini değerlendirmektir. Elde edilen bulgular, sanatçıların ve müzik şirketlerinin görsel unsurları kullanarak nasıl bir anlatı oluşturduklarını anlamak ve bu unsurların müşteri memnuniyeti üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek adına önemli bir referans kaynağı olacaktır.

Bu çalışma, Ferdinand de Saussure'un semiotik teorisinden beslenerek, Arif Sağ'ın albüm kapaklarındaki grafik tasarımın anlamını çözümlenmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Görsel unsurlar, metinler ve renkler gibi tasarım öğeleri, semiotik prensiplere dayalı bir inceleme ile analiz edilecek ve elde edilen bulgular, müzik endüstrisindeki görsel unsurların pazarlama stratejilerine olan etkisini değerlendirmek amacıyla ele alınacaktır. Bu çalışmada, 1990 ile 1998 yılları arasında Arif Sağ tarafından ASM (Arif Sağ Müzik) Şirketi altında üretilen 9 albüm kapağının semiotik bir analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Analiz, Ferdinand de Saussure'un semiotik teorisine dayanmakta olup göstergesi ve gösterileni sınıflandırarak albüm kapaklarındaki görsel öğeleri insan, nesne, yer, zemin, renk ve metin altı ana kategoriye ayırmıştır. Bu kategoriler, semiotik prensiplere uygun bir şekilde değerlendirilmiş ve gösterilenin kavramsal bir analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Çalışma, Arif Sağ'ın 1990-1998 yılları arasında piyasaya sürdüğü albümlerin kapaklarını semiotik açıdan inceleyerek önemli bulgular ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle, 1992 yılında yayınlanan "Halaylar ve Oyun Havası" albümü, kapak tasarımıyla başlık arasında semiotik bir tutarsızlık içermektedir. Bu durum, başlık ile kapak tasarımı arasında bütünlüğün eksikliğini göstermektedir. Diğer taraftan, diğer albüm kapaklarının genel olarak semiotik prensiplere uygun bir düzeyde uyumluluk sergilediği gözlemlenmiştir. Bu uyum, albümün içeriğini doğru bir şekilde temsil etme ve müzik dinleyicilerine doğru bir mesaj iletmeye yardımcı olur.

Albüm kapaklarının görsel ve metin öğeleri arasındaki uyumu inceleyen semiotik analiz, sanatçının temsil ettiği değerleri ve temaları anlama açısından önemli bir model sunmaktadır. Örneğin, "Türklüler Yalan Söylemez (Sözlü ve Enstrümantal)" albümünün kapağında ellerin omuzlarda birleşmesi, dostluk ve kardeşliği vurgulayarak birliği öne çıkardığı düşünülmektedir. Ancak, albüm kapağı ile başlık arasında tematik uyumsuzluk olduğu görülmekte ve bu uyumsuzluk, karanlık ve aydınlık temalarının doğru ve yanlış ilişkilendirilmesinden kaynaklanabilir.

"Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin" albüm kapağı, sanatçının izleyicilerle iç içe geçtiği bir konser ortamını temsil ederek birlik vurgusu yapmaktadır. Genel olarak, semiotik analiz, Arif Sağ'ın 1990 ile 1998 yılları arasındaki albüm kapaklarındaki görsel tasarımlarda belirgin bir değişim olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır, bu da o dönemin teknolojik sınırlamalarına bağlanmaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalar, albüm kapaklarının içeriği ile uyumlu olup olmadığını ve sözlerin görsel unsurlarla nasıl uyduğunu daha ayrıntılı bir şekilde inceleyebilir.

Diğer yandan, "Biz İnsanlar-Kerbala" albüm kapağı, sanatçının bir spot ışığında aydınlatılması ile temizlik, saflık ve dürüstlük kavramlarını çağrıştırarak semiotik uyum sergilemiştir. Bu tasarım, müzik dinleyicilerine albümün içeriği hakkında olumlu bir izlenim vererek, sanatçının mesajını etkili bir şekilde iletmeye yardımcı olabilir. Sanatçının bu seçimi, albümdeki temalara ve müziğin duygusal atmosferine uygun bir şekilde yapılmış gibi görünmektedir.

Benzer şekilde, "Bağlama Recitali 1" albüm kapağı, sanatçıyı birleştiren bağlamanın merkezi bir fotoğrafını vurgulayarak geleneksel bir izlenim bırakmıştır. Bu tasarım, müzik dinleyicilerine albümün içeriğinin geleneksel ve otantik olduğu mesajını ileterek, hedef kitleyi etkili bir şekilde cezbetmeye yardımcı olabilir. Bağlamanın öne çıkması, albümün enstrümantal bir içeriğe sahip olduğunu ve geleneksel Türk müziği ile bağlantılı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

"Ben Çaldım Siz Söyleyin" albüm kapağı, sanatçının izleyicilerle iç içe geçtiği bir konser ortamını temsil ederek birlik vurgusu yapmaktadır. Bu tasarım, sanatçının sahne performansını ve müzikle olan etkileşimini ön plana çıkararak, dinleyicilere canlı ve samimi bir deneyim sunmaktadır. Albüm kapağı, izleyicilerle sanatçı arasındaki bağı güçlendirmek amacıyla tasarlanmış gibi görünmektedir.

Genel olarak, semiotik analiz, Arif Sağ'ın 1990 ile 1998 yılları arasındaki albüm kapaklarında belirgin bir değişimi olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır, bu da o dönemin teknolojik sınırlamalarına bağlanmaktadır. Ancak, her bir albüm kapağı, içerdiği semboller ve tasarım unsurlarıyla sanatçının mesajını iletmekte etkili olmuştur. Gelecek araştırmalar, albüm kapaklarının içeriği ile uyumlu olup olmadığını ve sözlerin görsel unsurlarla nasıl uyduğunu daha ayrıntılı bir şekilde inceleyebilir.