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3D SURREALISM AND EXAMPLES IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to discuss the concept of 3D surrealism, which has become an important trend in the field of visual communication design in recent years, and some related visual works. With its ability to evoke subconscious emotions, surrealism is treated as a theme in various fields. However, here the topic of surrealism is limited to three-dimensional design and animation examples in the field of visual communication design. Document analysis is the preferred research method. A literature review is carried out using digital resources on the internet on the subject. In addition, examples of surreal images and animations created in 3D design software are included. The research concludes that the audience's interaction with the product takes longer when visual communication products use 3D surrealism. Elements such as the visualization of subconscious elements, including objects with different functions in the same composition, and the uncertainty between the real and the virtual effectively create this time-based difference.

Keywords: Visual Communication, 3D Surrealism, Digital Art

INTRODUCTION

Surrealism, with its tendency to juxtapose seemingly disparate objects to produce surreal imagery, has found a significant response in the field of visual communication, with its emphasis on creativity and original expression. The essence of surrealism is the disruption of real and habitual behavior. It introduces the viewer to an imaginary universe full of subconscious objects that are independent of the rules of the physical world. Similarly, visual communication design creates a unique reality based on visual design elements and principles by manipulating imagery, typography and other design elements. Reality is fictional and its boundaries are quite wide. Within this bounded reality, each designer tries to achieve original forms beyond the usual and create strong audience associations. In recent years, 3D surrealism has also begun to take its place among the innovations in designing visual communication. The development of 3D design technologies is one of the main reasons for this. Surrealism, which had previously found its place in 2D visual communication, has begun to appear in 3D. This situation has led to the emergence of a skilled body of work based on surrealism. Designers are now able to visualize whatever comes into their minds thanks to rich 3D design tools.

The review of the literature revealed that there are several qualified sources, such as books and articles, written in a variety of fields related to surrealism. The sources primarily focus on Surrealism as an artistic movement and provide disciplinary interpretations (Richardson, 2006; Ball, 2008: 983-984; Brooks, 2019). Additionally, there are sources dealing with the digital aspect of Surrealism. One may notice a two-dimensional perspective dominating these studies dealing with digital surrealism (Ferguson, 2017; Gündüz & Özener, 2024: 139-162). The influence of collage and surrealist techniques on the practices of contemporary female graphic designers was examined in a study on surrealism in the field of graphic design (Czolacz, 2021). The influence of surrealism on contemporary design was analyzed in another study that may be related to this topic. This study included surrealist reflections in graphic design, environmental design, digital illustration and cinema (Yan, 2024: 116-119). Surrealism in the context of poster design and illustration also exists in Turkish sources. However, like other studies, Turkish studies have treated Surrealism in a two-dimensional context (Yalur, 2019: 145-152; Mercin & Tikit, 2021: 1155-1170). As a result of the literature review, it was found that there are no scientific articles that directly deal with surrealism in terms of three dimensions in a way that is specific to visual communication design. Thus, the main objective of the article is to address the issue of 3D Surreal and related examples in the context of visual communication. The study is limited to the concept of three-dimensional surrealism and the examples related to it in the field of visual communication. It is these concepts that differentiate the research from other related scientific studies. Therefore, this research on 3D surrealism in visual communication design was conducted to fill the gap on this topic.

METHODOLOGY

Document analysis, a qualitative research method, was used to make the article scientifically solid. In this context, the following 5 steps preferred by Forster (1994) for document analysis were considered: 1. accessing the documents (for document analysis, the words "surrealism" and "three-dimensional" were used to access documents via Google Academic, Springer and DergiPark), 2. checking the authenticity, 3. understanding the documents, 4. analyzing the data and 5. using the data. In this regard, the first step was to access sources related to 3D surrealism. These sources consist of books, articles, important websites related to the field and images and videos shared in these environments. Documents/studies related to both concepts "surreal" and "three-dimensional" were included in the study.

However, they were not included if they only referred to a single keyword. For example, a study was not included if it was not related to the concept of the surreal, even though it was a study of the three-dimensional. The primary sources related to surrealism were considered in the second step. For example, the articles included in the research were taken directly from the journal in which they were

published and were checked for their originality. To check the originality of the books, the relevant keywords were scanned directly from the books and the documents to be dealt with were identified. In the case of videos, screenshots were taken from the official websites of the organizations. For example, a screenshot was taken from an animation published on the official website of Porche. Thirdly, the documents were analyzed for their relevance to the field. The sources that could be related to the topic were linked. It was examined whether the scope of the study was related to visual communication design, in addition to the inclusion of the keywords mentioned. To understand this, attention was paid to the criterion that the design in the study has the potential to be a product of visual communication design. The fourth step of the process was to select a sample of the social disciplines of art, design and philosophy (from the available literature) and to limit the sources to surrealism and 3D. The fifth step in using of the data was to draw some conclusions based on the available sources.

DEVELOPMENT OF 3D DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

The transition from a very laborious method such as manual design to a very practical one such as digital design is an important development in the history of visual design. The basis of this development is the computer, which consists of two important components such as hardware and software. This development based on computer technology has led to digitalizing graphic design, which plays an important role in human life. This development based on computer technology is often called digital revolution (Goodman, 1990: 248-252; Meggs & Purvis, 2016). This process, the digital revolution, was roughly at the stage of maturity between 1950 and 1990. As computer technology evolved, designs that were previously created by hand using physical equipment became virtual. The digital design technique in the field of graphic design has made it easier for designers in many ways, such as experimentation, speed, multi-dimensionality, geometric flexibility and cost. This digital environment allows designers to express their creativity. Over time, this has led to the emergence of various trends. 3D design is one of these trends.

The use of computer graphics and 3D modeling in technological devices dates to the 1960s. William A. Fetter, a graphic designer at the Boeing Company, and his team leader Verne Hudson were pioneers in the use of the term (Fetter, 1964; Sabry, 2022). Peddie (2013) argues that Hudson, a designer of three-dimensional vector graphics, was the first to use the term computer graphics in 1959, before Fetter. Then, in 1962, Ivan Sutherland developed a piece of software known as Sketchpad (Kerlow, 2004). This software allowed users to draw and organize simple shapes. Sketchpad is considered to be the first 3D rendering software in the genre of object oriented programming using geometric shapes. Sutherland's software was the starting point for the rapid development of 3D modeling and computer-aided design (CAD) software. This is because 3D design is becoming essential in various sectors including game design, augmented reality, graphic design, communication design, film, simulation, health and architecture (Chopine, 2012: 253). People have chosen to learn specific design software in order to work in these areas. Today, software such as 3ds Max, Cinema 4D, Blender, Maya, Zbrush, Unity, Unreal Engine and Houdini have been developed for 3D design and have a large number of users. Designers who want to create successful 3D surreal designs generally prefer to use these software packages (Evans, 2014: 16; Mongeon, 2015: 3).

3D SURREALISM AND ADVERTISING IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

Companies are experimenting with different advertising and marketing techniques to impress and attract customers. One of these methods used in the advertising industry today is 3D advertising. In 3D advertising, the product that is being marketed or promoted is made to appear three-dimensional through the use of various visual techniques. The audience perceives the three-dimensional moving objects on a billboard or a screen as if they were real. If one examines the examples on this topic, it can be seen that this surreal attitude is created with

elements such as shape, color, light and shadow, depth and dimension (Seleka & Letaba, 2023: 7; Yassin, 2023: 24-25; Akören, 2015: 802).

One of the characteristics of 3D surrealism is the juxtaposition of objects from different worlds and the creation of dream-like environments. In graphic design, this method is applied in the form of collage techniques and digital manipulation. The atmosphere in the resulting digital image is completely surreal and is an attempt to influence the perception of the viewer. Surrealist designs combine objects that would not normally appear to be related to each other, drawing attention to a particular point and allowing the viewer to re-interpret the objects in his or her mind. The viewer can interact with the product in different ways in surrealistic designs. However, in this interaction with the design product, reality and imagination are intertwined (May, 2023).

Figure 1. Peter Tomaszewicz and Christiana Perdiou, *The Shrewd Awakening*. [3D Animation], 2020, Tomaszewicz Studio, London

Surrealism inherently uses abstraction to express subconscious desires. To manipulate the viewer, surrealism opts to represent objects contrary to their characteristics. In graphic design, striking compositions based on shape, color and typography are often used in this way. Figure 1 shows a screenshot from the animated film The Shrewd Awakening. In this 3D animation, which has a completely surreal structure, it can be seen that ordinary objects have a number of characteristics that are outside of their nature. The animation was created by Peter Tomaszewicz and Christiana Perdiou and is an example of 3D Surrealism (Maxon.net, 2020).

It is somewhat difficult to identify standard characteristics that are specific to three-dimensional surrealism, since it has no boundaries in terms of reality and subject matter. However, when some studies that have been popular with the audience are analyzed, it is seen that there are some recurring characteristics. Holographic patterns, volumetric illusions, technological objects based on science fiction, texture-based distortions, shimmering colors, experimental fonts, distorted organic shapes, the coexistence of non-conceptual objects, neon lighting, an atmosphere without gravity have become characteristic of 3D surrealist works.

RESULTS

The research found that examples of 3D surrealism in visual communication are mainly found in outdoor advertising and the web. Therefore, this part of the research includes a total of 5 examples of 3D surrealism, 3 outdoor and 2 web, in order to understand the topic.

3D Surrealism and Examples

A variety of media can provide examples of 3D surrealism in visual communication. However, the most common examples can be found on billboards and the web. 3D graphics and augmented reality are used to create fun, remarkable and interactive experiences on devices like smartphones, tablets and computers. Although the web uses only digital techniques, 3D billboards combine digital and physical techniques (Clear Channel, 2024). The degree of surrealism is greater in digital billboards because the real and the virtual are intertwined. The reason for this is that digital billboards have a twofold effect on consumers' emotions and behavior. As an example, consider the Nike Air Max Day 3D billboard study shown in Figure 2. The billboard was designed by CEKAI, an independent community in Japan (Cekai, 2022). The 3D work is physically located inside the buildings. This creates the illusion of a dimensional perception. The shoe has a size that is beyond the required dimensions, and when the shoe is associated with all the objects in the frame, the result is a surreal appearance.

Figure 2. Taro Mikami (Producer) and Kota Iguchi (Director), *Nike Japan's Air Max Day 3D Billboard*, 2022, Cekai, Japan

The surrealism that is achieved with the 3D Billboard goes beyond any of the traditional design-based products of 2D surrealism. This is because 3D billboards remove the boundaries between the virtual world and the real world. Virtual objects and other elements are so successfully designed that they are indistinguishable from their real-world counterparts. Through a physical object with volume, such as a 3D billboard, these objects are connected to other objects in everyday life. This outdoor advertising product, typically installed in crowded urban locations, has the potential to interact with people of all classes and ages. For example, in Figure 3, the billboard that reflects the 3D virtual image is advertising a Netflix movie. Many surrealist assessments can be made of the billboard work here. This is because the billboard as an object occupies a very large space in the real world. The objects on the screen are also larger than normal compared to their counterparts in the real world. Looking at this product in the context of design principles, we can see that several principles are used together. The fact that the objects have different sizes shows the principle of proportion, and the fact that one object on the panel looks large as if it has been zoomed in several times among other objects shows that the principle of emphasis has been applied. In addition, the fact that the virtual exceeds the dimensions of the human scale creates a kind of confusion of perception. The real seems to be added to the virtual.

The Pepsi Max bus stop advert in London is another important work that can be used as an example of 3D surrealism. In this ad, a kind of mixed reality was created by combining video footage from a camera mounted on a bus stop with pre-designed special effects. The advertising campaign included an alien invasion, a giant robot with lasers coming out of its eyes and a creature emerging from the sewers and attacking people on the street. The ad, which featured videos of people at the bus stop and their reactions, was created by Grand Visual and was well-

received and viewed on social media. The commercial, which gave an augmented reality experience to the people on the street, has won several awards (BBC, 2014; Grand Visual, 2024).

Figure 3. Marcus Taormina, *3D Army of the Dead Zombie Tiger*, 2021, 3D Billboard Advertising, 2021, Netflix

Figure 4. Pepsi Max Bus Shelter Augmented Reality Digital OOH, 2014

Examples of 3D surrealism that could be reached online are usually created in 3D design software. These examples are transformed into a product in photo, gif and video formats. An example of this is the short 3D animations that Peter Tarka has created for Porsche. The image shown in Figure 5 is taken from a 7 sec. animated movie. There is a model of the Porsche Taycan car in a surreal atmosphere, as the image shows. The cars in the animation have different colors and are moving in different directions. Some objects in the animation appear to be in an environment without gravity. The architectural structures in the animation are mainly in pastel colors. The full moon in the blue sky in the background appears in daylight just above the palm trees. This creates a surreal effect. In addition to this animation, Tarka has also prepared two other animations. Each of the 3 short animations, which are a continuation of one another, is designed to be 7 seconds long. So, the surrealistic effect in the animations is constructed in the same way in all the animations. Tarka says about these animations that he combines reality with surrealism, architecture with illustration and abstract art. When the viewer looks at his works, he wants them to see the reality and to feel as if they are on a different planet (Porsche, 2024).

Figure 5. Peter Tarka, *No Small Dreams,* Porsche

The short animation The Circle by the Argentine designer Ezequiel Pini is another important work with surrealist influences. This work is part of the collection of the Moco Museum. It combines different moments through a circular shape. The animation shows a continuous movement through the shapes of a circle. Pini explained that he wanted to evoke time and time fragments accumulating in a great scenario of memories through the circular form he uses in his works (Pini, 2022; Arias, 2022).

Figure 6. Six N. Five (Ezequiel Pini), *The Circle*, 2022, Digital Art

A digital magazine called Designboom (2022) highlighted the surreal aspect of the work, stating that it takes the viewer on a journey into a silent world and that the circle, the protagonist of the story, is abstract and has different characteristics. Analyzing the animation shows that the circle is sometimes a celestial sphere emitting light, and sometimes a growing void. The fact that the circle is in a constant state of flux, with changes in its structure because of different events, is reminiscent of many events for the audience.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, it was found that 3D surrealism in the design of visual communication is mainly used in outdoor advertising and web products. The examples of 3D surrealism in outdoor advertising combined real and virtual environmental objects. In contrast, the web examples used only virtual environmental objects. The examples of 3D surrealism in outdoor advertising were found to be more effective in terms of intertwining with life. That was due

to its ability to interact with people of all ages and classes in outdoor advertising. Moreover, outdoor advertising exposes the target audience to the advertising. In the web environment, however, the ad is viewed by the target audience at their own convenience.

In the research for this theme, it was found that modeling and animation processes in relation to objects in virtual environments are carried out through three-dimensional design software. Computer software such as 3ds Max, Autodesk Maya, Cinema 4D and Blender were the most used softwares for the modeling and animation processes. In different studies, it was found that the relevant software was used for this purpose (Appelt & Winter, 2003: 1; Hendriyani & Amrizal, 2019: 2; Scianna, 2013). It is possible to go beyond the usual and increase the audience's interaction with the ad by using 3D surrealism in the design. Surreal three-dimensional objects have the power to have a spiritual impact beyond the delivery of the message by activating subconscious experiences through association. An example of this is the placement of three-dimensional advertising objects in living spaces. Visual illusions lead viewers to change the direction of their thoughts and actions.

Visual communicators can achieve more remarkable advertising by integrating elements of 3D surrealism, one of the new trends, into their creations. Designers are advised to make use of three-dimensional surrealist objects in order to better connect with the subconscious world. The result can be a prolongation of the time during which the ad is under analysis by the target audience. Moreover, this method allows designers to transcend reality and make the visual communication established with the audience through the product more entertaining and effective. This research demonstrates that 3D surrealism is an important and therefore necessary tool in visual communication design. Due to this necessity, the development of the related field needs to conduct further research, including quantitative research methods, in addition to this research conducted through a literature review.

Authors' Contributions

The author contributed 100% to the study.

Competing Interests

There is no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Committee Declaration

There is no need for any ethics committee approval for this research.

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