

# 3D VISUAL ART STYLE POPULAR IN RAP ALBUM COVERS

**Ma Zhongyuan<sup>1</sup> and Taechit Cheuypoung<sup>2</sup>**

*Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand*

*EMail: S65563832010@ssru.ac.th & Taechi.ch@ssru.ac.th*

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the connection between 3D digital visual art and rap album cover design. Employing 3D technology to create visual elements can convey both realistic and imaginative images, resonating with the cultural aspects of rap music. Rap music, characterized by its innovation and individuality, closely aligns with the cultural and aesthetic preferences of young audiences. By integrating 3D digital visual art into album cover design, visual impact and creativity are significantly enhanced, fostering a stronger connection and resonance with the target audience. Therefore, with the advancement of technology and cultural trends, we can anticipate deeper interactions and innovations between 3D digital visual art and rap album cover design.

**Keywords:** rap album covers, 3D digital visual art, visual elements

## INTRODUCTION

This academic study examines the crucial role and impact of 3D digital visual art on rap album cover design. By integrating cultural and technological perspectives, the research employs visual semiotics to delve into the cultural and technical aspects that have propelled the emergence and development of 3D digital visual art in this field. The study seeks to investigate the development path and trends of 3D digital visual art, analyze its connection with rap album cover design, decode the symbols and meanings within these designs, and evaluate its influence on design effectiveness. By offering an in-depth understanding of the contributions and impacts of 3D digital visual art on rap album cover design, this study aims to promote innovation and advancement in the industry, introducing new design concepts and artistic expressions.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to reveal the practical applications and impacts of 3D digital visual art in rap album cover design through the analysis of various cases and examples. It explores the cultural significance of this art form, including its role in conveying specific cultural values and personal images. Additionally, the study examines how 3D digital visual art influences the cultural identity and resonance among audiences and listeners. Furthermore, it analyzes the technical characteristics and innovations, such as the use of digital modeling, rendering techniques, and animation effects, and how these elements express musical themes and emotions.

## METHODOLOGY

This research methodology consists of several steps: a literature review, case studies of albums, analysis of design elements, questionnaires, and data analysis. These steps aim to uncover the emergence and influence of 3D digital visual art in rap album cover design. Furthermore, the study examines cultural meanings and the selection of symbols through the perspective of visual semiotics.

## RESULTS

### 1. Introduction to Visual Semiotics and Its Role in Design

Visual semiotics is a discipline that examines symbols and their meanings in images, as well as their relationships with culture, society, and individuals. It plays a crucial role in interpreting and conveying the meaning of design works. By analyzing the selection and application of symbols, images, and visual elements, visual semiotics aids designers in deeply understanding and expressing the themes, emotional and cultural connotations of their works, and their impact on viewers' emotional responses and engagement.

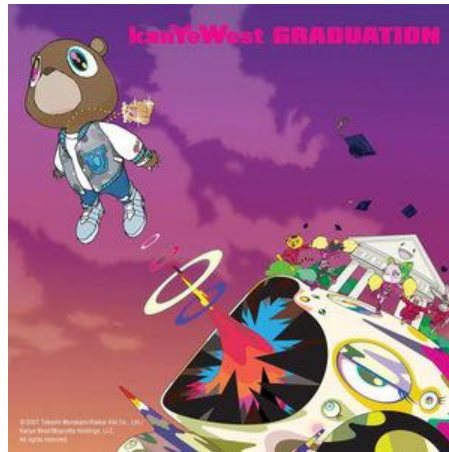
### 2. The Characteristics and Commonalities of Rap Music and 3D Digital Visual Design

Rap music and 3D digital visual design both emphasize creativity and personalized expression, capturing the audience's attention through unique forms and content. They share a commitment to innovation and artistry in expressing emotions, thoughts, and cultural significance. Both forms aim to shape personal images and evoke emotional resonance in their audiences.

### 3. Comparative analysis of artist cases

#### 3D Visual Art Cover Design \*Graduation (2007)\*

Kanye West's album *Graduation* features a cover designed by renowned Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, utilizing 3D visual art elements. The cover depicts a cartoon-like bear, representing Kanye West, navigating a vibrant and geometric 3D world. This design is filled with depth and imagination, leveraging 3D technology to create a dynamic and lively scene that aligns with the album's musical style and themes. The innovative use of 3D elements not only enhances visual impact but also underscores Kanye West's creativity and forward-thinking approach.



**Figure 1 : I \*Graduation (2007)\***

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduation\\_%28album%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduation_%28album%29)

**Traditional Design Method Cover Design \*The College Dropout (2004)\***

In contrast, Kanye West's album *The College Dropout* employs a more traditional approach with photography and graphic design. The cover features Kanye West in a brown jacket, seated on a wooden bench against an ornate background. The overall design is simple yet rich in texture, using expressive photography to highlight Kanye West's personal image and the album's themes. Although lacking the complexity and dimensionality of 3D effects, this traditional design method achieves a powerful visual impact through detailed imagery and emotional expression.



**Figure 2 : I The College Dropout (2004)\***

<https://open.spotify.com/album/4Uv86qWpGTxf7fU7IG5X6F>

The comparison of Kanye West's album covers for *Graduation* and *The College Dropout* highlights the differences between 3D visual art and traditional design methods. The *Graduation* cover uses 3D technology to create a dynamic, imaginative scene that enhances visual impact and underscores Kanye West's creativity. In contrast, *The College Dropout* cover uses traditional photography to emphasize personal image and emotional depth. The advantage of 3D visual design lies in its ability to create complex and engaging visuals, enhancing appeal and effectively conveying unique styles and concepts. Both methods successfully communicate the albums' core themes and styles, showcasing Kanye West's versatility in visual artistry.

#### 4. Personal Research Work Introduction

The focus of this study is to select an album by a rap artist and analyze the concepts the artist intends to convey. Based on this analysis, 3D visual design techniques are applied to redesign the album cover, effectively representing these concepts.

##### 4.1 Introduction of Original Works

“Cheng Dao Liang” is an album by the Chinese rap artist SASIOVERLORD, showcasing his musical prowess and deep understanding of life, suffering, redemption, and societal issues. The album revolves around themes of darkness and challenges, using the symbolic name “Cheng Dao Liang” to represent pain and despair. Through its music, it narrates the struggle within darkness and the pursuit of hope. The songs delve into personal experiences of suffering and hopelessness, articulate a yearning for redemption and hope, and critique societal phenomena, exposing the difficulties and injustices faced by individuals, while advocating for bravery in confronting reality and striving for change.

#### 5. Reason for Selection

The album cover of “Cheng Dao Liang” effectively conveys the themes of darkness and redemption through the use of 3D digital visual art, featuring intricate details and high artistic value, resulting in significant visual impact. However, the design’s dark and complex nature may hinder its recognizability and broader appeal, and its reliance on advanced technology increases production demands. Overall, the cover excels in thematic expression and artistic quality but requires a balance between visual effects and audience acceptance to achieve optimal dissemination.

##### 5.1 Design Process and Introduction of Researchers

The researchers initially selected shackles and blooming flowers, created with 3D modeling software, as the primary visual symbols to represent “darkness” and “light” in the design of the album cover. They achieved realism by highlighting these visual elements through adjustments in shape, size, and details, and by choosing metal materials and tweaking surface effects. To enhance the mood and emotion of the scene, edge lighting was employed.



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In the final layout adjustments, emotions were primarily conveyed through the “shackles” element with minimal text usage to emphasize a dark and oppressive atmosphere. Conversely, the “flower” element incorporated text blended with flashing elements to highlight the album’s name, symbolizing the transition from darkness to light.



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## 6. Survey Results Summary

The survey collected 500 valid responses from rap music listeners aged 18-45. The results indicate that respondents generally find 3D visual art highly compatible with rap album cover design. The following table summarizes the main findings:

Category	Details
Age Distribution	Under 18: 10%, 18-25: 40%, 26-35: 30%, 36-45: 20%
Gender Distribution	Male: 55%, Female: 43%, Other: 2%
Occupation Distribution	Student: 35%, Office Worker: 45%, Freelancer: 15%, Other: 5%
Preference for Rap Music	Like very much: 50%, Like: 30%, Neutral: 15%, Dislike somewhat: 3%, Dislike: 2%
Attention to Album Cover Design	Very attentive: 40%, Attentive: 35%, Neutral: 15%, Not very attentive: 7%, Not attentive: 3%
Belief that Album Cover Design Influences First Impression	Yes: 85%, No: 15%
Cover Design Preference	Traditional graphic design: 35%, 3D visual art: 65%
Belief that 3D Visual Art is More Attractive than Traditional Design	Yes: 70%, No: 30%
Feelings Brought by 3D Visual Art	More vivid: 60%, More interesting: 55%, More modern: 70%, More complex: 45%, Other: 5%
Belief that 3D Visual Art Better Conveys Album Style and Theme	Yes: 75%, No: 25%

## SUMMARY

The survey results show that 3D visual art in rap album cover design is widely welcomed and recognized. Respondents believe that 3D design not only enhances visual impact but also better conveys the music's style and themes. These findings support the use of 3D visual art in this field and provide valuable references for future design practices.

## RESULTS

Rap album cover design is significantly enhanced by 3D digital visual art, which creates vivid and three-dimensional effects. Through computer-generated models and rendering technology, it offers the audience a realistic and immersive experience. Unlike traditional graphic illustration, which lacks depth and dynamism, 3D art introduces a sense of realism and movement.

3D digital visual art aligns with the style and themes of rap music by strategically using symbols and image elements—such as realistic objects, light and shadow effects, and dynamic scenes. This technique not only emphasizes the artist's personal image and cultural identity but also engages the audience emotionally, reflecting the technological and digital innovations in music cover design.

The theory of visual semiotics aids designers in interpreting these symbols and meanings, understanding cultural identities, and enhancing communication with audiences. By integrating visual semiotics with 3D digital visual art, designers can create innovative and striking album covers, thus driving the evolution of rap album cover design.

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