

Public Abstract

First Name:Stefanie

Middle Name:Kathleen

Last Name:Kienstra

Adviser's First Name:Jan

Adviser's Last Name:Colbert

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:ART DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE AUDIENCE IN U.S. MAGAZINES FROM 2009-2012

A magazine's design can visually set the overall tone of the magazine or specific story within the publication, and art directors frequently use this visual means of communication to inform their readers. Art directors also utilize design to visually define tone and add context to the magazine. This research studies how art directors use specific elements of design to engage their readers, and focuses on the ways in which art directors connect with their readers on a visual level. Magazine art directors and designers recognized by ASME and Amazon.com's Best Cover Contest in 2011 and 2012 were interviewed and asked about how they communicate with their readers, as well as how they consider their audience's level of engagement with a story's visual presentation. A visual analysis of all magazines studied was also performed to identify specific elements of design used in award winning magazine covers. All art directors noted that they were able to identify specific demographical information about their readers, and, more importantly, were aware of visual tastes and preferences that their audience responded well to over time. This information, art directors stated, has developed a platform for the exchange of information with readers. Additionally, all art directors addressed the relationships they form with their readers via visual discourse in their respective magazines, and stated that those relationships motivate them to design in the most effective way possible.