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# GRAPHIC DESIGN OF CONTEMPORARY ART MAGAZINES: (On an Example of “Teatri”, “Arili”, “ARTFORUM”, “Art in America”)

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## ABSTRACT

Cohen's assertion that “the press may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about” encapsulates the media's profound agenda-setting power in shaping public discourse, a critical component of democratic societies. While the contemporary media landscape is dominated by social and digital platforms, the enduring influence of print media, particularly in developed nations, cannot be understated. Publications such as *The Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Forbes*, *The New Yorker*, and *Cosmopolitan* exemplify this sustained impact. Their influence extends beyond mere content dissemination, encompassing sophisticated visual strategies, including cover design and graphic layout, which contribute significantly to their authoritative positioning and the cultivation of informed public discourse. These publications, therefore, serve as critical sites for the analysis of how print media continues to navigate and shape public opinion within a rapidly evolving media ecosystem.

In this article, we will discuss the graphic design of two Georgian and two American art magazines - “Teatri”, “Arili”, “ARTFORUM” and “Art in America”.

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## KEYWORDS

Media, Culture, Cover, Contemporary Magazines, Visual Concepts, Graphic Design

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## Introduction

This research investigates comparative models of cultural journalism in Georgian and American print media, focusing on the specific case studies of *Teatri* and *Arili* (Georgian publications) alongside *ARTFORUM* and *Art in America* (American publications). The study aims to analyze the influence of these print media platforms on artistic and literary discourse within their respective national contexts. Furthermore, it examines the visual communication strategies employed by these publications, with a particular emphasis on their graphic design. This article will present a comparative analysis of the visual concepts utilized by the selected magazines, recognizing the crucial role of graphic design in shaping initial reader perception and establishing a publication's aesthetic identity.

The **relevance and scientific novelty** of this research stem from the absence of prior comparative studies examining the coverage of cultural issues within Georgian and American print media. This project represents an initial exploration into this underexplored area, offering a foundational contribution to a potentially broader field of inquiry. To analyze the graphic design of the selected Georgian and American magazines, this article will employ **content analysis and comparative analysis methodologies**.

## Discussion

Graphic design, as a discipline of visual communication, strategically employs artistic principles to achieve specific communicative objectives. Its symbiotic relationship with digital art has fostered a dynamic environment for creative exploration, reflecting evolving cultural influences and artistic trends. Design magazines, in particular, have historically played, and continue to play, a crucial role in supporting and disseminating information about the art field, acting as vital platforms for critical discourse and aesthetic innovation.

Magazines, by their inherent structure and content, afford greater visual expression than newspapers. Unlike the constrained format of daily news dissemination, magazines leverage expansive layouts and diverse visual elements. This includes a richer palette of colors, varied typographic styles, and the integration of illustrations and photographs to enhance textual content. The enduring relevance of Harold Evans's series on print media design, particularly his work, *Newspaper Design* (1981), underscores the fundamental principles of visual communication in print. As Evans articulates, print media is an excellent mechanism for communicating news and ideas. Design is an integral part of that process. Designers strategically employ textual layout, photographic elements, leading (line spacing), white space, and page divisions to optimize communication effectiveness (Evans, 1981).

Visual journalism, encompassing the strategic integration of photography, information graphics, and overall design principles, constitutes a critical instrument within the designer's toolkit. Effective graphic design, characterized by the judicious application of color palettes, serves to amplify a magazine's visual impact and reinforce its communicative objectives. As Natalia Avaliani (2023), a prominent graphic designer and cover artist for Georgian publications, asserts, achieving optimal design outcomes necessitates a dual perspective: "If you want a quality result, you have to be both a reader and an illustrator. You have to read a book or a magazine, create your own imagination and convey it to the reader with visual concepts." This statement underscores the importance of a designer's interpretive role, translating textual and conceptual content into compelling visual narratives.

The graphic design of the magazines selected for this study — **Teatri**, **Arili**, **ARTFORUM**, and **Art in America** — exhibits notable variations in aesthetic approach and visual communication strategies, warranting further comparative analysis.

"**Teatri**", a Georgian publication with a 112-year history, having been founded in 1913, underwent a significant design revitalization in 2018. This redesign extended to the cover, back cover, and interior pages, demonstrating a commitment to comprehensive visual presentation. The magazine's content, encompassing articles on Georgian cinema and theater directors and actors, theatrical history, performance reviews, and play translations, is visually complemented by illustrations and photographs. The editorial direction of David Andriadze and the design expertise of Besik Danelia contribute to the magazine's aesthetic coherence. Theatre is a 70-page publication characterized by thematically relevant cover designs, often featuring the works of renowned artists (e.g., Nikolas Poussin's "Adoration of the Shepherds" or Elene Akhvediani's theatrical sketches).

The inside cover prominently displays the Art Palace logo, accompanied by the inscription "GEORGIAN ART PALACE." The initial unnumbered page, designated as the "Editor's Page," serves as an introductory platform for the publication's content. The "Editor's Page" of Theatre functions as a dynamic platform for engaging with contemporary cultural discourse within Georgia, characterized by both analytical rigor and a proactive approach to addressing pertinent issues. This page features a dedicated colored column, employing a smaller font size, which presents essential publication metadata, including the magazine's title, logo, publication date, editor's name, and editorial board composition. Furthermore, it explicitly acknowledges the journal's affiliation with the theatrical community and the financial support provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports. Pages two and three are dedicated to a bilingual (Georgian and English) table of contents, organized under thematic headings such as "Profile," "First Row," "Essay," "Theatre Philosophy," "Alternative," and "Play." This section provides a comprehensive overview of the journal's content, listing authors and their respective contributions (articles, essays, and reviews). The magazine's pagination extends from page four to page 72. The back cover is allocated to an advertisement for the Georgian wine brand "MARANI," while the inside back cover features the logo of the Business Association of Georgia (BAG) and an advertisement proclaiming their partnership with the Georgian Theater Society since May 2, 2018.

"**Arili**", similar to Theatre, employs a distinctive graphic design strategy, although it distinguishes itself through a more restrained color palette, primarily utilizing black and white. Edited by Malkhaz Kharbedia and designed by Mamuka Tkeshelashvili, this 50-page publication organizes its content under clearly defined rubrics, each accompanied by relevant photographic or pencil-drawn illustrations. The cover design of each

issue of “Arili” directly reflects the thematic focus of the corresponding content, establishing a cohesive visual and textual narrative.

The interior cover of “Arili” is structured into two distinct sections. The upper portion functions as a table of contents, categorizing authors' contributions under headings such as "Essay," "Prose," "Poetry," "Translation," "Review," and "Portrait." The lower section presents the magazine's publication details, including its title and affiliation in both Georgian and English: "Monthly Publication of the Public-Literary Association “Arili”; The Literary Magazine “Arili”. This section also lists the editors, artists, project manager, and editorial board. Notably, it acknowledges the magazine's publication since 1993, supported by funding from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth of Georgia. The back cover features a photo collage advertising books published by the Sulakauri Publishing House, while the inside back cover displays an advertisement for Litere Invente. With the exception of the cover, back cover, and interior covers, the magazine's content is presented in a monochromatic format, utilizing black and white printing. Graphic photographs and illustrations accompany the articles, maintaining visual consistency throughout the publication.

“ARTFORUM”, a monthly American publication focusing on contemporary art, stands out with its distinctive square format and artist-focused cover designs. The magazine's logo, utilizing a bold, repeated Akzidenz-Grotesk typeface, reinforces its visual identity. From its inception in 1962, the journal has shown a specific interest in typography, notably considering fonts approved by the Swiss School. Part of ARTFORUM Media and LLC Penske Media Corporation, the magazine's name, chosen by John P. Irwin, Jr., is inspired by the Roman "forum," reflecting the intention to create a space for active artistic debate and commercial activity (Irwin, 1962).

“ARTFORUM” presents a comprehensive overview of contemporary art through a combination of visually rich illustrations and photographs, complemented by in-depth articles, critical reviews, book reviews, film and popular culture columns, and personal essays. The magazine also features extensive full-page advertisements from prominent international galleries. Under the editorial direction of Tina Rivers Ryan and the design leadership of Tina Tran, ARTFORUM comprises 200 pages and maintains a circulation of 46,000. The publication distinguishes itself through its exceptional print quality, a feature that sets it apart from Georgian publications analyzed within this study. A significant portion of the magazine, beyond the cover and interior pages, is dedicated to showcasing contemporary artists' work and advertisements for gallery exhibitions. ARTFORUM demonstrates a commitment to creating content optimized for the print medium, establishing high design standards through the utilization of superior color reproduction. Furthermore, ARTFORUM's Artguide serves as a comprehensive resource for the art world, functioning as a dynamic reference for galleries, museums, exhibitions, and art fairs.

“Art in America”, an American art magazine, is recognized for its refined design and superior print quality, establishing it as a prominent international publication within the contemporary art sphere. This illustrated monthly magazine focuses on the United States' contemporary art world, comprising 150 pages and maintaining a circulation of 25,600. Currently edited by Sarah Douglas, “Art in America” was acquired by Penske Media Corporation in 2018, transitioning from its previous ownership under Variety and Brant Publications. The magazine has a history of commissioning notable artists to create bespoke covers, demonstrating a commitment to integrating artistic collaboration into its visual identity. Examples include Edward Steichen's contribution for the magazine's 50th anniversary and planned commissions from Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, and Urs Fischer for its 100th anniversary.

Each issue of “Art in America” features, alongside the title and cover image, the inscription "International Review Since 1913" positioned in the right-hand corner, establishing its historical legacy. The left-hand column presents a concise overview of featured content, such as "New Talent," "20 Artists to Watch," and "Art in Space!" The magazine's interior pages provide comprehensive coverage of the visual art world, encompassing both domestic and international perspectives, with a particular emphasis on contemporary art fairs. The publication incorporates a detailed art guide, including exhibition listings and annotated maps, alongside extensive information regarding art fairs and auctions. Founded in 1913, “Art in America” maintains a distinct design aesthetic, reflecting its focus on modern and postmodern art. The magazine employs vibrant collages, illustrations, and photographs of artists' works to create visually compelling layouts. Abstract art, minimalism, and expressionism are prominently represented within its pages.

“Art in America” has historically featured works by prominent artists, notably Grant Wood, whose "American Gothic" garnered significant attention. The magazine's design often incorporates photographs and illustrations of exhibits and paintings from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which houses a comprehensive collection of masterpieces by artists such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Salvador Dalí, Matisse, and

Monet. Each issue of the magazine strives for a distinctive visual identity. For instance, the September 2023 issue of *Art in America* exemplifies this approach. In his article, "Sculptor Alix Vernet Excavates Secrets from Architectural Facades," Alex Greenberger (2023) examines the work of American sculptor Alix Vernet, focusing on the artist's exploration of architectural facades. The article is accompanied by photographic documentation of Vernet's sculptures. As Greenberger observes, "Vernet's sculptures examine what is truly important in the 'messy' landscape of New York, and one of them is a white wall covered with silver-plated sculptures representing the letters of the alphabet." (Greenberger, 2023). This integration of critical analysis and visual representation contributes to the magazine's scholarly and aesthetic value.

A comparative analysis of the graphic design strategies employed by the studied magazines, reveals distinct approaches to visual communication, reflecting varying levels of resources and cultural contexts, while consistently demonstrating the critical role of design in shaping a publication's identity and impact.

### Conclusions

This article has examined the graphic design strategies employed by selected Georgian and American art magazines: *Teatri*, *Arili*, *ARTFORUM*, and *Art in America*. Analysis reveals that the designers of these publications utilize a common repertoire of visual elements, including photography, typography, illustrations, and color palettes, to construct cohesive brand identities. The synthesis of logo design, typography, text layout, color schemes, and imagery contributes to the establishment of a distinctive visual signature for each magazine.

While Georgian magazines, potentially constrained by financial limitations, may not consistently achieve the production quality of their American counterparts, they demonstrate a commitment to tasteful design. The integration of high-quality content with well-executed page layouts, including photographs, illustrations, and appropriate color palettes, results in aesthetically pleasing publications. Conversely, American publications, exemplified by *ARTFORUM* and *Art in America*, exhibit a high degree of technical proficiency in printing and graphic design, complementing their diverse content and thematic range.

Ultimately, the function of graphic design is to produce visually compelling products that effectively communicate information. A well-executed graphic design strategy can enhance a publication's appeal, contributing to increased readership, sales, and, consequently, revenue. This comparative analysis underscores the significance of graphic design as a crucial element in the overall success and cultural impact of art magazines.

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