

Genre Analysis: Video Game Covers Redone

“The world is in turmoil. The C Virus has spread to epidemic proportions. The bioterror threat looks to lead humanity into a chilling end of days.” (Resident Evil 6) Video game covers

are the case that holds video games and can be found in almost any electronic store. It looks like an exciting advertisement for the game including large fonts, pictures, and interesting color-

schemes. They contain easy-to-read sentences with persuasive words in attempt to hook readers right away. They have large and interesting pictures depicting the game, and contain a brief

insight as to what the game is. However, the covers heavily manipulate readers, excludes

negative opinions of the game, and the designs have not changed significantly over time. The

cover contributes to the success of the sales of games as well as getting buyers more eager to

purchase not yet released games, but it fails in giving completely accurate information by

choosing to leave out any criticized aspects of the game.

The designs of the covers have changed little over time. It follows the same general

template, even from multiple types of systems. They have on the front: a large font title, what

system the game is for across the top, the rating in the bottom corner, a large single picture

depicting the game behind the text, and the company that created the game on the bottom. On

the back cover there is a larger sentence followed by a small paragraph, small images to aid the

text, technical aspects taking up about the bottom third of

cover, and the company that created the game. The only thing

that has changed over time is the physical shape of the cover,

which used to be more square-like and is now rectangular,

and that the system information on the front cover has changed from the side to the top of the



cover. The game Crash 2 was released in 1997 for Playstation and follows all of the rules for the cover design except for the box-shape and information on the side. Today games like Resident Evil 6, released in 2012 for Playstation 3, follow the template exactly. Even by 2001, with



games like Resident Evil 2 for Gamecube, the template for the covers were the same as they are today. Having almost no changes in the design makes it easier for consumers to know what they are looking for, but also leaves essentially nothing new for them to view when looking for a game.

Within the text itself there includes no negative opinions of the game, or any already known issues with the software. On games such as Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, the case states things like “5 out of 5 stars” and “Best of Show,” leaving out any possible negative opinions given to the game. It could have easily included opinions like “developers have played it safe to some degree and because of this Uncharted 2 does not feel like it has an identity of its own”

(NTSC-UK) or “the gameplay does not scale the heights of the production values,” (IGN UK) but chose to ignore those reviews. By choosing to not put these types of opinions on the case, the reader is left without a complete sense of what others actually think of the game and can be swayed into buying something they might not enjoy. Even though video game covers are a form of advertisement, the genre is still untruthful to the buyer. By choosing to leave out negative



of advertisement, the genre is still untruthful to the buyer. By choosing to leave out negative opinions, the reader does not get a full knowledge of what the game is like, or what others think about it. This also makes most buyers persuaded to wait until reviews come out before they go to buy the game. This can hurt early release sales for the company, which is something the genre

has decided to slide so that the cover is convincing to the casual buyer. It is an effective tactic

for the distributors of the game, but leaves the consumers unsure of what they are really buying.

Overall, this creates both success and failure within the genre. The persuasiveness of the

sentences, such as "enter the ruthless world of international espionage and become the ultimate

secret agent," (Quantum of Solace) can get people very excited for a game and be willing to pay

\$60 just to experience the story. The exciting covers also persuade consumers to purchase the

game, like the Resident Evil 4 cover with the main character fighting zombies, and can draw

people's attention before they even know exactly what it is. This



success of interesting and thrilling covers is what keeps the

industry, and therefore video game covers, running. However the

genre fails at being completely honest by leaving out any known

glitches or negative opinions of the game. Instead of saying

"There are points that the game could've looked a little smoother," (GamerFeed) a cover will

state "greatest survival horror game of all time" (Resident Evil 4), leaving out any completely

truthful review of the game in its entirety. This deception helps with sales of the game, but can

also leave consumers very disappointed in a purchase or the company after spending money on a

game they do not even enjoy.

With sayings like "can you survive the horror?" (Resident Evil 2) and "embark on a

journey to discover the real truth behind the lost fleet of Marco Polo" (Uncharted 2: Among

Thieves) followed by large exciting pictures, how can one not be intrigued? The covers are very

manipulative to readers, and even if the game is bad, can get a person to spend \$60 or more. Just

looking at a man hanging on a cliff about to fall only to turn the case around and figure out he is

a fortune hunter, (Uncharted 2: Among Thieves) makes readers curious about how he got in that

situation. Having only a few pictures and sentences wanting gets people to mindlessly hand their \$60 over just to see what the game is about. The exciting color-schemes of the game, such as The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword where the front is dark and golden with the back being bright blues and yellows, also immediately draws the

attention of a potential buyer into getting that specific game.

The covers of video games heavily manipulate readers, exclude negative opinions, and the designs themselves have changed very little over time. They succeed in getting people to

purchase the game, but fail at giving the entire truth (whether in glitches or reviews) of the game. Therefore, people have come to recognize what a video game cover should look like, and

generally know what to look for while shopping. This makes the designs themselves less paid attention to because consumers felt like they have already seen it. Also, the readers are being

heavily misled without any criticizing aspects of the game being stated. In this case, buyers need to pay more attention while looking at the covers so they are not as easily persuaded. Companies

should also look into changing the style when creating covers so their game will be more noticed, and will give

future buyers more diversity. "When all the goodbyes have been said and all hope seems lost. One final struggle

begins." (Resident Evil 6)



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Examples Not Used In Paper:



Genre Analysis

The genre I chose to research was bathroom signs. Many bathroom signs across the globe share universal characteristics; the first of which being a stylized and simplistic image depicting whichever gender is designated to use said bathroom. Lettering, font size, and background color are often similar in a variety of examples of bathroom signs. It is the style and font of the text that makes the sign identifiable as a bathroom sign, along with the iconic cartoon depiction of the male or female silhouette displayed on the sign.

Each and every bathroom sign must follow necessary characteristics of the genre in order to be encompassed as a part of it. However, people have continued to creatively alter the original form of the bathroom sign in a number of ways, while fully retaining its meaning. Examples of this are altering the cartoon to have a cowboy hat or giving the female cartoon a ponytail. These and other trivial changes can help to establish a desired tone or theme, when utilized in themed locations.

Although many themed bathroom signs deviate from the original form, they still fully accomplish their intended purpose. It is for this reason that the criteria of what is considered to be a bathroom sign is very broad. A sign may completely disregard all of the expected characteristics of a bathroom sign, yet people will still decode the message as long as a few basic rules are followed. One of these rules is that the sign must in some way specify which gender the facility is designated for. This is often achieved through the use of images or text. The other guiding rule is that a bathroom sign must in some way identify that the facility is indeed a restroom and not a closet or storage room.

In my study of the genre of bathroom signs, I have found a number of creative ways in which people have expanded and altered the genre. One example is an image of a wall that doesn't use a sign at all. The window on the parallel wall has an image, which depicts a classic bathroom sign representation of a cartoon person

standing above the word bathroom. An arrow is also shown pointing towards the direction of the bathroom. When the sun shines through the window, it creates a shadow of the image. The shadow is then projected naturally onto the wall for everyone to see. This inventive method fully achieves the intended purpose of a bathroom sign, while only employing certain characteristics indicative of the genre. The only perceivable flaw in this method is that it would likely not work at night.

My second example is an image of an especially basic chrome bathroom sign. It depicts only a crude representation of a man and a woman divided by a dotted line. This sign functions without the use of any text and is still widely understood. My third example is an image of a Japanese bathroom sign that looks strikingly similar to one that we might see in America. The only obvious exception is the use of Japanese characters to write the words (male) and (female). This duplication and slight adaptation of the American bathroom sign style, is a prime example of the universal nature of bathroom signs.

Throughout the world, many cultures tend to prefer using direct symbols or images in their bathroom signs. The popularity of the "original" American bathroom sign has helped to establish a global framework by which common symbols are now universally understood. An effective bathroom sign will allow someone to know that the facility is in fact a bathroom and will indicate which gender is supposed to use it. Language barriers create segmentation amongst people, yet an effective sign can be understood even without the use of language. It is through universally recognizable symbols and images that we are able to decode and extrapolate meanings, while disregarding the ascribed limitations of communication through verbal language.

The genre is also unique in that it is often parodied and perverted. One example of this is a comical Japanese bathroom sign, in which the male cartoon is peeking over the side of the wall barrier into the female cartoon's stall. A second and more ironic example is a sign, which depicts an image of a female on the men's bathroom sign and vice versa for the female bathroom sign. The intended effect of which is to deliberately create confusion. Additionally, the sign states in relatively

small print, "Ladies don't go in here, this is the men's room, the ladies room is across the hall." The reverse of which is posted on the men's room. To make things more complicated the signs are both hung in a bar and thus are being seen primarily by intoxicated patrons. Examples of these humorous perversions of the genre are as numerous as they are creative. Another very blunt Japanese example is a depiction of a pink character with long hair, squatting to urinate, posted on a glass bathroom door. On the door next to this is a blue male character that is instead standing to urinate. This is another example, which does not rely on the use of text in order to convey its message. It clearly identifies the facility as a restroom and furthermore dictates the intended gender for each stall, while simultaneously conveying a humorous element.

Other humorous adaptations include a Taiwanese sign. The sign depicts a female cartoon peeking through a hole in the dividing barrier as to watch the male cartoon urinate. Many of the examples I came across in my research of the genre have lead me to observe that Asian cultures seem to have a unique sense of humor when it comes to public restroom signs. This example serves merely as another perverse and humorous example of creative alteration and manipulation within the genre.

In summation, no matter how drastically different a bathroom sign may be, it will always be encompassed within the genre, as long as it successfully serves its intended purpose of declaring the presence of a restroom facility. These various examples each portray a unique spin on the timeless and exceedingly universal facet of modern life, called the bathroom sign. Different cultures across the world have duplicated, altered, and innovated new and interesting ways to transform the traditional bathroom sign. It is because of this, that I am eager to see what unique and interesting adaptations will be made to the genre in years to come.