

1960s & 1970s

SOME OF THE FIRST

There was a limited number of female designers in the beginning decades of album cover design. Those who did make their way into the industry worked at record labels and had commercial limitations on the designs that they could produce and distribute. This mostly limited image use to artist portraits, so this was a period where designers experimented more with type to create unique albums and engage their artistic expression.



LAINI ABERNATHY worked with Delmark Records designing jazz album covers for artists such as Roscoe Mitchell, Sun Ra, and Leon Sash. Her album cover for Roscoe Mitchell Sextet's *Sound* is believed to be the first cover credited to a black woman designer and reflects the experimental style of type that is characteristic of the 1960s.¹ As an activist within the Black Arts Movement, Abernathy incorporated styles connected with contemporary Black culture as well as protest symbols employed during the civil rights movement.²



HENRIETTA CONDAK began designing for Columbia Records in the early '60s. She went on to create more than 370 album cover designs for renowned record companies like Columbia, CBS, Odyssey, and Nonesuch. She is esteemed for her typographic exploration which can be seen in her classical album covers, one of which was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Album Cover. Condak continues to work with recording and publishing giants at her own design studio.³

1960s -1970s

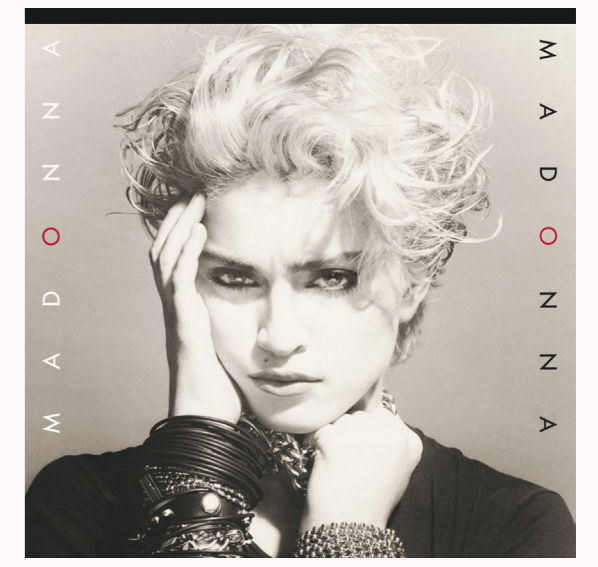
PAULA SCHER

started working at CBS and Atlantic Records in 1970 designing ads and album covers. Within a few years, she was working with bands like Boston, Cheap Trick, the Rolling Stones, and others and was making nearly 150 covers a year.⁴ She designed for iconic women and female groups including Patti LaBelle, Melba Moore, and The Three Degrees. In many of these projects, Scher exhibited the progression of her acclaimed experimental approach to typography.⁵



CARIN GOLDBERG

worked at CBS Records, Nonesuch, and even under art director Paula Scher at Atlantic Records. Her design for Madonna's first album cover exhibits her minimalist treatment of type as well as her other covers for icons such as Marvin Gaye and The Doors. Goldberg opened her own design firm in 1982 where she continues to work with major recording and publishing companies in New York.⁶



BARBARA WOJIRSCH

worked for ECM Records where she made more than 250 album covers. Unlike the album art of previously mentioned record labels, ECM's imagery was that of Wojirsch and her colleague Dieter Rehn alone. Wojirsch didn't have the commercial limitations enforced by the label, meaning that she had free range during her creative process. This resulted in experimental and expressive treatments of type and image and many striking album covers.⁶



1970s & 1980s

TWO STYLES

Album cover design in the '70s and '80s took multiple stylistic avenues. Some embodied the archetypal '70s look by using vibrant color and rounded, flowing type while others took a more minimalist approach. These employed starker color palettes, more negative space, and geometric forms. The use of portraiture continued but was met with line art and written text as well as 3D type.

1980s

DESIGNING FOR CDs

Using portraits in album art had been practiced since the late '40s, however there was a growing popularity of portrait heavy album covers in the '80s. With the CD coming to the market in 1982, the format and size of new album art was forced to change. Less focus was placed on complex typography and more on photos of the musician in order to communicate the content of the album at a smaller scale. This put more emphasis on photographers as designers.

B SIDE

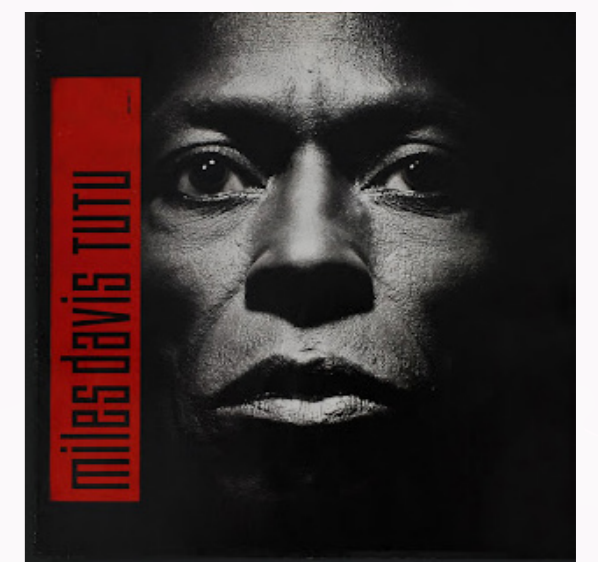
WOMEN IN

ALBUM DESIGN

1980s- 1990s

EIKO ISHIOKA

was a multifaceted artist who worked as a costume designer, art director, and graphic designer. She worked with CBS, Sony, East Wind, Columbia Records, and others creating album covers featuring abstract forms and experimental typography. Her album cover for Miles Davis' *Tutu* won a Grammy Award for Best Recording Package. She exhibits how the concept of the artist could include the practice of many different disciplines.⁸



1990s

IMAGE ALTERING

With the emergence of applications like Photoshop, the '90s exhibit more experimentation in the altering of images using transparency, color experimentation, and different methods of producing images. Rap and hip hop became more widely popularized during this period and adopted a style of digitally collaged energetic images and decorative type. During the '90s and moving into the early 2000s, album typography trended towards dramatically embellished and dimensional. Typography played a large role in establishing an artist's brand and often functioned more as a stylized logo.



KATE GIBBS

is a silk screen artist who has designed album covers for musicians like The Chemical Brothers, Simian, Suede, and Bob Marley. Her unique approach to color often leads bands to use her repeatedly for their cover art. Her covers feature striking color-blocked images with unique yet small scale type. She thoroughly plans out her layers, yet embraces the unpredictability of the screen printing process to add even more character into each cover.⁹

VALERIE PHILIPS

worked with Columbia Records, Island Records, Perfecto, A&M Records, and others. Acting as photographer and art director, she photographed artists such as Van Morrison, PJ Harvey, The Cranberries, and Amy Winehouse. Her album covers feature unconventional portraiture and focus on the relationship between type and image.¹⁰



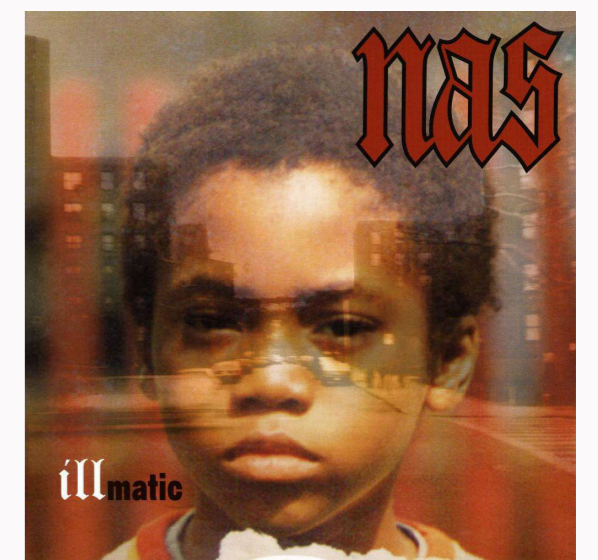
ANNIE LIEBOVITZ

is a well renowned photographer who shows how prevalent portraiture was in album art in the rock scene of the '70s and '80s and beyond. She photographed artists such as Bruce Springsteen, The Carpenters, John Lennon, The Rolling Stones, and Cyndi Lauper. Her album covers use close cropping of portraits, reflecting how album art was changing to accommodate the smaller format of newly introduced CDs.¹¹

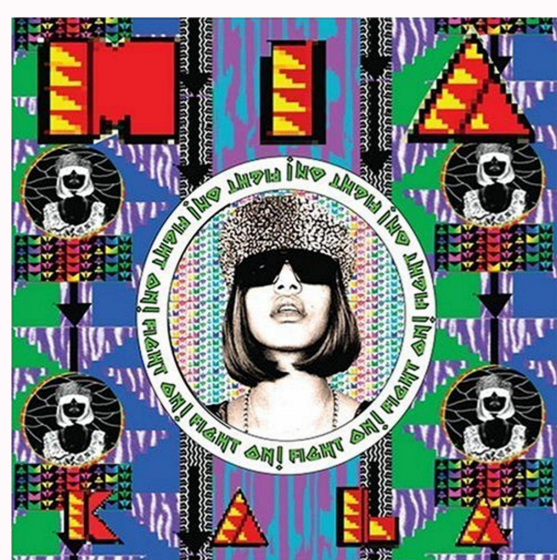


AIMEE MACAULEY

started as an art director at Sony Music in 1993 where she worked with a range of artists such as Rage Against the Machine, Nas, Hoodlatz, Daryl Hall, and ELO.¹² Her album cover for Nas' *Illmatic* shows a shift towards the trend of using personal images of the musician within their cover art. This shows collaboration between designer and musical artist to create a meaningful album cover with an individualized message.¹³



2000s- PRESENT



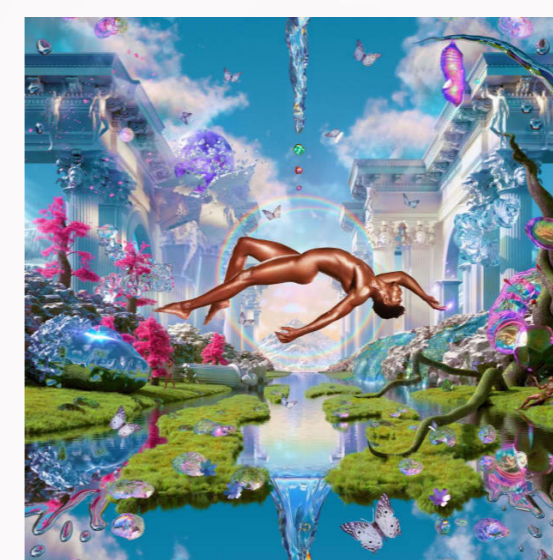
M.I.A.

or Maya Arulpragasam, is a musician who designs her own album art. Originally interested in videography, Arulpragasam uses images from her own video recordings to connect her albums to her background as a Sri Lankan. This shows the growing personalization of album art design, something that is often emphasized when the musician creates their own work. Even as an extremely well established artist, Arulpragasam continues to design her own covers.¹⁴

2000s & 2010s

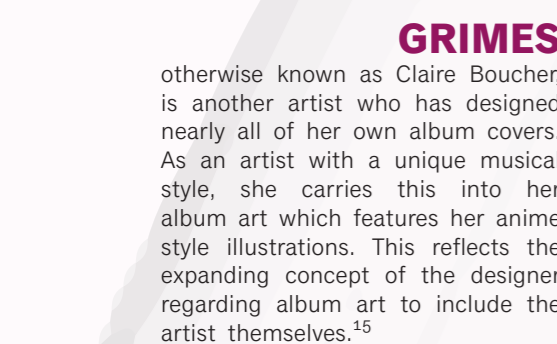
MUSICIAN AS DESIGNER

Development in and access to technology opened up the opportunity for musicians to be their own designers. With more access to digital image editing programs and social media, musical artists could more directly engage with and contribute to pop culture. This freedom gives full artistic expression to the musician and creates continuity between their music and visuals, as well as across their collection of albums. It also expands and amplifies female artists' expression beyond one format, projecting a more comprehensive view of the artist.



CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD

is a videographer and designer who has worked with well known artists like Lil Nas X, Ashnikko, Charlie XCX, Marina and the Diamonds, and more.¹⁵ She exemplifies how musical artists can achieve cohesivity throughout all aspects of an album by using a single art director, something that is necessary with the growing impact of and demand for music videos, social media, merchandise and other elements that weren't focused on as heavily decades before.¹⁶



GRIMES

otherwise known as Claire Boucher, is another artist who has designed nearly all of her own album covers. As an artist with a unique musical style, she carries this into her album art which features her anime style illustrations. This reflects the expanding concept of the designer regarding album art to include the artist themselves.¹⁵



CARLOTTA GUERRERO

was contacted by Solange to create her album cover for *A Seat at the Table*. Guerrero's work focusing on depicting femininity and the female gaze is what led Solange to reach out to her to design her cover.¹⁷ This shows a connection between musical artist and visual artist and how female musicians begin to more often employ female designers with similar inspirations and messages to best communicate the feeling of their album.¹⁷

2010s-PRESENT

DESIGNERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In the age of social media where artists and designers are able to self promote, less-established artists have the opportunity to work on bigger projects, which leads to a slowly growing amount of female and bi-poc designers. Social media platforms also allow for major musicians to connect directly with artists without the interference of record labels, resulting in more collaboration between visual and musical artists and in more personalized album art.

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