

Boris Chang: Expressing Two Cultures

(teenage artist mixes American and Chinese influences in his art)

Asian culture has always fascinated 18-year-old Boris Chang, even though he barely remembers his only visit to Taiwan (a large Chinese island), made when he was 5 years old. Boris, currently a senior at Benjamin Cardozo High School in New York City, likes to draw on his heritage when creating works like the award-winning graphic design on the opposite page. He says, “Brush painting, the use of Chinese characters, the type of design you see in Buddhist manuscripts and scrolls, all interest me. But my own graphic designs are Western, with a little Asian influence.”



How did you first become involved with art?

In high school my teacher encouraged me to apply to a special program at Cooper Union for motivated high school minority students. That program really pushed me toward the arts. I discovered art was what I wanted to do in life.

How did you come to do this award-winning piece?

It’s a cover for a magazine that doesn’t exist. I’ve always wanted to create a quarterly magazine for urban youth that covers art, music, fashion, technology, and nightlife. I put my image on the cover because the magazine is designed for people like me.

Why did you call the magazine *Revolve*?

Revolve means evolution. You’re constantly going around in a circle, yet changing with time. The world is always changing, so people have got to get with the program.

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Why do you show yourself with one eye closed?

That was actually influenced by Buddhist culture. To me, one eye closed represents learning and wisdom. And the one open means I have the flexibility to keep on learning, that I know I have a lot to learn.

What is the letter in the lower left corner?

That's another personal thing. In Chinese that character means "sky and heaven." But I added a dot at the bottom to personalize it. Most Chinese artwork has a personal stamp with the artist's name or where they're from.

What kind of message did you want this cover to convey?

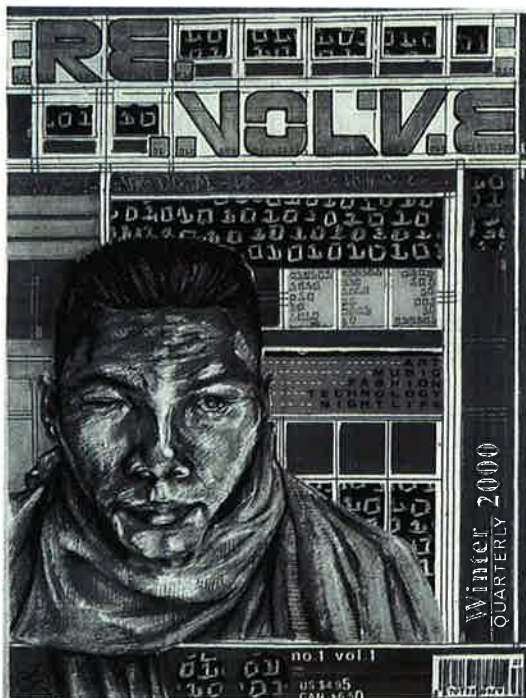
The cover expresses something I'm passionate about: urban lifestyle. In order to express this, I focused on composition and graphic elements. I wanted to combine fine art—the self-portrait—with contemporary graphic design. I wanted to give my magazine cover a modern, futuristic look with a touch of Asian influence.

What steps did you take to create this piece?

First, I decided on my focus—graphic design for a magazine cover that would depict urban culture. Next, I decided on my materials—paper, colored pencil, art markers for more color, and press-on text for the table of contents and date. I also used coloraid paper—textured art paper—for the colored boxes and acetate for the computer coding. I also wanted to add graffiti to stress the urban feel I was after.

Do you think your cover was successful? Why?

On a scale from 1 to 10, I would probably give it an 8. It was successful in that a lot of my ideas were carried out. I think the cover works in grabbing the viewer's attention. The composition



Go On 

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makes the viewer wonder what the magazine is about. You see a portrait and you see “Revolve.” You see the futuristic text, and cool design, and you wonder, “Oh, what kind of a magazine is this?” I think this cover is somewhat successful in that way.

Are you planning to go on in art as a career?

Yes, definitely. I’m pretty sure my career is going to be involved with art in some way. I’m leaning toward commercial graphic arts, the type of design you see in magazines.

What do you like best about creating art?

I like its uniqueness. Art to me is a whole subculture. It’s a lifestyle in itself. It’s an interaction with people. It’s about creating something. It’s also about having an opinion on what’s around you: what you like and what you want people to see. It’s a great feeling to be able to convey that to others and to be part of this subculture.

What advice do you have for aspiring artists like yourself?

Just really know what you want to do. Go through with what you feel passionate about. Love and understand your art. Try to do it well and learn as much as you can. Take risks and reveal an aspect of yourself through your art. The greatest art is art you put yourself into, through effort, time, and commitment. And that quality comes through to the viewer.