7 trends for your 3D design journey.
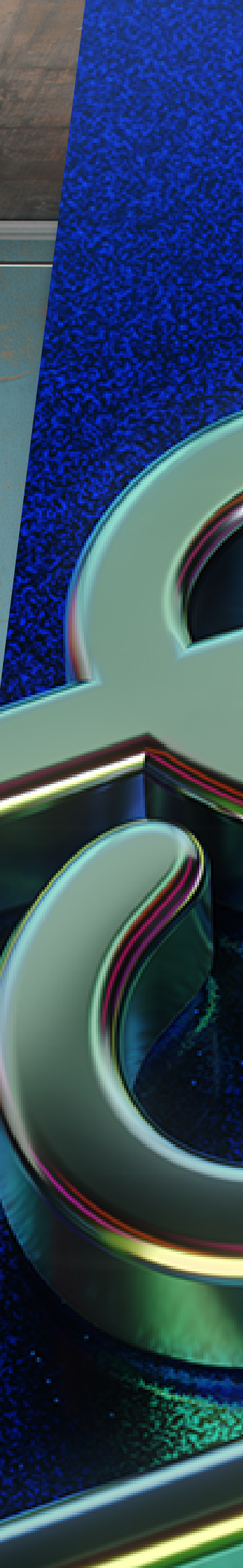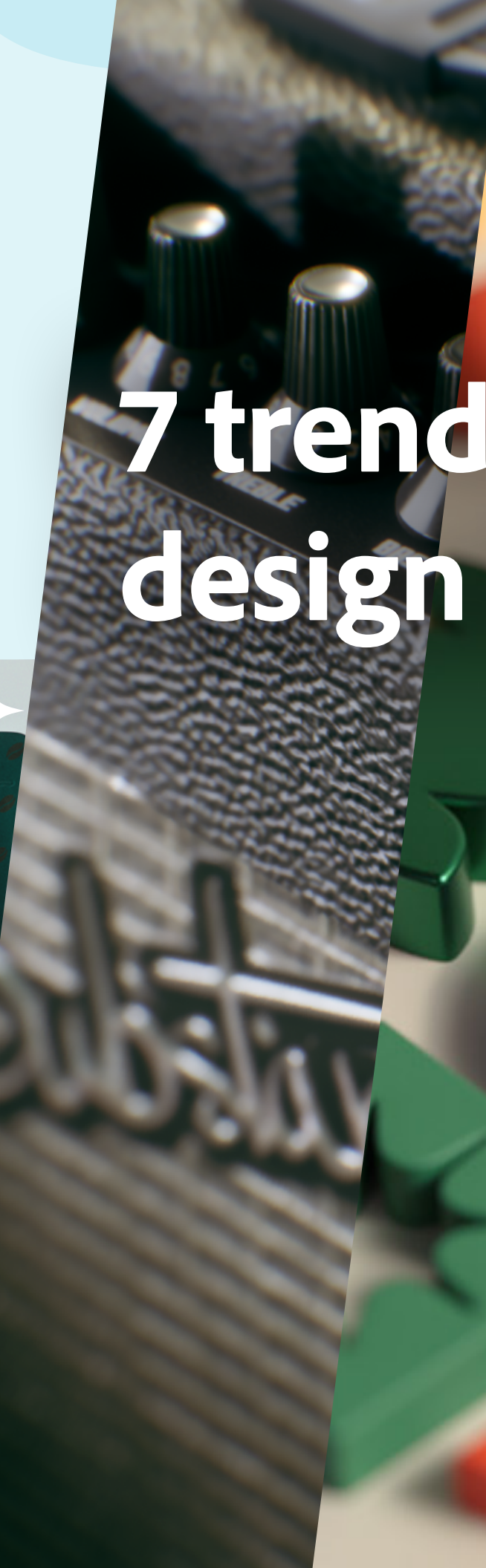
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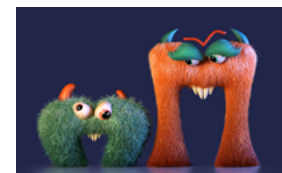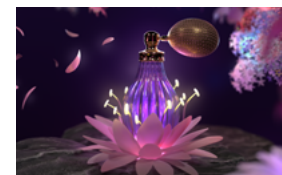
3D is making its way into the graphic design mainstream.

Thanks to the influential detail, realism, and precision of video game and film art, graphic design finds itself poised to be the newest frontier for 3D design expansion. Today's consumer expects next-level graphic design at every touchpoint—digitally and otherwise—and designers are tasked with creating compelling, unique content across mediums.

Traditional forms of graphic design, such as print, digital, and video—along with newer mediums like the metaverse, VR, and AR—are creating new demand for 3D creative. To help viewers get inside an experience—whether for recreational, educational, or occupational purposes—graphic designers have opportunities to incorporate 3D elements into their projects, using everything from photorealistic renders to more ethereal scenes created in tools like the Adobe Substance 3D Collection.

In this eBook, we'll explore seven trends shaping 3D design to inspire your next creative projects, whatever your design medium.

Use simple shapes so details can do the talking.

Shapes are essential elements in all design and a big part of today's 3D graphic design landscape. Simple shapes can serve as background components of a visual composition, or take center stage as hero elements in a larger scene.

Dimensional scenes.

Adding dimension to simple shapes and colors dramatically changes a scene, making it more complex without adding detailed design elements.
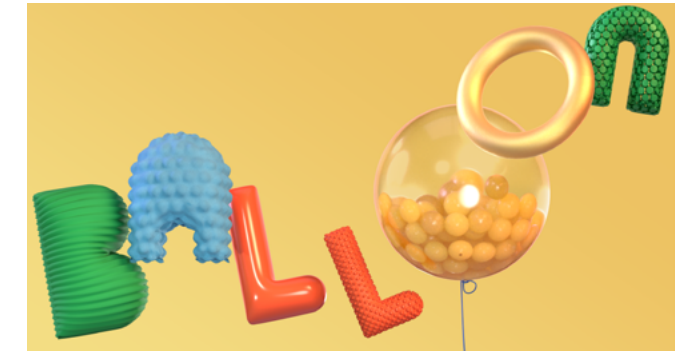
Basic geometric shapes.

Even simple shapes can make a big impact when created in 3D.

Abstract, organic, and asymmetric shapes.

Organic, asymmetrical 3D shapes or balanced, uniform ones can help you evoke the feeling you want to create.
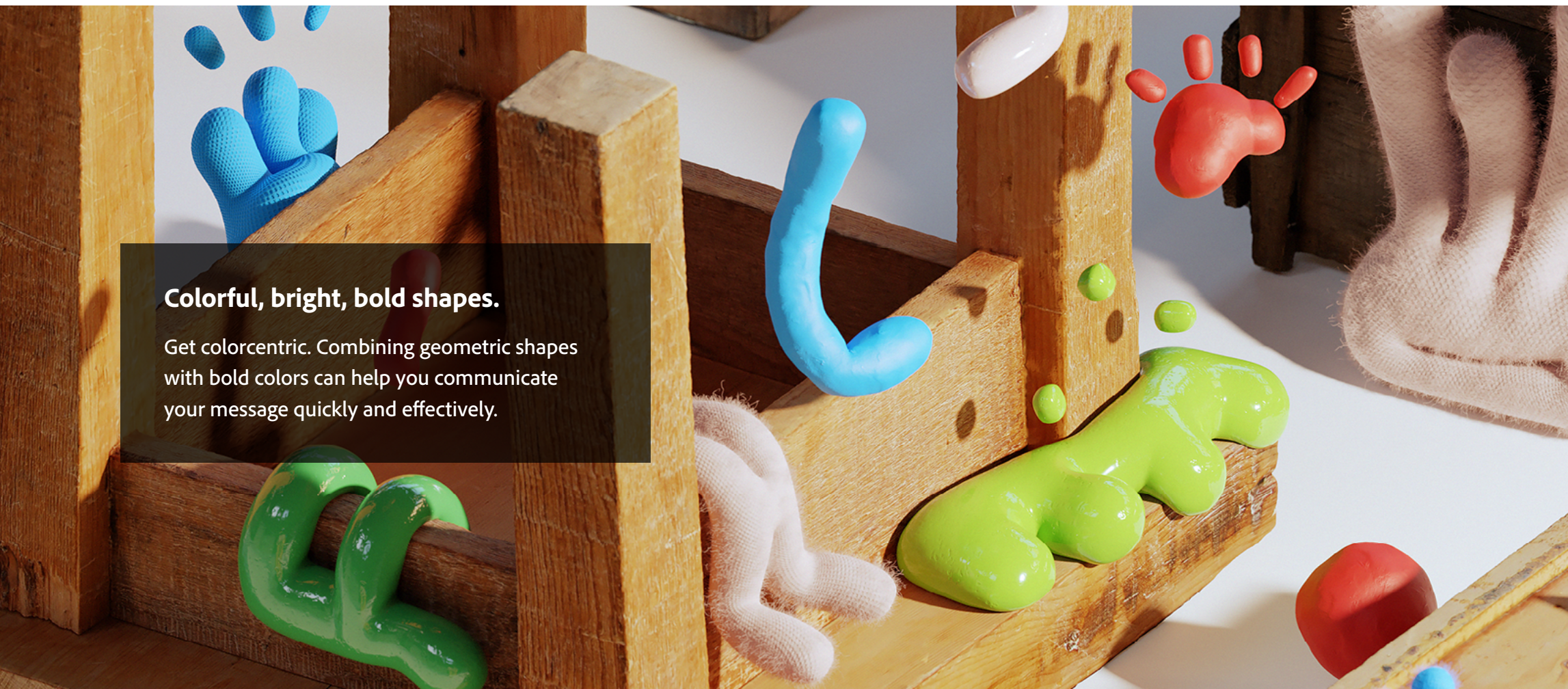
Colorful, bright, bold shapes.

Get colorcentric. Combining geometric shapes with bold colors can help you communicate your message quickly and effectively.

Get the best of both worlds with 2D-3D mashups.

The partnership between 2D and 3D combines the best of each design approach: the simple flatness of 2D design and the complex depth of 3D. These mashup designs create interesting, unpretentious effects that level up web design, UI design, typography, graphic design, and animation projects. Using 2D and 3D elements together can emphasize specific visual elements, create hierarchy and contrast, and combine the digital with the physical for novel results.

Punchy visual effects.

Think outside the box, then think bigger. Look for ways for your shape combinations to create high-impact effects.

Mixed media effect.

Use the simplicity of 2D elements paired with the complexity of 3D shapes for endless design possibilities and a layered effect.

Highly unique imagery.

Build truly outstanding illustrations powered by a distinctive feel.

Visual emphasis.

3D captures the complexity of the product by showing realistic form, shading, and gradients, while a simple 2D background adds stylistic interest.

Astonish and delight with next-level hyperrealism.

Many design projects rely on photography to capture the real world—but the real world can sometimes be difficult to bend to your creative will. Hyperrealistic 3D renders allow designers to bring their version of reality to life down to the smallest detail.

With today's generation of 3D design tools, you can craft objects with all the details that make things interesting—adding creases, reflections, dents, and textures that indicate whether something is wet or metal, and more. This subtlety is what makes a computer-generated image feel like the real thing to a viewer.

Physical spaces.

Put your clients at the forefront of your renderings by using 3D to show how people will interact with a physical space.

Product design.

Only the designer knows this is a digital recreation of a real product—which means products can be showcased in market long before they're physically produced.

Immersive experiences.

Invite viewers to be a part of the design by making it easy to experience.

Texture.

Translate an object's true physical properties—like color, reflectivity, or grain—into the digital space to create 3D product images that stand out.

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Amplify your creative impact with stylized designs.

In contrast to hyperrealistic designs, stylized imagery tells a story by playing around with shapes, colors, and details instead of presenting a purely accurate depiction. This intentional break with reality gives 3D designers the chance to build original worlds and scenes that grab viewers' attention.

Humanizing products.

Make a product relatable and approachable by giving it personality.

Brand imagery.

Try stylized 3D imagery or illustrations to build stronger brand connections with your audience.

Gaming and cartoons.

Stylized designs can immerse gamers or media enthusiasts in new worlds.

Communicate more with color.

Color speaks for itself. Whether you're looking for an analogous palette or a more complementary approach, knowing your color theory means you can use color to make an impact on your message. In 3D compositions, color can be used to heighten the impact of a hero object, or it can provide a contrasting background for primary imagery to amplify its visual effect.

Mesh gradients.

Move beyond a simple gradient to a mesh gradient that adds dimension and complexity.

Psychedelic colors.

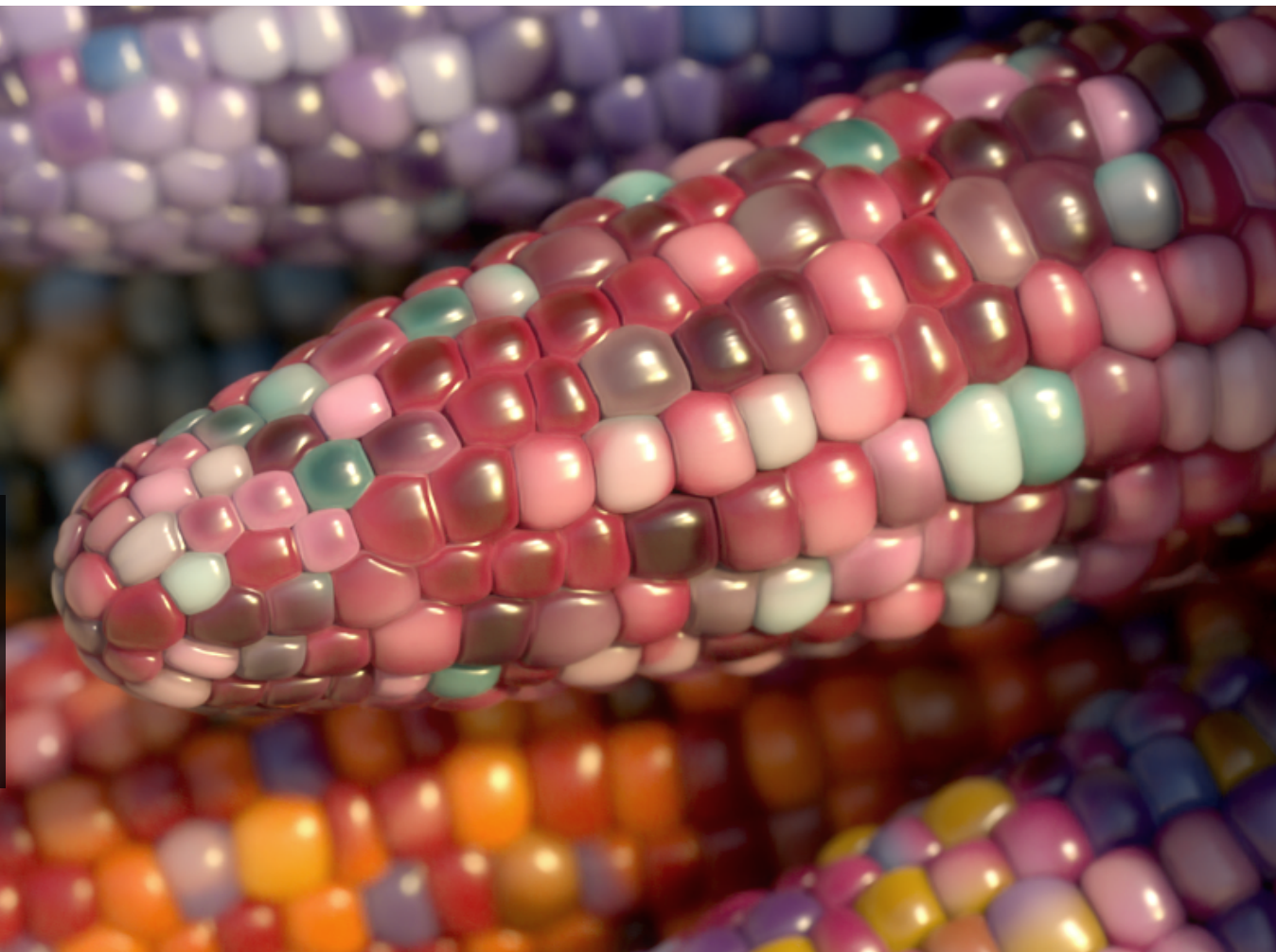Wild color combinations and patterns can create a trippy visual effect, especially when paired with 3D visual elements.

Monochromatic compositions.

Monochromatic 3D scenes can create a unified, harmonious look in any medium.

Saturated colors.

Bold, highly saturated colors can grab viewers' attention in a crowded feed and pique their curiosity.
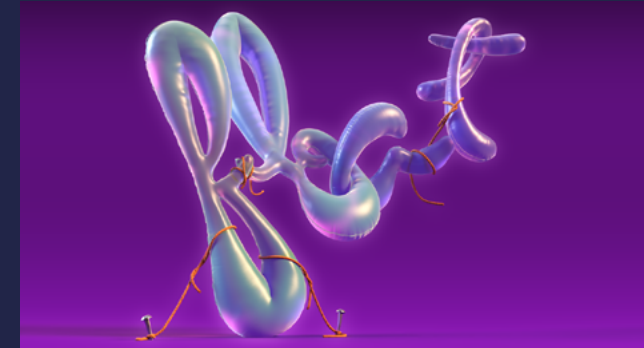
Make a bold statement with dimensional typography.

3D typography stands out—literally. Adding the third dimension brings type to life and makes whatever words you're designing more like a physical object than simple text. With the freedom to create without the constraints of 2D, 3D allows designers to rethink how words are treated in everything from static images to videos to immersive experiences. 3D text does more than simply communicate information—it makes a statement all its own.

Inflated type.

Create depth and interest by playing with scale.

Isometric or perspective block text.

Isometric typography is a classic 2D design technique that takes on new impact with 3D textures, materials, and lighting.

Textured type.

Textures can give 3D text a more tactile feel that represents a physical object in addition to a verbal concept.

Chrome type.

Adding chrome detailing can take simple 3D lettering up a notch.

Go beyond reality with surreal designs that transcend the familiar.

Behind every creative effort is the desire to expand audience perception. Surrealism lets 3D designers do this by giving new meaning to the expected and elevating creative through sheer innovation. As designers look to surrealism to infuse products or campaigns with dreamlike qualities that communicate novelty and uniqueness, their work transports viewers to a different state of mind.

Surreal character design.

Create 3D characters that put the viewer's imagination in the driver's seat.

Surreal branding.

Brands compete in a crowded digital environment. 3D surreal visuals can help them stand out by surprising viewers with a twist on the ordinary.

Surreal emotional triggers.

The intended feeling can be the whole purpose behind a design. 3D surreal scenes can transport viewers out of their everyday experience and evoke a strong emotional response.

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Dimensional inspiration for your next creative project.

There's a wealth of interesting and cutting-edge creative trends in 3D design. Whether you're creating realistic designs representing real-world products and spaces or developing expressive, boundary-pushing content that brings the intangible to life, these 3D graphic design trends can help you build impactful, unique experiences that grab your audience's attention. Taking the leap from traditional design tools like Photoshop and Illustrator into 3D with tools like Substance 3D may be just the thing your next project needs to move your creativity to the next level.

Adobe can help.

Smart creative apps and an ever-growing library of production-quality assets combine in the Adobe Substance 3D Collection to make 3D design more approachable than ever. Easy to use and impossible to outgrow, these tools are transforming workflows for designers of all backgrounds and across industries, allowing them to create stunning content at warp speed.

[Learn more]

We can also help you find a solution to fit your business.
[Request more information](#) to get started.

All images were produced using the Substance 3D Collection, Photoshop, and Illustrator.
Thanks to the following 3D artists for contributing imagery for this eBook:

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