

# Participation

What we are calling participatory culture is a culture where everyone has the potential to produce and contribute creatively—where everyone contributes to the production of knowledge and exchange of information—is precisely about being able to rewrite and rescript the environment around you, to remix the media that comes into our lives. That is in some sense a modern definition of what the consumer does in a digital age.

Dr. Henry Jenkins

The media we use influences our cultural behavior. Marshall McLuhan realized this as far back as the 1960s. His predictions were played out across the latter part of the 20th century and continue to be relevant today. Printed words and images defined a culture of individualized passive consumption. Objects and artifacts had a central role and the makers were revered without question.

As new technologies developed, they created an environment that provided opportunities for audiences to contribute. First, projection and amplification enabled greater communal involvement. Then, with economic prosperity came a wider participation in culture creation and increased outlets for its consumption. More recently, networked computing has created opportunities for an audience to influence and distribute creative content, and this audience has gradually become influential contributors to its form.

Participation culture did not start with networked computing. As far back as the 1950s, cultural commentators described a momentum that was leading to the development of cultural forms that embraced an openness and multiplicity of meaning. Robert Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas* sought inspiration from architecture that had developed organically through use. Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* examined the benefits of creating work that is unfinished and open to interpretation. Fluxus and the Situationists specified artwork for construction by an audience. More recently, Nicholas Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics described an opportunity for artists to create a social circumstance, orchestrate what surrounds them, and become a conduit for the experience.

Networked computing has accelerated the evolution of these ideas through heightened opportunities to adapt, contribute, and redistribute. Today postmodern ideas such as intertextuality, deconstruction, hybridization, appropriation, and recontextualisation all seem like they were coined to describe post- rather than pre-Internet cultural activity.

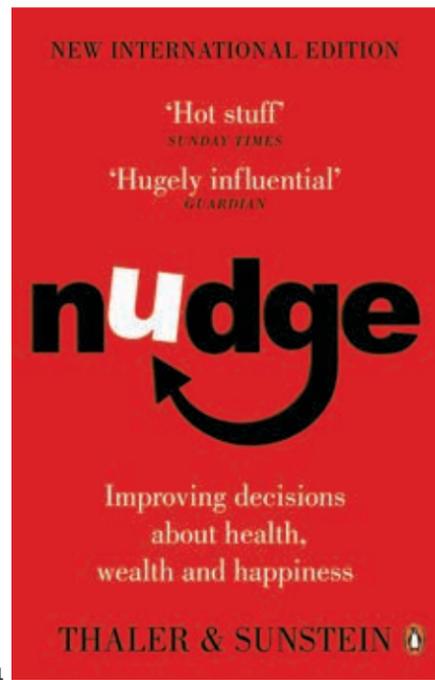
“Participation culture” is a term first proposed by American media scholar Henry Jenkins. In his 2006 book *Convergence Culture*, he describes how consumers have become “active participants in shaping the creation, circulation, and interpretation of media content.” In this brave new participatory world, the nature of creative outcomes is not solely controlled by the expert. Instead it is as likely to be governed by the contribution of an audience. As a result, creative authorship now needs to develop out of empathy, interpretation, and orchestration. In his 2008 essay for *Interactions* magazine, “Design in the Age of Biology: Shifting from a Mechanical-Object Ethos to an Organic-Systems Ethos,” Hugh Dubberly, former creative services coordinator at Apple and founder of Dubberly Design Office, describes a shift from a “mechanical object ethos to an organic systems ethos” as we evolve new models for production, distribution, and consumption. He proposes that it is the coordination of these organic ecosystems that will evolve cultural outcomes rather than rigidly controlling specified outcomes and artifacts. These ideas seem set to become increasingly influential in shaping practice within the creative industries as the 21st century evolves.

## Behavior Change

A sophisticated manipulation of our instinctive behavior is increasingly being used to influence our decision making.

1. *Nudge* by Cass Sunstein and Richard H. Thaler heralded a new approach to influencing public behavior.

2 & 3. By printing a fly in the men's urinals, the authorities at Schiphol Airport cut their cleaning bills by 80 percent.



1 **SEARCH:** Don Norman "Why Design Education Must Change"; Daniel Kahneman *Thinking Fast and Slow*; Graham Lawton Behavioral Economics; Cass Sunstein *Nudge*; Aad Kieboom fly; OgilvyChange; Rory Sutherland

In a world where an audience participates in shaping and redistributing of culture, design is much more dependent on the subtle orchestration of their involvement. This audience wants to feel that they have retained ownership of their input and that this input has been shaped by their own free will. Engineering audience involvement is a complex task that requires skills that go beyond those we traditionally associate with a designer. As a result, design commentators such as Don Norman have called for design education to embrace the development of an understanding of areas such as psychology and applied social and behavioral science.

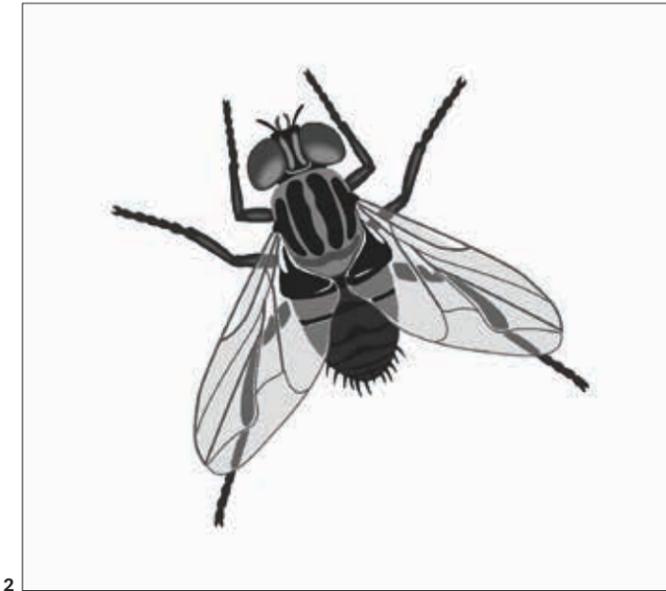
For much of the 20th century, economic thinking described a consumer who made decisions based on a logical analysis of cost against materials, labor, and availability. This gives a priority to what Daniel Kahneman in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow* calls System 2 thinking: the focused, rational way our brain forms perception. As we have seen earlier in this book (see pp. 66–68), the problem with System 2 thinking is that it is slow, inefficient, and requires 100 percent of our attention. Kahneman points out that, in a world where our busy lives are bombarded with multiple messages, we are not always able to assign the effort and attention required by System 2. As a result, our instinctive perception (what he calls System 1 thinking) is an equally important shaper of our decisions. The science of behavioral economics seeks to understand the complex interrelation between the instinctive perception, emotional preference, and rational analysis that shape our decision making. As Graham Lawton explains in a recent article in *New Scientist* magazine, "Human behavior is irrational but predictably so. It is this predictability that convinced behavioral economists that it should be possible to change behavior." Strategies for influencing this behavior have become known as "nudges."

The "nudge" is an idea coined by U.S. legal scholar Cass Sunstein to describe the sophisticated manipulation of our instinctive behavior in order to influence our decision making. A great example of the nudge, and probably one of the first cases to be widely recognized, happened at Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands in 1999. The airport authorities were looking for ways to save money on their cleaning bills, and economist Aad Kieboom targeted the men's urinals as being a particular problem. He proposed that by getting men to pee more accurately they could save on the floor-cleaning bill. The rational solution to this would have been to put up some signs asking men to aim more accurately, but as Kieboom pointed men were not making a rational decision to pee on the floor. Instead, he suggested that they etch a picture of a fly into the toilet bowl and instinctively men would aim at the fly. Amazingly it worked, and the cleaning bill was cut by 80 percent.

The global advertising and PR agency Ogilvy and Mather have set up a specialized area of its business called OgilvyChange that engages with a "community of behavioral economics experts consisting of leading professors from around the world to create strategies that positively influence behavior," according to its website.

Most importantly, nudges must be freedom preserving, which means people remain at liberty to make the wrong choice.

Graham Lawton, the *New Scientist* magazine



One of its founders, Rory Sutherland, has also delivered a series of very popular TED talks on the subject, the first being "Life Lessons of an Ad Man" in 2009. His TED profile describes him as "standing at the center of an advertising revolution," and Ogilvy's groundbreaking status has been reflected in a wealth of awards. In 2013, it was globally the most awarded agency at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity and one of its Golden Lion winning projects, *Immortal Fans*, (featured on pp. 164–165) used Brazilian football fans' instinctive loyalty to their team to encourage them to sign up with an organ donor registry.

Tara Austin, senior planner at Ogilvy & Mather UK, describes ten factors that influence how we make decisions that inform the work of OgilvyChange:

1. The endorsement of someone we trust can positively influence a decision.
2. Fear of losing something is more influential to a decision than the desire to gain something.
3. We are more likely to make a decision if we see those around us making it too.

4. We are reluctant to pull out of a process. Organizations will often automatically opt us into something with the knowledge that we are unlikely to opt out.
5. Information is better understood if it is delivered at the point where it is needed.
6. Subconscious cues can influence our decisions.
7. We respond to emotional connections.
8. A public pledge is much more likely to be acted upon.
9. We like decisions that make us feel morally good about ourselves.
10. We prefer to commit incrementally rather than through one conclusive decision.

All of this might sound a little like George Orwell's *Big Brother*, but it is important to remember that these strategies will not work if people feel like they are being covertly forced into something. As Graham Lawton points out in the *New Scientist* article mentioned earlier, "perhaps most importantly, nudges must be freedom preserving, which means people remain at liberty to make the wrong choice."

In almost every area, there are people out there creating amazing content, and they would jump at the chance of creating content for your brand—if your brand is meaningful.

## In Conversation

with Adrian Ho, strategist and founding partner, Zeus Jones

Before founding Zeus Jones in 2007, with Christian Erickson, Eric Frost and Rob White, Ho worked at Fallon, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners and Anderson & Lembke. Based in Minneapolis, the company has grown quickly to become one of the most influential agencies in the Midwest, working for clients such as Nestlé Purina, 3M, Nordstrom and Betty Crocker; and in 2014 it opened a second office in the San Francisco Bay Area. Zeus Jones questions traditional views on how a brand might be structured drawing a distinction between “classic brands” that establish trust through authority, deliver a promise, communicate through consistent messages, strive for perfection through control, and establish relationships that are based on transaction and the “modern brand,” which is guided by a purpose, establishes a culture built around multiple coherent ideas, creates a community, delivers an experience, moves forward through iterative development, and gains trust through transparent communication.

[zeusjones.com](http://zeusjones.com)



Adrian Ho began our interview by expanding on some of these ideas:

“We believe brands come to life through what they do. They should be built around ideals and purpose so that people can participate with them, be they consumers or strategic partners. This purpose should inform everything that a brand does, from the way the boardroom is laid out to how the representatives of the company behave.

“Some brands have a communications mindset. They believe that a brand is supposed to say things. But if you define a brand in this way, then you automatically end up saying that the brand needs to stand for one thing. You end up wanting to be consistent, saying the same thing over and over again in order to be understood. But if you buy into the idea that a brand is understood by its actions, then this deters you from making one simple promise. A simple promise such as ‘we make whiter whites’ doesn’t have any scope for an audience to participate.”

Ho believes that how a brand defines itself needs to be richer and more complex in order to enable the alignment of “different people, partners, disciplines, and functions.

“You can’t do anything on your own. You’ve got to build coalitions of people in order to turn something into a movement. There has to be benefit for all of the participants, and when this happens you have something really powerful.

“A traditional business is one dimensional—it defines itself through that product and creates a transactional relationship with its customers. A modern business is one where you create an ecosystem of different partners and all of those partners win. A good example of this is the iTunes Store, which creates a platform where bands can market themselves and sell their product. iTunes is not about a one-to-one transaction.

The same could be said of the App Store, which supports and nurtures the creation of the content that enables products like the iPad to come to life. Both iTunes and the App Store have created

communities of vested interests that contribute to the success of Apple and the products its teams create.

“This concept [the idea of brand as a collaborative platform] is true at all levels of a business. We apply these principles to our work with a brand. Advertising or approaching an advertising agency has always been a very one-dimensional experience: you give the agency a problem and they produce a piece of communication that solves that problem. Instead of simply getting our team to produce content, [Zeus Jones] thinks about other content creators. In almost every area, there are people out there creating amazing content, and they would jump at the chance of creating content for your brand—if your brand is meaningful.

And when you consider the reach that your brand has through its website, media, packaging, retail store, etc., your brand can offer many of those content creators distribution for their content that up until this point has not been possible for them to achieve. One of the major advantages of this model is that you are able build content that is more authentic and more believable, and typically far less expensive, than any content that has been created by an advertising agency. What’s more, this content is in turn attractive to other advertisers.

“Zeus Jones can broker a partnerships [that] will allow you to develop a range of really interesting content on the behalf of your brand. Once you have all of this interesting content being created, you can then package it up and approach a media company. These organizations are always looking for interesting content to fill their media space. The key is to define an idea that relates to your brand, informs your brand, and informs ideas around your brand.

“The foundation of all of this is the brand purpose. It outlines the big mission that the company has in society, it tells everyone what the company hopes to do, and, importantly, it also tells people how they can participate. A strong purpose allows us to reach out to other people who share our beliefs and who may want to help. To do this,

we create what we call a manifesto, which is really a statement of intent. It is also extremely important that these manifestoes feel visually right. Often what something looks like can help define an idea better than words. A manifesto could be film or a series of pieces of design, but its purpose is that it will help partners contribute cohesively to a vision. Unlike traditional graphic standards, our manifestoes are designed to tell you what you can do rather than tell you what you can't do.

"It's very easy for you to build graphic standards that only you can execute but much harder to build graphic standards that allow different contributors to bring their personality in. It's one thing creating a series of adverts that will work together, but [it's] incredibly difficult to have a whole battery of partners all working toward the same thing and to have that feel coherent. So we work hard to create an infrastructure [that] is defined in writing, in design, in establishing a tone of voice, in setting direction, and so on.

"Ultimately it's about defining a vision that can be individually interpreted."

**Case Study: Betty Crocker**

When Zeus Jones started to work with Betty Crocker, its brand was built around a very traditional idea of the American family home. Betty Crocker approached Zeus Jones asking its creative team to help create a more progressive perception.

Betty Crocker has always been a brand that helps homemakers. The team discovered

that the need to enable homemakers to do more hasn't gone away, but the individual definitions of a homemaker have changed. Research into the life of American families today revealed that they've changed so much that there is a need to redefine what it means to "make home." As an icon of homemakers, Betty Crocker could help gather this information and share it with the world—to demystify what it means

to be a successful family today and help everyone talk about their challenges and their strengths.

Zeus Jones co-founder Adrian Ho explains, "We decided to make Betty Crocker into a brand that is associated with a progressive idea of the American family—the family of the future. And instead of simply talking about the family of the future (which actually means next to nothing) we chose to demonstrate it, and design is a really excellent way to do this."

To execute their idea, the Zeus Jones team created a report, in conjunction with family studies expert Dr. Stephanie Coontz, on the modern family with the purpose of celebrating the differences that make families great. They talked to four unique families about what makes them strong and worked with filmmakers Group Theory to put together documentaries about their experiences. They then made a video that captured Betty Crocker's

new philosophy and shared it on YouTube. Finally, they put all of this together into a website and approached bloggers and content creators who were commentating on issues such as same-sex marriage or single-parent families to create content for it that would stimulate debate.

[zeusjones.com/work/betty-crocker-families-project/](http://zeusjones.com/work/betty-crocker-families-project/)



1 & 2. To understand the potential of the Betty Crocker brand, Zeus Jones conducted some research into the state of the American family and published a report.

3-5. They then used the findings of the report to celebrate the differences that make families great and position the brand at the center of this celebration.

## Generative Systems

Designers can create systems that synthesize the individual contributions of an audience into something far greater than the sum of its parts.

Although connected media channels allow the contemporary audience to actively reshape and redistribute media content, this does not mean they always want to create it from scratch themselves. The tools to generate content are readily available to all. A new generation of digital devices enables high-quality image capture, sound recording, and video editing on the move in a form that can be instantly uploaded. However, the untrained hand does not always have the expertise or confidence to fully utilize what they have created. Designers have a new role in orchestrating this contribution: creating systems that synthesize the individual contributions of an audience into something that is a far greater than the sum of its parts. Design during the 20th century was framed through the control of media and process, but now we are seeing this control reframed to encompass the orchestration and manipulation of audience input. At its best, this alchemy can transform the throwaway act of the untrained amateur into outcomes that seductively compete with those created by experienced professionals. In addition, the involvement of an audience creates a vested interest in the contributors and a ready-made team of advocates that provide free PR and viral marketing.

To productively orchestrate user-generated content requires the coordination of interconnected organic systems that allow a theater of intrigue to build incrementally and provide the motivation for an audience

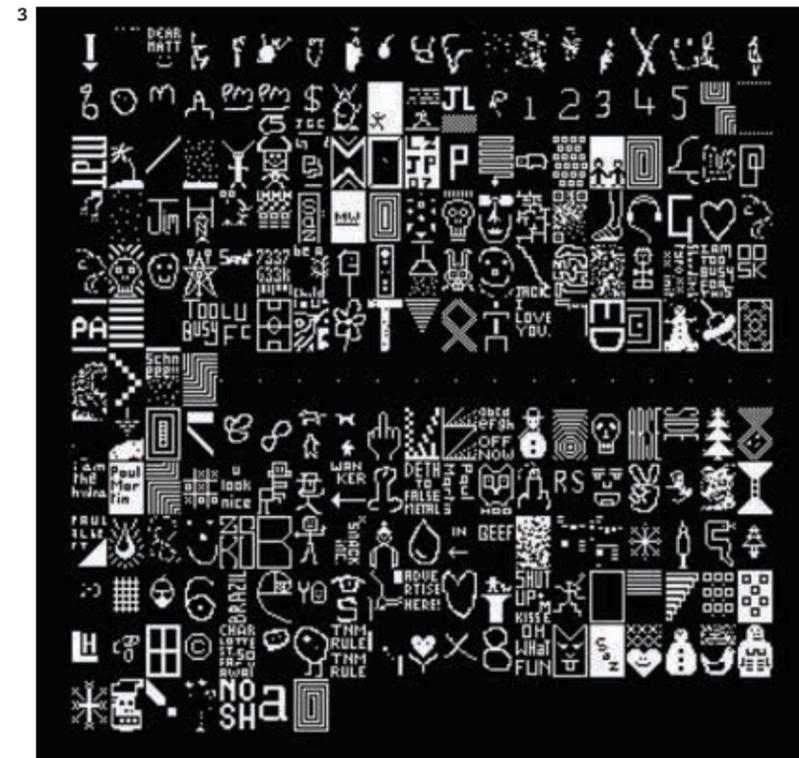
to devote precious moments of their busy lives to small manageable inputs. Around these inputs, designers build networks and communities bonded by the incentive of what their efforts might build. The 20th-century mentality of the lone ego with highly developed specialist expertise is not best suited to the challenges of this task. Today designers need to have empathy with participants in the systems they orchestrate and an interest in areas of expertise that will help them understand and predict behavior. Contemporary design practice increasingly revolves around the development of software and services that are given form through use, and a basic knowledge of areas such as psychology, ethnology and applied social science are increasingly seen as a valuable compliment to the designer's traditional skillset.

### MB Weare

There are few precedents to draw from as these new areas of practice define themselves. Studios like Moving Brands are continually learning what works within these new paradigms and as a result have developed R&D strategies that help them make and record discoveries. Over the last 15 years Moving Brands has created a series of themed R&D projects that are built into their seasonal calendar. Many of these projects have specifically focused on creating systems that elicit, collect, and synthesize user-generated inputs.

From fairly early in its life, Moving Brands used the window of its London studio, which looks out onto a busy street in East London, as a vehicle to interact with the public at Christmas. At that time, Matt Wade (see pp. 63–65) and Karsten Schmidt (see pp. 116–119) were design directors at the company and were using the open-source programming language and development environment called Processing as a prototyping tool. Wade and Schmidt had already used it to create a mechanism that transformed text messages into digital snowflakes that were then projected from a screen in the window. Following this project, at the end of 2007 they decided to do something that explored more fully how the public might become involved in the design process. The aim would be to create something that was “socially sourced and user created.”

Over the Christmas period, they set up a grid of fairy lights and launched a simple website where anyone could create messages and graphic icons and add them to an online gallery, which then populated an (unedited) electronic display in the studio window. All the contributions (without editing) were used to create a scarf. Moving Brands then sent the scarf out as a Christmas gift to clients, friends, and collaborators and sold it through its website and independent design stores. The icons have since been used in the Moving Brands Artist's Pack for the Granimator iPad app produced by ustwo.



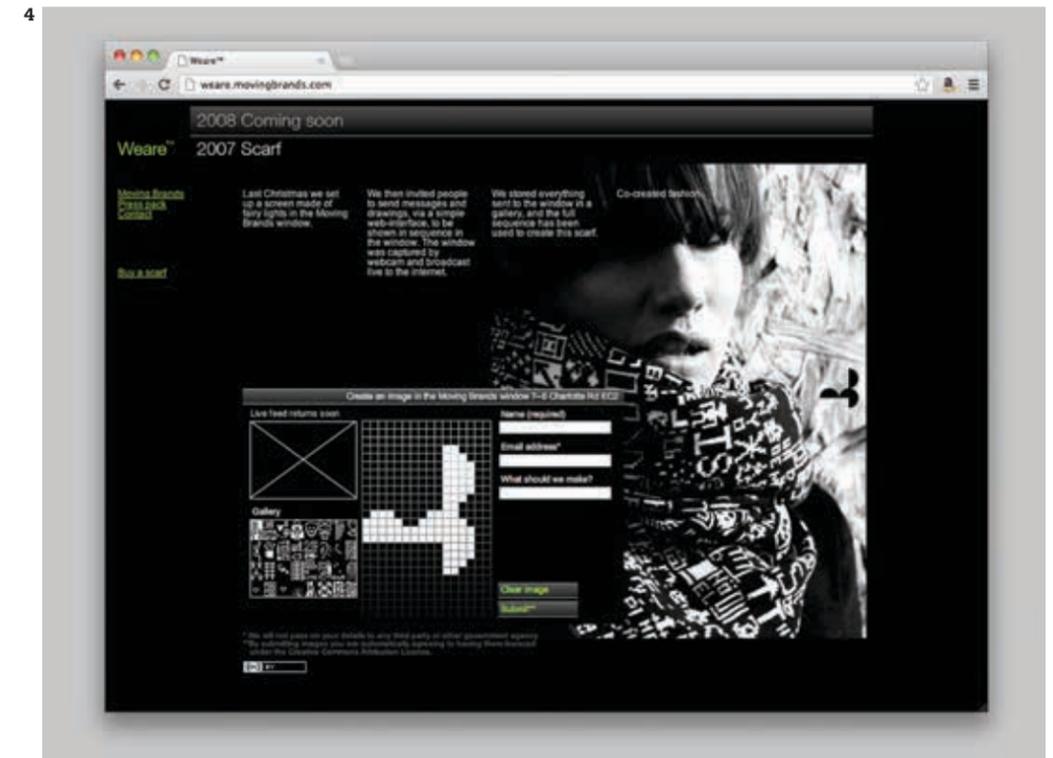
**SEARCH:** Wallpaper\* custom covers; Kam Tang; James Joyce; Anthony Burrill; Hort; Nigel Robinson; Dubberly “Design in the Age of Biology”; Moving Brands Snowflakes; MB Weare™; MB Joule; Matt Wade Karsten Schmidt Processing; Kongsberg cutting; Kin design Wallpaper\*

1. Moving Brands used the window of its London office to display pixel drawings from the general public on LED screens.

2. Images submitted were incorporated into a pattern that helped conceal the less politically correct iconography.

3. The patterns became the basis for a scarf that was sent as a gift to friends and associates.

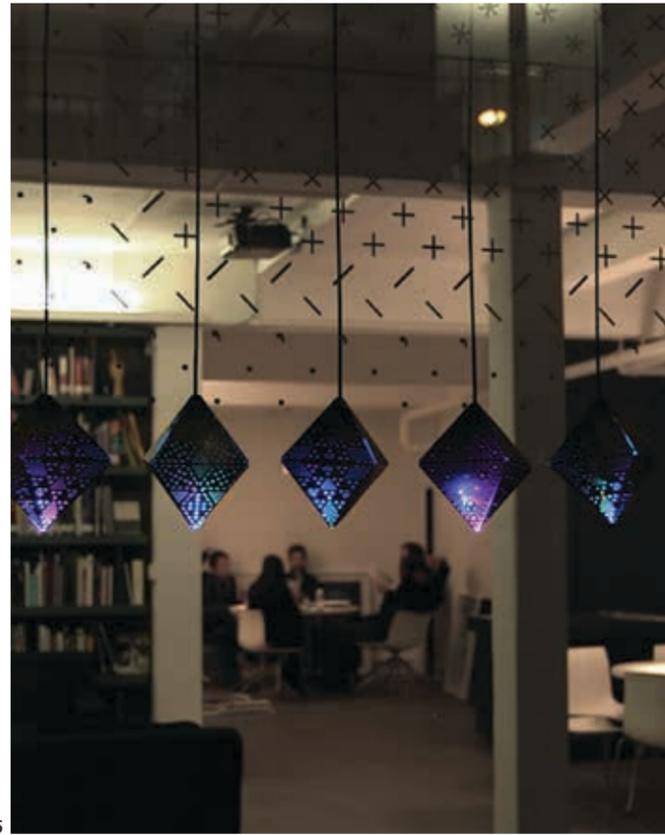
4. The pixel drawings were created using an interface that could be accessed through the Moving Brands website.



5. Moving Brands created the MB Joule to explore opportunities created by emerging technologies related to custom manufacture and small-scale production.

6. Once the joules were folded and assembled, a circuit created by screen-printed conductive ink was joined and they lit up.

7. Laser and “Kongsberg” cutting were used to create intricate custom patterns for the individual joules.



8. *Wallpaper\** subscribers were invited to use this custom interface to create their own cover of the magazine. They were able to choose elements designed by the likes of Kam Tang, Anthony Burrill and James Joyce to arrange, recolor or resize.

9. Individual covers of the “Handmade Issue” were then applied to the magazine and sent out to their creators.

10. Some of the subscriber-designed covers.



**MB Joule**

Moving Brands has also been quick to recognize how the growth of digital printing and other bespoke small-scale manufacturing processes are leading to a disruption of the financial advantage of large-scale manufacture and production. In 2012, it created the MB Joule, a paper-crafted electronic ornament that combines design, digital manufacturing, code, and hand assembly. The joules were crafted as a special holiday gift to the friends and partners of Moving Brands with more than 500 meticulously created, individually designed cards to send out. This was a lesson in the patience required by small-scale production and manufacture for the Moving Brands team. Designs for the card were inspired by the snowflake project described previously. Their production involved laser cutting, “Kongsberg” cutting, screen-printing, conductive ink, and finally hand assembly. To bring in a wider participatory element to the project, visitors to the Moving Brands site and staff in their offices around the world were then asked to create their own joules through a custom-built website.

**Kin Wallpaper\* Custom Covers**

A year after working on the MB Weare project, Matt Wade left Moving Brands and founded Kin with his partner Kevin Palmer (see pp. 63–56). One of Kin’s early projects clearly demonstrates the lessons of Weare and Wade’s ability to create tools that actively engage the user to participate in the generation of an outcome. At the end of 2009, Kin was commissioned by *Wallpaper\** to design and program an application that would allow all 20,000 subscribers to create their own unique cover design for the magazine.

Subscribers were invited to a website where they were able to use a simple intuitive interface to manipulate and arrange a series of assets commissioned by contemporary designers and illustrators such as Kam Tang, James Joyce, Anthony Burrill, Hort, and Nigel Robinson. Each one had a specific use, from icons to resize and manipulate, to patterns that users could recolor. Kin created specific interaction methods for each element, along with ways to combine them. So, for example, users could fill a James Joyce shape with a pattern by Kam Tang or one of Nigel Robinson’s textures.

As a result, more than 20,000 unique designs were then digitally printed by F.E. Burman and bound along with the interior of the magazine, which was printed using traditional lithographic techniques.

Digital is not just another communication channel—it is the communication channel because it is the channel that drives all other communication channels.

## In Conversation

with Hashem Bajwa, former CEO of DE-DE and director of digital strategy, Droga5

Hashem Bajwa started his career in the communications department at the United Nations and progressed via McCann Erickson to become digital strategy director at Goodby Silverstein & Partners. In 2009, he moved to Droga5, where he helped design and lead the award-winning “Decode Jay-Z with Bing” campaign. He is a highly respected figure in the industry, and Timothy Shey, director of YouTube Next Lab at Google says of him, “Hashem is one of those rare movers in the creative industry who makes the right things happen—he has an innate insight as to what’s next and what’s most valuable amid the overflow of new ideas in new media.”

[hashembajwa.com](http://hashembajwa.com)



Hashem Bajwa is convinced that “digital is not just another communication channel—it is the communication channel because it is the channel that drives all other communication channels.” Expanding on this, he describes three major ways that digital media contributes to marketing:

**1. Digital can act as the vehicle for a message.**

For example, YouTube ads, web banners, emailers, etc.

**2. Digital can be the center of a marketing experience.**

This means more than taking a message and packaging it in a digital context. It involves creating an entirely new way of interacting with the product and creating an experience related to the product that is enabled through digital media.

**3. Digital can act like a product in its own right.**

This means creating new products for clients that work through digital media and that are designed to deliver an experience that has a marketing objective. Examples of this is are the digital products that have been produced to support Nike+.

Earlier in the book, we talked about how products (and particularly digital products) can define experiences that are highly influential in creating a perception around a brand. The success of Nike+ has led the advertising and marketing industries to focus on the development of digital products in an effort to provide new opportunities for its business model. However, as Bajwa points out, there are many difficulties in trying to replicate the Nike+ phenomenon. In principle, it can work, and there are various successful historical precedents of products and services that have been used to market other products and services.

He refers to the example of the restaurant and travel guides that Michelin developed to promote its tires. These guides

eventually became multimillion-dollar businesses in their own right by drawing attention to and enhancing the freedom and discovery that motoring makes possible. The Michelin Guides demonstrate a very smart alignment of a secondary product to a set of marketing objectives—framing the benefits of the experiences that Michelin products enable.

It is clear that when employed intelligently, digital products are a way of defining the values of a brand. Unfortunately, as Bajwa points out, “The marketing model (and the way clients think about marketing) means that there is always a pressure to include a message about buying a product, and at that point the power of an experience related to a product is compromised because the audience feels like they’re being sold something. Marketing and digital media can be really powerful in defining the purpose for a brand, creating a clear message for it, and delivering that message in more innovative, interactive, valuable, exciting ways. They can create content and experiences that the consumer will seek out, but the interrelationships between the marketing objective and the user experience need to be carefully managed.”

“The interactive element really needs to be driving the program, and often this will happen through a system of things. Not through the old school idea of 360-degree marketing where you define a message and put it in as many different boxes as possible. That model is dying out. A new idea that can be seen in campaigns like Decode Jay-Z with Bing is much more complex and multifaceted.”

Along with many in the industry at the moment, he questions the traditional advertising agency model, pointing out that “the hierarchy of an advertising agency is orientated around the creation of the message and the delivery of that message, which is quite a linear process. It is also full of vested interests that do not orientate themselves around fluid R&D-based development.”

Digital products and the objectives that govern their creation

need to evolve together. Bajwa says, “I would like to see agencies develop and evolve so that they can shape the development of existing products—not create new products and try to bolt them onto existing products.

“My view is that the product strategy and the marketing strategy need to be inherently linked to the point where they are inherently the same thing. The engineer building a new future in their product, whatever the product is, and the marketing person who is developing communications about the product need to be working out of the same core ideas.”

### Case Study: DE-DE

At the time of interview, Hashem Bajwa was the CEO of a new studio associated with Droga5, specializing in the development of innovative digital products. DE-DE (standing for DEsign & DEvelop) is a technology-based innovation studio that creates “great products with an understanding of how to form a market around the benefits of these products.” They were set up from a desire to give Droga5 an influence beyond the marketing room.

“Our model is one where we are trying to identify people who are extremely creative, who can come up with a solution to a problem in the world and design, develop, and employ that solution into the market.” Bajwa describes

how they are not looking for people who can be given a problem to solve, they are looking for people who can identify the problem themselves and solve it.”

DE-DE works from the premise of trying to set up an innovation-orientated studio with a start-up mentality alongside a more established agency. The people who work for them are offered a stake in the business. Their attitude aspires to the mentality of the likes of Twitter or Skype when they were initially building their businesses.

Bajwa talks about a friction between the inspiration and uncertainty that is at the heart of the start-up mentality and the efficiency of an established methodology, which minimizes risk through repetition. At DE-DE they

are trying to balance these qualities and, as far as possible, to “capture lightning in a bottle” and be able to do this again and again and again.

“DE-DE’s mission is to create a portfolio of Internet-fueled, technology-driven products that do solve problems in the world and have some value exchange for us.” They currently have three core products that have gone through their development cycle and are being taken forward to a point where they have been released into the world:

### Birdseye

Birdseye is the first email client built from the ground up for tablets. It takes advantage of this new environment to utilize gesture-based interaction. It provides a finger friendly visual overview of your inbox with intuitive

actions for each message to cut through the overload. It is built out of the insight that email is a stressful, time-consuming thing to manage for anybody who leads a busy life.

### Pling

Pling is a push-to-talk voice messenger that helps teams and individuals communicate quickly and naturally. It allows the user to send messages to individuals or groups with the speed and brevity of a text message and the personality and ease of a human voice.

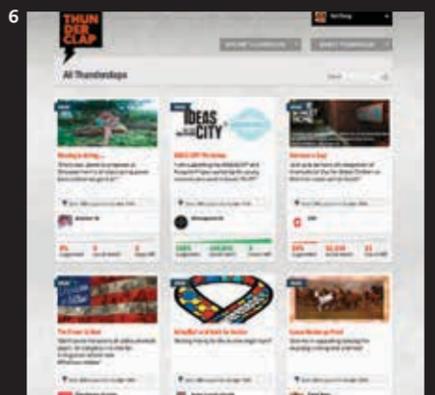
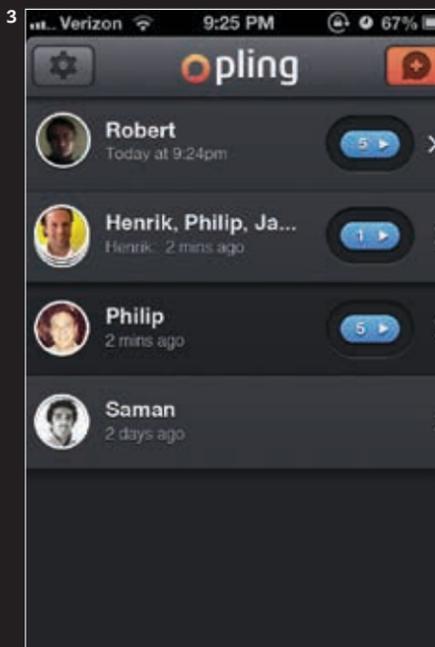
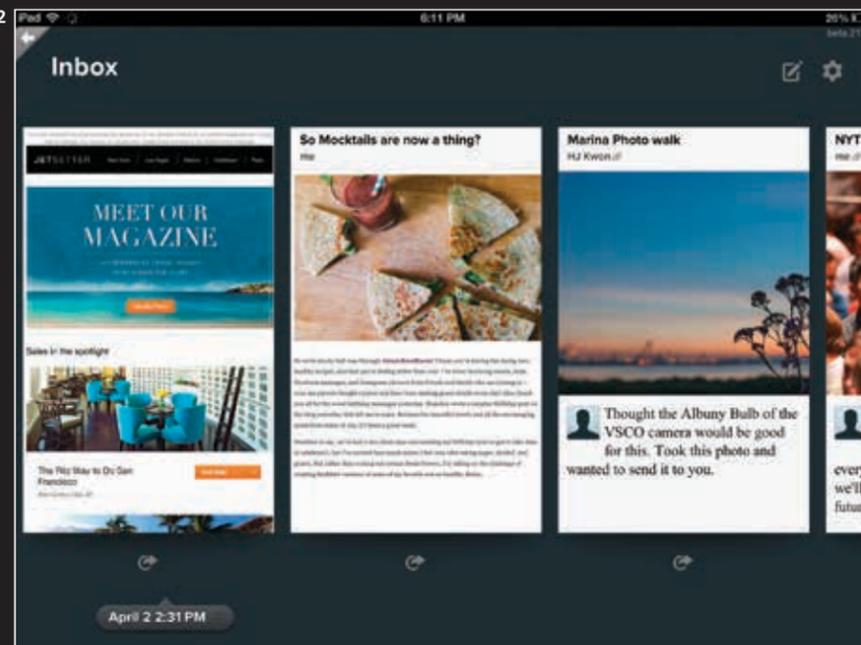
### Thunderclap

Thunderclap synchronizes messages across different social networking platforms to enable a piece of communication to have more impact. It has been extremely

successful, with more than 1 billion users, including some of the highest-profile people and organizations in the world, such as Barack Obama, Major League Baseball, the UK government, the White House, Levi Strauss & Co., and the United Nations.

Bajwa defines the success of these products not only through the financial income they generate. “An Internet product needs to create financial value, it needs to create utility for yourself and for other people, and it needs to create widespread adoption in the market; and finally, it needs to have great technology underpinning in order to make it unique and distinct.”

de-de.com



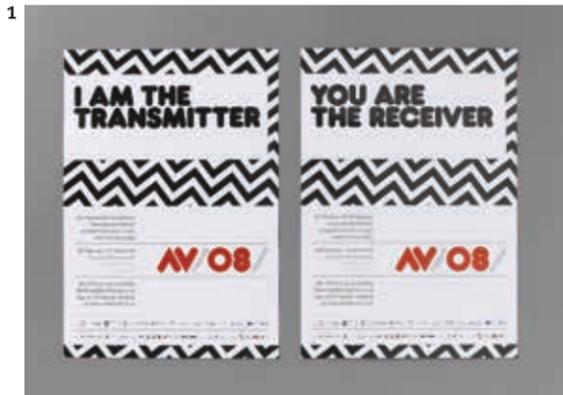
1 & 2. Birdseye is an email client specifically built for use on tablets. It takes advantage of gesture-based interaction to cut through the message overload.

3 & 4. Pling is a voice messenger that is designed to update the text message format and allow messages to be sent to individuals or groups.

5 & 6. Thunderclap synchronizes messages across different social networking platforms and has been used by the likes of Barack Obama and the UK government.

## Participation and Advertising

Today's audience wants to create, engage, and share. Successful campaigns focus on facilitating this creativity by building transactional experiences that have value to both the consumer and the client.



**SEARCH:** Charlie Bit Me!; "Make it Real" Steve Hare, Eye 70; Viral Factory; the Hodge Twins; Big Frame; memes; LOLcats; Rickrolling; Chocolate Rain, Tay Zonday; "No Bollocks" Subtexter; Henry Jenkins convergence culture; Henry Jenkins participatory culture; AKQA; Glue; Dare; R/GA; Poke; the Rumpus Room; Wieden + Kennedy; Fallon; BBH; Ogilvy; Mother; Droga5; Jay-Z Decode; Cannes Gold Lion

Up until the launch of YouTube in 2005, advertising was largely based around the "interruption model"—messages delivered between media content via an attention-grabbing "big idea." Video sharing changed all of this. All of a sudden home movies such as *Charlie Bit Me!* were achieving more viewers than expensively produced TV ads without having to be sandwiched between other content. The industry regrouped and set about populating this new media channel with brand-sponsored material. The smarter producers realized that this new environment worked on a different paradigm. This was a much more democratic environment, where audiences directed each other toward content and their reasons for doing so were not always governed by slick production values or catchy straplines. Interviewed in "Make it Real" by Steve Hare in Eye 70, Ed Robinson from the Viral Factory explains that the Internet is "a direct window on the world. There's no real filter between the audience and what's on screen. So they trust it more; it's how the world really is." Through this realization, companies like the Viral Factory began to develop content that was designed to resemble something that the audience could make themselves.

After the launch of YouTube, advertising and marketing campaigns drew inspiration from viral home movies, influential bloggers, or what is trending on Twitter. The hierarchy of cultural evolution is no longer from high to low culture or from professional to amateur. *Charlie Bit Me!* has had more viewers than the first moon landing, and unemployed body builders, the Hodge Twins, have gone from posting home videos to setting up their own YouTube channel. They now have more than 600,000 subscribers and are managed by the multichannel network Big Frame who "connect advertisers with targeted audiences through influencers they trust."

Crude video mash-ups, screen-grabs, and photographs accompanied by comments or crude straplines have developed into the phenomenon of the meme and have spread across the Internet to command massive audiences. So much so that websites such as Know Your Meme (knowyourmeme.com) have been developed just to track their progress. Viral Internet phenomena such as LOLcats (comments applied to pictures of cats), Rickrolling (ironic humor connected to Rick Astley's pop hit "Never Gonna Give You Up"), and chocolate rain (parodies of the "I move away from the mic to breathe" caption during Tay Zonday's viral film) are now viewed by audiences that are larger than many expensively produced advertising campaigns. Interestingly, many memes are designed to echo traditional advertising in their image/ text/ punchline composition, but unlike many ads their lack of craft or artifice communicates a spontaneity and irreverence that encourages reaction, response, and contribution.

### Droga5: The "No Bollocks" Subtexter

Contemporary agencies such as Droga5 are alive to this viral power and have used it to inspire campaigns that have the same infectious irreverence. As part of the "No Bollocks!" campaign for Newcastle Brown Ale, they launched the Subtexter in 2012, which allows

1 & 2. These posters created in 2008 by Multistorey for the 2008 AV International Broadcast Festival of Electronic Arts, Music and Moving Image describe the new dynamic between broadcaster and audience.

3-5. Elements from the Droga 5 Newcastle No Bollocks! Subtexter campaign.



Companies that desire to understand the "flow" within the ever-quickenning media environment need to understand how these changes are generating a rapid movement from impressions to "expressions," and intellectual property to "emotional capital." Such approaches maybe key to breaking through a cluttered and fragmented media environment, relying on consumers themselves to help knit together information and impressions gathered from multiple media experiences.

MIT Convergence Culture Consortium



friends to expose the social media pretention of the photos they post on Facebook. With an obvious visual reference to memes, the campaign invites users to expose an unsaid social-media photo “subtext” by adding a statement to the photograph and then sharing it via the Facebook timeline. The campaign was then taken into the real world where street-art-style artwork was created with ready-made subtext for people to pose in front of, photograph, and share via social media.

In his 2006 book *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins describes how, as consumers explore the new range of resources available to them, they “become active participants in shaping the creation, interpretation of media content” and how “such experiences deepen the consumers’ investment in the media property and expands their awareness of both content and brand.” In a later essay, “Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century,” he describes how “a participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another.” These findings obviously have powerful implications for the advertising and marketing industries.

Small digital agencies initially led the line in taking advantage of this new relationship with the consumer. Agencies such as AKQA, Glue, Dare, R/GA, and Poke have built a reputation for creating strategies that although digital at their core, encourage users to contribute to the development of experiences that evolve outside of this environment. These studios develop interconnected systems that utilize user generation, viral filmmaking, and games and grow organically to create opportunities that tap into an audience’s desire to grab their five minutes of fame. Tom Roope, one of the founders of Poke, has launched a new studio, the Rumpus Room, and the statement of intent published on the company’s website describes the potential of this new approach perfectly. “We were founded to harness the power of participation and help align this activity with brand communication. We think today’s audience wants to create, engage, and share. We also think successful campaigns focus on facilitating this creativity by building transactional experiences that have value to both the consumer and the client.”

The big names at the heart of the traditional advertising industry like Wieden + Kennedy, Fallon, BBH, Ogilvy, and newer key players such as Mother and Droga5 are learning from the example of what smaller digital agencies have achieved. They are now creating participatory campaigns interconnected by digital media but underpinned by the production standards that we associate with traditional advertising.

#### Droga5: Decode Jay-Z with Bing

In 2010, Microsoft’s search engine, Bing, approached Droga5 to trial and market its Search and Maps function with the aim to increase its relevance and use by a younger audience. At the same time, Jay-Z had begun talking to them about helping him launch his autobiography *Decoded*. Droga5 saw an opportunity to harness a unique moment in the history of pop culture

1-4. Some examples of the site-specific artwork created for the Decode Jay-Z Bing campaign including:

2. A customized Cadillac at the birthplace of hip-hop;

3. A typographic piece on the bottom of the pool of the Delano Hotel in Miami; and

4. A custom Gucci jacket with text from Jay-Z’s autobiography embroidered into its lining.

5. Reactions to the Decoded campaign on social media.

6. Bing Search and Maps in action during the campaign.



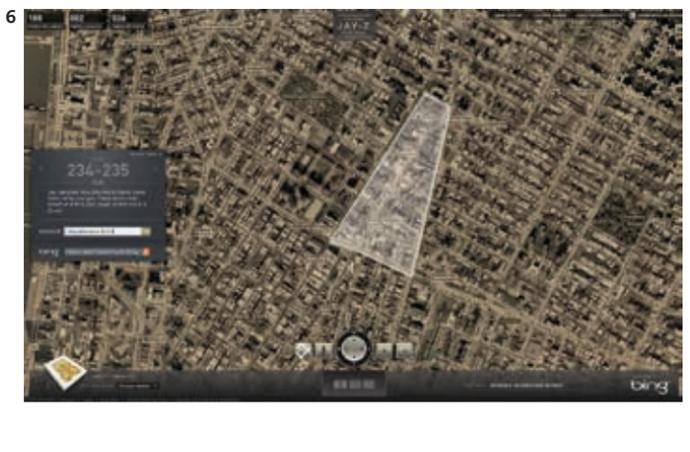
to give millions of people a reason to use Bing, and in doing so it created a new demographic for the search engine. In the month before the release of the book, the agency displayed each of the pages of *Decoded* on specially created, site-specific artworks in relevant sites across the United States and around the world. In addition to conventional billboards, Droga5 also created unique collectable objects and large-scale pieces that transformed their environment. These included exclusive Gucci jackets lined with words from the book, a bronze plaque in the Marcy Projects where Jay-Z grew up, a typographic piece on the bottom of the pool of the Delano Hotel on Miami Beach, and a Cadillac wrapped in a page of the book parked at the birthplace of New York hip-hop.

At the same time, Bing created an online gaming experience that allowed fans to search locations from clues that were posted daily on Facebook, Twitter, and announced on the radio. The system that housed this experience was based on Bing Search and Maps. Every person who found an artwork had the opportunity to win the page that it referred to, signed by Jay-Z. The most loyal players were then entered for the ultimate prize—a lifetime pass to all Jay-Z’s live performances.

Fans were able to document their finds through photographs, and in the days before the launch, they assembled the book digitally at [bing.com/jay-z](http://bing.com/jay-z). The whole campaign was an unprecedented success, and the statistics that describe its success on the Droga5 website make pretty astounding reading.

1. The average player engagement time on the website was 11 minutes.
2. The campaign achieved 1.1 billion global media impressions.
3. Jay-Z’s Facebook followers grew by 1 million.
4. *Decoded* was in the global best sellers charts for nine straight weeks.
5. Bing broke into the top ten most visited websites for the first time.

Bing had become part of the pop culture conversation and had transformed its perception with the youth audience. All of this was made possible by an exciting, engaging participatory experience engineered by Droga5. Needless to say, the project won a Gold Lion at Cannes.



# Technology sets us apart as a species. It should be in everybody's hands.

## In Conversation

with Karsten Schmidt  
(aka Toxi)

Karsten Schmidt was born in Chemnitz in the former East Germany and began programming at the age of 13. A few years later, he was in London interning at web developers Omniscience and was soon subsumed into the chaotic but highly creative melting pot of Shoreditch in the late 1990s. Adopting the alias "Toxi," he split his time between playing techno records at parties and using his coding skills to define early digital creativity at agencies such as Zinc and Lateral before joining Moving Brands in 2005. He contributed to the development of the open source programming environment Processing, and alongside fellow creative director Matt Wade at Moving Brands, he pioneered its use as a prototyping platform. In its Winter 2009 Reputations profile, *Eye* magazine referred to him as a "virtuoso among new-media designers." Over the last ten years Toxi has been at the heart of code-based innovation in the UK and has worked on iconic projects such as the generative identities for the 2009 Adventures in Motion festival with onedotzero and Wieden + Kennedy and the Decode exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

[postspectacular.com](http://postspectacular.com)



Karsten Schmidt sees creativity as being led by the understanding that evolves from the expertise of making.

"You gain understanding by being involved in building something and by figuring out what works physically and what works virtually. Without knowing how to assemble things in detail, you will never learn how to be a designer. Reading about something or attending lectures that explain how people have done it in the past is not the same as sitting down and actually doing something.

"There are a lot of people who think that there is so much value in just having ideas. It is often said that we live in an ideas economy, [in other words], the better your ideas are the better off you are financially. But this is totally divorced from any form of hands-on skill: it reduces hands-on skills to implementation. Anybody can have an idea, but an idea will only stand up through the discoveries of the people [who] make that idea work."

He seeks to understand the interconnection between these different aspects of creative making and also how digital technology connects to the world it is shaping.

"There is no such thing as digital culture, all our lives are digitized in some way."

Schmidt believes the true potential of digital technology is not being realized at the moment. "We are sold the myth that digital technology is something that you consume, something that other people have put into the world for us to use. The mobile revolution, the iPad, the iPhone, and a majority of the digital devices we use are about media consumption. Their main effect on people's lives is to just to get them to consume more. These devices are not used to discover something totally new or to create new skills that might enable the transformation of somebody's life."

The key to unlocking the true potential of digital technology lies in the mass acquisition of programming skills—"a key skill to decipher the world we live in." It is as fundamental to our society as the alphabet was to preceding societies.

"Technology sets us apart as a species. It should be in everybody's hands. To see technology as something that geeks involve themselves with is a form of brainwashing. Education is something that all of society goes through; it is meant to teach us life skills. If this process engenders people to fear technology then there must be something wrong with it."

He points out that programming creates tools and systems that guide outcomes and maybe, more significantly, behavior, and if all we do is use software created by corporations then we are being controlled by these corporations. It is important to understand that when Toxi talks about programming, he is describing a way of thinking, not just the use of a prescribed mechanical language.

"Programming is not just about machines. It's about shaping behavior, PR is programming, rhetoric is programming. . . . It's about thinking about the world around you as a system or a number of processes that are all interconnected and A, understanding that those connections exist and B, understanding what happens when you manipulate these connections. It has nothing to do with machines—machines are just a means to an end."

The mind of a programmer breaks down the creative act into a series of choices and actions that branch out from each other. Schmidt notes, "On a fundamental level, everything boils down to very primitive tasks. This is the nice thing about code, because within any idea, no matter how complex, at some point in the hierarchy of the generation of that idea, it's just zeros and ones. . . . Every process fulfills one little role. When you program, it literally is arranging processes in a structure."

Breaking down the creative act in this way has led Schmidt to question conventional ideas around creative ownership. "Every idea we have is actually a product of our own idea and ideas that are in the environment. Each product is the result of the accumulated thought of thousands of minds. As a very rough model of creativity this works

really well.” Open source thinking embraces this principle rather than slavishly laboring toward the myth of originality. From this starting point, it then proposes each stage of the process is opened up for others to use “to implement an idea in such a way that you can build other things in the future using the same principle.

“You have a path that you have followed to get to a particular mental state: there is nothing wrong in the fact that this path has been explored before. How can anybody say that they have explored that path and discovered everything that can be discovered there? This is not possible. Open source is a leveller for this sort of opinion about originality. It makes it obvious from square one that you are benefitting from previous knowledge, and by using those open source tools you already acknowledge that you will not be the full author.

“Digital making . . . offers an opportunity that has never happened before—to stand on the shoulders of giants. If you think about the millions of man-hours taken up by something like [the open source library of programming functions] Open CV [http://opencv.org] and the sheer amount of intellect that has contributed to this one project. You could never achieve that sort of insight and perfection in a whole lifetime. So to have that sort of potential at your fingertips should give everybody goose bumps!”

**Case Study: Toxiclibs**

Toxiclibs is a personal project that Karsten Schmidt has been working on for the last seven years.

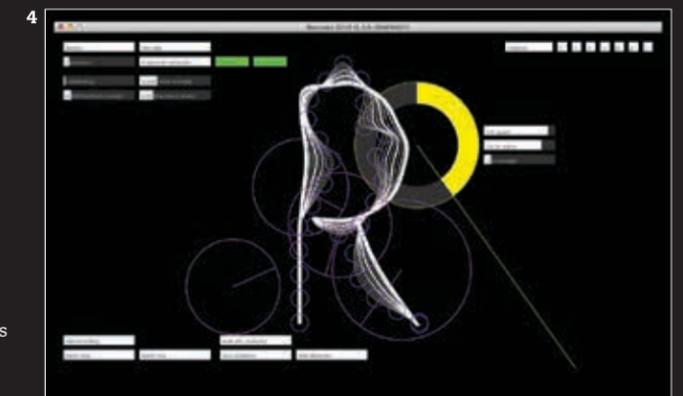
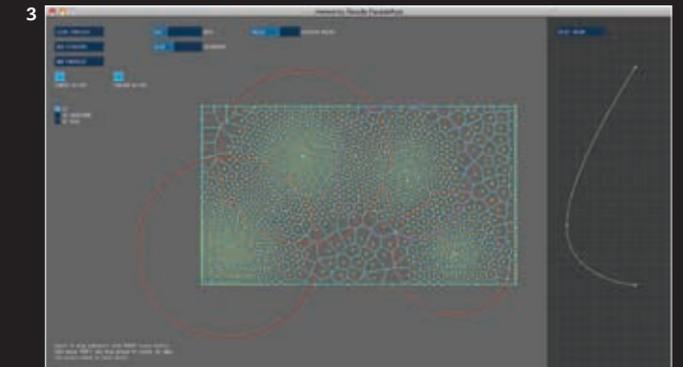
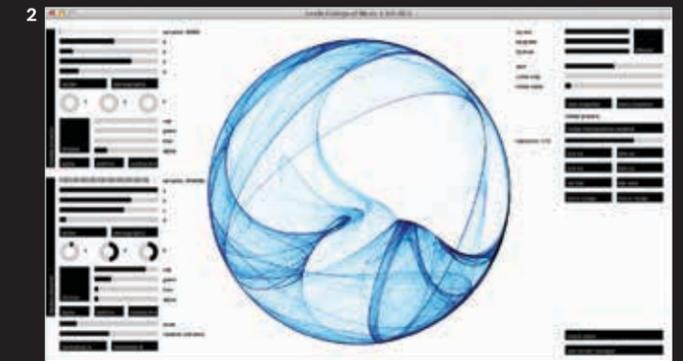
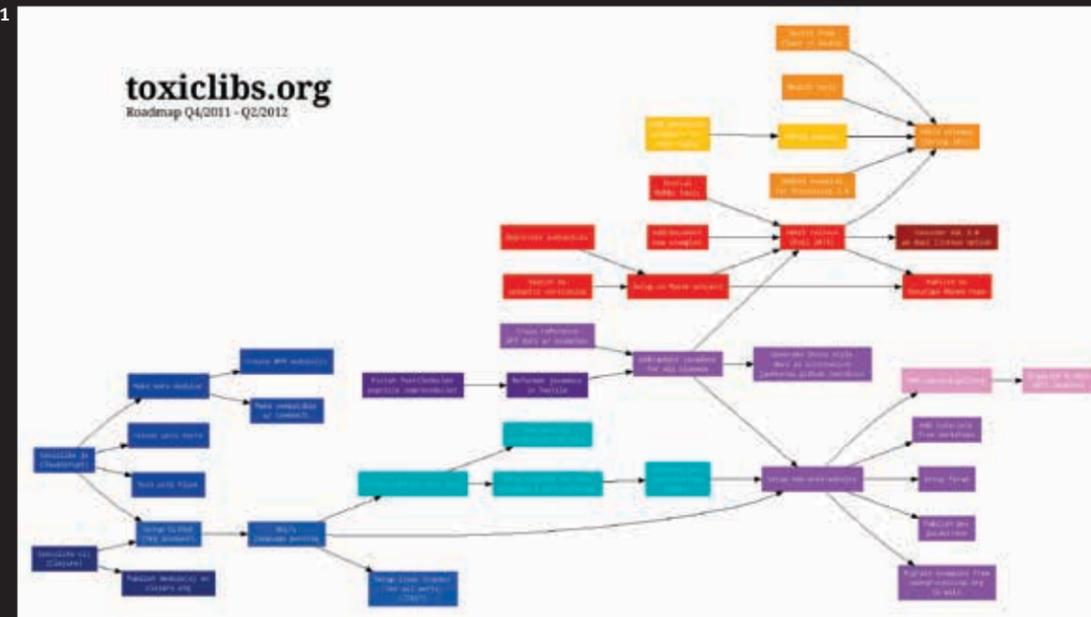
“Often I find it very hard to say that my process is finished. The only reason why work is finished is because there is a deadline to meet. If I had the opportunity, most of my projects would go on much, much longer. The great thing about Toxiclibs is that it is open ended, and I really enjoy that open ended nature. I know that it will never really be finished.”

Put as simply as possible, Toxiclibs is “an independent, open source library collection for computational design tasks with Java & Processing” that can be used for a range of different things, including education workshops. To explain this, Schmidt gives a basic lesson in programming, “Every process fulfills one little role. When you program, it literally is arranging processes in a structure.” This is where Toxiclibs comes in: it provides hundreds of primitive elements of code that can then be

assembled in infinite different ways. Central to the idea behind Toxiclibs is that the members of the community will not only submit elements to the library, but will also combine these elements to create new processes.

Schmidt uses the analogy of the computer game Minecraft to introduce the building potential of Toxiclibs but goes on to explain that the forms that it is able to create are far more complex and dynamic. Rather than “building blocks” he prefers to use the analogy of sand to explain this potential. He also points out that, as people develop expertise in using the materials he provides, then the potential of this material will become more apparent and outcomes will move beyond a defined aesthetic. He also demonstrates how Toxiclibs can be used to create 3D structures that can then be manufactured in the real world, both on a 3D printer and in traditional materials like paper.

[toxiclibs.org](http://toxiclibs.org)



1. A self-portrait of Toxiclibs: this complex map of interconnecting lines and shapes and words describes all of the different categories of elements available within Toxiclibs. Lines, polygons, rays, color palettes, 3D free-form surfaces, nodes, meshes are all arranged to demonstrate how their interconnections call them to take on different forms and behaviors.

2-5. Some of the forms and behaviors from the Toxiclibs open source library collection.

## Open Source

Releasing the potential of the accumulated thought of a thousand minds.



**SEARCH:** Karsten Schmidt; Richard Stallman; GNU/copyleft/ Creative Commons; Lawrence Lessig; Creative Commons; MIT Media Lab; Casey Reas/ Ben Fry; Processing; Prototyping tools; Jurg Lehni; Jonathon Puckey; Scriptographer; the Blender Foundation; Patent wars; Douglas Rushkoff *Programme or Be Programmed*

The open source movement is founded in the belief that the source code of computer programs should be freely accessible to all. This principle has significance far beyond the world of software development. It is built on the proposition that each stage of discovery involved in any creative act be opened up in order that it might provide starting points for new creative acts. Open source programmers like Karsten Schmidt talk about the potential of being able to “stand on the shoulders of giants” and how the progress of humanity might benefit from “the accumulated thought of thousands of minds.” The potential of this philosophy could be not only to multiply understanding and accelerate progress but also to trigger an attitude of open, shared collaboration, which could define new, more sustainable forms of human behavior.

The roots of the movement can be traced back to 1983, when activist Richard Stallman launched the GNU project as the first completely free and open operating system. This operating system was improved and perfected by a growing community of developers and acted as a beacon to like-minded programmers. Very quickly the movement was rubbing itself up against economic interests terrified of such an open approach to ownership. As a result Stallman wrote the GNU General Public License, turning copyright law on its head and creating a new set of agreements that became known as “copyleft.” Copyleft licenses mark a creative work as freely available to be modified and in addition require all modified and extended versions of the work to be made free for utilization by other users. As an extension of this work, Harvard Law School professor Lawrence Lessig founded Creative Commons (CC) as a nonprofit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share. They provide copyleft licenses free of charge to the public. These licenses “allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators.”

In 2001 two MIT Media Lab graduates, Casey Reas and Ben Fry, initiated a project that brought open source development to the attention of the communication design community. Processing is an open source programming language and “integrated development environment” designed to support the exploration of the fundamentals of computer programming within a visual context. UK-based computational designer Karsten Schmidt was involved in writing parts of the graphic engines of earlier versions of Processing. At that time Schmidt was the design director at Moving Brands, and they began to use the platform as a prototyping and production tool. Processing is now used by “tens of thousands of students, artists, designers, researchers, and hobbyists . . . for learning, prototyping, and production,” according to its website.

Open source platforms such as Processing avoid the controlling aesthetic of major software platforms by giving designers more creative control in adaptation and development of platforms to suit individual needs. Scriptographer, a project initiated by Jurg Lehni and Jonathon Puckey, creates a scripting environment for Adobe Illustrator. Their website <http://scriptographer>.

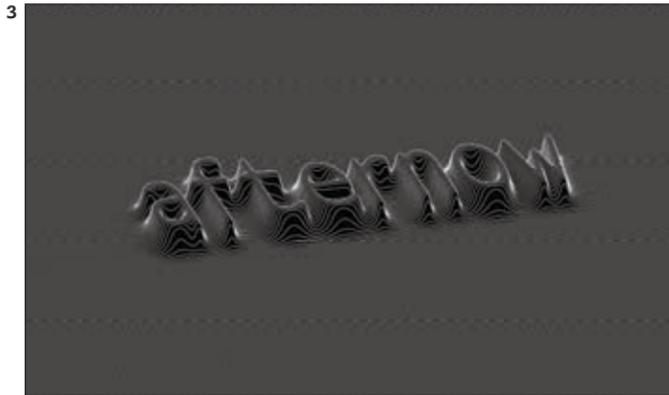
1. Creative Commons (CC) as a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share.

2–4. Some images from the Scriptographer community. Scriptographer is an open source project initiated by Jurg Lehni and Jonathon Puckey that creates a “scripting environment” for Adobe Illustrator.

2. *Sketchy Structures* by Acemi Caylak

3. *After Now* by Jurg Lehni

4. *Liquid 2 solid* by Jan Abellan



org proclaims that Scriptographer puts the tool “back into the hand of the user and confronts a closed product with the open source philosophy.” In doing so, it defines a new relationship between designers and the software that is developed for their use.

Open source culture has infected a wide variety of fields, and typing “open source” into a Ted Talk search will reveal how this culture is benefitting product design, architecture, science, cancer research, economics, and even government. One great example of the benefits of open source culture in action is the Blender Foundation, based in the Netherlands. Blender is a not-for-profit organization that, according to Blender.org, provides “a free and open source 3D animation suite.” Blender uses a GNU General Public License and is developed “by hundreds of volunteers from all around the world. These volunteers include artists, [visual effects] experts, hobbyists, scientists, and many more. All of them are united by an interest to further a completely free and open source 3D creation pipeline. The Blender Foundation supports and facilitates these goals—and employs a small staff for that—but depends fully on the global online community.” As Karsten Schmidt points out, “They publish short films, Pixar-style animations, and they make every asset of the film open source so that other people can learn from the expertise they are developing. If you want to get into film production, it’s the best resource there is. So you can really learn from professionals how to do a feature film. All the sound design, the character design, the timeline, the key framing, the motion graphics, 3D modeling—EVERYTHING—all accessible.”

This is an idealistic world, seemingly full of world-changing possibilities, but there are powerful economic vested interests that seek to oppose it. In our recent conversation (see pp. 117–119), Karsten Schmidt highlights how corporations use patents to disable or interfere with the development of competitor technologies. The high-profile legal battles between technology giants such as Apple and Samsung are evidence of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, our obsession with ownership does not appear to be disappearing anytime soon. This economic momentum leads to the creation of technology that acts as a tool of consumption rather than encourages the utilization of its unforeseen potential. Open source development communities have the power to change our lives for the better, but our education systems need to feed these communities with young minds that have the confidence to examine what is behind an interface. It is widely recognized that code will be the defining tool of the new century, and its use will define the world we will create. The open source movement believes in placing these tools in the hands of the people so that they have control over what this world will look like. As advocate and writer, Douglas Rushkoff points out, either we program or be programmed!