

**CLINTON VAN ARNAM**  
**VARIATIONS ON NOISE**



**Variations on Noise** is a three-part collection: an index, a set of interviews, and a perspective on a working practice in graphic design and sound.

If noise is ubiquitous in our everyday lives, how do we define it and use it as a catalyst for dissonance and change? As a designer, I use noise algorithms to generate pseudo randomness and break up repetitive textures. As a musician, I use noise to create scores and performances that challenge our perception of what is comfortable and uncomfortable.

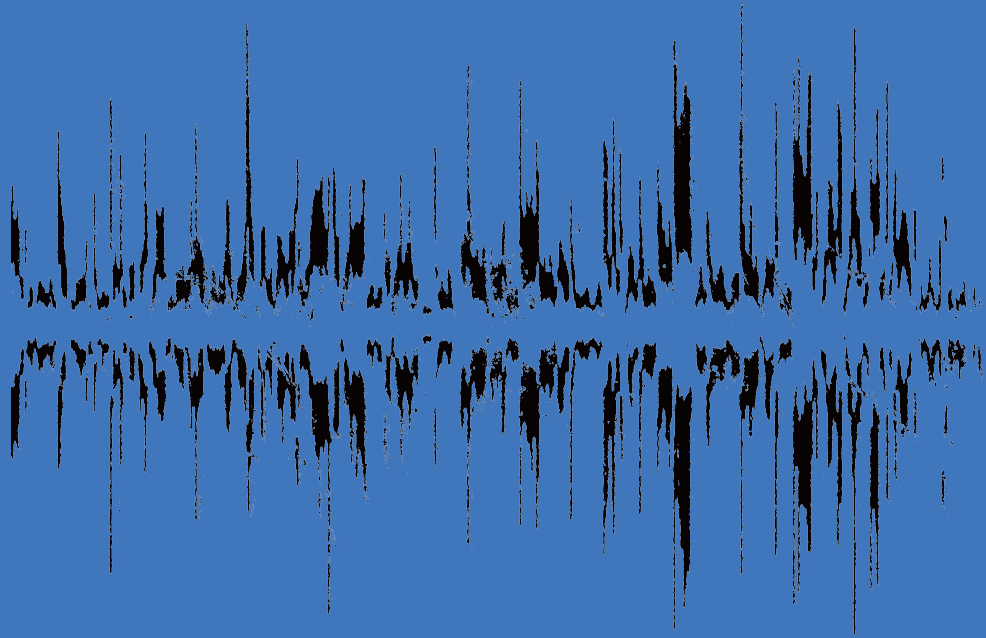
Seven interviews with designers, artists, musicians, and a Tibetan monk offer ways to approach the world through noise and to gain a better understanding of humanity.

An index offers a consolidated tool for anyone interested in noise and how it shapes science, audio, culture, and other disciplines.

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# CLINTON VAN ARNAM



LET'S CONSIDER  
NOISE

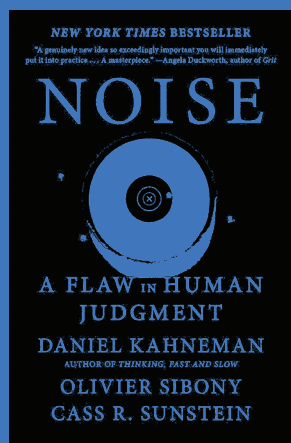
ON PRACTICE

AND RESEARCH

## INTRODUCTION

What is it? The question seems simple—yet it’s tough to define. Is noise sound? For some, the answer’s obvious—yes, it is. But what about visual noise on an old television screen? Or, noise in economics? In the book *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment*, Daniel Kahneman describes noise as irrelevant or misleading data and information that can cause misinterpretation of economic indicators, leading to incorrect decisions by investors, analysts, and policymakers. Other noise examples might include computer programming algorithms, psychological noise, and more.

While a complex and far-reaching inquiry, I decided to tackle it from three perspectives:



↑  
(01) ‘Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment,’ by Daniel Kahneman, Olivier Sibony, and Cass R. Sunstein, Little, Brown Spark, 2021. Cover.

## INDEX

If noise is ubiquitous in our everyday lives, how do we, in fact, define it? As an ongoing research project and resource, this index is a consolidated tool for anyone interested in noise and how it shapes science, audio, culture, and other aspects of our lives. It offers a range of interpretations across media and disciplines, with as many varieties as possible. Here, you’ll find topics from visual noise in graphic design to noise music, a genre characterized by musicians questioning dominant power structures, to Brown noise and how it may help people concentrate or focus.<sup>02</sup>



↑  
(02) YouTube channel which offers users “Academic Brown Noise” for studying

## LET’S CONSIDER NOISE

### INTERVIEWS

The subject of noise has become a starting point for me to conduct seven interviews with designers, artists, musicians, and a Tibetan monk.<sup>03</sup> Each interview offers unique insight into personal experiences and ways to approach the world through noise. These interviews taught me considerably about noise and helped me better understand humanity.



↑  
(03) Geshe Lobsang Yonten, photograph by Rebecca Wilkinson

### PRACTICE

But what are my thoughts on this looming subject? Is this a game of semantics? Why am I attracted to noise? The answer lies in multitudes of forms.

#### *Noise as Sound*

From a sonic perspective, noise creates dissonance and fullness in sound, a seeming paradox. Sonically, ‘white noise’ refers to every frequency the human ear can hear played at the same amplitude. Then where does the dissonance come from? My thinking lies in the idea that it’s fundamental to the human condition. From our time in the womb, the human body is surrounded by noise, and so the world appears to be silent.

## INTRODUCTION

An example is the “shhh” sound, akin to white noise, which soothes babies by mimicking the comforting, constant sounds of the womb familiar from their prenatal environment. Scientists support its use as part of calming techniques, emphasizing its effectiveness in mirroring the continuous background noise experienced before birth. Culture, music, and language create patterns in our minds; disruptions to those patterns are called noise simply because we are not used to it. But strangely, we need it. The world of sound can be exceptionally sterile without noise, and noise can act as both a catalyst for dissonance and change in music. I am interested in the experimental nature of noise and the surrounding communities. Over the last two years, I’ve been organizing noise shows and bringing people together to experiment with sound and noise. The events, titled **Rave by Design**,<sup>04</sup> allowed me to try different experimental approaches to sounds and create posters for the show and live visuals for the performances.



↑  
(04) Rave by Design flyer by Clinton Van Arnam, 2023

Another way I introduce noise in my musical practice is by **ambience** (the sub-genre of noise music is referred to as ‘Drone,’ which you can find in the index p.34). Ambient noise and Drone music might also seem like a paradox: How can ambience be noise? Consider informational noise. From click-bait journalism to the shortening attention span of the public, we live in a world of information overflow. When an audience member hears a sound whose evolution is to change over an hour rather than a second, many uncomfortable feelings might arrive. Slowness can bring out the noise of the mind and, perhaps with recognition we can improve it. With the help of friends, I organized a live event at the RISD Museum titled **Ambience as Noise**,<sup>05</sup> where artists came together and performed drone music for two hours—the event created an interruption into a hyper-stimulated media landscape through slowness.

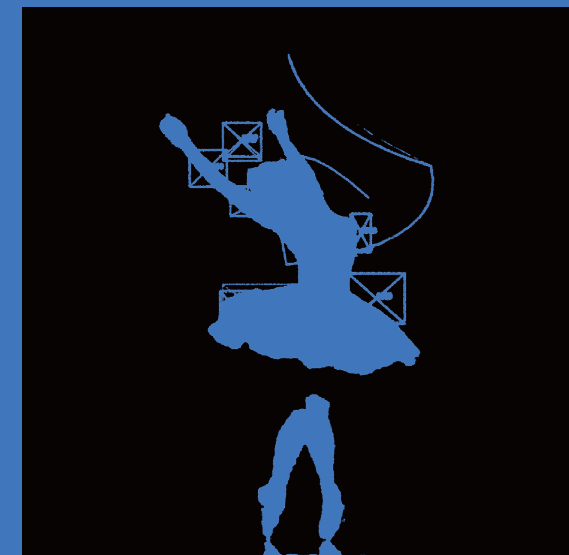
## LET’S CONSIDER NOISE



↑  
(05) Clinton Van Arnam performing at Ambience as Noise, 2023

### *Technology as Instrument*

I approach design as a musician, where technology becomes an instrument for generating ideas. My interest in typography has led me to create custom software that interacts with language similarly to how I might interact with a synthesizer. Programming languages and writing custom software allow me to expand on this practice because I can create custom tools to tell a particular story and create a larger narrative. An example is a video piece I made with the same title of this book, *Variations on Noise*.<sup>06</sup> The video is an essay exploring the notion of noise and its relationship to the human body. I wrote custom software for this project, which tracks the motion of the human body, outputs the data to live synthesizers, and generates new typographic forms. Using typography and graphic form the same way a musician would use their instrument, I was able to comment on more extensive texts and connect philosophical ideas of noise, such as Micah Silver’s *Figures of Air*, Damon Kruoski’s *Ways of Hearing*, and Jacques Attali’s book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*.



↑  
(06) Clinton Van Arnam, *Variations on Noise*, 2024. Film still.

### *Noise as Algorithms*

As a visual designer, I use noise to create pseudo-randomness while maintaining consistency in design work. Thanks to Ken Perlin, who made the Perlin Noise algorithm, I can generate procedural textures and use them to create natural-seeming patterns in visual environments. I apply Perlin noise most in my design practice by creating fluctuation in repetitive typographic design work. While programming, I often use repetitive patterns; and noise helps to create variations in some of those patterns. Visual designers can use noise to create anything from mountains to clouds to the ocean. Without noise, the work of a generative artist would be challenging and tedious.



↑  
Clinton Van Arnam, Noise pattern experiments, 2023

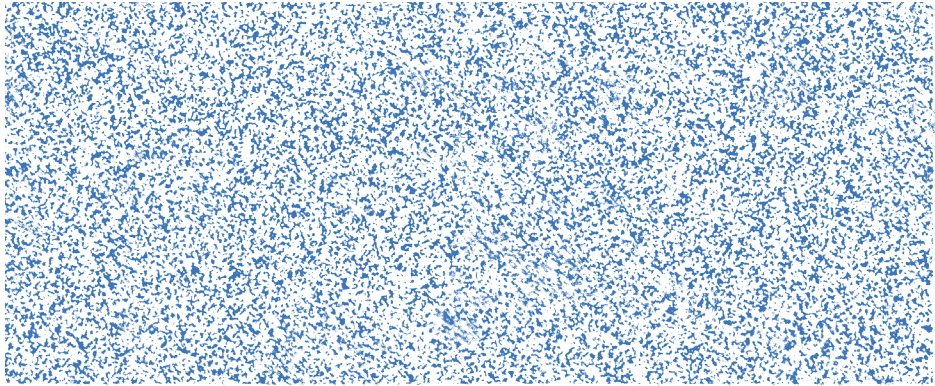
### *Noise as a Metaphor for Information*

In the current technological era of advanced artificial intelligence and attachment to social media (and to the screen), noise is the information we are surrounded by. Noise is what is fighting for our attention. In my practice, I comment on these ideas through design projects like [inourti.me](https://inourti.me).<sup>07</sup> [inourti.me](https://inourti.me) uses facial recognition technology to monitor the user's eye movements using their computer's camera. Each time the user blinks, the system generates a new daily headline from *The New York Times* and initiates a timer to measure the duration the user spends reading this headline. The time taken to read the headline influences the next interaction: the longer the reading time, the more intense and 'noisy' the sound generated upon the user's subsequent blink. The piece acts as a commentary on how we consume media, click-bait journalism, and surveillance.



↑  
(07) Clinton Van Arnam, [inourti.me](https://inourti.me), 2023

# NOISE INDEX

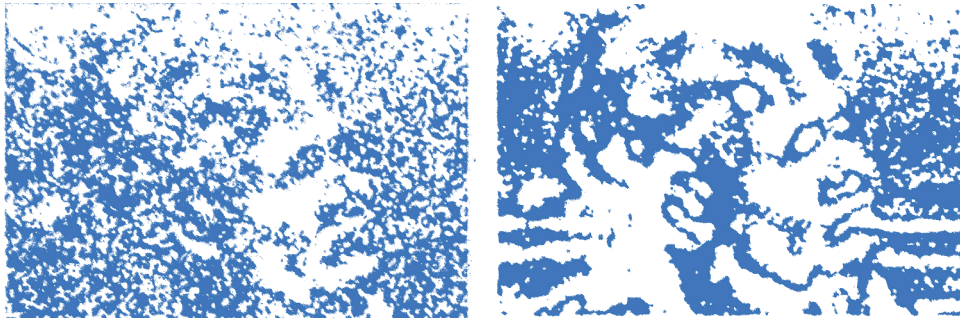
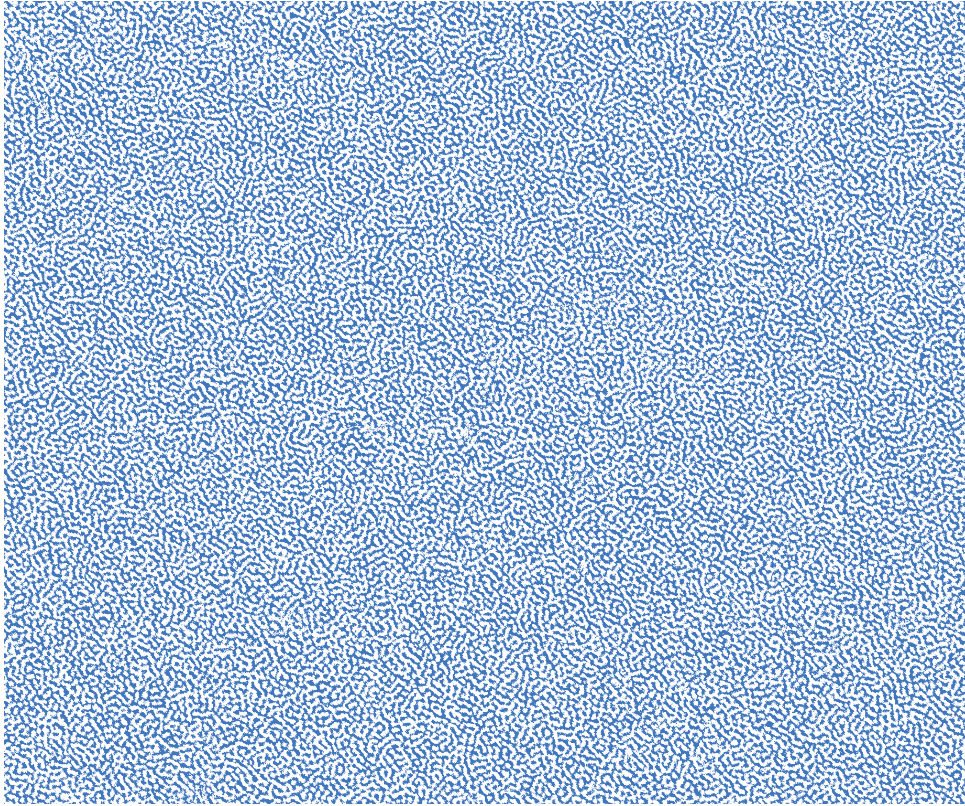


AN ONGOING  
PROJECT

BLUE NOISE

WHITE NOISE



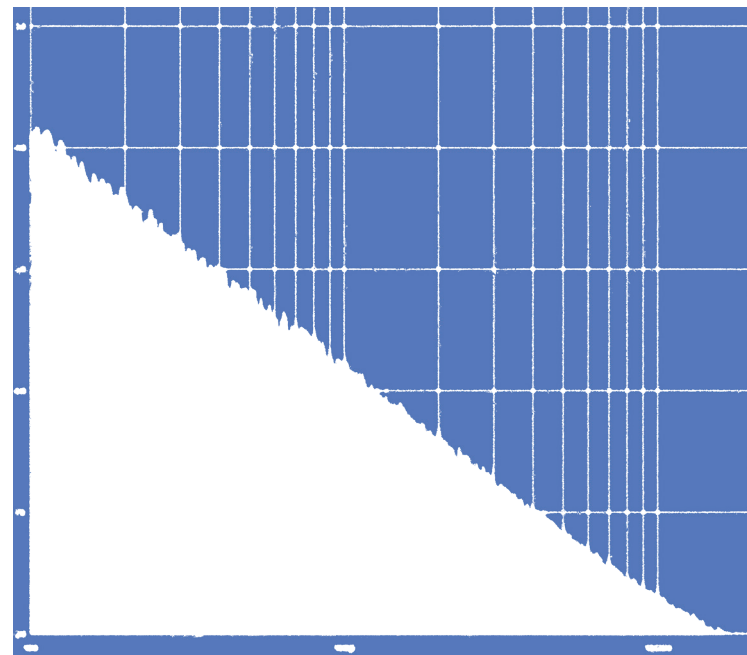


↑  
 Top: uniform blue noise texture  
 Bottom: example of white vs blue noise used for dithering

In the context of sampling and dithering, **blue noise** has a power density that increases with frequency. This property is desirable for sampling because it allows for an even distribution of error or noise across the spectrum, which can make the noise less noticeable.

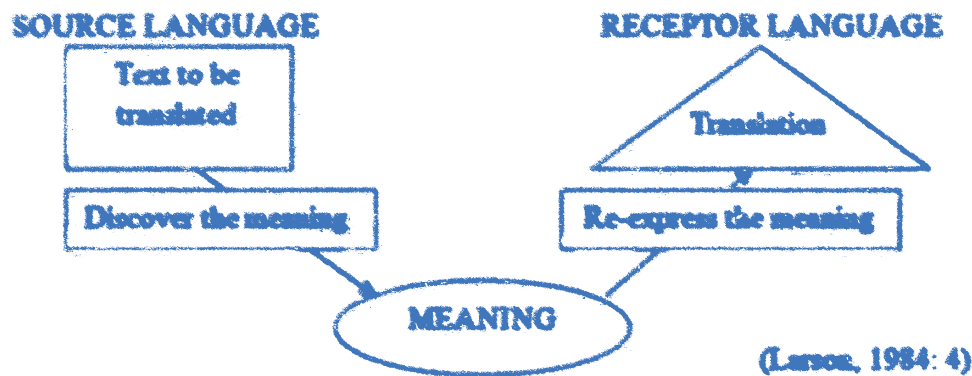
The name “blue” in “blue noise” comes from the association with the color blue in the visible light spectrum, where blue light has a higher frequency than most other colors visible to the human eye. In the context of signals and noise, blue noise is characterized by its power spectral density, which increases with increasing frequency. This type of noise distribution is helpful in various applications, such as dithering in digital signal processing and image processing, where it helps to distribute error or noise uniformly across different frequencies, leading to a more pleasing or less noticeable result. The term contrasts with other types of noise, such as “white noise,” which has a constant power spectral density across frequencies, and “red noise,” or “Brownian noise,” where power decreases with increasing frequency.





↑  
 Top: Robert Brown, botanist b. 1773  
 Bottom: Brown noise frequency spectrum

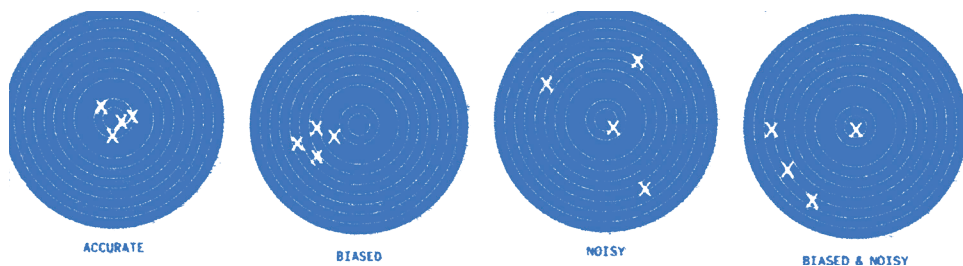
Brownian noise, also known as **Brown noise** or red noise, is named after the botanist Robert Brown, who observed the phenomenon of random particle movements in fluid in 1827. This type of noise has a power density that decreases with the increase in frequency, producing a deeper sound than white or pink noise. It is reminiscent of the low, powerful rumble of a thunderstorm or the deep roar of a waterfall. Brownian noise is used for sound masking, sleep aids, and audio testing due to its strong lower frequencies. According to The Washington Post, "For some with ADHD, the low rumble of brown noise quiets the brain."



**Communication noise** or interference can disrupt the intended message in various ways, including physical, physiological, technical, organizational, cultural, psychological, and semantic noise. Such interference alters audience focus, understanding, and reception of messages. Strategies to mitigate these noises include controlling physical noise when possible, adapting messages to physiological states, ensuring technical reliability, respecting organizational communication channels, being aware of cultural differences, and using clear, jargon-free language.

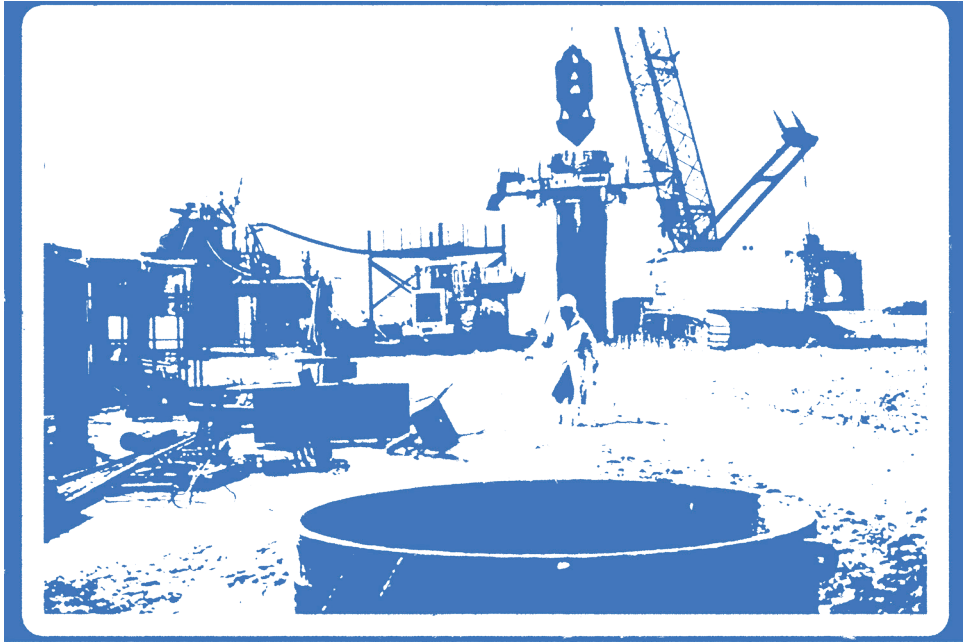
“Noise Matters: The Evolution of Communication” by R. Haven Wiley examines communication’s evolutionary aspects, emphasizing how organisms adapt to noise within their environments to convey signals effectively. Through an evolutionary lens, Wiley highlights the intrinsic role of noise in shaping communication strategies across species, offering insights into the complex interplay between signal transmission and environmental noise.

↑  
 Top: *Noise Matters: The Evolution of Communication*.  
 Harvard University Press, 2015. Book Cover.  
 Bottom: The Process of Translation



**Economic Noise** is defined by author and psychologist Daniel Kahneman in economics and decision-making contexts as the unwanted variability in professional judgments that leads to inconsistency and errors, even when the same information is available. This concept, detailed in his book “Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment,” co-authored with Olivier Sibony and Cass R. Sunstein, extends the traditional understanding of noise to financial markets and economic forecasting. Kahneman distinguishes noise from bias—the latter being a systematic deviation from accuracy—emphasizing that noise represents random variability in decisions that should be uniform. His work reveals the pervasive effects of noise across various fields, including medicine, law, and human resources, often overlooked yet significantly impacting accuracy and fairness. Kahneman’s insights stress the importance of identifying, measuring, and mitigating noise to enhance decision-making quality across disciplines, highlighting its broader implications beyond economic and financial analysis.

↑  
Kahneman, Daniel, Olivier Sibony, and Cass R. Sunstein. “Targets Illustrating Accuracy, Noise, Bias, and Both Biased & Noisy Decisions.” *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment*



# MUZAK®

TM

↑  
 Top: Construction of the Pont de Normandie (Normandy Bridge)  
 Bottom: Muzak corporation logo

**Environmental noise** in communication refers to external, physical disturbances that can disrupt or interfere with the transmission and reception of intended messages. Examples include background conversations, traffic sounds, construction noise, and any other auditory or visual distractions in the environment.

Muzak, for instance, is a corporation that uses external stimuli to influence the psychological states and behaviors of individuals, impacting their perception of their surroundings. By playing background music in various environments such as stores, restaurants, or offices, Muzak aims to create specific atmospheres or moods, contributing to the overall environmental ambience.



↑  
Vomir

028

**Noise music** is a genre that challenges the conventional distinction between musical and non-musical sound. It includes a wide range of musical styles and sound-based creative practices that feature noise as a primary aspect of their practice. Though incomplete, listed below are outstanding examples, from American Harsh Noise to Cut Up to 'Old School' Industrial.

029



↑  
The Haters, 1999, Live

**American Harsh Noise** was created around the early 1990s. The original artists who helped develop this sound are The Haters, Daniel Menche, Macronympha, and Richard Ramirez.





↑  
Facialmess, *THE COMPLETE SLAUGHTERHOUSE SESSIONS*, 2015, Album cover

**Cut Up** is characterized by the quickness of how sounds come in and out of the mix. The genre takes inspiration from musique concrete, a faction of experimental music that originated in the 1940s and focused on found-sound collage created through the splicing of tape. Prominent artists of Cut Up include Sickness, developer, Facialmess, Kazuma Kubota, and K2.



↑  
Brighter Death Now, *United States Now*, 2018, Album cover

**Death Industrial** shares many similarities with Power Electronics, although focuses more on the use of synthesizers rather than vocals. Prominent artists include Brighter Death Now, and Control.





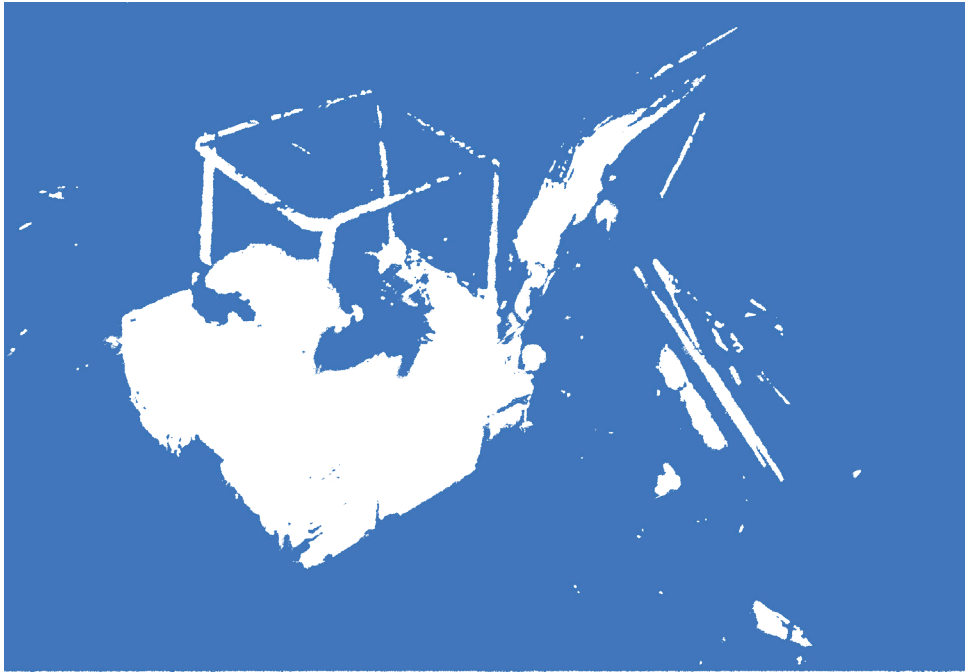
↑  
Kevin Drumm, 2009, Live

**Drone** is characterized by the use of unchanging drones and melodic synths. The genre shares many similarities with Harsh Noise Wall but uses subtle to no changes in slow melodies and atmospheric dynamics. Prominent artists of Drone include Brian Eno, Lamonte Young, Kevin Drumm, Lea Bertucci, and Tim Hecker.



↑  
The Rita, *Gamzatti*, 2015, Album cover

The use of unchanging static and harsh drones characterizes **Harsh Noise Wall**. The craft of harsh noise walls reveals itself through the minute changes within that static. Subtle shifts slowly morph over time as certain crackles or frequencies enter and dissipate. Prominent artists of Harsh Noise Wall include The Rita and Vomir. Vomir emphasizes the nihilistic approach by handing out plastic bags for audience members to put over their head to block any/all sensory input beyond the wall of noise playing through the PA.



↑  
Hanatarash, 1985, Bulldozer live set.

**Japanoise**, initially created in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, offered a common approach to dissonance, overwhelming volume/dynamic shifts, electronics, and extremity. Prominent artists include Merzbow, cccc, The Incapacitants, K2, Government Alpha, and Killer Bug. One iconic performance included artist Hanatarash's set, during which they destroyed the venue with a bulldozer while turning on the microphones for sound and feedback.



↑  
Andrea Pensado, 2014, Live performance

**Laptop Noise** uses programming custom noise software with applications such as MaxMSP, PureData, Audiomulch, and Supercollider. Prominent artists include Mecha-Shiva, Dillon Bastan, John Wiese, and Andrea Pensado.



↑  
Einsturzende Neubauten

“Old School” Industrial presents simple rhythmic structures and melodic lines underneath dissonant synths and howled vocals. Prominent artists include Einsturzende Neubauten and Boy Dirt Car.



↑  
J. Soliday, *Plastics*, 2020, Album cover

**Modular Based Noise** uses instrumentation with modular synthesizers. Artists create patches of many times self-generating synths to create noise music. Prominent artists include J. Soliday and SADNOISE.



↑  
Coughs, *Secret Passage*, 2006, Album cover

Influenced by punk and metal, **Noise Rock** is characterized by home-made drum sets, broken guitars, and circuit-bent keyboards. Prominent artists include The Coughs and Nozagt.

# WHITEHOUSE LIVE ACTION

# 107

# OCT 24 2003 BRUSSELS

↑  
WHITEHOUSE, *WRIGGLE LIKE A FUCKING EEL*, 2003, Album cover

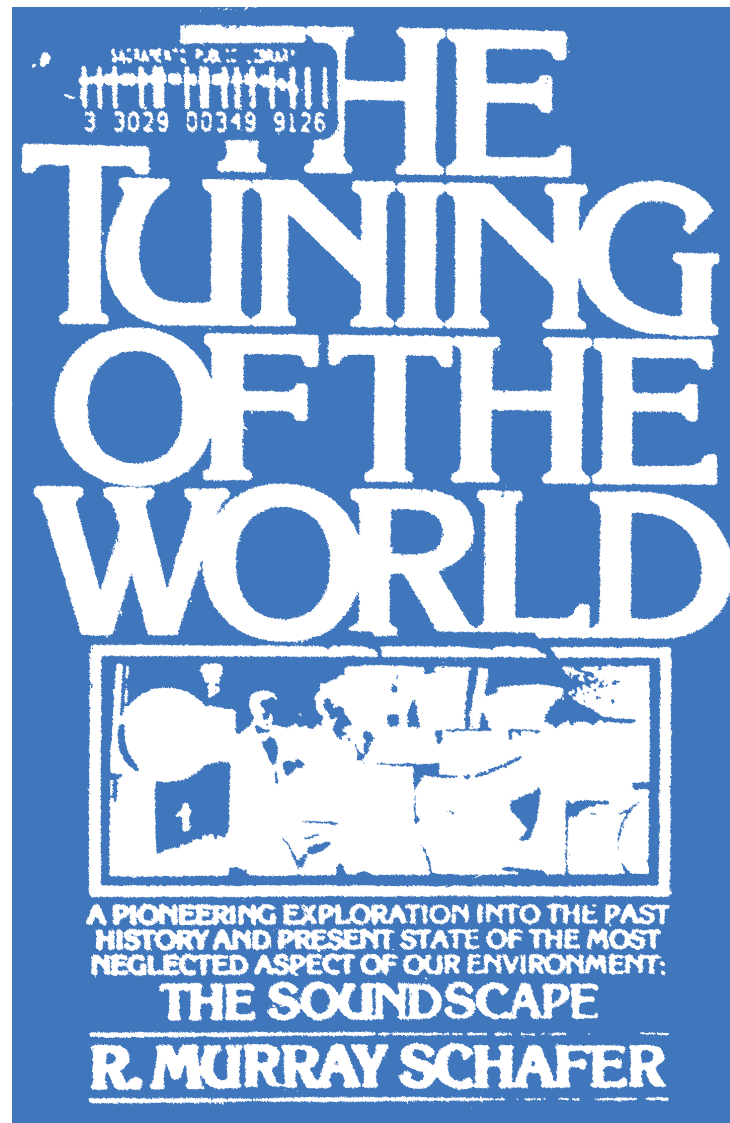
**Power Electronics** was created around the 1980s and 1990s in the UK with minimal sound, their approach is blunt. Groups include White House, The Grey Wolves, Con-Dom, and Sutcliffe Jugend. Though their aesthetic approach shifted between groups, their fascination with serial killers, genocide, racism, sexual assault, and state violence connected these acts. Power Electronics focuses on power—the artist taking control of power.





↑  
Aaron Dilloway live at Union Pool, 2020

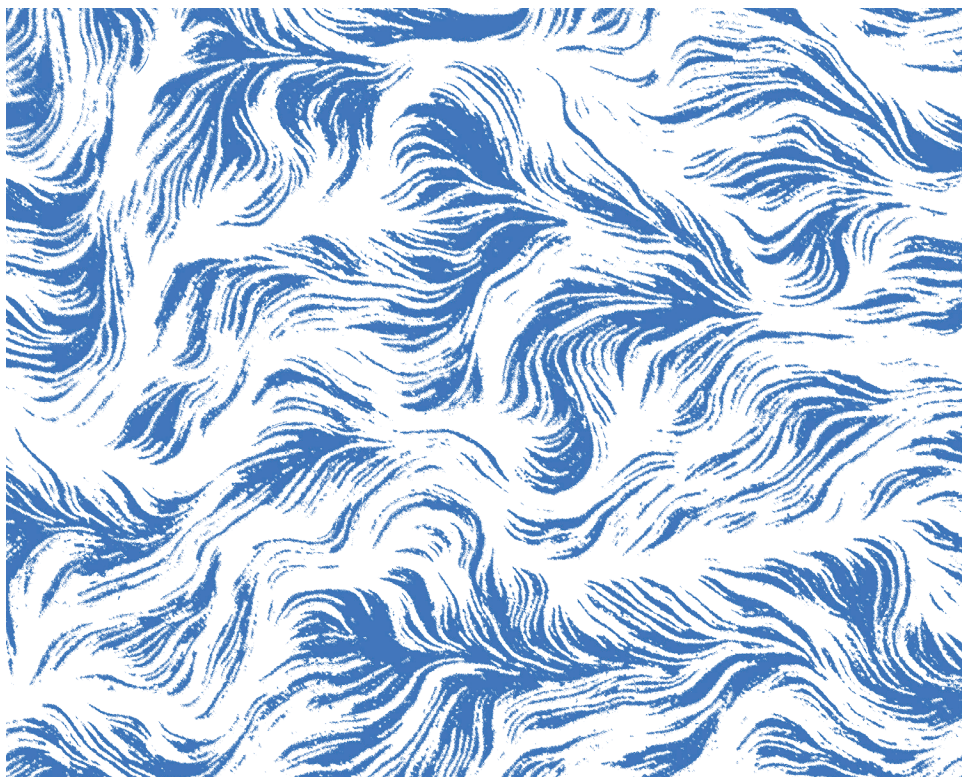
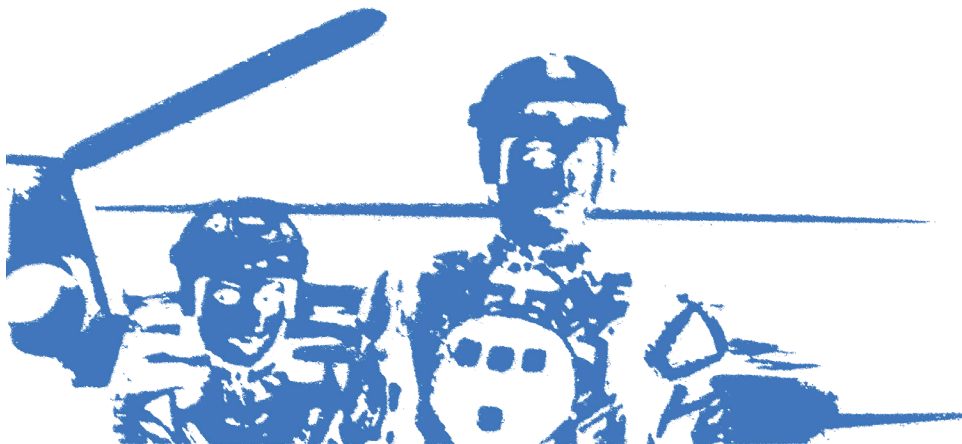
**Tape Based Noise** is a genre of noise music characterized by instrumentation and artists using tapes to loop, manipulate, or physically interact with the medium. Prominent artists include Aaron Dilloway and Howard Stelzer.



↑  
 Top: Schafer, R. M. (1977). *The Tuning of the World* (Book cover)  
 Bottom: Airplane flying over city, Getty Images

**Noise pollution**, stemming from various sources, including industrial activities, transportation, construction sites, and urbanization, poses a significant threat to human health and the environment. The continuous barrage of loud and disruptive noises can lead to various adverse effects, such as hearing loss, sleep disturbances, increased stress levels, and impaired communication. Moreover, wildlife and ecosystems can also suffer from the disruptive impact of noise pollution, leading to disturbances in natural habitats and ecological imbalances. One example of this

R. Murray Schafer's book *The Tuning of the World* emphasizes the importance of harmonizing soundscapes to create environments conducive to well-being and ecological balance. Many have said implementing Schafer's principles can guide efforts to mitigate noise pollution and promote environments where tranquility and harmony prevail, benefiting both human populations and the natural world.



↑  
 Top: *Tron* Directed by Steven Lisberger, 1982. Film still  
 Bottom: Perlin noise wave-field

**Perlin Noise** was developed by Ken Perlin in the early 1980s as a response to the visual limitations he encountered in computer graphics while working on the movie *Tron* (1982). Traditional methods for texture generation at the time resulted in artificial-looking textures that lacked the complexity and natural randomness found in real-world textures. Perlin sought to create a technique to produce more organic and visually appealing surfaces. Perlin Noise is a gradient noise function that generates smooth, natural-looking textures in a way that can be easily computed and replicated across different platforms. This innovation significantly improved the realism of computer-generated imagery (CGI) by mimicking the stochastic properties of natural phenomena, thereby enhancing the visual effects in *Tron* (1982) and subsequent films and applications in computer graphics.



↑  
Basinski, William. *The Disintegration Loops*, 2002, Album Cover

In communication and signal processing, **physical noise** pertains to disturbances inherent within the signal transmission system itself. These disturbances can arise from electromagnetic interference, thermal noise, or imperfections in the transmission medium. Physical noise directly affects the signal quality during transmission or reception, introducing errors or distortions that can hinder effective communication.

Physical noise differs from environmental noise because it originates from within the signal transmission system, while environmental noise originates from external sources in the surrounding environment.

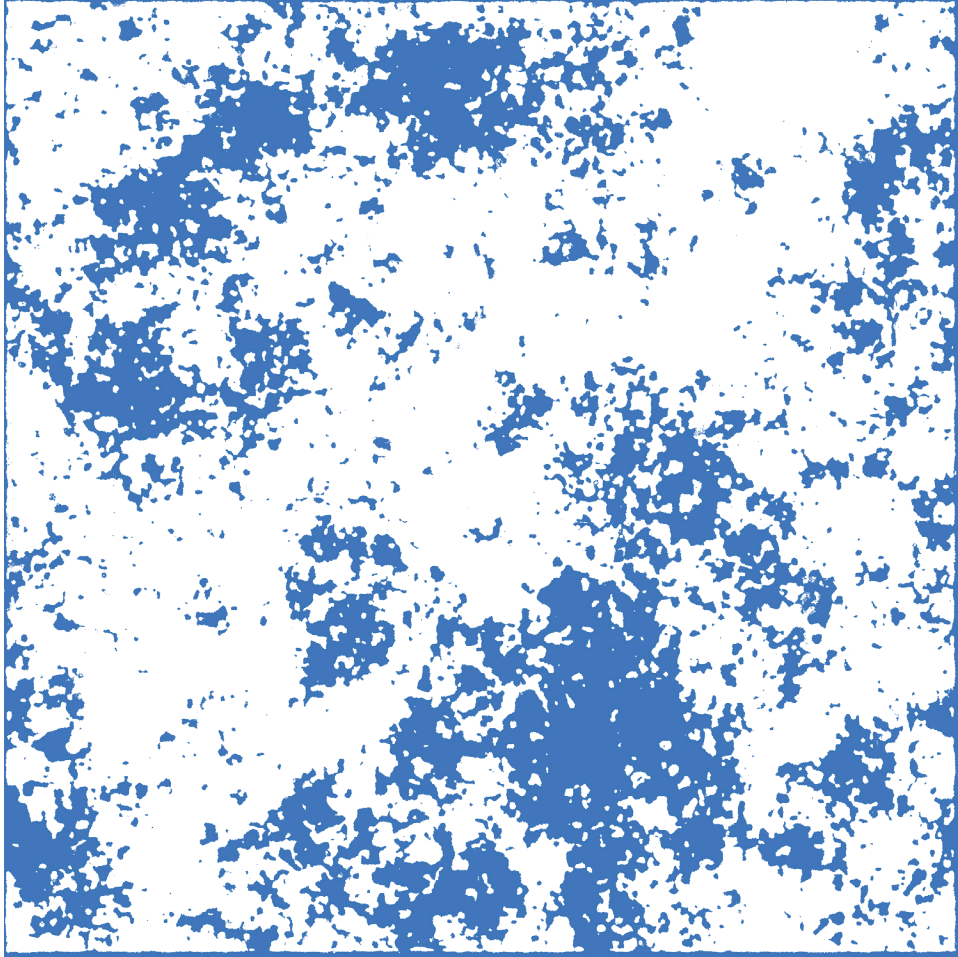
William Basinski's *The Disintegration Loops* can act as an example of physical noise due to its reliance on the gradual degradation of analog tape loops, introducing a form of disruption or decay into the sonic composition. The intentional decay of the tape loops within Basinski's work is a tangible manifestation of physical noise, embodying themes of entropy and transformation through the materiality of sound.



↑  
Noise Control Act, 1975, Post card, Library of Congress

**Physiological noise** are disturbances or interferences in communication that originate from physiological factors within the communicators. These factors can include biological processes such as hunger, fatigue, illness, or sensory impairments, which may affect an individual's ability to send or receive messages accurately. Physiological noise can manifest as distractions or impediments that hinder effective communication, leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of messages. The Noise Control Act of 1972 was enacted to oversee noise pollution in America because long-term exposure to physiological noise can negatively affect the body.



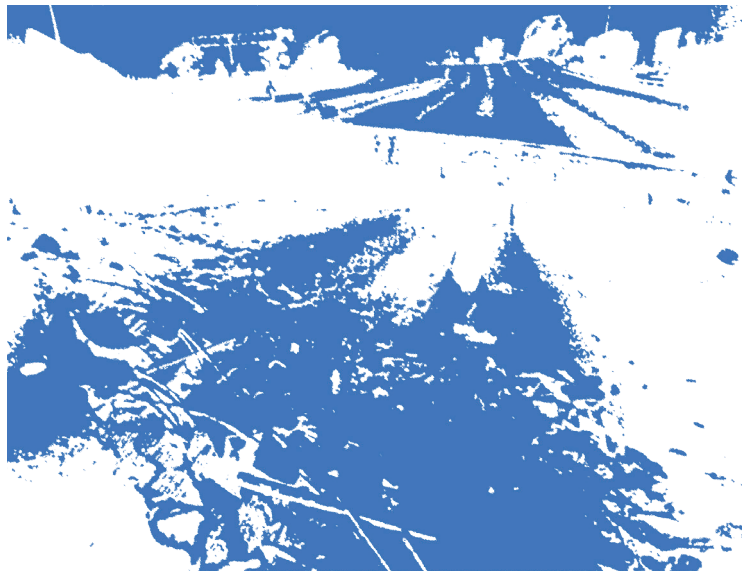


↑

A two-dimensional pink noise gray scale image, generated with a computer program.

**Pink noise**, sometimes referred to as “1/f noise,” is a variant of white noise with a frequency spectrum that decreases in intensity as the frequency increases, resulting in deeper sounds that are more pleasing (or harmonious) to the human ear. It replicates natural sounds, such as the rustle of leaves, steady rain, wind, or heartbeats, making it more conducive to relaxation and sleep. Pink noise has been used in sound engineering, music, and for therapeutic purposes to aid sleep and mask background noise. It’s also used in electronic devices and audio tests to evaluate sound balance in different environments.

The term “pink noise” is derived from a light analogy; just as pink light is a lower-frequency version of white light, pink noise is a lower-frequency version of white noise. In layman’s terms, pink noise has more energy at lower frequencies. Hence, it’s sometimes called “red noise,” evoking the color red, which is associated with lower-frequency light.



↑

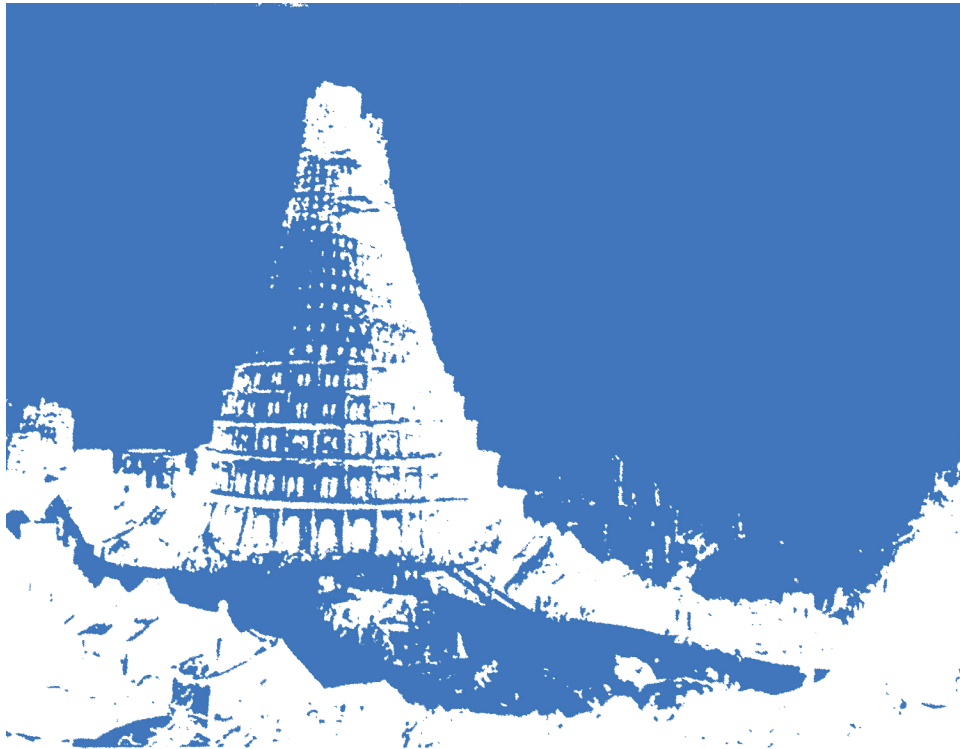
Top: Elvis Presley, Getty Images

Bottom: The stretch of the 10 Freeway that collapsed following the Jan. 17, 1994, Northridge earthquake was repaired in less than three months.

**Psychological noise** results from preconceived notions brought to conversations, such as stereotypes, reputations, and assumptions. When we come into a conversation with ideas about what the other person will say and why, we can easily become blinded to their original message. Most of the time, it is difficult to distance oneself from psychological noise. Many recommend recognizing that it exists, and considering those distractions when we converse with others is essential.

An example of this is right after a major earthquake, an “oldies” radio station in Los Angeles plays Elvis Presley’s “I’m All Shook Up” as part of a preprogrammed music session and is condemned by listeners for mocking victims of the quake. This example illustrates psychological noise in communication, where the context or emotional state of the audience (affected by the earthquake) influenced how a message (the song) was received. While preprogrammed and coincidental, the choice of song can be perceived as insensitive given the circumstances, highlighting how external events can impact the interpretation of communication.

Psychological noise differs from bias in that psychological noise refers to internal distractions that affect how messages are received and interpreted, such as emotions or stress. On the other hand, bias involves a predisposition or preconceived notion that influences the interpretation of messages, often leading to prejudgment. While psychological noise can encompass a wide range of internal states, bias refers explicitly to a skewed perspective towards or against something or someone.



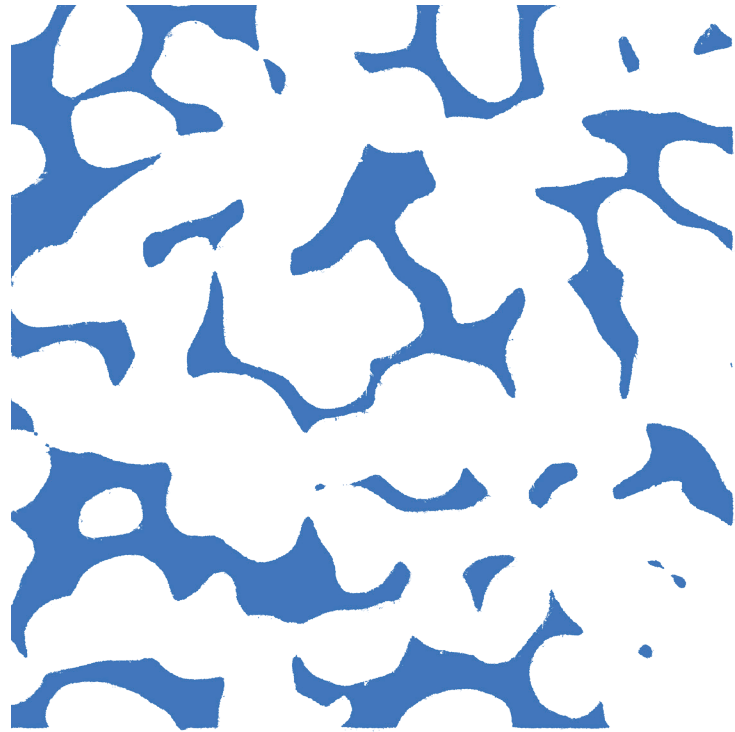
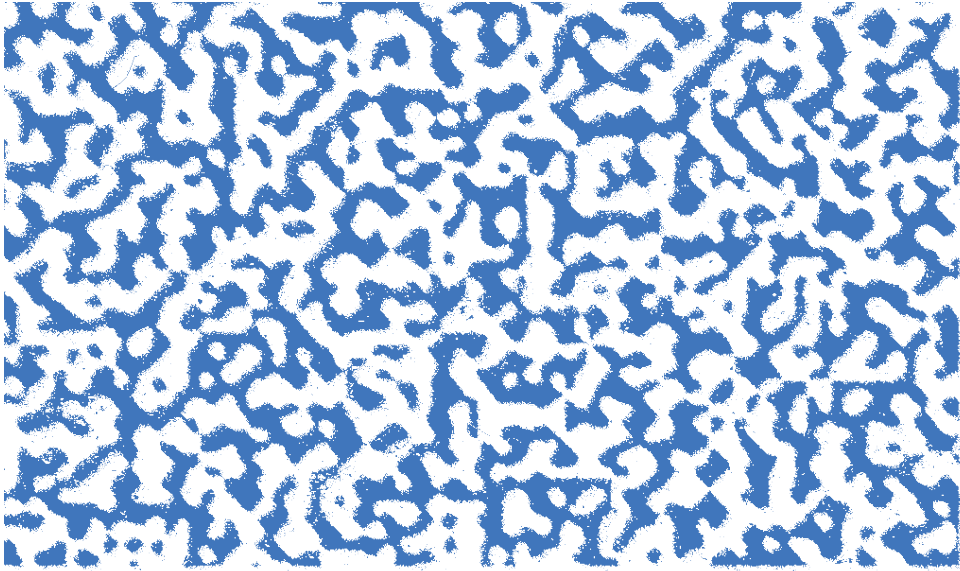
↑

The Tower of Babel acts as a symbol of translation

**Semantic noise** refers to interference in communication caused by differences in the interpretation or meaning of words, symbols, or language constructs between communicators. This type of noise arises when there is a misunderstanding or ambiguity in the intended message due to semantic barriers such as language, jargon, technical terms, or cultural differences. The Tower of Babel, where people were unable to communicate with each other due to the confusion of languages, can be seen as a metaphor for semantic noise that creates misunderstandings and hinders effective communication.

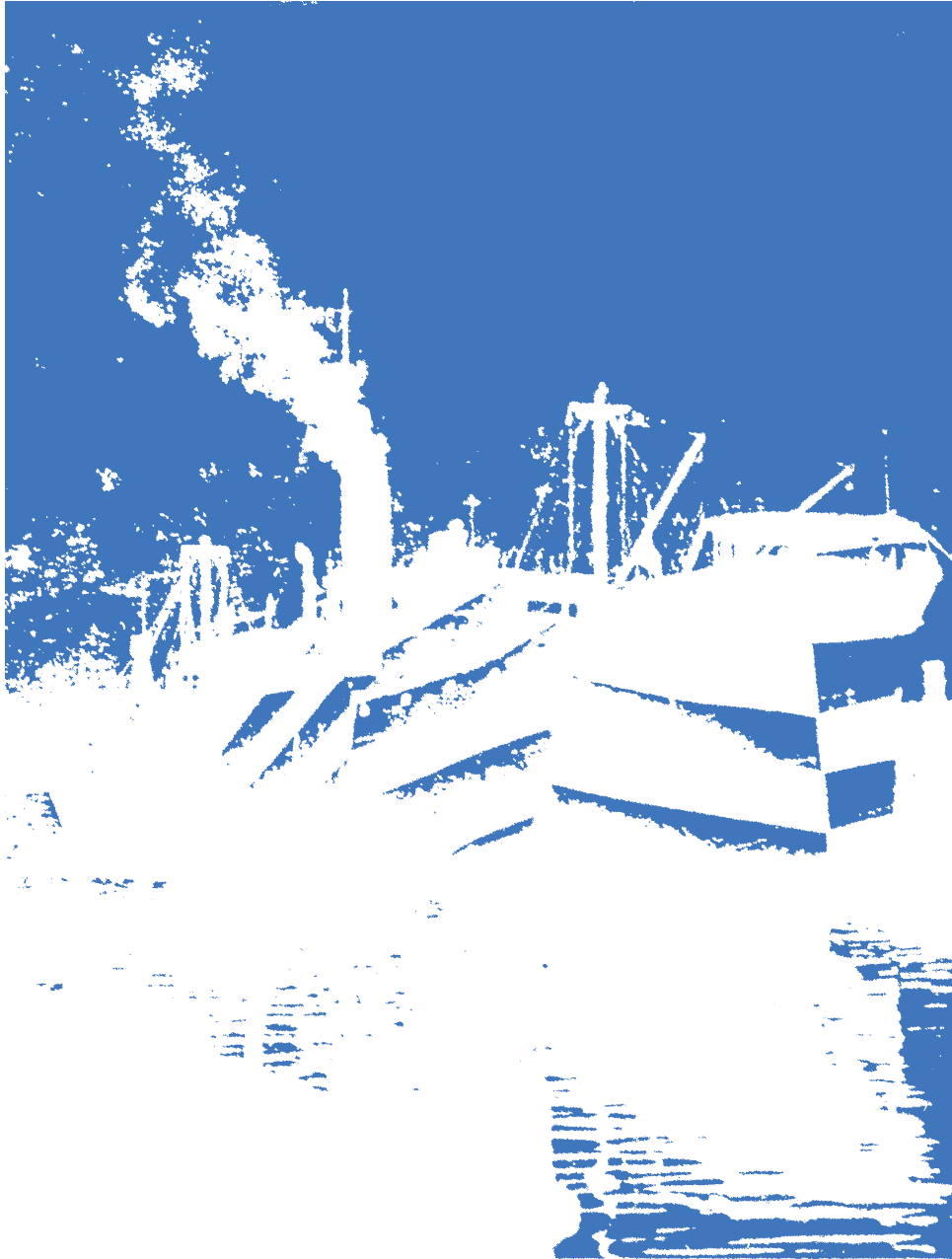
In digital communication, issues such as autocorrect errors, poor voice recognition in virtual assistants, or even font choices that make text hard to read can introduce semantic noise, distorting the intended message.





↑  
 Top: Rendered Simplex noise  
 Bottom: Water caustics created using Simplex noise

**Simplex noise** is an algorithm developed by Ken Perlin as an alternative to his classic Perlin noise. Computer graphics use it to create more natural procedural textures and terrains. Simplex noise is computationally more efficient, particularly in higher dimensions, and it avoids some of the visual artifacts associated with Perlin noise. Its ability to generate coherent noise quickly makes it well-suited for real-time applications in graphics and games, allowing for the simulation of phenomena like water, clouds, and other textures that exhibit randomness with continuity.



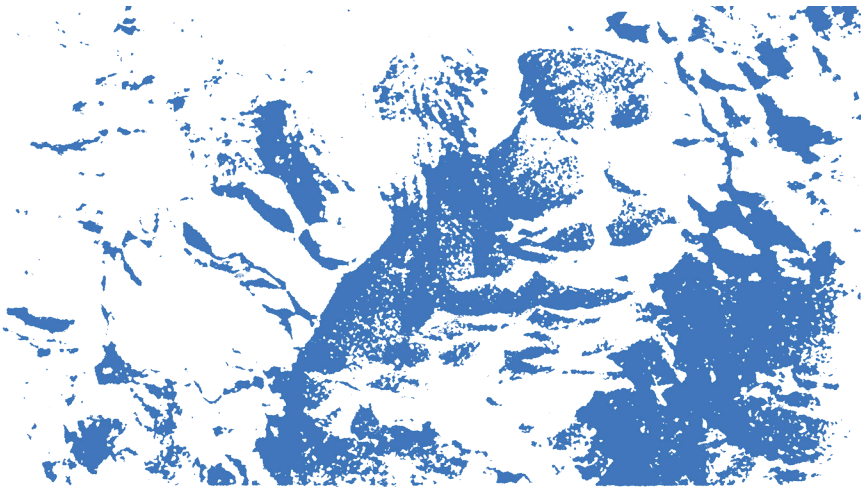
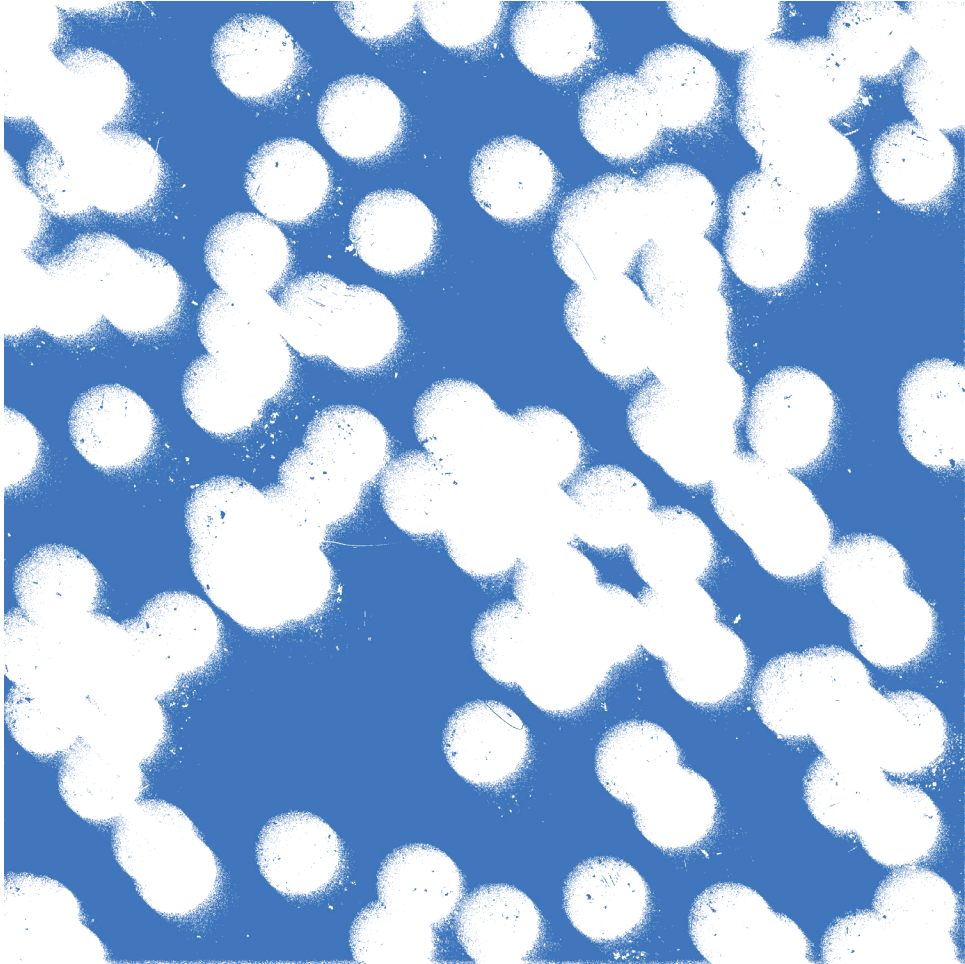
↑  
USS West Mahomet in dazzle camouflage, 1918

**Visual noise** refers to unwanted or distracting elements in a visual scene that interfere with the perception or comprehension of relevant information. It can include cluttered backgrounds, irrelevant graphics, overly complex designs, or inconsistent formatting. Visual noise can impair communication, reduce the effectiveness of visual materials, and make it difficult for viewers to focus on critical messages or details. Dazzle camouflage, a type of ship camouflage using bold, geometric patterns and contrasting colors, can be considered visual noise because it creates a confusing visual signal that disrupts an observer's ability to perceive a ship's actual size, shape, and direction.



↑  
Rendered image of wavelet noise

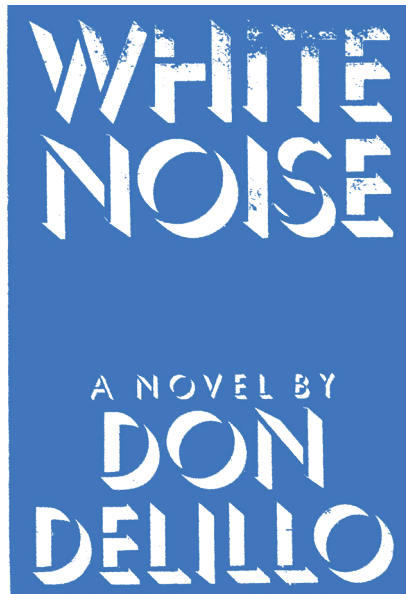
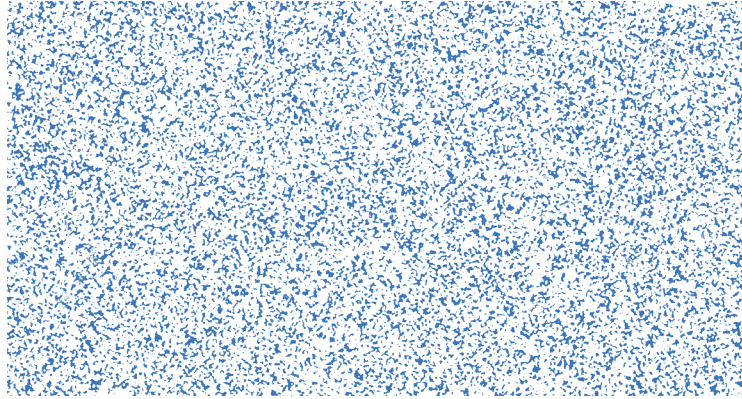
**Wavelet noise** is an alternative to Perlin noise, which reduces the problems of aliasing and detail loss encountered when Perlin noise is summed into a fractal.



↑  
 Top: Example picture generated with Worley noise's basic algorithm  
 Bottom: Large rock formation created from Worley noise

**Worley noise**, also called Voronoi noise and cellular noise, is a noise function introduced by Steven Worley in 1996. Worley noise is an extension of the Voronoi diagram that outputs a real value at a given coordinate that corresponds to the Distance of the  $n$ th nearest seed, usually the nearest seed, and the seeds are distributed evenly through the region. Worley noise is used to create procedural textures in computer graphics.





↑  
 Top: Image of White Noise  
 Middle: Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, Cover, 1985  
 Bottom: Marpac White Noise Sound Machine, 2024

**White noise** encompasses various applications, from sound to complex algorithms. In acoustics, it is a type of noise with equal intensity at different frequencies, giving it a consistent and uniform “shhh” sound, like the static between radio stations or the steady hiss of a radiator. This feature makes it useful for sound masking, aiding sleep, and testing equipment in sound engineering.

In digital signal processing and algorithms, white noise is used as a random signal to test processes or introduce randomness into functions and simulations. Its algorithmic counterpart can be found in random number generation, dithering in image processing, and various types of statistical sampling. Across these diverse applications, the defining characteristic of white noise is its randomness and uniform distribution across a set domain, whether that is sound frequencies or a range of values in computational algorithms.

The term can also be used metaphorically, as in Don DeLillo’s novel *White Noise* (1985), which explores the symptoms of modern culture that make it difficult for individuals to actualize their ideas and personalities.

According to *The New York Times*, white noise machines producing audio can “mask the assorted yapping dogs, clanky radiators, and late-night parties that can leave us anxious, seething, and awake.”

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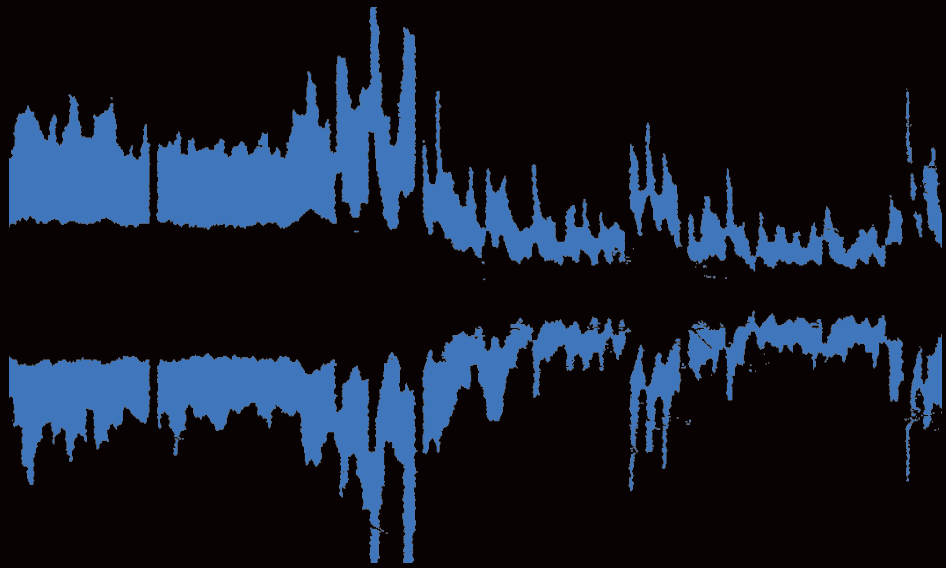
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# INTERVIEWS



# SUZANNE CIANI



FREEDOM  
LOVE  
PERFECTION

Suzanne Ciani is a five-time Grammy award-nominated composer, electronic music pioneer, and neo-classical recording artist who has released over twenty solo albums including *Seven Waves*, and *The Velocity of Love*, along with a landmark quad LP *LIVE Quadraphonic*, which restarted her Buchla modular performances. Her work has been featured in films, games, and countless commercials as well.

She was inducted into the first class of *Keyboard Magazine's* Hall of Fame alongside other synth luminaries, including Bob Moog, Don Buchla and Dave Smith and received the Moog Innovation Award. Most recently, she is the recipient of the Independent Icon Award from A2IM.

Suzanne has provided the voice and sounds for Bally's ground-breaking "Xenon" pinball machine, created Coca-Cola's pop-and-pour sound, designed logos for Fortune 500 companies, and carved out a niche as one of the most creatively successful female composers in the world. *A Life in Waves*, a documentary about Ciani's life and work, debuted at SXSW in 2017 and is available to watch on all digital platforms.

Ciani is a graduate of Wellesley College and holds a Masters in Music Composition from the University of California, Berkeley.

On a personal note—I was first introduced to Suzanne's work at a record store in Los Angeles where they were celebrating the re-release of her Buchla Concerts 1975 album. The album is a live performance on the Buchla synthesizer, and I was fascinated by the sounds she was able to produce. Since then, Suzanne has been a huge influence on my work and the way I think about noise and sound. It was an honor to speak with her about noise, and the way she thinks about life.

**CVA** What does noise mean to you, both as a person and as an artist?

**SC** Because of my relationship with the Buchla synthesizer, noise is my access to the white noise generator<sup>01</sup> and the creation of waveforms. From what we know about white noise, it includes every frequency. I use that as a starting point for my concerts. Whatever I'm going to do is born out of noise, and I think that's an appropriate connection because everything is in there. We often think of noise as dissonance, attack, or unwanted sound or chatter. But for me, noise is simply a palette or a starting point.



(01) 266e Source of Uncertainty Buchla synthesizer white noise generator

**CVA** It's interesting to consider white noise as a starting point. Certain psychologists think that the "sh" sound used by parents to calm babies mimics the constant, whooshing white noise heard in the womb, which is attributed to the mother's blood flow and bodily functions. This sound is thought to soothe infants by replicating the comforting and familiar auditory environment of the womb, acting as a form of white noise that can have a calming effect. The relationship between white noise and birth is fascinating to me.

What did working with Don Buchla teach you about music and life?

**SC** I embraced his vision of a new musical instrument. It was the 200 series Buchla synthesizer then. This instrument was a complete 180-degree turn from my classical training. What he taught me was freedom. He had an attitude until the end of working with his instrument as a collaborative artistic expression. As an artist, I'm working within the frame of what he's given me as a tool. And that tool is a very open architecture. There's nothing defined. It gives you so many choices to create and express yourself. You choose the modules, you choose the patch, and you select the raw materials that you're going to use. But all of this choosing is an expression of freedom in designing what it is that you're going to do.

Don had a certain attitude towards the world. For instance, I would ask him, "Don, this module will not tune properly; it's driving me crazy because I can't calibrate it into my tuning system." And he'd look at me and say, "We'll do something else. Don't try to force your will on something that doesn't want to do what you want to do."

**CVA** Speaking of the Buchla synthesizer, an analog instrument, how do you feel about the difference between analog and digital noise?

**SC** Theoretically, digital can do anything analog does because it's just a matter of computational power and direction. We all say that you can replicate anything if you have enough data, and digital is data. But in general, I don't think that data alone is a measure of musical functionality, so it's not interesting to me that you might be able to do it.

It's like the difference between analog and digital recording technology. During the transition from analog tape to digital recording, I was doing an album and had two multi-track machines, one analog and one digital. There was a 32-track Mitsubishi digital machine<sup>02</sup> and a 24-track analog tape recorder. As an experiment, I would record each sound on both machines and then make a subjective, empirical decision based on just my ears. In general, the high-frequency sounds sounded better on the analog machine.

## "Obsolete" will never apply to Mitsubishi Digital Audio Equipment.

### Mitsubishi means flexibility.

We've designed our systems with you, your budgets, and the future of the entire recording industry in mind. Mitsubishi Digital Audio Systems let you start out with basic mastering equipment and build your system as the need develops. The equipment you buy today is state-of-the-art and is designed to accommodate any improvements the future may bring. For instance, we've already greatly improved the abilities of our 2-channel recorders capabilities.

### Why choose Mitsubishi? Selection.

We are one of the few companies that can offer uncompromised quality and flexibility in such a wide range of PCM equipment. From 2-channel mastering to 32-channel recorders to advanced electronic editors, Mitsubishi makes them all with the quality that you demand at very realistic prices.

### Fixed Head Design.

All Mitsubishi recorders use a fixed head design. We believe this is the link between analog and digital recording. The fixed head design makes engineering as simple as analog, allows simultaneous sound monitoring, and is much more reliable than the cassette rotary head format. The fixed head design even allows for razor blade editing, as well as sophisticated electronic editing.

Also, the fixed head design allows for a flat frequency response of up to 21 kHz (optionally) and has a more practical design than other systems. And, of course it's highly compatible with the CD digital audio disks that will be available in audio stores in the United States next year.

A Mitsubishi PCM system for your specific needs. Immediate delivery is available on most models. Leasing programs are available and we even rent systems directly for short term projects.



(02) Mitsubishi digital audio equipment advertisement, 1986

I'm not trying to say that one is better than the other; it's just a different universe. The analog is softer because it's a little bit blurrier; it doesn't have the edges that the digital one has. The digital machines have these edges because they do everything in increments,



↑  
Suzanne Ciani with Buchla synthesizer

and even if those become infinitesimally small, they're still increments and samples. So, I prefer analog.

**CVA** Many people gravitate towards analog machines and synthesizers because of their 'imperfect' qualities. It's nearly impossible to replicate the same sound or patch again. What does perfection mean to you, both as an artist and as a person?

**SC** There are different levels of perfection. I tend to be a perfectionist in my studio album work because you're in a situation you can control to the nth degree. If you get carried away with that control, though, you focus on minutia and aren't focused as much on the big picture. The issue with perfectionism is that it replaces an appreciation for the whole, the communication of the whole, with a microcosmic focus that, in the end, might not be that significant for communication. We go down those perfectionistic tunnels as almost a distraction from serving the communication.

What I love about live performances on the Buchla is that they are always different. That's what I mean when I say it's alive. It's a life form of its own. That's why we like it—it's constantly changing and not frozen. It's not a digital sample, which might be perfect—for example, a perfect sample of a perfect cello note. But those samples are dead. To be alive, it has to be in motion.

**CVA** In the documentary about your life, *A Life in Waves*<sup>03</sup> (2017), it's mentioned that after being diagnosed with breast cancer and confronting your mortality, you chose to move to California. Could you share your thoughts on death? How do death and life influence your work?



A LIFE IN  
WAVES

↑  
(03) *A Life in Waves*, 2017. Documentary cover

**SC** I see life as a continuum. An individual has a specific span, and I will die, predictably, within the next twenty years at most. Life continues but is not housed in my existence. Right now, I'm very concerned with the connections to the new generation, which will carry on expressing and continuing the evolutionary process of the work that I'm involved in.

As soon as I feel content that I've communicated what I have to say and that it's been heard, I'm happy. I don't pretend to know where it will go, but I know I'm a certain link in the chain. So, I want that link to be connected to the chain properly before I go.

**CVA** Do you think that was a realization you had dealing with your diagnosis? Or was that something that's always been on your mind as an artist and as a person?

**SC** I don't think you can separate it. Confronting one's mortality is a shock. It's shocking because if we lived our lives in constant awareness of our mortality, we'd be crazy. But it's a good thing to put into one's history.

**CVA** You released the album *The Velocity of Love*<sup>04</sup> in 1985. Can you speak to what love means to you and the relationship between love and your work?



(04) Suzanne Ciani, *The Velocity of Love*, 1985, Album cover

**SC** When I created the album, love was about a safe place. It wasn't romantic love. It wasn't a person-to-person kind of love. I like to think of love as a universal energy system or force. You don't know what it is, but know when you're in it. You know when you feel it. I like that album because it elicits whatever happens when we feel love. After all, love is connection. We often consider it a person-to-person connection, but it could be as expansive as the universe.

**CVA** I remember hearing the album for the first time, and I know what you mean. It was a safe space. When creating work today, do you still feel like you are trying to create that safe space, or was that album specific? How do you think about this while you are making new work?

**SC** Until I returned to the Buchla synthesizer seven or eight years ago, my career was rooted in classical music. Even though my first album, *Seven Waves*<sup>05</sup> (1982), was all electronic, it was based on melody. And it was based on romance—not in the sense of a relationship, romance, but in romantic music. Romantic music was rooted in the idea that feeling was the focus. The idea was to elicit human emotion.



(05) Suzanne Ciani, *Seven Waves*, 1985, Album cover

What I'm doing now is more abstract. I'm in a chapter of my creative life which could be related to the visual artist who starts out doing representative work and then goes abstract. I'm in my abstract period. But my abstract period still references my classical roots. It's just a new language. I create spaces, whether it's an emotional space or an actual immersive sonic space, which I'm doing now because I'm focused on quadraphonic, spatial movement, and the three-dimensionality of the experience of listening. Creating these spaces is fundamental and essential to me.

**CVA** What does romanticism mean to you?

**SC** It's a dangerous precipice because there are different levels of romanticism. For instance, there are cheap romance novels, romantic bodices, etc. There can be less inspiring levels of what we call romanticism. But for me, romanticism is the glue of the universe. It's the idea that you can see a connection in nature, that your surroundings speak to you and include you, that you're a part of it, and that you're connected to all you know.

**CVA** That's beautiful. Thank you.

Because of your approach to technology, you opened new pathways for future artists, musicians, and designers and gave them new ways to think. You thought about the future of music in a radically different way, and this shaped your career and the careers of others. What do you think about the future of technology in art, music, and design?

**SC** It's funny because many things I thought would happen in the future haven't happened until now. So, for me, this is almost a renaissance or a rebirth. What we're doing is we are going backward. It's so beautiful because there was a moment in history when we were about to go to a particular place, but we didn't get there. We saw the future. But the future didn't happen. Forty years later, it's happening. It wasn't a continuum. It wasn't like we got on a trajectory, and we worked our way up to this point. No. It got lost. Then we came back and reinvestigated. So, it's not a continuum; it is the finishing of something that was started and will continue.

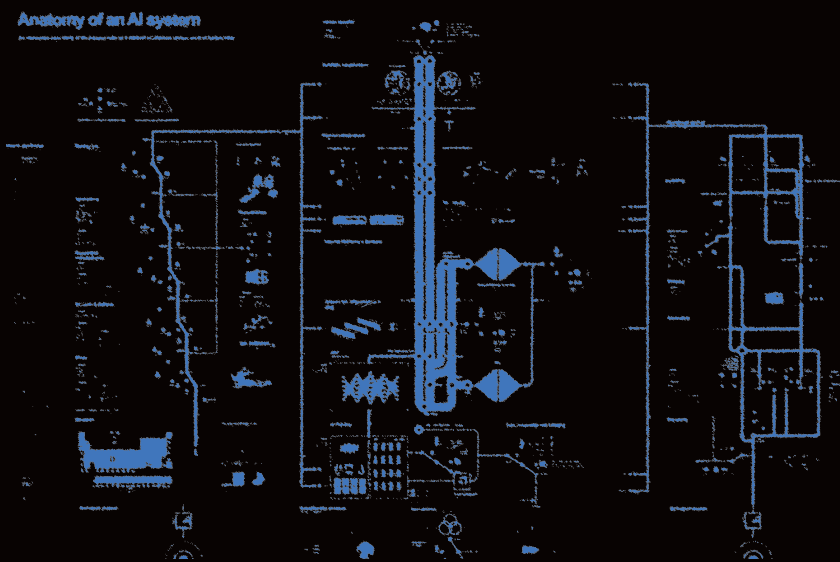




But that break happened because of technology. It happened because we got distracted by the pure technology of it, making it faster, better, and cheaper; it was all about the tools. It was not about realizing the real potential of the tools. We were just so focused on our appetites. We went from LPs to CDs to DVDs, and eventually, we became engulfed in the commercialization of technology, which became exhausting. The kids got tired and just had to say, “No, wait a minute, stop!” The rapid push towards technological innovation is why we now see a transition back to LPs and modular synthesizers. People are now interested in the interface. They are interested in how you connect to it. You can create those interfaces in many ways. For some reason, this didn’t happen until we went backward. Kids today want to turn a knob; they don’t want to look at a menu. You don’t want to choose from a list of 4,000 string sounds. It becomes exhausting. What I’m interested in working with now is the immediate satisfaction of interacting with the machine; there’s a deep joy in that.

**CVA** What I love about vinyl records, in particular, is that they force you to slow down and genuinely appreciate the album from front to back. There is no shuffle or skip. Plus, the physicality of holding the artwork adds another dimension to attaching yourself to the work. Do you think about the rapid push toward innovation with AI and large language models?

**SC** We are fascinated by the possibility of something being created without a human being generating it. You can go pretty far with that. But to have the prompts or the raw materials to foster that creation, you’re taking it from preexisting sources of creation. You’re just doing a new mix.



Kate Crawford, Vladan Joler. *Anatomy of an AI System*. 2018



Suzanne Ciani, live

Most of the world’s artistic content is recognized in the Pyramidal structure of hierarchy. In our human creative lives, we’ve consistently recognized communication levels and organized these through hierarchical structures, whether that’s Michelangelo, Leonardo Di Vinci, etc.... Now, it doesn’t mean as much because there is business attached to the value of a piece of work, even if it doesn’t have cultural or emotional meaning.

But there have always been exceptional creators. To appreciate any artistic expression, you must be able to see or hear it and take it in; this can be lost on us if we don’t have the receptors to understand it. It’s so subjective. I can play Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, and you could pass it by as if it were a news program if you aren’t paying attention if you can’t receive it. So there’s the generation and the receiver. All of that is non-literal. If I play a concert and there are 1,000 people in the room, there are a thousand different concerts. I do think that the ability to communicate on a rarified or exceptional level is a very complex dynamic.

However, the problem with artificially generated art is that it has no soul. And I know that sounds like a total dismissal, and I’m not trying to say that it doesn’t have a wonderful place in our lives. But I think that you still need the human. I’m still a romantic about that one.



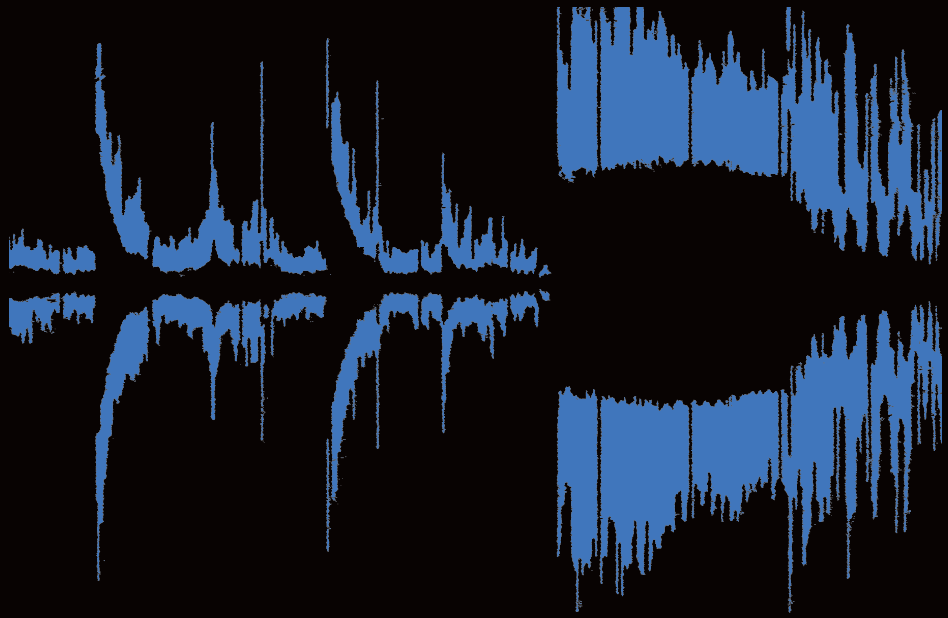
## INTERVIEW

**CVA** Do you have any advice for students or younger artists, designers, or musicians?

**SC** There's all the standard stuff, "follow your vision," "don't give up." Oh, gosh! It all sounds so trite. But what I've always functioned from is realizing that the seed of your expression is within yourself. So you must be able to access communication within yourself, and if you can communicate with yourself, you access a universal connection. Because at our deepest, uncompromised, most open, vulnerable levels with ourselves, we tap into the infinite. Do what speaks to you. Don't reference it outside for judgment. It isn't very meaningful if somebody else likes it. You should ask yourself if you have satisfied your goal. Is that what you wanted to say without excuse? Do non-apologetic work. Your self-satisfaction is the ultimate judgment.



# KEVIN MCCAUGHEY



DISPERSION  
BOOT BOYZ BIZ  
RESEARCH  
TECHNOLOGY

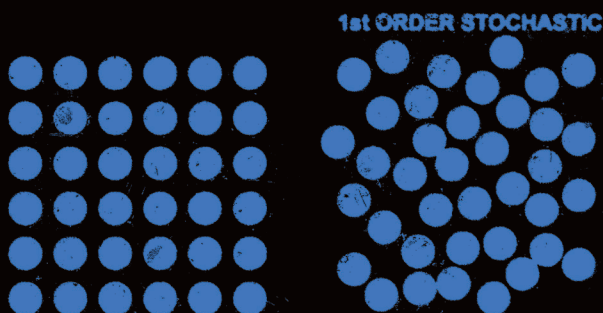
Kevin McCaughey is a designer and co-founder of Boot Boyz Biz, a research and production cooperative based in New York.

Kevin's love for music is apparent in the collection of bootleg clothing Boot Boyz Biz produces. The most intriguing thing about his practice to me is the research on each specific clothing release, and how the piece is meant to act as a container for research. His in-depth approach to clothing and graphic design has influenced my practice and how I think about design. The song he contributed to the mix was *Ghosts of My Life* by Rufige Kru aka Goldie, which he discusses further in the interview.

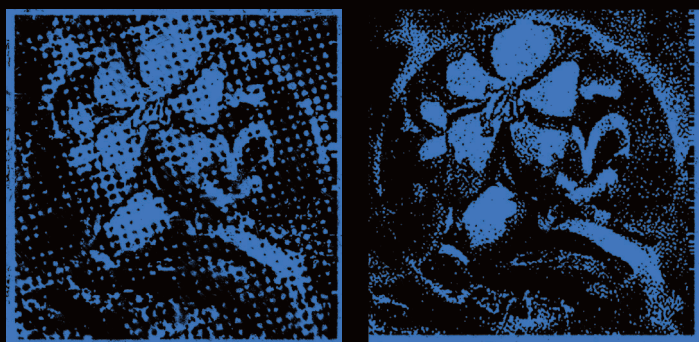
**CVA** Much of your work uses various forms of noise to communicate an idea or even love for an object. I'm thinking of both physical noise with distortion of images and noise in musicians such as Björk, Grace Jones, Yellow Magic Orchestra, and Laurie Anderson. How do you define noise, and what role does noise serve in the context of graphic design and in your practice?

**KM** "Thinking is a putting-aside, rather than a putting-in discipline, e.g., putting aside the tall grasses in order to isolate the trail into informative viewability. Thinking is FM-frequency modulation-for it results in tuning-out of irrelevancies as a result of definitive resolution of the exclusively tuned-in or accepted feed-back messages' pattern differentiability." —Buckminster Fuller

The stochastic screen (used in print processing and in music formulated by Xenakis) is the modern update to the classic halftone screen. Whereas the halftone screen is a fixed crystalline structure, the stochastic (also called FM Screen) is amorphous and undetermined up close. Its noise pattern brings more resolution but also more chaos to the image. This development resembles the metamorphosis from modernism to postmodernism.



(01) Visual representation of fixed dot vs stochastic dot spacing



Conventional halftone screening vs stochastic dispersed screening

Noise is still the rhythm of the present—we're warped by its exploding presence brought by globalization and technology. The complex task is to read through (not against) noise and collect the things

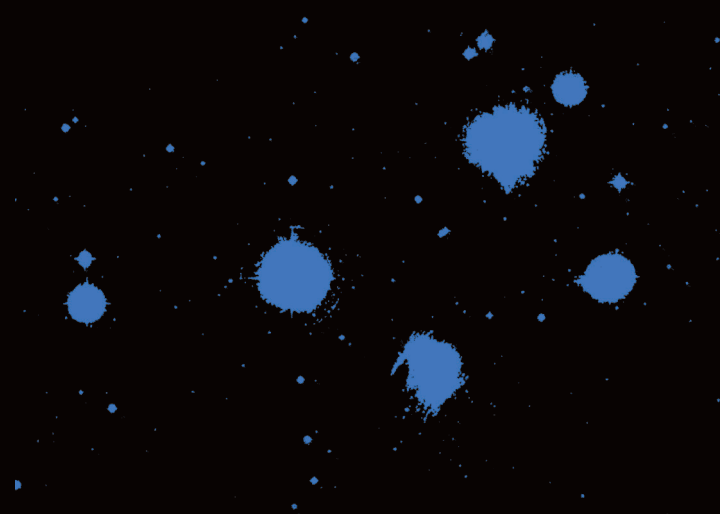
that empower us, not exhaust and dehumanize us. What empowers us is not what 'feels good' but what challenges our current vision of what's possible and illuminates an alternative—it starts with a new way of reading noise. We need noise (information) control to function.

Alexander Kluge speaks of the task of developing the 'dragonfly eye'. Holding many points of view simultaneously. Nodes that interconnect unevenly. You have to continually speak 'through' noise to connect with the fragmented nonlinear, multi-perspective world. Villem Flusser talks about how our time is experienced as a pile of sand, not unlike a field of noise. In this sandpile every grain of sand is a historical event—evidence we depend on for decision making. We construct how we see the world based on what grains make up the pile. Its form reflects its parts. Is this sandcastle surrounded by a moat of power or are others outside of power allowed to dismantle its failings and determine its shape?

Noise can lead the pathway to inquiry—its obscuring power ends the automatism of perception, slowing it down and complicating meanings, and forces the imagination to fill in the blanks, disrupting dominant patterns of thought.

I'm thinking of the image of noise and the image of how stars appear to us in the night sky. It's incomprehensible as a fragmented whole, but once you start making connections between bright points (what's meaningful, useful) a legible picture emerges from noise.

The common thread between the artists you mention is that they resist specialization and refuse to be pinned down by disciplinary strictures (forced to one constellation) and embrace a kind of shape-shifting practice, jumping from constellation to constellation, putting the large field of noise into an interconnected view. This constellation-building practice gets us closer to understanding noise not as meaningless fragments but as pieces of a complex 'whole' that are interdependent—even though in reality it remains in 'pieces'.



Pleiades constellation from the Digitized Sky Survey

**CVA** One of my favorite tees from you is the Rhythm Prince<sup>02</sup> tee, which is a tee that pays homage to the drum machine the synth-punk Suicide used. I have a deep love for this tee (outside of my love for Suicide) because it acted as an educational tool, and created relationships between technology and art. How do you see the relationship between technology and art in your practice? Do you have any speculations about what that looks like in the next decade, and will that impact the thinking behind your output?



(02) "Rhythm Prince" crewneck sweatshirt, Boot Boyz Biz

**KM** The aim is to put this relationship between technology and creativity into clear view. Highlighting the means of production, the 'how' of making, not just the 'who' and 'what' on the surface. Bringing to light that creatives are never working alone. We need tools to mediate and our messages are largely determined by their potential. Its liberatory potential depends on how it's used and for whom it benefits. "Technology is the spark that ignites the powder of nature."  
—Walter Benjamin

Don't forget, clothing and screen printing are technologies. All mediums are, as extensions of human abilities. Their full potential has yet to be witnessed. They communicate through echos and appear on a different layer/order of reality—an imaginative one. The graphic tee cannot work socially without being worn (though the market and the internet complicate this) and our bodies can only produce limited visual communication—a symbiotic agreement is made.

In the work we are dependent on so many processes and technologies—from Adobe to our Vastex Printing Press, the blank t-shirt distributor, and USPS logistics (and many more in between). An understanding of the whole system that you participate in gives you a heightened economic and political perspective. You realize that you are "in business" with a lot of people you wish you were not. This consciousness allows you to make more responsible decisions.

#### RESEARCH TECH

Information continues to explode onto the internet if you know where to look. But things are also disappearing. Google obviously sucks now so people will hopefully start to create new alternative knowledge resources.



Vastex manual screen-printing press

PRODUCTION TECH

Screen printing is a big business and slowly evolving technology but the recent developments appear to be easing the complexity. New tech that eliminates most chemicals involved in screen-burning could potentially make it easier to print from home, allowing for new experimentation. Print-on-demand is big and a huge negative for the world, and people increasingly sense the poor quality—which could spark a demand for hand-prints.

**CVA** In *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord says that “society which eliminates geographical distance reproduces distance internally as spectacular separation.” With globalization, and access to information, and commodities what is the role in individuality in regards to clothing? How do you see graphic tees in creating separation in the individual?

**KM** “We are at any moment those who separate the connected or connect the separate.” —Georg Simmel

Tees in the wild condition us. They link us and repel us. Acknowledging this is a redemption of the ugly term ‘streetwear’. It’s training through looking. Architecture and advertising have a similar semiconscious effect on us. The making of our visual landscape is a making of ourselves; that means we can realize new forms of connectivity. However, we also make our own passive alienation. To realize a less separated relationship to the world and each other doesn’t mean just putting out positive vibes but making objects politically.

In this commodity culture, we have to play with the contradictions for creative advantage, but we try to eliminate as many as we can without sabotaging the economy of the project. The main contradiction being the commodity tethered to education and having to sell something for our project to survive while also providing social value. We produce politically by organizing as a co-operative and we limit what we produce to our direct abilities—eliminating waste by meeting direct demand and printing DIY to eliminate alienated production. This way we never have to ‘sell’.

Images that instrumentalize identity lead to an atomized, tribalized engagement with the world that continues the logic of capitalism and private property. Tees certainly can participate in the petty “narcissism of small differences.” But this attitude has to be recognized as the immature stage of engagement with social objects. If we approach images as tools for connecting with others, they can open up a new kind of collectivity. The image landscape has exploded via technology, and graphic tees are a mediator for temporarily pinning down forms and ideas to be shared and discussed. Its virtues derive from their ability to create a unique kind of noise that oscillates between the personal and collective, subjective and objective, a blurring that speaks to modernity.

The tee is powerful in space, as a ‘proxemic’ actor (Edward T. Hall). One with potential is one that activates all of the social spaces



↑  
“Faucheux Book Club” crewneck sweatshirt, Boot Boyz Biz





Group 1 — 20

**BOOT BOYZ BIZ**



"Group 1-20 Archive Blanket" 2 layer woven jacquard blanket, Boot Boyz Biz



(personal, social, and public) where its legibility changes and unrolls as one draws closer or farther. The point is to create contact that wouldn't happen otherwise. The tee can be a kind of 'amulet' that can improve our spirit and hold our attention within the whirlwind—batteries storing energy for unexpected use—a counter-spectacle, that shocks us to wake us up from complacency.

PUBLIC SPACE



Edward T Hall, "Proxemics" diagram, 1963

Personality is important, and tees can play a role in its development. The association of multiple free personalities is the ideal of culture. The merging of ideas and disciplines on a tee could promote the natural merging of personalities into a newly connected network. Here the object promotes cooperation.



"One big union" cartoon by the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917

Alone in the crowd becomes a socialized space.... A Brechtian refunctioning, transforming the spectacular crowd into an educational/intellectual/emotional festival. In Debord's world, this is close to "détournement"—using the everyday spectacle for different means. A dream that wakes us up from the dream of the status quo. The sandwich man wearing an advertisement (still the dominant form of

graphic tees) makes up the spectacle of commodities; a different kind of broadcasted message can make for a counter-spectacle of different hopes, dreams, attitudes, ideas.

Images of the past, left incomplete, can be part of the alternative plan going forward.



↑  
"Sandwich board man" representing advertising

**CVA** When making a new item, it seems like there is a thorough amount of research and preparation that happens before the output is clear, and a lot of the research does not make it into the final output. (Not sure this would even be possible considering how much research goes into each product). Can you speak a little more about what parts of the research are turned into the final output, and what makes you focus on specific graphic forms?

**KM** The research is often sparked by a simple urge to share something that's impacted our lives recently or in the past, but we give ourselves space to complicate this singular subject through an undetermined digging and stitching process (organization!). On the journey to collect materials and organize a layout, unexpected material takes us on productive detours where we embrace expanded and serendipitous connections that unlock something new when illuminated in conjunction with our initial subject. The research is really an uncovering of a wider labyrinth of connections that isn't visible until the pathways are marked, compounding and revealing a new web of information.



↑  
Jean Piaget's office

How we select is an intuitive process of picking and choosing like anything else. The more you think with images the better you develop a sense of what images make an impact.



Looking and Seeing - 1: Pattern and Shape, 1964

A tee works when its message penetrates a viewer's image of the world. The arrangement has to tell a coherent story, but it requires new pictorial reading that's nonlinear and more ambiguous. New intentional relationships between images need to be interpreted. Our moment of "noise" (as discussed earlier in the text) has conditioned us to experience time polychronically the ability to attend multiple events simultaneously. The multiple significance of signs on top of signs is becoming a comfortable pastime. For most it still requires a 'double take' taking a viewer out of automatic perception and activating thought.

This is the language of film and also of lowly advertising, the front page of newspapers, 19th-century "catchpennies," ancient illuminated manuscripts, and emblem books from the renaissance (all ancestors of the poster and t-shirt). They share a common literary method: "headline, image, caption." By tapping into this simple tripartite visual rhythm (bass, strings, vocal in music) one can generate infinite complexity. It's a starting scheme to be further developed and later turned on its head.

32. ANDREAE ALCIATI  
Virtuti fortuna comes XVIII.



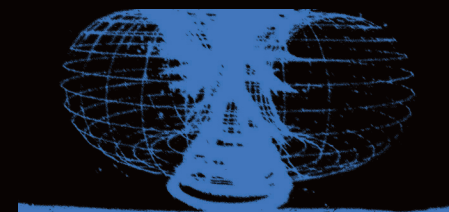
Angustus implatis gemmas caducei, alit,  
Inter Amaltheae cornua relictus adit.  
Tollentes sic mente viros, fundiq; peritos  
Inducit us rerum copia nulla beos.

Emblem book page Alciato, Andrea

Above all the arrangement has to activate the intellectual and emotional, the rational and irrational. What graphics make it onto an object corresponds to its potential for creating situations as a worn sign that activates any of these responses. The content and medium have to be in sync, which means legibility across multiple distances in social settings. If the material is too banal, novel or illegible it has less of a chance for being noticed. This is all obvious. An effective way to generate notice is to meet people where they're at by showing something at once familiar and unfamiliar, where the new and unknown springs from the already known. Referencing what people already expect from t-shirts (a 70-year history to draw from) can act as a Trojan horse for introducing new forms and ideas. When something's 'slightly off' people take notice. A simple "logo flip" is the simplest version of this. Shock is the quickest way to affect someone's nervous system but it is not sustainable (unless you're the New York Post) and people are most generous and open to a reading when they're at ease and understand at least part of a visual puzzle right away. This is also a strategy for building knowledge through constructive links. Tees can then become gateways into the details we have on the website and become a mnemonic device or a kind of emblem of compressed thought—a mental map, a sigil, a tool for reflection and memory. A diagram of complex data that accelerates understanding and reveals routes for deeper exploration. The shirt explodes inwards spiritually and outwards socially.



John Dee Sigillum Dei



Morphic fields

ROOM<sup>4</sup>

Visual  
Studies &  
Global  
Imagination

Susan Buck-Morss

PhD Lecturer, AHRC Research Centre for Studies  
in Surrealism and its Legacies, University of Essex,  
University of Manchester, and Tate





**CVA** Along with the writing, there will also be a mixtape pressed to vinyl. I'm asking influences of my work to contribute a portion of audio to the vinyl. If you'd be willing, is there any song or audio recording that you think would best represent your work? Or, any audio you're currently inspired by that you'd like to add to the mix?



(03) Rufige Kru - *Ghosts Of My Life / Terminator II*, 1993, CD

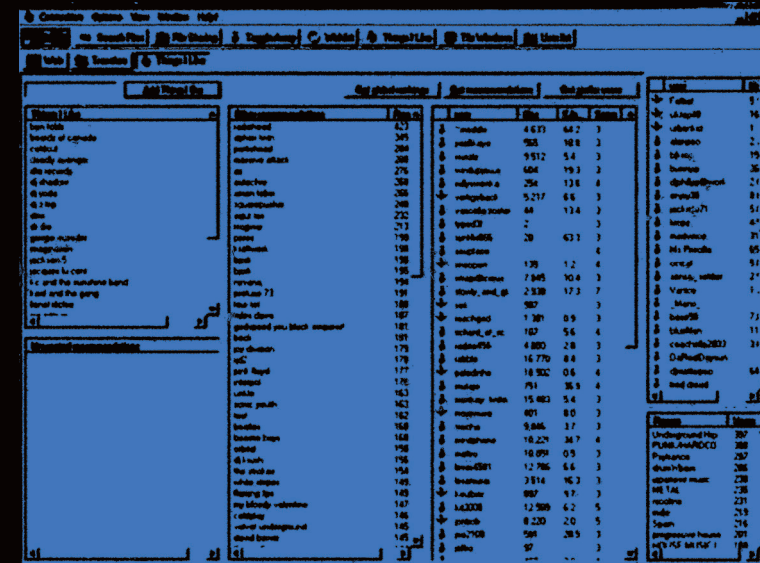
**KM** Rufige Kru aka Goldie—*Ghosts of My Life* (1993)<sup>03</sup>  
 This is a guiding spirit. Mark Fisher talked about this one too. It is so emblematic of this drive we share—to renew the best of the past (here it's Goldie updating Japan's "Ghosts" from 1981), bringing it into constellation with the present (Goldie's Jungle generation of the early 90s). It's a blueprint for using the past as raw material for making something completely new without diminishing the truth content of the past. A progressive recycling, not impotent melancholic nostalgia. Here the past and present are on equal footing and in symbiotic relation. To produce something like this requires a responsible translation. This doesn't mean any kind of loyalty or literal translation of the original, but it requires an ability to understand two worlds, multiple perspectives and languages simultaneously and see how and where they fit together to make unforeseen sparks. This track is history transformed—made compact and intelligible to a new generation raised on new sounds with new tools. Writing on top of history, Throughout the track is an acute sense of danger anticipating pain... but glimmers of hope manage to explode through at 3:04 for about 30 seconds. This is us sifting through trash, the deep storm of information, and by miracle bringing a pearl or two back up to the surface to share with all.

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**CVA** You have created a unique path in your work. Through Boot Boyz Biz, you have shown designers that it is possible to create a research-based practice that is educational but also very

public. Your work escapes the walls of academia. Through almost seductive aesthetics, you have created educational tools that spark conversation. What are your thoughts on the relationship between academia and the public sphere?

**KM** My path is marked by a very "unofficial" education, a self-education first inherited from the surface (popular bourgeois sphere), and later in my teens within alternative spaces like online forums, late 2000s social media, blogs and p2p sites with chat rooms. In those spaces you understand the real potentials of file-sharing combined with discussion (everyone's library is a unique constellation), which becomes a mode of simultaneous building and sharing—a super productive mode for learning that rivals any "official education." There you learn to freely express and play with language (before followers existed). What's missing are any kind of standards for good writing. These contingent spaces are organically constructed instead of casted like a season of the Real World. Engaging with a thousand arguments about why X band is great or X band sucks becomes a fruitful struggle for constructing knowledge (going beyond the immediate subject).



(04) Soulseek, a peer-to-peer file-sharing network

The history of music is open for discussion and you learn what's good with enthusiastic (sometimes toxic) people working to discover for themselves what's good under their own direct control. But these spaces are transient, so the aim since then has been to seek out or develop similar and updated frameworks for continuing to add to this great discussion of what's valuable (information war). Aesthetics are involved in convincing people why something matters (rhetoric, propaganda). Bridging the URL with the IRL was a next step which led me to self-publishing and design.

As my interests evolved beyond music (into design, art, philosophy etc) this method for self-constructing and presenting knowledge continued, but I found the search for good images and media from other disciplines located in a different landscape well protected or unavailable online. Meaning it's unavailable to most others too. At a certain point of digging you hit proverbial paywalls or an institutional gatekeeper that denies access to quality material that would help improve a growing conception of the world for many. Access denied (due to lack of economic or social capital) requires alternative methods to reach an objective. This involves smuggling—rescuing and liberating what's been locked up or hidden is the primary action. Teenage experiences of ripping unheard records and uploading them to Soulseek is close to the current method of organizing found material onto 'objects-to-think-with.' The movement of mp3s circulating on networks is analogous to shirts moving through city streets: people log-on and log-off, go out and go home—when the space is live and shared, information is allowed to flow.



Guy Debord, *The Naked City*, 1957

There's a different conception of the "gatekeeper" that I'm drawn to—one with the responsibility to keep doors open: between disciplines, institutions, and to all differing worldviews. Every institution (and person) is determined by what ideas are able to be smuggled in and out of its system. Closed off institutions and specialized individuals are doomed to decay. With open doors and a flow of information, new forms emerge. The internet has given us keys to previously sealed off rooms but we still need direction to find their entrances.

History can be told in academic papers as well as in images: which one has a higher probability of being read? Condensed forms don't have to be of lesser quality or impact. Any medium and tool has the ability to drop its therapeutic or entertainment function and become one in the service of education and socialization. The goal isn't to replace the academic text, but to lead a person into it that

would never encounter it otherwise, and then carry on its ideas as an educational beacon. Tees work as potent tools because they're in touch with the emotions of modern life—the desire to share signs with hopes of building new associations and knowledge with others through values in common. Illuminating signs unroll into a new use value, newly organized images lead to newly organized people (who organizes the images and for what purpose is most important). The meaningful, surprising interactions mediated by these tools help knowledge stick and generate further inquiry. As long as the 'official education' is reserved for a select few, these unofficial objects like Tees will provide a similar temporary scaffolding that ignites a process of interiorizing and socializing knowledge.



Franz Kafka "Gatekeeper" from *The Trial*

**CVA** Do you have any advice for younger designers, artists or people in the world?

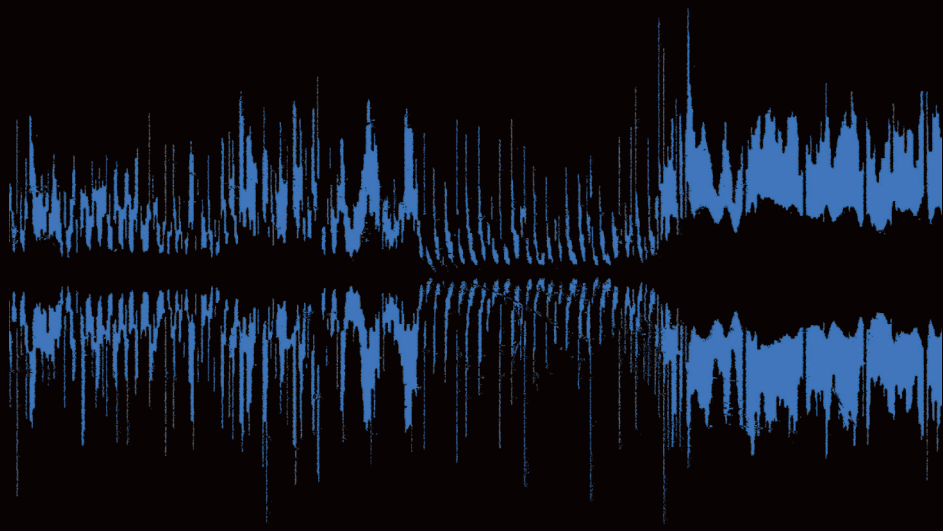
**KM** Remember that even if you're working alone, you're always drawing on a community and a history.

Experiment and decide for yourself (the nice way of saying "f around and find out.") Discovering "what you do" actually does play a part.

Embrace and take in the whole of life, then give energy (whatever form) back to it. Stirring others to work and enjoyment is the aim. Design without thought is a dead thing.

Continually cultivate a balance between "Live Laugh Love" and a "Ruthless Criticism of All That Exists" without diminishing either.

# MITCH PAONE



# DIA STUDIO MUSIC INSPIRATION FLOW

Mitch Paone is the creative director of New York and Chamonix-based creative agency DIA Studio. DIA Specializes in corporate and cultural visual identity systems, graphic design, and typography. DIA's signature use of motion and generative tools has led to significant collaborations with clients such as Squarespace, Balenciaga, Pinterest, Nike, Saint Laurent, Apple, and many more. Additionally, Mitch lectures and leads workshops at conferences and universities worldwide. Most notably, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL), Pratt Institute and the School for Visual Arts in New York.

Mitch recently held positions at Haute école d'art et de design, Genève (HEAD – Genève) and The Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK). In his courses, he implemented DIA's creative process into the academic curriculum, specifically focusing on motion and generative tools in a graphic design context. Mitch and DIA studio partner Meg Donohoe are AGI (Alliance Graphique Internationale) members. Mitch is also a performing jazz pianist, composer, and type designer beyond DIA and academic endeavors.

I first discovered Mitch's work when I was an undergraduate student finishing my degree at UCLA. Mitch gave a lecture on kinetic typography and I was blown away by Mitch's unique approach. He was thinking about typography the same way that many musicians think about their instrument. Typography for Mitch was about the input and the process. Since then I've looked up to his work tremendously and have given his talks and lectures as part of the supplemental material I give to students when teaching motion design. For the mix that comes with this publication, Mitch contributed a piece of his original jazz music titled *Resolution* which I felt complimented the interview well.





DIA Studio identity for Chaumont Biennale, 2021

**CVA** Noise is interesting because it's almost impossible to clearly define. For instance, there are noise algorithms, psychological noise, noise music, etc. Some similarities might be this idea of the unpredictable, but it's open to interpretation. One example would be a noise generator, and the key idea is the unpredictable nature of the algorithm.

I know you are a jazz musician as well as a visual designer, and jazz specifically has a unique angle on noise, because of the improv nature of the medium. What are your thoughts on noise, both as a musician and as a designer?

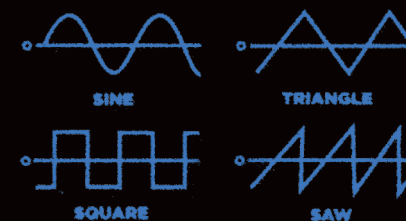
**MP** Noise is the particles and waves that I'm being inundated with. It is actual atoms moving in the air that our ears respond to. So it is something that is felt by our ears. Maybe that's more of a physics definition. But that's the same thing musically. Our ears are dealing with something harmonically or in dissonance. It essentially depends on how the waves are lining up within our ears and whether that's pleasing or not, as it's the organization of those atoms or particles we're reacting to that constitutes noise in its multitude of forms.

Musically, that's why we have scales and harmonics, because that's tuned to human hearing. We've developed whole theories around certain chords, etc. And then, huge art forms have been developed because of those theories that are present in music in general, whether that's composition, jazz, classical, etc. It's wild to think that essentially, at a certain point, we were cavemen. Then we created this massive language that tries to define sound in a certain way.

**CVA** What do you think about visual noise? DIA has been posting some work recently of textural elements that some would call noise. How does visual noise influence you as a designer?

**MP** It's pretty much a visual direct translation. If you think of things that are more harmonic or melodic, there is more organization in the rhythm of what's happening visually. There's a system there. There's some sort of pattern that's happening.

If you're familiar with working in 3D software or generative design, you can play with different noise parameters to create a certain feeling out of the work being more symmetrical, asymmetrical, and random. That's essentially the same as if I'm playing with waveforms on a synthesizer<sup>01</sup> to develop a sound. It's just the visual version of it. I see them directly as a one-to-one equal. It's the visual translation of how we see things. Although in a design sense, it's more abstract, and musically, it's a little easier to understand. If I'm creating a visual system or visual identity, it's more complex than something like a saw wave on a synthesizer. But we're still getting at the same thing, pattern recognition and development.



(01) Common waveforms found on synthesizers

**CVA** In your interviews, you describe yourself as a musician first and then a designer. In many ways, I think of myself in the same way. Being a musician has translated into the way I think about design work. For instance, if I have an After Effects file or a Processing sketch, it feels like I'm playing an instrument.

There's a quote from the professor Sister Corita Kent in her *Ten Rules for Students and Teachers*. Rule number 8 says, "Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They are different processes."

DIA's process is described as input → improv or experimentation → output. You're a jazz pianist, and part of playing jazz is creating music in the moment and not having time to analyze. Can you speak about the difference between making something and then analyzing it?

**MP** From a creative standpoint, that's the ultimate goal. To find a space where you can freely create without criticism. And if you're coming from a music standpoint, especially in jazz, it's crucial that you don't think too much about what you're playing. You're reacting to the moment in time. It forces you to be in that space. Therefore because I'm a musician first, it allows me to get into a sort of psychological space, if I'm iterating in design or working on art.

There's another quote I go to from studying Eastern Philosophy and Zen in college. "Analysis leads to paralysis." And it's true. As soon as you start to compare something you're doing to others, or you're worried about some technical aspect when you're making work, it



freezes the flow of creativity, and that is an extremely important thing.

I talk about the input, and output, before and after. But that “before” is the practice. That’s the time when you work everything you need to before it’s time to get down and make something. That’s your taste, your intuition, all that stuff that goes into just how you react to things.

That voice in your mind that is providing critical thoughts should ultimately vanish during that point of the best creative moment. As a musician, it’s easier to do that. With design, it’s harder because you can be in a judgment mode if you make a composition. The flow of time during music performance isn’t there. So that needs to be forced. It’s easier to see, “Oh, it’s not working.” But there are other ways to iterate in a certain way that gets you through some of those roadblocks.

With students, I deal with all of these things. I tell them, rather than trying to move shit around on a poster to make it look good, just make a hundred posters fast. You’re going to discover a few in there that have what you were looking for because you weren’t thinking too much about it. You’re just getting in the flow, just making stuff rather than analyzing and trying to make it perfect all the time. It never works. You’re never going to hit that “thing” if you’re trying to analyze it.

So I think what Sister Corita Kent said is spot on. But that’s hard. It’s a difficult thing to do.

**CVA** What has teaching taught you about design, and how has it influenced your practice?

**MP** Teaching is fascinating because you have to treat every individual student as an individual person. I can’t apply a methodology in a universal way over everyone. I have to react to each person differently, feel them out, and see what’s going to make them tick or not. So it does require a very intimate understanding or relationship to be developed with the student. And even if you have a large class, you still have to do it. There are no shortcuts. And it requires an incredible amount of patience.

Everyone’s skills are different, their interests are different. So it forces you to have to get to know the person well and to work with them in a way that’s going to make them feel excited about doing the work, and then make the work related to stuff they’re interested in. We can all make good design and typography but ultimately, that’s just design. I try to ask students, what else are you interested in? What other things can get you pumped up about a design project? For instance, if you’re into food, music, or photography, find what’s interesting to you, and then merge that into your design work. It ultimately becomes more personal, and more interesting.

Patience is key. Even with the team at DIA, it’s just how we work together. Everybody is very different. It’s understanding how to support the strengths of the individual as much as possible, to give the best performance, to get them to the space where they can not be



↑  
Mitch Paone at KIKK Festival, 2021

critical of themselves and make work. That's the role of a teacher, and it is very similar to the role of a creative director. You're just trying to create an atmosphere for people to do the best they can.

**CVA** That's amazing, thank you. During some of your public lectures, you talk about the hundreds of outputs for a project DIA will create before deciding on which ones to show clients. There's this huge array of different types of graphic forms and ways to treat type and movement.

What's the process of deciding what sticks after living in this creative flow? How do you treat being analytical? And at what point is the work "finished"?

**MP** It depends on the client and the project. I don't want to oversimplify things, but let's say that there are two client types. There are branding jobs for clients that have little understanding of the process and you do have to do a lot more education. You have to mock stuff up. You have to make stuff look finished. Then, there are clients with their internal creative team.

In our case, a lot of our projects have creative teams on the other side. Most of the big tech companies we work with have creative departments with really talented people. So it gives us the luxury of being more open. In that case, we're very transparent. It's like, "Hey here are some buckets and territories of exploration." Those creative teams know the company better than we do. So they can see how these things could potentially be applied. Then, we just have a larger discussion over a big body of work that consists mostly of sketches, little iterations, and unpolished pieces. But also we have trust in them that they can see that these things can come to life into a very practical matter.

If you don't have the luxury of a creative team to work with on the client side, we have to internally decide; "Okay, here are the directions out of this mess that we feel the strongest about." Less than a day before the presentation of the actual work needs to go, that decision is made. So what we want to do is iterate right up until we don't have enough time to mock stuff up. And then, really, it's very fast. Collectively we decide which ones are interesting, and put them into a presentation. There are never a ton of meetings. All of the decisions happen right before the mockup stage, because essentially what you're forcing yourself to do is to just let your gut decide.

If you give yourself too much time, you start to overthink it. It just needs to feel good. And those decisions happen quickly. If you have technical chops and good typographic skills, it's pretty easy to make good-looking stuff. But it's not easy to make things impactful or strong, because you'd have to go through an iterative process to get to that point. We can always fall back on a grid and some good typefaces. But even there, the selection of a typeface is crucial, you go through thousands of options before one feels right. Ultimately though, final decisions need to be quick for it to feel right.



DIA Studio for MoMA's *It Wasn't Written* symposium, 2018



**CVA** Thanks, that makes sense. I've seen two different versions of outputs that DIA gives clients (but I'm sure there's more.) One output is the more "classic" approach, where DIA gives clients finished rendered videos, or templates to make and create these videos. The other output involves creating custom tools, which then the client uses to create their work. I'm thinking specifically about the work you did for Space 10,<sup>02</sup> where you gave the client a tool that can render custom videos for assets. The tool you created reminded me of a synthesizer, where there are certain parameters that a musician needs to be able to change to create a specific sound, but there are also parameters that the manufacturer made concrete, meaning the musician cannot change the function.



(02) Proprietary generative tool for SPACE10's visual identity by DIA Studio

Can you speak a little bit about creating tools for clients, the limitations that you set on those tools, and how much flexibility you give someone versus how much is contained?

**MP** Design systems are essentially a set of rules and parameters. If you look at brand guidelines, for example, you could theoretically turn that into code and create a system that can generate the majority of the stuff. This has been practically and theoretically in my head even ten years ago. I was thinking, "Why do we have 200 pages of shit in a PDF when you could write code to automate most of these tasks?" It's all kind of ridiculous that that's still the norm.

The design that I find interesting asks the question, "What can you do a lot with... if you only have a little amount of stuff?" For instance, if we just have well-considered typography, we don't need to add illustration, photography, or art direction. We don't need all of that because if we can do a lot with a little and then apply certain rules to that, then it does generate a consistent aesthetic.

There's this idea of a system that's in mind: "A + B + C = this." Then you decide, okay, these are the things you don't want the client to change, and these are the things that you give them allowance to change. We're trying to find where the flexibility in the system still feels consistent when it's generated but also dynamic and interesting. After that, it's really about setting guardrails. So it's us testing

and playing to see how much freedom we allow the system to have before it breaks and becomes abstract. Limitations on typography and color are the two things that you can lock systems down with. For example, suppose you set limitations on color or x-height on a typeface but leave everything else open. In that case, you'll still generate some consistency through the exports because you've already set those limitations.

We find that balance through testing. It starts with prototyping. We have extensive experience using 3D and animation software. So, we can create renders and create the basis for what a generative tool can look like. I can make three different renders, with variations on specific parameters such as type size, leading, and color. After that, you can apply those variables to code and create a more accessible and playful system. Some fun examples include mapping it to a camera, putting images to effect it, and using noise; it can all become endless once you have the core idea sorted.

It's a synthesizer, really, essentially, that is what it is. Export. Hit render. Make a poster. It's fast. It's hard to get there. But then there's practicality to it. When talking about client work and branding, branding is a production problem for big companies because they have this design system and need to produce it. And they need it done fast. Internal design teams aren't trying to create a new challenge every time. They're trying to get an ad out quickly because they are usually strapped for time. So, if you have tools or templates and things built for them, it makes their life a lot easier, and it's much more valuable than supplying a large PDF to decipher.

**CVA** One of the most interesting things about DIA to me is the research aspect of the company. Can you speak about the time allotted for research and development and the time spent directly working on client projects?

**MP** We're four people. It's been roughly that same formation for nearly eleven years. Because of this, we can handle the ebb and flow of work and the cycles that come with our line of work. When we have downtime, we don't have to seek new business like big agencies actively do because we are small and have very little overhead. So, during downtime, we support research and development when we're not working on client projects.

So it usually starts with Meg and I kicking off some of these thoughts like, "Hey, we should explore a particular idea, and then Deanna and Daniel will begin to explore and look into methods. Right now, we're playing with a lot of OpenGL shaders and experimenting with new languages outside of JavaScript. And for me, it's the same thing. I'm working on typefaces and then using those as a place to explore new techniques, whether it's in 3D After Effects or other animation software. So, I always play with typefaces, even when I'm not working on client work. It's kind of non-stop.





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DIA Studio for Nike Basketball, 2016

**CVA** On that topic, you're also a type designer, having started the foundry Monkey Type. Can you speak a little bit about that and how you got into that? Also, as someone who's so well known for their work in motion design and animation, what is your mental process for designing a typeface? Are you already thinking of how it is going to move?

**MP** When I was studying, I was super interested in being able to draw typography. Looking at the work of DIA, the typographic component is probably the most crucial part of our projects. Typography reigns supreme over everything else. It's one of the most critical decisions on our projects. Creating my typefaces was just a natural progression; I can't find what I'm looking for aesthetically in the millions of fonts, so why can't I draw my own?

That was a question that started in 2016. I drew Banana Grotesque<sup>03</sup> then and it was finished in 2018. Monkey Type started as sort of a joke. This other designer based in New York named Philipp Hubert was eating with me in Chinatown and we were just like, "Let's call this type foundry Monkey Type." He was just joking but I took it more seriously and was like, "Yeah, fuck it. We're going to do this."



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(03) Monkey Type, Banana Grotesk, 2018

Over time, I have developed twelve fully finished typefaces and many more in the works, anything from serifs to sans serifs, etc. All of this has come out of trying to find something that doesn't exist in other libraries or catalogs of other foundries. On top of that, I moved to Switzerland. And I realized, there's a whole different approach to type in this country where it's so fundamental to the graphic designer that it's in the fundamentals of their studies. People are drawing typefaces just for a poster, which I think is almost ridiculous. But it's natural that the designer is also the type designer in Switzerland.

I found it interesting because from the start to the finish of the work, you can be in charge of the entire development process. Then I kind of took it upon myself to just learn. I was teaching at ECAL and I just bothered the type design teachers for the entire time I was there and showed them stuff. Aurèle Sack was around, the guys from Lineto



were around, and the guys from All Caps were teacher's assistants at the time. So I was like "Hey, guys, check out this shit. What do you think? Give me notes...?" I was acting like a curious student the whole time even though I was there to teach. That experience added another level of refinement to my type design practice.

**CVA** In the last ten years, you are one of the leading figures that created major paths that weren't there. If they were there, they weren't on the scale that they are now, and this is in large part due to the success of DIA.

Do you have any ideas of what the future of animation or typography might look like one year from now and ten years from now?

**MP** If you listen to some of my talks around 2017–18, I said this would be the norm. People were rejecting it and calling it trendy, but I was stating that this would be normal because our mode of communication is all digital. It's on your phone. So, it's just natural that graphic design transfers itself into new mediums. The history of graphic design is essentially connected to how type is being printed, and this is no different.

As far as the future goes, AI will have a tremendous impact on it. When we were working with Squarespace, we started to develop generative tools for visuals. Now, it has become more normal to create these sorts of tools. The automation of these animation tasks is going to be easier and more democratized. When we develop tools for clients like Space 10, it's democratizing many skills that are very difficult to do if you are an After Effects animator or Cinema 4D person.

The role of creative direction is going to be interesting. Suppose I don't understand aspects that go into a project, such as music, type design, animation, etc. It may be challenging for me to train AI to develop something that's going to work. But if you have this understanding of all these things going into it, it's easy to talk to Chat GPT and have you develop a piece of software that's doing something for you because you know the language, you understand the logic of the code. You have this fundamental understanding of these things. Then, it's easier to work with AI to develop stuff. I think the future is that rather than having a team of specialists, there will be more AI integration in creating these things.

I worked in commercial motion graphics from 2005 to 2013 before we became more of a branding studio. I have a lot of friends in that field who are doing 3D modeling and animation. If you saw the Sora videos<sup>04</sup> that are coming out from Open AI, they're all fucking freaked out. And rightfully so, because there is a sense of the craftsman of the work that will start to be automated. But there always is going to be the creative director. The taste and the input are always going to be necessary. Someone will have to control it and train it to do what you need to do. So, to me, that's the future of typography. That's the future of graphic design.



(04) Preview of video generated with Sora by Open AI, 2024

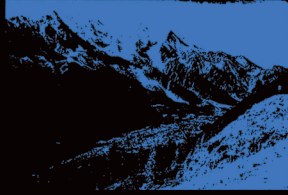
From what I've seen, illustration and image generation will get hit first because, from what I understand, bezier and vector formats are a lot harder for language models and training. It's moving much slower than image creation. Just seeing what's happening in the last three to five years, it's hard to know what it will look like ten years from now. It might be simple: you type in a prompt with some references, and you can generate any type of work. It's kind of scary to think about that.

**CVA** I'm with you. Recently, I've been doing projects that use camera data to move variable types with wrist tracking. It's interesting to think about the interactive component of typography with everyone carrying around a camera. What are your thoughts on the interactive element of typography? What does that look like in the future?

**MP** This may be something I'm more pessimistic about. I think something like the Apple Vision<sup>05</sup> is fucking absurd. You are alienating yourself from reality. You have a lens attached to your face. I think it will take a long time to adopt those formats. Also, though, I didn't grow up on the screen. I got Facebook right in college, so my perspective might be different. I've always been critical of some of this stuff. Still, as generations continue to integrate the screen right out of the womb, it might feel more natural for future generations to interact with a design like that.



(05) Apple Vision Pro, Apple 2024



↑  
(06) Chamonix, France

I still think there's a beauty of not having that shit around and just being in nature; I mean, I live in Chamonix<sup>06</sup> in the mountains. Being immersed in nature is super important to me, so I would be devastated to be in a world where everybody's just attached to technology. But in a way, we already are; I mean, if you walk around, what you'll see is people just locked into fucking TikTok all day. It worries me.

So on that topic, to each their own. But I hope some people care about being in nature and without technology attached to them. That being said, there will undoubtedly be people locked into the matrix. There's no way around it.

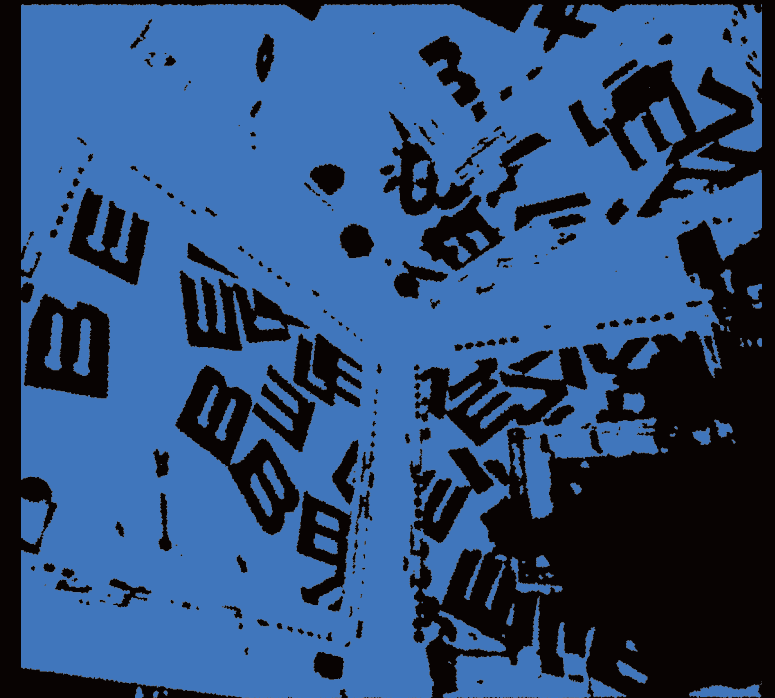
**CVA** I agree. These tools have a lot of potential for some beautiful things, but they're a double-edged sword.

On another topic, I know you're a huge fan of Herbie Hancock and jazz music in general. Can you mention a couple of albums or songs that inspired you as a designer and as a creator?

**MP** When I was younger, Herbie was the person who got me into studying jazz. The album *Thrust*<sup>07</sup> was the one. *Headhunters* is a little more well-known, but *Thrust* was the one for me. It's live recorded in Japan. I was in high school when I heard it, and I just thought, this is fucking amazing. The sound of the Fender Rhodes created the funk and the feel that took jazz out into a new space for me. I realized this is what I want to figure out how to do. Weather Report and the album *Heavy Weather* was also highly inspirational. I was 16 or 17 then and loved people like Jaco Pastorius. I was really into that fusion of funk and jazz. I also went to New Orleans and studied music there while finishing my design degree. New Orleans is the motherland of funk and jazz. So I just got educated in all of it.



↑  
(07) Herbie Hancock, *Thrust*, 1974. Album cover.



↑  
DIA Studio for A-Trak's live visuals, 2016

I could go on and on. Lately, I've been influenced by music like J. Dilla and drum and bass artists such as LTJ Bukem<sup>08</sup> and Ronny Size. That's excellent music to listen to when you're doing type design, it's like fucking like 180 BPM, and you're working on beziers, it's great. Even now, I am just discovering some more straight garage house music or stuff on SoundCloud because you have so much access to music. Now you find stations of people you like and can constantly discover new things. So I'm genre-less. I have a core taste for soul, funk, and jazz. But I love it all. There's also a lot of stuff coming out of the UK, such as Kamal Williams and Yussef Dayes. I find many of the UK scene mixes house and techno with jazz influences interesting.



↑  
(08) LTJ Bukem

Another huge influence of mine is Wayne Shorter.<sup>09</sup> I find his spiritual aspect fascinating, especially his Buddhist practice and how that's impacted his creativity. As we mentioned earlier, this idea of analysis leads to paralysis. A lot of this stuff all follows into the same kind of space. It's just a way of life and a way of being. His quartet, which I saw live a few times, was Brian Blade, Wayne Shorter, John Patitucci, and Danilo Pérez. The live performance just blew you out of your fucking seat. It was just pure, intense improvisational energy for an hour. You're just holding under your seat like you're on a rocket ship, and then you're like, "holy fuck, what has happened to me." That was amazing. And I'm not sure what happened. It was so intense and so awesome.



↑  
(09) Wayne Shorter

**CVA** Do you have any advice for future designers who might read this during their early days of design?



↑  
Mitch Paone with piano

**MP** There are two things. It is finding the space where you're not being critical, and I think it's hard to do that. But that might mean different things for different people. Such as how much sleep you get, whether you need a cup of coffee in the morning, what you're eating, and all these lifestyle choices or inspirational ideas that can put you in a space that makes you feel comfortable. And it takes a while for people to optimize themselves in that way. You have to learn the design craft and study everything, but there's a parallel between making yourself feel comfortable and happy and synergizing those things.

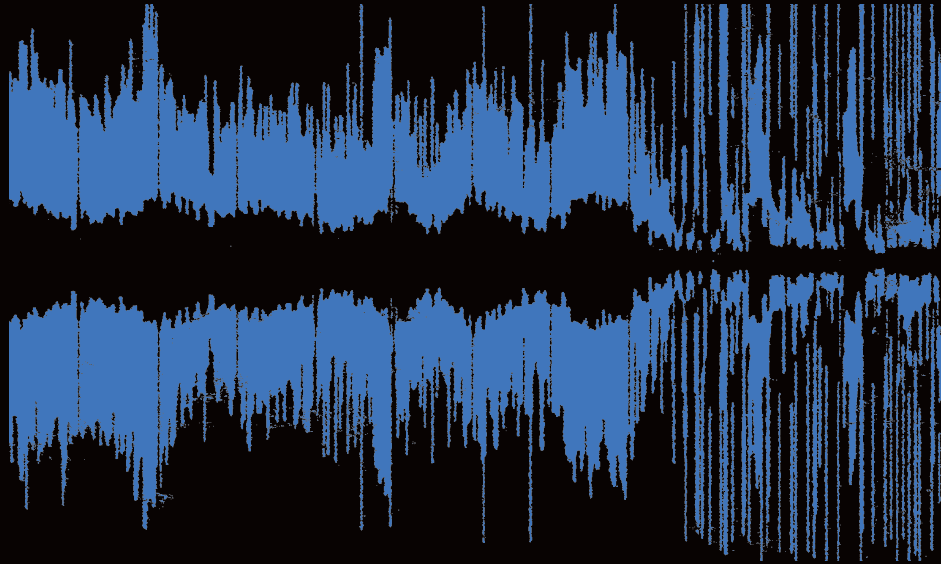
The second and perhaps most important thing is finding inspiration for design outside of strictly design. For instance, music drove my design practice. It drove how I thought about design since day one, and it continues to be a source of inspiration for the work. Having an interest that parallels to draw inspiration from will make the work more interesting and personal. And then it doesn't get boring. You're always finding ways of bringing these things and mixing them. Whether that's poetry, writing, or journalism, finding other interests and then seeing how that can fuse with the technical side of design makes it more interesting.

You can't just love design—I guess some people can—but there's always inspiration. Ask yourself, what was your inspiration? Why did this person make it this way? There's got to be more than just a beautiful form. There are richer narratives and personal stories to draw on. The people we think are masters were all probably finding inspiration and sources from an array of stuff that had nothing to do with a chair or a typeface.

So those are my two things. But it's hard. It's getting to know yourself. It's tough to do when you're young, on social media, and comparing yourself to others. But questions to ask are things like what makes you tick? What do you like? What defines your taste in things? It's hard to define, and it takes a lot of trial and error and putting yourself out of your comfort zone. It's just trying, testing, and being okay with falling down a few times.



# HASSAN RAHIM

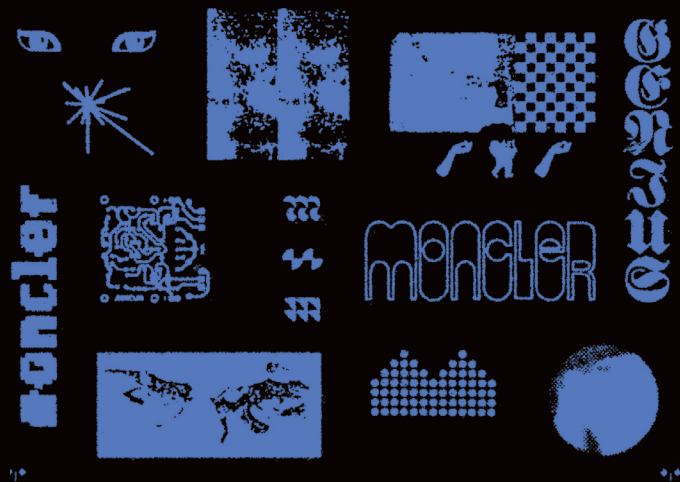


# INFINITY PERSISTENCE STATIC THE HORIZON

Hassan Rahim is a creative director and high school dropout from Santa Ana, California, currently living and working in New York City. Hassan owns and operates an anti-disciplinary creative studio 12:01.

In opposition to culture's obsession with speed, Rahim's output remains guarded—incubating as long as necessary while he continues to build a body of work dealing with monomania, memory, and mortality.

I have been a major fan of Hassan's work for a while now. While living in Los Angeles, I was introduced to his work at the Slow Culture art gallery, which a friend used to run. Hassan's ability to switch mediums, from typography to sculpture to video, while keeping a consistent aesthetic sensibility is impressive. His graphic design practice comprises a wide range of clients, from musicians to clothing designers, book designers, and more. We found a connection between music, work ethics, and the future of design. After our conversation, I asked Hassan if he'd like to contribute a song for the mixtape that comes with the book. His choice was *Contagious* by ADULT.



↑  
Assorted graphics by Hassan Rahim for Moncler  
Genius workshop with *Kaleidoscope Magazine*

**CVA** My research is focused on noise. What's interesting about noise is that it's almost impossible to define clearly. In programming, various noise algorithms exist, such as blue noise, Perlin noise, and simplex noise. But there is also noise in communication, noise in economics or something like noise music. When I see your work, I see visual noise through textural elements, but there's more to that. Can you speak about what noise means to you and your work?

**HR** Yeah, of course. I love this question because of your interpretation of noise in my work. Or at least the way that you've identified it is interesting. A lot of people refer to it as texture. I usually don't refer to it as texture. I refer to it as static. I describe it as static because it symbolizes aspects of my youth, upbringing, and worldview, which have always been marked by ambiguity rather than clarity. This perspective is deeply rooted in my childhood. It has influenced how I've navigated life, including interactions with family, community, and career choices, from my early years to my young adult life and into the present. I'm constantly adjusting the antenna to find a signal, and I believe the static represents my search for clarity, reflecting the decay inherent in transmission.

**CVA** That's beautiful. I've been diving into noise through my research and just finished the Miles Davis biography, which is fantastic. He touches on free jazz, discussing how what was initially considered noise by audiences eventually gets embraced by mainstream culture. This shift is influenced by time, place, and the passage of time. Knowing that free jazz and music broadly have greatly influenced you and your work, could you elaborate on how music has shaped your approach and your work?

**HR** I'll start by discussing how music's always been a part of my life. It sounds so cliché to say I love music; music makes me happy. But everything I can attribute to my life, the reason I'm creative, the reason I was so deep into skateboarding, and honestly, even the reason I'm alive is probably because of music, and I think that I always had an affinity to finding obscure stuff. When you're 15 or 16, in that teenage discovery phase, many people older than me would head to the video or record store. I didn't do that. My place was the skate shop, but mostly, I was online. I talk about peer-to-peer file sharing and pirating music all the time, just hunting for obscure files. I've been obsessed with that.

There was always a search for security. I don't think I've encountered many polished surfaces in my life. There's something about the gloss texture and its ability to stay shiny. For instance, a brand-new car with no scratches or dust is just something you want to keep shiny. It takes upkeep for you to be driving around in a shiny vehicle. It speaks to a sense of wealth or money or luxury. It's just something I've never encountered.

Glossy surfaces didn't surround me, whether marble floors, shiny new cars, clean silverware, or clear windows. These weren't elements I was familiar with, from the environments I encountered daily in childhood to institutions like public schools or child protective services. We didn't have that texture. That wasn't a texture that was in the library for us. There was never a gloss. It was always tattered, beaten, weathered, used, well worn, loved, or hated as it was abused; it showed through the way things were physically presented themselves.

As for the music, when I talk about searching for obscure, underground, or DIY aesthetics, it's because that music is often self-produced or it's more art-adjacent. Like Sonic Youth,<sup>01</sup> you could say they're art-adjacent but still DIY, grunge, and punk. These things have a DIY look due to the absence of institutional funding, glossy aesthetics, and government support from large, shiny bureaucratic buildings. We lack these resources, and these definitions and textures reflect our access to materials in many ways.



↑  
(01.) Sonic Youth, *Goo*, 1990, Album cover.

**CVA** Thanks, that makes sense. How do you view the role of the graphic tee in spreading information?



Hassan Rahim for Jacques Greene *Feel Infinite*, 2017





Hassan Rahim for  
NTS Radio, 2018

**HR** I love that question. I've said this once, maybe in an interview, but let's go back to high school: when you show up wearing a graphic T-shirt, whether a specific skate brand, a specific band, or a specific sports team, that was the quickest way to identify yourself to like-minded individuals or any subset of a group or culture.

I'll use skateboarding as an example. Some kids had Baker shirts that said one thing about who they were as a person: as skaters. You could immediately tell what kind of music they listened to if they had a Baker<sup>02</sup> logo on their shirt because those were punk. We used the word hesh back in the day. Tight pants, all black, throwing themselves down big sets of stairs specifically. And then you had these kids wearing Shorty's<sup>03</sup> shirts, and maybe baggy pants with one of them rolled up. Listening to hip hop underground, they had Osiris on, which was a different kind of subset of skate culture.



(02) Baker  
skateboards



(03) Shorty's  
skateboards

In high school, when you're around 14, you might not have a highly developed sense of style yet, but you could have the \$15 to buy that one T-shirt with a logo that represents what you believe in or are into or just the aesthetic you like. This mentality is how I see T-shirt graphics, their primary audience, and who wears them. As I've gotten older, my work with T-shirts has undergone many phases. For example, my work for Total Luxury Spa continued my earlier skate culture work but was seen through an adult lens.

The importance of the T-shirt for me now fluctuates, but I think I'm back to not wearing any graphics. Graphics come and go. From 22 to 28, I didn't touch graphics at all. I didn't wear T-shirts with graphics on them. When I hit 29 or 30, I got back into graphics, and that was also when Total Luxury Spa<sup>04</sup> was happening. So yeah, I think we're seeing that sort of slowly go away right now. Some brands are out there making cool graphics, but I think their energy and interest might be fading a bit, maybe due to oversaturation or a cultural shift.



(04) Hassan Rahim shirt design for Total Luxury Spa, image by Daniel Reagan

Right now, I'm unsure about the importance of wearing something on a shirt; I'm in a different mental zone. I think I've done enough T-shirts for years and years. The stuff I've made that never got released is also crazy. I've developed complete collections for brands and people no one will ever see. I think I'm good on T-shirts for a while. However, the importance remains, and T-shirts will always make a comeback because, for me, they were the first introduction to self-identity.

**CVA** In previous interviews, you've mentioned this Ira Glass quote called "The Gap." It's about the gap between good taste and technical ability, where you're sort of in this trap of having taste but not being able to pull it off yet. A lot of people become paralyzed by that.

You're famous for pirating Photoshop and being self-taught. What was the process like for you developing technical ability? Was it working with paper textures or specific mediums? Was there a particular moment when things were hitting? Was there a moment when you recognized that this technical ability is catching up with taste?



**HR** I can answer that question in one sentence. It's just 10,000 hours. That phrase gets thrown around a lot. Are you familiar with that term?

**CVA** Yeah. Yeah, I am.

**HR** You have to put in the work; it's time. You have to serve it, and there's a reason for that specific amount of time and energy. I think you need to put in the effort. I'm not sure at what point in that process you hit that personal goal you're aiming for, where you have the epiphany, and everything starts to click.

But I know that most people start their journey by trying to replicate something, which is normal. If you see someone directly copying something of mine, you'll never see me publicly call them out unless it is a politician or someone I disagree with. I've never felt the need to protect my IP too strictly because I believe that people are just learning. I understand that part of their learning process involves replicating something. Even Kanye has said he used to try to replicate Dr. Dre's songs, making the Explosive drums perfect, like, he found it, he figured it out.

You start with technicality, tools, and materials. You figure out how to use those tools and get good with your hands. Often, people find in this journey that when they use the tool to replicate something and can't get it right, it's because there's that moment of 'damn, I don't know how he did this.' When you're trying to get something just right, such as trying to replicate the drums to get that snare perfect, but you don't know how, after trying every plugin, you realize, I don't know how he did it, and then you start exploring outside of those initial boundaries.

You're like, "Let me step away and look at other instruments or try other techniques. Or maybe I can do it by hand and then record it." You find yourself entering a different mode of discovery, not just trying to replicate what someone did but becoming more obsessed with figuring out why it wasn't as easy as you thought. Once you're in that zone, you can move into a different headspace, learning about what makes someone's practice unique and why.



(04) AKAI MPC3000  
MIDI Drum Machine used by J Dilla



(05) Questlove speaking about  
J Dilla's drums for RBMA

A good example is J Dilla's drums.<sup>04</sup> Some people can't figure out why his signature sound is so unique. They might think, "This is just another low-fi hip-hop beat to chill and study; I don't get it." But I'm like, no, that's the blueprint. It's about the quantization, his deliberate lack of it, and the unique swing. Questlove explains<sup>05</sup> in an RBMA panel that it sounds like a drunk kid on the drum set; it's just not right, not perfect. And it's this imperfection, more than the polish, that catches people's attention.

This mark is exactly what I'm talking about: the signal, the static. It's not a clear transmission. You might call it imperfection, but it's just not quite right, a little off. And this is where the learning starts. That moment, you realize you can't replicate what this person did on a one-to-one basis, and you begin to see it's something special. You're learning about what it takes and what it means to create something unique and special. That's the pivotal moment where inspiration shifts, not just because you like how something looks or sounds but because you're fascinated by how it was made.

**CVA** You learn so much from doing that. I know you've been doing some work recently with Generative AI, and I'd love to hear your thoughts on what you think the future of graphic design looks like, maybe one year or ten years from now.

**HR** Firstly, the work I've been sharing involving AI is from about two years ago. I'm very restrained in how I use AI and how I share it and apply it. And I guess I'm also restrained about how it's presented and received. When it first came out, everyone was using Mid Journey, Stable Diffusion, or DALL E, and we saw a massive wave of images. This moment of whoa, everyone's creating these insane images, you know, what's going on? How is this made? I think there's a lot of fear among creative individuals that this technology will, in many ways, replace the human touch or even erase job positions. But maybe it's just threatening to their skill set because it's trained on the skill sets of thousands of artists.

My core comparison or analogy is that a synthesizer was introduced into music at some point. And I'm pretty sure every guitarist, every drum player, every keyboardist (especially keyboardist) was probably like, "What the fuck is this? This new tool is insane. The synthesizer is threatening. It is not a real instrument. It is a computerized sound." You don't even need to learn how to play to do this. What's this going to do to music? The fear people have is entirely valid.

There's a turning point, though, where we're in that gap where we've been introduced to this tool. We're using this tool to replicate the work of existing things. This tool has way more potential to become a unique, specific thing that is being used to create work we've never seen before.





↑  
Hassan Rahim for AceMo, 2024

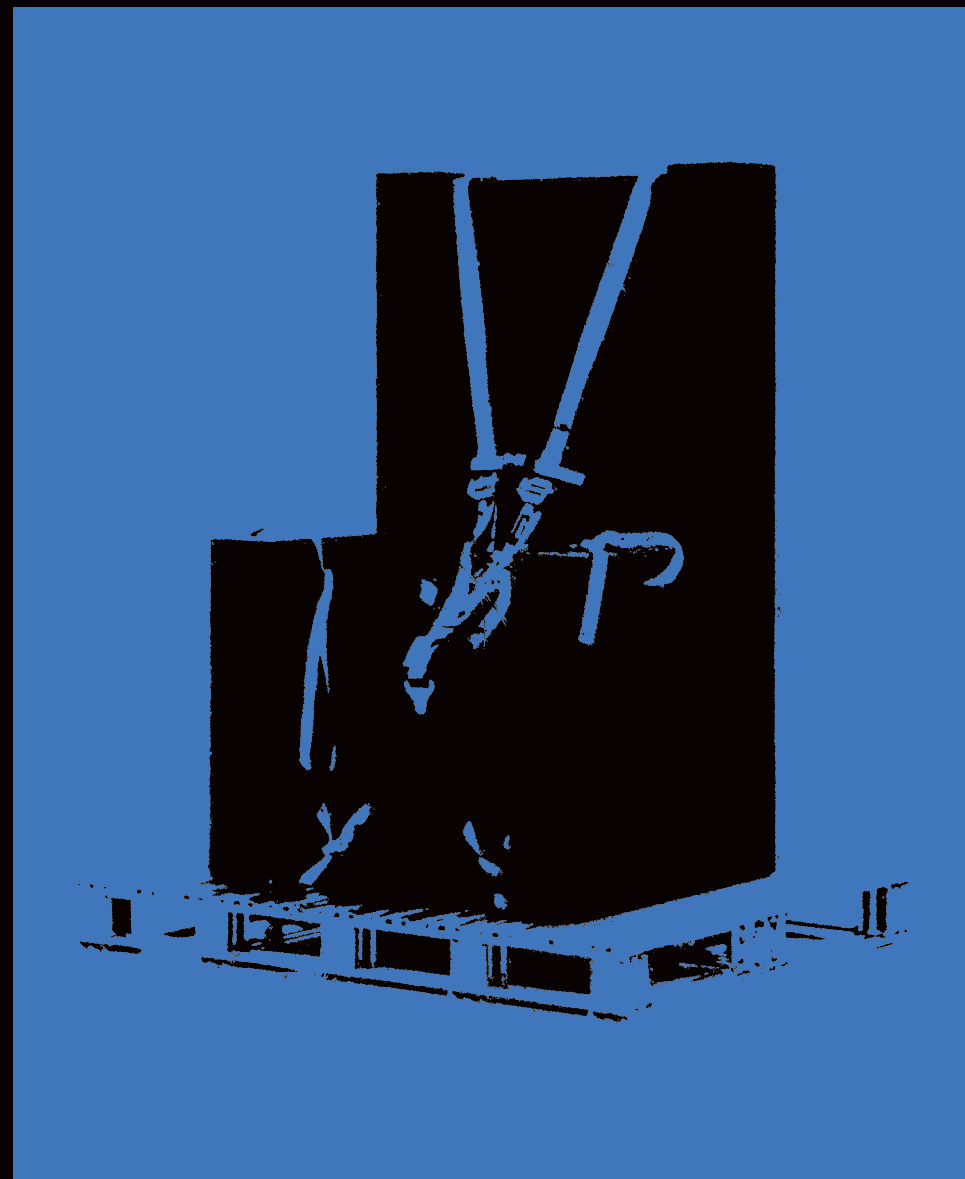
I want to discuss the introduction of Techno, for instance. Techno differs from the type of music a live guitarist, a keyboardist, and a drummer would ever create. Acid, specifically, is a genre of electronic music whose entire crux is the 303, which is the classic Roland instrument.

What I'm getting at is that they become instruments. It's just another instrument. The introduction of the first synthesizer was probably scary to people. If you watched old library videos of people introducing synthesizers and theremins, everyone thought, "This is going to take away from us. We're the musicians." We're in that gray area where we haven't yet seen the new genre emerge.

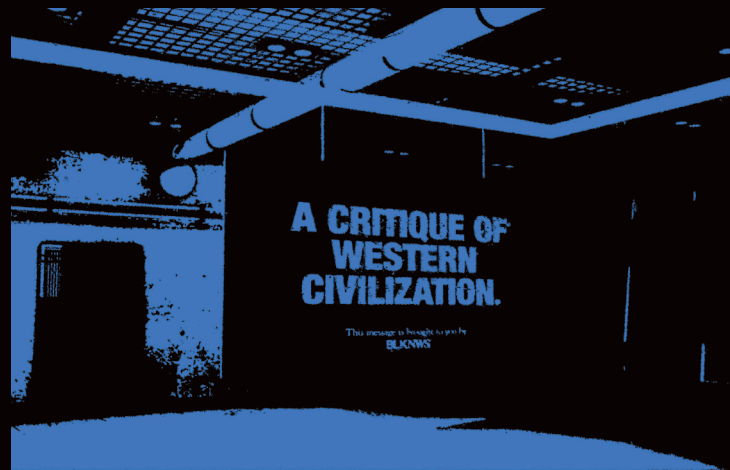
Because everyone's replicating the human with human-made work, we'll eventually get to the point where the computer does the work. And maybe we've kind of dabbled in that, or maybe that made its presence known with NFTs. In my opinion, that wasn't the point of the work with AI. I think that was just one of the first use cases. NFTs are so quantitative. You can spit out 1000 images and sell 1000 NFTs.

We haven't found the invention of Techno yet. And I think what I'm doing with the work is also very much not a new genre of computer-created work. It's work that has the same static and noise as handmade work, as my previous work. There is a difference between people using AI to make work for the first time and people who've been making work for 20 years, like myself, who are using AI as another instrument. We understand it's an instrument, not the end-all-be-all. This is just my synthesizer. My synthesizer makes a specific sound. If I want that sound on this track, I bring it into the room. It's just another instrument.

The best AI work I've seen comes from those already proficient with various tools. Every shocking and amazing piece I've seen created with AI has been by someone already an artist, image-maker, or designer with a solid skill set or a strong point of view. It seems they've discovered how to leverage this tool effectively. At the end of the day, it's the vision.



↑  
Hassan Rahim, *Fastlane*, 2021 Shou Sugi Ban plywood, gas-powered torch, 5-point racing harness, aluminum shipping pallet. Commissioned for Not for Sale, an exhibition of chairs at 909 Archive



↑ Hassan Rahim for BLKNWS, a project by artist and filmmaker Kahlil Joseph. An ongoing development with Lee Harrison.

Again, I waited two years to see these images. I spent six months straight doing work nonstop. And I'm not just telling the machine to give me something. You sort of train it. You feed it iterations of its work; you feed it references. You can also take certain aspects you like, cut around them, paste something different in the middle, send it back, and I'll have it trained based on this. So, for example, if I notice something unique, like a weird lightning effect in the sky, it's about identifying the patterns that the AI handles well or poorly. I believe there's a kind of dark art to this that people who don't use it don't understand.

You have every right to question whether AI will take your job. However, the future of design with AI will depend on how good you are at using the instrument. It's not just about the instrument but how good you are as an artist—the same as with a musician.

I might not know how to play the drums, but I can use a 909 or an 808 drum machine. However, that doesn't make me a skilled drummer. People will realize and think, "That's unimpressive because it's just a preset being used." Becoming a professional musician involves manipulating those presets and creating a sound from the machine that's uniquely yours, something no one else has achieved before. That's when you truly excel. Back to Acid House, it's like, fuck, you've discovered something with the machine that no one has done before. You created a genre. Thinking in this way will allow a new genre to emerge and will no longer indicate a desire to replicate human play instruments.

**CVA** It's just back to what you said. I don't think there's any way around 10,000 hours.

**HR** (laughs) 10,000 hours.

**CVA** Do you have any other advice for designers?

**HR** Don't stop. And about the 10,000-hour thing, I want to explore it more because it feels facetious to tell people, "Just keep going." But it's the truth.

If you think about any goal someone's set, like maybe a weight goal, or you're saying, "I wanna hit the gym, I've got a fitness goal," or perhaps it's a savings goal, an academic goal, the thing is, I believe the answer is just to keep going. You reach this point where you've been through it all. You've faced every little thing that could come up. What do you do when Photoshop crashes? Or what happens when it's time to go to print? Oh, and then there's the moment you discover DPI. Eventually, you will encounter enough scenarios.

That's how evolution works, right? The thing about infinity is that it means everything, everywhere, exists all at once. There's a universe where this interview didn't even happen. There's a version where I never touched a skateboard, and there's one where you didn't go to the college you're at. All these possibilities exist somewhere. The idea of infinity is a scary thing for people. But the one thing I love about it is that, inevitably, every scenario has happened or is happening, right? So, because we're stuck in this mortal realm of time, it's not all happening at once for us. It unfolds linearly, consecutively.

That's why you have to stick with it. In some other universes, I've already put in the 10,000 hours. But in this one, I haven't. So, in a linear way, I have to work towards that.

Persistence is the goal. Looking forward is the only thing we can do. Drill Sergeants gave me this advice when I was in boot camp. We had to run on the beach in Camp Pendleton for more miles than I had ever run. And they just said, don't look at the ground, look at the horizon. You know, every step along the way, you're just staring at the ground, or you're staring at things near you, or you're staring at the house 100 ft away, or a boat 300 ft away. They said no. Look at the horizon, at the mountains over there. And when I did that, I locked in. I didn't even realize how far I ran at all. It was a goal that I was never going to reach. It's the horizon. You can't reach a horizon. At a certain point, the horizon is a theory. That was amazing because it made me understand not to pay attention to all the noise around you. It's just about cutting out the noise.



WAGDAH

INDIAH

OTHERN

HEMULAH

# LAUREL SCHWULST



MEANING  
COMMUNICATION  
CONTEXT  
HUMANITY

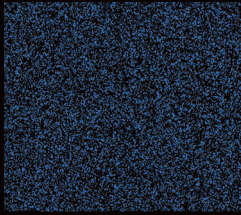
Laurel Schwulst is a designer, artist, writer, educator, and technologist. She is recognized for her experiential projects-as-worlds, her expanded writing practice, her creative direction leadership, her websites, her innovative learning materials and educational environments, and her ongoing collaborations. Her writing (published in venues including *The New York Times*, *The Creative Independent*, and *Art in America*) has taken the form of essays, perfume reviews, and interviews with other artists. For over a decade, she has taught award-winning design classes and workshops (at universities including Yale and Princeton), and has presented internationally at cultural, academic, and internet-native institutions (at venues including BBC Radio 4, RISD, University of Seoul, Google, and Wikipedia). Laurel currently lives in New York City, serves as director of the gift shop at Are.na (a platform for networked curation), and is working towards a “PBS of the Internet.”

As an instructor and internet designer, Laurel’s thinking has played a major role in my work. Her unique perspective and lightness towards her practice is admirable. She can think deeply about the world while doing it in a playful way. Her vision of the future is refreshing in a time with so much uncertainty, but her love for humanity is what I find most intriguing. She doesn’t take herself too seriously, but in doing so has so much depth and breadth. After our conversation, I asked Laurel if she’d like to contribute a song for the mixtape that comes with the book. Her choice was *Your Wildlife* by Propaganda.

**CVA** How do you define noise? What does noise mean to you, both as a person and as part of your practice?

**LS** Noise is about ambience and the environment. It's interesting to think about the difference between sound and noise. Not that I have a very big definition myself, but to me, sound seems more general than noise. It somehow feels more atmospheric.

White noise,<sup>01</sup> for me, holds a special significance. It's the primal sound we encounter as infants in the womb, our first auditory experience. In contrast, the outside world seems eerily silent to babies. This notion of enveloping noise, perhaps, is a more natural state for us.



↑  
(01) Visual representation of white noise.

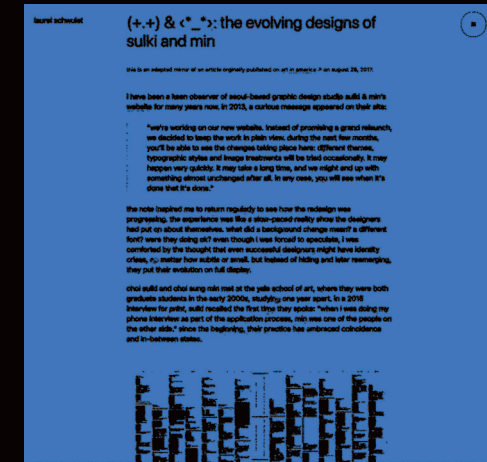
**CVA** That's beautiful. My research has led me to explore different sorts of noise. For instance, there are noise algorithms for generating visuals. There's visual noise in general, like static on a television, and also noise in economics, psychological noise, and more.

When I read your piece on 'The cuteness of white noise,' I was drawn to the discussion about the relationship between birth or being in the womb and white noise. What I find intriguing about white noise is its sound perspective—it's essentially all frequencies played at the same level. As you said, it's like you're enveloped in this encompassing frequency. And then you go to nothing. Maybe if we could expand a little bit more on any thoughts you have on that.

**LS** We could think of white noise as the sonic equivalent of the color gray. Although, it's funny because it's called white noise. But it's actually equal levels of these frequencies. Let's think about the color gray and RGB; it's an equal R, G, and B. Sometimes it's easier to start sketching on a gray or brown page as opposed to a white page because it's more in this middle ground, where we feel like we can go darker or lighter if we have a lighter colored pencil. In high school, I always used to sketch on brown paper.

It also made the colors look nicer. And I often feel that web designers like gray, or at least presenting their work in gray, because so many websites are white by default, and it's just nice to have some dimensionality to differentiate. It's fun to think about the background color of websites.

This topic reminds me of a website and a piece of writing I did about Sulki and Min.<sup>02</sup> They are two Korean designers based in Seoul and have been active since the early 2000s. I'm a big fan of them and their website. In my writing, I talked about why I liked their website. If you notice, there's a visual noise GIF in the background. And that noise GIF is actually the GIF that was on the background of their site. When I wrote about their site in 2017, I thought bringing back the background noise made sense. So, I went to archive.org and reinstalled it on my site.



↑  
(02) Laurel Schwulst, '(+,+) & (\*,\*)': the evolving designs of sulki and min

**CVA** Great. I'm excited to read it later. Another piece of your writing that I just read recently was this Kiki Bouba piece<sup>03</sup> you did for *The New York Times*, which was so fun. For those not familiar, the effect is a classic psycho-linguistics experiment that explores the relationship between nonsense words and abstract shapes, revealing connections between the phonetic qualities of words and the visual characteristics of shapes, such as the sharp, abrupt sounds of "Kiki" contrasting with the soft, rounded sounds of "Bouba."



↑  
(03) Screenshot from 'The Kiki/Bouba Effect,' an article by Laurel Schwulst, exploring the fascinating relationship between sound and shape.



The Kiki Bouba effect made me think of semantic noise, which is described as the interference in communication caused by differences in words and symbols in different attributes.

And what I found interesting about this Kiki Bouba effect is it almost feels like it cuts through the noise related to semantics. These are like atomic structures of thought that everyone can relate to. I was thinking about the difference between red and green. And how 86% of people agree that red is Kiki. How do you feel about the Kiki Bouba effect and its relationship to noise?

**LS** What you're speaking to is the strength of communication—specific communication without words, or just how communication can be precise but almost more sense-based through the five senses.

Like you said, it's crazy how accurate or maybe unanimous the red-green one was. I would assume everyone thinks Kiki is red and Bouba is green. In that way, you're talking about cutting through the noise.

I would say language and speech are kind of our default as humans. So, we have to find other ways of communicating to cut through the noise. Other examples might be sensory ways of communicating—for example, music or other sensory ways to communicate. It's like, "Yeah that, that's it." But we can't explain in words what "that" is. It's almost as if it's some mood. It's interesting, there's almost a Kiki mood.

**CVA** Towards the end of your essay, "The cuteness of white noise," you chose the digital version,<sup>04</sup> not the analog version of these noise machines. What made you choose that one specifically, and what were their differences? And then, as a broader question, what are your thoughts on analog and digital noise?



(04) "Lectrofan" digital white noise machine

**LS** It's a fun question. Honestly, I think it was because I heard you could turn up the volume. And with the non-digital ones, you can't turn up the volume because it's essentially a fan. So, I guess I wanted that control. I also think it was just slightly cheaper. So, it was just an easy purchase on Amazon. It could be more pragmatic. But it's funny; I only used it for a few years, and I don't own it anymore. I don't know what I did with it, but I don't use a white noise machine anymore.

Do you use one?

**CV** I do. Yeah, I have the analog one.<sup>05</sup> You mentioned it in your essay, but turning it on before sleep is habitual. I actually feel the same.

**LS** Which manual one do you have?



(05) "Dohm" analog white noise machine

**CV** I think it's the.... I'd have to check. It's one of the classic, most reviewed ones. But you can turn the knobs and control the pitch of the noise. As a web designer, how do you define noise on the Internet?

**LS** I think this is very related to the problem of our time. As we go on as a human society, informational noise is at an all-time high. Things are coming at us so fast—and all the time. It's almost expected that we're not only always available to incoming pings but also able to sift through all the news coming in.

Sometimes, I consider myself a website designer, but I also think about these systems more in the big picture. I guess I'm always thinking about people's attention. I consider attention to be one of the most valuable "currencies" of our time because paying attention to something means a lot in an ecosystem of many competing, noisy things.

I have an are.na channel called Attention that I like to tend to sometimes. Whenever I return to it, I realize how important it is.

**CVA** And so noise for you on the Internet is informational. Is that right?

**LS** Yeah, for sure. I wrote an essay called "My website is a shifting house next to a river of knowledge. What could yours be?" I collected some quotes that were then expressed as sparrow memes. The first sparrow meme was by the editor-in-chief of Wired magazine, Lewis Rosetto, in the early 90s. He basically says that meaning and context are the ultimate luxury in an age of information overload. It's so interesting that he said that in 1993. Because it's like, "Wow, they were feeling it then."

It's only going to go up and up, I suppose. This conversation also reminds me of another piece I enjoy. Have you read "The coming age of calm technology"?<sup>06</sup>

<sup>06</sup> Weiser, Mark, and John Seely Brown. "The Coming Age of Calm Technology." Xerox PARC, 5 Oct. 1996, [people.eng.unimelb.edu.au/vkostakos/courses/ubicomp10S/papers/visions/weiser-96.pdf](http://people.eng.unimelb.edu.au/vkostakos/courses/ubicomp10S/papers/visions/weiser-96.pdf).

This paper outlines the shift in computing from mainframe and personal computers towards ubiquitous computing, emphasizing the concept of "calm technology." It advocates for technology that integrates seamlessly into our lives by remaining in the periphery of our attention, thereby enhancing our capacity to process information without the feeling of being overwhelmed.

CV I haven't. Not yet.

LS Oh, wow, exciting. Yeah. I love that one. It's also from the 90s. It's from 1996. Two researchers at Xerox PARC wrote it. Sometimes, I give this to my students because this piece is almost the history of computing. They talk about how computers were so complex in the early days that they had to be big, like a mainframe. And many people shared one computer. Then we got to the age of personal computers, where every person had one computer. And now, we're in an age of what they call ubiquitous computing, which is about many computers sharing each of us. I would also say, each of us having many computers. The Internet of things, sort of era. They talk about, okay, if we're going to go from mainframe to ubiquitous computing, calmness will continue to be an important feeling we need to achieve in the design of computing and the design of the Internet.

They say something interesting to me at the end about something they call the periphery. They say, "We use 'periphery' to name what we are attuned to without attending to it explicitly." They explain how, when you're driving, you're always focused on the center of the road. But of course, you're paying attention to other stuff like if there's an accident zooming by.

They say something counterintuitive, which is interesting. They say that they think a good strategy to work towards would be like driving when you're focused but still attuned to the environment. There needs to be more things like this with the design of computers for the Internet—where these are sort of like atmospheric signals. But you're still focused on your main thing. And they say that if you increase information overload a lot, we'll have to deal with it. And that stuff is just going to zoom by. And then, maybe because we're experiencing so much, we will be better at choosing what's most important, which I find funny. But it's kind of true in some ways.

So I don't know. Maybe I just went off the deep end a little bit. But I guess this is always something I think about. I don't know if it's enacted in my designs.



Meme made by Laurel Schwulst for her essay "My website is a shifting house next to a river of knowledge, what could yours be?" Quote by Lewis Rosetto

I am designing this website for an architecture firm right now. One thing I've been thinking about is that they have projects all over the world. And they're very interested in light websites and the five senses. I've been thinking about how it would be neat if there were a way to feel the place of the site when you're on a certain project. So you could know it was sunset there or something like that.

Even if it's just the background color shifting some, there needs to be more ways to communicate that that's on the periphery but still felt.

**CVA** It reminds me of certain websites that will be “closed after 5 pm” or on the weekends. It's interesting to think of those alternative models. I know you think a lot about those models and question what's accepted or the dominant narrative. So, on that topic, what do you think about the future of design on the Internet and interactive design, maybe one year or ten years from now?

**LS** Yeah, it's a good question. Maybe I've talked about this before, but two things are coming up for me. I think we will continue to see more and more less screen-based things. I'm also very curious about the future of audio just because I find it a bit more of a humane medium. It's funny. You could have overlapping sounds, but there's something about the directness and only being able to listen to one stream at a time that feels useful for being a healthy human. I also think about people walking around, looking at their phones, and crashing into each other. Or how their eyesight is eventually going to start to go.

I'm just very interested in a future of more embodied technology that works for people and helps them achieve their goals rather than distracting them further.

This is random and funny, but I was doing a workshop two weekends ago at the University of Tennessee. While I was there, I talked with one of the other faculty members at the University of Tennessee. She has two kids and said that one of her kids is next level and whenever he goes on the Internet or uses Minecraft,<sup>07</sup> he says that he only uses it in peaceful mode. He won't do anything destructive in Minecraft, and if he sees a violent video, he'll be like, “No, I'm in peaceful mode.” I feel like the Internet needs some peaceful mode, not just for kids but for humanity in general.

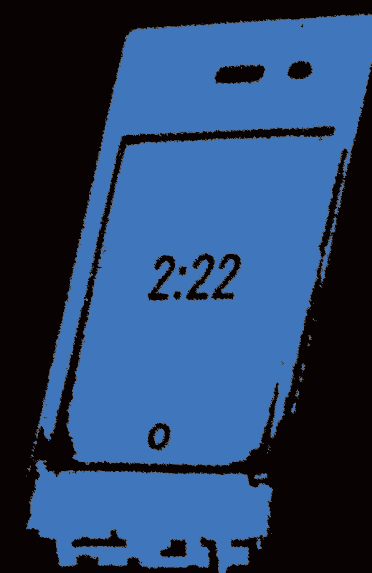


↑  
(07) Minecraft (2011)

I don't know if this is actually going to be the future of the Internet, but it's the future that I would like to see. Of course, if this is actually going to happen, it needs to come from the ground level. But I also think there needs to be some people in positions of power making big decisions who also think about this.

Another thing I've been thinking about is maybe a kind of an intense view. But I believe many problems would be solved if we had upload and download limits, just in general, on the Internet. I moved last week, and I didn't have Internet at my house for a few days, and the service was also bad; I only got 2 bars. So when I tried to load Instagram, no videos played. And I was thinking, “Oh, my God! Thank God! Like I didn't wanna do that, anyway.” Of course, there's value to Instagram sometimes, and I enjoy being connected to lots of smart and interesting people. But I feel like some limitation that's imposed for a collective good would be possibly very valuable.

I was talking to some friends last night about how we all think the Light Phone<sup>08</sup> is cool. I don't know if you've played with it. It's like this E-ink phone. Do you know about it?

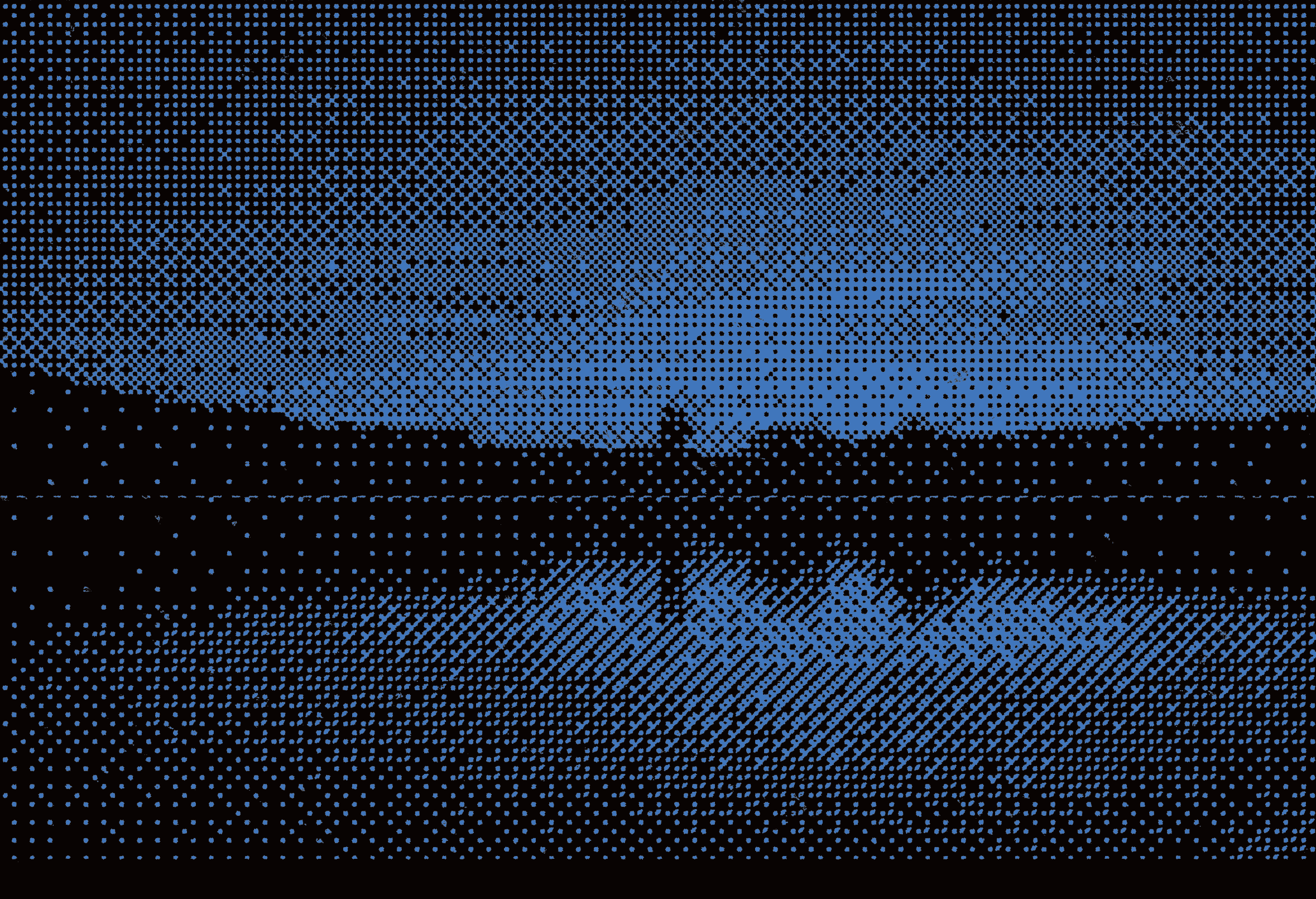


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(08) Light Phone II (2023)

**CVA** I may know it briefly. It's sort of a phone with some limitations. Is that right?

**LS** Yeah, exactly. It has an E Ink display so it looks like a Kindle screen. The idea is that you get one that works in concert with your smartphone. And so if you want to go out on a walk but don't want all of the functions of your smartphone, you take your Light phone out. Then, you can call and look up maps, text, and essential things. It's like a way to be more present in the world when you're mobile. Anyways, all of my friends think it's cool.





Laurel Schwulst, *Untitled*, 2011

We were thinking, “It’d be awesome if everyone just had the Light Phone because then we wouldn’t have to explain, ‘*Sorry, I’m on my Light Phone; I can’t receive images right now.*’” It would be more collective. I do know there was an experiment<sup>09</sup> where one school acquired Light Phones for all the students, measured the results, and said that it was really good for people’s attention levels over time.

<sup>09</sup> Haidt, Jonathan. “The Terrible Costs of a Phone-Based Childhood.” *The Atlantic*, 13 Mar. 2024, [theatlantic.com](https://www.theatlantic.com).

“The four norms I have proposed cost almost nothing to implement, they cause no clear harm to anyone, and while they could be supported by new legislation, they can be instilled even without it. We can begin implementing all of them right away, this year, especially in communities with good cooperation between schools and parents. A single memo from a principal asking parents to delay smartphones and social media, in support of the school’s effort to improve mental health by going phone free, would catalyze collective action and reset the community’s norms.”

I feel that maybe at the school level, more experiments like this should take place. Because these populations are interlinked but still individual, they’re collective but not the size of a nation. Smaller places where you can do experiments like this.

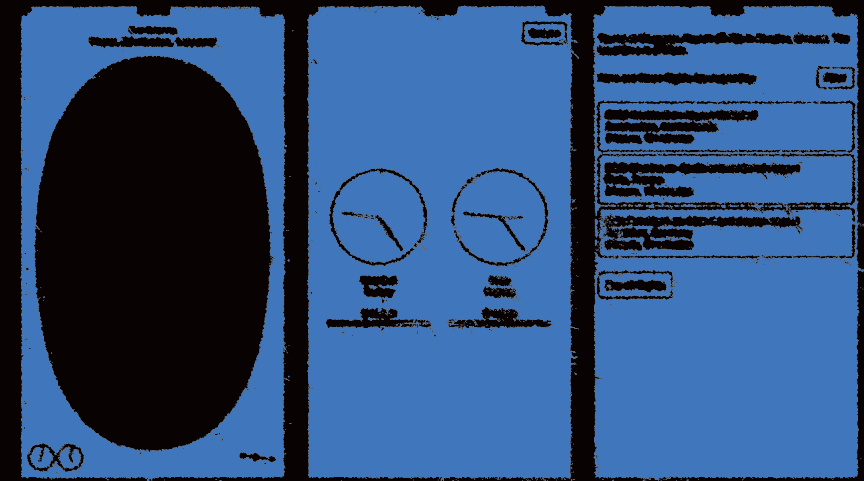
What do you think of all those ideas?

**CVA** Yeah. I agree with you on all of that. And I think the media needs to bring out the coolness of the Light Phone if we’re going to make that happen widespread. I have some younger family members, and the influence of being “cool” is very seductive. This influence of “coolness” can put you into some traps with social media and things like that.

What are your thoughts on AI if a hopeful future looks like a step towards the Light Phone? Does AI get in the way of that? And how does that look in a world where AI is becoming increasingly a part of our lives?

**LS** Everyone’s asking about AI, and I think it’s fascinating and insane at the same time. It can be a huge help for a lot of talented people to make their jobs easier. But it’s just good when we work with AI to understand its limitations and what it’s good at and not good at.

There’s an article I’ve been enjoying by Elan Ullendorff. He writes this Substack called *Deep Sea Diving*, and he wrote a piece called “The New Turing Test.”<sup>10</sup> This talks about AI in the context of creativity. Actually, this circles back to that Lewis Rosetto quote, which says, “In an age of information overload, the ultimate luxury is meaning and context.” Elan says, “I have a nontraditional set of standards through which I encourage my students to evaluate their work (curiosity, criticality, communication, conscientiousness).” It has three simple criteria.



*flight simulator* by Laurel Schwulst is an “ode to airplane mode” and an app for ios and android. users put their phone into airplane mode for the duration of real flights in order to “travel” to this location and earn pins for each airport visited.



10 Ullendorff, Elan. "AI is Gaslighting You." *Escape the Algorithm*, 7 Dec. 2023, [escapethealgorithm.substack.com/p/the-new-turing-test](https://escapethealgorithm.substack.com/p/the-new-turing-test).

In "AI is Gaslighting You," Elan Ullendorff discusses the increasingly blurred lines between AI-generated and human-created content, highlighting instances where AI's involvement in content creation leads to ethical dilemmas and confusion about authorship. Ullendorff argues for a shift in focus towards the expressiveness and human essence in works, proposing a new standard for evaluating content that emphasizes authenticity and emotional resonance over mere technical accomplishment.

Number one. It feels like it came *from* someone.

Number two. It feels like it was meant *for* someone.

Number three. It feels like it belongs in a *particular context*.

It's aware of the place, time, culture, and artistic medium in which it will be consumed.

AI to me in general is similar to information overload. I agree with Elan when he says "But for everything else, asking how much AI is in something may be less important than a simpler question: how much humanity is in it?" I don't know how to answer this regarding a feature of the Internet. I find AI quite helpful in certain contexts. But I think the humanity thing is key and something I'm interested in.

One other thread I've been thinking about is, in an age when we're getting good at talking to computers, basically, in an age when we're getting good at asking Chat GPT questions, I think it becomes increasingly important for us to learn how to talk to ourselves, and speak to other humans. And I find that conversation being the medium quite interesting. Gordon Brander is working on this enchanted notes app,<sup>10</sup> which is a notes app for yourself. But what it does is it uses AI in the notes app to bring up unexpected connections between things that you've written down in the past. I find that a very cool and valuable use of AI to help you understand links in your thinking. To help you become a better human.



(10) Subconscious Alpha "enchanted notes app" by Gordon Brander

I don't know if I've answered the question. But those are some starting thoughts.

**CVA** I appreciate it. AI has huge potential for good and huge potential for bad; that's obvious. Some of the advertisements for good still seem dystopic, so I'm trying to find better alternatives. This app you're talking about sounds interesting, though. I love the idea.

What advice would you give to younger designers, younger people trying to work in the field, people on the internet, or just humans?

**LS** My first thought has to do with humanity. One thing I like about working in the digital is that it makes me more aware of how links exist in the physical, especially in terms of networks of people.

Something nice about starting to research this architecture website I'm currently working on is that I've been going through all the texts of their books and their practice. As I look through these books, I'm like, "Wow, the website is basically here; in the books, I just have to translate it." I find that thinking about one's practice in terms of links of people or structures that are just emergent is valuable, and we don't need to outsource everything to be digital all the time because links are already inherently human. I hope that's not too abstract of a piece of advice.

I also think maybe a good piece of advice that calms me a lot is to work with what's here—that is, what's already here. I don't actually need to invent anything new. It might be just about rearranging some stuff or translating some stuff.

In art school, there's always this pressure to invent, invent, invent. But we can rethink what invention means, and sometimes, it can be about rearrangement or arrangement or translation—a translation to a new age or something like that.

**CVA** Are you thinking about this as maybe spending more time to notice?

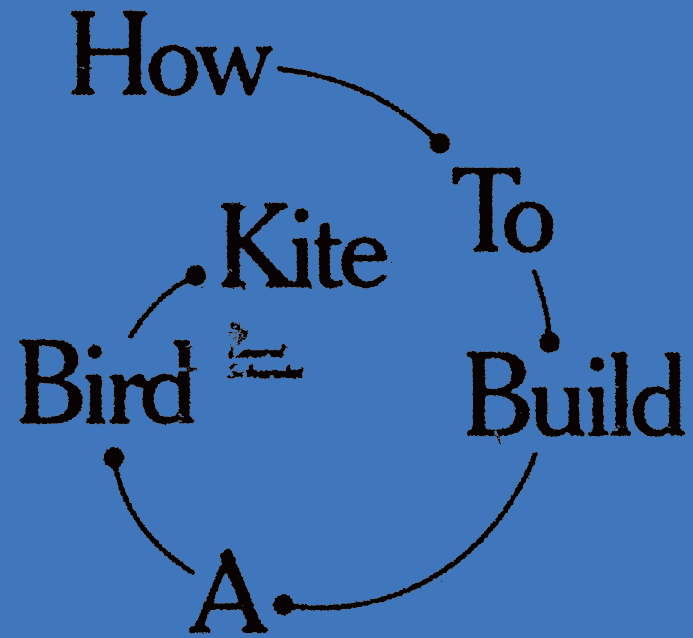
**LS** Yes, exactly; I love that.

Okay, maybe last thought, this links to the second half of the semester in my Princeton class. I'm going to be doing a project with everyone called "local website."

The plan is for everyone to choose a location on campus and make a website accessible only in that location. So, it's going to start with some site-specificity assignments. It will be about noticing the site and atmospheric attunement. I'm inviting this artist and my friend named Austin Wade Smith into my class, and they're giving a lecture that I'm excited about called *Aeromancy in Everyday Life*. Aeromancy is a fancy word that means atmospheric conditions. And so they'll talk about how their practice is interested in understanding the atmosphere in many different ways.

It's going to end with a little workshop on how to become more attuned to your site, and then I think we might fly kites after that. I'm excited.

How  
Kite To  
Bird Build  
A



START



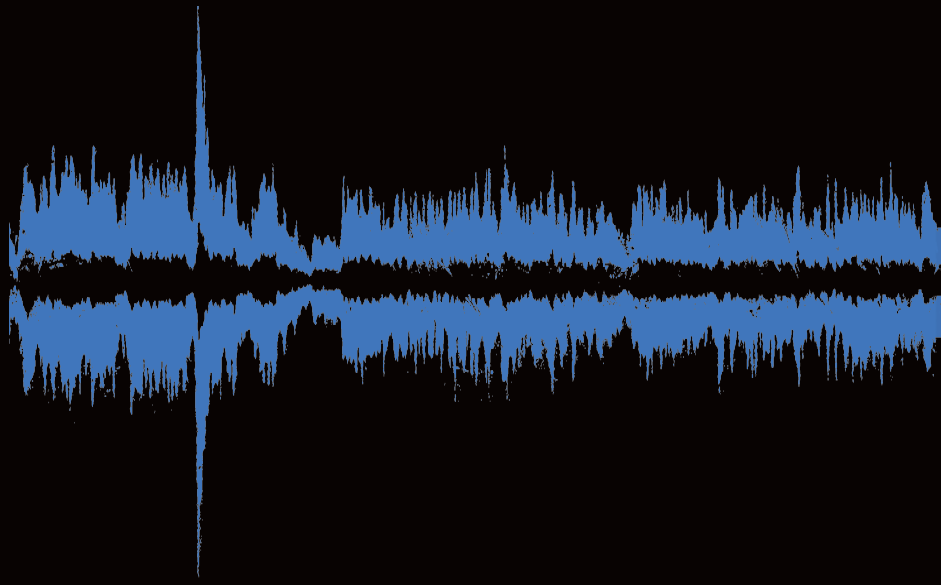
This is a craft tutorial that  
doubles as a meditative  
experience.

Cover videos by Elliott Cast and  
Farah Al Qasbi

May 19, 2021



# GESHE LOBSANG YONTEN



# TIBET MEDITATION ZONG-KAY

Geshe Lobsang Yonten was born in 1976 in the Tsakhalho township of Markham County, Tibet. He was determined to study and practice Tibetan literature and Buddhism freely as a teenage monk at the local Karda monastery. Therefore, he escaped Tibet, taking the dangerous journey across the vast grasslands and high Himalayas, reaching India through Nepal. In 1991, he joined Phukhang Khangsten at Drepung Loseling Monastery in Karnataka State, India. He completed his studies of the five Buddhist Treatises (Logic, Perfection of Wisdom Psychology, Middle Path Philosophy, Ethics, and Cosmology) to achieve his doctoral-level Geshe Degree in 2013. Besides his academic accomplishments, he learned spiritual arts, instruments, and multi-phonetic chantings. He has toured and constructed Mandala Sand paintings at many colleges and art centers in the United States.

I spoke to Geshe Lobsang Yonten on March 7, 2024. The conversation was made possible by Thupten Tendhar who was kind enough to translate for us. Thupten Tendhar is a decades-long scholar and practitioner of nonviolence and peace. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of Rhode Island (URI) and a Geshe (doctorate) degree in Buddhist studies from Drepung Loseling Monastic University. He is a certified Level 3 Trainer in Kingian Nonviolence from the URI Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies. He serves as the director of the International Nonviolence Summer Institute teaching nonviolence globally. He also coordinates and leads training initiatives and inner peace projects at the center. Tendhar authored and published two poetry books, *Peace: Rhythm of My Heart* and *Love: Beating My Heart*. His primary research focuses on compassion, inner peace, mindfulness, wellbeing, and nonviolence pedagogy.

Thank you to both Geshe Lobsang Yonten and Thupten Tendhar for this opportunity. As apart of the vinyl that comes with the book, I used recordings from the Tibetan Zong-Kay multi-phonetic chanting at Fleet Library.

**CVA** I was at your opening reception yesterday, where your group participated in throat singing. Can you please speak briefly about throat singing and why you use sound and the human voice for your practice?

**GLY** In Tibetan, it's called Zog-Kay, which literally means complete voice. In English, we call it throat singing or multi-phonic chanting. Humans don't have multi-phonic singing ability at birth, but we practice it and then develop our voices deeper and deeper. Eventually, with practice, we can reach the skill of multi-phonic chanting. There are two different types. One comes from the throat,<sup>01</sup> which is slightly more shallow. That one comes a lot easier. The other one is deeper; it comes from the abdomen. A deeper voice stays longer; so we practice the deeper method and train to have that ability.



↑  
(01) 1936 Anatomical diagram of human throat

**CVA** What is the training process like? How long does it take to learn the techniques?

**GLY** We practice daily, multiple times a day, and sing. Some people may be unable to do multi-phonic chanting even after trying for a long time. It depends on people's natural voice box and abilities. Those who have the ability, if they practice over and over again over the course of two to three years, will be able to sing well with the multi-phonic voice. We have to learn two things: the first is to produce the multi-phonic voice, or its noise, through the human vocal chord, and the next is to train to twist things and make tones. That is important because while we chant repeatedly, we are reciting verses. So it's not just the voice but also reciting sentences and prayers, which have tones that change in pitch. This process takes two to three years, and again, some may not be able to get it even if they try. A natural physical element also plays a role in becoming good at multi-phonic chanter.



↑  
Drepung Loseling Monastery preparing for chanting and music

**CVA** What is the spiritual belief of why you practice chanting and this specific voice for meditation?

**GLY** The purpose of chanting in general, particularly multi-phonic chanting, is that when we do it this way, we are highly concentrated on the verses we recite. And so this is a powerful tool that reminds us to focus more on the verses or thoughts we produce. People can also feel the message when they hear and listen to it. They can feel the vibration; they can feel the meaning. And with that, it brings more impact on their spiritual development. So, the primary purpose is to consolidate all our positive energies and combine them into a deeper voice that conveys the message to ourselves and others listening.

**CVA** What does noise mean to you, and how does it impact us spiritually?



Geshe Lobsang Yonten and other monks create mandala after chanting at Fleet Library. The mandala was a painting of Avalokiteshvara, which represents great compassion.

**GLY** There are two different types of noises produced. Sentient beings, such as humans or animals, produce one kind of noise that is related to or directly related to the organs and physical body of a being. Then, there are noises produced by natural elements, such as wind or water. We also have categories for noises, such as those that some people might consider melodious or those that people consider non-melodious that might induce fear or worry in them. However, spiritual practitioners try to maximize and transform noises into something calmer and more positive. Positive noises or voices are beneficial because they remind us of doing something good that contributes to peace and calm in our spirit. Therefore, they also impact the environment, where we live, or the people we come into contact with. When we do the chanting, either multi-phonic or just regular voice, but with tunes and rhythms, the purpose is to produce voices or noises that are more positive, melodic ideas that impact or inspire people to think something good.

**CVA** What do you think about noise that might be uncomfortable at first? For instance, when I first heard Tibetan throat chanting, as a Westerner, it made me feel uneasy and not calm. Since then, I've grown to have a deep love for it. There are many other examples of this throughout my life, from visual art to food. Can you speak a little bit about this transformation?

**GLY** It takes a lot of familiarization to feel something. For example, when some people hear multi-phonic chanting or chanting in general for the first time, they may feel it is completely new. Because of this, it may induce some unfamiliar feelings. Our experiences with unfamiliarity or something strange may spark certain feelings, depending on our relationship with what is unfamiliar. Sometimes, it takes us getting more familiar with noise or any concept to feel more comfortable. When we feel more comfortable, we are open to experiencing or tasting it better.

Chanting and music depend on the motivations of the singer, the musician, or whoever's producing the voice or noise. When the musician has more positive motivation, even if the audience may feel uncomfortable at the beginning, as they develop more trust and are more open-minded, eventually they feel the energy and impact of the positive motivation. Positive motivation significantly affects whether something becomes more trustworthy or favorable.

**CVA** How are noise and visual design connected?

**GLY** There is a great connection between physical design, the noise within us, and the noise we produce outside, and they are all linked by our minds or thoughts. For example, if we think of creating a melodious noise through our physical body, let's say with our voice, we might try to produce something more harmoniously from the mind, giving the command to the voice.





Similarly, if our mind thinks of making some design, let's say a sketch on paper, our mind needs to give the command to our hand, and the hand will produce it accordingly. Therefore, physical noise, and by that I mean a physical sketch or design, as well as verbal noise, is all created by the command of our thoughts and minds. But then also, if our mind wants to produce a noise, sketch, draw, etc., and we do it accordingly when we look at it, our eyes sense it, and we develop our thoughts to be able to say if something is good or needs further development, or if we should try something else. Then, by seeing with our own eyes, we also develop a different command that may change our design or voice. So, they are deeply connected with our minds and thoughts. Sometimes, when we judge ourselves or our design, the judgment also tells our mind to think differently.



Geshe Lobsang Yonten and other monks create mandala after chanting at Fleet Library.

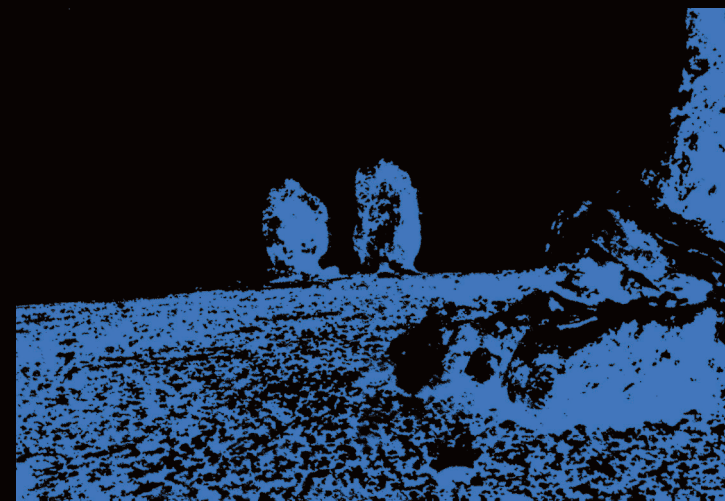
**CVA** What do you think about the relationship between making and analyzing something when creating work?

**GLY** Before we produce any noise, music, or design, there is a plan within our mind or thoughts, and then it's like an outline or a blueprint of what we will produce. Based on that outline or the blueprint, we design it in our physical thing and then using our eye senses and ear senses, and so on, we can feel it, we can see it, and then we may realize, "Oh, there is something that we can develop or something that we can change, and then there is no end to the development." There's always room for development if we want to modify or develop it.

**CVA** When I have practiced mindfulness or meditation in the past, one of the critical elements is a paradox. You are attempting to do nothing, which in itself cannot exist. One interesting thing is that when you meditate, you can eventually notice thoughts arise. What do you think about the internal thoughts or noises of the mind?

**GLY** In meditation practice, we try to familiarize our mind with a specific or chosen object. For example, if we meditate on a particular rock, a flower, etc. Whatever object you pick should sooth you and calm your mind. This technique aims to familiarize your mind with that specific object so that your mind calmly settles on that object. This is because our mind tends to think of multiple things at once. Or, to the other extreme, our mind becomes so unclear and cluttered that we are unaware of what we are thinking. The idea of thinking multiple things at once is called agitation, but you can also think of this as the mind thinking too rapidly; the mind is feeling too hyper. Once again, that is different from the other idea that the mind is so unclear and cluttered that it is unaware of what it is thinking.

These two extremes have always existed in humans, and most people are familiar with them. In meditation, we try to shift from those two extreme opposites to somewhere in the middle, where we are aware of what we are thinking, but also we are trying not to overthink what we are thinking. So we try to focus on the specific object, and whenever our minds wander outside of that object, we simply notice it and try to bring it back to the object; this way, our mind remains mindful and aware at the same time. Humans can train our minds so that we are alert and mindful at the same time, not dull or agitated.



Rock formations at Lake Namtso, Tibet

**CVA** Do you have a first memory of sound?

**GLY** I have no clear childhood memory of that.

**CVA** Do you have advice for people?

**GLY** It is important to recognize the similarities among people. From this perspective, everyone is equal in the process of life, which is a process of suffering that includes birth, aging, illness, and death. These are four measures of life, and everyone undergoes these processes. When we see people, it is important to acknowledge that everyone will undergo this similar process and not look down on people who are aging or experiencing illness, and so on.

Please recognize that we are all under a similar process of life. Be mindful of our behavior. For example, if I act negatively towards someone or speak to them negatively, this brings negative emotions to them and feelings of hurt inside them. Nobody likes to experience feelings of hurt or suffering, just like I don't want to experience that. So, because I care for my happiness and well-being, I should also care for others rather than being egoistic or disrespecting others' feelings. If we all develop this empathetic, compassionate feeling, we will all try to be respectful and mindful in our daily lives. This way, we contribute and live in a society based on respect and acknowledgment. It is essential to repeatedly remind us of this idea so that we live our lives mindfully and positively.



Geshe Lobsang Yonten photo by Rebecca Wilkinson

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## **SIGNATURE**

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### **BETHANY JOHNS**

Professor, Graphic Design  
Graphic Design Graduate Program Director  
Primary Thesis Advisor

### **RYAN WALLER**

Critic, Graphic Design  
Secondary Thesis Advisor

### **CHRISTOPHER SLEBODA**

Critic, Graphic Design  
Tertiary Thesis Advisor

### **KEIRA ALEXANDRA**

Partner, Work-Order  
External Thesis Critic



## COLOPHON

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