What Does the Rise of Participatory Culture Mean for Art and Design Education and Practice?

LEE VANDER KOOI ▮ HELEN ARMSTRONG ▮ ZVEZDANA STOJMIROVIC ▮ NATHAN DAVIS ▮ RICHARD ELAVER

COLLABORATE
INTERACT
PARTICIPATE.*

Creativity is no longer the sole territory of a separate creative class. Artists and designers now face an activated public. Today's users approach art and design with a growing expectation that they participate in the generation of content and the shaping of their own experiences. The burgeoning DIY, Open Source and Free Culture movements reflect the growing values for participation, openness, and inclusion.

What does this shift toward participation mean to art and design? What does it mean to the classroom? Are there new competencies that art and design education need to address? Should artists and designers act as expert leaders of this widespread creative impulse or should they stand apart, reinforcing their own credentials? What place do dialogical and relational aesthetic models have in the discussion? If the artist/designer, audience divide breaks down, what new modes of collaboration emerge? How do we prepare students for a climate in which feedback is instantaneous and projects often developed and propagated not just by the artists and designers, but also by the people themselves?

In sum, how will such a fundamental shift toward bottom-up creation affect our society, our disciplines and our classrooms?

*Co-Created D.C. letterforms from an workshop led by Stojmirovic and Armstrong. To download letterforms visit http://participatorydesign.net/?page_id=1828

Competencies for Collaboration: Teaching, Learning, and Doing Collaborative and Community-Based Work

Lee Vander Kooi

Assistant Professor Visual Communication Design, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

"*We have to learn new ways to collaborate and do projects. We have to enhance the ability of all citizens to engage in meaningful dialogue about their environment and context, and foster new relationships between the people who make things and the people who use them.*"

–John Thakara

Competency:

A set of knowledge, skills, and abilities

Teaching

- - - - - - - - -

→ → →

Incremental
experience

- - - - - - - - -

exposure >>
Immersion > >
Competence •

- - - - - - - - -

[reflection + contemplation]

Doing

- - - - - - - - -

Project–based
experience

- - - - - - - - -

dynamic
process

- - - - - - - - -

[action]

tribal language
attitudes
perspectives
values
working styles
disciplinary frames
siloed knowledge
problem solving preferences

Challenges for
collaborative activity

Develop values for collaboration

*Develop a shared understanding
of creative problem solving*

*Support the identification of personal
preferences in creative problem solving*

*Promote understanding of how and
why people respond differently to
problem solving processes*

*Create structures to support
communication and collective
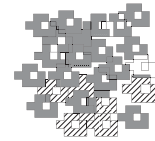decision making*

–Christopher Vice
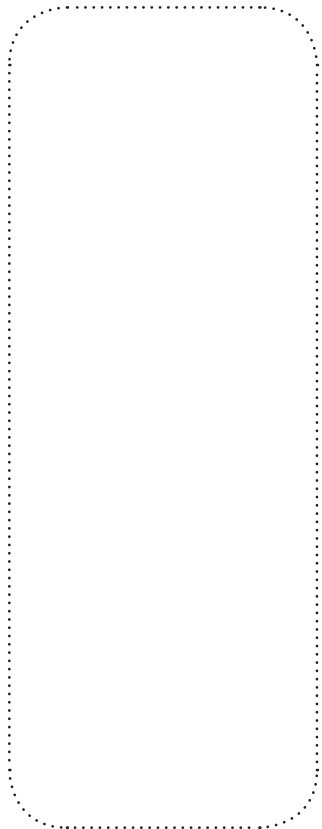
DESIGN AS CONVERSATION

HELEN ARMSTRONG

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Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, Maryland Institute College of Art
www.zvezdana.stojmirovic.org/design/

THINK. DRAW. WRITE.

Viewer has become user. Professional creatives suddenly face this newly activated public. No longer content to simply digest messages, these users increasingly approach design with the expectation of contribution.

"THE TEMPLATED MIND SEARCHES FOR TEXT FIELDS, METATAGS, AND RANKINGS LIKE HANDLES ON A SUITCASE"
DMITRI SIEGEL, 2006

YOUTUBE
ETSY
FLICKR
FACEBOOK
GOOGLE RANKINGS
AMAZON

PRODUCTION

DISTRIBUTION

Apps condition the public to fill in the blanks while putting the means of production and distribution directly into their hands.

. . . . .

No longer does production require large up front investments in equipment, storage and distribution. As the means of production and distribution open up to individual hands, distributed content creation surges. The amateur creative emerges.
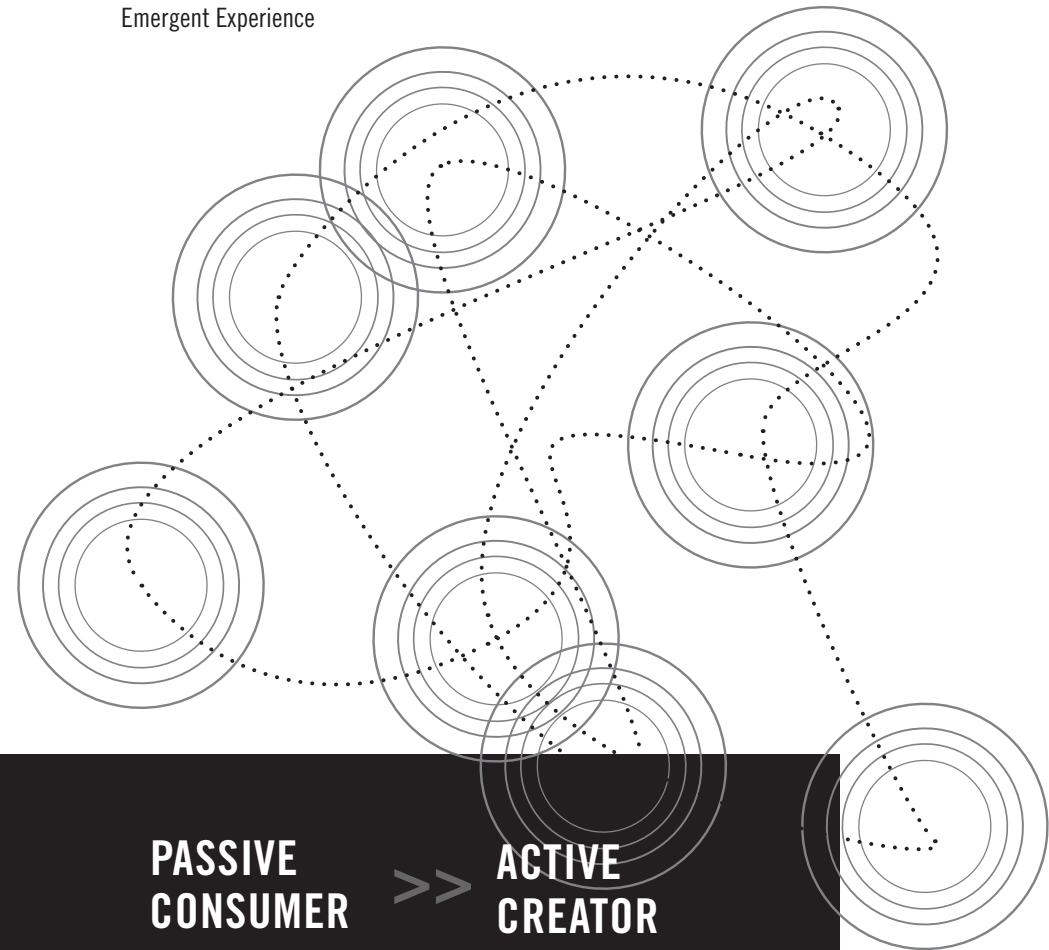
FINISHED PRODUCT

>>
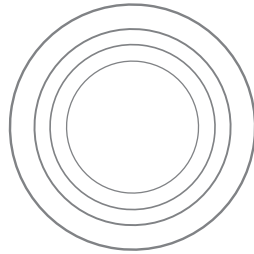
FLEXIBLE CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

Embedded Narrative

Emergent Experience

Graphic Design has always been about control—controlling the audience's eyes, controlling the typography, controlling the concept. The end result, historically, has been a polished finished product/message.

Participatory design turns this idea on its head. Graphic Design was a monologue, now it is a dialogue/ a conversation. An act of co-creation.

Participatory Design requires user content for completion. No more delivering clean, finished products to a passive audience. Instead, designers can create open-ended systems. This idea is not unfamiliar in the interactive world. In face this is really just a spreading of interactivity to all mediums.
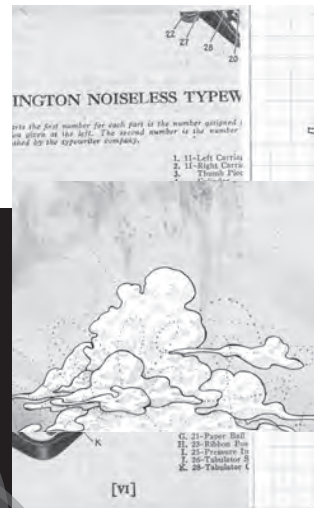
PASSIVE CONSUMER
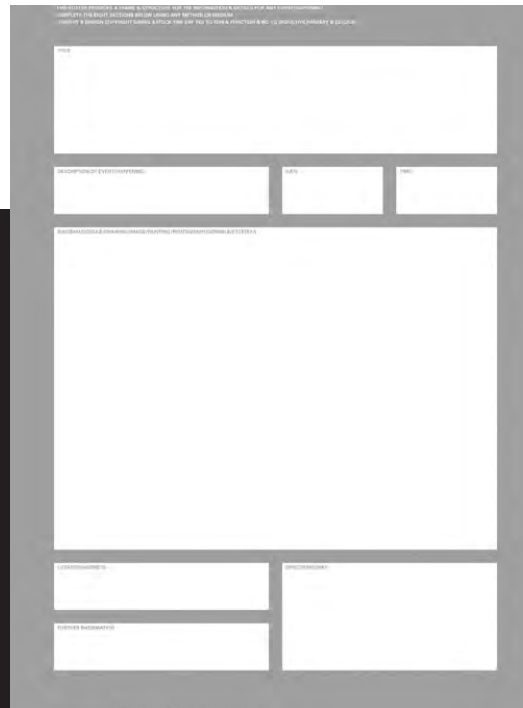
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ACTIVE CREATOR
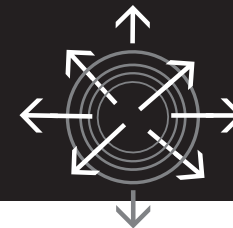
COMMUNITY

Art House Coop, 2010, www.arthousecoop.com ❚ SS+K Advertising, 2007, www.ssk.com ❚ Troika, 2006 ❚ MICA, 2010 (clockwise)

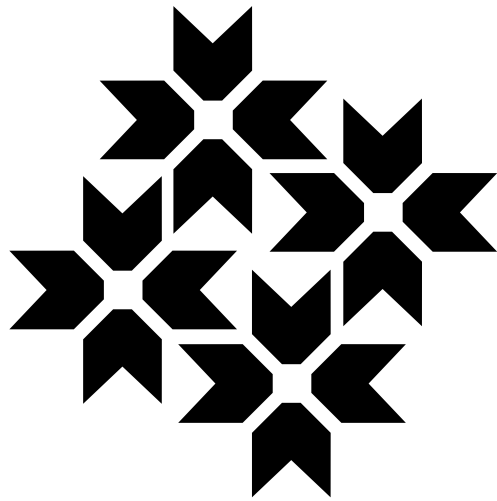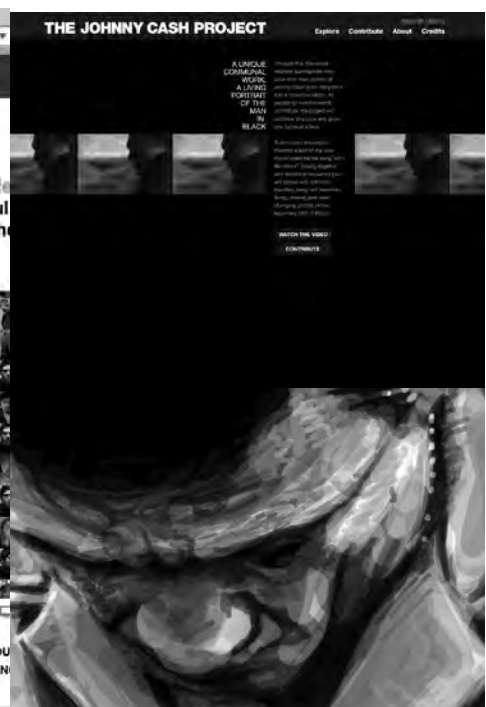**an alliance formed along shared interests**

FLEXIBILITY
(TEMPLATES)
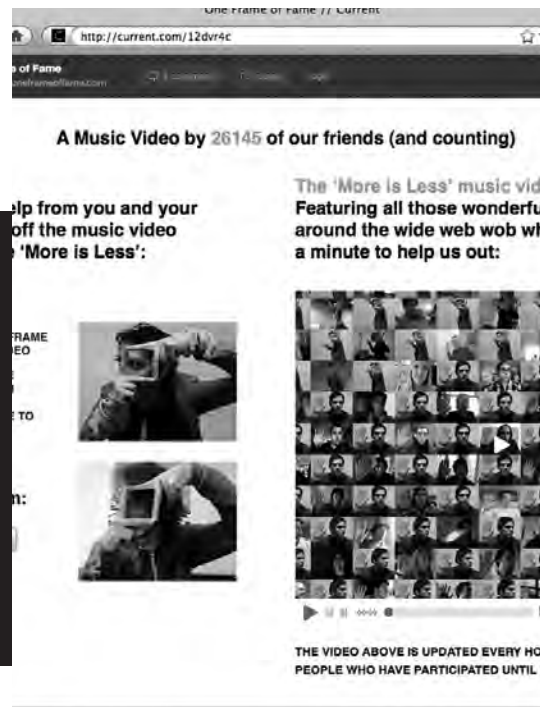
Daniel Eatock, 1998, www.eatock.com ▮ Wolff Olins, 2007, www.wolffolins.com
▮ Walker Art Center, 2005, www.walkerart.org ▮ MICA, 2010 (clockwise)

templates
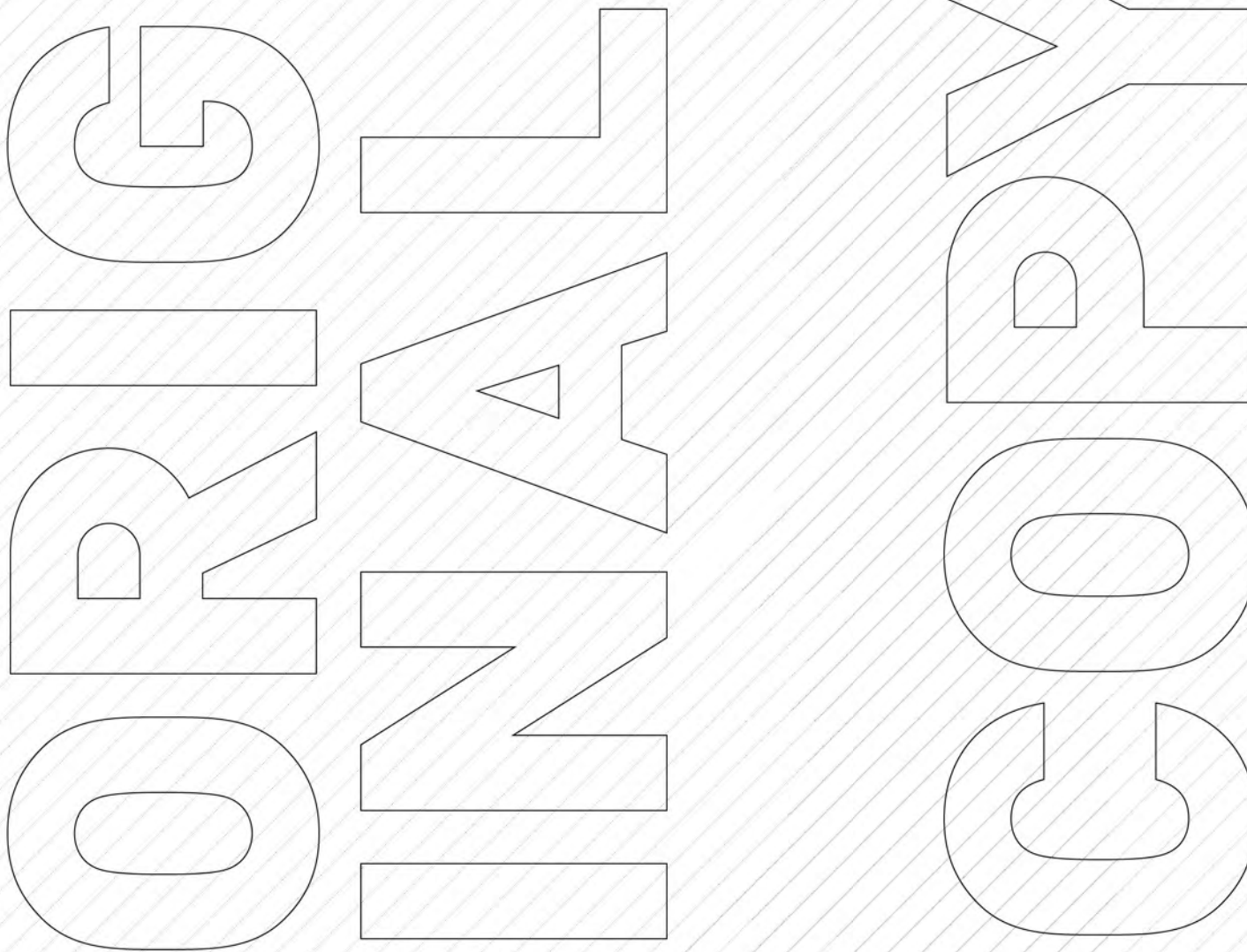
MODULARITY

Jonathan Puckey, 2010, www.oneframeoffame.com ❚ Aaron Koblin, 2009, www.thejohnnycashproject.com ❚ MICA, 2011 ❚ MICA and Miami U, 2010 (clockwise)

a multi-unit design structure

a division of labor
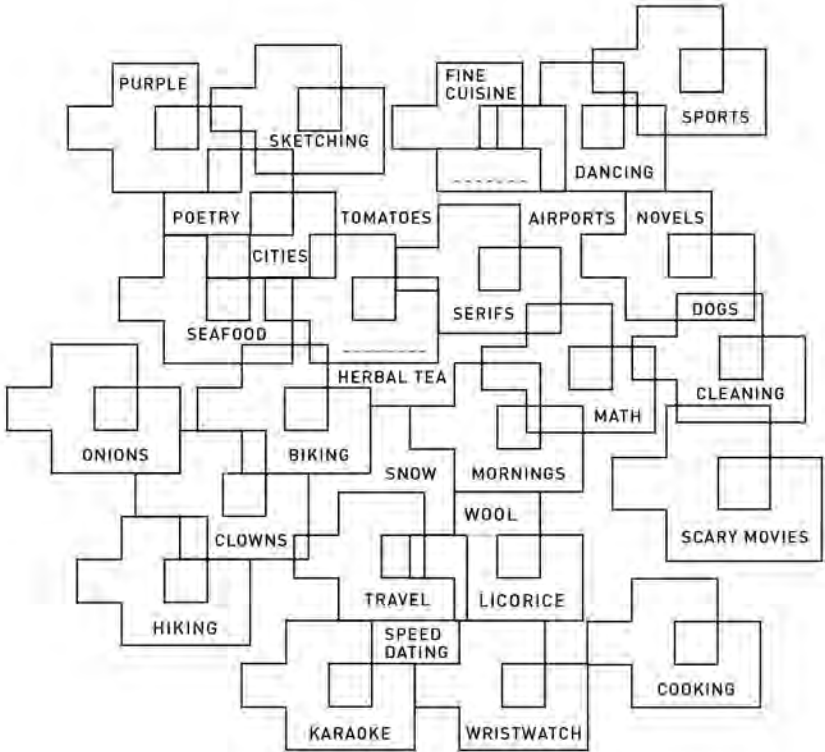
ORIGINAL

COPY

Instructions

1. Cut three slits in the upper right hand corner of each letterform.

2. Cut a series of diagonal lines in each of the "i" letterforms.

3. Make tiny slits, one inch apart covering the surface of each "O."

4. Using your knife add dimension to the letterforms by freeing segments of the letterforms and pulling them away from the page.

The Human Machine

Turn yourself and your friends into human machines. Photocopy this exercise, pass it to 10 participants, and then get started. Each participant should follow the provided algorithmic process to customize their type. When finished, compare results.

Name

PURPLE

FINE CUISINE

SPORTS

SKETCHING

DANCING

POETRY TOMATOES AIRPORTS NOVELS

CITIES

SERIFS DOGS

SEAFOOD

HERBAL TEA CLEANING

MATH

ONIONS BIKING SNOW MORNINGS

WOOL

SCARY MOVIES

CLOWNS

TRAVEL LICORICE

HIKING SPEED DATING

COOKING

KARAOKE WRISTWATCH

Who Are You?

Share yourself with the world using this identity signage template. Photocopy the template onto paper of your choice. Fill in the areas that list things that you do not like in one color. Use a second color to fill in areas that indicate things that you like. If you have no feelings toward a topic, leave it blank. If your feelings are complex, mix the colors together. In the dashed lines, fill in your own particular like or dislike. Use your preferences to generate your own identity mark. Hang the sign in your office space or on your dorm room door to reveal your identity to others.

A B C D E F G H
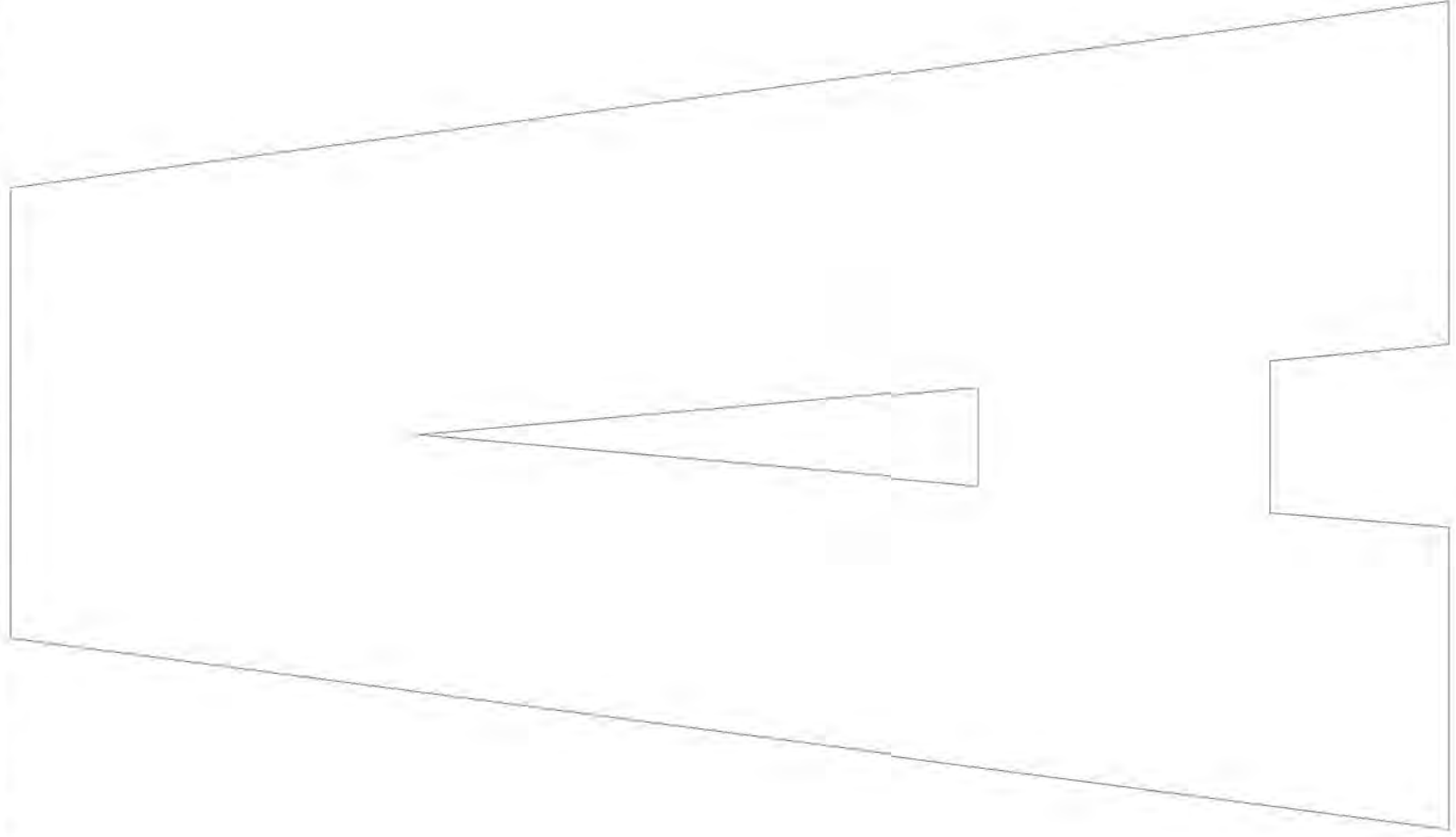I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X
Y Z
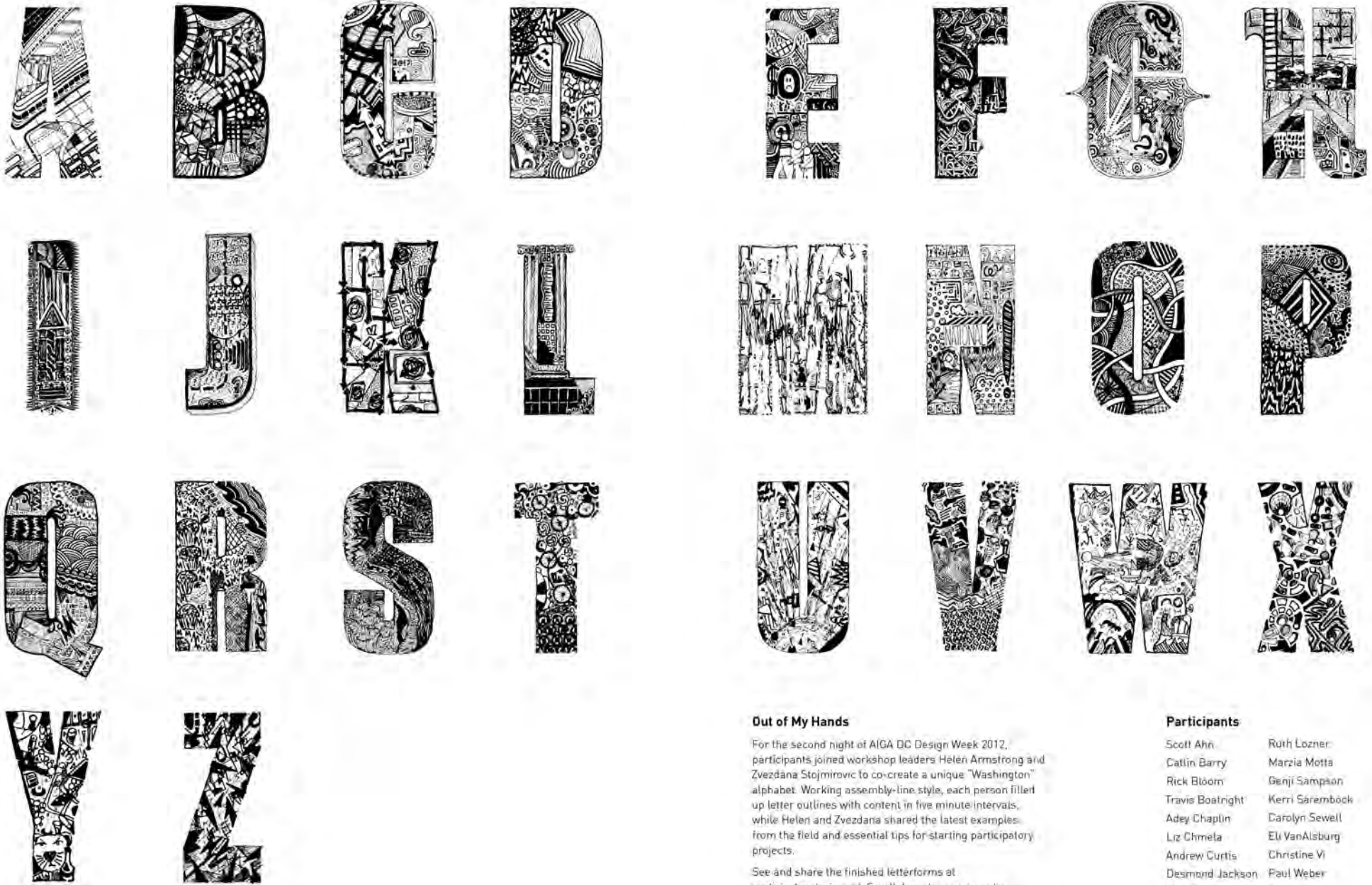
Out of My Hands

For the second night of AIGA DC Design Week 2012, participants joined workshop leaders Helen Armstrong and Zvezdana Stojmirovic to co-create a unique "Washington" alphabet. Working assembly-line style, each person filled up letter outlines with content in five minute intervals, while Helen and Zvezdana shared the latest examples from the field and essential tips for starting participatory projects.

See and share the finished letterforms at *participatorydesign.net*. Scroll down to access vector versions. The DC alphabet is licensed using a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License. You may use these letterforms for non-commercial purposes as long as you attribute the creators.

Participants

Scott Ahn	Ruth Lozner
Catlin Barry	Marzia Motta
Rick Bloom	Genji Sampson
Travis Boatright	Kerri Sarembock
Adey Chaplin	Carolyn Sewell
Liz Chmela	Eli VanAlsburg
Andrew Curtis	Christine Vi
Desmond Jackson	Paul Weber
Karl Kaufmann	Jue Yang
Patti Look	Bryant Yee

Letter is filled out all over, with lines and patterns filling in odd white spots.

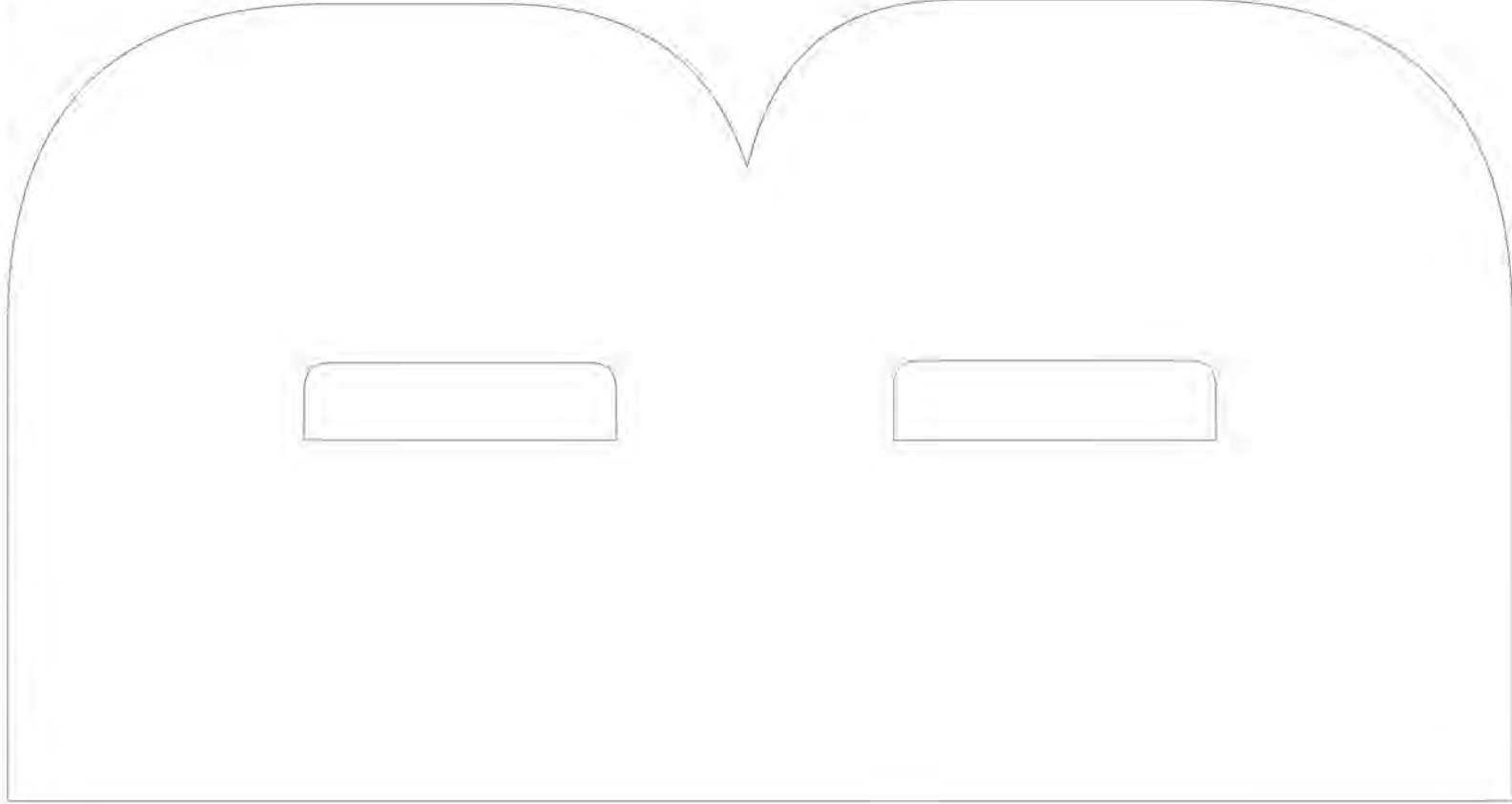Disjointed illustrations separated by too much space. Fix this by adding patterns.

Post-production Scan your letter in black and white at about 600 ppi and erase everything but the letter itself. Convert it to outlines in Illustrator using the Image Trace command. Play with the settings to find the best conversion. Clean up the vector. Redo muddy areas to preserve legibility. This should take about two hours.

Legal Permission By participating in this workshop, you grant permission that your contribution to the work be used freely by the workshop leader, Zvezdana Stojmirovic. Usage includes publication anywhere on the web or in print, unlimited in time. This artwork will be made available on *participatorydesign.net* under a Creative Commons license. You will receive no remuneration, but will be listed among their authors whenever possible. Your signature on the letterform represents your permission.

To all the co-creators of this letter, here's how I envisioned it:

1 sign
2 sign
3 sign
4 sign
5 sign
6 sign
7 sign
8 sign
9 sign
10 sign
11 sign
12 sign
13 sign
14 sign

:-| Letter is filled out all over, with lines and patterns filling in odd white spots.

:-(Disjointed illustrations separated by too much space. Fix this by adding patterns.

To all the co-creators of this letter, here's how I envisioned it:

Post-production Scan your letter in black and white at about 600 ppi and erase everything but the letter itself. Convert it to outlines in Illustrator using the Image Trace command. Play with the settings to find the best conversion. Clean up the vector. Redo muddy areas to preserve legibility. This should take about two hours.

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① sign ② sign ③ sign ④ sign ⑤ sign ⑥ sign ⑦ sign

⑧ sign ⑨ sign ⑩ sign ⑪ sign ⑫ sign ⑬ sign ⑭ sign

DESIGNER AS EDITOR: CREATING A GARDEN FROM THE JUNGLE OF USER GENERATED CONTENT

NATHAN DAVIS

Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, Montana State University
www.nathanrossdavis.com

DESIGN ORGANIZES THE CHAOS OF NATURE INTO CONSUMABLE FORMS - FROM JUNGLE TO GARDEN.
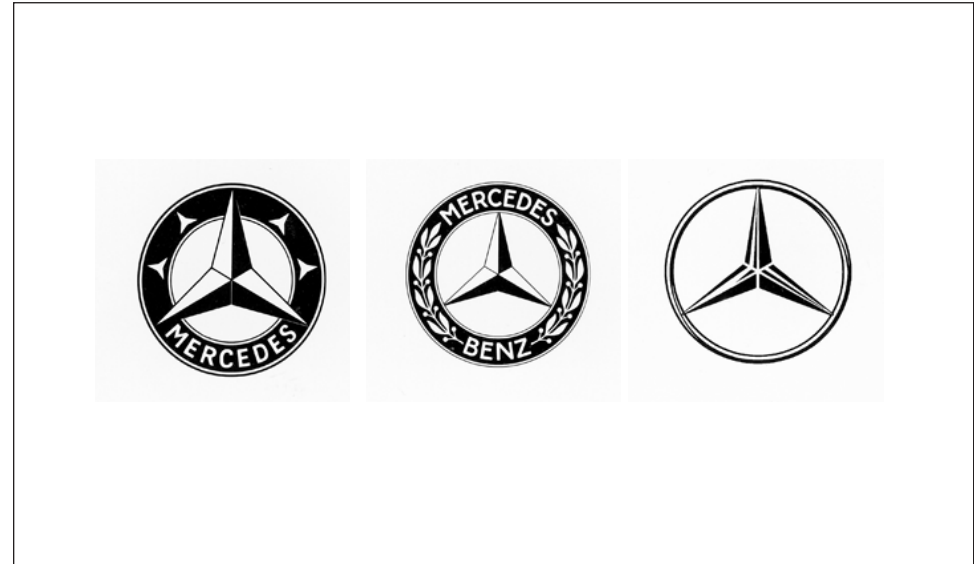
DESIGN HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT FINDING PATTERNS AND CREATING HIERARCHY. THIS HELPS FOCUS ATTENTION ON PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS, FEATURES, MESSAGES AND IDEAS.

Evolution of the mercedes-Benz logo.

Design is a process, not a product. Participation by a chosen public or community in the design process is an outgrowth of the desire to connect the design process with a more authentic expression of the situated condition of the design product.

Design has always been about managing complexity and creating narratives out of disparate stories. The ability to collect bright moments and arrange them into cohesive ideas and communications that add value to a specified user's life is increasingly important.

User centered research, participatory design, collaborative production, and modular and flexible design are a reflection of the respect that the design industry now feels for the fragmented public it seeks to connect with. Without design to filter and organize ideas into cohesive communications and experiences this public would be overwhelmed and our "information age" would retreat from expanding knowledge and become a pile of useless data.

Typical French Garden (Duke Gardens in New Jersey, via Wikipedia)

DESIGNERS HAVE AN
IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY
AS FILTERS AND SYSTEM
DESIGNERS FOR THE
NEW KINDS OF CONTENT
GENERATION THAT EXIST.

The democratization of technology and publishing tools has allowed once private ideas to be public, obscure knowledge to become accessible, and ideas to be transmitted at lightning speed to vastly larger but culturally and geographically fragmented audiences.

The practices that seem to most significantly address this problem are those that seek to manage

the data and transform it into new, consumable knowledge. Also those practices that connect with individuals by releasing agency and control allow a larger slice of individualism in the act of consumption strengthening individual identities. This in turn empowers the users and helps them identify not with the product but with the community of individuals that participate in the use of the product. (pinners, tumblrs, etc.)

SORT ()

/RELEVANCE
/AVG REVIEW
/HOT
/POPULAR
/MOST LIKED
/SIZE
/COLOR

STUDENTS NEED TO BE TRAINED TO SEE THIS DATA AS A SOURCE FOR INSPIRATION AND INTERPRETATION.

Data is not knowledge. The designed product is a product *of* design, not design itself. Participatory processes are not an end in themselves, but rather a means. Today's design students need to be lead through processes which will establish new ideas and products adapting to their changing contexts and tools. Participatory processes, and particularly the ability for a student to edit content and discover existing value is essential. Without a knowledge of how to sift and sort, observe and articulate, collect and order designers will be unable to engage with the users who are more and more empowered to write their own story every day.

Individuals are offering their ideas, information, conversations, hopes, dreams, frustrations etc. with alarming openness and regularity. The pool of information to use for inspiration, research, and design production is huge. But the pluralism and fragmentation of

thought that we now experience must still be condensed into packets of useful and poetic communication so that we cans still establish and maintain common group identities. Allowing or inviting participation in the process of design helps establish a sense of community, common interest, empowerment and self confidence for individuals in a given social group. This effectively gives the empowered individual stronger sense of identification with a social group.

Two Details of a student collaborative design project using images from flickr.com, Montana State University.

USER GENERATED PROJECTS OFFER AN EXCITING SPACE FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION AND A WAY TO ORGANIZE TECHNOLOGIES SERVE OUR EMERGING DIGITAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

Image of silent rave event in New York City.

Increasingly our technologies are becoming more aligned with our needs. We have spent a great deal of the modern era bending to meet our technological progress, but now we are starting to experience technological development that feels like it might contain the user at the center.

Technical answers usually only address "how?" or "what?" leaving out the question of "why?". Participatory processes even the collection of data and it's organization into a cohesive idea present the opportunity for the "how?" and "what?" related to technological development to include the "why?".

There is still a great deal of work to do, but the effort to advocate for the user and to provide opportunities for users to engage in a meaningful way with the products they encounter is promising .

This release of agency to individuals through thoughtful design requires the releasing of some power from the maker in order to empower the user.

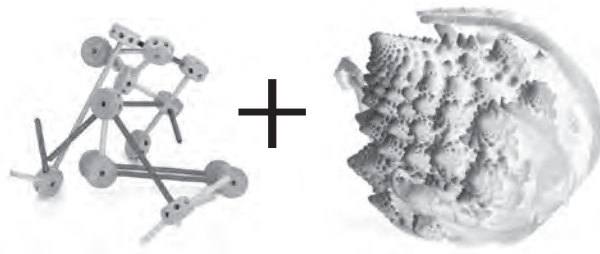*Concert goers using their cellphones to capture the experience.*

Mass Customization
and Product Individualization

RICHARD ELAVER

Assistant Professor of Industrial Design, Appalachian State University
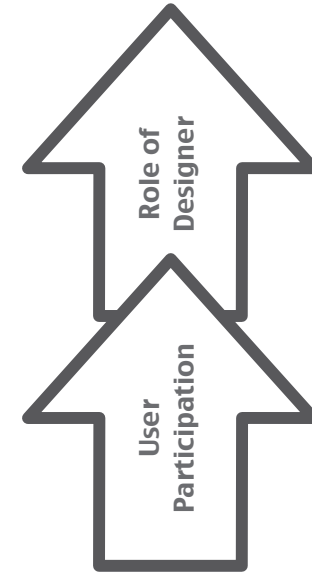http://www.designercraftsman.com/

Modular Organic Systems (MOS)

- Kit of parts
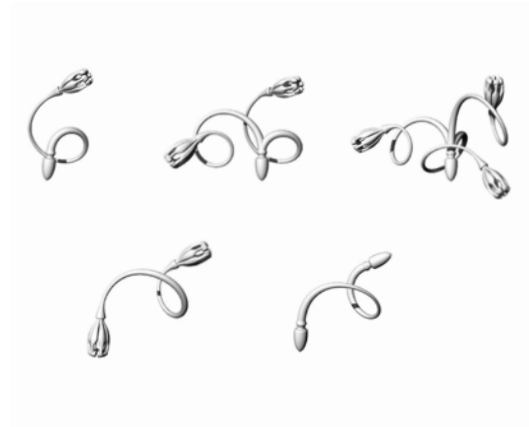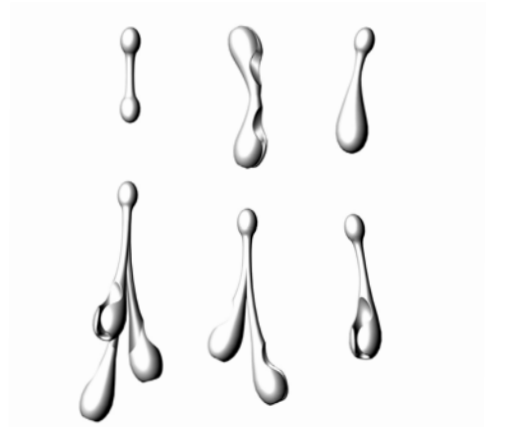- Open-ended construction
- Interactive fractal structures

Five Stages of the Creative Process

1. Preparation

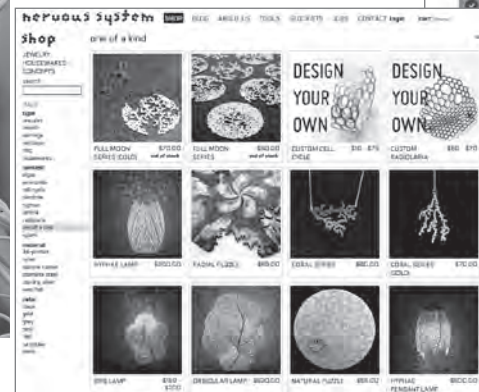2. Incubation

3. Insight

4. Evaluation

5. Elaboration

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi,
Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention

Role of Designer

User Participation

Drips
Richard Elaver, with Phil Renato

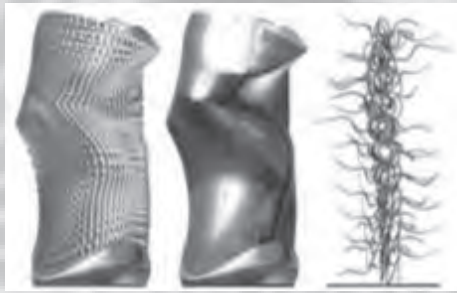

Tendrils
Richard Elaver, with Dennis Dollens

Designer & User Collaboration

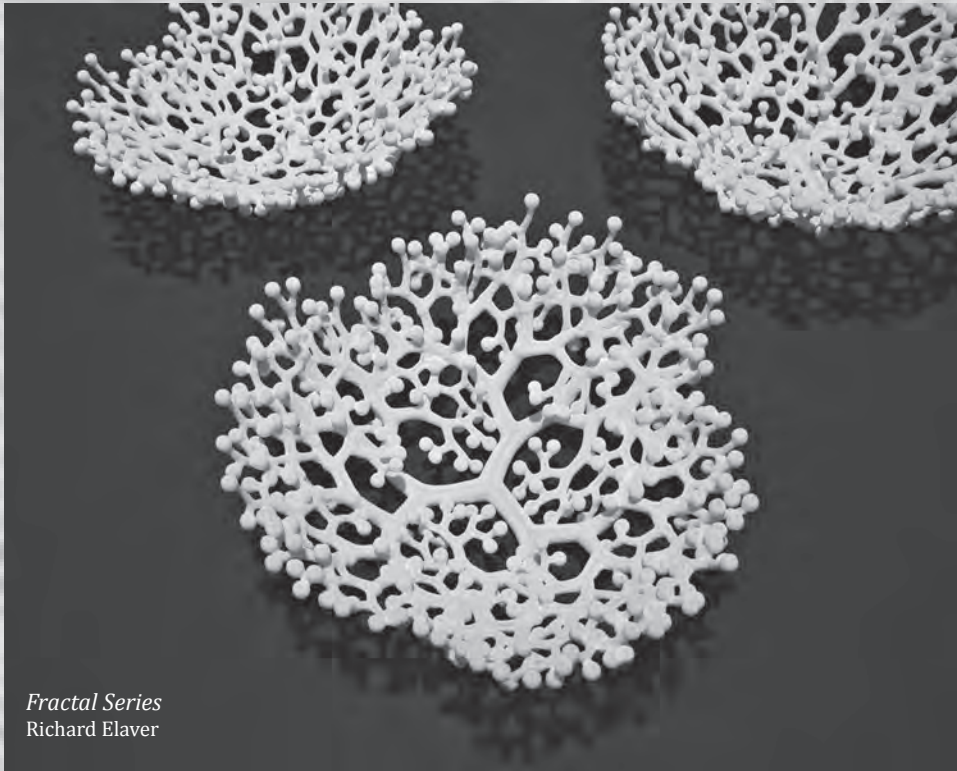- Designer establishes parameters
- User explores within parameters

Designer & Software Collaboration

Bio-digital Architecture
Dennis Dollens

- Designer establishes parameters
- Software explores within parameters

Fractal Series
Richard Elaver

"What we are evolving are the rules for generating form rather than the forms themselves. We are describing processes, not components, ours is a packet-of-seeds as opposed to the bag-of-bricks approach."

John Frazer

Designing Participatory Experiences

- Provide a high likelihood of success

- Allow a significant, but limited level of involvement

- Foster a sense of ownership

"What will that which has been designed design?"
Tony Fry