Zach Brutti

Design Portfolio

2026

A compilation of some design works undertaken by me, including final design elements and information about the brief I was given which informed my final design choices.

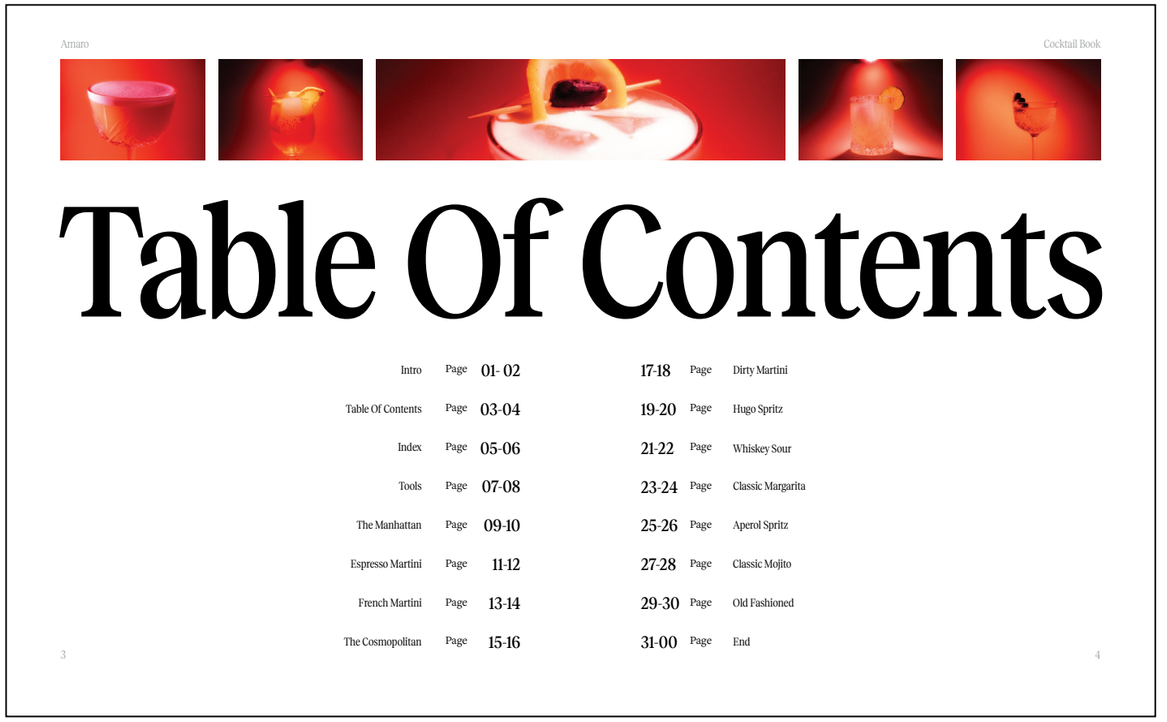
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Catalogue Print

For this assignment I was tasked with creating a 30-page, 15-spread catalogue of anything I chose. The catalogue had to feature at least 10 unique physical objects that fit into the chosen topic, as well as icons and infographics. We also had to generate all of the material ourselves, meaning I set up a photography studio to take pictures of all the cocktails.

I also researched existing catalogues and looked for a niche to build into. I chose to mix European-style lifestyle magazines and cocktail recipe books to create a coffee table look book for cocktails. In the end, I created something I could imagine being owned by other designers as a coffee table book. I chose orange and amber as my primary colours and built the book around them, using photo editing to create a strong, distinctive look through the images and sell the idea of a European lifestyle through cocktails.

Overall I think this is one of my favourite piece of design work I have created. It is clean, bold and perfectly captured the niche I was going for.







Whiskey Sour

Rocks Sour Whiskey Difficult

A Whiskey Sour is a mixed drink or shot containing whiskey, lemon juice, and simple syrup, and traditionally garnished with a cherry or sometimes a lemon wedge. It is a blend of sour, bitter, and sweet flavors. Sometimes, an egg white is included, which is sometimes called a Boston sour. When the whiskey used is a Scotch, it is called a Scotch sour.

Ingredients: Typically uses 2 oz bourbon, 3/4 oz lemon juice, and 3/4 oz simple syrup.

Garnish: Often finished with an orange slice, or a few drops of Angostura bitters on the foam.

History: The drink dates back over 150 years, with its first printed recipe appearing in The Bartender's Guide.



Old Fashioned

Rocks Sweet Whiskey Medium

An Old Fashioned is a simple cocktail made with whiskey, sugar, and bitters, usually garnished with an orange peel. It has a strong, sweet and bitter flavour, with the whiskey still being the main taste. It is traditionally served over ice in a short rocks glass.

Ingredients: Typically uses 2 oz bourbon or rye whiskey, 1/4 oz simple syrup, and 2-3 dashes of Angostura bitters.

Garnish: Usually finished with an orange peel, sometimes with a cocktail cherry.

History: Known as an "Old Fashioned" as people began asking for cocktails made in the old-fashioned way.



Dirty Martini

Martini Bitter Gin Medium

A Dirty Martini is a variation of the classic Martini made with gin or vodka, dry vermouth, and olive brine. The olive brine gives it a salty, savoury flavour compared to the cleaner taste of a traditional Martini. It is usually served very cold in a chilled martini or coupe glass.

Ingredients: Typically uses 2 1/2 oz gin or vodka, 1/2 oz dry vermouth, and 1/2 oz olive brine.

Garnish: Usually finished with one or more green olives on a cocktail skewer.

History: The Martini developed in the late 1800s, becoming popular later as a variation using olive brine.

The Cosmopolitan

Martini Fruity Vodka Moderate

A Cosmopolitan is a vodka cocktail made with cranberry juice, lime juice, and orange liqueur. It has a sweet and sour flavour with a bright pink-red colour, making it one of the more visually recognisable cocktails. It is usually served straight up in a chilled martini or coupe glass.

Ingredients: Typically uses 1 1/2 oz citrus vodka, 1 oz cranberry juice, 1/2 oz Cointreau, and 1/2 oz lime juice.

Garnish: Usually finished with a thin orange peel or orange twist.

History: The Cosmopolitan became popular during the 1990s, helped by its appearance on Sex and the City.



Brand Identity

I was tasked with creating a brand identity for a food truck that would be seen around our campus. We were supplied with a country to build the brand around, and I was given Iran. After researching the demographics of our campus and who I wanted to appeal to, I settled on a food truck aimed at groups of culturally diverse students who wanted affordable meals. I then researched Iran's relationship with food, where I found the name Sufra, which describes the act of sitting down to share food around a tablecloth.

I used rich purple, olive green and rusty orange to relate back to the cultural identity of Iran, as those colours occur a lot within their written history and architectural design. We also had to create mock-ups and collateral, such as a menu and merchandise, to create a full brand rollout.



Main Logo

Persian Red	Army Black	Olive Green	Sufra Cream	Royal Purple
#A94228	#181513	#707f0f	#FFFAE3	#732c8c
Primary	Black	Accent	Background	Secondary

Heading — Aquavit - Bold - For Display/Headings

سفره — Parastoo - Medium - Farsi Text

Subheading — Aquavit - Medium - For Important Info

Body Copy — Aquavit - Regular - For All Others







Design Elements

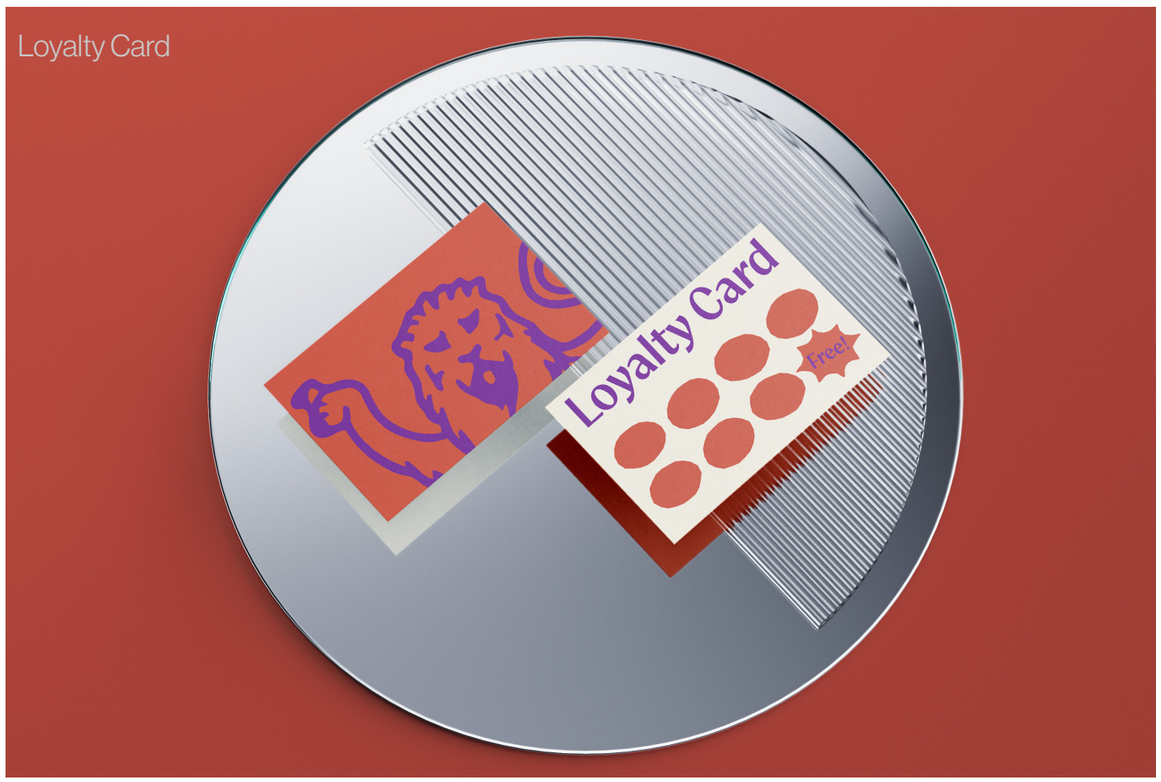
Menu Design



Food Truck Design



Loyalty Card



Cup Merch



The Taste of WA

The brief for this design exercise was to create a billboard and Adshel ad campaign for an Australian brand of our choosing. We had to create the SMP (Single Minded Proposition), target audience and the feeling we wanted the ad to have, while making sure the final product matched the brand's existing identity. I chose Gage Roads, an independent brewery from Perth.

After researching their existing identity, I focused my campaign on young Australians who value local brands, with the SMP of simply "The Taste of WA". I went with the idea of iconic WA scenery, particularly the beach, and relating that to the taste of drinking a Gage Roads beer. After a few sketch mock-ups, I settled on showing the beers sitting in the beach waves and pouring over the WA coast. I created all of the graphic elements myself apart from the logo, including the photography and type layout.



Snapshot of process diary



Billboard, landscape



Adshel poster

Hills Handyman

This was my first project for a real client, so it was my first time trying to design around what another person thought looked good instead of just my eye for design. He was a tradesman who wanted to start his own handyman business and sell his skills. After talking to the client, we narrowed down his target demographic to older men and women who live in the Perth Hills, as they were his most repeating customers.

I wanted the brand to feel timeless with a touch of retro, so we settled on a burnt orange as the primary colour, matched with a timeless soft serif typeface to give the brand a more casual and friendly feeling. I also wanted to push the brand in a very personal, “one man army” direction, so I got the client to write out his name, which I scanned in and used on his business card and shirts. This helped make the identity feel more personal and connected to the Hills Handyman.



Main Logo



Facebook header



Car Badge

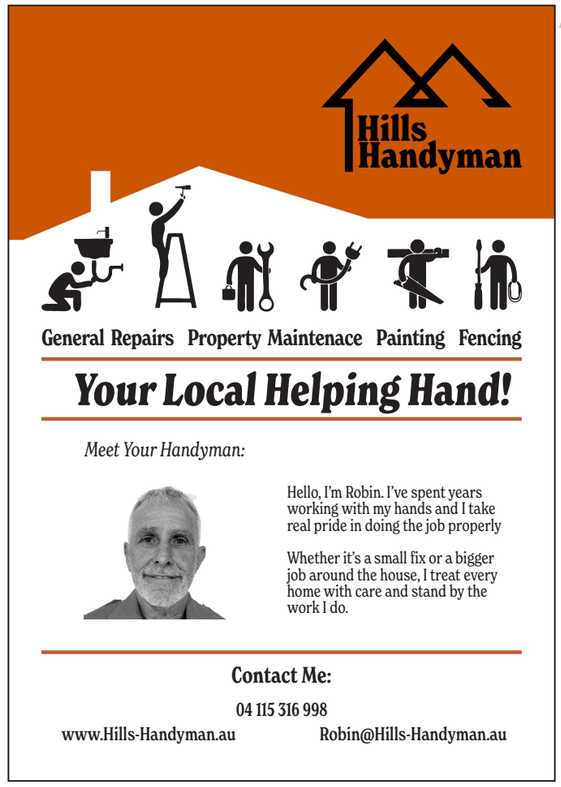


Full Lockup



Shirt Mockup

A4 Flyer





Business Card



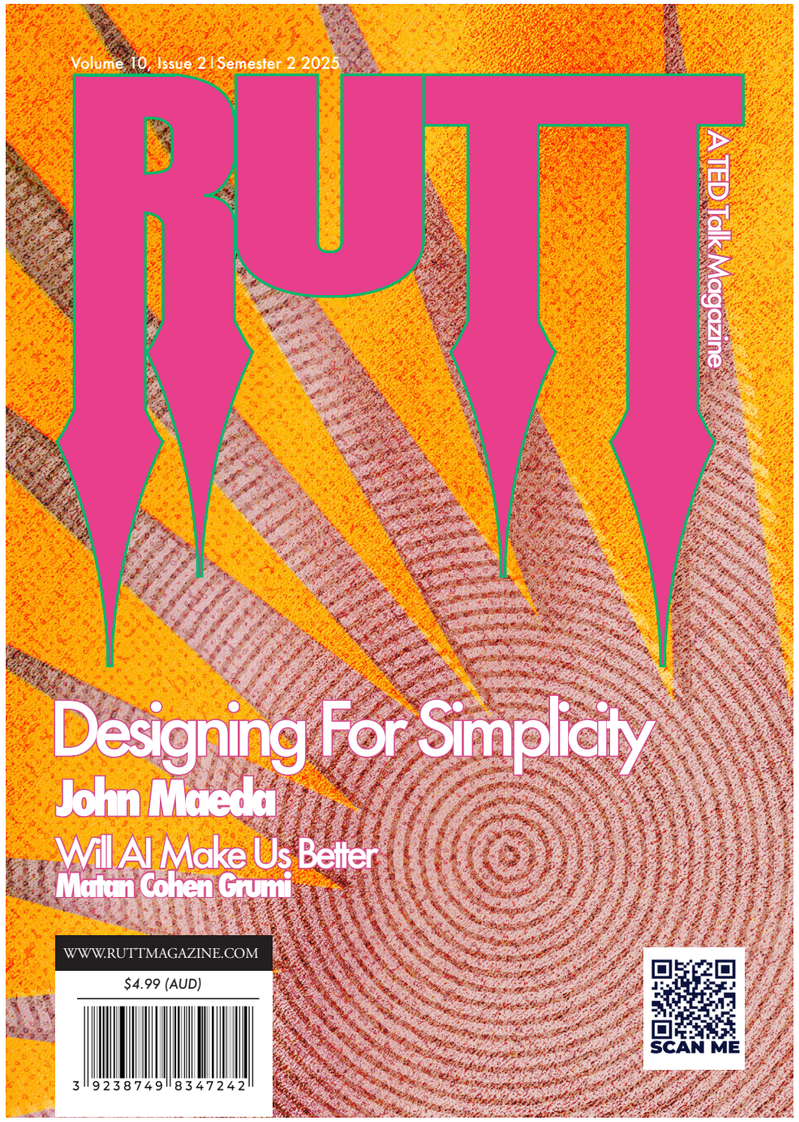
A5 Flyer



Magazine Design

This was one of my earlier design works, and it pushed me to use newer design applications that I wasn't familiar with. It was a typographic study exploring the ideas and visual language of John Maeda's TED Talk. Although it was a fictional magazine, we still had to create a three-spread article based on our chosen TED Talk, as well as an unrelated cover for the magazine.

I picked a TED Talk about designing for simplicity and quickly found the art direction of Swiss Style, with heavy box grids and a "never break the grid" mentality. I chose this style as its structural grids and minimalist approach reflects the idea of simplicity in its rawest form. I tried to make the spreads look as simple as possible, which I found quite challenging to balance while still making them visually interesting. For the cover, I decided to do the opposite and make it loud and heavy with textures to contrast against the simplicity of the spreads.



Magazine Cover

TED Talk Magazine Design

DESIGNING For Simplicity

John Madea

In John Maeda's TED Talk "Designing for Simplicity," he explores the balance between simplicity and complexity in design and in life, showing that the two are deeply intertwined rather than opposites. Maeda, vva designer, technologist, and educator, uses humor, storytelling, and personal experience to illustrate how simplicity is not about removing depth, but about making meaning clearer and experiences more human. He reflects on how society is obsessed with making things "simple," from technology and branding to everyday life, yet true simplicity thoughtful not just minimalism for its own sake. Maeda discusses his journey from computer science to art and design, describing how his mentors taught him the importance of beauty, emotion, and humanity within technology. He also shares personal stories, such as his time growing up in a tofu factory, his experiences at MIT, and his shift toward appreciating the value of imperfection and play. Throughout the talk, Maeda emphasizes that simplicity isn't just about doing less — it's about finding clarity, joy, and purpose. He ties this philosophy to his book *The Laws of Simplicity*, explaining that design should enhance life by making it more enjoyable and less painful. Ultimately, Maeda's message goes beyond design; it's a reflection on living meaningfully in a complex world. He encourages

Opening Spread

On simplicity. What a great way to start. First of all, I've been watching this trend where we have these books like such and such "For Dummies." Do you know these books, these such and such "For Dummies?" My daughters pointed out that I'm very similar looking, so this is a bit of a problem. But I was looking online at Amazon.com for other books like this. You know, there's also something called the "Complete Idiot's Guide?" There's a sort of business model around being stupid in some sense. We like to have technology make us feel bad, for some strange reason. But I really like that, so I wrote a book called "The Laws of Simplicity." I was in Milan last week, for the Italian launch. It's kind of a book about questions, questions about simplicity. Very few answers. I'm also wondering myself, what is simplicity? Is it good? Is it bad? Is complexity better? I'm not sure. After I wrote "The Laws of Simplicity," I was very tired of simplicity, as you can imagine. And so in my life, I've discovered that vacation is the most important skill for any kind of over-achiever. Because your companies will always take away your life, but they can never take away your vacation -- in theory. So, I went to the Cape last summer to hide from simplicity, and I went to the Gap, because I only have black pants. So I went and bought khaki shorts or whatever, and unfortunately, their branding was all about "Keep It Simple." I opened up a magazine, and Visa's branding was, "Business Takes Simplicity." I develop photographs, and Kodak said, "Keep It Simple." So, I felt kind of weird that simplicity was sort of following me around. So, I turned on the TV, and I don't watch TV very much, but you know this person? This is Paris Hilton, apparently. And she has this show, "The Simple Life." So I watched this. It's not very simple, a little bit confusing. I looked for a different show to watch. So, I opened up this TV Guide thing, and on the E! channel, this "Simple Life" show is very popular. They'll play it over, and over, and over. So it was traumatizing, actually. So, I wanted to escape again, so I went out to my car. And Cape Cod, there are idyllic roads, and all of us can drive in this room. And when you drive, these signs are very important. It's a very simple sign, it says, "road" and "road approaching." So I'm mostly driving along, okay, and then I saw this sign. So, I thought complexity was attacking me suddenly, so I thought, "Ah, simplicity. Very important." But then I thought, "Oh, simplicity. What would that be like on a beach? What if the sky was 41 percent gray? Wouldn't that be the perfect sky?" I mean that simplicity sky. But in reality, the sky looked like this. It was a beautiful, complex sky. You know, with the pinks and blues. We can't help but love complexity. We're human beings: we love complex things. We love relationships -- very complex. So we love this kind of stuff. I'm at this place called the Media Lab. Maybe some of you guys have heard of this place. It's designed by I. M. Pei, one of the premier modernist architects. Modernism means white box, and it's a perfect white box. And some of you guys are entrepreneurs, etc., whatever. Last month, I was at Google, and, boy, that

> **Simplicity and complexity need each other.**

Good Design Is As Little Design As Possible.

cafeteria, man. You guys have things here in Silicon Valley like stock options. See, in academia, we get titles, lots of titles. Last year at TED, these were all my titles. I had a lot of titles. I have a default title as a father of a bunch of daughters. This year at TED, I'm happy to report that I have new titles, in addition to my previous titles. Another "Associate Director of Research." And this also happened, so I have five daughters now. That's my baby Reina. Thank you. And so, my life is much more complex because of the baby, actually, but that's okay. We will still stay married, I think. But looking way back, when I was a child -- you see, I grew up in a tofu factory in Seattle. Many of you may not like tofu because you haven't had good tofu, but tofu's a good food. It's a very simple kind of food. It's very hard work to make tofu. As a child, we used to wake up at 1 a.m. and work till 6 p.m., six days a week. My father was kind of like Andy Grove, paranoid of the competition. So often, seven days a week. Family business equals child labor. We were a great model. So, I loved going to school. School was great, and maybe going to school helped me get to this Media Lab place, I'm not sure. Thank you. But the Media Lab is an interesting place, and it's important to me because as a student, I was a computer science undergrad, and I discovered design later on in my life. And there was this person, Muriel Cooper. Who knows Muriel Cooper? Muriel Cooper? Wasn't she amazing? Muriel Cooper. She was wacky. And she was a TEDster, exactly, and she showed us, she showed the world how to make the computer beautiful again. And she's very important in my life, because she's the one that told me to leave MIT and go to art school. It was the best advice I ever got. So I went to art school, because of her. She passed away in 1994, and I was hired back to MIT to try to fill her shoes, but it's so hard. This amazing person, Muriel Cooper. When I was in Japan I went to an art school in Japan I had a nice sort of situation, because somehow I was connected to Paul Rand. Some of you guys know Paul Rand, the greatest graphic designer -- I'm sorry out there. The great graphic designer Paul Rand designed the IBM logo, the Westinghouse logo. He basically said, "I've designed everything." And also Ikko Tanaka was a very important mentor in my life -- the Paul Rand of Japan. He designed most of the major icons of Japan, like Issey Miyake's brand and also Muji. When you have mentors -- and yesterday, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar talked about mentors, these people in your life the problem with mentors is that they all die. This is a sad thing, but it's actually a happy thing in a way, because you can remember them in their pure form.

Turn Spread One & Two

I think that the mentors that we all meet sort of humanize us. When you get older, and you're all freaked out, whatever, the mentors calm us down. And I'm grateful for my mentors, and I'm sure all of you are too. Because the human thing is very hard when you're at MIT. The T doesn't stand for "human," it stands for "technology."

> **Technology makes our lives more complex, but simplicity makes us feel human again**

And because of that, I always wondered about this human thing. So, I've always been Googling this word, "human," to find out how many hits I get. And in 2001, I had 26 million hits, and for "computer," because computers are against humans a bit, I have 42 million hits. Let me do an Al Gore here. So, if you sort of compare that, like this, you'll see that computer versus human -- I've been tracking this for the last year -- computer versus human over the last year has changed. It used to be kind of two to one. Now, humans are catching up. Very good, us humans! We're catching up with the computers. In the simplicity realm, it's also interesting. So if you compare complexities to simplicity, it's also catching up in a way, too. So, somehow humans and simplicity are intertwined, I think. I have a confession: I'm not a man of simplicity. I spent my entire early career making complex stuff. Lots of complex stuff. I wrote computer programs to make complex graphics like this. I had clients in Japan to make really complex stuff like this. And I've always felt bad about it, in a sense. So, I hid in a time dimension. I built things in a time-graphics dimension. I did this series of calendars for Shiseido. This is a floral theme calendar in 1997, and this is a firework calendar. So, you launch the number into space, because the Japanese believe that when you see fireworks, you're cooler for some reason. This is why they have fireworks in the summer. A very extreme culture. Lastly, this is a fall-based calendar, because I have so many leaves in my yard. So this is the leaves in my yard, essentially. And so I made a lot of these types of things. I've been lucky to have been there before people made these kind of things, and so I made all this kind of stuff that messes with your eyes. I feel kind of bad about that. Tomorrow, Paola Antonelli is speaking. I love Paola. She has this show right now at MoMA, where some of these early works are here on display at MoMA, on the walls. If you're in New York, please go and see that. But I've had a problem, because I make all this flying stuff and people say, "Oh, I know your work. You're the guy that makes eye candy." And when you're told this, you feel kind of weird. "Eye candy" -- sort of pejorative, don't you think? So, I say, "No, I make eye meat," instead. And eye meat is something different, something more fibrous, something more powerful, perhaps. But what could that be, eye meat? I've been interested in computer programs all my life, actually. Computer programs are essentially trees, and when you make art with a computer program, there's kind of a problem. Whenever you make art with a computer program, you're always on the tree, and the paradox is that for excellent art, you want to be off the tree. So, this is sort of a complication I've found. So, to get off the tree, I began to use my old computers. I took these to Tokyo in 2001 to make computer objects. This is a new way to type, on my old, color Classic. You can't type very much on this. I also discovered that an IR mouse responds to CRT emissions and starts to move by itself, so this is a self-drawing machine. And also, one year, the G3 Bondi Blue thing -- that caddy would come out, like, dangerous, like, "whack," like that. But I thought, "This is very interesting. What if I make like a car crash test?" So I have a crash test. And sort of measure the impact. Stuff like this are things I made, just to sort of understand what these things are. Shortly after this, 9/11 happened, and I was very depressed. I was concerned with contemporary art that was all about piss, and sort of really sad things, and so I wanted to think about something happy. So I focused on food as my area -- these sort of clementine peel things. In Japan, it's a wonderful thing to remove the clementine peel just in one piece. Who's done that before? One-piece clementine? Oh, you guys are missing out, if you haven't done it yet. It was very good, and I discovered I can make sculptures out of this, actually, in different forms. If you dry them quick, you can make, like, elephants and steers and stuff, and my wife didn't like these, because they mold, so I had to stop that. So, I went back to the computer, and I bought five large fries, and scanned them all. And I was looking for some kind of food theme, and I wrote some software to automatically lay out french-fry images. And as a child, I'd hear that song, you know, "Oh, beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain," so I made this amber waves image. It's sort of a Midwest cornfield out of french fries. And also, as a child, I was the fattest kid in class, so I used to love Cheetos. Oh, I love Cheetos, yummy. So, I wanted to play with Cheetos in some way. I wasn't sure where to go with this. I invented Cheeto paint. Cheeto paint is a very simple way to paint with Cheetos. I discovered that Cheetos are good, expressive material. And with these Cheetos, I began to think, "What can I make with these Cheetos?" And so, I began to crinkle up potato chip flecks, and also pretzels. I was looking for some kind of form, and in the end, I made 100 butter-fries. Do you get it? And each butter-fry is composed of different pieces. People ask me how they make the antenna. Sometimes, they find a hair in the food. That's my hair. My hair's clean. I'm a tenured professor, which means, basically, I don't have to work anymore. It's a strange business model. I can come into work everyday and staple five pieces of paper and just stare at it with my latte. End of story. But I realized that life could be very boring, so I've been thinking about life, and I notice that my camera -- my digital camera versus my car, a very strange thing. The car is so big, the camera is so small, yet the manual for the camera is so much bigger than the car manual. It doesn't make any sense. So, I was in the Cape one time, and I typed the word "simplicity," and I discovered, in this weird, M. Night Shyamalan way, that I discovered [the] letters, M, I, T. You know the word? In the words "simplicity" and "complexity," M, I, T occur in perfect sequence. It's a bit eerie, isn't it? So, I thought, maybe I'll do this for the next twenty years or something. And I wrote this book, "The Laws of Simplicity." It's a very short, simple book. There are ten laws and three keys. The ten laws and three keys -- I won't go over them because that's why I have a book, and also that's why it's on the Web for free. But the laws are kind of like sushi in a way: there are all kinds. In Japan, they say that sushi is challenging. You know the uni is the most challenging, so number ten is challenging. People hate number ten like they hate uni, actually. The three keys are easy to eat, so this is

Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious and adding the meaningful.