

## Reflection 1 - QR Codes for Digital Nomads

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Golan Levin is an American artist who specialises in exploring the relationship we have with technology. Currently a professor of Electronic Art at Carnegie Mellon University, Golan's previous work has been exhibited worldwide. MoMa's next major exhibition will in fact exhibit Free Universal Kit, a collaborative piece between Golan and Shawn Sims. Throughout every one of his pieces, Golan explores the playful interactions we have with tools, technology and ourselves. What makes his works so interesting is how timeless they appear. For example his Augmented Hand Series is ridiculously impressive and deceptively simple, in turn providing a still fairly poignant experience to this day. Golan not only pushes the limitations of the technology, but the limitations of our perspective. Wholeheartedly, I think Golan is a very inspiring artist. His art, especially his telephone symphony, have brought me many new ideas. Just typing this text, I'm left thinking "How do I use this keyboard". What are the components of a keyboard, and how do I interact with them? If I had to explain a keyboard, how would I explain it? As McLuhann said, "medium is the message" and Golan seeks to ask what that medium is to us? Another important factor of Golan's works is his openness on sharing. Many of Golan's works involve physical objects, and in turn he has made most of them available as 3D printables. I am a big activist for openness in software and design, and it's awesome when people just let me download their stuff for free. Not only can I learn from it, but it's easier for me to share it or improve it if I find it lacking. Overall, Golan provides quite a lot as an artist. He clearly has defined himself as an apt example of a new media creator. I hope to see many more works from him.

QR Codes for digital nomads is a series of stencils and QR codes developed by Golan Levin and Asa Foster III for F.A.T Lab in 2012. The stencils are a modernisation of what is known as Hobo Codes. These codes have been historically used by homeless and lesser-meaned communities as a way to secretly communicate information. The information often involves descriptors of a location, or demands by other vagrants. Golan and Asa translated this secretive symbolic language for the digital world. First, they created QR codes based on different phrases or pieces of information most relevant to the Hobo community. Then, they created 3D printable stencils that could be used to spray paint these codes in public areas. These stencils are available to print for free by any one that desires. Even the software created to convert QR codes to stencils is available free for download. This project is wholeheartedly designed for digital nomads, those living detached from the technofacist culture that was starting to take shape back in 2012. It was a statement connecting two vastly different communities with similar goals and ambitions. Technology at the time wasn't as accessible as it is today, so the connection seemed much less apparent. But now years later nearly everyone has access to a smart phone with a camera. So these QR codes have transitioned from a statement to a useful reality. This piece, if we can still call it that, shows that utility can always be found in any service anyone makes. You might not be the one that finds that utility, but it will always be available. Another interesting factor is the interaction these QR codes have with the space they inhabit. Golan and Asa want us to reclaim our spaces, and in turn we must ask which spaces should we reclaim? A lot of the internet nowadays is owned by corporations, same as the number of private spaces in a city. The digital nature of these codes means they can be used everywhere. On the side of building, in the middle of street, in the middle of a forum. We are all humans who share space, so why not also share information?