

**JOHN MAEDA UNCOILS THE POTENTIAL OF COMPUTATION AND AESTHETICS, DEMONSTRATING AGAIN AND AGAIN THAT THESE TWO DISCIPLINES CAN AND WILL FEED ONE ANOTHER IN THE DECADES TO COME.** A meticulous sense of craft and labor—both of which Maeda learned growing up in his father's tofu store—coupled with study in engineering, computer science, art, and design produced this innovative leader. In the mid-1990s, he founded the Aesthetics and Computation Group at the MIT Media Lab (ACG). There, brilliant minds experimented with raw computation as a unique expressive medium. Influential students, including Casey Reas, Ben Fry, Golan Levin, Peter Cho, and Reed Kram, helped spread the confluence of design and code through their work. In the years following Maeda's thirteen-year stint at ACG, he served as president of the Rhode Island School of Design. He is currently a partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and chairs the eBay Design Advisory Council. In these roles, Maeda continues to advocate for the centrality of art and design within the technological framework of our lives.

## DESIGN BY NUMBERS

JOHN MAEDA | 1999

Drawing by hand, using pencil on paper, is undisputedly the most natural means for visual expression. When moving on to the world of digital expression, however, the most natural means is not pencil and paper but, rather, computation. Today, many people strive to combine the traditional arts with the computer; and while they may succeed at producing a digitally empowered version of their art, they are not producing true digital art. True digital art embodies the core characteristics of the digital medium, which cannot be replicated in any other.

Computation is intrinsically different from existing media because it is the only medium where the material and the process for shaping the material coexist in the same entity: numbers. The only other medium where a similar phenomenon occurs is pure thought. It naturally follows that computational media could eventually present the rare opportunity to express a conceptual art that is not polluted by textual or other visual representation. This exciting future is still at least a decade or two away. For the moment, we are forced to settle with society's current search for true meaning in an enhanced, interactive version of the art that we have always known.