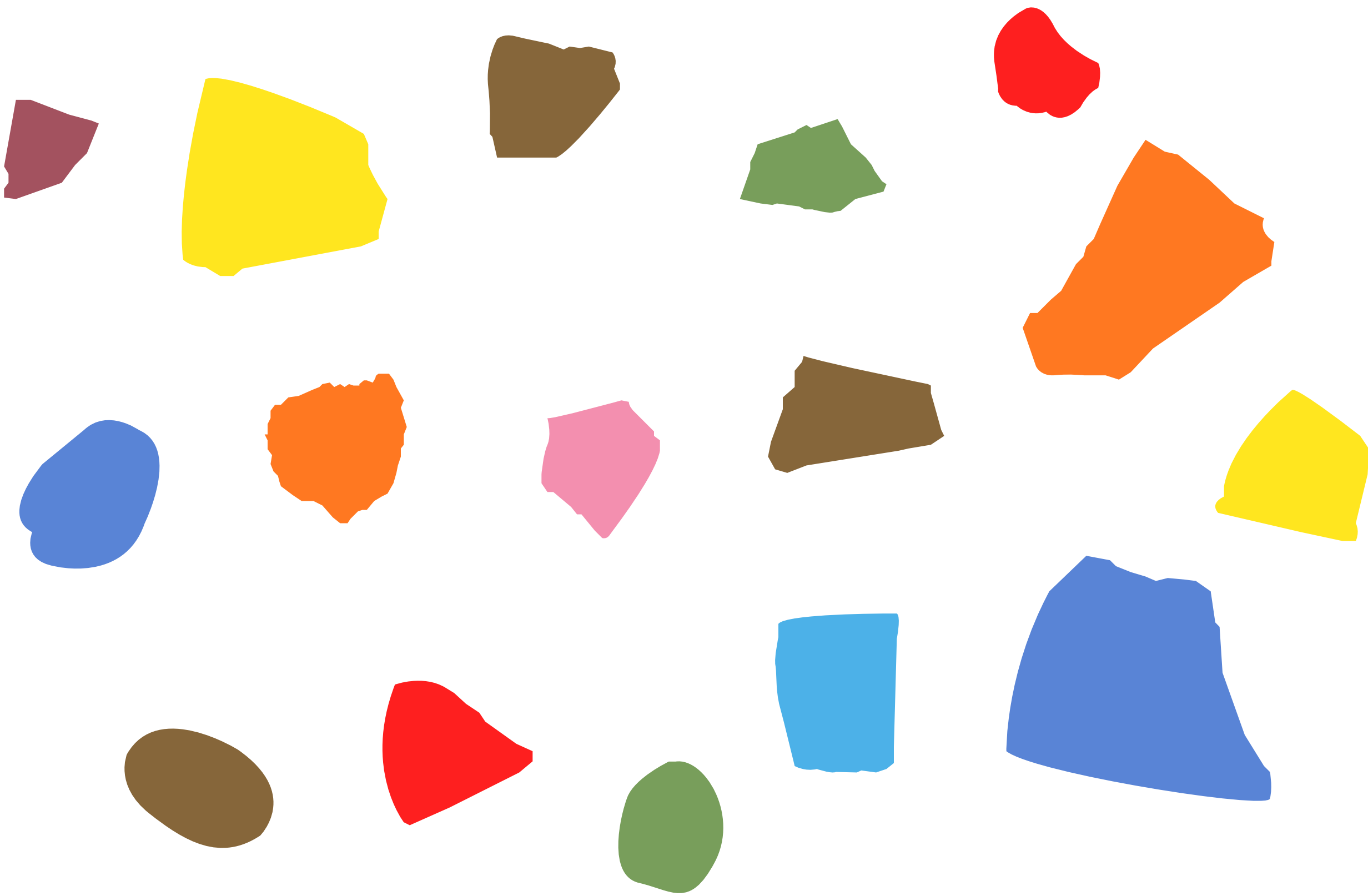
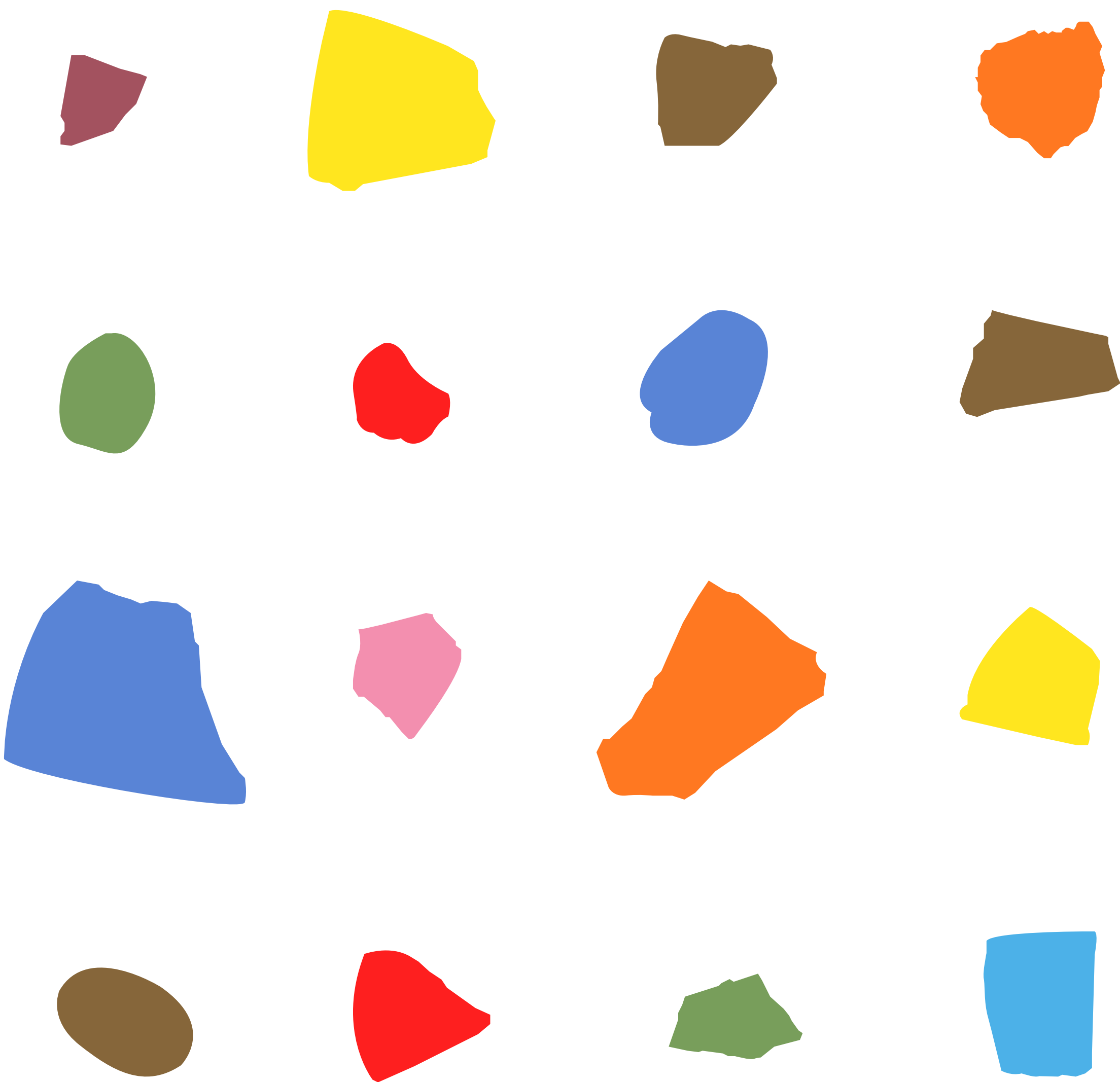


All My Friends At Once



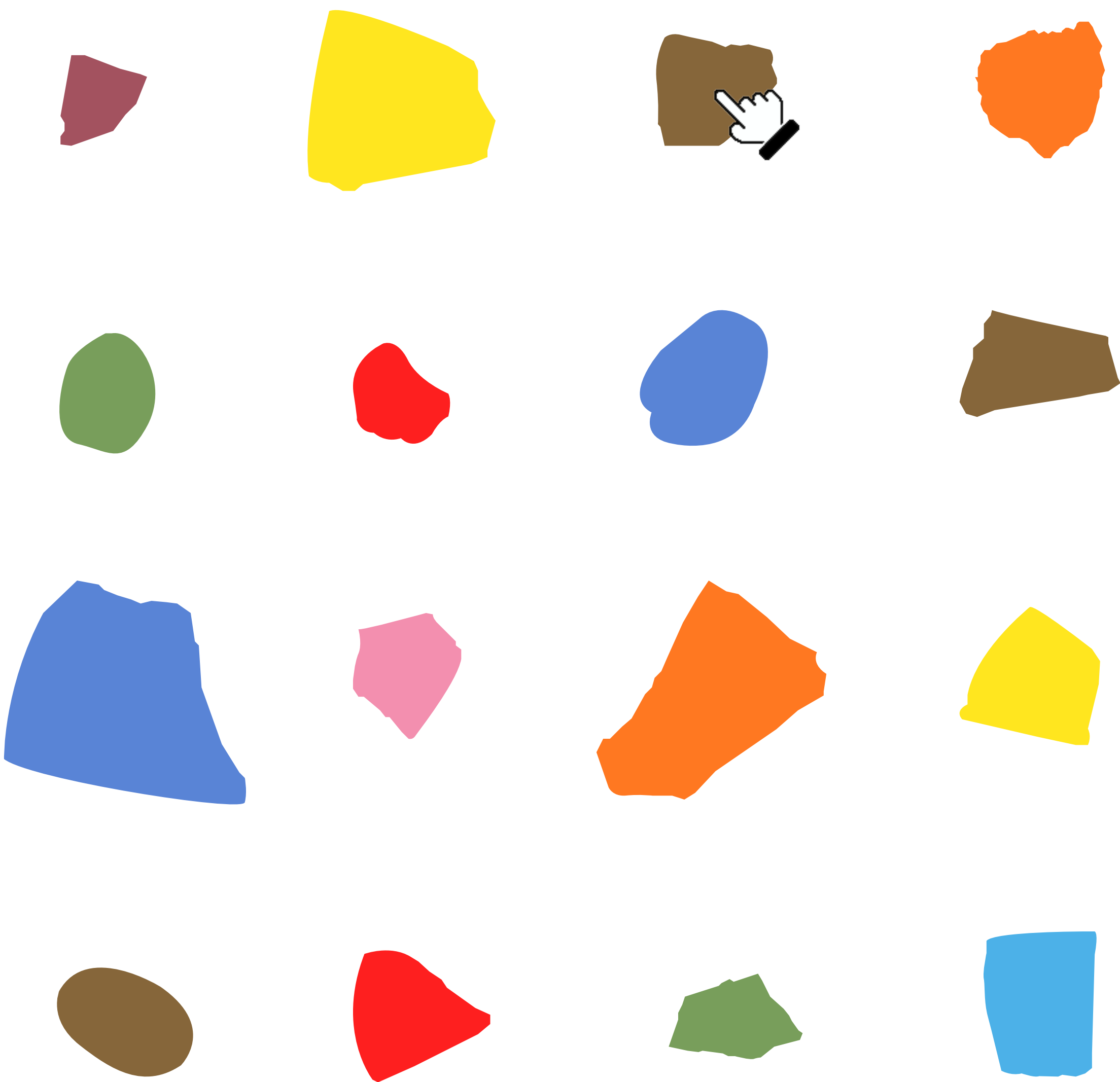
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Sydney Shen



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Sydney Shen



The Most Central Part of New Jersey

By the time I was 14 I had already met and befriended several peers from the Superpunk and Vivalavinyl (VLV) online forums. I would have my parents drive me to Princeton Record Exchange to meet nearby internet friends under the pretense of having already gotten to know each other at a track meet or school-sanctioned event. Fortunately, these internet friends were usually wimpy-looking enough that it never drew much suspicion; it almost never crossed my mind to realize a dangerous fantasy of predatory romance, I was just so thrilled to meet fellow alienated suburban pre-teens who listened to Dystopia.

I made this shirt with xhatchetx, who came from Tallahassee to central Jersey to visit me. He was the first person from Livejournal that I met IRL. xhatchetx and I began our correspondence in the thrash and grindcore Livejournal community Boilingvomit in 2003. We both appreciated the Japanese bands Bathtub Shitter and Fuck on the Beach. He was in a band with an equally abject and perhaps more illustrative name Ass Covered In Cum (ACIC). We started a toilet rating Livejournal community called hothot_toilette that was a parody of the scenester rating community trend at the time. Prior to his visit I thought I had seen a plaque mounted onto a boulder in my town claiming that spot was “The Most Central Part of New Jersey”. This he had to see. My boyfriend drove us to see the rock. We could not find it. We found something that looked like it around the same place that I thought I saw it, but this boulder’s plaque was not even memorable enough to recall here. Maybe I had imagined seeing The Most Central Part of New Jersey? Nonetheless we made these shirts to commemorate his visit. I was really into customizing t-shirts at the time, especially since my trompe-l’oeil lederhosen t-shirt received a lot of praise in the t_shirt_surgery LJ community. Maybe the most central part of New Jersey was not a geographical locale, but a disposition and an attitude.

Squarepants9329

A middle-school friend of mine who went by Captainweed42069 online once posted a sarcastic bomb threat in his Deadjournal. His ex, who had allegedly tried to self-harm with plastic knives in the locker hall earlier that week, disclosed this entry to her therapist, which prompted the local police to seize Captainweed42069’s personal desktop computer.

The next day at school, anyone who had left a comment on the bomb threat entry was interrogated in the principal’s office. My best friend Valerie was among them. The first thing the principal said to her when she entered the office was, “Are you... Squarepants9329?”

That experience made me aware of the strangeness of uttering a username. At that time, it was probably beginning to seem dated to use numbers in your screenname, hence the obnoxious yet self-aware caricature that is a moniker like Captainweed42069. It’s awkward to say a string of numbers, but how else will you set yourself apart from the other Squarepants?

As users became more fluent, numbers and letters blended together in a type of language that could look like Valerie’s boyfriend’s AIM screenname, h0ggiemakinmasta (I think he meant “hoagie”). By the time I got to high school, usernaming became very sophisticated and seemingly arbitrary in its departure from standard English, both spoken and written. It became trendy to make usernames that began with underscores, anywhere from a single to several. How do you articulate an underscore?

All My Friends At Once



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