INFOGRAPHIC DESIGNERS' SKETCHBOOKS

STEVEN HELLER
RICK LANDERS

Thames & Hudson

Contents

Laura Cattaneo

MILAN, ITALY   **ILLUSTRATOR AND INFORMATION DESIGNER**

Milan-based Laura Cattaneo describes herself as an information designer, but she is also an illustrator, art director for iPad magazine *La Vita Nòva* and journalist at the Italian economics newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*. 'I have always loved infographics,' she says, 'ever since primary school, when I would check out science books from the library. I had a true revelation in 2000, when I saw the animated infographics used in the music video for "Remind Me" by Röyksopp. I then realized what I really wanted to do with my life.'

Cattaneo worked with infographics during her undergraduate years, and followed this with a stint at the Milan design firm Leftloft, where she was able to 'convert a lifetime passion into a profession'. Her goal is to rationalize concepts and make them immediately understandable through the visual shaping of information. To achieve this, she sketches ideas on A4 paper, and then copies the drafts into a Moleskine notebook.

'When I know what I want to do, I start working on vectors,' Cattaneo explains. 'I prefer to use a pen, and I rarely use a pencil. If I don't have time to draw a sketch, I use my computer. I don't really have a favourite method. The draft sketch helps me to shape what is in my mind, and when I use a computer, I automatically begin to give a silhouette to an object.'

**Moda 24 –
The Rich Man**
2012

A sketch for an infographic illustrating the potential for mistakes when companies buy back their own stock, such as trying to increase the value of their executives' stocks, or falling into the trap of buying when shares are expensive and selling when prices fall again.
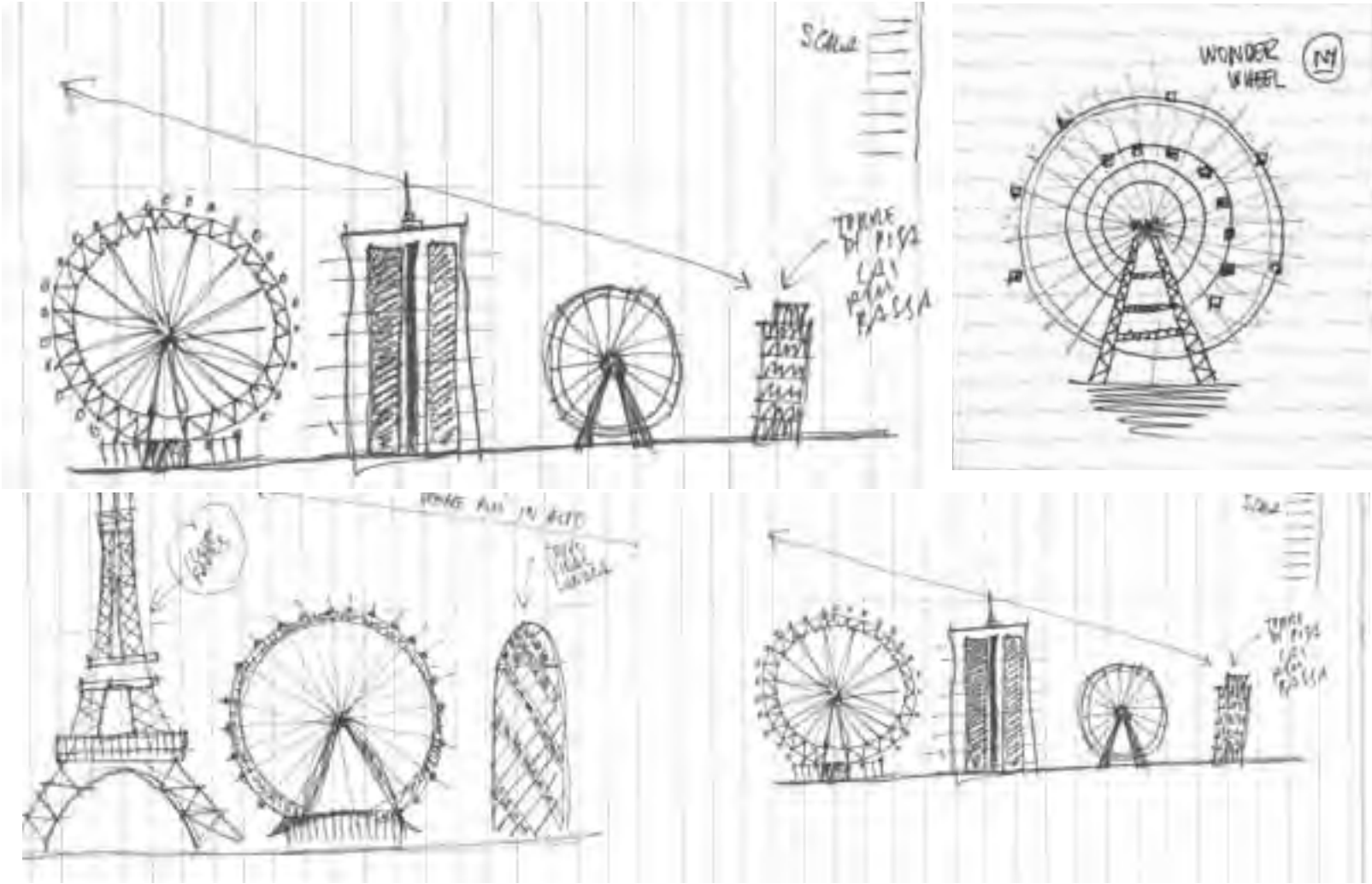
**Gira il mondo, gira
(Turn, world, turn)**
2009

An illustration for *Il Sole 24 Ore*, no. 14 (December 2009), with the working sketch above.
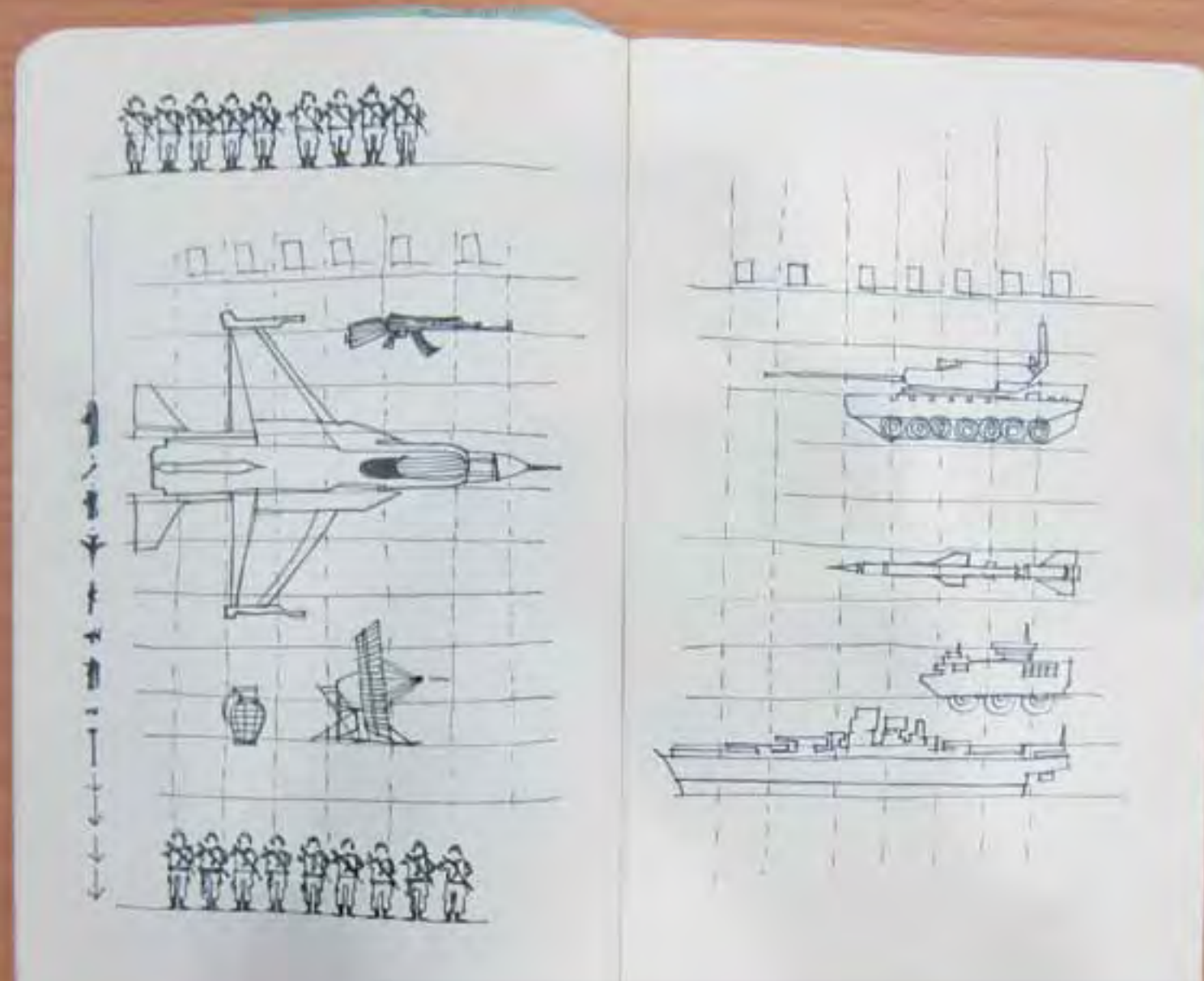
**Altro che disarmo
(Talk about
disarmament)**
2010

An illustration for *Il Sole 24 Ore*,
no. 20 (July 2010), with the
working sketch above.

**Aiuto, chiamate Noè
(Help, call Noah)**

2010

An illustration and its preliminary
sketch for *Il Sole 24 Ore*, no. 18
(May 2010).

Antoine Corbineau

⚲ NANTES, FRANCE   ✎ GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND ART DIRECTOR

Antoine Corbineau studied graphic design at art schools in France and the UK, while continuing to pursue his interest in painting. When showing a portfolio that included both graphic design and fine art, he was encouraged to push his work further in the illustrative direction – a path that ultimately led him to information graphics.
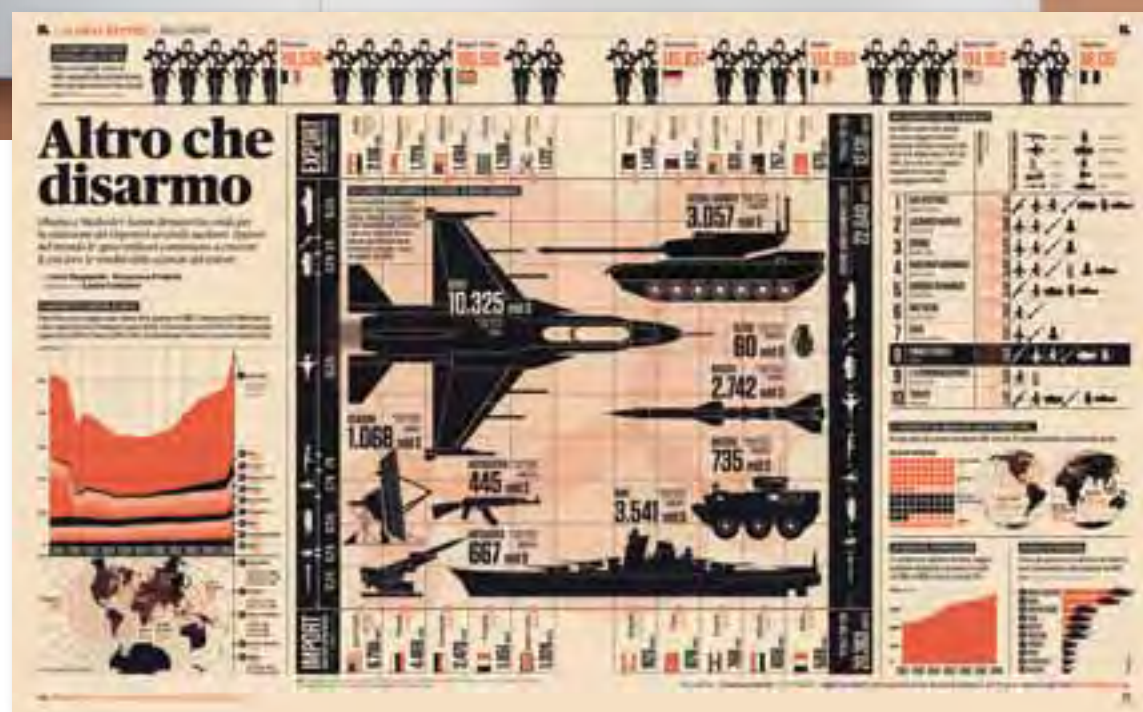
'It is a good halfway point between graphics and illustration, but it's still just a part of my output,' he says. 'I also do children's books, for example, which require a different approach altogether.'

Corbineau embarks on a job by doing one very rough sketch, followed by a more detailed one, but only after he begins the final work. 'I always sketch with pencil and a fine eraser,' he explains, 'but I sketch revisions on computer, on top of my scanned sketch.'

He admits that using a pencil is probably a more natural process, as 'there is no filter, or the interpretation of a machine, between my impulse and the visual result. It's a great opportunity to not be on a computer, at least for a little while!'

Festival of the World
2012

The idea behind this poster design for the Southbank Centre in London was to underline the diverse and exciting programme and atmosphere of the centre's Festival of the World during the London 2012 Olympics.

Prodotti Tradizionali Italiani
2012

The concept for this poster was to show the diversity of Italian food via an illustrated map, which would have to look good in restaurants and food shops and not date.
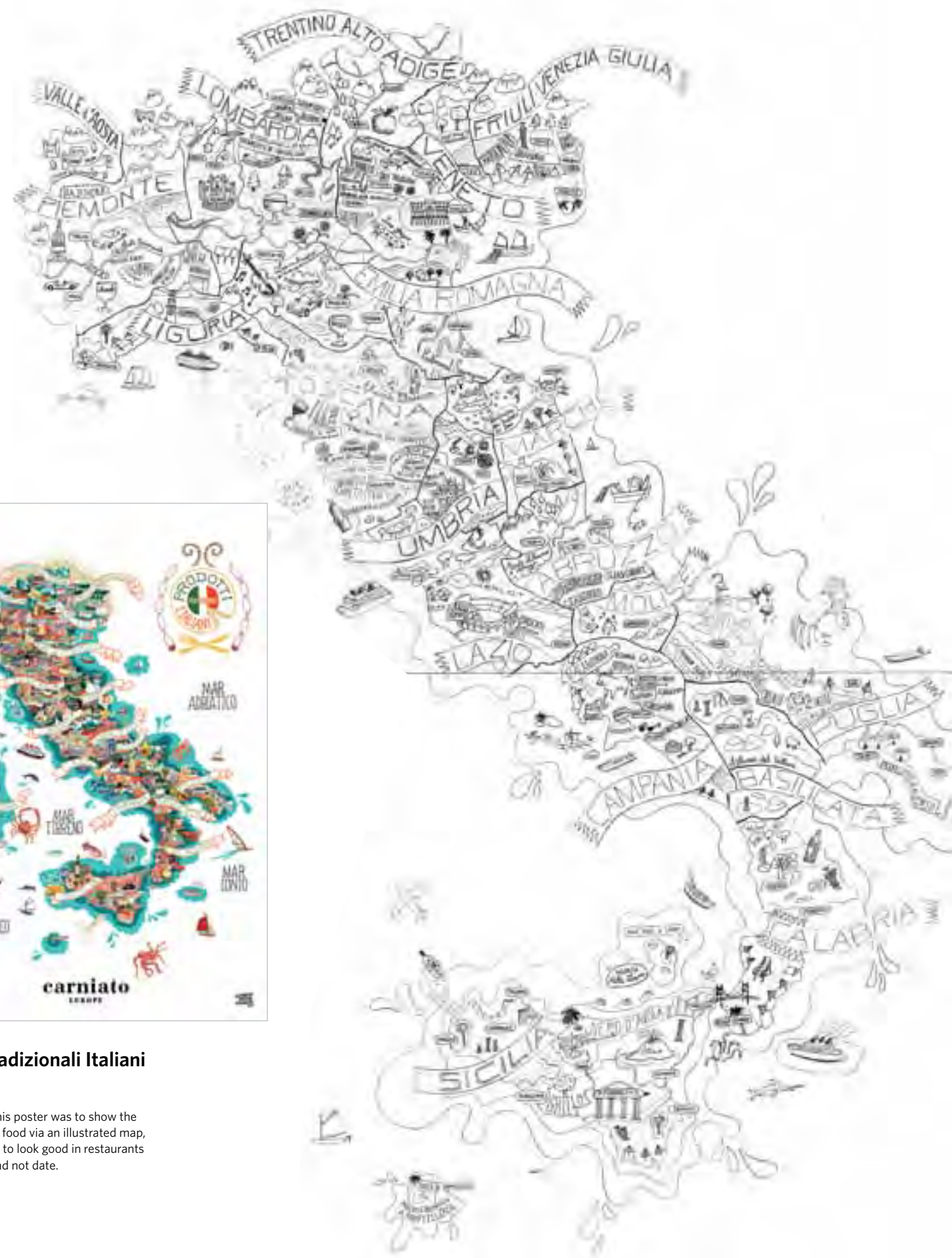
Red Bull Music Academy Radio
2012

The aim of this project was to provide visuals for the relaunch of RBMA online radio, and demonstrate a balance between the graphics and a solid, typographical structure.

Tim Hucklesby

NEW YORK, NY   GRAPHIC DESIGNER

British-born Tim Hucklesby, now a designer at Doyle Partners, first began designing information graphics a few years ago, when he wanted to round out his portfolio before applying to the MFA Design programme at the School of Visual Arts in New York. 'I kept designing them because I wasn't happy with the first one, and discovered that they were, in fact, pretty tough to make,' he admits. 'I always want the core idea to be a quick read, as well as the viewer to be encouraged to keep digging. I tend to slip up on at least one of these, so will keep trying.'

Hucklesby always embarks on a project by sketching in pen or pencil, whatever is to hand. 'I want get the concept pinned down before moving on to the computer,' he says. 'I've found going straight to it tends to pull me down certain avenues, using techniques that I've used in the past. If I start on paper, I worry far less about how I'm going to make the finished piece and aim for something a bit more ambitious as a result.'

Of the visualization of his Netflix streaming consumption, shown here, Hucklesby says: 'In the process of sorting the data, I found a great number of movie titles I didn't recognize, which turned out to be what my wife was watching while I was out. She was catching up on TV and films I wouldn't watch with her. In the end, the project was a public shaming of both of us and our viewing habits. It also served as a wake-up call to get out more.'
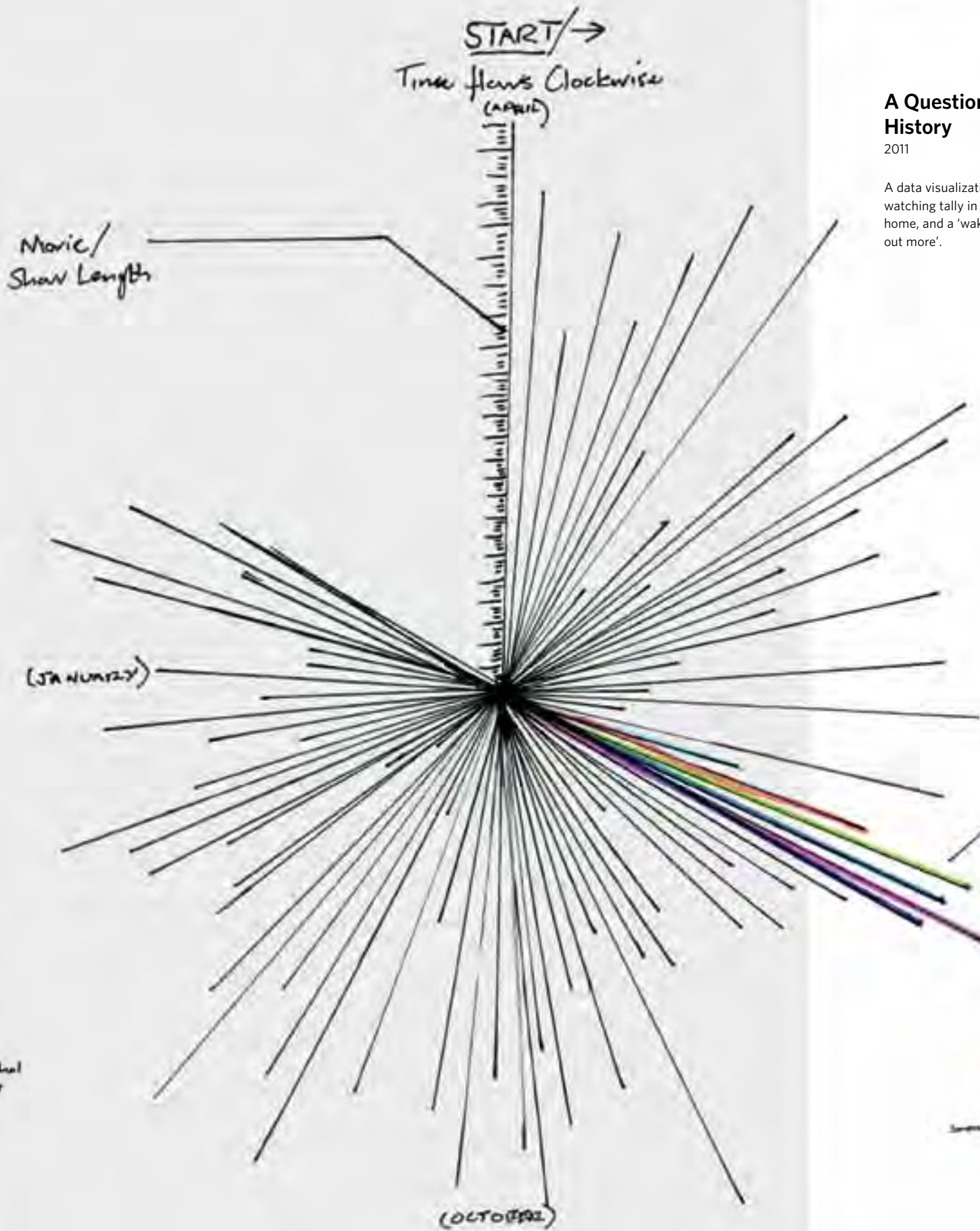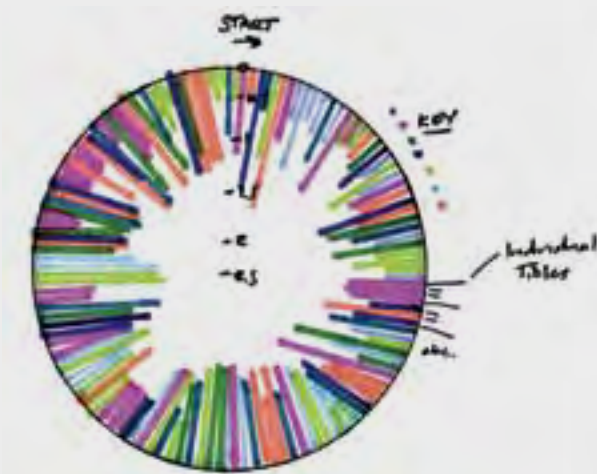
A Questionable History
2011

A data visualization of the video-watching tally in the Hucklesby home, and a 'wake-up call to get out more'.
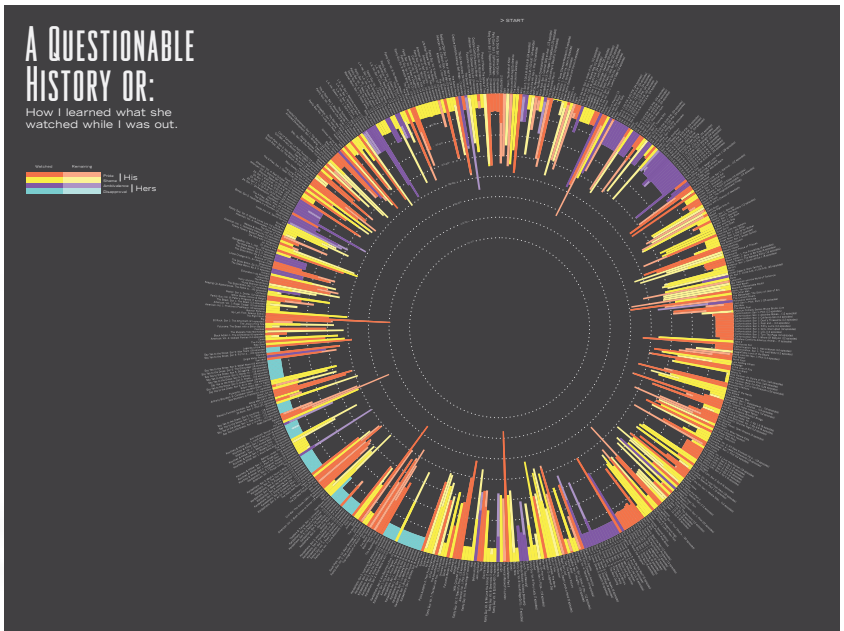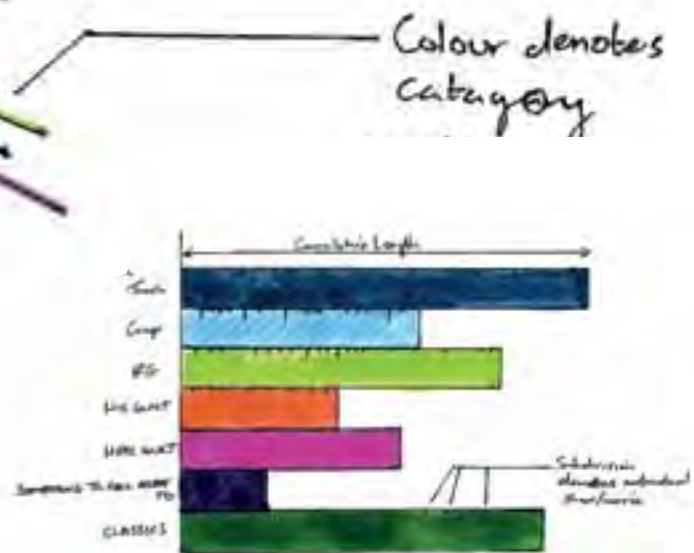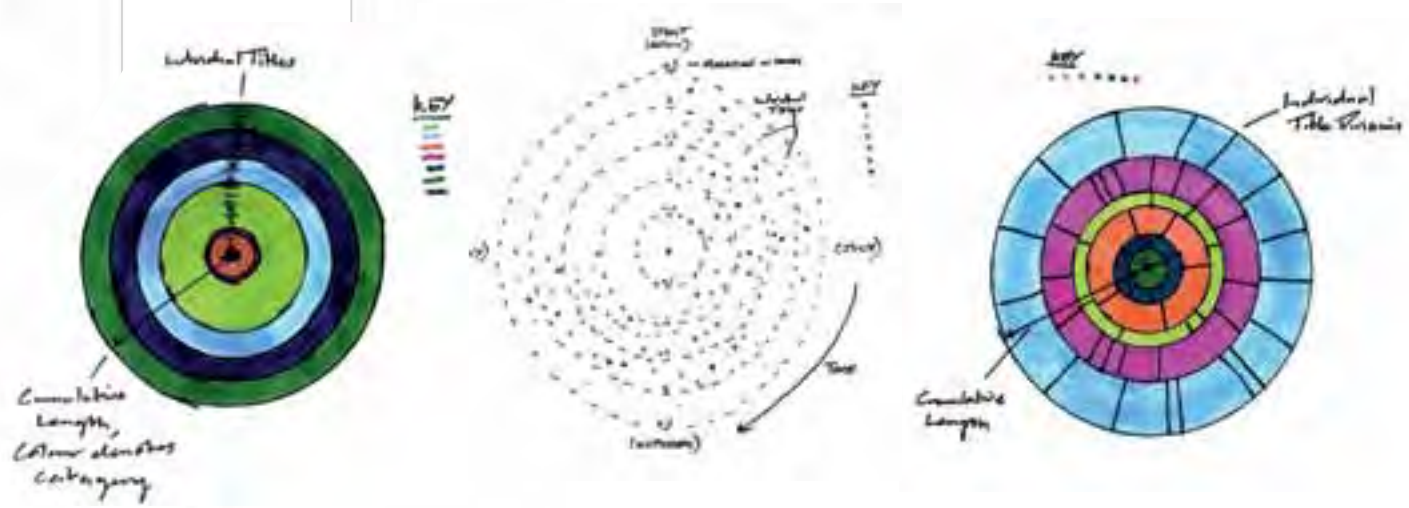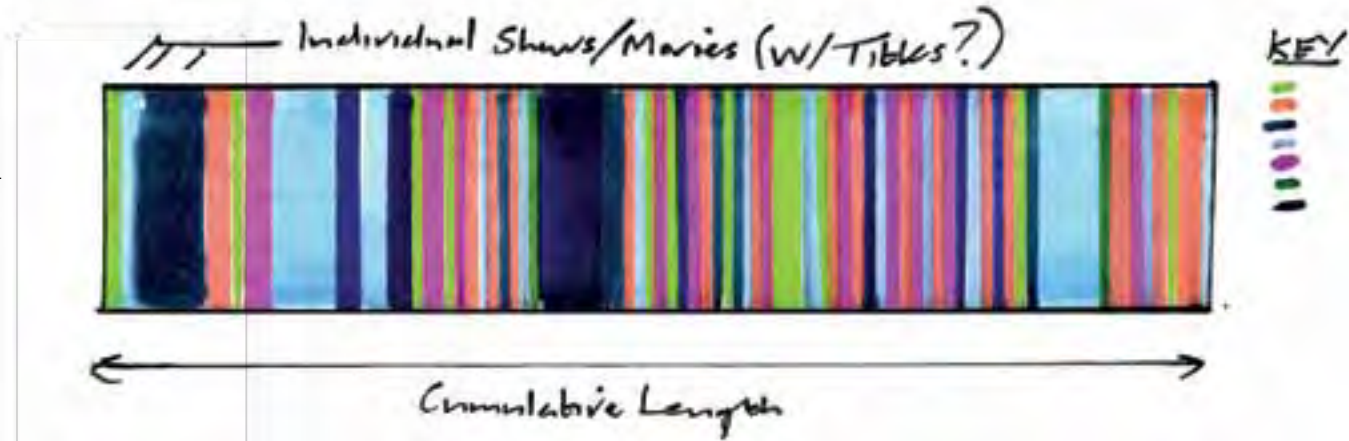
Clara Prieto

 MADRID, SPAIN   ILLUSTRATOR AND TYPOGRAPHER

Clara Prieto has always been interested in the data-visualization design discipline. In 2011, she earned a scholarship in the infographics department of *Público* newspaper – an experience, she says, that allowed her to increase her understanding of data-viz. She would eventually apply this newfound knowledge to her online project Tipógrafos.

Prieto soon discovered that sketching was an important step. 'Actually, I find it harder to do the work without making a previous sketch,' she says. 'I love drawing, it's the quickest way to visualize my ideas. I usually sketch with my propelling pencil, although I also occasionally use a pen.' Despite her preference for beginning a design with pencil, Prieto does the finishing touches on her computer. But, she insists, 'I prefer the pencil, because it's more sensitive, more human.'

Prieto creates charts and graphics, because, as she says, 'I like telling stories through pictures. My information graphics are clear, and I always want to show or teach something interesting with them. They speak about history and address social problems, and more.'

**El hombre globo
(Balloon man)**
2011

Sketches and infographics for the 'Ver entre líneas' series, published in *Público* newspaper, 4 August 2011.

TIPÓGRAFO

Tipografías por autor/tipógrafo

(Descripción)

(Ejemplo tipografía)

1950

1960
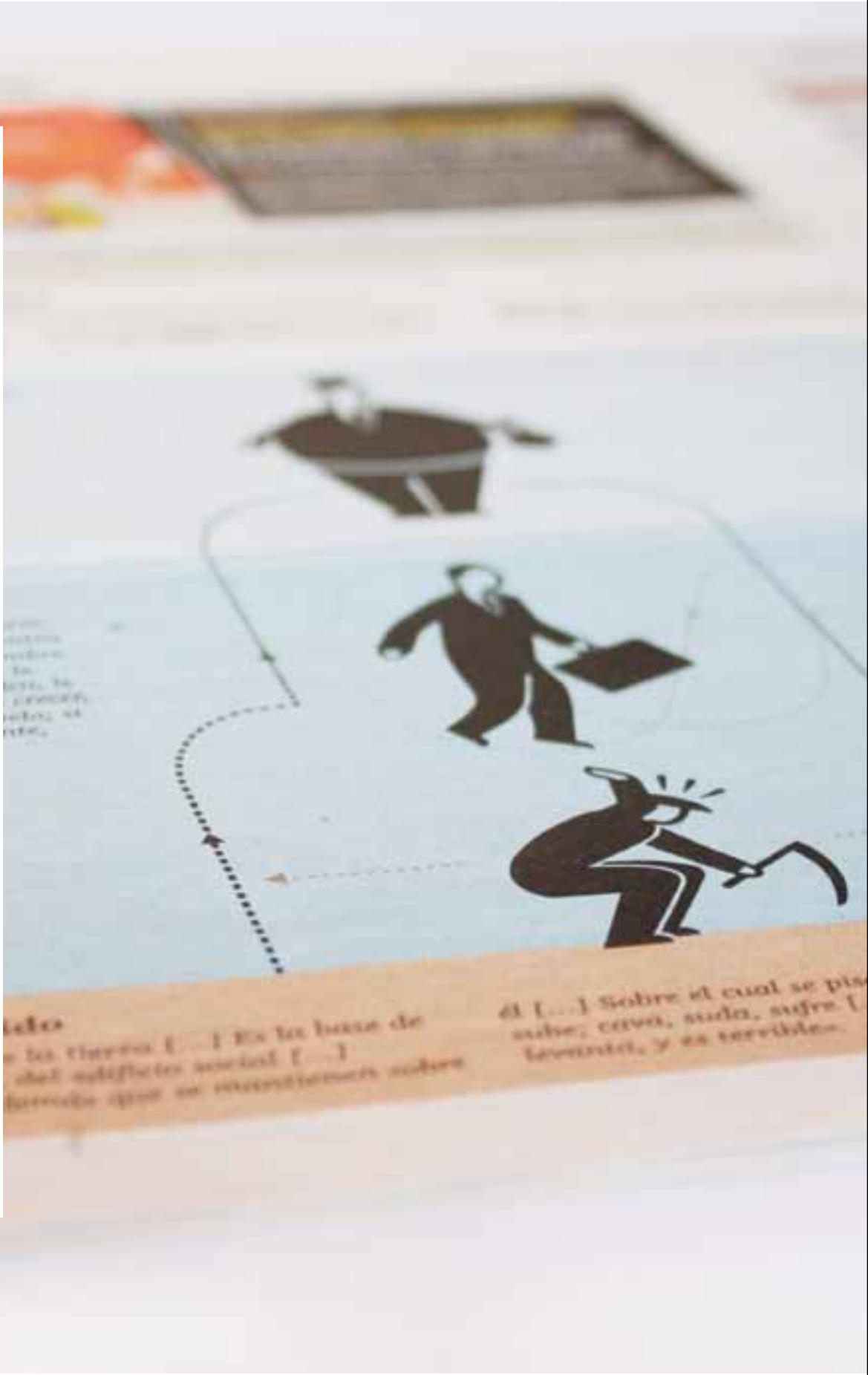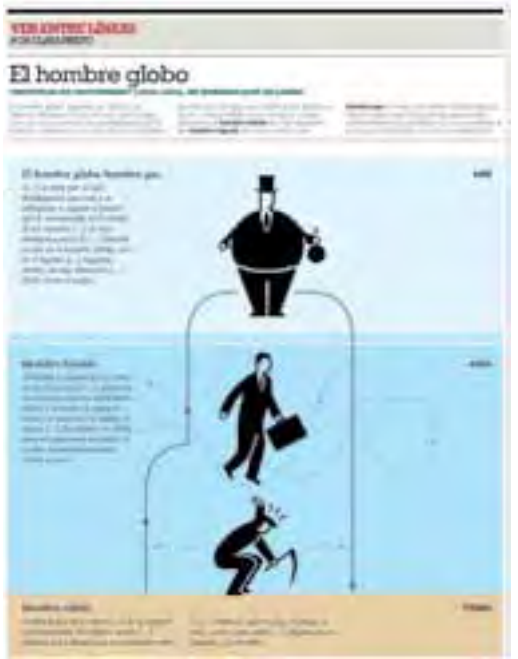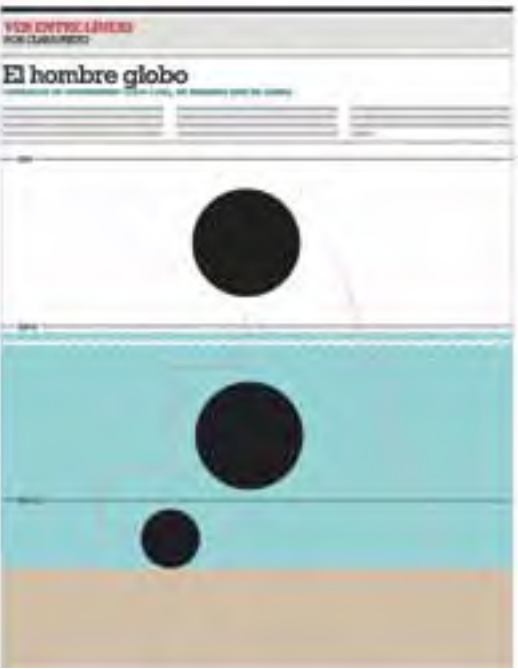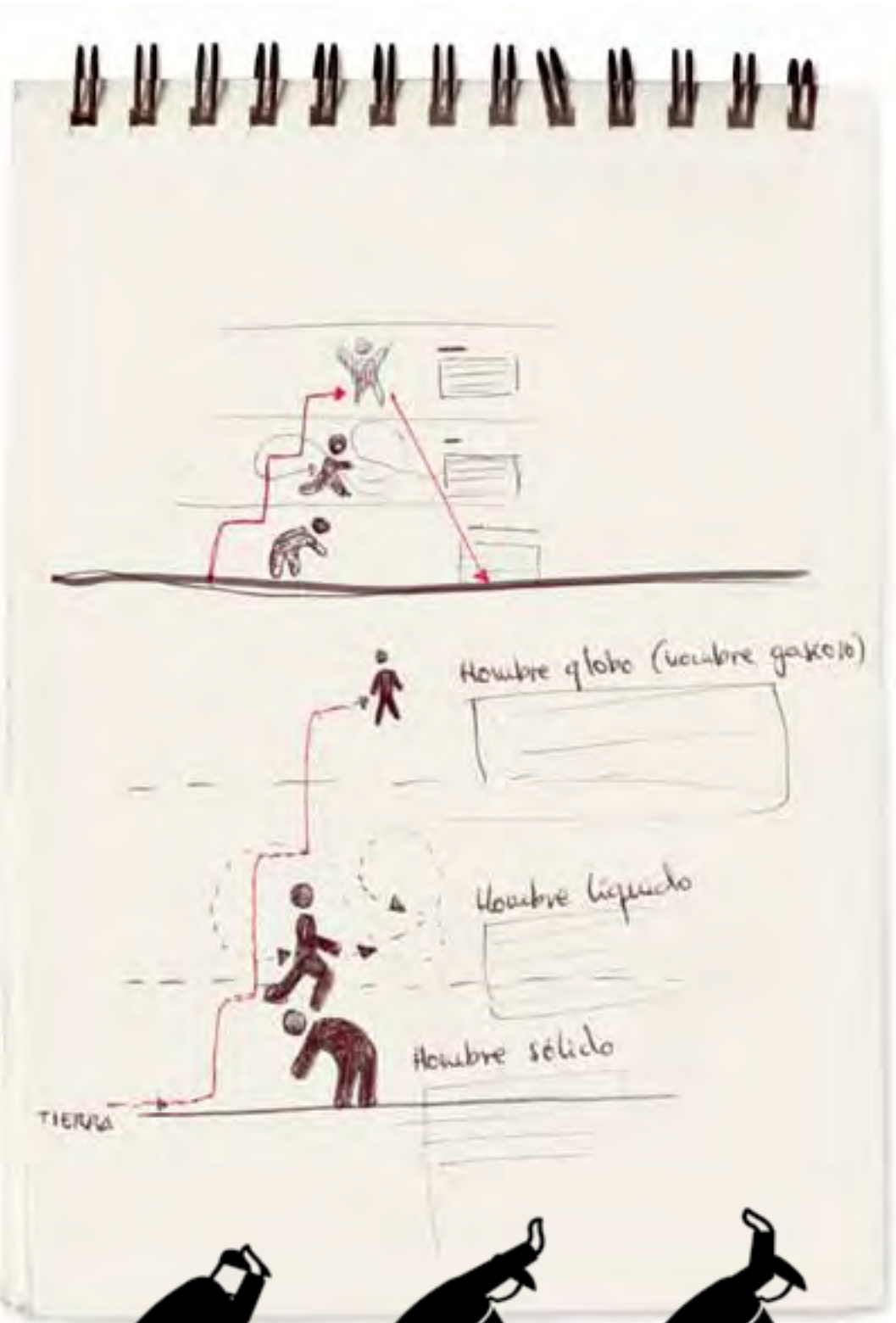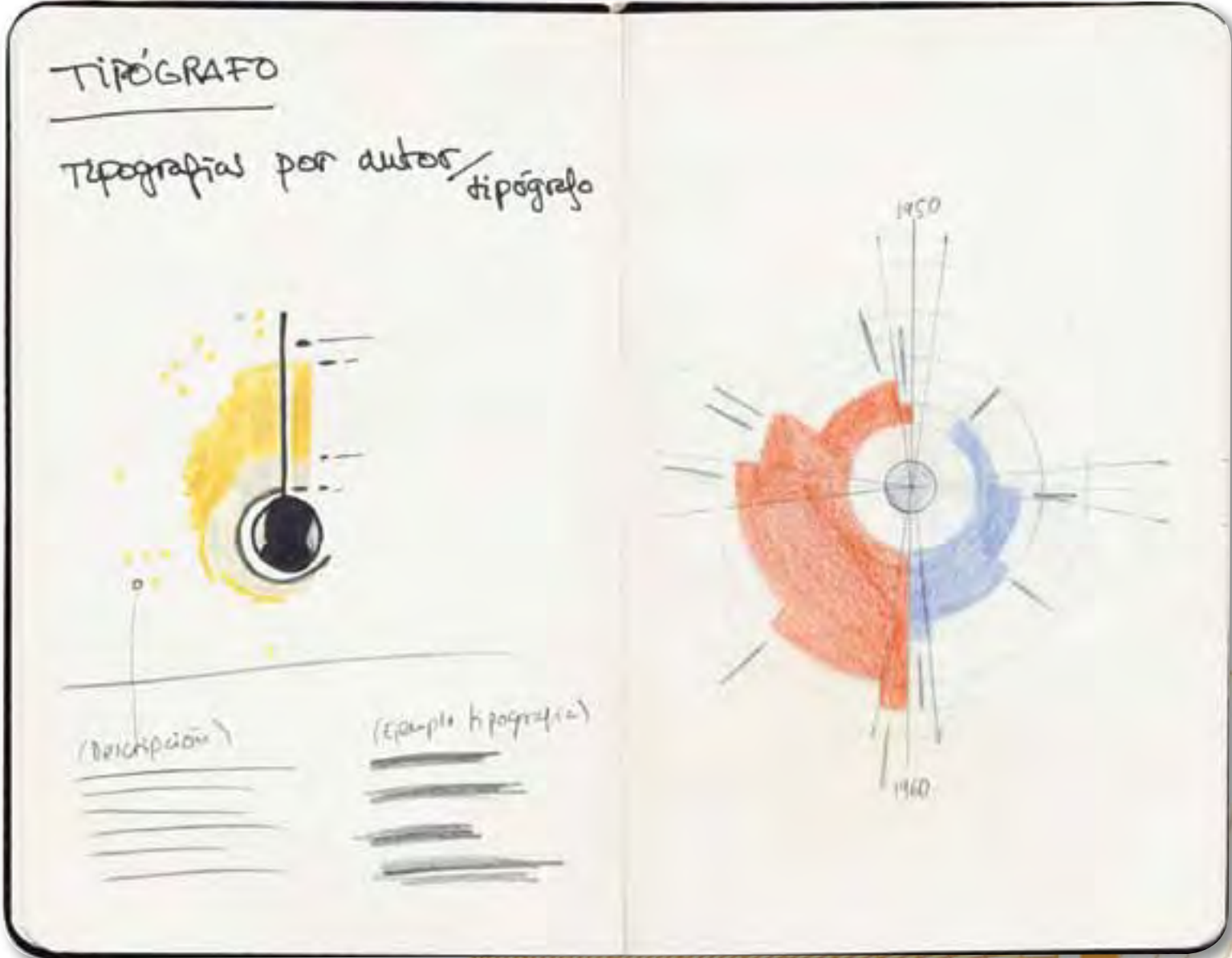
Tipógrafos más destacados (Prominent typographers)
2011

Sketches and infographics from the Tipógrafos project, featured on Prieto's blog.
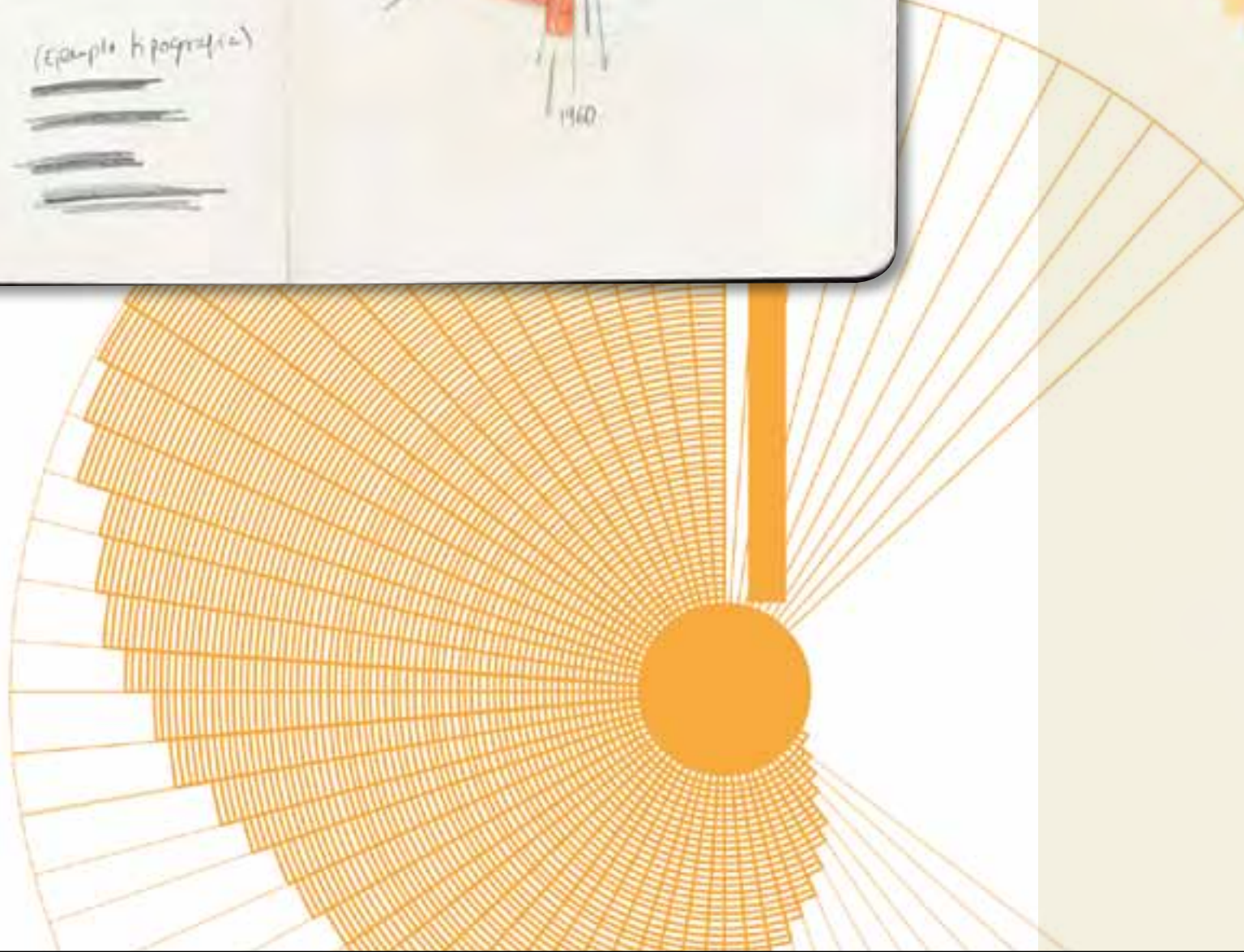
Tipógrafos más destacados

Creación de tipografías por categoría

Tipografías sans serif
Tipografías serif
Tipografías góticas
Otras tipografías

87 Total
47 Serif
25 Sans serif
11 Otras
4 Góticas

Morris Fuller Benton
1872-1948. EE.UU.
❶

26 Total
13 Gótica
5 Sans serif
4 Serif
4 Otras

Rudolf Koch
1876-1934. Alemania
❷

29 Total
18 Serif
7 Otras
4 Sans serif

Hermann Zapf
1918. Alemania
❸

38 Total
14 Serif
13 Sans serif
10 Otras
1 Gótica

Adrian Frutiger
1928. Suiza
❹

30 Total
25 Sans serif
5 Serif

Erik Spiekermann
1947. Alemania
❺

37 Total
16 Sans serif
11 Otras
10 Serif

Zuzana Licko
1961. Checoslovaquia
❻

Nik Schulz

📍 OCCIDENTAL, CALIFORNIA
✏️ ILLUSTRATOR OF PROCESS MAPS

Nik Schulz, who works under the studio name L-Dopa, based in Sonoma County, California, has been doing some form of infographics since 2002. 'As I came from an industrial design background, there was something appealing to me about the rationality of infographics,' he says. 'To take data or processes, which can be opaque in written form, and render them clear and transparent in visual form is very satisfying.'
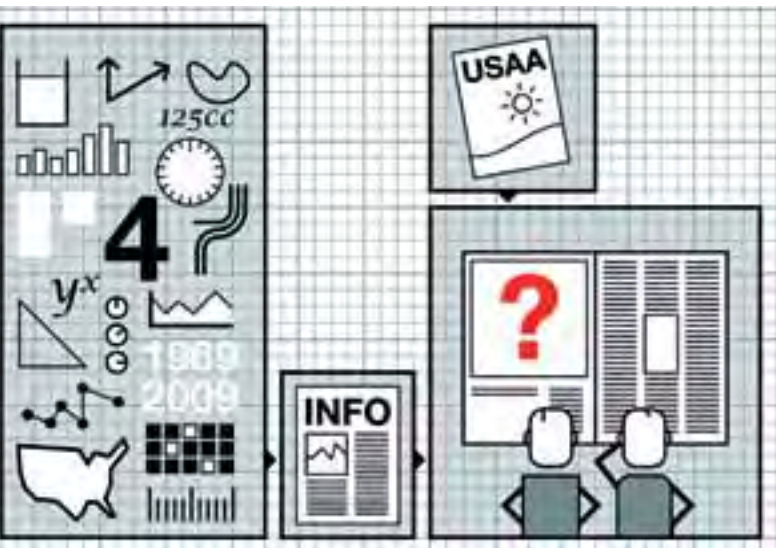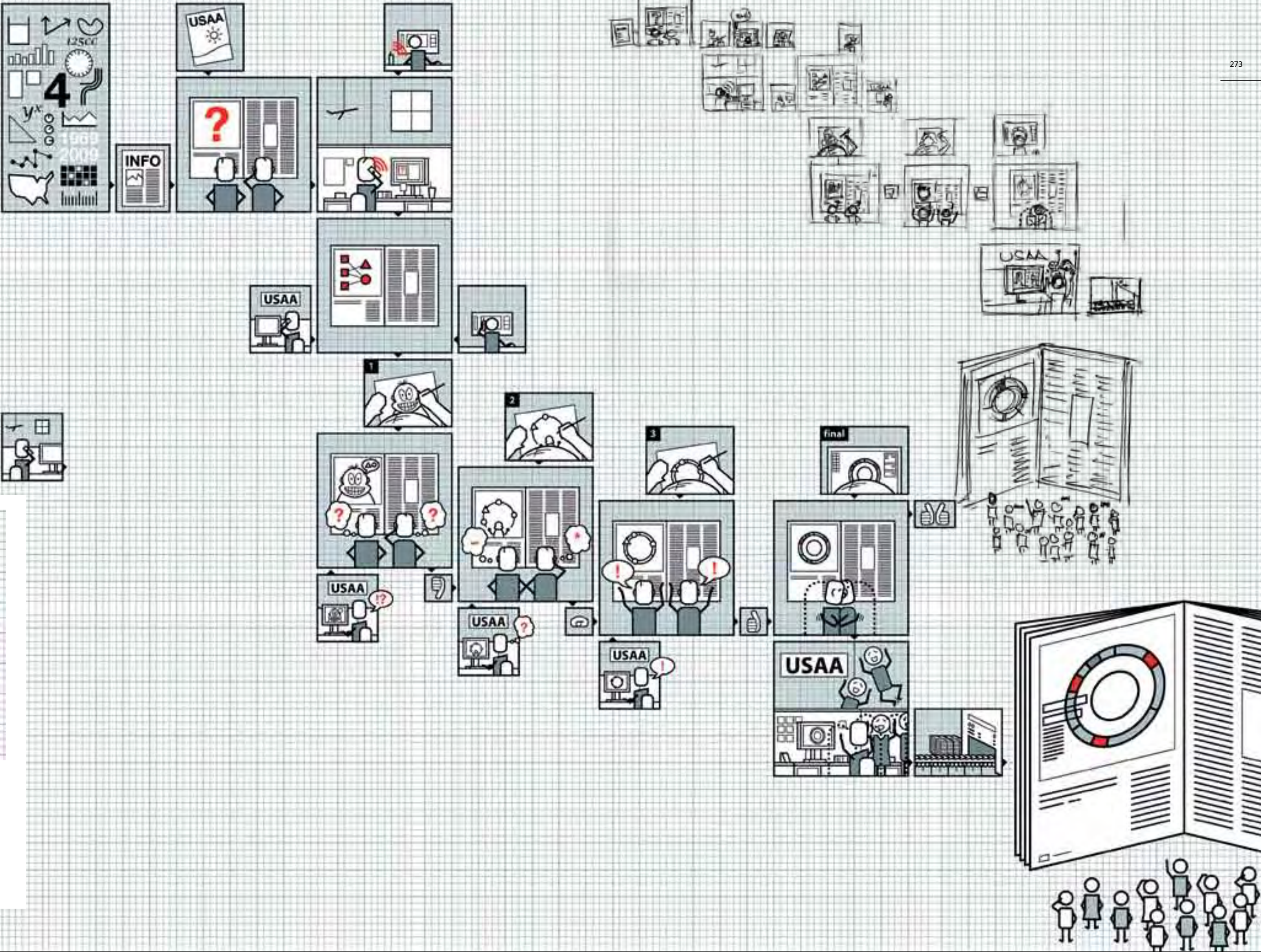
Schulz almost always produces pencil sketches. 'When I don't, I usually have to go back to pencil anyway, because the computer sketch didn't work out,' he explains. 'It's much faster to work through ideas in pencil.' For Schulz, a 'true infographic' is one that shows pictorially all the details of the data involved.

The Infographic Process
2009

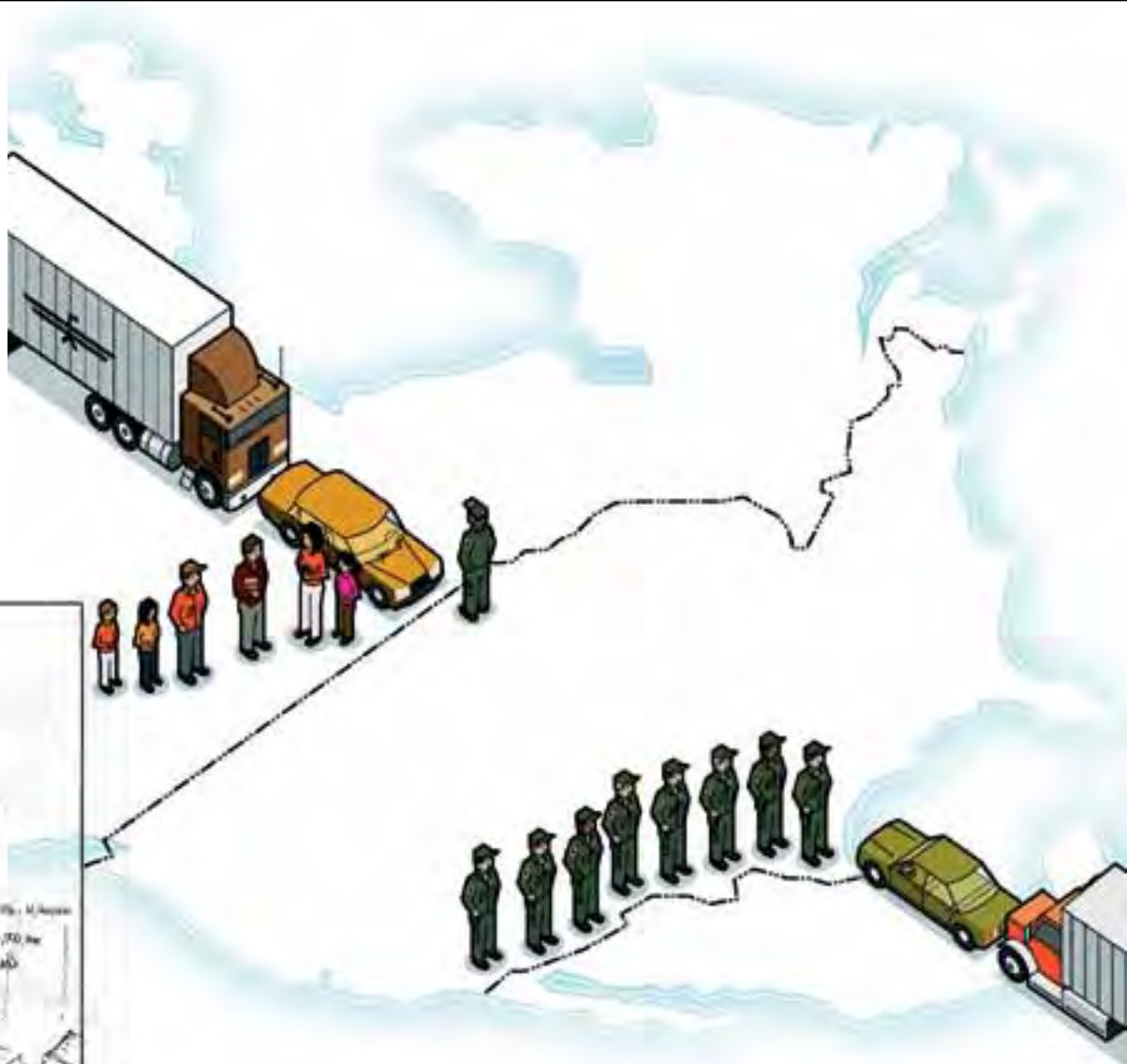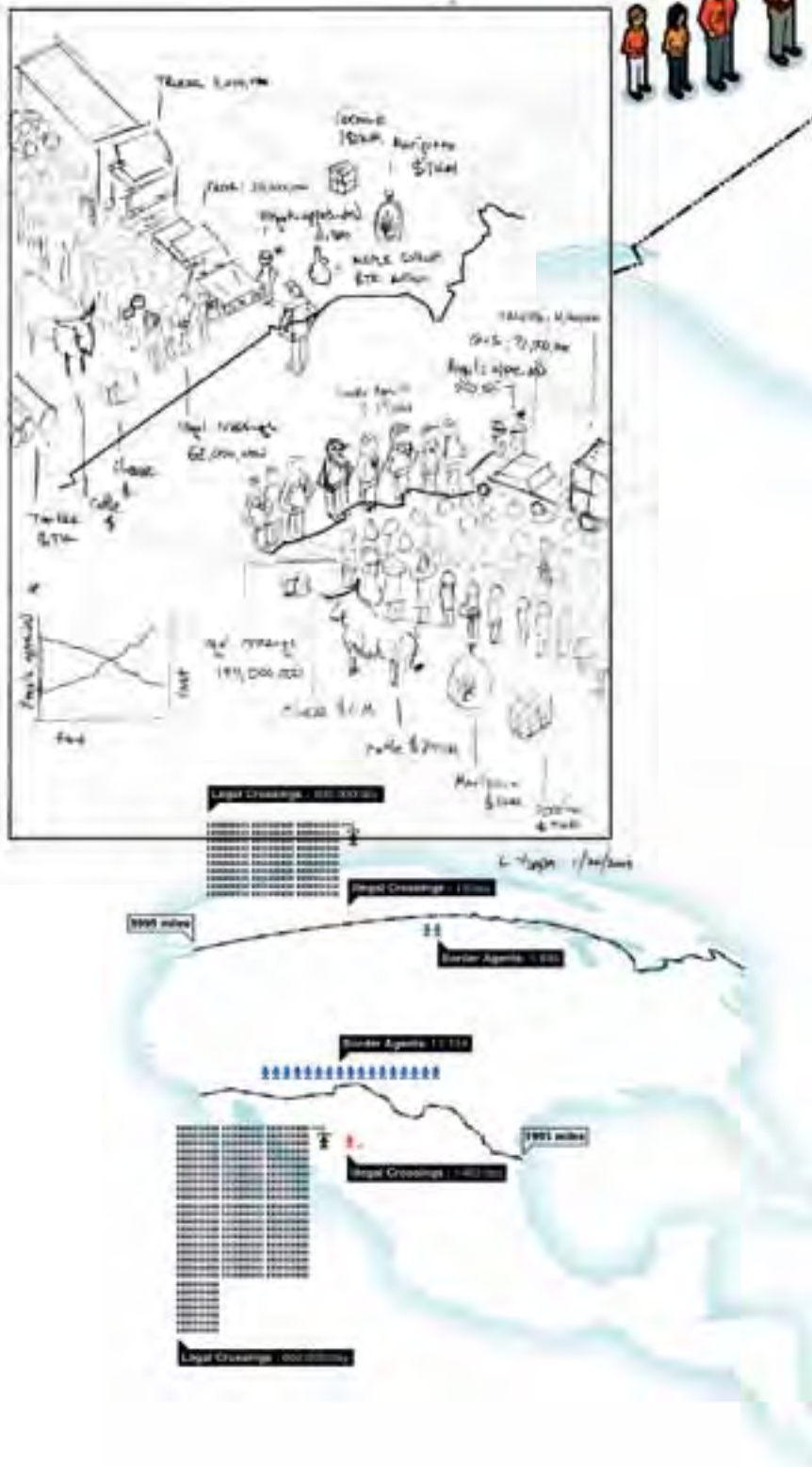This design illustrates how client and designer can work together to create infographics.

Border Control
2009

This design for *Reader's Digest* compared the incoming traffic across US borders in human and economic terms, as well the resources employed to secure them.

Bluetooth Home
2010

A visualization illustrating present and future implementations of Bluetooth technology in the home.

Cooper Smith

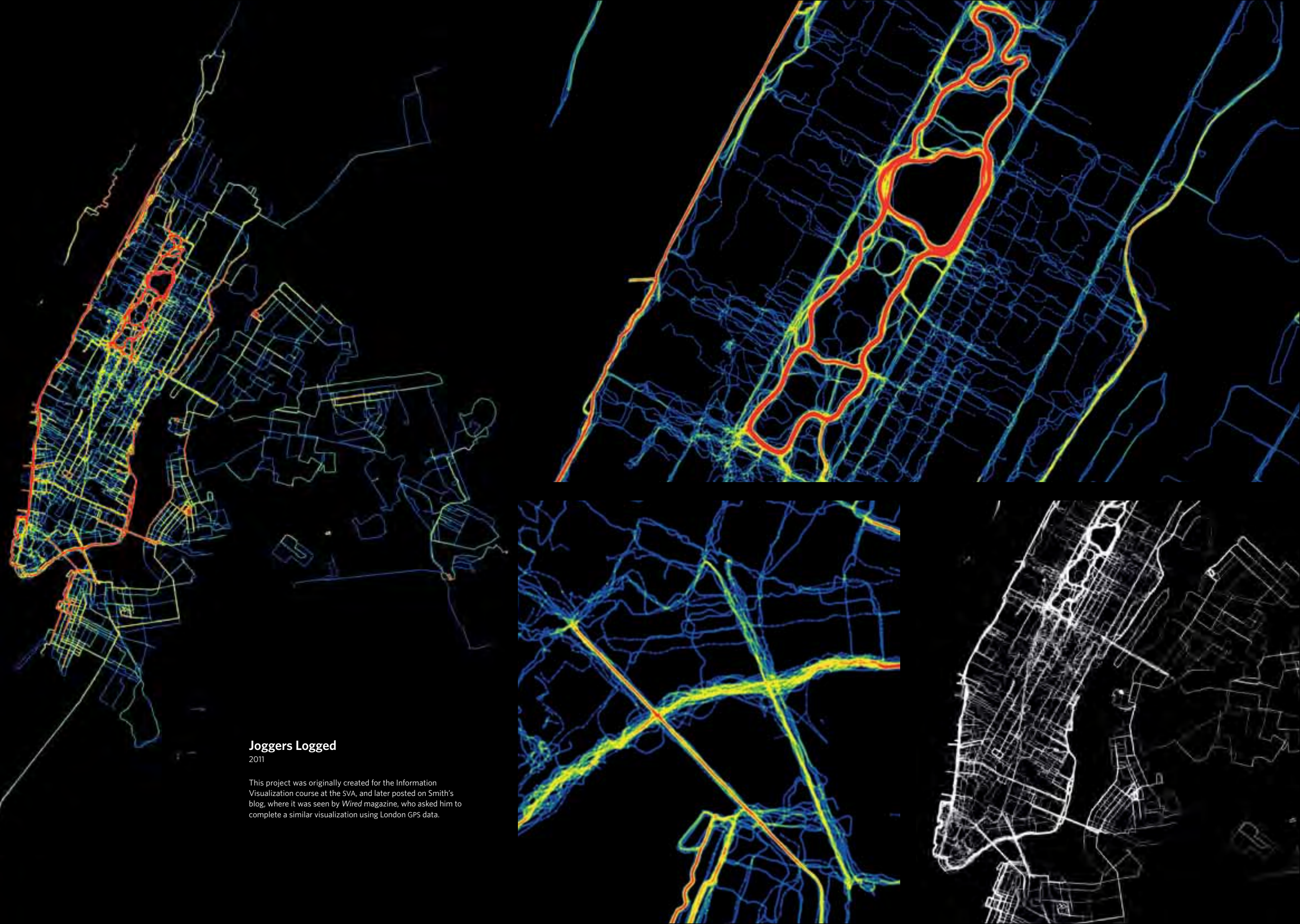⚲ NEW YORK, NY ✎ INTERACTION DESIGNER

Cooper Smith, a School of Visual Arts graduate now working at Foursquare, does not consider himself an infographic designer as such. 'I'm just a designer with a wide range of tools at my disposal,' he says, 'information visualization being one of them.' This particular tool, he adds, is a powerful one for completing the feedback loop of users' data. Although he keeps a sketchbook to hand, sketching is done primarily through Processing: 'I can just work so much faster in code,' he says. 'You try something, it either works and gives you an idea of how to evolve it from there, or it fails. But it fails quickly, and then you adjust.'

For the Joggers Logged project, Smith says, getting the GPS data of the runs to plot where it was captured 'instantly transformed 500,000 lines of data into this amazing story of where New Yorkers go running. From there, it was just deciding which stories to tell.' Having been a runner since junior high, he was curious about what it meant to be a runner in New York – 'from where people ran, to which time of day, even what parts of the city slow them down. One thousand runners is obviously an incredibly small sample size, but it's a great start to show the potential of capturing this data. I'd love to see other cities use a similar method to help identify where to build better running paths, safer crosswalks, and so on.'

Joggers Logged
2011

This project was originally created for the Information Visualization course at the SVA, and later posted on Smith's blog, where it was seen by *Wired* magazine, who asked him to complete a similar visualization using London GPS data.

Hyemi Song

NEW YORK, NY   INTERACTIVE VISUALIZATIONS DESIGNER

Hyemi Song has been involved with data visualization since 2007, ever since discovering that organizing information in this way is just another method of storytelling, albeit with various media.

'Raw data has no value in itself,' Song explains, 'only the extracted information has value. I always sketch ideas when they come to mind. Sketching is helpful in recognizing the look and feel of a project quickly, and writing is a good way of organizing concepts logically. Infographics and data visualization are based on data sets, and one of their main purposes is for communication. This means that the final work needs to be persuasive.'

Song draws her initial ideas on paper because the sketches 'are not bound by location, time and technicalities'. But drawing on computer is important to designers who treat data as the main content. 'Data sets are only records that do not have any story, and cannot yet be encoded to the visual element,' she explains. 'So I need to analyse them through simple programming or digital drawing tools, which help me build their design concept.'

Song works on the computer to develop the concept after a rough sketch, using Photoshop and Illustrator, as well as ActionScript or other interactive tools. But more than the technical aspects, she says, 'information design has such a power to show the idea. A keen interest about the information design has been growing steadily within me, and I'm looking forward to making more advanced data-visualization projects in the future.'
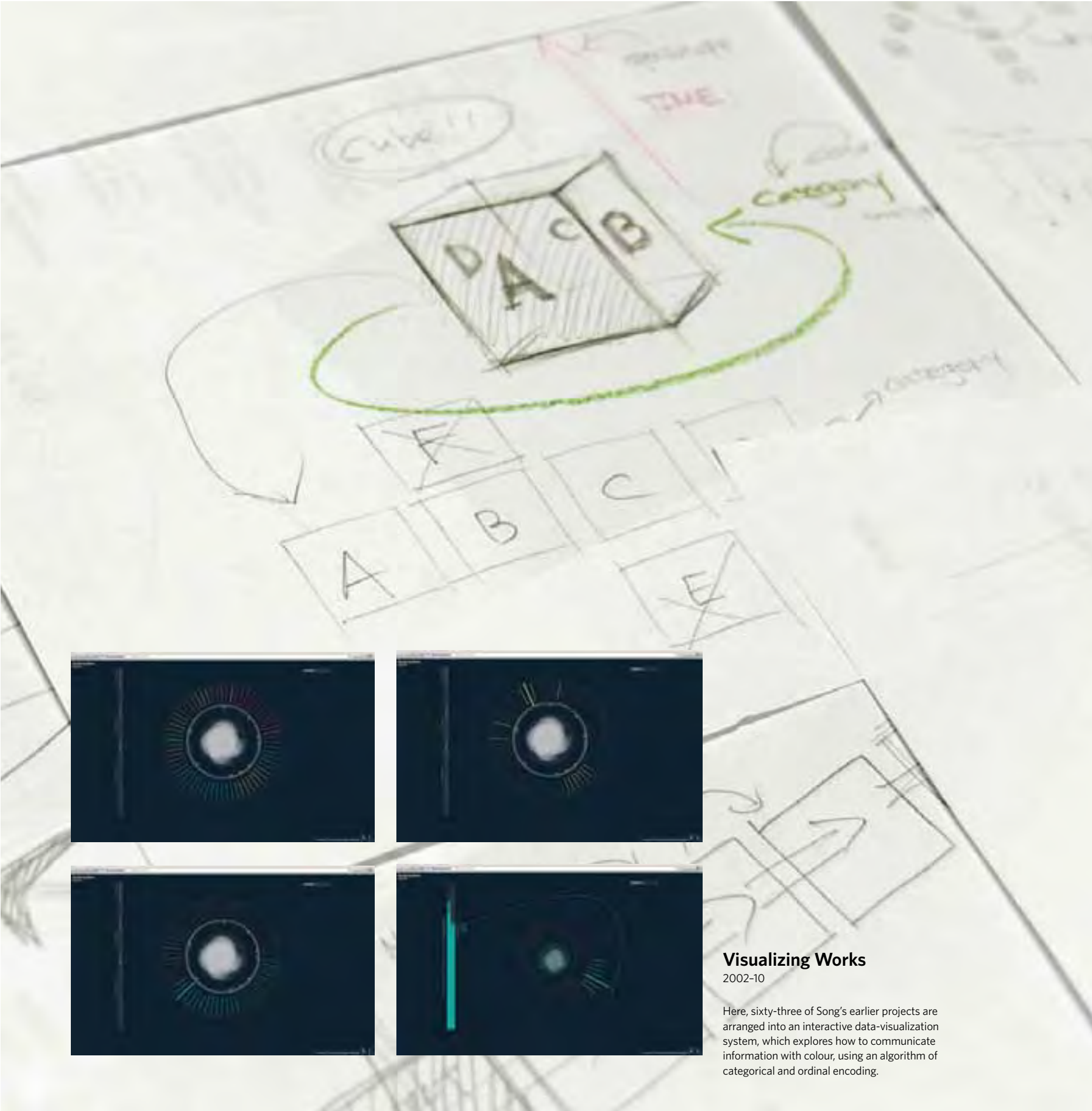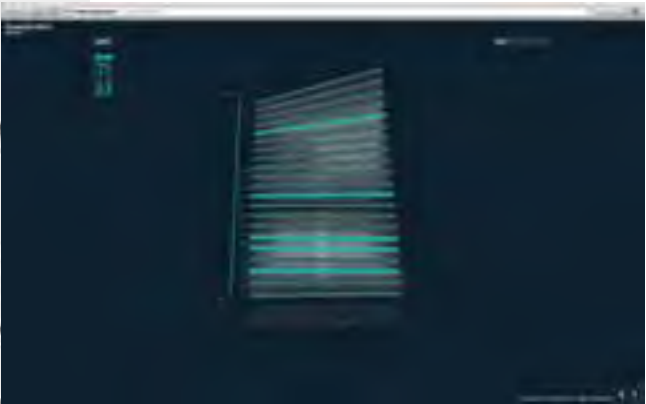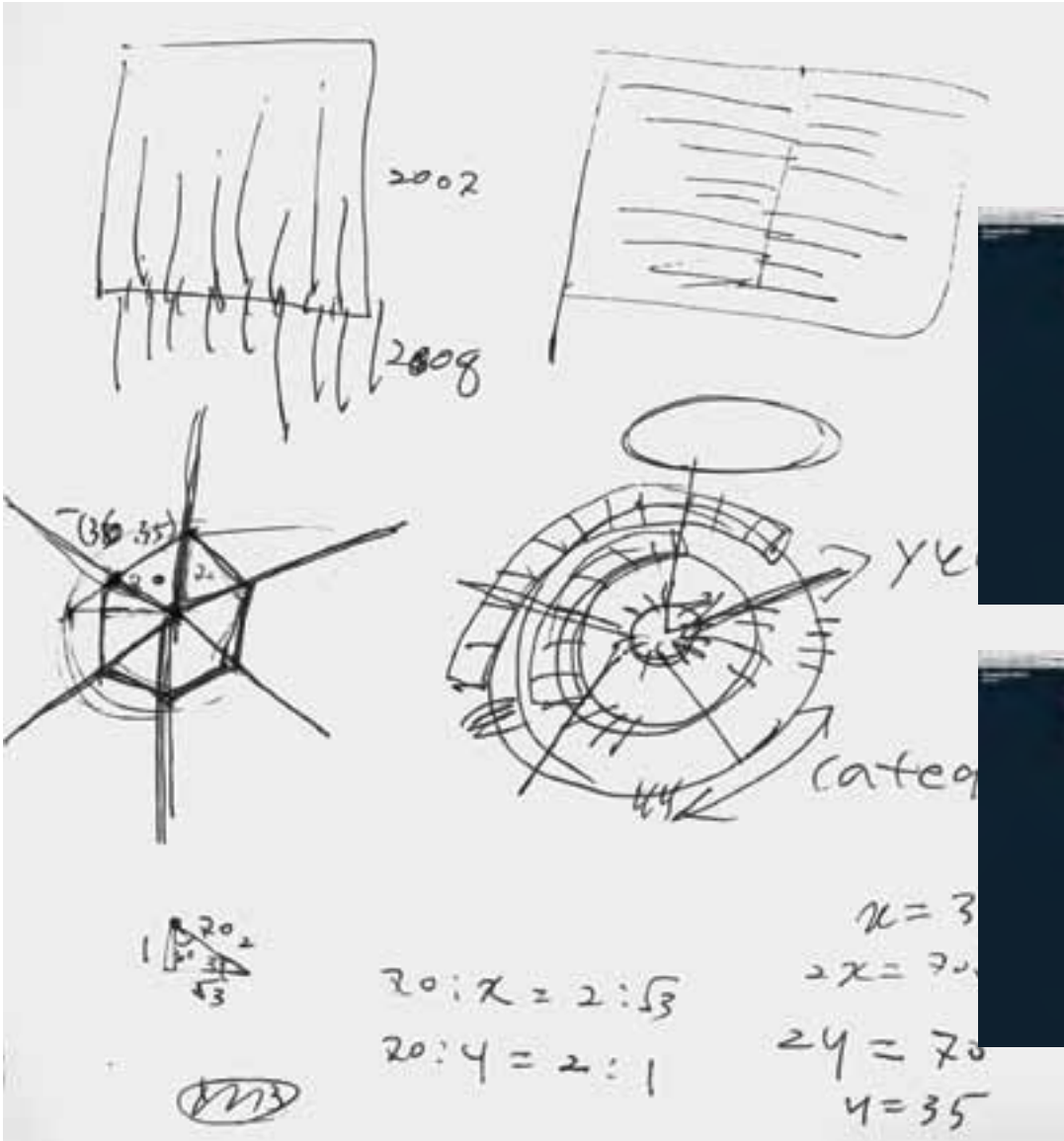
Visualizing Works
2002–10

Here, sixty-three of Song's earlier projects are arranged into an interactive data-visualization system, which explores how to communicate information with colour, using an algorithm of categorical and ordinal encoding.

A LITTLE GLOOMY

GLOOMY

VERY GLOOMY

UNDER 10 LINES

FROM 10 TO 30 LINES

OVER 30 LINES
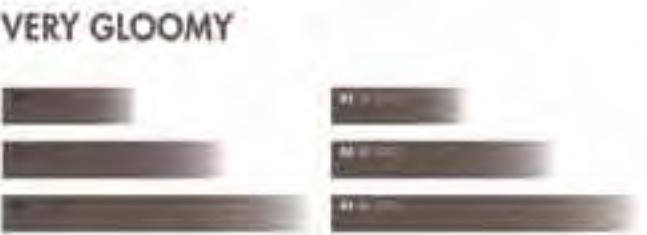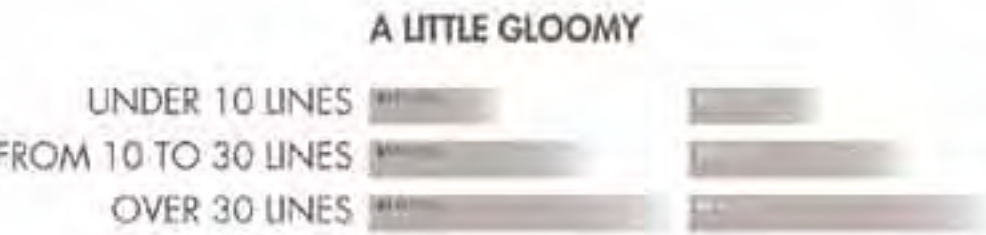
The Temperature of My Mind
2006

Song classified 380 diary entries into four emotions (happy, gloomy, angry and hopeful) and hues (yellow, grey, red and brown), which were then subdivided into three levels of brightness, relating to the strengths and weaknesses of the emotions.
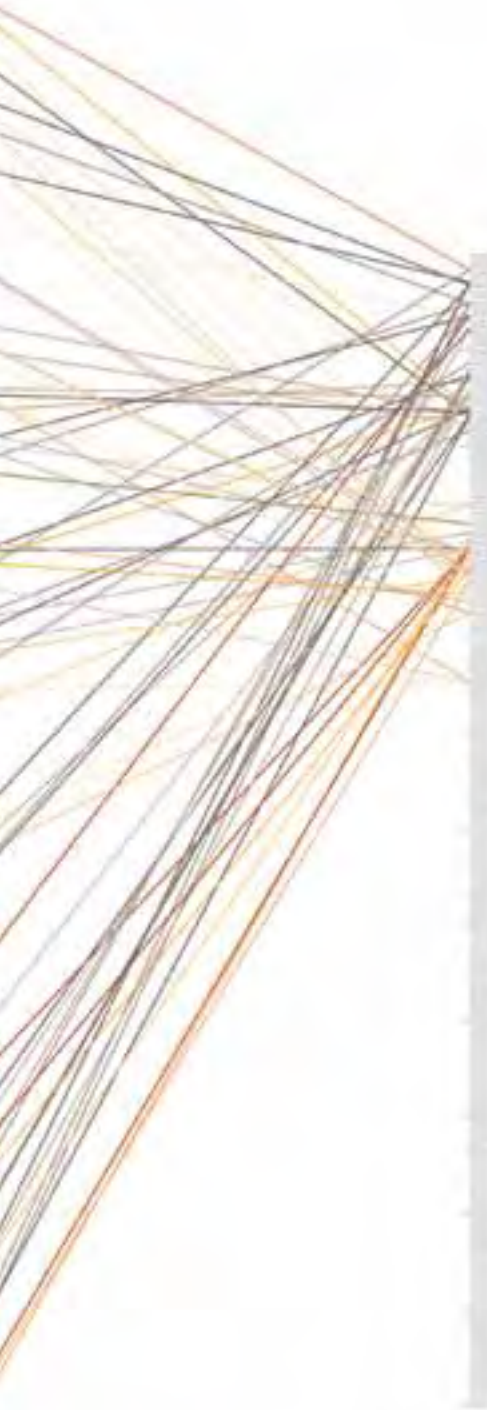
TIME

9

10

11

MAR

APR

2006
THE TEMPERATURE
OF MY MIND
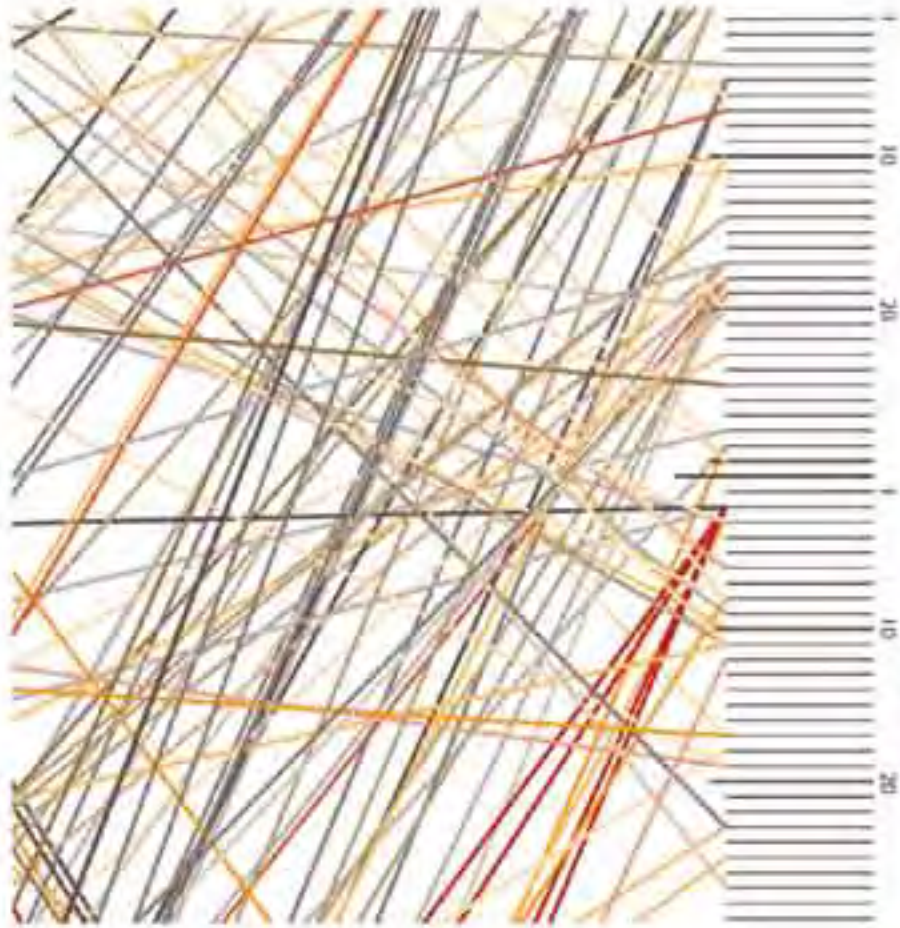
Karin Soukup

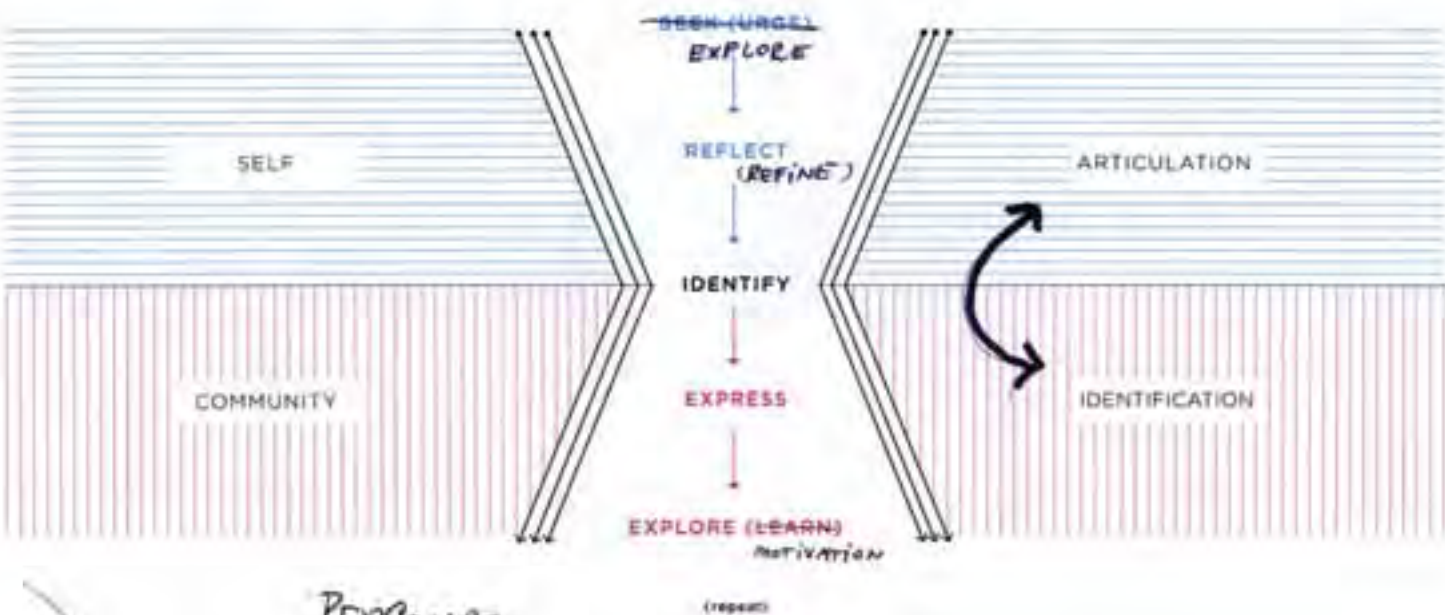📍 BROOKLYN, NY   ✏️ INTERACTION DESIGNER

Brooklyn-based Karin Soukup has been practising design for over a decade. 'Information graphics comes into my work, although it is only a fraction of it,' she explains. 'I am most drawn to designs that blend an element of psychology, whether explicitly or otherwise. This is true for infographics, as well. I like the challenge of framing information sets that try to quantify highly qualitative information.'

Sketching is part of the process, albeit loosely, Soukup says, and finds that she will often spend more time sketching words and concepts than visuals. Whether she uses a pencil or a computer depends on the content and phase, but she usually starts with pen and paper: 'I am more interested in the process of how my ideas come about, so I tend to sketch on pads of tracing paper. Something about seeing through layers of notes and drawings makes it feel like I have a more comprehensive, if cluttered, view into my mind.'

Soukup feels limited by the computer, and although she admits that she is not a skilled draughtsman, she notes that 'the freedom of my hand suits me. But when I am at a stage that requires explaining an idea to another person, the rigour of the computer is my greater ally.'

11:11
2011

This project is an app for cancer survivors, which prompts users to track their emotional variance each day. The sketches illustrate the development of the user experience, along with early participation results. Ultimately, the mobile platform is meant to reduce loneliness and restore a feeling of normalcy. The input (emotion-based words and, indirectly, colours), therefore, needed to be from a universal taxonomy, so that the data sets could correlate across users.

OUR HERO'S JOURNEY:

MONDAY   **TUESDAY**   **WEDNESDAY**   **THURSDAY**   **FRIDAY AM**   **FRIDAY PM**

MONDAY   **TUESDAY**   **WEDNESDAY**   **THURSDAY**   **FRIDAY AM**   **FRIDAY PM**   **SATURDAY**
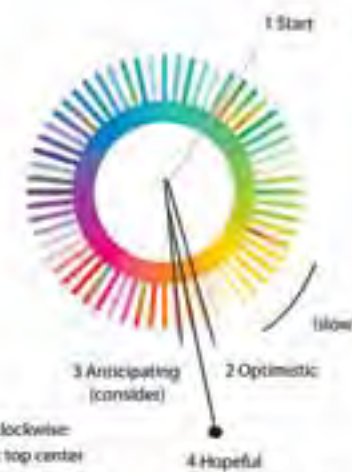
Moritz Stefaner
📍 LILIENTHAL, GERMANY   ✏ INTERACTIVE VISUALIZATIONS AND INTERFACE DESIGNER

For the last seven years, Moritz Stefaner has worked as a self-employed 'truth and beauty operator' at the crossroads of data visualization, information aesthetics and user-interface design. His method is to develop concepts and form ideas in parallel with exploring the data set he is working on at the time.

'While the first is often tied to sketch and verbal discussions,' he explains, 'the latter is very much bound to working at the computer with code and data.' The most important sketching phase in Stefaner's work happens when he has an initial conceptual direction and a good technical grip on the data: 'This is the time when I will explore the problem and solution space together iteratively, producing many different perspectives on the data and functional prototypes, to understand the texture of the data, as well as which forms support the properties of the data set in the best way.'

Stefaner adds: 'I am not sure if this qualifies as sketching – I see it more as an exploration/ prototyping activity – but the rapid iterations and the throwaway character of the artefacts produced is quite similar in spirit to sketching.' He notes that his sketching is 10 per cent pen and pencil and 90 per cent computer. This is because, he says, 'the active exploration of data sets and their possible visual forms requires code that operates on actual data. Great data visualizations highlight the unique aspects of a specific data set (or type of data set), and to reach this "blue-sky" design can be a starting point, but it has to be turned quickly into hands-on explorations on the basis of the data.'
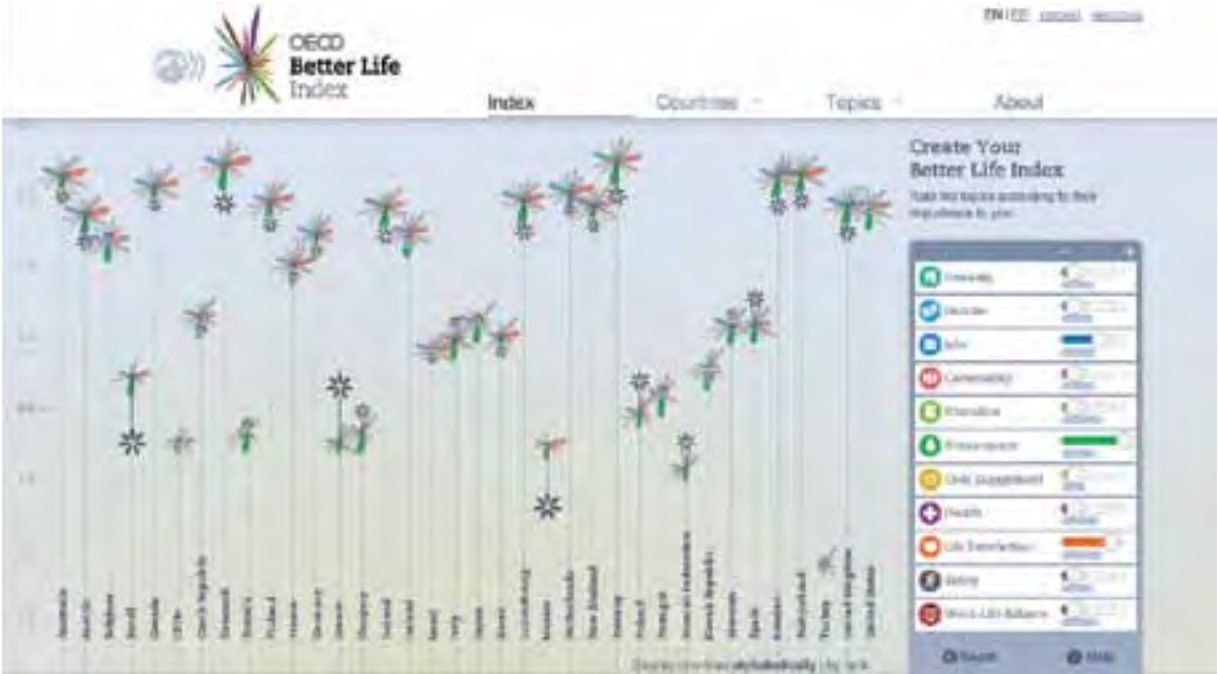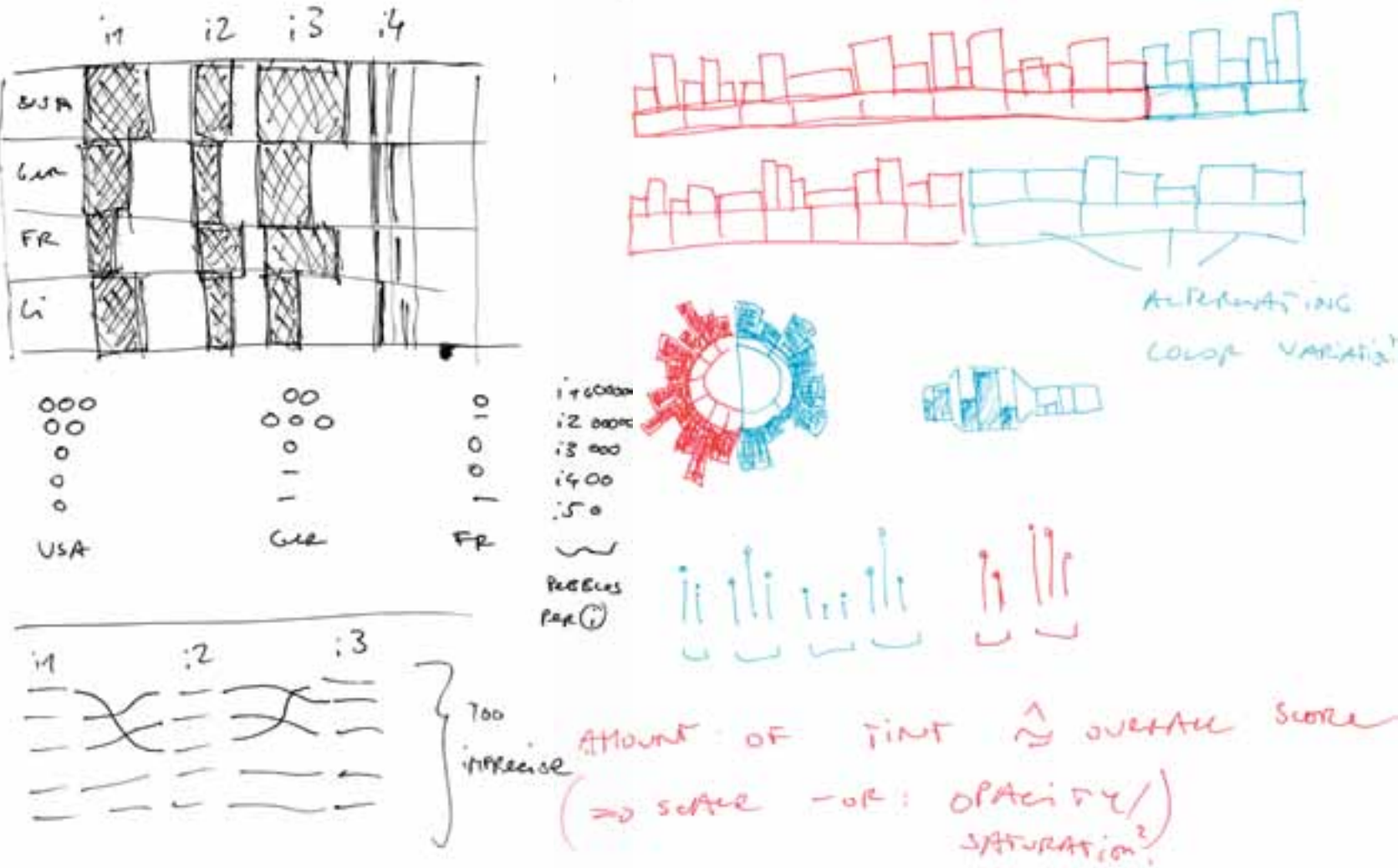
OECD Better Life Index
2013

Stefaner developed the Better Life Index for the OECD, a forum for governments seeking solutions to improving the economic and social wellbeing of people around the world. It is an interactive application, in which each nation is represented by a flower, with each of the petals representing a key topic (such as education, housing or environment). When the user prioritizes education, the education petals become wider and more visible. The goal was to make normally dry, abstract statistics accessible and playful.