

< Introduction >

< Letter from the creator >

As a creative and designer with interest in computation from Russia recent political events (though i'm not going to discuss the politics here) prompted me to reflect on current state of creative industry since most of the creatives couldn't access software due to political restrictions and therefore most of the creatives were forced to use alternatives options. Starting from the early beginning, Back at the childhood the creativity felt as a space of freedom and liberation, it was still early stages of web that wasn't fully commodified and dominated by big-corporate companies leaving some breathing space for PC users, I still remember long-time obsession with *Microsoft Paint* - free and simple raster graphics editor where I drew on a digital screen - something magical and unbelievable for 9 year old kid. It was a time when I in a sense felt truly connected to the technology, it seemed simple yet enchanting.

As time passed on, and my interest deepened in graphic design area and i entered academia in bachelors degree in Graphic Communication design. Before I shifted towards the Graphic Design field I was interested in illustration and mainly worked with drawing tools like SAI or Procreate, however, while developing the projects i've realised the urgent need of exploring the Adobe Suite - industry standard software design tools that allow creatives to create work digitally. I've been told multiple times by teaching stuff that to create professional-level work you have to use industry standard tools - its a well-known convention within designers circles. Going back to these memories all i can recall is sleepless night of nightmares in order to understand what this tools output of other one millions tool requires you to do, how it affects the outcome i want to make. Often, it came down just to me manually and simply doing the same process but thorough more meticulous and witty designing process. And on top, all comes with a price.

You want to be professional creative?

You want to be able to create work on high level industry level?

You want to be...
That's why you have to buy our tools to create an excellent work.
The creativity - something that usually feels disconnected and
untouched by capitalistic perspective never held a stronger grasp
over the art and design industry. Why creativity comes with a subscrip-
tion with a high price tag?
...you can find reasonable answers to this

And even if you feel that you can find resonable answers to this question the more valuable questions then will be how we shifted from free web and computer as an expression of a liberation to the tools that enslave not only our daily lives but creative thinking and determine our

creative choices by imposing predefined workflows on our processes? Going back to the beginning of the preword, the example of political sanctions shows toxicity of the online world and underscores its' dependance of external social structures.

Tools and technology become far more than just extensions of the body that operate on the world, they impose on us certain hidden agendas. Technology also means the social systems of labor, control, faith, philosophy, politics, reason, and science, and how all of these technological systems come back to bear on the workers who labor through them.

גְּדָרָה

Dear designers, have you ever asked how we got there to the point where design industry is monopolised and controlled by big corp? How do we break this frictionless illusion?

This publication is for designers and fellow creatives who felt the same way or ready to take on a new perspective. It explores the notions of softer computing, its future implications, its possible implementations, alternative options of softer computing as a way to break free from monopolised vision of creativity and proposes new angles on creative workflows. To envision futures we need to be radical and radical can start from our own relationships with technology and the way we mold it by creation of our own technologies and tools. It explores Softer Computing as a newly formed discourse that resist to digital maximalism and embrace slower approach to tech.

→

WHY CREATIVITY COMES WITH A SUBSCRIP- TION?

Valerie Kvon,
London, 2025

introduction

Chapter 1

A journey from the hands-on freedom of early web and clunky mobile magic to today's opaque, corporate-run platforms and design defaults that stifle creativity, underscoring our lost agency in a web we once built.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: THE WEB WE LOST

Reflecting on my own entry into digital culture, I am reminded of the early, almost awkward intimacy of technology in early 2000s. I watched as mobile phones rose—not as sleek objects of desire, but as clunky and unpredictable devices. These early phones, for all their quirks, facilitated new forms of connection and seemed to shrink distances, conjuring McLuhan's idea of a "global village" (McLuhan, 1964). I can vividly recall the sense of wonder the first time I loaded a webpage on a tiny Nokia screen: glitchy, barely legible, but magical in its promise. The experience was imperfect, but it invited exploration. The internet of this era felt radically open, unfinished, and full of potential.



Although I wasn't born yet to participate in the so-called "free web" of the mid-1990s, I nevertheless encountered its traces: hand-coded personal sites, niche forums, and scattered remains of a DIY internet that carried an unmistakable sense of intimacy and slowness. There was a palpable feeling that one could still carve out a digital identity without being absorbed into the logic of centralized platforms. As Chayka (2014) observes in his meditation on Web 1.0, this period was marked by a quieter, safer, and more personal internet. The prevailing dream was that digital space might be a place for self-authorship — a hope that now feels distant.

Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, 1964

Kyle Chayka, GIZMODO *The Great Web 1.0 Revival*, 2014

↑ found image of Nokia I used to own
→ www.heavensgate.com

Example of a Web 1.0 website
that's still maintained



Whether Hale-Bopp has a "companion" or not is irrelevant from our perspective. However, its arrival is joyously very significant to us at "Heaven's Gate". The joy is that our Older Member in the Evolutionary Level Above Human (the "Kingdom of Heaven") has made it clear to us that Hale-Bopp's approach is the "marker" we've been waiting for -- the time for the arrival of the spacecraft from the Level Above Human to take us home to "Their World" -- in the literal Heavens. Our 22 years of classroom here on planet Earth is finally coming to conclusion -- "graduation" from the Human Evolutionary Level. We are happily prepared to leave "this world" and go with T1's crew.

If you study the material on this website you will hopefully understand our joy and what our purpose here on Earth has been. You may even find your "boarding pass" to leave with us during this brief "window."

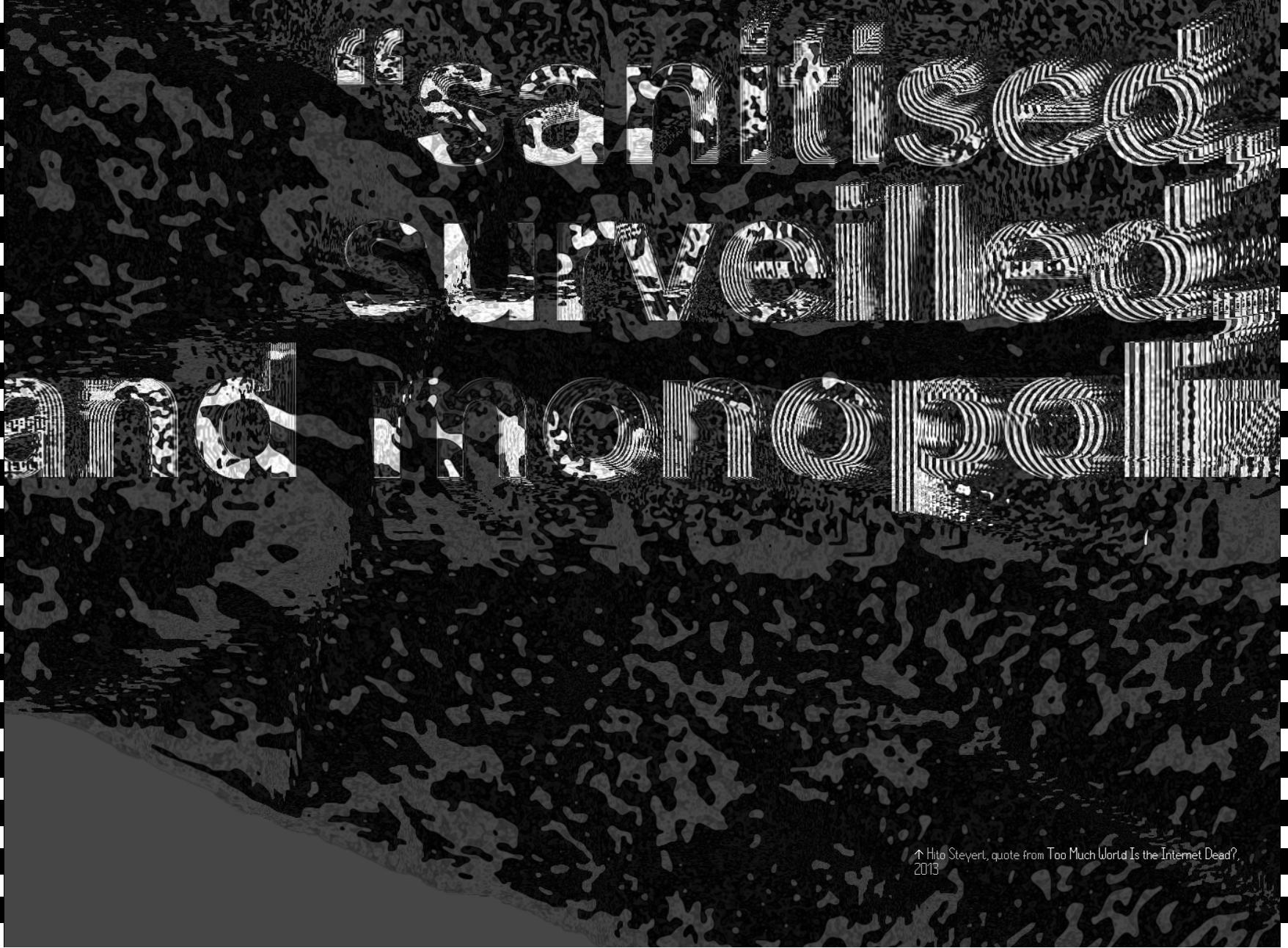
We are so very thankful that we have been recipients of this opportunity to prepare for membership in Their Kingdom, and to experience Their boundless Caring and Nurturing.

Keys or Bookmarks to Vital Information on Our Website

-  [Do's Intro: Our Purpose -- The Simple Bottom Line \(an excerpt from our book HEAVEN'S GATE -- see below\)](#)
-  [Statement by an E.T. Presently Incarnate \(excerpt from our book\)](#)
-  [Overview of Present Mission \(excerpt from our book, a student paper\)](#)
-  [Last Chance To Advance Beyond Human \(excerpt from our book\)](#)
-  [To Access Our Book Online in its Entirety:
How and When HEAVEN'S GATE May Be Entered](#)
-  [Transcripts of Two Recent Videos](#)
-  [Our Position Against Suicide](#)
-  [How a Member of the Kingdom of Heaven Might Appear](#)
-  [Earth Exit Statements by Students](#)
-  [Exit Press Release:
"Away Team" Returns to Level Above Human](#)

To Order a Hard Copy of Our Book

The following materials are available through TELAH Services:



↑ Hito Steyerl, quote from *Too Much World Is the Internet Dead?*,
2013

PROBLEMS OF THE CURRENT DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

The landscape today could hardly be more different. Technology, once promising and participatory, now often feels remote and controlling. The contemporary internet is defined by what Powers (2011) calls **digital maximalism**: an environment engineered for relentless consumption, not for creative exploration. Algorithms govern our feeds, shaping experience and taste, quietly relegating users to the role of spectators. Hito Steyerl (2013) describes the modern web as “sanitised, surveilled, and monopolized”—a system policed by corporations for the purposes

Hito Steyerl, *Too Much World, Is the Internet Dead?*, 2013

William Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, 2011

of copyright, conformity, and profit. Chayka (2014) expands on this, suggesting that platforms now encourage users to act as curators, but only within pre-filtered, limited options. The promise of agency is often an illusion; choice is a performance enacted within tightly drawn boundaries.

This landscape of monopolistic platforms, ever-present surveillance, and the manufacture of disinformation produces a form of digital exhaustion. The simple act of “being online” is less joyful and less present. Tolentino (2019) points to the internet’s ability to “distend our sense of identity,” to foster the overvaluation of opinion, and ultimately to “destroy our sense of scale.” In this way, what was once a space of possibility has become, for many, a source of confusion, anxiety, and fatigue.

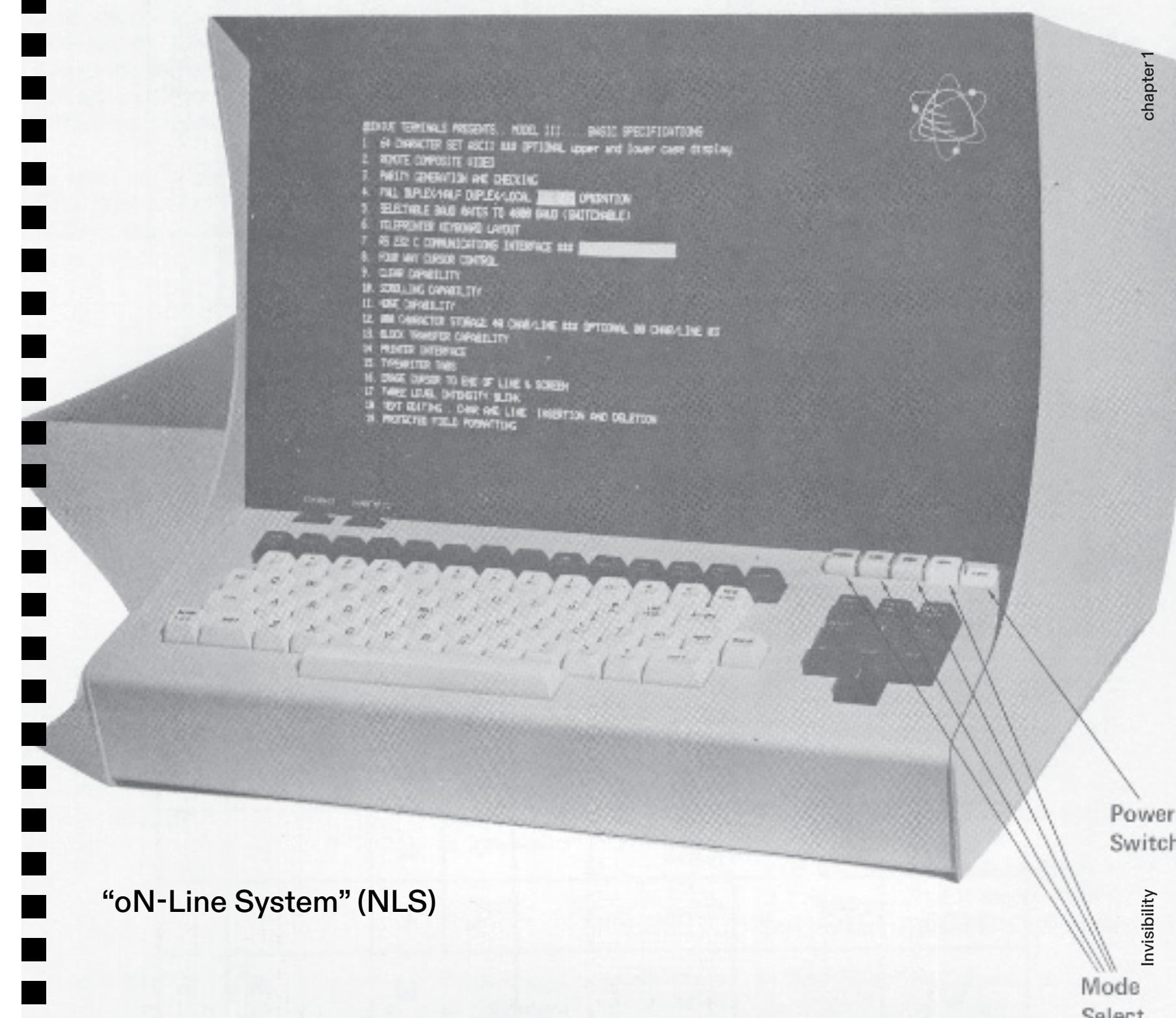
Kyle Chayka, GIZMODO, *The Great Web 1.0 Revival*, 2014





DATA TERMINAL PRESENTS... MODEL 333... BASIC SPECIFICATIONS

- 1. 64 CHARACTER SET ASCII AND OPTIONAL upper and lower case display
- 2. Remote composite video
- 3. Multi generation line checking
- 4. Full duplex-half duplex-local [REDACTED] operation
- 5. Selectable baud rates to 4800 (half) switchable
- 6. Teletypewriter keyboard layout
- 7. RS 232 C COMMUNICATIONS INTERFACE HAS [REDACTED]
- 8. Four way cursor control
- 9. Clear capability
- 10. Scrolling capability
- 11. Home capability
- 12. IBM character storage 48 character line has optional 96 character line set
- 13. Block transfer capability
- 14. Printer interface
- 15. Typewriter tabs
- 16. Drag cursor to end of line & screen
- 17. Three level intensity select
- 18. Text editing - char one line insertion and deletion
- 19. Protected file formatting



“oN-Line System” (NLS)

THE NOTION OF INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY AND THE INVISIBLE USER

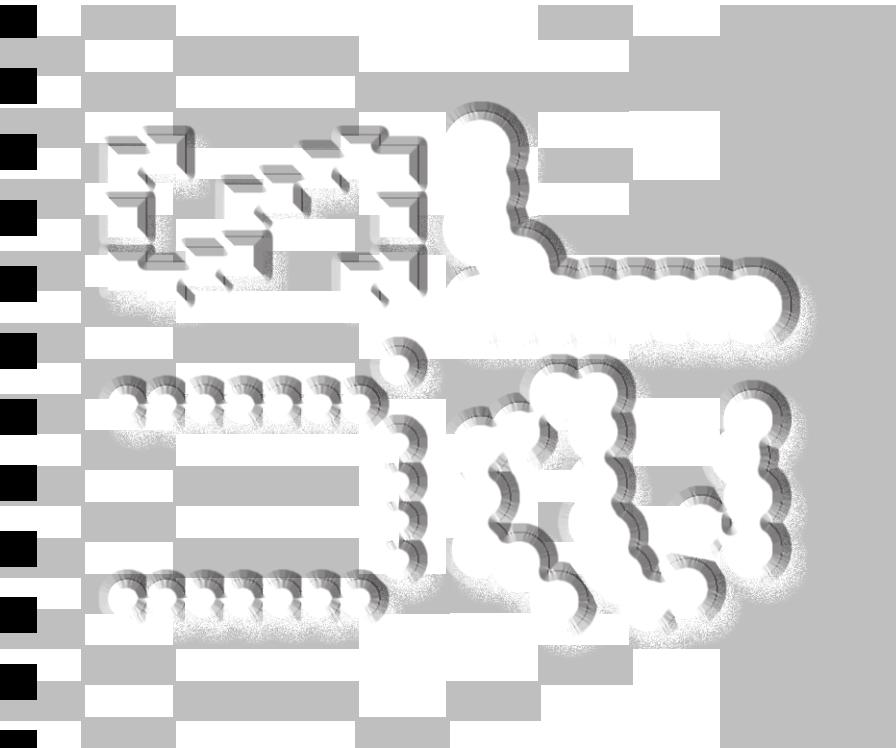
The alienation of users from their tools did not occur all at once. Early computing, with its physical, chunky machinery, required a deep, almost bodily engagement; programming was a process of direct confrontation with the limits of hardware, keeping the human “close to the metal” (Norton, 2019). This changed dramatically with Douglas Engelbart’s invention of the computer mouse in 1968, as part of his visionary “oN-Line System” (NLS). The mouse created a new kind of intimacy with machines, transforming the computer into an extension of the user’s body. Yet, paradoxically, this innovation also marked the beginning of a gradual distancing: as interactions became smoother and more abstract, the workings of technology became increasingly hidden (Real Life, 2020).

Emma R. Norton, Close to the Metal, 2019

Don Norman, “Why Interfaces Don’t Work”, in: Brenda Laurel (Ed.), *The Art of Human-Computer Interface Design*, 1990

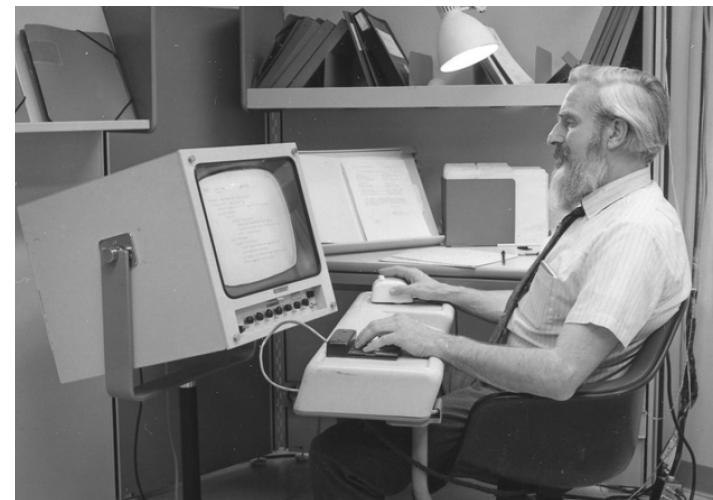
Emma R. Norton, Close to the Metal, 2019

Olia Lialina, Turing Complete User, 2012



This concept of “invisible computing” was championed by Don Norman, who in his influential essay *Why Interfaces Don’t Work* (1990) proposed that, “The real problem with the interface is that it is an interface. The computer of the future should be invisible!” (Norman, 1990). The tech industry quickly adopted this principle. Apple, for example, declared in a 2012 campaign that “Technology is best when invisible.” While this promise of seamlessness might seem elegant, it also detaches users from the systems they rely on, making questioning and understanding almost impossible. As Brenda Laurel famously remarked, computers became “doors without doorknobs”—perfectly smooth, yet fundamentally inaccessible (Laurel, cited in Lialina, 2015).

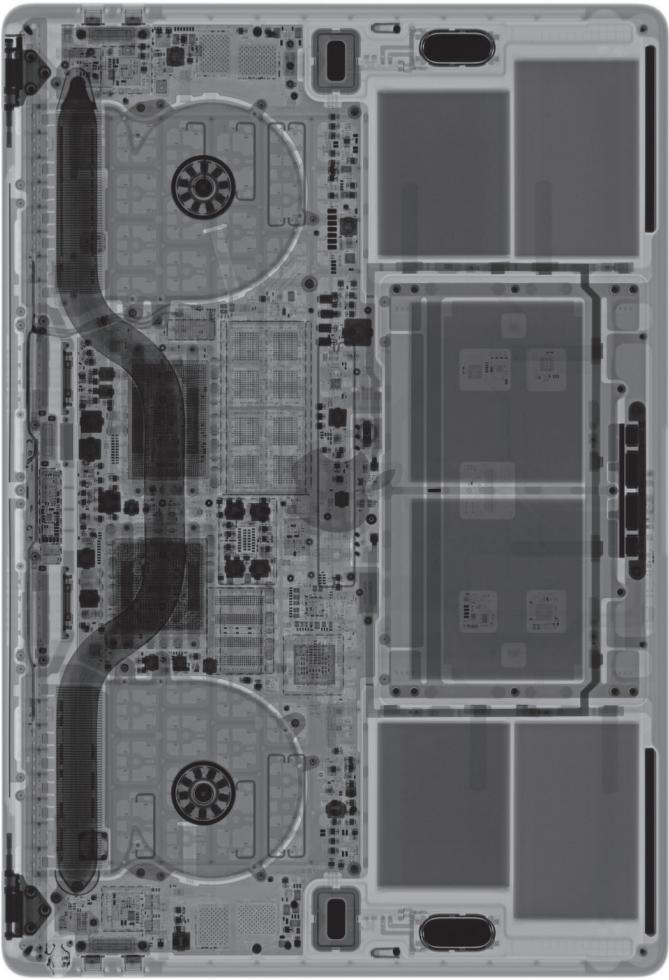
Olia Lialina identifies this as a core reason for the transition from interface design to what is now called experience design. The aim is not simply to make technology easy to use, but to erase awareness of technology altogether—leaving only the user’s emotions, goals, and tasks. The price of this comfort, however, is a deep alienation: users become not just operators, but invisible presences within systems they can no longer interrogate or change.



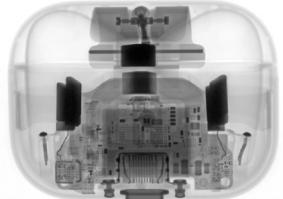
↑ Image courtesy of the Doug Engelbart Institute

Invisible Technology

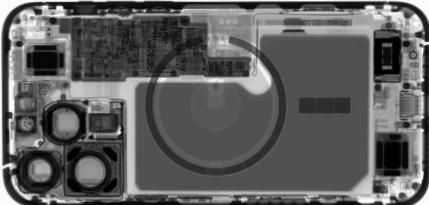
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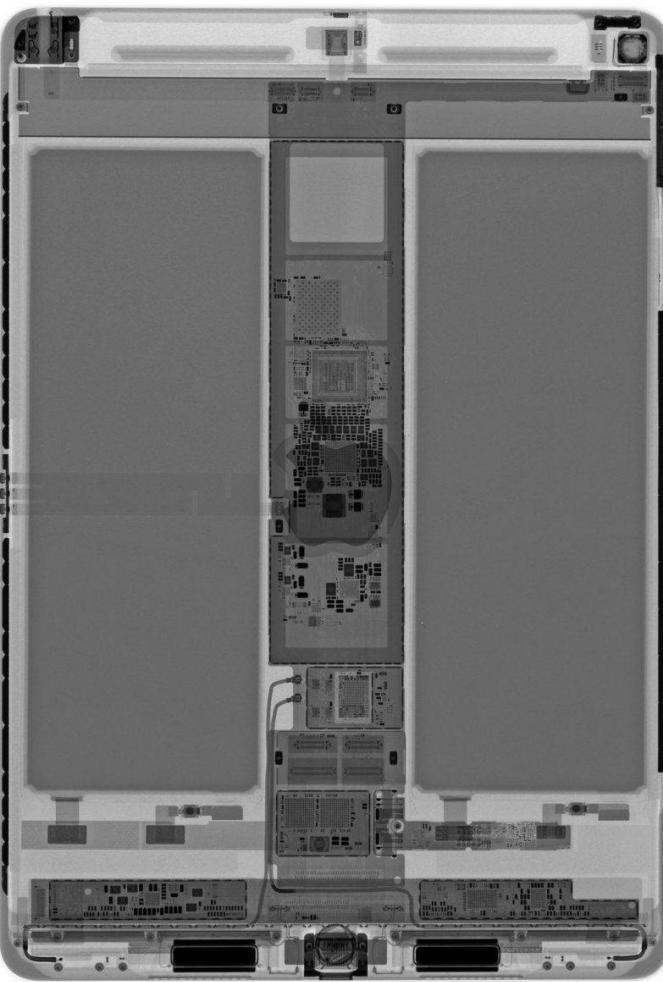
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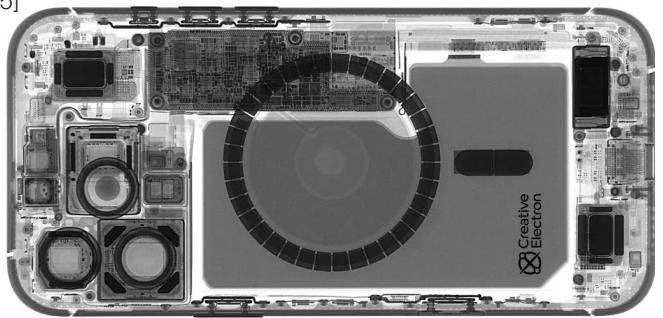
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“We believe that technology is at its very best when it is invisible”

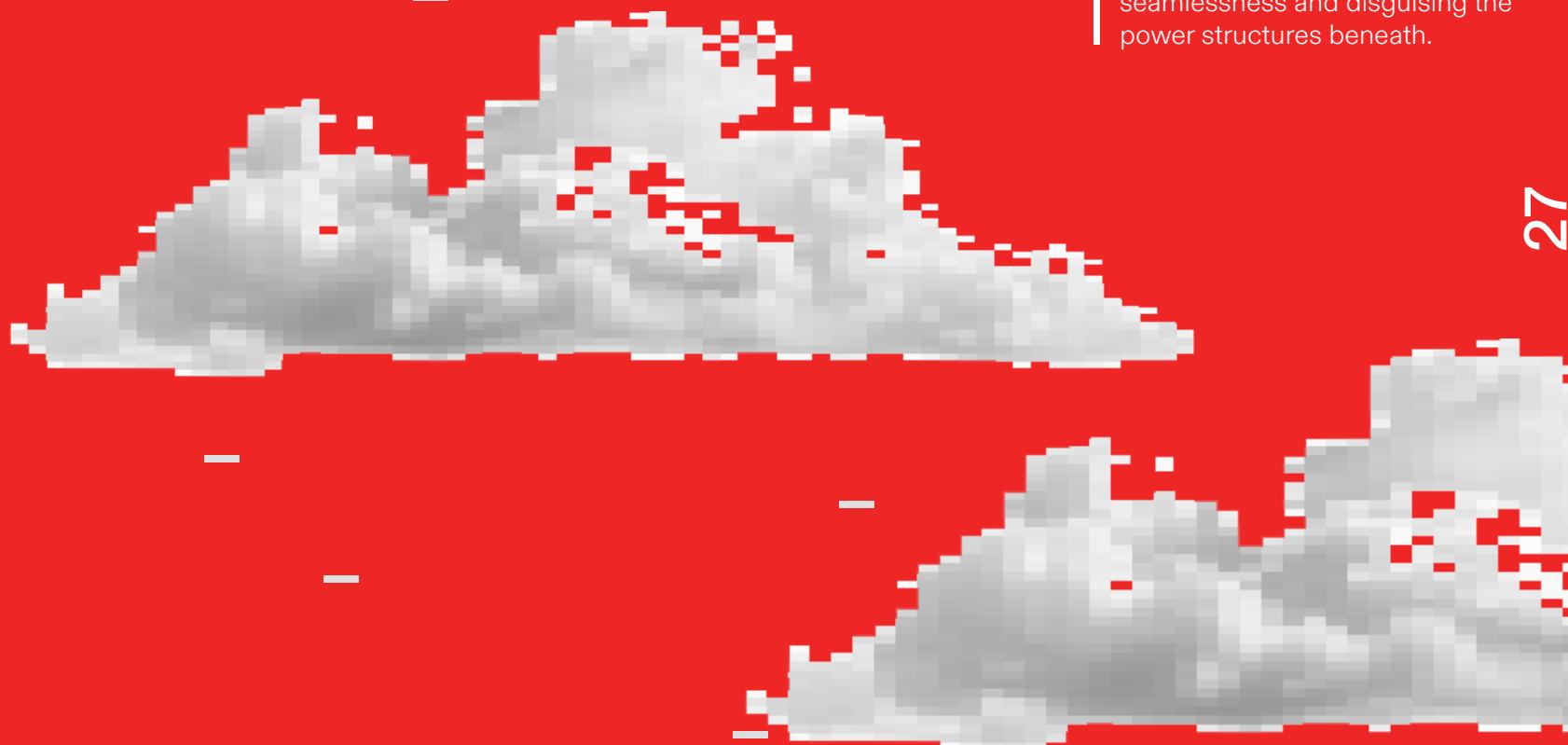
The New iPad (iPad 3) Official Introduction Video,
Youtube, 2012



HOW METAPHORIZATION OF THE WEB DISTANCES US FROM TECHNOLOGY

One of the most persistent forces alienating users from technology is the human tendency to cloak the digital world in layers of metaphor and abstraction. Rather than revealing, these metaphors obscure, turning technology into something mystical at once familiar and fundamentally unknowable. This process distances us, the so-called “users,” from the technical realities underpinning our digital environments.

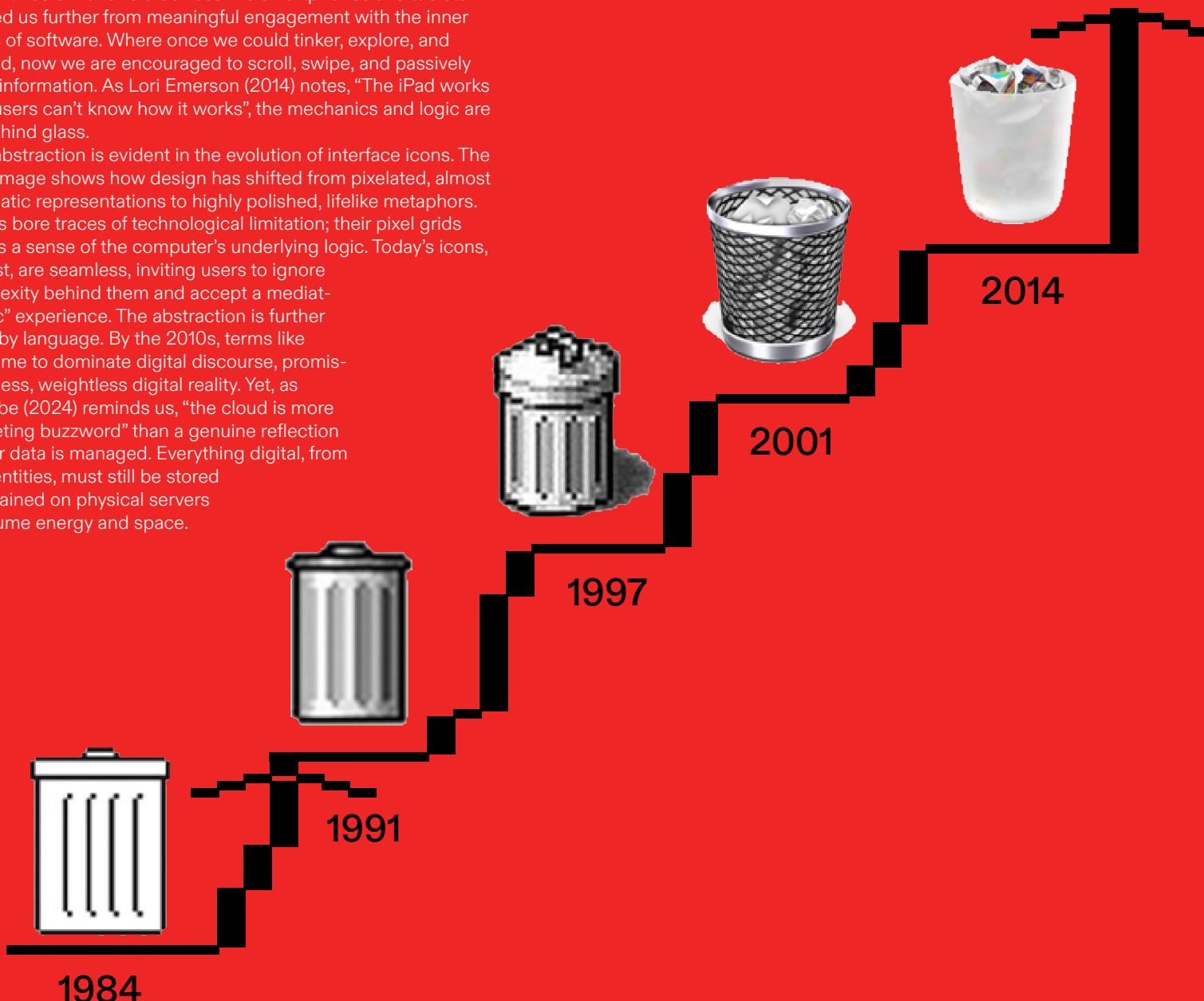
Graphical user interfaces (GUIs) themselves have become “an abstracted representation of a person’s relationship to a machine”—and it is precisely this abstraction that prevents users from seeing or questioning the technical and political realities at play (Ecologies, 2024). These metaphors, once meant to make technology approachable, now render it distant and unchallengeable, reinforcing the illusion of seamlessness and disguising the power structures beneath.



metaphors

The invention of the computer mouse, for instance, brought us closer to virtual space by introducing a new form of embodied navigation, demanding at least some physical effort from the user. However, the subsequent rise of handheld devices like smartphones and tablets has pushed us further from meaningful engagement with the inner structures of software. Where once we could tinker, explore, and understand, now we are encouraged to scroll, swipe, and passively consume information. As Lori Emerson (2014) notes, “The iPad works because users can’t know how it works”, the mechanics and logic are hidden behind glass.

A similar abstraction is evident in the evolution of interface icons. The attached image shows how design has shifted from pixelated, almost diagrammatic representations to highly polished, lifelike metaphors. Early icons bore traces of technological limitation; their pixel grids gave users a sense of the computer’s underlying logic. Today’s icons, by contrast, are seamless, inviting users to ignore the complexity behind them and accept a mediated, “magic” experience. The abstraction is further amplified by language. By the 2010s, terms like “cloud” came to dominate digital discourse, promising a limitless, weightless digital reality. Yet, as Becca Abbe (2019) reminds us, “the cloud is more of a marketing buzzword” than a genuine reflection of how our data is managed. Everything digital, from files to identities, must still be stored and maintained on physical servers that consume energy and space.



Emerson, Lori, *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound*, 2014
Becca Abbe, *The Internet's Back-to-the-Land Movement*, 2019

ADOBE AND DESIGN SOFTWARE MONOPOLIES: DEFAULTISM, TEMPLATES, AND INDUSTRY STANDARDIZATION

This culture of abstraction and detachment finds its most potent expression in the world of design software. As Rob Giampietro has argued, “The computer has changed design, but it has also changed our process of thinking and making” (Giampietro, 2014). Tools like Adobe Creative Suite, with their intricate ecosystems of defaults, templates, and automated features, shape not only how we work but how we think about what design is and could be.

design

aspects

of

design

and

defaultism

AND

DEFUALTISM

<http://www.aspektedesrasters.de>

chapter 1

31

defaultism

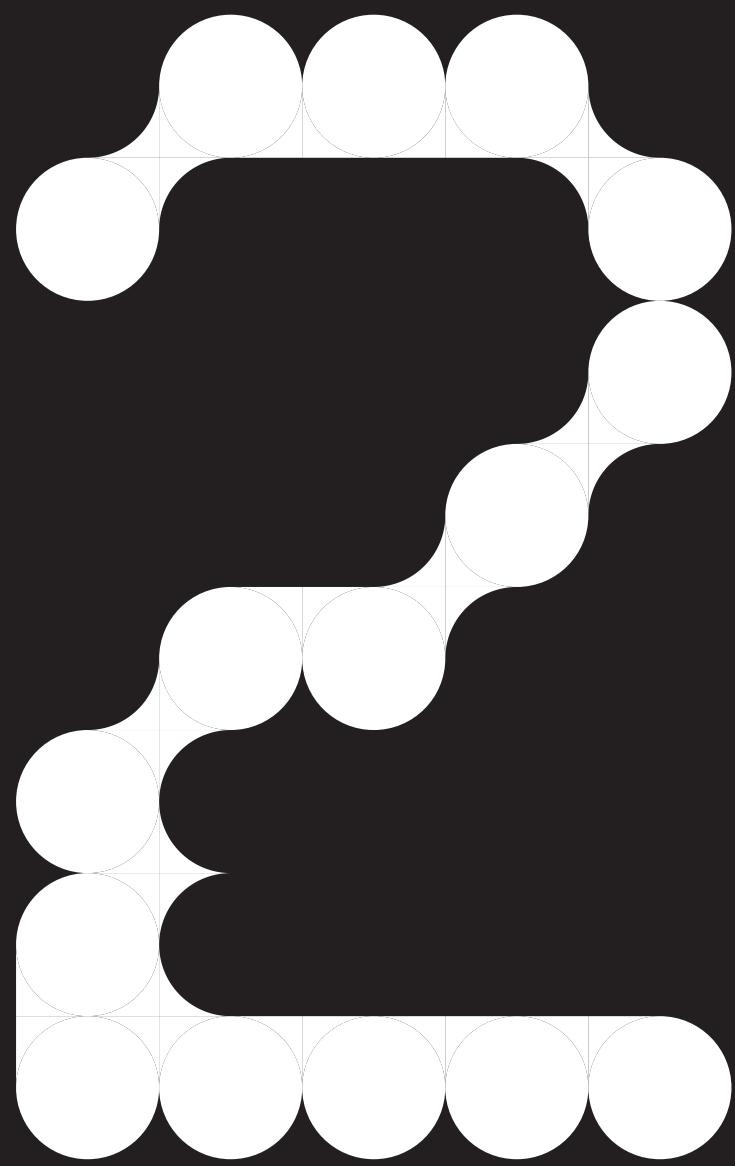
This phenomenon extends beyond mere hardware. The introduction of the Macintosh computer, for instance, coincided with the decline of the Swiss International Style and the rise of a more automatic, industrialized approach to graphic design. “Default systems are machines for design creation,” Giampietro writes, describing a shift toward design practices that align with capitalist values—speed, replication, and efficiency over craft, nuance, and critical engagement (Giampietro, 2014).



The first Apple Macintosh was introduced on January 24, 1984, by Steve Jobs.

For me, this resonates with Olia Lialina’s critique of Adobe’s marketing: campaigns that claim, “I have more time to do what I like most—being creative,” while actually encouraging designers to distance themselves from code, links, and the deeper workings of the web. The message is clear: the less you understand about the technology, the more creative you supposedly are (Lialina, 2015). Adobe, in particular, monopolizes the “creativity” market, setting the standards for what is considered “good design” and influencing aesthetic norms across the field (Giampietro, 2014). The deeper issue is that default systems are designed to be invisible. Their norms, once established, become silent truths—rarely questioned, yet powerfully shaping the direction of an entire industry. As Bridle (2019) observes, “To live a life within human society

Default settings, far from being neutral, actively sculpt creative outcomes. They make design more accessible to the masses, but also risk flattening difference and dehumanizing the creative process. The designer is gradually replaced by the software; what once required intentional choice and authorship is now accomplished through the path of least resistance, the click of a button. Even the notion of “ugly design,” as Giampietro discusses, is bound up with these same systems—driven by a mix of democratic impulse and algorithmic convenience.



As a creative and designer

TOPICS THIS INE

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