

FOREWORD

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JENNIFER COLE PHILLIPS

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005 BY RAS+E

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2. Designers as Not Artists

Later, it became fashionable for Mad Genius Designers to reject the Designer as Artist model, eventually considering the two fields equal but different, which Michael Rock recognized and clarified in a follow-up article, "Fuck Content."

Designers should not need to be anything but Designers. Separate but equal. This perspective somewhat cracked the Designer as Mad Genius perspective, leaving design without the clout of Architects or the exploratory interdisciplinary nature of contemporary Fine Artists. Design no longer needed anyone's approval, or influence.

3. Designers as Collaborative Cowboys

In the meantime, Fine Artists were outright ditching the isolationist Mad Genius myth, climbing off Lonerism Tower and engaging each other as remixers, commenters, and generative Interactive Artists. The collaborative nature of contemporary Community Art, the heroic democracy of Street Art, and a mounting acceptance of practicing collectives as Makers themselves were enabled by communications technologies and supported by a global culture shift.

Before telecommunications media, Fine Artists usually came together for two main reasons: (1) geographical proximity, and (2) like-minded stylistic pursuit. The reason behind these gatherings wasn't necessarily for collaboration (such as Cubists Picasso and Braque), but for purposes of Show and Tell or apprenticeship. Consider Realism, a movement originating in France directly following the 1848 Revolution as an open rejection of Romanticism's open emotion. Courbet, Daumier, Millet, and Manet aimed to present ordinary life as a transcribed reality based on truth. Branches of Realism formed in Russia, America, and elsewhere; however, these chapters formed under very different circumstances, and the context of the paintings directly related to specific environments. Many movements in art began as loose collectives, attractive simply as a platform for reciprocating critique and dialogue. Salons and night cafés supported rising local Artist Collectives within a community through physical working and meeting spaces. Many guests interacted as well, enabled by the public format of the gathering.

Starting in the '50s, telecommunications media undermined the requisite of geographical proximity in qualifying Avant Garde art movements and gatherings.

WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE

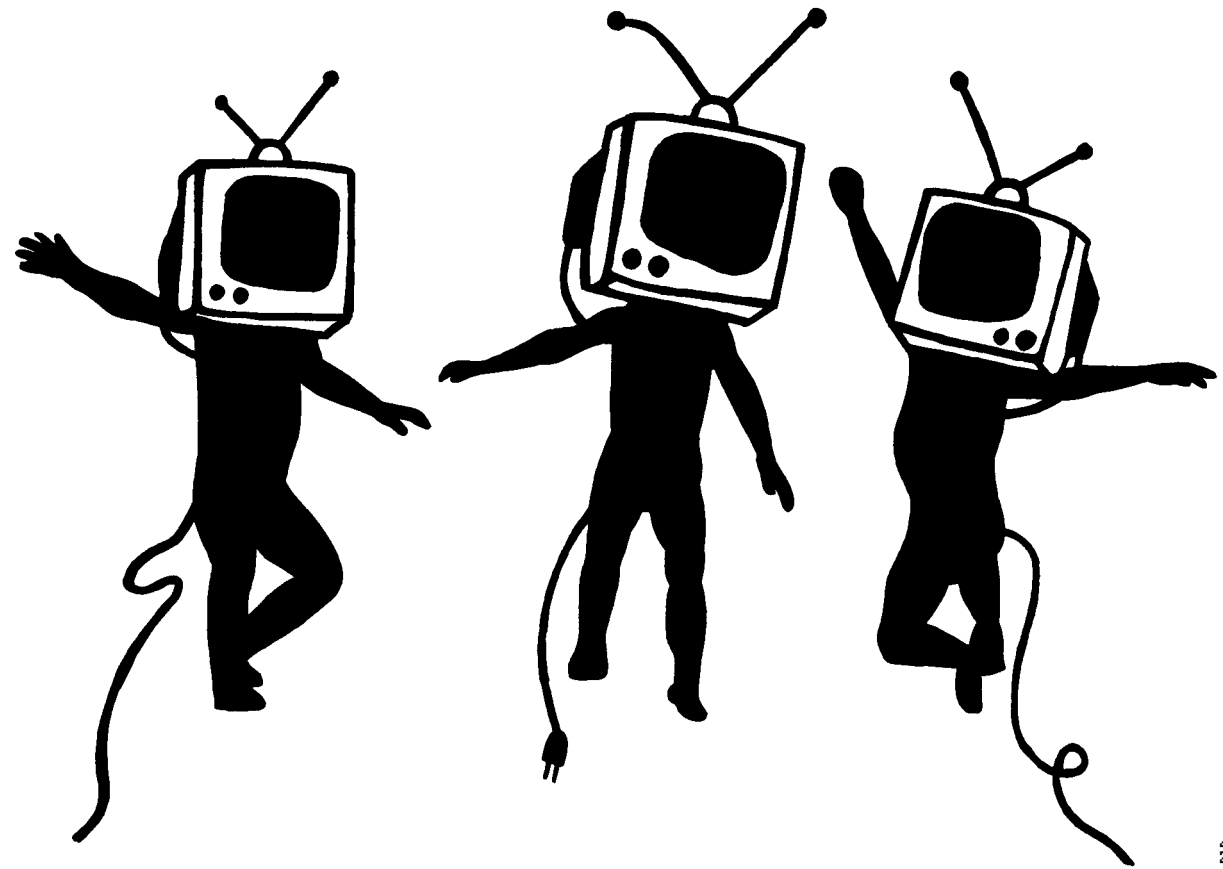
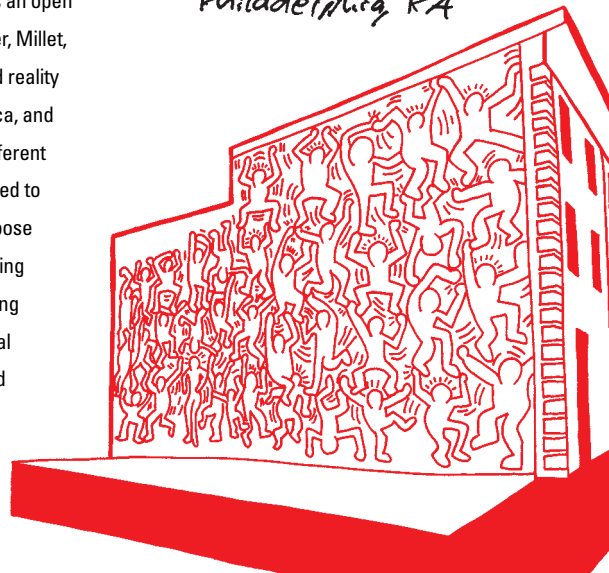


BANKSY
\$5,000 REWARD

NOTIFY- Marshall Pat Garrett

BANKSY AS COWBOY
London has an uneasy
relationship with its
illicit outsider-hero

KEITH HARING
activist street designer
Philadelphia, PA



"THE THING I HATE THE MOST ABOUT ADVERTISING IS THAT IT ATTRACTS ALL THE BRIGHT, CREATIVE AND AMBITIOUS YOUNG PEOPLE, LEAVING US MAINLY WITH THE SLOW AND SELF-OBSSESSED TO BECOME OUR ARTISTS. MODERN ART IS A DISASTER AREA. NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN HISTORY HAS SO MUCH BEEN USED BY SO MANY TO SAY SO LITTLE."-BANKSY

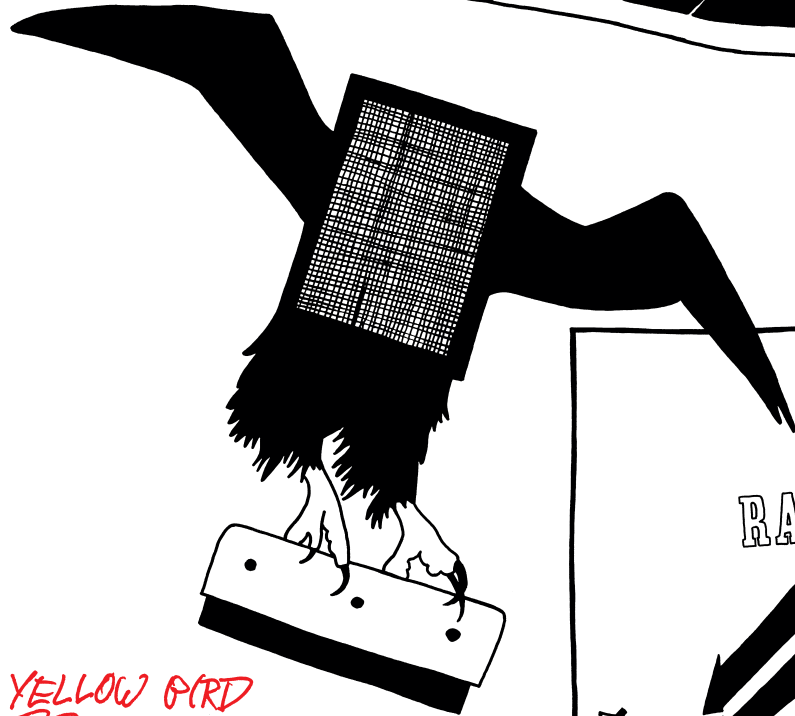
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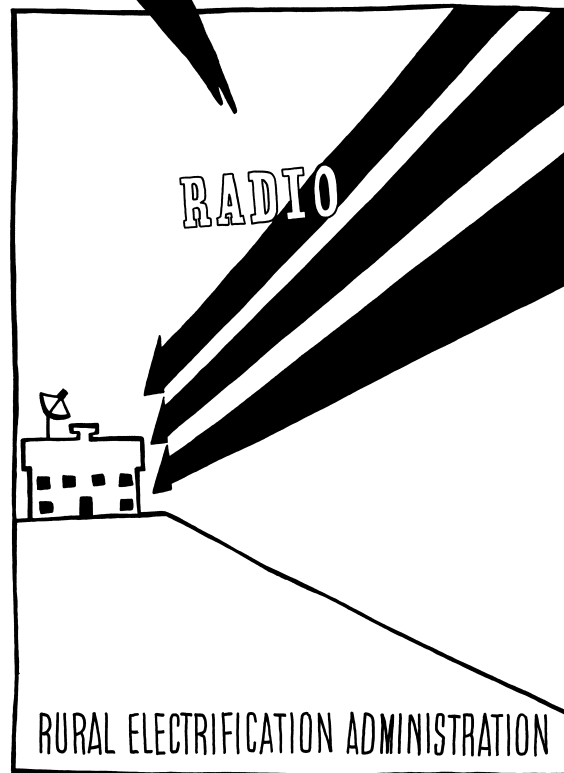
BOBS



CHARITY
COMPETITION



LESTER BEALL
posters for REA, pro bono



YELLOW BIRD
PROJECT
works with indie
bands to design
and print t-shirts
that are sold to
benefit charities

Next in Classical Design Responsibility:
pro bono work. Many designers have thought
of this in terms of content decisions: specializing
in environmentally sound design, donating a
percentage of time to important projects and causes
that lack budgets, or refusing to design way-finding
systems for an authoritarian government. Like
practicing kinetic typography in After Effects
for the Girl Effect, like donating show posters for
Indie Baltimore theaters, and like North Korea.
Respectively—for example.

The pro bono side of responsible design practice is trickier
to comment on since each designer and each agency often
exists in radically different spheres. While some agencies
institutionalize pro bono work, or require designers to allocate
time and talent toward need-based causes, many practitioners
lack the financial or structural footing for the same commitment.
One payoff for loftily idealistic design work: awards.

A Michael Bierut essay criticizing the rockstar-laden *First Things
First 2000 Manifesto* argues that anything and everything should
be well designed, and that creating an Industry Standard Ideal
dependent on the Luxury of Time, Luxury of Client, and Luxury of
Content belittles the very nature of Design: The Profession.
A significant tenet of many design projects involves partnering
with others to effectively communicate messages that transcend
the designers' personal backgrounds. From a collaborative
stance, building a link between specific elements of the
design community and The Greater Good creates inequality
in our Firm by bringing heaven closer to some than others,
rendering team concepts moot when the members are
strewn across different tiers of the victory podium.
Regarding Bierut's argument and awards, the concern
seems somewhat more applicable to graphic design than,
say, product design, where highlighting toilet brushes
is disturbingly common, vs. poster design awards that
involve Charmin as a client. Rather, graphic design
for museums cleans up at awards. This raises a
question of whether product design, like architecture,
trends toward a more content-agnostic industry
compared to graphic design; but Bierut argues that
everything deserves quality design and equality in
acknowledgment. In other words, responsibility

first MANIFESTO
Ken Garland (1964) and
Kalle Lasn (2000)

things

first

LANDMINE KETCHUP
PACKETS
Nick Wourthing/loc at
Publicis Mojo for Campaign
Against Landmines (CALM)



kickstarter



I made an app called Poopbrain that helps designers be creative by giving them a prompt for ideation that can be processed within the time it takes for an average bowel movement.

ALL INTERVIEWS

"This is what I love about design: anything's fair game. Photography, collage, sketches, type. I can sledgehammer an old TV if I want to. I can paint my penis blue. I can write a short story to fit the bookmark I'm designing. Whatever."-David Barringer, *American Mutt Barks in the Yard*

I made a thing.

This is a true story, probably.

During summer break, I made a thing with some friends. I wanted my thing to launch my design career, you know, preferably the kind of stratospheric career arc where my name will be carefully typeset by student-workers on a dozen art school visiting lecturer posters each year. That will be how I give back: by letting these mid-level programs buy me plane tickets and meals while I assure them that "Yes, the hotel is just fine." Because I will vow to never forget where I come from, I will acquiesce to the local faculty's request to run a workshop for the students, all without upping my modest \$2,000 honorarium.

I made a thing in my garage, or rather my parents' garage, out of stuff just laying around. This is Slang Americana for, "It's a prototype because I'm in school and barely have Incessant Drunk money, much less Netflix Money, much less Lab Fee money, which I'm supposed to pay because I'm in college, which coincidentally is why I'm working in my parents' garage. But this prototype concept will totally work if someone invests in me, which all the design blogs promise will happen. Not that I read them, but sometimes I accidentally see the captions when I try and look at the pictures." I made a thing, well, a demo-thing, but it will totally work.

I made an app-thing that deserves an A but I didn't get an A because my typography was supposedly bad. The game is fun and based on old Nintendo games, and nobody complains about that typography, so I think my faculty are just old and stupid and don't appreciate gamer culture. Anyhow, this app-thing took me all summer, and online tutorials taught me how to do all this cool stuff. Now that I have it, I want it to be popular because I want my own studio so I can be more of a game-concept person.

This other app-thing I made, called Poopbrain, helps designers be creative by giving them a prompt for ideation that can be processed within the time it takes for an average bowel movement. Anyhow, I guess I'll go to college-Poopbrain might be perfect for college applications-or I'll do something else.

I made this chair-thing that will look awesome nestled amongst Herman Millers. The chair is office appropriate, with some give in the back of the seat so users do not accidentally crush their phone if they forget it in a back pocket while sitting.

I made a thing and it's awesome, well designed and beautiful, the prototype works like a charm, and the production is worked out, so it's commercially viable, hopefully. They tell me, depending on the context of the designer and the designed, there are a few open avenues for the-piece-as-launchpad.

SILICON VALLEY
Mike Judge's TV satire
of tech culture



IGGY POP
The Stooges frontman
became collaborative
90-40

FAMOUS GARAGE
Steve Jobs and Steve
Wozniak launch Apple

INTER- LIFE ON THE FRINGES

"We're going to learn how to do this by doing it."
-ras+e, in Cover Letter to Proofreader

James Newell Osterberg was raised in a trailer park somewhere in Indian Name, Michigan, making his decision to become a drummer somewhat preordained. But intervention came one vibrant Jim Morrison performance later + Mick Jagger + James Brown + Osterberg's invention of The Stage Dive = Iggy Pop. Music's great Indie Interdisciplinary Collaborator wove a mantle and then wore it permanently.

Iggy is most commonly associated with The Stooges-canonized by The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2009-but even a cursory bio read will give your inner collaborator a bad stage dive's worth of whiplash. Sure, it helps a musician's collaborator when David Bowie adopts you as an ongoing personal Maker-buddy, superseding even the moral boundaries of rehab facilities. Both legends transcended genres, drugs, and time, embracing their statesmen status and moving seamlessly between many teams of Creatives. Even so, Iggy stands alone as a Collaborator of Note due to the breadth of his interdisciplinary work, seemingly bringing out the very best of each inventor he works with.

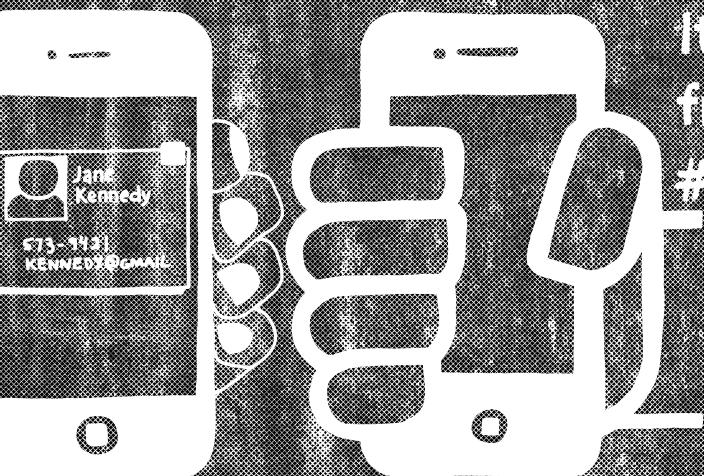
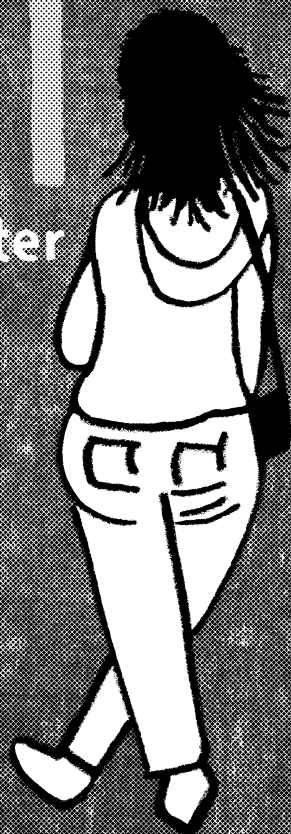
He sang on "Punkrockers," the Swedish electronic group Teddybears' best song, which was custom built for Iggy. Bowie's "China Girl" was actually an Iggy Pop song. In fact, Bowie's recordings of Iggy songs helped the latter out financially with royalties during some particularly tight times. The Sex Pistols' Steve Jones worked with Iggy on the cult film *Repo Man*. Iggy sang with Lou Reed in the animated film *Rock & Rule*. "Candy," from Iggy's album *Brick by Brick*, was a duet with Kate Pierson of the B-52's and his most commercially successful song to that point. Green Day, The Trolls, Peaches, and Sum 41 all collaborated with a reunited Stooges on *Skull Ring*. Madonna requested The Stooges to perform her songs in her place for her Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction concert. Iggy sang on the Danger Mouse/Sparklehorse track, "Pain." Slash's solo effort featured Iggy on "We're All Gonna Die," and Ke\$ha tapped Iggy for "Dirty Love," proving the icon's penchant for making everyone around him better, regardless of genre. Some additional collaborations include several early Johnny Depp film projects, voice work including Lil' Rummy on Comedy Central's *Lil' Bush*, and a give-and-take role with Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis*).

Iggy Pop initially gained attention through unexpected musical innovations, no doubt helped along by performances that included rolling around in broken glass, but his ongoing footprint has much more to do with finding conceptually companionable projects with colleagues who extend beyond his prototypical dominion within American Punk. In cases of projects with Satrapi and Bowie, all parties take turns initiating work and inviting the other as a contributor, as opposed to a hierarchical or medium-specific organization of Creative and Labor. Given that so many of Iggy's projects, musical and otherwise, occurred outside of a major label or mainline pop trend solidifies his status as an Indie outsider, but it is his ability to make everything he touches his collaborators' best work that makes him an exemplar collaborative Indie link.

I don't get it



BUMP

It looks better
from here
#siteseeing

RETURNED - EFFICIENCY & NEW TOOLS

"I can't believe NASA is getting rid of SpaceBook. We were on the verge of learning if social networking sites could support intelligent life!"-Stephen Colbert

After three hours of open studio time, my senior thesis students slowly trickled out of the classroom. I had spoken to a handful of them, reviewing research and project endeavors. The majority of the students were happy to have the time to work without interruption-earbuds went in, and a fence of black-rimmed eyeglasses reflected a neutral backlit glare. Some students scattered into the lounge to work more comfortably with laptops in laps.

"Can I email you about my project later?" She asks this on her way out.

"Well, can we just talk now? What's up?" Said me.

She explained that she wanted to share some things she had been working on in class and when I asked her why it would be better to have this discussion via email rather than in person, she said that she didn't know, but that it was just easier for her to email it to me. I told her that she could, but if that was the case, then she probably should have been taking online courses instead, since physical edification wasn't helpful to her. She then told me that online classes were a joke and left, waving happily with errant flip-top mittens, and resumed a half-complete text message on her iPhone. Another student yelled after her, "Text me later!"

A few factors could be at play here: (1) The act of writing an email helps this student practice composing her thoughts with an audience in mind, (2) She actually doesn't have anything new to share and is buying time, (3) Emailing is a more comfortable form of communication that removes the sense of immediate responsibility and the time constraints of physical interaction, (4) She prefers her online identity to her physical one, (5) Discussions via email are more real or normal, and I'm being abnormal by talking to her directly, or (6) She's lazy and just wants to leave now.

I would like to believe she is not lazy and likes writing, but based on her in-class proclivities and vocabulary, she simply prefers interacting remotely and sees in-person class and communication as inconveniences. This scenario, where people sign off with plans to continue a conversation online, regardless of actual follow-through, has become our culture's version of goodbye. But it's not goodbye. It's I'm away but "you're all still gonna be there when I need you, right?" A continuous conversation is known as a perma-sation and we're immune to noting it anymore. The idea of co-presence applies to physical separation but with omnipresent connection via technology. As a new generation of designers grows up with constant connectivity, and heavily relies on technology to mediate their interactions, what impact does this have on how humans relate to each other overall? Furthermore, how can we make technology better facilitate design collaboration? The truth is, our tools connect and our tools isolate. For designers crafting messages, and reliant on technology to do so, as well as aiming to collaborate with each other, parsing these mediums for the line of diminishing returns is an ethical and qualitative essential.

That romantic inspiration can influence the work to feel less like *work*, as opposed to feeling like a Job, is an inescapable infringement that follows designers home. Like other forms of collaboration, couples often possess an unconscious desire to impress each other. Reflecting Weston, English painter Ben Nicholson married three influential female artists over the course of his career: Winifred Roberts (1920–1938), Barbara Hepworth (1938–1951), and Felicitas Vogler (1957–1977), distilling specific inspiration and motivation from each relationship. For such Makers, there is no toggle switch between personal and professional. Nicholson's career was a seamless transition-merger of a love for working with his models and a love of his camera.



KATHERINE +
MICHAEL McLOY

by EERO + ALINE
SAARINEN



CHARLES + RAY EAMES



Design brought career-driven superstars Aline Bernstein and Eero Saarinen together. From 1948 to 1953, Bernstein was the associate art editor and a popular art and architecture critic for *The New York Times*. On a business trip in January 1953, she traveled to Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, to interview Eero Saarinen about designing the General Motors Technical Center, which was awarded the most outstanding architectural project of its era by the American Institute of Architects in 1986. According to the *Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers* in the Archives of American Art (AAA) at the Smithsonian, on their first day together, Aline and Eero had dinner, then hurriedly made love in a dark coat room on the Cranbrook campus. Their shared passion of architecture was an aphrodisiac and perhaps a prerequisite of love at first sight. Each were married with two children. Eero's spouse was a wealthy sculptor, but Eero wanted a partner in life and work; Aline's husband was also an outsider to the shared world promised by Eero. They each divorced their spouses in 1951, married, moved to Detroit, and became high-profile collaborators while also maintaining separate pursuits.

A similar situation happened with Eero's closest friend, architect Charles Eames. After twelve years of marriage, Charles left his wife, Catherine Woermann, and daughter, Lucia Jenkins, to marry his Cranbrook colleague Ray Kaiser in 1941. They moved to Los Angeles, where they lived and worked together closely until Charles died in 1978. Their domestic and work lifestyles were so completely integrated that they regularly wore matching or



MIKE SIMONIAN +
MAAIKE EVERS

THE WHITE
STRIPES



AZIZ + CUCHER
photo collaborative
shot for their site by
Martin Parsckian

complementary clothes. In the "Lifelong Collaboration" section of *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, author Pat Kirkham writes that: "The sense of coupling, bonding, 'togetherness'—call it what you will—between Charles and Ray was extremely strong and frequently remarked upon. They were often photographed with Charles's arm around Ray, smiling at each other with hands touching or both touching the same object."

Charles and Ray's relationship possessed a charisma that inspired their colleagues at the Eames Office, a direct offshoot of their mutual enthusiasm for design and architecture. Their relationship has many contemporary parallels, including architecture couples Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, Dan Wood and Amale Andraos, Billie Tsien and Tod Williams, Mike Simonian and Maaiké Evers, and J. Meejin Yoon and Eric Höweler.

The Georgia O'Keeffe/Alfred Stieglitz collaboration is a unique love story. Like Weston, Stieglitz married for financial security in order to pursue his interests in photography. But since childhood, Alfred was jealous of his twin brothers, Julius and Leopold, who had a very close relationship, and wished for a partner of his own. Alfred resented his wife, who was nothing like him, leaving him missing a sense of collaboration. He abandoned his wife and daughter without regret to work full time at the Camera Club pursuing photography.

In 1916, Alfred exhibited drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe at his 291 Gallery. This kick-started a collaborative affair, in which the two artists corresponded long distance for two years. In 1918, Georgia accepted Alfred's invitation to move from Texas to New York, and they took an apartment together. Four years later, Alfred divorced his wife and married his lover. O'Keeffe inspired Stieglitz's work: he photographed her hands and full nude portraits regularly. Meanwhile, O'Keeffe's paintings shifted from abstract organic form to the geometry of New York skyscrapers. In 1929, Georgia's need to find new inspiration beyond New York landed her on a trip to New Mexico with her friend Rebecca Strand. Together, they started studios and backpacked the countryside. Georgia spent a good portion of every year until 1946 traveling the Southwest, and in 1949, a few years after Alfred's death, she moved to Abiquiú, New Mexico.

SECTION

02 CASE STUDIES

In Q+A form, a broad selection of practitioners across a range of disciplines describe their collaborative process. Consensus and discrepancies emerge as designers, musicians, educators, architects, and artists tell us why they choose their mediums and studio peers.

EYEBEAM ART+TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Roddy Schrock, Director
Brooklyn, NY

Why is physical space important to collaboration and interdisciplinary work at Eyebeam?

It is easy to put artists into a technical environment, lock them in a room, and claim that it is an art and technology residency. What makes Eyebeam unique is that we spend so much time thinking about the kind of cohort that we are building, and we develop a space that encourages conversations. Everyone works in a shared studio space. We have formal weekly 45-minute group meetings with every resident and fellow, to track progress on work and help solve roadblocks. We also have monthly shop talks, where we require everybody to close their computers and listen to fellow artists talk about problems in their work. Every one of those meetings leads to somebody realizing something about their work.

It is easy to think about collaboration as a virtual experience, such as online through Skype. But having people physically together in the same space, at the same time, seeing the way other people work, regularly chatting in the kitchen, and having access to the kinds of applications and tools that we provide, gives people a chance for growth that I don't see replicated in traditional residency programs.

One good example is James Bridle, who joined us through a joint residency program in London. He had previously been through residencies where he worked mostly in isolation and did a lot of writing. He started collaborating with resident Ingrid Burrington, and they developed a performative talk, a one-on-one conversation that was presented publicly. I saw changes in the way they were thinking about their work, just based on having the collaborative opportunity. The talk was a culmination of joint thinking through similar artistic problems and issues over the course of 14 weeks.

How does Eyebeam facilitate a sense of play?

Eyebeam has always been a place where people can challenge one another and do things that don't make sense. It is a space that allows people to try ideas and fail. The crazy warehouse space that we have in Chelsea allows for that. You don't have to worry about messing things up. You don't have to worry about whether the space will survive whatever project that you're doing. We are working with the architects to keep that sense of play in our new Brooklyn location. We want a space that still allows for experimentation, but you don't find that a lot anymore.



Data Viz Marathon 2010 weekend workshop, impact of humanity's footprint on Earth photo: Ann Liu Alcasabas

We've been around long enough that we can point to that kind of space leading to real successes. For instance, Graffiti Research Lab met here to develop the EyeWriter. We know that these kinds of projects have been quite successful, and it is because of the kind of space that we offer.

What is the Eyebeam take on tech and culture?

More than ever, technology is being integrated into people's personal lives. Eyebeam has been focusing on issues of digital intimacy and information ownership. Our culture lacks an understanding of the technology that we use. It's a major issue that's not going away. The more that we can bring artists in to explore some of these problems, the better we can prompt the general discourse around these issues. I think art can be a way of helping people digest what it is that they are facing. Artists will always be the ones who are leading creative inquiry. There has never been a time when that isn't the case.

Learning to trust artists is the hardest hurdle for institutions. Artists are great producers, and often work at a level of efficiency and production that is higher than expected. It is hard for companies to understand that, and especially hard for educational institutions to understand that.

FLUX FACTORY

Nat Roe, Executive Director
Long Island City, NY



rafting on the canal in Aarhus, DK, courtesy of Flux Factory

How is Flux Factory structured for collaboration?

Flux Factory is highly multidisciplinary. The resident group here at Flux Factory is the heart of who we are and what we do. The residency program gives studios to artists who share the building. We also do many classes and workshops. The Exhibitions Program includes four major exhibitions a year. Our residents put on many solo and collaborative exhibitions beyond that, and special events. The exhibitions are usually curated by the residents, and the artwork in the exhibition primarily comes from residents. Flux Factory functions because there is a lot of resource sharing, including meals. If you put work into the collective, and if you are committed to the collective, then you have equal ownership over the curatorial direction of the space. You get the space for the night to put on a concert or a show or a film.

Collectives result in different kinds of curatorial output than what you would see otherwise. If you were to look at a gallery with one curator, there is a cohesion of vision. To a certain level, you give up your own tastes in a collective. You end up with exhibitions, outputs, and artwork that are rich and diverse. On the other hand, you have to live with a lot of imperfections.



Flux Thursday monthly potluck dinner courtesy of Flux Factory

One of our recent, collectively produced, exhibitions was *The Exquisite Contraption*, which was a Rube Goldberg machine set in Flux Factory. It's a great analogy for collectives in general because different artists make work that feeds directly into each other, and they are inherently dependent on the cohesion of linked works. The ironic symbolism was that parts of the Rube Goldberg sometimes didn't work, so we secretly had to help it along. Artistic collectives are a microcosm of society at large.

How does Flux Factory play within the community?

Flux Factory definitely does have in its DNA the punk warehouse vibe. Our peers are also galleries and museums. But the true collaborative aspect of what we do comes from a tradition of artists living and working in warehouses. New York City used to be more of an outlaw city. You used to be able to get away with living in a warehouse; it was something that people in the Lower East Side did all of the time. But, there is a genuine, new paradigm in New York of artist collectives learning the lexicon of real estate and aiming for long-term stability. In the past, a lot of people didn't feel like it was that big of a risk. I like to think of Flux Factory as leading that shift for artist-run collectives.

YELLOW BIRD PROJECT



Yellow Bird Project logo design: Dynamo all images courtesy of YBP

MATT STOTLAND & CASEY COHEN, Co-FOUNDERS
MONTREAL, QC



Dresden Doll Amanda Palmer's contribution to the YBP collection donations to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

What is the Indie philanthropy/collaboration link?

Matt: Collaboration is what made YBP possible. We've worked with designers who could be million dollar enterprises if they had the network, but because of their small scale, they were willing to work with us. Combining resources expands options.

How does YBP benefit artists/musicians/charities?

Matt: They are all dependent on each other. Our collaboration with Andy J. Miller on *The Indie Rock Coloring Book* and *The Indie Rock Poster Book* are great examples of everyone's skills layering on top of one another. Andy had all these amazing ideas, we had the fans and reach and marketing skills, and Chronicle Books had the distribution. We were able to take this passion and turn it into an impactful commercial success.

How do you collaborate with musicians?

Casey: The selection process is fairly arbitrary—we go after our favorite bands. Not everyone gets to choose who they work with, but we do. That's one of the perks. Once we've chosen a band, our first job is to marry them with a designer or illustrator whose style fits with the band's overall aesthetic; that is, if there isn't a band member who can design the t-shirt by themselves. For example, the *Dry the River* t-shirt was

designed collaboratively between lead singer/guitarist Peter Liddle, and Jonathan Lindley, our Art Director at the time. In an email, Liddle said, "I really like the idea of using old books to say something about the weight of history and how we all labour underneath that." So they organized a photoshoot at Turton Tower, which is an historic building halfway between Bolton and Darwen. The design includes a photo by Lindley that shows the silhouette of a boy facing forward, balancing history books on his head. The image is based on their song "History Book" and depicts a Victorian technique used in schools to correct children's posture. The boy sitting on the chair is actually the band's guitar player, Matt Taylor.

How did you get started?

Matt: We met in high school, in Montreal. After graduation, we spent a summer together in London where we got into all sorts of music and started going to concerts together. The Montreal music scene was really blowing up and getting international recognition at the time. We thought of combining all of our concert and band t-shirt passions into one, and YBP is what came of that: giving back, working with our favorite musicians, and producing a product that we would buy.

THE COPYCAT

ROB BRULINSKI, Co-AUTHOR & FORMER RESIDENT
BALTIMORE, MD



The Copycat warehouse converted to residential compound courtesy of Rob Brulinski + Alex Wein



The Copycat photo essay on artist commune courtesy of Rob Brulinski + Alex Wein

How do you characterize The Copycat residence?

The people who visit are generally art students, or people who are there to see something, like a show, or a gallery space, or a theater performance. The people who live there actually vary greatly. There are some students, but usually it's older people. Like, there was a retired social studies teacher and his whole room was full of instruments. This dude is retired, in The Copycat, smoking joints, and playing all the music that he wants with a plethora of instruments. It's beautiful. Another older guy makes jewelry and has six employees in his space. While he was making jewelry, they were building a design school and tearing a hole in his wall! There was a doctor that lived there just because. The weirdest, was the guy who sold real estate.

Why do you keep returning to it?

It's the sense of duty and the sense of freedom that you get. As an artist, I can go there and meet people who are taking their life just as seriously as I am, or just as not-seriously as I am. You never know what you're going to wind up with. When I lived in The Copycat, there was never a dull moment. My neighbors were magicians. And I never saw my other neighbor, but I knew she sold sex toys out of her apartment, online. That

was like, her thing. I thought it was hilarious. I'm sitting next to a dildo factory and a magician, and that's such a small part. I like going there because it reminds me to be creative, to research, to continue being an artist, and to continue being myself. You don't need to replicate what is on Instagram or what someone in New York is doing, because you are not there. Wham City moved to Baltimore to live in The Copycat because it was cheap as fuck. And then they took that idea further, and said, "We are going to be artists and share ideas without any objections or any prejudice." It would be weird if you wanted to be an artist but didn't do something there, because it's been around so long.

How does the environment impact the work?

You are allotted your space. If you are living in a huge space, and you have eight roommates, and two of those roommates bring four other people in illegally, now you have a lot of mouths to feed and a lot of rent to pay. And if you don't have a real job, you better find some fucking shows. And you're going to start talking to some other people about doing stuff in that building. There is a lot of connectivity going on in a space like that. It forces you to open your doors to strangers for the sake of art, a couple dollars, and a good time.