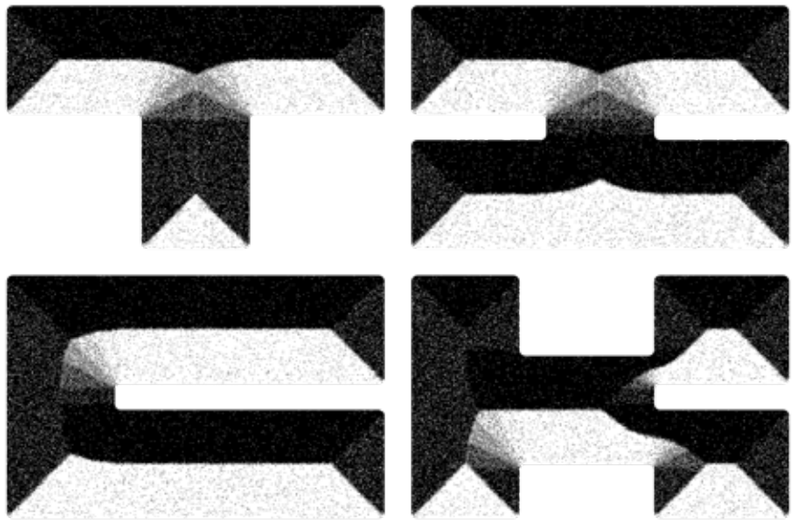


We believe all content in this issue has been used with the correct rights and permissions. If you think any image or material has been used improperly, contact us at hello@ocd.studio and we'll address it.



Hello, I'm Olly, founder and director of OCD Studio. It's been roughly seven years since I created the OCD logo, starting what I've devoted most of my 20s to building, along with a team of wonderful people. The best part about the job is working with people who also value craft and culture. Together striving to do something authentic and entertaining. So, we're hoping to widen our community. By giving something back. Sort of.

Introducing TICK magazine. It's a screen-bound designer's wet dream to produce something in print, but it turns out it's actually really hard. Unfortunately, when you've told enough people that you're going to do something, eventually you kind of have to figure it out. Without the help of AI.

A creative studio starting a magazine isn't revolutionary, neither is the flip. We're not hiding behind a façade about why we're doing this. Ultimately, we want more brands to spend more money on culture marketing. But not by throwing money at it and having a negative impact on culture. Instead, by trying to understand how to do it successfully. TICK is showcasing the brands and some amazing creatives, musicians, sports people and communities that deserve attention.

So, in the spirit of honesty. I'm proud to release our first issue, Friends with Budgets, brought together by a beautiful team, with real stories, real labour and a true passion for culture and creativity. Thanks to all the contributors, brand side and artists. Real craft, good shit. To repeat, no AI. We've loved working on this so much we're already planning the next one.

Let me know if you'd like me to make it more concise, casual, or tailored to a specific tone.

CAMBRIDGE



Sound that makes a statement

Music lives differently in every home, so we've built a family of active speakers that lets it flourish anywhere.

The L/R Series combines advanced acoustic engineering, simple connectivity, including intuitive TV integration, and bold, timeless design — created for people who want incredible sound without complication.

Find out more at
cambridgeaudio.com



INDEX

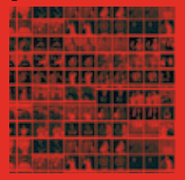


OCD
OP-ED[12-19]
OCD LOGOS & MARKS[22-27]
TICK DISPLAY[112-115]

ARTISTS
CONNOR BAKER[32-43]
ANNA DEWHIRST[46-57]
LEWIS OFMAN[61-66]
MARIE-ERMELINDA MAYASSI [68-77]
TÖPIA ADEBAYO[80-87]
AILSA OGDEN[90-103]







BRANDS
NOTHING[30-31]
UBER[44-45]
ATLANTIC RECORDS[58-59]
XOXO SODA[66-67]
HYROX[78-79]
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO[88-89]
ALPHA THETA[104-105]
PIP & NUT[106-107]
HEINEKEN[110-111]










punchy
hydrate here
DAILY HYDRATION RESET
Tropical
Wild Berry
Citrus
7 electrolytes & minerals
5 immunity-boosting vitamins
No artificial colours or preservatives
Caffeine free
Add to 500ml cold water, mix, & enjoy
POUR IT IN
Tip one sachet into 500ml of cold water
MIX IT UP
Give it a good stir or shake
DRINK IT UP
Enjoy! Hydration never tasted this good


punchy
hydrate here
ALL ESSENTIAL ELECTROLYTES
ELECTROLYTES & MINERALS
VITAMIN C & D
LOW CALORIE
CAFFEINE FREE
Grocer NEW PRODUCT AWARDS 2025 SILVER
great taste 2025
Grocer CHAMPION
NEW
punchy hydration
mexican lime
mango
blueberry
blood orange



950855

TABLE	NO. PERSONS	WAITER	AMOUNT OF CHECK

Thank You!

YOUR PATRONAGE IS APPRECIATED

TABLE	NO. PERSONS	WAITER	CHECK NO.
			950855

JAYCEE
MAX ELLIS
Roxana Diba
TOM
GEORGIE BARNETT
Alethea Norman-Rhodes.
ALEC

TAX

STYLE XX Thank You -- Call Again

No one wants to see your brand.



Written By
TOM YOUNG

Creative Director
OCD Studio

We've just finished a summer working with six festivals over 28 days, covering roughly 400 artists (that includes Lewis Capaldi four times, mind you) and partnering with more than 20 brands, in front of more than 1.7 million people. And the most singular insight we can share is that no one bought a ticket hoping to get a really good look at your brand activation. They came for the music, the artists and the people around them.

That may come across as combative or as bad news for anyone responsible for making a brand culturally relevant. But I think it's actually quite freeing.

Your job isn't to make people suddenly care about your brand. It's to work out what role the brand can play inside something they already care about.

Which is where things get uncomfortable, because nobody wants to be culturally irrelevant but very few are comfortable explaining what cultural relevance means to them and their brand.

What is culture marketing, why are we here, and how have we found ourselves obsessing over it?

For years, brands could do heaps with an image. Clothes, celebrities or locations did all the hard work communicating relevance, status and style.

Now, anything niche can be copied, reposted and flattened into an aesthetic. AI adds another layer because the first question is increasingly whether the image is even real.

When I started in creative marketing, the image or film was the asset and the community was the audience. Now, increasingly, the community is the asset.

The interesting bits have moved beneath the surface: in the habits, references, values and behaviours that make a community recognisable to itself. Which means culture marketing, at its best, is simply understanding those things well enough to contribute without flattening them.

That is why everyone is obsessing over culture. Trust, belonging and earned relevance are much harder to copy than an image.

Which brings me to the fairly basic point I was going to misattribute to Aristotle until I found out he didn't actually say "we are what we repeatedly do."

So, I'll use Nipsey Hussle instead:

"The Marathon Continues."



HOW TO BE THE COOL BRAND IN CULTURE

Andy Crysell gets closest to the answer in his book on the interaction between club culture and industry, Selling the Night. After more than 100 interviews with DJs, club promoters, writers and designers, his advice was simply to know your role, stick around, and let the people already inside the culture shape what happens.

But, for many brands, this becomes harder the minute something starts getting attention.

A scene takes off, everyone notices, and suddenly there's a pressure to do something with it. Sometimes that's absolutely the right call. But the danger is grabbing at the bits that photograph well and missing the nuance and the reason people care about it.

Take the moment when, Satisfy and Adidas staged The Circle Pit, a brand activation where running influencers circled a desert pump track while punk and metal bands played. The internet reaction was brutal.

Punk, running and skateboarding subcultures are full of people who've spent years inside them. They can tell very quickly when something feels like a Pinterest board called "Raw Cut Hems".

But, knowing what Ian MacKay from Minor Threat and Fugazi fame had to say about punk makes me think that Satisfy and adidas were doomed to fail from the start – "Punk is not a sound for me. It's not a style of music. It's not a look." These are brands that have never been authentically within the punk subculture.

Charli xcx described a different version of the same problem with brat. She wasn't bothered by popularity. She was bothered by dilution, as repeated interpretations reduced something very specific into increasingly approximate versions of itself.

All of this can actually be reassuring.

Forget about "moving at the speed of culture." Running at it too quickly increases the chance you'll trample the interesting bits before you arrive.

Instead, understand why the thing matters and find somewhere useful inside it.

Red Bull is the obvious example. Red Bull Music Academy built much of its reputation by documenting music, sharing knowledge and telling stories other people weren't. In sport, Red Bull has stayed close to particular athletes and communities for long enough that it feels natural.

Tash Ruparelia at Pip & Nut made a similar point about Puresport at the London Marathon. Bigger brands had bigger sponsorships, but Puresport felt natural because people already wore the kit and its cheering areas looked like an actual community.

She could see the years of work underneath it.

And that's really the point.

PHOTO BY @jakephilipdavis



CULTURAL RELEVANCE IS CUMULATIVE

Serena Williams once said, “I have spent many, many hours, countless hours, on the court working for my one moment in time.” And that’s basically the job. Brands worry that moving slowly means falling behind. But constantly changing direction leaves you restarting again and again.

We hear brands talk about how hard it is to sustain cultural programmes because quick, clean numbers are easier to defend. Which is probably where my recommendation could become annoying. Because the answer to cultural relevance may involve doing a little less for a little longer. And yeah, I understand that just makes me another person telling a CMO or a brand manager to think long term.

Still, there’s a practical point underneath it. The brands that become culturally relevant in sport or music are usually the ones that keep turning up. Over time, those decisions become associations, and those associations start doing serious commercial work.

Red Bull’s sold heaps of really quite shit energy drinks using this strategy. Commerciality doesn’t invalidate cultural participation as long as the exchange makes sense to both sides.

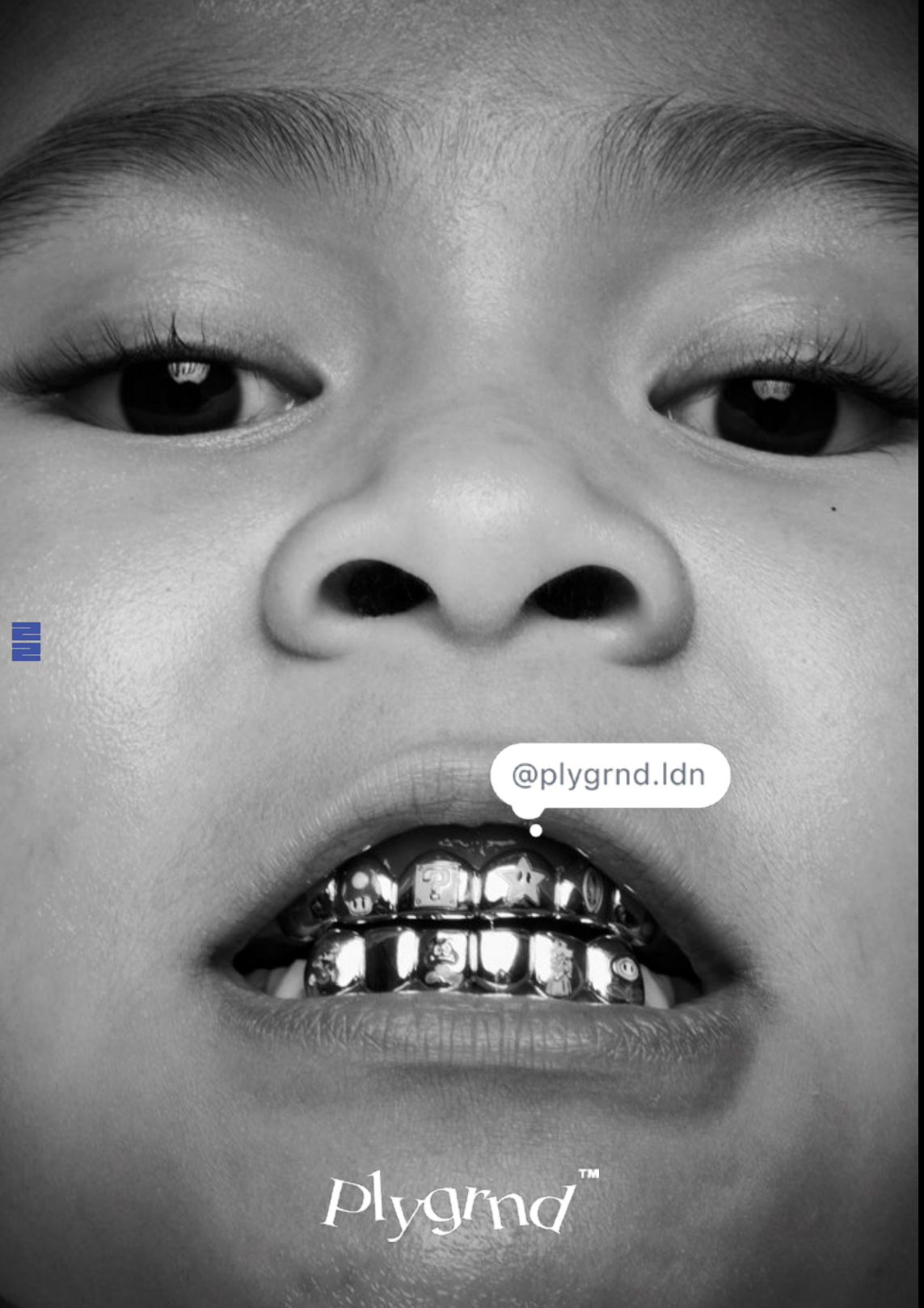
Which leaves me with the most succinct point I’ll make.

Be useful.

If you have a role to play, contribute something real, give the people who understand the culture some authority, learn from them, listen to the community and resist the urge to have the whole thing wrapped up by the end of your budget cycle.

Remember, no one wants to see your brand.

Give people enough good reasons, for long enough, and eventually it stops being your brand showing up in their culture. It becomes their brand too.


@plygrnd.ldn
Plygrnd™


PLYGRND

OCD

LOGOS

AND

Ø

/

STUDIO

ICONS

MARKS

1

OCD LOGOS AND MARKS

We hoard small books of record label logos. There's a shelf of them in the studio and it keeps growing.

This is ours: seven years of work since OCD started, in no particular order. Not everything we've made, just the ones worth looking at twice.

01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10



05



06



01

02





03

04





05



06



07

08





09

10





Bombo

"Bombo doughnuts taste as good as a league and cup double."

Lee Dixon



Go on, scan me

AlphaTheta

ATLANTIC

AEG PRESENTS

CAMBRIDGE

HYROX

LIVE NATION

NOTHING

Heineken

Pip & Nut

Uber

Westfield

XOXO

A special thanks to all the brands who took part in our interviews.

“The best cultural brands know what they stand for, and they know what their customers stand for. Then they co-create culture together.”

ALEX WHITLOCK
GLOBAL DIRECTOR - SOCIAL,
CONTENT AND COMMUNITY AT NOTHING TECH

NOTHING

It’s about meeting them where they’re at, in the spaces they already occupy. It’s community in the truest sense of the word, never performative. Being in the zeitgeist means authentically showing up as part of it, not just borrowing from it or appropriating it and critically, always maintaining a point of view.

Brands are rightly driven by ROI in marketing decisions, but cultural brands understand nuance. An authentic cultural play will provide far greater levels of long-term ROI than short-term beats with unaligned partnerships and so on. There are many ‘sponsor’ brands that think a logo on an invite is tantamount to cultural relevance — it’s not enough.

The last mass cultural moment that will be studied was Charli xcx’s brat summer — it’s an album rollout we will see replicated over and over again for years to come. It felt different in that it was clearly so considered and structured, but it never felt like it — at any point, and that was obviously the intention. There is a real art in landing that kind of momentum and making it feel incidental.





WORDS BY ROXANA DIBA

CONNOR *BAKER*

Photographer Connor Baker has spent the last decade photographing music festivals, gigs and artists, documenting the cultural change happening on stage, and around it, through Polaroids.

Please stop shaking your Polaroids



Sammy Virji & Conducta

Outkast's age-old adage 'shake it like a Polaroid picture' is actually terrible advice. As anyone who has ever shot film will tell you, shaking it isn't going to help the picture develop. That's what photographer Connor Baker taught T-Pain when he took his portrait on a Polaroid at a gig in London.

Connor has been shooting Polaroid portraits since he began his photography career ten years ago, snapping gigs, festivals and concerts to merge his love of music and photography at once. Over the course of his career, he's captured both the joy and soul of live music and incidentally, the natural shifts in culture that come with it. "Because no doubt it'll be different again in the next 10 years," he says, pointing to the cycles of popularity reflected in the microcosm of the music festival: no-phones – phones – phone-free; analogue – digital – analogue; skinny jeans – wide-leg jeans – skinny jeans again.



Raye

He himself has witnessed the change, both on the dancefloors he captures and in the medium he uses. “Film again is a massive thing. I’ve been shooting Polaroids for years and years and years. But they’re cool again,” he says.

Connor’s first Polaroid shot was of Raye after he photographed her early-career performance in Bristol. He knew she’d be big. When Connor saw her again a few years later, a few thousand more singles sold, she told him she still had his photo of her in her bedroom.

“People love it,” he says. “It’s so novelty.” That novelty and instant appeal of Polaroid has allowed the photographer to get up close and personal with hundreds of artists. It helps that anytime anyone has been worried about having their photo taken Connor has been able to reassure them that Polaroid is so low-res and high exposure that it’s virtually impossible to look bad – a very strong incentive for a grainy photo resurgence.

01



02



03



04



Polaroid 1. **Kaytranada**
Polaroid 2. **Lewis Capaldi**

Polaroid 3. **The Absolutley**
Polaroid 4. **Skream**

"I've got three albums that are nearly full, each one can take nearly 200 photos, and they're my best portraits and moments". It's become Connor's own archive of each artist encounter, "it's like I'm collecting my own Pokemon cards," he says. In place of a Bulbasaur (I had to look that up), each photo offers a window into a rare, unguarded, intimate encounter backstage – a brief look at a moment the crowd rarely sees.

And, unlike the 31 identical, drunken photos of a messy night out that you'll never see again until it regrettably pops up on your featured photos, Polaroids become a collectable – something to stick on a wall or at least shove in a drawer: "People want to have something that's not on their phone. You play on people's feelings, and memories." In an age where an image can be instantly AI-generated, or edited into the Photoshop abyss, the instant photograph offers something that's unmistakably real. People are trying to hold onto that, Connor explains.

"There's no editing. It just is what it is. If it looks shit, it looks shitty. If it looks great, it looks great. If the colours are all over the place, that's just how it's supposed to be. I'm not trying to get into Lightroom and make it look perfect," he says. "It is just like, cool, here it is. Here's a hazy, out-of-focus photo, but that's exactly how it was in the moment."

Polaroid 5. **Flowdan**

01



02



03



04



"Polaroid is so low-res and high exposure that it's virtually impossible to look bad"

05



06



07



08

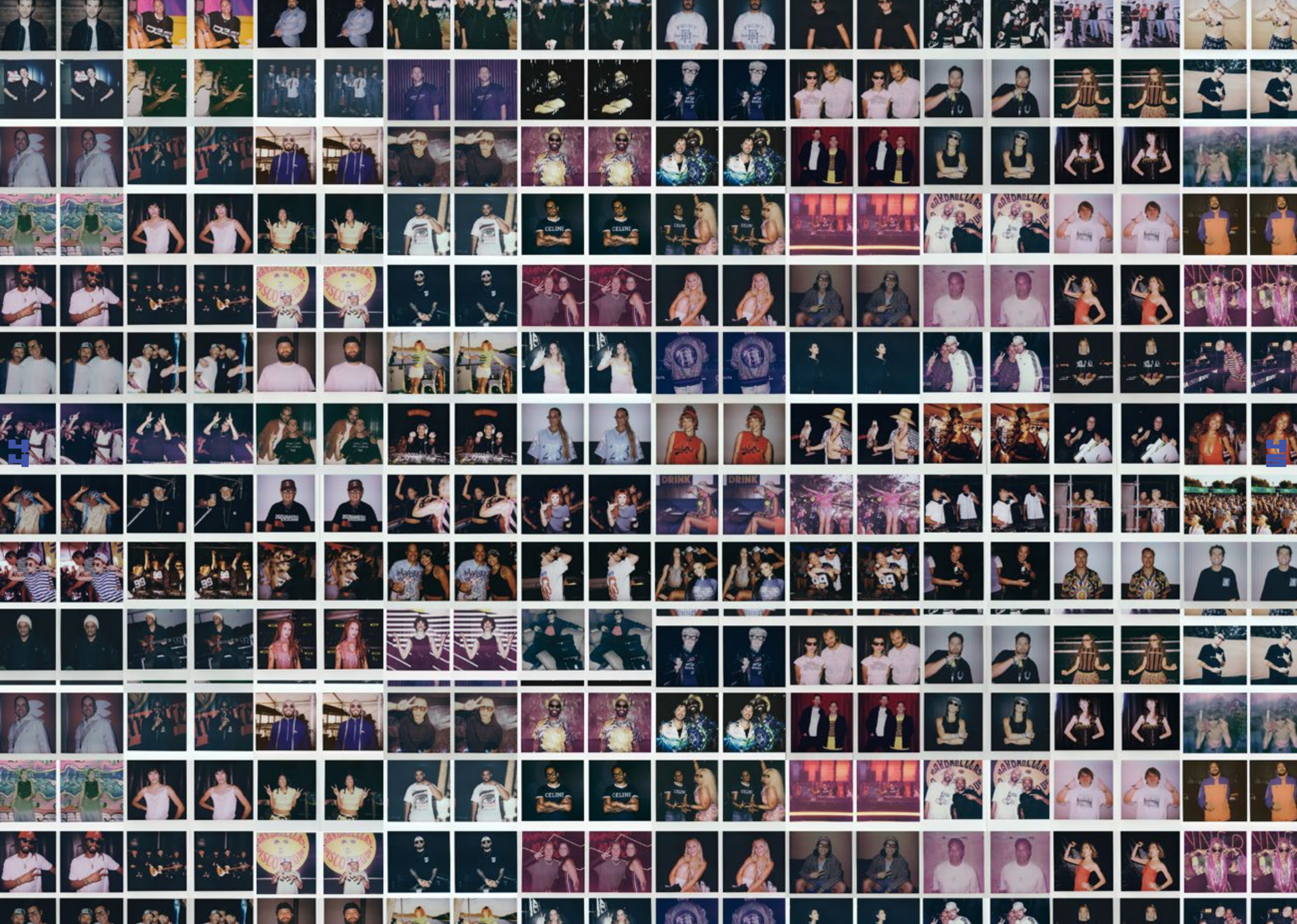


Polaroid 1. **Nick Hakim**
Polaroid 2. **Hannah Wants**

Polaroid 3. **Liam Bailey**
Polaroid 4. **Kid Fonque and Nightmares on Wax**

Polaroid 5. **Olive F**
Polaroid 6. **Groove Armada**

Polaroid 7. **Natasha Diggs**
Polaroid 8. **Issey Cross**


CELINE
DRINK
DRINK



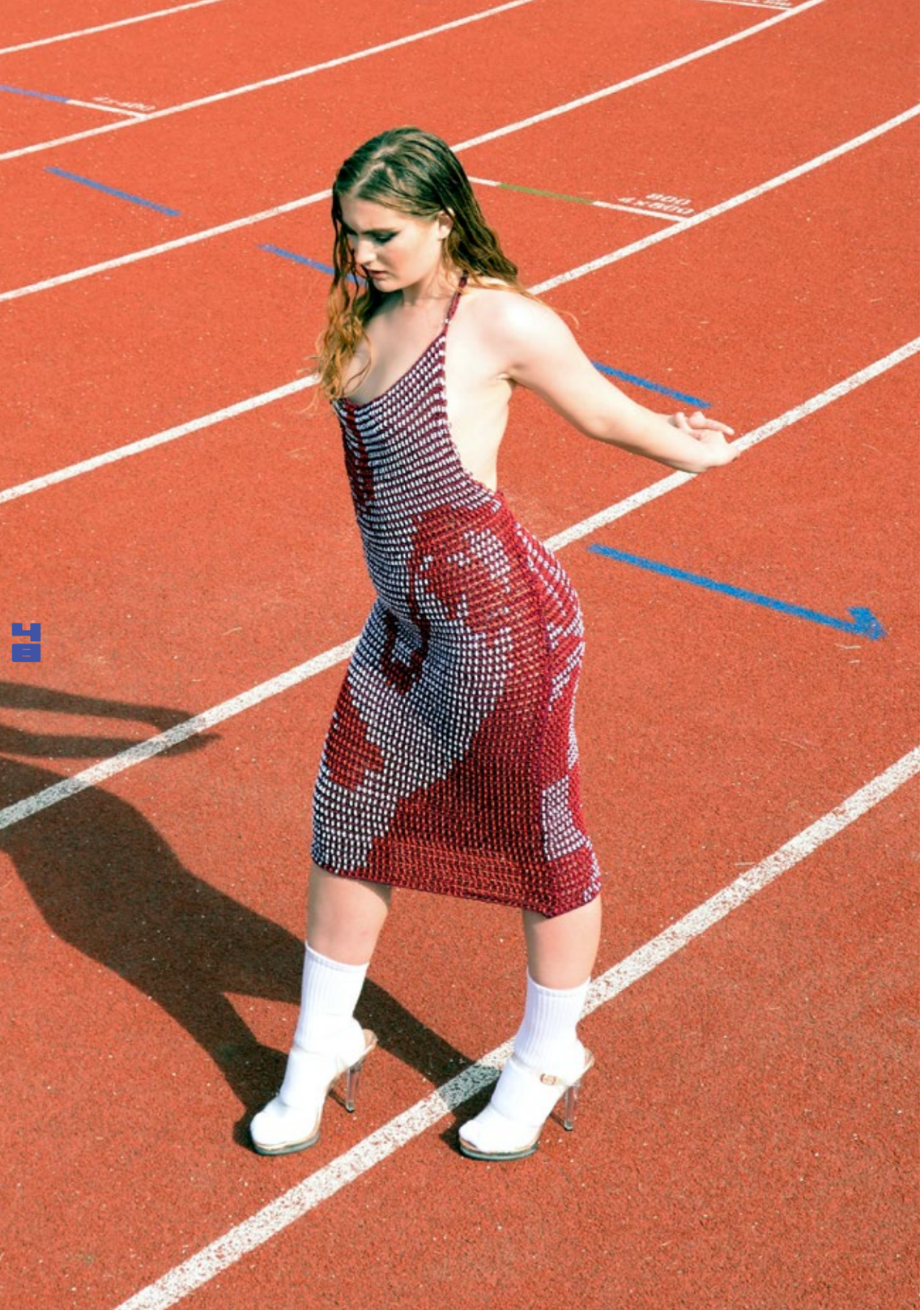
[THE BIGGEST MISTAKE BRANDS MAKE IS] THINKING YOU NEED TO BE 'COOL' TO BE CULTURALLY RELEVANT.

Brands don't get to define their role in culture, people do. It's about setting yourself up for success and why insights and strategy take so long to develop and refine. At the end of the day, the public says what you are and what you are not.

Attention is earned, not bought. Good cultural relevance never comes from media spend, but the creative.

The World Cup. As someone with no real interest in football, the Scottish fans completely won me over in the group stages. It wasn't about the sport, it was the fans' humour, optimism and kindness that shone through on social. It genuinely made me want to spend a night in a Glasgow pub. That's when you know it's a cultural moment: when it pulls in people who weren't the intended audience.

JOE GROVES
HEAD OF CONSUMER COMMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA AT UBER



WORDS BY ROXANA DIBA

ANNA *DEWHIRST*

The London-based designer, Anna Dewhirst, on turning thousands of tiny rubber bands into body-cons, and her unseriously serious approach to fashion.



HOW TO GET SNATCHED WITH RAINBOW LOOM BANDS

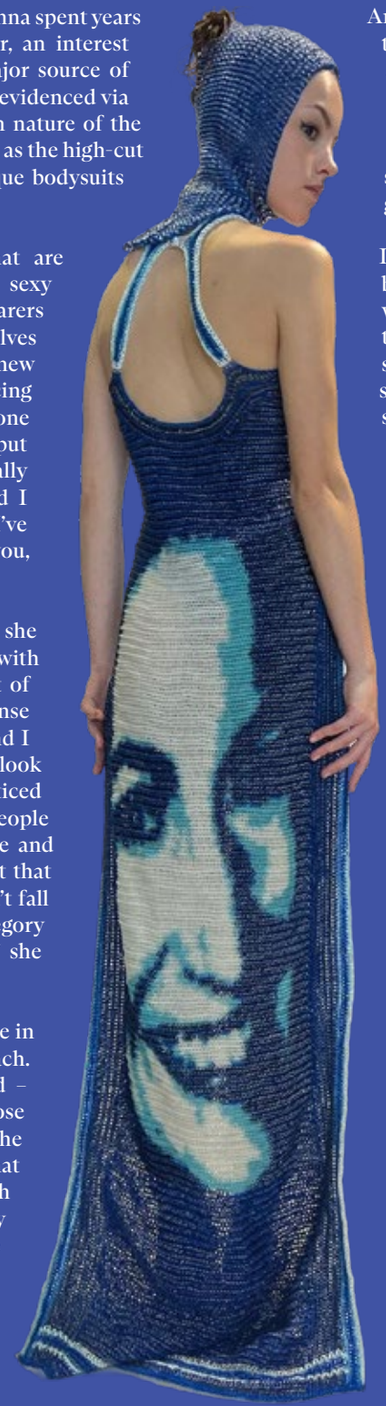
Appearing out of the rubbery blue flesh of several tens of thousands of Rainbow Loom bands comes Kim Kardashian's arguably most iconic selfie – that's her Selfish cover photo, for the uncultured.

Her face forms the front panel of a dress, painstakingly knitted together by designer Anna Dewhirst. When Anna was deciding on her Central Saint Martin's graduate collection, her mum told her: "don't pussy out". With this maternal counselling in mind, Anna raided her sister's craft cupboard, unearthing her Rainbow Loom bands – a 2010's crafting phenomenon that overtook the lives of pretty much every UK tween with access to YouTube and became so addictive they were banned in several schools. She began collaborating with Rainbow Loom, who sent her what she suspects to be millions of tiny rubber bands for her to adapt into her pieces.

Anna's design philosophy is 'unseriously serious'. Aptly illustrated through her designs by the application of weird materials (loom bands, hair bands, and at one point, rubber chickens) into finely crafted and form fitting fits. Each design can contain as many as 20,000 bands, which takes hours and hours of fastidious looming to put together. But, unlike traditional knitwear materials like wool, the rubber bands are naturally skin-tight. The fit is thus snatched. "I love the elasticity of the bands. If you wear the bands, they snatch you in. There's no way about it, they just are very flattering," she says.



Growing up in Scotland, Anna spent years as a competitive swimmer, an interest that is unmistakably a major source of inspiration in her designs, evidenced via the particularly cinched-in nature of the elastic she works in, as well as the high-cut leotards and wet-suite-esque bodysuits she produces.

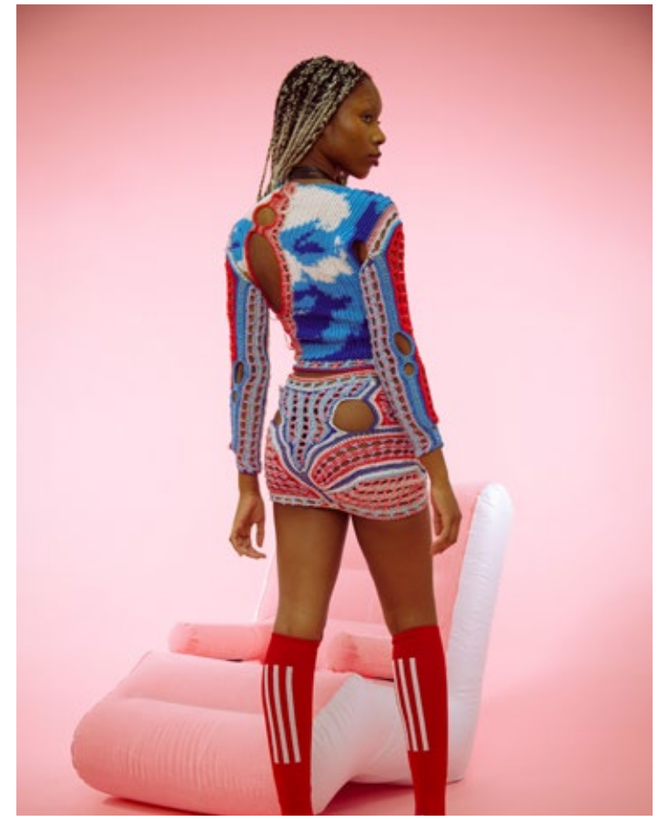


The result are pieces that are simultaneously sporty, sexy and overtly cool. Wearers have found themselves metamorphosing into a new persona, she says, referencing her friend who modelled one of her pieces, "when she put on the look on, she basically became a supermodel and I was like, oh my goodness, I've never seen this side of you, I'm obsessed."

Yet Anna maintains that she always makes designs with herself in mind. "I'm a bit of a selfish designer in the sense that I design for myself and I design stuff that makes me look good, but I've actually noticed that in turn, that makes people want to wear it even more and I put that down to the fact that I'm not stick-skinny. I don't fall into the normal model category and I have a little curve," she says.

Versace also plays a big role in influencing Anna's approach. Excessive, sexy, a bit mad – a spiritual leader for those looking to remonstrate the sade beige epidemic that has contaminated much of the fashion industry in recent years. "Versace is so fun. It's so camp. I love Donatella's Versace because I think she's over the top," Anna says. "She's unseriously serious." Similarly, Anna's irreverent designs, created through exaggerated silhouettes and vivid colours create an instant magnetism in the beige-verse. "I think people just really love seeing something a bit wild and seeing something a bit like, oh my god, that's crazy," Anna says.

In a world awash with brazenly boring minimal basics and capsule wardrobes, Anna creates pieces that are playful without sacrificing sophistication. For her next pieces, she plans to keep exploring the space between the serious and the unserious. Although she's returning to hair bands – they're a little bit more sturdy than elastics, she says.








Fashion Communication
Studio

Cultural relevance is theabilitytocutthrough the noise of today's world and resonate with audiences long enough for them to stop scrolling.

Brands can get there by working with verified tastemakers, platforming voices from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, and genuinely listening to their consumers.

The Adidas x Sebastian Sawe marathon record is a good example of this in action. Adidas has long invested in run clubs and platformed their athletes across all sports, so it didn't come from nowhere; it landed because the groundwork was already there.

Brands also need to be ready to spend money to make money: investing properly in the right talent, both internally and consumer-facing.

JONATHAN FARMER
HEAD OF BRAND PARTNERSHIPS AT ATLANTIC RECORDS



Lewis *OfMan*

Photography by: Atsuya Morioka



Producer, songwriter and musician Lewis OfMan on finding inspiration in places, from Marseille to Seoul, and the process behind his distinctive genre-blending sound.

WORDS BY ROXANA DIBA

Synth and the city

There are certain hallmarks to Lewis OfMan's tracks. A synth-injected chord, a bouncy, rolling beat, a layer of playful, drippy melodies. But each one has a distinctive identity in its own right, and with each one, the listening experience changes too. "It can be pretty jumpy sometimes, but it's also contemplative, nostalgic and joyful – all these kinds of emotions. It may make you dance; it might make you sit down. I guess, depending on who's listening," explains the French-born synth-pop artist.

The different identity of his tracks is in large part a result of Lewis' environment – new places and journeys that leave their mark on him and, in turn, his music, imbuing songs with a certain electric-tanged nostalgia in the process. "I kind of see it as a bit like research or a quest of going to this new place and digging the scenes that's going on there and just being inspired by it, you know," he says.

When he produced 'Frisco Blues', Lewis says he was thinking back to a bus ride from Tuscany to Marseille, riding hills, contemplating life. The resulting track was neither joyful nor sad but dreamy, a little ruminative, an unconscious echo of his journey. In a similar vein, Lewis' EP, Casa Bonay, was shaped by time in Barcelona; his eponymous Seoul Mixtape came out of his time in South Korea, and London helped him to complete his latest album, 50KWTTS.

In 50KWTTS, Lewis shifts gears. It's less dreamlike, more raw, a tightly produced, high-energy collection of songs that plays full-throttle from the first track to the last. Taking inspiration from The White Stripes and The Black Keys, he folds a rock element into his melodies, fusing electric guitar riffs with breakbeats, drums and his characteristic synthy lilt.

It was specifically London's nightlife scene that helped shape that sound, time spent at gigs and club nights listening to strange mixes. "You know, there's these kind of like fun, energetic, crazy vibes," he says. "This is more how I would resonate for the album when I would go out on a night like this, and, you know, I would hear stuff I would never hear anywhere else. It would be okay, this little freedom going on."

That sense of freedom is also found in the community around the scene, like-minded people looking to dance. "When I just arrived in London, I saw this band triage with Bar Italia, and like you kinda understand all those people, how they all linked. When you see the scene, [that] kind of community doing their stuff," he says. "It's going to be the same in Seoul, and you go to this club and then this DJ is friends with this other guy who was [at] another club, and they're actually friends, and they have things together, and then they have this party in Tokyo. It's funny for me to see. It's like watching, I don't know, like comics or a little TV show."

Lewis flips between Paris and London, but for now he's working from his studio in Tower Hamlets, where he keeps to a strict 9–5 schedule – record shop for inspiration – music – lunch break – music. There's something familiar about the routine. Lewis' father is a painter, his mother a writer; he guesses he's inherited part of their work processes, the solitary rite of being alone in a room and getting something done. "I just try not to think about it too much," he says. "It's just kind of, make music every day, and in London, I'm kind of going to the studio every day, as I would see, you know, my father going to his painting studio every morning."





Our approach is to treat the brand like a person: showing up as a peer within the communities we want to be part of, sharing our imperfections rather than a polished front, because that's where real human connection comes from.

Cultural relevance means existing outside the physical product. It's soda that says something about the person drinking it. Our approach is to treat the brand like a person: showing up as a peer within the communities we want to be part of, sharing our imperfections rather than a polished front, because that's where real human connection comes from. We'd rather show up at smaller, more intimate events and connect with individuals than compete for space in an overcrowded, performative one.

SHIVANI GOHIL
CONTENT AND COMMUNITY LEAD AT
XOXO SODA



WORDS BY ROXANA DIBA

Marie-Ermelinda *MAYASSI*

Founder and CEO of skate collective Melanin Skate Gals & Pals, Marie-Ermelinda Mayassi, discusses creating sporting spaces for marginalised communities and why skating is good for the soul.



In a city like London, there are few sounds as unmistakable as the sound of skateboarding. Trucks pivoting, wheels screeching, deck colliding with a foot, and then concrete – listen closely enough and you might even hear a rubber sole scrape grip tape.

But when skater, filmmaker and DJ Marie-Ermelinda "Maz" Mayassi first moved to London, that unmistakable sound came with a scene that she felt didn't represent her. "I felt like skating within white communities was very hard for me. I was experiencing a lot of microaggression," she says. She set out to create a space for Black and other people of colour, the queer community, marginalised genders, and socio-economically disadvantaged minors to skate and share experiences, to increase access and representation. In 2021, Melanin Skate Gals & Pals was born, filling a gap in the skateboarding ecosystem that Maz says was undermining opportunities within the sport.

While skateboarding is the focus, building community is the goal. "We use skateboarding as a tool for driving change," Maz says. Each event is free or set at a very low cost to boost access. But it's not just skate events they put on. The collective has organised workshops, panels and toolkits to build and support marginalised communities in London, and even run fellowships with skate organisations in Brazil, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Senegal. "We really try to remove obstacles to people being able to socialise, especially because of the anti-socialisation that's in London," she explains. "The reason why we also have social events on the side is so, again, people who are not interested in skateboarding or people who can't skateboard because of community issues are still able to have access to a community."

THE WORLD IS YOUR SKATEPARK


MADNESS

It makes sense for a sport that has never really just been a sport. Skateboarding has been an entire subculture since its inception – music, clothes, film have been built around it and through it – creating communities of die-hards all over the world. “I think it’s a very unifying sport and it’s one of the few places in society where you don’t really have any competition,” she says.

Though, at least a little competition with yourself is required – just to repress the little voice in your head telling you you’re going to crack a rib. “You really have to believe in yourself because otherwise you’ll literally hurt yourself in skateboarding,” Maz says. “It’s an extremely mindful and meditative sport because your head literally needs to be like, on the board.”

Aside from the meditative aspect, a big part of the appeal comes down to the playfulness a good skate allows, an inherent creativity from being on a board and the opportunity to make your world one big playground. “It really brings something into your consciousness when you see the whole world as a skating ground,” she says, pointing out a railing on the side of the road that someone could grind, a ledge that someone could noseslide.

They’ve helped to build that playground too. Through a partnership with UCL, the collective helped design City Mill Skate, a series of accessible skating architecture on the university’s Stratford campus, giving the skate community a say in shaping urban planning. In a city that is quickly becoming saturated by hostile architecture, landscapes that retaliate and allow people to make joy out of the concrete are increasingly needed.

“People get to see people playing in the streets, and it actually does make everyone’s world more of a playground,” she says. “It’s really an opportunity for the well-being of local communities as well, like mentally and also just, for people to get a bit more loose.”



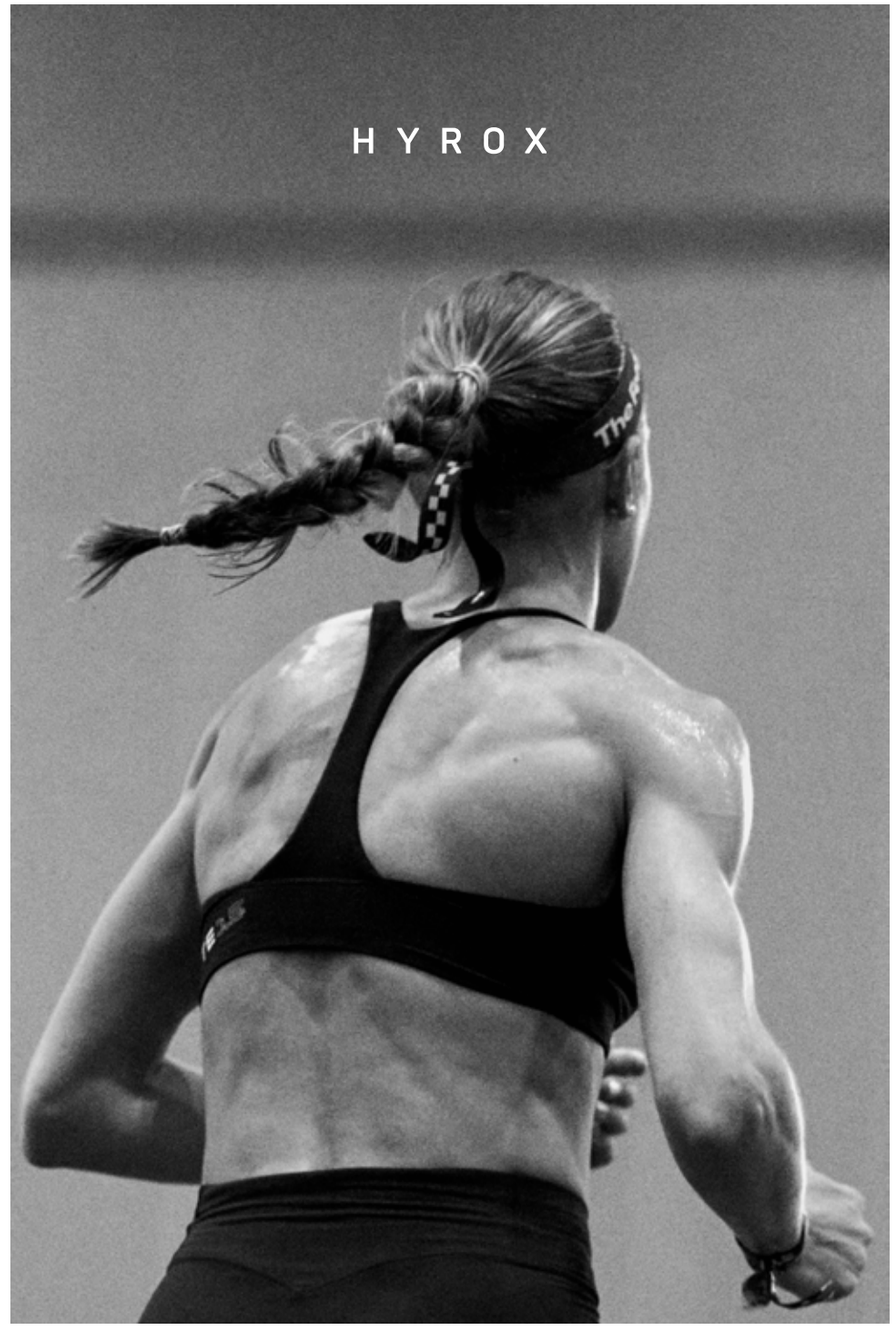

DON'T SNAKE
WELCOME EVERYONE
ENCOURAGE OTHERS
BE A GATE KEEPER
CLEAN
ROUND WHEN MOVING
ON OBSTACLES
WHEN YOURS IS FLYIN' AWAY
79
22

A BRAND FEELS LEGITIMATE WHEN IT PARTICIPATES IN A SPACE RATHER THAN PERFORMS IN IT. PEOPLE CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE QUICKLY.

If a brand has genuinely been present, supporting and building within a space over time, its voice carries weight; if it only shows up once something's already popular, it reads as opportunistic.

EMILY GRIFFIN
UK AND IRELAND MARKETING MANAGER AT HYROX

Runna is a good example of a brand genuinely showing up in a community. What stood out to me was the consistency: Runna didn't force its way into running culture, it grew from within it, combining digital community with real-world presence until it became part of modern running culture itself, not just an app or brand campaign.



WORDS BY HOLLY WYCHE



TÖPIA *ADEBAYO*

Töpia Adebayo runs London's most welcoming jam night, Töpia's Homies. If you have any song in mind, get up, start singing, and the band will play along. Feeling brave?


TWELVE
DON'T WORRY
BE LATE

“There was a girl who came up. She had never touched a mic before, never been on stage before. She held the mic. She was shaking at one point and I thought, maybe I need to go on and coax her. She said, ‘I have this song in my heart. I really want to sing it,’ and it was ‘Put Your Records On’ by Corinne Bailey Rae. She sang it first very quietly. Halfway through the song, we realised she was comfortable and everyone was singing too. We switched to playing a bossa nova version, and she was still riding it. By the end, she was completely working the stage. We now put that song in every set we have.”

‘Trust the band, and they’ll trust you’ is the slogan for Töpia’s long-running jam night, Töpia’s Homies. Once a month, the four-piece instrumental band opens the floor to any person brave enough to step up and just start singing. One by one, the band comes in and builds the tune live around the singer, mixing genres and tempos, experimenting in real time as they sing. The result is one of the most welcoming and varied musical scenes London has to offer. Töpia and her drummer, Kwäku Boächïe, chat about just how varied these mash-ups are.



Kwäku: **“We’ve done some strange mixes; people have asked me a lot, ‘how do you know what you’re doing’?”**

Töpia: **“We do everything from indie to soft punk to R&B to hip hop to bossa nova. We start a cappella, and we’ll build a sound around them.”**

“We even do a bossa nova version of Family Guy as an intro to every single set, and I think it always makes people laugh.”

Kwäku: **“But I think people would only hear these things as a DJ mix, and then when we do it we actually play it live.”**



Töpia's Homies recently celebrated its second birthday, but the idea began at the first open mic Töpia attended after moving to London from Aberdeen. "I was at Troy Bar, and it's this crazy band," she says. "Adele's drummer, Michael Jackson's keys. And as much as I loved it, the imposter syndrome was so intense because I realised I wasn't learning with them, I was just trying to adapt to their pace. So I met these guys at Abbey Road Studios, and we became a unit."

This accessibility drives Töpia and her bandmates. Audience members from all disciplines and skill levels step up to the plate. Guests bring instruments from saxophones to harps, and over the past two years, the audience has grown from 20 to 250 people. Töpia says, "I just couldn't understand how I could have access to this platform and not bring as many people as possible, because that's how many people it took to build my career. How could I not create a sound around that?"

It takes a lot of care to build something like this from scratch, and Kwäku says it's still hard to believe the scene they've made for themselves. "It's nice to know that what we're doing is really important. Even the other day, we did the V&A exhibition [The Music is Black: A British Story]. When I was walking around, me, her and Töpia's Homies, we were thinking, we are part of Black British music. Even though we might not deep it when we're doing the events, we are. This is history, this is all history. So yes, it's still mind-blowing."



“Cultural relevance means a meaningful engagement and curiosity in the creative world around you.”

Respecting the work of artists, designers and craftspeople, embracing the new while appreciating what’s gone before, and contributing in a way that adds genuine value.

If a brand simply wants to capitalise on a culture without investing in it, it will never work. They have to actively participate and create real connections within the space they want to be. A lot of that is defined by the people and the culture within the organisation. If there is strong leadership with vision that unifies everyone, that is a great starting point.

Real commercial impact will come through authentic and consistent visibility within the culture. Audiences require more than just product marketing, they need to be invested in the brand and what it stands for. So its about being creative with how they can demonstrate how their products fit into the lives of their consumers.

LAUREN CHALMERS
HEAD OF BRAND AND CREATIVE AT CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

CAMBRIDGE



WORDS BY ROXANA DIBA

AILSA *OGDEN*

Artist Ailsa Ogden on exaggeration, fictional characters and using portraiture to build imaginary worlds that blur observation and invention.



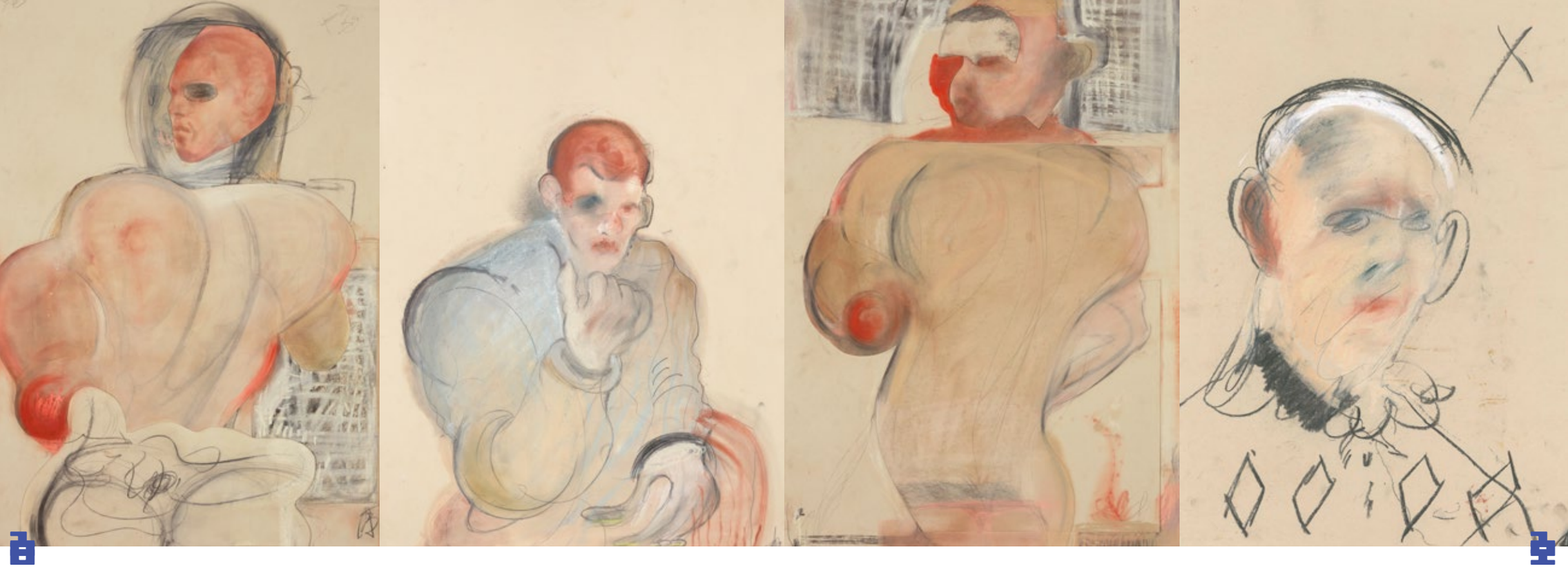
Creating community in imaginary worlds

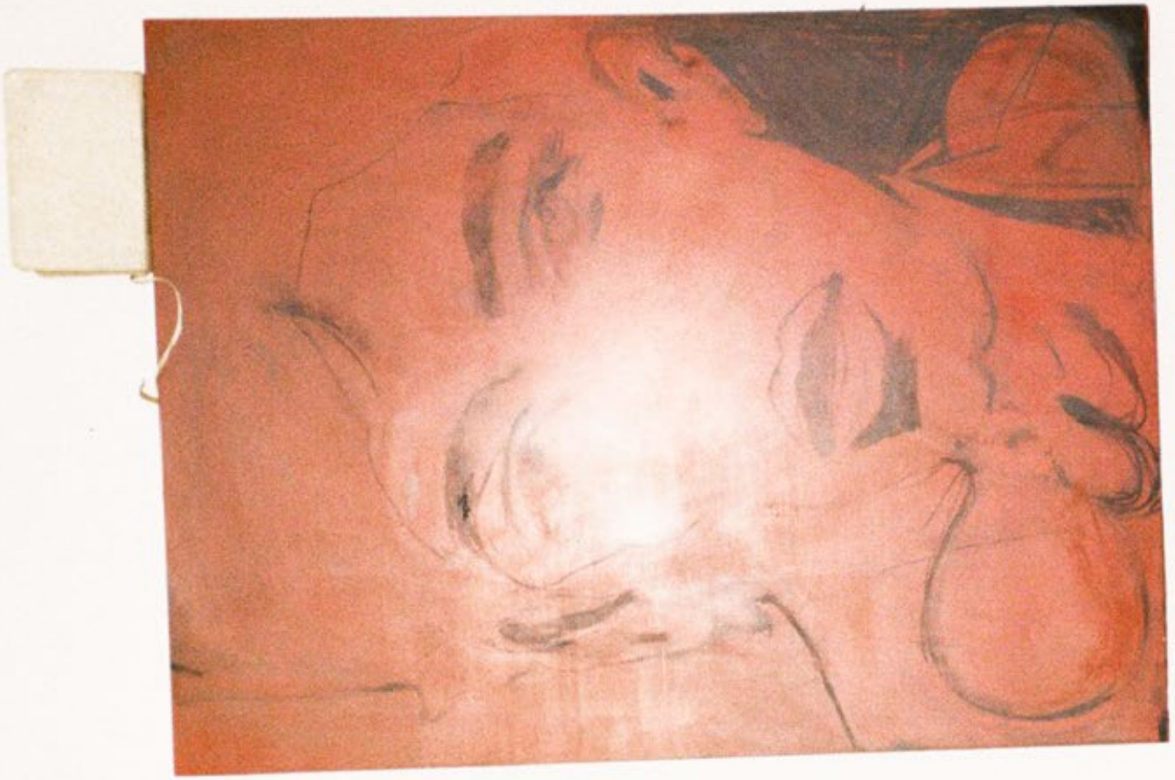


Ailsa Ogden's work is probably best described in her own words. "There's something kind of elaborate about the line work, you know, it's a little bit classical, but then it's kind of smudged and fucked. And then kind of, I don't know, bloody and physical," she says.

There is definitely a feeling of bloodiness in the deep, burnt red that emerges in several of her pieces; the physicality, meanwhile, references Ailsa's exploration of figures via different mediums. She moves between detailed etchings, dark graphite tracing deep contours and high cheekbones, and softer pastels that give way to an exaggerated curve of a spine, a ballooning, muscled arm. Elsewhere, she works with queer ephemera, photographs and printed matter, including vintage pornographic magazines sourced from an undisclosed and rightly gatekept North London shop where the queer community bequeath their old collections.

Whatever the material, the body is the throughline, appearing blurred, indeterminate, genderless. She uses her models as reference material and constructs an imagined character around them, obscuring the person underneath as much as possible. "I just love the imaginary kind of world of it. It just appeals to me so much, and I like giving them these kinds of crazy or non-formal names because it takes it beyond that," she says. Kamikaze Sweetheart, for instance, asks the viewer to determine the gender of its central figure for themselves, though the name comes from the lesbian fuck-boy protagonist in the queer docufiction film, *Kamikaze Hearts*.







The instinct to build these fictional worlds comes from Ailsa's background in art direction, where pulling references, making moodboards and constructing entire visual universes is part and parcel of the job. When she made the switch from art director to artist, the initial discomfort with the change eased once she realised she'd already been building the worlds behind the pieces.

For Ailsa, this fiction isn't a barrier between the viewer and the work; it creates an opening for projection instead. "Everyone is just really accepting of that kind of imaginative quality, and for me, I love that. And I mean, people will message me being like, 'oh, I see myself in that,' 'I recognise that person', and they are fictional." Though the figures are often inflated, exaggerated and unrealistic, they exude the flesh and blood needed for viewers to find themselves in. "That exaggeration is, I mean, maybe there's a fantasy element to that, but maybe this is some way in people wanting to be perceived."

Identity and queer culture runs throughout Ailsa's work, sometimes explicitly through the materials she uses, and other times more implicitly through language and the characters themselves. "Whether it's conscious or subconscious is always kind of there," she says.

But perhaps most importantly, the fictional community within Ailsa's work has created space for a real one around it. "Art has given me access to a queer community. It's probably one of the things I love most about the work; I've connected to so many people across the world that are the same as me across age groups. And I'm always like, this is fucking amazing. We've got these really cool, weird friendships with these people. We just are really materially aligned." She says. "It's like, got a life beyond the work. It's like a community in itself."

"It's like, got a life beyond the work. It's like a community in itself."





CULTURAL RELEVANCE MEANS SETTING TRENDS, NOT FOLLOWING THEM. IT'S ABOUT BEING A HEAD OF THE CURVE AND UNDERSTANDING WHERE CULTURE IS MOVING BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE

Brands define their role in culture by understanding what they genuinely stand for and where they can add meaningful value to communities and people's lives. That means listening and questioning constantly: what's going on in the scene? What the audience is actually interested in? What shifts are happening?

The campaign that has always stuck in my mind is Nike's Nothing Beats a Londoner Ad. It was so real and so raw. Rather than trying to imitate culture, it captured it authentically. The energy, diversity, humour, resilience and creativity that makes London what it is. It was powerful and still is today.

KELEIGH BATCHELOR
MARKETING MANAGER AT
ALPHA THETA

AlphaTheta









TASH RUPARELIA
SENIOR BRAND MANAGER AT
PIP & NUT

The biggest mistake brands make when trying to be culturally relevant is making it too much about themselves, rather than listening to what consumers actually want.

For us, that means keeping our values consistent – e.g. no palm oil, being a B Corp, standing for better business – and only playing in spaces where we have a genuine right to be. Running is one of them: Pip started the business while training for a marathon, so it isn't a borrowed campaign territory, it's the origin story.

A cultural moment that stood out to us was Puresport at the London Marathon. Not the sponsorship or the finish-line branding, but the people running in Puresport kit who actually believed in it, and the cheering sections that felt like friends showing up rather than ambassadors hitting a brief. Puresport wasn't the loudest brand on the course, it just felt like it belonged there – which, we'd argue, is worth more than a bigger budget.



XDJ-AN

2-CHANNEL ALL-IN-ONE DJ SYSTEM

Access to streaming services
Mix tracks from Apple Music, Beatport, Tidal and more with music from other sources

Works with mobile apps
Play with rekordbox for iOS or djay for iOS, and use DJM-REC for live streaming / recording

Built-in SonicLink transmitter
Pair your SonicLink headphones for ultra-low-latency wireless monitoring

Cloud-based playlist editing
Directly manage your cloud-based music via a compatible rekordbox subscription

Club-standard layout & media compatibility
Connect a laptop to use DJ software, or play music from USB drives

High-quality sound & flexible connectivity
XLR and RCA outputs, plus Bluetooth input/output

ALPHATHETA.COM

AlphaTheta

CULTURE ISN'T CREATED BY BRANDS. BRANDS NEED TO FIND WAYS TO NATURALLY BECOME PART OF IT.

It starts with understanding what people genuinely care about, whether that's sport or music, it's about identifying where your brand has a natural role to play and show up.



It starts with understanding what people genuinely care about, whether that's sport or music, it's about identifying where your brand has a natural role to play and showing up.

The question we always ask is: what value can we add that feels authentic? With Heineken, we've built campaigns around fandom because sharing a beer is already part of how people come together to watch sport and bond over a shared passion. We use creators because they're often closer to communities and culture than brands can be. They understand what people care about, what they want to talk about and how they want to participate.

The biggest mistake is making the brand the hero instead of the audience. We need to earn their attention, not demand it. The strongest work celebrates what people already care about and uses the brand to enhance the experience, rather than trying to force itself into the centre of it.

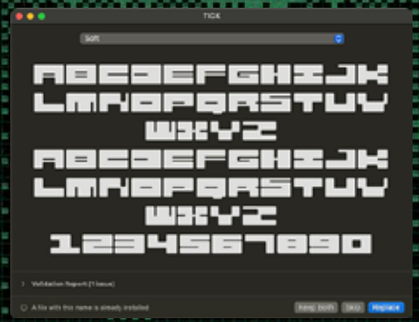
NICOLE KELLY
INTEGRATED CONTENT, SOCIAL & INFLUENCERS AT HEINEKEN

TECH FONT

114

115

Zero obligation.
Download font for free



Font in use: Tick Display

Lettuce know if you wanna be in the next issue



HELLO@OCD.STUDIO