Design Trends 24.

Designing the next chapter

What lays ahead and
how to navigate the
design landscape

A creative point of view
by Lukas Cottrell

For us designers, a new aera begins: With the rise of AI tools, our role is undergoing significant transformation. Manual tasks are swiftly handled by machines. We can no longer rely solely on craftsmanship.

Instead, we must remember what truly defines us as creatives: It has always been about ideas and stories, about connecting people, evoking emotions, and inspiring others through design.

The focus is always on people, not AI. People possess feelings, personality, and character. No computer can empathize with others, it only replicates. The original work of a human creative is always unique and profoundly human. And design that truly touches people can only originate from a human mind.

Nevertheless, we must adapt. With these new and enriching tools, we can create things that were previously unseen. We can forge new worlds and bring dreams to life.

All we need to do is remember what sets us apart: design by humans, for humans.

"Design is the nucleus of every culture. Culture is the origin of design. It begins with the fascination of beauty and the interpretation of natural ideals. At the end of this evolutionary process is a cultural identity that defines every human community." – Lukas
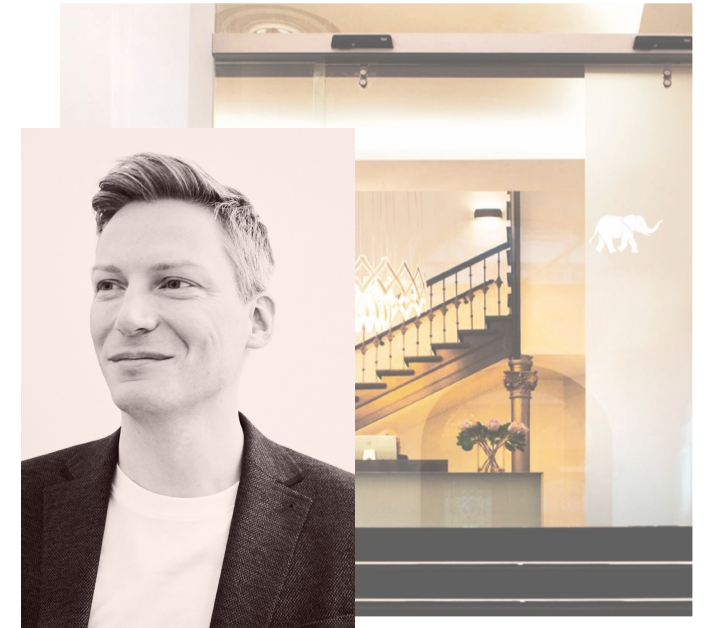
1.
The return of character

Reduction and minimalism have shaped our ideas about global design elegance for years but with the relaunch of Burberry in 2023, we experienced a radical trend reversal: Blanding is over, bring back maximalism! The trend towards opulence and craftmanship will continue in 2024. Across all industries, consumers want brands to be bold, unique, and self-confident about their origins. A yearning reaction to the crisis of our globalized, highly standardized world.

– Burberry re-introduced the equestrian knight as the brand's logo. Originally it was the winning entry of a public competition in 1901. A statement of heritage and Britishness!
– Cora – a period care and wellness brand – has created a new identity that focuses on inclusivity and comfort.
– There's not much innovation happening in the pasta category, but Goodless disrupts the status quo with its brand design. The vibrant colors and playful illustrations make the products stand out on the shelf.

2.
Humanizing brands


Meet Marshall

Android

In many industry sectors, products and services are converging. Brands are becoming redundant — so their emotional appeal is often the only decisive selling point. In 2023, we have seen many brands adding human expressions to their design: through the use of characters, but especially through animations in digital media. What was right in 2023 also applies in 2024: People tend to form stronger bonds with individuals rather than with abstract companies or products!
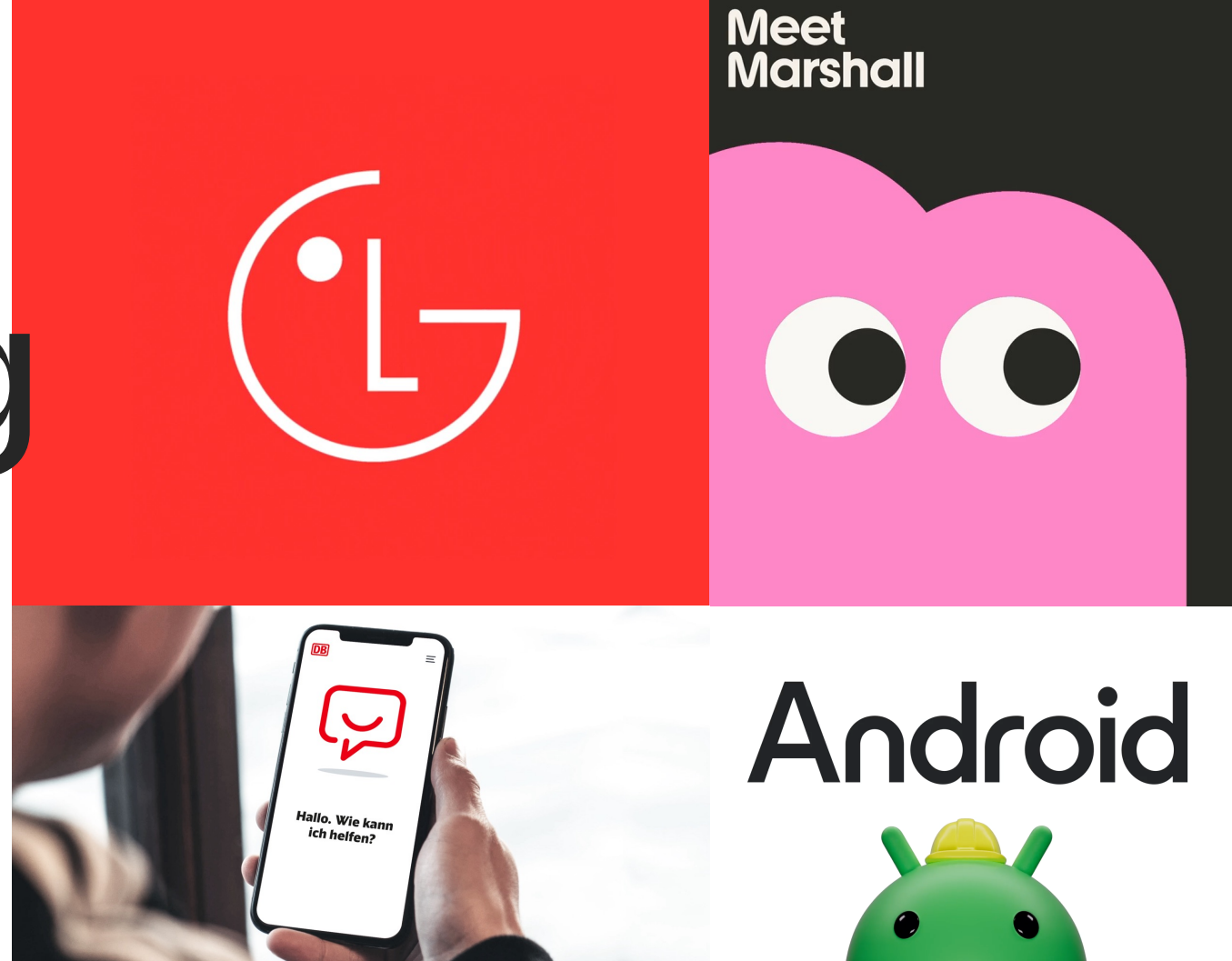
– By using graphic character mascots, the car insurance brand Marshmallow creates a new tone of voice for newcomers. It helps the brand top position itself as "the go-to insurance company for people on the up".
– In its logo, LG electronics forms the brand's name into a face. It's an obvious yet clever evolution to enrich it with different forms of emotional expressions.
– Since the relaunch in September 2023, the "Bugdroid" mascot of Google's Android brand appears in 3D, adding more character, playfulness, and flexibility.
– In digital media, Deutsche Bahn (German state railway) uses an element called the "Pulse" that derives from the brand's logo but also refers to the rhythms of human behavior.

3.
Ideate, then automate

Using Artificial Intelligence will establish as the standard way to automate simple tasks and adapt designs. Additionally, AI tools will be more and more often trained to rethink, adjust and expand existing material. The logical next step is, that they will be integrated seamlessly in brand management processes and portals: This will simplify rollouts and increase the impact range. As a side effect, defining a strong, unmistakable design idea is now more important than ever!
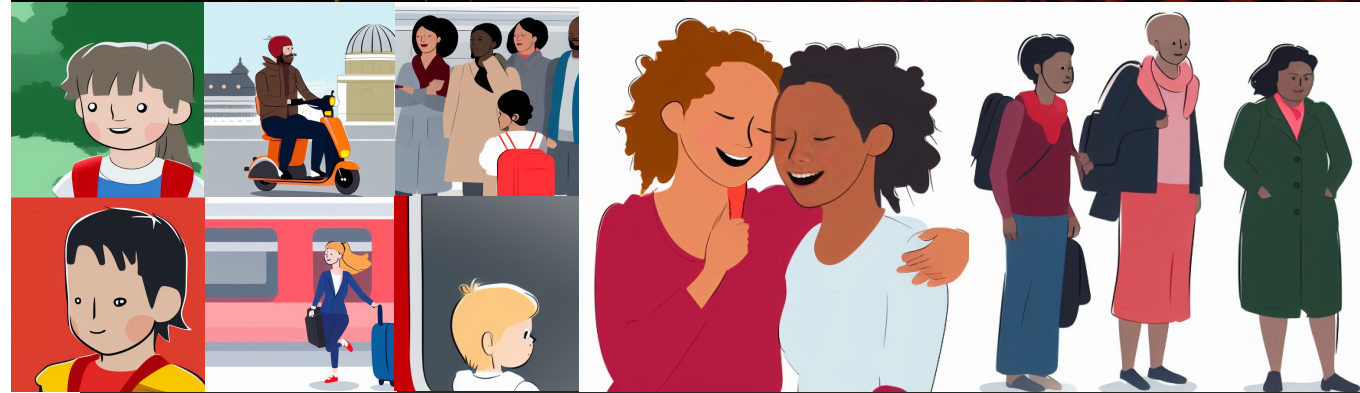
– AI helps us to generate countless motifs - so it is all the more important to define the unifying theme creatively and unambiguously. That's how Thegymnaistics did in their "Fries" series.
– A deep learning text-to-image generator was trained with 170 images for the illustration style of Deutsche Bahn (German state railway). It proves that this offer can be easily implemented in the future, even without a modular system and technical expertise.

4.
Never ever static anymore.

We experienced Gucci at Roblox and Balenciaga at Fortnite: Our digital and physical lives have merged — which means that the era of brands that could afford to use only analog touchpoints is over once and for all. The consequence: In 2024, every brand needs to exploit the possibilities of digital media. Dynamic, animated content is essential to express personality and thus establishing as the expected standard. The use of sound gives an additional boost!
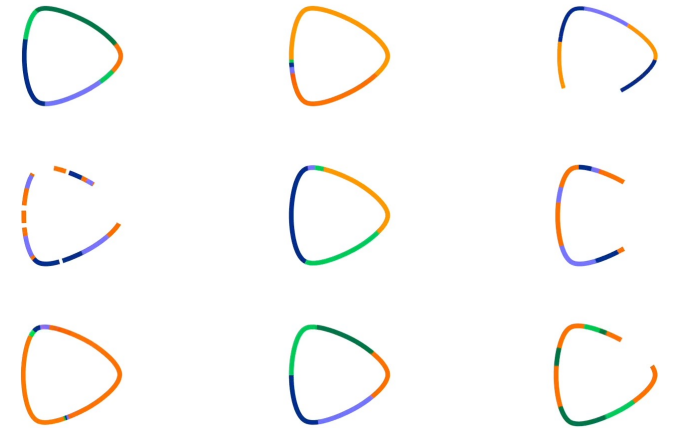
– For Utah Jazz, Studio Dumbar animated the visual identity to reflect athletic ability, the rhythm of the game, and the connection between jazz and basketball.
– The VMA logo transforms each letter shape into a spatial 3D stage that features nominated artists.
– Based on the outline of the postnl logo, a colorful new "Postline" expresses the company's commitment to constant change and innovation.

5.
Low-code and no-code coding

In 2023, creatives embraced low-code and no-code platforms to elevate digital design without relying solely on programming skills or perfect mastery of software. This shift was notably observed on platforms such as Webflow, where users crafted sophisticated websites effortlessly. Brands like Nike and Coca-Cola showcased the impact of this trend, incorporating low-code design into their digital presence for innovative and polished outcomes.

– Visual identity, dynamic typeface and pattern generator for a machine learning hardware start-up.
– The exploration of adidas Futurenatural's identity is dynamic, fluid and distinctive. The design creates its own moving Futurenatural environment.

6.
Flat is dead

Designing for the screen does not mean to be restricted to a two-dimensional look: Spatial arrangements of content on interfaces and playing with perspectives is becoming a key idea in digital design. Three-dimensional layouts can react to gestures or user actions and thus offer fascinating and emotional experiences.

ROTATIONAL ICONOGRAPHY

Santa Fe, NM

Canyon Road

Kevin H.
Florence Album

Gelateria Edoardo
"I thought I tasted Gelato before"

Rotate Globe

– In the new brand design of Eurostar, the so-called Spark takes on a wide range of motion behaviors like rotating, extruding and dropping into locations. He acts like a navigational compass and thus consistent with the brand's promise.
– The motion design for Going is inspired by the rotation of a globe. This is digitally translated into interactive and moving principles that playfully represent the unplanned twists and turns of travel.

7.
Hyper-realistic fantasy

The possibilities of AI generated visualizations are developing rapidly. Within the past year, what started as an experimental field became an option that is now taken for granted. Tools like Wonder AI and Midjourney AI empower designers to create high-resolution artworks that are suitable for any kind of campaign. As more and more AI-generated images are used in brand communication, consumers will get used to hyper-realistic aesthetics that blur the lines between reality and imagination and offer a unique and lasting visual experience.

– The Melbourne Writers Festival was one of the first festivals that uses AI art commercially to demonstrate the power of the written word.
– At London Fashion Week 2023, Moncler Genius presented an AI generated campaign that featured the brand's latest collaborations.
– Brands and NGOs such as Unicef deliberately point to the use of AI in their visuals to address the "discovery of new possibilities".
– Grit Wolany is a designer who has been working on AI generated images since her bachelor's thesis.

8.
Quirky & perky illustration

Illustration is an important but underrated tool for creating effective awareness for brands. Now, in the face of the overwhelming flood of breathtakingly perfect, artificially created images, we are noticing a counter-movement: the need for bold, raw, unique, and — above all — authentically imperfect expressions of human creativity. Illustrations give consumers an idea of the people and purpose behind the message and brand. They are no longer a nice-to-have accessory, but a powerful identity builder.

– For their assortment of animal crackers, Leibnitz uses illustrations that playfully complement the new minimalist look.
– The delivery service Gopuff uses "The Mean Tomato" as a mascot for their pizza boxes. Full of humor and storytelling power, it allows the brand to enter into dialogue with customers. Sometimes full of silliness but always approachable.
– The colorful design elements of the sustainable toothbrush brand Biobrush express diversity. Each color emphasizes stability with a key visual that is reminiscent of plant shoots.

9. Radical shelf attention

Shelves are filling up with new brands being added every day. The battle for attention is in full swing, and the store shelf is one of the fiercest fronts. In addition, sales via online channels and the visual requirements of digital interfaces are bringing new challenges for packaging and range design. Brands that tend to get it just right might not be seen anymore. Now is the time to deliver fast and furious design. Bold and with a visual edge. Stand out and poke them in the eye. Because being seen means everything. The brand of the future expresses confidently, "I am seen, therefore I am."

New Diet Coke can design

– Coke enlarges its brand codes to the maximum of what can be depicted on the packaging and is therefore immediately recognizable on the shelf, even from a distance.
– Clear color-coding and the codes of functional food make the plant-based products of Sproud stand out.
– Blossa Glogg was a traditional, old-fashioned beverage brand from Sweden. By introducing a new design, it received recognition all over the world.
– Sober is a newcomer in the segment of energy drinks. While its competitors are trying to use codes that are associated with performance, Sober focuses on a strong, illustrative key visual and uses bottles instead of cans.

10. Shared ownership

The Metaverse offers new opportunities for brand engagement, including virtual worlds, product presentations, and even virtual restaurants. Additionally, Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are shaping brand marketing, with agencies specializing in NFT design and brands like Adidas and Gucci entering the market.

– Adidas' first collection of digital apparel showcases the codes of the brand, reimagined for virtual worlds and the Metaverse.
– Nike offers customizable virtual sneakers on the Roblox gaming platform. Each pair is unique and can be purchased as a Non-Fungible Token (NFT). They are available in four color schemes – Blackout, Ice, Stone and Space Matter – and limited to a total number of 19,000 pieces.
– NFTs and other Web3-based products can be explored on Gucci's Metaversum in a multi-directional experience that spans digital worlds.

People before machines. Let´s work towards a more human centerd design.

Image sources

1. The return of character
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Cora: www.motherdesign.com/work/cora/
Goodles: https://zero.nyc/work/goodles/

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Deutsche Bahn: Design by Peter Schmidt Group, www.peter-schmidt-group.de

3. Ideate, then automate
The Gymnaistics: www.instagram.com/thegymnaistics
Deutsche Bahn: Design by Peter Schmidt Group, www.peter-schmidt-group.de

4. Never ever static anymore
Utah Jazz: https://studiodumbar.com/work/utah-jazz-brand-in-motion
MTV VMA: www.mtv.com/vma
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5. Low-code and no-code coding
Pentagram: www.pentagram.com/work/graphcore/story
Adidas Futurenatural: https://studiodumbar.com/work/adidas-futurenatural

6. Flat is dead
Eurostar: Design by Design Studio, www.design.studio/work/eurostar
Going: www.design.studio/work/going

7. Hyper-realistic fantasy
Moncler: Design by MaisonMeta, https://maisonmeta.io/portfolio-item/moncler-genius-ai-campaign/
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Melbourne Writers Festival: https://tbwamelbourne.com.au/work/art-of-words/
Grit Wolany: https://gritwolany.com/

8. Quirky & perky illustration
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Gopuff: www.alectear.com/casestudies/themeantomato
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9. Radical shelf attention
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Blossa Glogg: https://bvd.se/case/blossa-glogg
Sober: www.sober.energy

10. Shared ownership
Adidas: www.adidas.com/metaverse
RTFKT: https://rtfkt.com/category, www.designboom.com/design/nike-rtfkt-sneaker-nft-real-life-cryptokicks-irl-12-06-2022/
Gucci: /www.gucci.com/de/de/st/capsule/vault-metaverse

In the publication we show images of brands and products in order to substantiate design trends through best practices. The image rights remain with the respective brands quoted.

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