

[FF/ PARADOX]

**THIS IS THE THIRD
INSTALMENT OF FRESH
FORWARD, AND THREE, AS IT
GOES, IS THE MAGIC NUMBER**

Last time we took you somewhere. Escapism was the destination; no passport was required. This time, we're shaking the 8 ball...ask again later is off the cards.

Welcome to PARADOX, the contradictions surfacing across Creative Design, Fashion, Brand and FMCG right now. Being human in 2026 is complicated. We have never had more: more information, more access, more choice, more noise. Everything we need is one click away. Yet the appetite for community, craft, creativity and privacy has never been louder. The need to disconnect is a direct product of being permanently connected.



This is a point of view, not a gospel, but it's an informed one. We're in the room with the brands shaping culture right now, and this is what we think it means. The foresight below is a response to that tension. A signal that people are pushing back, not against progress, but against the flattening of it. Personal style is reasserting itself. Like, 'I'm sick of being shown', people want to discover what gets them going. Creativity demands the human touch, and the brands navigating all of this, are the ones learning to hold two contradictory truths at once, without flinching.

**THAT'S THE PARADOX, THE
DUALITY. AND IT'S SHOWING
UP EVERYWHERE...**

LET'S GET INTO IT!

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THE PARADOXICAL THEME IN DESIGN IS ESSENTIALLY ABOUT VISUALLY EXPRESSING THAT CONSUMERS LIVE IN CONTRADICTIONS: THEY WANT LESS AND BETTER, HUMAN AND AI, DIGITAL ESCAPE AND GROUNDED REALITY AT THE SAME TIME.

Design trends are mirroring that tension with work that is both imperfect and high-tech, warm and chaotic, minimal and maximal in different layers enter the Paradox.

The 2026 consumer “lives within a web of contradictions,” craving hyper-personalised experiences while fiercely guarding privacy, wanting instant convenience but also more authentic human connection. It’s hard work being a human in 2026, we are a complex species.

The most resonant work tends to acknowledge the paradox outright: messaging and visuals that admit tension (slow living vs speed, low-buy vs joyful indulgence, AI help vs human touch) feel more truthful to 2026 audiences. Duality is key. AI is becoming ever more prevalent, but one thing remains firmly human: our

sense of taste. The ability to choose what resonates with us, shaped by personal preference, instinct, and experience, offers a form of autonomy that machines can’t replicate. Taste is inherently subjective, and the process of discovering your own style is a fundamental part of the human experience.

This is influencing design and retail packaging, constantly searching for a connection in an overwhelmed state.

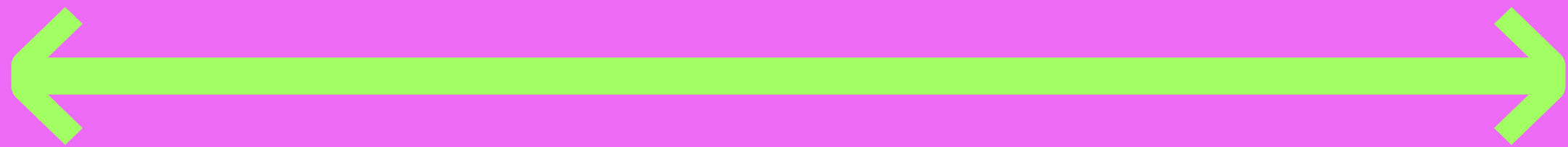
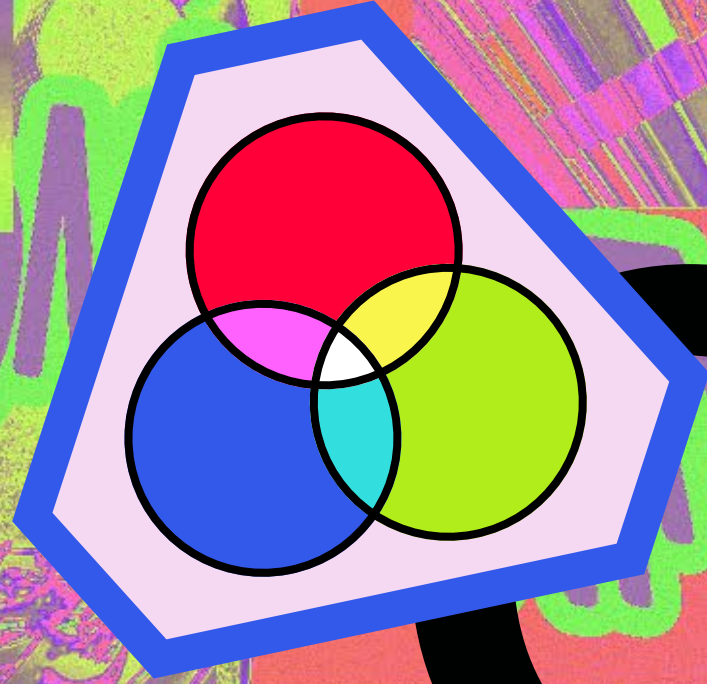
Sometimes you just have to commit, you do, and both things can exist, and that’s what this report considers, which is strangely comforting (it’s always nice to have options)

The ideas and imagery have already happened, but we also wanna chat about what we think is gonna happen, how it trickles down across fashion, FMCG, Design, the feels that we feel directly impact across generations, and the world is spicy at the moment, so we do what humans do best, question, contradict, and then get deeply creative and seek community and move on to the next, what a ride.

[FF/ PARADOX]

SAY YES! TO FRESH!

TREND REPORT



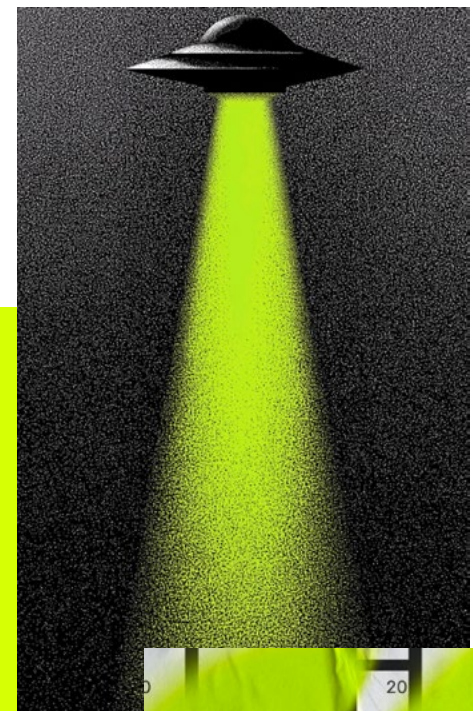
COLOUR TRENDS



Colour is never neutral. It carries weight, mood, memory, and meaning in equal measure. The four colours we've identified for 2026 don't shout for attention. They earn it. Each one holds a tension at its core: between nature and technology, warmth and precision, depth and brightness. That's no coincidence. These are the colours of a culture learning to hold contradiction with intention. Rooted yet forward-facing. Tactile yet elevated. Calm in their confidence. Paradoxical, in the best possible way.



SUN GLARE



PANTONE
13-0663 TSX
Sun Glare

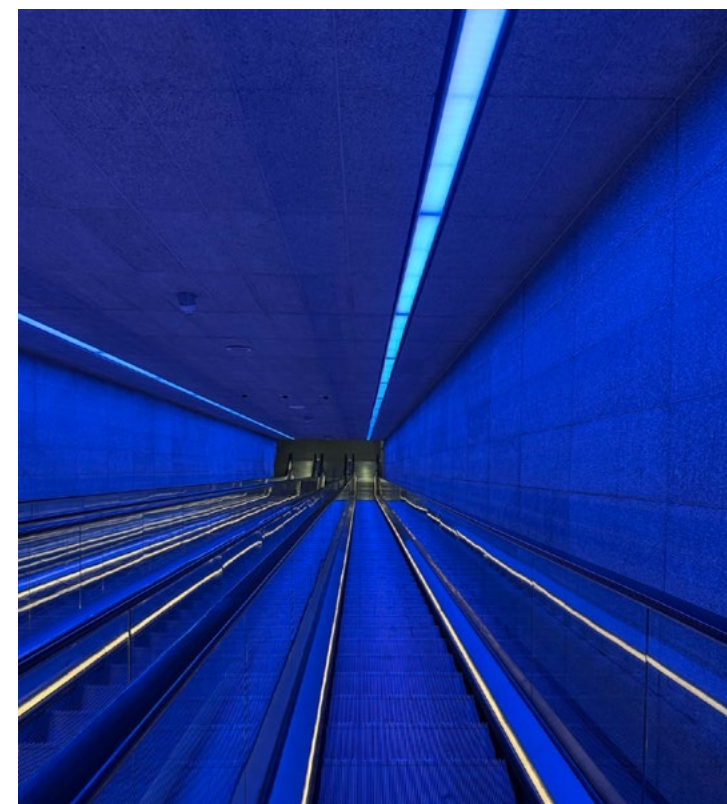
What makes it interesting is that it evokes nature and innovation at the same time, There's a sense of futurism, but softened through atmosphere rather than technology.

The paradox is exactly what gives it power: it doesn't rely on richness, darkness, or earthy depth to feel profound. In fact, it achieves depth through brightness. Through clarity. Through this luminous tension.

Most colours that feel "grounded" lean warm, muted, mineral. Sun Glare does the opposite its like if the sun and the night moon had a baby in space.

It's almost as if the colour has been lit from within. Not saturated for attention, illuminated with intent.

ELECTRIC BLUE



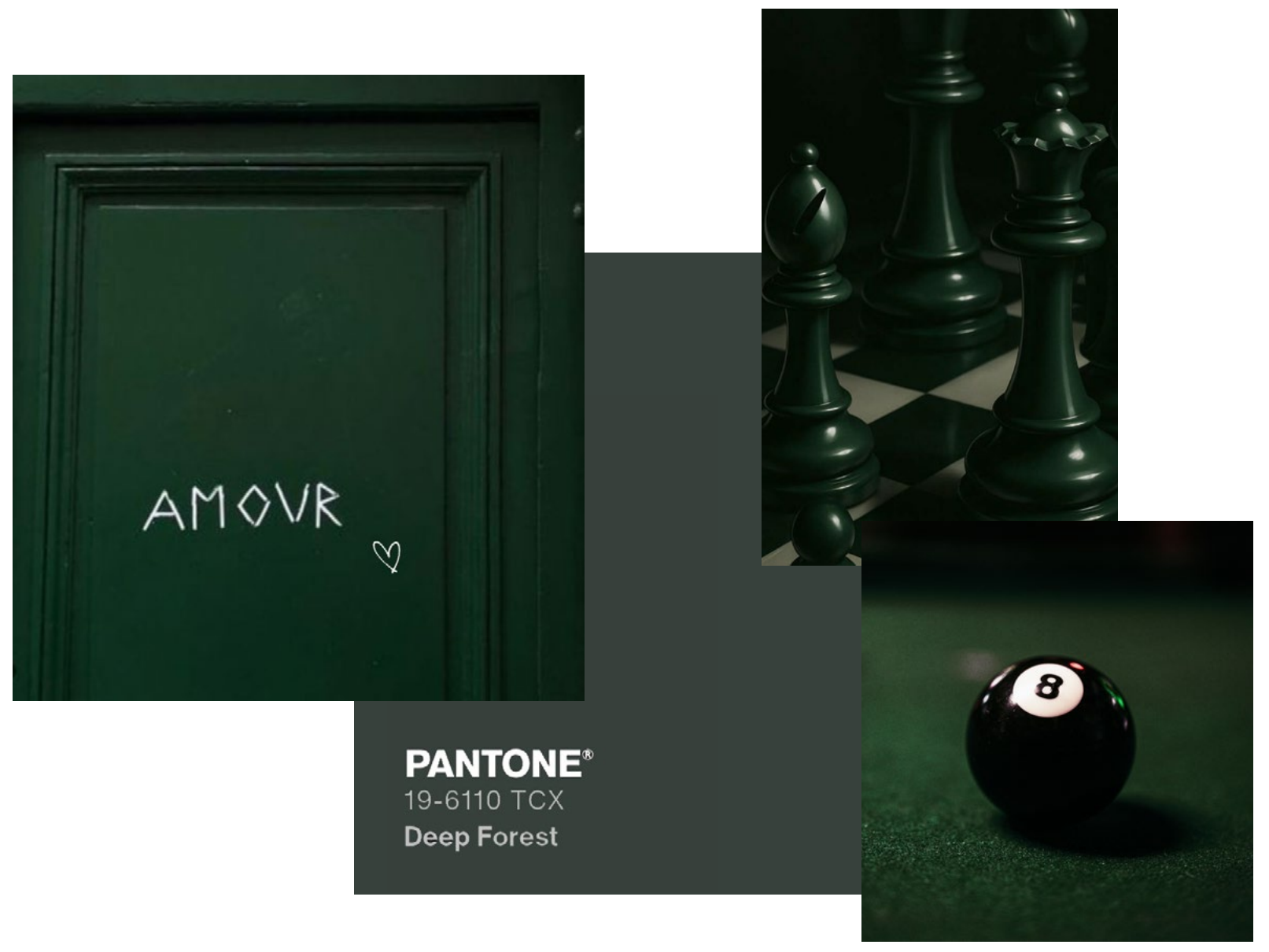
PANTONE
Blue 072 C

Representing the intersection of trust, innovation, and infinite depth, Electric Blue is a vivid electric blue inspired by the meeting of sea and sky. Expansive, fluid, and boundless. It carries both familiarity and forward motion, balancing emotional reassurance with a sense of technological progress.

There's a duality at its core: grounded trust and future-facing energy. In automotive and tech interiors, it feels precise and intelligent, yet never cold, a colour that suggests control without losing emotion.

A colour of the elements, familiar enough to trust, electric enough to move forward. Infinite in feeling, precise in form, the paradox of stillness and speed.

DEEP FOREST GREEN



PANTONE®
19-6110 TCX
Deep Forest

Representing a balance between modern precision and natural immersion, Deep Forest Green is a rich, layered green that embodies grounding, protection, and environmental consciousness. Dense and atmospheric, it carries the depth and the quiet intensity of untouched nature.

There's a deep texture to the colour. A opulence that feels tactile and enveloping, and the quiet confidence of old-school luxury. Yet despite this refinement, it remains firmly rooted in nature. Unlike brighter greens that signal freshness or vitality, Deep Forest Green feels enduring. The colour reflects a growing cultural desire for reconnection a longing for permanence, stillness, and preservation in an increasingly synthetic world. It speaks to the instinct to protect nature at all costs, not out of nostalgia but out of necessity. Luxury not through excess, but through depth, texture, and timelessness.



PANTONE®
18-1446 TSX
Fire Finch

Fire Finch redefines the emotional language of red. While red is often associated with danger, intensity, or warning, this shade moves differently, signalling sturdiness, elevation, warmth, and understated luxury.

This red feels grounded rather than aggressive. Slightly rustic, sun-warmed, and tactile, Fire Finch carries the depth of oxidised earth, aged leather, clay, spice, and ember tones. It feels lived in and elevated at the same time.

Red is perhaps the ultimate paradox: the colour of love and danger, passion and control, attraction and caution. Fire Finch exists within that tension. It breaks away the sharpness of traditional reds with warmth and texture, creating something more enduring and emotionally complex. There's still heat in it, that subtle spice, but it's controlled, cautious and sturdy.

FIRE FINCH

[FF / PARADOX]



FRESH FORWARD
£0.03
ANALOGUE

THE TRENDS

LETS DIVE IN TO THE MAIN EVENT!



[FF3-PARADOX]



**IRL ISN'T A RETAIL STORY.
IT'S A MEDIA STORY.**

As AI continues to streamline the online journey, making it faster, smarter, and increasingly streamlined, brands are rediscovering the value of being unmistakably present. In a landscape where digital experiences risk becoming so frictionless they become forgettable, the physical world is doing something no algorithm can replicate: making you feel something.

BELOW

GYMSHARK

Gymshark's "Jacket Patch" activation at Hyrox London turned a sandwich shop into a post-race celebration space, using free food, viral personalities, and smart product integration to create the finish-line moment athletes were missing.



The real world has become the most powerful channel a brand can own. Not the feed. Not the paid placement. The moment someone has to be in a room for, the billboard that stops them mid-street, the product launch that feels like an event, the activation people queue for, travel to, photograph, and talk about for weeks. That's the channel. And right now, it's wide open.

The paradox is this: as digital gets more seamless, IRL has to get more expressive. The more frictionless the purchase, the more the experience needs to create friction. Not inconvenience. Intention. The feeling that this moment was worth showing up for.

CONVENIENCE IS EVERYWHERE. MEANING IS NOT. MEANING IS NOT.

BELOW **SELFRIDGES** 40 Duke is the home to Personal Shopping at Selfridges London, and a club for socialising, fashion and culture. Including personal shopping studios, event spaces, bar and more



THE NEW BRAND BATTLEGROUND

The most talked-about brand moments of 2026 weren't ads. They were events, spaces, and moments people chose to show up for. Mattel's first-ever Coachella activation. OOH campaigns so bold they became social content before the brand spent a penny on amplification. Product launches are treated as cultural programming, not press releases. These weren't campaigns with an experiential budget line. They were statements. And the people who were there, or who wished they were, did the rest.

The brands winning right now have stopped thinking in media placements and started thinking in moments. Events that build community. OOH that earns a second look and a screenshot. Activations that turn a product launch into a destination. Retail that gives people a reason to come back, that has nothing to do with the transaction. Stores, stages, streets, and festivals if they exist in the physical world, it's an opportunity. The brands that understand this aren't buying space. They're creating it.

YOU CAN'T FAKE A FEELING. YOU CAN'T DOWNLOAD IT EITHER.

BELOW **OATLY** The world's first bike-thru is now open in Amsterdam, the cycling capital of the world. Pedal in, place your order, and get out. A fast-drink spot inspired by the city's thriving bike culture.



BELOW **BARBIE** Mattel's first activation at Coachella, signalling the cultural importance of showing up at festivals



ABOVE **HOKA** Presents New Horizons. A multidisciplinary experience workshop celebrating creativity, community, and movement in Paris

TAKE THIS → DO THIS

- **IRL is your most powerful media channel.** Not a supplement to digital. Not a nice-to-have. The physical world is where memory gets made, and memory is what builds brands. Think of every IRL touchpoint, retail, events, OOH, activations, and launches as media spend with cultural upside. Don't underestimate getting regional. This works both for legacy and startup.
- **As digital gets seamless, physical must get expressive.** The more frictionless the online journey, the more visceral the in-person experience needs to be. That gap is the opportunity. Efficiency is the baseline. Feeling something is the differentiator. Stop thinking in transactions. Start thinking in moments. The brief isn't "how do we sell here." It's "what do people walk away saying." If they leave with a story, you've done more than any paid impression could. Make the memory the marketing.
- **Bold OOH gets photographed.** Great events get recapped. Considered product launches get covered. The real world amplifies itself when you give it something worth amplifying. Word of mouth should not be a forgotten tool.

BELOW **NIKE ACG** Sportswear brand Nike has created an all-orange, heavily branded train at the Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics to mark the relaunch of All Conditions Gear.



ABOVE **AS COLOUR** Just opened their new shop with a collaboration with Jail House Print and Leeds band Mercury. The launch was a proper community effort, putting a massive spotlight on the Leeds hardcore scene.



ABOVE **PEACEFUL RESEARCH** Motorsport & lifestyle exhibition exploring the intersection of motorsport heritage, industrial design, and contemporary culture.

BELOW **ASICS X JD** Immersive concept space ASICS House in Soho, London for a stacked weekend of interactive workshops, VIP parties



BELOW ADIDAS X SATISFY

Blurring the lines between fitness and a festival experience with THE CIRCLE PIT launch event in Arizona. Runners from around the world met up to test gear and show what happens when you find your crew.



HIGH PURCHASE INTENT: 91% OF CONSUMERS SAY LIVE BRAND EXPERIENCES INCREASE THEIR LIKELIHOOD TO PURCHASE.

VML

[FF3-PARADOX]

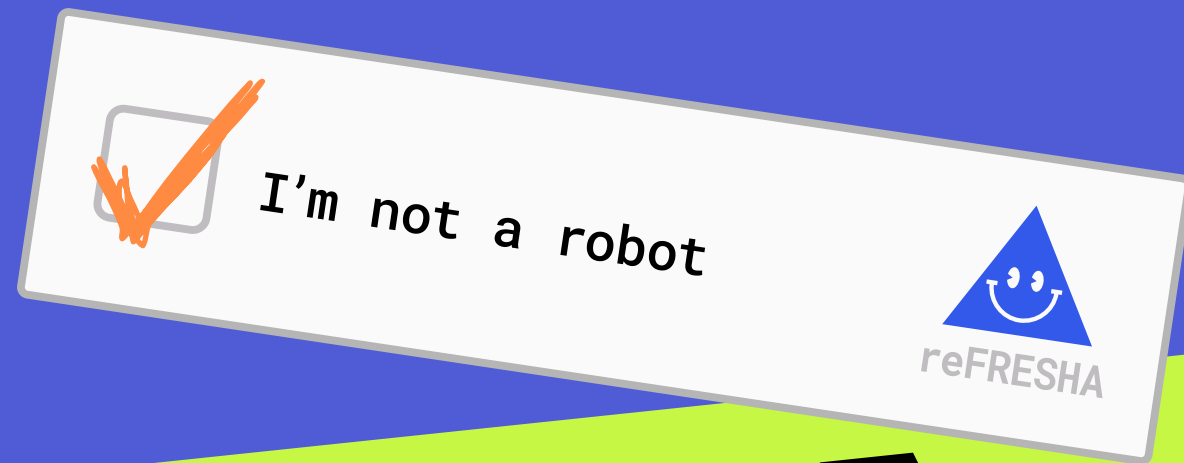


THINK ABOUT THE LAST TIME A BRAND GENUINELY SURPRISED YOU IN PERSON. NOT A POP-UP WITH A PHOTOGRAPHER. A MOMENT THAT MADE YOU STOP, STAY, AND TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT AFTERWARDS.

We asked our pals over at Blood, who are the GOAT. They explained Culture & Community is at the top of the food chain. You don't need a Coachella budget. You need a point of view and somewhere to put it. The hard part isn't the idea. It's the commitment. But the brands that make the memory make the market. It's not a new thing, but community is key.

IT'S THE CRUX OF HUMAN NATURE.

[FF3-PARADOX]



HAND CRAFTED

(ANALOGUE)®



“GOING ANALOGUE” IS LESS A REJECTION OF THE ALGORITHM AND MORE A REFUSAL TO LET IT HAVE THE FINAL SAY.

As feeds become increasingly polished, predicted, and frankly a bit samey, brands are reintroducing something the algorithm cannot manufacture: the feeling of human hands. This isn't new, but the meaning behind it is the driving force for design in the next few years.

Design that looks handled, not just rendered. Scuffed typography, photocopied textures, spray, pencil, scissors, screen prints. Layered, imperfect, a little slap and tickle. The kind of work that feels like you stumbled across it, not that it was served to you because of your search history.

Because increasingly, that's the point.

BELOW

BURBERRY

Vibrant colours and crocheted florals set the tone for Summer 2026, fully silk screened photoshoot by Kate Gibb Print



DIGITAL REWILDING

This signals a broader shift towards digital rewilding. Brands designing for agency, not automation. For cognitive satisfaction over passive consumption.

It's not anti-tech. It's anti-predictability.

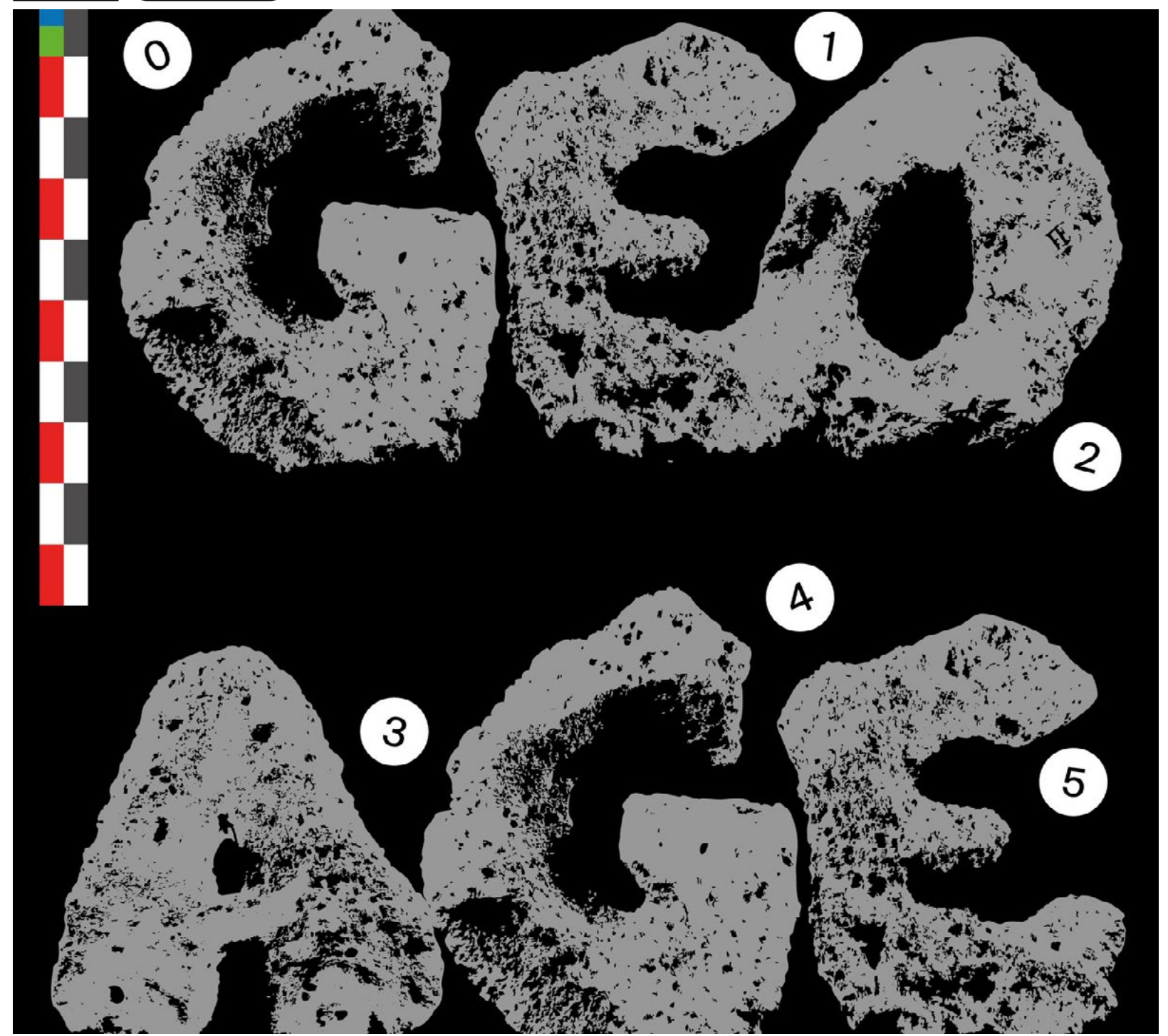
Algorithms are efficient. It's maths, it's the matrix, they have also flattened taste, narrowing not just what we see but how the internet looks and feels. In response, the smartest brands are taking cues from pre-digital discovery. Dog-eared magazines. Record shop deep dives. Posters wheatpasted with intent. Creating work that rewards curiosity and invites exploration.

Real discovery isn't frictionless. It's found, not fed, in a world of hyper-curation, the most powerful thing a brand can do is make you feel like you discovered it first.



ABOVE (APPLE) TV intro. Created using rotating glass panels, studio lighting, and in-camera techniques to produce the colourful, shimmering logo.

ABOVE (LENA MONO) Geo: Experimental Textured Display Typeface - for 6TM® MAGAZINE



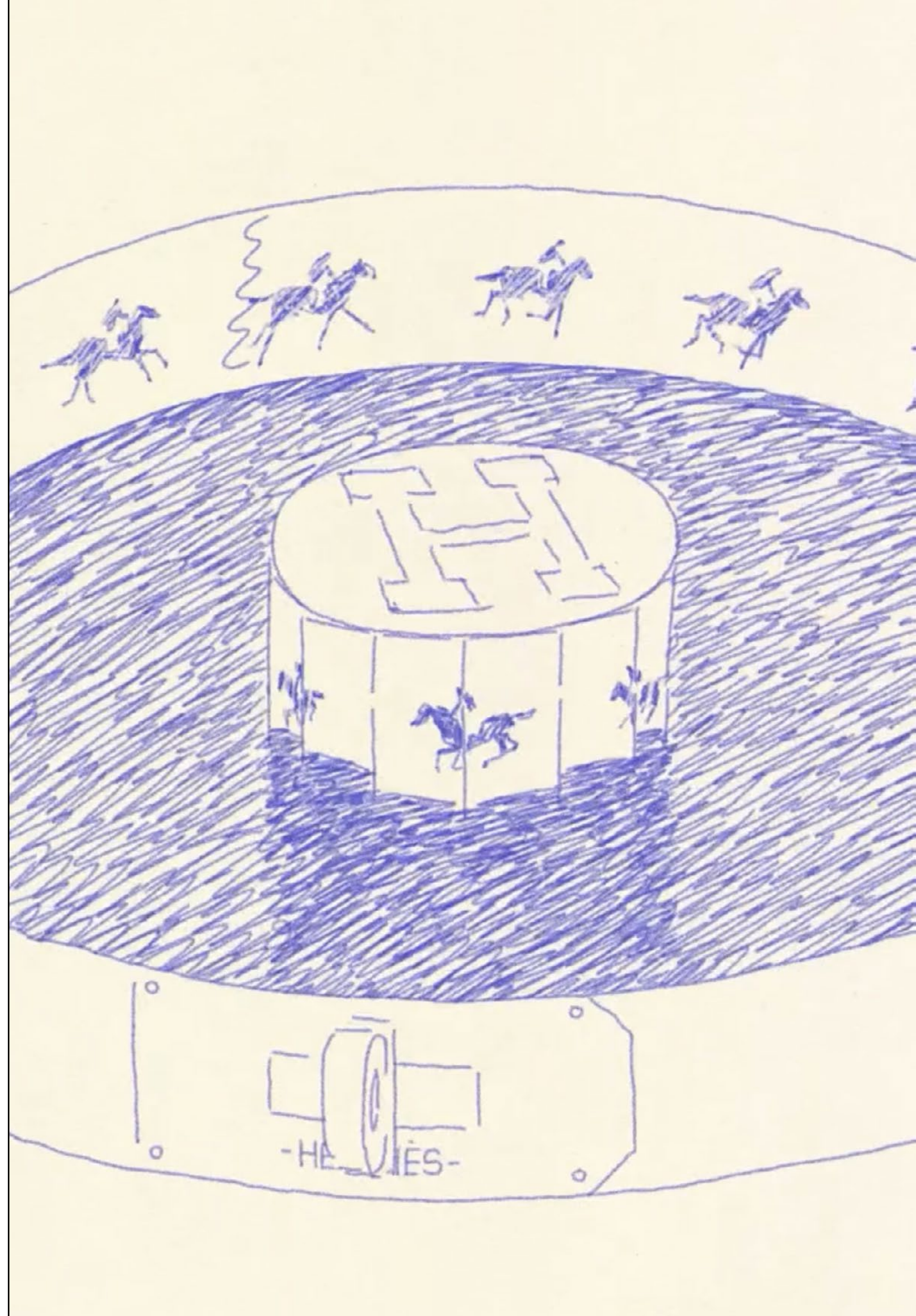
PARADOX

Here it is: in 2026, the most forward-thinking design decision a brand can make is to look backwards. The most innovative thing is to appear analogue. The more powerful our tools become, the more valuable the absence of those tools feel.

The algorithm brought us everything. The paradox is that everything now looks the same.

AI CANNOT REPLACE TASTE. NOT REALLY. NOT IN ANY WAY THAT MATTERS.

BELOW (HERMES) Lee kyutae Drawn to craft animation. An invitation to joyfully celebrate drawing, the guiding thread of creation at Hermès and the house's chosen theme for the year.



TAKE THIS ➡ DO THIS

- **Design for discovery, not delivery.** Stop optimising to be served, create work that feels found. In a world of infinite content, scarcity of friction is a brand asset.
- **Imperfection is the new quality signal.** Handled, not rendered, the mark of a human decision reads as premium now, something a prompt cannot fake consistently.
- **Taste is the only unreplicable asset.** Algorithms optimise. They do not curate. The brands that win here have an opinion, not just a visual language.

BELOW (ASHLEY WILLIAMS) Trashcore bags from her latest collection filled with items usually found at the bottom of your bag now on full show



FORWARD SIGNALS

Here's what's happening inside people's heads right now, and it matters more than most brands realise.

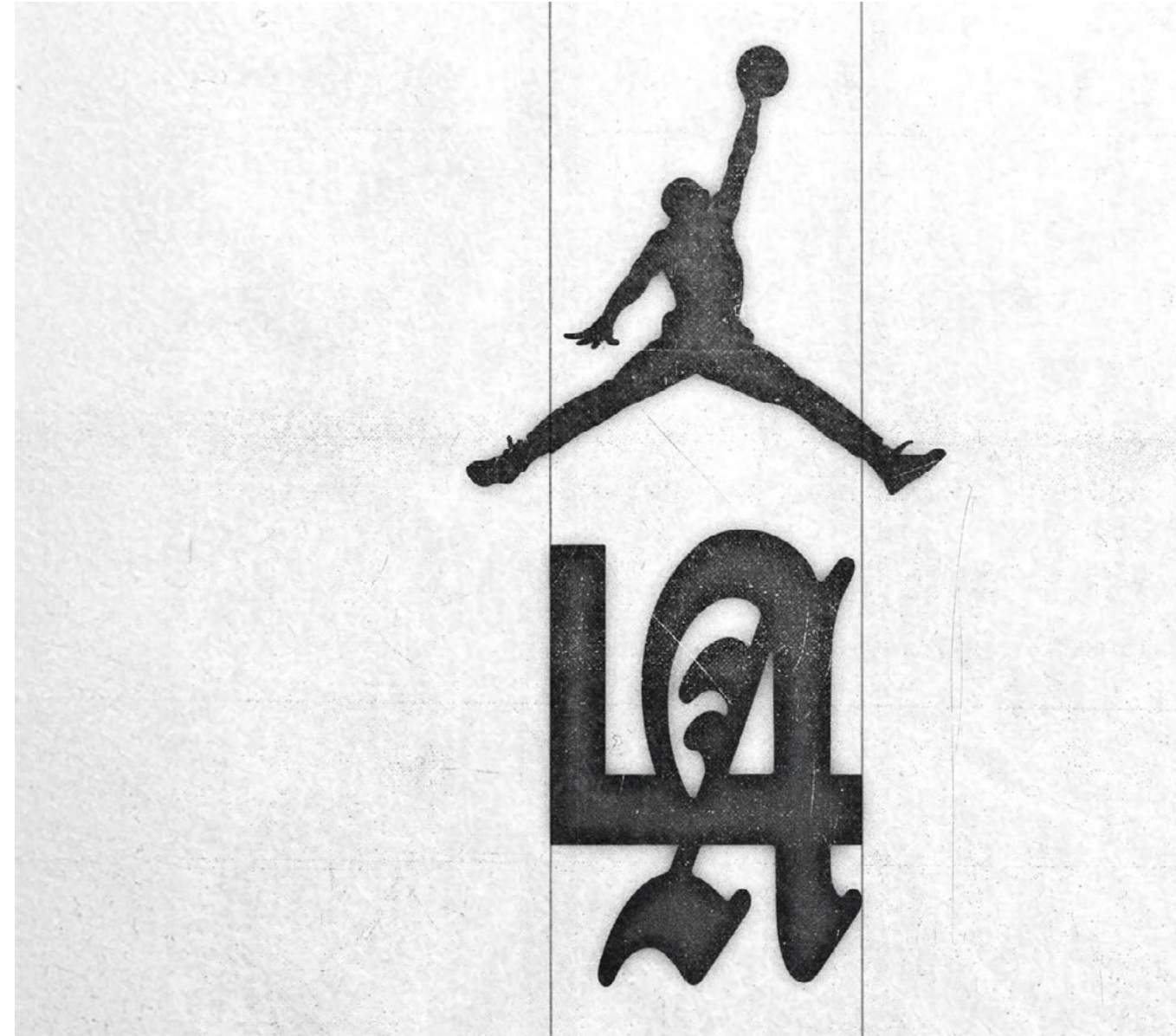
Our brains have evolved to ask a new question every time we encounter content: is this AI? It's unconscious. It happens in milliseconds. And it has changed the experience of being online in a way that is still being underestimated.

The term "AI slop" didn't emerge from nowhere. It describes the dopamine crash of consuming content that looks almost right, almost considered, almost human. The antidote isn't better AI. It's the real thing. Work that feels made. A discovery that feels earned.

From a creative perspective, this is genuinely Mint (British slang for really good). The tools that aren't screen-bound, the physical processes, the accidents and textures you can't prompt your way to this is the moment they become strategic, not just aesthetic.

One caveat worth considering: there is a glass ceiling here. As analogue aesthetics become a recognised trend, they risk being replicated algorithmically. The AI generators are already decent at zine-look, risograph, and wheatpaste posters. When the aesthetic becomes a filter, the filter becomes the feed, and the feed becomes samey again. The brands that stay ahead are the ones building genuine process, not approximate texture. The work has to actually come from somewhere real. That's what makes it undeniable.

BELOW (NIKE JORDAN) Forth + Back with an idea born from the idea of imperfection, authenticity, and the textures of LA.



ABOVE (CHIPS NY) Custom font classic lace fill, created for Waner Bros for Wuthering Heights

BELOW DYLAN'S T-SHIRT CLUB

For Zara . Dylan a 12 year old designer creating one of a kind hand drawn designs since 2019.



DYLAN'S
T-SHIRT
CLUB

[FF3-PARADOX]



THE REASON THIS TREND HAS LEGS IS THE SAME REASON ALL FOUR TRENDS IN THIS REPORT HAVE LEGS, THIS REPORT COULD GET UP AND WALK IF IT COULD, IT'S NOT ABOUT AESTHETICS. IT'S ABOUT TRUST.

In a world where everything can be generated, the human mark is a trust signal. The smudge, the misregistration, the type that doesn't quite sit right. These aren't accidents. They're proof. Proof that someone made a decision, took a risk, committed to a direction without a prompt telling them to.

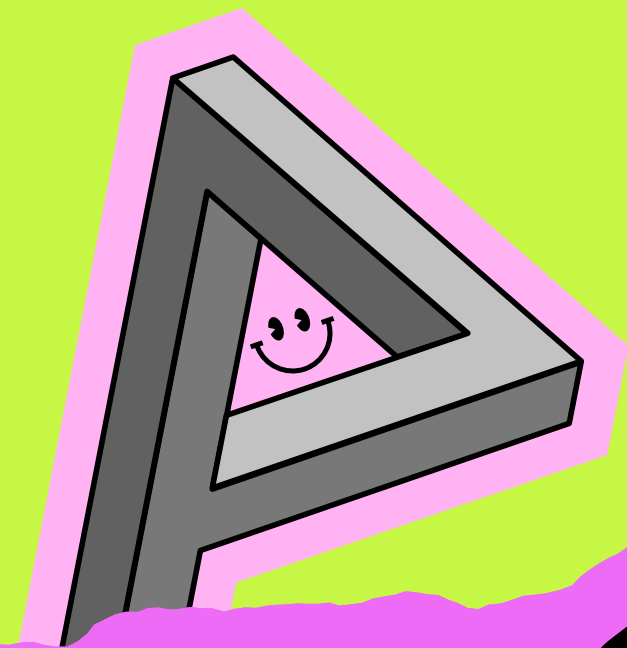
THAT'S RARE NOW. AND RARE THINGS COMMAND ATTENTION.(WHAT WE LITTLE WE HAVE)



BY MARCH 2026, THE BBC COUNTED 8 COMPANIES RACING TO ESTABLISH 'HUMAN MADE' CERTIFICATION LABEL,

BBC 2026

[FF3-PARADOX]



▲ ALL THE GEAR,
NO IDEA!

RUTHLESSLY
SPECIFIC.



“ALL THE GEAR, NO IDEA” CAPTURES A GROWING REJECTION OF MASS APPEAL IN FAVOUR OF MEANINGFUL SPECIFICITY. THE FATIGUE IS REAL. ENDLESS CHOICE.

And in an era where data has made it possible to target everyone, the smartest brands are choosing not to.

Instead of casting the widest net, challenger brands are going deliberately narrow. Tunnel-visioned. Microscopic. Defining exactly who they're for, what they stand for, and just as importantly, who and what they're not.

BELOW

BANDIT

Brooklyn-based running apparel brand fusing performance, style, and community. Combined with super emersive launch events and IYKYK club feel!



BELOW CADENCE

View Source fueling the brand design for a product fueling athletes around the world.



THE DISTRUST CATALYST?

This isn't a new idea. But it is accelerating, and the reason is simpler than it looks.

We are living through a generational crisis of distrust. The food we eat. The information we consume. The politicians who talk and the world leaders who spin. The ads that promise everything and deliver the average. Across every generation, in every market, the baseline is the same: *we don't believe you anymore.*

The catalyst isn't cynicism. It's exhaustion. Years of being oversold, underdelivered, algorithmically nudged into a version of the world designed for someone else's conversion rate. The noise got too loud. The promises got too big. And somewhere in the middle of all of it, people stopped trusting the broad and started looking for the specific.

MICROSCOPIC SPECIFICITY

This goes beyond niche marketing. This is micro-category creation.

The move isn't to find a niche. It's to build one that didn't exist, stick your flag in it, and become the only possible answer. It's a return to an almost old-school sensibility. The allure of the insider. The quiet confidence of a brand signals that it actually means something. Knowing exactly what you're getting, no suspicion, no smoke and mirrors.

As consumers grow fatigued by endless choice and algorithmic noise, there's a shift toward slower, more considered consumption. Curation trumps convenience. Identity outweighs scale. In this landscape, innovation isn't about more products. It's about a sharper perspective.

Because in a world where everyone has access to everything, the real flex is knowing exactly where you belong. Infinite reach made intimacy the rarest resource.

BELOW TALLOW+ASH

Clean Chemistry, Sophisticated Fragrances. For something you do so often, you shouldn't have to settle for boring scents, ugly bottles and toxic chemicals.



ABOVE UTU

Rise of the performance skincare. Utu outdoor skin care brand

THAT'S THE PARADOX

TAKE THIS → DO THIS

- The world is getting broader. Go narrower. That's where the value is.
- **Narrow is the new scale.** Define exactly who you're for, and just as importantly, who you're not. Clarity. Not the boardroom kind. Uncut Gems clear.
- **Curation trumps convenience.** Identity now outweighs scale. The consumer isn't looking for more options. They're looking for the right one.
- **Own the category.** Identify the gap that has no language yet. Name it. Become the default answer. There's a distance between a brand people use and a brand people evangelise, and that distance is specificity.
- **Be ruthlessly specific.** Not specific enough to feel niche. Specific enough to feel *made for me.*

BELOW (TINCAN) The new-school landline for friends. It doesn't have apps, texting, or games - just real conversation with friends, neighbours, Grandma!



BELOW (R.A.D) Is a performance footwear company built by athletes and designers, designed by Fluro. A fuse innovation and creativity to unlock the euphoria of sport, deeply connected to its subculture.



BELOW (FFERN) Artisan perfume, organic, natural perfume. Made in the UK. Who have a in house team solely for film making.



ABOVE (VIBRAM) Five fingered shoes were created by the barefoot running club. The shoe that fits like a glove and enhances the barefoot minimalist experience. The original barefoot training tool.

BELOW **BRICK** A physical device that temporarily removes distracting apps & their notifications from your phone. The ultimate deep focus.



CONSUMERS ARE 50% MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE FROM A CURATED SELECTION.

440% INCREASE IN PERSONAL STYLE SEARCHES

WGSN

[FF3-PARADOX]



HERE'S THE THING RUTHLESSLY SPECIFIC.

HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED A SPECIFIC PRODUCT, SEARCHED FOR IT, AND THOUGHT: WHAT DO I EVEN BUY? REVIEW SITES. REDDIT. SOCIAL MEDIA RABBIT HOLES. THEN, FINALLY, YOU FOUND THE BRAND. THE ONE THAT DESCRIBED YOUR EXACT PROBLEM ON ITS HOMEPAGE AND SOLVED IT.

That feeling. That small, private click. That's the whole game.

Be that. If you're the master of your craft, be that. The forecast is this: the brands that win the next five years won't be the ones that evolved the furthest from where they started. They'll be the ones that went back to the problem they originally solved and got ruthlessly clear about it again. The origin story isn't a heritage piece. It's a strategic north star. The brands that return to it, and double down, are the ones that will cut through.

Evolving isn't off the table. But the evolution that works is the kind that goes deeper, not sideways. Deeper into your community. Deeper into the specific problem only you know how to solve. The brands that evolve by going broader will confuse their audience. The ones that evolve by going deeper will own it.

Don't be all things to all people. Know your thing. Own your thing. Be the undisputed answer to your thing. Size isn't the variable. Conviction is. The brands that win this, big or small, New or old are the ones that remember and know exactly what they are.

RUTHLESSLY SPECIFIC IS THE KEY.

[FF3-PARADOX]



IN A WORLD OF INFINITE INFORMATION
AND ZERO BOUNDARIES, THE MASCOT IS
BACK. NOT AS A LOGO. AS A HOST.

We have everything at the click of a button. Every answer, every product, every aesthetic. So why are consumers gravitating toward brand characters invented in the 1950s? Because in a boundaryless digital world, character creates boundaries.

A mascot says: this is who we are, this is who we're for, this is where we begin and end. A face in a faceless feed. An anchor when everything else is algorithmic and shifting. In challenging times it can be a refreshing crux

But this isn't nostalgia. It's a reinvention.

BELOW

APPLE

Apple's new viral brand mascot is affectionately known as "Little Finder Guy" (or Finn the Finder). Inspired by the classic two-tone Mac Finder icon, this cute character made his debut in TikTok promos to launch new affordable MacBook.



THE HOST, NOT THE LOGO

The smartest brands aren't dusting off old characters and putting them on Instagram. They're turning mascots into cultural figures. Personalities that guide experience, ground community, and make transactions feel like showing up for something. The mascot has evolved from identity mark to host to cultural institution.

There's a deeper current underneath all of it: a generation romanticising eras they never lived through, scanning the past for warmth that infinite access couldn't provide. We have everything. So the paradox is choosing to have limits. Choosing a face. A voice. A point where the brand says: this far, no further.

And there's a deeper resonance specific to this moment. We are living through challenging, contested, and often exhausting times. Political noise. Economic anxiety. A world that feels harder to read than it used to. In that context, a mascot offers something profoundly rare: purity and innocence. A character that doesn't

BELOW **MC.DONALDS** The McDonald's Ronald Card is an extremely rare, golden, 25th, "Legendary" trading card in a 2026 UK promotion, with only 10 in existence.



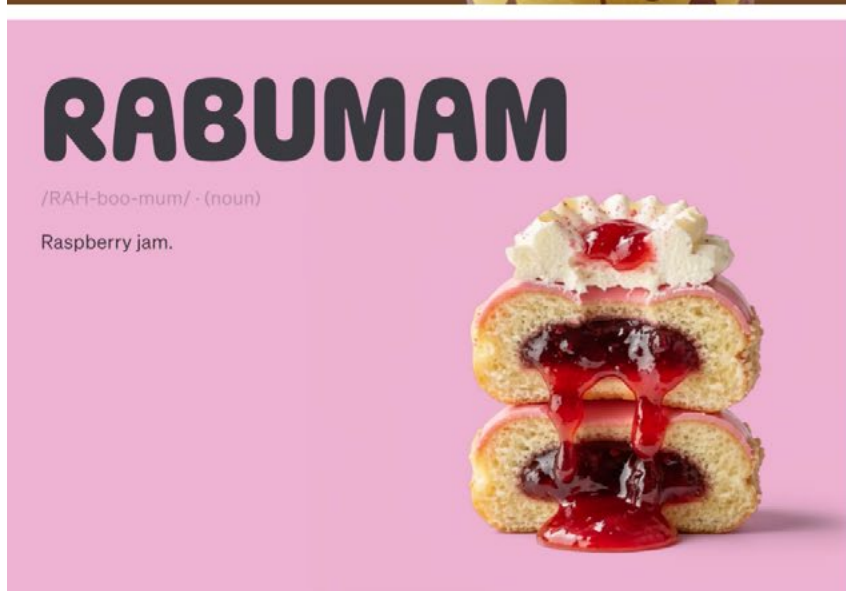
ABOVE **BARRATT** As part of a major rebrand, Barratt introduced George the Jaguar.

have an agenda, doesn't take sides, doesn't waver with the news cycle. It is simply, consistently, itself. In a world of complexity and noise, that uncomplicated warmth is a genuine emotional anchor. The mascot doesn't solve anything. But it reminds you of a time when things felt simpler. And that feeling, right now, is worth more than any claim a brand can make.

WE HAVE EVERYTHING. THE PARADOX IS CHOOSING TO CREATE BOUNDARIES.

In a feed of infinite sameness, a character with a face, a voice, and a point of view is the rarest thing a brand can offer. The mascot isn't a restriction. It's a statement of identity in a world that keeps asking brands to be everything to everyone.

BELOW **BUTTERBABY** A Butterlandia alien bringing desserts from his home to humans. In search of butter to save his planet



BELOW (LACOSTE) Les Monstres animation for Lacoste, bringing the iconic croc to life in an iconic fashion



FORWARD SIGNAL

The next evolution isn't the mascot as logo or even as host. It's the mascot as media channel.

Watch for mascots getting their own social presences, collaborating with other brand characters, appearing in content that has nothing to do with the product. The mascot stops being about the brand and starts being about the world the brand inhabits. That's when it becomes culture.

The warmth signal is structural too. In an increasingly frictionless, efficient, and cold digital world, warmth becomes a strategic asset. The mascot is the warmest thing a brand can offer. And warmth, right now, is in short supply.

BELOW (COKE) At Analogue, we have had the pleasure of working with Coke to reimagine and create mascots, including the iconic polar bear and Coke can.



BELOW (KELLOGG'S) Day Ones, version of Tony the tiger. J.I.D. reimagines Tony's iconic 1990s jingle, "Hey Tony," along with limited-edition Kellogg's Frosted Flakes release



TAKE THIS * * DO THIS

- **Stop thinking logo.** Start thinking host. Build a personality that guides experience, anchors community, and makes a transaction feel like showing up for something. If you can't describe your brand's point of view in a sentence, a mascot won't fix that.
- **Give it a world, not just a look.** The mascots that last have backstories, opinions, a way of speaking, who it is, not just what it looks like. What does it care about? What would it never say? That's the work.
- **Most brands still haven't done this.** That's not a warning. That's an invitation.

Build for the long game. A mascot is a commitment, not a campaign. The brands that get this right build an asset that compounds. It travels across every touchpoint, carries the brand into spaces advertising can't reach, and builds the kind of recognition that outlasts any media budget.

BELOW RED HEAD Oliver & Grace refreshed Redheads with Swiss modernist typography and a flexible grid system, modernising the iconic brand while preserving its nostalgic character.



BRAND MASCOTS ARE UNDERUTILIZED AND SHOW GOOD POTENTIAL TO BUILD BRANDS.

FORBES, 2026

[FF3-PARADOX]



THE WORD MASCOT LITERALLY MEANS LUCKY CHARM. AND LIKE ANY GOOD LUCK CHARM, IT ONLY WORKS IF YOU BELIEVE IN IT.

That's the real commitment. Not the design, not the launch. The decision to build something with genuine character and stick with it long enough for it to mean something. Because things change, brands evolve, and the question to ask before you commission a mascot ask: is this the right signal for where we're going, not just where we are?

When it lands, it compounds. We know this firsthand. Working on campaigns with brands like Coca-Cola

showed us what happens when a mascot becomes genuinely embedded in culture. It stops being about the brand. It becomes part of how people experience a time of year, a feeling, a memory. That's not marketing. That's legacy.

The flex is twofold. A mascot signals legacy when it lands. And it travels across every touchpoint without losing itself. That's a rare thing to build. But when you do, it lasts.

CONTRIBUTORS

Faye Mathieson - Trend QUEEN

Faye leads the trend reports and heads up marketing at Analogue. The queen of Seriously Playful. Chaos and energy in equal measure. She spots trends the way other people spot the weather: everywhere, constantly, whether she's looking or not. Reading three things at once. Talking about what she sees before anyone else has clocked it. Finger firmly on the pulse, never short of an opinion, and absolutely never short of energy. If you meet her she will mention Fresh Forward FYI, or ask if you follow us on Instagram.

Dave Robbins - Design Director

Dave leads the visual language across Analogue's trend reports. Every spread, every colour choice, every type decision is his. He believes design should make you feel something before it makes you understand anything. Him and Faye are constantly firing references, finds, and half-formed ideas at each other - the curation is always the hardest part. Vol.3 proves the point. Meet him in real life and it's 50/50 whether you're talking music or sandwiches.

WIDERTEAM

Alex Hilbert - Motion Guru

Alex lives in the renderfarm. Always rendering, always moving, always making things feel alive, he is the motion man.

Josh Watts - Web Master

Award-winning web developer. He will close all your tabs. The man shuts the windows. Every single one.

Joe Snow - Mascot King

Joe can turn anything into a mascot. No, seriously. Anything.

Fresh Forward is written and produced by the team at Analogue, a creative studio based in the UK, but works globally, and with that comes having global sensitivities. We make brands that mean something. If this report sparked an idea, a question, or a slightly uncomfortable feeling about your current strategy, that was entirely the point.

CAREEDNITS

