



JOHN PROVENCHER
IN CONVERSATION WITH
THEFUNNYGUYS



RASTER

RASTER IS A MARKETPLACE FOR ON-CHAIN DIGITAL ART, FOUNDED BY MICHAEL ELSDOERFER AND THEFUNNYGUYS (JAN) IN EARLY 2025 AND PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED ON SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2025. JOHN PROVENCHER HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE DESIGN OF RASTER SINCE BEFORE ITS LAUNCH AND CREATED ITS GENERATIVE LOGO SYSTEM.

IN THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION, JOHN AND JAN DISCUSS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM, THE IDEAS AND INSPIRATIONS BEHIND IT, AND THEIR COLLABORATION OVER THE PAST YEAR.

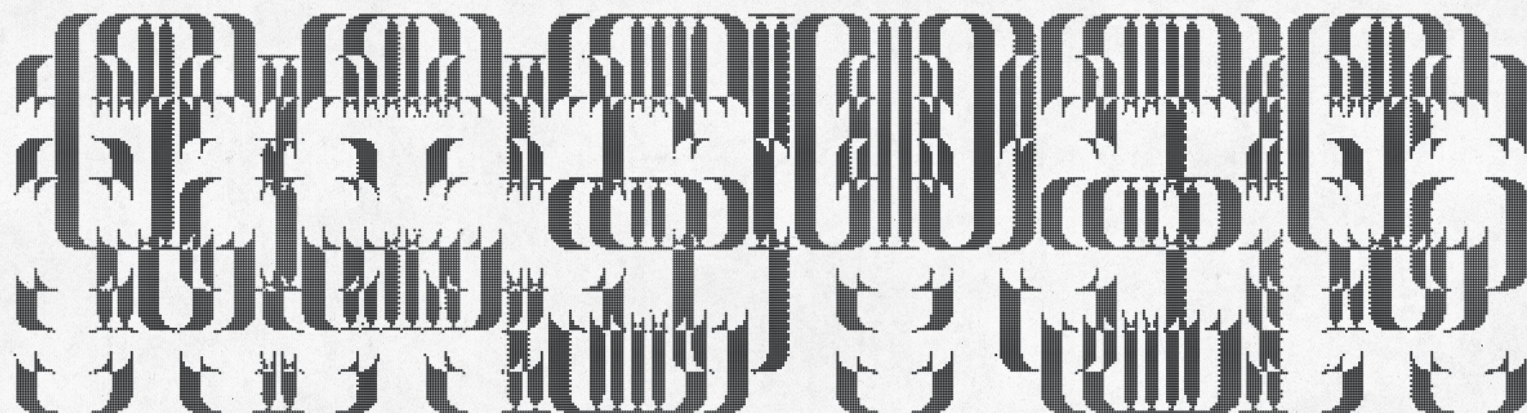
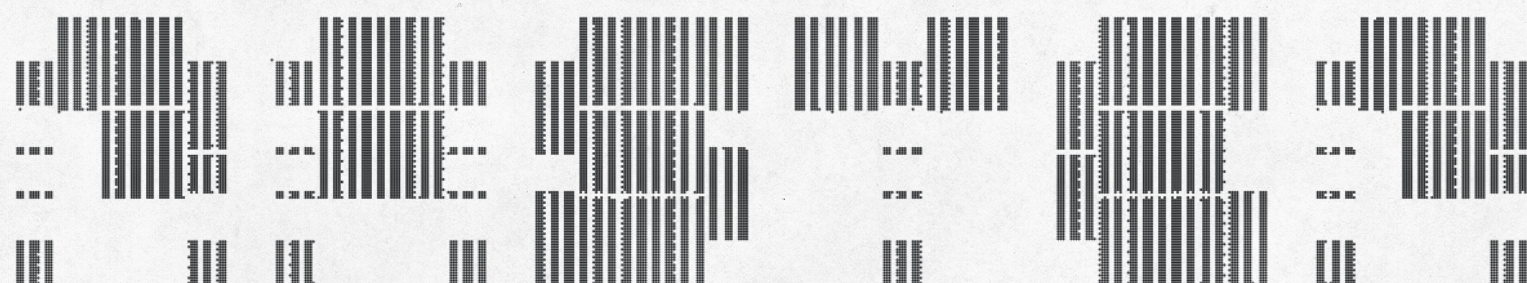
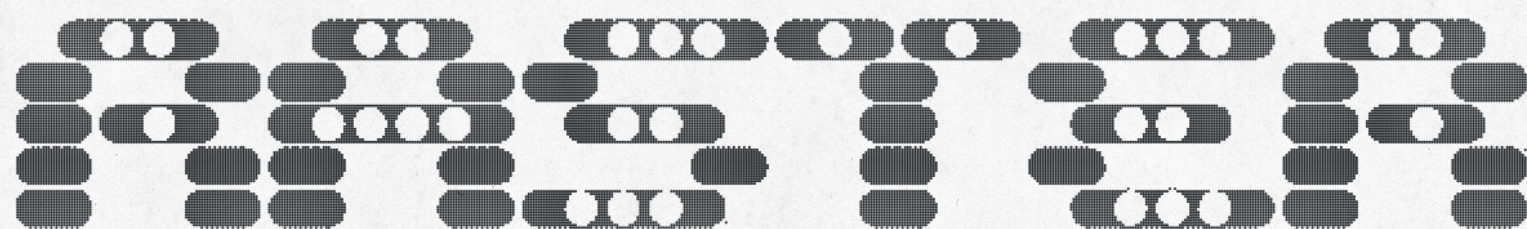
JAN: HI JOHN! IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE FIRST STARTED THIS PROJECT. HOW DID THAT HAPPEN AGAIN?

JOHN: HELLO :-> HMM I REMEMBER THE PROJECT BEING INTRODUCED TO ME AS A GENERATIVE LOGO THAT WOULD ALSO FUNCTION AS A SORT OF GRAPHIC IDENTITY FOR THE SITE. IT SEEMED COOL.. AND IT SEEMED LIKE AN IDEA THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN REALLY. I SPENT THE EARLY PART OF MY PRACTICE AS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER SO IT REALLY APPEALED TO ME TO MAKE A LOGO THAT WAS TRULY A GENERATIVE SYSTEM.

THE FIRST SKETCHES WERE CENTERED AROUND DESIGNING A STATIC LOGO CONCEPT AND THE ART DIRECTION/DESIGN FOR THE RASTER WEBSITE. THE MOST OBVIOUS IDEA WAS; HOW CAN WE CREATE A GRAPHIC IDENTITY FROM A SIMPLE GRID INSPIRED BY THE IDEA OF RASTERED IMAGES (GRIDS OF PIXELS TO MAKE AN IMAGE) .. I THOUGHT IT WAS COOL THAT THE LOGO, THE WEBSITE, AND THE GENERATIVE WORK ALL GROW FROM THE SAME CONCEPT.

IS THAT HOW YOU REMEMBER IT?

FASTER



JAN: YES, I REMEMBER MICHAEL AND ME TALKING ABOUT DOING THINGS A BIT DIFFERENTLY ON THE FRONT-END. THERE'S A TYPICAL "MARKETPLACE" AESTHETIC THAT WE KNEW WE WANTED TO STAY AWAY FROM. WE HAD ALREADY LANDED ON THE RASTER NAME AND HAD SOME VAGUE DESIGN IDEAS IN OUR HEAD: "LEANING INTO A GRID AESTHETIC", "LOGO / FRONT-END DESIGN SHOULD NOT COMPETE FOR ATTENTION WITH THE ART", ... BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THIS SHOULD LOOK LIKE.

SO WE STARTED LOOKING FOR ARTISTS WITH DESIGN EXPERIENCE TO HELP US OUT AND FROM THERE IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE WE REACHED OUT TO YOU.

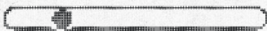
HOW DID YOU GO FROM THE STATIC LOGO TO THIS GENERATIVE SYSTEM?

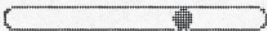
JOHN: I HAD AN INITIAL SKETCH WHERE I TOOK THE BITMAP WORDMARK BUT SCALED AND ROUNDED EACH PIXEL RANDOMLY AND USED SOME SVG CLIPPING TO GET SOME INTERESTING OUTCOMES. THAT SERVED AS THE BASIS FOR THE PROJECT..

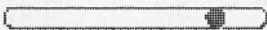
ONE THING I WAS KEEN ON WAS MOVING AWAY FROM SOME OF THE MORE OBVIOUS VISUALIZATIONS OF THE WORD RASTER. THE WORK ACTUALLY BECOMES MUCH MORE VECTOR-BASED. THE LOGO IS MADE FROM SVGS, WHICH IS A VECTOR GRAPHICS COMMONLY USED FOR LOGOS, SO ALTHOUGH IT STARTS WITH A PIXEL, THAT PIXEL CAN START TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ALL THESE OTHER THINGS THAT SVG ALLOWS.

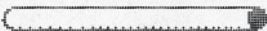
THE REAL CHALLENGE WAS CREATING SOMETHING TO HOUSE MANY OUTPUTS WITHIN 72 ACTIVE GRID CELLS TO CREATE SOMETHING INTERESTING.

RASTER

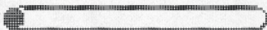
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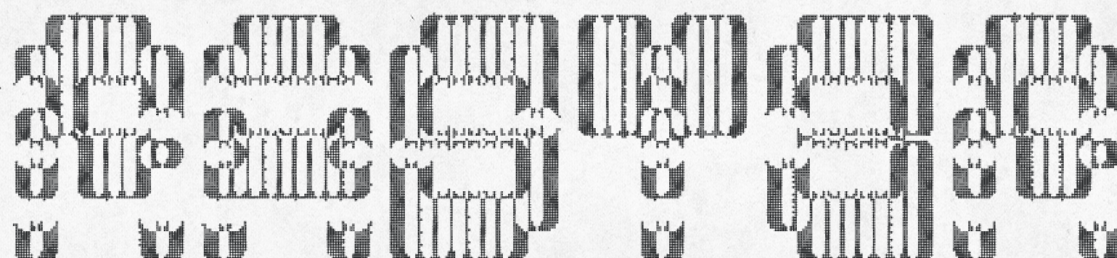
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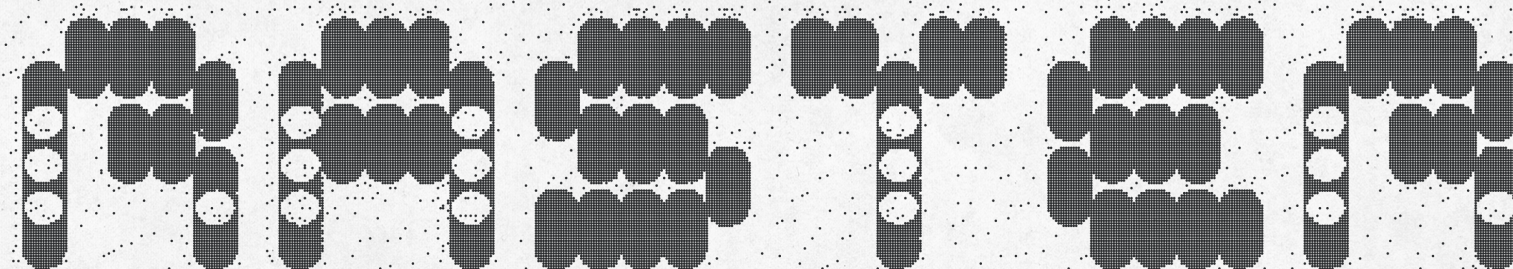
SAVE



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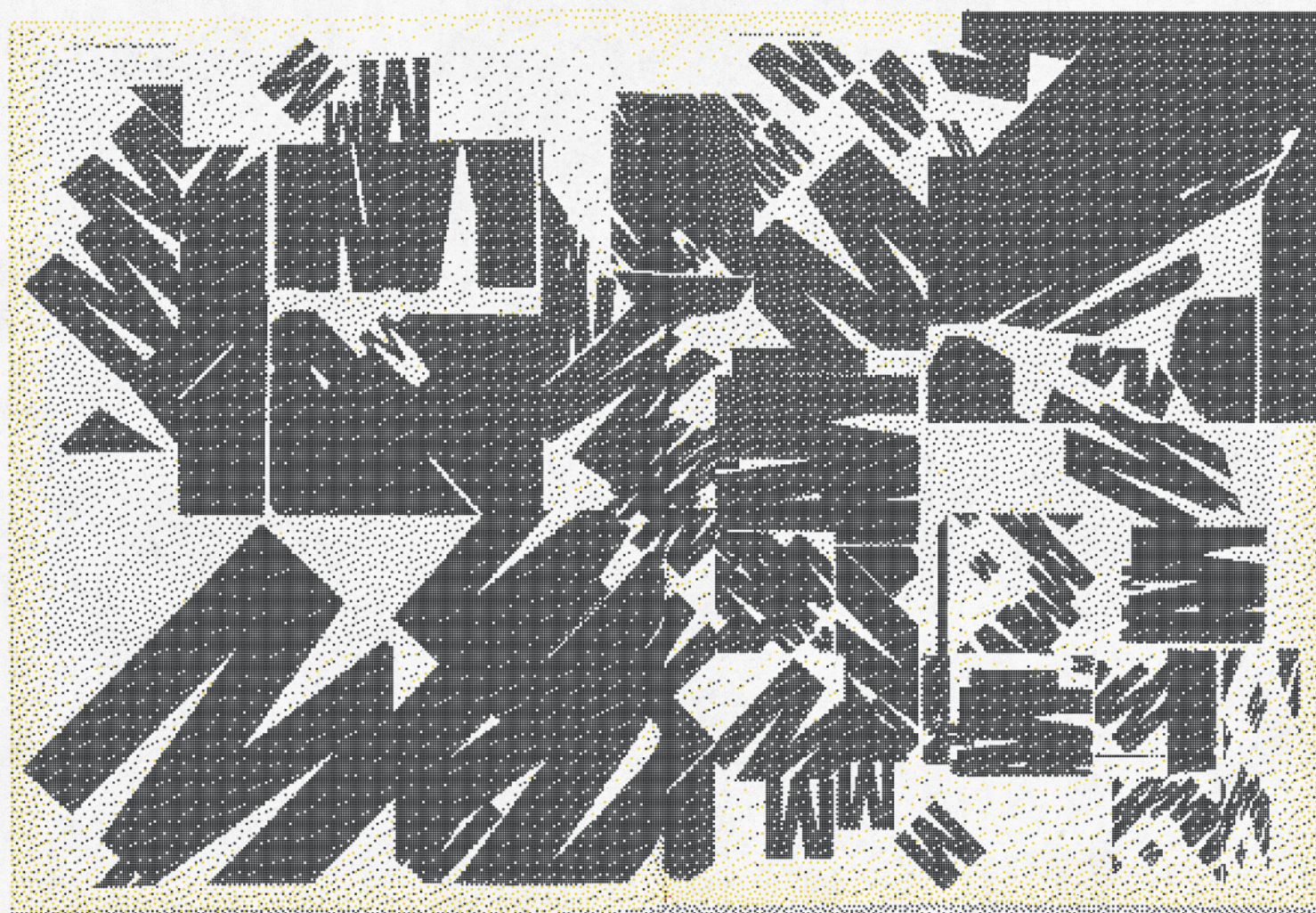


JAN: WHEN I FIRST SAW THE SYSTEM IT TOOK ME BACK TO EARLY EXPLORATIONS WE DID WITH MARCELO SORIA-RODRIGUEZ AT LE RANDOM. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT MIT MEDIA LAB'S GENERATIVE LOGO AND THE LOGO OF THIS OPERA HOUSE I FORGOT THE NAME OF. IN THE END WE DIDN'T MAKE LE RANDOM'S LOGO GENERATIVE, BUT MARCELO DID CREATE A BEAUTIFUL SYSTEM CALLED ALEATORIA THAT STILL WELCOMES VISITORS ON OUR HOMEPAGE.

AS FAR AS I REMEMBER, THE LOGO SYSTEMS I THEN LOOKED AT ALL OUTPUT PERMUTATIONS OF GEOMETRIC SHAPES WITH A STATIC WORDMARK NEXT TO IT. OUR GENERATIVE TYPOGRAPHY SYSTEM IS QUITE DIFFERENT AS IT COLLAPSES THE TWO.

I'M CURIOUS IF YOU HAD ANY REFERENCES IN MIND IN THE EARLY STAGES?

JOHN: YEA THERE'S DEFINITELY SOME MODERNIST DESIGN INFLUENCE LIKE WOLFGANG WEINGART AND WIM CROUWEL, NEVILLE BRODY ... THERE'S THIS TYPEFACE BY NEVILLE BRODY CALLED "BLUR" THAT I'VE ALWAYS LIKED AND YOU CAN START TO SEE SOME OUTPUTS THAT RESEMBLE THIS. BUT IT'S COOL THAT THE OUTPUTS HAVE SOME REALLY MODERN LOOKING INFLUENCE INTO SOME MORE POST-MODERN ONES. IT WAS FUN TO CONNECT THE GRAPHIC DESIGN PART OF MY PRACTICE SO THIS PROJECT WAS A WAY OF RETURNING TO SOME OF THAT THROUGH GENERATIVE SOFTWARE.



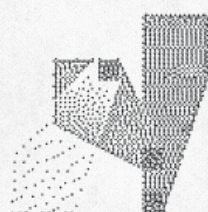
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FF Blur Medium

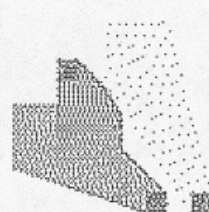
FF Blur Bold



MIT MEDIA LAB



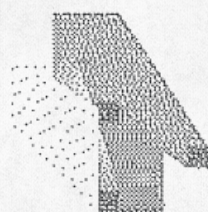
MIT MEDIA LAB



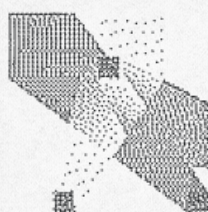
MIT MEDIA LAB



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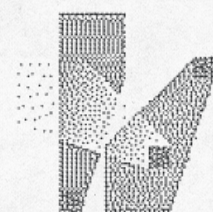
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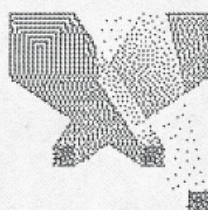
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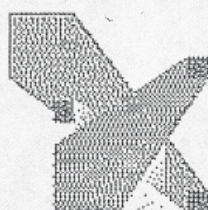
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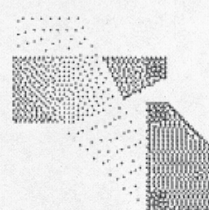
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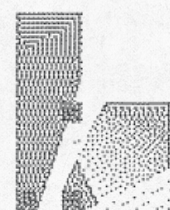
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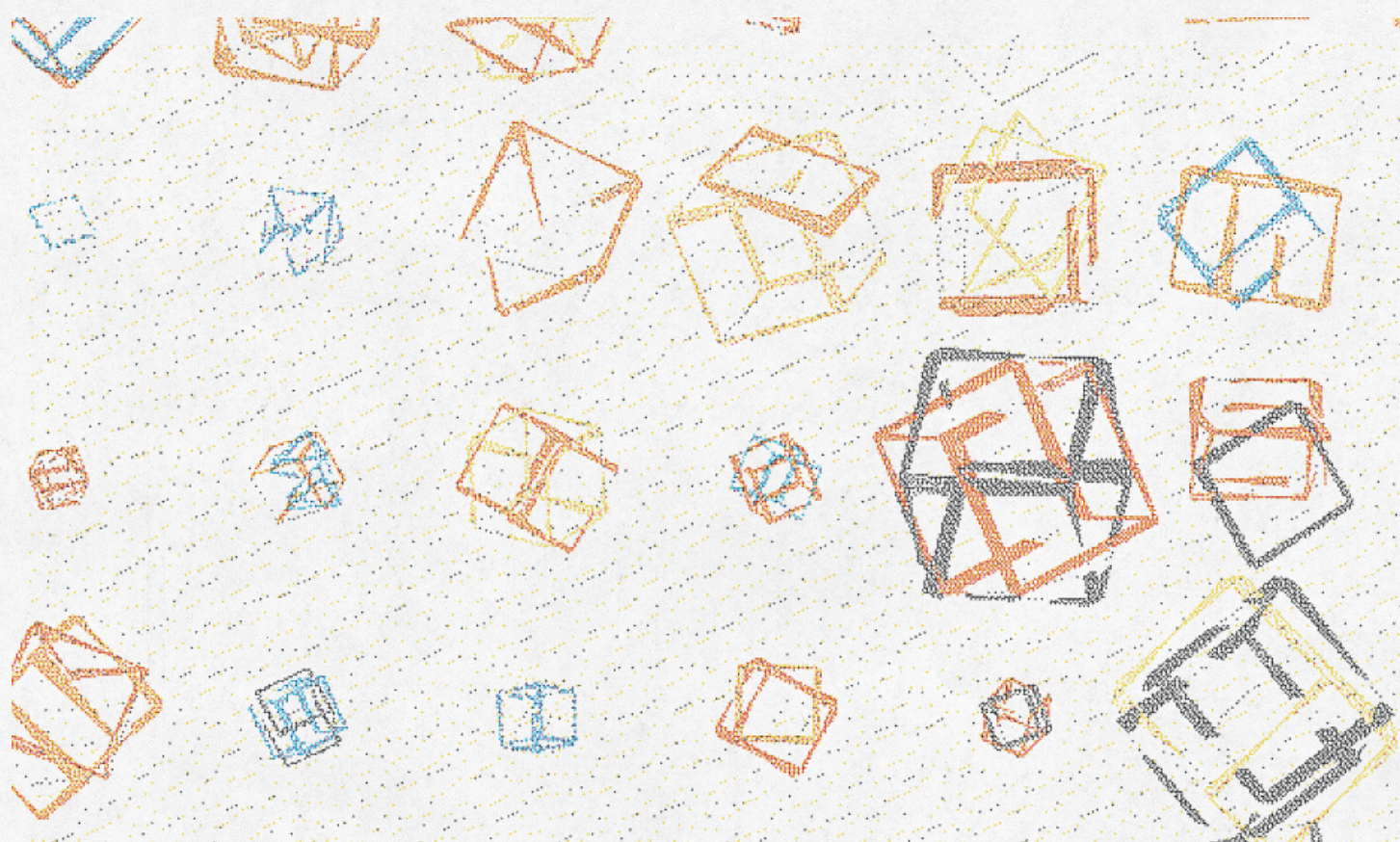
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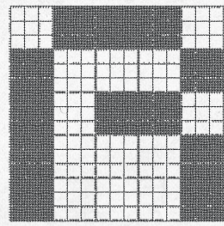
JAN: SO EVEN THOUGH THIS GENERATIVE SYSTEM WAS AT PLAY FROM THE START, WE ANNOUNCED RASTER WITHOUT IT. AS WITH MANY THINGS, WE WERE A BIT OPTIMISTIC WITH THE TIMELINE FOR THIS FIRST VERSION OF THE PLATFORM, SO OUR PROJECT ENDED UP GETTING PUSHED BACK TO 2026. I'M REALLY GLAD THAT HAPPENED, AS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SHAME TO RUSH IT, AND I THINK THE PROJECT NEEDED SOME EXTRA TIME TO MATURE ANYWAY.

CAN YOU TALK A BIT MORE ABOUT THE FINAL VERSION OF THE SYSTEM AND HOW IT WORKS?

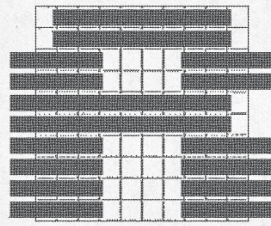
JOHN: SURE .. WELL IT STILL HAS THE BASICS FROM THAT INITIAL SKETCHES. THE BASE IDEA IS THAT EACH LETTER IS MADE FROM A GRID OF PIXELS. WITHIN THAT GRID, EACH PIXEL CAN STAY WHOLE OR BE SUBDIVIDED. THOSE SUBDIVISIONS CAN SCALE UP OR DOWN, AND PIXELS CAN ALSO EXCLUDE ONE ANOTHER, WHICH CREATES THESE DIFFERENT SHAPES AND OVERLAPS. EACH PIXEL CAN ALSO ROUND ITSELF, SO IT CAN MOVE BETWEEN A SQUARE AND A CIRCLE.

THE REAL CHALLENGE WAS CREATING A LARGE SCALE GENERATIVE SYSTEM THAT COULD HOUSE 1,000 TO 10,000 UNIQUE OUTPUTS SO I ADDED VARIABLES WHERE THE GRID WITHIN EACH LETTER CAN REORIENT, THE PIXELS CAN BLUR INTO ONE ANOTHER, THE SYSTEM CAN APPLY ONE SET OF VARIABLES ACROSS THE WHOLE WORD, OR EACH LETTER CAN HAVE ITS OWN SET OF VARIABLES.

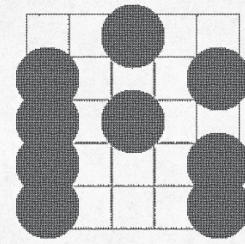
SO YOU CAN GET A WIDER VARIETY OF OUTPUTS THAT ARE STILL SAFEGUARDED TO READ AS A "LOGO" (EVEN IN ABSTRACT CASES!)



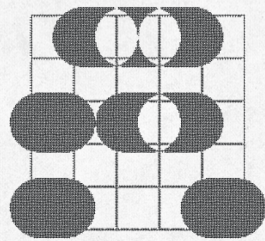
NEUTRAL SQUARE



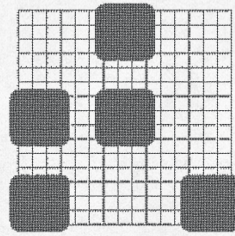
SQUARE SCALE



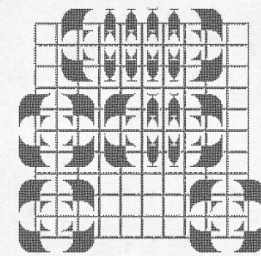
ROUND SCALE



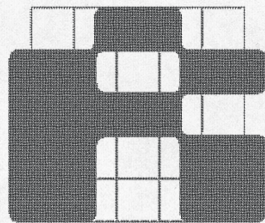
ROUND SCALE EXCLUDE



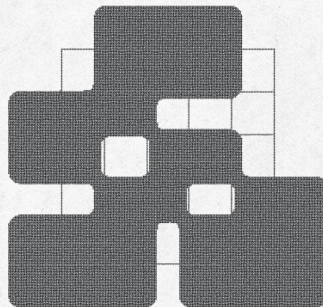
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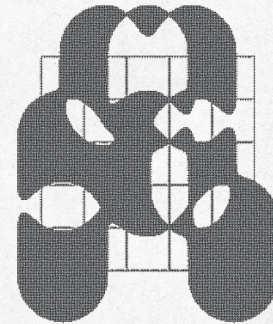
ROUND SUBDIVIDE EXCLUDE



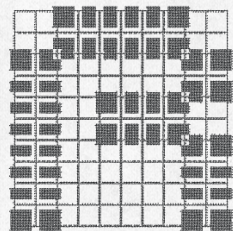
BLUR SCALE



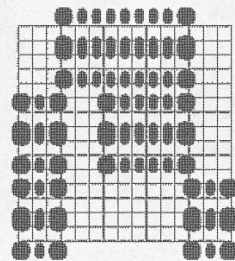
BLUR SCALE



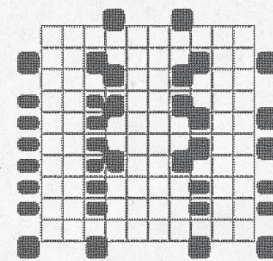
BLUR SCALE EXCLUDE



SUBDIVIDE EXCLUDE



BLUR SUBDIVIDE EXCLUDE



BLUR SUBDIVIDE EXCLUDE

JAN: I REMEMBER THAT THE GOOEY MERGE (OR BLUR) VARIABLE AND THE RANDOM VARIATIONS BETWEEN LETTERS OPENED UP A LOT OF NEW VISUAL VARIETY. ALL OF A SUDDEN THE RANDOMISE BUTTON BECAME A LOT MORE ADDICTIVE.

WHAT ABOUT COLOUR - I ACTUALLY DON'T KNOW HOW YOU LANDED AT THIS SPECIFIC SHADE OF GREY. COULD IT HAVE BEEN ANY OF THE 49 OTHER ONES? AND WHY DID YOU NOT INCLUDE SOME MORE EXPRESSIVE COLOURS IN THE END?

JOHN: HAHA HMM YEA I THINK THIS SPECIFIC GREY WAS USED IN SOME EARLY SKETCHES IN RESPONSE TO THE PURELY BLACK AND WHITE WIREFRAME YOU HAD. I THINK THE LOGIC WAS THE SIGHT FELT REALLY CONTRAST HEAVY WITH ALL THE WORK AND THE GREY HELPED TO SOFTEN THINGS.

FOR THE GENERATIVE PIECE, WE TRIED A FEW COLOR EXPLORATIONS BUT ULTIMATELY RASTER IS A PLATFORM FOR ARTWORKS SO IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE IDENTITY COULD LIVE ON THE WEBSITE WITHOUT COMPETING TOO MUCH WITH OTHER WORK.

GRAY HAS BEEN A KEY PART OF THE VISUAL LANGUAGE CONSTANT THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT FOR THIS REASON. THE WEBSITE HAS USED THIS GREY PLUS A BLACK FOR DARK-MODE AND WHITE FOR LIGHT-MODE SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE IF THE OUTPUTS COULD MIRROR THAT.

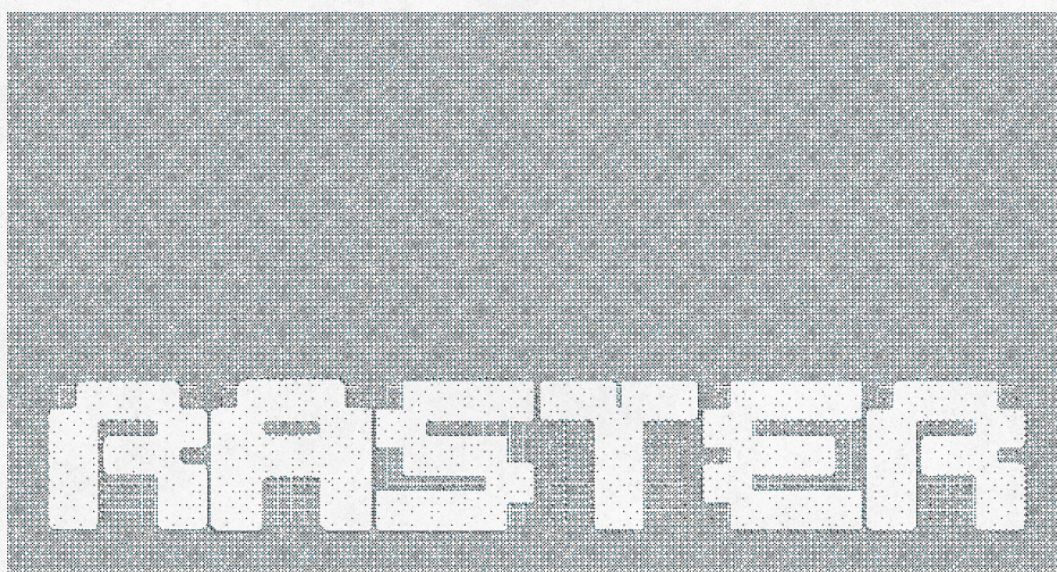
THE GENERATIVE SYSTEM CAN CREATE ENOUGH VARIATION WITHOUT COLOR, SO I KEPT THE COLOR OUTPUTS RESTRAINED.. IT LETS THE LOGO BECOME MORE ACTIVE WHEN IT NEEDS TO, BUT IT CAN ALSO SIT IN THE BACKGROUND.



INK



PAPER



PLATE

JAN: I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR COLLABORATING WITH US ON THIS PROJECT. IT'S PRETTY AMAZING FOR RASTER, ONLY ONE YEAR IN, TO BE SET UP WITH SUCH A UNIQUE LOGO SYSTEM. I ALSO THINK IT WILL BE FUN FOR OUR COLLECTORS TO MINT THESE BEAUTIFUL DESIGN OBJECTS THAT DOUBLE AS TIMESTAMPS OF THEIR EARLY SUPPORT FOR RASTER.

FROM A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE, IT FEELS LIKE A FULL-CIRCLE MOMENT AS IT WAS GENERATIVE ART THAT MADE ME COMMIT TO THIS WHOLE SPACE IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND I LEARNED A LOT FROM YOU THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS. I REALLY HOPE WE CAN FIND ANOTHER WAY TO COLLABORATE IN THE FUTURE.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE COLLABORATION AND WHERE THE PROJECT ENDED UP?

JOHN: YEA LIKEWISE! I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE DONE A PROJECT WITH ANYONE ELSE. I KNEW THAT YOU AND MICHAEL WOULD BE VERY OPEN TO IDEAS AND IMPLEMENTING THINGS IN AN INTERESTING WAY. I THINK THAT'S ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING PARTS OF IT, BECAUSE THE PROJECT SITS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A BRANDING PROJECT, AN ARTIST COLLABORATION, A GENERATIVE ARTWORK, AND ART DIRECTION. IT FEELS VERY UNIQUE TO ME TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE STRUCTURE.

AND I LIKE THAT THE GENERATIVE PROJECT CAN EXIST BEYOND JUST BEING AN ARTWORK. IT ALSO BECOMES PART OF HOW RASTER PRESENTS ITSELF TO PEOPLE AND INTERACTS WITH PEOPLE WHO USE IT. IT'S LIKE THE GENERATED ARTWORK IS A BUSINESS CARD.. WHICH IS WHY IT'S DESIGNED LIKE THIS "CARD" LOL. I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT AS A SORT OF HANDSHAKE BETWEEN RASTER, ME AND THE PEOPLE THAT USE IT.. TO EXPRESS OUR SHARED INTEREST IN GENERATIVE ART BEING A PART OF THE GRAPHIC DNA.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO COLLABORATE ON THE PROJECT :->

MASTER