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Gendering F/Loss

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Making the switch

MANUFACTURA INDEPENDENTE



Ana Isabel Carvalho and Ricardo Lafuente make up Manufactura Independente, a design research studio based in Porto, Portugal. Their design practice orbits around the principles of Free Software and Free Culture.
<http://manufacturaindependente.org>

Making the switch is one of the main issues in the Libre Graphics community.

The “professionals use Adobe” meme is still very prevalent, to the point that the Adobe way of doing things has become, to many, the one way to do serious design work. This myth has historically been emphasized by the prominent presence of Adobe in the graphics software arena.

The magazine you’re currently reading is, we hope, evidence to the contrary. While the process of reframing your mindset for a new tool is rarely straightforward, making the switch to F/LOSS design tools is not only an attitude but a refreshing new view on digital design work, moving away from the Adobe way of doing things.

Specialized GNU/Linux distributions like *Ubuntu Studio* or the *Fedora Design Suite* try to fill this gap. However, our impression is that these are closer to the audiovisual and web side of design, and do not devote as much attention to print—and we understand that choice. But it means that there’s still work to be done to show how F/LOSS tools can be a viable alternative to the Adobe suite for print designers.

We find that one of the reasons people around us have trouble switching is that the F/LOSS tool ecosystem is hardly the neat, shrink-wrapped experience that Adobe’s suite provides—and while we think that’s a plus for Free Software tools, it lacks the convenience that people crave. It is true that the scattered nature of the Free tool world makes it desirable, if not necessary, to have some hand-holding through the switching process. It is also true that convenience is the main enemy of principle.

So how can we reduce the effort in migrating to Free Software tools?

1. Give people easy access to Windows or Mac versions of F/LOSS design tools. Requiring an operating system switch is too drastic a change to ask as a first step (naturally, the goal is to make it clear that it’s a worthy change!).
2. Bring together software packages and their documentation, so that one does not need to hop between sites and software versions.
3. Provide a selection of resources that can be used immediately in those tools: brushes, presets, typefaces, ready-made configurations and examples.

These goals fueled the *Libre Graphics Kit*, a project we’re starting that tries to address these issues. It takes the shape of a physical access point, directly inspired by the “USB dead drops” explored by, among others, media artist Aram Bartholl. Our dead drops are read-only USB devices, accessible in public places, which contain a set of tools and resources that we’ve selected for people who want to try something different.

Providing a physical location to access these goes a long way further than telling people “go to site X and download version Y.” Picking locations such as art schools, hackerspaces and libraries can, we believe, work towards familiarizing people with F/LOSS workflows for print design.

We’re still in our first steps with this project, so we’d certainly appreciate whatever feedback you might have about the idea, especially if you’d be interested in placing a dead drop in your campus, office or local coffee house! We’ll be bringing a dead drop with us to our stand at FOSDEM, so be sure to drop by and see how it works.



**LIBRE GRAPHICS
MEETING 2014
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02-05 APRIL**

WWW.LIBREGRAPHICSMEEETING.ORG

LibrePlanet 2013

NOTEBOOK

Where

LibrePlanet 2013, Cambridge, Massachusetts

What

A two day conference, organized by the Free Software Foundation, exploring the diverse meanings of software freedom, as they apply to different people and contexts.

Most wanted

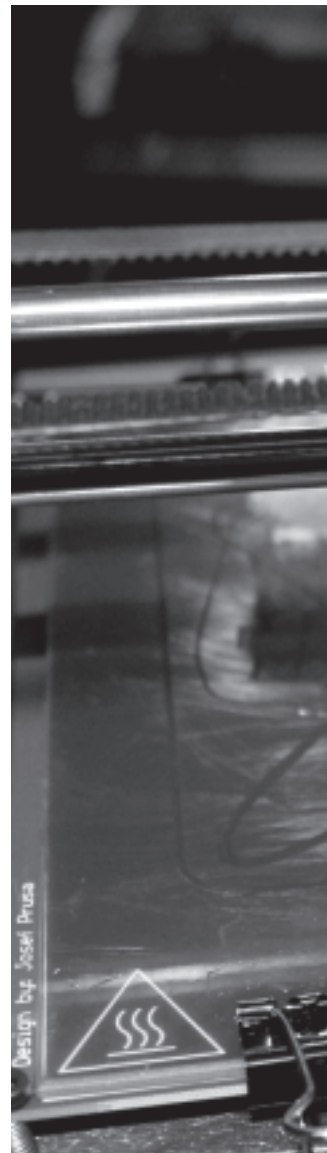
A 3D printer from Lulzbot was on show, printing out the MediaGoblin mascot and characters from Blender Foundation movies. Based in the popular RepRap community, Lulzbot has produced the first 3D printer to receive the Free Software Foundation's "Respects Your Freedom" hardware certification.

Best point

Leslie Hawthorn, channeling her years of experience as a community manager, offered an opening talk on negotiation theory. One of the key takeaways? There's a difference between being honest and being mean.

Best dinner

The day before the conference began, more than twenty people gathered for the Women in Free Software dinner. Coming from a diverse collection of projects, locales and roles, those present at the dinner offered proof that women in F/LOSS are both many and active.





New Releases



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>

<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digital-scholarship/2013/12/a-million-first-steps.html>

The British Library on Flickr Commons

A trove of illustrations spanning three centuries was released into the Public Domain by the British Library. Coming in 2014, a crowdsourced platform for tagging and identifying the images.

<http://greyscalepress.com/2013/books/eve-future-specimens-de-fontes-libres>

L'Ève future—Spécimens de fontes libres

From Greyscale Press comes a book packed full of gorgeous, permissively licensed type specimens. An indispensable tool for designers considering F/LOSS fonts.

<http://faitmain.org/volume-3/edito.html>

Fait Main magazine, Volume 3

An almanac of all things homebrew (in some cases, quite literally), the current issue of *Fait Main* offers lessons about stereos, soap and yes, beer.

<http://www.packtpub.com/multimedia-programming-with-pure-data/book>

Multimedia programming with Pure Data

Pure Data is a powerful tool for visual coding, but its learning curve might be too steep for some. This book comes to clarify and demonstrate how to use PD for audio-visual performances, interactive displays, animation and interface design.

<http://www.calligra.org/get-calligra>

Calligra

The KDE application suite is seeing fast progress: the 2.7.4 stable version is just out, and the 2.8 beta is available if you want a taste of the bleeding edge.

<http://subtlepatterns.com>

Subtle patterns

Simple, well designed and indeed subtle patterns, available with a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license. A subset of 88 Subtle Patterns is available as GIMP ready-to-use patterns. Get the zip at <https://github.com/dbb/subtle-patterns-gimp>

<http://fedoraproject.org>

Fedora 20

Following a tradition of funky version naming, the twentieth major release of Red Hat's community distro is known as "Heisenbug," and comes with sweet new things like more powerful networking, plus thin-client and ARM support. The release coincides with Fedora's 10th birthday.

<http://stdin.fr/Bazar>

Stdin Bazar

The Brussels-based design studio opened up their cupboards, sharing their homebrew HOWTOs, recipes and guides for a number of purposes, ranging from command-line image and video manipulation to database and typesetting software tips. All available under the Free Art License.

<http://reader.lgru.net>

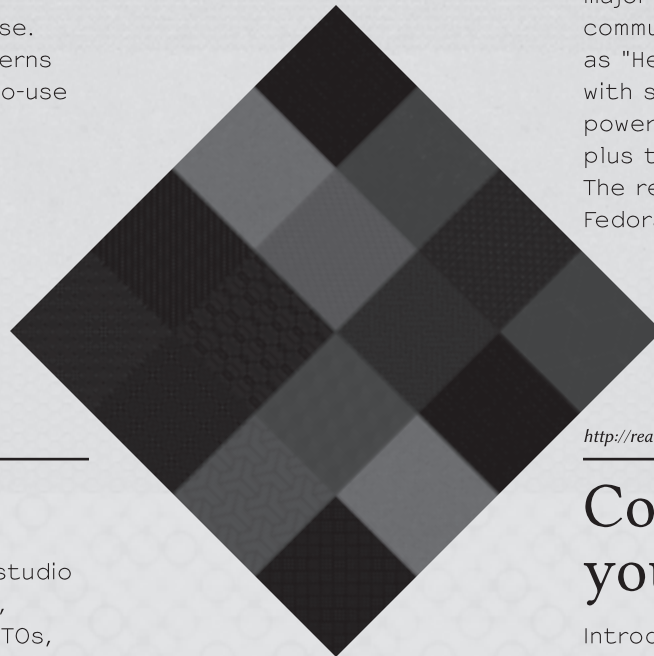
Considering your tools

Introduced as "a reader for designers and developers," *Considering your tools* responds to a dearth of literature around the use of digital tools in graphic design. The collection is an extensive and diverse set of texts and essays around language, gestures, devices and tools.

<http://stolen-projects.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage/products/alphabent-experiments-from-a-z-book-1>

AlphabeNt

Beautifully printed and put together, this publication by Drew Taylor and Daniel Purvis presents an alternative view of the latin alphabet from a glitch art perspective.



Ticking the other box

ANTONIO ROBERTS



Antonio Roberts is a digital visual artist based in Birmingham, UK.

He produces artwork that takes inspiration from glitches in software and hardware, errors and the unexpected.

<http://hellocatfood.com>

The digital world presents an opportunity for us to transcend the boundaries and limitations of the physical world. In the physical world we attempt to comprehend our day-to-day experiences with easy-to-define categories. Our lives are bounded by tick-box exercises that detail our age, race, gender, occupation and even occasionally our emotional well-being. We are bound to our location through documents and legal processes that restrict our movements. Everything that makes us unique and human is reduced to impersonal and bland form descriptions designed to make us easier to group and define.

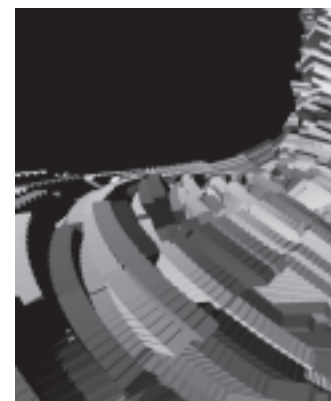
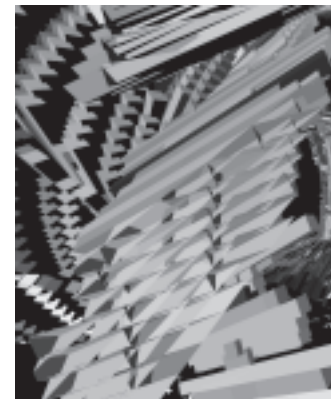
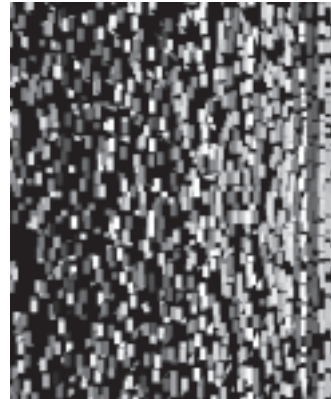
In the digital world, however, we can choose not to participate in this box-ticking exercise. At our own will we can transform ourselves from someone human and tangible to something other than ourselves and beyond definition. We can overcome the location boundaries and connect with others across the world simultaneously and without fear of repercussions. We can be everywhere at once or occupy an imagined space. We can choose to be neither male nor female, neither black nor white, neither old nor young. We can redefine ourselves and tick the “other” box if we wish to do so.

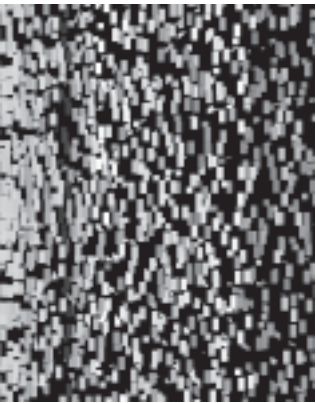
The digital world is infinite, its inhabitants faceless. Boundaries such as location, time, speed and language break down to create a world where art—music, dance, words—and anything imaginable can exist in a chaotic harmony. Only our knowledge and imaginations limit our experiences.

Or so I'd hoped.

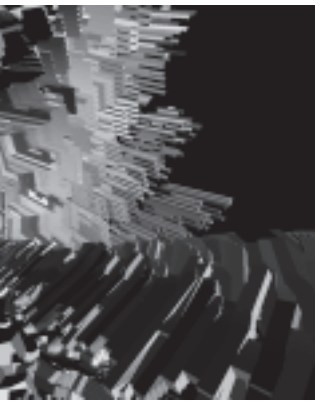
As the internet becomes ever more engrained within our day-to-day activities, more powers—governments, employers—attempt to restrict our movements through the digital world and remove the anonymous mask, making our digital experiences more closely tied to our physical experiences.

The digital world is becoming less of a playground for our ideas to run wild, with the same rigid, limiting boundaries we experience in our physical lives again being forced unwillingly upon us.

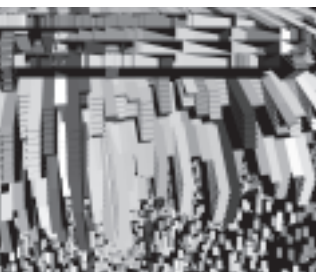




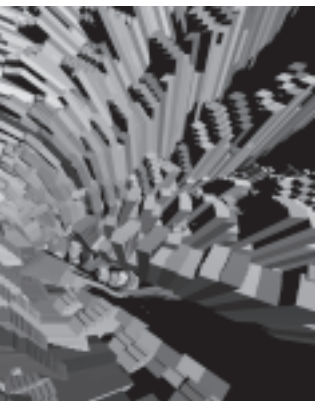
These limitations are being imposed on art. With the digital world should have come the end to localization of art. Many artists and institutions already practice this and allow those who aren't physically present to experience their works via recordings shared on video sites, as well as easier and more immediate access to documentation. The results of this sharing can only mean greater chances of engagement with a wider range of audiences, perhaps paving the way to collaborations and conversations not possible in the physical world.



So why do we still choose to restrict access to art based on location? What are the actual gains of denying access to a video on YouTube or an e-book on Amazon because of the user's location? How does denying access to the vast knowledge bank of Wikipedia enrich a person's life and fill them with knowledge?



These physical-world limitations also manifest themselves when it comes to abusive behaviour. Countless conflicts, quarrels, tiffs and disagreements occur daily over our physical appearances. Why, when the art published online has the potential to be completely anonymous from its author, do we still ridicule an artist based on their physical, human attributes such as gender, race or age? Why, in situations where the artist has made the conscious attempt to withhold their physical identity, do we strive to discover this instead of focusing on the art itself?



Do these politically charged actions do anything other than needlessly replicate the problems of the physical world and highlight inequalities? The physical world, with all of its problems is bad enough already. Let's not waste the potential of the digital world by bringing along our baggage.

Rewriting hacker culture

ERIC SCHRIJVER



Eric Schrijver (Amsterdam, 1984) is a graphic designer and a performance artist. He is inspired by programming culture. Eric teaches Design for new media at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, and is a member of the design collective Open Source Publishing.
<http://ericschrijver.nl>

There are not many women in IT, and even less so in Free Software. A 2004 report by the National Science Foundation finds roughly 1.5% of F/LOSS community members to be female whereas in proprietary software that number is 28%.¹

A 2006 European Union report analyzes the reasons for this disbalance. Within “hacker culture,” a great focus lies on the willed acts of the practitioners, on what people, themselves do: Your position in the community is based on the contributions you make and is thus “meritocratic.” More structural reasons why minorities are dissuaded to make these contributions in the first place, structural reasons that go beyond the single individual, are thus out of sight.²

It’s a thought process, shared by the more ruthlessly commercial side of geek culture, web 2.0 tech entrepreneurs: Tech blogger Jason Calacanis says race doesn’t exist in Silicon Valley—one gets one top through sheer will power and perseverance.³ This assessment is echoed by tech writer Michael Arrington who, not long afterwards stressed similar sentiments. While the tech community was rife with debates on racism, sexism, and just recovering from the suicide of Diaspora founder Ilya Zhitomirskiy, which triggered a debate on the work pressures of Silicon Valley, Arrington labels all that as “whining.” His message: Don’t whine, work hard, and the reward is yours.⁴

Still, the debate on gender is much more present now than it was at the time of the EU’s first research into the subject. A string of incidents surrounding sexist behaviour at conferences by male attendants (documented at the Geek Feminism wikia)⁵ brought attention to problems surrounding the attitude towards women in the communities of Free Software and Open Source. This has led to much debate, and also to actual improvement: Many conferences now feature a code of conduct, and a conference like Pycon has seen quite an uptake in both female attendants and speakers.⁶

What is discouraging though, is that there are community leaders who are quite dismissive of such efforts. David Heinemeier Hansson, lead developer of Ruby on Rails, dismissed the critique of a female unfriendly presentation, labeling it as harmless fun, and positing that in no way this kind of attitude could be what kept women out of Open Source.⁷

1. National Science Foundation 2004. Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering, NSF04-317, Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation

2. D Nafus, J Leach, B Krieger 2006. Gender: Integrated report of findings. Free/Libre and Open Source Software: Policy Support. UCAM, University of Cambridge

3. <http://blog.launch.co/blog/doing-the-right-things.html>

4. <http://uncrunchd.com/2011/11/27/startups-are-hard-so-work-more-cry-less-and-quit-all-the-whining>

5. http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Timeline_of_incidents

6. <https://twitter.com/jessenoller/status/315132950364708866>: “Over 20% female attendance at PyCon, from all over the world. 22 female speakers and teachers #PyCon”

7. <http://david.heinemeierhansson.com/posts/40-alpha-male-programmers-arent-keeping-women-out>

The Libre Graphics community, as I have experienced it through the LGM meetings, faces the same issues as other communities in free software, though for me it feels already rather open and diverse in comparison to other Free Software and Open Source communities I've partaken in.

It helps, I think, that in organizing these meetings, the organisers have not only teamed up with technical universities, polytechnics—a traditional locus of the engineering culture from which the hacker ethic has sprung—but also with two art institutions, Constant in Brussels and Medialab Prado in Madrid. These institutions bring with them other narratives regarding masculinity, femininity and the relation to technology. And, also in purely demographic terms, a different audience as well.

I feel glad that, in our way and our time, we are busy rewriting the narrative around technology and gender. There are downsides to the fabled "hacker ethic," and I am happy to know we do not need to keep constrained to this prototype—we are free to reinvent ourselves as people, and paraphrasing Judith Butler* now: Our hostile gender roles only exist for as long as we keep playing them out.

8. Butler, Judith (1990):
Gender trouble: feminism
and the subversion of identity.



Consensus is sexy?: The gender of collaboration

ELEANOR GREENHALGH



What does it mean to reach consensus? What, in fact, does it mean to “consent?” If we take the gender/ing of collaborative practices seriously, we should ask not only *who* participates and how they are represented, but in what ways a collaborative process may itself be gendered.

There is a rich feminist tradition of defining and arguing for the importance of (sexual) consent. And feminist models of consent offer useful tools for evaluating collaborative practices in other contexts too, be they sexual, democratic or artistic.

I have marched in the rain many times beneath the famous slogan, “Yes Means Yes and No Means No.” (Or its more upbeat cousin, “Consent Is Sexy.”) This black-and-white approach is an important starting point, in a culture where collaboration is too often made meaningless by coercion. But starting points are just that. As artists and activists we should ask: how much better can we do?

One reason for moving beyond a simplistic Yes/No model of consent is that it encodes a gendered power dynamic in its very grammar. “B gives consent to A, for proposal C.” In this grammar, an active (read: male) subject seeks consent for his proposal from a reactive (read: female) respondent. Moreover, we need to ask how B’s “yes” is produced. The way we understand and encode consent—in both our digital tools and social protocols—makes a difference. Consider these examples:

Using the organising tool eConsensus, there is a green icon for tagging a response to a proposal as “Consent” (but no button for refusal or veto). On Wikipedia, there is no “consent” button, but a policy that silence equals consensus.

The important point is that “consent” is not a stable or self-evident term. Its meaning and practice are variable and up for grabs. So what radical models of consent could we articulate for use in the open collaborations of sex, art or culture? How might we define consent in our own projects, and what methods of expressing it do we want to encode in our tools? These design questions are inherently gendered.

Many of the feminist proposals emerging today share a F/LOSS-like emphasis on communication and collaboration. Consent, rather than a type of gendered “permission,” has been re-defined variously as “an open dialogue,” “an active collaboration,” or “a process of affirmative participation.” Consent should not merely be the imperative, as one poster campaign put it, to “get a yes.” We must re-think consent,

not as an outcome to be achieved, but as a process in and of itself. Thomas Millar argues for this model of sexual consent by re-casting sex as an artistic collaboration. Conversely, we might discover interesting models for artistic collaboration by applying practices developed in intimate relationships.

One of these (feminist) practices is a tolerance for indecision and inaction. With its unpopular insistence that “maybe also means no”, a feminist ethics of sexual collaboration demands an unusually high tolerance for the possibility that “it” might not happen. Consent is certainly *not* always “sexy.” And when “it” is a design decision, a document, a project, this ethics is perhaps stretched to—or beyond—its limit. The term “design by committee” is reserved for those who fail to recognize this, who shrink from the necessary violence of decisive action.

However, a F/LOSS mindset makes us well-placed to question these assumptions, and to make imaginative use of artistic ambivalence. The Libre Graphics Research Unit's *Collision* project, for example, has showcased some excellent examples in the field of graphic decision-making. Its first work session in Brussels recently explored alternatives to the logic of conflict resolution underlying conventional graphic design practice.

Gijs de Heij ran a battleships-style game in which two teams attempt to avoid colliding on paper by sending commands to a plotter printer. In its sheer pointlessness, the game invited us to re-imagine the printed page as an open space where interactions can occur, rather than a grid where lead blocks compete for their share. Christoph Haag ran Lafkon's Forkable workshop, in which multiple collaborators contribute versions of a design to a git repository. Rejecting the imperative to choose one over another, the “conflict” is resolved by a bash script which picks versions at random and combines them in layers, producing a new iteration of possibilities each time it is run. On the final day of the meeting, digital and paper prototypes were created that attempted to realize this ethic of coexistence: using cross-hatching to indicate overlapping zones on maps, or accordion-style folding to accommodate multiple layers on the printed page.

Just as consent needs the notion of collaboration in order to become meaningful, collaborative practices need to look closely at how they implement consent. An ability to tolerate and make skillful use of indecision, privileging process just as highly as outcome, is where F/LOSS practices and feminism might come together. And *that* could be really sexy.



Eleanor's work on consensus and decision making can be found at <http://consensusus.org>

For more on the subjects and work explored in this column, see: *Collision* (2013) Workshop 1—Badness and Conflict http://blogs.lgru.net/collision/?page_id=2

Kramer Bussel, R. (2008) “Beyond Yes or No: Consent as Sexual Process”, in Freidman, J. & Valenti, J. (eds) *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (California: Seal Press).

Millar, Thomas M. (2008) “Towards a Performance Model of Sex”, in Freidman, J. & Valenti, J. (eds) *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (California: Seal Press).

Mothership HackerMoms:

Forging Open Source community for mothers

Aya de Leon and Sho-Sho Smith



For most urbanites, becoming a mother is like moving to another country, with its own language, culture and politics. For women artists, motherhood can be another planet. The pressure is extreme: We go from having one consuming passion that is unpaid/underpaid (making art) to having two underpaid passions (making art and people). Our own needs for community and creative stimulation can go unmet while we respond to the massive needs of young children. It's easy for mothers—and often expected in our culture—to disappear into their children. Motherhood is a hidden life, and mothers are a demographic hidden in the open. But there's a certain kind of highly creative woman who won't accept invisibility. Enter Mothership HackerMoms.

Hackerspace:
3288 Adeline Street
Berkeley, CA 94703

<http://mothership.hackermoms.org>
info@hackermoms.org
facebook.com/MothershipHackerMoms
& twitter.com/hackermoms

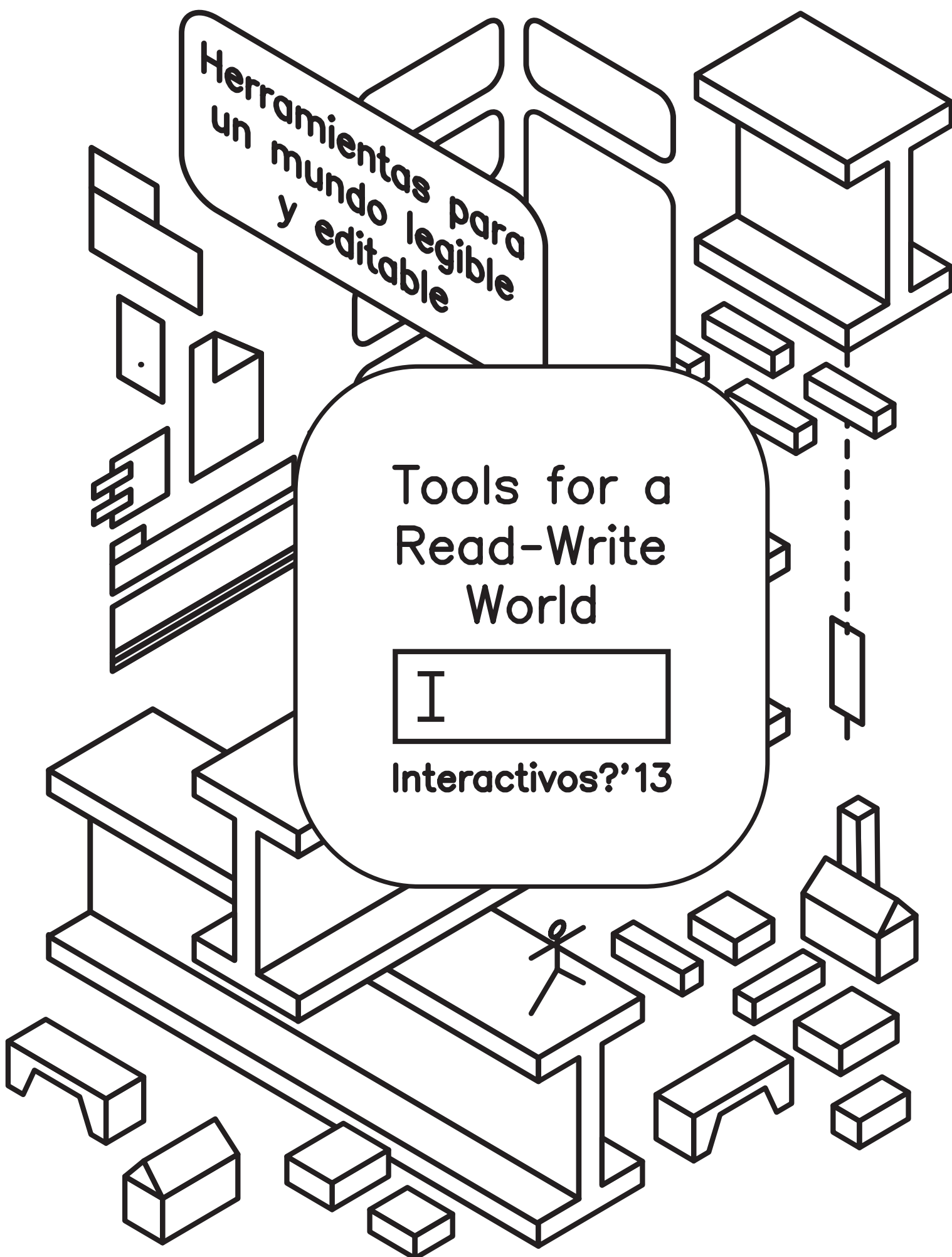


Though the free market offers “options” to help us out—hiring childcare, paying for classes—there’s really no service in America dedicated to improving the lives of mothers. HackerMoms aspires to be the mythical village that raises the child and takes care of the mother, a village that mothers themselves had to create. The HackerMoms mission is twofold: To give mothers of every gender the time and space to explore DIY craft and design, hacker/maker culture, entrepreneurship, and all manner of creative expression – with childcare; and to teach children the creative process through Hacker Sprouts, our educational childcare program. With onsite childcare and hands-on community workshops for adults and kids, HackerMoms creates families that build together.

We need a parenthood commons. We need open source activities for families – and not just park playgrounds. (I never manage to make my own art in a park). HackerMoms unites a community of mothers—and by extension, our children and partners, too—around our deepest passions of creative work and children. We’ve also become a unique business incubator that supports entrepreneurship and growing income from creative endeavors.

We are betting that a happy mother—that is, a fulfilled woman learning and using her talents—is good for herself, her family, the community and the world. At just a year old in April, the HackerMoms model is still young, but it’s working. We’ve had requests from moms of every gender—dads, non-moms, LGBT moms also factor in the HackerMoms membership—who would like to see more HackerMoms spaces around the world. Our biggest success to date? Making motherhood visible. HackerMoms have hacked a hackerspace to suit mothers.

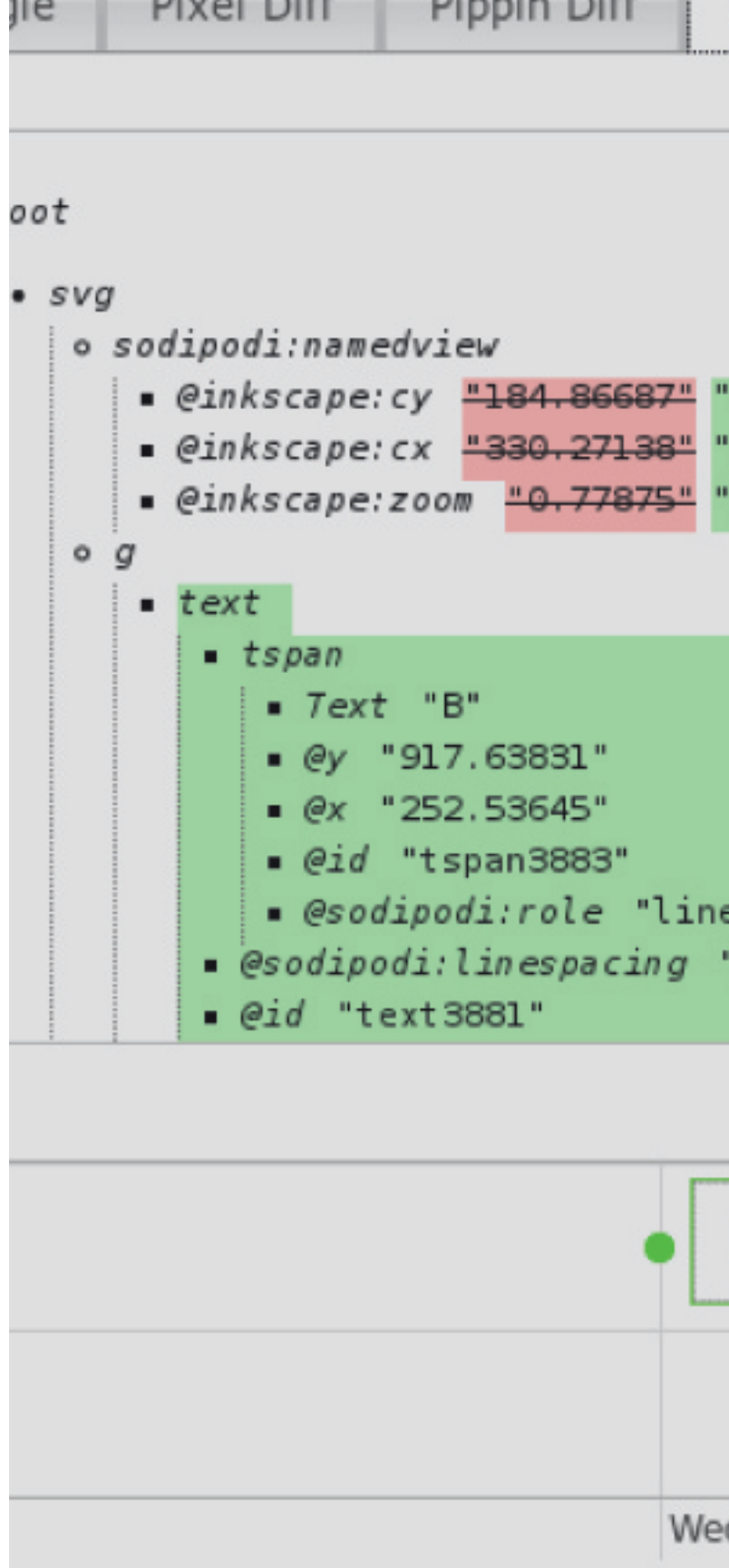
Aya de Leon is a performer, blogger and novelist.
Sho-Sho Smith is a writer and co-founder
of Mothership HackerMoms.



The Libre Graphics magazine team took part as advisors in Interactivos?'13, an event hosted by Medialab Prado.

The premise of Interactivos? is to promote the development of promising ideas by joining together practitioners and learners, who spend a week hacking and building beautiful outcomes.

The theme of Interactivos?'13 was “Tools for a Read/Write World.” In this dispatch, we feature the projects that represent the 9 different takes on this theme by a diverse group of experts and enthusiasts.



Design with Git

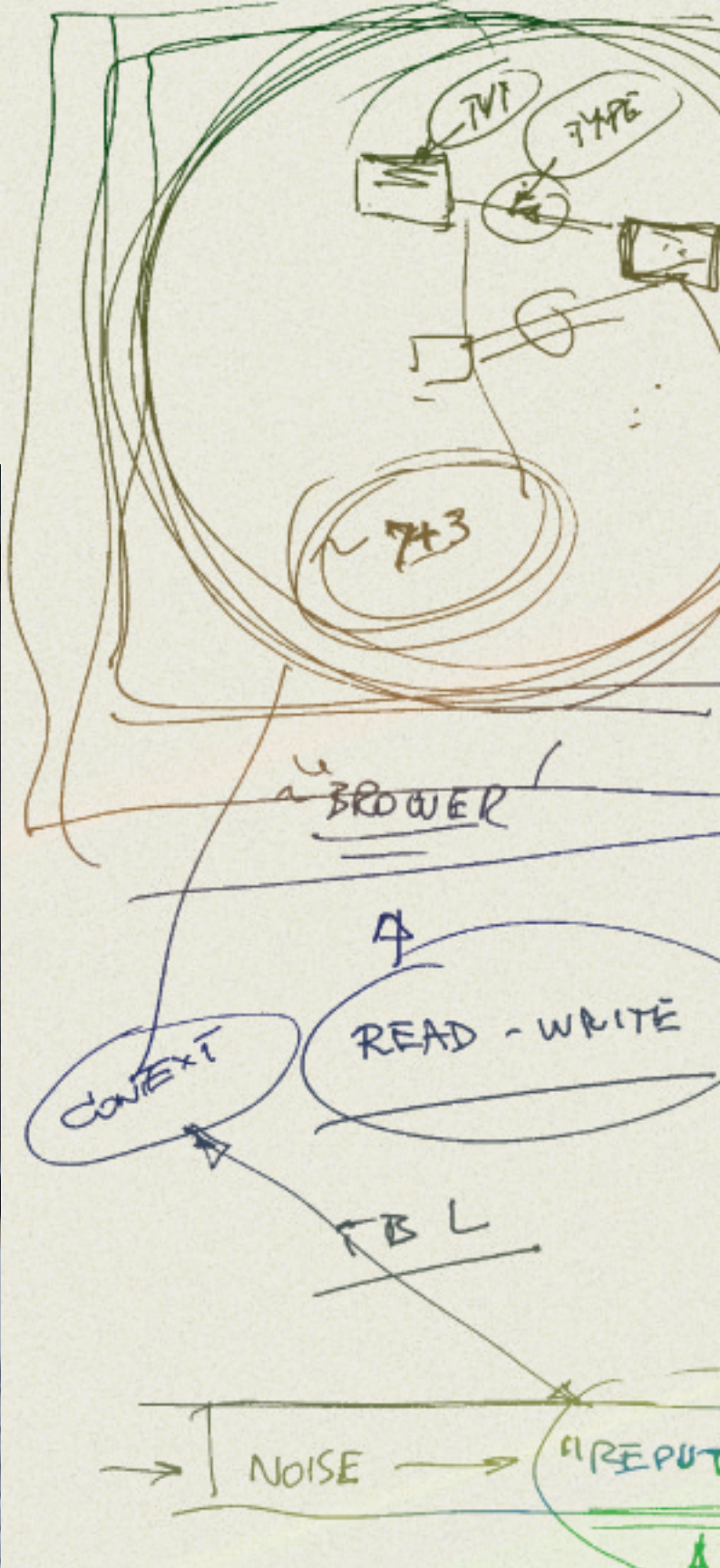
A visualizer of the commit history of SVG files, meant to improve collaboration, encourage the use of version control systems and push the designer's workflow into unknown territories.

http://w.xuv.be/projects/design_with_git

Freedom of Speech Kit

An interactive and portable digital banner that displays messages sent via internet, to empower citizens by freedom of speech in public space.

<http://freedomofspeechproject.org>



Incoma

An Open Source internet platform that serves as a space for thought and discussion, specifically designed to allow massive access and interactions, to try and answer the question "How can we think together?"

<http://incomaproject.org>

Yes, No? Maybe

A research project on how decision-making tools might allow for and record users' ambivalence. "Yes" doesn't always mean "yes." So how can we encode "maybe?"

<http://tiny.cc/yesnomaybe>



El Recetario

A collaborative platform for research and experimentation on the use of waste to construct furniture and accessories, where people can share what they do and how they do it.

<http://www.el-recetario.net>

Colaboratorio de relatos #Hackmito

An experiment of collective creation through the remixing of collective imagination and characters, and through this reflection about open culture and the commons environment.

<http://hackmito.wordpress.com>



Grapa

A site dedicated to promoting Libre editions and publications, focusing on the development and gathering of software, hardware and practices to rethink printed culture.

<http://grapa.ourproject.org>



A tool which enables designers, patternmakers and consumers to express ideas, customize products, order individually-sized unique patterns and garments and enter into creative business relationships.

```
front_across_chest=14; //middle
front_full_width=19; //across f
front_shoulder_height=18; //fro
front_shoulder_width; //called
front_shoulder_slope; //shoulde
front_shoulder_seam=5.25; //ler
front_waist; //measure waist in
front_side_waist_depth; //front
AAx = 0;
AAy = 0;
ABx = AAx;
ABy = AAy + front_center_length
ACx = AAx;
ACy = ABY/5;
ADx = ACx + front_across_chest/
ADy = ACy;
AEx = AAx;
AEy = ABY - front_shoulder_heig
AFx = dist(ACx, ACy, ADx, ADy)
AFy = AEy;
AHx = AEx + neck_width/2;
AHy = AEy;
AGx = AFx;
AGy = dist(AAx,AAy,AEx,AEy) - s
AJx = ABx;
AJy = ABY - 1.375 - (1.014*side
AKx = AJx + front_full_width/2;
AKy = AJy;
ALx = AKx;
```



<http://fontforge.org>



Gendering Craft

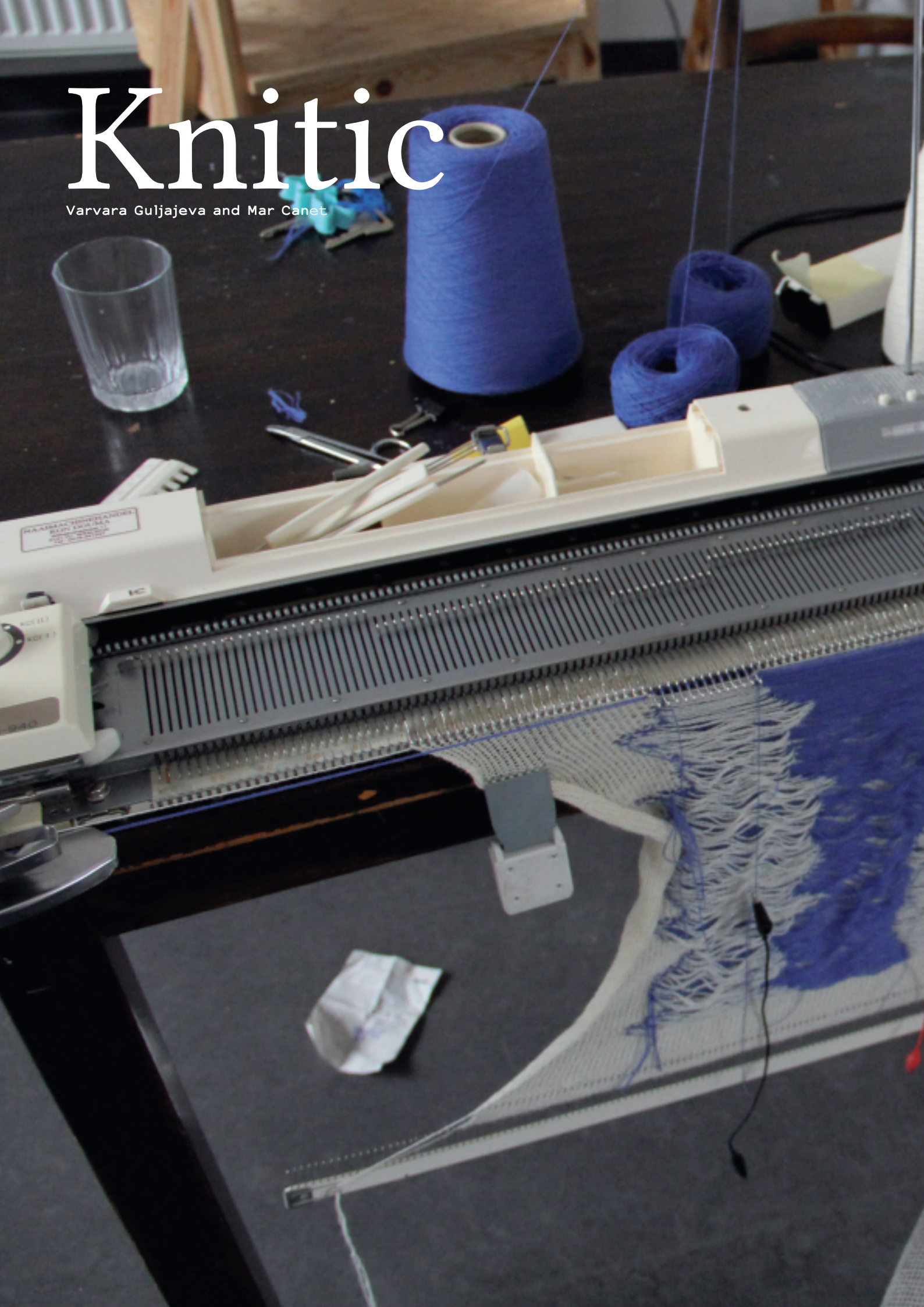
SHOWCASE

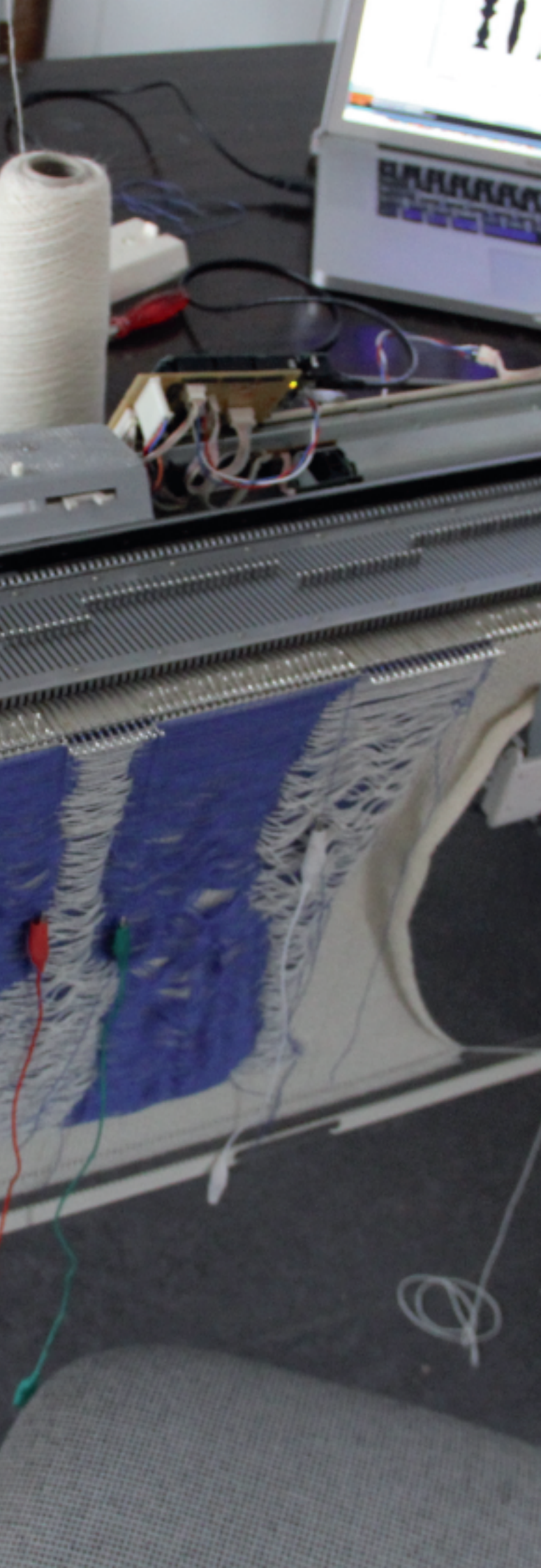
Our showcase this issue focuses on gendered work in craft. The term “women's work” has been variously applied to such diverse tasks as household chores, child care, textile labour and virtually any task deemed un-manly at a given moment and in a given cultural context. Conversely, if someone is said to have “done a man's job,” it may well mean that some task was done with competence and skill. In this showcase, we seek to show work which overturns standard conceptions of what it is to do women's work or a man's job. In the following pages, images of computerized knitting, code-inspired embroidery and women infiltrating F/LOSS offer windows into sites of subversion, in which the gendered natures of crafts and tasks are blurred.



Knitic

Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet





Knitic is an Open Source knitting machine, controlling a Brother electronic knitting machine via Arduino. To be more precise, Knitic is the new “brain” of a knitting machine. From the electronic part of the original machine we use only the end-of-line sensors, encoder and 16 solenoids. With Knitic, one can knit as long a pattern as desired, as well as modify the pattern on the fly.

Why are we developing Knitic? Because we feel the knitting machine, as the first automatic domestic fabrication tool, has been totally overlooked in the age of digital fabrication.

<http://knitic.com>

<http://varvarag.info>

<http://mcanet.info>



Our manager
Drop a bomb on professional
Data as all assistant

Transaction that you doing
You would like new companies

Setting-up companies
Setting-up companies setting-up
Companies winding-up.

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ZONE

Ele Carpenter

The Embroidered Digital Commons is a collectively stitched version of the Raqs Media Collective's 2003 text "A Concise lexicon of/for the Digital Commons," facilitated by Ele Carpenter.

The term "Zone" featured here was facilitated by ArtYarn in collaboration with MADLAB for "Analogue is the New Digital," an exhibition curated by Simon Blackmore and Andrea Zapp, AND Festival, Manchester, 2010. Supported by Arts Council England and Manchester Metropolitan UniversityMU/MIRIAD.

The Zone Embroiderers are: Charlotte Bacci, Katie Brandon, Jo Burton, Ele Carpenter, Jane Deschner, Dawn Elwell, Rachael Elwell, Jan Willem de Fockert, Sally Fort, Sarah Al Haddad, Lulu Hankin, Alex Hodby, Adamandia Kapsalis, Liz Kenney, Heather Kerr, Marianne Laimer, Silke Lambers, Judy Lambert, Maggie Lister, Marie Pattison, Steph Peters, Carrie Reast, Jen Southern, Carol Taylor, Laura Ward, Rebecca Aimee Lanyon Willmott, Katie.

<http://open-source-embroidery.org.uk/EDC.htm>

A Site,
Within a
Location,
on a Work,

That Demands
an attenuated
awareness

because of the porosity of the lines

that
demarcates
its existence

Or
Because
They
Witness
A Lot Of
Traffic.

IT IS
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TO
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a Zone.

ALERT
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another

Where I go I like to fuzz.

The Zone
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They are best entered and
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abandoned
railroads

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connect
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A Zone is
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BECAUSE
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AND
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ideas

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Serendipity.....

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Depending
on  one's
Longitude,

but Twilight
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in the Longer
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Web



Lelacoders

Spideralex

Lelacoders is a cyberfeminist research project about women's contribution to computer science, Free Software and hacker cultures. Those contributions have been little-studied and seldom made visible. Lelacoders' research has sought out women developers and hackers in order to better understand their motivations, practices, and technological perspectives. The research questions why women are under-represented in computer science, studies which practices and initiatives have been successful in overcoming barriers, and analyzes the experiences and subjectivities of many programmers who have chosen to use Free Software for their techno-political practices. The project aims at developing a documentary with Free Software that will be released on the internet using a free license.

<https://n-1.cc/g/donestech+lclacoders>

<http://www.studioxx.org/en/res/alexandra-hach%C3%A9-lclacoders>

<http://vimeo.com/channels/535358>





Small & Useful

There's an adage in the software world: programs should do one thing very well. In that spirit, we offer you a round-up of small and useful programs and resources which do one thing particularly well. This issue, we focus on some key concepts for understanding gender issues.

The Geek Feminism Wiki

A clearinghouse of concepts and discussions crucial to understanding and promoting issues of equality and representation. What makes it crucial is its understanding of F/LOSS and geek culture, framing its critiques and suggestions in ways that make concrete sense.

http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Geek_Feminism_Wiki

Some key concepts:

Intersectionality

The idea that different kinds of oppression and marginalization can't be treated individually, but must be considered and acted upon as a whole.

<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Intersectionality>

Privilege & privilege checklists

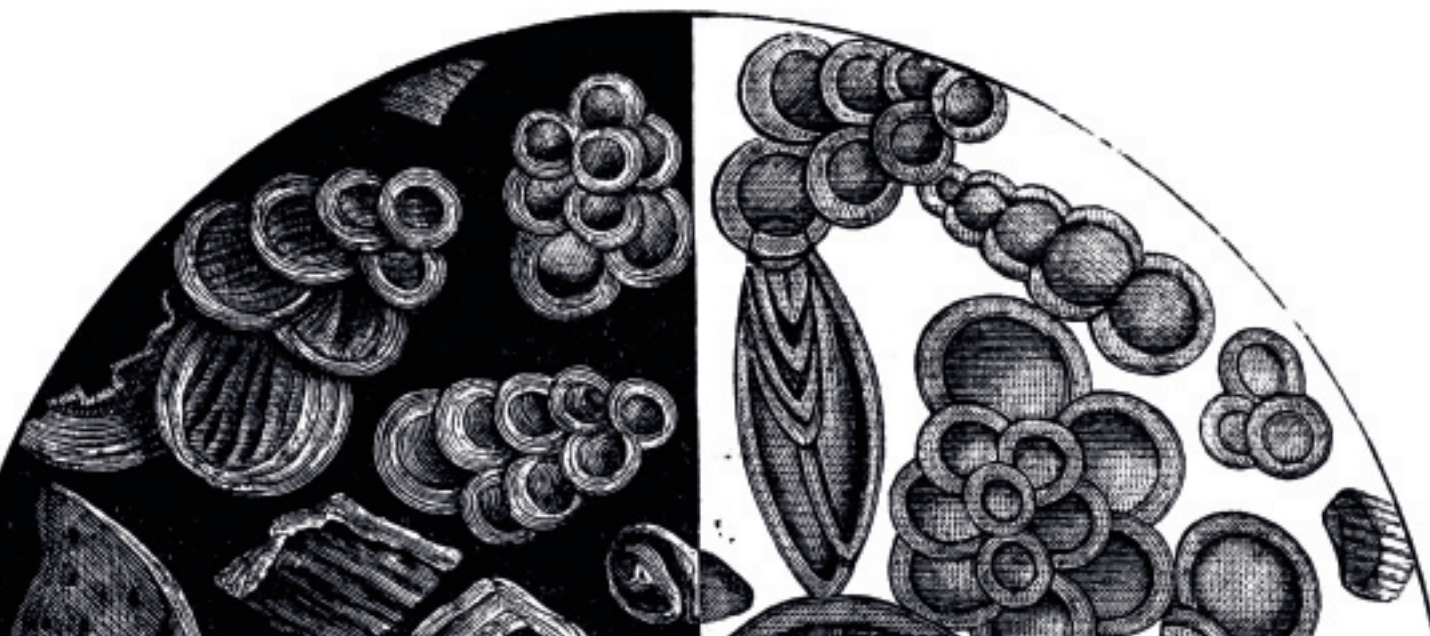
The idea that a group, though they may not be intentionally hostile to others, may have a set of unknown or unnoticed advantages over other groups. Privilege checklists are a way of making such advantages visible.

<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Privilege>
http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Privilege_checklist

Bechdel test

The famous test of woman-friendliness in media. This article also includes variations of the test which focus on other issues.

http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Bechdel_test



HAVE YOUR SAY.

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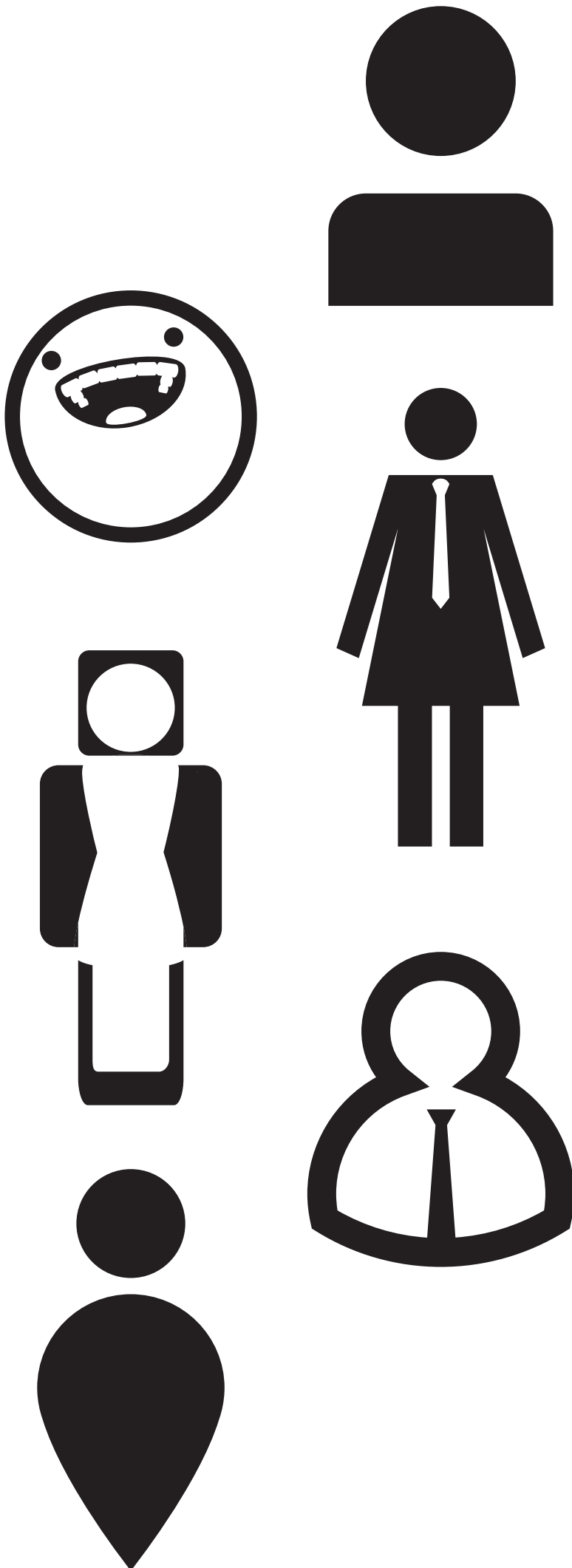
Best of people icons

Icons generalize. A particular icon represents not one individual object or person, but a whole collectivity of things. A picture of a knife and fork, posted at the edge of a highway, means “restaurant” in the most general sense.

We routinely represent people with similar simple icons. Perhaps the most familiar are the men and women posted on lavatory doors, letting us know which room we should use.

The classic difference between these two icons is the skirt, but there are ways of representing gender (or not) which go beyond the skirt/pants decision.

Below, we present a set of icons which blur the lines of gendered icon design, collected from *The Noun Project*.





The Empowermentors Collective—an interview

Kýra is the founder of the Empowermentors Collective, a new initiative for multiply-marginalized women and queers of colour interested in Free Software and Free Culture. Kýra was interviewed by ginger coons during Libre Planet 2013 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

ginger coons In starting the Empowermentors initiative, what are you aiming to do?

Kýra First and foremost, it's a space. It's a space for intersectionally-marginalized people of colour.

So by intersectionally-marginalized, that's some lingo that a lot of people don't understand, but basically, people who hold another marginalized identity, whether they're women or gender queer or trans or a person with disabilities, any of these things. As long as they're also a person of colour. They're welcome to join the group. At its core, I started it as a space for that. Anything that comes out of it is subject to change, but it's for those people in Free Software and Free Culture communities. Things that I personally wanted to work on through it, which if other people don't want to, that'll change, was to serve similar purposes to Linux Chicks or GeekFeminism in documenting these issues and experiences for people. As well as to, instead of focusing on being assimilated and normalized in the movement, actually to create a movement that fights for itself and to approach the issues. We're not trying to just make the broader Free Culture/Free Software movement something that people of colour will feel welcome in. We're trying to introduce a new way of approaching the issues entirely. Fundamentally. So you can't do that just by calling people out. So the name "Empowermentors," as it implies,

is about empowerment, which is what Free Software is supposed to be about, but also mentorship and reaching out to people who are also not normative. Instead of just putting those folks in positions that are speaking positions. People have a community that they can reach out to and join and other people. And feel safe and validated.

In terms of this focus on intersectionality and people who are multiply marginalized, some people would say that you're drastically cutting down...

Who we can reach out to?
It's such a small niche?

Yeah. At the moment there aren't a lot of people who are interested in Free Software and Free Culture who would fit into...

We're not trying to be big. This is for us. This is not for the broader movement to feel better. This is providing a space for the people that need it. If you don't need it, that's really great for you, but other people do. And this speaks to all the people who, when the group was announced,

were like "Oh, I'm a white man, but I feel a sort of kinship with all these people and I wish I could be included." The rest of the community already includes you. You have your space. It really says something when people don't recognize that, when the tables are turned, there's an imbalance there.

I guess what I'm getting at here is this question of: All right. Makes sense. Draw your boundaries. You exist to serve a specific constituency. Sensible. But a lot of queer organizations do "and allies." What's your stance on... "and allies"

Yeah. Because it's a contentious thing.

Right now, it seems like the allies outnumber us. Not only in numbers, but in the space that individuals take up. Which is a big problem and really upsetting to have happen. So I don't know how that will go. I don't know how it'll turn out. It'll probably always be an ongoing discussion. But it is an issue, definitely.





About the meritocratic ideals of Free Software, which do so much work to make invisible every other issue by saying “oh no, look, we give people a chance.”

Our judgements are based on this abstract technical thing that we say we can quantify, not based on their ability to fit into a community.

How do you feel about the meritocratic blind?

I think it's a huge problem. It's a homogeneous community that somehow manages to ignore the fact that most of the people who voluntarily come forward and are able to not only reach the community to get involved but to stay there once they've gotten there are mostly men. So we therefore have to attribute these differences to inherent differences in people that have nothing to do with the way the Free Software community behaves, or who's representing it or any of those issues. What I assume most people think is that decentralization comes first and then after that, diversity and these other problems will just trickle down out of existence. And [they] don't realize that there are other problems that don't depend on centralization and that, in fact, decentralization and networks can be far more oppressive than top-down organizations because of the fact that they're so culturally ingrained in whatever community it is that holds the values that keep people out.

More women are being explicitly included in f/loss communities, but we can probably take it for

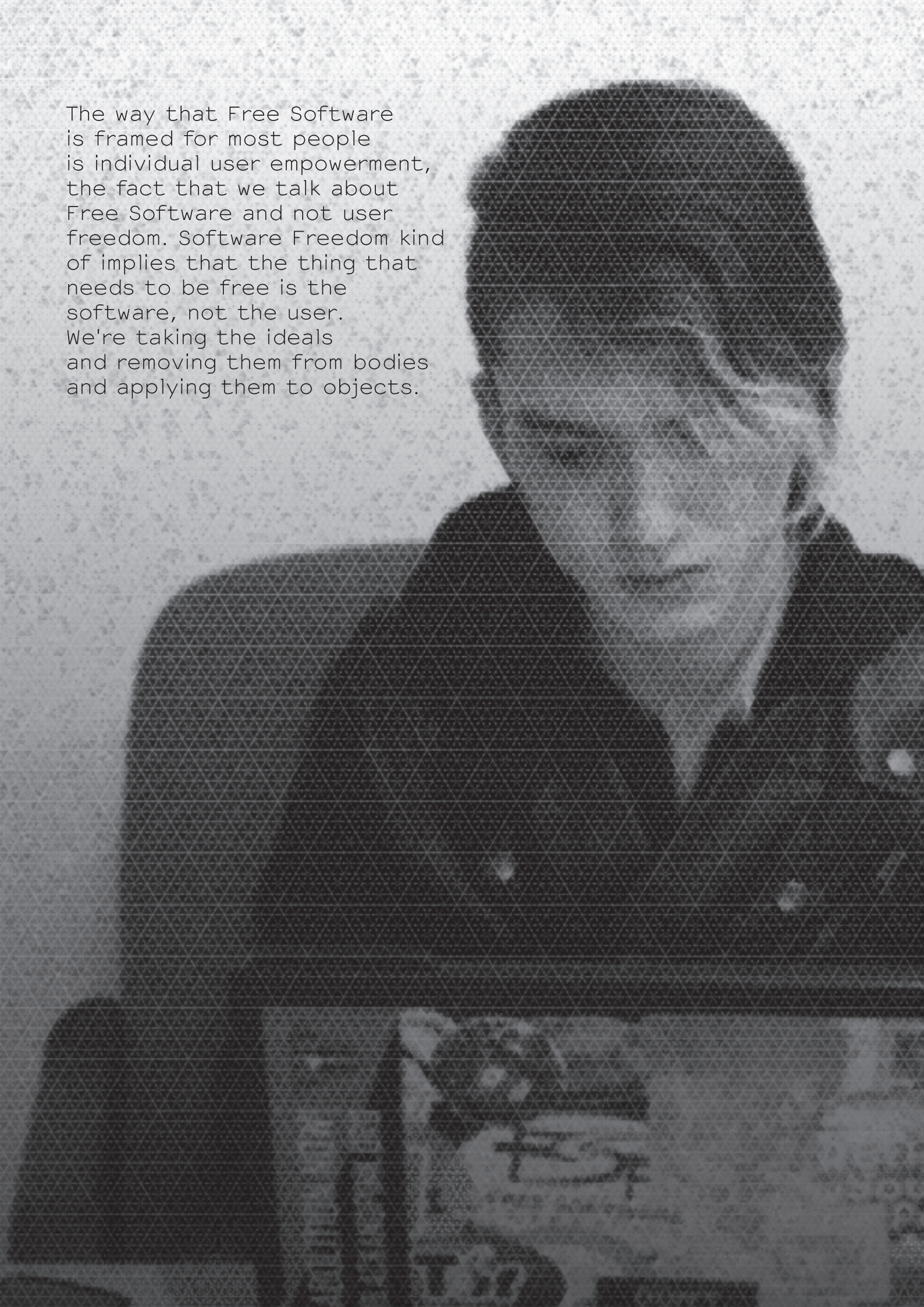
granted that almost every woman who fetches up at any kind of public software thing or hacker thing or f/loss thing will at some point be harassed or insulted in some way...

There's that external push [to include women] that's popular right now. And the people who are making these decisions are still the same people, making a space or making an effort to include women. But that discussion hasn't really started about race.

Or other lines. Sexuality or non-binary genders. We're only including these different identities that already agree with our message. I think that closed spaces, specifically, are really important to not compromise on any Free Software ideals, but to approach Free Software ideals from a completely different place. And that's really important for the greater Free Software community because then they can form coalitions on advocating for user freedom and software freedom and also learn from the mistakes that they've had in the past. And I think there's something that we can't achieve simply by trying to reach out more or include other people more because you're only assimilating and you're not changing yourself at all. You're changing yourself superficially.

I would love for Empowermentors to provide a space specifically for intersectionally-marginalized people of colour because I think that issues of gender and sexuality and class are also important but I think that race is a really not often talked about issue in

The way that Free Software is framed for most people is individual user empowerment, the fact that we talk about Free Software and not user freedom. Software Freedom kind of implies that the thing that needs to be free is the software, not the user. We're taking the ideals and removing them from bodies and applying them to objects.



the Free Culture, Free Software community. I'm hoping that Empowermentors can help people be intentional about their politics. That's definitely the huge thing for me. I guess considering not only the behaviour within the community, but software itself and considering the ways that software can potentially be racist. Like how might software exclude certain people without having explicit rules to do so.

The way that Free Software is framed for most people is individual user empowerment, the fact that we talk about Free Software and not user freedom. Software Freedom kind of implies that the thing that needs to be free is the software, not the user.

[O]ne of the bugs that I saw was in this game called *0 A.D.* which is like a *Civilization* clone. And there are characters in the game that, if you click on them, their information thing is that they're women and one of their main properties is to make the men work harder, just by their nearby existence.

We're taking the ideals and removing them from bodies and applying them to objects. And so a lot of the emphasis on advocacy tends to be on how we can have the most powerful players take our side and that's often businesses and that's often people who don't want to recognize these issues. And it's often not the people who are working towards social justice but just the people who are working to commoditize free software and turn it into something profitable, which in the end will always undermine the goals of user empowerment.

So just in terms of putting this in the context of the larger discussion of the inclusion of minorities in Free Software: What do you want to see from Empowermentors? Do you want to see more people

of multiple marginalizations in Free Software? Do you want to see better support for the people who are there?

Probably. That's probably one thing that is not a goal at all. But I would see as a natural thing that would happen, alongside the things that I would like us to do. There's no "we've won." There's no "we did it." There's no "all intersectionally-marginalized people are using Free Software" or something. There's nothing like that. At its core, it's functioning as a space for people. So the desires and issues of the people it serves are always going to be what matters. For me, I would really like to see us create or write and produce materials that explain Free Software and Free Culture from our perspective.

And in doing such, form coalitions with other maybe anti-racist or anti-sexist organizations about issues of media ownership and software ownership and all those things. So that's something I'm interested in. I would love to start making tools by and for us. One of the activities I added to the wiki was to document and work on bugs in Free Software projects in general. And I know that sounds like it's doing that changing the broader Free Software thing, and maybe it is, but software is still infinitely reproducible and has an impact.

And one of the bugs that I saw was in this game called *0 A.D.* which is like a *Civilization* clone. And there are characters in the game that, if you click on them, their information thing is that they're women and one of their

main properties is to make the men work harder, just by their nearby existence. So you can see how things need to change. And calling out how software embeds the views of the people that make it. And how different ideals are encoded into software.

If the property of that little woman character in that game is to make men work harder, is that something that we can legitimately say we need to fix? Can we say that that game can't have that property?

Should they have the freedom to make that game the way they want to? Because it's for them? What I'm hearing is this "oh, but that's like reverse sexism" or "oh, that's reverse racism" or "everyone should have their space." Actually, no. We can call out the people who are dominant, who have all the space.

But people are going to say to you "why are you stepping on my software? You can make your own." Once you get your inclusive software, why can't they have their non-inclusive software?

And we'll respond to that when they say it. We'll try to. But our answer, hopefully, will not be catered towards appeasing them but towards helping other people like us who might understand the problem and maybe join us. Our goal isn't to appeal to the people in power and be like "hey, make us legitimate." That concern is definitely going to come up again and again and again. And it sucks and it's going to be annoying. But I don't think it's a show stopper, because it's always been a problem. There are lots of groups that keep on keeping on.

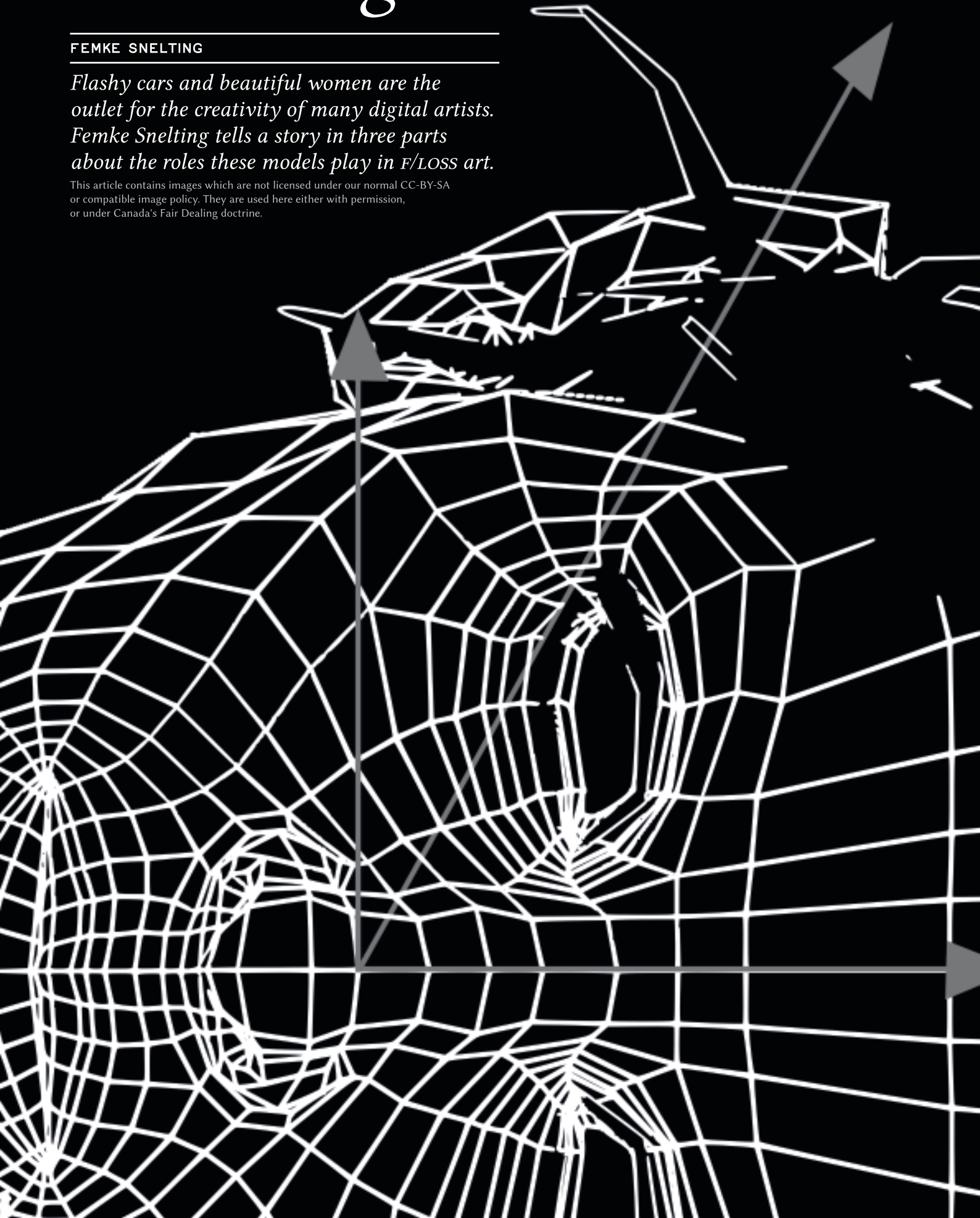
<http://empowermentors.org>

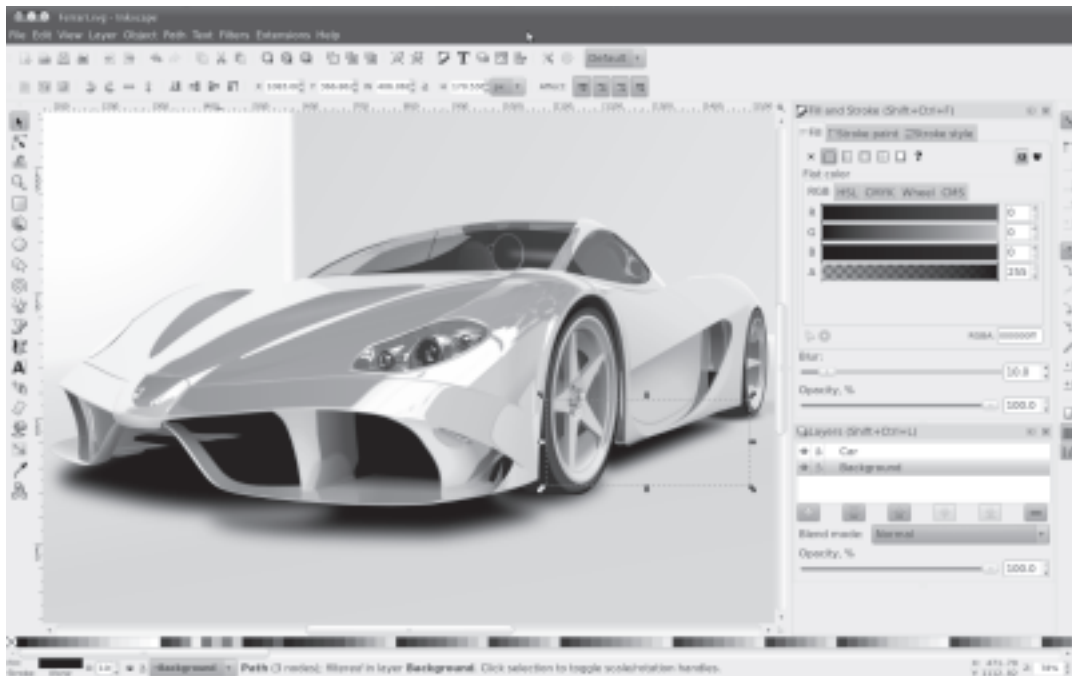
Modelling

FEMKE SNELTING

Flashy cars and beautiful women are the outlet for the creativity of many digital artists. Femke Snelting tells a story in three parts about the roles these models play in F/LOSS art.

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Cars

Just before the release of Inkscape version 0.45, core team member Bulia Byak asked for help. He needed Inkscape artists to showcase recent additions such as clipping, masking and especially blur. In a message to both the developer and user mailing lists he wrote:

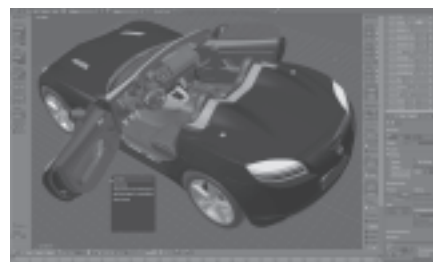
One thing I would like to request in particular: A car. It would be very nice to have a complex, detailed, photorealistic svg image of a shiny impressive car.

→ <http://inkscape.13.x6.nabble.com/Artists-needed-td2868775.html>

An image of a broken light bulb would probably be sufficiently complex and shiny to showcase the photorealism that Inkscape is capable of, but Bulia listed several arguments to explain why he felt car images would be desirable. First of all, “cars are sexy (for many people, anyway).”

→ <http://inkscape.13.x6.nabble.com/Artists-needed-td2868775.html>

A first encounter with Libre Graphics tools will most likely involve an automobile. In galleries, tutorials and screen shots, cars prominently and consistently figure as the subject of choice. Mixed in with other interesting topics such as romantic portraits, baby pictures, an art catalogue, fantasy characters and wild-life scenes, cars appear to be indispensable for demonstrating what Free, Libre and Open Source graphics software is capable of.



1. Inkscape 0.48 with Ferrari by Gilles Pinard
2. Scribus 1.2 cvs with Renault Roadster by unknown illustrator
3. Blender 2.5 with Opel GT by Rogério Perdiz



image. Two luxury cars could now be packaged and distributed as sample files with Inkscape 0.45.

The Gaussian Blur filter support in Inkscape 0.45 made possible some extremely photorealistic art. This Lamborghini Gallardo was created by Michael Grosberg based on a photo and uses blurs extensively for soft shadows and halos around bright reflections.

→ <http://inkscape.org/screenshots/?lang=es&version=0.45>

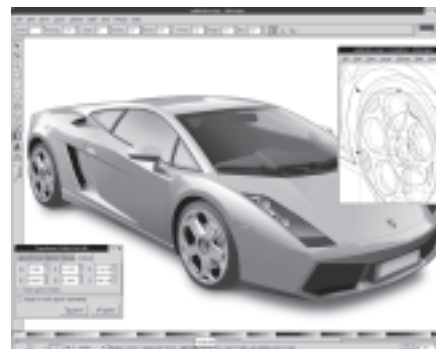
As a female feminist without a driving licence, how do I address the disproportionate amount of cars in the context of this issue on gendering F/LOSS? I myself might prefer public transport, but other women love cars and probably dream of something more exciting than driving the practical family sedan.

The typical car appearing in software screen shots is definitely not in the *reasonably priced* category. Scribus features a Renault Roadster; Blender an Opel GT, a gleaming Audi G8, a BMW M5, a Mercedes G and a Lamborghini Gallardo. Inkscape includes yet another Lamborghini Gallardo, a Ferrari plus an unidentified sports car that looks like a vintage Porsche.

Bulia Byak continued his request by explaining that cars would be easy to draw because “you don’t need to be much of an artist for that, you just need patience, Inkscape skills, and a good photo to start from.” He then pointed out that Xara Xtreme, a competing Open Source vector editor, successfully used “amazing” car images for its promotion.

Michael Grosberg and Konstantin Rotkevich ignored the insult and each responded with a skilfully rendered

Those bright reflections are not just innocent dream images. Glamorous cars sell the idea that exclusivity, advanced technology and speed are linked to excitement, respect and success. For a community energized by sharing, mixing and exchange, to identify with such over-engineered proprietary status symbols is bordering



For a community energized by sharing, mixing and exchange, to identify with such over-engineered proprietary status symbols is bordering on perverse.

4. Screenshot of Xara Xtreme, version unknown. Viper car image courtesy of José de Jesús Campoy Arce
5. Lamborghini Gallardo by Michael Grosberg
6. Photorealistic car by Konstantin Rotkevich

on perverse. It means negating everything that makes Free, Libre and Open Source software desirable.

Girls

Surprising both the official jury of the *Blending Life Challenge*¹ and members of blenderartists.org, newcomer Nyxia aka Angela Guenette came out first in the category “photo-realistic human.” The prize included one year of premium access to a database of royalty free photo references offered by sponsor 3d.sk. Winning the contest meant above all that the Blender community noticed her skills and talent.

I admit that Nyxia's is my favorite, based purely on beauty. (Looking like a dream date)

→ <http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?144103-blending-life-category-a-voting-closed>

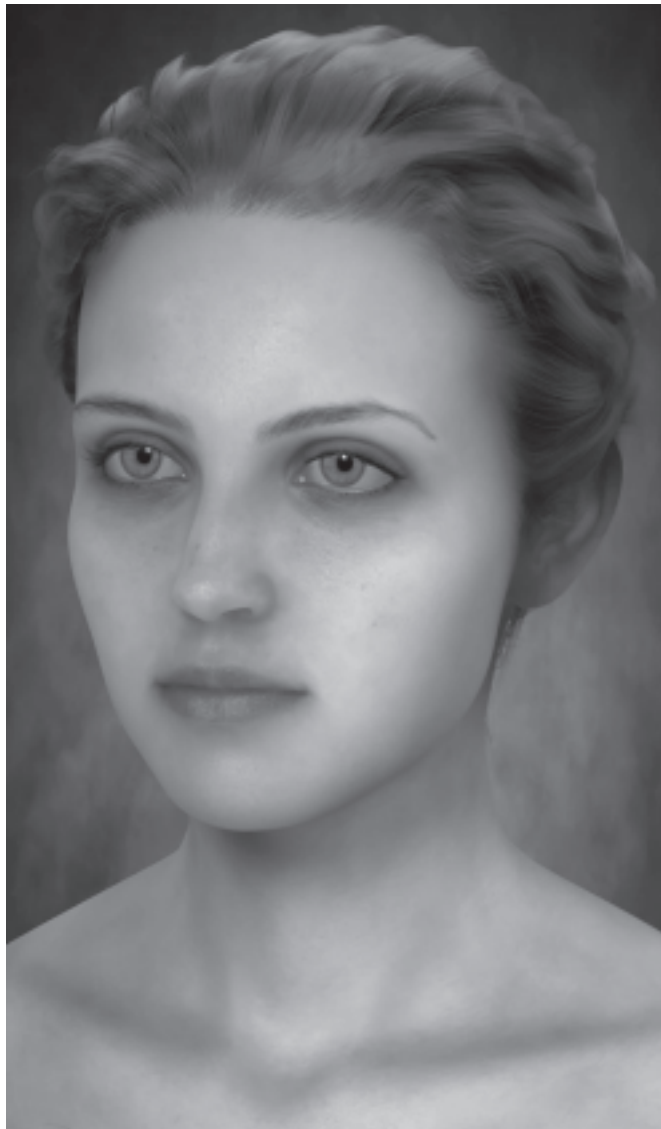
My girlfriend walked in the office while I was reading this post. Her: “Oh, she's pretty.” Me: “That's actually a model.”

→ <http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?142776-Blending-Life-Category-A-Isabella>

At around the same time, Blender foundation chairman Ton Roosendaal started preparing for a third Open Movie with a core team of script writers and concept artists. From the beginning of the project, their mind was made up: The follow-up of *Big Buck Bunny* would be a real film and the main character a warrior girl.²

Only five skilled artists could join the core team at the Blender Institute in Amsterdam to help realize the project. Out of hundreds of applications, Angela Guenette was selected to be one of them. Under the inspired leadership of director Colin Levy and art director David Revoy, she would be responsible for modelling the main character, Sintel. Angela was the only woman on the animation team.

I go through many blog posts, interviews, comment threads and a documentary. The Sintel team has kept the Blender community up to date with endlessly detailed accounts of the sometimes frustrating but always fascinating production process. Unfortunately, that did not include an account of Angela's experience. Did she agree that the main character was transforming into “yet another anorexic anime doll”³ as one blenderartists.org member commented? How did she cope,



Left:

7. Isabella by Nyxia
a.k.a. Angela Guenette
(2008, all rights reserved)
8. Female Warrior Character
concept art by David Revoy
(2009, CC-by SA)

Right:

9. Blender 2.5 modeling test by
Angela Guenette (2009, CC-by SA)
10. Sintel Stage 2 model, Dorian
movie project (2009, CC-by SA)
11. Sintel, Blender Foundation (2010,
CC-by SA)
12. Object linking, scaling
and texture exercise
with Sintel-lite by Becsta
(2012, all rights reserved)





"Guys, if you think the new Sintel is more realistic, warrior-like or even sexy, here's my advice: Stop downloading anime, turn off the computer, get out of the basement and meet some real females. You're in for a big surprise."

all those months immersed in adolescent banter and casual sexism if it already gets on my nerves after a few days of reading and watching?

One Point about the Charakter [sic]. Maybe this is just some more personal liking. But I think at this Point her Proportions are not female enough.

→ Comment thread on "Sintel Model, 2nd Stage, with .blend"

<http://sintel.org/news/sintel-model-2nd-stage-with-blend>

Guys, if you think the new Sintel is more realistic, warrior-like or even sexy, here's my advice: Stop downloading anime, turn off the computer, get out of the basement and meet some real females. You're in for a big surprise.

→ Comment thread on "Sintel Sighting"

<http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?171730-Sintel-sightings>

After a year of relentless work, the project was finally finished. Much more than just a technical demo, Sintel had grown into an epic short story featuring a young heroine with a sympathetic dark streak. Both the movie and its protagonist were an immediate success.

In keeping with the ethics of an Open Movie, all files used to generate the film were made publicly available for anyone to inspect, test and learn from. A "lite" version assured that the character was also accessible to amateur 3D animators.

Soon after the completion of Sintel, The Blender Institute contracted Angela to develop a tutorial DVD on character modelling. She created a sturdy girl made to wear arms and armour, standing firm on her two feet in knee-high boots. Meet Blenderella: Yet another fearless warrior to try your hand at.

The Blenderella training DVD includes photographic reference images that can be used with special permission from 3d.sk: Twenty five neutrally lit shots of a reasonably-proportioned girl with manicured nails and blemish-free complexion; full length frontal, back and side views plus several details of her boots, arms and face.

Some Blender fans recognized ANETA000.JPG right away as Czech pornstar Aneta or Anetta Keys, otherwise known as Aneta Steele, Katrin, Adriana, Denise, Sunny, JeeTee or Cindy Sweet.

If you want to have her tits that high on her thorax, I suggest a B cup rather than D, it just doesn't look proportional, even with a major uplift corset/vest.

→ Comment thread on "Blenderella"

<http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?220600-Blenderella/page3>

In a short amount of time, Blenderella/Aneta became the benchmark template for anyone wanting to learn character modelling. In numerous threads on blenderartists.org and other sites,

aspiring CG artists report on their progress and exchange detailed advice. In this collaborative process of creating virtual women, Blenderella's anatomic proportions are stretched in rather predictable ways.

Models

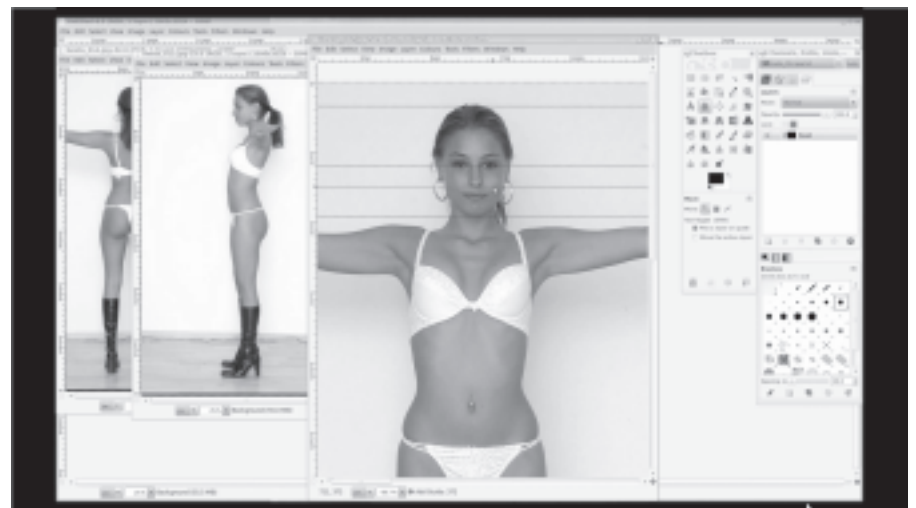
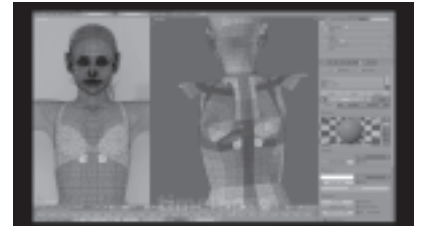
Hanging on to stereotypical representations of desire like cars and girls is boring and limits the playground of F/LOSS to the constraints of proprietary, misogynistic values. A more ambitious approach would be to ask for images that experiment with diverse realities, bending the rules of both gender and software.

Sample images, screen shots and tutorials provide a glimpse of what could be achieved and set the scene for prospective users. While demonstrating what is technically possible, they literally provide a window into the world of a program, and it matters what kind of world is captured.

F/LOSS is playing its part in constructing alternative imaginaries of how people might relate to technology. The potential of these shared and participative software projects lies in negotiating new visions and utopias based on the powerful idea that we not only consume but also construct our coded environment.

References:

1. → <http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?144103-blending-life-category-a-voting-closed>
2. → "So let's add a female/girl as main character!"
From the project targets listed on the Sintel About page
<http://www.sintel.org/about>
3. → Comment thread on "Sintel Sightings"
<http://blenderartists.org/forum/showthread.php?171730-Sintel-sightings>



13. Blenderella, character modelling in Blender 2.5, DVD cover
14. Screen shots from instruction videos included in Blenderella, character modelling in Blender 2.5, Blender Institute (2010, CC-by SA)
- 14a. Preparing reference images in Gimp
- 14b. Modelling the torso
15. Blenderella/Savannah exercise file by tfrank (2011, all rights reserved)
16. Vampirella character based on Blenderella by Esemkay (2011, all rights reserved)

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Resources/Glossary

Arduino

A popular open hardware platform for rapid electronic prototyping.

Blender

A powerful 3D animation application for GNU/Linux, Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows.

copyleft

A style of licensing in which those redistributing the work are required to do so under its original (or a compatible) license.

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A suite of licenses designed to allow creators and users of works flexibility beyond that offered in traditional copyright.

distro/distribution

A specific configuration of GNU/Linux, often designed with a particular purpose in mind.

F/LOSS

Stands for Free/Libre Open Source Software. Software which has a viewable, modifiable source. It can be modified and redistributed.

Fedora

A popular distribution of GNU/Linux, produced by Red Hat, Inc.

Free

As in freedom, or often, that which is or is of Free Software.

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A term describing software which is made available under licenses permitting users to not only run it, but to examine its code, redistribute it and modify it.

Free Software Foundation

An organization dedicated to the promotion of Free Software. Well-known for its development of the GNU General Public License.

GIMP

A raster based image editor for GNU/Linux, Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows.

GNU General Public License (GPL)

A license originally intended for use with software, but now used for other applications. Made famous the principle of Copyleft, requiring those using GPL licensed work to license derivatives similarly.

GNU/Linux

A group of operating systems which are built on the Linux kernel and components from the

GNU project, among others, which are widely distributed and freely modifiable.

Inkscape

A vector graphics editor for GNU/Linux, Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows.

KDE

A community project which produces various F/LOSS applications, best known as a popular desktop environment for GNU/Linux.

Libre

A less ambiguous adaptation of the word Free. Implies liberty of use, modification and distribution.

Open Hardware

Hardware which follows the same principles as F/LOSS, including publicly available, freely licensed schematics.

Open Source

See Free/Libre Open Source Software

Scribus

A desktop publishing application for GNU/Linux, Mac OS X and Windows.

They

Most commonly known as a collective pronoun, it is also used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun.



RY RUN OR BUST.

T OF THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA IN THE YEAR 1900, BY FRED L.

OWER, B. C. AT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Gendering F/LOSS

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