Over
Trends Kit
2020
Over users create and export almost ten million projects every month. This gives us rare insight into the design styles that get used more than others. On the basis of this extensive data, we’re confident that the ten trends we’ve taken a closer look at here are hugely popular at the moment, and only show signs of increasing their grip on our imagination. To service the needs of our users, and keep them up to date with the freshest ideas in visual communication, Over’s design curators spend much of their time researching and understanding new trends – ensuring that you can easily recreate them in our app. This report represents some of their most significant discoveries over the last few months.

It’s more than a round up of trending aesthetics though. Of course we do discuss the design application in detail, but some of our research has focused on prevailing cultural ideas; ways in which our society is transforming. It’s crucial to have at least some understanding of this context before diving into the templates, graphics, fonts, and color palettes we’ve highlighted. Knowing why these trends have emerged, and what they say about us when we use them, can only make your message more meaningful. The cultural context can also help you decide if a particular trend is relevant and appropriate to your brand, or just pretty.

Combining ideas with practical application, we hope that this Trends Kit becomes a useful companion to help you make 2020 the year when things really start to happen. Creating on-trend, eye-catching content is the best way to start moving the needle, and get yourself noticed.

Everything you need to bring your inspiration to life can be found in Over. So jump in, get inspired, and then go out into the world and make some beautiful noise.
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Rebellion

Authentic Imagery
Female Narrative
Reduce Reuse Recycle
Protest Aesthetics
“As a brand or an individual looking to engage meaningfully with your audience this year, you’d do well to consider the changing tides.”

Before digging into specific design trends, it’s worth looking at a significant idea underlining much of what we’re seeing expressed in art, music, fashion, and media. Rebellion is shifting the cultural landscape massively. There’s a whiff of revolution in the air, and it’s manifesting as a reaction to rules, rationality, and tradition.

Whether it’s taking to the streets with a poignant message, opting out of the mass-production cycle, or embracing vintage tech as a middle finger to push-button perfection, creatives are responding to a world fed up with the mess technology leaves in its wake. We can see the dehumanizing effect it’s had on so much of society, and we’re returning to simpler, authentic, more hands-on ways of making things, and expressing ourselves.

As a brand or an individual looking to engage meaningfully with your audience this year, you’d do well to consider the changing tides. Before you begin trying out fashionable new design ideas, take a moment to consider where they’re coming from, and tune in to the values of the people you’re talking to.

From where we’re standing, there are four major expressions of rebellion having a ripple effect on doing business in 2020.
“Far too many brands have ended up alienating us in their attempts to inspire us.”

Phew. The fashion houses and beauty brands finally got the message. We’re not all size zero Scandinavian goddesses with flawless, mathematically symmetrical faces, and we don’t wake up in the morning looking like magical beautician elves pampered us while we slept. How we ever allowed the 0.01% to define how we all ought to look is a mystery for future generations to puzzle over, but in 2020, quite frankly, perfection is boring.

This was inevitable, and the cracks have been showing for a long time. Like with most things, technology has played a major role in this cultural shift. First off, almost everybody has access to a camera these days, so fashion and portrait photography is no longer an elite skill limited to professional artists and models. On Instagram alone we’re seeing millions of authentic perspectives every day, reframing beauty as something intrinsic, not engineered.

The sorcery of Photoshop has also lost most of its mystery at this stage. We all know that the images we see on covers and in campaigns are retouched to the point of being digital paintings more than photographs. It all starts to feel a bit deceitful, and if we’re not buying the pictures in the ads, then we’re unlikely to buy the product either. Far too many brands have ended up alienating us in their attempts to inspire us.

We’ve seen fashion magazines make statements by publishing raw, un-edited covers in the past. Vogue Italia went a step further in their January 2020 editions, opting to use no photography at all — only illustration.

Authenticity is a major currency in a world disillusioned with the glossy varnish on advertising. In fact, the pendulum is swinging so hard, that imperfections aren’t just being tolerated, they’re being celebrated. Women’s shaving brand Billie, for example, is made all the more endearing through its unabashed close-ups on lip fluff and hirsute bikini lines. It’s a dramatic departure from those generic, silky smooth Gillette ads, but masterfully in tune with young women grappling with body positivity.
The never-ending quest for perfection has taken a serious toll on our collective psyche, but in 2020 we’re getting off that train and loving our beautiful selves just as we are... and we’re down with the brands that get that.

It’s not just portrayals of people that are becoming more real. Product photography is loosening its collar too. We’re seeing more and more shoots outside of the studio – on the street, or just sorta thrown together in living rooms. The more casual and contextual, the better.

Brands with confidence in their product should feel comfortable tossing it into the real world, instead of lighting it up on a plinth. Done right, there’s an added layer of emotional connection you can unlock by making product scenes more relatable; easier to envision in our own less than perfect lives.

The good news is that this trend makes everything a little easier. It costs less to be real, with the added bonus of people liking and trusting you more. So scrap the studio, the lights, the photographer, the models, the make-up artist, the post-production, and DIY it: grab your iPhone and a few of your half-good-looking mates, and shoot that new campaign on the fly in your bedroom, or down at the beach. Just make sure you keep it real and at least buy everybody lunch.

‘Authenticity is a major currency in a world disillusioned with the glossy varnish on advertising.’
In a nutshell

We’re in the midst of an overdue anti-perfection rebellion.

Perfection is boring – unfulfilling and exhausting to pursue. The quest to attain it takes a toll on our collective psyche.

Digital retouching is no longer sorcery. We can easily detect it, and we don’t trust it.

Even product photography is becoming less contrived; more laid back and real.

Authenticity is social currency. Consumers can smell insincerity a mile away.

The good news? It’s easier and cheaper to be real.

On Trend with Over

It’s all about image selection for this trend, so if you’re not working with your own photographs and relying on image libraries for your content, consider how you search. Even the major libraries are becoming far more in tune with this cultural shift, and there are more and more authentic, representative images coming online every day.

There’s also a growing number of boutique photo libraries focused on rebalancing under-representation, like TONL, Create HER, Scopio, and The Gender Spectrum Collection. Check these out if Unsplash or Pixabay don’t have what you’re looking for.

Resist the urge to gravitate towards the polished, perfect, popular options that churn up in searches, and dig a little deeper. Or scuff them up a little with some analogue texture. Consider the value of more realistic, down-to-earth portrayals.
Female Narrative

“If you’re a small, female-owned brand, you and your team are better ambassadors than you might realize”

Female-oriented brands have unsurprisingly led the way with this shift towards authentic imagery. Freed from the male gaze that defined the classic beauty and fashion standards of decades gone by, women are reclaiming their own representation. There’s an enormous opportunity for getting real with consumers who are sick of the phony gold standard.

Beyond the imagery, there’s a shifting paradigm that puts major brand power into the female narrative. Female entrepreneurship is in a golden age right now, and it’s being celebrated widely. There are a growing number of platforms and spaces geared towards support, motivation, opportunities, and knowledge sharing for the #girlboss movement, like Refinery29, Girlgaze, and The Wing.

Tapping into these networks can be hugely beneficial – psychologically and practically. Small collabs and content partnerships with like-minded brands are definitely opportunities to look out for, exposing you to new communities already in tune with your vibe.

If you’re a small, female-owned brand, you and your team (no matter how small) are better ambassadors than you might realize, so turn the camera towards yourself from time to time. Your story as a female entrepreneur almost certainly has an audience that wants to hear it.
There’s a gap in the market for fresh perspectives on stale cliches. Parade, for example, subverts the sexy lingerie stereotype with real images of real women in their gorgeous underwear. They feature bedroom selfies from satisfied customers alongside their studio shoots on Instagram. It all looks beautiful, but the insight is that iPhone snaps from real fans are at least as valuable and effective as styled, professional shoots.

User-generated content (or UGC) is particularly valuable to brands focused on young female consumers. A steady drip of satisfied selfies is pure gold for a small brand that relies on word-of-mouth marketing, and can be way more effective than expensive campaigns with superstar influencers. People will gladly share this kind of authentic content if your product makes them feel more confident, beautiful, safe or inspired.

This is why we’re seeing big brands adding more and more re-grammed testimonials in their feed. Not only does it celebrate their product, engaged fans open up cans of new content ideas a marketing director might never have imagined - especially if he’s a dude.

“There are a growing number of platforms and spaces geared towards support, motivation, opportunities, and knowledge sharing.”
In a nutshell

Largely as a reaction to stale stereotypes, female-focused brands are leading the way with authentic images of women.

Female entrepreneurship is in a golden age right now, and it’s being widely celebrated.

Female business owners can be their brand’s best ambassador – we’re hungry for success stories.

Subverting the male gaze offers a massive opportunity for realness.

User-generated content is a very direct way to sidestep the artifice of advertising, and start relevant conversations.

On Trend with Over

Here again, the easiest way to endorse this trend is with authentic imagery, thinking carefully about the pictures you choose to use in your content. Within the Unsplash and Pixabay libraries on Over, you can find collections geared towards specific representation – like this one, curated by Billie. And don’t forget about the smaller, female-focused image libraries like Create HER, and The Gender Spectrum Collection.

We also have a great selection of #girlpower graphics that you can use to fly your feminist flag, and create fun, inspiring designs that make a statement. Bold copy on a plain background (in the mode of protest aesthetics) can be the simplest and most powerful way to send a message.
Conscience is becoming a brighter guiding light for consumers lost in the plastic jungle. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

We're running out of all the good stuff – like glaciers and animals and beautiful green spaces – by putting more junk into the world than ever before. Whether it's single-use plastics or single-season fashion, our obsession with cheap products that make our life easier has brought with it some severe side-effects. The environment is the biggest loser, but human rights are often disregarded in the race to produce more of what we want, for less. We end up on a treadmill of mindless consumption, leaving a trail of waste and damage behind us.

Aesthetically, this RRR mindset comes across in things like vintage tech, collage, authentic imagery, video remixing, and memes – rejecting excess and newness by reviving old ‘junk’. The rise of thrifting is a great example of how it's becoming a big cultural movement too. Rocking vintage clothes is both a statement of unique personal expression, and a principled defiance of the fast-fashion disaster. It's never been more on point. Textile upcycling is also putting out some of the flames, with Vogue predicting that the 2020s will be about making new clothes out of old ones.

With every trend comes new opportunities, and right now the online ‘car-boot sale’ represents a massive side-hussling frontier. Turning your wardrobe stuffing into cold, hard cash has never been easier. Thriving on major social media platforms, there are now numerous trading platforms branching off to create their own communities.

More broadly, reflecting an awareness of sustainability and positioning your brand in opposition to waste and mass-production can only do you good in the current landscape. This doesn't have to equate to becoming an ‘eco-warrior’, but considering your brand's impact is a sensible idea. Vogue Italia's entirely illustrated edition – aside from affirming the decline of perfect fashion photography – this creative move equated to an astronomical reduction of the carbon footprint typically associated with big shoots all over the world. It was an ecological concern, more than a stylistic concept – and readers loved it. Conscience is becoming a brighter guiding light for consumers lost in the plastic jungle.

If you're interested in learning more about the designers and engineers who are disrupting the ways products will be manufactured and consumed, Thames & Hudson is offering Over fans a 20% discount on Radical Matter: Rethinking Materials for a Sustainable Future.

Our obsession with cheap products that make our life easier is leaving a trail of waste and destruction.

Excess isn’t very cool anymore, but eco-consciousness is.

Vintage clothing is in vogue. It signals individuality, and conscience — offering an antidote to the fast-fashion nightmare.

The RRR mindset is expressed in other trends like vintage tech, collage, authentic imagery, video remixing, and memes.

A major theme in 2020 is imperfection, and the worn-out or upcycled aesthetic is bang on.

The rise of thrifting opens up a huge side-hustle opportunity.

We’ve mentioned how thrifting is a huge opportunity at the moment, and we’re all about that side-hustle. Whether your goal is to rustle up some quick cash to keep your bigger dreams afloat, or to build an online vintage scrunchie empire, we all know that first impressions are important.

So instead of just snapping and posting right away, consider creating a simple frame in Over, and find a font that says: “Hey! Over here!”. Make your virtual shop window pop.

If you just want to infuse some eco-consciousness into your content stream, we also have some beautiful templates and graphic packs in this visual style. There are plenty dates on the calendar when these messages are more relevant (Earth Day, World Environment Day, Global Recycling Day, Arbor Day, World Oceans Day, etc.), but you needn’t wait for these to engage with this hot topic. The destruction of planet earth would be terrible for business, so let’s try and avoid that, shall we?
“There's a renewed sense that we can actually overcome seemingly impossible challenges – if we all push in the same direction.”

Perhaps the most literal expression of rebellion we've been seeing lately is the act of protest itself. It's one of the purest expressions of democracy and – despite the complications that arise with free speech – protest action has always maintained the uneasy alliance between good and evil. Without it, history would be one long tale of little people under powerful thumbs.

The narrative over the last few years has been one of growing hopelessness. Ruthless capitalism, fake news, pollution, global warming, inequality... Like Sisyphus, we're pushing a big rock up a steep hill, and it keeps rolling back down. But last year we witnessed some great examples of mass protests turning the tide, and the side effect seems to have been a sense of optimism.

In light of Hong Kong, Greta Thunberg, #metoo, and other victories for freedom, common sense, and decency, there's a renewed sense that we can actually overcome seemingly impossible challenges – if we all push in the same direction. Our voice does matter, and we can use it to create the future we want.

People have taken to social platforms to vent their frustrations for years, and people have been gathering in the street with slogans on placards for much longer than that. With visual communication becoming our go-to mode, we're seeing an interesting merging of these patterns. Joining protests is quite fashionable, if not for the cause then certainly for the content. Pictures or it didn't happen, baby.

It's easy to be cynical about virtue signaling, but there's a far more optimistic perspective. Broadcasting to your followers with boats on the ground just means you're amplifying your concern to way more people all around the world. It's our smartphones, more than our smart signs, that are truly making the message heard.

That said, protests are a fantastic platform for emerging activist-comedians. We all love some clever wordplay sprinkled in with the demand. It's our smartphone, more than our smart signs, that are truly making the message heard.

In 2020 we'll see US elections, post-Brexit Britain, and more urgency around climate change and the spread of populist rhetoric. Brands will have a vital role to play in helping us rationally judge the information, products and services we consume. And as an individual, your social media feed is your cardboard placard. Be heard.
It’s been doom and gloom for a while, but there’s a renewed sense that we can create the future we want. Hong Kong, Greta Thunberg, and the #metoo movement have all been inspiring examples of positive mass action.

Protest action has social capital, and gets amplified via social media.

Humor and childlike expression are big components of the protest aesthetic.

Signs, slogans and protest placards inspire a more direct way of getting your message across.

Brands have a role to play in helping us ethically navigate these confusing times.

In a nutshell

Simple and direct is the best approach for making your message heard. Big, bold, unmissable fonts in bright colors is always a great way to catch eyeballs, but consider a more humanistic style if you want to invoke the protest spirit.

Handwritten or sketchy fonts typically convey this feeling. And make it big. No, even bigger than that. Subtle textures (especially cardboard and rough paper) blended into the background can heighten the protest metaphor. A few cutey graphics sprinkled here and there probably won’t hurt either.

Here are a few quick examples we made in Over. Try it for yourself, and let your rallying cry ring out far and wide.
Collage is an expression of remixed reality, combining unrelated elements to create something that is recognizable, but at the same time has never been seen before.

In a ‘post-truth’ world, where even the news can’t always be trusted, rejecting a single reality in favor of multiple, layered perspectives seems reasonable. The equivalent visual idea is what makes collage so appealing. Perhaps we’re all just collaging our way through the uncertainty – gluing different pieces together in an attempt to turn chaos into beauty.

As a visual idea, collage has been around for more than a century. Some of the mixed media experiments by Dada artists like Jean Arp and Raoul Hausmann, look surprisingly fresh a hundred years later. For decades, avant-garde creatives have turned to the medium to express absurdity; building imaginary (and often bizarre) scenarios from the building blocks of life as we know it. In an age as absurd as the one we live in, collage feels weirdly relevant.

Contemporary designers use software instead of scissors and glue to achieve a comparable mash-up of photos, graphics, typography, and texture, but the sentiment of remixing reality persists.
Digitized replicas of analogue textures (folded paper, tape, newspaper, stickers) are wildly popular on Instagram, but virtually anything – photos, text, stickers, GIFs, emojis, graphics, textures – can be ingredients in a collage.

In recent years, we’ve seen a loosening up of the style, as collages become less composed and more expressionistic. Images of people are fragmented, and interwoven with abstract patterns or expressive painting and drawing. Fashion houses have embraced the style in major campaigns – rebelling against posed fashion photography by exploding these images into surreal fragments.

Counterbalancing this very raw, almost childlike expression of collage, we’re also seeing more design-oriented applications that approach the art form with more minimalism and precision. Taken into the digital realm, elements can be manipulated more meticulously, and the color palette is easier to unify. Collage needn’t always be chaotic, it can be very melodic and harmonious.

Another big evolution has been breathing motion into collage, using GIFs to make graphic elements dance playfully, or deconstruct and reconstruct to reveal the creation process. The added elements of surprise, delight, and visual complexity make animated collage even more compelling, and it will definitely be an unmissable design trend this year.

Collage artists love to dig through old magazines and online libraries for obscure imagery, like thrifters at a vintage market: reducing, re-using and recycling design rather than creating it from scratch. At least half the fun lies in sifting through dozens of pictures, imagining connections between them. The aesthetic’s rejection of newness aligns it well with eco-consciousness, and the general trend towards analogue ways.

In terms of visual communication, collage is also very efficient. Superimposing multiple ideas and imagery in a single frame can drive home a complex message in a moment – even if the message is perhaps more of a feeling. Brands that embrace this approach in their design, are often purposefully communicating a sense of complexity and rebellion. Unusual juxtapositions make us pause, decode, and ask questions.

Alternatively, collage is often used more like a moodboard, sketching a unified idea from multiple images, something difficult to put into words that we nonetheless feel immediately. The effect here can be quite peaceful, as it drifts the eye along a more considered journey. Done right, this approach can mainline a mood straight to the heart.

Whether it’s with paper and glue, or on your phone while you’re taking a train, collage is also just... fun; an almost meditative way to spend an hour or two. It’s pure play, because there really are no rules, and you’re almost certain to create something completely unique. Quite frankly, we should all be playing a bit more in 2020.
Collage remixes reality, something we understand all too well in a post-truth world.

It’s an established genre within art history, more than a century old, but still being explored in new ways.

Collage is an expression of rebellion, playfulness, and imperfection.

Its repurposed aesthetic makes it popular with an analogue, or eco-conscious mindset.

Digital design often executes collage more meticulously, and harmoniously. Animated collage is an exciting new extension.

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On Trend with Over

We’re certain this visual style is well-loved by Over users, seeing as there were more than 50 000 searches for ‘collage’ in 2019 – the second most popular search term of the year. It’s a trend that’s only gaining momentum, and we have you well covered.

There are no real rules when it comes to collage, so you can dig around in just about any of the thousands of graphic packs we have in our library. Much of the fun to be had is in combining different elements, and seeing what instinctively feels right together. Like we said, it’s a great way to play.

That said, we have some brilliant collage graphics and templates to get you going in a more specific direction. We even have a collage layout collection, which is a great way to apply this trending look to an entire Story, or multi-platform campaign. It’s all laid out for you, just switch out the images and graphics to reflect your personal style.

Check out some of these designs #madewithover to get you inspired.
Analogue Textures
Rebelling against digital precision, analogue texture seems to infuse a sense of having been created by human hands.

'Skeuomorphism' is one of those fancy words designers love to flex with, but the concept is pretty straightforward. It refers to making digital products resemble their real-world counterparts, and we see it all the time in user-interface (UI) design: buttons that depress when clicked, dials and sliders, and analogue clocks on our phones' lock screens.

Steve Jobs was a big pioneer of skeuomorphic design, and even today the Apple interface remains rooted in some of these early ideas. Using familiar real-world objects like recycling bins, floppy discs, and note paper lends a sense of intuition to deleting, saving, and writing.

This approach has fallen out of favor with many UI designers, but more and more graphic designers are exploring analogue textures to 'roughen up' the pristine digital facade of their work. Crumpled, folded, torn, and glued paper posters have seen a particular explosion this year, attracting physical interest to the design.

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This visual trend exemplifies the sense of rebellion that will define much of what we see emerging in 2020. Rebelling against digital precision, analogue texture seems to infuse a sense of having been created by human hands, imperfect, and therefore more authentic. There’s a subtle but powerful gesture of retaining humanity underlying this idea.

Ironically, degrading the image to some degree can make it seem more prestigious. As print media has fallen by the wayside, physical printing (magazines, album covers, posters) tend to be reserved for very specific, high-end applications. Anybody can have their work published on a blog, but to have it appear in print elevates the achievement.

This might be why so many digital branding projects are presented in the mode of good old fashioned paper. Folds, rips, stickers, plastic wrapping, punch holes, and other physical marks only enhance this illusion.

Aesthetically, the analogue texture trend is hugely popular with brands on the street-style spectrum. Emulating the appearance of a poster roughly glued up on the wall, or a hand-printed run of mixtape CDs, calls to mind the context of the concrete jungle, and ups the street cred accordingly.

The evidence of human handiwork locates the trend within a paradigm of 90s nostalgia, recalling a bygone era when side hustling meant hitting the streets for hours with a backpack crammed with flyers, stickers, wheat-paste, or cassette tapes – not just promoting with the click of a button.

In 2020, you can save the tread on your sneakers and spend more time fine-tuning your faux-crumple effect in Over.

“Ironically, degrading the image to some degree can make it seem more prestigious.”
In a nutshell

Analogue textures are an example of skeuomorphism – digitally replicating real-world physicality.

Precision is overrated. Texture roughens up pristine, digital designs, and makes them visually interesting.

It signifies rebellion against sugar-coated perfection, and evokes the handmade in reaction to mass-production.

The illusion of being printed on paper carries an aura of prestige in a digital world.

Evidence of human handiwork locates the trend within a paradigm of 90s street nostalgia.

On Trend with Over

We have a wide range of analogue textures you can blend into your images, to give them that slightly roughed-up, made-by-hand look. But don’t limit yourself to just these. You could build up your own library of life-like textures by snapping random surface materials with your phone – concrete, tarmac, scratched metal, brick, sand… Or easier still, search for these in our endless image libraries.

Whether you use our graphics or your own photographs, the key to adding texture to your images is the Blend Mode. This handy tool literally blends two images together, with a range of different variations.
Vintage Tech
Nostalgia for an analogue era is one of the biggest overarching trends we’ve seen this year, and the phenomenon is only getting stronger. It’s an attitude we’re seeing reflected in art, music, and fashion, pointing out a growing disillusionment with perfection at the push of a button. Technology has made almost every aspect of the creative process so much easier... but have we lost something meaningful in the absence of effort?

Of course, technology has always been an ally to our creative efforts (paint is technology that revolutionized smearing berries on a wall, and the fax machine was a futuristic device in 1843). But in the 21st century it seems that machines do the work for us, instead of with us.
Which explains why outdated photography tools like Polaroid and 35mm film continue their meteoric rise from the grave, despite the insane sophistication of modern digital cameras. There’s something satisfyingly physical in their clunky mechanisms, and the limited number of shots per roll makes you cherish each snap more – even the slightly out of focus ones. Unlimited perfection, it turns out, is overrated.

The trend of vintage technology in photography extends to a broader range of artistic formats, like screen printing, VHS video, and audio cassette tapes. The Risograph (a primitive one-color printing technique used to produce small runs of ‘zines, brochures and flyers in the mid-twentieth century) is in the midst of a massive revival. This aesthetic reduces images into overlapping patterns of tangy colors, typically on heavily textured paper.

As we’ve progressed deeper into the digital age, the computers we grew up with are now relegated to the vintage section too. Old school user-interface has become a contemporary look unto its own, pairing particularly well with glitches and sorrowful-looking Greek statues. The iconic 32-bit Windows 95 logo is a cornerstone of Vaporwave, a surreal aesthetic engaging with the popular entertainment, tech, and advertising of previous decades. Our Retro 95 layout collection was one of our most popular releases in 2019.

It’s beautifully ironic that digital technology allows us to easily mimic the analogue approach, but the decision to do so is a bold creative decision that says a lot about your brand or personality.

There’s a cliché that photographs on film have “more soul” than digital pics, and there’s something to be said for that. Effort, craftsmanship, and imperfection are all very human ideas that we’re unconsciously drawn to as they become more rare. We’re all a little bit clumsy and rough around the edges, after all.

image: @wereoutofoffice
image: @blacmagic_woman
image: @super_unknown
image: @wereoutofoffice
image: @jamielynkane
image: @super.unknown
image: @wereoutofoffice
image: @jamielynkane
Analogue nostalgia continues as a big theme, pointing out our disillusionment with perfection at the push of a button. There’s a sense that the ease of digital creation makes it less meaningful. The imperfection and limitation of Polaroid and 35mm film are precisely their appeal.

Vintage tech also extends to other artistic media: screenprinting, audio cassettes, VHS, retro gaming.

The retro user-interface of old Macintosh and Windows 95 computers is a particularly popular aesthetic.

Effort, craftsmanship, and imperfection are human ideas that technology threatens.

We’ve got tons of graphic material for you to get on trend with vintage tech. You can use blend mode to add film grain, negative frames, and light leaks to your photos, giving them that 35mm photo look. Or drop your pics into a Polaroid frame, and add a warm, bleached filter to send it back in time.

Retro UI was huge this year, and so we have some super cool templates and graphic packs to take you in this direction. Throw some glitches and holographics into the mix, and you’re golden.
Childlike Expression
Overview

“The creative adult is the child who survived”
- URSULA K. LEGUIN

Remember coloring books? We all spent hours and hours completely absorbed in them, turning rabbits and cowboys and clowns into psychedelic patchworks of color – sometimes even inside the lines. Without really being aware of it, we were experiencing creativity in its purest form: curious, free, and fully present in a state of low-key bliss.

Sadly, we can’t keep coloring in forever. But we can (and really should) tap into that feeling of unrestrained artistry as often as we can in our complicated adult lives. We do sometimes go there, on a phone call or in a boring meeting, doodling like nobody’s watching. It might be worth posting some of those Post-It notes, considering artists like Mr. Doodle have over 2.5 million followers on Instagram. Your mom ought to be kicking herself for wiping away those crayon masterpieces you created on the walls as a kid.
In the context of rebellion as a major social trend in 2020, it’s unsurprising that childlike expression has hit the mainstream. As far back as the 1950s, a collective of artists known as CoBrA (from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam) were experimenting with a spontaneous, rebellious style of painting that was heavily inspired by the art of children. This was an equal and opposite reaction to what they saw as “a world of decors and hollow facades.”

History is repeating itself today, in an absurd, superficial world built on silicon and plastic. A growing number of artists and designers reject the pixel-perfect gloss and mechanical uniformity of digital design. Childlike art and design is real, raw, honest. It alludes to a time before rules, a time we’ve all experienced and have stored in our subconscious, where feeling trumps thinking.

Playful and inherently positive, childlike expression offers moments of delight for both the creator and the viewer. Just looking at the scrawls, doodles, and splashes of an unrestrained hand makes us feel free, and at ease.

“Playful and inherently positive, childlike expression offers moments of delight for both the creator and the viewer.”
Even subtle hints of this is an otherwise ordered design seems to loosen the collar, and dramatically lighten the mood.

Within this mode, illustration is riding an all-time high. Digital sketching has made the art form less intimidating, to the point that iPads have replaced pencil and paper to a large degree. The rise of vector graphics and digital textures has revolutionized illustration, but the side effect of its popularity is same-ness: there’s a dominant style that seems to be cropping up everywhere, eroding its unique effect. As a reaction, we’re seeing greater interest in ‘old school’ hand-drawn illustration, in a very simplified approach that blatantly denies any technological intervention. Back to basics.

It makes perfect sense for kiddies’ brands to opt for this style, but we’re seeing it infiltrate more grown-up industries like tech and finance. You would have noticed that cute, plump, simplified avatars are all the rage with tech startups and mobile apps. The primary reason seems to be an association of simplicity, and playfulness. In the context of ever-increasing technological complexity, cartoon characters put us at ease, and endear us. We’ll gladly engage with your brand’s story if we’re in love with its mascot.

Channeling your inner child requires letting go of expectations, pressure, and rules. Handing yourself over to the process. Zen masters call this “beginner’s mind”, and it’s a state of enlightenment we should all be striving for. Seven year-old you knew a thing or two about artistic expression, and the joy of making, and mindfulness. Ignore that creative genius at your own peril.
If childlike expression speaks to you, you're going to love all the illustrated graphics we have in Over. There are dozens of packs to choose from – not just cutesy characters, but hundreds of squiggles, splashes, and splotches too. Once you have your design all worked out, consider a micro-dose of unbridled expression to sprinkle in some playfulness and delight. We also have an impressive collection of fonts that pair perfectly with this style.

These are a few examples of templates we've created in Over, to give you a sense of where you might take it for your own brand.

In a nutshell

Childlike expression is perhaps the purest form of creativity: completely free from any rules or judgment.

In art history, mimicking the pure freedom of children’s art has been a rebellious reaction to uniformity and rationality.

Doodling – the epitome of creating without thinking – is hugely popular, even adorning luxury fashion brands.

Childlike art is a delight to create, and behold; a reprieve from the overwhelming seriousness of the world.

For brands, a simple, cartoonish style speaks volumes about a playful spirit, and ease of use.

On Trend with Over

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Anti-Design
Almost every great cultural movement in history began with an intuition to purposefully go where you’re not supposed to go.

We’ve seen how rebellion is a major theme right now, and in design this is very literally being expressed as defying the age-old rules of the game. And let’s be clear – graphic design has plenty of rules. More, perhaps, than most art forms. There are hundreds of text books to verify this.

Precision and legibility are essential for clear visual communication, and so designers adhere to almost mathematical laws defining exactly how elements appear on the page – quite literally down to the pixel. If you’ve ever worked with design software, you’ll know that the grid lines, rulers, and text boxes on the page are like stop signs at an interaction – you really do need to obey them. In the past, digital design has been fit for purpose but by no means elaborate or expressive, limiting true creativity.
“Rules are made to be broken” is the rebel mantra, and as tech accelerates it’s no surprise that more and more designers are coloring outside the lines. Design is an art form, and creativity is defined by curiosity, exploration, and experimentation. The artistic spirit will always wriggle away from safe spaces. Almost every great cultural movement in history began with an intuition to purposefully go where you’re not supposed to go.

2019 saw a huge resurgence of Brutalism, with a chunky, geometric, brashness derived from its architectural namesake. It’s not everybody’s cup of tea. But it’s certainly effective at grabbing attention, and sometimes that’s the whole point.

The Brutalist trend will undoubtedly continue to seep into popular culture this year, becoming even louder and more expressive as it invigorates graphic design with energy, movement, and impossible-to-ignore presence. The rise of unnatural color and the clash of natural and synthetic textures are parallel developments that bode well for difficult-on-the-eyes design in 2020.

This idea of anti-design has taken hold not only in the graphic design world, but in fashion, furniture design, decor, and food styling – where ugliness emerges as a radical response to pretty. “Raw,” “unapologetic” and even “hideous” are compliments in this context. Running parallel to the rise of authentic imagery in photography, we see a very clear mistrust of sugar-coated perfection. We’re yearning for evidence of imagination. Intuitive expression is the antidote to the generic mechanization we’re growing weary of.

The only catch is that it requires a fair amount of skill to play on the cliff edge of familiarity. We can’t all just fling paint at a canvas and assume we’ll create a Jackson Pollock. Basic knowledge is essential, and there are some outer limits that just seem to be impenetrable.

Firstly, if there’s a message being conveyed, it does need to be visible, and readable, otherwise it’s just a frustrating experience. And then there’s the unfortunate fact that bad design can just be really difficult to look at, repelling the eye instead of pulling it in. Perhaps “breaking” the rule is the wrong way to phrase it. ‘Bending’, ‘flexing’, ‘contorting’, and ‘re-interpreting’ might be better terms.

Confident designers can venture far out to sea, but they remember to never lose sight of the lighthouse. It’s still worth familiarizing yourself with the centuries-old principles of composition, color, movement, and typography, because they really do work in harmony with the eye-mind connection. But once you understand these basics, remix them into something louder, bolder, and more never-seen-before. Don’t accept the standardized option.

If you or your brand want to really get noticed in 2020, join the rebel alliance. May the fire of the burning rule book light your way.
In the past, digital design was fit for purpose, and rarely elaborate or expressive.

Graphic design is becoming more of an art form in its own right.

Anti-design is an expression of rebellion – bending, stretching, and re-interpreting the rules of graphic design.

The idea runs parallel to the rise of the ‘ugly’ aesthetic in furniture, product, and fashion design.

Anti-design requires real confidence and skill, ironically. It’s a good idea to know the rules before you break them.

In a nutshell

In a nutshell
Starting with a blank canvas can be intimidating when you’re looking to create something intentionally anti-design. Of course, if you’re feeling rebellious that’s a great way to dive in. But the tens of thousands of pre-designed templates we have in the app make things much easier for you.

All our templates can be remixed at your fingertips. If you want to try something far out, pick a design in our feed that you instinctively like, and then mash it up. Push it outside of its neat alignment, enlarge the fonts, add more images, invert all the colors... Go nuts.

Here are a few anti-design designs we created in Over, to inspire you.

On Trend with Over

On Trend with Over

(image: Hello Mister Frank for Over)

(image: @a.running.contradiction for Over)

(image: @a.running.contradiction for Over)

(image: @a.running.contradiction for Over)

(image: @a.running.contradiction for Over)
Phygital Objects
The digital realm and its limitless restrictions is therefore becoming a space for excess and maximalist aesthetics."

Much has been made of nostalgia, craftsmanship, childlike expression, and analogue ways in this trend report. Many of these intertwined ideas emerge as a reaction: rebellion against perfection, in favor of something more raw, more human. But curiosity and imagination are equally human traits, and on the other end of the spectrum we’re seeing digital artists using the medium to render imaginary worlds and objects with increased sophistication.

Movies and games have accelerated 3D animation to a point where hyper-realism doesn’t surprise us anymore. The gap between capturing and creating reality is a very narrow one, and discerning the physical from the digital can require a second or third assessment. ‘Phygital’ emerges as a term to describe this hybrid state.

image: @kaeptive
It’s a very useful development for product designers and architects, who can prototype and visualize their projects with less time and effort. They can iterate, play, and experiment much easier with pixels than clay or cardboard. In their final form, products can be located in any environment, real or imagined, without travel or studio expenses. Beyond mock-ups, digital-only furniture, fashion and beauty collections – made for our virtual identities – are becoming popular on Instagram.

The environment stands to benefit in the long term, as less manufactured material ends up in the world. We might even think of digital product generation as an expression of the reduce, reuse, recycle trend. Eco-conscious consumers are increasingly questioning whether they need physical products. The digital realm and its limitless restrictions is therefore becoming a space for excess and maximalist aesthetics.

It’s not just the cost-saving that makes these simulated environments appealing to brands. Operating in a realm of pure imagination speaks to endless possibilities, and a sense of dissatisfaction with the familiar. Brands with a particularly bold vision – those most excited by the future – would naturally gravitate here.

In terms of specific trends within this field, we’re seeing another overlap with our report on grounded tones. Though complex and surreal in their forms, they are frequently rendered in natural, subdued, subtly textured hues. In the same way that sanctuary whites provide some refuge from chaos, the pervading phygital aesthetic is defined by serene pastels and soft tones to inspire feelings of calm and escape from real-world noise.

Existence itself is becoming more phygital every day. Brands and designers drawn towards this style are invariably the ones who are most interested in defining this brave new world.
Thankfully, you don’t need a working knowledge of the latest 3D software to jump onto this trend. Within our extensive library of graphics, we have plenty phygital objects (and even fonts) that you can add to your canvas with a gentle tap. Try combining some of these to create your own surreal world.

If you want to start integrating these 3D objects with other design elements, it’s worth getting to grips with the mask tool in Over. This will help you create the illusion of depth in your scene. Subtly adding shadows to your objects can enhance a sense of weight and physicality.

Give it a go, it’s super easy. Here are some examples to inspire your exploration.
Color Expressions

Unnatural Color
Organic Fluidity
A Squeeze of Citrus
COLOR EXPRESSIONS

Overview

“In line with the prevailing theme of rebellion, color is rioting in the streets.”

It’s fascinating to think that the endless possibilities of color all emerge from the humble color wheel. Within this very limited spectrum, we’re forever concocting new combinations. We gravitate towards certain co-ordinates on the wheel every season or so, led by the collective intuition of fashion, product, and graphic designers.

Despite the rationale that accompanies each seasonal palette, it’s typically just a self-fulfilling prophecy: bold designers instinctively explore new hues and combinations, and if they look fresh and easy on the eye, others soon replicate them, and a trend is born.

Which is why this year, though much will be made about the celebrated ‘Colors of the Year’, we’re interested in expressions of color that move beyond any replicable palette. ‘Wild’, ‘excessive’, ‘over-saturated’, ‘artificial’, ‘electric’, and ‘explosive’ are some of the adjectives we’d use to describe them. In line with the prevailing theme of rebellion, color is rioting in the streets.

image: @maalavidaa
“As more and more synthetic materials enter our world, it stands to reason that their physical properties will infiltrate our imagination.”

Made all the more malleable by digital technology, we’re definitely seeing more synthetic tones, gradients, combinations, and surface textures — colors we’d never see in nature. On second thought, some of these might be inspired by new perspectives on nature that technology has enabled: an insect’s eye, beetle’s shell, or scales on a butterfly’s wing are digitally psychedelic under a microscope. The fashion industry is booming with experiments in iridescence, mimicking nature with synthetic materials.

The artifacts of technology have also expanded the color wheel’s repertoire. Things like silicon, plastic, neon, and petroleum all throw light back at us in fascinating ways. As more and more synthetic materials enter our world, it stands to reason that their physical properties will infiltrate our imagination. Plastic wrap, for example, is an analogue texture we’re seeing all over the place. There’s an element of nostalgia behind this for sure, but the crumpled synthetic texture adds visual interest as it distorts light into random rainbow slivers.

Technology gives us the ability to blend gradients with perfect precision and unlimited freedom. Any two, or three, or sixty-seven colors can be integrated in an instant — and we kinda want to see what that looks like, how much further we can push it. Glitch art remains big within the anti-design uprising, short-circuiting the code that recreates color as we know it to generate garish clashes, visualizing hysteria, tension and chaos. The “broken machine” aesthetic is an evocative expression of rebellion.

Whereas most art in existence has used the abundant tones of the natural world to reproduce it to some degree, many contemporary artists and designers are choosing to represent our new digital reality with a palette beyond the organic world, developing a new color language as different as Java is to Japanese. We’re using computers to help us imagine the possibilities we haven’t quite imagined yet.
COLOR EXPRESSIONS

Organic Fluidity

‘Freed from the supervision of the logical mind, unexpected patterns bring themselves into existence.’

Another expression of unbridled color expression we’re seeing much more of is fluidity. Put simply, it’s the manifestation of color as pure energy, using abstract, organic shapes to create a sense of movement and life force.

In many cases this idea works hand in hand with the aforementioned trend of unnatural colors, emulating the fluid shapes of synthetic materials like warped plastic, soap bubbles, or petrol on a wet street.

Digitally rendering or referencing these prismatic colors creates beautiful abstract forms that are popular in contemporary graphic design – particularly successful when counterbalanced with clear, minimalist typography.

These fluid shapes are often generated with digital physicality to the point of being phytgal objects, the centerpiece of a scene created entirely from imagination. It’s common to see 3D forms interacting with text and other graphic elements, enhancing the illusion of depth, volume, and tactility.

Not all variations on this trend are wild and outrageous. Some are more graphic and simplified, perhaps only using two or three colors. But the sense of dynamism, spontaneity, and energy remains consistent. Animation works perfectly in this mode, converting a sense of movement into actual movement, as organic shapes flow, twist, ooz, and rotate in mesmerizing loops. Like smoke trailing up into the night sky, or a cyclone whipping across an island, there’s no apparent logic to the twists and undulations. They simply flow.

It’s a visual representation of that ideal state where we let intuition take the wheel, and our natural impulses guide the way. Seen in this light, organic fluidity might be regarded as a more sophisticated expression of doodling, another big trend we’ve identified as childlike expression.

Freed from the supervision of the logical mind, unexpected patterns bring themselves into existence. Amorphous, lava-lamp-like blobs of color might not seem like a representation of anything specific, but they definitely paint a picture of creative confidence.
"Like a lone lemon on a tree, a tangy pop of yellow can really grab your attention."

If you’re looking for one specific and easy to implement take-away from our research into color trends, adding a squeeze of citrus into your designs would be it. Restraint is a very underrated design skill, and we know that not everybody will gravitate towards the wild expressionism we’ve been looking at. If subtlety is your thing, and you’re just looking for a lil’ Salt Bae sprinkle of on-trend flair, consider delving into the yellowy section of the color wheel.

Yuzu, Tangerine, Papaya, and Blood Orange aren’t just brilliant juice ingredients, they’re hugely popular colors at the moment. But that doesn’t mean you need to spread ‘em on thick in every design you create. Like a lone lemon on a tree, a tangy pop of yellow can really grab your attention, especially in a minimalist or monochrome design. It can be even more interesting in the mode of childish expression – a spontaneous splash, spray, splotch, or speckle interrupting an impeccably ordered design.

Citrus accents inject a dash of energy, warmth, positivity, and vitality. Subtle notes of softer hues can also evoke nostalgia, like light leaks on old photographs, or the subtitles in a European arthouse film. ‘Mellow Yellow’ typography over raw, authentic photography is a very hot look in fashion and music right now, typically bolstering a retro or analogue aesthetic.

There’s an intrinsic healthiness to yellow and orange (think sunlight, spring flowers and ripe Californian orchards) which makes it a great choice in the realm of wellness And it grabs attention like nothing else. Maybe it’s something in our primal jungle DNA, programmed to spot bananas or poisonous frogs. Who knows?
Color is going wild in 2020: 'excessive,' 'over-saturated,' 'artificial,' 'electric,' and 'explosive' are some suitable adjectives.

Synthetic materials and textures are a huge trend, and new bizarre combinations are emerging to portray these.

The glitchy, 'broken machine' aesthetic creates unnatural palettes as a by-product.

These synthetic colors are frequently presented in warped, abstract, organic forms.

Some expressions of organic fluidity are more graphic and simplified, and the impression is more flowing than chaotic.

For a more subtle application of expressive color in 2020, citrus accents are the way to go.

In a nutshell

When creating your own color combos in Over, the only limitation is your imagination. There are no limits to how many colors you can bring together in a single design. Don’t forget to save and name your palettes once you’ve built them, so you can replicate the identical hues at a later stage. For bigger projects, you might even want to create a color moodboard at the outset, to preview the overall impression your selection will make.

We also have some incredible graphic packs with glitches, swirls, waves, and other expressions of pure color energy. Here are just a few examples of designs created in Over, responding to the color expression trend.
Grounded Tones

Terracotta
Powder Pigments
Sanctuary Whites
"Colors in this realm are far more understated, and operate more as a context than the main event."

On the other end of the color trend spectrum, away from the garish, kinetic experimentation, there’s plenty to be said about natural, grounded tones that reflect an affinity with Mother Earth. Colors in this realm are far more understated, and operate more as a context than the main event.

This year we expect to be seeing more of this humble color expression in beauty, wellness, decor, and food as one might expect. But this relatively neutral palette is increasingly popular with edgier street and fashion brands too. Grounded tones don’t only say “natural” or “down-to-earth”, they can also communicate a sense of premium quality, especially when subtly textured to activate the idea of touch.

With the reduce, re-use, recycle mantra being as dominant as it is, the aesthetic of ground down and repurposed waste material is on trend, denoting social consciousness to its users. A product living its second or third life has more subdued, imperfect tones, progressively phasing out its shiny newness. Like chipboard and terrazzo, which have been such popular background textures in recent years, recycled plastic – speckled with tiny little nuggets of color – is on the rise in graphic, product, and fashion design.
“Although these hues aren’t vivid or lush or even consistent, it’s the ethos behind them that makes them highly sought after.”

The appeal of terracotta’s warm, clay tones seems to know no bounds. Its spectrum of dusty orange, caramel, and brick-red hues have been trending for the last couple of years, and it shows little sign of slowing down. There’s something quite visceral about it, transporting our sensations to a sun-drenched Portuguese villa, or the shade of an adobe house in the bright New Mexico desert.

In a world of plastic mass-production, the very concept of terracotta pottery symbolizes its antithesis: using only natural materials from the earth, creating by hand, imperfection, minimalism, durability, lack of adornment. Clay subconsciously evokes so many of these current ideas, which is why it’s always an option for brands or individuals aligned with any of them. The analogy extends beyond pottery. Materials like clay, leather, wood, stone, and marble are associated with quality craftsmanship, and their tones carry these connotations.

On the softer side, the rise of natural dyeing has also stimulated the popularity of unadulterated, grounded tones. There’s a similar association at play between hand-made, organic production, and value. Although these hues aren’t vivid or lush or even consistent, it’s the ethos behind them that makes them highly sought after.

These colors have been stored in human consciousness for millions of years, whereas youngsters like Neon Pink came online just decades ago. Perhaps that’s why we’re instinctually put at ease in the presence of earthy tones, reassured by their permanence. Thousands of years ago, man’s earliest expressions of art were in terracotta tones. If they’ve been in vogue that long, there’s certainly still some mileage to be had in 2020.
"...somewhere between concrete and candy floss."

‘Pastel tones’ is another longstanding trend that’s been living its best life for a few years now. Right now we’re seeing a phase out of perky peach and apricot in favor of dustier, more grounded interpretations.

Rather than being digitally luminous and perfectly smooth, subtle texture often comes into play, adding the illusion of tactility; more matte than gloss. This textural dimension infuses a subtle sense of sturdiness and durability to its presence, which gears it well towards premium brands.

Tropical pastels carry an inherent femininity and youthfulness, whereas these dusty powdery pigments are more neutral, perhaps even nudging toward the masculine end of the spectrum. This expands their potential application, and we’re seeing them crop up everywhere from beauty to skateboarding to tech.

There are rumblings of a ‘soft Brutalism’ emerging in 2020; think jagged austerity with round edges and soft finishes. Industrial pastels will invariably fuse with this trend – beautifully poised somewhere between concrete and candy floss.

It’s also a very popular palette amongst 3D artists, who imbue their phygital objects and surreal landscapes in these tones to blur the line between real and imagined. Though the forms they imagine might be from another world, they seem more believable because their materiality is rendered with grounded colors and textures from the earth we know and love.
If all the hysterical imagery in our sections on color expressions, anti-design, and childlike expression has your heart palpitating and your eyeballs hurting, take a deep breath. Now, come and lie down in the cool, calm, and quiet corner of the report we’re calling ‘Sanctuary White’.

With rebellion being such a defining trend in 2020, things are definitely going to be loud and wild for the most part. Design, music, art, and fashion all got the memo, and as we’ve seen throughout most of this report, the lunatics are now taking over the asylum.

Beyond busy aesthetics, there’s just so much noise at the moment. Everybody’s shouting at each other over the internet, and we’re bombarded with thousands of images every day – many of them engineered to make us feel inadequate. It’s a lot, and our mental health is suffering the consequences.

In reaction to this, the mindfulness movement is bigger than ever before, with meditation becoming part of our daily lives. We’re having to develop strategies to cope with the onslaught of modern life. Minimalism and emptiness is the visual representation of a quiet mind. Stripping away pigment seems to turn the volume down, and lets the eye take a breather.

Some of the same underlying principles we saw with Terracotta and Powder Pigments apply here: a sense of subtle texture and raw materialism evokes an idea of quality, in opposition to bright, garish mass-production. Expressions of Sanctuary White tend to be soft and rounded, in keeping with the psychological comfort they radiate. There’s a sacred dimension too, calling to mind classical Renaissance statues carved from marble and alabaster.

With eco-consciousness being such valuable capital for brands at the moment, the use of uncluttered, unobtrusive design signifies resistance to excess and artificiality. An ethos of ‘less is more’ comes across, an idea that has become more of an ideal. Colorlessness is inherently natural too: bone, ice, stone, clouds, and pure white light are all tones on the Sanctuary White palette.

Monochromatic minimalism has always been classy, but this year it’s necessary. We’re all drawn towards it like an empty bench in the mall on Christmas Eve. Just give us five minutes to sit down and catch our breath, before we jump back into the fray.
In a nutshell

At the other end of the spectrum to wild, synthetic colors, natural tones are hugely popular in 2020, with some specific nuances.

The reduce, reuse, recycle ethos has a ripple effect in color, where subdued, grounded tones speak to eco-consciousness.

In a world of plastic mass-production, the concept of handmade, earthen pottery symbolizes its antithesis.

The rise of natural dyeing has stimulated the popularity of unadulterated, grounded tones.

Referencing the earth alludes to craftsmanship and quality.

Pastels are still popular, but this year they are dustier, textured, and less luminous – verging on industrial.

Earthy, powder pigments are frequently being used in 3D design, blurring the boundary between physical and digital.

Sanctuary white is the antidote to color chaos, creating sensations of restfulness and quietude.

On Trend with Over

This trend is right up our alley, especially seeing how wildly popular the Terracotta phenomenon has been amongst our users. We have so many graphics for you to try out, and a huge number of existing templates in this spectrum of natural, earthy hues.

Here are some of our favorite examples of grounded tones in action.
Typography Trends

Type Heroes
Delicate Serifs
Even though images are the first language of the TL;DR generation, the alphabet isn’t going anywhere anytime soon. Pictures, graphics, colors, and textures sketch a context, but words are how we communicate the specifics. Typography remains a critical component of almost all graphic design.

We can’t however ignore the fact that we’re reading less and scanning more, as our visual literacy evolves. In an endless stream of images, text has mutated into a more graphic organism. Typography has escaped its cage. It needn’t always be the most precise, structured aspect of a design. Sure, we ought to be able to read it, but beyond that restriction anything goes. Legibility can be stretched surprisingly far before it breaks altogether — especially when we’re all so visually adept.

Those less inclined towards the lawlessness of anti-design are seeking refuge from chaos. In more elegant, minimalist modes we’re seeing grounded tones and delicate type treatment. Minimalism is inherently restrained, and within this more classical approach, subtle variations and distortions update timeless serifs with modern personality.

Typography has escaped its cage.
“Done right, we see how a word or phrase we might have seen written a hundred times before comes alive with emotion, personality, and energy.”

We’ve mentioned how graphic design is an inherently ordered art form, with a hard-coded system of guidelines and formulae. But creative expression always finds a way to break free, and this year we’ve seen anti-design gaining ground in a major way. Typography is governed by a particularly strict set of rules, but in 2020 the suit and tie is coming off. Expect to see it getting a little tipsy, singing karaoke louder than everyone else.

Lettering can be far more expressive or emotional when unrestrained. It can also be extremely effective at communicating an idea: designers arguably do their job with the maximum possible efficiency if they can communicate a complex idea with a single word. The ancient Egyptians quite possibly kicked off the trend with hieroglyphics.

In this unlikely collision of boldness and minimalism, we see all other graphic elements stripped away, and typography stands squarely in the spotlight.

Type heroes are often inherently playful, with words taking on the attributes of the idea they stand in for: a word like ‘BLAZE’ rendered in flaming type, or ‘FLOW’ made up of smooth, liquid lines. This concept becomes highly creative when brands want to convey a more complex idea, or value, or characteristic. Done right, we see how a word or phrase we might have seen written a hundred times before comes alive with emotion, personality, and energy.

Animation has revolutionized the type game in this regard, and it’s shaping up to be a BIG trend this year, not just for brands, but for all of us on our visually oriented social platforms.
With the added dimension of movement – swirling, floating, growing, spinning, disappearing, reappearing – the language of expressive typography is greatly expanded. The alphabet is no longer just two-dimensional, or even three-dimensional; bringing time into the mix takes us to the fourth.

With type as the hero of a design, a paradigm shift happens. Words are treated as raw material for art, rather than writing. It’s often said that limitation fosters creativity, and with just 26 letters and 10 numbers, designers have a very finite toolbox to work with. Yet we consistently see brilliant and bold new ideas emerging in this field, in an ongoing quest for new variations.

It goes without saying that brands willing to make type the hero, convey an inherent boldness. It can also be a very classy way to SHOUT your message in a crowded marketplace, stripping away the superfluous details and amplifying a single idea through a loudspeaker. Enlarged, expressive typography requires both daring and skill. Not everybody is brave enough to serve a meal made from just one or two ingredients, but the chef who can has a natural ability. For this reason, it’s often the most design savvy brands that play at this high altitude.

“Words are treated as raw material for art, rather than writing.”

(image: Studio Violaine & Jeremy)
"It’s about subtly refining a perfectly functional design to take on unique characteristics."

The classics, by definition, never go out of fashion, and this year is no exception. It’s humbling to consider that, though we may find them in new contexts, we’re still largely dependent on a typographic style that has remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of years. Elegant, Romanesque serif fonts are in the midst of a massive revival, unseating the simple, bold sans-serifs that have reigned supreme for the last few years.

In contemporary expressions of this antiquated style, lettering tends to be very slender and high-contrast — meaning there’s a notable difference between long, skinny arms and much heavier serifs (those bits at the ends of long strokes). This subtle variation creates an interesting balance between delicacy and strength. It might be why it’s hugely popular in brands geared towards women, or celebrating female narratives.

As visual imagery becomes increasingly complex and abstract, with anti-design and childlike expression pervading graphic design, classical typography can serve as an anchor to reality, a guiding light of information in a swirl of expression. Frequently, graphics and textures serve as a contextual backdrop to the essential message, which cannot be missed or misread. In these instances, classical type is a logical option. It can also be called upon to create a dialogue between old and new, formal and informal, when combined with contemporary, authentic imagery.

Incorporating classicism needn’t always be ironic. Any brand rooted in heritage, elegance, or quality simply can’t go wrong with fonts that exude these values. With classic fonts (as with classic brands) it’s not about constantly re-inventing or responding to trend. It’s about subtly refining a perfectly functional design to take on unique characteristics. Little nuances that give each almost-identical serif font its own personality, are the product of immense attention to detail. The brands that bear them often do so to echo this exact sentiment.
As an extension of the growing anti-design sentiment, typography is breaking out of its cage.

In a visually-oriented era, it makes sense that words evolve to become more pictorial.

Lettering can be far more expressive, emotional, and eye-catching when unrestrained.

With oversized text dominating the design, there’s an interesting dynamic at play between boldness and minimalism.

Animated typography is a mega trend. With the extra dimension of movement, expressive potential is greatly expanded.

Slim, delicate serif fonts keep classicism alive in 2020.

Subtle variations to antiquated lettering imbue a modern personality.

In a nutshell

We’re a little bit font-obsessed here at Over... and we all have our favorites. To showcase typography trends for 2020, we asked our design curators to put together a collection of the hottest fonts for the year ahead, with some examples of them in action.
We hope the 2020 Trends Kit has inspired you to make change happen. So let’s start doing!

We’ve made sure you can recreate your favourite trends with Over. Inside Over Pro you’ll find Premium assets, on-trend curation, and all the fonts, graphics, images and video you need to stand out in 2020.

**Inspired? Great!**
**Now start creating.**