

# About the Design & deviantART

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*Editor's Note (2021): This article is in relation to the original design of these articles on the previous version of the Synoptique website. In order to see the design being referred to in this article, please see the legacy version of Edition 11 which preserves the visual approach being discussed.*

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The synoptic image for this edition (the horizontal image above) is pieced together using five works taken from the mega artist-sharing site deviantART, and they offer the collection of articles in *Synoptique 11* a curiously familiar, crafted, and careful loveliness—a style of design decidedly ‘deviantART-esque’.

2 million people will visit deviantART today, submitting somewhere around 70 000 works. You can develop a sense of this site's importance if you compare this with YouTube's 65 000 daily submissions, the majority foisted without any thoughts of being art. There is a ticker at the top of deviantART counting up the number of submissions. When I started writing this article, the ticker, which has been running since the site opened in 2000, reported 53 million 189 thousand 359 artworks online. When I'm done there will be about 1400 more. With numbers like these it would seem ridiculous to talk about a deviantART style. In the presence of such big numbers, does the word ‘art’ start to falter?

If museums could be lived in they'd be like deviantART. The site itself is drab and functional. The squatters bring the colour, the tenants tend the new blooming galleries. To look at a work on deviantART is to see it simultaneously with many others, and always with

the sense of the artist being nearby, peeking in. Like MoMA, deviantART lends the pieces on display a coherence by virtue of its space: the building itself tells us how to see them.

On the other hand, there is a lot about deviantART which keeps the casual gallery visitor out. The community is kept contained by its shibboleths, its traditions, and runes (member names are prefixed by a whole series of special characters identifying them to other members)—it is guarded by its own etiquette and oiled by quick allegiances. And, of course, there is the lingo: artists are ‘deviants’, works are ‘deviations’. With hefty roots in Japanese anime and manga, the site — which is impressively international even though the language is English — is dominated by a sensibility which, in the eyes of many, marks it as a fringe culture. That being said, it is a massive fringe. There is something poignantly teenager-ish about deviantART —the site just *seems* young. Yet the pulsing potential of the environment is anything but shallow, superficial, or transient.

The site was started by web geeks who specialized in application ‘skins’—little bits of colour and design you can use to change the look of your favourite program or browser, like when you change your Windows desktop theme. A new skin allows you to re-decorate your virtual world, to personalize it, to change your mood, to stave off boredom. The metaphor of skin — touching, shedding, stripping, wearing, exposing, and sharing — is central to what deviantART has become. This metaphor suits the deviant's penchant for photo and image manipulation. Since so many of the works

are fetishistically rescued from the real through the secret and the leet, through Photoshop incantations and kick-ass Illustrator tricks, the skins multiply. The web site becomes a layer over the work, the work a layer over the original image, and the original image a layer over the creator. These layers define a very definite body, and though it may indeed one day be outgrown, it is not discarded. It is in a museum.

DeviantART as a whole is an ever-expanding body of work. There is the sense that individuality must be impossible because it is so massive. The individual artists all have their names obscured by the huge multilayer fringe culture of web tech. The images so often predictably strive to exist indifferently and yet appear so uniformly polished. The sheer volume makes uniqueness statistically impossible.

However, this experience is not a limitation. For this *Synoptique* layout, expressing the ideas authors were getting at in their articles was as simple as typing keywords into the deviantART search engine and snapping up the deviations as they surfaced. The community's extensive vocabulary, its readiness to offer its 'deviation' on any idea one approaches it with, gives the images their final layer — a branding, a tattoo — of their participation in a culture much larger than themselves alone. Like a museum, deviantART gives us much more help in thinking 'through' a work of art than just thinking 'about' one.

The deviantArt slogan is "Where Art Meets Application" referring both to the site's origins as a place to 'skin applications,' and its interest in matching art to walls that support them and with the communities that appreciate them.

The *Synoptique* designer, Kina de Grasse, asked the artists, through the deviantART messaging system, for permission to use their work. They happily agreed, and we salute them for their talent, vision, and curiosity. It was wonderful to reach the individuals behind the art and to receive their help in creating more connections.

#### **Kina de Grasse**

<http://www.kina-ink.com/>

<http://kina.deviantart.com/>

Artist: **Roman Gordeev**

URL: <http://softlanding.deviantart.com/>

Original: <http://softlanding.deviantart.com/art/soap-bubbles-78893478>

Article: For A Sentiment of Beat Infancy: Conceptions

of Childhood in the American Avant-garde

Artist: **"Ellenoir"**

URL: <http://ellenoir.deviantart.com>

Original: <http://ellenoir.deviantart.com/art/empty-64425947>

Article: Antonioni—La Grande tétralogie du malaise moderne: une étude visuelle de l'absence et du vide

Artist: **Nicoletta Fersini**

URL: <http://bewel.deviantart.com/>

Original: <http://bewel.deviantart.com/art/marble-quot-1-78846100>

Article: Eye and Brain, Torn Asunder: Reading Ideology in Sally Potter's Orlando

Artist: **Juuso Koivunen**

URL: <http://outeq.deviantart.com>

Original: <http://outeq.deviantart.com/art/Arctic-Desert-21780399>

Article: Si le vent soulève la neige ...

Artist: **David Steiner**

URL: <http://muetze.deviantart.com/>

Original: <http://muetze.deviantart.com/art/shattered-reality-8654168>

Article: Look At Me and Tell Me If You've Known Me Before

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*Edited by Amanda D'Aoust*