

The Imaginarium: a Saturnalia Report

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REDS-COUT

Saturnalia

Each summer, a different group of leaders come together—brand innovators, poets, marketers, designers, musicians, and advertisers - to reimagine the inside of our creative industries and give flight to our souls. Saturnalia takes place in the Berkshires, and in Cannes and has grown into a vibrant community of friends. www.thisissaturnalia.com

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A Thank-You Note

by Michael Ryan
for John Skoyles

My daughter made drawings with the pens you sent,
line drawings that suggest the things they represent,
different from any drawings she — at ten — had done,
closer to real art, implying what the mind fills in.
For her mother she made a flower fragile on its stem;
for me, a lion, calm, contained, but not a handsome one.
She drew a lion for me once before, on a get-well card,
and wrote I must be brave even when it's hard.

Such love is healing — as you know, my friend,
especially when it comes unbidden from our children
despite the flaws they see so vividly in us.
Who can love you as your child does?
Your son so ill, the brutal chemo, his looming loss
owning you now — yet you would be this generous
to think of my child. With the pens you sent
she has made I hope a healing instrument.

Welcome to the Imaginarium

By Scott Stedman

“I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn’t much improved my opinion of them.”

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
The Little Prince

Imagination. Sometimes it’s hard to remember how much we owe to our old friend. Imagination can feel like a vestige of our youth. Imagination is magical where creativity is tangible, imagination wanders where creativity solves, imagination is for the sake of itself, where creativity has an outcome and a benefit. We talk at length about creativity and inspiration, but we’re here to make a case for bringing back imagination.

Perhaps, like me, you’ve grown too comfortable in your own perspective. By mistake we’ve all grown up and forgot to bring our imaginations with us.

In the Imaginarium, we schluff off our grown-up skin and prance around the land of new, uncomfortable, and unpopular ideas. I hope that here you’ll find a thought that makes you feel uncomfortable, but perhaps brings you someplace new. Ideas like this are not found in data, as we’ll discuss, but in the clear sky. Discovering

them is the purpose of our industry, and I think it’s probably why each of us choose to work in the business of creativity.

Before we get started, I wanted to mention how lucky I feel to have worked with the brilliant creative thinkers at Redscout on this inaugural Imaginarium. Gratitude and amazement! We’ve worked hard to put something together that reflects the adventurous, provocative, and decent spirit that Saturnalia captures each year. It’s born of the insights we heard from all of you, and particularly our newest group of merry misfits that came together at Tourists during the Summer.

We’ve also updated thisissaturnalia.com to share all the people who have experienced Saturnalia and I certainly encourage you all to continue connecting, growing, and bravely reimagining the inside of this industry that we all care about so much, together. We deserve to work in an industry that looks and acts the way we *imagine* it should.

Enjoy—
Scott



**At least
one
of these
ideas is
wrong**

Against Popularity

By Connie Lim



Popularity is an alluring bait. It seems, to many seasoned marketers and not just at first glance, like the best pathway to profit is to appeal to the largest audience.

But in a world of ever-splintering subcultures, the ideas that everyone agrees with are often the ideas no one actually likes. They're accepted with a yawn, and promptly forgotten.

Let us consider a few examples. Bud Light, a beloved beer brand, debuted Bud Light Seltzer in the wake of competition from low-calorie alternatives. BuzzFeed "pivoted to video," in response to high viewership numbers reported by social networks. (It later pivoted back, when the reports proved inflated.)

Consensus is rarely as unified as it seems. Overwhelming data can be reinterpreted. Overnight, a lurch towards the bleeding edge of culture can seem more like cowing to trends.

When McDonald's turned its golden-arches logo upside-down to honor International Women's Day, it received widespread criticism about pay and benefits for its female employees. Starbucks debuted a

#RaceTogether campaign — without first addressing its own diversity shortcomings.

Where did these brands go wrong? It wasn't just that they prioritized the popular. They forgot *why* they were ever popular. They were inauthentic. That definition can help us arrive at its inverse: the core tenet of authentic creative work is that it respects a brand's true audience, and forgets everyone else.

Compare McDonalds' political grandstanding to Nike's collaboration with Colin Kaepernick. Kaepernick is one of the most polarizing figures in sports, but also one of the most interesting: he took a stand (a knee) because he thought it was right, regardless of public opinion. Nike, too, proved that taking a risk offers meaning, because it requires the bravery to make some people mad.

Brand clarity originates not just from understanding who you want to reach, but also who you don't. While inflaming the scientific community with her company Goop, Gwyneth Paltrow built the most dedicated following in wellness. Elon Musk faced backlash surrounding his ambitions with SpaceX — which attracted avid believers to his cause.

Inevitably, successful brands alienate. By defining their enemies, they find their friends. Consider this your invitation to take a stand against popularity, and catalyze authentic community.



The 27 Human Emotions
2018 Report for Proceedings of
National Academy of Sciences
at UC, Berkeley

**We Grew Up in Places
That Are Gone**

by Jennifer Robertson

Why do we look
for sutures and siblings

in all the wrong places,
when Google gives us

22,950,000,000 results
for the word home?

Living in the In-Between

By Nora Bradshaw



We are witnessing a moment of technological acceleration. It has happened before: the creation of the printing press. The discovery of electricity. Oral contraception, or representational democracy.

When innovation compounds, establishments fade. Institutions—the governments and industries that form the bedrock of our society—evolve at a constant rate. Their scale and complexity, normally an asset, becomes a liability in times of exponential progress.

In the gap between innovation and institution, future and present, lies opportunity. In this in-between space, brands create meaning, and corporations become truly useful.

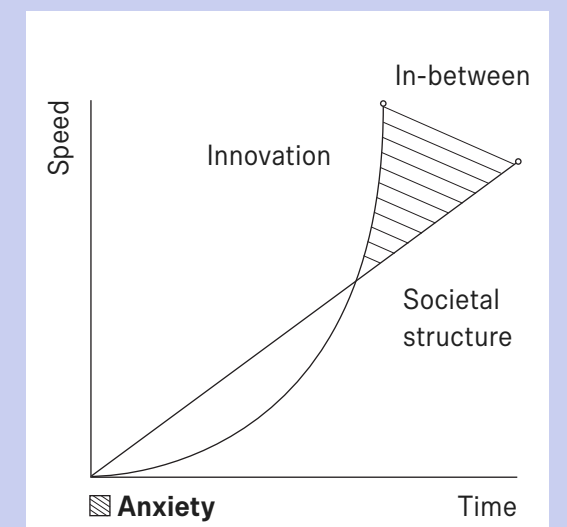
When Uber debuted ride sharing, municipalities around the world were lagging to meet citizens' demands for public transportation. Leaps in smartphone technology, geolocation, mobile payment, and cloud storage poised Uber, a corporation, to solve the problem of getting people to their

destinations affordably on a scale that few cities had imagined.

The in-between space exists also in education, fashion, and healthcare. General Assembly has built a brand around preparing students for technology jobs in ways that traditional schools do not. Everlane and Patagonia created new business models around transparent and sustainable manufacturing, proving that consumers want more than fast fashion and forever plastics (their policies are also inspiring regulators). In the U.S., where new healthcare innovations are unaffordable, brands like the vitamin company Ritual thrive by promising to help consumers take charge of their own wellness.

These companies have staked their identities in the shadow of progress. Still others propose temporary fixes, or “society hacks.” In the wake of mass shootings, and government inaction, Dick’s Sporting Goods and Walmart began restricting access and limiting the types of firearms and ammunition sold in their stores, and were publicly lauded. As it turns out, the in-between is where profit and social good coexist.

Hack or transformation, companies have a big job. Progress is made with bits and pixels, by patents and inventors. But it’s brands that help society adapt to it nimbly and humanely.



Empathy Means these Ideas Don't Contradict



“Some people use empathy as referring to everything good, as a synonym for morality and kindness and compassion. The notion of empathy I’m most interested in is the act of feeling what you believe other people feel. From a moral standpoint, we’re better off without it. Empathy is a spotlight focusing on certain people in the here and now, and leaves us insensitive to the long-term consequences of our acts, and blind to the suffering of those we do not or cannot empathize with. Empathy is biased. It is shortsighted.”

—Paul Bloom, Professor of psychology and cognitive science at Yale University, *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, 2016

“There’s a lot of talk in this country about the Federal deficit, but if we hope to meet the moral test of our times, if we hope to eradicate child poverty or AIDS or joblessness or homelessness or any of the other issues that were chronicled before I came on stage, then I think that we are going to have to talk more about the empathy deficit, the ability to put ourselves in somebody else’s shoes, to see the world through somebody else’s eyes.”

—Barack Obama, 44th President of the U.S, 2006

When You Imagine the Future, Do You See Numbers?

By Charlotta Hellichius



“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

—Benjamin Disraeli or Mark Twain, depending who you ask

Never has a historical record been more hysterically celebrated than data. And nowhere is data as beloved as it is in modern marketing.

With ID matching and PII CRM results overlaid against massive amounts of behavioral tracking and purchase information, marketers can use media to interject a brand’s message at the exact right moment, convincing customers to buy. It hasn’t always been this way.

Having access to data used to be a privilege. Only companies that were able to afford the high cost of in-person conversations, phone banks to call consumers, and mailers understood exactly what their customers thought and felt.

Today’s companies are spoiled. They expect droves of data, and look to it as the holy grail of decision-making for strategy and creative alike. Data has become a neutral, rational and dependable lighthouse lamp that gleams with approval when you

move in a familiar direction. Data has this ‘je ne sais quoi’ — the inexplicable air of objectivity — that portrays a brand’s unassailable truth, through pixels and a billion measurable points of contact.

Or does it? Data is often misused, and even more often misunderstood. There are many aspects of algorithms that make them unreliable narrators.

Data enables truth to be in the eye of the beholder. Data often overcomplicates as much as it simplifies. It treats all information as equal, showing anything and everything that is tangentially related. Which makes data only as accurate as the interpretation of the reader, or in this case, the data analyst. The famous example: the data tells us that eating ice cream leads to a statistically significant leap in drownings. But as we all know — correlation does not imply causation. We don’t just eat ice cream in hot weather. We also swim. Turns out, it was the heat all along.

Algorithms lie, like the people who write them. Programs can be coded with an agenda in mind. Most businesses buy programming off the shelf, not fully knowing what biases it might propagate and what

creative solutions it might deprioritize. Back in 2002, the state of Virginia led a charge to make courtrooms fairer by installing algorithms aimed at sidestepping human bias. Twenty eight other states quickly followed suit. But recent reports show that what the algorithm really did was give longer sentences to young and minority defendants, while shortening the average sex offender sentence by 24 percent. Algorithms are not liberated from human shortcomings — instead, they amplify them.

Data describes the past, not the future. But only looking backwards can hinder truly innovative ideas. History* does not tell you how to navigate societal and cultural shifts, and it won’t tell you what will happen next. A perceived act of empathy today might be perceived as cultural appropriation tomorrow. The past doesn’t necessarily determine the future.

Here’s another way to think about data — or feel about it. When you imagine a future, do you see numbers? Or do you picture colors, hear whispers, and sense the warmth of people congregating around an idea?

Conversational Piece

by Yoko Ono

Bandage any part of your body.
If people ask about it, make a story and tell.
If people ask about it, draw their attention
to it and tell.
If people forget about it, remind them of it
and keep telling.
Do not talk about anything else.

1962 summer

*In the 1960s, artists in the conceptual art movement Fluxus composed "scores": instructions, games, and puzzles meant to catalyze social interaction. Per the University of Iowa collection, Fluxus works "emphasize joyful absurdity, curiosity, and collective life."

These Numbers Can't Teach You Empathy*

40%

Self-reported empathy dropped by 40% among college students between the 1970s and the early 2000s.
—2011 University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, “Changes in Dispositional Empathy in American College Students Over Time: A Meta-Analysis,” 2011

50%

Nearly 50% of respondents reporting that they feel alone or left out always or sometimes.
—2018 Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index

82%

82% of employees would consider leaving their job for a more empathetic organization.
—2019 State of Workplace Empathy Executive Summary, Businessolver

*Listening to someone can

Once Upon Today, There Was a Storyteller



“Now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it. The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.”

—“The Storyteller” by Walter Benjamin, writer & cultural critic, 1936

“The essence of intelligence is the ability to predict. An intelligent agent must be able to predict unobserved facts about their environment from limited percepts (visual, auditory, textual, or otherwise), combined with their knowledge of the past. When we read a story, each sentence we read or hear causes us to update our internal representation of the current state of the world within the story. The flow of the story is captured by the evolution of this state of the world.”

—Artificial intelligence research paper by Facebook, market capitalization \$476 billion, 2017

Futurecast: The Last Stand

By Charlotta Hellichius



As the world throttles into the unknown, companies need a new vision.

Rather than blindly vying for popularity, succumbing to inertia, or using data as a crutch, some brands will imagine a future that looks different from what they've known. They will practice empathy, to ensure that this future is better than the alternatives.

We hope to join them. Innovation is pulling away from the institutions that govern it, and the in-between is becoming more fertile. Thank you for considering how to fill it with purpose, connection, and community.

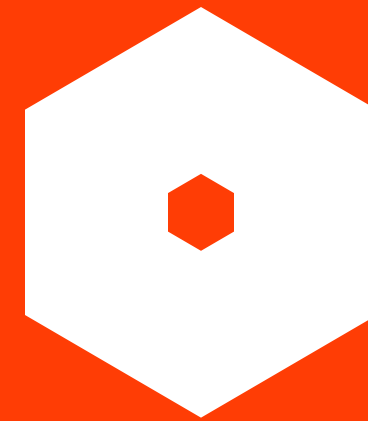
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Redscout is a strategy and design consultancy and we call each other Scouts. We are a team of strategists, designers, and client services who create new brands, experiences, and businesses for ambitious clients.

Our offices are in NY and LA, but our best thinking happens in the field—whether we’re across the globe or down the block.

Curious to learn more? hello@redscout.com

We also wanted to note with appreciation that this report could not have been completed without generous support from Assembly.



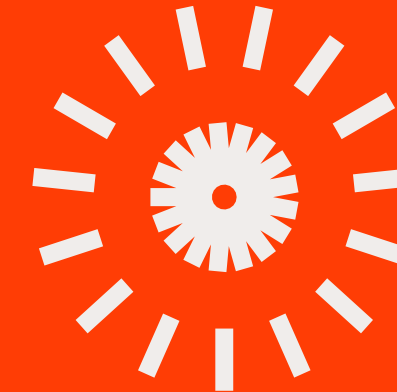
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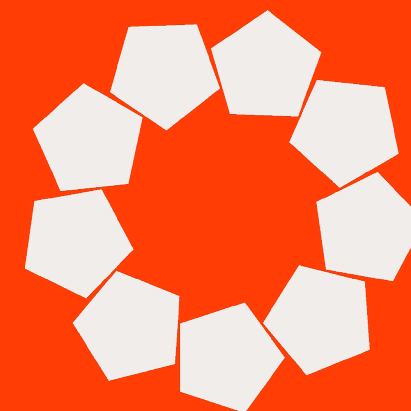
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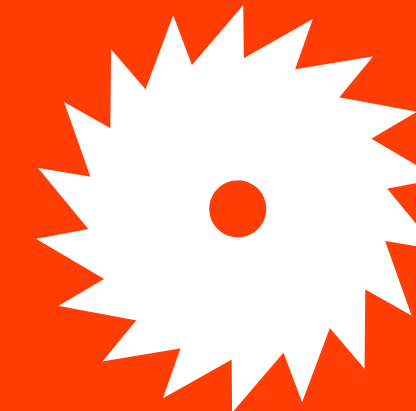
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