

MOTH STUDIO

55

Motion Design





MOTH STUDIO

DESIGN FRIENDS

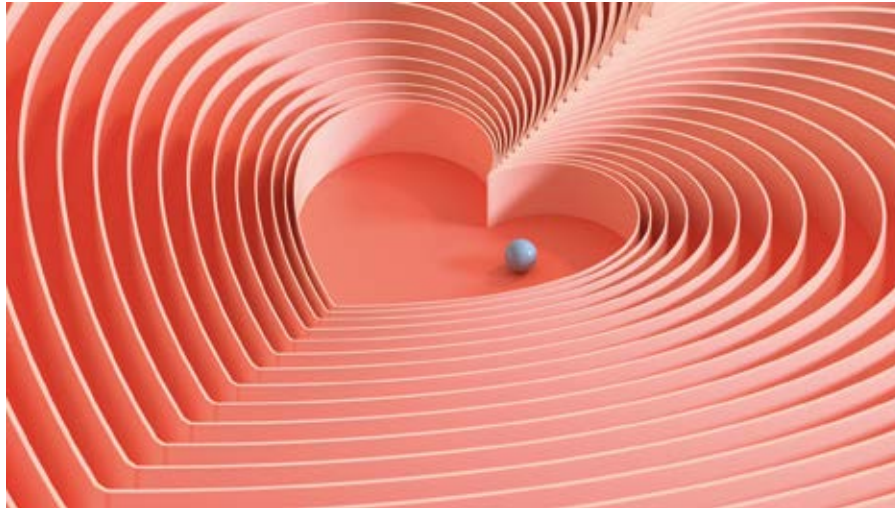


(Cover picture)

The Last Job on Earth, The Guardian, 2016

HIAS, For the Refugee, HIAS, 2015

The Storytellers



Heart Stills, Pitch work, 2020



“One thing we have learned over the years is to be more realistic and rational in our decision-making. You can give that extra push for some projects that are personally interesting and important to you, but if you do it for all of them, you end up exhausting your resources and your energy.”

Moth Studio, the award-winning and London based animation studio, was first established as a collective amongst friends. A virtual place that served as a springboard to nurture creative ideas. Five years later, they put on their business hats and set up a studio that has been creating human and thought-provoking animations for the likes of The New York Times, The Guardian, and Facebook.

I was surprised to find out that you established your studio only back in 2015. In such a short time you have been able to attract a notable roster of clients, create very compelling animations (and win several distinguished awards in the process) and bring about a definite maturity in your scripts and choices. Can you talk to us about the journey?

Moth began as an animation collective back in 2010 when, as graduates from the Royal College of Art, we decided to begin working with and around each other. The collective was a part-time platform for us to create projects that we were passionate about. We began slowly building a portfolio of work that helped us get noticed and recognised in the industry and, after hiring some talented staff, we decided to become a full-time studio in 2015. We built the base of our work from non-commercial films but decided we would need to balance that with working with bigger clients to exist as a studio.

A lot of people ask us about how we got work in the beginning. The answer is that we never searched for it, it just came to us. A lot had to do with timing. With vimeo becoming established,

clients looking to work directly with creators, we were just at a sweet-spot in time. We were very selective with what projects that we took on and we always put quality above quantity. Running a business is not something we were familiar with, but we learnt step by step, and we are still learning as we go.

Animation is one of the most, if not the most, effective ways of painting a narrative. It seems pretty clear cut when you are telling an actual story, like you did for the Guardian in The Last Job on Earth, but what are the elements you hold on to, to tell a story when you have to do more of a “corporate” job and fulfill a client brief.

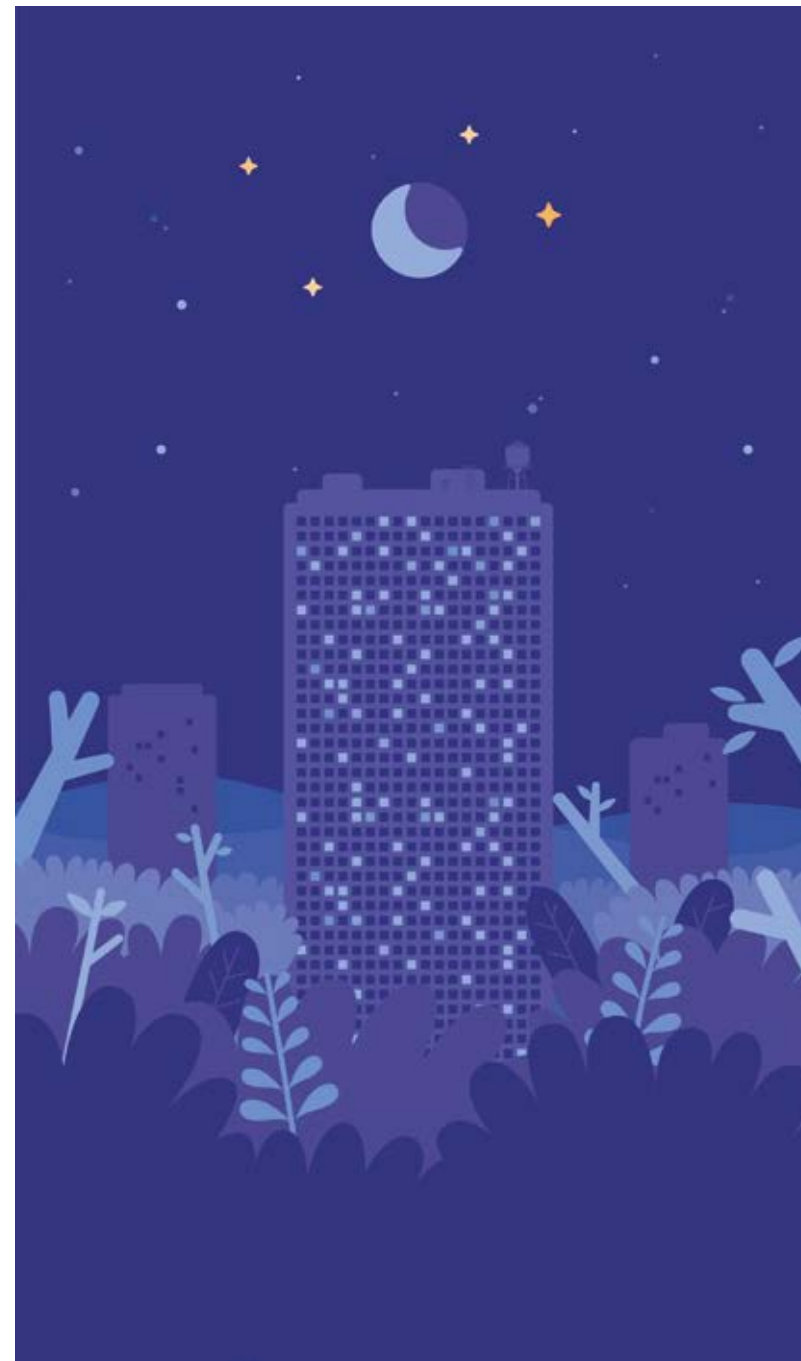
We tend to choose commercial work that still retains narrative or character potential. The traditional 30 second mark of a TV spot is always a challenging one when telling a story. We tend to employ narrative devices that will carry us through a story on time, while ensuring clarity and an extra layer of symbolism or playfulness, wherever allowed. The constraints of a TV ad can be tricky but it tests us in the efficiency of our storytelling and clarity of composition and the performance of our characters. We love to

create character-driven work with a human feel and we champion fighting for smart concepts and good design until the very last minute!

Are there any pitfalls you try to avoid? Especially in light of the fact that your work is often described as being emotive?

It is easy to get pigeonholed into one category, and for us there was definitely a time where people were viewing us solely as the environmentally and socially conscious collective. We were of course very honoured to carry this name, but we also wanted to show the world that we can do things beyond serious and emotive, and that we can also do playfulness and humour. With that in mind, we selected some projects over others, that would allow us to do something more to showcase different skills of ours and add variety to our portfolio.

Specifically, a breakout piece for us was our work for Headspace (Headspace Idents, 2016) which was intrinsic for us to prove that we can go beyond what people knew us for and even develop our work in 3D. It's important as a studio to keep looking forward and developing our techniques for telling stories, beyond styles.



Sundown Place, Headspace, 2019

Headspace approached us to create some new content for the promotion of Sleep, a place for restless sleepers to find meditation and music within their app. We produced a hero 60” film and six 15” spots starring a cast of characters all wanting a good night’s sleep.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/sleep-headspace>

Idents, Headspace, 2017

Series of 10 Idents created for the meditation app Headspace.

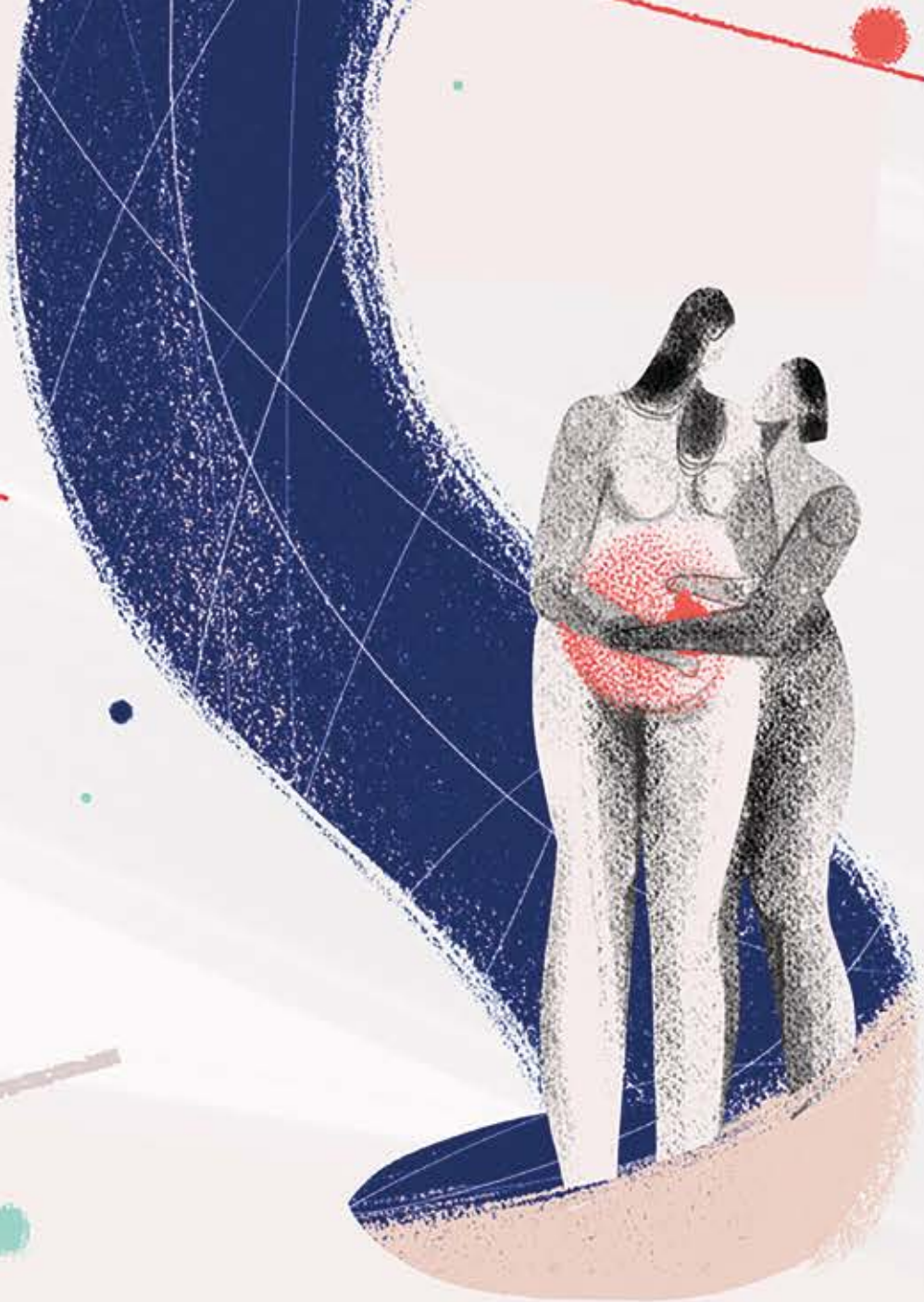
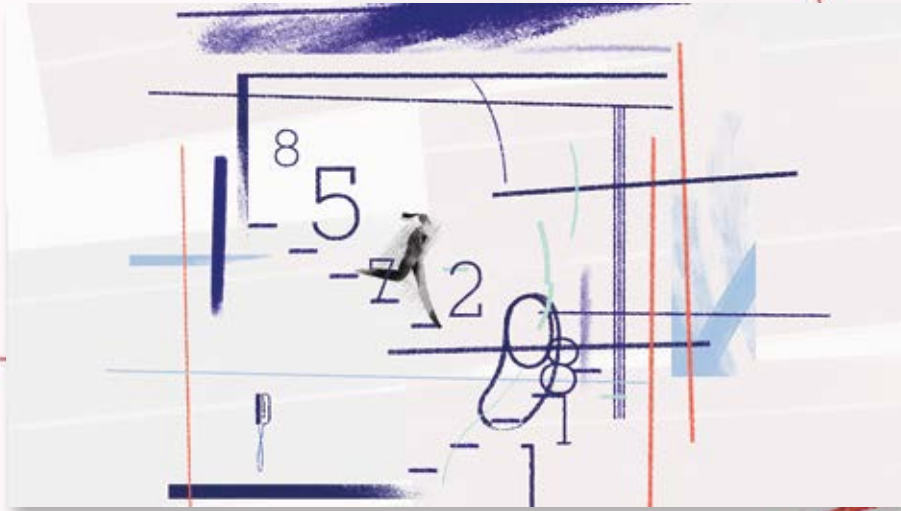
<https://www.moth.studio/projects/headspace-idents>



The Last Job on Earth, The Guardian, 2016

Meet Alice, holder of the last recognisable job on Earth, trying to make sense of her role in an automated world. 'The Last Job on Earth' is a film produced in collaboration with the Guardian Sustainable Business section.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/the-last-job-on-earth>



Conception: Catie + Jen, The New York Times, 2018

We follow Jen and Catie: two sisters struggling with infertility, an unexpected pregnancy and difficult life decisions. Sisterhood and motherhood meet in this powerful story of love, fear and trust. This film was produced as part of the New York Times' Conception series, a six-part animated series showcasing different real-life stories about becoming a mother. <https://www.moth.studio/projects/conception>

Both “My Mother’s coat” and “Tough” are incredibly personal and human stories, yet you chose a completely different narrative style. I am interested in understanding what defines your visual choices and if you have discovered one style to be more effective than another?

These two films were personal graduation films from our respected universities, and thus not studio projects. The two directors, Margaux and Jen, worked in their personal narrative and drawing styles on them.

When it comes to studio projects, the choice of style depends on several factors, like the nature of the subject but also the time and budget constraints.

We have definitely used traditional 2D animation and a more tactile approach when it comes to more personal, sensitive or documentary-style projects, though we believe that, ultimately, it is the direction style rather than the visual style that gives a film the personality and the tone it embodies.

I was particularly drawn to the Marie Curie animation you guys created. Death is an internally uncomfortable subject, and though the animation is really full of humor and color, I would imagine people are still not that much more accepting of it. Did you have any feedback as to how the animation was received and if it had the desired effect?

The Marie Curie film was produced in collaboration with Saatchi & Saatchi London, who worked on the concept, script and song for the film, before they approached us. Saatchi tested the project in several stages with audiences, and the direction taken was the one that resonated with people the most. We want to believe that the end result was also warmly received by the British audiences, which were our target ones. We have seen very positive tweets and mentions of the work and have even walked past charity shops that have enthusiastically used our characters for their window displays, something which we found really sweet.



My Mother’s Coat, Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2010

Margaux’s mother recounts her memories, nostalgia, but also struggles of motherhood in post-dictatorship Athens in the 70’s.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/my-mothers-coat>



Tough, Jennifer Zheng, 2016

Some things can only be understood with maturity. New light is shed on childhood cultural misunderstandings when a Chinese mother and her British born daughter speak as adults for the first time.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/tough>



Whatever You Call It, Marie Curie, 2019

For many people death is an uncomfortable topic, so we teamed up with charity Marie Curie and Saatchi & Saatchi to create a campaign with a catchy tune and googly eyes aimed at encouraging people to start a conversation.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/whatever-you-call-it-marie-curie>



Facebook Branding, Branding, 2017 - 2018

Working alongside Hornet, we partnered with Facebook to create a new visual approach for illustrated and animated content that could be used across their platform, primarily for subjects covering privacy and security.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/facebook-content>

Careers, Facebook, 2018

A collection of over 30 illustrations we designed for the Careers team at Facebook.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/facebook-various>

Sigrid: Focus, Island Records, 2018

Abstract visuals with a subtle narrative tell a familiar tale of heartbreak. This music video was made for one of the first songs recorded by Islands Records' artist Sigrid, released on her debut album in demo form.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/sigrid-focus>

The styles of animation you work on are enormously different from project to project. Can you walk us through your decision-making process? Does it depend on who is leading the project? Do preferences emanate from the client?

When clients approach us, they usually have an approach in mind already, or a reference of some of our already existing projects that resonate with them in terms of style or narrative direction. We see each project as an opportunity to try something new, be this directional or visual, as this is what excites us as a studio.

We tend to lead projects collectively, so style choice is not so much a case of personal directing style but a case of what will tell the specific story best. The story is what leads the visuals, rather than the other way around. We also have to be conscious to create something that is feasible within the scope of the timeline and budget, so things like good concepts are imperative as they are not always so restricted with budgets and schedules.

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One thing we have learned over the years is to be more realistic and rational in our decision-making. You can give that extra push for some projects that are personally interesting and important to you, but if you do it for all of them, you end up exhausting your resources and your energy.

	COLOUR BOARD	MAIN COLOURS	MEMORY COLOURS/ACTION <small>HELP FLAT COLOURS HAVE GREY SHADOW NO ZONES</small>
BRAIN			
EYE			
GUT			
HEART			
VEINS			



Planet Under Pressure, Global Canopy Programme, 2014

'Planet Under Pressure' is the second film we produced for the Global Canopy Programme, a tropical forest think tank working to demonstrate the scientific, political and business case for safeguarding tropical forests as natural capital.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/global-canopy-programme>

I read for example that even if a client asks you to recreate something along the lines of what you have done before, you prefer starting from a clean slate. I can understand that creatively it is more interesting, but from a business perspective would that not make certain projects more efficient and financially sound, and hence create a good balance for the studio between work that is lucrative and others that are more creatively forward?

We might use a similar style to something we have done before, especially if a client is very heavily leaning towards one they really like. But we believe every project deserves a bespoke approach and we find it more respectful for both the current and the previous client.

What sort of projects do you look for and are you drawn to? If someone asked you to create a narrative around the coronavirus would you find that appealing for example?

Ha! That very much depends on who was involved in the project, if the piece was well written and if it had an interesting perspective on the subject. We are always looking for work that is intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking, if possible, especially when we take them on as passion projects. Being quite selective with the work we take on, we are either looking for pieces that will enhance our portfolio, challenge us creatively, allow creative freedom or have a good financial profit, to allow us to invest in projects that offer us one or all of the above qualities during our down-time.

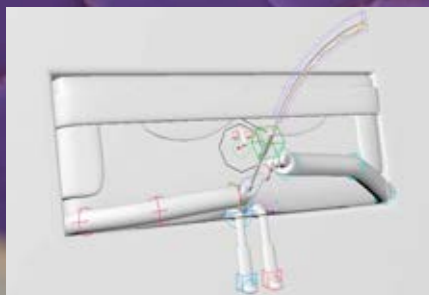
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Forest 500, Global Canopy Programme, 2015

'Forest 500' was produced for the COP 21 Climate Conference in Paris, 2015. It is the third film Moth has made for the Global Canopy Programme, a tropical forest think tank working to demonstrate the scientific, political and business case for safeguarding tropical forests as natural capital.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/forest-500>



Window Worlds, E4, 2018

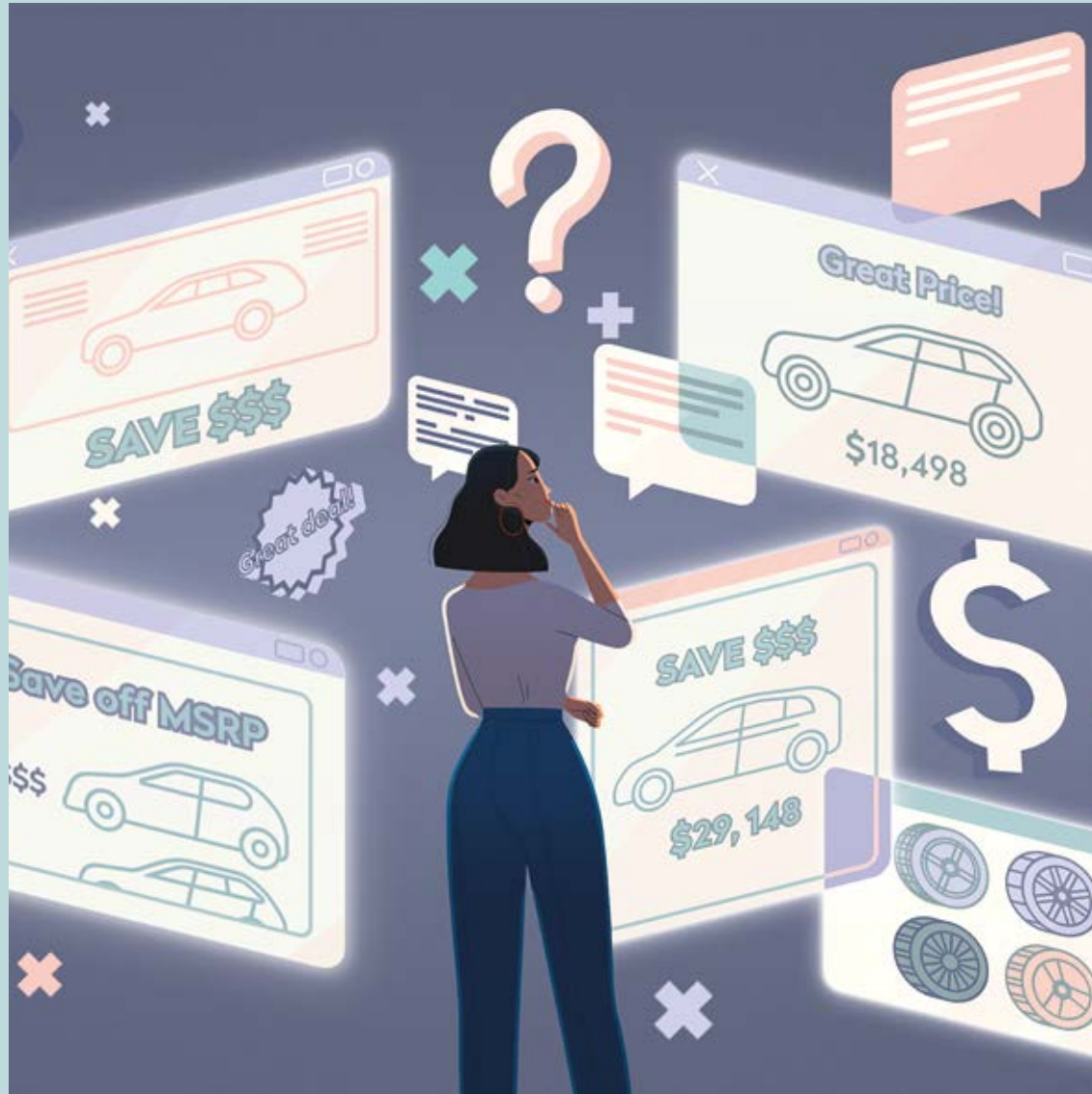
As part of its makeover, E4 commissioned us and a group of other wonderful UK talents to create their new idents. We were given absolute creative freedom to create something fun and unexpected. We went and did just that!

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/window-worlds-e4-ident>

That Moment When ..., TrueCar, 2019-2020

We teamed up with Hornet to create a completely new campaign and direction for one of America's biggest new and used car platforms, TrueCar.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/that-moment-when-truecar>



The Fight for Good, The Salvation Army, 2017

A Christmas campaign for The Salvation Army which tells three different stories about hardship and the power of individual generosity.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/the-fight-for-good-the-salvation-army>

You have talked about the importance of having common values and goals, what are these values and goals that you share and that define Moth Studio? And given that at times you work with a good number of freelancers, is it difficult to ensure that they embrace your ethos?

We began Moth as a space to create work we are passionate about and this still continues to be our driving value today. We're a small, dedicated team that spends a lot of time together so it's important our environment is positive and collaborative and each individual feels valued as part of the team. When we expand our team, we try to work with as many people in-house as possible and create a community around a project.

Our goal is to be able to continue Moth Studio for as long as possible and for this we have to learn to reevaluate often and reinvent ourselves as we grow as individuals. For us, working together as a team and the studio atmosphere is what takes utmost importance, the projects themselves are almost a side product of that.

What does an ideal project/client look like?

The perfect project would involve a topic that is close to us as a studio, would allow us to try something new and therefore grow as a studio, and would pay us millions of pounds :)

What were some of your favourite animations growing up?

Margaux: Looney Toons in general but especially Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner, Malefica's character in Disney's Sleeping Beauty (great hands!!), Pingu.

Daniel: Off On A Comet

Jen: Tom & Jerry, Sailor Moon, The Simpsons, Futurama

Dave: Wallace and Gromit, The Rugrats, TMNT, The Racoons

Ifor: Batman: The Animated Series, Transformers, Heman

Luke: Tom & Jerry, Dragonball, The Simpsons, Fern Gully

Renata: Dragonball z, Freakazoid, Looney Toons, Animaniacs, Pinky & Brain, Cow & Chicken, Power Puff Girls, Dexter's Laboratory, Catdog, Scooby Doo

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Conan O'Brien Discusses "We're Going to be Friends" by The White Stripes, XL Recordings, 2017

An animated interview with Conan O'Brien about his last Late Night Show and friendship with Jack White.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/jack-white>



Cursors, Google, 2019

We collaborated with Droga5, Hornet and Google to create a series of films highlighting the interconnectivity of the G-Suite platform.

<https://www.moth.studio/projects/cursors-google>



PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

01	CHRISTOPH NIEMANN	Illustration Design	2009	31	LA FILLE D'O	Fashion Design	2016
02	MICHEL MALLARD	Creative Direction	2009	32	RUEDI BAUR	Graphic Design	2016
03	FUN FACTORY	Product Design	2009	33	ROMAIN URHAUSEN	Product Design	2016
04	ANDREAS UEBELE	Signage Design	2010	34	MR BINGO	Illustration Design	2016
05	HARRI PECCINOTTI	Photography	2010	35	KIKI VAN EIJK	Product Design	2016
06	KUSTAA SAKSI	Illustration Design	2010	36	JEAN-PAUL LESPAGNARD		
07	5.5 DESIGNERS	Product Design	2011		Fashion Design		2017
08	NIKLAUS TROXLER	Graphic Design	2011	37	PE'L SCHLECHTER	Graphic Design	2017
09	JOACHIM SAUTER	Media Design	2011	38	TIM JOHN & MARTIN SCHMITZ		
10	MICHAEL JOHNSON	Graphic Design	2011		Scenography Design		2017
11	ELVIS POMPILIO	Fashion Design	2011	39	BROSMIND	Illustration Design	2017
12	STEFAN DIEZ	Industrial Design	2012	40	ARMANDO MILANI	Graphic Design	2017
13	CHRISTIAN SCHNEIDER	Sound Design	2012	41	LAURA STRABER	Product Design	2017
14	MARIO LOMBARDO	Editorial Design	2012	42	PHOENIX DESIGN	Industrial Design	2018
15	SAM HECHT	Industrial Design	2012	43	UWE R. BRÜCKNER	Scenography Design	2018
16	SONJA STUMMERER & MARTIN HABLESREITER	Food Design	2012	44	BROUSSE & RUDDIGKEIT	Design Code	2018
17	LERNERT & SANDER	Art & Design	2013	45	ISABELLE CHAPUIS	Photography Design	2018
18	MURAT GÜNAK	Automotive Design	2013	46	PATRICIA URQUIOLA	Product Design	2018
19	NICOLAS BOURQUIN	Editorial Design	2013	47	SARAH-GRACE MANKARIOUS		
20	SISEL TOLAAS	Scent Design	2013		Art Direction		2018
21	CHRISTOPHE PILLET	Product Design	2013	48	STUDIO FEIXEN	Visual Concepts	2019
22	MIRKO BORSCHÉ	Editorial Design	2014	49	FRANK RAUSCH	Interface Design	2019
23	PAUL PRIESTMAN	Transportation Design	2014	50	DENNIS LÜCK	Designing Creativity	2019
24	BRUCE DUCKWORTH	Packaging Design	2014	51	IAN ANDERSON	Graphic Design	2019
25	ERIK SPIEKERMANN	Graphic Design	2014	52	FOLCH STUDIO	Strategic Narrative Design	2019
26	KLAUS-PETER SIEMSEN	Light Design	2014	53	MARC TAMSCHICK	Spatial Media Design	2020
27	EDUARDO AIRES	Corporate Design	2015	54	TYPEJOCKEYS	Type Design	2020
28	PHILIPPE APELOIG	Graphic Design	2015				
29	ALEXANDRA MURRAY-LESLIE						
	High Techne	Fashion Design	2015				
30	PLEIX	Video & Installation Design	2016				

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