

AColorBright

Aesthetics of AI

Observations on the Visual Identities of Standout AI Brands



The AI race is running at an incredibly high pace. But product-wise, it has become somewhat monotonous. Each new model beats all others out there, until the next one lands. Everyone integrates everything. Armies of agents are unleashed to create value by connecting the dots in our data, yet they often just get in the way.

From a branding perspective, however, AI is more exciting than ever. As in every crowded market with low product differentiation, brand has become a crucial asset in the fight for attention, authority, and capital.

A perfect moment to dive into the AI space through a branding lens.

We looked at 23 standout AI brands, big and small, to identify the trends that currently shape visual identities in AI

ANTHROPIC

 cohere

 CURSOR

ElevenLabs

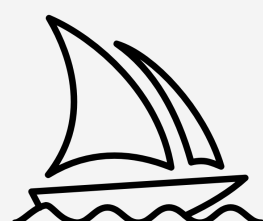
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The General Intelligence
Company of New York

 INTERCOM

 manus

MAI



 Mistral AI

Modular

 Notion

 OpenAI

 perplexity

Pi

 Retool

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sakana.ai

 SIERRA

THINKING
MACHINES

 World Labs

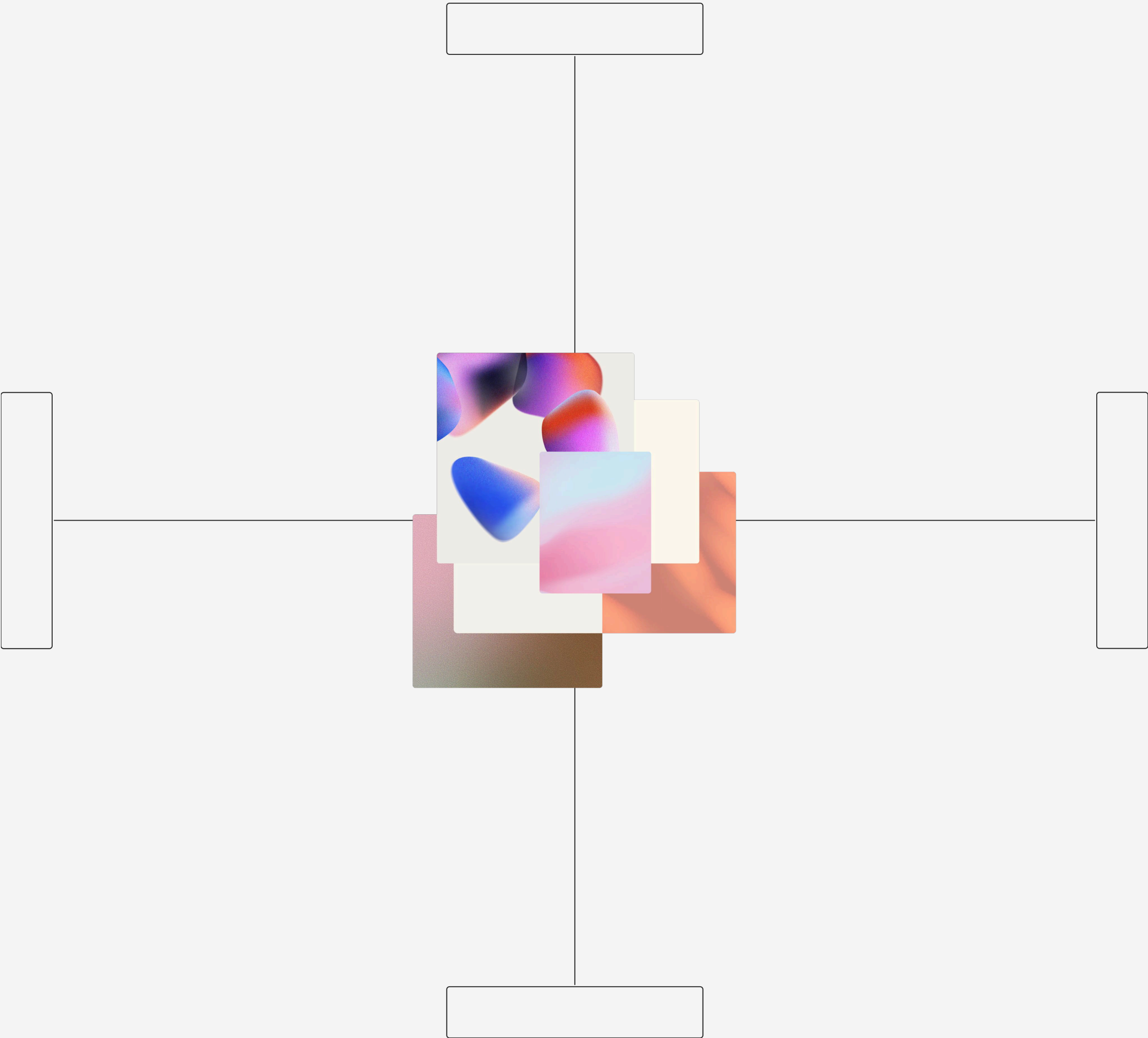


Initial Observations

Initial Observations

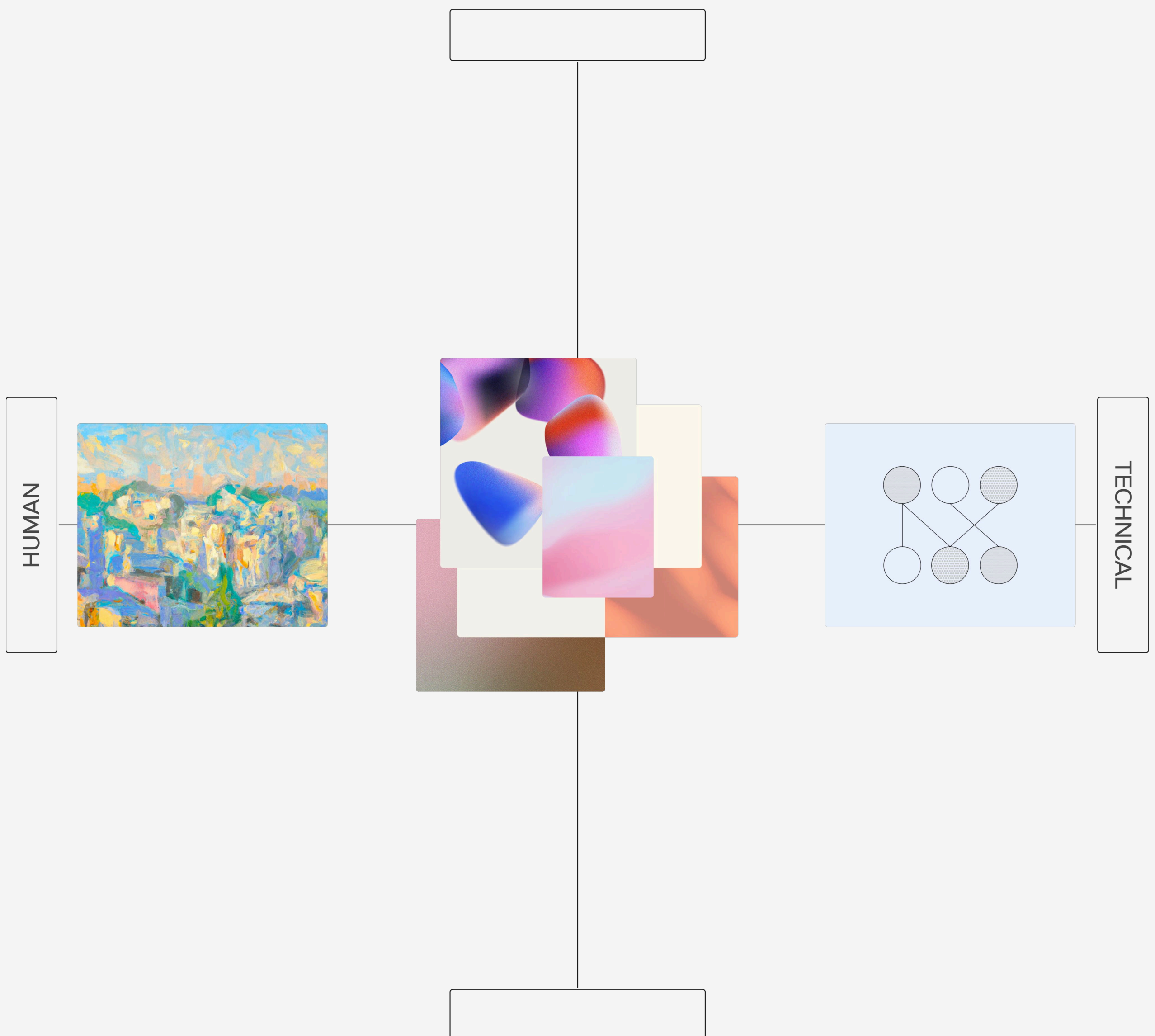
Organic pleasantness gives a potentially terrifying technology a friendly appeal

What stands out immediately is that many brands aim for a sense of organic pleasantness, giving a potentially terrifying technology a friendly appeal. Shades of off-white and soft, organic gradients feel calm, approachable, and trustworthy.



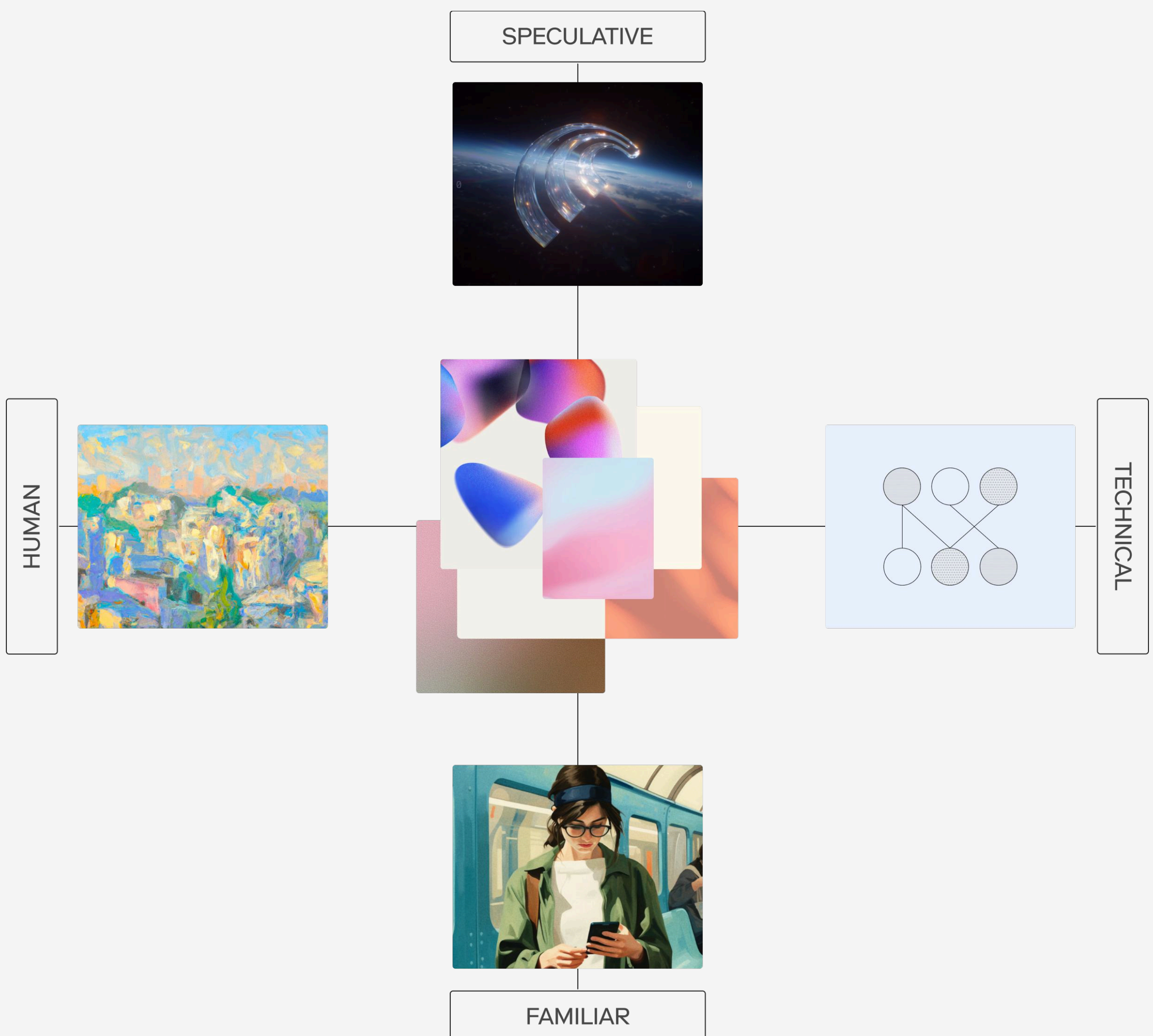
Expressive key visuals create distinction when products essentially look alike

On top of these pleasant canvases, many brands use expressive key visuals to create distinctiveness. That makes sense in a space where actual product interfaces are barely differentiated. The spectrum ranges from technical styles like pixel art and CAD-inspired illustrations, focusing on the technology itself, to human-inspired paintings and scribbles that emphasize what the technology enables people to do.



Motifs convey different ideas of AI: from friendly helper to radical disruption

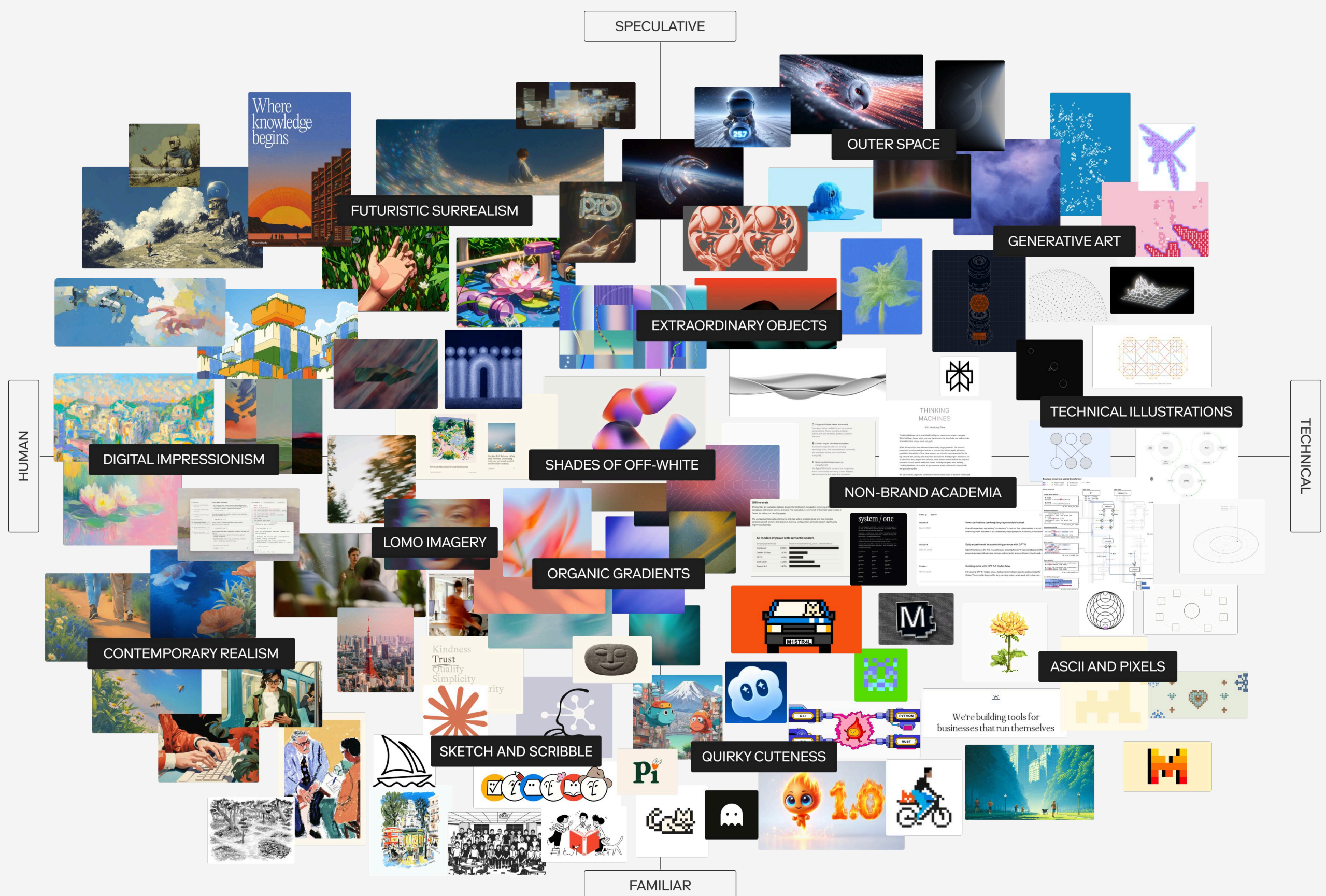
The motifs range from familiar to speculative. Everyday scenes and friendly faces communicate the idea of AI as a tool that is here to make our lives better. Retrofuturistic imagery and mysterious objects, on the other hand, convey AI as a technology poised to radically change the world.



Visual Identity Trends

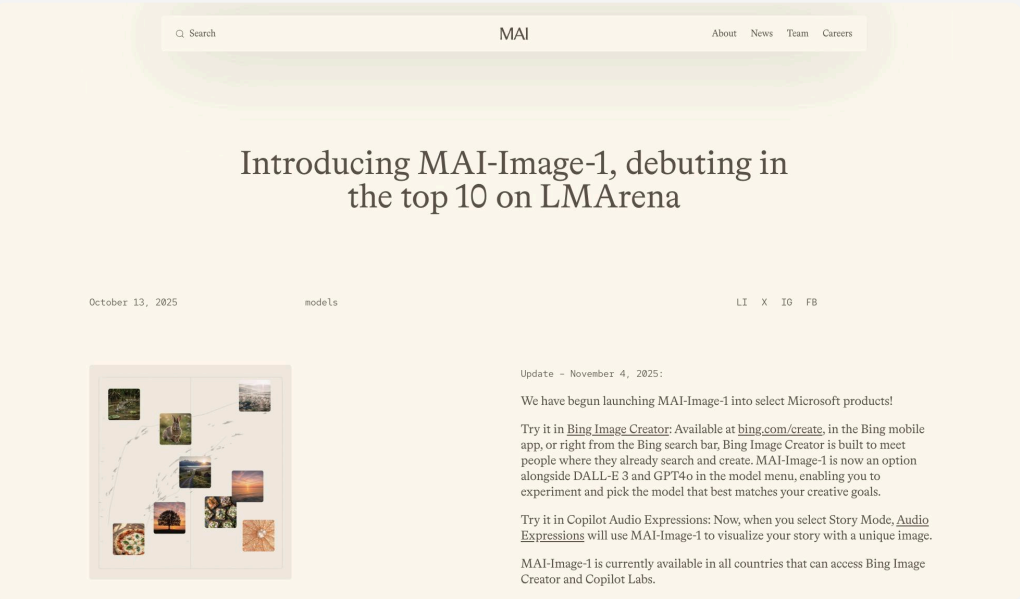
Within this spectrum, we identified 14 trends that shape visual identities in AI

As with all trends, blindly following them leads to sameness and, ultimately, irrelevance. The real opportunity lies in making conscious decisions: when to adopt, when to ignore, when to push a trend further, and when to deliberately counter it.

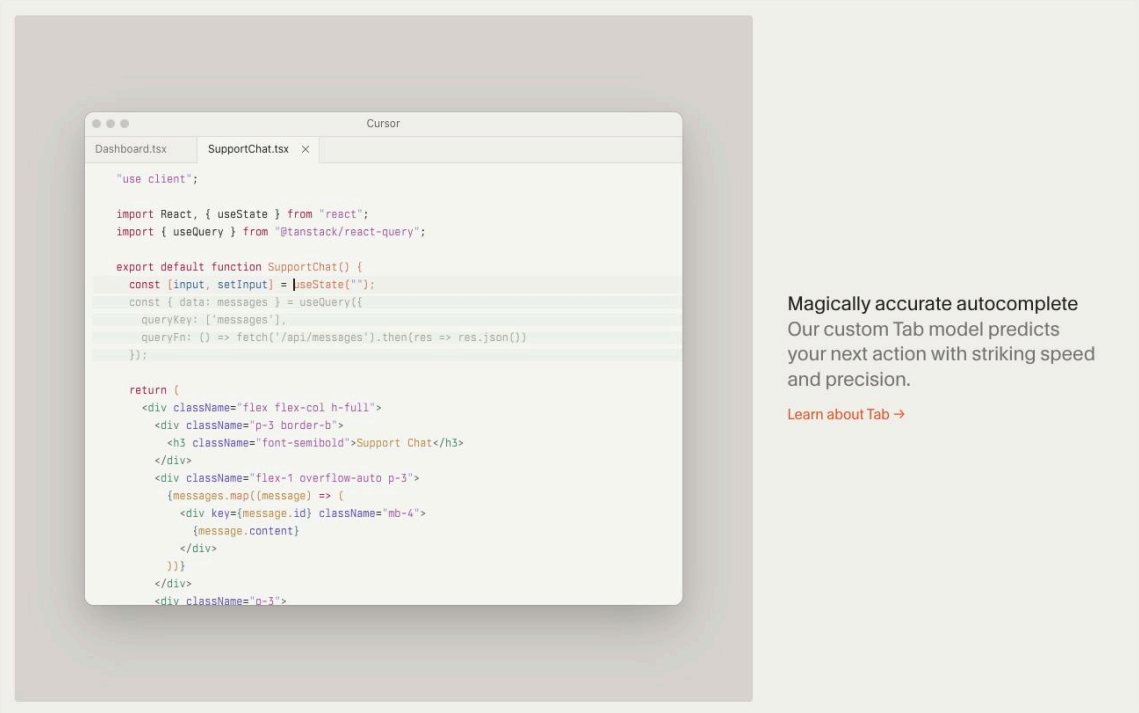


Shades of Off-White

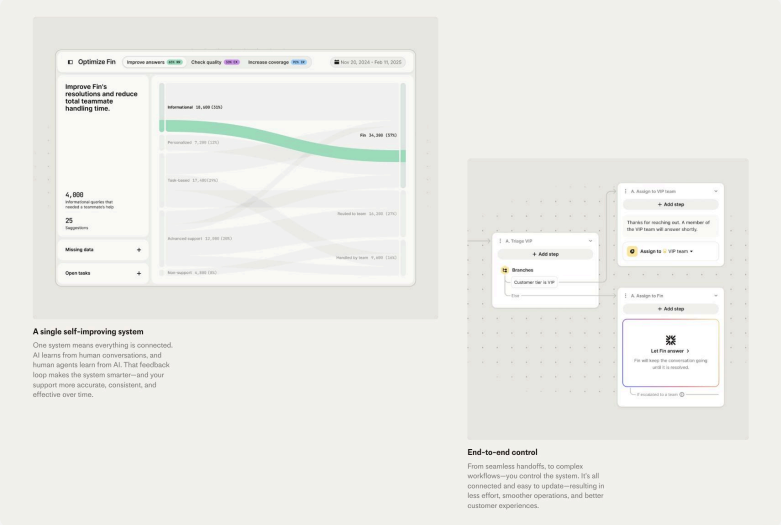
The quiet-luxury uniform of AI. Calm, warm, muted palettes designed to reduce friction and avoid visual risk. Signaling trust, restraint, and maturity rather than excitement. Premium without gloss, authority without dominance. A neutral backdrop that deliberately steps aside, allowing products and narratives to take center stage. The Pantone color of 2026 already all over in AI.



Microsoft AI



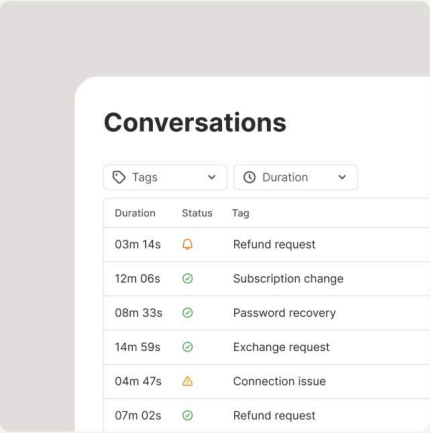
Cursor



Intercom

Connect to your call center ecosystem

Seamlessly integrate with your existing technology stack.



Sierra

Economic Futures

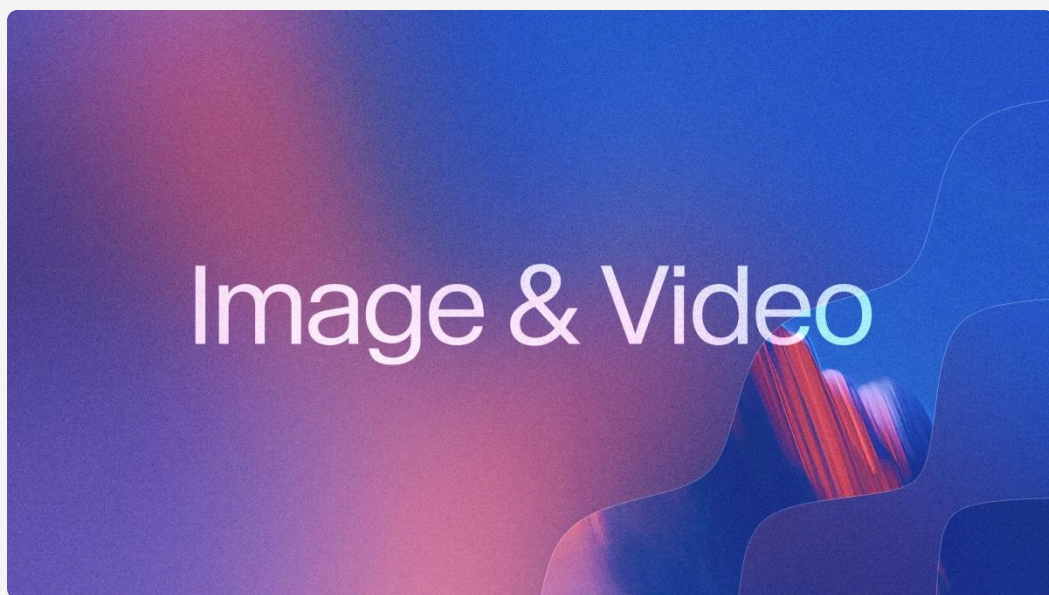
The Anthropic Economic Futures program aims to support research and policy development for addressing the economic impacts of AI. It provides research grants, forums for policy discussion, and evidence on real-world AI use.



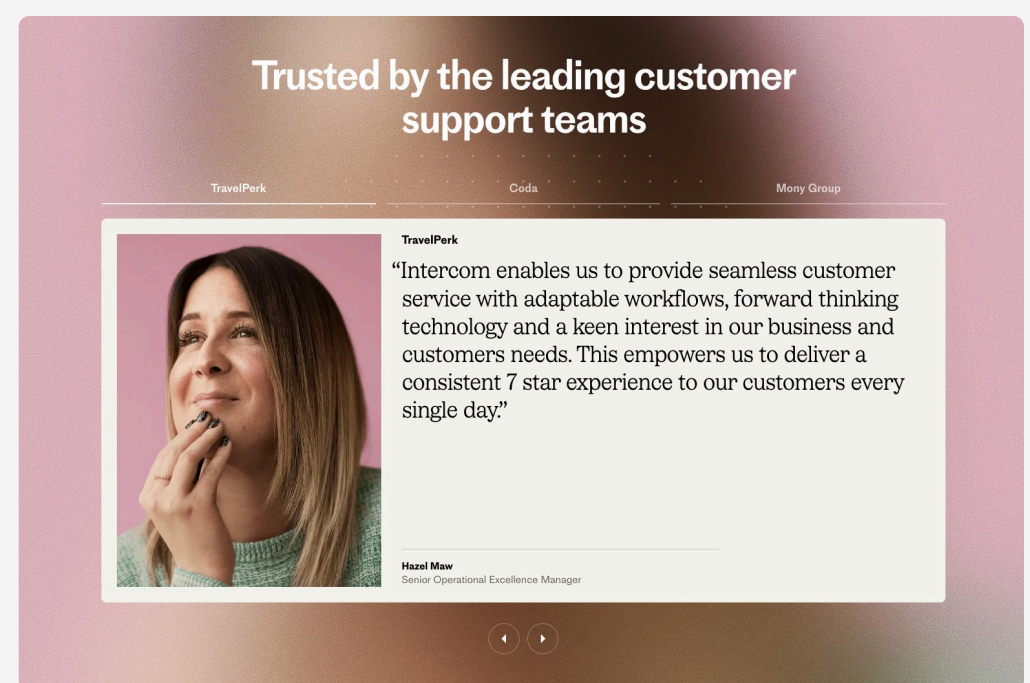
Anthropic

Organic Gradients

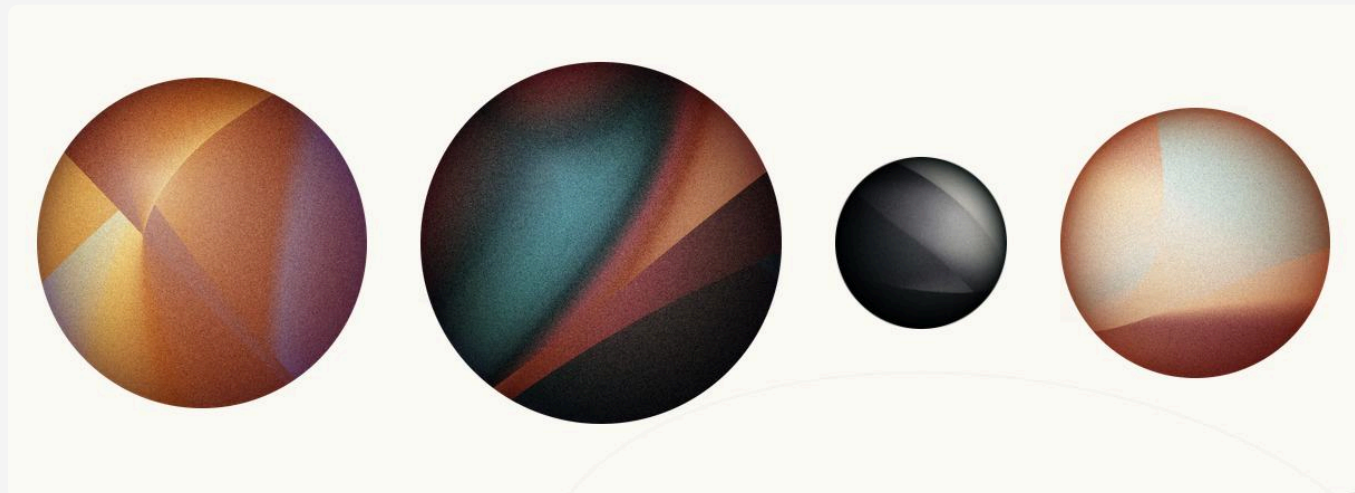
Gradients are everywhere. They scale effortlessly and go with anything. Looking interesting without saying much. AI itself has figured this out and splashes gradients onto every interface it touches. To differentiate, brands are pushing gradients further. They make them more organic, add grain, texture, and subtle variation. The result is greater distinctiveness and a more ownable visual identity within a crowded and homogenized landscape.



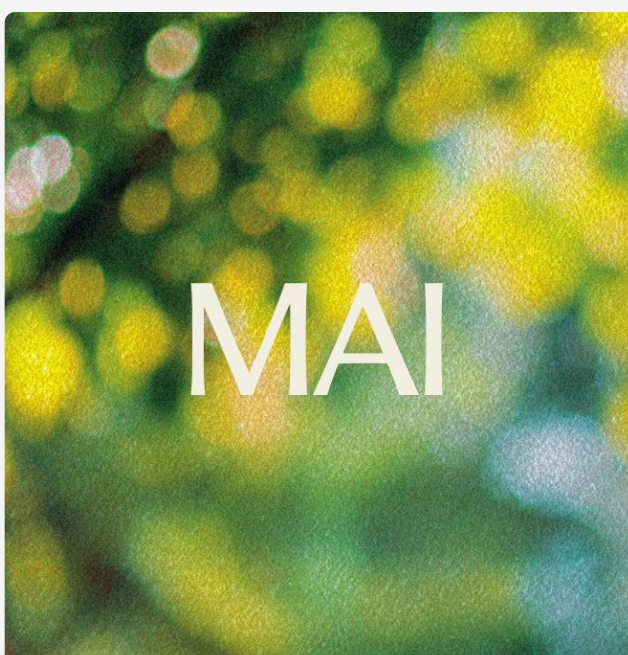
Elevenlabs



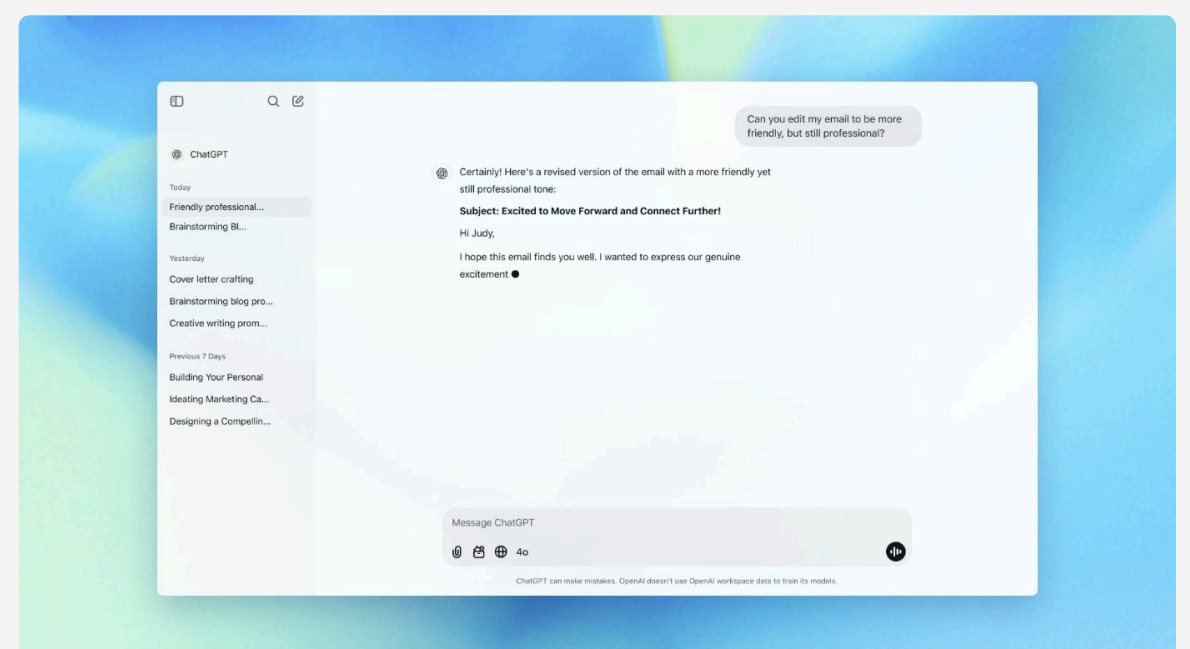
Intercom



Perplexity



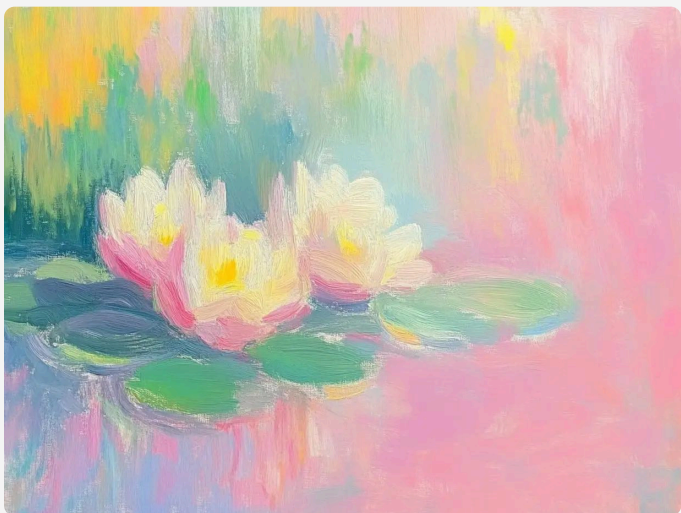
Microsoft AI



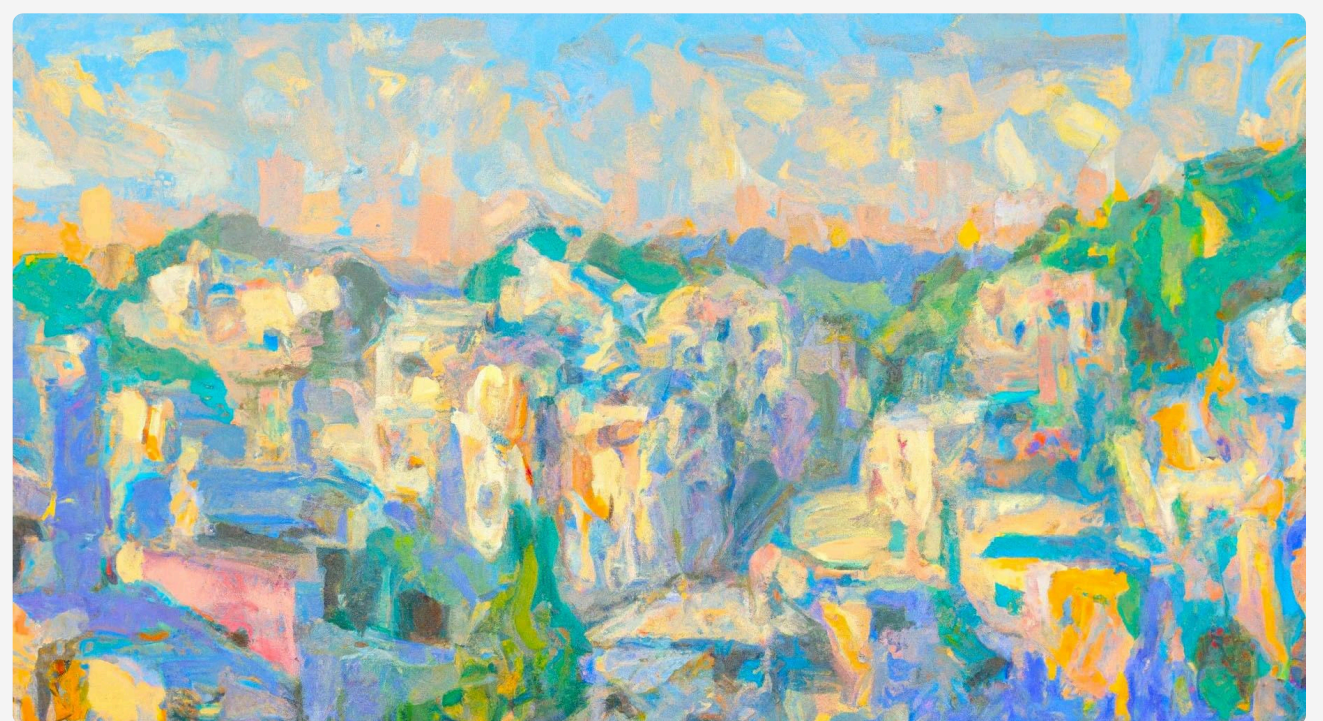
OpenAI

Digital Impressionism

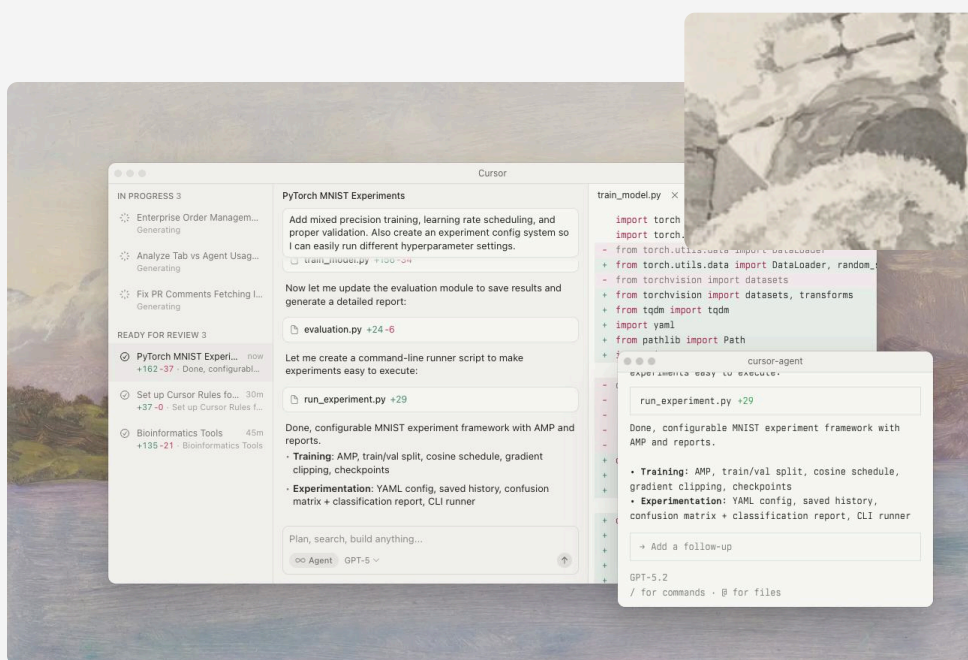
Soft, blurred forms and reduced detail avoid literal representation and instead focus on mood and emotional resonance. By keeping nothing fully in focus, these visuals resist the urge to explain or over-specify what AI is or how it works. The imagery becomes suggestive rather than descriptive, creating space for interpretation and projection. Digital impressionism allows brands to visualize intelligence without making concrete claims they can't fully control.



General Intelligence Company of New York



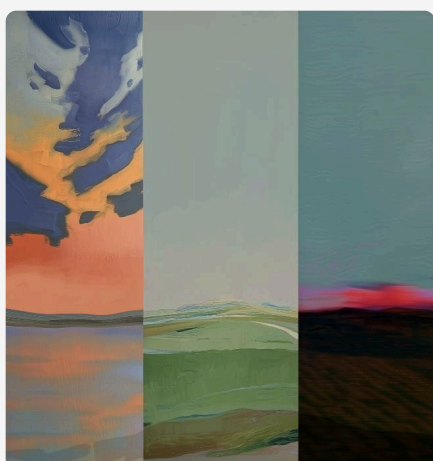
OpenAI



Cursor



Pi AI



Microsoft AI

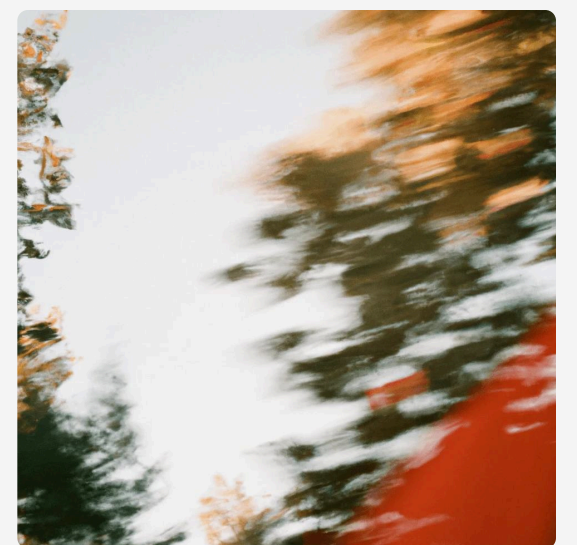
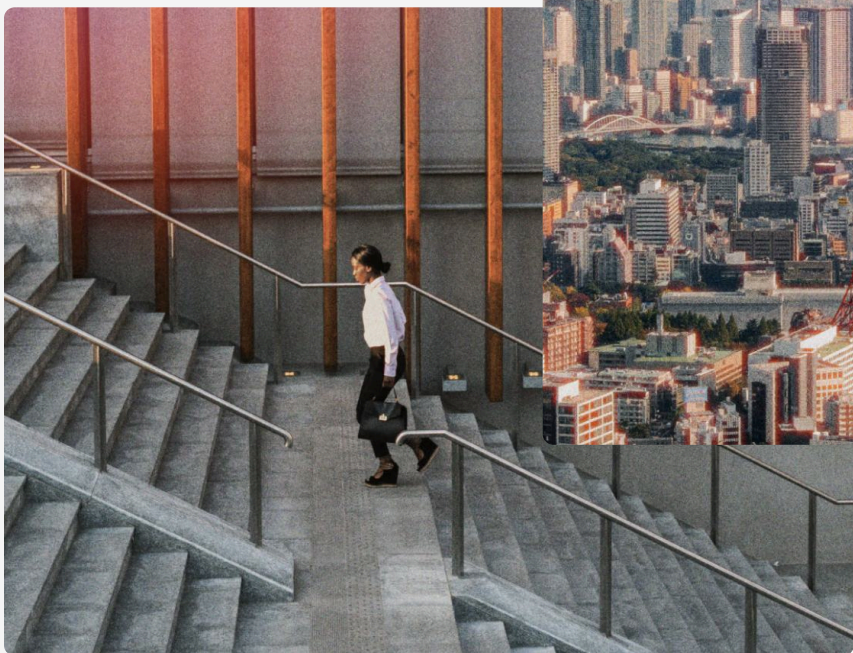


Manus

Lomo Imagery

Lomography-inspired imagery embraces imperfection as a signal. High contrast, washed-out colors, light leaks, blur, and visible “mistakes” deliberately reject polished, corporate aesthetics. This visual language frames AI as exploratory rather than authoritative — something to play with, not be intimidated by. By referencing analog photography and happy accidents, these brands position themselves closer to human creativity, curiosity, and experimentation. The messiness is intentional: it suggests openness, discovery, and a system still in motion rather than a finished, rigid product.

Cohere



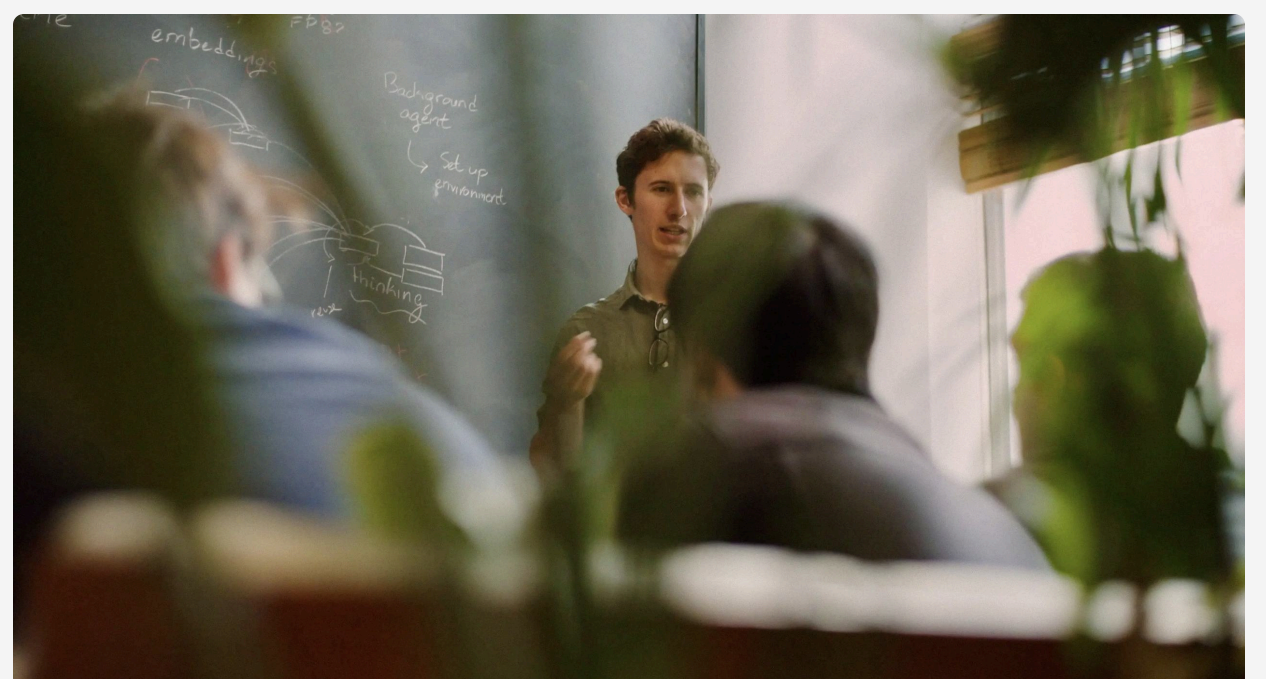
OpenAI



Runway



Microsoft AI



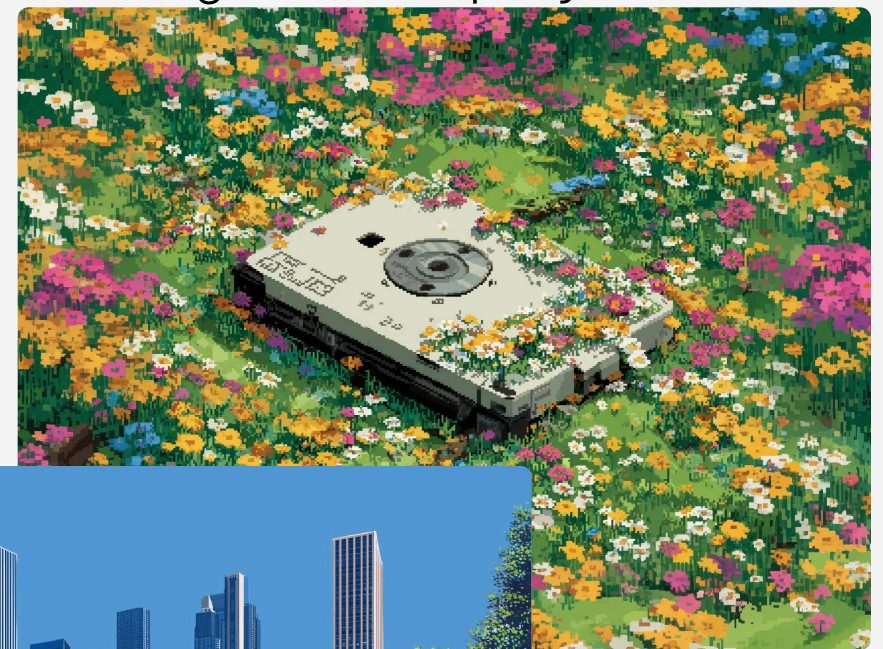
Cursor

Contemporary Realism

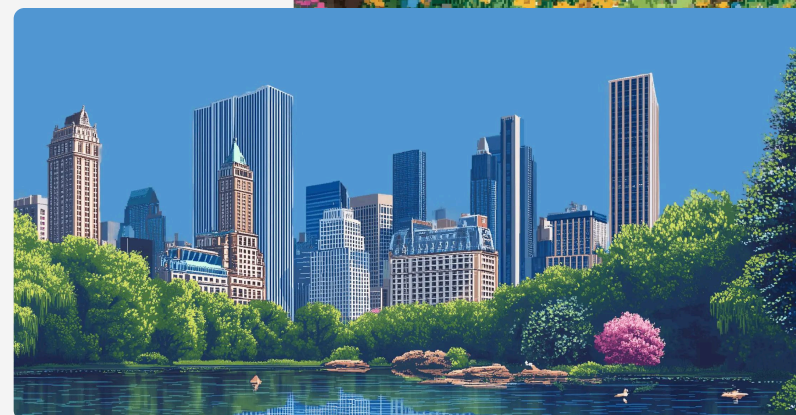
Contemporary Realism serves as both a metaphor for AI and proof of its capability. It makes the invisible tangible and firmly grounds the often blurry, abstract technology in the real world. The style signals precision, control, and craft, creating a sense of reliability and mastery. It sets the brand apart from vague, decorative gradients while hinting at the AI's uncanny ability to “see” and interpret the world, positioning the technology as advanced yet comprehensible.



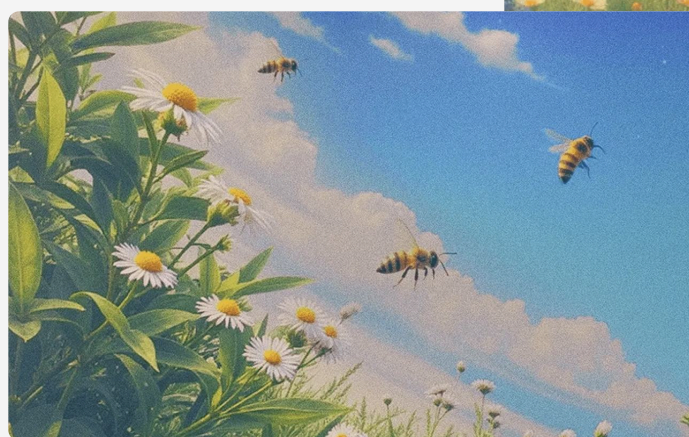
General Intelligence Company of New York



Pi AI



Retool

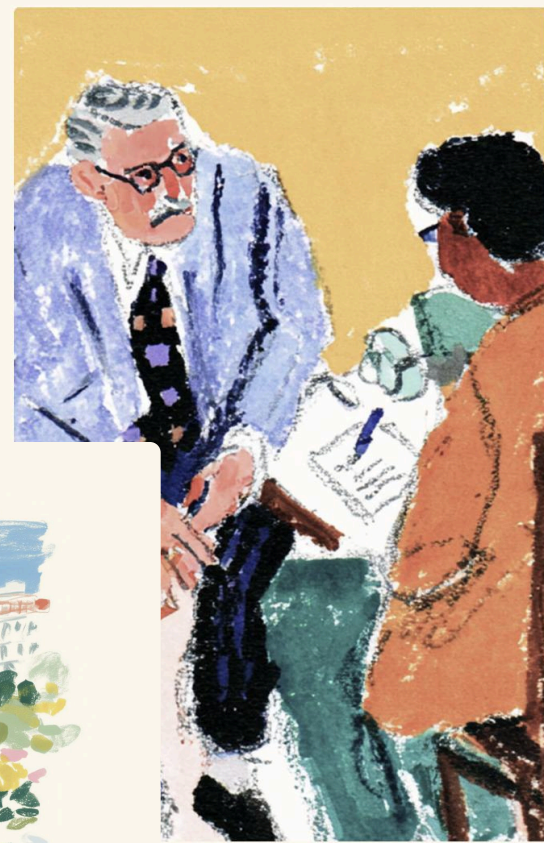


Intercom

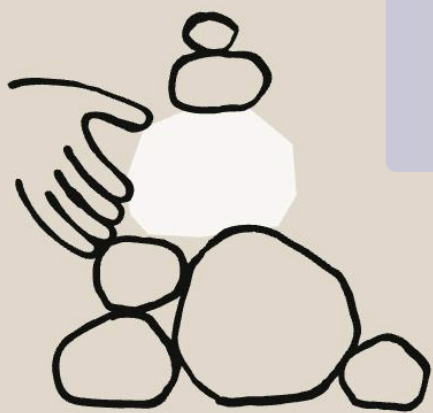
Sketch and Scribble

Sketches and scribbles serve as a deliberate counterpoint to machine perfection. Uneven lines, quick marks, and half-formed diagrams create visual traces of thinking rather than finished outcomes. They reference notebooks, whiteboards, and the early moments when ideas are still fragile. In a space dominated by automation and scale, scribbles reintroduce hesitation, curiosity, and human intent. The style signals exploration over certainty and emphasizes the human thought process behind the technology.

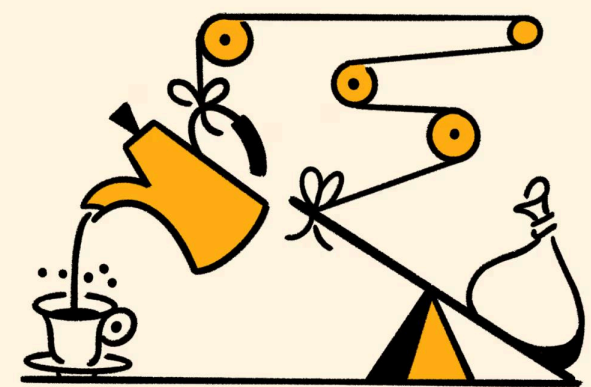
Kindness
Trust
Quality
Simplicity
Safety & Security
Evaluation



Microsoft AI



Anthropic



Notion



Non-Brand Academia

Creating authority in a space where much so-called groundbreaking AI is little more than a GPT wrapper. Stripping visual identity down to essentials, avoiding shine or gimmicks, signaling that the work itself demonstrates innovation. Lean typography, muted colors, and functional layouts emphasize seriousness and credibility. This is the humblebrag of branding: We don’t need a shiny brand; our work speaks for itself. The overall effect is quietly confident, rigorous, and authoritative.

THINKING
MACHINES

NEW Introducing Tinker

Thinking Machines Lab is an artificial intelligence research and product company. We're building a future where everyone has access to the knowledge and tools to make AI work for their unique needs and goals.

While AI capabilities have advanced dramatically, key gaps remain. The scientific community's understanding of frontier AI systems lags behind rapidly advancing capabilities. Knowledge of how these systems are trained is concentrated within the top research labs, limiting both the public discourse on AI and people's abilities to use AI effectively. And, despite their potential, these systems remain difficult for people to customize to their specific needs and values. To bridge the gaps, we're building Thinking Machines Lab to make AI systems more widely understood, customizable and generally capable.

We are scientists, engineers, and builders who've created some of the most widely used AI products, including ChatGPT and Character.ai, open-weights models like Mistral, as well as popular open source projects like PyTorch, OpenAI Gym, Fairseq, and Segment Anything.

Thinking Machines

Sakana AI Agent Wins AtCoder Heuristic Contest (First AI to Place 1st)

January 05, 2026

Rank	User	Score	Rank	User	Score
1	fishylene	848,373,282 (5)	8	Shun_PI	845,287,070 (11)
2	yosupo	847,674,723 (4)	9	Rafbill	844,986,384 (7)
3	asi1024	846,938,871 (18)	10	nono00	843,793,082 (17)
4	takumi152	846,350,877 (15)	11	semilexp	843,780,589 (17)
5	tishi24	845,489,747 (7)	12	gazelle	842,540,969 (7)
6	rhooh	845,324,831 (13)	13	montplusa	842,390,994 (6)
7	yochan	845,301,068 (4)	14	nikaj	841,539,388 (4)

First AI Agent to Win a Competitive Optimization Programming Contest (804 Participants, \$1,300 Compute).

Final Standings: <https://atcoder.jp/contests/ahc058/standings>

read more

Sakana

All models improve with semantic search		
Model (alphabetical)	Relative improvement (Cursor Context Bench)	
Composer	23.5%	
Gemini 2.5 Pro	8.7%	
GPT-5	6.5%	
Grok Code	11.9%	
Sonnet 4.5	14.7%	

Cursor

Research

All Publication Conclusion Milestone Release

Filter Sort

Research

Evaluating chain-of-thought monitorability

Dec 18, 2025

We introduce evaluations for chain-of-thought monitorability and study how it scales with test-time compute, reinforcement learning, and pretraining.

Product

Introducing GPT-5.2-Codex

Dec 18, 2025

The most advanced agentic coding model for professional software engineering and defensive cybersecurity.

Publication

Addendum to GPT-5.2 System Card: GPT-5.2-Codex

Dec 18, 2025

This system card outlines the comprehensive safety measures implemented for GPT-5.2-Codex. It details both model-level mitigations, such as specialized safety training for harmful tasks and...

OpenAI

Research from Runway

September 24, 2025

Autoregressive-to-Diffusion Vision Language Models

by Marianne Amola, Naveen Venkat, Jonathan Granslog, Anastasia Germanidis

We develop a state-of-the-art diffusion vision language model, Autoregressive-to-Diffusion (A2D), by adopting an existing autoregressive vision language model for parallel diffusion decoding. Our approach makes it easy to unlock the speed-quality trade-off of diffusion language models without training from scratch, by leveraging existing pretrained autoregressive models...

Read Paper

June 2, 2025

Dual-Process Image Generation

by Grace Luo, Jonathan Granslog, Aleksander Holyfiski, Trevor Darnell

Prior methods for controlling image generation are limited in their ability to be taught new tasks. In contrast, vision-language models, or VLMs, can learn tasks in-context and produce the correct outputs for a given input. We propose a dual-process distillation scheme that allows feed-forward image generators to learn new tasks from deliberative VLMs. Our scheme uses a VLM to rate the generated images and backpropagates this gradient to update the weights of the image generator. Our general framework enables a wide variety of new control tasks through the same text-and-image based interface. We showcase a handful of applications of this technique for different types of control signals, such as commonsense inferences and visual prompts. With our method, users can implement multimodal controls for properties such as color palette, line weight, horizon position, and relative depth within a...

Read Paper

March 31, 2025

StochasticSplats: Stochastic Rasterization for Sorting-Free 3D Gaussian Splatting

by Shikha Khendram, Delo Vicini, George Kopanas, Dmitry Lagun, Kwang Moo Yi, Mark Matthews, Andrea Tagliasacchi

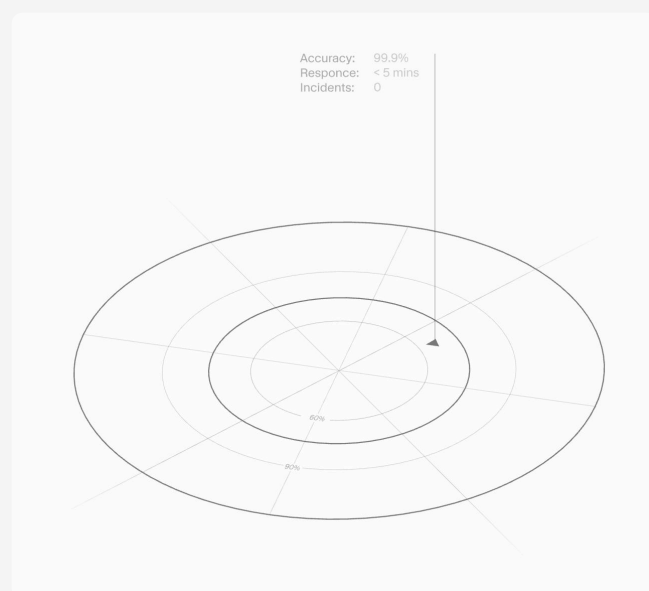
3D Gaussian splatting (3DGS) is a popular radiance field method, with many application-specific extensions. Most variants rely on the same core algorithm: depth-sorting of Gaussian splats then rasterizing in primitive order. This ensures correct alpha compositing, but can cause rendering artifacts due to built-in approximations. Moreover, for a fixed representation, sorted rendering offers little control over render cost and visual fidelity. For example, and counter-intuitively, rendering a lower-resolution image is not necessarily faster. In this work, we address the above limitations by combining 3D Gaussian splatting with stochastic rasterization. Concretely, we leverage an unbiased Monte Carlo estimator of the volume rendering equation. This removes the need for sorting, and allows for accurate 3D blending of overlapping Gaussians. The number of Monte Carlo samples further imbues 3DGS...

Read Paper

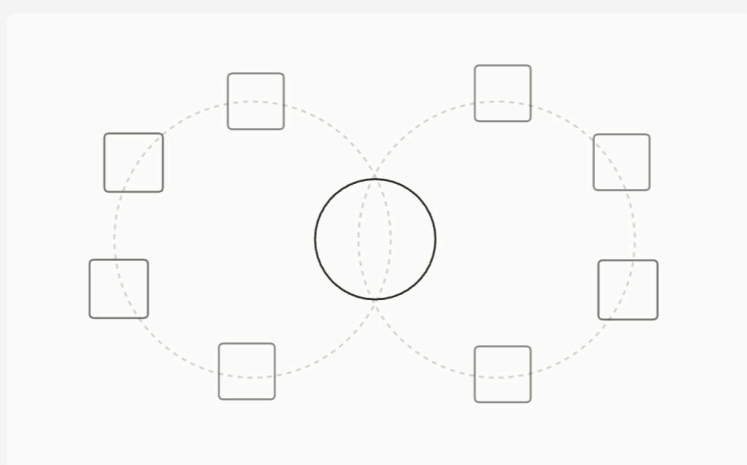
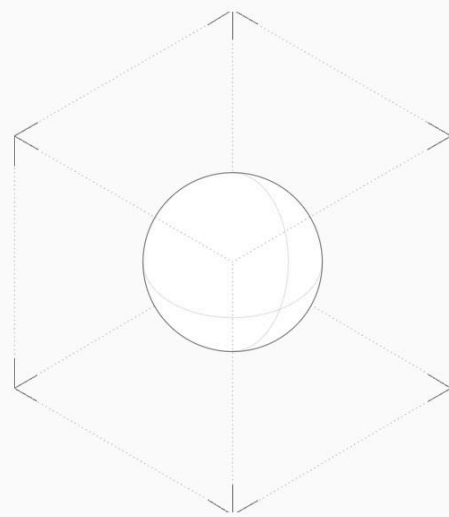
Runway

Technical Illustrations

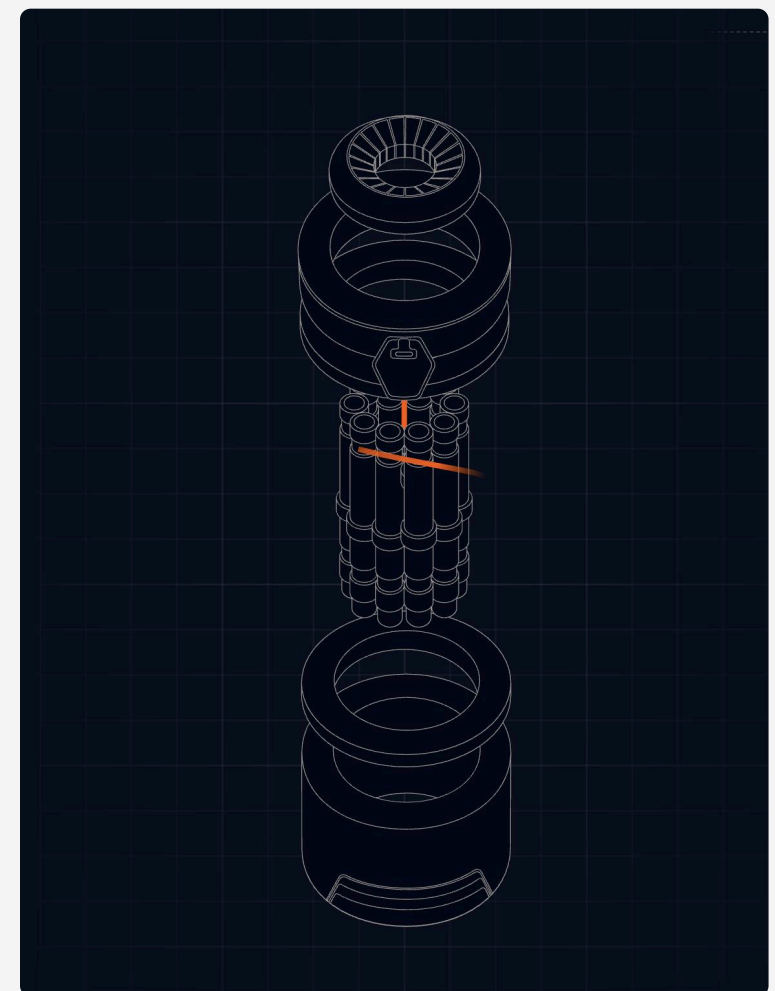
Often not actual visualizations of the technology, but signals of technical competence. They serve more as decoration than communication, referencing engineering, research papers, and system diagrams. Slightly retro in feel, they project rigor, depth, and seriousness. This style borrows the language of documentation, positioning the brand as knowledgeable, precise, and grounded in technical expertise.



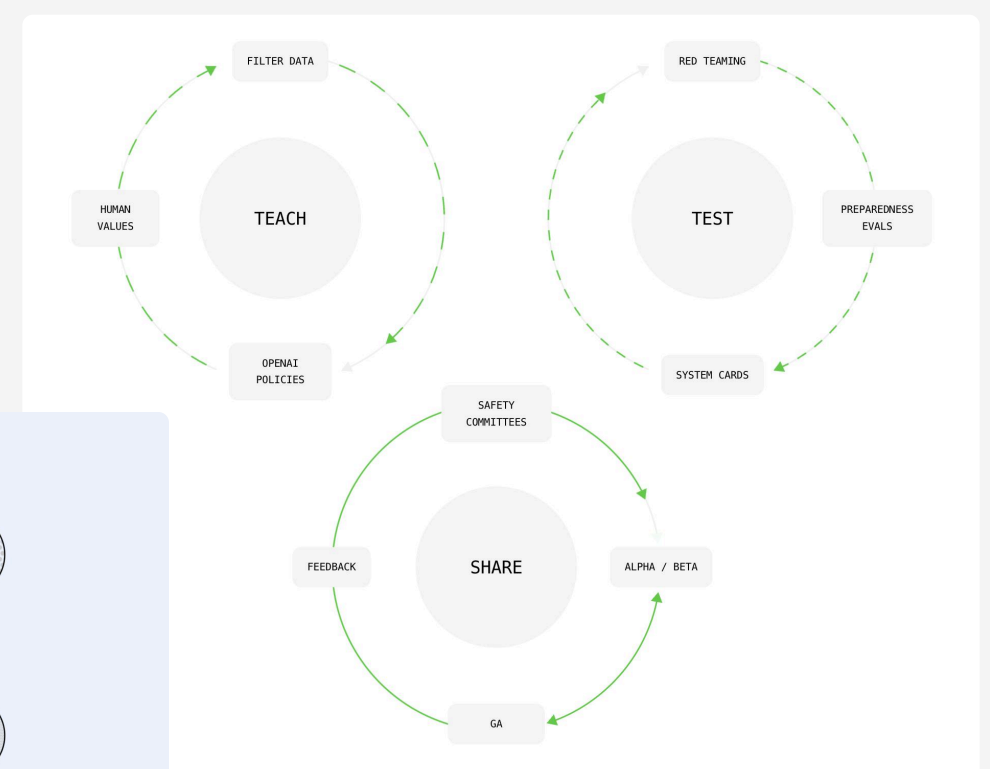
Eleven Labs



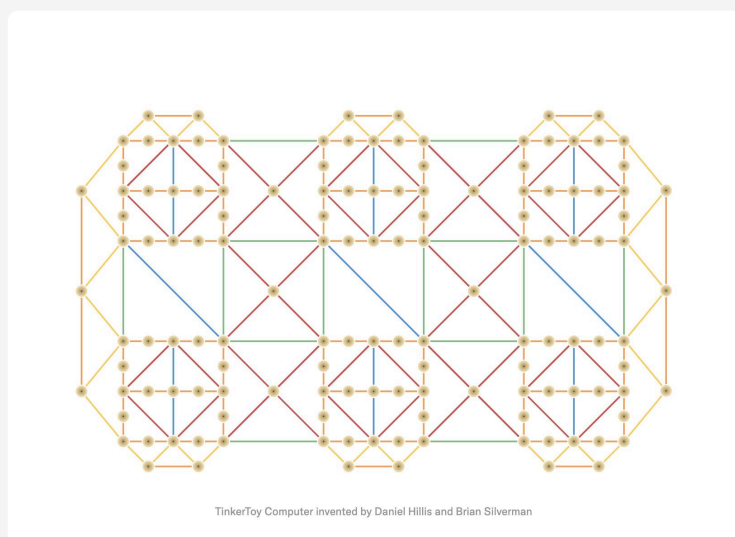
General Intelligence Company of New York



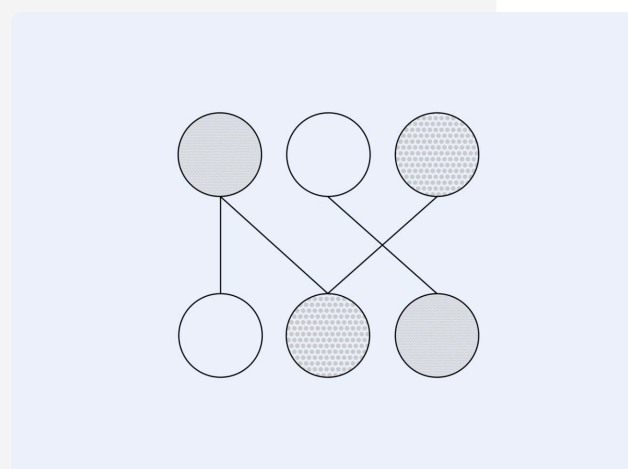
Intercom



OpenAI

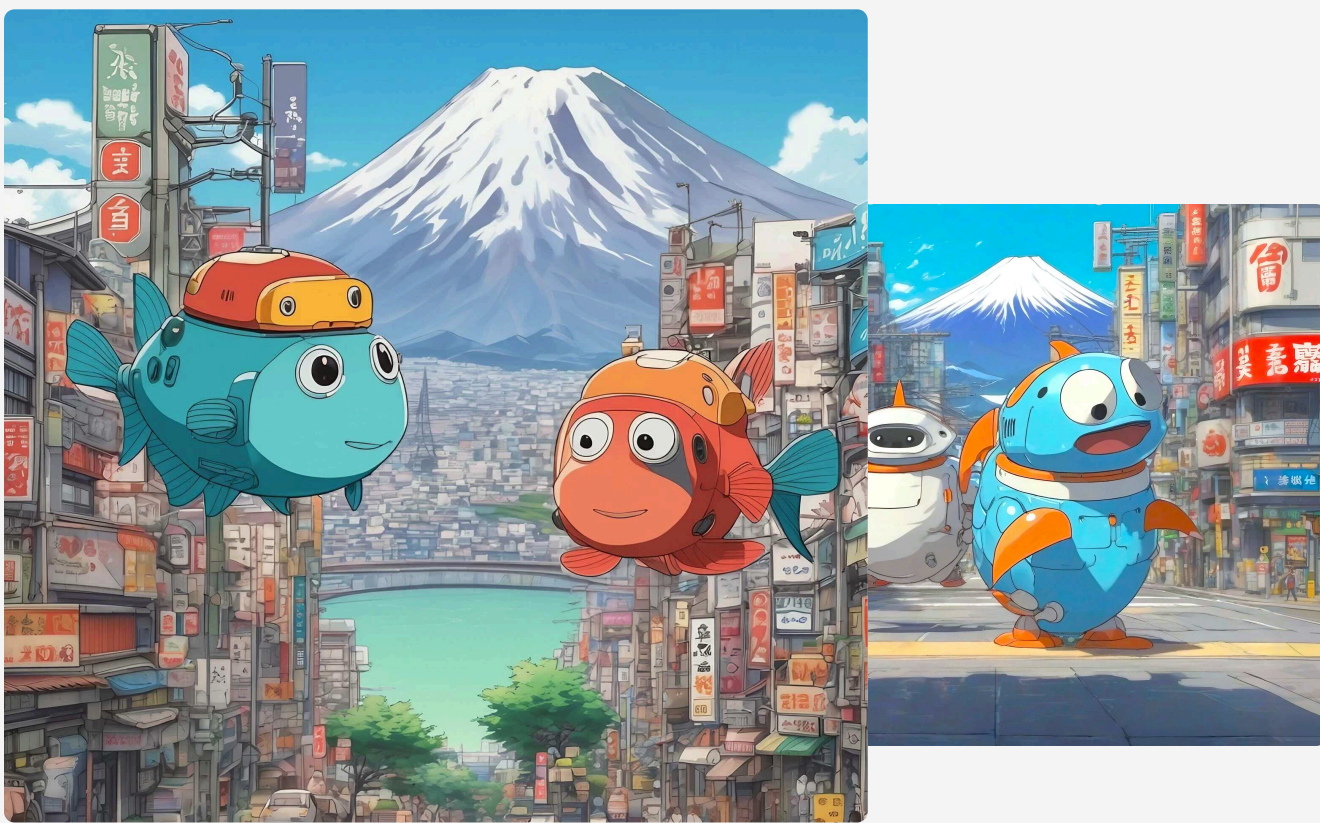


Thinking Machines



Quirky Cuteness

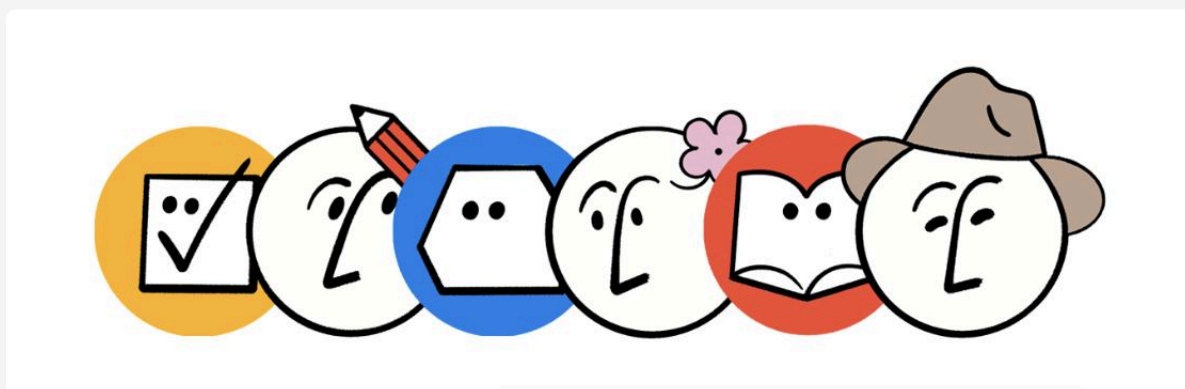
Cute mascots as counterweight to AI doomsday narratives. Humanizing a technology that feels abstract, powerful, and sometimes threatening. Friendly faces for complex systems. Playful, nerdy, self-aware. A bridge to engineering culture and insider humor. Signaling approachability in public and belonging in the war for AI talent.



Sakana



Mistral



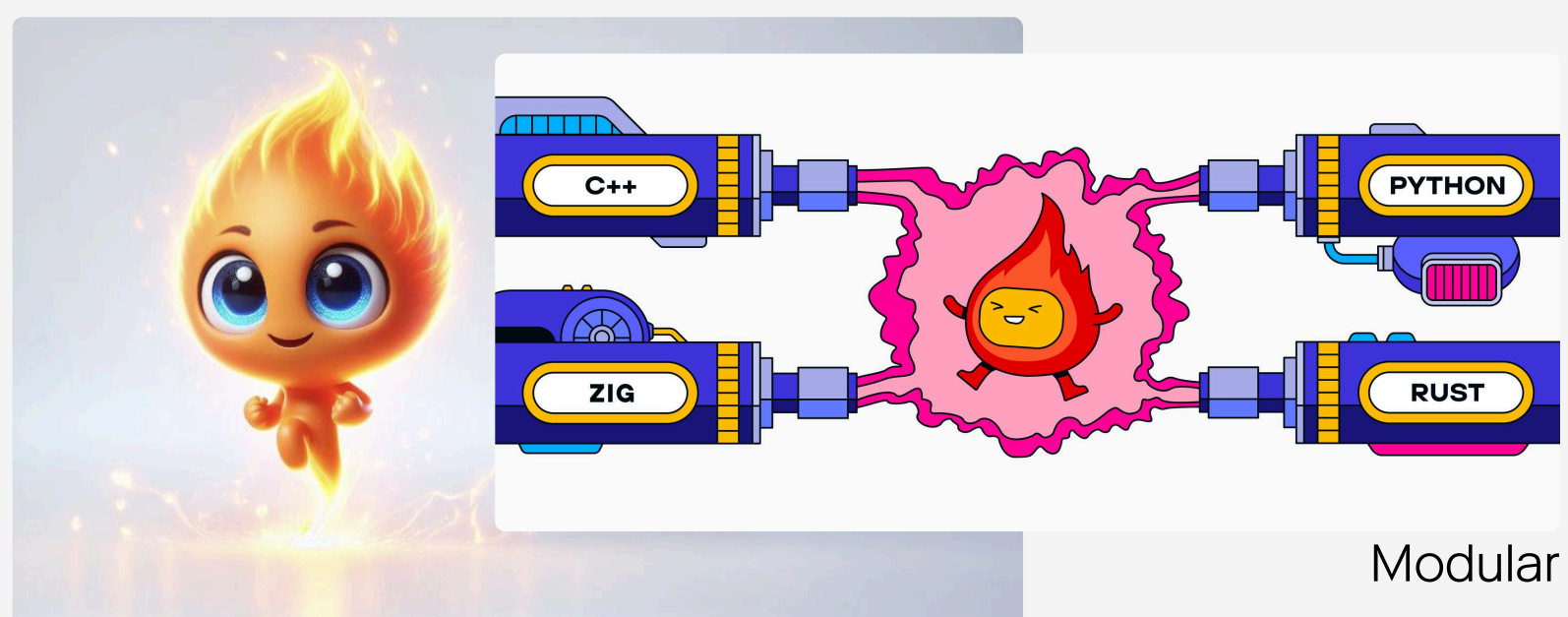
Notion



Anthropic



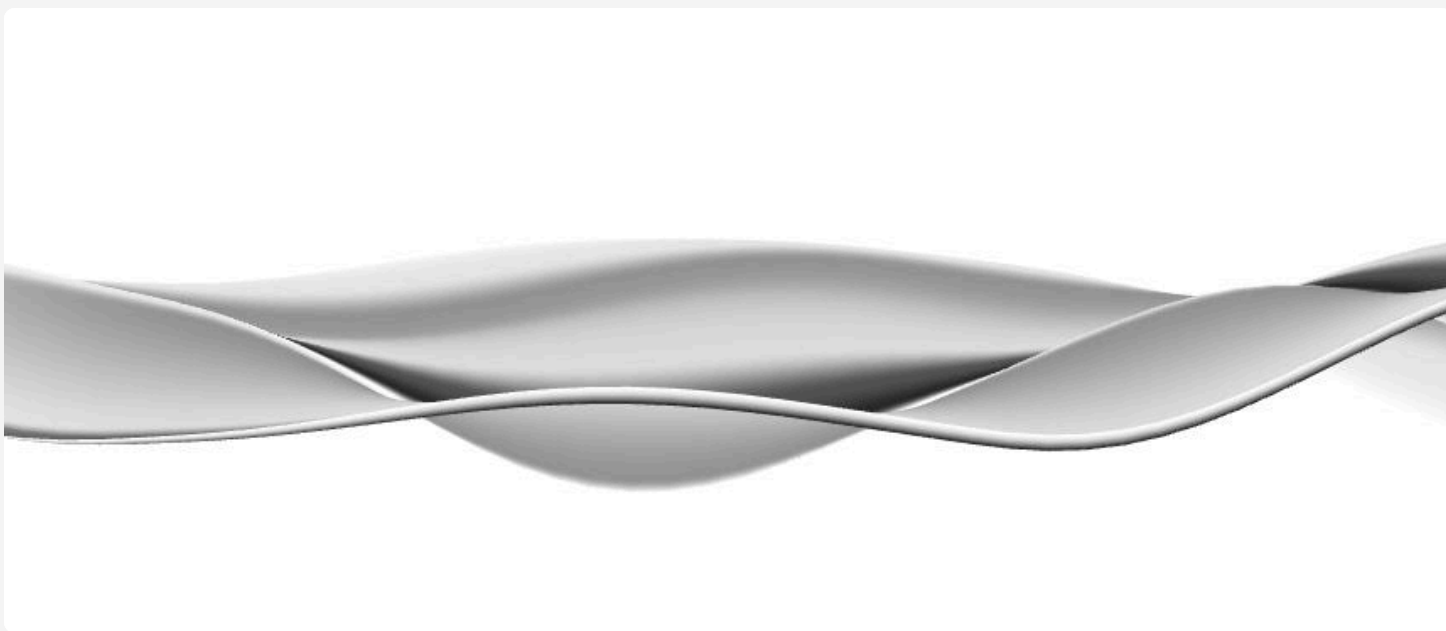
OpenAI



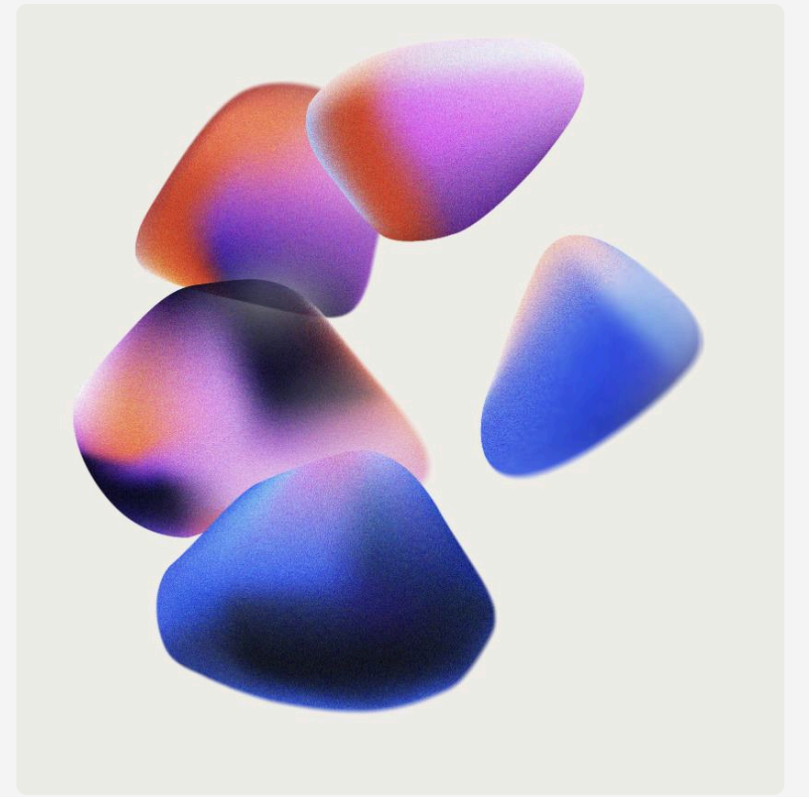
Modular

Morphing Objects

Floating, evolving, constantly in motion. No fixed form. No final state. Shapes that evolve, dissolve, and reassemble. Visualizing emergence rather than outcomes. A metaphor for systems that learn, adapt, and change over time. Signaling novelty, uncertainty, and the unknown. AI not as a finished product, but as something continuously becoming.



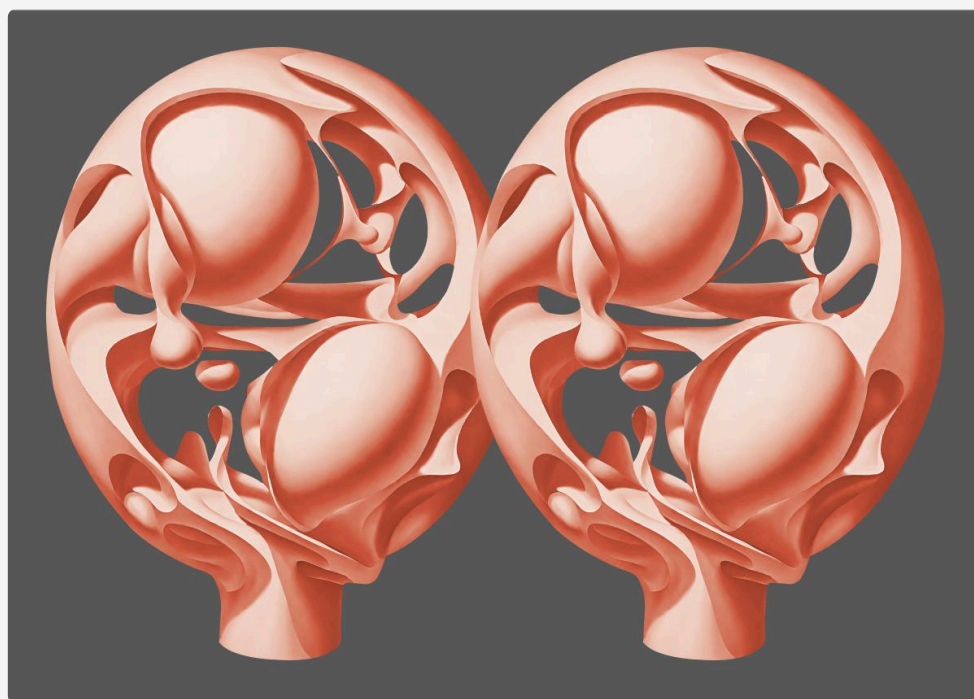
ElevenLabs



Cohere



Intercom



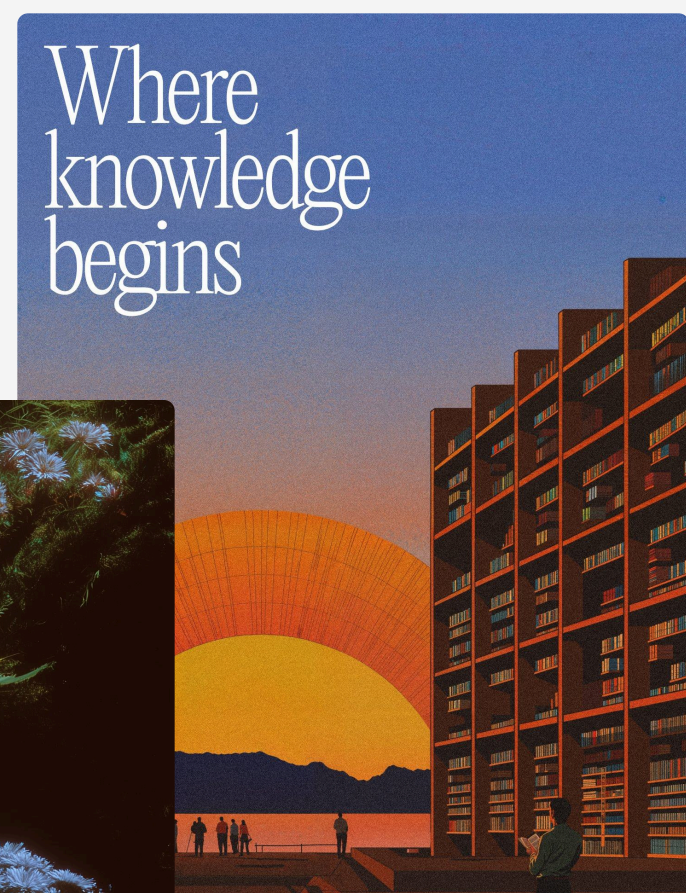
Runway



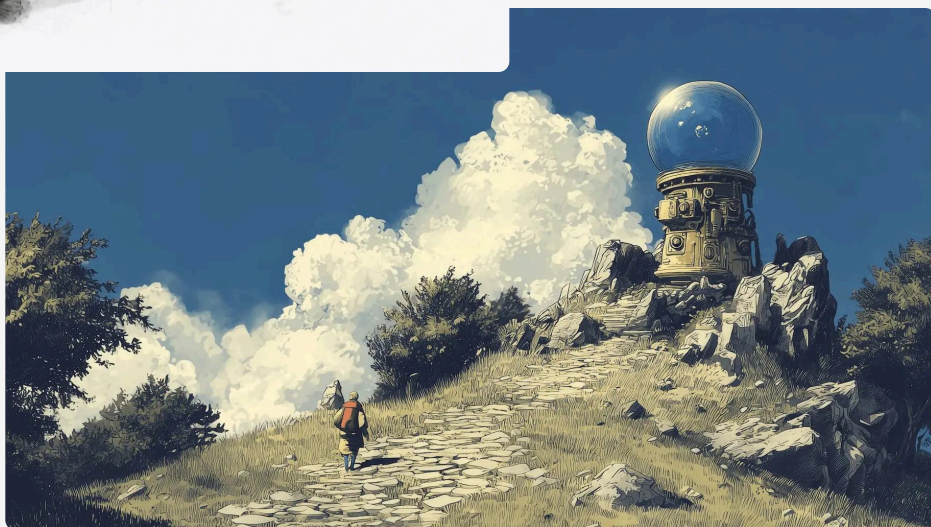
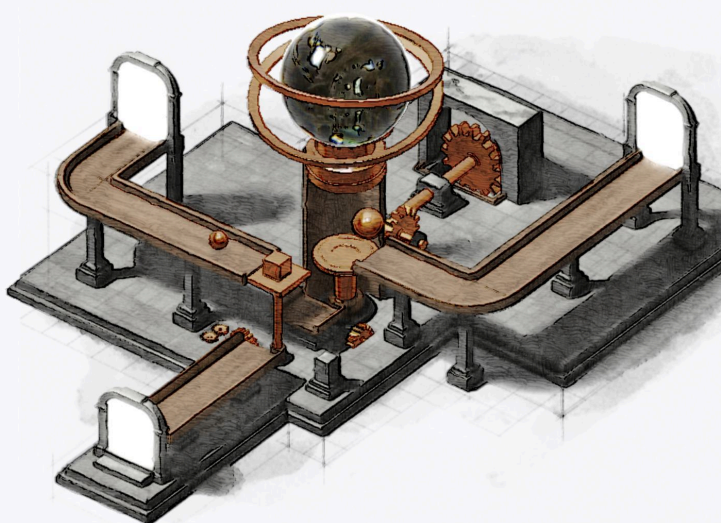
Fal

Futuristic Surrealism

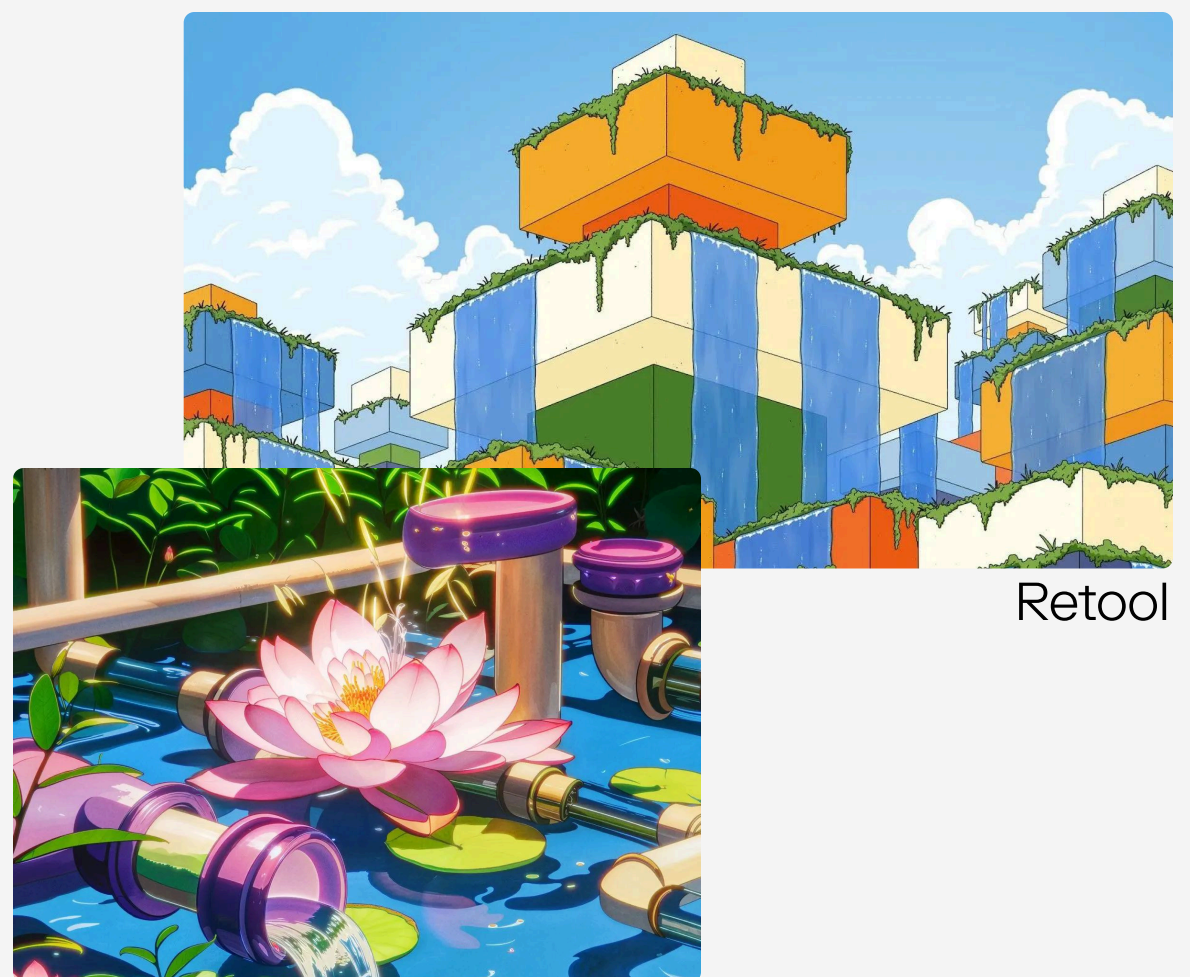
Some brands build entire surreal worlds. Layered environments, impossible physics, dreamlike machines. Sometimes leaning steampunk, sometimes retrofuturistic, always otherworldly. Less about explaining the technology, more about what it enables. A signal that this AI is not just a tool, but a gateway. An invitation to step into new worlds.



Perplexity



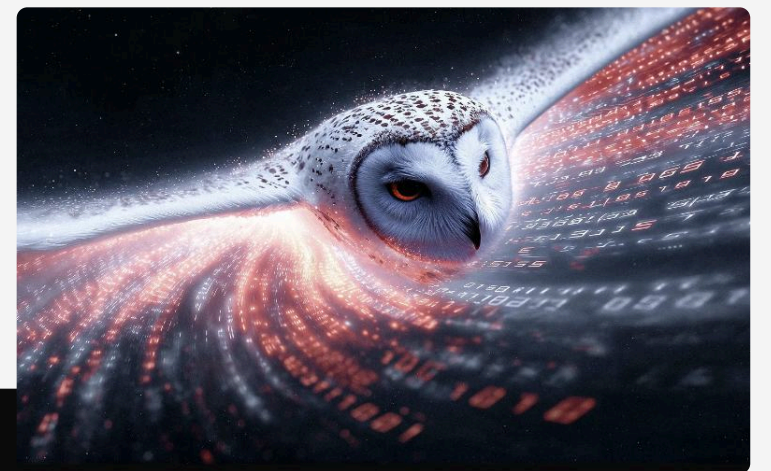
World Labs



Retool

Outer Space

The final frontier. A familiar metaphor for intelligence that still feels undiscovered. Sometimes romantic and utopian. Sometimes undeniably cheesy. Galaxies, stars, cosmic light. AI as exploration. Framing progress as a journey into the unknown.

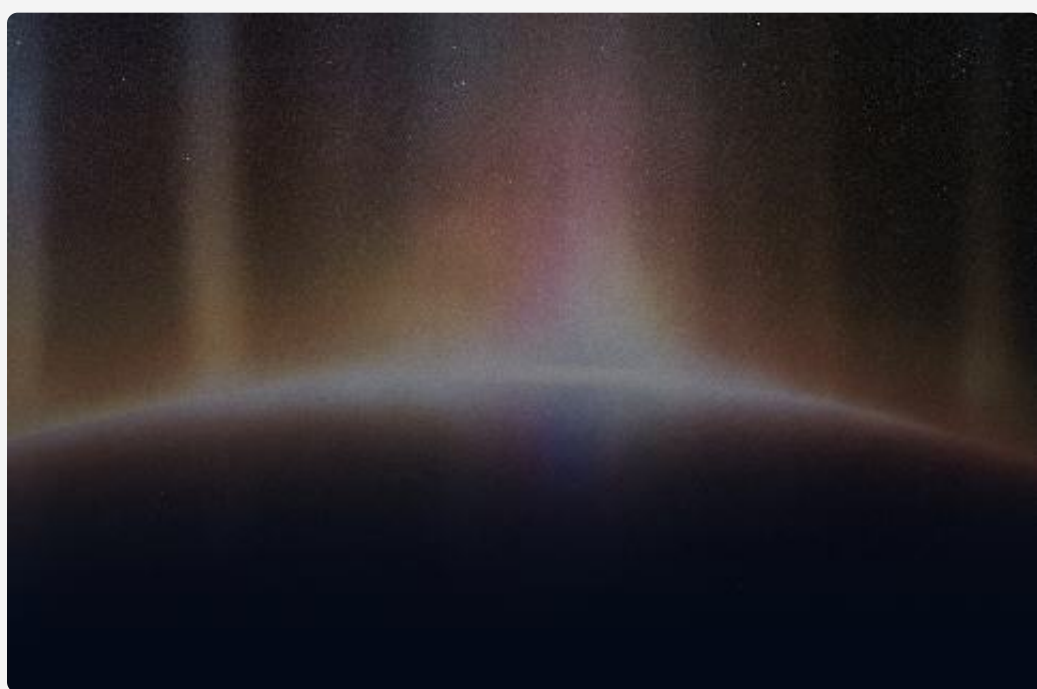


Modular

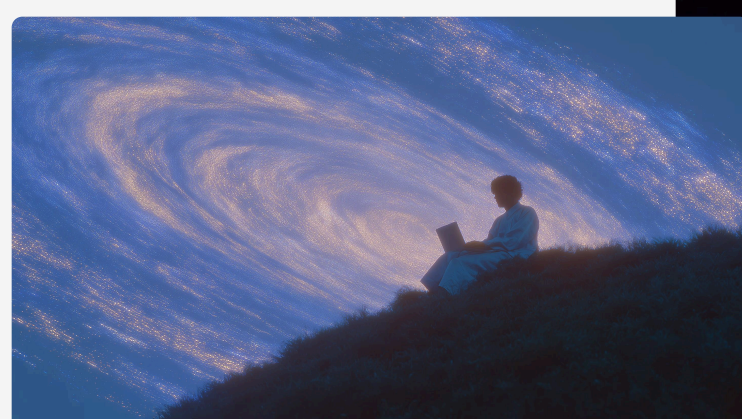


Understand
The Universe

X AI



Intercom




Perplexity



ASCII and Pixels

Pixelart and ASCII art are back. A nod to early internet and computer culture. Retro by design. Instantly friendly. AI that is here to play, not to take your job. Creative and inspiring, yet clearly technical. Adding familiarity, nostalgia, and a sense of predictability to an opaque technology.

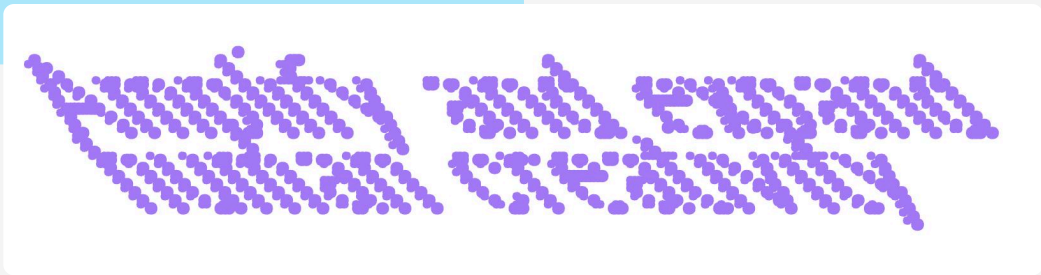
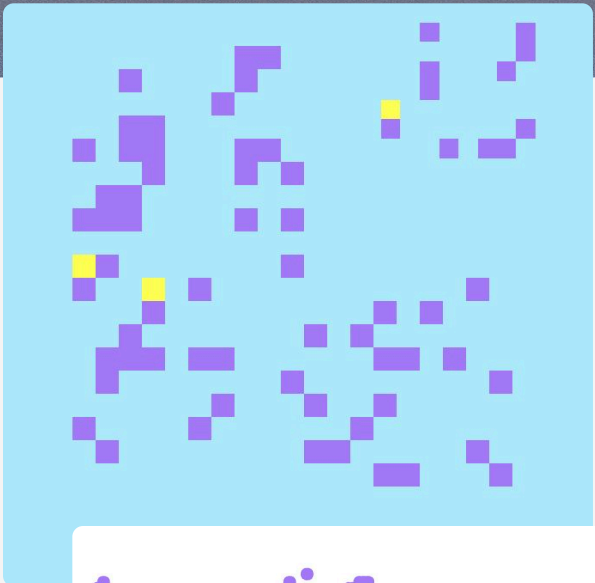

We're building tools for
businesses that run themselves



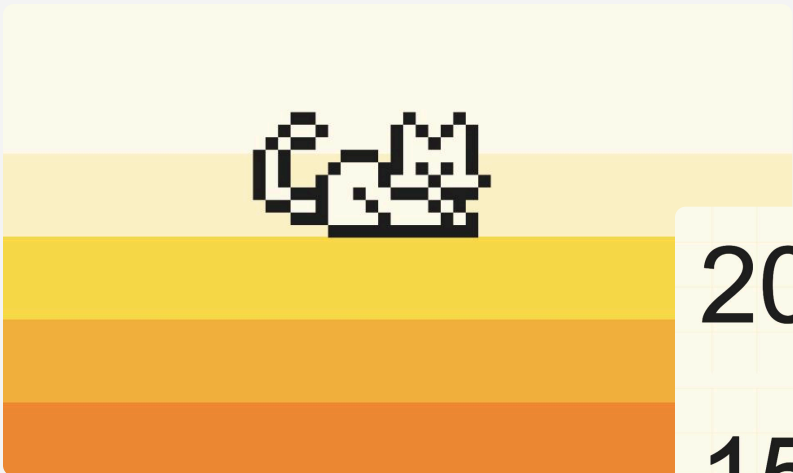
General Intelligence Company of New York



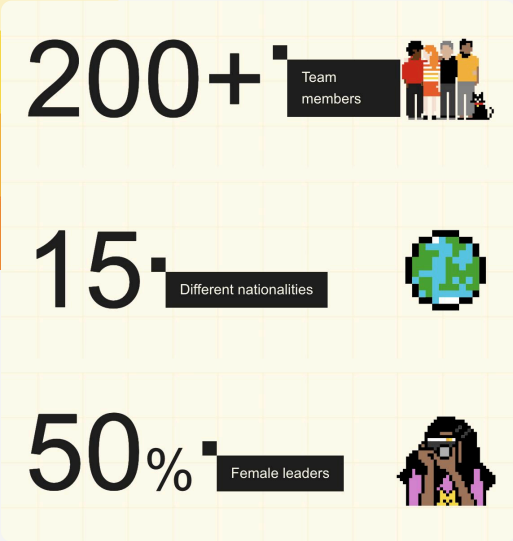
Fal



Midjourney

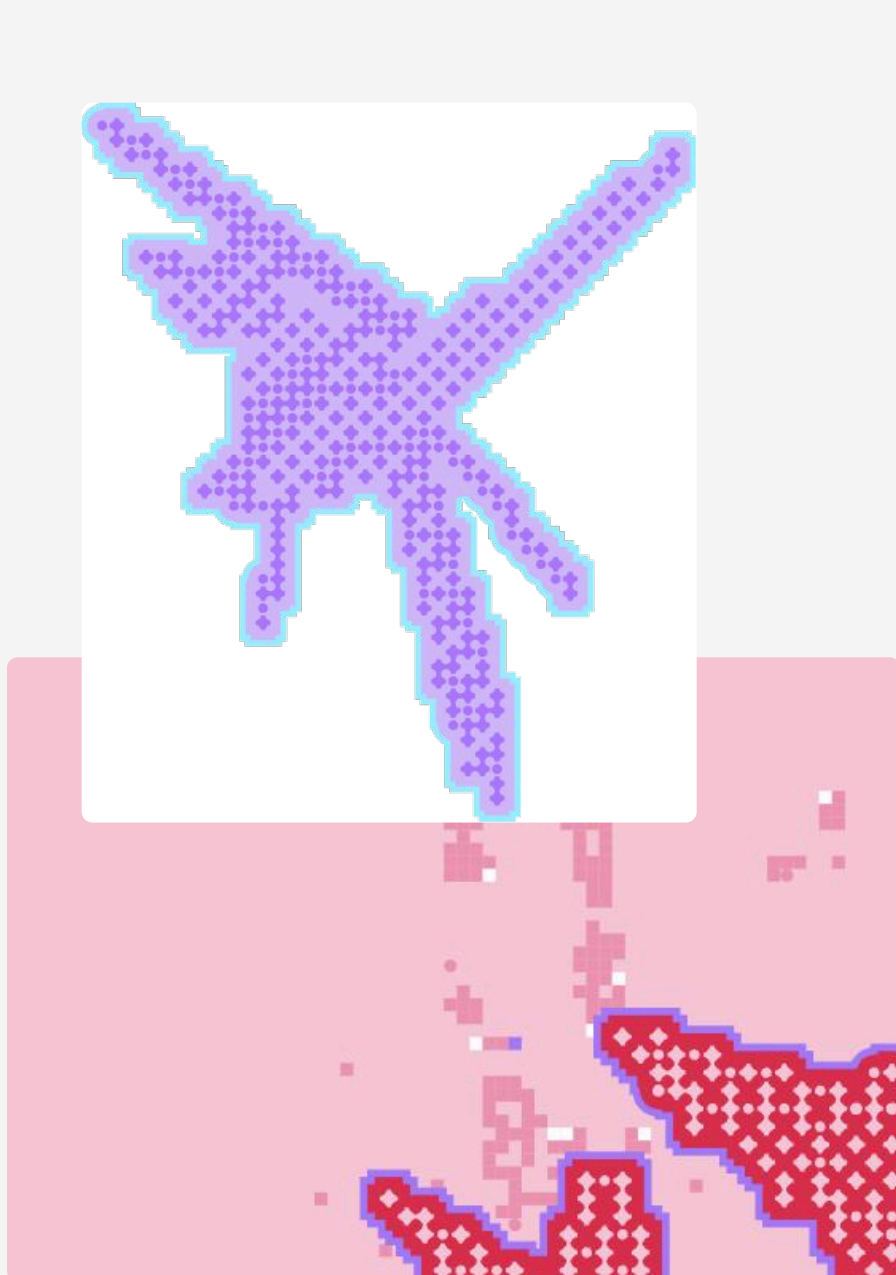


Mistral



Generative Art

Algorithmic patterns, cellular automata, rule-based visuals. Pixel art for mathematicians. Systems that create form through logic. Flexible and scalable. A natural fit for AI branding, where the visual itself behaves like a product. Less about a single image, more about a living system. A signal of depth, rigor, and emergent complexity.



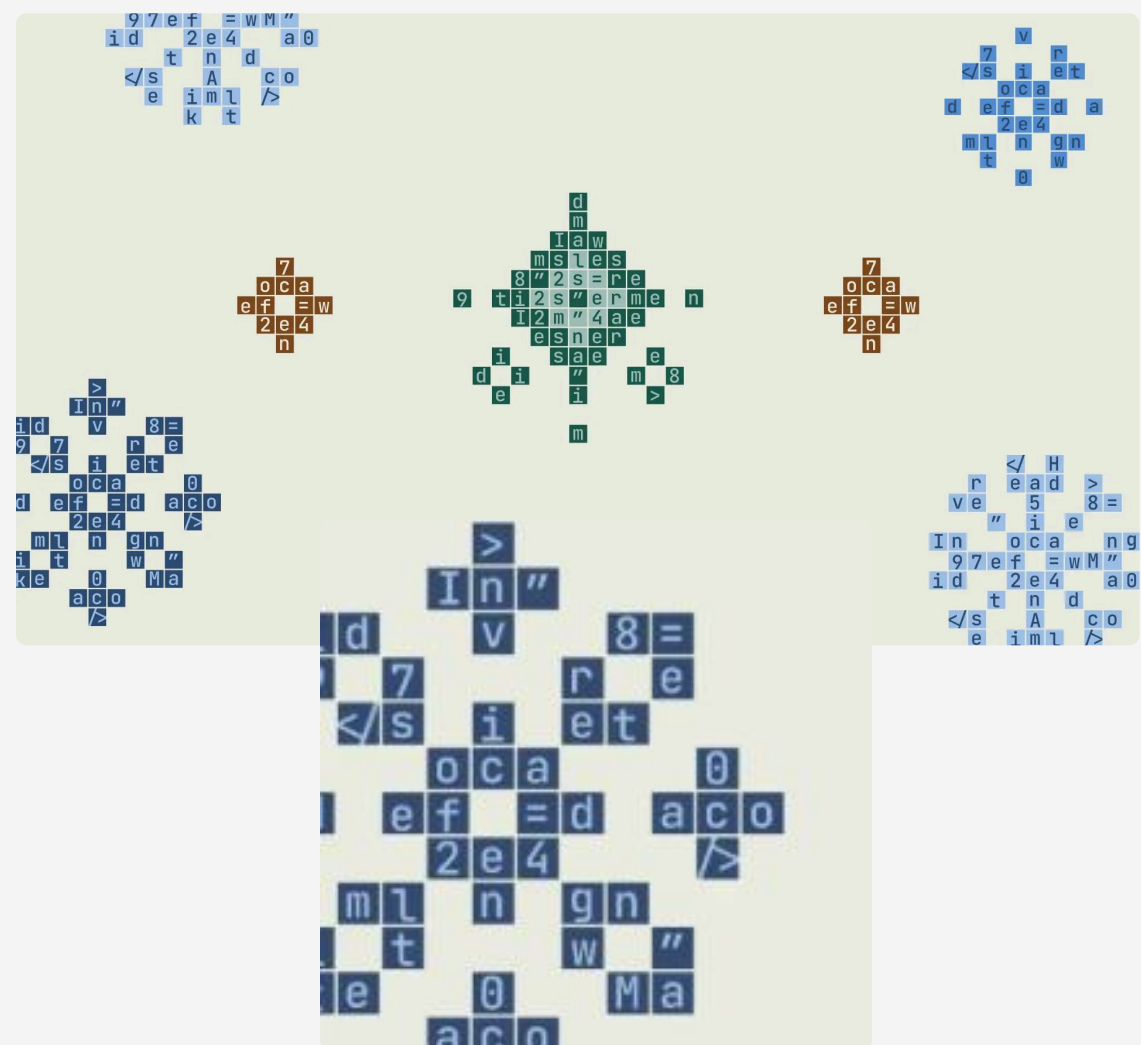
Fal



General Intelligence Company of New York



Sakana



Retool

Brand Archetypes

Five Brand Archetypes Reflecting Different Visions of AI

Every brand we analyzed is clearly unique. Yet, we think that they can be clustered into five archetypes, each setting a distinct tone in the race for attention, authority, and capital.



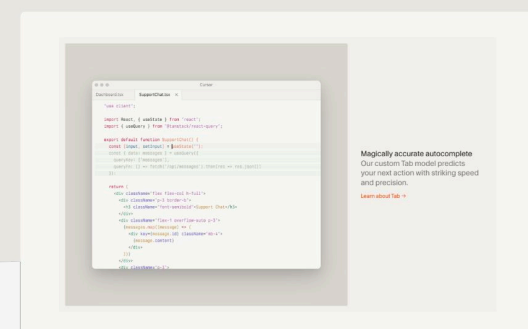
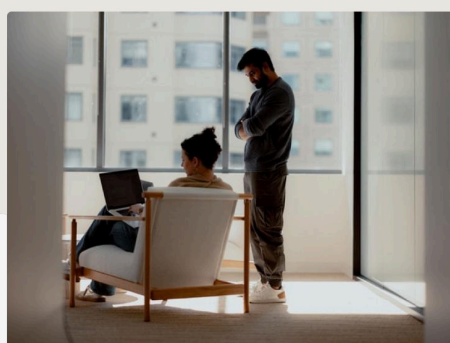
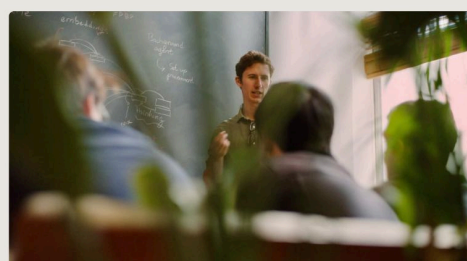
Likeable Leaders

Brands like OpenAI, Sierra, and Cursor primarily communicate seriousness, stability, and trust. Their color palettes are toned down, often built around muted greys and warm beiges. Nothing sharp, nothing polarizing. Their visual identities avoid friction by design. Impressionistic illustrations and soft gradients are common, used not to explain, but to create a broadly appealing, inoffensive atmosphere. Photography leans human and approachable, presenting the brand as friendly, calm, and responsible. The result is authority without arrogance, leadership without edges.

Likeable Leaders



ElevenLabs



Gentle Humanists

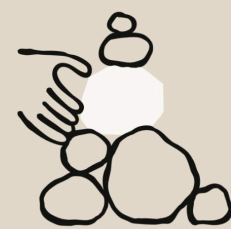
Brands like Microsoft AI, Notion, and Anthropic put people before technology. Their brands carry a soft, almost romantic tone. Visuals lean toward human, often hand-drawn illustrations that depict everyday moments, nature, and human interaction. Playful, sometimes bordering on childlike. Deliberately avoiding anything that could read as cold, technical, or potentially threatening. The technology stays in the background. What matters is what people can do with it, how it fits into life, and how it makes things feel. AI as an enabler of human potential, not a force to be feared.



MAI



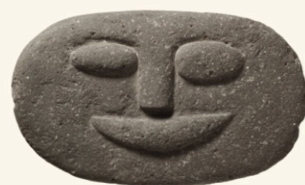
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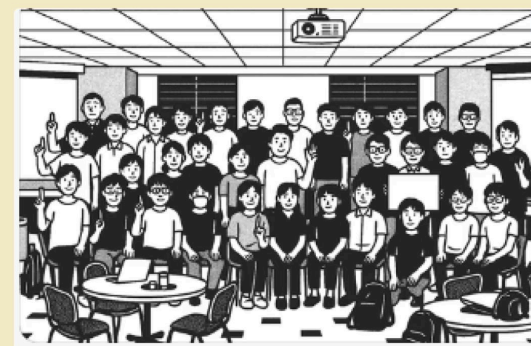
Gentle Humanists



Pi



N Notion



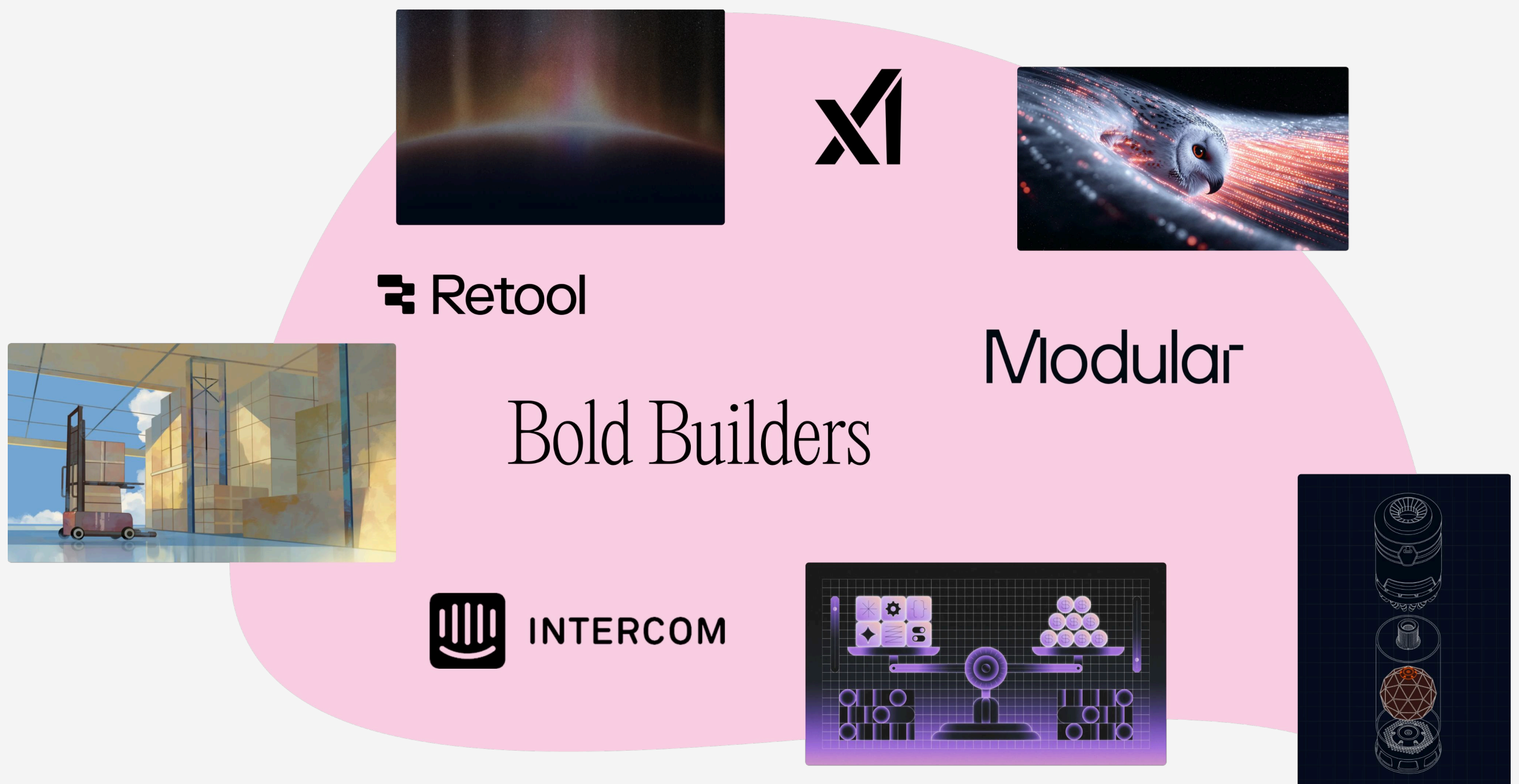
Nerdy Idealists

Brands like Sakana, Midjourney, and Mistral are not about business first, but about exploring a fascinating technology. Their brands are steeped in engineering culture and nerd references. Intentionally unpolished. Sometimes overly playful, sometimes quirky, sometimes deliberately non-branded. Rough edges are part of the signal. They are not trying to look like serious, corporate super-brands. The goal is not to attract consumers, but peers. Fellow builders, researchers, and enthusiasts who care about the technology itself, not the hype around it.



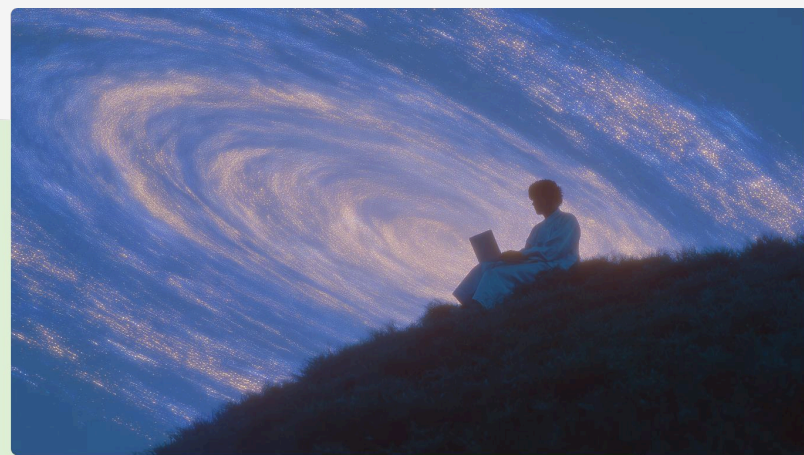
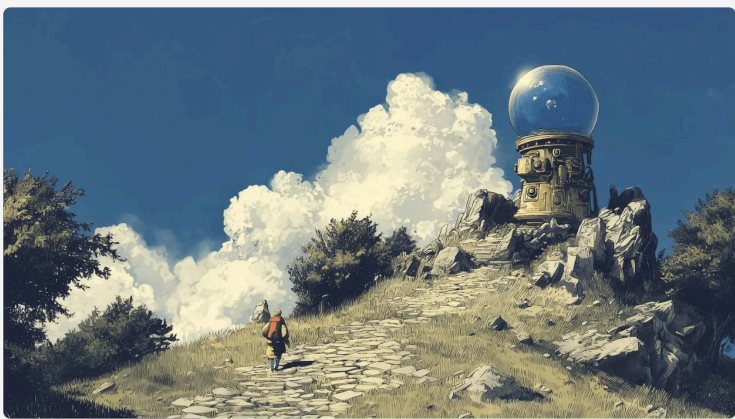
Bold Builders

Brands like X AI, Intercom, and Retool treat AI not as just another technology, but as something truly groundbreaking. They don't try to soften or humanize its power. Instead, they lean into it. Their brands make AI feel vast, capable, and transformative. Space references are common. The last frontier as a metaphor. Darker color palettes replace off-whites and pastels. Less comfort, more ambition. These brands frame AI as a force that reshapes what's possible, not something to be domesticated.

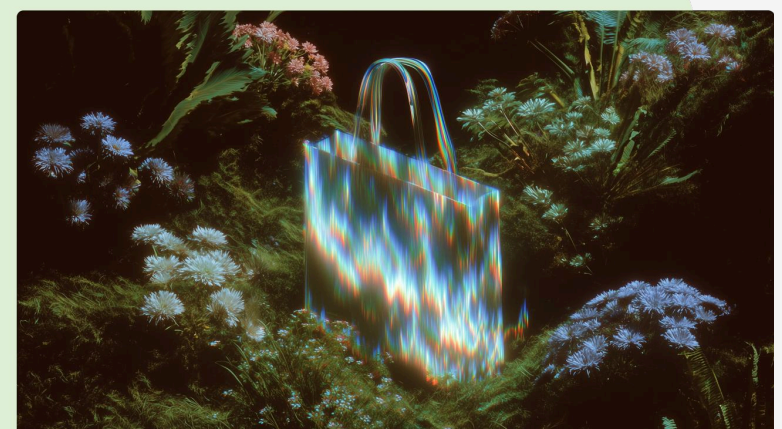


Utopian Dreamers

Brands like Perplexity, World Labs, and Manus talk less about the technology itself and more about what becomes possible because of it. Their brands build expansive creative worlds, sometimes retrofuturistic, sometimes surreal. They communicate optimistic, utopian visions that may confuse or even alienate some audiences, but almost always fascinate. Clarity is less important than imagination. It's not about the here and now, but about futures yet to be defined. These brands invite people to dream first and understand later, framing AI as a catalyst for entirely new realities rather than incremental progress.



Utopian Dreamers



By the time you've finished reading this, parts of it are almost certainly already outdated. Some of the brands we analyzed may not even exist anymore. That's exactly what makes following this industry so exiting. Branding alone won't make a winner, but a standout brand can provide a meaningful advantage in this high-stakes race for attention, authority, and capital.

AColorBright

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