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Presenting Style - Issue #8 April 2005

Mogollón - James Lightboun - iF design award
Project Fox - Rubens Lp - PixelPlastiken

PixelPlastiken

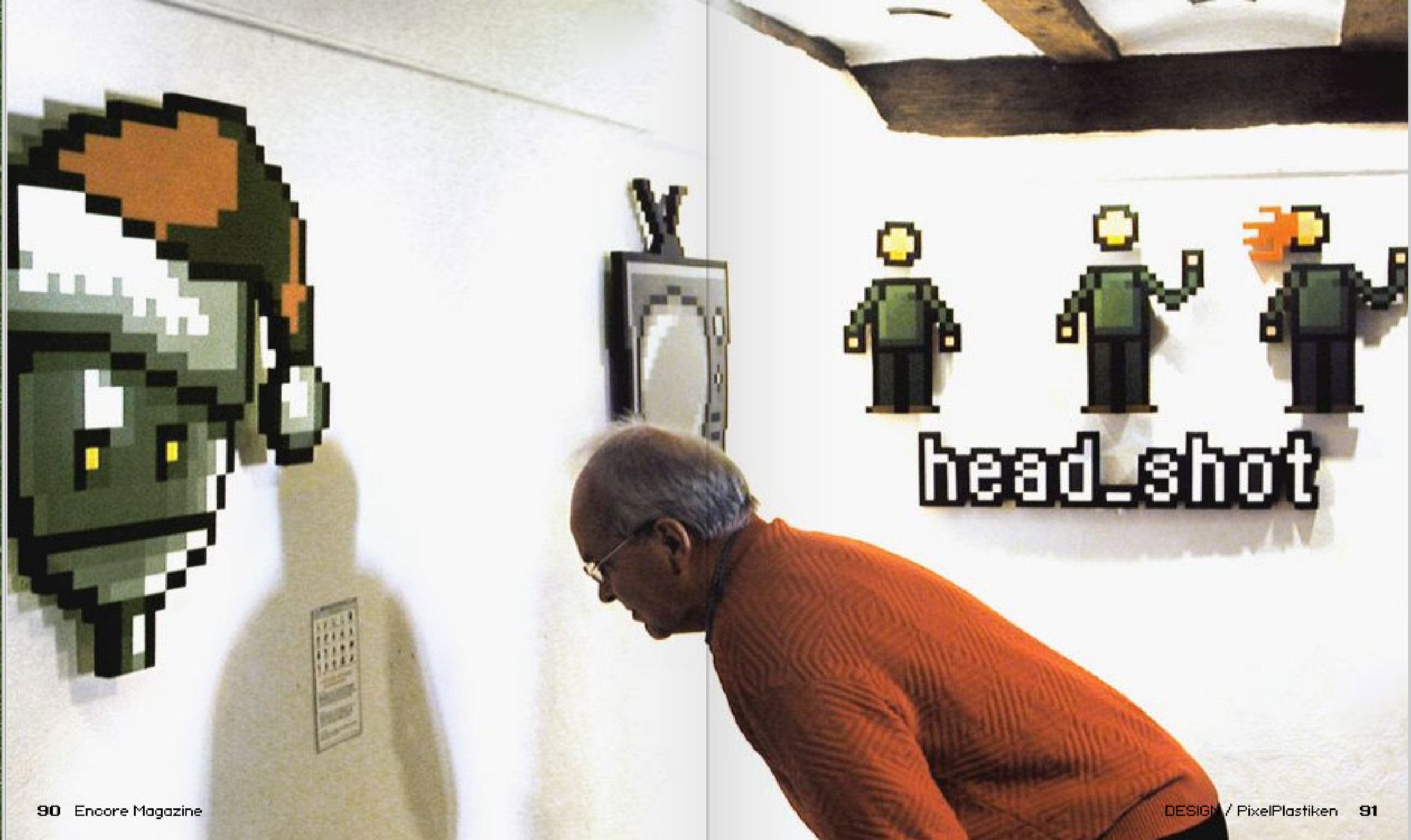
It all began with 32x32 px
and only 256 colours

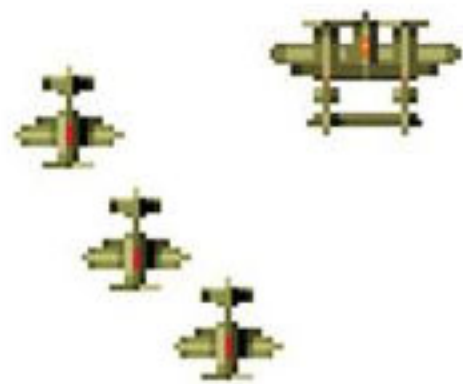
All PC or Mac users are aware of them, but only few really know them. Icons are way more than just symbols for folders, documents or applications. Although or because they are technically limited, many designers and artists now use them as a forum for their creativity.

If you are creative, you can produce charming pieces of art even when reduced to 32x32 pixel and 256 colours. The best example that icons are not limited to the digital world is the Jürgen Blümlein, an artist living in Berlin. His PixelPlastiken are created using a mixture of Silicon, Resin, Acryl colours and loads of time.

The PixelPlastiken are about 50 cm tall sculptures that have already been shown in numerous exhibitions around Germany. Every Pixel-Icon is unique in its colours, and every motive is limited and numbered to ten pieces.







Inspired by his dedication for skateboarding, the first timid progressions of the computer-century and the first arcade games such as Pong, Tetris, Gato or Green Beret, he had the idea to convert coarsely screened icons to real-life sculptures.

But why don't we let the artist tell his own story? Jürgen Blümlein:

»Through my dad, who is an engineer at the International Business Machines Corporation (better known as IBM) and was involved in the construction of the first large-capacity computers in the mid 70's, I already had contact with computers at an early age.



However, the first computer I really did something with was a black box called Pong. Connected to a TV you could move two lines from top to bottom and the other way around. What a thrill!

Pong was the first and really simple computer game to simulate tennis. You had to shoot the ball from one field to the other.

The older brother of my best friend soon got a few of these black boxes, and that's how the C 64 came into my life and how numerous joysticks were sacrificed, especially to the Summer- and Wintergames series. With the C 64, I also played the first shooter games. My personal favourite was



the Konami classic »Green Beret«. Soon thereafter, my dad brought some of these awesome IBM PC PS/2's home for the weekend. I already learned how to use it at a house of a friend whose dad was working at IBM as well (like actually

almost all dads in southern Germany). The other dads were working at the car manufacturer with the star. Their kids got a ride in the car. Well, I preferred the computer, 'cause you obviously cannot play a submarine simulator on a car.





But even the best shooting could be optimized with special computer applications. So I got back behind my monitor which unfortunately didn't help my construction of new models.

Anyway, the construction of models was already out of fashion at that time because they said better models can soon be built on the PC. Well, I'm still waiting for that.

Because I never gave away my airbrush equipment and other materials for model construction, nor did I sell them on Ebay what you would probably do today, I was soon handcrafting models again.

During the years, I had discovered new ways to make models, for example with resin or silicon. When working in the post-production of



digitized movies, you often zoom into certain parts of the stills until you see single pixels. I thus had the idea to build and paint coarsely screened PixelPlastiken.

In this way, the games of my childhood soon appeared on my walls and in various exhibitions. Because my interest in art was not limited to my own work, I founded the

artist platform FauxAmi together with a couple of friends in 2002.

The designers of FauxAmi are spread all over the world. We are organizing exhibitions, visiting interesting museums and promoting artists, graphic designers and photographers.

My favourite game at this time had, however, nothing to do with shooting people or boats. I discovered Tetris which became my first addiction. I was absolutely unable to let my hands off this game. Even when I closed my eyes, these coloured blocks kept falling down.

But then I got off it surprisingly quickly and painlessly. The computer was replaced by a skateboard, and when you actually wanted to play games, you could still walk into some game house with your first and faked identity card; there were the big arcades.

Over all these years, I also didn't lose my ability to work with my hands. When I was 12 years old, the German battleship »Bismarck« was raised from the bottom of the sea and found its way as a Revell model onto my shelf. Gradually, I added more tanks, my ceiling became home to jets, and the streets were hit with remote-controlled cars of course.

When Star Wars moved into my life, the tanks were finally replaced by Yodas and Wookys. At that time, my dream job was making special effects for movies and to thereby actualize the fantasies of great movie directors. That's why I played with a Hi8 camera directly after I graduated from high school. I made the first stop-motion movies (single-frame animations of characters, known through Wallace and Gromit).

The only reasons why you do these movies is probably just to be able to show audiences later how it all began. Nevertheless, they were entertaining.

My admission to the movie academy in the beautiful city Ludwigsburg showed me that all this made some sense. My first works I did there already looked a lot better. I always made visual effect shots, like they're called nowadays, for which I used my handbuilt models. Mostly, they crashed or exploded!





So one thing came to the other. I completed my studies as a master in digital arts; worked on the VFX of »Traumschiff Surprise«, a "Star Wars for Fun-movie" by the German director Bully; and moved to Berlin to organize the skateboard exhibition »Skateboardfieber« which featured my own PixelPlastiken as well.

Now it's 2005 and I'm still in Berlin where I'm working on plans for upcoming exhibitions and new PixelPlastiken plus a book on »Skateboardfieber« which is supposed to be completed by the end of the year. «

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