

Into Z Future

Understanding Generation Z, the Next Generation of Super Creatives

JWT Intelligence in partnership with Snap Inc.



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THOMPSON
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Into Z Future: Understanding Generation Z, the Next Generation of Super Creatives

Raised with mature social media, online creative tools and gesture recognition at their fingertips, and with entrepreneurial platforms to broadcast their wares, generation Z is defining a new era of influence and creative communication. This group, between 13 and 22 years old, are already monetizing their outputs, building empires, e-zines, influencer communities and more—all the while using visual tools like those available on Snapchat to propel their influence. Their creative arsenal—face swaps, selfies, AR Lenses, lip syncing, and emojis—has become the expressive staple of the digital arena, and now this group is using video, sound, animation and more to create rich new visual landscapes, lobby for their favorite causes, and create new income streams. Meet the gen Z Super Creatives: the supercharged multidisciplinary future of creative talent. And your new consumers.

More than half of gen Z (51%) say their generation is more creative than previous generations, according to a 2019 study conducted in the United States and United Kingdom by JWT Intelligence. Teens are certainly setting a new tone for visual culture—after an era of posed photos against millennial-pink backdrops, a new wave of social content mixes selfies with spoken word, imperfect collages with augmented reality (AR) landscapes, and illustration with candid livestreams. This is layered with the need to live their truth, and an acute sense of social responsibility. Hence, gen Zer Donté Colley posts short clips of him dancing in his bedroom, syncing animated emojis and words of encouragement over his short videos; Tyler Woodford crafts simple, playful Snapchat Lenses that help fellow trans and LGBTQ teens express their identity.



Art by Katya Abedian. Courtesy of Irregular Labs

“Gen Z are absolutely more creative, but it’s more utilitarian than other generations,” Molly Logan, cofounder of gen-Z run think tank Irregular Labs, tells JWT Intelligence.

In other words, while “creativity” was taught to millennials and generation X in art classes, it’s significantly more inherent for gen Z. Logan first observed this phenomenon when she ran School of Doodle, an “online high school for imagination” for teen girls. “We would ask them to articulate a feeling and opinion... and, say, make an image and explain it to me,” she says. Leading with something creative—an image, a video, a collage—and writing out what it was about made the written element much richer, Logan explains. “You’d ask them to do it in the way they’re used to communicating every single day via Snapchat and Instagram and the rest of it. You’re acknowledging this generation is creatively trilingual.”

There are sliding scales of creativity. Phoebe Pojo, 19, the founder of YouTube platform Models That Eat, says she was born into it. “I grew up in a creative household,” she tells JWT Intelligence. “My mom is a professional photographer and a musician, and she’s always ingrained in me that you want to engage with instruments and draw and be creative, and I think I’ve always had that within me.” Others are self-taught videographers, photographers, and podcasters. Danny Moriarty, 22, founded the Picky Boys Podcast partly as a response to his endless content consumption, a constant reminder that he wanted to create something himself.

Their creative language is crucial for brands and marketers to translate. Gen Z make up about a quarter of the population in the United States and the United Kingdom. A 2013 Mintel report put their annual purchasing power at \$44 billion in the United States alone, with some estimates putting this figure much higher, making their engagement a boon for brands.



Art by Priyanka Paul. Courtesy of Irregular Labs



Levi's partners with Snap for Pride month

Black is Lit by Winter BreeAnne Minisee



Some, like Toms shoes, have already recognized their power; earlier this year, the company's founder Blake Mycoskie took Winter BreeAnne Minisee, 17, on a US tour to support the prevention of gun violence, leveraging her influence as the organizer of the National School Walkout. The *Teen Vogue* 21 Under 21 Class of 2018 member also runs an organization for black youth representation called Black is Lit.

What gen Zers all have in common is an intuitive relationship with social platforms and digital tools that are continuously evolving. Gen Zers are overwhelmingly embracing new digital tools and features from platforms like Snapchat, but many also recognize the need to take a break from the internet's immersive influence and wield the creative power of the analogue and IRL.

Snapchat has partnered with JWT Intelligence to explore this new generation of leaders. With their fluid relationship with social media platforms, as well as their budding reach in brand campaigns, culture, and media, gen Z are redefining what brands and marketers may have thought they understood about identity, communication, and the future of creative talent.

"Gen Z are absolutely more creative, but it's more utilitarian than other generations."
Molly Logan, cofounder, Irregular Labs



2. Overview

Who are Gen Z?

They have grown up immersed in a digital-first society marked by severe shifts in economic, environmental and political circumstances.

They're the hyper-connected, highly opinionated generation, moved to activism as the internet and social media landscape has made them acutely conscious of and concerned about world events. Having lived in an era of overall progress when it comes to issues like marriage equality and body positivity, they're forging new territory in broader conversations about identity; this is the cohort of gender fluidity and inclusivity in all its forms.

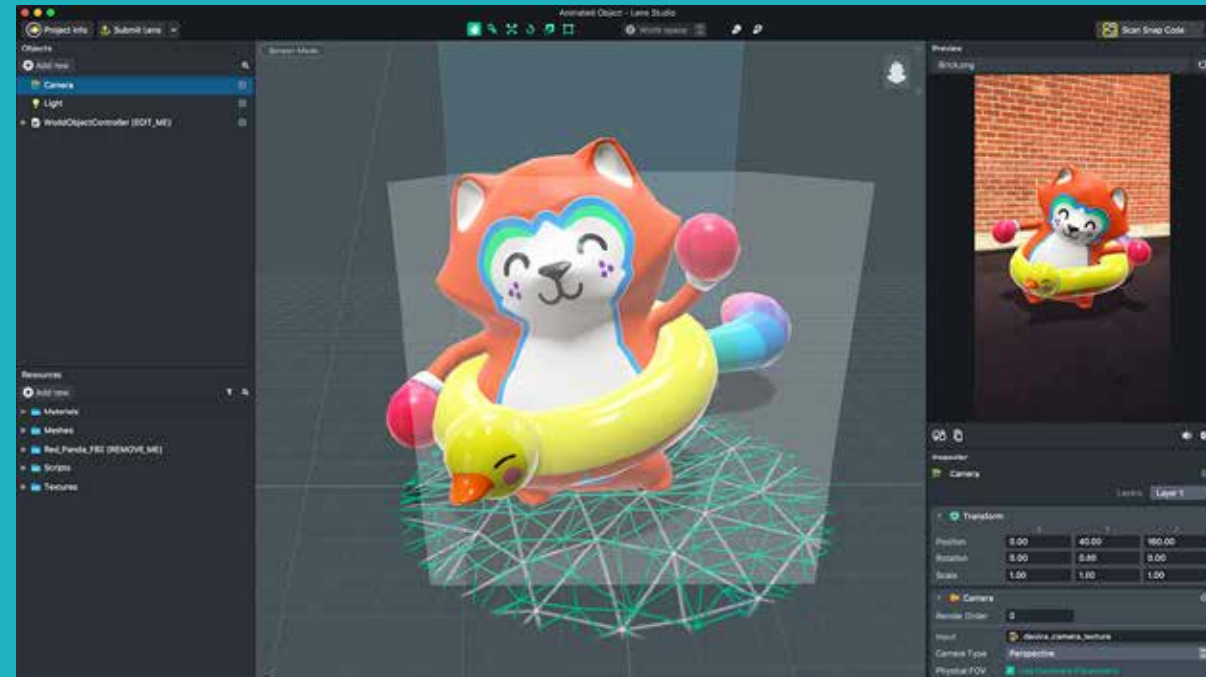
With these values in tow, many gen Zers, some of whom are already starting to enter the workforce, are leveraging social apps to build communities and creative endeavors that are intertwined with a passion for advocacy, art, or entrepreneurship. Many are earning money for their efforts, using platforms like mobile marketplace Depop to sell clothing and Snapchat's Lens Studio to build AR experiences for brands.

Worth noting, however, is that while 56% of JWT Intelligence survey respondents use social apps to express themselves creatively, only one-fifth say they are using social media to develop or create their brand. Nearly half (46%) are doing what they do because it's a passion, and most don't consider themselves to be a brand.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the fluidity of this generation. Gen Zers are not single-taskers. They are poets, visual artists, and musicians, using social channels and multiple mediums to create and manipulate their image and connect with others. As such, they live in a space of multiplicity, both in identities and craft—one

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Gen Z have a unique relationship with digital culture that manifests in how they use digital tools to create.



Snapchat Lens Studio

that's simultaneously an authentic representation. Nearly 60% of survey respondents say their output on social apps represents the real, everyday version of themselves.

Gen Z have a unique relationship with digital culture that manifests in how they use digital tools to create. They lean towards images over extensive text, for example. They like to layer hand-drawn illustrations over digital imagery. They combine influences from all corners of the world, and thus they are curators of the digital space, and montage it to create new things rather than making brand new things from scratch.

"With access to so much, both in terms of their exposure and visual sophistication, because they've had the ability to learn at a rate that nobody else could, they can see it all," Logan says, emphasizing that this has heavily influenced their relationship to creation. "Authorship is real but originality is something that's constantly shifting. And ownership—there is almost no ownership." It's almost, she says, like a temporary form of creation—"you make it your own and then somebody else can take it and make it their own, and so on. It's fan-fictioning everything."

Photography by Jude Valentin

**“There are no contradictions for gen Z,
it’s just all raw material.”**
Molly Logan, cofounder, Irregular Labs

No gif, meme or heart emoji is too silly or flippant to communicate gen Zers’ feelings, as long as it’s effective and efficient, Logan tells JWT Intelligence.

“You have to completely remove any sense of binaries or rules—there are no contradictions for gen Z, it’s just all raw material,” she explains. “They’re: This makes a lot of sense to communicate in that way, why wouldn’t I do that? Why wouldn’t I articulate something that may be very serious through certain tools and tactics that older people think should be reserved for something that’s between your friends or frivolous?”

All of this is being articulated partly thanks to gen Z’s hyper-intuitive and versatile relationship with technology. If appropriate tools for creative expression are not available within any given app, they’ll add them. In JWT Intelligence’s survey, 27% of respondents say they’ve hacked an app to do something that isn’t normally feasible, whether it’s using an editing tool to add in a collage or an audio app to layer in music.

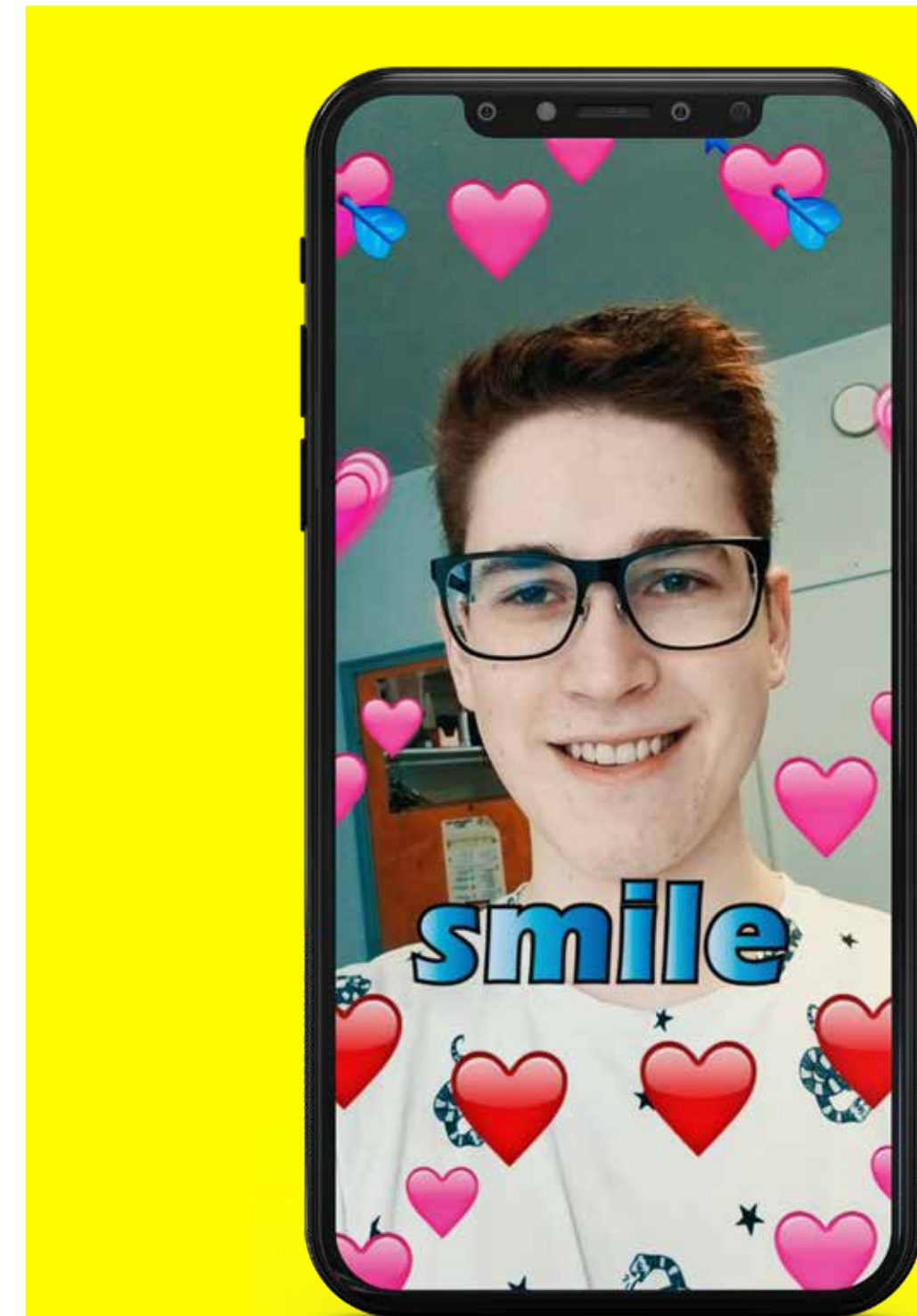
Snapchat and Gen Zers—The Original Gen Z Platform

“Everybody is a creator on Snapchat,” Benjamin Paruzynski, an official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator, tells JWT Intelligence. “They have the tools to draw and to add little stickers, and that creative freedom that isn’t allowed on other platforms is what really sets Snapchat apart.”

Snapchat reaches 90% of 13-24-year-olds in the United States,¹ and it’s easy to see why this generation has evolved with the platform since its inception in 2011. The app’s influence on gen Z is inherent in Snapchat’s design at the most basic level: it opens up directly to the camera. From vertical video to layering text with filtered selfies to creating AR experiences, this vertical camera provides an intuitive, creation-first tool that has been progressively integral in fostering the spirit of gen Z communication and self-expression.

“We give people the expectation, the means to always be creating,” Jeff Miller, global head of business marketing at Snap, tells JWT Intelligence. “The creativity that we’ve seen develop around gen Z has really manifested organically based on how they communicate with each other. They’re sharing messages this way, they’re

¹ Data from Snap Ads Manager as of April 19, 2019. Percentages calculated by dividing addressable reach by relevant census figures. Addressable reach and age data are subject to limitations. See businesshelp.snapchat.com/en-US/a/audience-size-tool for details.



Benjamin Paruzynski



Benjamin Paruzynski

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Jeff Miller, global head of business marketing, Snap

posting to their Story in this way, and it’s a very natural thing that they don’t have to go to an advertising school or develop a formal portfolio in terms of how they create—it’s something that’s intuitive to them.”

“Everyone really wants to express themselves, and Snapchat makes that easy to do,” Paruzynski says. “If you want to make something on YouTube, you have to download Premiere Pro or get expensive software and spend hours on it. But if you want to do something fun on your phone and not have to download a new app and send it to your friends, it’s super-easy.”

From its inception, Snapchat has inherently created a frictionless space where gen Z creatives can experiment with their identities, yet not have to feel like they’re “on brand” in communicating to their close friend groups. “A lot of the product philosophy around ephemerality is grounded by this notion that you can be whoever you want to be today, without a record of who you were yesterday,” says Amy Moussavi, global head of consumer insights at Snapchat. “We’ve seen this has unlocked an online community without judgment or social currency. This is reflected in how people feel when they use the app. For instance, a recent study found² 95% of Snapchatters say the app makes them happy, which was higher than any other app tested.”

As gen Z’s usage has evolved, so have Snapchat’s offerings, and it’s now a toolbox of intuitive new functions and features, from custom stickers and Lenses to Bitmoji games and short video series, curated from both influencers on the app and larger media companies.

In October 2018, Snapchat launched Snap Originals as part of its mobile short-form video programming, in the belief that “there’s no generation that better understands the behaviors of mobile and how to create for it than gen Z,” Vanessa Guthrie, director of programming at Snap Originals, tells JWT Intelligence. “We’re constantly learning from this generation to deliver innovative offerings.”

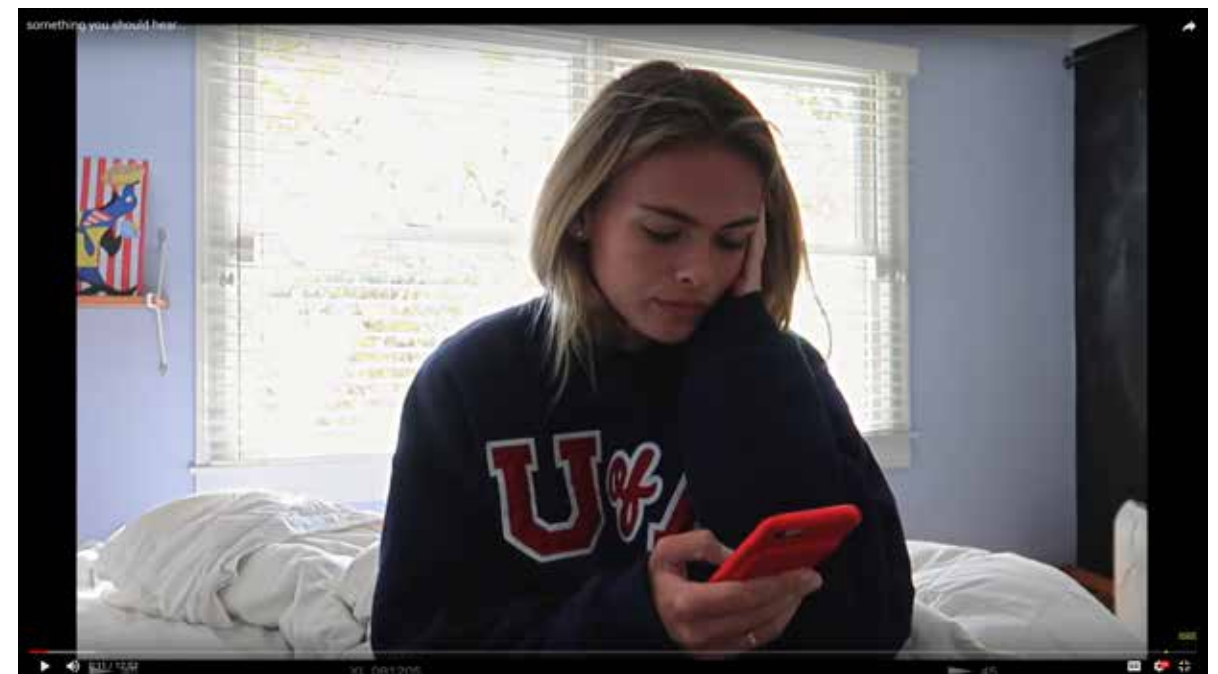
² 2018 Murphy Research study commissioned by Snap Inc

Guthrie's team works closely with influencers and talent "that really understands storytelling and authenticity" to feature in scripted programs or to inspire mini docuseries. In one series, "Growing Up is a Drag," Snapchatter Clawdeena shares a raw perspective of a teen redefining gender norms. In another docuseries, "Endless Summer," Summer Mckeen, a 20-year-old high-profile influencer and a YouTuber with over 2.3 million subscribers as of June 2019, gave audiences a look at her beachside life and teen dramas. *Vogue* called the series the *Laguna Beach* of 2018, referencing the popular 2004 show featuring Orange County's Lauren Conrad. The first series of "Endless Summer" was made with Mckeen's former boyfriend Dylan Jordan in 12 highly accessible episodes of around five minutes each. While Mckeen and Jordan have split, the second season of the show is set to launch in June 2019.

"Authenticity—being yourself and living in the moment—is incredibly important in this generation. We see it every day with the content they submit to Our Stories," Guthrie says. "They have also grown up mobile-first and expect custom experiences tailored for their phones. This has informed so much of the way we tell stories ourselves on our platform—full screen vertical, quickly paced, highly visual, and personal."

Beyond mobile programming, Snapchat has expanded its platform to allow for more fluid, visually focused, and intuitive communication between friends, beyond messaging and streaming. For example, users now can game with each other on their phones—but in an alternative universe as their Bitmoji avatars.

"All of these feature additions were inspired by our core purpose: to contribute to human progress by empowering people to express themselves, live in the moment, learn about the world, and have fun together," Will Wu, head of Snap Games and director of product, tells JWT Intelligence. "We've been thrilled to see how quickly gen Z can adapt to our changes and we're excited to see how usage continues to change moving forward."



Summer Mckeen. Courtesy of YouTube

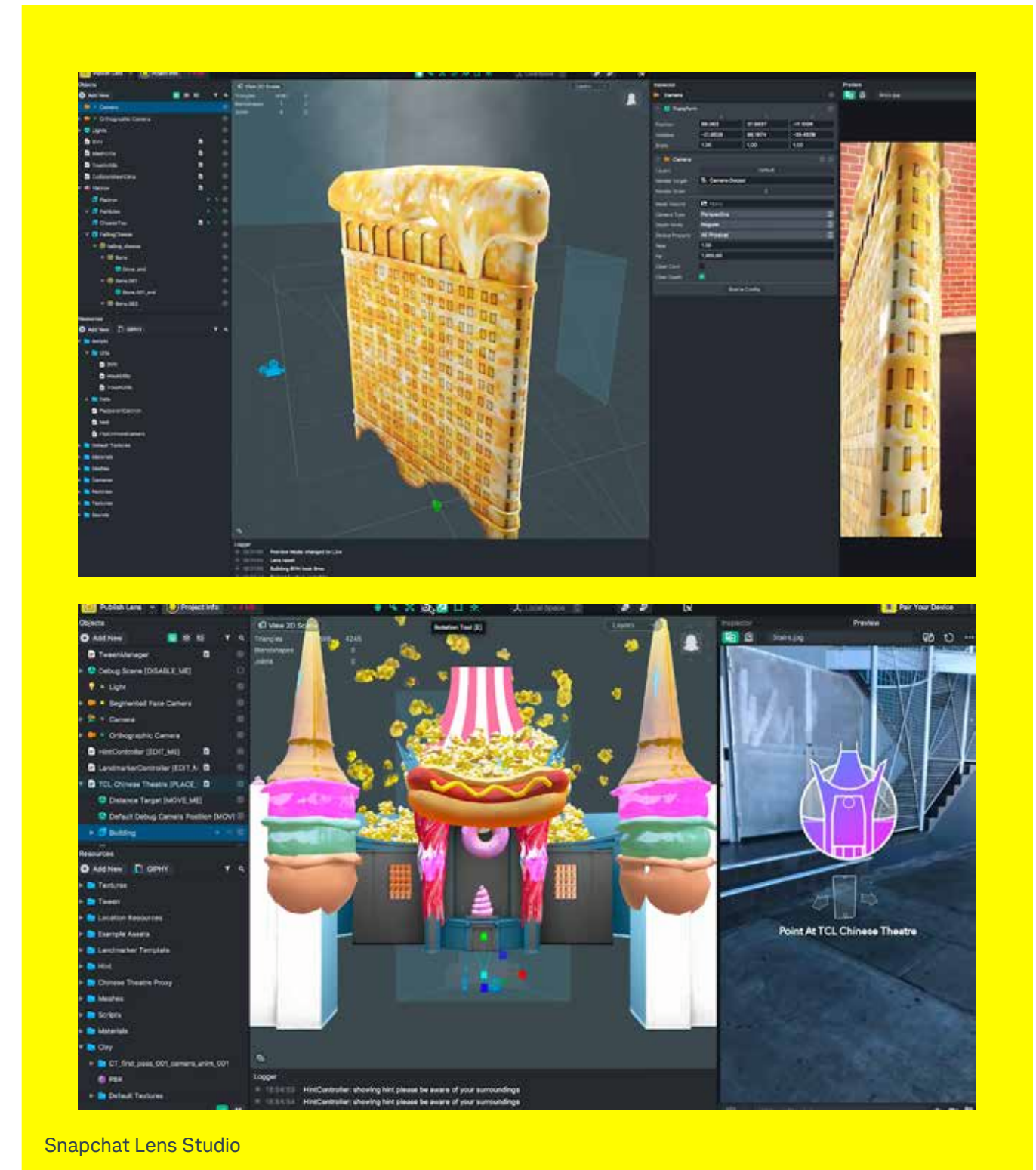
Lens Studio

One standout feature that significantly enriches the creative possibilities for Snapchat users is AR. Users don't have to spend long on the app before they can find someone who's casually live streaming in their car, using a Lens that transforms their face into a dog's head; or even distorting their face completely, like gen Z vlogger Emma Chamberlain. For a significant period of time, these Lenses were primarily built by the internal Snapchat team for Snapchatters to use around the world.

Then, in December 2017, Snapchat launched Lens Studio, a software tool the platform uses to create its AR lenses, as an open-source resource available to creators outside the internal team. This move made AR available to everyone in the world, including brands, agencies, and the broad Snapchat community. Lens Studio Creators have a range of skills, from basic 2D illustration to training and experience in 3D modeling.

Templates that make what was once a very difficult process extremely easy mean that Snapchatters can be building art in a matter of minutes, points out Miller. "And if you want to develop something that is more complex and higher fidelity or tells a deeper story, then you have the same ability to do that. If you're an external agency or a teenager living with your parents, you have the same tools available to you."

"That was what really developed a structured momentum around the sense of creativity," he adds. "We essentially gave them the tools to develop an incredibly expressive visual means of communicating with their friends, and also the ability to



Snapchat Lens Studio



Snapchat Lens Studio



Snapchat Lens Studio

work with brands in such a way that they're leading the forefront on augmented reality, often times inspiring our own internal team."

Around the Lens Studio software, the company has built a core group of official creators and influencers who disseminate their creative talents to the greater community. Paruzynski, one such creator, devises AR Lenses for musicians, to help them drive awareness for album launches. However, much of his Lens portfolio is done for fun because, he tells JWT Intelligence, he loves making people happy.

To date, around 400,000 community Lenses have been created, Miller says, and they've been downloaded and used by the Snapchat userbase around 15 billion times. "That gives you a sense of the scale," he notes. "When we talk about the gen Z creative, it goes beyond a traditional 'creator' who is trying to push a product or taking the perfect shot at that landscape. It's not about the projection of the world they're trying to convey. It's about them, focused on how they organically do something they might feel is a little more raw, and feels truer to who they really are—and on Snapchat, that starts with the camera."

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3.

**Key creative
themes for gen z**

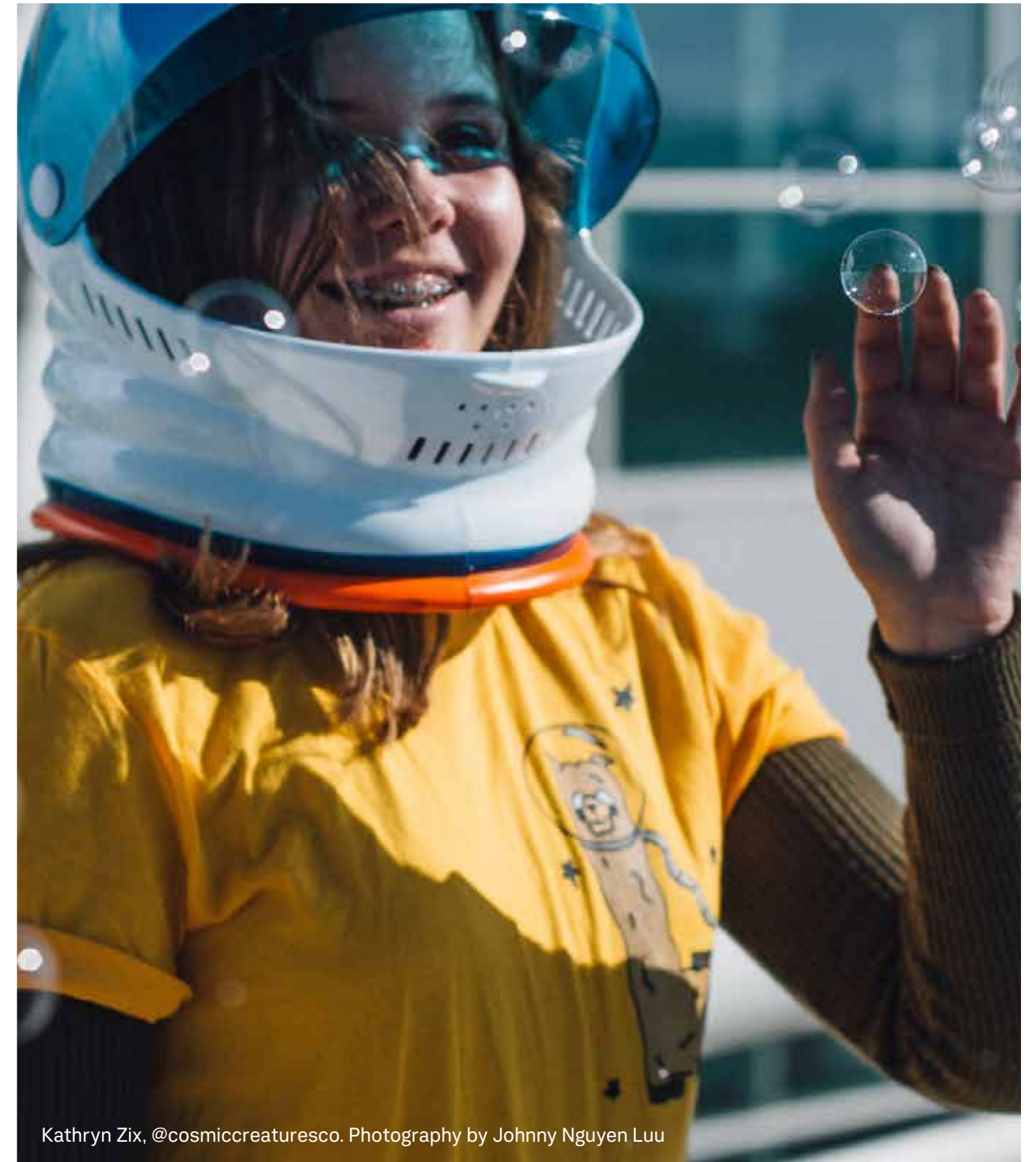
Craft and Digital

High-schooler Kathryn Zix is hyper-digital, and that has turned into entrepreneurial fuel for her offline obsession: doodling in biology class. Zix recently launched an online shop, Cosmic Creatures, where she sells T-shirts bearing her illustrations of ghosts, aliens, and cosmic fish. The California-based creator also makes time between classes and exams for film photography, her first passion, while contributing to publications for young creatives Lithium Magazine and Aspirants.

Like Zix, Naima Dolly is a creative offline and uses her talent to engage and communicate with a digital-native community. The Michigan-based transgender artist makes figurines and paintings, the latter paired with poetry in her online portfolio. Much of her work is aimed at raising awareness of LGBTQ issues, with one recent piece depicting the rising teen transgender disabled model Aaron Philip.

Bay Area-based Olivya Nora is known as a Vietnamese beauty blogger with a YouTube channel and bold looks—she also uses her Instagram platform to sell illustrated stickers and take commissions. Another gen Z creator, Xoe Arabella, 20, uses social apps to share her whimsical watercolor illustrations, along with a link to purchase on Depop. The artist is dating trans 20-year-old Theodore Zane, who uses his social platforms to share his personal transitioning journey.

On TikTok, 2018 Shorty Award nominee Alicja Mocek animates hand-drawn paper cut-outs to create stop motion video to pair with music, doing occasional custom work for brands and even books she's reading.



Kathryn Zix, @cosmiccreaturesco. Photography by Johnny Nguyen Luu

Gen Z Super Creatives are combining the digital landscape with craft and handmade aesthetics in inventive ways.



Olivya Nora



Curating Creatives

While the crafters create from scratch, a tribe of teens and early 20-somethings are taking it upon themselves to curate work by their gen Z peers in order to buoy representation from their generation in digital spaces, as well as print. Their influences come from around the world and a variety of social causes and mediums.

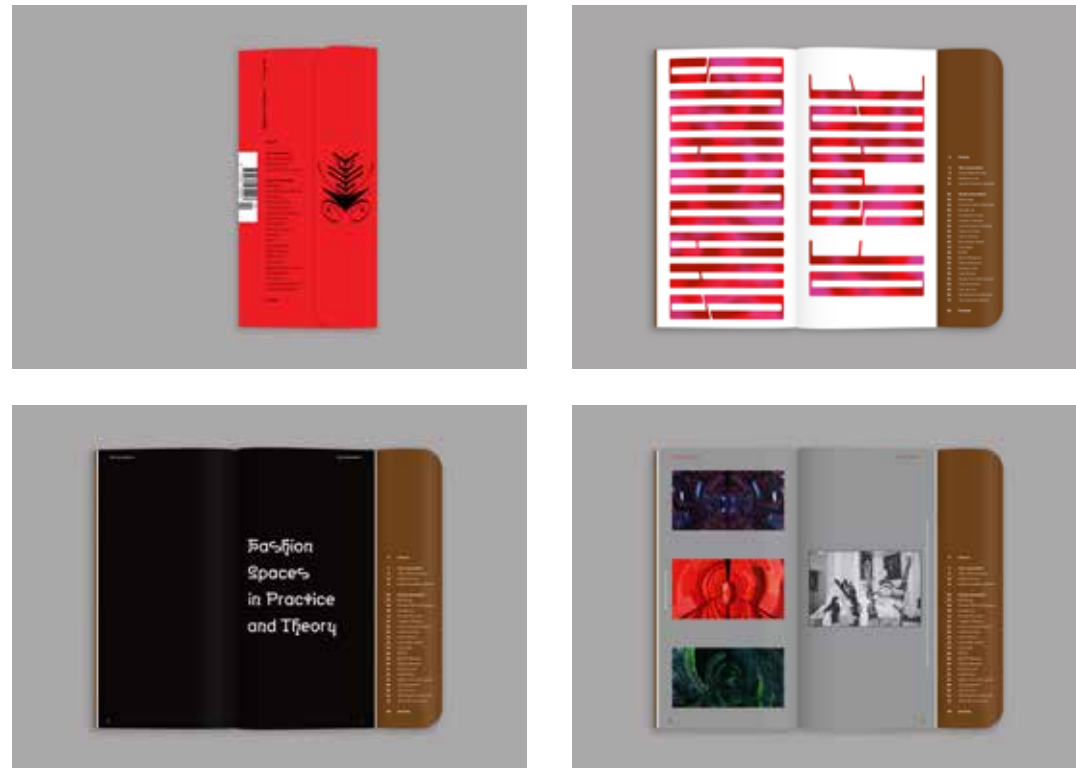
Los Angeles-based Remi Riordan, 19, brings young musicians, illustrators, poets, and activists together in *Crybaby*, a zine she founded when she was a high school sophomore. She uses online social platforms as a tool to engage and crowdsource submissions from fellow teens that explore queer and femme issues.

Riordan's personal feed harnesses digital tools to communicate rawness and authenticity. With photos and video featuring the lo-fi, unedited quality that resonates with the nostalgic gen Zers, it's no surprise that she maintains a print publication in a digital-first world. "I've just always loved print publications," she told Irregular Labs. "I like to hold something in my hand and read it."

In a similar vein, 20-year-old Norwegian-born Elise By Olsen created *Wallet*, a pocket-sized fashion magazine that features Q&As with industry stalwarts from Adrian Joffe of *Comme des Garçons* to *Dazed* magazine's Jefferson Hack. *Wallet*, Olsen's second magazine, was inspired by the need to create a "fashion-criticism publication" that is authentic and unaffected by commercial and financial interests.

Photography by Lars Brønseth





Olsen told *Vogue* that it is also a step away from the digital-native, immersive social media landscape that defines her generation. "I thought we are being exposed to so much online, so many visuals every single day, to have a critical filter was important," she said.

On Snapchat, Florida-based gen Zer Blake Burford, an official Lens Studio Creator, curates the trendiest brands of the moment to create Lenses. His work has proved popular with other Snapchat users and he often uses Photoshop and Google images to create the overlay filters.



Left: Issue 4 of *Wallet* by Elise By Olsen
Right: @crybabyzine by Remi Riordan

Mobile-first Storytellers

Gen Zers like Makenna Kelly, one of Teen Vogue's 21 Under 21 class of 2018, use mobile social tools to create new video landscapes and forms of entertainment. The 13-year-old behind "Life with MaK" wants to help her viewers de-stress with autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR), with most videos filmed on her phone in her bedroom. Kelly whispers, crumbles and taps on objects with manicured nails, and even crunches on a chocolate rendition of her iPhone—no swallow or slurp goes undetected.

Kelly tells JWT Intelligence that she wouldn't necessarily say her generation is "more creative" than previous ones. "We just have a much easier way to show it to the entire world!" She adds that it's "easier to get ideas and inspiration from others" with access to the internet.

On Snapchat, official Lens Studio Creator Meredith Binnette creates 2D and 3D animated experiences for the Snapchat community while studying at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work, ranging from a rising cartoon sun to a sprouting tree for Earth Day, also includes illustrations. While crafting tools for mobile storytelling is the main attraction, in April 2019 one of Binnette's popular animations, "Suspicious Cactus," was transformed into an IRL statue at the Snap Partner Summit.



Makenna Kelly

Ariel Martin, 18, better known as Baby Ariel, takes to TikTok with her catchy blend of lip syncing and hand motions unique to users of the app. Now the teen talent has a roster of her own hit singles, like “Gucci on My Body” and “I Heart You.” While music is her main focus, Baby Ariel uses Snapchat to interact with her fans and share snippets of her daily life. Martin told *LA Weekly* that the main demographic of subscribers to her platform is teen girls. “My goal has always been to be a big sister to them and to be as close to them as possible,” she said. “I want to share nothing but honesty and truth with them, and what I want to do is go online and share my real story.”

“We just have a much easier way to show our creativity to the entire world!”

Makenna Kelly, Teen Vogue 21 Under 21 class of 2018



Creative Activists

They have fun with emojis and memes, but gen Zers also use their creativity to highlight causes they care about: charities, campaigns, movements and more.

Deja Foxx, a member of *Teen Vogue*'s 21 Under 21 class of 2018, is one of a trio of young women who founded the Gen Z Girl Gang, a community with a mission "to redefine sisterhood for a new generation," she told *Refinery29*. "We do it by experimenting with social media as a community-building tool and inverting the typical top-down structure to instead center our audience as our content creators."

But the 19-year-old's list of credentials is longer than that: she's MAC's youngest ever Viva Glam ambassador, she helped launch a program to give access to reproductive healthcare to members of her community in Tucson, Arizona, and she is widely recognized for her face-off with an Arizona senator over Planned Parenthood funding when she was just 16. Now at Columbia University in New York, Foxx uses her platform to post news about her latest projects, from speaking events to campaigning with *Dosomething.org*, as well as coaching and inspiring other teens into action by staying relatable.

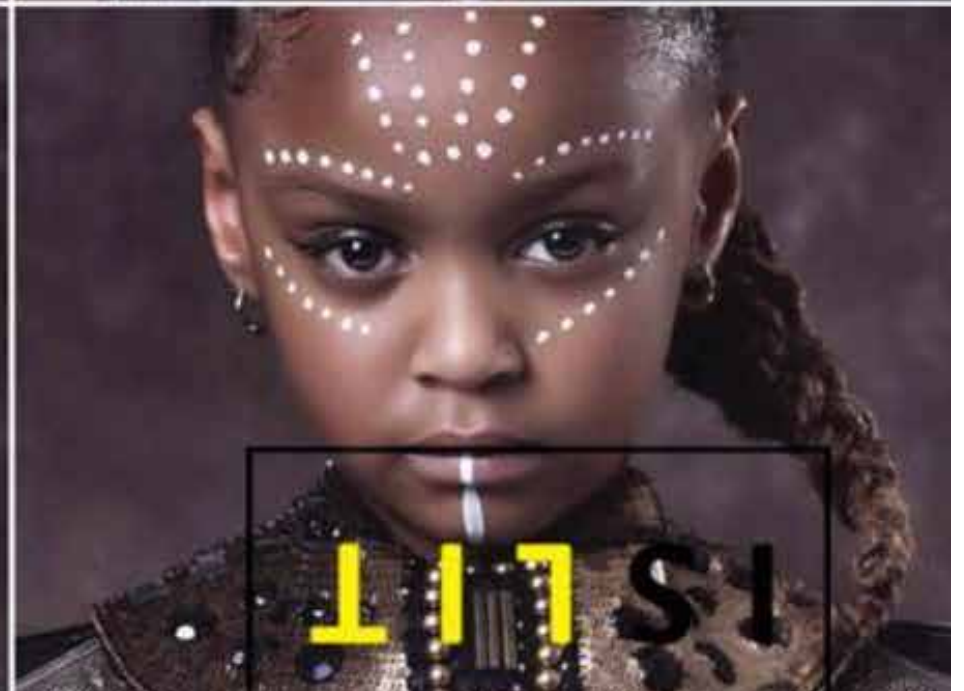
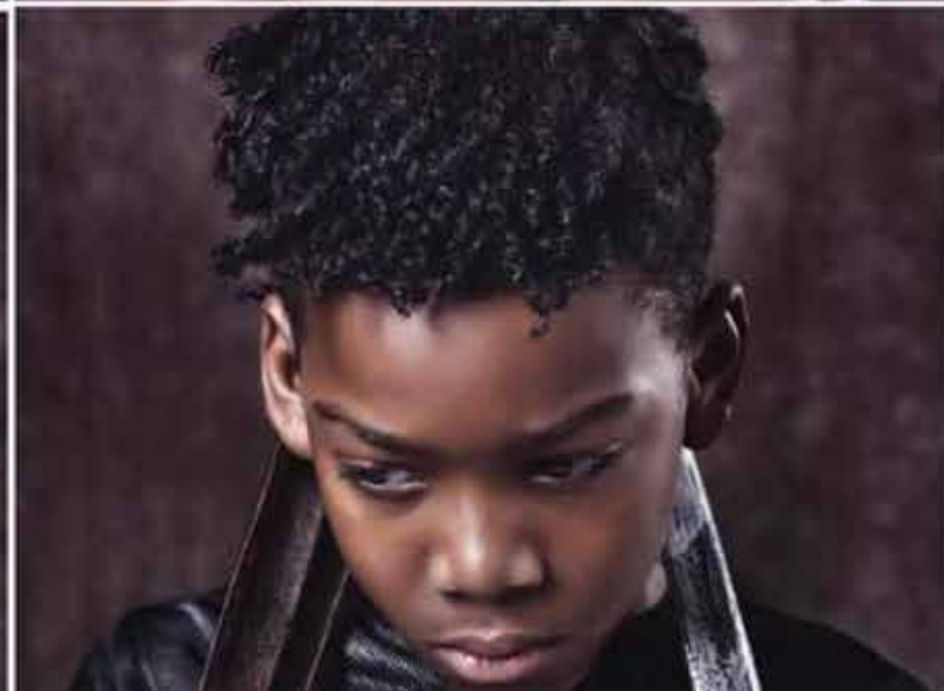
Winter BreeAnne Minisee, another member of the *Teen Vogue* 21 Under 21 class of 2018, created the online community *Black is Lit*, set for an official relaunch in June 2019, to create more black representation on the platform—it was also harnessed as a podium for youth education around voting. On her own page, she promotes interviews where she speaks out against gun violence, and shows her



Gen Z Girl Gang launch party film by Deja Foxx



Black is Lit by Winter BreeAnne Minisee



"I never saw myself as an activist, I just saw myself as playing my part in shaping the world that I want to see for our future."

Winter BreeAnne Minisee, Teen Vogue 21 Under 21 class of 2018

support for Black Lives Matter and the Phenomenal Woman campaign. All of this led to her latest role as the youth ambassador for Toms shoes, where she did a cross-country tour with Toms founder Blake Mycoskie to campaign for background checks for gun owners.

"I never saw myself as an activist, I just saw myself as playing my part in shaping the world that I want to see for our future," she told *Teen Vogue*. "Young people should have a say in our future and to some that looks like activism. [Activism] is literally just voicing your opinions, or if you can't voice your opinions, using whatever gifts and talents you have to add to society and add to the world."

In a slightly different vein, 21-year-old Demetrius Harmon is harnessing his early fame as comedian MeechOnMars on Vine and his struggles with



Winter BreeAnne Minisee supports the Phenomenal Woman campaign



Vonny Lorde

Demetrius Harmon's scope spans mental health, self love and LGBTQ rights, all delivered through poetry, vlogs and snippets of his personal life.

depression and suicidal thoughts to promote social causes through his social apps. His scope spans mental health, self love and LGBTQ rights, all delivered through poetry, vlogs and snippets of his personal life. He also debuted his own line of hoodies to fuel his message, each bearing the phrase "You Matter" emblazoned on the front, with "I Feel Weak, But I Know I'm Strong" stitched on the inner wrists.

This all works both ways; brands and media organizations are inspiring gen Zers with creative takes on social and political causes that mesh with their communication style. For example, in September 2017, *Refinery29's* third edition of its immersive, interactive 29Rooms museum included a neon-filled installation from Planned Parenthood and an illustrative take on the Women's March. The latter room, which featured posters by artist Shepard Fairey and allowed visitors to mail postcards to their government representatives, was designed to "turn activism into art," according to Albie Alexander Hueston, *Refinery29's* creative director of experiential.

Hyper-fluid

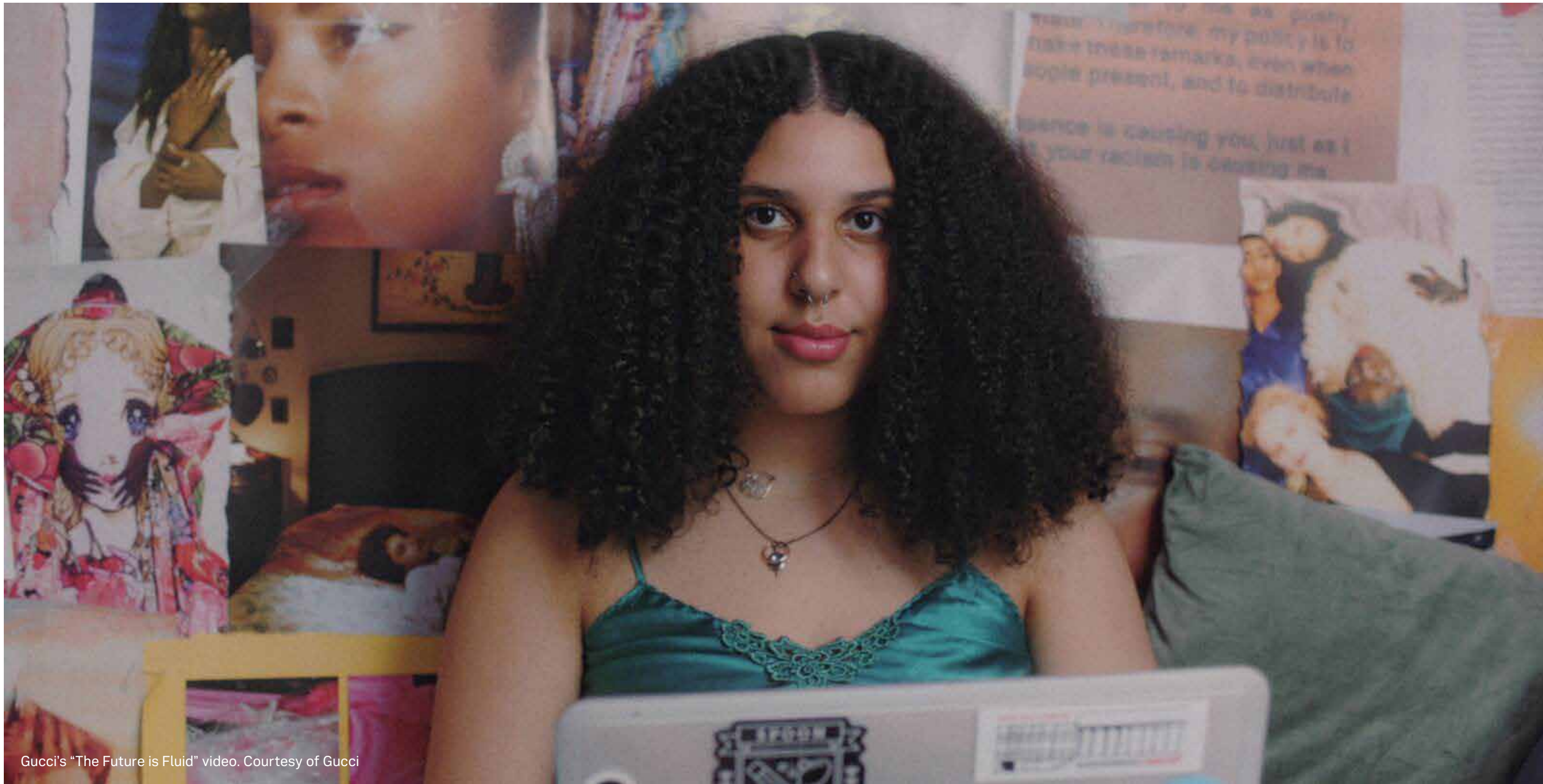
Digital platforms are creating a space where gen Zers can play with gender, beauty norms, and self-expression. While the likes of James Charles were making waves in online beauty circles in the United States and inspiring countless micro-influencers to challenge beauty standards and gender norms online, in London, teenage YouTuber Lewys Ball became Rimmel's first male spokesperson in 2017.

Ball creates short videos, including a "Working with Lewys" series that debuted in late 2018, for his diverse Snapchat fanbase. Most of the Shorty Awards finalist's posts center around makeup tutorials, transformations, and product reviews, including those from Sephora, Ulta Beauty and fellow celebrity beauty influencers. "Posting videos online has helped me find who I am as a person and bring out the best in my personality," Ball told the BBC in a 2018 interview. "For people who followed me when I was 14, I changed by the time I was 18 and people would be commenting, 'What happened to the old you?'—I'd grown up and everyone else had done it, except they hadn't done it online."

It's not just beauty—award-winning graphic novelist Tillie Walden blurs the rules of genre in her webcomic *On a Sunbeam*, a story about queer love that takes place in outer space, a setting normally reserved for science fiction (this version is filled with historical architecture and trees). London-based Singaporean dancer Chantel Foo stars in Gucci's "The Future is Fluid" video, created and produced by Irregular Labs, to express her support and curiosity for gender fluidity despite being a cis-gender female herself. "With traditional Chinese dance, there is a clear divide

Rimmel campaign with Lewys Ball

DEFINE
LIMPACT



Gucci's "The Future is Fluid" video. Courtesy of Gucci



Left: Chantel Foo
Right: Tyler Woodford, Snapchat Lens Studio Creator



with a female style and a male style. Growing up with that discipline made me learn what it is to be a female and these ideals," she says. "I'm really interested in the fluidity of set boundaries, and I've brought that into my dance."

Others, like official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator Tyler Woodford, use online tools to challenge gender norms and create new spaces for self-expression. The trans British teen started making sexuality-themed Lenses on Snapchat last year to help people better convey their identities online (see Wordplay below for more). "I find that Snapchat is a bigger community of people who are accepting and forward-thinking," Woodford tells JWT Intelligence. "I get a lot of messages from people saying, 'Thank you for your work, could you do this, perhaps, because it would help me present myself to my online following?' and it's an honor to be able to actually see the effects of my work around other people."

“Posting videos online has helped me find who I am as a person and bring out the best in my personality.”
Lewys Ball, beauty blogger

Digital Influence

What shapes the visual codes of gen Zers? Influenced by everything from gaming culture to music to memes to just plain fun, members of this generation are unafraid to alter their images online to create new characters and avatars.

Gaming culture occasionally inspires Olivya Nora's work—one recent makeup tutorial borrowed ideas from popular team-based shooter game Overwatch.

If there is one gen Zer who best represents the uninhibited distortion of self-image on social media—a far cry from the perfected selfies of the previous generation—it's California native Emma Chamberlain. The 18-year-old YouTube comedian is known for her goofy DIY vlogs, fashion taste and, most recently, a top-rated podcast called *Stupid Genius*. Her Instagram is filled with mostly polished posts showing off her cool sense of style, but when Chamberlain takes her interaction with fans to Snapchat, she rarely posts a photo or short video without using a Lens that completely distorts her face, giving her Grinch-like features. Her candid personality has made her a magnet for brand collaborations, including an invitation to Paris Fashion Week from Louis Vuitton.



Emma Chamberlain. Courtesy of YouTube

**What shapes the visual codes of gen Zers?
Influenced by everything from gaming culture to music to memes to just plain fun, members of this generation are unafraid to alter their images online to create new characters and avatars.**



Fireworks



complements



Princess Nation

Gia on Snap



Julien van Dorland

Snapchat has provided a channel for everyday creators... to create Lenses and Filters that give them and the broader community other options for presenting their image.

In fact, Snapchat has provided a channel for everyday creators like Gia and Julien van Dorland to create Lenses and Filters that give them and the broader community other options for presenting their image to their followers. Gia, 16, uses YouTube and Instagram to post videos of herself singing and playing the guitar, while on Snapchat, her personality takes on another dimension. Here, she's an official Lens Studio Creator, making augmented reality halos of hearts and stars, some accompanied with phrases like "Sweet Like Cinnamon," and "Your Smile is Cute."

Julien van Dorland, an 18-year-old student from the Netherlands, started out making motion design videos on YouTube and dabbled in photography in school, all of which segued into his current status as an official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator with several billion views, as of June 2019. Last year, he created what would become his most popular Lens, a camera filter inspired by '80s retro film, and he also makes countless Lenses inspired by computer games and his love of lo-fi house music. "The retro Lenses give Snapchatters a different aesthetic," he tells JWT Intelligence. "It's the nostalgia that people are feeling at the moment—it's pretty interesting."

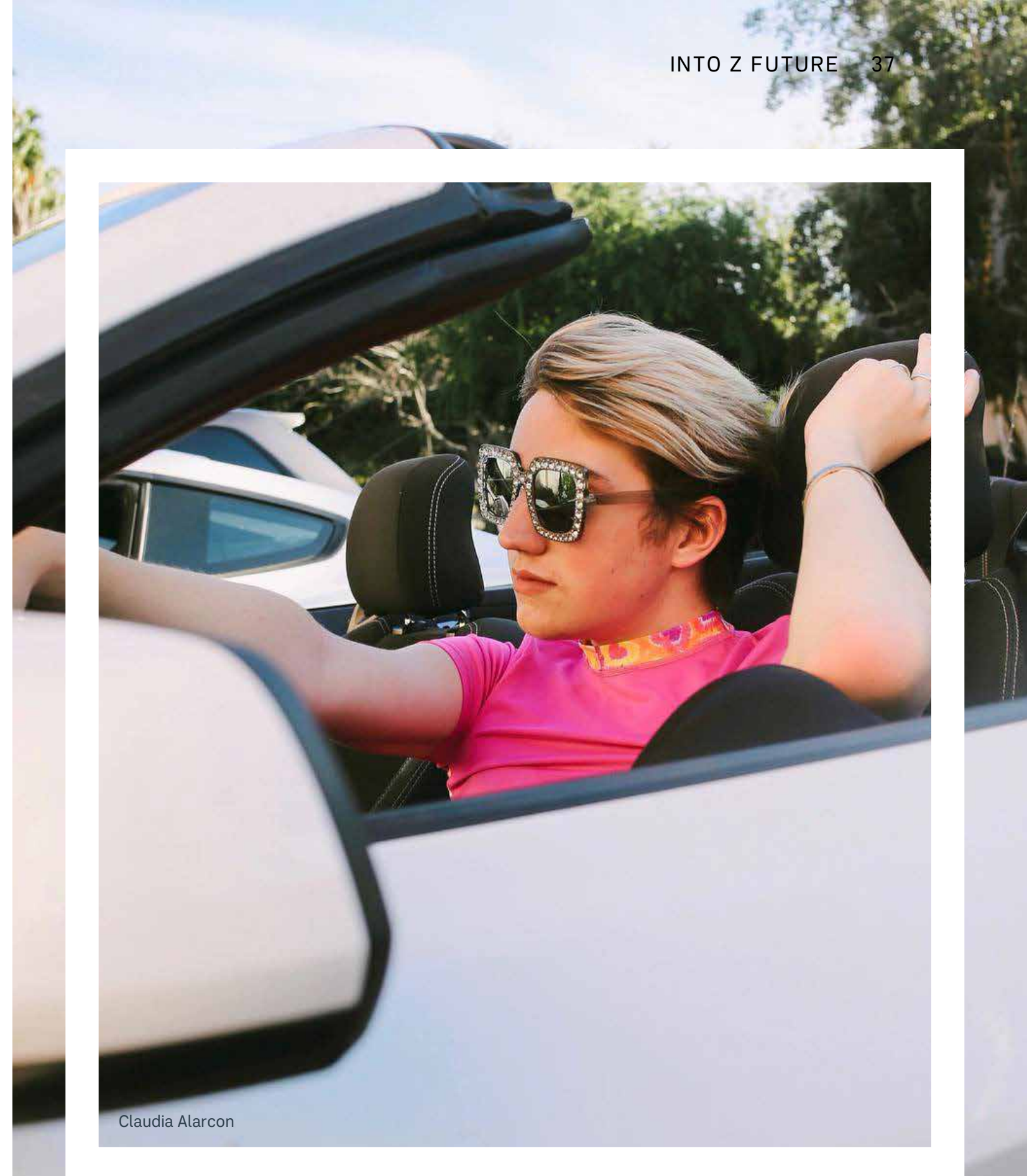
Slash//Slash Generation

With gen Z, creativity is not siloed, it is multichannel. Benjamin Paruzynski, 20, mashes music video creations for rising artists while crafting fun and catchy AR Lenses to put a smile on the faces of the broader Snapchat community (see more in Section 6).

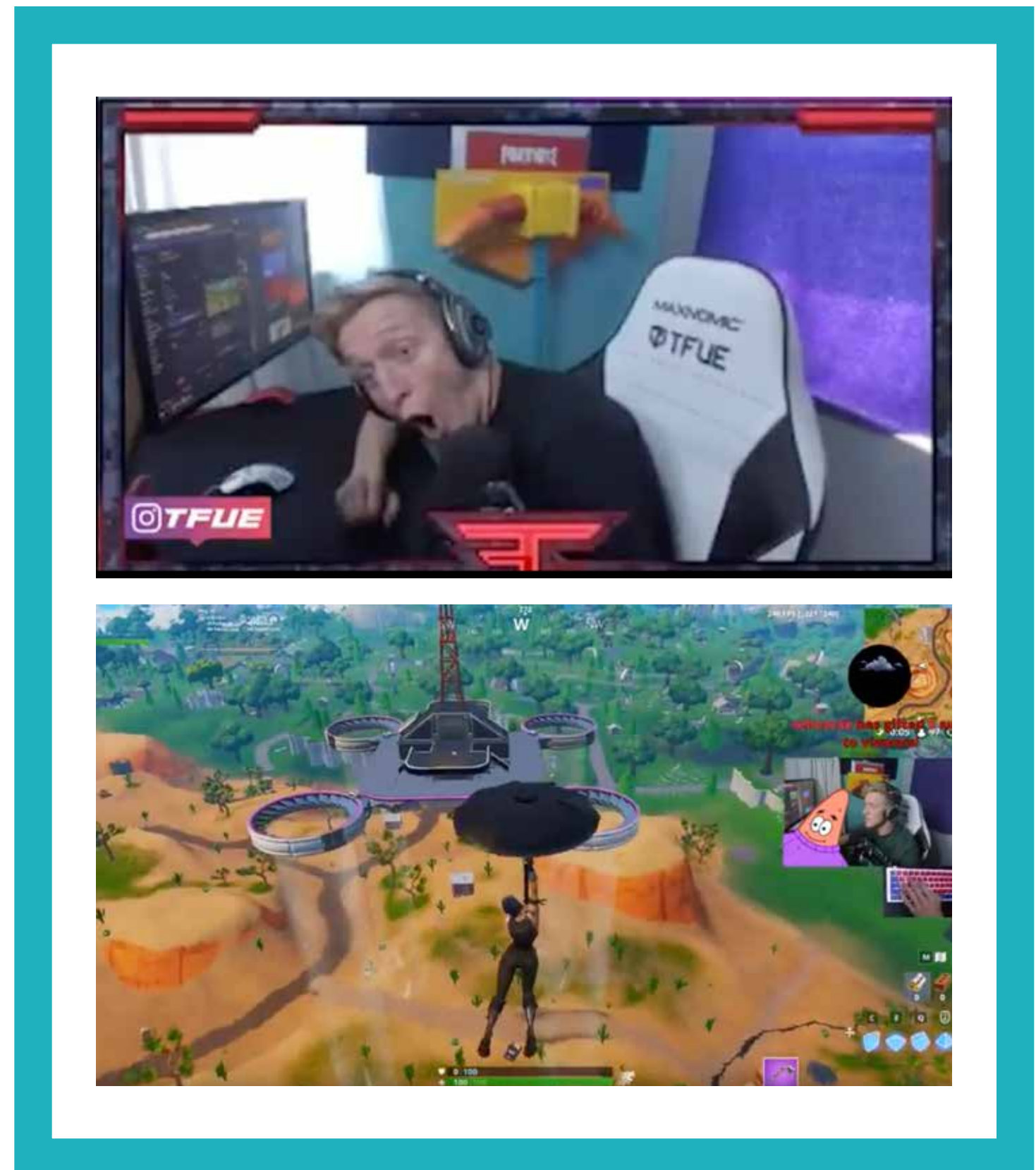
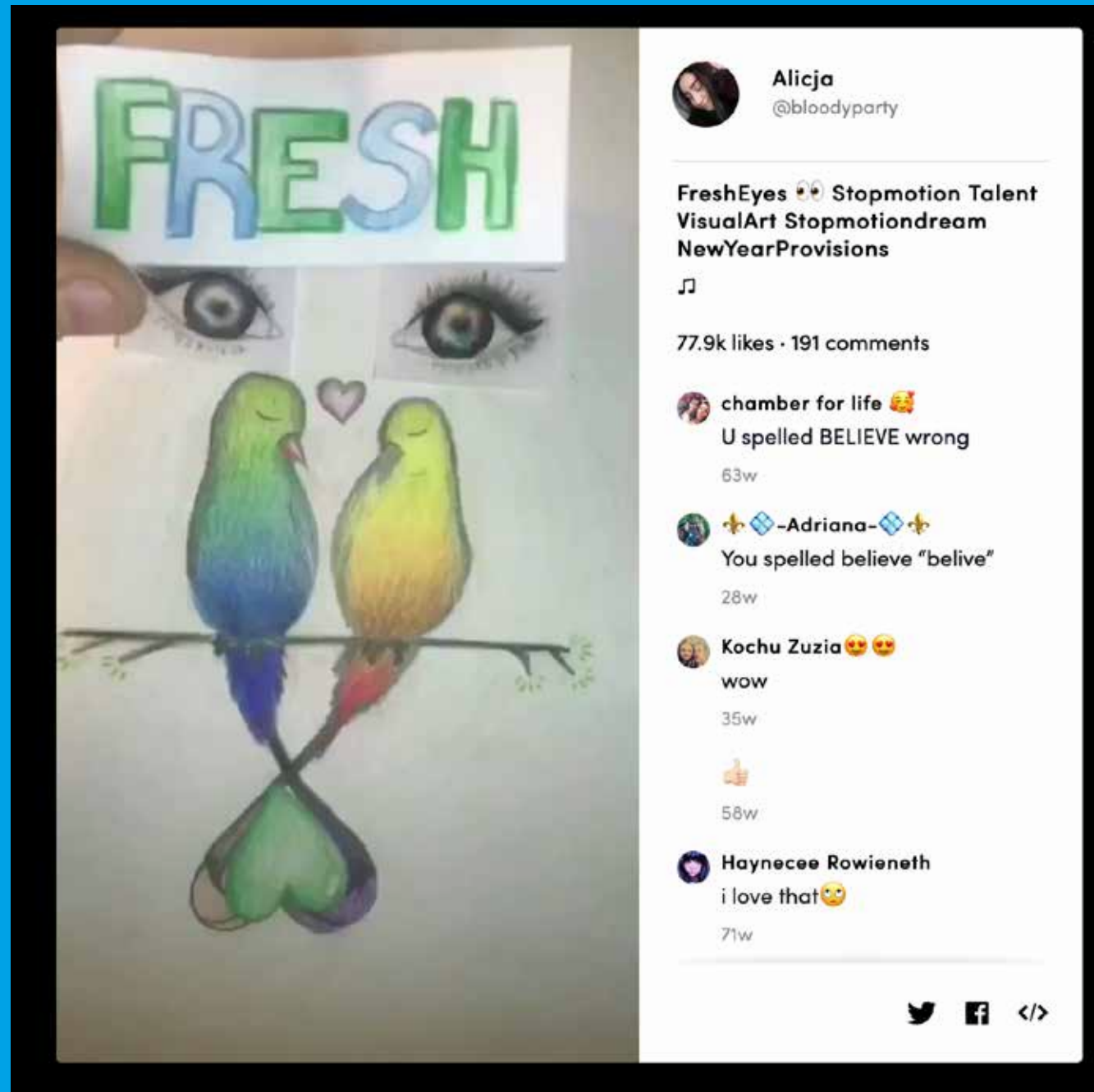
YouTuber Claudia Alarcon, 18, makes thrift haul, DIY, *mukbang* (eating in front of a camera) and high school vlog videos for her channel, which has nearly 11,000 subscribers (as of June 2019), while on her Instagram she posts a curated selection of her professional photographs, sprinkled with edited snippets of her life.

Even gamers (both professional and hobbyist) take time to explore other channels of creativity. Fortnite player Turner Tenney, better known to fellow gamers as Tfue, entertains nearly 11 million subscribers (as of June 2019) to his YouTube channel with vlogs of his life as a celebrity gamer. Enthusiastic gamer and LGBTQ influencer Theodore Zane posts snippets of his gameplay highlights from Twitch on his YouTube channel, interspersed with vlogs on life as a trans teen and Q&As themed around navigating gender dysphoria, sexuality, and relationships.

With gen Z, creativity is not siloed, it is multichannel.



Claudia Alarcon



Left: Alicja Mocek
Right: Turner Tenney

Creative Empires

Some gen Zers are finding ways to monetize their output before they've even graduated from university, whether it's through providing a Snapchat Lens creation service for brands and marketers, building a community on YouTube, or selling vintage wares on Depop.

A case in point is Scotland-based Stephanie Spook, who, like countless other teens, models her thrifted fashion finds in creative photography sessions on social apps, providing followers with links to purchase on Depop. Her online clothing boutique is her side hustle, enhanced with short makeup tutorials and selfies highlighting her bright pink and purple hair.

Paruzynski founded his company ChAR Digital to create a professional service for marketers who want to incorporate AR experiences for Snapchat users (see more in Case Studies). Likewise, Julien van Dorland (see above) launched his own website to show off his Lens creation services for local businesses in the Netherlands and even created his own Zoark brand logo.

**Stephanie
Spook's online
clothing boutique
is her side hustle,
enhanced with
short makeup
tutorials and
selfies.**

Word Play

Gen Zers love to experiment with word play and graphics—often inspired by text, emojis, and memes. Perhaps one of the most effective examples of this in 2019 so far is dance-emoji sensation Donté Colley, 22, who has gained the attention of brands like Glossier and celebrities like Leslie Jones for his ability to mash animated words, hashtags and emojis with dance moves to create uplifting and motivational Instagram videos.

The Toronto native's process is relatively straightforward, as he told *Fashion* magazine. "I take a song and I either take one video and I'm happy with it, or I'll take three to five different videos of the same thing. Once that's done, I kind of just throw it into my Premier Pro and my After Effects, and add all of the graphics in. I figure out the story as I'm editing it, 'cause that's how I make it fun for myself."

A new army of meme generators are using simple editing tools to create visual charts for the astrology-obsessed. One of the leaders of this trend is 22-year-old Jake Register, whose memes helped earn him a spot as a Sexoscopes writer for *Cosmopolitan*.

"I'm always on social media and if I see a funny image or gif that makes me laugh, my brain can usually look at it and twist it into some type of meme," Register tells JWT Intelligence. "I usually take the picture, tweet it with a caption, then screenshot it for my Insta, but sometimes when I'm feeling especially crafty, I'll

**"I figure out
the story as I'm
editing it, 'cause
that's how I make
it fun for myself."
Donté Colley,
dancer and
content creator**

Jake Register



use the Markup app that comes with all iPhones and do a little editing. A post takes me five minutes, tops, a lot of the time. I've never had to sit down and really work at making content for my page, luckily. My creative process tends to flow pretty easily."

Words are also used to send messages of social acceptance. Beauty buff and LGBTQ advocate Matt Bernstein combines makeup with temporary word tattoos on his skin to combat homophobia and toxic masculinity. In each of his photographs, Bernstein features a part of his body emblazoned with phrases like, "To love the part of yourself deemed shameful by others is a revolutionary thing," and "I'm tired of constructed ideals of masculinity making me feel inadequate." Most photos are paired with a rainbow flourish—a colored brow or a creative eyeliner. His brand collaborations include Glossier, Urban Outfitters and ColourPop.

Words have even helped LGBTQ members of the Snapchat community come out to their friends and family members, thanks to the work of British teen Tyler Woodford. The official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator studies graphic design, music technology, French, and media in high school, and started making Lenses for fun last year. "The first one was just a couple of emojis put on a transparent background. It was nothing, but loads of people started using it," Woodford tells JWT Intelligence.

Not long after this success, Woodford began to think about the power of creating expressions with text. "I sat there thinking, 'There are so many different things I could do with this,' and it means that people perhaps don't have to say anything in their photo because the Lens kind of says what they want it to say, and it's a fun thing," Woodford explains. "A couple of words can set the tone and say a whole backlog of things that mean a lot to you."

4.

Survey findings: the creative habits of gen Z



A new era of creativity is upon us.

Creative expression once meant producing an original work molded by one's imagination and the limitations of the physical experience. Now, gen Zers are evolving the definition, thanks to their digital intuition and limitless inspiration from the internet.

Most gen Zers have a penchant for traditional artistic hobbies such as painting, film, or playing an instrument—but online, these talents take on new forms. Taking cues from a world of online personalities and content, gen Zers are manipulating and altering creative works to generate memes, photo collages, filters, and more. What's more, they're harnessing social apps and digital creative tools to visually enhance the way they communicate, whether it's a casual note to their friends or a message of activism to their broader online community.

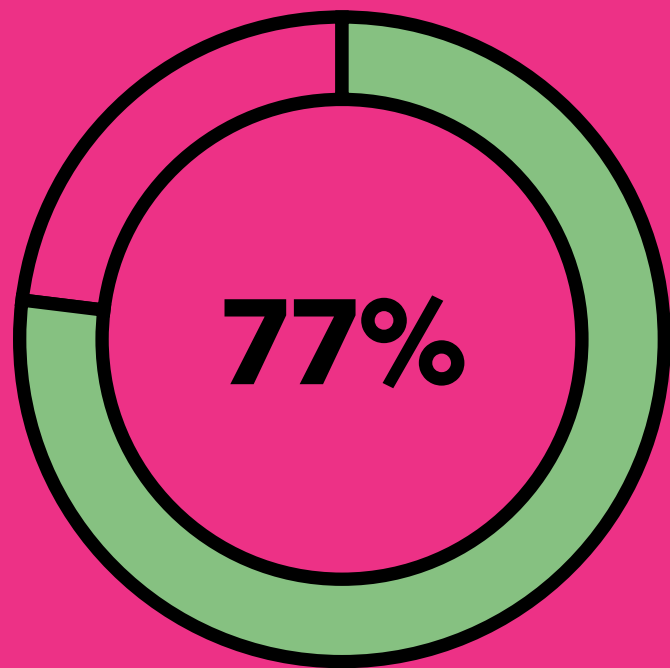
From May 2 to May 7, 2019, we surveyed 1,208 US and UK gen Zers who use their smartphone at least once a day, using SONAR™, JWT's proprietary online research unit, to find out how they're expressing their creativity both online and offline.

Here are the highlights:



**Gen Zers are
manipulating and
altering creative
works to generate
memes, photo
collages, filters,
and more.**

Over half (51%) of gen Z agree that their generation is more creative than previous generations

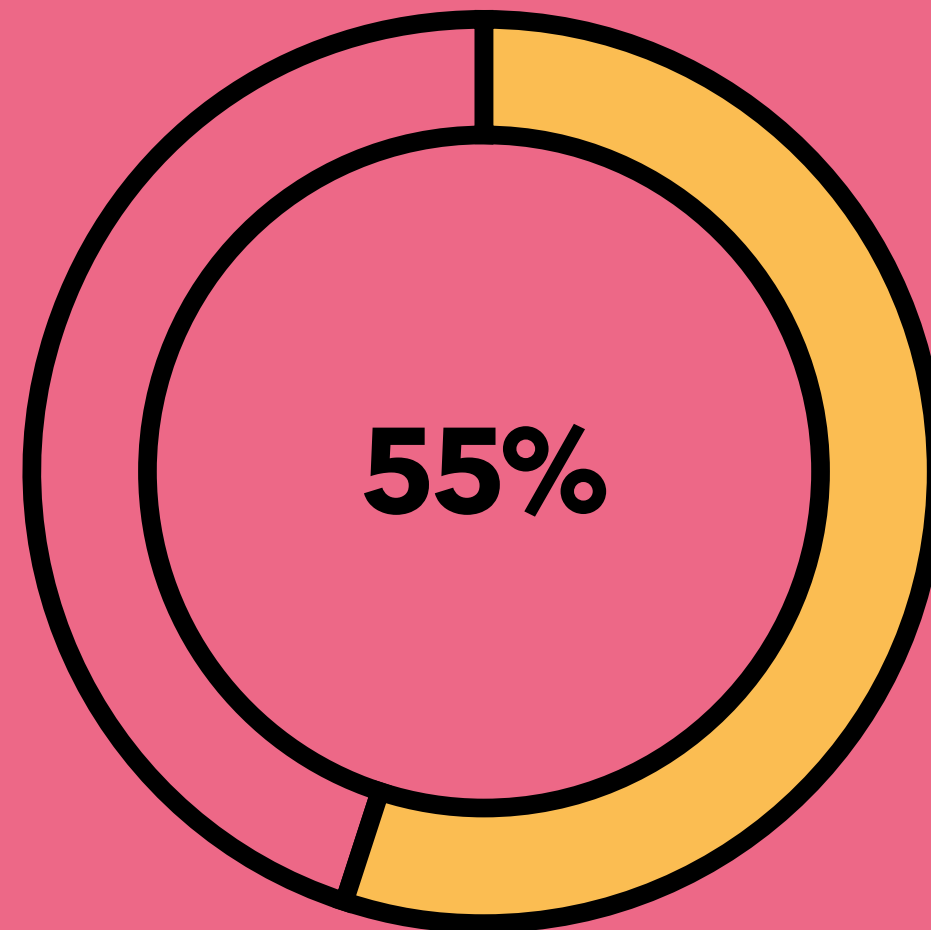


When asked how they spend their free time offline, over three in four (77%) of gen Z select at least one creative activity such as drawing, illustrating, journaling, or playing an instrument



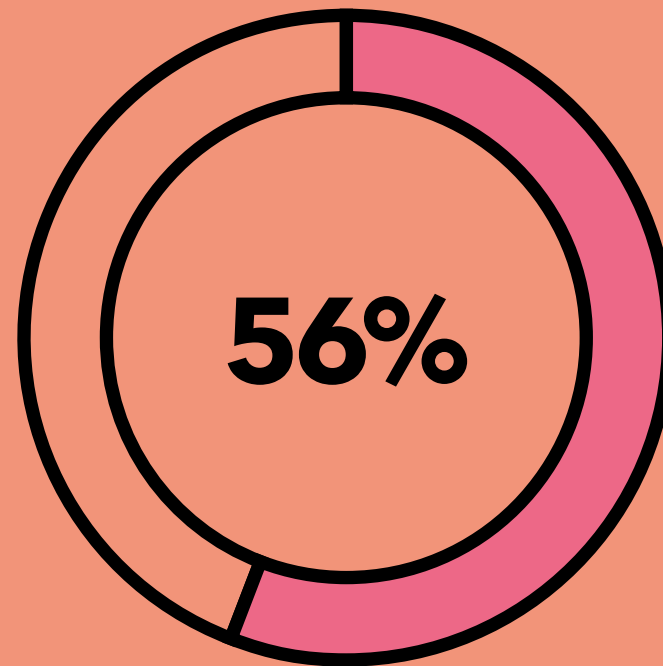
When asked how they spend their free time online, nearly half (48%) of gen Z select at least one creative activity such as editing photos, creating memes, or creating digital art

Over half of gen Z (55%) say that they find social apps and the internet a more creative space than what they experience offline

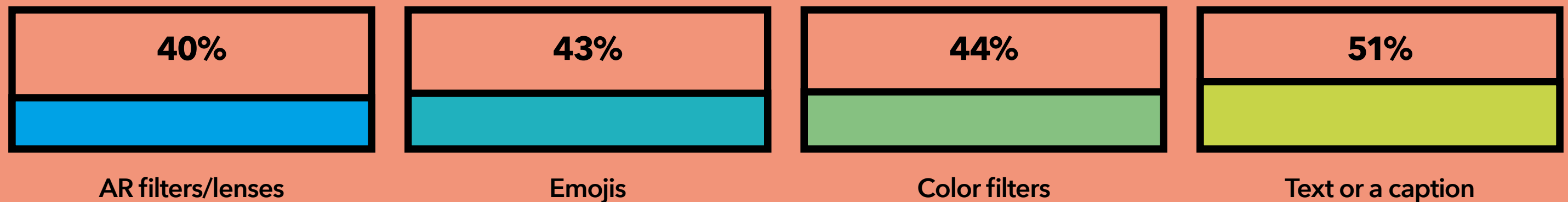


This speaks to a digitally influenced perception and experience of creativity, and perhaps to the fact that creativity for gen Z is more about manipulation/alteration than about observation/description/replication

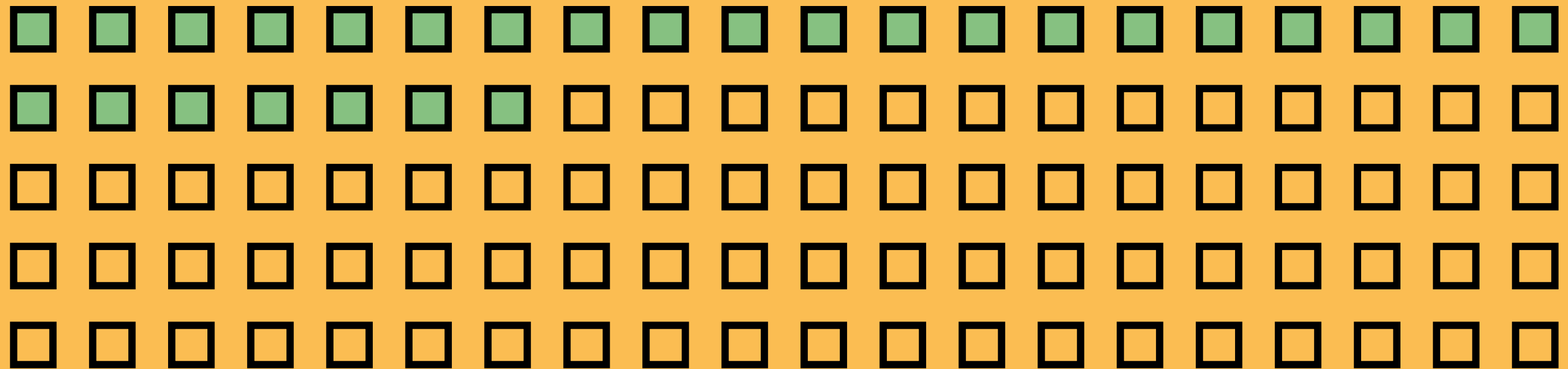
Over half (56%) of gen Z use social apps to express themselves creatively



Further, 40% of gen Z state that they've used AR filters/lenses to enhance a photo/video of themselves or with friends; 43% have enhanced with emojis, 44% with a color filter, and 51% with text or a caption



Over one in four (27%) of gen Z have hacked or adapted an app/website features to do something that isn't typically available (for example, used a picture collage app or an app to add music, separate from the app they were posting with)



**Among all apps cited (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, TikTok),
Snapchat was rated the top app among gen Z for:**



Creating videos or images



Sharing videos or images they've created



Communicating with friends



Sharing moments throughout their day



Posting what they're doing with their day (text, images, or video)

Asked about digital creative tools, gen Z ranks Snapchat creative tools top for creating art or editing photos, ahead of Instagram creative features, VSCO, Photoshop, and iMovie

Snapchat creative tools



Instagram creative features



Photoshop



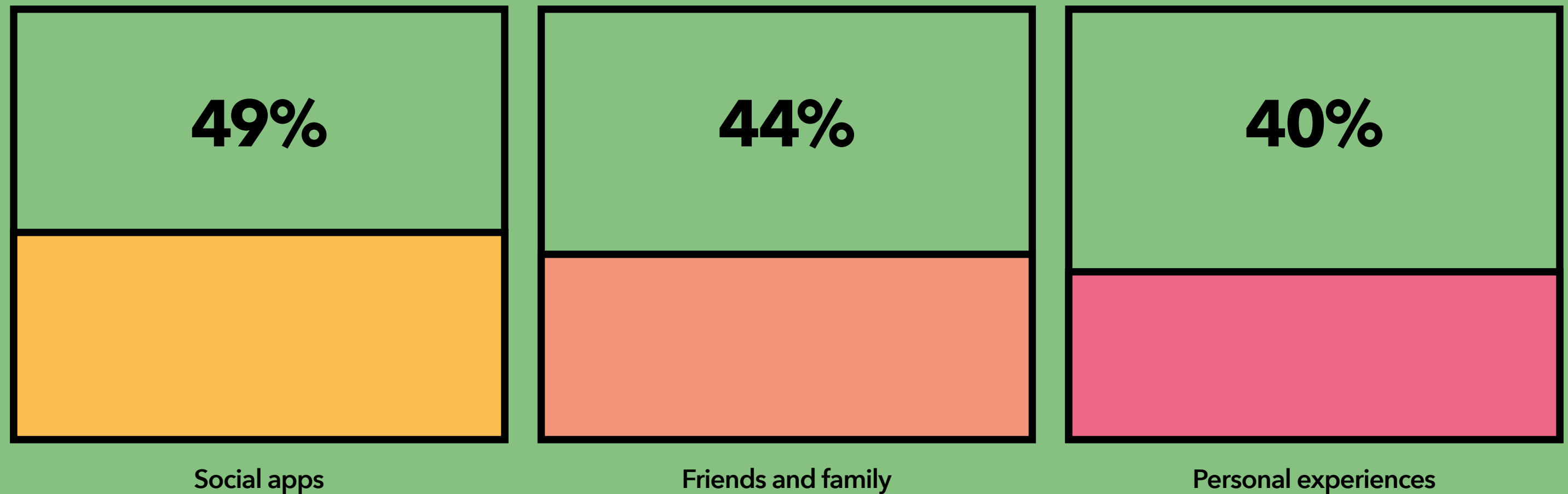
iMovie



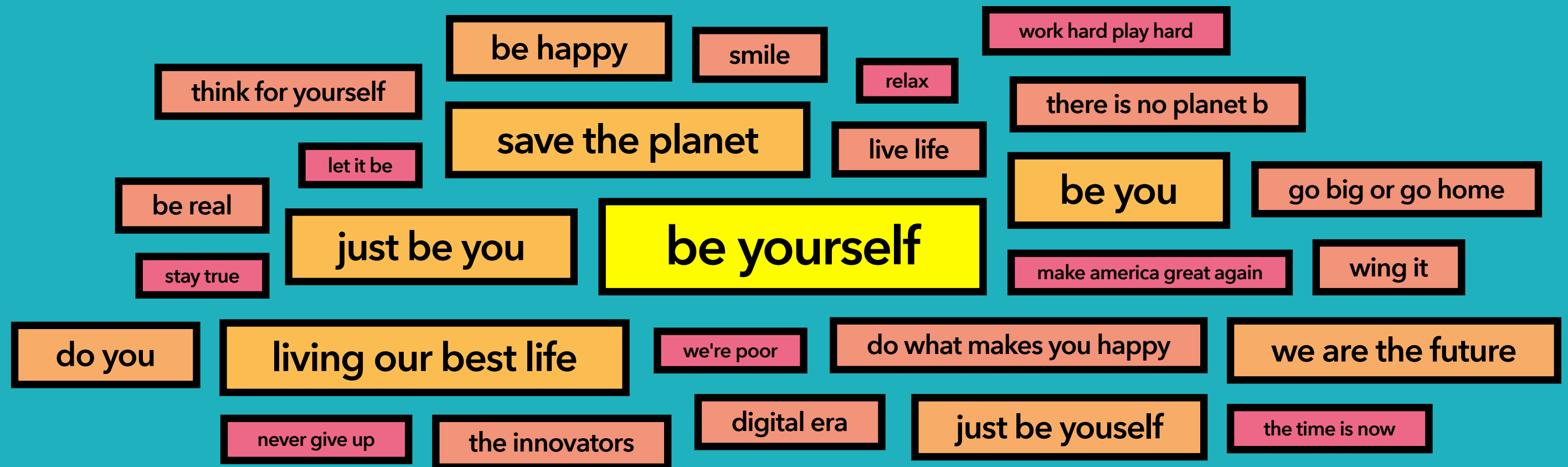
VSCO



Asked where they turn to for ideas and inspiration for online or offline creativity such as photos, blog posts, videos, memes and paintings, gen Z cite social apps, friends and family, and personal experiences as the top three areas for inspiration



Asked to develop a slogan for gen Z, 13-22-year-olds overwhelmingly suggest some variation on "be yourself" (e.g. "just be you," "just be yourself," "do what makes you happy") as the slogan for their generation. Second after variations on "be yourself" were slogans aimed at social responsibility such as "save the planet," "we want change," and "we are the future"





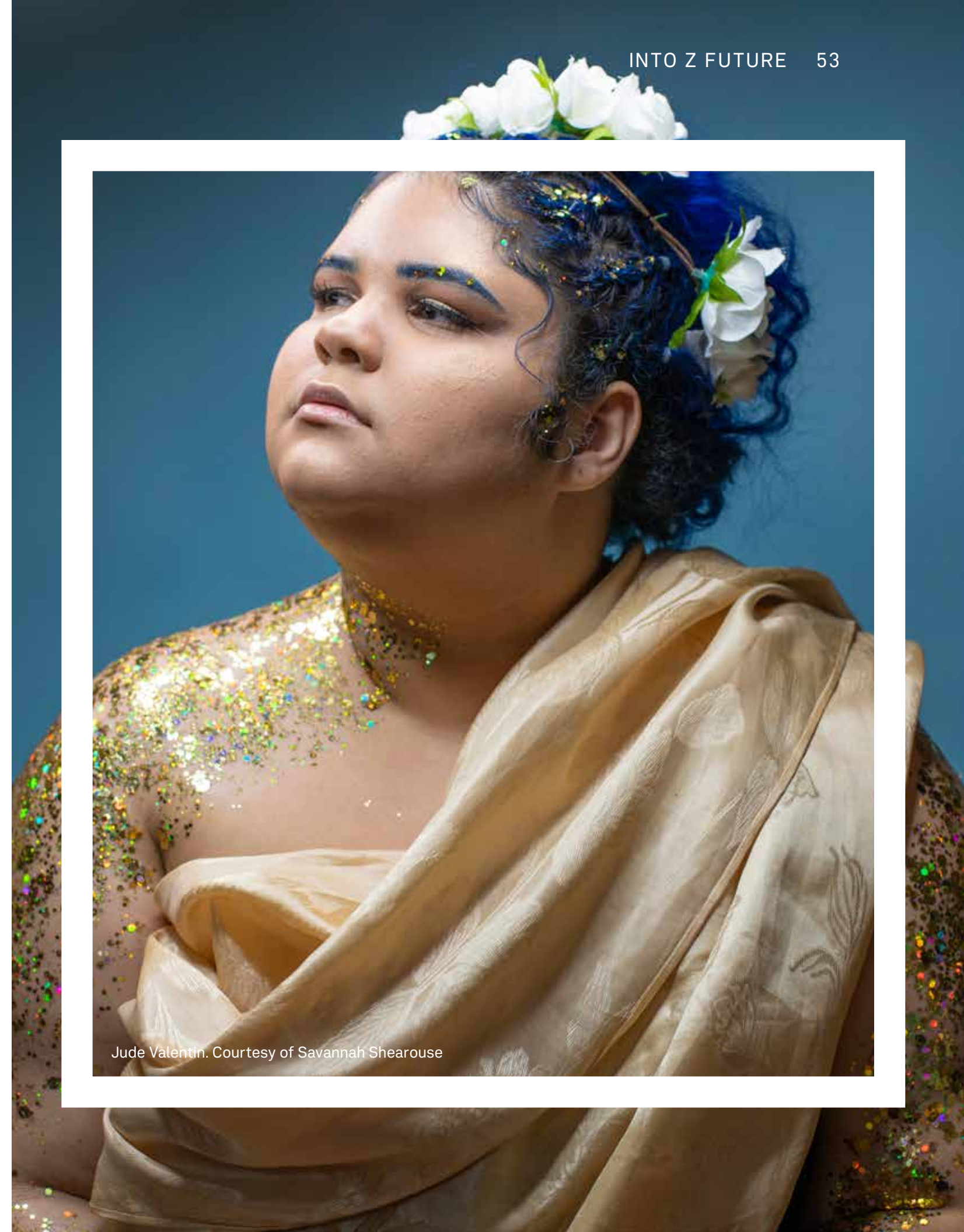
5.
**Meet five gen Z
Super Creatives**

1. Jude Valentin, founder, Mermaid Queen Jude

Jude Valentin is the 22-year-old Latinx YouTuber behind Mermaid Queen Jude, a channel where she promotes body positivity and self-acceptance. She is also a portrait photographer and sells her own merchandise, including shirts that read “my self love is an act of rebellion.”

Valentin credits social media and selfie culture with helping her gain more confidence in the online arena despite her struggles with self-image and identity. “Because I felt that I had such important things to say, I had to push through that discomfort of ‘I don’t really like the way that I sound’ or ‘I don’t really like the way that I look,’” she tells JWT Intelligence. “It was, well, you don’t have a choice. You can either not post, or post.”

For Valentin, each app on her smartphone serves a specific purpose. While YouTube is for her vlogs, Facebook is for “my college friends and family, and for me to catch up with them”; Twitter is where she is “a lot more open—my friends on Twitter are all creators as well”; Instagram is a place where she learns from the



Jude Valentin. Courtesy of Savannah Shearouse

This Woman Was Included In A "Cringe Compilation" And YouTube Won't Take It Down

These videos are designed to mock people, and they're getting millions of views.

Lauren Strapagiel
BuzzFeed News Reporter

Posted on May 1, 2019, at 3:14 p.m. ET

Tweet Share Copy



This Latina Fat Acceptance Activist Is Being Harassed After She Was Included In A 'Cringe Compilation' Without Her Consent



Instagram / @mermaidqueenjude

By **Raquel Reichard**
May 2, 2019 at 6:55 am

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"... for those of us that are creators, we are responsible for much more than ourselves."

body positivity and activist community, but "the thing that I love about Instagram is not everyone is expecting you to have all the knowledge." Finally, Snapchat is where "I just want to send my friends silly selfies that are not cute, and be myself, and let them know what's going on."

But it's not all just fun and games. One Mermaid Queen Jude video can take at least a day to film and edit, in addition to the work that goes into maintaining a presence in the online body-conscious community. "I think a lot of the time adults feel as though we're just twiddling around online and that it's not serious and that it's not stressful," she says. "But it's very stressful. It's hard because, especially for those of us that are creators, we are responsible for much more than ourselves. We are responsible for the people that are in our communities."

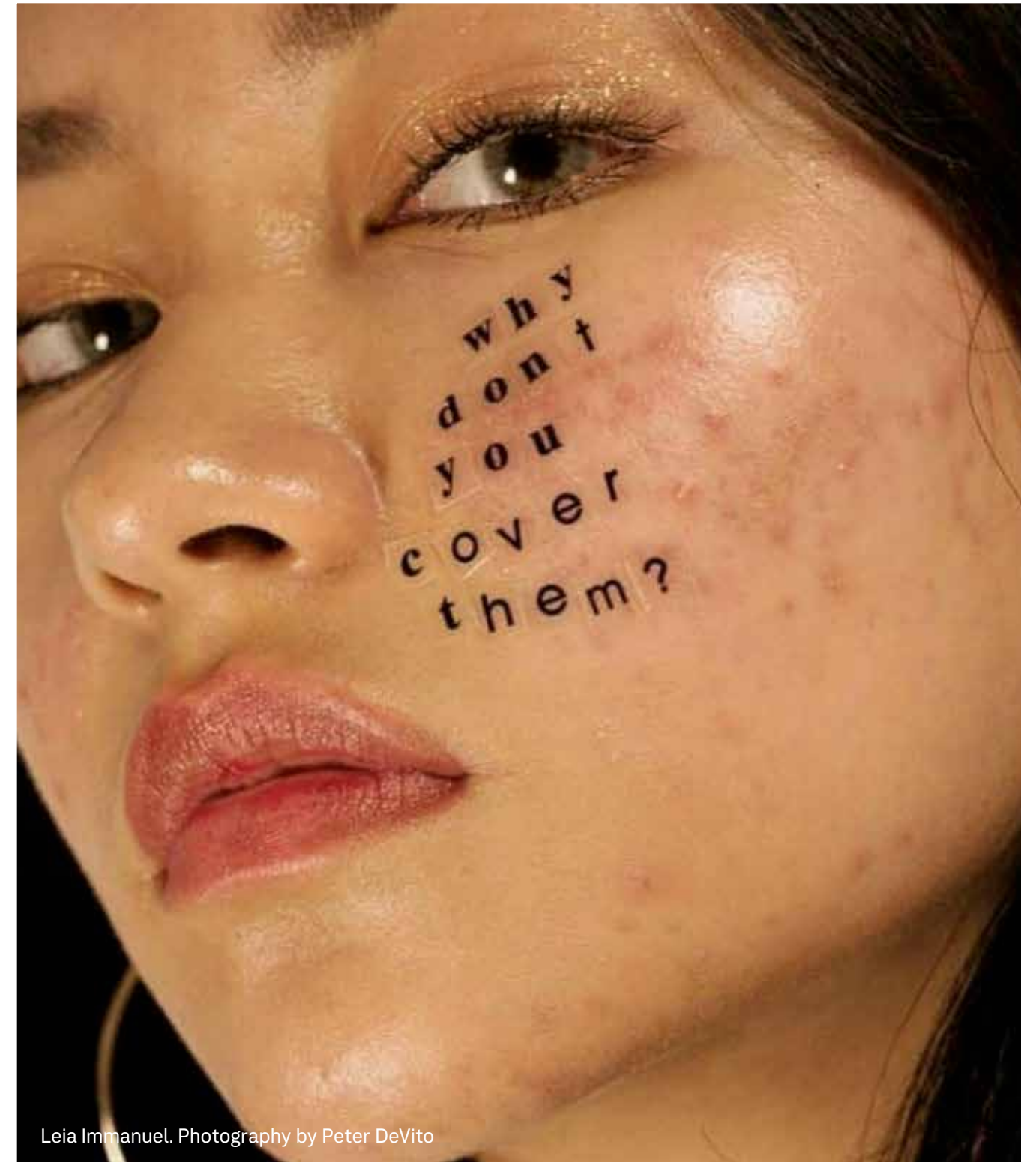
2. Leia Immanuel, model

It didn't take long for Leia Immanuel, 15, to gain enough encouragement from her close friends to start publicly sharing her makeovers online. But what started out as "playing with makeup" and doing mini photoshoots just for fun turned into an online portrayal that made her increasingly uncomfortable.

"I'd get comments saying, 'Oh, you're so perfect. I wish I looked like you. Your skin is flawless.' But at the same time, I was, 'That's not true.' I felt a little bit guilty because I was struggling with hormonal acne a lot more back then," she recalls.

Months later, she stopped wearing foundation to cover up her acne and posted a photo of herself online with "a long caption explaining how my skin isn't perfect, and it's normal for me to have acne, because I'm a teenager." Her confession caught the attention of photographer Peter DeVito, who helped Immanuel take photos that called into question the stereotypes about perfect skin, setting off a #skinpositivity movement that garnered media coverage and online discussion.

Over a year later, Immanuel still uses social media as a platform for creative expression and communication with her fans, who number over 115,000 as of June 2019. "What I'm trying to do is constantly experiment with the way I look because appearance can be such an empowering thing," she tells JWT Intelligence. "So, being able to publish and have a platform to draw inspiration and show my experimentations is really special. I really like the concept of changing yourself and the concept of having an identity. So I told myself my goal in life is to be as many versions of myself that I can be, both inside and outside."



Leia Immanuel. Photography by Peter DeVito



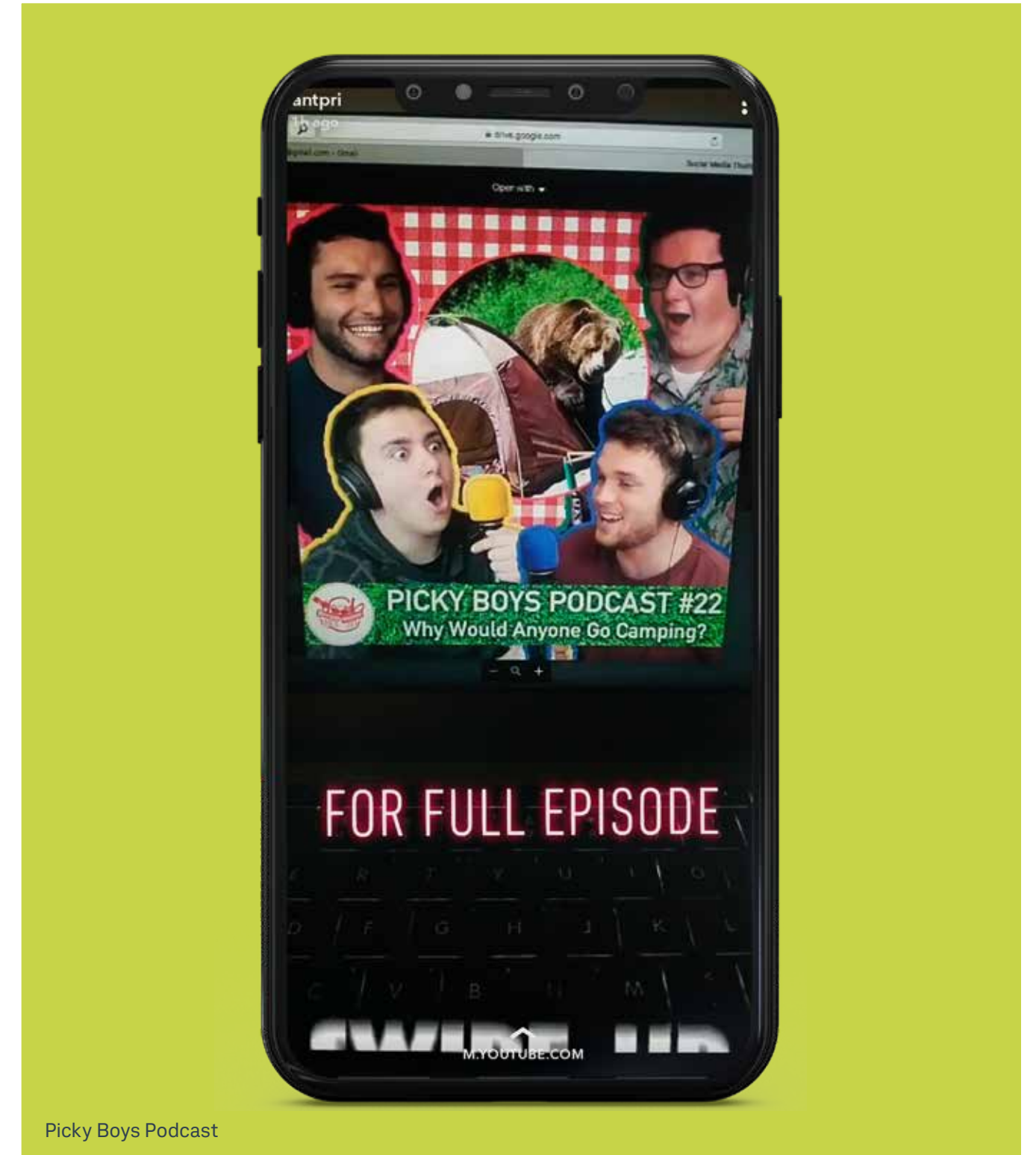
Leia Immanuel

3. Danny Moriarty, cofounder, Picky Boys Podcast

Danny Moriarty, a 22-year-old living in New York, describes himself as an online content creator. Moriarty is the cofounder of the Picky Boys Podcast, a vlog and audio show he launched earlier this year with friends he has known since middle school. "We kind of all got that creative bug," he tells JWT Intelligence. "We were, 'We should really start something,' because we all consume massive amounts of content every day. I've always wanted to create, so that was the main motivation behind us starting."

When he was in seventh grade, Moriarty started making YouTube videos for fun with his friends and taught himself the editing skills that would eventually lead to the creation of what he calls a "lighthearted comedy" podcast. The show features the four friends discussing current events, drawing inspiration from social media as well as the physical world around them, and they share all the creative roles for production. Sometimes they'll even dress up for the theme. "We like the visual side of podcasting—we think it adds a bit more personality, especially for newcomers. I feel like it connects on a personal level."

When he's not podcasting, Moriarty is active on Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook. Snapchat is a space where he can message his friends, play with Lenses, or have quick, on-the-spot creative discussions with his fellow podcasters. "You can kind of get lost as an individual if you're not throwing your hat in the ring with everybody posting about what they're doing day-to-day," he says. "So you want to try to please your audiences, while also staying true to yourself and making content that you enjoy."



Picky Boys Podcast

**“You can kind of get lost as an individual...
So you want to try to please your
audiences, while also staying true
to yourself and making content that
you enjoy.”**

*Danny Moriarty, cofounder,
Picky Boys Podcast*

4. Benjamin Paruzynski, founder, ChAR Digital, and official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator

Benjamin Paruzynski, 20, is known in certain Snapchat circles for his hit AR Lens for singer and songwriter Bazzi that racked up hundreds of millions of views. But the self-taught creative has been experimenting with everything from game design to animation and 3D modeling ever since he was 11. "I've been creating ever since I had my hands on a computer," Paruzynski tells JWT Intelligence. "I'd rather make a game than play a game, and I'd rather spend my time creating than consuming content—so that really drove me to get just anything I could on my computer that allowed me to express myself."

Now an official Snapchat Lens Studio Creator, Paruzynski hops easily between tools for his work, from Illustrator and Photoshop to Blender and Audacity, creating AR Lenses inspired by memes, music, and pop culture. He developed an official website, ChAR Digital, to work directly with a variety of brands and companies like Atlantic Records and 300 Entertainment on digital marketing endeavors. His favorite AR projects are those for record labels. "They can just give me a song. That's all they have to send to me," he says. "Whenever I listen to music there's always a visual that goes along with it that I'll just create. To bring that into the physical or digital world is really cool." Paruzynski emphasizes that his passion lies in creation—when he's not uploading Lenses to Snap or music video designs to Twitter, he's using Snapchat mostly for personal communication with friends. "My goal isn't really to be an influencer," he says. "I'm more of a behind the computer and program or 3D model versus in front of the camera."



Benjamin Paruzynski

5. Phoebe Pojo, founder, Models That Eat

Growing up as a teen model in New York placed Phoebe Pojo in a world where dieting culture and struggles with body image were rampant. But her own relationship with food was positive—she even documented her meals and snacking between shoots for fun with her friends on Instagram.

Now aged 19, she's the founder of Models That Eat, a YouTube channel where, over dinner or a *mukbang*, she interviews men and women in the fashion industry who get candid about their relationships with food, eating disorders, and body positivity in a media arena with rigid beauty standards. She uses her Instagram account to document all of the eating—in one photo colleagues take a lunch break at Boba Guys, while in another Pojo takes a bite out of a Hawaiian-style pizza.

Pojo also maintains a private Instagram and avoids using filters—growing up in a field where people are selling and branding their image has made her cautious about Facetune culture, she says. She relies on Snapchat as a space to interact with her IRL friends and gain a little comic relief, whether it's scrolling through the news bytes on the Discover platform, or using the Face Swap filter. "It's so funny because when I got Snapchat it was right when it came out, and I remember all of my friends, we were on it like it was our jobs," she says.

But it's her sister who is the "Snapchat Queen," Pojo says. "My sister is one of those girls—she's a senior in high school—who is very into how she looks, and is very self-aware of her image. But then I see her on Snapchat and she is almost a more raw version of herself. It almost feels like a look into somebody's life rather than this curated thing."



Phoebe Pojo



Phoebe Pojo



6.

Takeaways

1.

This generation is creatively trilingual and resets the rules for brands and marketers when it comes to communicating with them. “Unlike any generation before them, they’ve grown up expressing themselves online,” Molly Logan of Irregular Labs tells JWT Intelligence. “They’re expressing very complex thoughts, very personal ones—we see them with their emotions in a really raw, revealing way on social media. But whatever they’re doing, whether it’s a caption or a comment, it’s always tethered to something that’s visual and creative.”

2.

Gen Zers may seem contradictory as they are inherently unafraid of exploring countless identities and ways of expressing themselves. In terms of the ways this is expressed, it's "all fair game," Logan says. "They've grown up understanding that there's all this stuff out there that you can integrate to make something original, but it's not really yours. They're constantly borrowing and recreating, and then passing it on." This melts borders, both aesthetic and cultural.

Logan points out that gen Zers have grown up with "access to all this information, and ideas and visuals from places all over the world, all pockets, and all different points of view" sitting on their flat screens. "It's all been flattened in that way, so it's literally all equal, it's just all there—why shouldn't they mash it up?" she says.

3.

Gen Zers are authentic. While their social profiles comprise a mix of curation and reality, an individual's personal truth plays an important role in creative engagement for this generation. Acutely polished, perfectly arranged photos of decor and food have given way to spontaneous live videos, stream-of-consciousness storytelling, and grainy, old-school photography. Don't let the AR Lenses fool you—Snapchat is giving its users innovative and entertaining means to express their genuine selves, whether it's through their emotions, their identity, or their insecurities. A fifth of survey respondents strongly agree that their social accounts represent the real, everyday version of who they are, so it's safe to say they'll expect a similar authenticity from brands.

4.

Humor and entertainment are top motivators for gen Z to create and consume on social media, and are harnessed when gen Zers are communicating with friends or sharing content for a greater cause. They're buoyed by creative freedom in communication and a penchant for efficiency. No meme, emoji, or digital wordplay is deemed inappropriate or unprofessional when it comes to getting the message across, whether it's a social cause or an inside joke.

5.

Self-expression can take many forms online, but for gen Z, social causes like LGBTQ issues, body positivity, and mental health are increasingly at the core. The internet can be a judgmental place, but gen Zers are unabashedly using their reach to create communities and dialogue around their fluidity. They're redefining gender identities and breaking beauty norms, going beyond tutorials and selfies to establish more multifaceted personas.

6.

They may be hyper-digital but they're also mindful of too much social media use. Expressing creativity offline, therefore, is almost as important to them, whether it's doodling, crafting, making music, or film photography. But most gen Zers post their tangible work online, or even find ways of layering the digital with the analogue, resulting in more fluid creative expression.

7.

Ultimately, more than half of gen Z survey respondents say they find social apps a more creative space than what they experience offline. To this end, the digital landscape offers gen Zers unparalleled access to information and inspiration free of physical boundaries, meaning their output can draw on the creative expression of cultures and communities around the world.

About the Innovation Group

The Innovation Group is J. Walter Thompson's futurism, research and innovation unit. It charts emerging and future global trends, consumer change, and innovation patterns—translating these into insight for brands. It offers a suite of consultancy services, including bespoke research, presentations, co-branded reports and workshops. It is also active in innovation, partnering with brands to activate future trends within their framework and execute new products and concepts. It is led by Lucie Greene, Worldwide Director of the Innovation Group.

About J. Walter Thompson Intelligence

The Innovation Group is part of J. Walter Thompson Intelligence, a platform for global research, innovation and data analytics at J. Walter Thompson Company, housing three key in-house practices: SONAR™, Analytics and the Innovation Group. SONAR™ is J. Walter Thompson's research unit that develops and explores new quantitative and qualitative research techniques to understand cultures, brands and consumer motivation around the world. It is led by Mark Truss, Worldwide Director of Brand Intelligence. Analytics focuses on the innovative application of data and technology to inform and inspire new marketing solutions. It offers a suite of bespoke analytics tools and is led by Will Sandwick, Head of Data & Analytics.

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For more information visit: jwtintelligence.com



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Art by Katya Abedian. Courtesy of Irregular Labs