

# /gallery

Christian Hall reveals this month's hottest new websites

## 1-10 Wim Vanhenden – Internet Artist

URL [www.wimvanhenden.be](http://www.wimvanhenden.be)

Company In house (Wim Vanhenden)

URL In house

Few sites that aren't actual search engines dare to incorporate search as anything more than a device to quickly get to site content. Belgian designer Wim Vanhenden, however, has made the content on his site be determined by how people search and what they search for.

"My works are installations in the form of computer programs running outside a browser and projected in any form on any given screen," explains Vanhenden. "All my work is internet-based, which means the software connects to the internet, takes stuff from it, reinterprets it and shows it in a different form." He also wanted his site to be essentially user generated, a kind of blank canvas where the user builds their own experience with images, sound and video pulled from the internet.

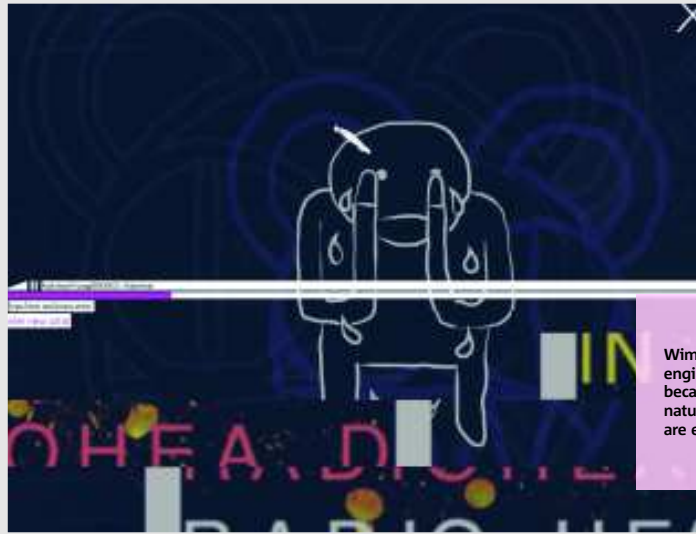
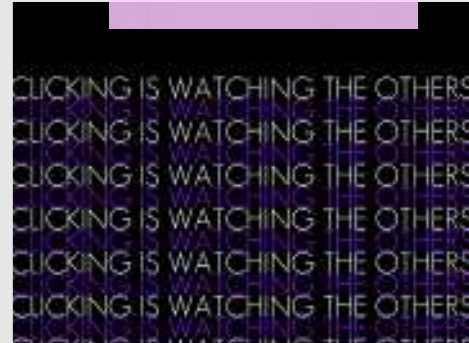
After a while, Vanhenden started to realise this concept was a bit too experimental. He didn't want to totally overshadow his portfolio, which the site is supposed to showcase. So he ended up with a healthy compromise, where the visitor creates an atmosphere based on keywords. It's an extraordinary experience, which complements rather than takes attention away from his art.

Technically, the site posed some intriguing problems. "It relies on APIs ... the problem is that sites have the tendency to change or to break." The biggest challenge was preventing memory leaks in Flash Player. "Because the site uses a never-ending number of images and bitmap operations, it became very vulnerable to memory leaks. Note to nerds: the final rule is to always dispose of bitmap data and use weak referencing on listeners!"

**"Software connects to the net, takes stuff and shows it in a different form"**

Wim Vanhenden

Because Wim couldn't free himself from having input on the interface, he decided it should have an 80s feel to it, which is seen in the disco-like flashing text used throughout.



Wim chose the Google image engine above the Flickr one because it better reflects the true nature of the search terms that are entered.





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### 1-5 House Of Jackie Brown

URL [www.houseofjackiebrown.com](http://www.houseofjackiebrown.com)

Company Version Industries

URL [versionindustries.com](http://versionindustries.com)

The clothes for this brand are steeped in 80s retro chic. For the site, Version Industries' president Caspar Newbolt says it was important to get fantastic photography with some interesting New York locations to work from. Version also had a very clear idea of the style direction it wanted to pursue. "We explained we didn't believe in airbrushing or making girls look super-perfect ... we like to make things that feel like they're falling apart or are in some way tarnished, so the idea of handling perfect models, in perfect lighting, with every blemish removed doesn't really fit with our aesthetic." The result is a flamboyant photo slideshow that scales to a user's screen. "It's built to work on anything from 1024x768."



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### 6-10 Mitsubishi Lancer Sportback

URL [lancer-sportback.eu](http://lancer-sportback.eu)

Company MUSE & Lukkien

URL [muse.nl](http://muse.nl) & [www.lukkien.com](http://www.lukkien.com)

3D is very effective with modern Flash, particularly when used on top of a 2D background. But one of the most obvious 3D objects, a cube, is rarely used as a video player. Cubes are great navigation tools for websites that utilise 3D, but the challenge of displaying video correctly within them, especially when rotating a cube, isn't to be underestimated. This sports car site uses the cube to great effect because it can display multiple images (on each side of the cube) and play a video instantly when a visitor clicks on it. It goes straight from a still image into the video and makes the central piece of navigation for this site the content itself, and there's a seamless transition between the two.



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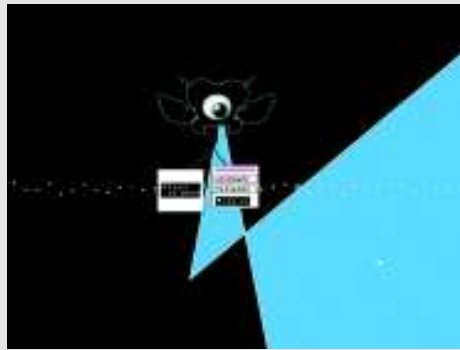
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**"Perfect models, in perfect lighting, with every blemish removed doesn't fit our aesthetic"**

Caspar Newbolt



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### 1-5 Inside Piet

URL [www.insidepiet.com](http://www.insidepiet.com)

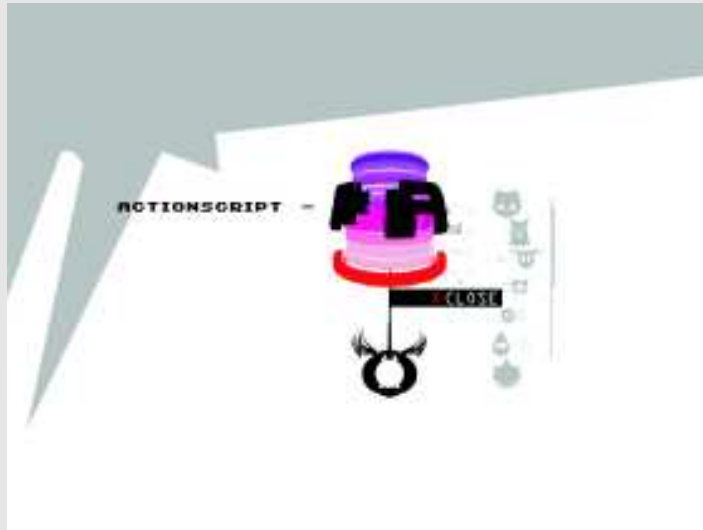
Company In house (Piet Dewijngaert)

URL In house

Inside Piet is the portfolio of Belgian Flash developer Piet Dewijngaert. Wrapped up in a retro arcade look, there's an almost schizophrenic feel to its construction – in a good way! “The site is a trip through my brain, which is a turbulent place without an off switch,” explains Dewijngaert. “Hence the music and the constantly moving graphics.” The icons in the main section represent a DNA string with his creative DNA, and each element links to a past project. “Most of the site was built in Flash and Flex Builder. Flash for the minimalistic graphics and Flex Builder for the ActionScript code. A lot of the graphics, like the vortex in the skills area, are generated dynamically by ActionScript and react to background music and sound effects.”



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### 6-10 O’Neill

URL [www.oneill.com](http://www.oneill.com)

Company Achtung!, Furthermore and B-Lex

URL [www.achtung.nl](http://www.achtung.nl), [www.furthermore.nl](http://www.furthermore.nl) and [www.b-lex.nl](http://www.b-lex.nl)

The global site for surf brand O’Neill has been given another makeover, and this time it’s a great showcase for how Flash can be used to manipulate a space to create room for more or less content. The flexibility of menus and content is becoming increasingly important in web design, and here the designers have concentrated on making the site seem very pliable. It’s best demonstrated in the Hyperfreak area promoting a new pair of boardshorts. The central image is divided up into a grid with each square of content expanding and contracting as a mouse pointer is moved around the screen. In some of these squares a video segment similarly expands when hovered over.



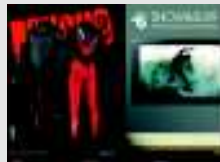
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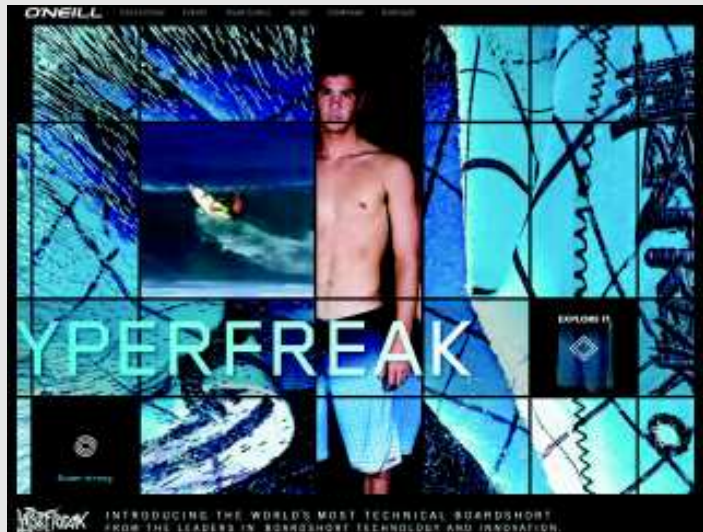
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“The site is a trip through my brain, which is a turbulent place without an off switch”

Piet Dewijngaert



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### 1-6 Toshiedo

URL [www.toshiedo.com.au](http://www.toshiedo.com.au)

Company In house

URL In house

The idea for this site was to give the visitor a feel for Toshiedo's work as quickly and as elegantly as possible. "First we experimented with different image compositions and traditional slideshows, but we couldn't get it to where we wanted it," says director James Mason. "Finally, the idea came one morning when I was passing a bus stop. There was a rotating poster sign cycling through a loop, almost like the rotation of fruit you see on a poker machine. It was exactly what we needed and would be relatively low on bandwidth." The site has an industrial feel and Toshiedo deliberately chose a neutral colour palette with blends of white and grey to appeal to all ages. Due to a lack of search-generated traffic, HTML was used to aid accessibility.



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### 7-11 Call You Back

URL [www.callyouback.ch](http://www.callyouback.ch)

Company Hinderling Volkart

URL [www.hinderlingvolkart.com](http://www.hinderlingvolkart.com)

This website for the Zurich blues/pop band Call You Back uses the internet as a live visual tool (not dissimilar to Site of the Month Wim Vanhenden). Songs from the band play on the site, with the background changing instantly to reflect the lyrics. It uses a straight Flickr feed to display the images, searching at an incredible speed as each word is spoken. As with Wim Vanhenden's site, the experience is unique to each user. Even though the lyrics here are repeated for each user, the Flickr images shown will be different. The site also features a fun audio player (in the centre) that demonstrates some innovative interaction, stretching away in a point depending on where the user moves their mouse.



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"The idea came one morning when I was passing a bus stop. It was exactly what we needed"

James Mason



### 1-6 Coke: HappyMe

URL [www.coketeens.com.br/index.html](http://www.coketeens.com.br/index.html)

Company Gringo

URL [www.gringo.nu/v3](http://www.gringo.nu/v3)

This Coke site aimed at Brazilian teenagers is a majestic, interactive 3D experience that has a real video game feel. The animation itself is impressive (if deliberately low key in terms of graphics), but it's the colourful landscape that really pulls the visitor in. It's also the customisation angle that makes people want to stay on the site. Each character can be given a makeover and there are dozens of places to visit on the 3D map. The all-important social aspect hasn't been forgotten, with its email a character facility, and one fantastic design point is the way the map can be changed from the default third-person view to a bird's eye view with a tap of the spacebar – a great way to maximise the mapping idea.



### 7-12 The Toke

URL [thetoke.com](http://thetoke.com)

Company In house (Darek Nyckowiak)

URL In house

Migrating away from Flash is all the rage for some designers and agencies (Big Spaceship, Fi and Odopod have all moved to more accessible sites), but for Polish designer Darek Nyckowiak lavish animation still rules, and it's easy to see why. "For the intro I chose to use 3D Studio Max with Vray, Real Flow fluid simulation software, and Sapphire and Trapcode plug-ins in After Effects postproduction," says Nyckowiak. "For the interaction elements, Flash CS3 with Papervision3D 2.0 Great White and Tweener libraries." Impressive animation skills abound, plus some innovative navigation. "I tried to keep the layout and navigation simple and usable. The stripped-down elements help form this simple type-based layout."



**"The stripped-down elements help form this simple type-based layout"**

Darek Nyckowiak



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### 1-6 Hugs For Monsters

URL [hugsformonsters.com](http://hugsformonsters.com)

Company In house (Joe Lifrieri)

URL In house

"I believe that communicating a message correctly is more important than communicating it clearly", says Joe Lifrieri of his own portfolio site. "The look was one of the easiest design decisions I've ever made. I wanted to make something that was unashamedly me, pulling no punches and not feigning haughty professionalism or cheekiness." That boldness is seen in the colourful sketch design (he created nearly all of the graphic elements in pen and ink or watercolour first), and also in some of his projects, including one where he teases visitors who land at the site using IE6. "There was no plan for more than 20 people to see it, but around 70,000 have!" he says. The site uses a Tumblr blog with Fancybox for the portfolio sections.



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### 7-11 53 Colors

URL [www.53colors.com](http://www.53colors.com)

Company Hyper Island

URL [www.hyperisland.se](http://www.hyperisland.se)

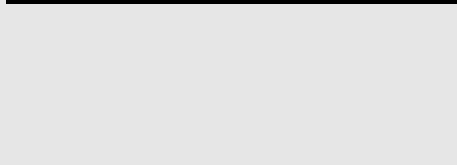
53 Colors is the official website of Digital Media 10 at the creative hub Hyper Island in Stockholm. The site lets visitors know more about the 53 students who are at Hyper Island. It employs modern tools such as Skype, made prominent in each student's profile, to good effect with a custom-made contact button. It's also a nice touch having a full photograph of each student next to their profile. What's more striking, however, is the great use of landscape, which is a 3D world deliberately dulled to make the colourful students (in 2D) stand out. The backdrop serves as an excellent way of drawing attention to the student figures. The 3D rotation as you zoom from one student to the next is deftly applied and highly attractive work.



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"I wanted to make something that was unashamedly me, and not feigning cheekiness"

Joe Lifrieri

Want to see your work here? Think your work should be in Gallery? Tell us about it at [netmag@futurenet.com](mailto:netmag@futurenet.com)



### 1-5 Soft

URL [www.soft.se](http://www.soft.se)

Company In house

URL In house

Swedish agency Soft has given us a glimpse of the future of web design with a mock holographic interface. The designers wanted to use Flash 3D, partly to show how much they could squeeze out of the 3D engines available, and also because most sites using 3D focus mainly on technical aspects and less on design and usability. Because it's aimed at a B2B audience, Soft decided on a clean approach. "We believe that the blurs and sparse angle shifting were a good compromise between ease of use and strong design with attention to details," says managing director Alexander Johansson. "We focused on keeping the effects subtle and hope visitors appreciate the simple and minimalistic use of 3D." Soft used Papervision3D and TweenMax.



### 6-10 26000 Vodka

URL [www.26000vodka.com](http://www.26000vodka.com)

Company Resn

URL [www.resn.co.nz](http://www.resn.co.nz)

New Zealand isn't renowned for its vodka, so marketing this drink's brand isn't an easy task. The company itself has done a good job with such a bizarre name (referring to the Ice Age water that's used in it) as well as the striking bottle design. Getting the brand out there on the web, however, needs more. So Resn has used some great 3D effects to bolster the Ice Age image that pushes the brand. Blocks of ice float around the main menu and other pages, and a brilliant use of depth-of-field adds to the stylish design but also helps focus the visitors' eyes on specific elements. Each page reacts to the user's mouse movements too, showcasing some beautiful 3D design and text manipulation skills.



"We kept the effects subtle and hope visitors appreciate the simple 3D"

Alexander Johansson