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Artspace

INSIDER ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S BEST ART

Browse the Web With Rafaël Rozendaal's Modernist Kaleidoscope

By Dylan Kerr
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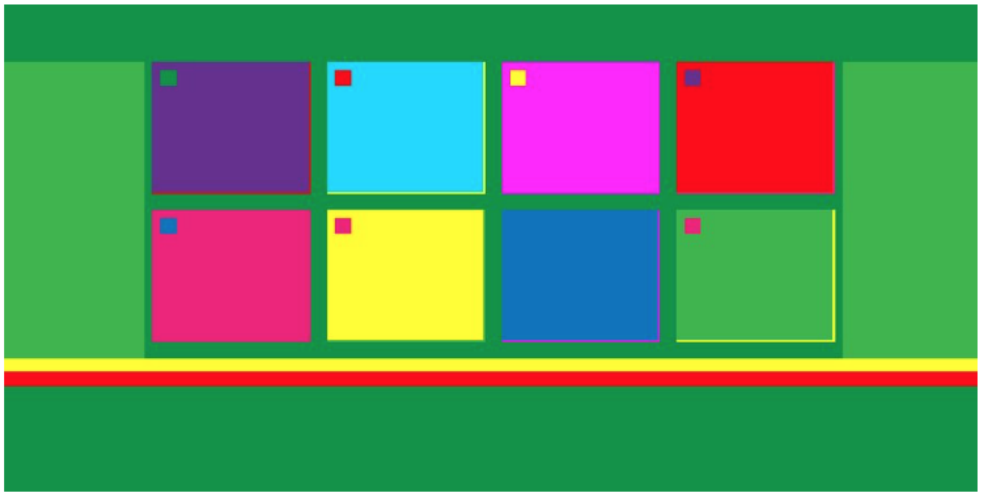
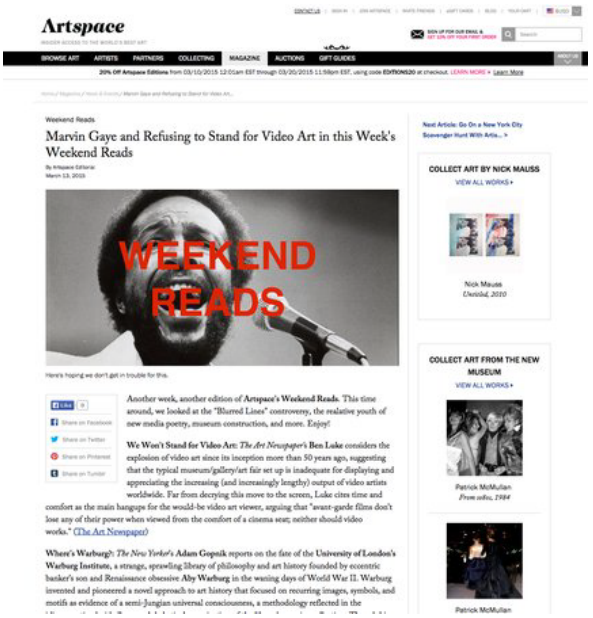


Woah.

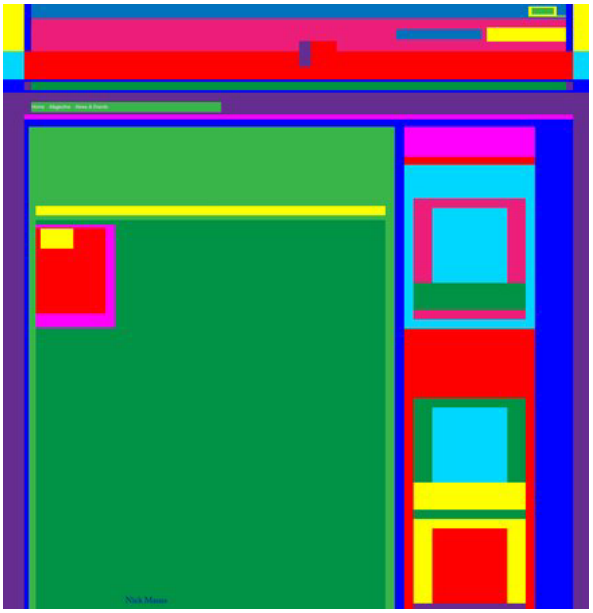
For the lastest installment of our Art & Tech series, we've selected Abstract Browsing (2014), the latest Google Chrome extension by digital artist Rafaël Rozendaal. The Dutch-born, New York-based programmer is known for pioneering the "website-as-sellable-artwork" model, in which his brightly colored and cleverly animated sites are sold to collectors under an "Art Website Sales Contract" that specifies that the pages remain freely accessible to anyone with Internet access regardless of whose collection they may "belong" to. In recent years, Rozendaal has extended his reach to embrace free browser apps or extensions for Chrome whose functions are more aesthetic than utilitarian. These including Text Free Browsing (2013), which adds a button that temporarily removes all text from a given webpage leaving only images and non-text site items visible.

Abstract Browsing operates under a similar logic, but with far more eye-catching results—pushing a button on Chrome's toolbar renders a given web page in vivid Microsoft Paint hues, with the discrete site elements each in a contrasting colored box. The colors shift every few seconds, meaning one page can result in nearly limitless combinations.

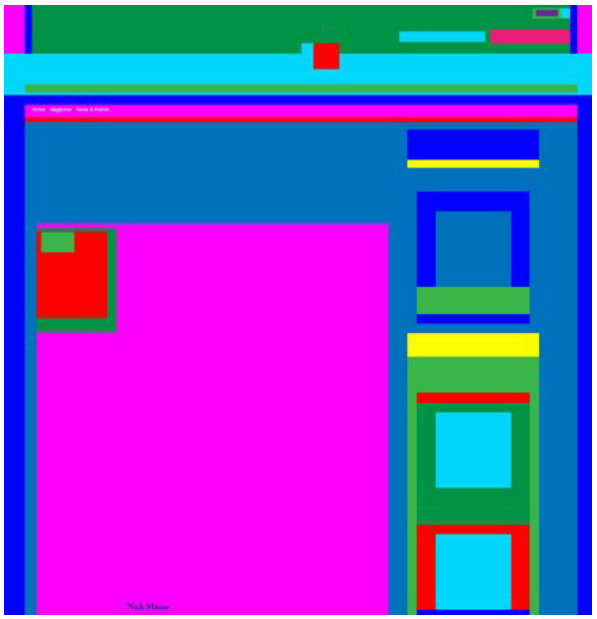
As a quick illustration, here's what last week's Weekend Reads normally looks like:



Here it is with Rozendaal's Abstract Browsing activated:



And here it is three seconds later:



What's the use, you ask? That's a question for aesthetic philosophers and their ilk. If you want to experience the magic for yourself, go to AbstractBrowsing.net and download the extension via the Chrome Web Store. It's free, and it looks nice. What more could you ask for?