



a Creative Studio

STUDIO *HDJ*

This 2026 Studio Document was created and intended for our former, current and potential clients, as well as future investors who believe in what we do and what we are trying to achieve. The document opens the doors to our creative approach, revealing how we see and do things differently. We may also showcase our work and the thought process behind every idea. The content of this document can also sometimes be vague because we may not always provide a direct answer. But that is simply how creativity works. We provide just enough information & everything else is left to your imagination and interpretation. No part of this document may be reproduced in any way possible without the written permission and consent of the Guv'nor of Studio HDJ—*whomever that may be*.

THE ORIGINS ABOUT THE STUDIO CREATIVE MANIFESTO THOUGHT PROCESS MANIFESTO TRANSLATED A NEW PLAYGROUND LEAP OF FAITH

The Summary.

The list you see below is supposed to be the table of contents of the bookbook—it still is, more or less but instead of having the page number, we decided to remove it completely. Honestly, there are no solid reason for it, we just simply do it. It is how we are as a creative studio and forever will be.

Here's the thing about creativeness in today's world—it's been a bit too technical. We understood that every decision is a business decision and a business decision is ultimately to grow the business. We are not against that, but, it's just that, can't we have fun once in a while?

Hence, why we are here.

Let's have fun.



To the ones that feel the world is too much. Yes, life's too short for safe & boring ideas. So we design, build and break things—*Creatively*. We do it not to impress, but to connect. To move people. To start something real.

How it started.

Studio HDJ was not really Studio HDJ in the beginning. Through our 16 years of existence, having been founded in 2010, we were first named as HDJ CRTVE—and if you guessed it, then yes, that we are named after our founder. Over the years, we changed names more times than we can remember. Finally, in 2024, we settled down with Studio HDJ. The story was almost similar to that one political party with both a *lama* and *baru* version. The only difference was that our *lama* version was never banned by the authorities.

We were primarily active during our early years, circa 2010 to 2013, before organically sliding onto the shelf from 2014 to 2023. Of course, we were never entirely gone. During that period, we still became involved in a couple of projects and updated our social media once or twice a year, mostly to appear active, alive and definitely not dead.

Anyway, in 2024, we decided, or rather, the founder first decided & we followed, to quit his job and focus on the studio full-time.

But hell, was it not easy.

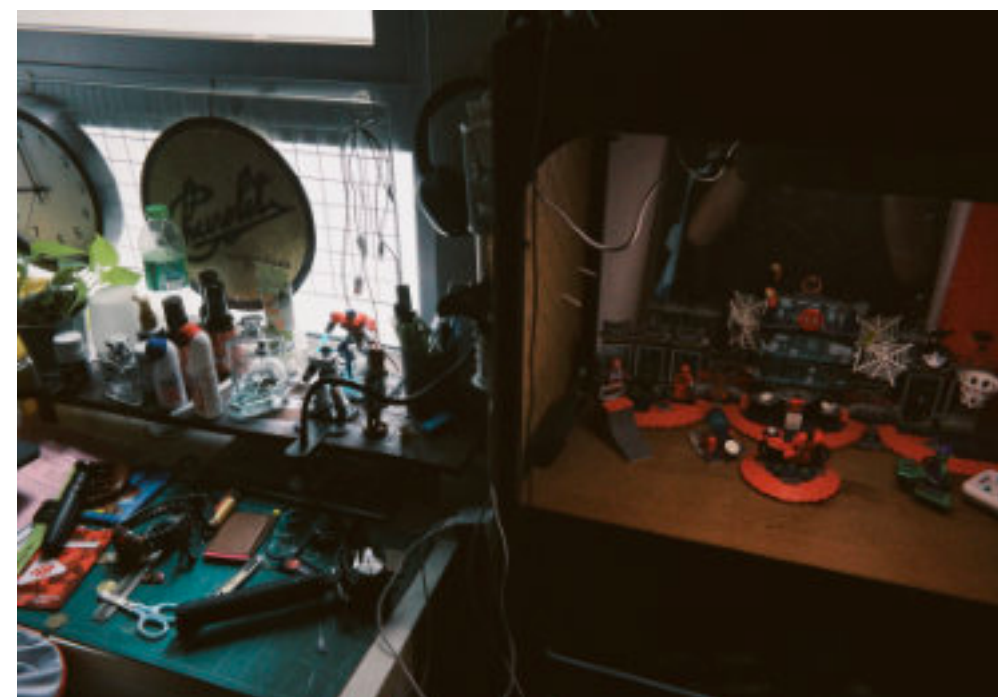
If you are a business owner, you should know how hard it is to run a business. More importantly, if you run a creative business, you will definitely know that running one is not as easy as it seems. At first, you have all this eagerness and confidence. You believe that whatever you want to do, and whatever idea you had in the first place, will be amazing. You believe people will understand it, believe in it and buy into it. But hell no, not when reality checks in. Well, if you have read enough entrepreneurial books or followed enough entrepreneur-KOLs, you will know that starting a business can take anywhere from a few months to a year before it gains any traction. And if you have enough grit and resources, you may get through it. But if that is not the case, well—yeah.

Studio HDJ, per se, has not yet gone through the traditional route of running a business and enduring all its struggles. Since our inception in 2010, the entity has existed almost like a ghost. We appear when we want to, or cease to exist when we do not feel like it. So, in a way, the question of whether we survive is entirely up to us. A weird thing to say, huh?

But in all seriousness, what we did was based on an uncomfortable truth. You see, when we started more than a decade ago and again a couple of years back, we began with the conviction that whatever we did, and whatever services we provided, would come from something we genuinely loved doing. We assumed that people would naturally want the same thing. How wrong we were. With the world moving towards artificial intelligence and whatever else is out there, the truth and reality is that opportunities are becoming smaller than ever. And we have not even mentioned today's competitors yet. No, not yet.

To the true creatives, we respect the work that you do. But to the others who claim to be creative, well, there is nothing we want to say.

But fret not. This is not the end, even though it may sound like we are ending ourselves—no. Because, as we said earlier, keep going. When things get hard and the road you have known for so long is no longer the same, choose another. Or better yet, create a new one. That is way better.



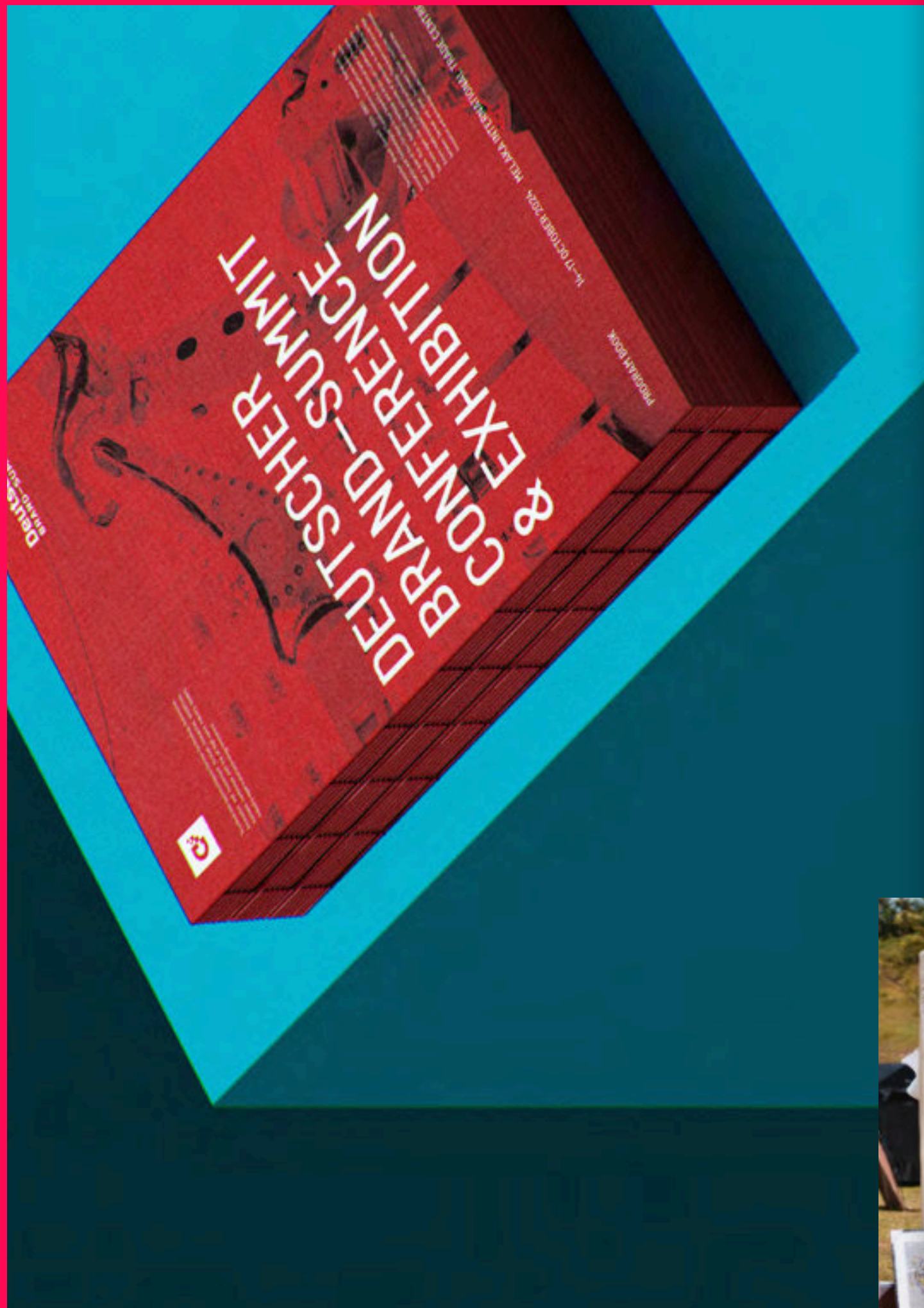
a *Creative* Studio



Studio HDJ

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www.studiohdj.com



Design for People.

When we started, we were known as HDJ CRTVE, the Insanely Kreativ design studio. A few years later, the name changed to DK Design Bureau. That was the period when we were slowly approaching the end of the road and the shelf we had been building was nearly complete. It was also around this time that Design for People first became part of our design and creative nature. At first, it did not mean much. We chose it simply because we wanted our work to be, and feel, more human—and it did.

Over the years, the sentence became something more. It became the root of almost every design & creative decision we have ever made. It shaped how we looked at ideas and how we approached the work. Because design, no matter how clever or impressive; means very little if it fails to connect with the people it was created for.

Design for People is just not about making everything universally simple and safe. It is not about removing personality so that nobody feels uncomfortable—but it is about understanding there is always a human

being on the other side of everything.

Someone will either read it, look at it; or use and question it both at the same time. Someone will also remember, ignore and perhaps feel something because of it. That someone matters. Because to us, people are not merely audiences, users, customers, consumers, demographics or numbers presented inside a deck. They are complicated human beings with their own stories to tell. We do not design for imaginary personas who live inside pie charts. We design for people who live outside them.

Design for People, when translated beyond the words and beyond the physical studio, means that Studio HDJ is not merely a place where creativity is expected to thrive. It is also a feeling—and perhaps, even more than that. It is every late night, every rough sketch, every rejected idea, every strange brief and every instinct telling us that something is still not quite right. It is the conversations that go nowhere before suddenly leading somewhere. It is the frustration of not knowing the answer, followed by the quiet satisfaction of finally discovering one. It is knowing when to

listen, when to question and when to tear everything apart and begin again.

We believe good design should communicate, but it should also carry a point of view. It should be useful, but not lifeless. It should make sense, but at the same time leave enough room for people to feel, interpret and imagine for themselves. That is where the human part begins.

At Studio HDJ, we make design to provoke, to inspire and to be human. Not provocation for the sake of making loud noise, but enough to make people pause, look again and perhaps see something differently.

We do not always begin with the answers. Sometimes, we begin with a feeling. Sometimes, a question. Sometimes, a terrible sketch that somehow survives long enough to become a great idea. But regardless of where we begin, we always return to the same place—the people. We come for the work and stay for the madness. But the work will always be for people.

DESIGN FOR PEOPLE



INDEPENDENT

We are weird.



We follow our guts.
These self-written rules
is more than just a
guideline. It remind us
why we start & it's also
a declaration of intent.



STORIES MATTER DEFY CONVENTION INSPIRED BY LIFE

These manifestos did not really exist in the beginning—at least, not in the written form they exist in today. But the ideas behind the manifestos have always been there as part of the studio's fundamentals. It is really simple when you look at it. These three manifestos are the manifestation of Design for People. Yes, we named it the Creative Manifesto. But what it really means is that, in every design or creative work we do, at the end of the day, it needs to feel human.

One description we have always used is that creativity and design need to have a soul, not be empty on the inside. Because it is only by having a soul that these creative and design works can relate and connect to people.

Hence, why we start with Stories Matter. Like us, every human being has a story to tell. Whatever life we have gone through, the hardships and all the other things that come with living, are what make us unique. But believe it or not, the uniqueness we think belongs only to us may also be unique to many other people out there. There might be someone who has experienced something similar to your story. That element of sameness is where connections are made. Say you have a business selling products or services. The way most people choose the brands they use today is not entirely based on whether yours is the best. You may be one of the best, but that is not necessarily the reason why a customer chooses you over hundreds of others. It is the story your brand tells. No matter how small it may seem, that is the story that matters because it is what connects people.

Then, there's Defy Convention. Go left when most people choose right. Go against the tide. Stick out like a sore thumb. These are the things we always say whenever we work on a new project. Why?—Because in today's world, where your product or service may not be entirely unique or completely fresh as an idea, what your brand needs is a way to stand out. How?—As mentioned above.

Imagine that it is Friday, just after the Friday prayer. Most people are making their way out of the mosque, while there you are, in the middle of everyone, trying to get back inside. It would be a hassle. It would be difficult for you to move, and other people might become annoyed because you are going in the wrong direction. But one thing will definitely happen. People will notice you as the person trying to get back inside the mosque after the Friday prayer has ended. That is what it Friday, just after the Friday prayer. Most people are making their way out of the mosque, while there you are, in the middle of everyone, trying to get back inside. It would be a hassle. It

would be difficult for you to move, and means to defy convention. It does not mean being different simply for the sake of being different. It means recognising when everyone is heading in one direction and finding another way for your work, idea or brand to be noticed.

Finally, Inspired by Life because life is beautiful, even when it hits hard. We have always had this idea that whatever questions you may have about anything, life already has an answer—you just need to find it. Our inspiration comes from life itself because the answers that nature, or life per se, gives us cannot always be denied, even when they do not seem to make sense at first. Look at your surroundings. Study people's behaviour. Look at different cultures. Observe how people live, speak, react and connect with one another. Whatever there is in life, there is already an answer somewhere within it—you just need to notice it.

And when these three manifestos come together—Stories Matter, Defy Convention and Inspired by Life—they bring us back to the same belief we have carried from the beginning:

Design for People.

How can we do



this *differently?*

Not everyone needs the same thing. Some need to start from scratch. Some just need a little work. Some need to admit that they're going somewhere completely different. That's where our three frameworks come in.

BUILD REPOSITION REFRESH



Build.

Start something worth building—a new business; a new idea or a new brand. Build is for starting from the ground up, figuring out what you stand for, who you're talking to and how you want to show up in the world. From blank page to something people can believe in.

Reposition.

Change the way people see you. Sometimes you need to know if your brand has simply outgrown its old story. Reposition is for businesses entering a new chapter, speaking to a new audience or moving in a new direction. We rethink the strategy, sharpen the story and reshape the brand. Don't just look different. Mean something different.

Refresh.

Make something feel great again. Sometimes it isn't broken—just tired. Refresh is about finding what's still working, deleting what's getting in the way and giving the brand a new energy without throwing away everything that made it yours in the first place. Same soul. New energy.

We kept it this simple
intentionally because
creative work already gets
complicated enough.

The Creative Process.

THINK
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MAKE
② ④ ⑧ m n o

SHAPE
③ ⑥ ⑨ x y z

Our creative process only has three steps—Think, Make and Shape. We kept it this simple intentionally because creative work already gets complicated enough without us making the process complicated too.

Think is where we understand the problem, ask questions and find the idea; Make is where ideas become something we can see, hear or experience; Shape is where we edit, refine and make the work better.

They don't always happen in order. Sometimes making sends us back to thinking or shaping creates an entirely new idea. That's fine. Our process isn't there to control creativity. It's there to give creativity somewhere to go.

Thinking sounds simple enough—you sit down. Think. Have an idea. Congratulations. Unfortunately, brains do not work like microwave ovens. You cannot put a brief inside, press three minutes and expect one freshly cooked Big Idea to come out with a little *ding—ding—ding*.

So we start by looking around. We ask questions. Some useful and some stupid, but sometimes the stupid question turns out to be the useful one. We look at the problem, the people, the context, the story and whatever else happens to be lying around. We research. We talk. We read things. We stare at walls. We revisit things everyone has already accepted and ask why they are like that.

Because doing things differently does not always mean inventing something no one has ever seen before. Sometimes it is simply noticing things that has been sitting in front of everyone. This is also where we try very hard not to design anything yet—no fonts. No colour palettes. No "*maybe the logo can do this*". Calm down. Before deciding what something should look like, we need to understand what it should mean. What are we trying to say? Who are we saying it to? Why should anybody care? And more importantly, is there actually anything worth saying?

Eventually, somewhere between the sensible questions, unnecessary references, bad ideas and one strangely good thought that appeared while buying lunch, a direction starts to form.

Now we make the thing. The idea that spent the last stage living comfortably inside our heads is politely evicted and forced into the real world. It becomes a sketch, sentence, photograph, film, layout, object, website, campaign, decks, badly named working file or whatever form it needs to take. This is where things become slightly chaotic. Because making is not simply executing whatever we decided during *Think*: that would suggest we knew exactly what we

THINK

① ⑤ ⑦ a b c

were doing 'cause we rarely do.

Making is thinking with your hands. You put something down, look at it, realise it's terrible, change it, accidentally make it worse, undo it, make another version, hate that one too, then somehow discover a completely different idea hiding underneath all of them—*perfectly normal*! Some things can only be understood after they exist. So we experiment. We design. We write. We shoot. We build. We move things three pixels to the left and then three pixels back to the right. We try the obvious answer so we know why we should not use it. We try the ridiculous answer because

MAKE

② ④ ⑧ m n o

occasionally the ridiculous answer is exactly what the project needed.

Here, there is room for accidents to happen. Actually, we like accidents. The process may have started with a plan, but the plan is not sacred. If something better appears halfway through, we follow it. Creativity would be very boring if every journey ended exactly where Google Maps said it would. *Make* is where ideas earn their right to exist, not by being clever in a meeting, but by becoming something real enough for us to point and say: *There— that thing*. Now we have something to work with.

Technically, it already exists. Unfortunately, existence alone is a very low standard. So now we *Shape*. Here is where we

SHAPE

③ ⑥ ⑨ x y z

stare at everything we made and start asking questions that are really uncomfortable. The kind that destroys relationships (hopefully not)—does this actually work? Does it still carry the original idea? Is that element helping or is it just standing there like a flower pot? Do we need another paragraph, colour or animation? Another twelve slides explaining something that could have been one sentence?

Usually, only less of what's made, survives. Shaping is editing, refining, adjusting, removing, rearranging and occasionally murdering what we secretly loved because the work is better without it. A small funeral may be held but we still continue. Because creative work often becomes stronger when it stops trying so hard to prove how creative it is.

This stage is not about polishing something until it becomes shiny and soulless. We are not interested in sanding away every weird edge. Sometimes the weird edge is the whole point. The job is to find the right shape: enough clarity that people understand and remember it. Enough imperfection that it still feels like something made by humans instead of generated inside a boardroom laboratory. And while this is technically the final stage, nothing here is particularly final.

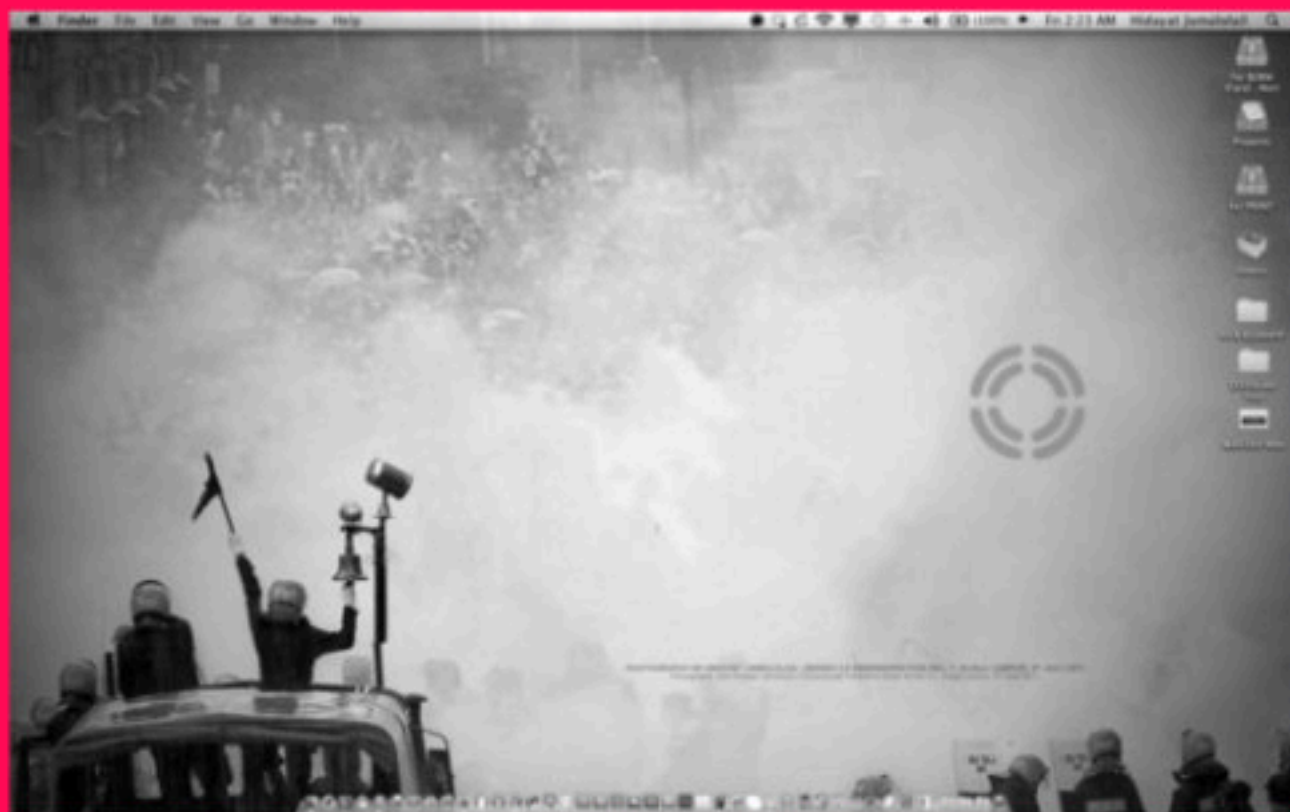
Shape can send us back to Make. Make can send us all the way back to Think. A tiny change can reveal a larger problem. A mistake can reveal a better direction. Suddenly everyone is back at the beginning wondering what the f—happened.

Good. That means the process is working. Because *Think*, *Make* and *Shape* were never meant to be three boxes we tick. They are simply three places we keep moving between until the work feels right. And when it does?—we stop touching it. Which, might be the hardest part: *surprise, surprise!*

STUDIO HDJ

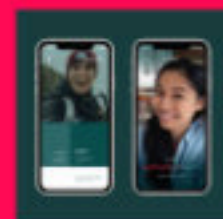
Give us a problem.
We'll *think* about it,
make something
out of it & *shape* it
until it works.

It's beyond list of services.



THINK

- Purpose & Values
- Brand Strategy
- Creative Strategy
- Visual Strategy
- Advertising Strategy
- Marketing Strategy
- Naming Strategy
- Messaging Arch.



MAKE

- Brand Identity
- Campaign Concepts
- Art Direction
- Advertising Design
- Photography & Video
- Content & Visual Dev.
- Creative Direction



- Social Media
- Website Design
- UI/UX
- E-Commerce
- Publication & Print
- Packaging & Livery
- Spatial Design
- Merchandise
- Audio-Visual

SHAPE



GADING

www.gadingmarine.com

2025

Gading Marine Industry builds boats. We helped make everything around the boats feel a little less complicated. From corporate presentations and exhibition materials to photography, video, website updates and event-related works, our role was to help translate a highly technical maritime business into something clearer, sharper and easier to connect with. Still serious where it needed to be, just with a little more soul.

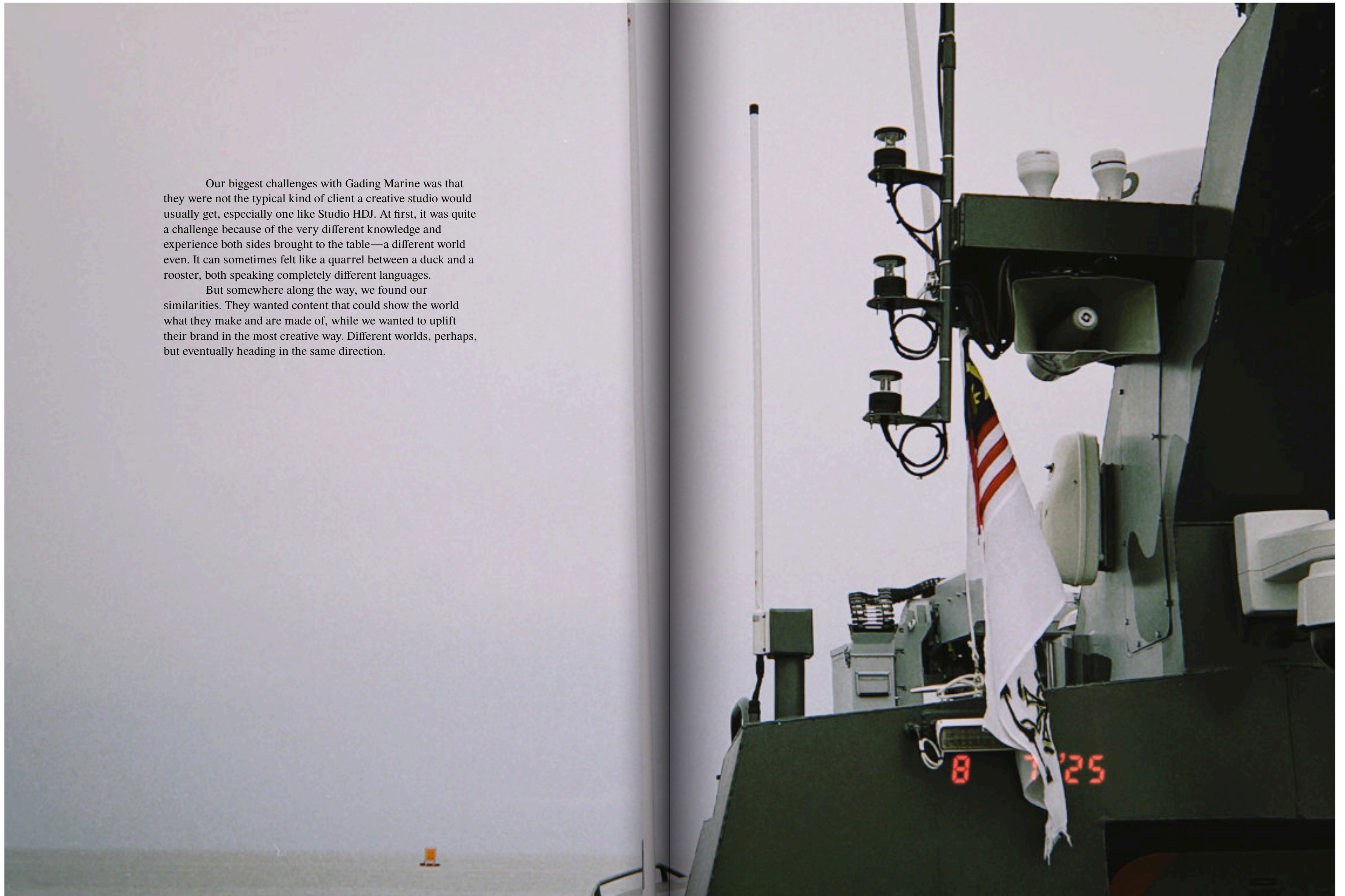
- OUR WORK
- Brand Refresh
 - Website & Content
 - Print & Digital
 - Photography
 - AV Production



MARINE

Our biggest challenges with Gading Marine was that they were not the typical kind of client a creative studio would usually get, especially one like Studio HDJ. At first, it was quite a challenge because of the very different knowledge and experience both sides brought to the table—a different world even. It can sometimes felt like a quarrel between a duck and a rooster, both speaking completely different languages.

But somewhere along the way, we found our similarities. They wanted content that could show the world what they make and are made of, while we wanted to uplift their brand in the most creative way. Different worlds, perhaps, but eventually heading in the same direction.



USRAH

BUKU



Buku Pintu Makna

2026

We redesigned and rebranded Usrah Buku, a digital media channel that looks beyond the pages of a book and into the people, ideas and stories behind them. Through interviews, documentaries, discussions and storytelling, Usrah Buku brings books out of the shelves and into wider conversations about people, culture, history & religion.

For the new identity, we went back to the name itself. The symbol is built from the Arabic letters Alif and Ba, the first letters of Usrah and Buku in Jawi. Both forms were simplified and brought together into something more contemporary, without making the reference too obvious. Much like Usrah Buku itself, the idea was simple: start with the book, then see where the conversation takes.

OUR WORK

Logo Design
Brand Strategy
Digital GFX





2025

Diantara.earth is a climate and sustainability platform built around a simple idea: we need to tell our own stories about the world we live in and the future we want to build. We worked with diantara.earth to shape its brand identity, visual language and creative direction, translating its ideas around climate, sustainability and collective action into a brand that feels human and distinctly rooted in Southeast Asia. Rather than framing climate change purely through data and urgency, the work focused on people, stories and the everyday realities behind a changing world.

OUR WORK

Brand Identity
Creative Direction
Website & Digital

diantara.
diantara.earth

IS A FACT

Anotherhalf

GUEST MANAGEMENT

2024

Another Half is a guest management brand built around a refined, contemporary hospitality experience. We developed the brand identity and visual direction, balancing a sophisticated, classic aesthetic with a more modern and confident character. The identity combines an elegant typographic logo with a subtle reference to Planck's constant, creating a visual detail that connects the brand to its underlying concept of "halfness" and balance. The resulting identity is intentionally minimal, polished and distinctive, with a restrained palette of black, white and mustard gold.

OUR WORK

Logo Design

EVENT CONCEPT



21st Annual Scientific Congress '26



Beyond Blood Pressure

Making Cardio-Renal-Metabolic
Health A Shared Responsibility

24—26 April 2026
Shangri-La, Kuala Lumpur



Scan & Register

congress2026.msh.my

Malaysian Society of Hypertension

DESIGN

Here is a Creative Playground for ideas that don't ask for permission. Born from whatever-s & built around the spirit of forbidden access—it is a space for experiments, visual thoughts, cultural fragments, objects, writings and bla-bla-bla whatever else refuses to fit inside a proper brief. So, just Stay Away!

www.what403.com

CREATIVE WORKERS PARTY

Endorsed by the 403.

The idea for 403. was originally meant for a new studio name. After almost two decades in the design and creative scene, we thought maybe it was time to move on from Studio HDJ, a name that has always been centred around our founder. We wanted to create a platform, or maybe a studio, that could live outside of his name and image. Something that could stand on its own and become whatever it needed to be. It sat on the shelf for about a month.

Then came an unexpected idea. It was state election season and a fictional political party that champions creative and design seems like a great fit. It was strange enough for us to like it, so we went with it. In less than a month, the idea became real and was launched across every digital platform we could get our hands on. Then came another idea. And another. And another. And another.

At some point, we realised that maybe 403. did not need to become another studio after all. Maybe it could simply be a place for ideas. A place where all the crazy, absurd, unnecessary and especially no-monetary-value projects we come up with can live without needing a proper reason to exist—so here we are.

403. is a Creative Playground where ideas sneak and peek around without adult supervision. Well, technically, we are the adults, which probably makes the whole thing slightly more worrying. Not everything here needs to make money. Not everything needs a client, a business plan or a five-year roadmap. Some ideas might remain as ideas. Some might inspire someone else. Some might suddenly become something bigger than we expected. Or they might just sit here quietly forever. Who knows That is probably the whole point.



403.

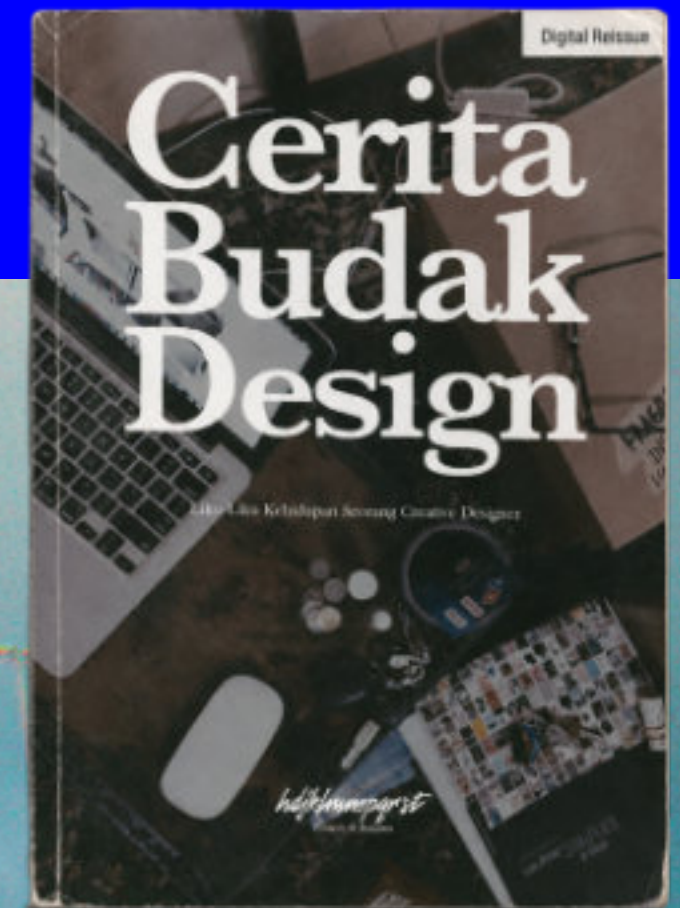


A fictional political party for people who make things for a living. Creative Workers Party takes the language, look and seriousness of politics and turns it towards the creative world. Posters, manifestos, slogans, campaigns and all the unnecessary drama included. It started as an absurd question: what if creatives had their own political party? So we made one. No elections to win, no seats to contest. Just ideas, satire and a little bit of creative propaganda.

Kambeng & Co. started from something much closer to home. Built around goats, chickens, fruits and kampung life, it explores what a farm brand could look and

sound like without becoming too polished or too serious. It is part brand experiment and part future farm. For now, it lives somewhere between an idea and a real thing. Which, in 403. terms, means it is exactly where it should be.





Becoming a creative designer was never really at the top of my list. To heck with it, I don't think it ever made the list. But somehow, it became my reality. Like the old folks used to say, or what the ustaz and ustazah would always remind us, things happen for a reason.

It has been more than ten years since I wrote Cerita Budak Design, and now, in 2026, my career as a Creative Designer has gone beyond 16 years, slowly approaching two decades. I'd like to consider myself more of a Creative Director now.

Cerita Budak Design was written by our founder, Hidayat Jamalolail and is free to download via our 403 platform.

403.

What should
we create next?

Life is short.
Jump. Try new
stuff. Experiment.
Get Crazy. Think
people. Why be
boring when you
can fly away? *Take
a leap of faith.*



Something's been sitting in
your head & not sure who to bring it to?
— that's a sign you should reach out.

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a Creative Studio

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