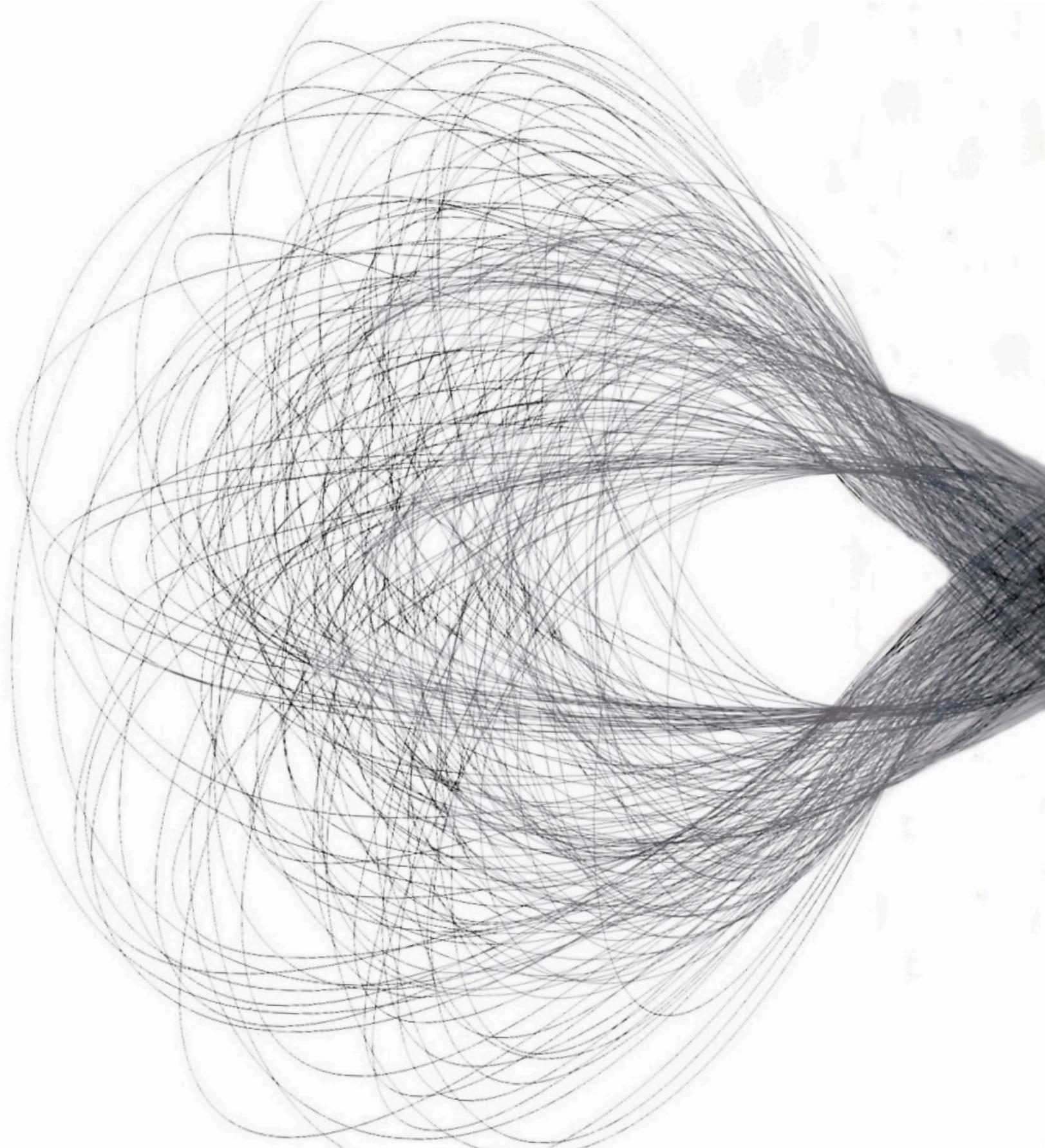


Spirit of Simplicity

John Maeda's Intention



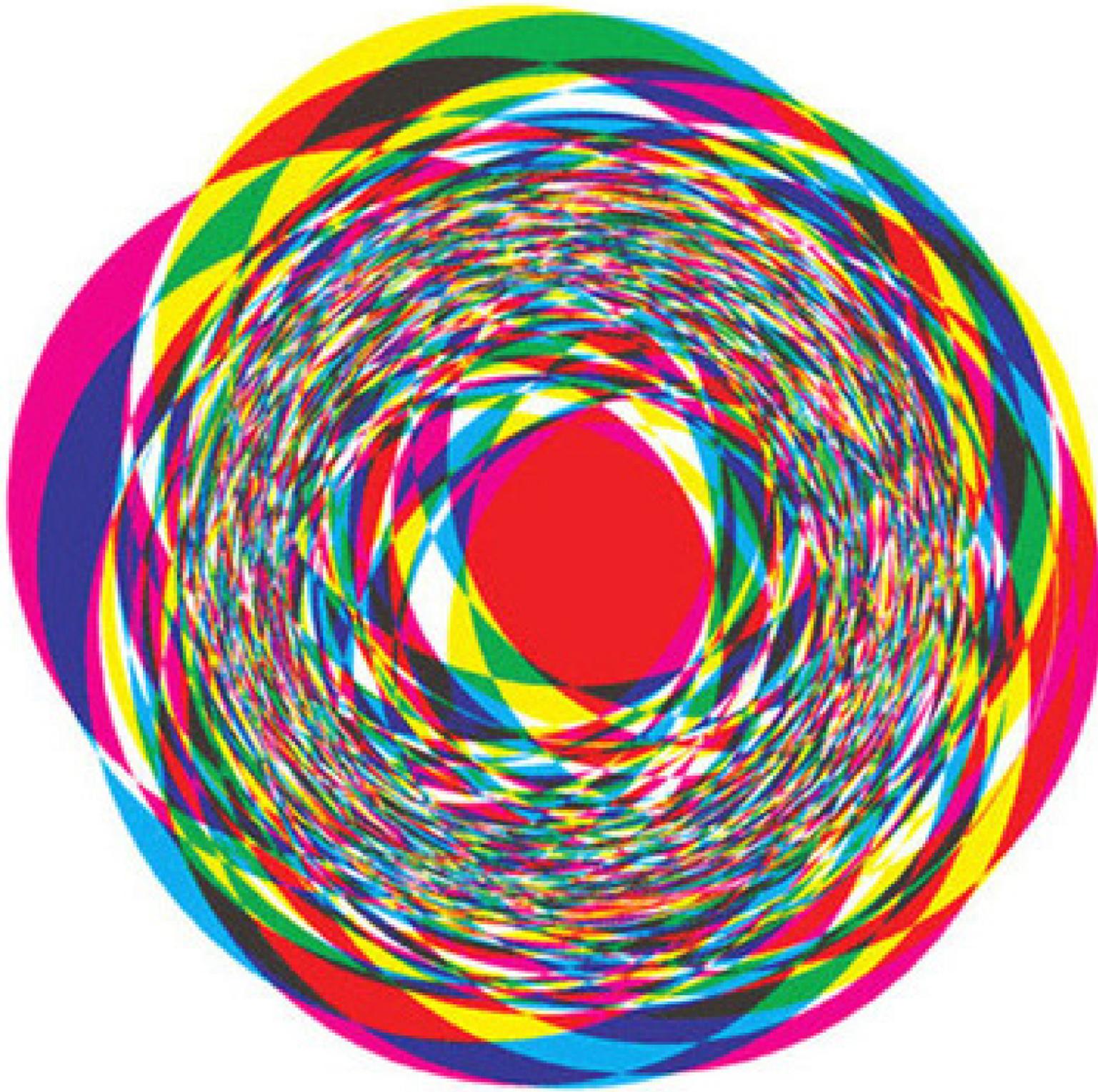
Spirit of Simplicity

John Maedas Intention

# Simply Intro

## *The Philanthropic One*

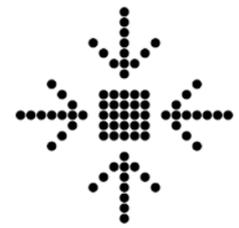
John Maeda is a popular contemporary American graphic designer of Japanese origin. Besides he is also a renowned author, computer scientist and academic scholar. The Laws of Simplicity is considered to be a landmark in graphic designing. In his work he explored design, technology and leadership and pinpointed the area where they all come together. John Maeda was born in 1966 and raised in Seattle, Washington. His father was an owner of a tofu factory and had a great devotion toward craftsmanship. As Maeda grew up and honed his own handcraft skills, he recognized its value. He helped out his father in the factory by managing small business paperwork on computer. This step propelled him in the direction of exploring the field of computer science. Maeda enrolled himself at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he studied electrical engineering and computer science. It was during that period that he found himself enthralled by the work of Muriel Cooper and Paul Rand. At that time, Cooper served as the director of Visual Language Workshop at MIT. Upon completion of the courses Maeda received Master degree in both disciplines. Afterwards, he moved to Japan where he pursued a degree in completely different discipline that is art and design. He attended the University of Tsukuba Institute and



# Simplified Essences

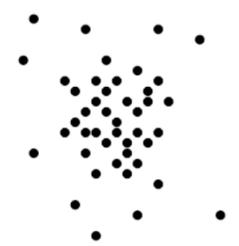
## Reduce

**1st Essence.** The easiest way to simplify a system is to remove functionality. Today's DVD, for instance, has too many buttons if all you want to do is play a movie. A solution could be to remove the buttons for Rewind, Forward, Eject, and so forth until only one button remains: Play. But what if you want to replay a favorite scene? Or pause the movie while you take that all-important bathroom break? The fundamental question is, where's the balance between simplicity and complexity? On the one hand, you want a product or service to be.



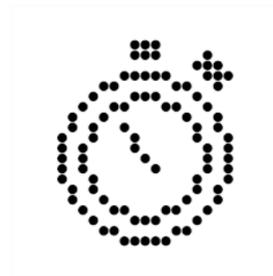
## Organize

**2nd Essence.** The home is usually the first battleground that comes to mind when facing the daily challenge of managing complexity. Stuff just seems to multiply. There are three consistent strategies for achieving simplicity in the living realm: 1) buy a bigger house, 2) put everything you don't really need into storage, or 3) organize your existing assets in a systematic fashion. These typical solutions have mixed results. At first, a larger home lowers the clutter to space ratio. But ultimately, the greater space enables more the clutter.



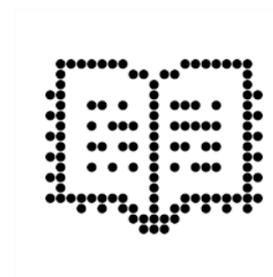
## Time

**3rd Essence.** No one likes to suffer the frustration of waiting. Thus all of us, consumers and companies alike, often try to find ways to beat the ticking hand of time. We go out of our way to find the quickest option or any other means to reduce our frustration. When any interaction with products or service providers happens quickly, we attribute this efficiency to the perceived simplicity of experience. Achieving notable efficiencies in speed are exemplified by overnight delivery services like FedEx and even the ordering pro.



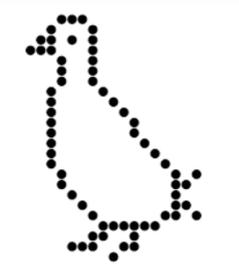
## Learn

**4th Essence.** My children remember this rule through a mnemonic taught by my spouse, „righty tighty, lefty loosy.“ Personally I use the analogy of a clock, and map the clockwise motion of the hands to the positive penetration curve of the screw. Both methods are subject to a second layer of knowledge: knowing right versus left, or knowing what direction the hands of a clock turn. Thus operating a screw is not as simple as it appears. And it’s such an apparently simple object!



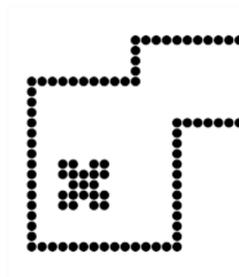
## Differences

**5th Essence.** Acknowledging contrast helps to identify qualities that we desire - which are often subject to change. I don’t personally prefer the color pink, but I do like it as a dash of brightness in a drab sea of olive green. The pink appears bold and vibrant as compared with its dark and muted surroundings. We know how to appreciate something better when we can compare it to something else. Simplicity and complexity need each other. The more complexity there is in the market, the more that something simpler stands out.



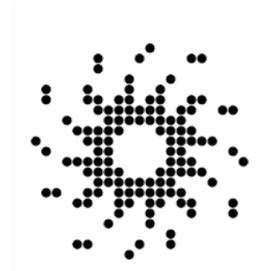
## Context

**6th Essence.** There is something about how our eyes and hands work in concert. Picture yourself at the pottery wheel, sculpting each detail with intense concentration. Everything that matters is happening in the foreground, at your fingertips, and is completely within your immediate field of vision. Your cell phone goes on or the doorbell rings, and this tightest of control loops is disrupted while the background surges into the foreground. Thankfully you notice that a pot on the stove is boiling over, or realize that your hand has been cut and unattendedly bleeds.



## Emotion

**7th Essence.** Simplicity can be considered ugly. Take my mother who absolutely despises anything of neutral color or minimalist form. She wants neon flowers, bejeweled frogs, and other decorative essentials. When it comes to aesthetics, she's all about the „bling.“ From a rational perspective, simplicity makes good economic sense. Simple objects are easier and less expensive to produce, and those savings can be translated directly to the consumer with desirable low prices. As evidenced by the extremely affordable line of simple.



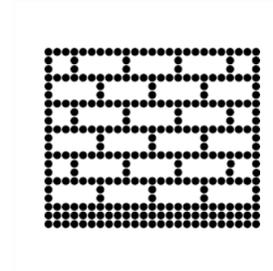
## Trust

**8th Essence.** I imagine an electronic device with only one unlabeled button on its surface. Pressing the button would complete your immediate task. Do you want to write a letter to Aunt Mabel? Go ahead and press the button. Click. A letter has been sent. You know with absolute certainty that it went out and expressed exactly what you needed. That's simplicity. And we are not far from that reality. Every day the computer becomes increasingly smarter. It already knows your name, address, and credit card number. Knowing



## Failure

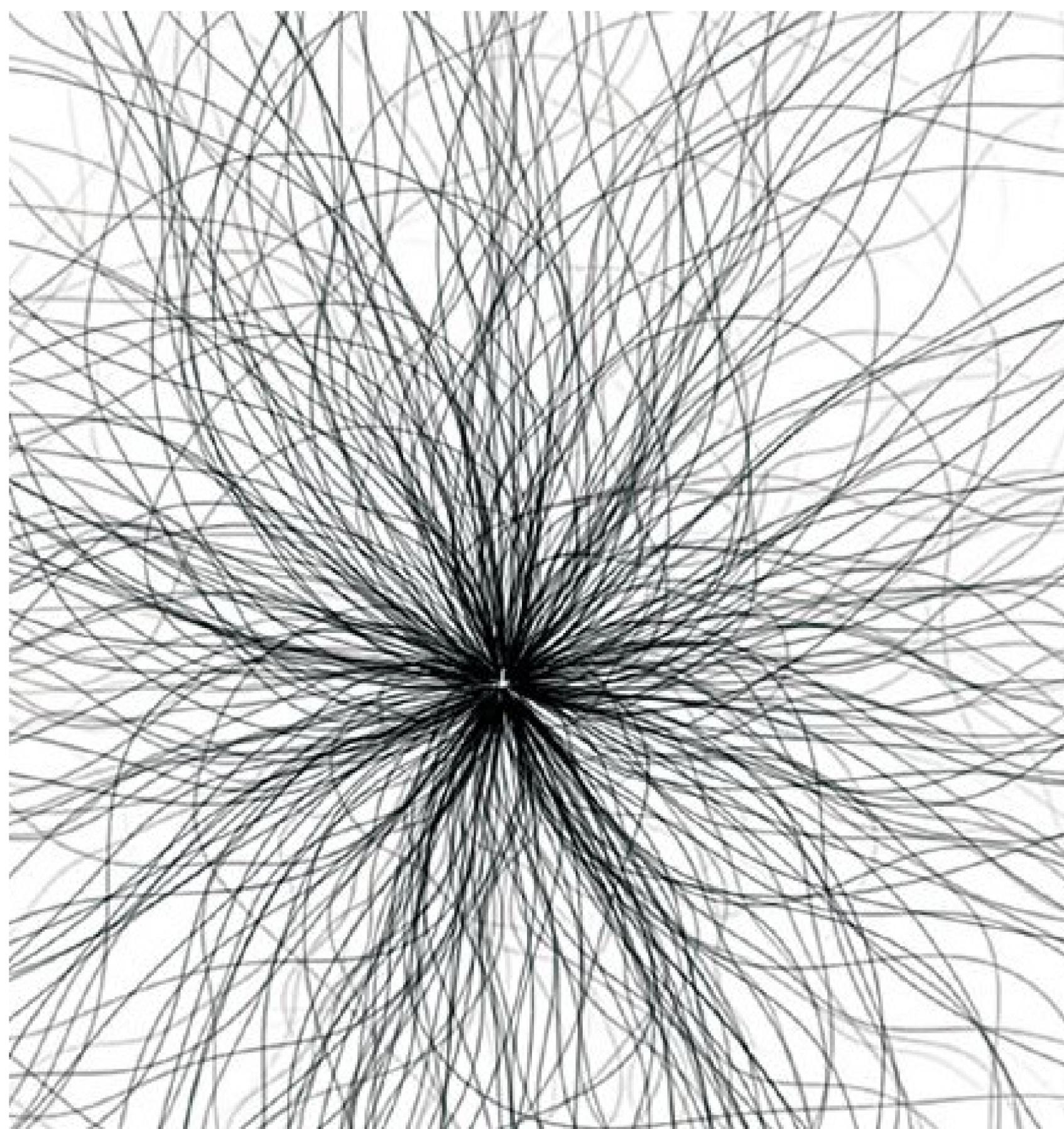
**9th Essence.** There's always an ROF (Return On Failure) when you try to simplify—which is to learn from your mistakes. When faced with failure, a good artist, or any other member of the creative class, leverages the unfortunate event to radically shift perspective. One person's failed experiment in simplicity can be another person's success as a beautiful form of complexity. Simplicity and complexity shift with subtle changes in point of view. Concentrate on the deep beauty of a flower. Notice the many thin, delicate strands that



## The One

**10th Essence.** Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious, and adding the meaningful. Ten laws (10: one, zero), remove none (0: zero), and you're left with one (10: one). When in doubt, turn to the tenth Law: the one. It's simpler that way. Key 1: *Away* More appears like less by simply moving it far, far away. Key 2: *Open* Openness simplifies complexity. Key 3: *Power* Use less, gain more. The problem isn't how to make the world more technological. It's about how to make the world more humane again. While great art makes things

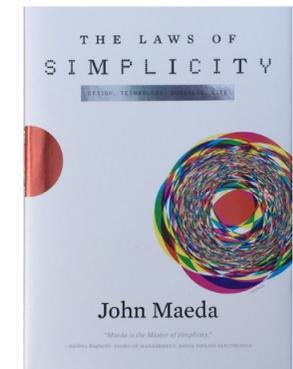




# Simply Haunted

## Trapped by a word

On Simplicity. What a great way to start. First of all, I've been watching this trend where we have these books like such as such „For Dummies.“ Do you know these books, these such and such „For Dummies?“ My daughters pointed out that I'm very similar looking, so this is a bit of a problem. But I was looking online on Amazon.com for other books like this. You know, there's also something called the „Complete Idiot's Guide?“ There's a sort of business model around being stupid in some sense. We like to have technology make us feel bad, for some strange reason. But I really like that, so I wrote a book called: „The Laws of Simplicity.“ I was in Milan last week, for the Italian launch. It's kind of a book about questions, questions about simplicity. Very few answers. I'm also wondering myself, what is simplicity. Is it good? Is it bad? Is complexity better? I'm not sure. After I wrote „The Laws of Simplicity,“ I was very tired of simplicity, as you can imagine. And so in my life, I've discovered that vacation is the most important skill for any kind of overachiever. Because your companies will always take away your life, but they can never take away your vacation...in theory. So, I went to the Cape last summer to hide from simplicity, and I went to the Gape, because I only have black pants. So I went and bought khaki shorts or whatever, and unfortunately.



*Laws of Simplicity*

Their branding was all about „Keep it Simple.“ I opened up a magazine, and Visas branding was, „Business Takes Simplicity.“ I developed photographs, and Kodak said, „Keep It Simple.“ So, I felt kind of weird that simplicity was sort of following me around. So I turned on the TV very much, but you know this person? This is Paris Hilton, apparently. And she has this show, „The Simple Life.“ So I watched this. It's not very simple, a little bit confusing. So, I looked for a different show to watch. So, I opened up this TV Guide thing, and on the E channel, this „Simple Life“ show is very popular. They play it over, and over, and over. So it was traumatizing, actually. So, I wanted to escape again. So I went out to my car. And Cape Cod, there are idyllic roads, and all of us can drive in this room. And then you drive, these signs are very important. It's a very simple sign, it says, „road“ and „road approaching.“ So I'm mostly driving along, okay, and then I saw this sign. So, I thought complexity was attacking me suddenly, so I thought, „Ahh, simplicity. Very important.“ But then I thought, „Oh, simplicity.

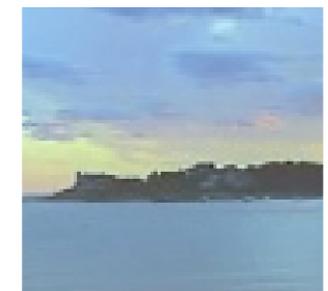
What would that be like on a beach? What if the sky was 41 percent gray? Wouldn't that be the perfect sky?“ I mean the simplicity sky. But in reality, the sky looked like this. It was a beautiful, complex sky.

You know, with the pinks and blues, we can't help but love complexity. We're human beings: we love complex things. We love relationships-- very complex. So we love that kind of stuff. I'm at this place called the Media Lab. Maybe some of you guys have heard of this place. It's designed by I.M. Pei, one of the premier modernist architects.

Modernism means white box. And some of you guys are entrepreneurs, etc., whatever. Last month, I was at Google, and boy, that cafeteria man. You guys have things here in Silicon Valley like stock options. See in academia, we get titles, lots of titles. Last year at TED, these were all my titles. I had a lot of titles. I have a default title as a father of a bunch of daughters. This year I'm happy to report that I have a new title, in addition to my previous titles. Another „Associate Director Research.“ And this also happened, so I have five daughters now. That's my baby Reina. Thank you. And so, my life is much more complex because of the baby, actually, but that's okay. We will stay married, I think. But looking way back, when I was a child--you see, I grew up in a tofu factory in Seattle. Many of you may not like tofu because you haven't had good tofu, but tofu's a good food. It's a very simple kind of food. It's very hard work to make tofu. As a child, we used to wake



*Simplicity*



*Complexity*

of like Andy Grove, paranoid of the competition. So, often, seven days a week. Family business equals child labor. We were a great model. So I loved going to school. School was great, and maybe going to school helped me get to this Media Lab place, I'm not sure. But the Media Lab is an interesting place, and it's important to me because as a student, I was a computer science undergrad, and I discovered design later on my life. And there where this person, Muriel Cooper. Who knows Muriel Cooper? Wasn't she amazing?

Muriel Cooper she was wacky. And she was a TEDster, exactly, and she showed us, she showed the world how to make the computer beautiful again. And she is very important to my life, because she's the one that told me to leave MIT and go to art school. It was the best advice I ever got. So I went to art school, because of her. She passed away in 1994, and I was hired back to MIT to try to fill her shoes, but it's so hard. This amazing person, Muriel Cooper. Then I was in Japan - I went to an art school in Japan in Japan --I had a nice sort of situation, because somehow I was connected to Paul Rand. Some of you guys know Paul Rand, the greatest graphic designer--I'm sorry-- out there. The great graphic designer Paul Rand designed the IBM logo, the Westinghouse logo. He basically said, I've designed everything.

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*John Maeda*

