

AD
LITETakashi Kawashima,
Unleashed

A Goodby, Silverstein & Partners AD shows how hard it really is to make money

Goodby, Silverstein & Partners art director Takashi Kawashima has launched a site unveiling the results of a net art collaboration enlisting a small army of faceless digital craftsmen to reproduce a hundred dollar bill. Kawashima and his partner Aaron Koblin divided a Benjamin into 10,000 sections then recruited participants via Amazon's crowd-sourcing bazaar Mechanical Turk, paying them one cent to reproduce each section. While Google initially balked at Kawashima and Koblin selling prints for \$100 apiece (don't worry, all proceeds are going to One Laptop Per Child), editions of "Ten Thousand Cents" are now for sale via PayPal. Kawashima explained the project for us.

The idea came on November 11th last year when I was driving with my friend Aaron, my partner on this project, from Los Angeles to San Francisco on Highway 5.

Building the site took us about two weeks, but we had to wait almost five months to get all 10,000 pieces (at only \$.01 each) before building the site and revealing the concept behind the project. Thousands of individual workers working in isolation from one another painted a tiny part of the bill without knowledge of the overall task. We were trying to picture the end result but were not 100% sure how it would actually come out until we got the all data. Also keeping our confidence for five months was pretty tough. It's hard to run without knowing what the goal looks like. That was a real challenge. However our efforts were amply repaid when we hit the rendering button to visualize the whole image after we finally got all 10,000 drawings. We used a few different tools to create everything. The interfaces were done with Flash, the movies with After Effects and PhotoShop, most everything else was done with Processing, and of course, the eyes and hands of thousands of workers online.

We expected that [selling the prints of] this project would be a bit controversial, but perhaps that's the point. We were rather impressed with Google's very close review process. They contacted us just a couple of days after we launched the site. We emailed back and forth a couple of times attempting to resolve the issue. They seemed to understand the uniqueness of this project but in the end they were apparently not comfortable enough to deal with it. Now we switched to PayPal and we are getting along so far.



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— TAKASHI KAWASHIMA



Although we respect their anonymity and we are not trying to identify who the Turks are, the access data is quite interesting. (Some of the stats are viewable on the site.) One of the facts which intrigues us was the number of accesses from India, China, the Philippines and Egypt. Considering the diffusion rate of Internet plus language barrier (in fact there was only one access from Japan) those are the second, third, fifth and sixth countries we had access from respectively. Of course the population in India and China is high, but what we thought more interesting is not only the number of accesses but average time spent by user and percent unique visitors. Users from China spent about 24 minutes average working on the task and the percent unique visitors was about 10%, whereas user in the U.S. which we got the most access from, spent less than two minutes and the percent of unique visitors was 83%. Few users from China spent about half an hour and worked on a lot of tasks, at least 10 drawings each. On the other hand most users from the U.S. did one drawing and left the site. Egypt is more particular. The average time spent per user there was almost 32 minutes and the percent of unique visitors was just 3%. We assume that some guy from Egypt actually tried to make some money. The data tells us a lot more stories than we expected.

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