

magazine layout

Project: Magazine spread for Bristol Collaboration

I am leant against a wall in the entrance stairwell of Spike Island, utterly transfixed by a surrealistic "happening" that is being played out before me. A fawn-coloured Lurcher, dressed in a pale pink coat, is standing outside the main doorway oblivious to the fact that no one can enter or leave without negotiating around him. Probably his owner is buying a chocolate muffin from the feng shuied Spike Café, but this hapless fellow is paralysed, gazing ahead at the building before him – and frankly I know how he feels! Where do I begin with such a tardis as Spike Island?!



Maybe an artist could film this canine compatriot and the people thronging around him and adapt the image for conceptual art, but some might say this isn't 'real Art' as it wouldn't be using traditional materials and processes. However, art is so fluid, innovative and all-embracing nowadays that it blows apart any restrictive notions of what forms it can take, where it can be displayed and how artists approach it. So much so that the art world itself has had to adapt and to create reflective organisations to house and nurture such developments.

Within this context, Spike Island Studios is probably one of the best examples in Europe of such responsive art centres. Housing a critically acclaimed art gallery and extensive studio spaces for local artists, as well as running a residency programme, results in a unique and a highly complex international organisation.

The centre's roots come from the Bristol harbourside-based studio, *Artspace*, which formed in 1976. Throughout the 1980s the group expanded, but in 1991 found themselves facing imminent eviction as victims of the city's regeneration schemes. Rather than quashing artistic impulse or initiative, *Artspace* responded by launching an unprecedented campaign to secure a permanent home, rallying council support, collecting a petition with over 12,000 signatures and eventually raising £1.5 million, enabling them to purchase a new warehouse on the Spike Island site.

In 1996 work began on refurbishing the former Brook Bond Tea packing factory and by 1998 Spike Island Studios was launched. It has since benefited, in 2006, from an additional phase of redevelopment which completed the complex of resources you see today.

Renovated by Caruso St John, the warehouse still retains an appealing, raw, industrial quality, revealing idiosyncratic details to counteract its solidity. Random marks from heavy machinery and yellow floor lines which transverse rooms are remnants of the building's previous life, but it is the sheer colossal scale and presence of this 80,000 square foot building that takes your breath away. The public gallery, a nine metre high space spanned by a glass roof, creates a tangible presence which mirrors the cutting-edge art that is displayed within it. Exhibitions here change every two months and have included artists as reputable as Richard Long, Simon Starling, Lucy Skaer, Ruth Claxton and David Blandy. Many works are commissioned specifically for the space, such as the monumental figures inspired by eighteenth and nineteenth century art that can currently be seen in the installation by Glasgow-based artist Clare Stephenson. Equally, shows can often be artists' first solo exhibitions.



Housed within Spike Island are over sixty studios rented out to locally based artists. When they aren't invaded during the annual Open Weekend by children on scooters and harassed but inspired parents, the ground-floor studios are used to produce a diverse collection of sculptures. Forms vary from the hilarious and thought-provoking work of Harrison and Wood, and the playfully crafted objects of Rhys Coren, to fields of light sculpture by Richard Box or haunting video installations by Mariele Neudecker. The upstairs studios are drenched with light, but the atmosphere is quieter as the making processes are less physical.

Artists based here include Andrew Mania, who creates assemblages and installations from collected curiosities; Nicola Donovan, who uses textiles sculpturally; and the ever-so-mobile InterCity Mainline, who are currently publishing an arts fanzine exploring artist-led activity throughout the UK. Additional spaces for artistic production are also located on this floor, including the Spike Print Studio, an independent organisation providing facilities and technical expertise for print-makers; the UWE Fine Art Studios, supporting both UWE graduates and the undergraduate School of Fine Art; and Spike Design, the largest design incubator that can be found in the South West.

With such a diverse range of activities taking place under one roof, one could easily assume that Spike Island consists of a series of disparate communities which only come together in events such as exhibition launches or the Open Weekend. However, this is not the case. Beyond its physical structures, Spike Island has a unifying artistic pulse which engenders its own dynamic socially and artistically mutable forms.

A prime example of this is the innovative Associate Programme which emerged in 2007 and now supports a membership of over ninety Bristol-based artists, writers and curators active in contemporary visual arts. The Associates have access to

their own space, generating funds for visiting lecturers and attendance at international arts festivals. Opportunities for public exposure also arise. Recently, an art store was converted into a hanging space, enabling an exhibition – *For Real* – to take place. Curated by Associate artist Nancy Murphy-Spicer, many of the exhibits were created by American artists and were transported to Bristol to join works produced by British artists from Bristol, Bath, Cardiff and Manchester.



The residency programme also adds to the fluidity of artistic practice within Spike Island, extending as far as Kosovo, Iran and Serbia, and is paralleled by programmes such as *Accented*, in which regional artists take up places in international partner institutions such as *Platform Garantie CAC* in Istanbul and *Vector Association* in Romania.

As Spike Island's curator Marie-Anne McQuay explains, the centre's primary investment is in people and meeting their evolving needs. So the Studios encourage artists to engage with them by entering through a multitude of access points from which they can develop their practice conceptually, practically and socially. She adds, "Spike Island is aspirationally like the Bauhaus model, in the sense that is trying to develop all these cultures in one house", and from what I have seen of Spike Island, I have to agree with her. Through its progressive vision and light-footed responsiveness, Spike Island is many things to many people, and long may it be so.

Image courtesy of Spike Island. Photo by Nathan Wild

brochure design

Client: [The Translation & Legalisation Services](#)

Project: e-brochure



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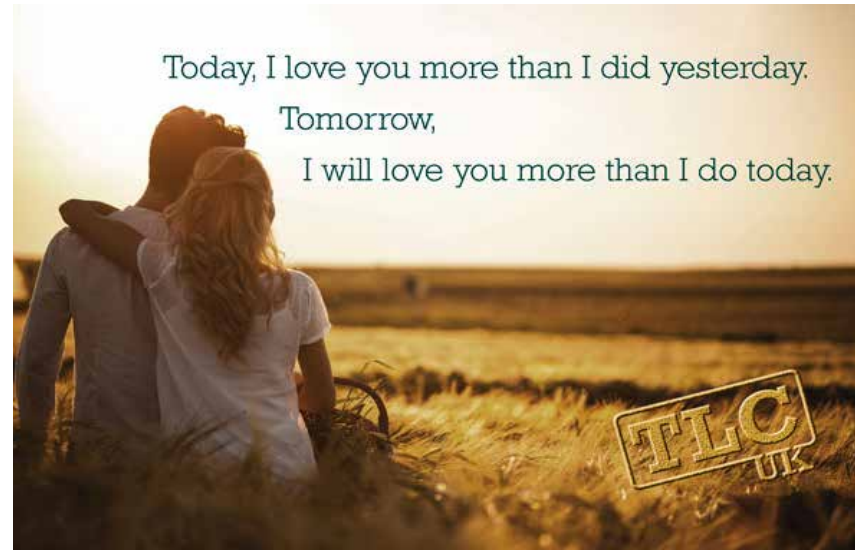
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design for web & social media

Client: [The Translation & Legalisation Services](#)



graphic design: packaging

Client: Vice Beats & uchi clothing co

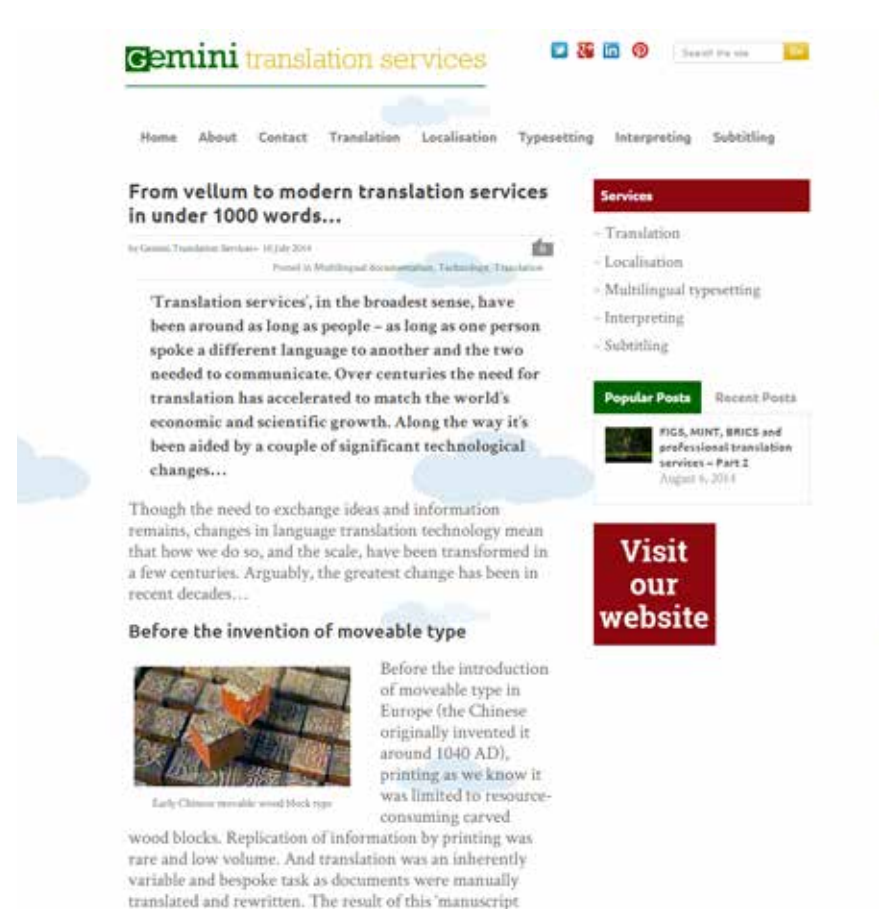
Project: Mix tape and artwork



re-branding & brand management

Client: Gemini Translation Services

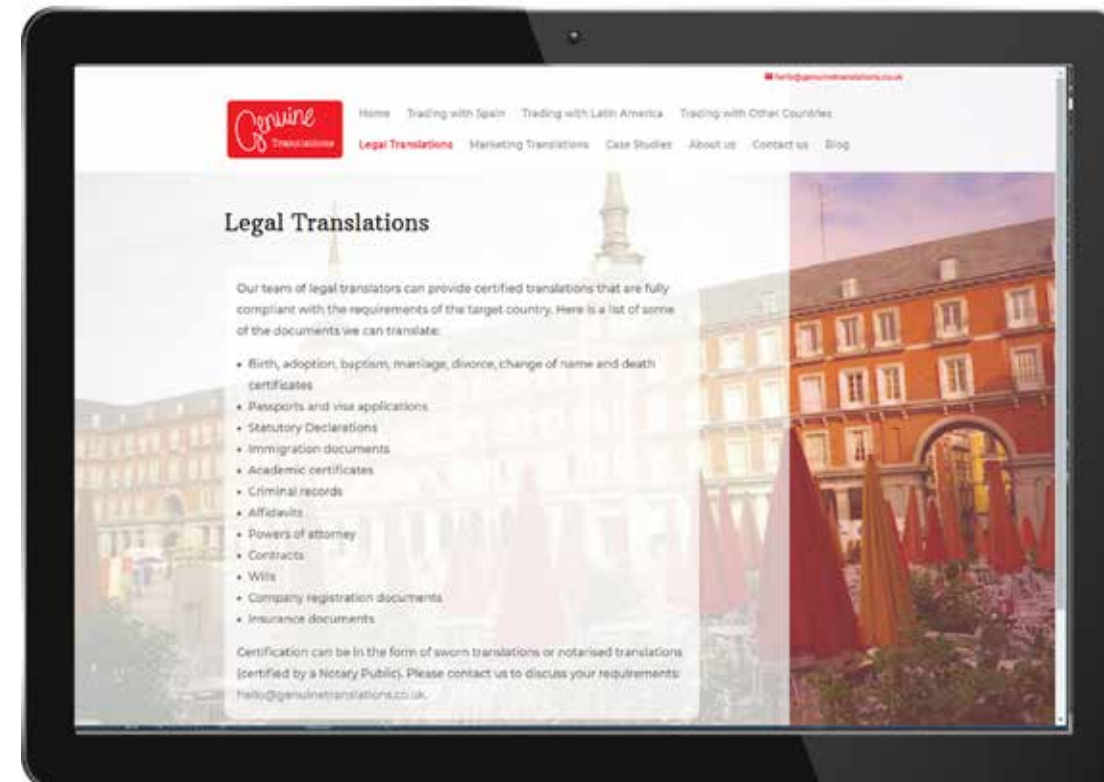
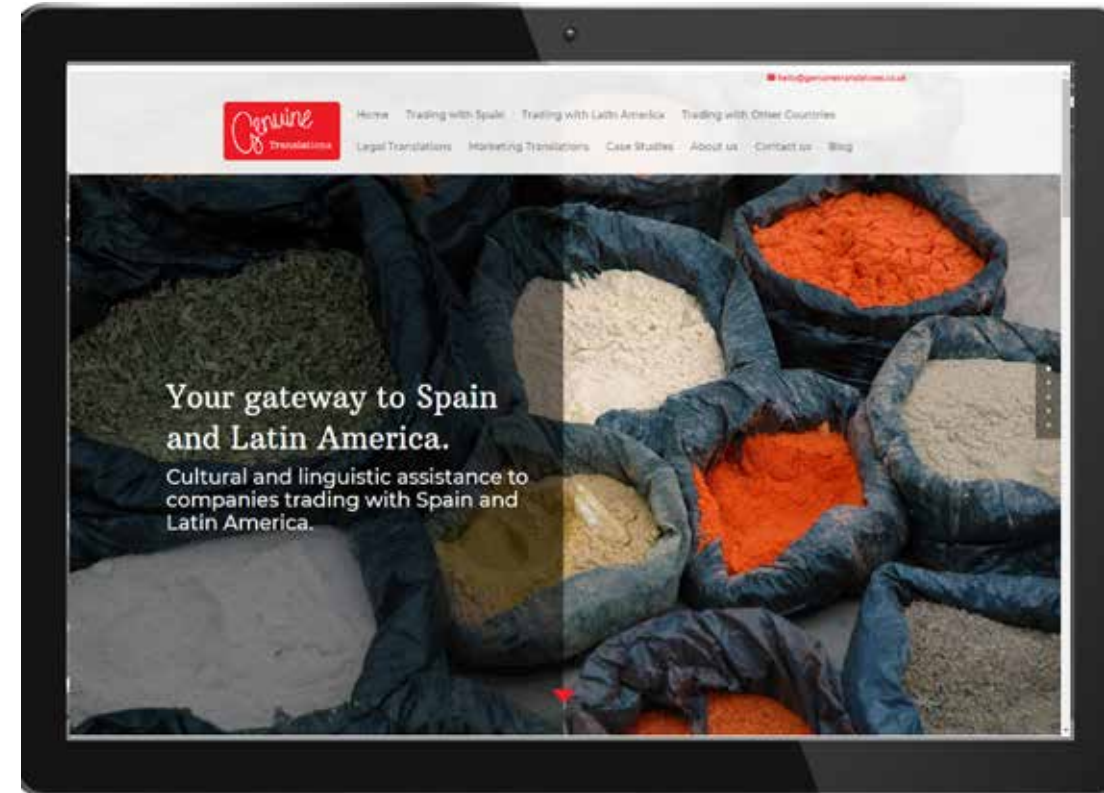
Project: Rebrand



Michael Langley

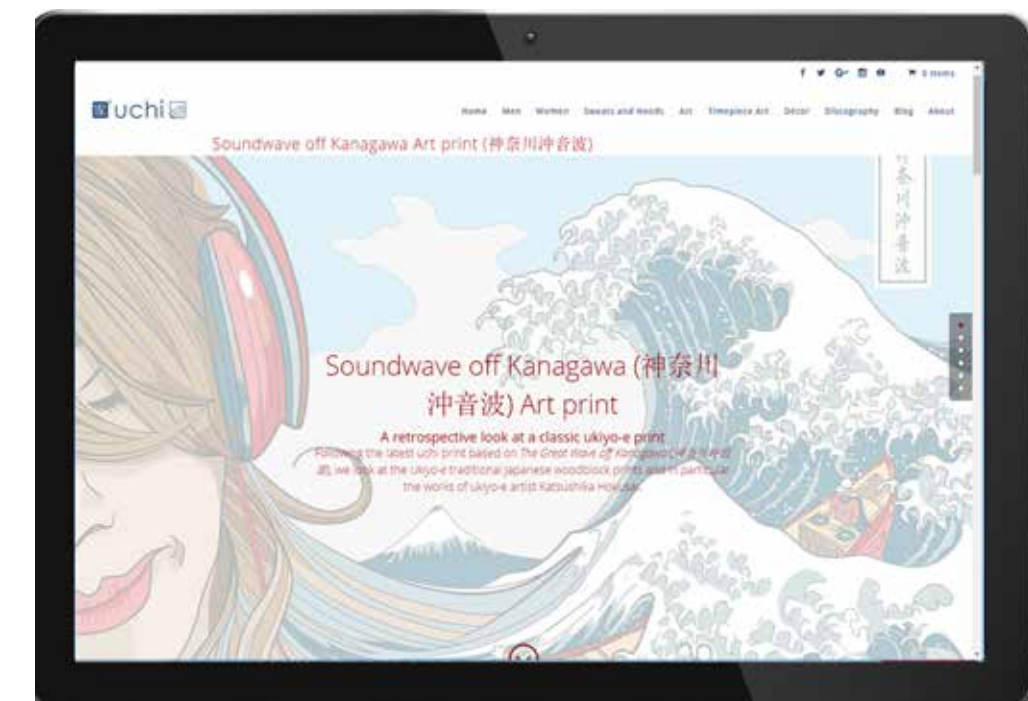
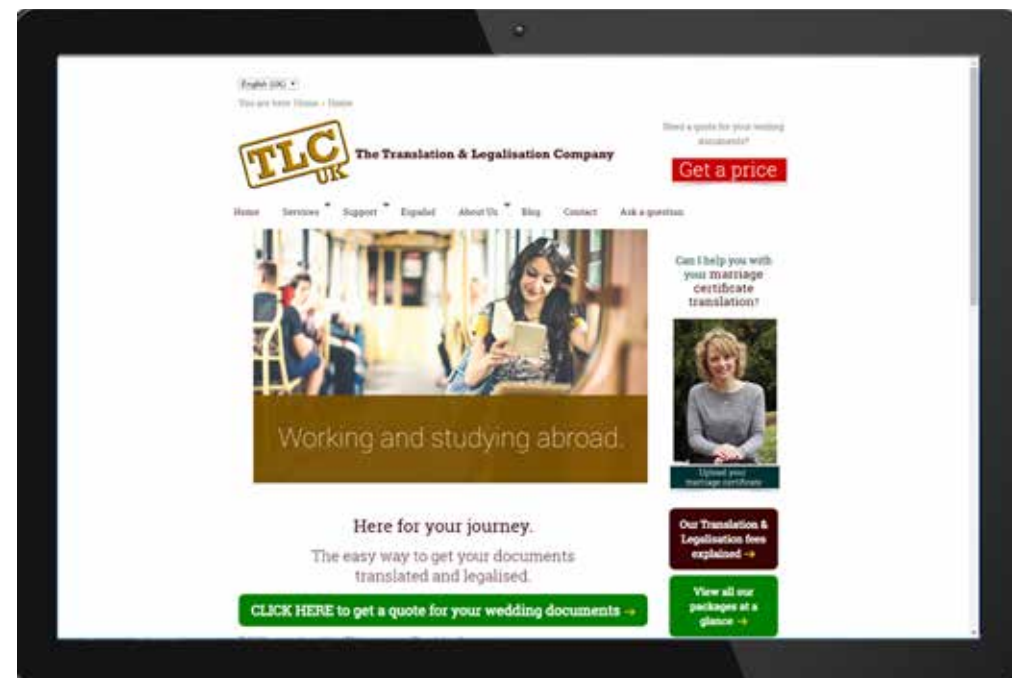
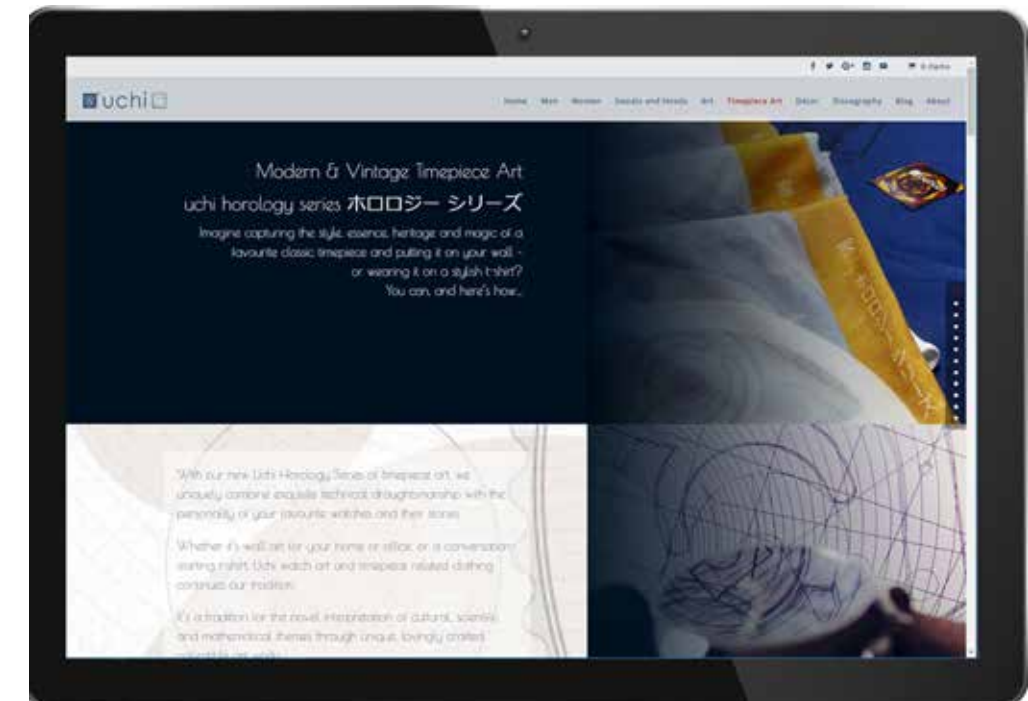
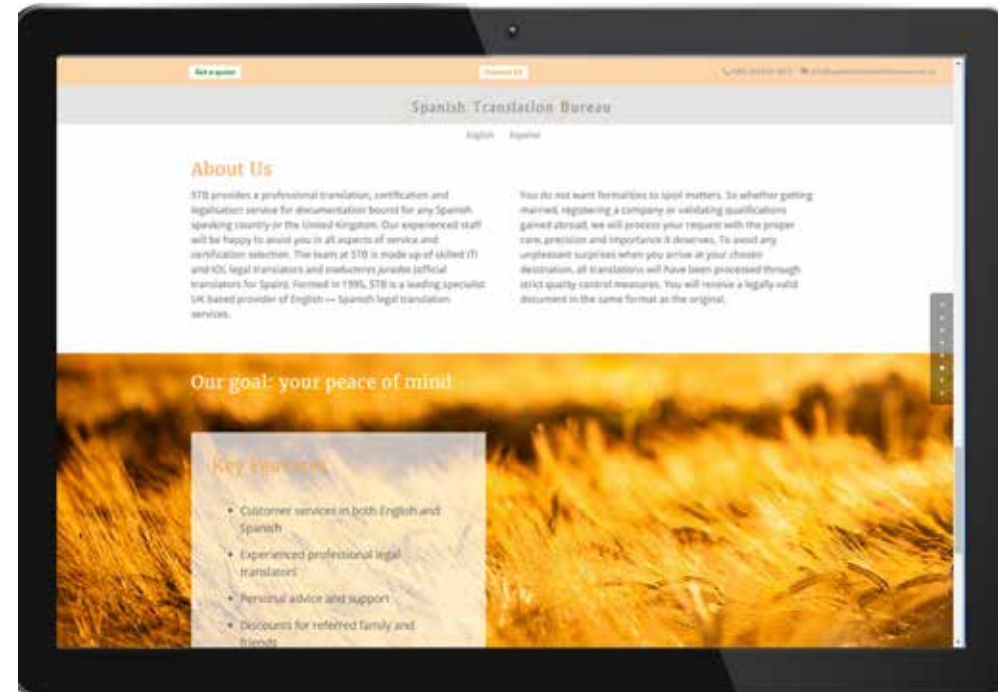
branding identity & website development

Client: [Genuine Translations](#)



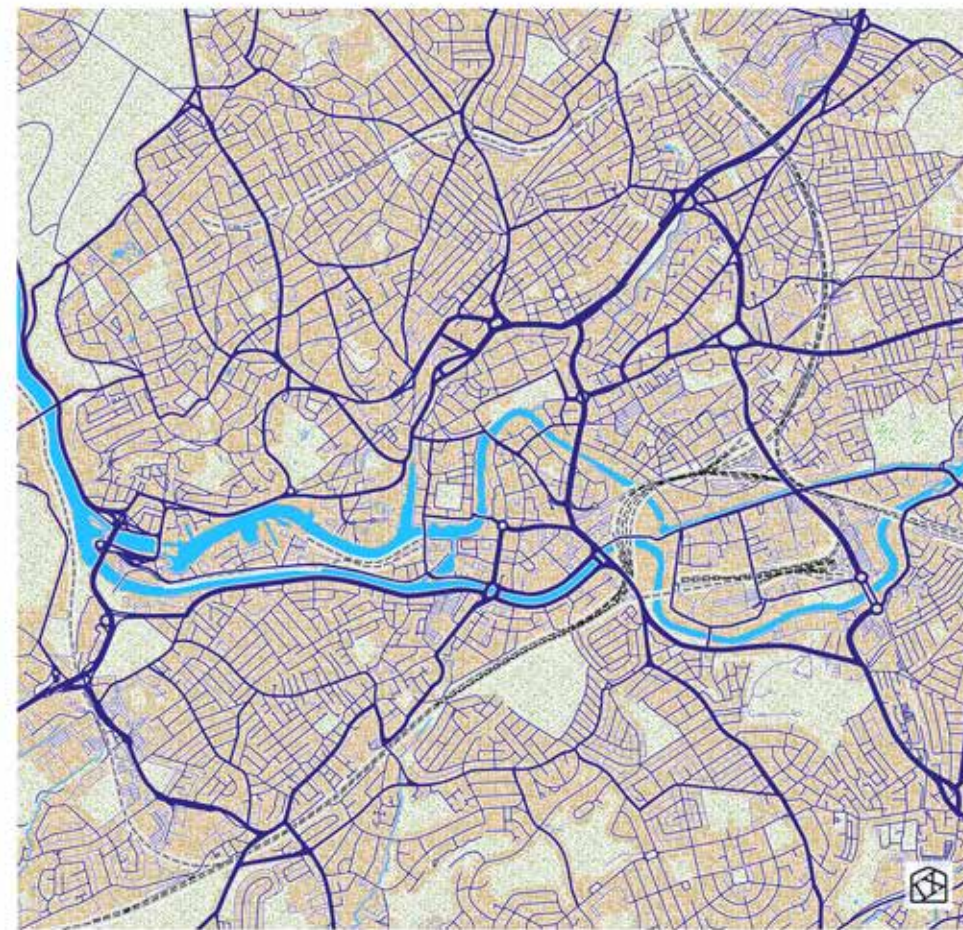
branding identity & website development

Client: Spanish Translation Bureau, Genuine Translations, uchi clothing



vector illustration

Client: NumberNine, uchi clothing



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TLC UK
The Translation & Legalisation Company

Esther Rodriguez
BA (Hons), MA, MCIL
Director

T: 0203-633-4923 E: esther@tlcuk.biz www.tlcuk.biz

d4

Deborah Walket
Textile & Surface Pattern Designer
07814 169715 d4-design.co.uk

Genuine
Translations

Eva Túnez Salvador

Your gateway to Spain
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+44 (0)753 123 7317
www.guinetranslations.co.uk
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Alison Swift
BSc Arb, NC (Hort & Arb), Permaculture Design Certificate
Tel 0117 9559323 / 07962 994746
61 Chelsea Road, Easton, BS5 6AS
swiftoutdoors@yahoo.co.uk

planeturf

G
gtsuk.biz

Redwood House, 65 Bristol Road,
Keynham, Bristol, BS31 2WB
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0) 117 988 8578
F: +44 (0) 117 988 8578
E: info@gtsuk.biz

Darren Elliott
Managing Director

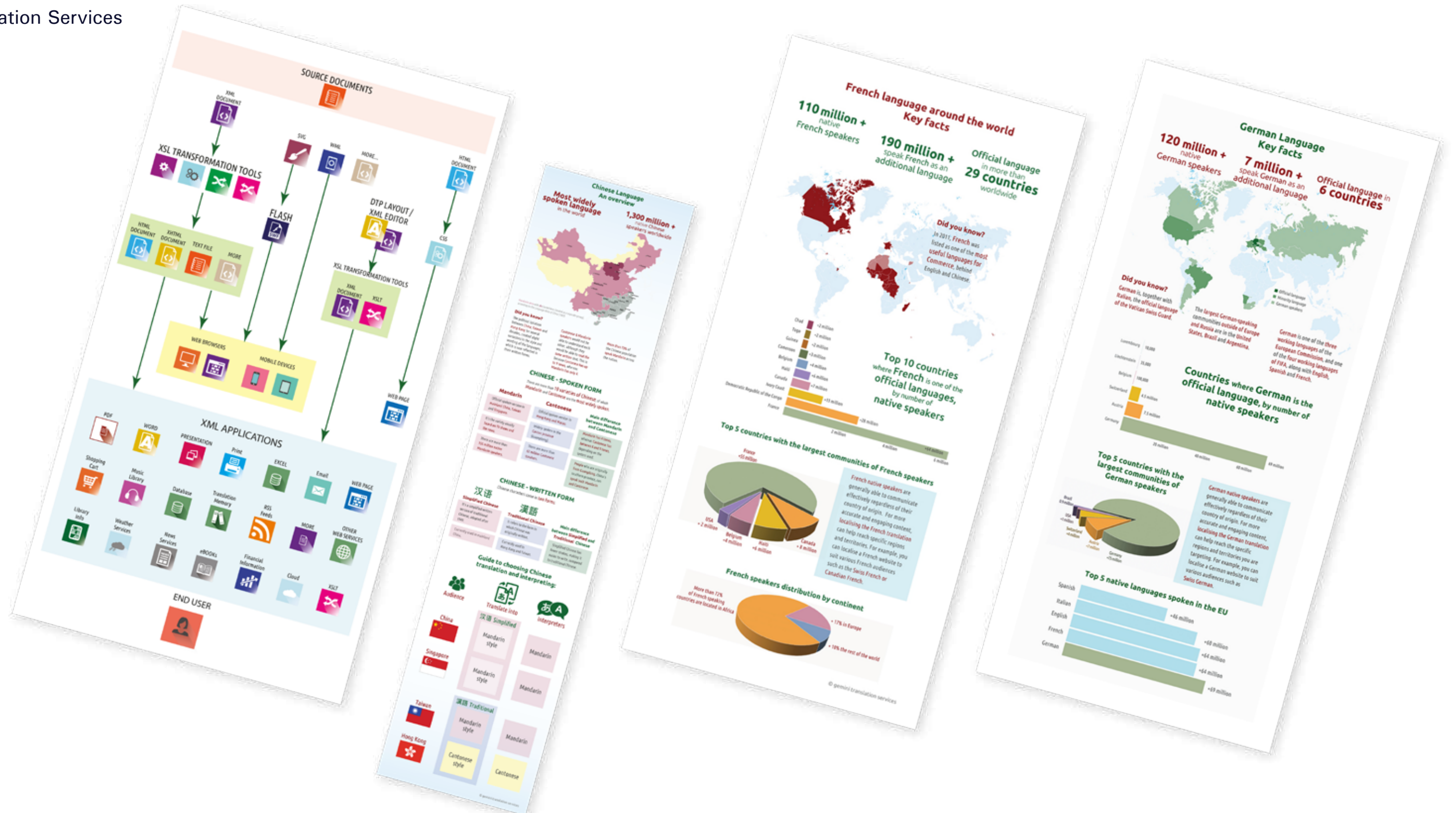
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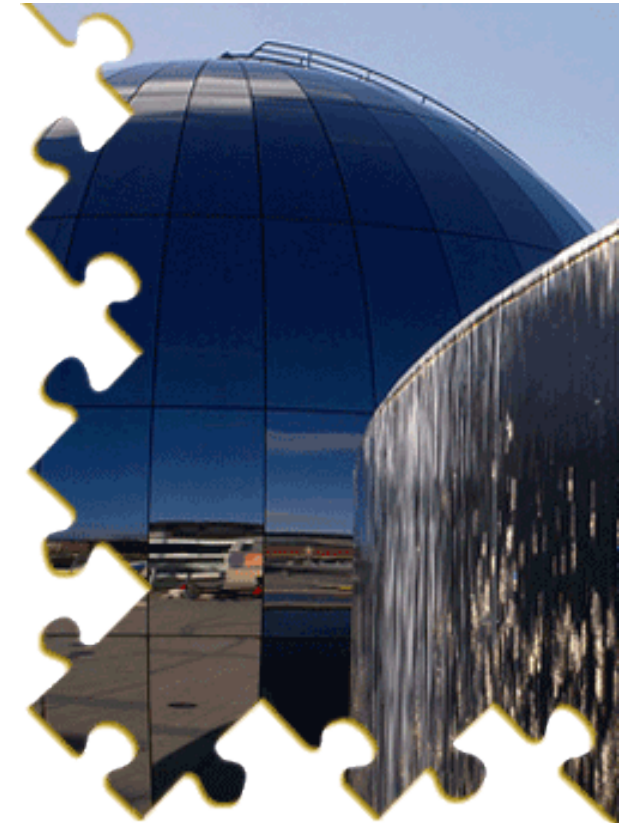
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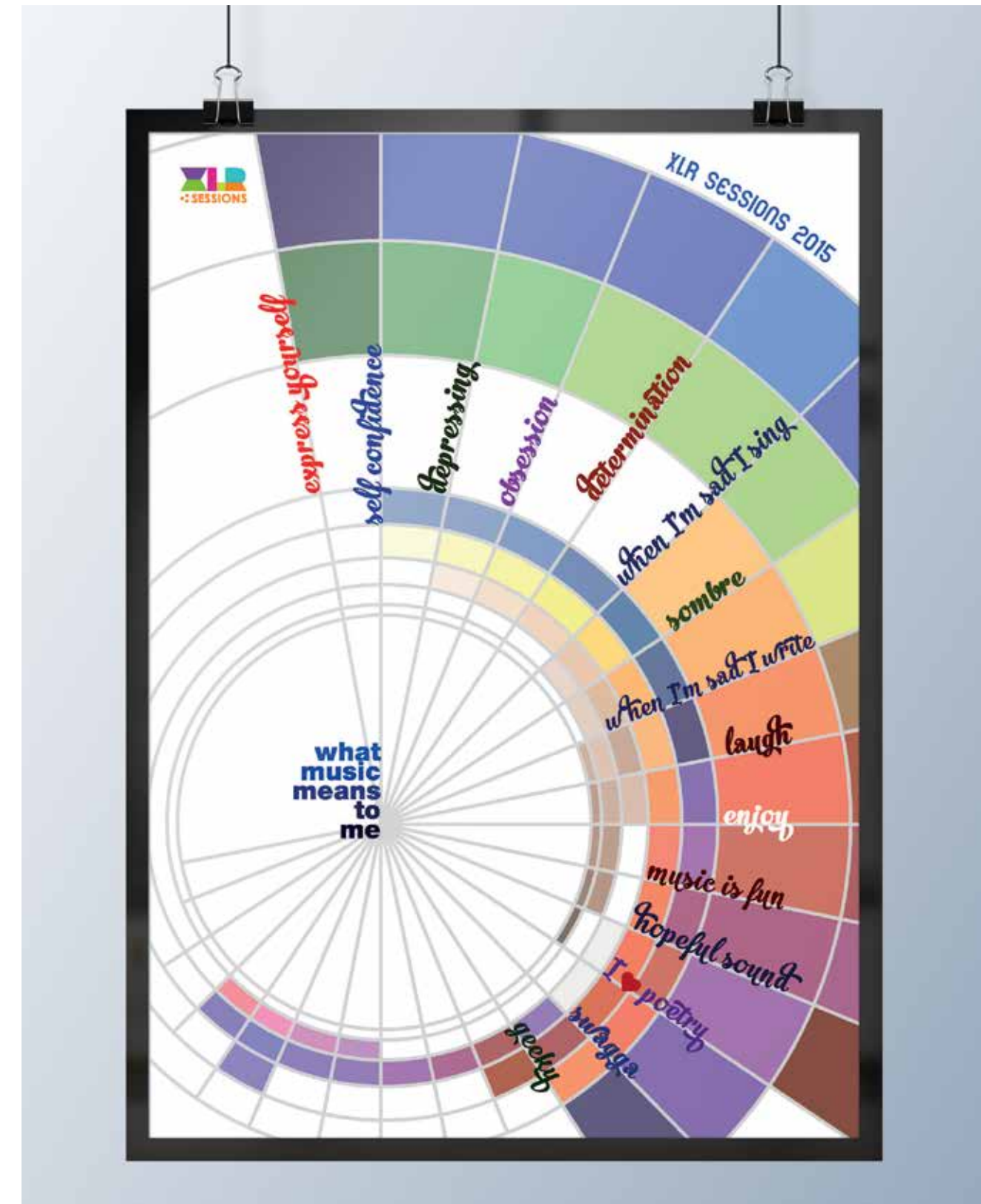


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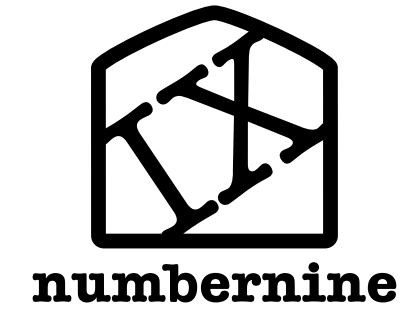
poster

XLR Sessions is a six month Youth Music funded project offering amazing opportunities for 11 – 19 year olds across Bristol who have an existing interest or experience in music. The XLR Sessions help to develop skills and confidence in creative ideas far beyond making music. I was asked to give a workshop on branding their creative abilities for their personal and professional development in music. Based solely on the input from the young people involved a poster was then created to mark the entire session.

Client: Knowle West Media Centre

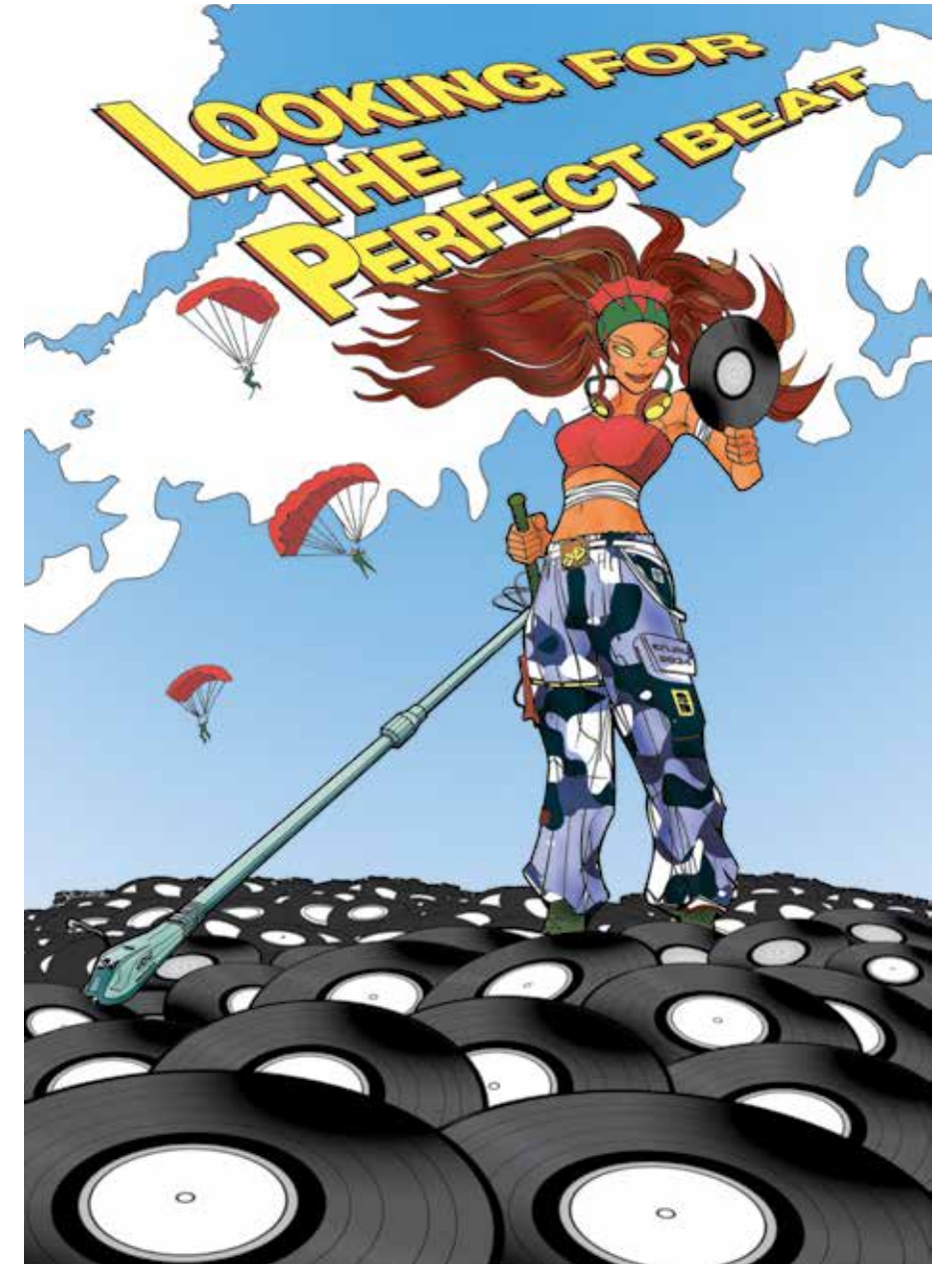


logos



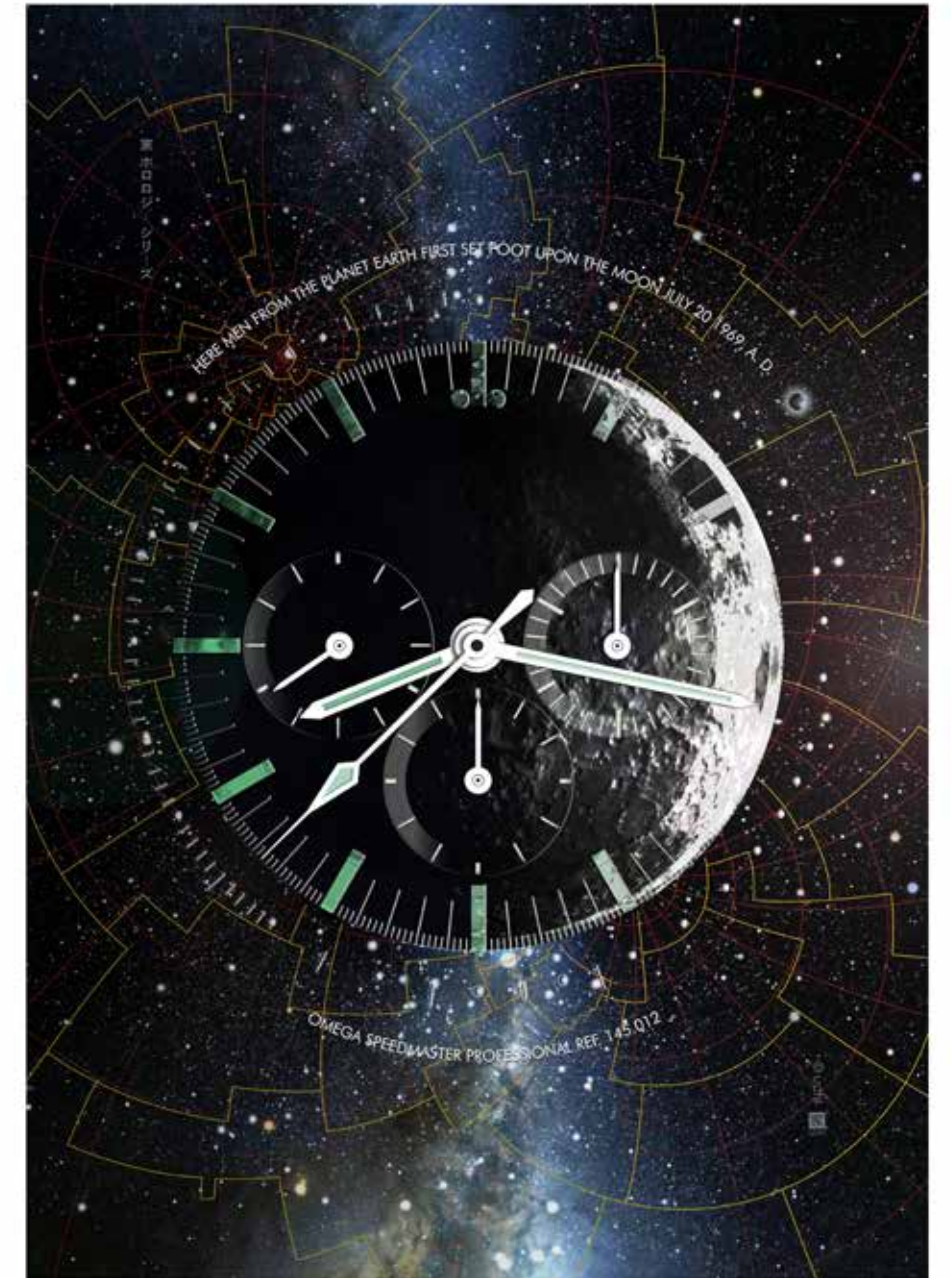


art

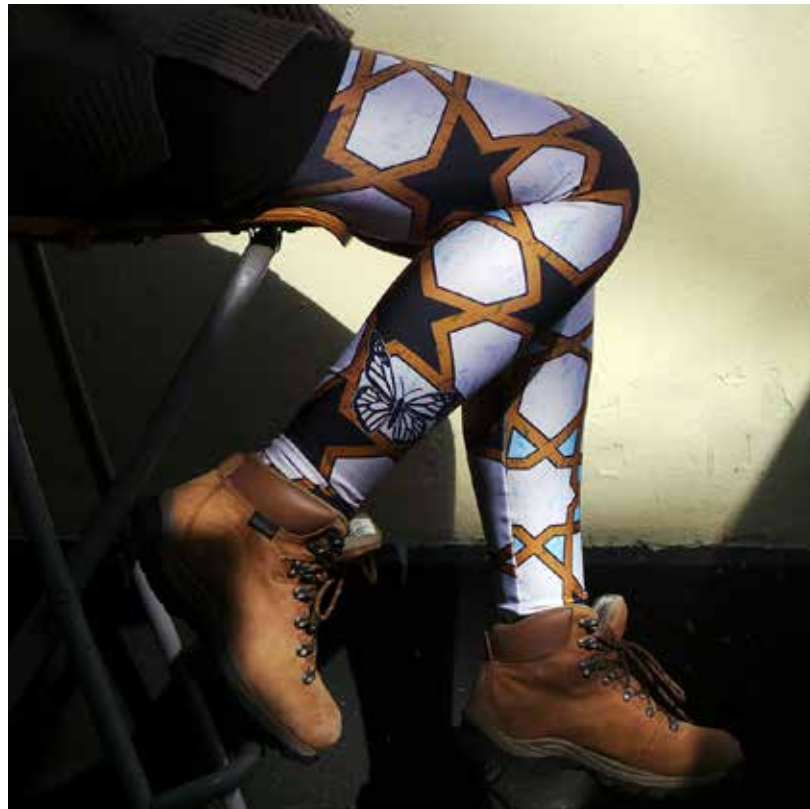


art & T shirt design

Client: uchi clothing co



design for fashion



brand identity: stylescape

