

MOTION DESIGN

CRASH COURSE

Motion Design Crash Course : Lesson 1

What This Lesson Covers

This first module sets your foundation for becoming a motion graphics artist by clarifying what motion design is, where it shows up in real life, and the kinds of projects and roles you'll encounter. You also get a high-level tour of the core tools you'll use and a realistic look at earning potential and career paths in the field. The lesson closes by moving from talk to action with a hands-on, beginner-friendly After Effects project.

What Is Motion Design?

Motion design (aka motion graphics) is essentially graphic design in motion—taking static elements like type, shapes, and images and making them communicate over time through animation. Think of it as the overlap in a Venn diagram between graphic design and animation, where visual principles meet time-based techniques to convey messages and evoke feeling. While it's a subset of animation, it's typically more design-centric than narrative character acting.



Where You See Motion Design Every Day

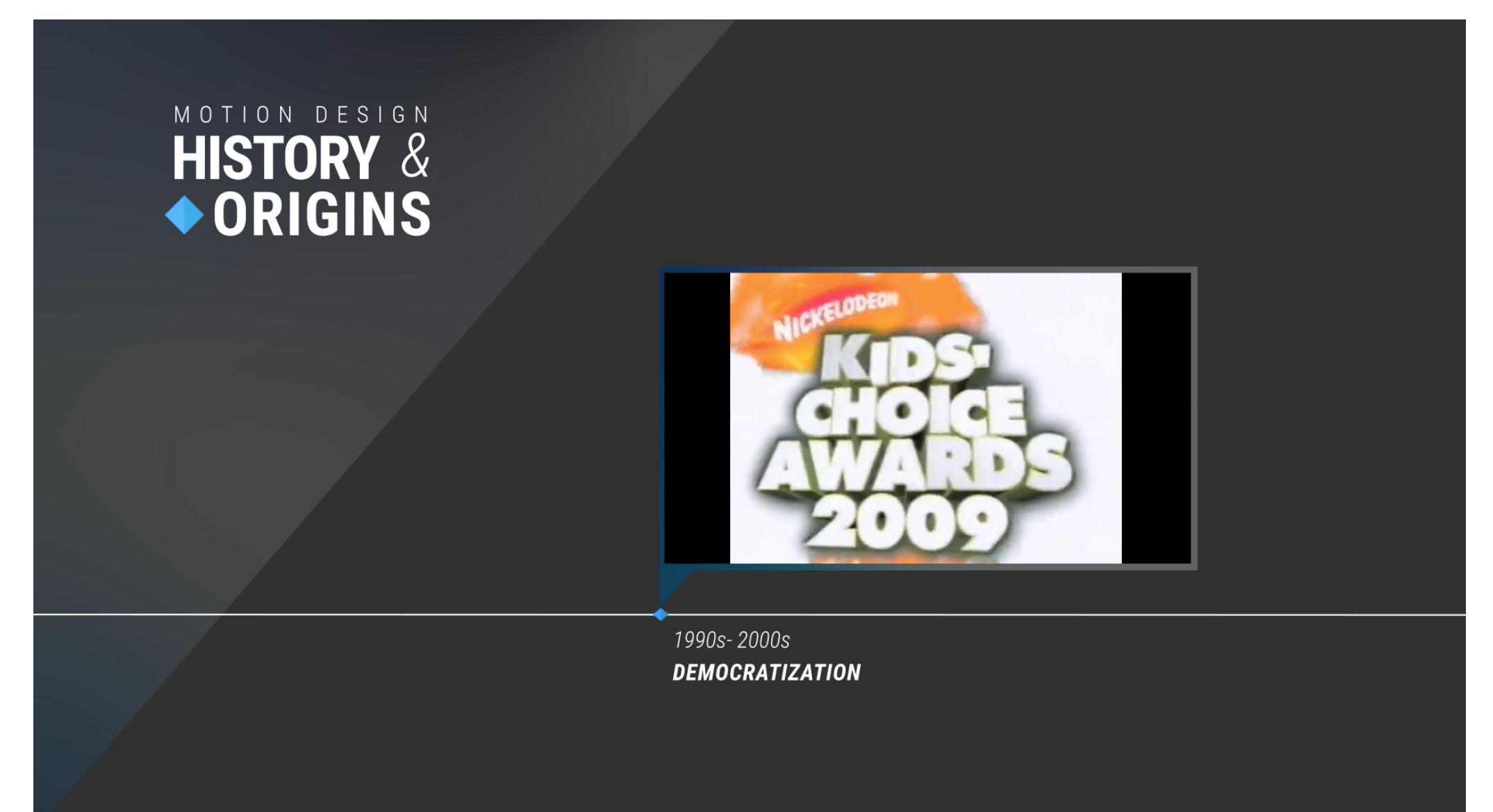
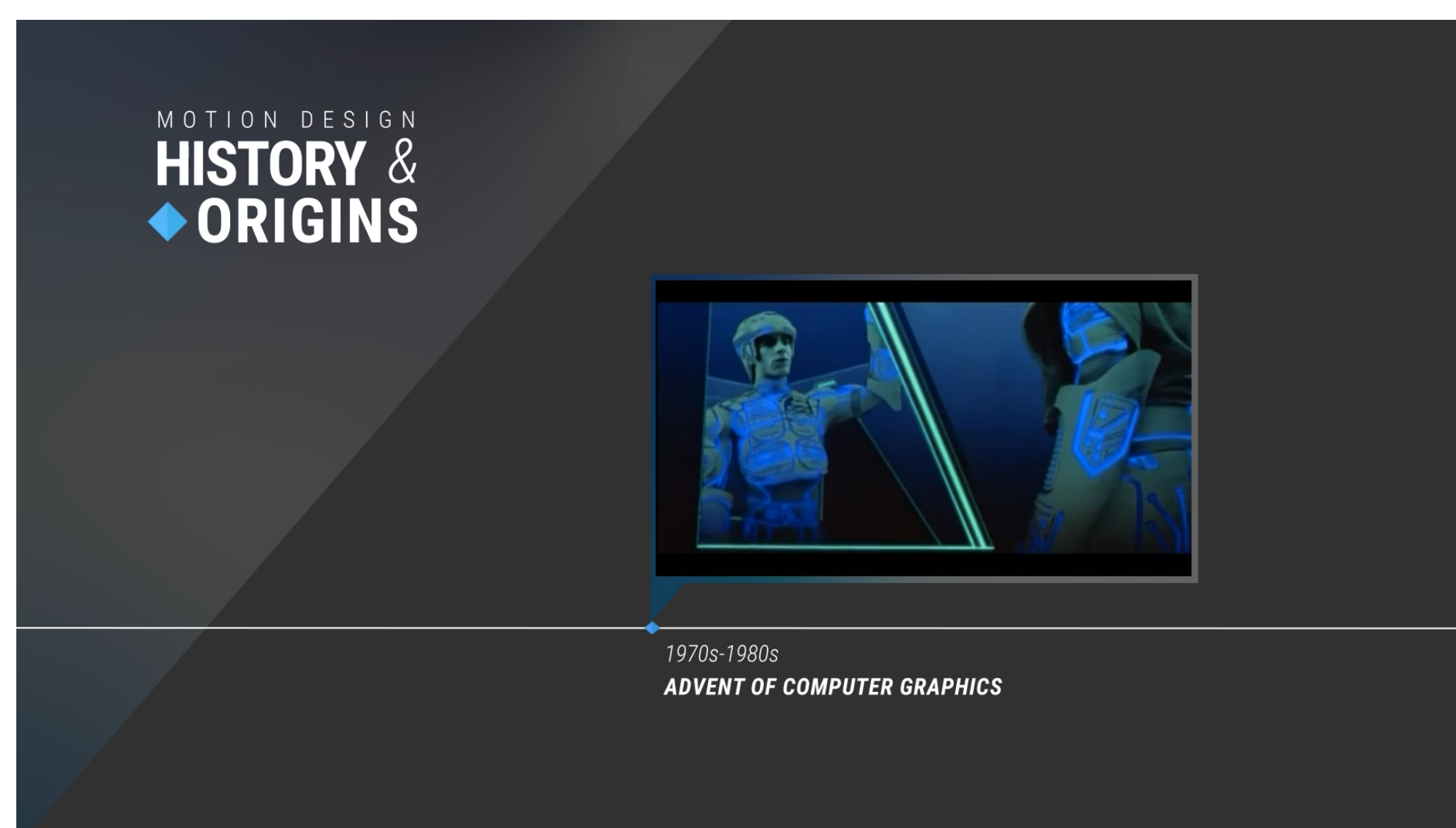
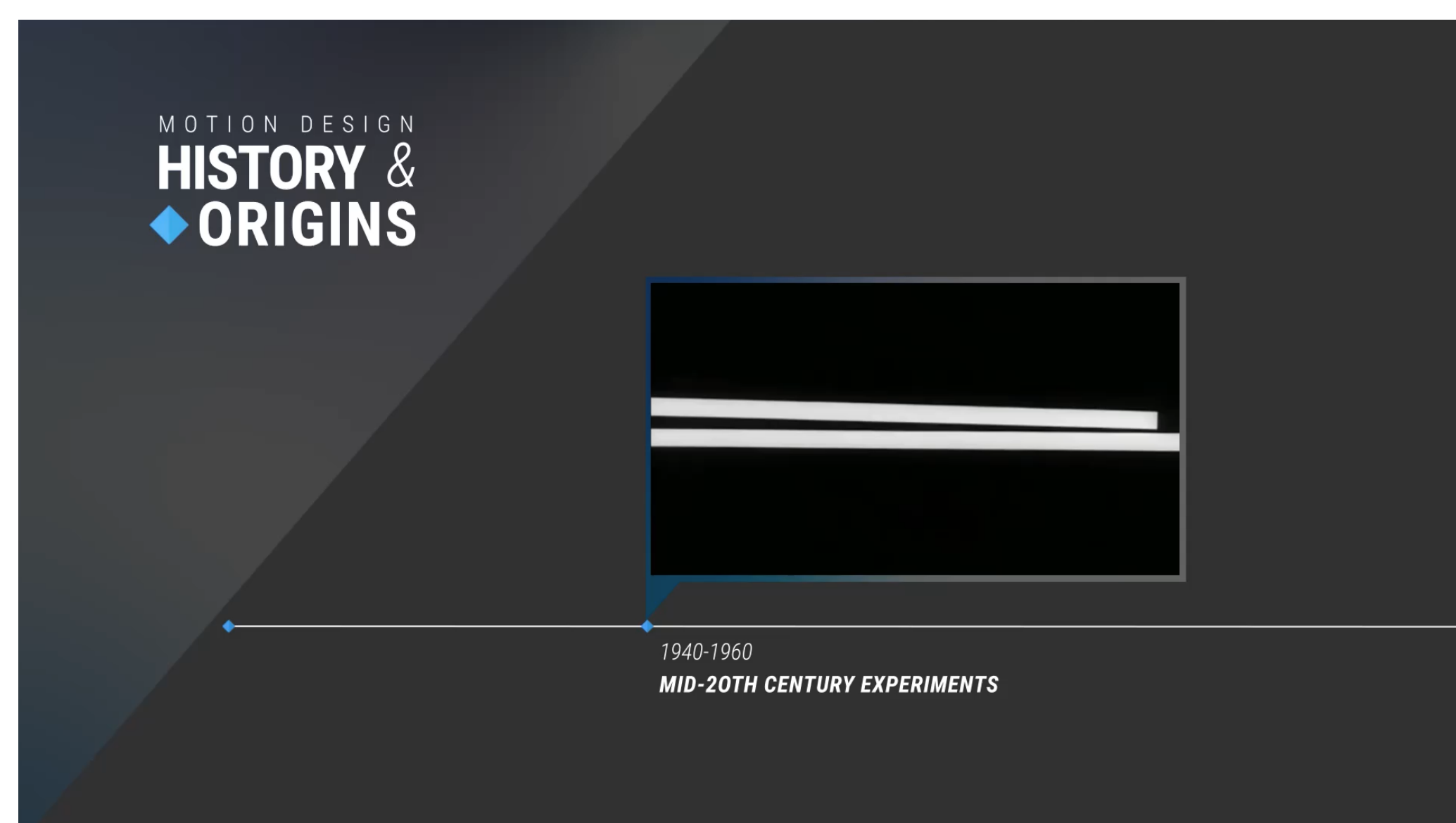
You encounter motion design constantly: in app micro-interactions (swipes, spinners, notifications), social ads and infographics, broadcast packages for news, sports, and weather, and film/streaming titles and YouTube graphics. It also lives in public spaces—from digital billboards and animated fast-food menus to airport signage—where motion adds clarity, feedback, and delight. Once you start looking for it, you'll see it everywhere.



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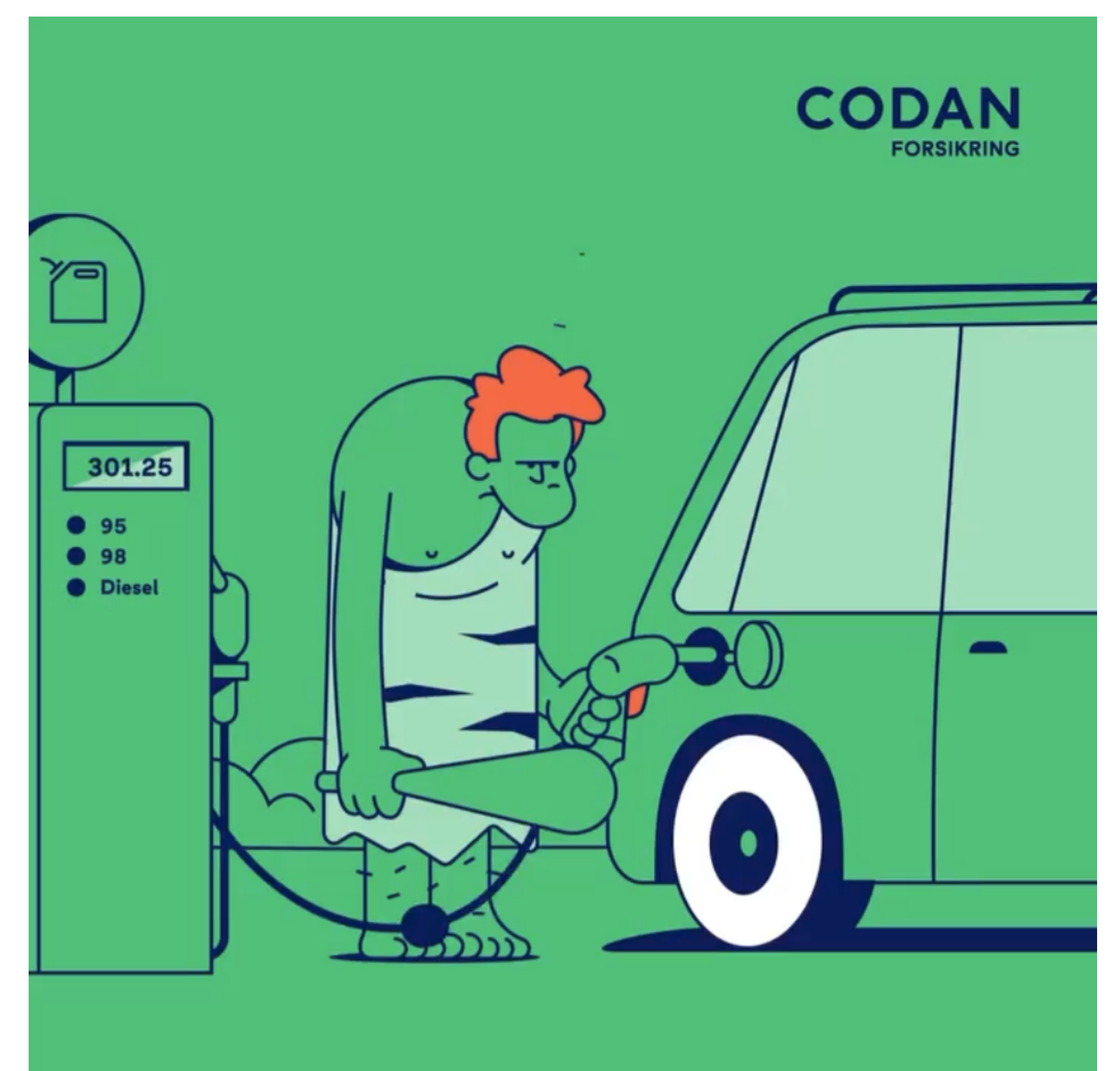
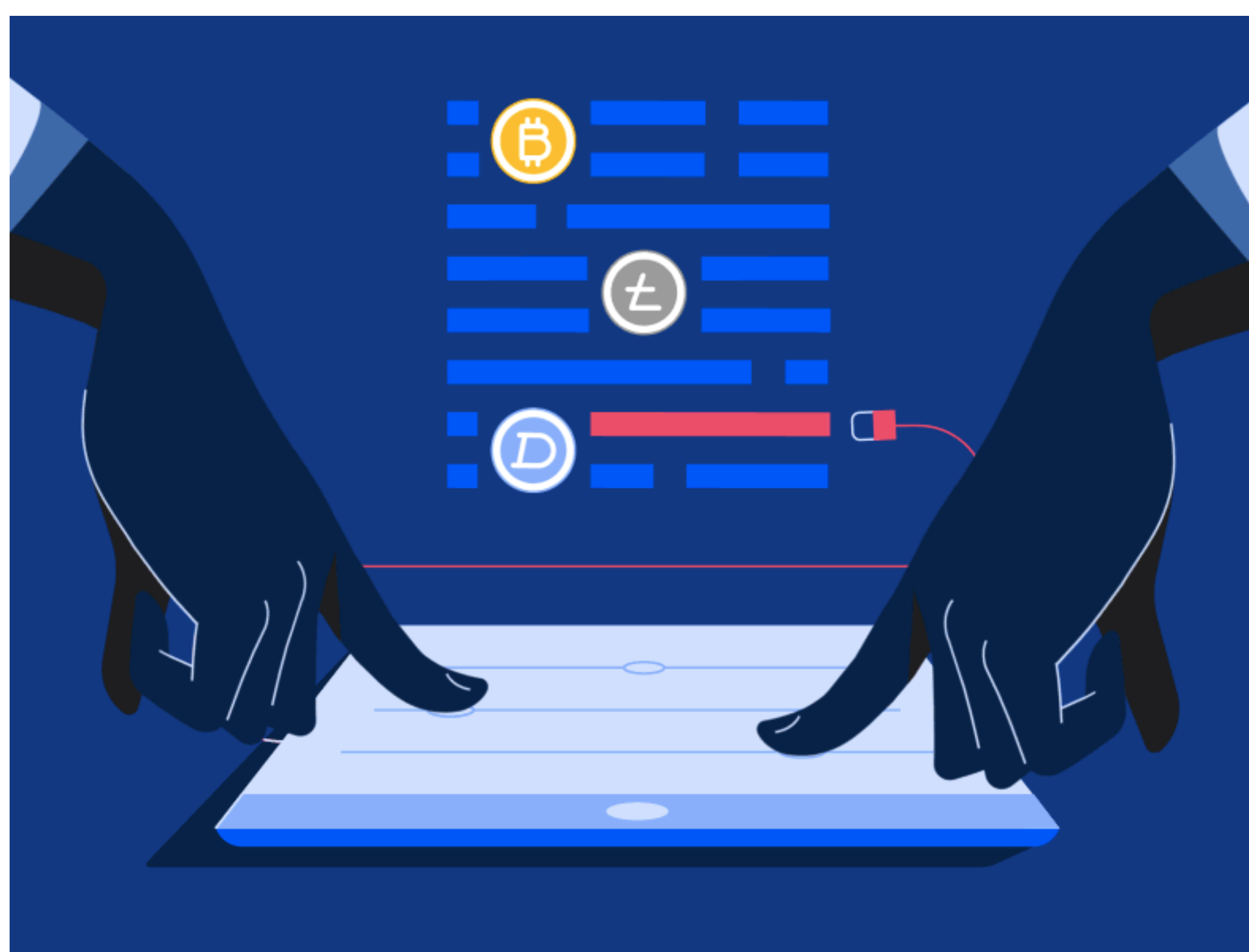
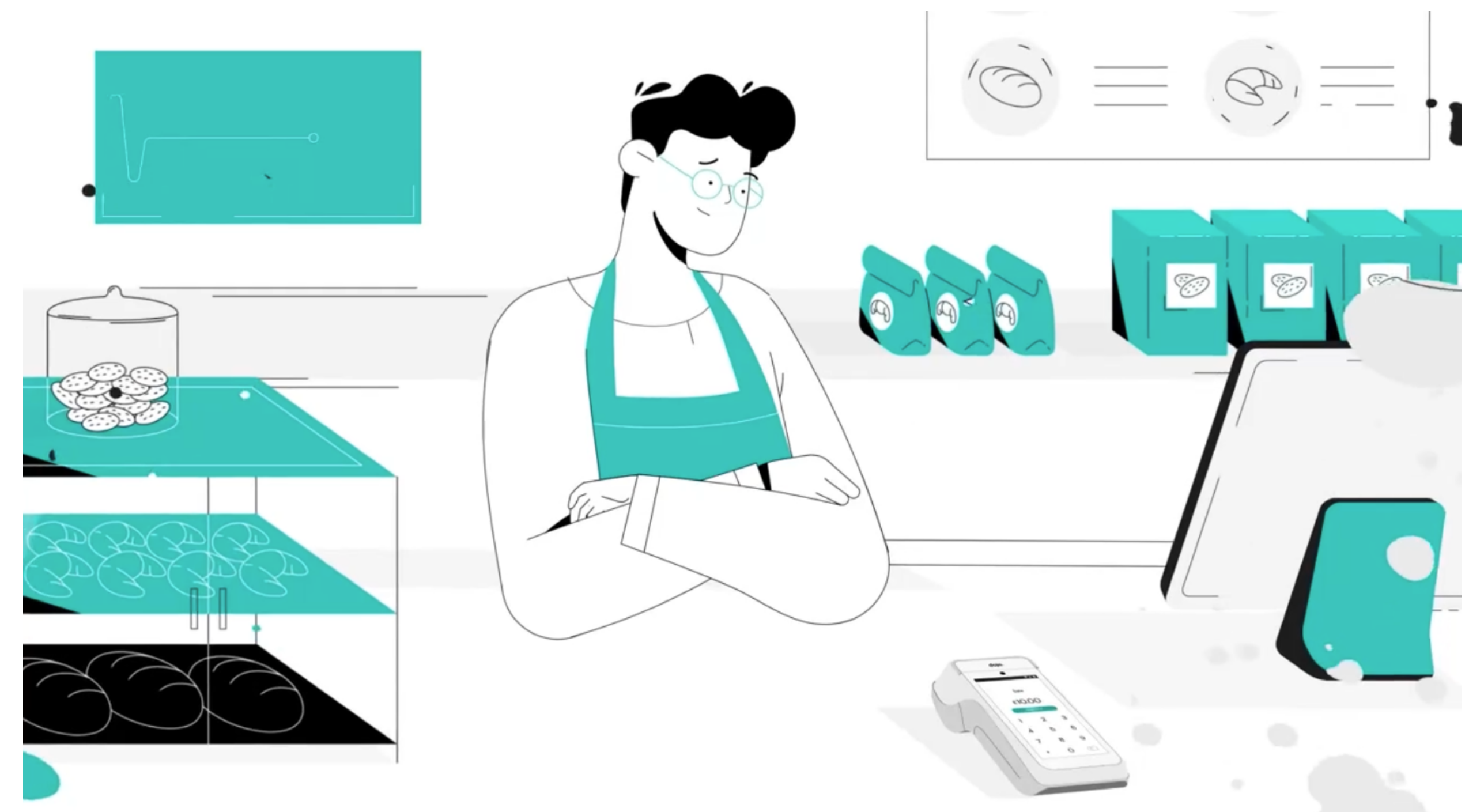
A Short History of Motion Design

The term “motion graphics” dates to the 1960s (John Whitney), with artistic groundwork from experimental filmmakers in the 1940s and iconic film titles by designers like Saul Bass in the ‘50s–‘60s. Early CGI in the late ‘70s–‘80s pushed design into the digital realm, and the release of After Effects in 1993 democratized professional-grade motion graphics. Through the 2000s–2010s, new screens (HD, mobile, LED, VR) expanded canvases, and today designers also touch real-time engines and data-driven animation.



Common Project Types

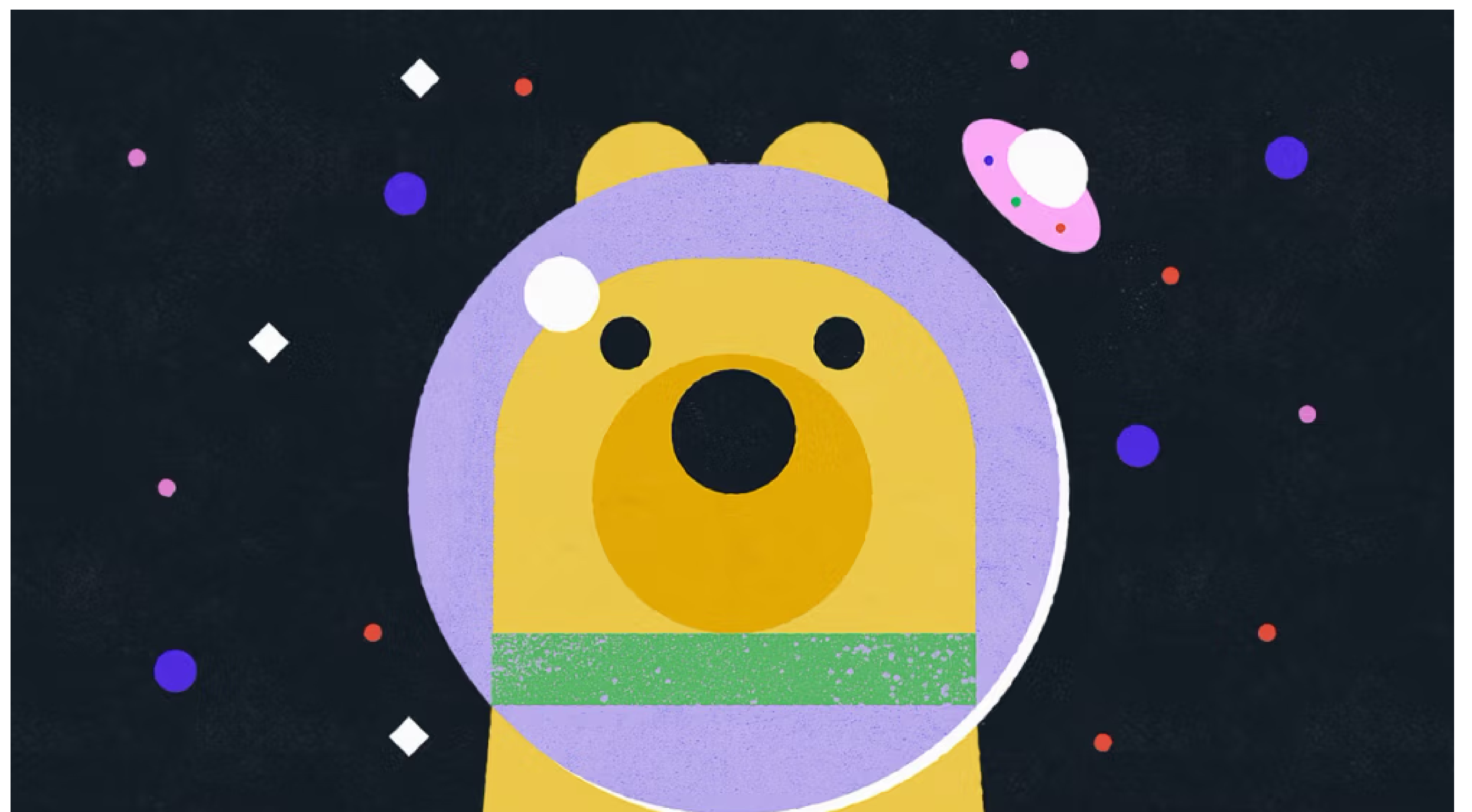
Bread-and-butter motion work spans explainer videos, advertising/promotional graphics, broadcast packages, entertainment title sequences, UI/UX animations, data visualizations, logo/brand identity motion, and environmental/experiential graphics like projection mapping and stage visuals. Many designers specialize in a few, while others stay generalist to meet opportunity. Across all types, the job is the same: communicate and enhance a message with animated visuals.



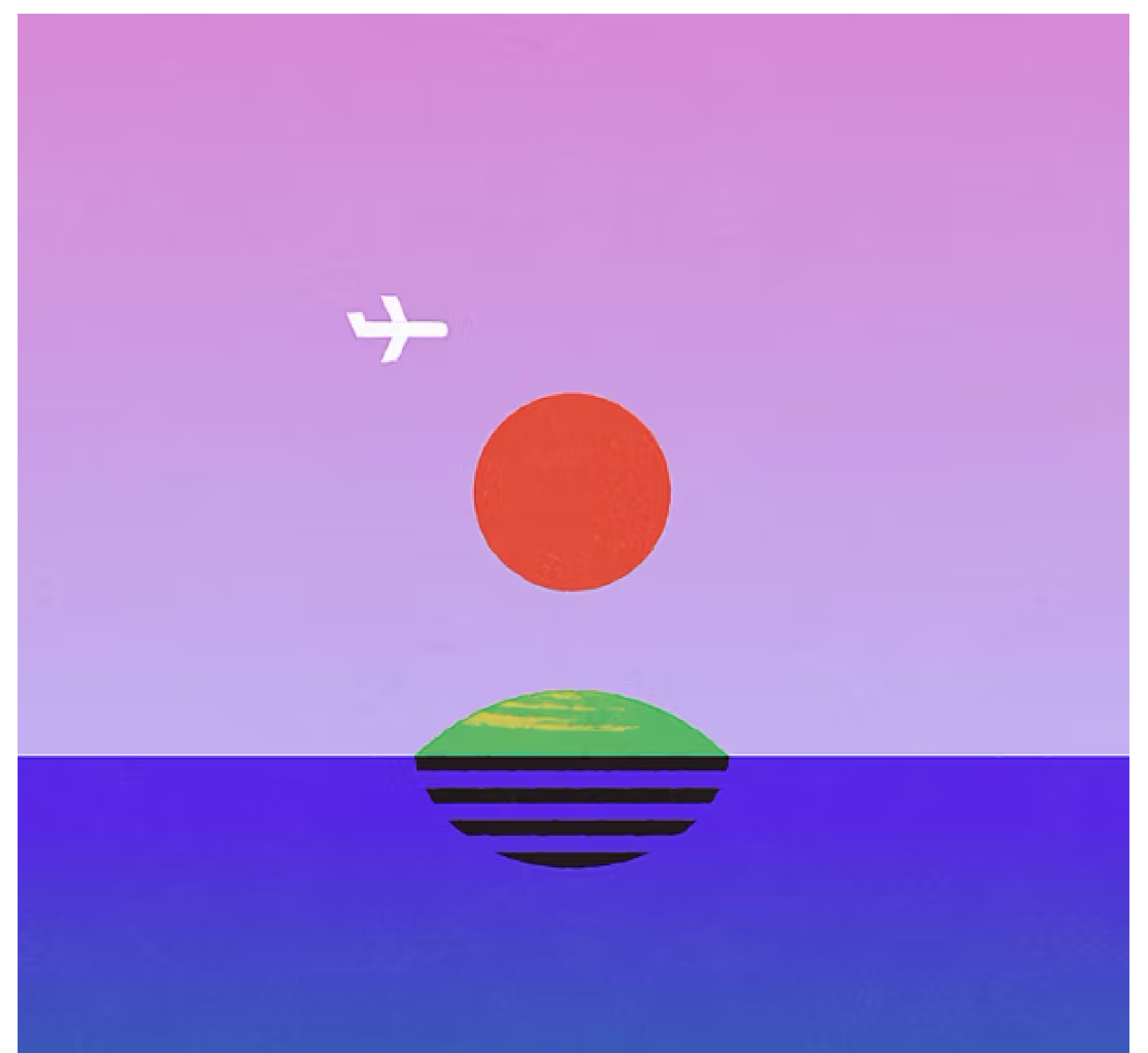
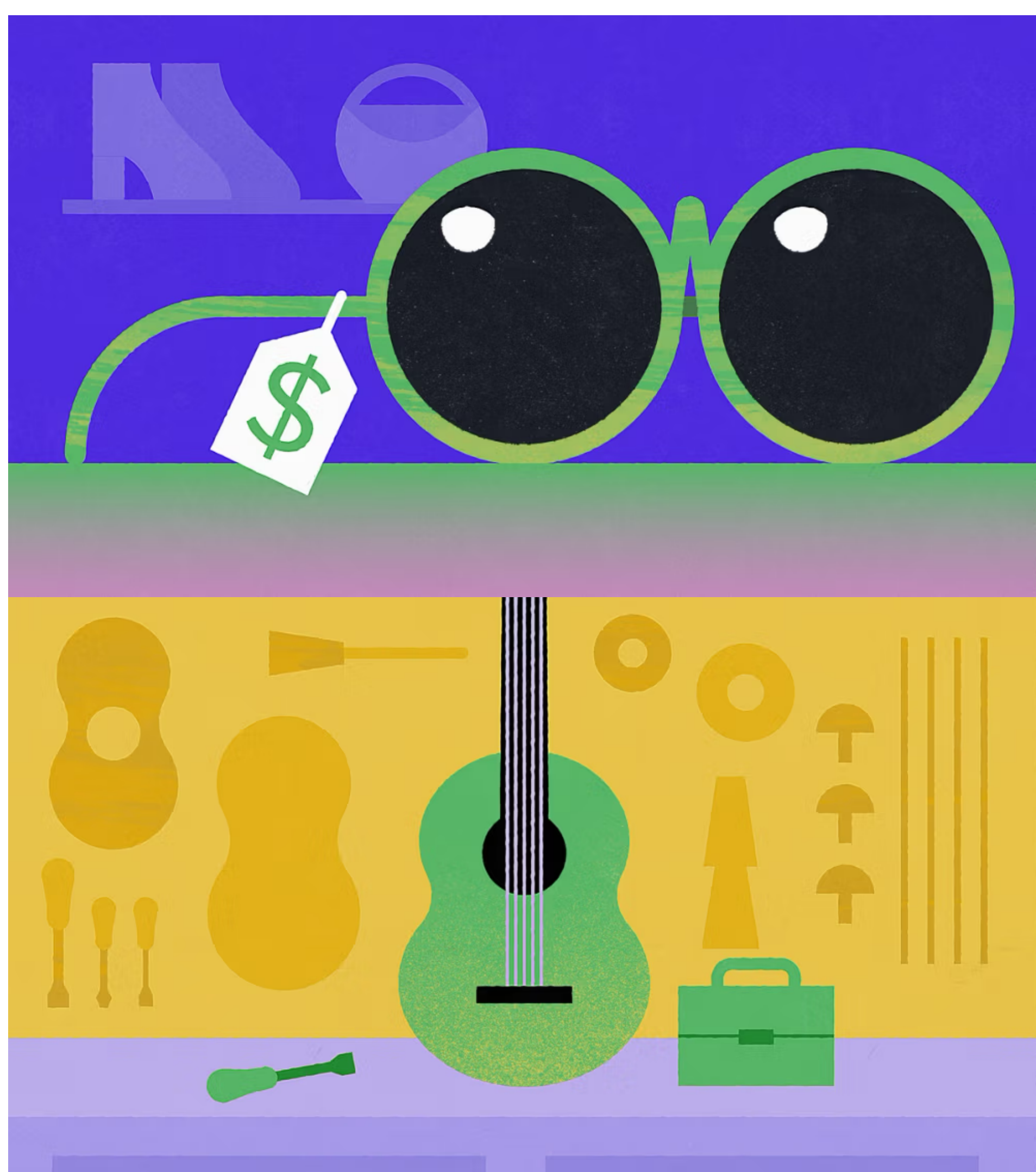
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Case Study: Buck — Identity Digital “The New Domain” (2023)



Buck produced three 15-second spots (.bio, .life, .pro) built around a cohesive illustrated style with center-weighted compositions, clean gradients, and a consistent structure. Each piece introduces the domain, highlights a main character or scenario, and uses branded transitions such as the signature red dot before resolving into a social or profile moment with a clear call to action. The .pro variation replaces character vignettes with environment-driven “fake 3D” rotations, creating a more professional tone while still aligning with the overall campaign style.



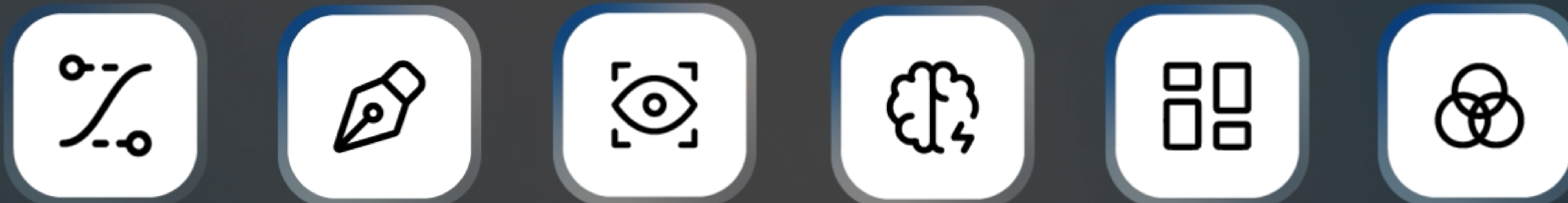
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Industry Roles & Collaboration

Projects scale from solo to team efforts. Core roles include motion designer/ animator, graphic designer/illustrator, art director, creative director, and producer/project manager, with specialists like composers, sound designers, riggers, and editors joining as scope grows. A typical pipeline moves from concept to visual style, asset design, animation, sound, and final assembly—managed to budget and schedule by production.

INDUSTRY ROLES IN MOTION DESIGN



Core Tools You'll Use

Adobe After Effects is the cornerstone for animation and compositing, tightly integrated with Illustrator (vectors) and Photoshop (rasters). Editors like Premiere help assemble longer pieces; 3D tools (Cinema 4D, Blender) add depth when needed; compositors (Nuke, Fusion) serve advanced VFX; UI prototyping tools (Figma, XD, Rive) and Lottie support app/web delivery; and audio apps (Audition, Pro Tools, Audacity) round out sound. Start with AE + Illustrator + Photoshop, then expand as projects demand.



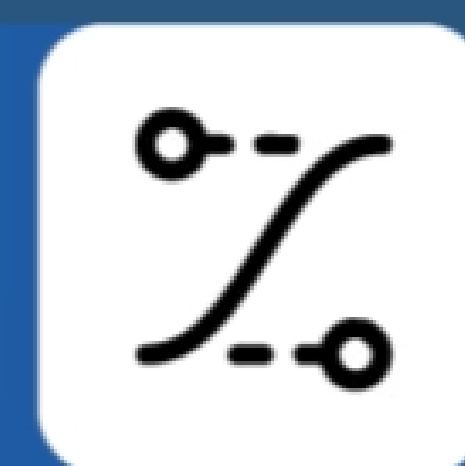
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Career Outlook & Earning Potential

Demand spans marketing, tech, entertainment, and more. Entry-level staff roles often land in the ~\$35–50k range with modest early freelance rates; mid-level/senior can reach ~\$60–90k with higher day rates; top specialists and leads can cross six figures, with elite freelancers commanding premium day rates. Paths include full-time, freelance, or hybrid, and many diversify income via templates, tools, courses, or small studios. Intentional portfolio building and relationships matter.

MOTION DESIGNER



EXPERIENCE LEVEL
JUNIOR (0-2 YEARS)



SALARY RANGE
\$35k - \$50k - Fulltime Position

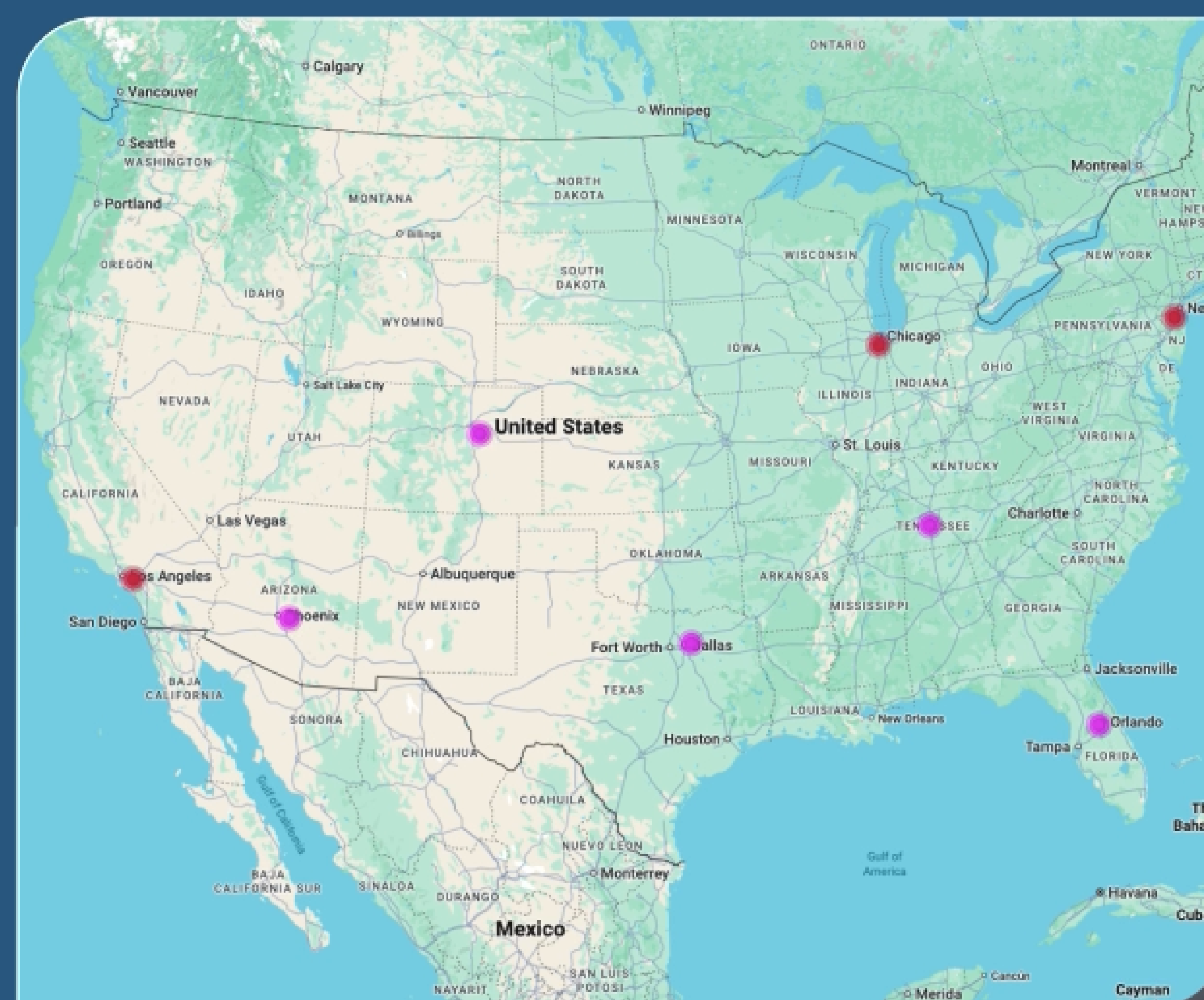


\$200-\$300/Day - Freelance



FOCUS
Portfolio Building

Top Markets: NYC, LA, SF, CHI



Big Takeaways

Motion design is a practical, creative discipline grounded in design, timing, and purpose. Learn the tools, but lead with taste and clarity; study great studios; and practice consistently to build skill and opportunity. This course aims to empower you to support yourself doing work you enjoy—starting with hands-on creation right away.