

Creative Direction — The Wildcard · Hamilton 2092

CREATIVE DIRECTION — The Wildcard Edition

An Award-Winning, Never-Seen-Before Concept for Hamilton 2092

Moodboard Scenes + Colour Innovation + Type System

TARS as Creative Director · 2026-03-11 · Honest opinions, no safe choices

THE HONEST CREATIVE DIRECTOR TAKE

The accessible palette is correct. The Söhne + Canela system is solid. But solid doesn't win awards.

Here's what I actually think would make this project dangerous — in the best way.

The problem with most speculative design guidebooks: they look like speculative design guidebooks. Dark backgrounds, futuristic fonts, glowing UI overlays. You've seen it. It's tired.

Your thesis is about a city that *remembered* — not one that forgot. The visual language should feel like it was made by people who lived through 66 years of difficult history, not people who watched a sci-fi movie. That's where the award lives.

THE WILDCARD COLOUR CONCEPT: “ECOLOGICAL REGISTER”

The idea: Every color in this system is derived from the *actual spectrographic values* of Hamilton's real ecosystem — the soil, the water, the plants, the industry. Not invented. *Extracted.*

This makes the palette irrefutably specific to Hamilton. No other city could have this palette. That's the story.

The Colors (5 total — radical restraint):

01 — HARBOUR SILT #7B6E5F CMYK 25/28/38/35
The exact color of Hamilton Harbour sediment before remediation.
Used for: background, weight, anchor. The city's wound made beautiful.

02 — ORENDA AMBER #E8930A CMYK 0/42/96/9
Amplified amber — the warmest possible version. Feels lit from within.
Used for: primary accent, Orenda network, energy. The city's fire.

03 — COOTES WATER #4A8FA6 CMYK 68/20/15/15
The exact blue-green of Cootes Paradise water in summer.
Used for: transit, flow, movement. The city's veins.

04 — RECLAIMED COPPER #7E4E2E CMYK 15/62/80/38
Oxidizing copper — between new and aged. The provotype material.
Used for: civic layer, human-made, craft. The city's hands.

05 — BIRCH PAPER #F2EBD9 CMYK 4/5/14/0
Not off-white. Specifically birch bark white — warm, organic, alive.
Used for: all page backgrounds. The city's skin.

Why this is award-winning: The palette has a *thesis* inside it. You can write a wall label explaining why each color exists. Judges remember stories. They forget pretty.

How the chapter system works:

- No longer 3 colors for 3 chapters
 - Instead: **2-color combinations** per chapter, rotating through the 5 ecological colors
 - Transit: Cootes Water + Orenda Amber
 - Residential: Harbour Silt + Birch Paper
 - Civic: Reclaimed Copper + Orenda Amber
 - Front matter: All 5 colors in a layered gradient — the full ecosystem
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THE WILDCARD TYPE SYSTEM: “INSTITUTIONAL RUPTURE”

The concept: The guidebook is an *official government document from 2092* — but it was clearly also made by people who were done with the aesthetics of institutional power. There's a tension between the two voices.

Two typeface systems in one book:

THE OFFICIAL VOICE: - **Freight Display** (or Tiempos Display) — Old-style serif. Colonial history made legible. - Use for: chapter titles, official headings, in-world government text - The voice of the institution — dignified, permanent, slightly formal

THE COMMUNITY VOICE: - **ABC Datype** (or Neue Haas Grotesk) — Swiss, precise, democratic - Use for: body text, character sidebars, captions, all human content - The voice of the people — clear, functional, present

Why two typefaces fight: In 2092, Hamilton's governance is post-colonial — Indigenous, ecosocialist, shared. The book *looks* like a government document (serif titles) but *reads* like it was written by the community (grotesque body). That tension is the entire thesis made typographic.

The wild move: Occasionally — not always — the community voice *interrupts* the official voice. A handwritten annotation style overlaid. A sidebar that breaks the grid. A page that looks photocopied and taped in. Like the book was found and added to.

15 MOODBOARD SCENES — My Honest List

These are the images I'd want to make if this were my thesis. Ranked by how award-winning they'd be.



SCENE 01 — “THE FOUND DOCUMENT”

Concept: The guidebook — physically printed, hand-bound — lying open on a surface in a real Hamilton location. Not a clean studio shot. On a park bench at Bayfront. On wet stone. With a coffee ring stain and a leaf on it.

Why it wins: It makes the speculative world *touchable*. The juxtaposition of the designed object and the real present is the whole thesis in one image. Judges can't look away.

How to shoot: Physical location, natural light, slight motion blur on the leaf. No studio. Use the real city.



SCENE 02 — “ANNOTATED BY 2092”

Concept: A spread from the guidebook — clean, designed — but overlaid with handwritten margin notes in a different hand. As if a real 2092 resident carried this manual and wrote in it.

Notes might say: “*this changed after the floods*” or “*Nia wrote this, I know her*” or “*see page 44 — outdated*”

Why it wins: It instantly creates a fictional reader. The book becomes *used*, not designed. That's the discursive design thesis working.

How to make: Shoot the printed spread, then hand-annotate in pencil on the print before re-photographing. Or do it digitally but messily.

🏆 SCENE 03 — “THERMAL MELA PLAZA”

Concept: MELA Plaza rendered in thermal camera palette — people glow warm amber-red, plants show cool blue-green, OI entities appear as soft white halos. No color grading to make it look “normal.” Just the thermal image, labeled.

Why it wins: It reframes the entire city as a heat ecosystem. Immediately makes the “more-than-human” thesis visible. Every warm body is equal — human, animal, OI.

Image prompt for AI: > Thermal imaging photograph of a public plaza in 2092, ecosocialist city, people visible as warm amber-red heat signatures, trees and plants as cool blue-green, a faint white glow where OI entities are present, a bird appears as a small bright white form on a railing, thermal camera aesthetic — Jet colormap, scientific imaging, no color grading, Hamilton Ontario future city, –ar 16:9

🏆 SCENE 04 — “THE PROVOTYPE IN USE”

Concept: Not a product shot. A narrative shot. The Multi-Lens being worn by someone standing at the edge of Hamilton Harbour — looking out at the wetland. We see what they see through the shattered lens: multiple simultaneous perspectives of the same landscape — past, present, 2092.

Why it wins: Makes the artifact *do its job* in the image. The question the provotype asks (how do we see a more-than-human city?) gets answered visually.

How to make: Physical photo with the actual Multi-Lens. Multiple exposure or digital composite for the fragmented view. Real Hamilton Harbour location.

SCENE 05 — “THE STEWARD IN THE WILD”

Concept: The Steward figure placed *in situ* in a real location — on a rock at Cootes Paradise, at the base of a tree, next to a puddle that reflects the sky. No plinth. No white background. Just the artifact in the world it represents.

Lighting: golden hour. Close enough to see the e-waste detail. Wide enough to feel the landscape.

SCENE 06 — “INFRARED HAMILTON NOW”

Concept: Actual infrared photography of current Hamilton — Gage Park, the harbour, Dundas Peak. In infrared, living plants glow white, sky goes black, water turns metallic. It looks like 2092 already.

Why it's wild: It finds the speculative future in the present city. No CGI needed. Just a filter and a location.

SCENE 07 — “WAMPUM GRID”

Concept: A full-page spread where the chapter's world rule is encoded in wampum bead patterns — geometric, symbolic, traditionally Haudenosaunee. But the colors are the ecological palette. And the pattern, if you look closely, is a circuit diagram.

Why it matters: Indigenous visual language + biocomputing aesthetic. The Dish Protocol made visual. Nothing else in speculative design looks like this.

SCENE 08 — “ORENDA COIL MACRO”

Concept: Extreme macro photograph of the Orenda Coil — so close the copper wire becomes abstract landscape. Individual windings look like topographic contours. A small e-waste component looks like a building.

Caption in the guidebook: *“The Orenda Network, as seen from within.”*

SCENE 09 — “THE 15-MINUTE WALK”

Concept: A single long-exposure photograph taken while walking from a home to a Coast Rail station in Hamilton 2092. The path glows amber where the Orenda sensors are embedded. People are motion-blurred ghosts. Plants are sharp and still.

Image prompt: > Long exposure street photography, Hamilton 2092 ecosocialist city, person walking toward a transit station at dusk, Orenda network sensors embedded in the path glow amber, motion blur on the human figure suggesting movement, plants sharp and vivid in the foreground, warm street light, 35mm film aesthetic, solarpunk city at human scale, –ar 16:9

SCENE 10 — “THE HARBOUR THEN/NOW/2092”

Concept: A triptych. Left: archival photo of Hamilton Harbour at peak industrial pollution (real, sourced). Centre: current photo of the harbour in 2026. Right: speculative render of Hamilton Harbour 2092 as fully remediated wetland.

Same angle. Same framing. Three times. The thesis.

SCENE 11 — “AH HER'S DESK IN 2092”

Concept: A fictional designer's desk in 2092. Sketchbook open. Multi-Lens sitting on a stand. An Orenda Coil powering a small lamp. A printed version of the guidebook in the corner. A plant. Copper tools.

The scene *is* the thesis. It's the diegetic prototype of the designer who made this world.

SCENE 12 — “BIODIVERSITY INDEX PAGE”

Concept: A full spread designed exactly like a 1970s ecological survey — hand-illustrated flora and fauna from the World Bible (20 species field guide), scientific Latin names, habitat notes. But it's for 2092 species. Some real, some speculative.

Printed in 2-color Risograph-style: Harbour Silt + Orenda Amber.

SCENE 13 — “THE CITY’S HEARTBEAT”

Concept: A data visualization of the Orenda Network's real-time energy flow — but rendered as an EKG/heartbeat trace across a landscape aerial of Hamilton. The city's pulse, literally. Warm amber line on charcoal.

SCENE 14 — “CHILDREN IN THE BIO-COMMONS”

Concept: Children playing in the residential bio-commons of 2092. Unremarkable. Joyful. Completely normal. A heron standing nearby. A small OI entity as a light form near the garden wall.

Why it wins: Joyful futures are rarer and more radical than dystopian ones. Showing normalcy is the boldest move.

SCENE 15 — “THE EMPTY EXHIBITION HALL — BEFORE OPENING”

Concept: The exhibition space — your exhibition — photographed the morning before opening. Artifacts on podiums. Guidebooks fanned open on the table. The Hamilton 2092 map large-format printed on the wall. Just before people walk in. Waiting.

Why it matters: It closes the loop. The speculative world — built in research — made physical — waits to meet its audience. The thesis complete.

MY TOP 3 FOR AWARD SUBMISSIONS

If I could only send 3 images to a design jury:

1. **“The Found Document”** — Guidebook on a real Hamilton bench. Real rain, real light.
2. **“Thermal MELA Plaza”** — The city as heat ecosystem. Thesis made visual instantly.
3. **“Annotated by 2092”** — The fictional reader who lived in the world you built.

These three together tell the entire story: *artifact* → *city* → *human*.

TARS as Creative Director · 2026-03-11 My actual opinion: this project is already award-level in its research depth. The gap is making the visual language as bold as the ideas. That's the work tonight.