



CONSUMERISM  
AS  
RELIGION



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*"This is where we wait together, regardless of our age, our carts stocked with brightly colored goods," - Don DeLillo In his 1985 novel White Noise; Don here describes the average American supermarket as a deeply spiritual place.*

In the modern developed world consumerism, in many eyes, can be considered a religion. Within a capitalist society we are told that we constantly need to buy buy buy. Ya feeling down? Go buy something, we're told; it'll make you feel good. That better? Fantastic, to celebrate this happiness go buy some more stuff! Consumer society tells us that shopping is a great pastime, a hobby, like playing video games or playing a sport. And if you can't afford all of these consumer goods, which make you fit so well into modern society, simply get a credit card and go wild! And then suffer the crippling consequences when the bill comes, but hey, don't worry about that, think about all the cool things you'll own! One of the biggest lies we're told in this world is that we need money to be happy, when in reality this is totally untrue, the greatest example to give is that of communities that don't have these complex structured societies like Amazonian and Indigenous tribes. These tribesman have no real concept of consumerism, they may know of it, but they do not partake in it, happily living their lives without any materialistic goods, services, or technology, these people use what they are given, which in a lot of cases is simply nature. Capitalism on the other

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hand caters for the developed world by sourcing the whole planet, attaining food, textiles, rare minerals, water and oil, then with these things that been taken from all over the globe they are manufactured into products and produced by people that won't ever use them due to the exploitative wages they are given by the corporations who hire them. The developed world collectively can be seen as a very greedy bunch, having constant wants and needs, when in reality aren't 'needs' at all, do you really need that gold plated iPhone? Or that £1000 Gucci handbag? No. When we have too many possessions they seem to own us, and surely it should be the other way round? All of these things are taken for granted by people, especially the younger generations, kids don't seem to ever be happy even with all of the newest games, gadgets, toys and spending money, it really shouldn't be like this, people should be grateful for what they have and are given, and not take all of these things for granted, which seems to be the case fairly often. With all of this in mind, we can look upon consumerism as a religion: the religion of the modern developed world. In Today's day and age technology is what drives society, it keeps it constantly moving, always developing, making older technologies insignificant, but what was it that drove us before technology? Things like good health and the providing of food, and those considered beyond the real realm, such as religion, Gods, symbols, and spirituality, these things took people away from reality. This idea of being

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taken away from reality is very loosely fitted to modern society as people have strayed from these things, however in it's place we now consume through the means of shopping, modern shopping is our only communally agreed path to salvation. As a culture, this is what we do to define and transform ourselves. It gives us meaning; it's the hobby of the nation! Shopping gives us a sense of community and belonging, it's part of our lifestyle, assuring us that we belong to certain socialist groups, however, it's with consumerism that we replaced the 'old' community - the need of religion and spirituality - we value the feeling of belonging, which religion does, or did as it now seems to be the case in the modern developed world. Connecting these thoughts and speculations to my work: A mandala is a piece of religious design work, a spiritual and ritual symbol in Buddhism and Hinduism, representing the universe. I am linking consumerism with this religious design to represent the comparisons and contrasts between the two forces, on how we've become disconnected with ourselves and our 'old' sense of community (the need of religion and spirituality), and replaced it with consumerism. I'm displaying my designs in a similar manner that artist Chris Jordan does, by visually demonstrating these comparisons and contrasts in a series of images, interlinking the two topics into one, giving people an insight to the consumer culture that we live in, and seem to take for granted when looking at the rest of the world.

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The context to this series of bottle cap mandalas derives from my own expression of personal views of consumerism and capitalism, strongly associating myself as being an anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist. With my design work I hope to educate of the darker side of consumerism and capitalism, illustrating the message to people that corporations, brands, and the consumer culture that stems from it, are manipulative, lying, and deceiving creations, that exploit the world's more vulnerable countries, specifically the third world, intensively. My aim is to inform of the damage that consumerism and capitalism has on the world through a synergy of images and words; using facts, satirical and ironically altered slogans and messages, and quotes. I want to give people an insight to the consumer culture that we live in, and seem to take for granted when looking at the rest of the world. The result of this resembles a sort of unfolding narrative. The imagery displayed is that of my collection of bottle caps (of which are predominantly branded with Transnational Corporations (TNCs)), which have been manipulated in a manner that represents the religious art of a mandala, the predominant artistic form found within the Hindu and Buddhist religions. Mandalas are also present in the Jewish, Christian, and Pagan faiths, and many

other religious orientations also. Through combinations of different shapes, colours, and formations, the mandala can mean a variety of things; in my recreation, I've manipulated the ready-formed designs of branded bottle caps, as the basis for my design process. These bottle caps are the things that speak for the mandala with the context I've given them. The fusion of this sacred design practice and the bottle caps - representing consumerism & capitalism - represent the comparisons and contrasts between the two forces, on how we've become disconnected with ourselves and our 'old' sense of community (the need of religion and spirituality), and replaced it with consumerism. The bottle caps speak for all that's created for consumption, indulgence, and for the reason of generating abundant amounts of money; the mandala being a symbolic representation of the Universe and everything good within, a religious art form that in fact actually retracts from concepts such as 'money' and feelings of greed. The mandala use and the bottle caps present a conflict, a total contrast, an oxymoronic statement; this is exactly what I want to gain in my designs. The mandala is a sacred and holy piece of imagery, presenting purity, wholeness, friends, family and community. Corporations, on the surface, in some way or form may represent

these qualities, but the reality of it is they are the complete contrary to these. They drive people apart by causing general (and social class) competition between people over material goods, where vanity takes rule. They destroy and exploit human lives out of the corporations' country of origin, taking advantage of people who aren't their 'own' in the third and second world. They void many of these workers of their basic human rights, exploiting them, leaving them to work in incredibly unsafe and poor working environments, making them far exceed the standard working hour regulations, as well as there being an exponential amount of child labor; all of this often leading to death. They demolish flourishing rain forests and variety more of natural habitats, the lungs of our planet, simply to make way for their factories, further ruining it by polluting it with harmful intoxicants and waste. On top of all this, many TNCs will deplete local villages of their natural local resources, often being groundwater. Despite there being so many available sustainable options to replace the current destructive ones, corporations don't implement these, because they'll lose a few pennies. All this damage to the world and fellow human kin caused merely to maximise their profit margins. Where there's profit, there's deficit. The majority of corporations mean no good, all they mean is business, and they only care for creating their own wealth, and at others expense.







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I SHOP  
THEREFORE  
I AM A SLAVE

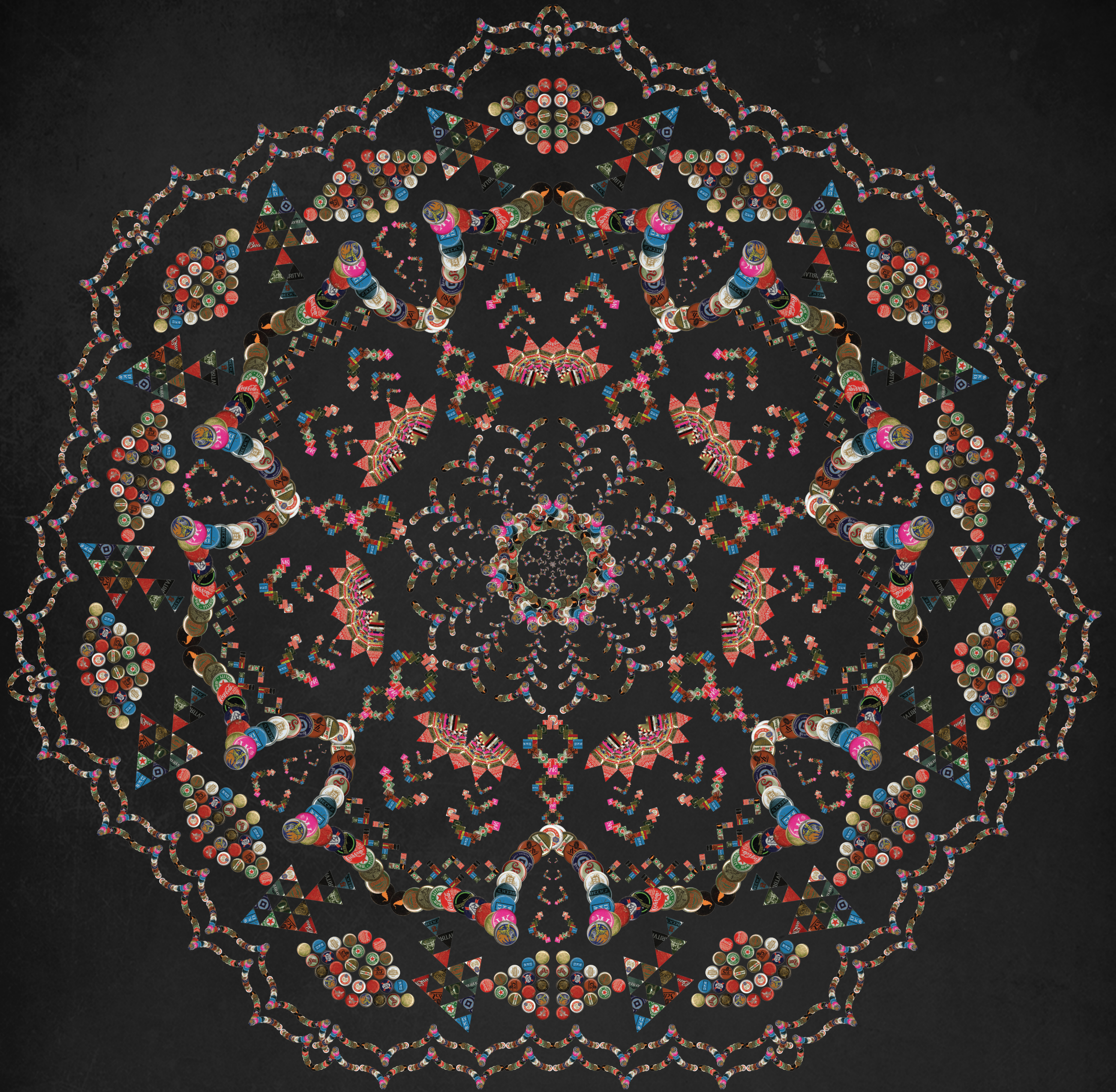




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COCA-COLA USE CHILD LABOR.  
HIRE PARAMILITARIES TO INTIMIDATE OR  
EVEN KILL UNION LEADERS.  
STEAL LOCAL WATER, EXHAUSTING  
GROUNDWATER LEVELS.  
DEplete RESOURCES, POLLUTE, WASTE.  
"LOVE" PROFIT.





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OB  
EY  
CON  
SUME  
REPEAT





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"EVERY TIME YOU SPEND MONEY,  
YOU'RE CASTING A VOTE  
FOR THE KIND OF WORLD  
YOU WANT."  
ANNA LAPPÉ





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WORK  
BUY  
CONSUME  
DIE





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"ADVERTISING HAS US CHASING CARS  
AND CLOTHES. WORKING JOBS WE  
HATE, SO WE CAN BUY SHIT  
WE DON'T NEED."  
CHUCK PALAHNIUK





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CONSUMERISM:  
RELIGION  
OF THE MODERN DEVELOPED WORLD.  
WHERE THE CORPORATIONS  
ARE THE GODS.  
DO YOU WORSHIP?

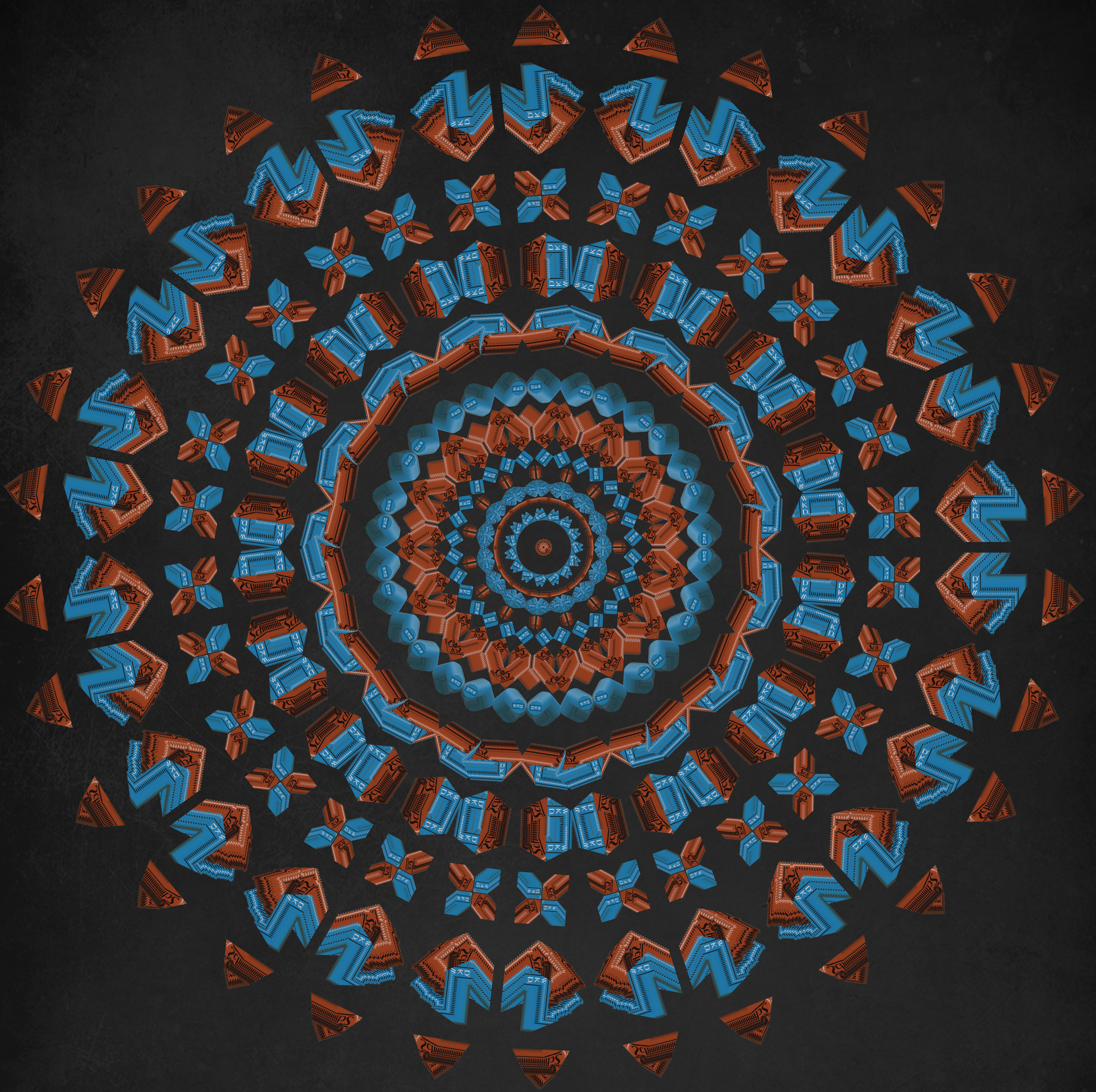




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"THE KING OF BEERS."  
THE KING OF YOU.





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SWEATSHOP WORKERS EARN A  
QUARTER, TO A HALF, LESS THAN  
REQUIRED TO PAY OFF, FOOD,  
SHELTER, TRANSPORTATION, CLOTHING,  
EDUCATION, AND ENERGY.  
1/6TH OF THE CHILDREN IN THE WORLD  
WORK AT A SWEATSHOP.





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CONSUMERISM:  
DEFINING YOU  
SINCE  
[INSERT DATE OF BIRTH HERE]