

DESIGN FOR CURIOUS MINDS / JUNE 2009

GO GREEN, SAVE MONEY / BIG LOVE IN STOCKHOLM / MAPS THAT MOVE YOU / TRANSIT FOR SALE / SEXY DATA / BEYOND HELVETICA: DESIGN MOVIE GUIDE

print

CHANGING DIRECTION?

The people and technology pointing the way forward

the iPhone icons

An iPhone isn't going to replace Creative Suite (yet), but it can host a number of applications specifically for designers—and how fun is it to play on a color wheel while you're standing in line? Here, we examine not just the quality and usefulness of 16 design-related apps, but also their most superficial detail: their icons.

ANDREW HEARST



The icon for Apple's preinstalled photo library app, **PHOTOS**, is elusive: Why a flower? **CAMERABAG** represents itself elegantly, though, with a trio of different lenses, and **YOUTUBE**'s retro TV is gorgeous and perfectly proportioned. **EVERNOTE** is a powerful app that syncs massive collections of images and documents among your laptop, iPhone, and the web. The concept behind its elephant mascot is unclear—an elephant never forgets?—but we like the way it looks. **COLORS**, **PALETTES**, and **COLOR EXPERT** are three excellent apps that create color schemes and then translate them into RGB, CMYK, and other formats. Pretty colors will always save the day. Craigslist has been a godsend for budget-strapped creatives, but **CRAIGSPHONE** is perhaps the single ugliest icon in the entire App Store. Rainbow? Peace sign? Pick one.

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WHATTHEFONT, a mobile version of the popular typeface identifier, and **FONT SHUFFLE**, a database of typographic style offer competent icons. But **FONT**, a simple app that displays the typefaces available on your phone, is set in a color scheme that's almost unreadable onscreen. The two-letter icon for **KERN**, a nerdy but highly entertaining app that challenges you to place a missing letter, Tetris-style, while avoiding any unnecessary ligatures, captures the game's stark aesthetic perfectly. The clever **RULER PLUS** lets you measure distances longer than the screen itself. But the icon is too literal: Zooming in on ruler details would have been a better choice. **CONVERTED** converts weights, speeds, and currency rates, and is updated regularly. This icon is better than an earlier version that crammed too many details in the center of the circle. **KICKMAP** is an alternate subway map that combines the geographic approach of the current New York map with the more abstract design of Massimo Vignelli's classic 1972 version. **CSS CHEATSHEET**, however, proves that sometimes you don't need a fancy design concept. Those three big letters will always be easy to spot, even if your screen is cluttered with dozens of apps you'll never use.



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The iPhone Icons

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