Our review of the year presents the 30 most popular wallpapers which ran on WeTransfer this year. They are split up into six categories – photography, animation, illustration, design, music and art.

For music, popularity is based on the number of downloads that wallpaper led to. For the rest, they are ranked on clickthrough rate – the amount of people who clicked on a wallpaper as a ratio of the number of people who saw it.

There are 12 different countries represented in the following pages – the US, Spain, the UK, Netherlands, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Brazil, Taiwan, Sweden and Ireland.
Here's to another year of connecting creatives around the world! In 2016...

WeTransfer welcomed more than 285 million unique users from 195 countries. These users sent 1 billion files every month.

We gave away 3 billion page impressions to promote creative projects of every stripe – from illustration to animation, music to architecture.

We showcased the work of more than 400 individuals and organisations.

Our new podcast series WeTalkMusic, featuring the likes of Anderson .Paak and Bonobo, clocked up 4.8 million listening minutes.

We launched our new blog This Works, to tell the stories of the creatives featured on our wallpapers. So far, This Works has had 3.2 million unique users.
We are lucky enough to have been spoiled for choice in 2016. It’s Gilles Peterson DJ-ing at our packed-out Cannes party as the sun went down over the sea. It’s Bilal and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson’s 11-piece orchestra bringing the audience to its feet with a spine-tingling Prince cover at our How We Do: LA event. It’s clustering round someone’s computer to see the first cut of our FKA twigs documentary, or our brand new WeTransfer website being rolled out around the world.

These special memories stand out, but they are jostled by the various small day-to-day moments we get – the email from a young photographer suddenly commissioned off the back of one of our wallpapers, or the artist whose site temporarily crashes due to the amount of traffic we are sending their way.

Ever since 2009, WeTransfer has supported the creative community in which we are embedded. This means – and will continue to mean – giving away 30% of our entire global inventory to showcase creative projects we love by individuals and organisations we admire.

In 2016, this meant nearly three billion page impressions given over to the creative community. We supported more than 450 different practitioners, ranging from world-renowned art galleries to fresh-out-of-art-school illustrators (and that mix is important to us).

Our new blog This Works, launched in April, welcomed more than three million unique visitors this year. Our WeTalkMusic podcast series clocked up 4.8 million listening minutes across its four episodes. We offered 14 different podcasts in our Podcast Pack, which were downloaded 219,000 times.

This review is a distillation of the past 12 months on WeTransfer from an editorial perspective. It gives you a sense of the most successful wallpapers we ran across six categories – music, art, illustration, photography, design and animation.

So thanks for taking the time to download it – we really hope you enjoy it. And thanks also to all the amazing artists, musicians, designers, illustrators, photographers, dreamers and makers who let us feature their work this year. Our creative integrity is built on your brilliance.

ROB ALDERSON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Since the very start, photography has been one of the main categories on our WeTransfer wallpapers, and photographers are among our most active users. This year we hired our first dedicated Head of Photography Partnerships and our top five threw up some really interesting insights.

In this selection, blue stands out in every photo. Interestingly, color trend researchers have consistently found that blues of various hues resonate with all kinds of viewers.

All the photos have a clear sense of symmetry. They are composed in such a way that they’re in proportion – making it uncomplicated for the viewer to follow the lines in the photos.

Interestingly Juno Calypso’s series *Joyce* was one of the most-complained-about wallpapers this year, with users questioning the way female characters were displayed in the workplace. But controversy also clearly led to clicks!

We could say that the most popular photos have been about cultural disconnect. For example Dan Burn-Forti explored the (to him) unfamiliar US, Matt Crump rediscovered the aesthetics of Disneyland and Sophie Ebrard immersed herself in the slam-dunk scene.
In 2016 we’ve experimented more and more with the use of moving imagery on our backgrounds, featuring artists working in disciplines ranging from CGI animation and GIFs to music video and film (and even a full-length George Orwell-inspired ballet!)

While we would have assumed that the brighter the better when it comes to our wallpapers, it’s striking here that the dominant colors are muted and grey. We didn’t see this across our other categories, suggesting a particularly fruitful link between this palette and moving images.

Another interesting observation was the weirdness of this category – three (arguably four) of the five are at the darkest and most surreal end of the spectrum of work we showcase.

It appears that our users tend to click more on small subtle movements rather than fast, flashy imagery – each video in this category (with the exception of Alan Warburton’s work) features just a tiny change in motion.
Illustration is one of the creative disciplines we have supported from the beginning of WeTransfer, and once again in 2016 we have showcased an eclectic range of visual styles.

Four of the five top illustrators this year were women, well above the 50/50 gender split for which we aim. This is the highest of any category.

The illustration category also has the most geographic scope, as the illustrators who make up the five come from Taiwan, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK. It’s interesting to see two creatives from the Far East – an underrepresented region overall – come in first and second here.

Overall illustration has a slightly lower clickthrough rate than the other disciplines we feature on our background wallpapers. This may be because in some regions, illustration still has a reputation as a childish or naïve artform.
Design is a bit of a catch-all name for the category which encompasses a wide range of work featured on the WeTransfer wallpapers over the past 12 months.

By its nature, this is the most eclectic category in this review. It features architecture alongside graphic, set, environmental and industrial/conceptual design.

The runaway leader in this category was Gianluca Gimini’s *Velocipedia* project. This saw the Italian creative challenge people to draw a bike from memory; he then took those sketches and rendered them as photorealistic models. Interestingly it is not possible to grasp the depth or the wit of Gianluca’s project from the visuals alone, and yet many users were compelled to find out more.

*The Serpentine Pavilion* work is one of only a handful of projects which ran on the site linked to a very timely event or exhibition. It was featured while the latest incarnation was up and running in London this summer, although it was the image of Sou Fujimoto’s 2013 pavilion that piqued the most interest.
Music is the creative discipline with which WeTransfer is arguably most closely associated.

From having Troy Carter on our board to bringing in Gilles Peterson to work across various projects, a lot of our energy is spent working with the music community. From the late, great Prince to Moby, many artists have released new music through our platform. This section focuses on those artists whose releases we have collaborated on this year.

Well ahead of the chasing pack, the Oasis demo *Going Nowhere* was the most downloaded track we promoted in 2016. Offered in September to promote the re-release of the band’s third album *Be Here Now*, it was excitedly welcomed by Oasis fans and the music press alike.

The Form Arcosanti download is the only entry which is a compilation rather than a release from a single artist or band. Offered as part of our sponsorship deal with the unique festival in the Arizona desert, it featured the likes of Skrillex, Bonobo and Hundred Waters.
I COULD DO WITH A MOTOR CAR

WANNA BE WILD COS MY LIFE'S SO TAME
ALBUM: THERE'S A LOT GOING ON
COUNTRY: US
GENRE: RAP
ARTIST: VIC MENS
COUNTRY: US
STYLE: RAP

01. DYNASTY
02. 16 SHOTS
03. DANGER
04. NEW BAE
05. LIQUOR LOCKER
06. SHADES OF BLUES
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ALL THE TIME TO SHARE,
ALL THE TIME TO SHARE,
ALL THE TIME TO SHARE

IT'S GETTING HARD TO TELL
THE MONTHS FROM WEEKS

I'M JUST ONE STEP
AWAY FROM YOU

ARTIST: GEMINI
CATEGORY: MUSIC
ALBUM: WANDERLUST
TRACK: TIME TO SHARE
COUNTRY: SWEDEN
GENRE: POP
STYLE: POP
GENDER: -
At first glance, it can be a challenge to find coherence in the wonderfully diverse and multidisciplinary entries in our art category. But art is – by its very definition – thrillingly varied and the work here is a reflective cross-section of what we have featured.

Having said that, it is striking that three of the five cover similar themes – Neal Peterson, Cinta Vidal and Alice Tye touch on travel and journeys, on the allure of exploration and the open road.

Compositionally, many of the images feature blank or one-color backgrounds with a single central focal point.

Neal Peterson’s Urban Mandalas not only topped the art category, it was the most popular set of wallpapers we ran on the site all year with a clickthrough rate twice as high as our average.

Overall we aim for a 50/50 gender split in the artists we feature. Art is one of three categories where women dominate, with three of the top five artists.
Over on our This Works blog, you’ll find more in-depth pieces looking back on the creative world in 2016. These include:

Our design team’s selection of the best album artwork of 2016

Why it’s been a great year for independent magazines

How photographers are finding different ways to tell one of the most difficult stories of our time

The rise, fall and redemption of Microsoft Paint

If you would love to see your work on the WeTransfer wallpapers (and maybe even in this review next year) then you can send projects to our curation team – editorial@wetransfer.com.

We guarantee that everything we receive is looked at and considered for the site.