

# Valp (Maciej Hajnrich)

Katowice's master of the digital artform

Words **Ruth Stokes**

● Even if you don't recognise his name, you'll probably be familiar with Valp's artwork. Characterised by bright colours and a vibrant energy, the creations of the self-styled 'Graphic Illusionist' are unlike anything his contemporaries are doing – and have featured on websites, album covers, TV adverts and even London buses.

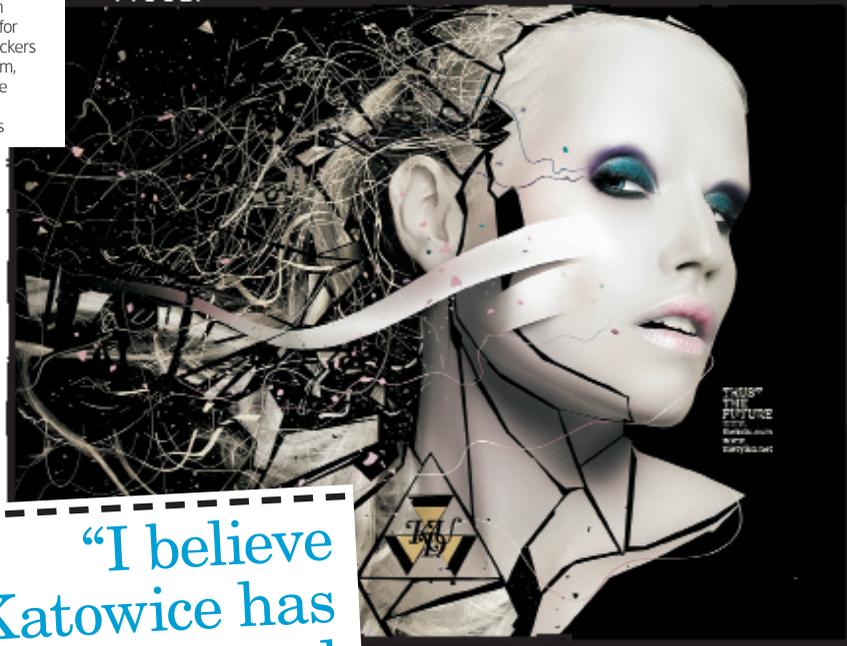
His work ranges from high-profile international campaigns to smaller, local commissions, and he counts Warner Music UK, Warner Brothers, Kraft Foods and Odeon Film Studios among his clients. In the last few years his success has gathered pace, and probably his most impressive – and best known – works are his illustration for the musical *Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* and the stunning underwater visuals for Pendulum's new *Immersion* album.

Living in the largest city of Poland's Silesia region suits Valp's artistic tendencies down to the ground. In a place teeming with a population of around 320,000, and rich in theatres, museums and music venues, he finds himself inspired by "everything visual, mostly other art: from static to motion, ancient to contemporary".

Valp explains that the city has a lot to offer artists like himself. "I believe Katowice has big untapped potential, and many artists can find inspiration all round the Silesian area," he says. "There are lots of things to do and see – galleries, museums, clubs and common places are full of inspiration. I adore the modern and art nouveau architecture, the combination of regional and national culture that makes this place really



● Album artwork for iconic rockers Pendulum, alongside previous creations



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→ unique. It also has good connections to Warsaw, Prague and Vienna – and hey, we have an airport!”

His work is a combination of photography – manipulation, retouching and matte painting – and hand-drawn effects, such as glowing bolts (streams of energy, such as from a rocket engine). Depending on the project he will draw varying amounts, possibly add some vector illustrations or even scan materials to create unusual artworks.

Amazingly, considering the complexity of – and the demand for – his work, Valp is self taught. What is now his unique brand of design grew from a basic curiosity in digital art. “The beginning was simple,” he explains. “I was fascinated with technology, photography and software, so I started experimenting with every part of the digital world.”

● Right: Valp at his favourite Katowice hangout, Gaudi Cafe



Now 28, he has been working on and developing his passion for 15 years. Six of those years have been spent in Katowice, wandering among art nouveau tenement houses and visiting cultural shows. And his enthusiasm hasn't waned: “I still feel the same – fascination is core for my career.”

Valp is most proud of his work for *Priscilla* – *Queen of the Desert* and Pendulum's *Immersion*, although he has been working on various projects for Pendulum for a while.

But despite his growing reputation among big international clients, Valp is very much tied to the local culture, and has worked on the Maj Music Festival, Zamek Celtic Music Festival, Katowice Anomaly and the Cogitatur Music Club – known for hosting popular bands, DJs and cabaret shows.

When he isn't working on a commission, one of the places he likes to visit is Spodek – a huge arena and the largest indoor venue of its kind in Poland, which has hosted the likes of Elton John and the Prodigy. “It's a unique UFO-shaped building, and great place for concerts and sports shows,” he explains.

“Head to Park Muchowicz,” he advises first-time visitors to the city. “It's an area of forest and ponds with swans, ducks and other animals.” Although it's where he goes when he needs some space, he's usually found in the centre of the city, where he can watch the world go by. “I'm a big fan of coffee,” he confides, appropriately enough due to his artwork for Carte Noire coffee's website. “I like Caffeine Cafe and Gaudi Cafe for their fantastic home-made cakes.”

His favourite pastime? Simply to “spend hours in the middle of this living, rushing city.” With such an enthusiasm for his surroundings, it's really little wonder that his art is so full of life. ●

[www.valpnow.com](http://www.valpnow.com)



“Valp's passion for his work and the city he lives in is palpable – best of all is how he has built a business from something he loves. I feel inspired!”  
WIZZ writer Ruth Stokes