

Memorandum

To: Dr. Cagle
From: Scott Dills
Date: 04/21/2021
Subject: Multimodal Design Project

This multimodal project was designed to emulate an article that might be found in a young-adult online e-zine. I even started the page numbering at page 26 (as though this were an article inside a magazine). The source material comes from an old website titled *Strawberry Pop-Tart Blowtorches* created in 1994. The color scheme is bright and cheerful with cartoons. It also contains several “modes” and methods in new media.

Original website link: <http://pmichaud.com/toast/>

Cover Page (page 26): I experimented with **Geon theory**, the idea that we perceive things as collections of 3 dimensional shapes and colors. I created the logo with the burning toaster on wheels from scratch. It is composed of a background circle (grey with black stroke), several lighter grey rectangles comprise the toaster itself, two tan colored rectangles with rectangular pink “icing,” several circles were used to create the wheels on the toaster, and a flame shape was pulled (and then modified) from Photoshop's extensive shape library (Kimball, 201).

The red enclosure that encapsulates the warning message was a **cultural** consideration. Most western readers will recognize bright red as “alarming” or important. An exclamation mark also culturally signifies the importance of the message (Kimball, 201).

Ethics were a consideration. Since this is the age of “Tide-pods” it seemed important to include some warning information that was not originally included in the original website (Kimball, 205).

Page 27: I conducted my own “experiment” with a toaster bought from a nearby Goodwill. This reenactment was completed in my backyard according to the instructions from the original website. I did this so that I could update the PDF with better photographs. Both photos on this page belong to me. The second picture has an “Easter egg” link to an accompanying video. Easter-eggs are a trend in **new media** (Wysocki). The toaster image used in the cover was carried over into the subsequent pages to provide (1) comedy relief (2) affordances to guide the reader to the next pages (you have to find out what happens to the toaster???) and (3) Cohesion (Kimball 32-33, 50-51, 130).

Page 28: A picture from the old website was employed on the bottom of the page because it is a very colorful image that makes the page appear striking and it creates a sense of balance on the page (Kimball, 129-131).

Page 29: The first obvious video link appears on this page. If you click anywhere on the image it will open a Youtube Video. The white “play” symbol was included to indicate to readers that this is a playable video (Kimball, 58). I rendered the video in Adobe Premiere Pro and added free-licensed music from the internet to make the production both silly and fun. The music is credited (Wysocki *New Media*).

Page 30: I added more video links and included the cartoon of a melted toaster. The toaster cartoon is the same image used on the cover. It was “melted” using the liquify function in Photoshop along with some other graphics tools. There is a “button” on this page that will take the reader to the original creator's contact information.

Remaining work: I might include some white borders in the background to make more definitive enclosures.

My questions: Was the design choices pleasant to the eye? Does it look like a fun and interesting magazine that young adults would want to read? Can you see a logical flow in my design elements? Does the magazine give you any additional information?



WARNING!

This must only be attempted outdoors with adult supervision. Your toaster will most likely be destroyed!

Strawberry Pop Tarts may be a cheap and inexpensive source of incendiary devices. Toasters which fail to eject Pop Tarts cause the Pop Tarts to emit flames 10-18 inches in height!

READ ON!

Last year, an article by well-known newspaper columnist Dave Barry noted that Kellogg's Strawberry Pop Tarts (SPTs) could be made to emit flames "like a blow torch" if left in a toaster too long. Given previous work in the field of food-entertainment (see Fun With Grapes - A Case Study), it was obvious that this was a new frontier that requires further exploration. The present work describes our independent verification and experience with SPT-based combustion.

Materials Used

Only two basic materials are needed to cause SPT-combustion: a (hopefully inexpensive) toaster and some Strawberry Pop Tarts (Figure 1). In this work, the authors used Kellogg's Strawberry Pop Tarts with Real Smucker's Fruit. SPTs can be obtained either with or without frosting; the non-frosted variety were used for this experiment.



Figure 1. Toaster and Strawberry Pop Tarts

In addition to the basic materials, a number of safety-related items were needed to conduct this experiment. First, a suitable location for the experiment was required, it being expected that the kitchen was not the appropriate place for blow-torching SPTs. The author's driveway was chosen as a suitable site. Second, an appropriate means for extinguishing the SPTs would be needed; a research assistant brought along some baking soda for the purpose.



Experiment Preparation

The toaster and SPT both had to be properly prepared for this experiment. In order to guarantee that the SPT would receive sufficient heat to begin combustion, the toaster was set to its highest setting and the lever was jammed in the "down" position using a clamp. A SPT was removed from the box and its protective packaging and carefully placed into the toaster slot (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Preparation of Toaster and SPT

Next, the toaster and SPT were taken to the driveway, and an extension cord was arranged to provide power to the toaster. At this point, we were ready to begin the experiment. non-frosted variety were used for this experiment.



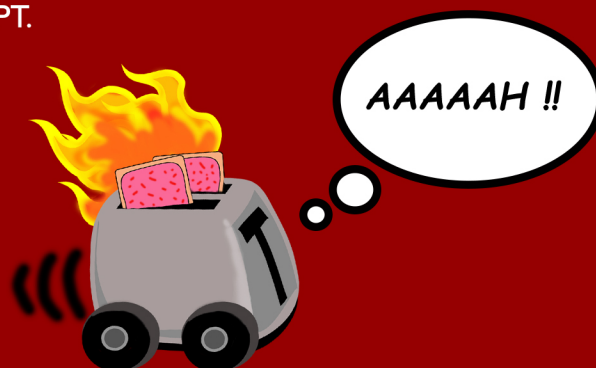
Figure 3. Toaster clamped for SPT combustion

The Experiment & Observations

The toaster was plugged in. First the toaster went through a normal "toasting" cycle (approximately 60 seconds), which more than thoroughly cooked the SPT (since the toaster was set to its darkest setting). By this point we could definitely detect a burnt SPT aroma. The toaster then attempted to eject the SPT, but was prevented from doing so by the clamp. The toaster then began emitting loud rattling and buzzing noises due to its inability to eject the SPT.

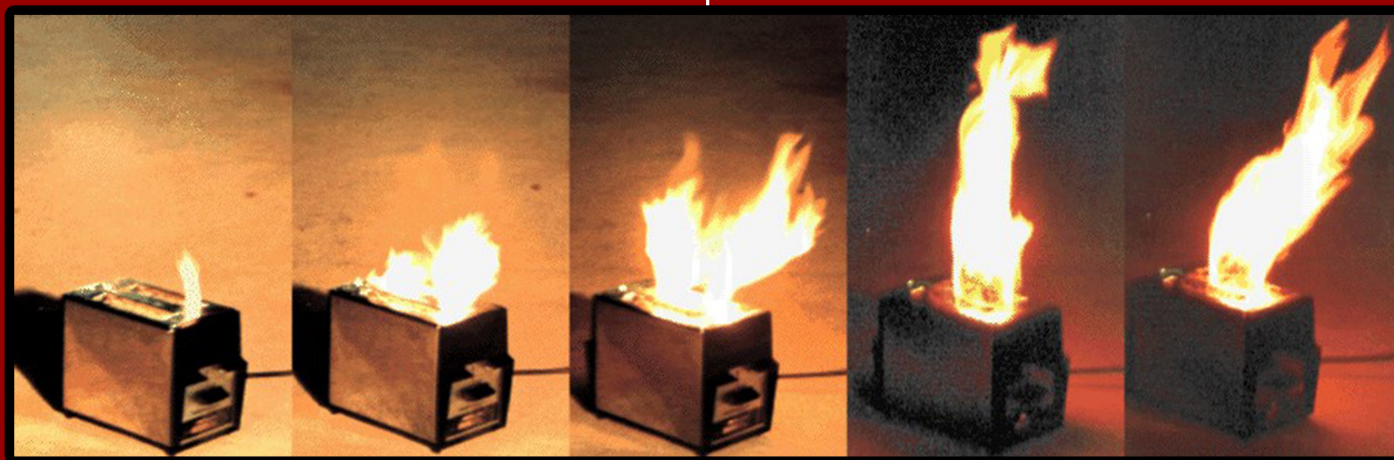
(At this point the researchers became somewhat concerned that the noise from the toaster would wake the neighbors and attract undue attention. However, we decided that we were already committed to the experiment and that the neighbors would be able to sacrifice some sleep in the name of science.)

Soon thereafter, large amounts of smoke began pouring out of the toaster. The researchers noticed that some of the neighbors down the street were beginning to get a little curious, but the experiment proceeded nonetheless. Approximately 40 seconds later, small flames began licking their way out of the toaster. The flames steadily grew larger and larger until reaching a maximum height of about 18 inches above the top of the toaster. Figure 4 presents a time-series collage of the flames emitted from the SPT.



As the flames were reaching their maximum height, the toaster abruptly stopped making buzzing noises. We speculate that the flames had by this point shorted the electronics within the toaster.

Figure 4. Time Series Photograph of Flaming SPT



The toaster was quickly disconnected from the primary electrical source to avoid any potential damage to the author's house. At this point, the researchers also realized that the heat could inadvertently cause the flaming SPTs to suddenly eject from the toaster. Unfortunately, this did not occur. The flames continued for several minutes.

At this point there was some slight concern that the flames might take considerable time to diminish. We then enlisted the help of a reluctant research assistant to sprinkle baking soda on the flames. (The reluctance was understandable given the potential for premature SPT ejection described in the above paragraph.) The baking soda quickly extinguished the flames and produced still further smoke (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Extinguishing the SPT

Once the flames were extinguished, the researchers noted an unanticipated problem: what to do with the (now defunct) toaster and the spent SPT. It became obvious that the toaster could not be returned to the author's house due to both a continued potential fire hazard and the smell of burnt strawberries. In addition, it was noted that the toaster was still "too hot to handle," necessitating the use of a nearby garden hose to cool the toaster off.

Summary & Recommendations

In summary, overcooking the SPT did produce a good size flame. The effect was not as pronounced as the researchers had hoped, but was satisfying nonetheless. The research assistant noted that the flames produced did appear to have some color variation. We believe that frosted SPTs may successfully produce even larger torches. Further research in this area is warranted.

We did desire to repeat the experiment with the remaining five SPTs, but we could not do so because there were no more suitable toasters available for further experiments. In the future, we recommend that toasters be sold in six-packs to accommodate important SPT research. Instead, the remaining SPTs were sacrificed over the course of the next several days in private, undocumented consumption experiments.

Watch the full-length video!



Figure 6. Full-length video of the replicated experiment in the editor's backyard

Acknowledgements

This page belongs to Patrick R. Michaud. These are his acknowledgments.

Special thanks to Jennifer "Svetlana" Reckard for her suggestions and proofreading of this work.

The response to my Strawberry Pop Tart article has been overwhelming. In October 1994 alone it's been accessed more than 2000 times.

Please send me your comments! I'm especially interested to learn how you found out about this page, since I haven't advertised it much of anywhere.

pmichaud@pobox.com

The current editor would like to thank his dogs for supervising the replication of this silly endeavor.

Learn more!



Figure 7. Mr. Science replicates the original author's experiment with a "Magic Blowtorch kit"



Other Experiments



Figure 8. Adam and Jaime from the show Mythbusters demonstrate the reaction between Mentos and Diet cola

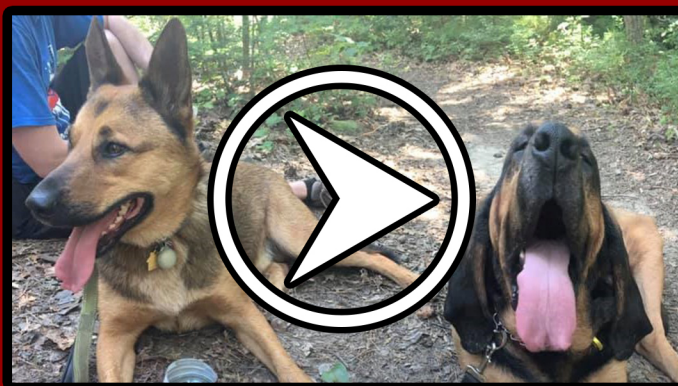


Figure 9. These boys supervised during new photography. No pooches were hurt in the making of this PDF (click the link!!!!)