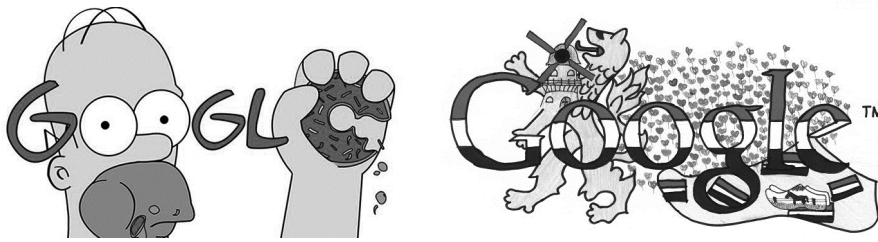


Nerdiest kid brings Google name to life



- 1 HOW much do you know about Momofuku Ando's 105th birthday? How about the Dragon Boat Festival, the last day of the Canadian penny or what would have been famous singer Freddie Mercury's 65th birthday? Chances are, if you have visited Google in the past few years, you have seen an image, animation or film that has become known collectively as Google Doodles. Designed to commemorate a specific person, event or milestone, the Google Doodle has grown from the most basic of illustrations to fully immersive games and creative experiences.
- 2 Ryan Germick is head of the Google Doodle team, based at the company's Californian headquarters. Born and raised in rural Indiana, a childhood love of art and comics led the friendly Germick to study illustration and creative writing in New York, before he spent several months sign-painting and learning remedial Tamil in India at the start of the century. There he created his first website to share photographs he had taken on his Sony Digital camera with family and friends. "It was the first time I really realised the power of the internet – this was before Flickr and social media and all that," he said. "Strangers, not just my friends and family, would see my site and message me, and it set off a little light bulb in my head. I was the nerdiest kid in school, and for me, a computer was just another tool to do something interesting with."
- 3 He began working for Google, the first place he applied to, in 2006. "When I first started, I had the very general title of web specialist, which wasn't special at all. I had a business card, and I would scribble out 'web' and 'ist' and would give people my card reading 'Ryan Germick, special'."
- 4 While the first Google Doodle officially appeared on the site in 1998 (a stick figure representing the Burning Man festival), there was no official Doodle team until 2009. The team now produces about 400 Doodles each year, about 50-100 of which will be animated, and about 12 fully interactive. Team members plan about 18 months ahead to work out the events, people and milestones with the most creative potential, and the only constraints to the team's creativity are that the word Google must be recognisable, and the amount of space it can occupy.

- 5 The true unsung heroes of the Doodle were the hundreds of workers across the globe who submitted ideas and cultural guidance to make the image personalised and resonant, Germick said. His team makes an effort to incorporate as many artistic styles and creative mediums as possible; 12, he says, is critical.

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