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K2 – Reflection and Evidence

K2: The broad range of industry standard creative digital design tools and methods, their strengths and weaknesses and how to apply them.

How I gained this knowledge

Over the past three years, I've had the opportunity to explore a wide range of industry-standard creative tools and methods. When I started in Year 4, most of the software, like Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, was completely new to me. Through structured coursework and guided experimentation, I began to understand how these tools function and what they're best used for.

As my confidence grew, I moved on to tools like Adobe XD and Figma, learning how to design and prototype user interfaces. I discovered how each software has its own strengths: Figma was brilliant for collaboration, while Adobe XD offered deeper integration with other Adobe tools.

In Year 5, I began exploring immersive and emerging technologies, including AERO, Skybox, and Spline. These opened my eyes to spatial and 3D design. Then in Year 6, I focused on AI avatar video creation tools like Synthesia. In May 25, in addition to work, I have set up my own business and created a website using IONOS and social media.

Comparisons of Tools and Methods

Throughout my digital design journey, I have worked with a wide variety of industry-standard tools, each with its unique strengths and limitations. Understanding how to assess and apply these tools appropriately has been crucial to developing my design practice.

Adobe Photoshop vs. Illustrator
Photoshop is excellent for raster-based image manipulation and detailed photo editing, making it ideal for tasks such as retouching, texture creation, and photo compositing. However, its limitation lies in scalability; assets created in Photoshop can lose quality when resized.
In contrast, Illustrator excels in creating vector-based graphics, which are scalable and ideal for logos, icons, and branding. Its weakness is that it's less suitable for photo-realistic design or complex image editing.

Adobe XD vs. Figma
Both are powerful tools for UI/UX design and prototyping. Figma's primary strength is its cloud-based collaboration features, allowing multiple designers to work on a project in real time, an asset during group projects or feedback sessions. On the downside, it may feel limited in offline environments.
Adobe XD offers smoother integration with other Adobe tools like Photoshop and Illustrator, making it efficient for projects requiring cross-platform workflows. However, its collaboration tools are not as intuitive or seamless as Figma's.

Immersive Tools: AERO, Skybox, Spline
These tools opened new possibilities in spatial and 3D design. AERO is particularly good for creating AR experiences with minimal coding, but it can be limited by hardware compatibility and export options.
Spline allows real-time 3D web design and is very intuitive for beginners. However, it lacks some of the advanced rendering capabilities found in professional-grade 3D software.
Skybox is useful for generating 360° immersive environments, though its niche focus means it may not be suitable for general-purpose design.

AI and Video Tools: Synthesia, Vyond, Premiere Pro
Synthesia is a powerful tool for creating AI avatar videos quickly, saving time on filming and editing. Its limitation is in customisation, voice, tone, and movement options are still restricted.
Vyond is great for animated explainer videos, offering a vast template library. However, it can feel templated and less original without significant customisation.
Premiere Pro provides the most control and quality for video editing but has a steeper learning curve and longer production times.

Web and Branding Tools: IONOS and Social Media Platforms
IONOS made it relatively easy to build and host my website, though it offers less design flexibility than platforms like WordPress or Webflow.
Social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook) allowed me to share and test brand content quickly, but their design tools are basic and better suited to supporting rather than leading a design strategy. I have upgraded my Groove with Sooze Facebook status to the professional dashboard, to engage with their challenges to reach a wider audience.

Through comparing these tools in context, I've learned that effective digital design is not about mastering one software but understanding how and when to apply different tools depending on project needs, team dynamics, and creative goals.

What have I learned?

I've learned to evaluate creative tools not just by their capabilities but also by how well they suit the task at hand. For instance, while Photoshop is excellent for detailed image editing, Illustrator is more effective for creating scalable graphics. I've learned that the key to good digital design is choosing the right tool for the right stage in the process and sometimes combining multiple tools for a single project.

I've also developed an appreciation for workflow methods like prototyping, versioning, and feedback cycles, which are essential in any real-world design project. This has made me a more strategic and efficient designer.

What challenges did I face?

The learning curve was steep at times, especially when juggling multiple tools and trying to figure out how they fit together. I often felt like I had to start from scratch with each new software, and it was difficult to know which one was best suited for different tasks at first.

How I overcame these challenges

I overcame this by staying curious and approaching learning as an ongoing process. I took advantage of online tutorials, peer feedback, and trial-and-error. Eventually, I began to see patterns and workflows that apply across different platforms. This made it easier to adapt and switch between tools as needed.

How I will apply this to work

Now that I'm comfortable with a wide range of tools, I can confidently select and use the best one depending on the design challenge. Whether I'm creating visual content, prototyping an interactive experience, or producing video content, I have the flexibility and insight to make informed choices. I also enjoy helping my colleagues find efficient ways to achieve high-quality results by sharing what I've learned and mentoring them when they're exploring new tools. I have also set-up my own business "Groove with Sooze" created a logo and added design content to my own website and social media.

Evidence by Academic Year

Year	Focus Areas	Tools Explored	Key Projects
Year 4	Foundational design tools	Photoshop, Illustrator, Adobe XD	CDD100, SENSE100
Year 5	Advanced UI/UX, immersive design	Figma, Spline, AERO, Skybox	UX200, IMM200, DDP200
Year 6	AI avatars, video production	Synthesia, Premiere Pro, Vyond, IONOS	PRP300, CRP300