

## Makr Shkr Mixology - The Latest Design, Make and Enjoy Your Own Cocktails

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2nd September, 2013

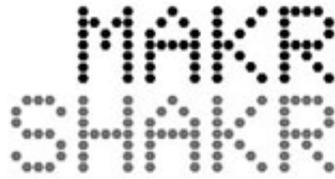
As any cocktail connoisseur knows, mixology is a precise science, and everyone has their own way of customizing their favorite drink. Makr Shkr was an installation at this year's Google I/O conference that used robotic barmen to mix drinks in approximately one googol (that's 10 to the power of 100) different crowd-sourced combinations. Developed by the MIT Senseable City Lab in collaboration with the Coca-Cola Company and Bacardi Rum, the project featured an identity, web application and data visualization designed by Pentagram's Eddie Opara and team.

Conference attendees downloaded the Makr Shkr app on their handheld devices and mixed and selected ingredients as their own virtual barmen, then watched as the cocktails were crafted by three KUKA robots and delivered via conveyor belt. As the drinks were prepared, a digital display behind the bar showed the queue of drinks in the works, profiles of the users, and the precise mixture of ingredients in their drinks, as well as what cocktails and ingredients were trending across the crowd.

MIT's Senseable City Lab studies ways the built environment is changing, and Makr Shkr explores the dynamics of social creation and consumption-what Lab director Carlo Ratti calls "design, make and enjoy." Rather than trying to replace a bartender with a robot, Makr Shkr looks at how people might embrace the new possibilities offered by digital manufacturing-in this case, mechanical barmen-to help them collaborate and co-create. Opara's app and interface gave users the opportunity to literally connect over drinks-interact with and learn from each other, be inspired by each others' choices, and share recipes and photos on social networks.

Pentagram was a co-sponsor of the project, recognizing that while robot barmen are a lot of fun, it was also a serious exploration of ways people might work together in the future and a dynamic visualization of social interaction based around product choices. The project taps into the social aspects of drinking and was a natural fit for the beverage manufacturers, who had an opportunity to study behavior and filter out information like what people are drinking, how many are drinking, what drinkers of different sexes or ages prefer, and so on. The application also tracks interesting data like how people change or enhance their next cocktails after seeing what others are drinking-how a certain ingredient or mixture is tried out, after one user sees what another is doing. (Non-drinkers were also able to participate; Makr Shkr can mix both non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks.)

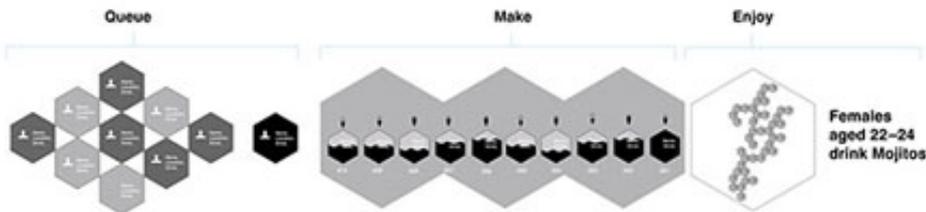
Opara and the designers at Pentagram worked closely with Ratti and his teams at the MIT Senseable City Lab and design practice [Carlo Ratti Associati](#) on the project. The designers had an accelerated schedule of only 30 days to design and build the project before a prototype was tested at [Milan Design Week](#) earlier this spring.



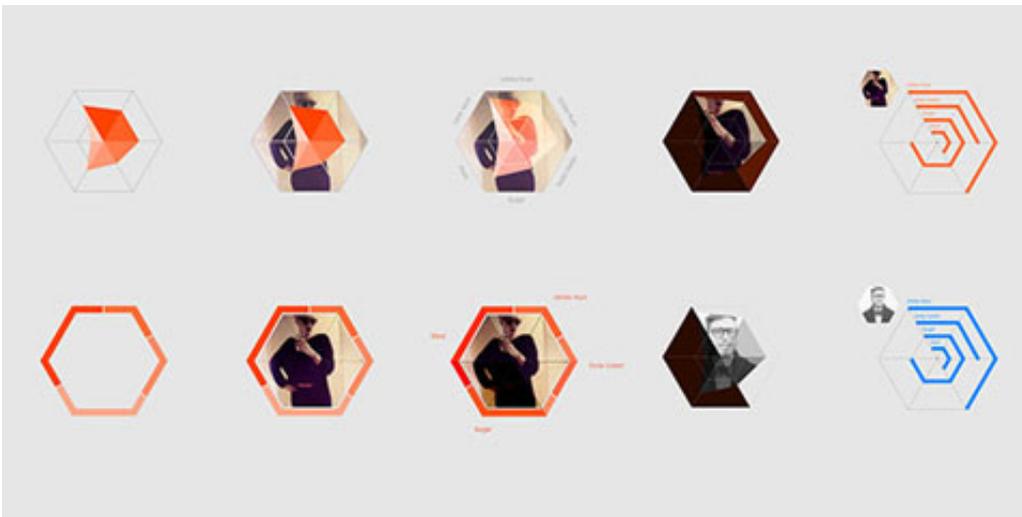
*The Makr Shagr identity.*

Opara and his designers created an app that matches the agility of the robots, as well as the scientific, step-by-step process of assembling the drinks (the "design, make, enjoy") and the horizontal orientation of the conveyor belt. The design of the app and Makr Shagr identity uses a hexagon/honeycomb system that is both organic and mechanical, and appears as a tessellating structure on screen. The app was built in Javascript and was available as a web application or downloadable app for the iPhone and Nexus 7 tablet platforms during the conference. Users logged in via Facebook or Twitter, and their profile appeared in the queue, along with a photo, their age, and where they come from.

#### Visualization Wireframe

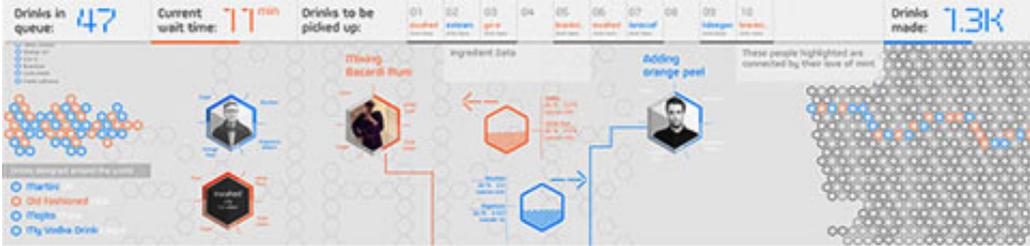


*Makr Shagr visualization development. The graphics use hexagonal/honeycomb forms and a tessellating structure..*

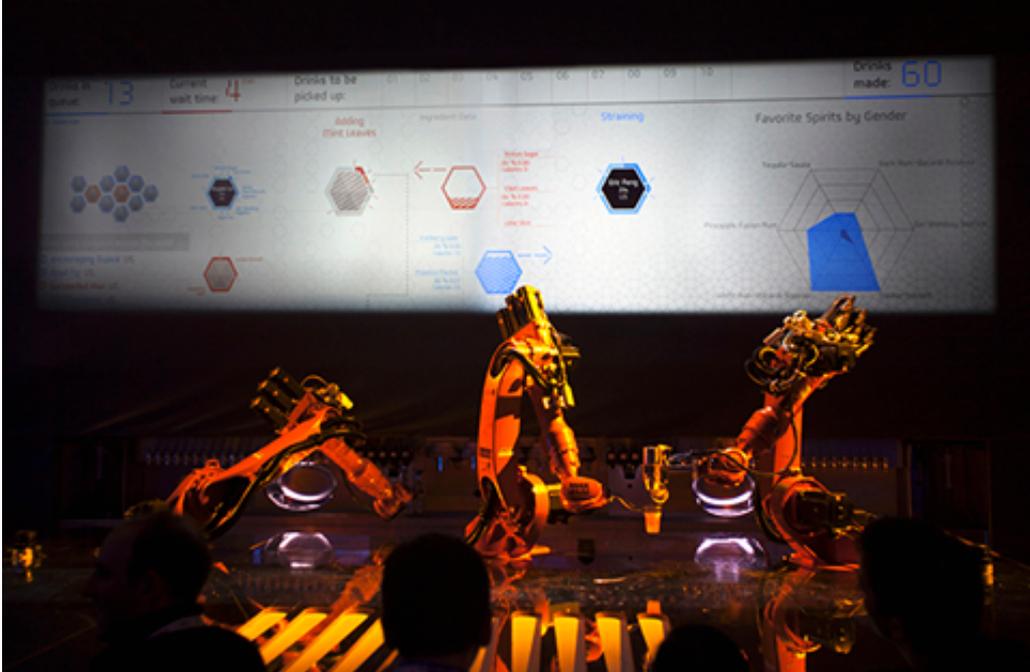


*Visualization development for user profiles.*

Once in the queue, the user profile is accompanied by a visualization of the drink being put together, with ingredients positioned around the hexagonal form, along with details like whether the drink is mixed or muddled, and what percentages are used. Users can see the count of drinks in the queue, along with an estimated waiting time for their drink--something that anyone who's waited at a crowded bar will appreciate. The visualization also displays information like how many drinks have been made in total, which ingredients are trending, and what drinks are popular around the world. (The system could conceivably be connected to other Makr Shagr in other locations.) Users can see links with other users who like the same drinks or ingredients they do, fostering an instant social connection.



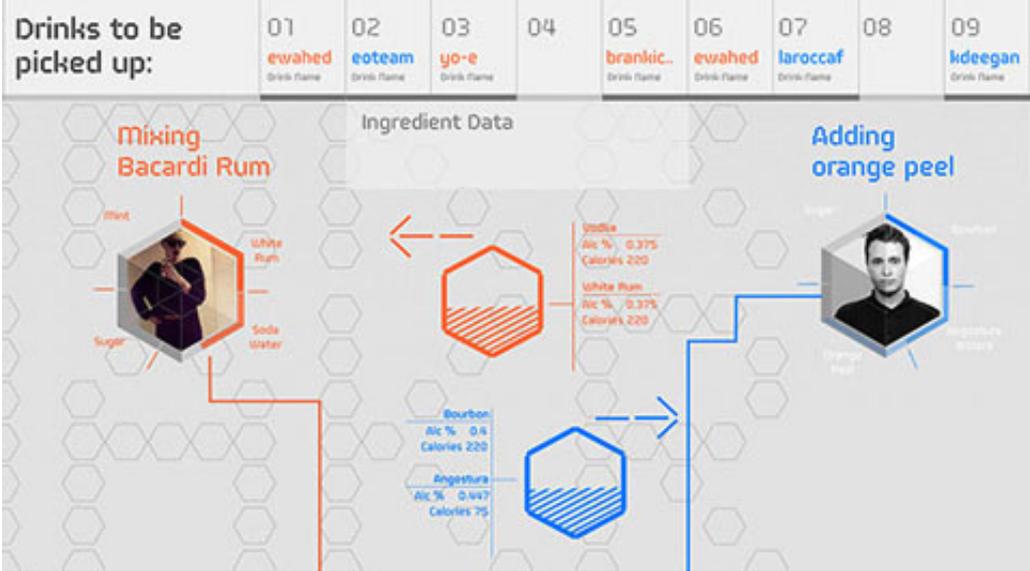
The visualization display uses a step-by-step, horizontal flow inspired by mechanical assembly.



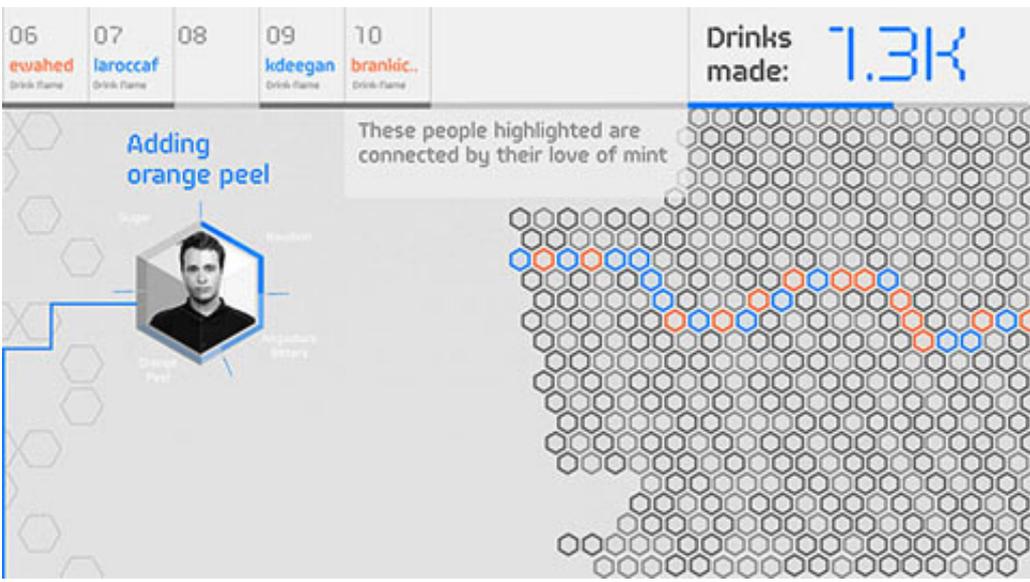
The visualization displayed behind the barmen at Google I/O.



The data visualization shares information like how many drinks are in the queue, current wait time, and what drinks are popular.



Users can watch their drinks being mixed and the specific combination of ingredients in each cocktail.



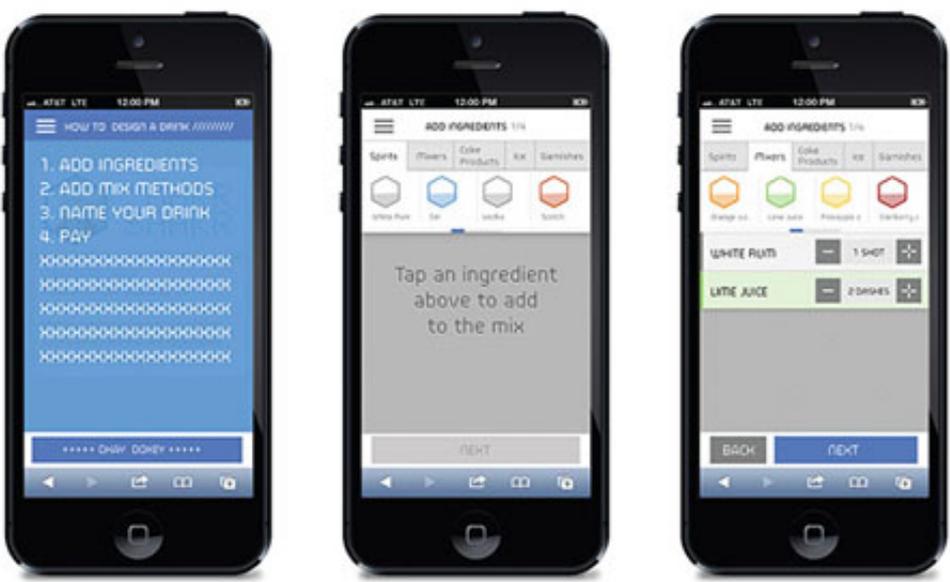
Users can see which ingredients are trending across the crowd.

Before anyone starts doing a little too much making or shaking, the digital design system monitors alcohol consumption and blood alcohol levels by inputting basic physical data, something beyond what a traditional barman can do (and allows drinkers to self-monitor their drinking).

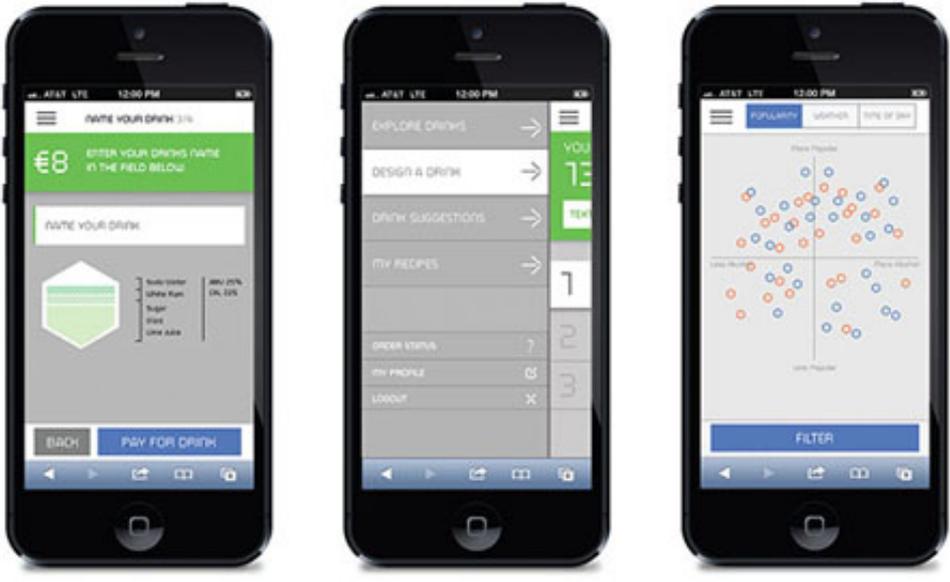
The Makr Shagr installation provided an instantly popular gathering spot at the conferences, where the endlessly moving orange arms of the KUKA robots became a center of attention, backed by the elegant progression of the data displayed behind. (The graceful gestures of the robots were inspired by the movements of the star ballet dancer Roberto Bolle, as well as the choreographer Marco Pello.) The developers of Makr Shagr are currently considering future installations of the project.



Attendees designed their cocktails using the Makr Shkr iPhone app.



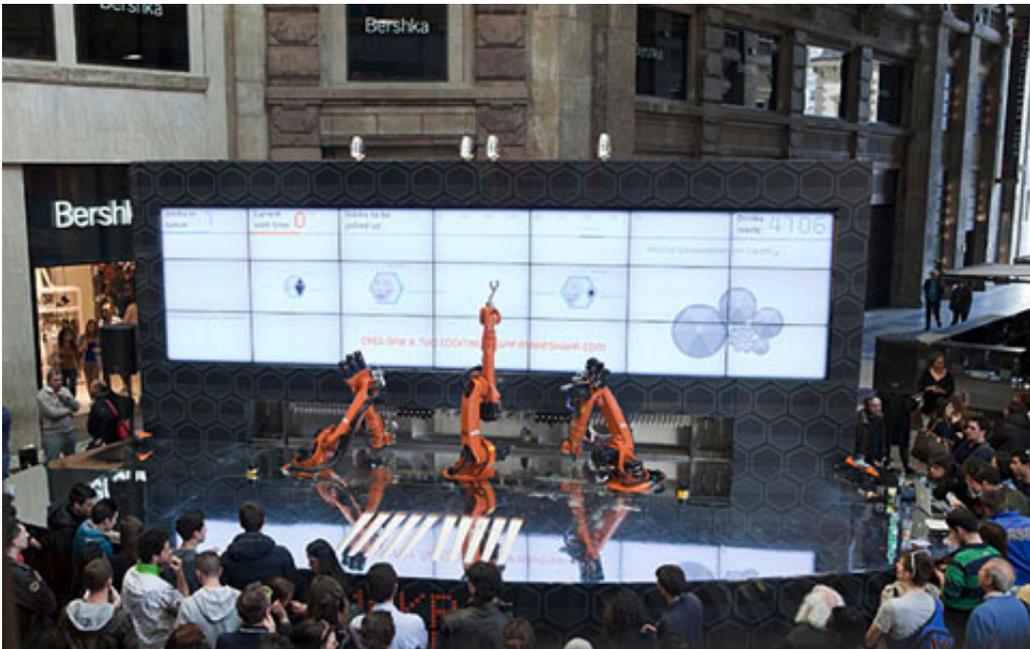
Makr Shkr iPhone app.



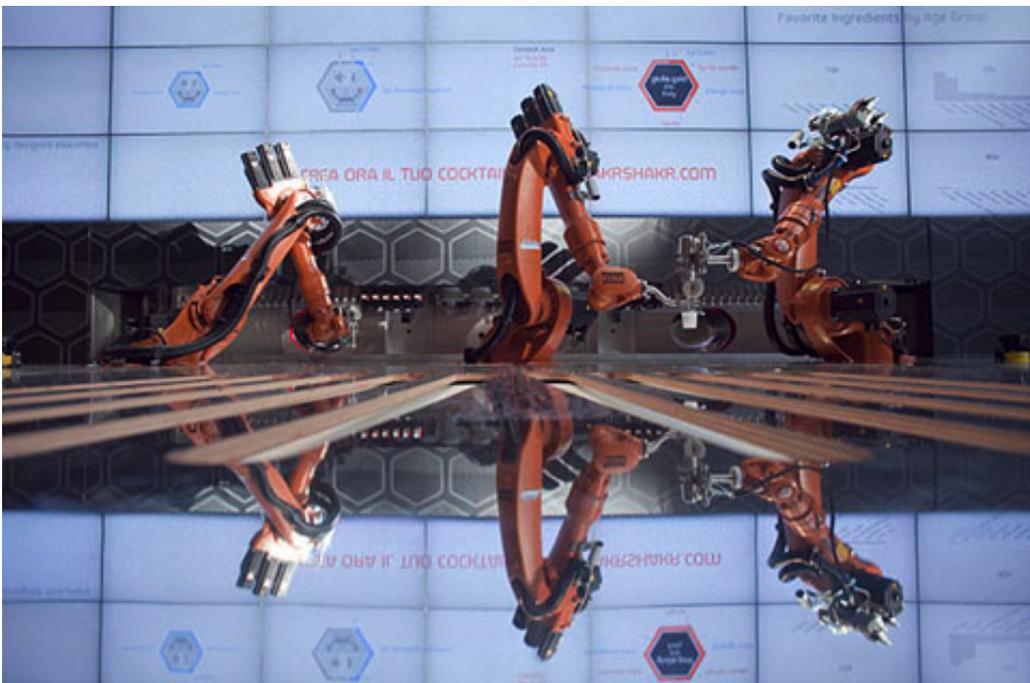
Makr Shkr iPhone app.



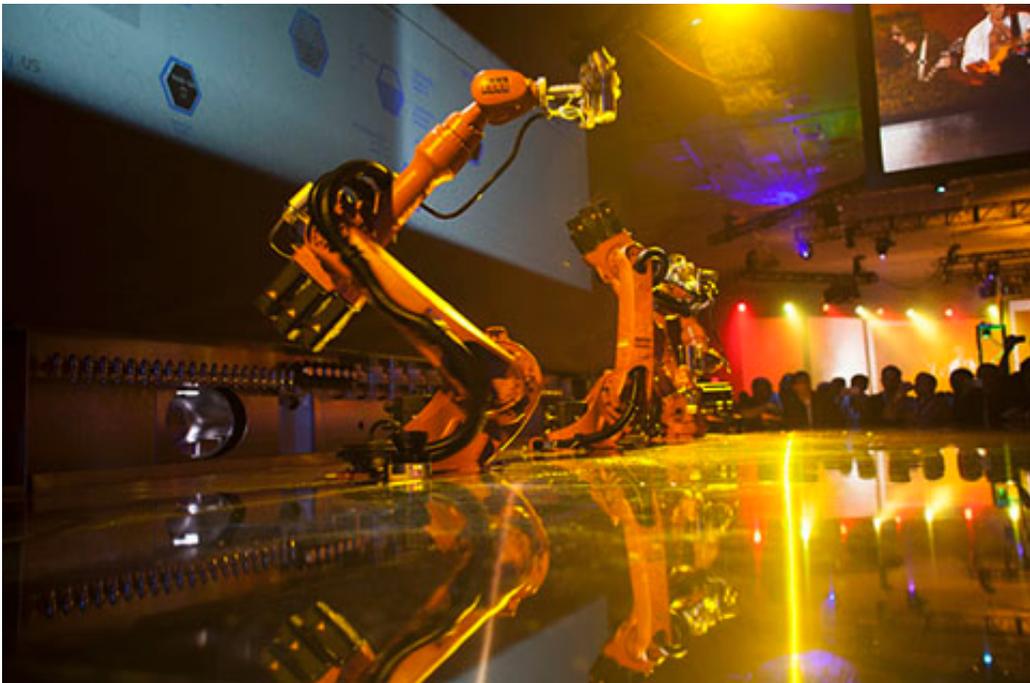
Makr Shagr prototype exhibited at the Galleria del Corso during Milan Design Week. Photo by Max Tomasinelli.



Makr Shagr at Milan Design Week. Photo by Max Tomasinelli.



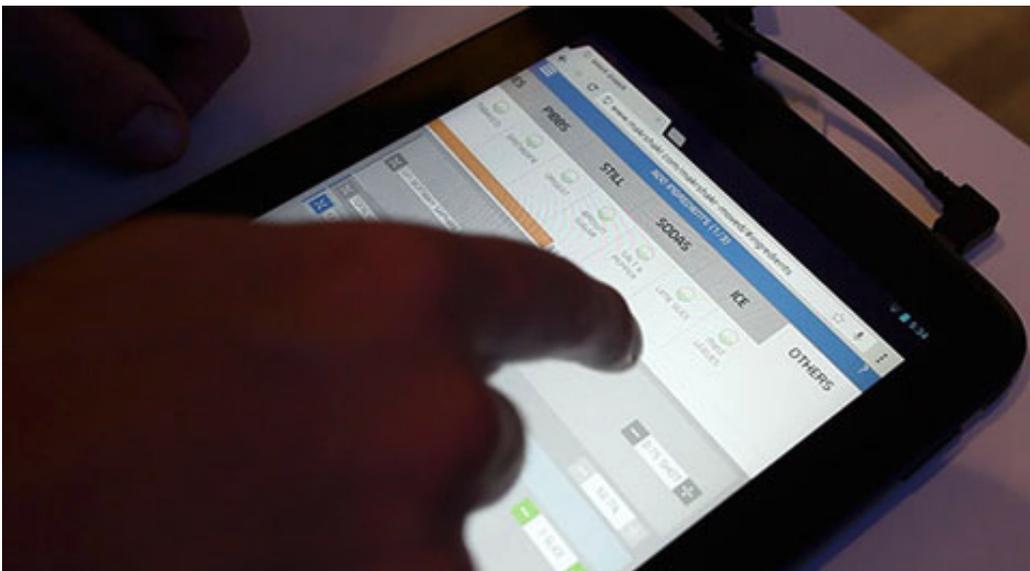
Makr Shagr at Milan Design Week. Photo by Max Tomasinelli.

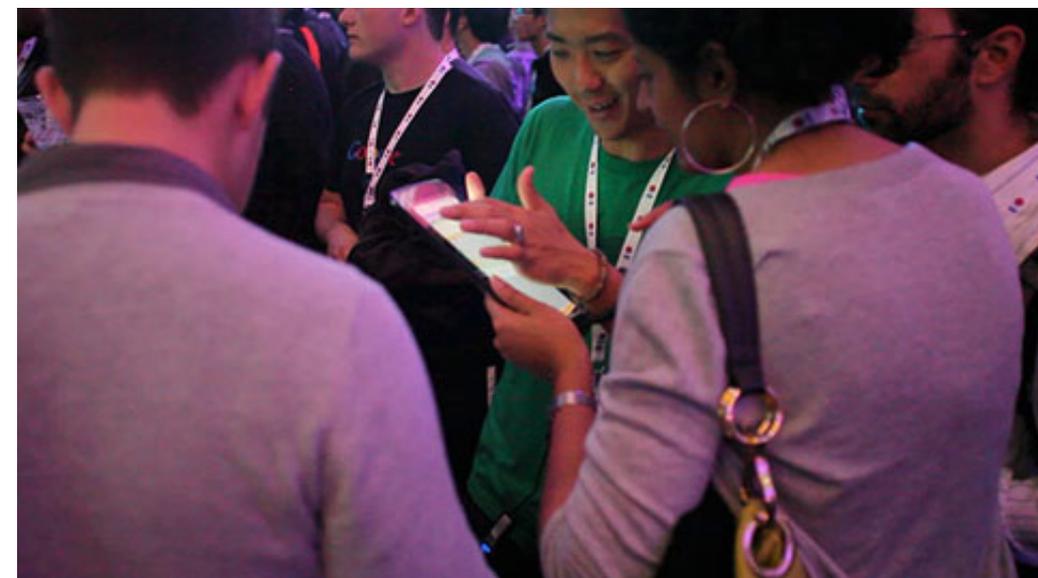


Makr Shagr at the Google I/O conference.



The bar attracted a crowd at Google I/O.





Attendees use the Makr Shkr Nexus 7 app to design cocktails at Google I/O.



Photo by Max Tomasinelli.

## Project Team

Identity, Web Application and Visualization Design by Pentagram  
Eddie Opara, partner-in-charge, creative director and designer  
Frank LaRocca and Ken Deegan, designers  
Erin Wahed, project manager

Application Development by Squeaky Bone Studios  
Nien Lam and Sebastian Buys, developers  
Visualization Development by SuperUber  
Shahar Zaks and Lucas Wertheim, developers

Concept and Design by MIT Senseable City Lab  
Carlo Ratti, project director

Implementation and Production by Carlo Ratti Associati

Automation Design and Fabrication by C.I.A. S.R.L. Automation and Robotics  
Angelo Galimberti, director

Film credits  
Original footage from Pentagram and MyBossWas  
Compiled and edited by Jessica Bishopp, Pentagram  
Music and effects by [Four Pin](#)  
Emmett Glynn, sound design  
Maxwell Sweeney, music

Full Makr Shkr credits available at <http://www.makrshkr.com/>

