Get Mac OS X look and behave the way you want!

Mac OS X
GUI Customization
FOR DUMMIES

first draft

Crazy themes for your favorite OS, unreadable fonts and more !

**A Reference
for the
Rest of Us!**

Pierre Châtel
Author of nothing else

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Second Draft (v2.1)

Mac OS X
GUI Customization for Dummies

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Introduction

MacOS X is an amazing operating system. It's fast, it's stable, it's based on unix (bsd roots to be precise) and, best of all, it has a breathtaking interface. The problem is, when you use it every day it can be pretty boring. Of course, you can change your icons, but it's a "pain in the neck" operation for 10+ icons. You can also change your desktop, but where to look when you are tired of apple's standard wallpapers? Perhaps you would like to change the style of all those neat windows, the style of iTunes, the look of safari. And what about the finder standard font? Or the way the trash looks in your dock? In this little guide I'll try to answer all these questions and more!

Users of MacOS 9 and bellow had suffered for years of the same difficulty. That was before the birth of Kaleidoscope, a user interface enhancement utility. It's the utility that started everything (at least on the Mac platform). With Kaleidoscope you could switch between completely different interface designs provided by plug-in modules called "Schemes". There was also a plethora of sharewares and freewares that allowed us to tweak each and every aspect of the system. You can find equivalent of most of this tools under OSX (and much more).

The MacOS X case

With OSX, we have a much more powerful system in our hands than in those glorious days (despite what some naysayers might say). The rendering system, Quartz, allow developers to embed powerful visual effects in their software. But apple position is quite different regarding the Finder, probably due to streamlining and ease-of-use concerns: out of the box, the end-user is not allowed to change most of the visual aspect of the system itself. The Computer History is an endless loop: developers had to bring back the previously mentioned utilities to the brand new operating system. This guide is all about those utilities, their usage and their price/interests ratio.

But you have to know one thing: customizing the MacOS X system is a relatively pricey hobby. Most of the tools we have at our disposition are sharewares, not freeware, even less open-source utilities. Generally the price for one software range from $5 to $20. But there are exceptions.

Things you can do "out of the box"

Most of the modifications that you can do without using third-parties software are accessible in the "System Preferences" see **Figure 1 - How to access the System Preferences**. They only concern the most basic of the customizations. Don't expect to change the window borders with this method.

But they are always a great start for the beginner you are supposed to be. Also, they don't necessitate any software installation; as a result they will not alter the stability of your system. As well, you will be able to perform them on a "secured" environment (like university, school, work) where you do not necessarily have the required authorizations to install third parties.
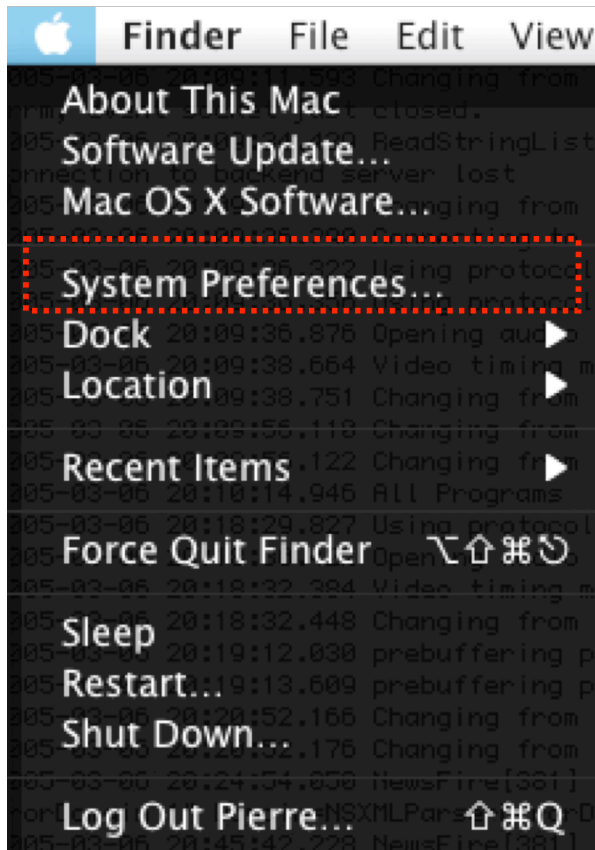
Figure 1 - How to access the System Preferences

Change the default "blue" aqua interface

In the "Appearance" preference pane **(Figure 2 - The "Appearance" preference pane location** & **Figure 3 - "Appearance" preference pane**), you will be able to change:

- The overall **color** of the most common aqua elements (like buttons, menu highlights and so…). I find the "Graphite" color less tiring than the standard blue one.
- Place, or not, the scroll arrows of your windows together (MacOS X default behavior) or "at top and bottom" (MacOS ? to 9 behavior)
- Change the font smoothing style (useful when you use a theme that try to emulate old operating-system look)
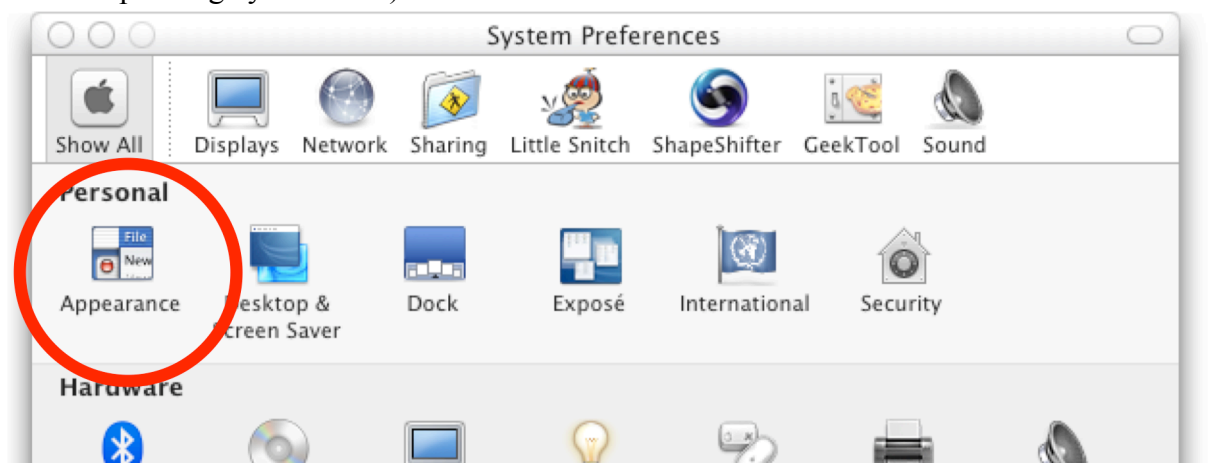
Figure 2 - The "Appearance" preference pane location
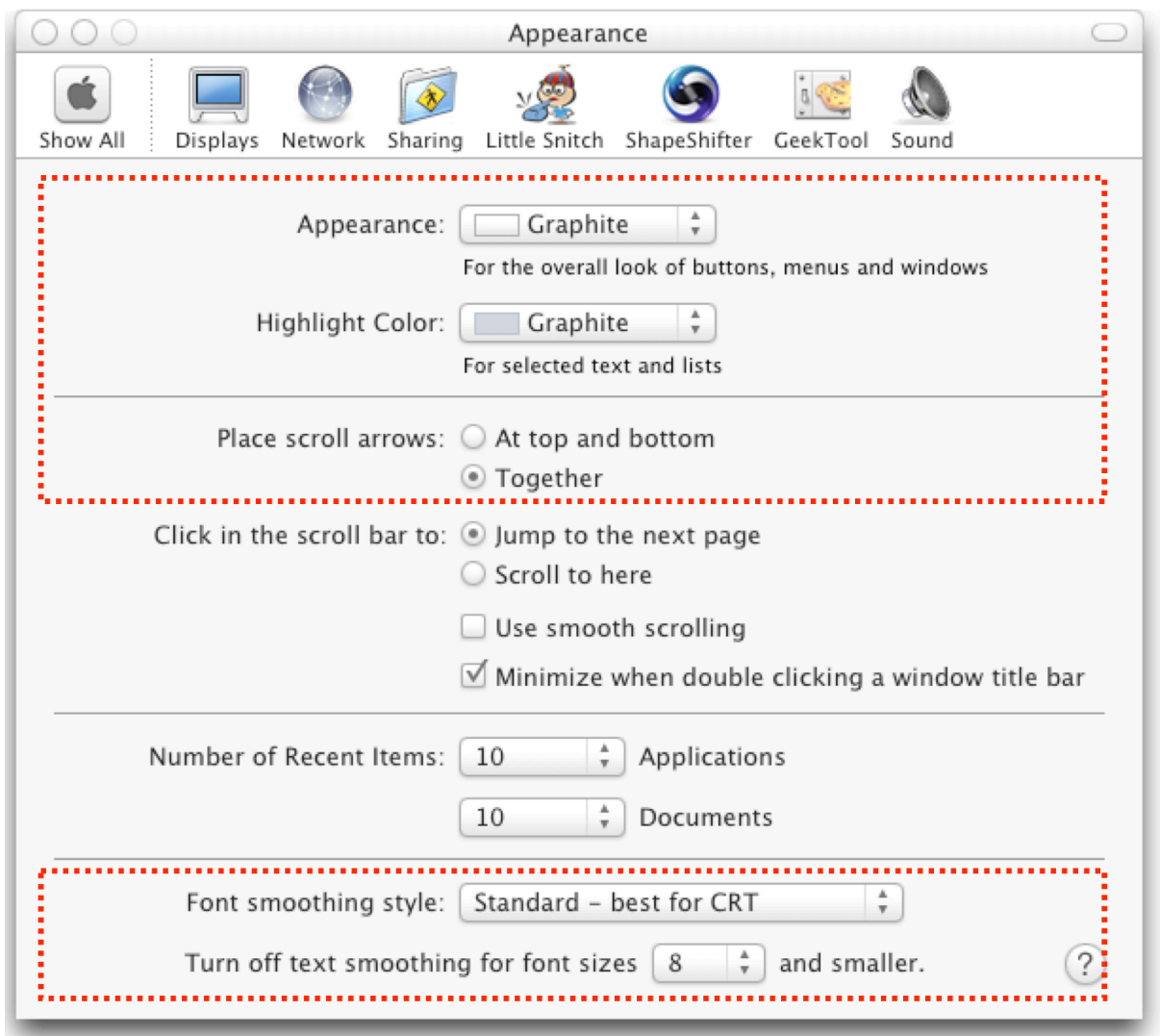
Figure 3 - "Appearance" preference pane

Change the desktop background

The desktop background is probably the customization that the majority of new users are already aware of. I'm not sure what platform introduced the functionality but it sure was a winner!

You have two ways to access this panel in MacOS X:
1. Via the same process that we used before (apple menu➡System Preferences➡Desktop & Screen Saver ➡Desktop)
2. Using the desktop contextual menu (right click (or ctrl-click) on the desktop then choose "Change Desktop Background…")
Figure 4 - The Desktop Contextual Menu

In both cases, you obtain the following view on your screen: **Figure 5 - The "Desktop" preference pane panel**

You can choose to use Apple's own desktop background that come with the system or download new one from the Internet and then drop them to the "Pictures" folder in your home

directory. You will then be able to select them in the preference pane under the "Pictures Folder" section (as shown on Figure 5 - The "Desktop" preference pane panel.
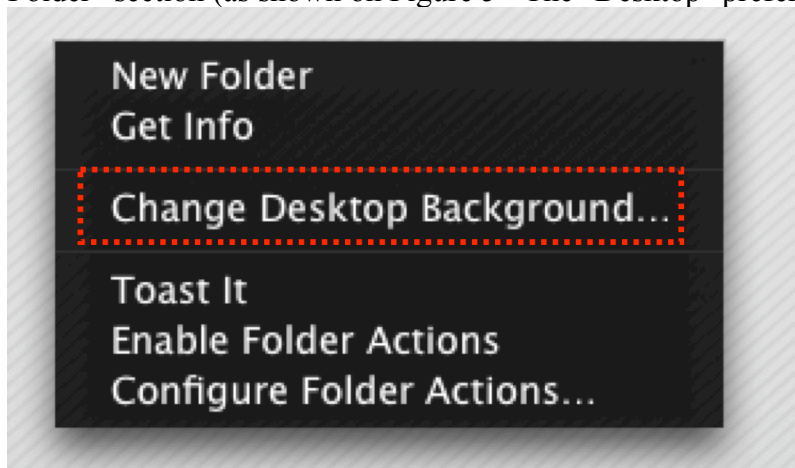
Figure 4 - The Desktop Contextual Menu
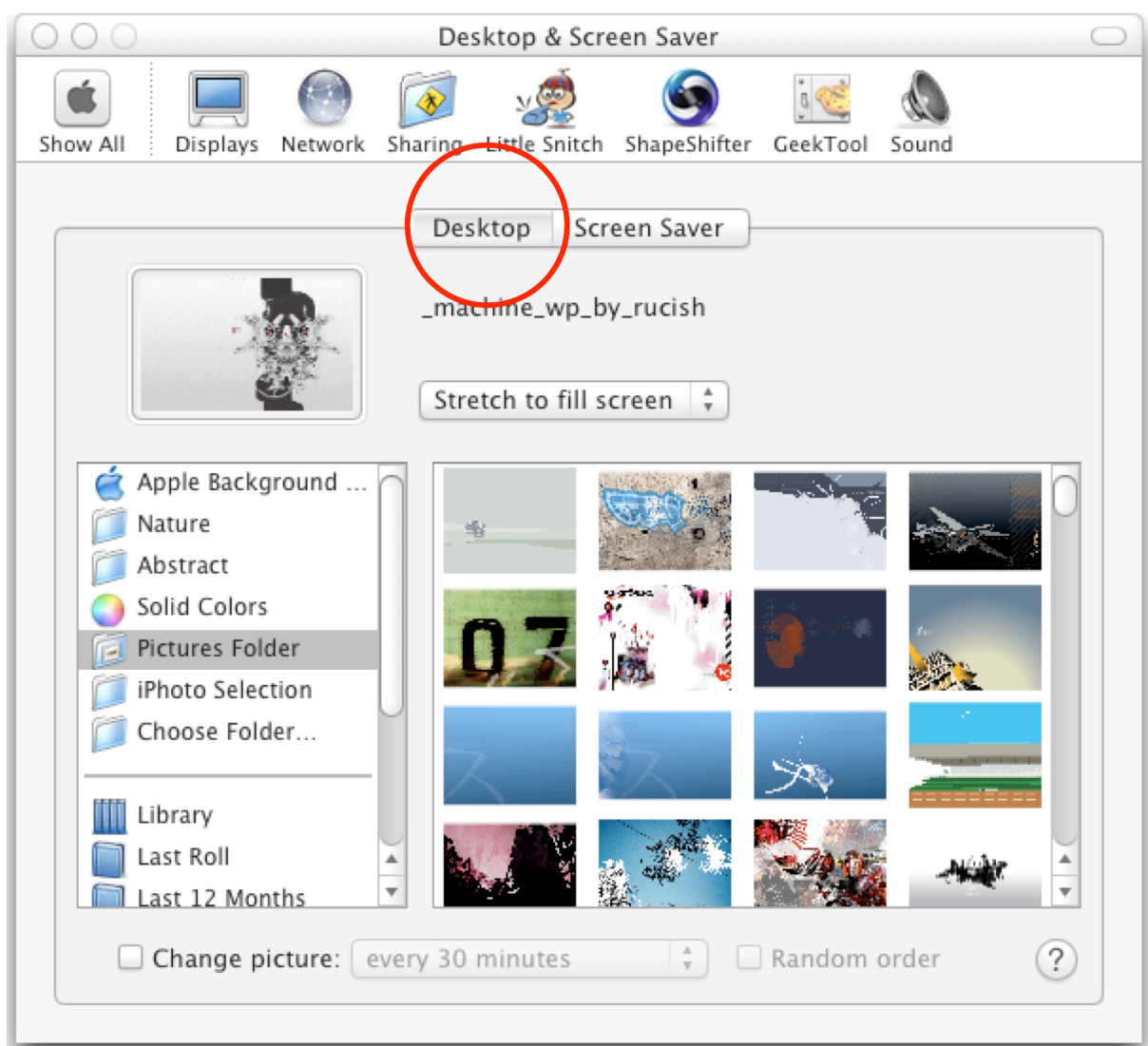
Figure 5 - The "Desktop" preference pane panel

The best way to get new backgrounds is probably to google around a bit. But, hey, this is a newbie guide so here is a list of bookmarks that you can try;

- deviantART: where ART meets application!
  http://www.deviantart.com/
- deviantART: liqachu
  http://liqachu.deviantart.com/
- deviantART: gearman
  http://gearman.deviantart.com/
- deviantART: z1ppy
  http://z1ppy.deviantart.com/
- :: Pixelgirl Presents OS X icons and Desktops::
 http://www.pixelgirlpresents.com/
- nonsuchplace
  http://www.nonsuchplace.com/index.html
- mandolux | :::.::.:.::.:::::..:
  http://www.mandolux.com
- Digikitten - Photoshop Tennis & Graphic Forums
  http://www.digikitten.com
- TETSOO PRODUCTION
  http://www.tetsoo.com/
- InterfaceLIFT - Free GUI Enhancements for Mac OS X and Windows XP
  http://interfacelift.com
- Xanthic Eye
  http://www.xanthic.net

Change the default screensaver

You access the "Screensaver" preference pane using the same instructions that for the desktop background. Except that we want to go under the "Screen Saver" panel of the common desktop & screensaver preference pane. **Figure 6 - The "Screen Saver" preference pane panel**

There is already an exhaustive set of savers with the system but if you are not satisfied with them, the best way to find new ones is to go to these two places on search for "screensaver":

- VersionTracker
  http://www.versiontracker.com
- MacUpdate
  http://www.macupdate.com

Here is what you should do when using versiontracker:

1. Enter the query string in the appropriate search field
   Figure 7 - VersionTracker search field
2. Obtain the results and select the ones you want to download
   Figure 8 - VersionTracker results

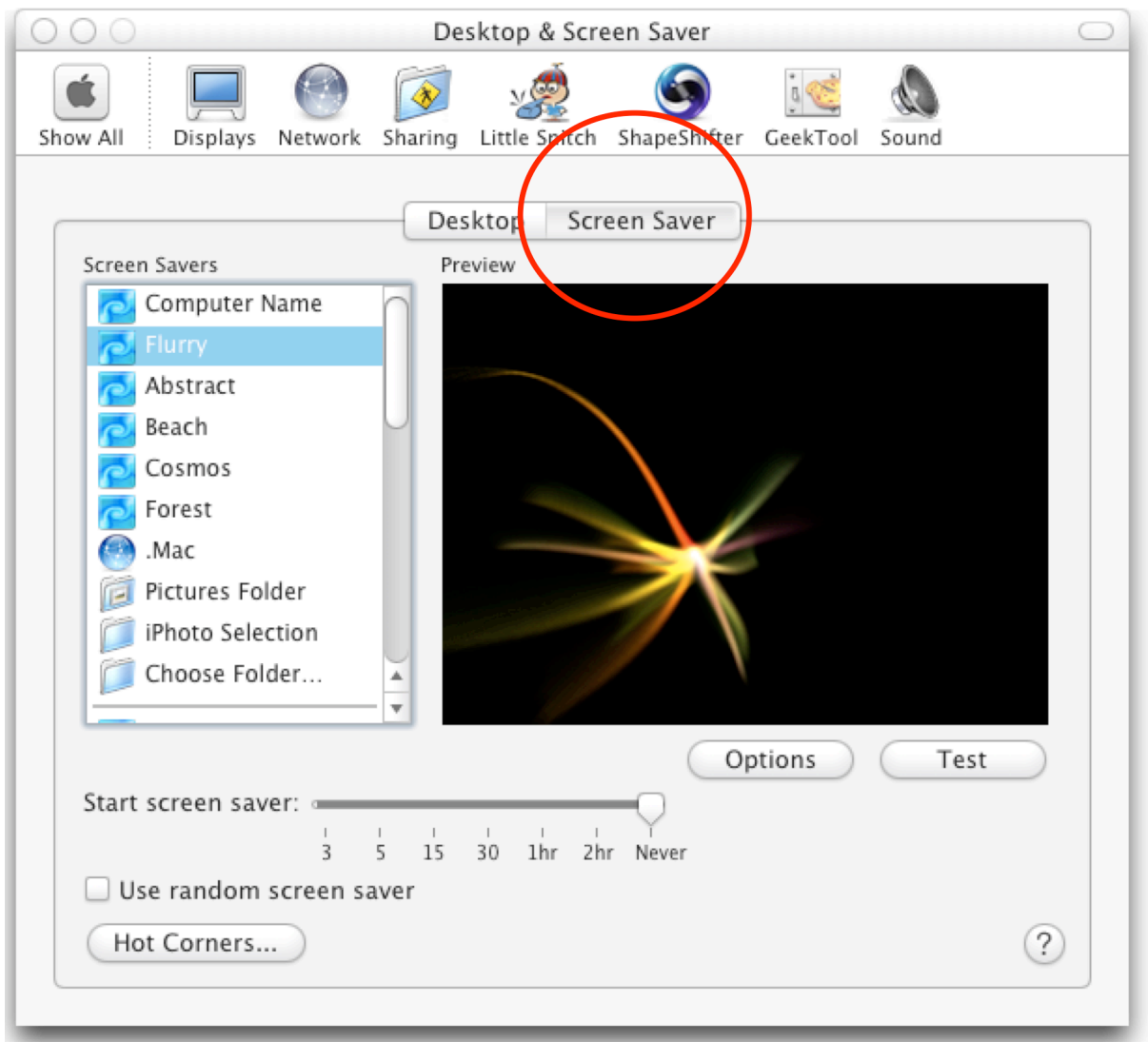**Figure 6 - The "Screen Saver" preference pane panel**

Figure 7 - VersionTracker search field

Search Results for screensaver

(search tips)

Title / Version / Description

Plasma Tunnel Screensaver 1.2.3
   OpenGL screensaver module
Fluid 2.6.1
   Real-time liquid screensaver
Screen Locker 1.0
   enables screen locking in OS X's built-in screensaver
~~GL Screensavers 1.0~~

Figure 8 - VersionTracker results

Change your icons

Another great feature of MacOS X is its ability at changing icons of folders and documents. You can paste any picture you like to an element of the finder. But it will need to have the right size to give great results. You can also copy & paste an icon from a finder element to an other: **Figure 9 - Changing a folder/document icon**

If you want to copy an icon from an other element (document or folder):
1. Select the element with the icon in the finder (the origin element)
2. Choose "File➜Get Info" in the finder menubar
3. Select the element where you want to put the icon (the destination element)
4. Choose "File➜Get Info" in the finder menubar
5. Copy the icon image in the first info window
6. Paste it in the second info window (you need to select the icon in the second info window first)

If you want to use a picture as an icon:
1. Double-click the picture file in order to open it in the "Preview" application or the image manipulation application associated to the selected picture
2. Choose "Edit➜Copy" in the application menubar
3. Select the element where you want to use the picture as an icon(the destination element)
4. Choose "File➜Get Info" in the finder menubar
5. Paste the picture in the info window (you need to select the icon in the info window first)

Things that you can't do with this method include changing the trash icons (one for the empty trash, one for the full trash), the "finder" icon (the one at the left side of your dock, network icons, and general icons that you can find on the toolbars (like "Favorites","New Folder", "Desktop", "Computer", etc…). To accomplish this kind of modification we'll need the help of an utility called "Candybar" (see appropiate section under the **Advanced customization** topic).

Document or Folder

Image Preview

Info window of origin element

copy & paste

copy & paste

Info window of destination element
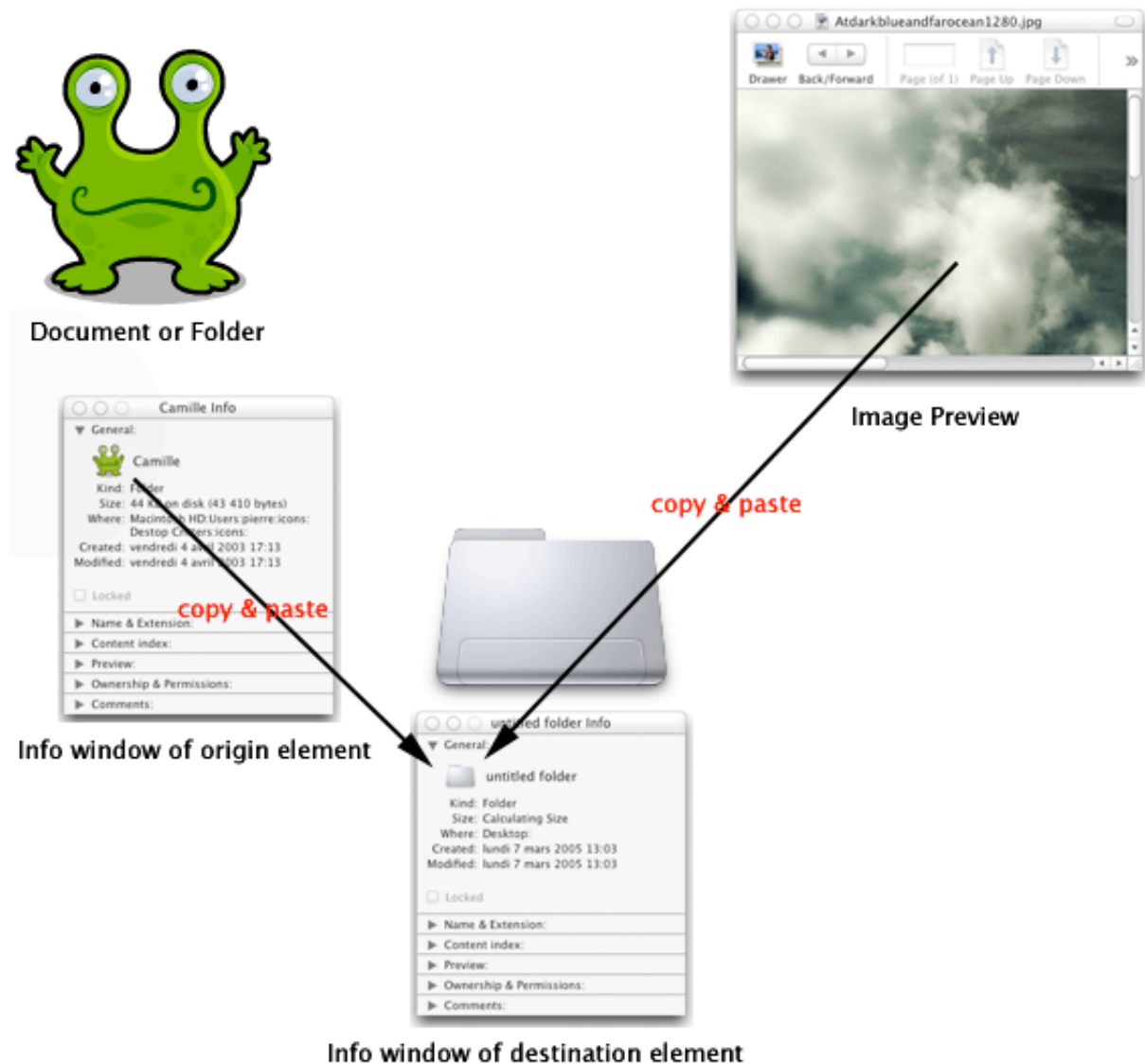
Figure 9 - Changing a folder/document icon

Customize the dock appearance and behavior

The dock is the bar at the bottom of your screen that holds icons of commonly used application and currently launched software. It also contains the trash and receives the minimized windows.

What you can customize:

- The dock size
- The magnification ratio (when you roll your cursor over the dock it magnify the icons under your cursor)
- The position of the dock on your screen (left, bottom, right)
- The window minimization effect: default cpu consuming "genie" effect or the more traditional "scale" effect.
- You can also choose to auto-hide the dock "à la windows"

All these settings are accessible in the Dock Preference Pane **Figure 10 - The dock preference pane**. You access it using the same method than before (via the apple menu).
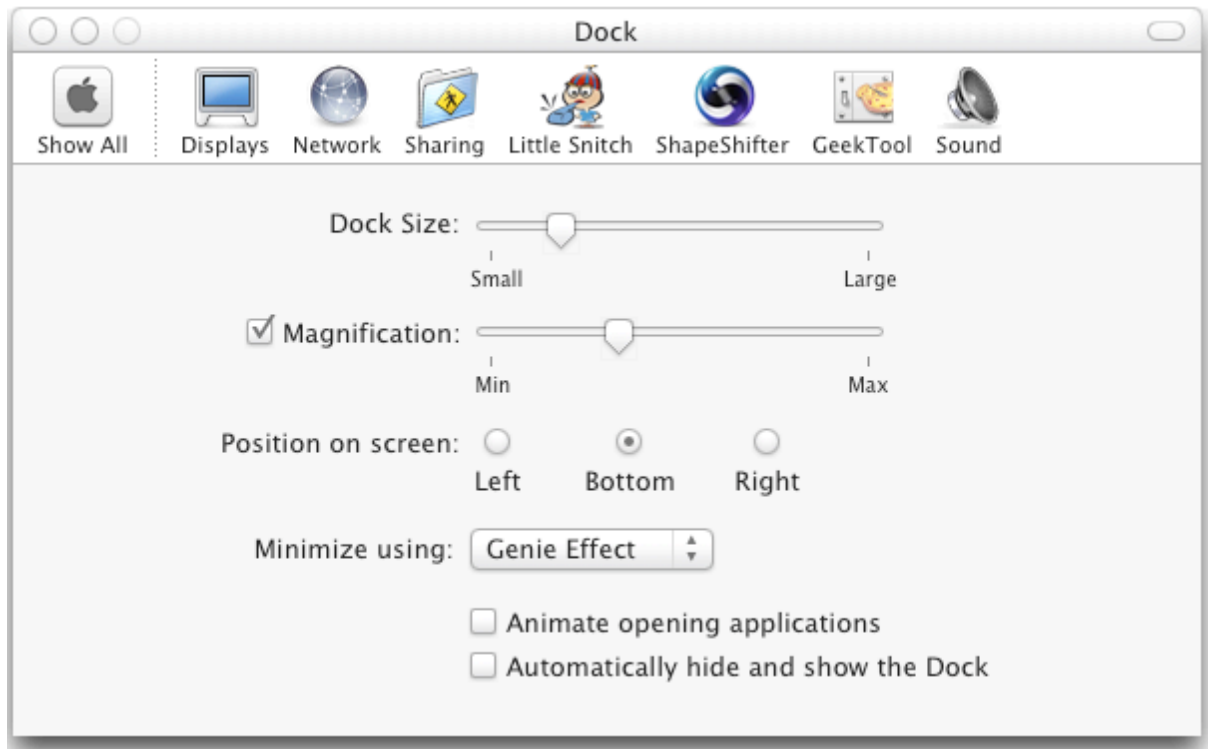
Figure 10 - The dock preference pane

Change the startup/login screen

WARNING: messing with system files is not a recommended procedure for inexperienced users. Do it at your own risks.

The startup screen is the picture that is displayed after the big grey apple with the spinning wheel (**Figure 11 - Standard boot panel**). If you want to change or customize it you need to:

1. Go to /System/Library/CoreServices/SystemStarter folder
   To do so, open a finder window (for example double click on your hard-drive) and select "Go To Folder…" in the "Go" menu in the menu-bar. Then enter the previous path**.** See **Figure 12 - CoreServices**.
2. It should go to the specified folder. Then, control-click on "QuartzDisplay.bundle" and select "Show Package Contents…"
3. You will find a file named "BootPanel.pdf" in the "Resources" folder.
4. **BACKUP IT** anywhere you want!
5. Open it with with photoshop, the gimp, or any other image manipulation program. Modify it the way you want, save it, replace it. As long as it remains a pdf file of the right proportions it should work.
6. The next time you reboot, you will see the new boot screen.

Figure 11 - Standard boot panel

Figure 12 - CoreServices

Advanced customization

In the preceding pages you have seen how to deal with the most basics customizations of your work environment. Most of them have been accessible to Mac users since the "Beginning". In the following chapters we'll see how to deepen the modifications without too much trouble (except for your wallet).
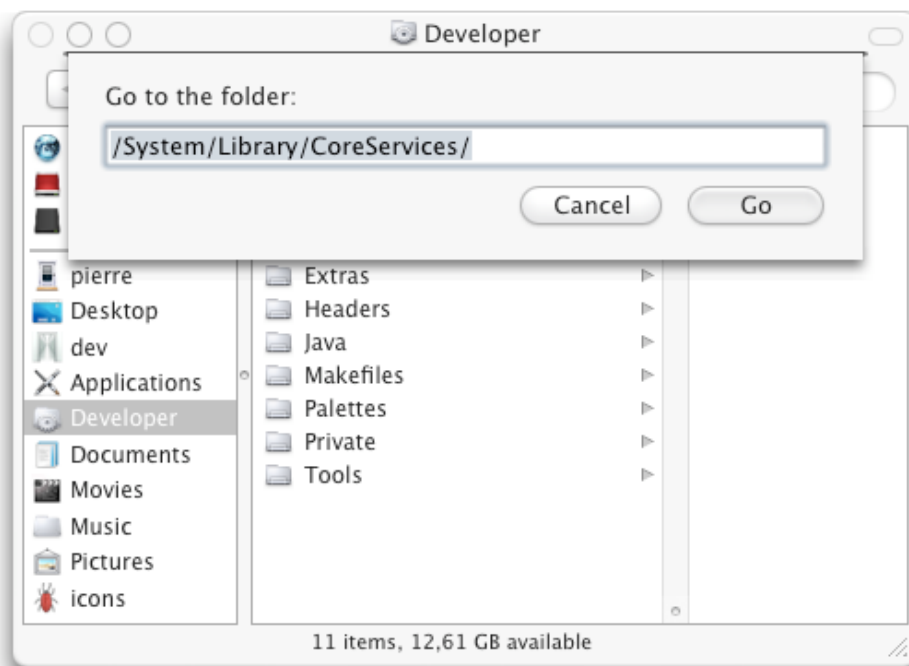
All of these customizations will require the help of some third-parties software. As they tweak with the configuration of your computer, they can alter its stability. For example, an application like Shapeshifter will modify the memory image of running software in order to change its widgets (windows gadgets/decorations). This can't be done without risking loosing some of the stability of the whole system. You need to have equilibrium between what you want to do and what can be done without ruining the ergonomics of your computer.

In the following section I'll try to gather applications by the type of alteration they can apply to your system. *It can be a modification in the look or in the behavior*. Some applications have multiple capabilities so they will appear multiple times.

Changing all the system icons

A great place to find icons and icons package is "The Iconfactory". Go to http://www.iconfactory.com and start downloading!

Candybar

Unlike the common way to of changing icons, Candybar can alter almost every icon used on your system: ranging from applications to toolbar icons, trash, volume icons, standard folder icon and more. All of this under the same window, no need to do open the information window of each element you want to change.

Icons are gathered by category:
- "System": all the system icons (general icons, folder icons, dock & devices icons)
- "Applications": try to list every application installed on your computer.
- "Volumes": the internal & external hard-drives, cd-roms, etc…
- "App Extras": where you can drag applications that were not found by Candybar.

So if you want to change any of the icons listed, you only need to drag the new icon on the selected destination and hit the "Apply" button. See **Figure 13 - CandyBar main window** for more detail.

Another great way to use this utility is to download icons packages that contain replacements for all your system icons at the same time. This way, you only need to double-click the package; it will launch CandyBar, then hit the "Apply" button and Voila.
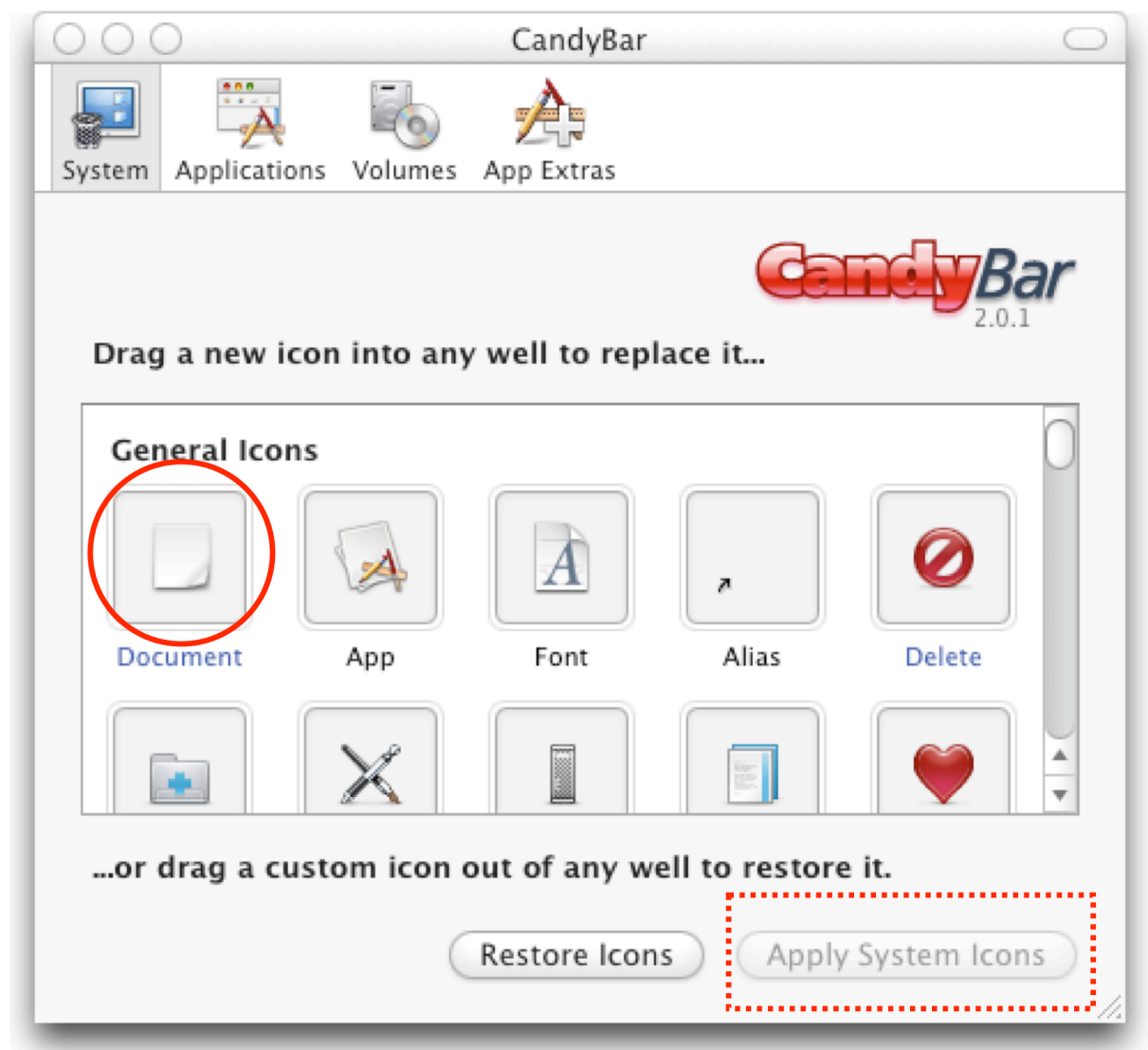
Figure 13 - CandyBar main window

There is also an other benefit of using CandyBar compared to the simple copy&paste method: most applications (using the Cocoa Framework) display their icon in the dialog boxes they open, with Candybar the new icon will also appear in theses dialog boxes.

Sofware:	Candybar
Price Tag;	$12.95
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.0.1
Homepage	http://www.iconfactory.com/cb_home.asp
Download URL	http://www.panic.com/candybar/d/CandyBar%202.0.1.dmg

ShapeShifter

Originally made to customize your windows via themes, it can also open the same icons packages that CandyBar. For this reasons these two applications don't tolerate each other's. If you want to use ShapeShifter and CandyBar at the same time you have to deactivate the icon customization function of ShapeShifter. If not, CandyBar will refuse to launch.

Changing the widgets used by the System (windows, menus and more)

These probably are the most exciting modifications you can do to MacOS X: customize the windows look, the menubar aspect and the dock appearance. To achieve this goal we'll use the following three applications:

ShapeShifter

As mentioned before, it's probably the most powerful tool we will use in this guide. Not only you can change the overall l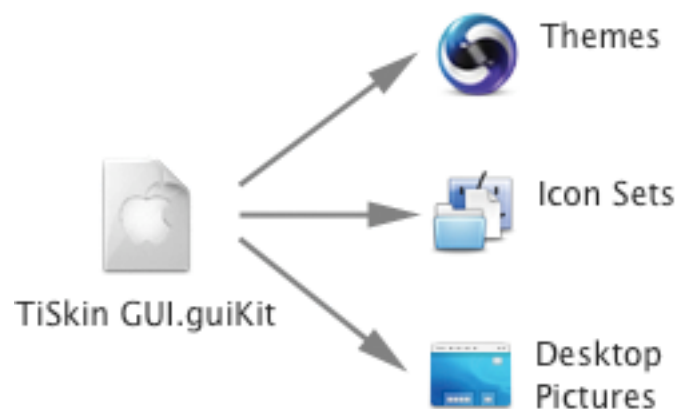ook of your system with it, but also your icons, desktop pictures and cursor (with the mighty mouse haxie, see **Changing mouse's cursor**).

When you download new themes, you download what is called a "guikit", it *can* contains icons, desktop pictures and cursors along with the standard theme but not necessarily.

Here is the look of the ShapeShifter preference pane. From here you can tweak most aspects of your system: **Figure 14 - The ShapeShifter Preference Pane**

So, you want to get ride of this awful "Aqua" theme here is what to do:

1. Go to MacThemes (http://www.macthemes.net) and download some shapeshifter themes (single file most of the time). Or, even better, crawl to the "Download" tab of ShapeShifter: it lists the best themes that were developed lately. See **Figure 15 - ShapeShifter "Download" tab**

2. Depending on your browser configuration the theme will be automatically added to shapeshifter and listed under "Themes" in the "Apply" tab as in Figure 14 - The ShapeShifter Preference Pane. If not double-click the file you have downloaded.

3. Select the new theme in shapeshifter under the "Themes" section in the "Apply" tab.
4. Most modern themes include, besides the standard theme, new desktops pictures and icons sets that will be added in the appropriate sections under the "Themes" section. If you want to use them, just select them the same way you selected your new theme.
5. Hit the "Apply Changes" button, then logout/logon to ensure proper theme application. See **Figure 16 - ShapeSifter "Apply" tab**
6. Well-done, young padawan, you've just entered the wonderful MacOS customization world! Now go create your own themes ☺
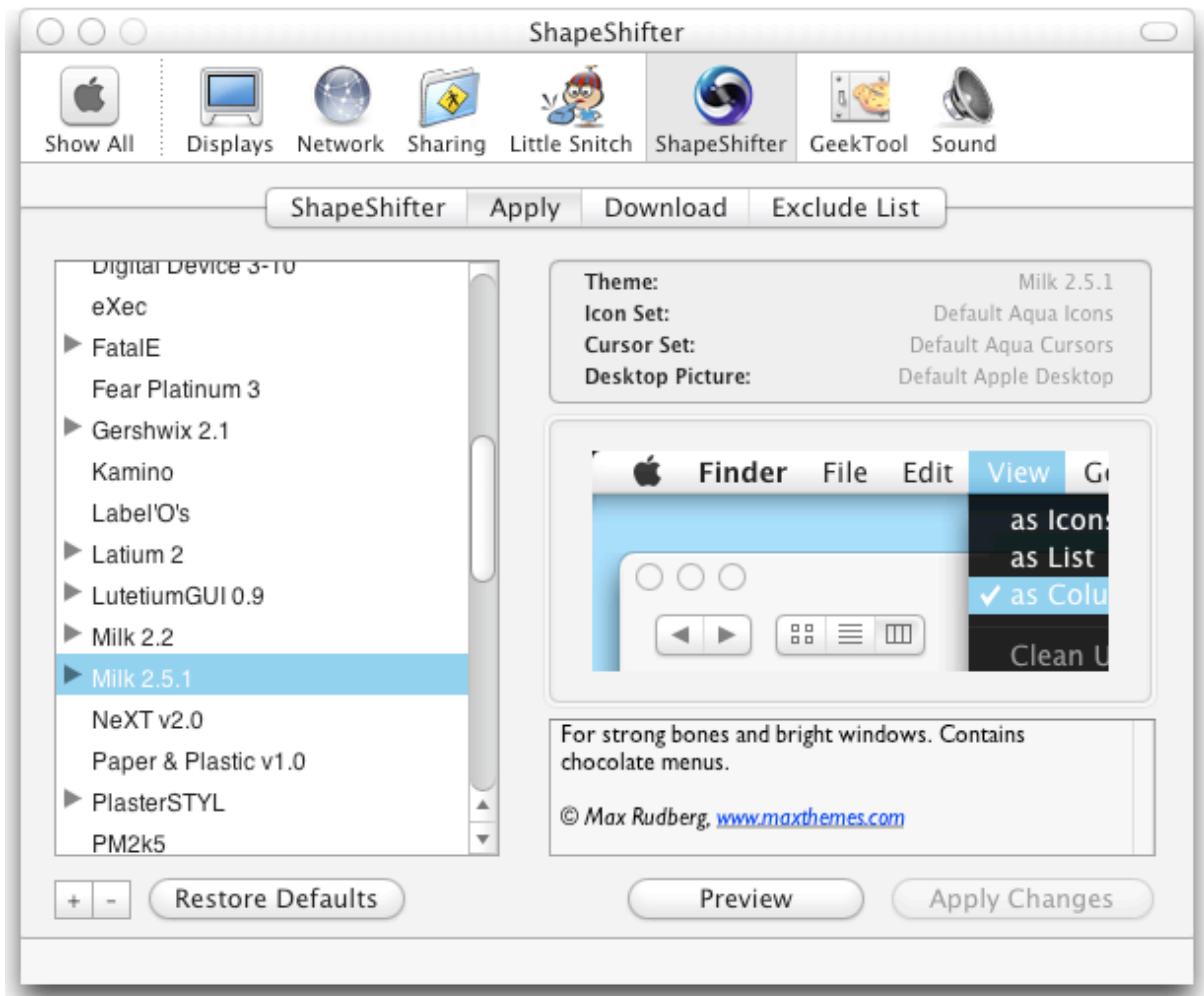
Figure 14 - The ShapeShifter Preference Pane

Figure 15 - ShapeShifter "Download" tab
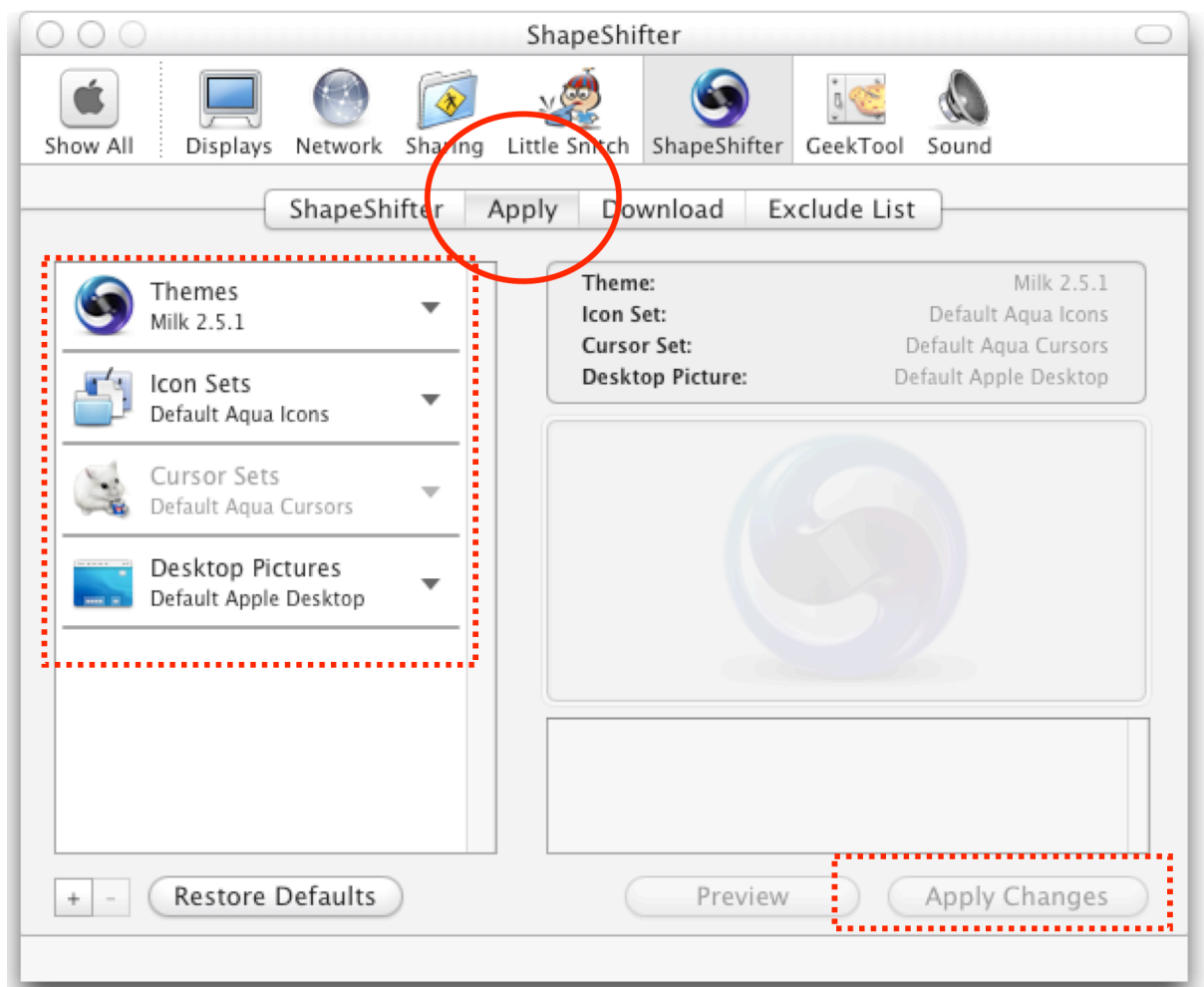
Figure 16 - ShapeSifter "Apply" tab

Sofware:	ShapeShifter
Price Tag;	$20
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.0.1
Homepage	http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/shapeshifter
Download URL	http://www.unsanity.net/shapeshifter-201.dmg

ClearDock

The main usage of cleardock, as its name imply, is to erase the semi-transparent background of the dock. It seems that "the icons are floating on top of your desktop pictures". In my opinion it's a matter of personal taste. I prefer my dock without it's background but you will not necessarily.

You can also use ClearDock to change the color of the dock and the applications triangles.

Here is what your dock will look without it's background: **Figure 17 - ClearDock effect on the Dock**

Figure 17 - ClearDock effect on the Dock

Sofware:	ClearDock
Price Tag;	free
Licence	Freeware
Current Version	1.2.4
Homepage	http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/cleardock
Download URL	http://www.unsanity.net/cleardock-124.dmg

TransparentDock

TransparentDock is a shareware with the same possibilities that ClearDock and more: for exemple It can handle the triangles under the applications and the "poofs" effect that you get when you drag an icon off the Dock.

Sofware:	TransparentDock
Price Tag;	$8.00
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.2
Homepage	http://www.freerangemac.com/
Download URL	http://www.freerangemac.com/Software/TransparentDock2.2.dmg.gz

Changing dock's background and color

See previous section: **Changing the widgets used by the System (windows, menus and more)**

Changing System's and applications' font

Changing system's font is a complex subject. Especially for developers. It can be done if you are not happy with the standard MacOS X font: "Lucida Grande". For example to match the so-called "modern" theme you are currently using.

You also want the change to be consistent: i.e. the same font for menus, windows title, applications text, finder windows... It's not as simple as it should (could?) be. For that you will need the help of two distinct applications:

One of the most famous replacement fonts is "HandelGotD" (**Figure 18 - HandelGotD font**); there was a time where everyone in the little customization world was using this font. One of it's main problem, and you should also watch this if you plan to change your font, is that the size of it's characters change with the "style" used (for example, "**Hello**" in bold is wider that "Hello" in standard style using HandelGotD).

ABCDEFGHIJKLM NOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklm nopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

Figure 18 - HandelGotD font

Silk

Silk, is a haxie by Unsanity (again). It allows you to replace **most** of the fonts you actually see on your screen and your interface elements. It also enables text smoothing in carbon applications (explaining the difference between carbon and cocoa applications is beyond the scope of this guide. Just remember that cocoa applications are the one that are developed to use the full potential of OSX, carbon applications are mostly adaptations of old MacOS 7-9 software).

Silk configuration can be pretty confusing so here's a link to standard silk settings found on MacNN forums: http://idisk.mac.com/gerritvanoppen/Public/Forum/SilkSettings.pdf

The problem is, if you want maximal font substitution you have to use an other tool: TinkerTool (see next section).

Sofware:	Silk
Price Tag;	$10.00
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.0.6
Homepage	http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/silk
Download URL	http://www.unsanity.net/silk-206.dmg

TinkerTool

TinkerTool is a very powerfull utility designed to give you access to hidden preference settings that are already built into MacOS X but not accessible. One of its usage (and it's the one that is interesting us) is the possibility to swap system fonts. It will allow us to customize the last font that we couldn't change with Silk. But it's not 100% coverage though. **Figure 19 - TinkerTool font settings**.
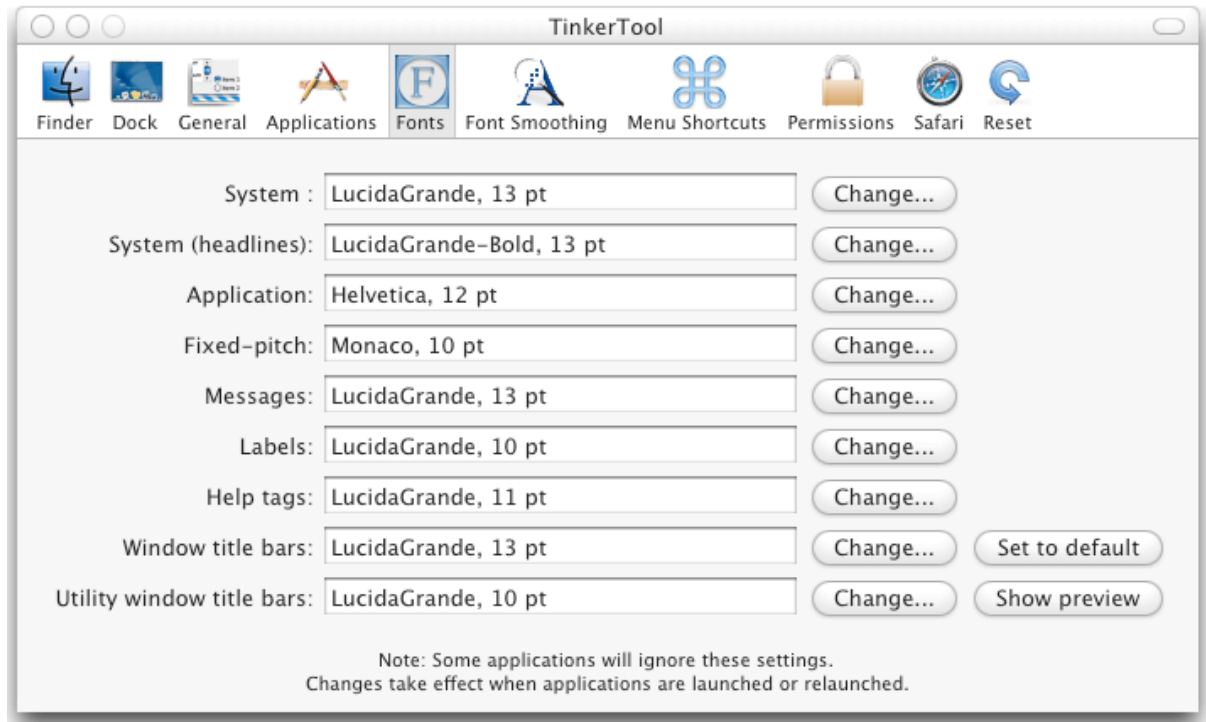
Figure 19 - TinkerTool font settings

There is an example configuration of TinkerTool in the last page of the document you should have downloaded in the previous Silk section.

Sofware:	TinkerTool
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Freeware
Current Version	3.3c
Homepage	http://www.bresink.de/osx/TinkerTool.html
Download URL	http://www.bresink.de/Downloads/TinkerTool.dmg.gz

Changing mouse's cursor

Mighty Mouse

We talked about this utility before. It can collaborate with ShapeShifter so that guikits with embedded cursors work directly with it, whitout the need to launch "Mighty Mouse" itself.

It's an utility to customize, edit and animate cursors. Like most haxies it does so on the fly, whitout modifying any system files. So if something bad happens it will not destroy your MacOS installation.

You can grab cursors to work with this soft here:

- ResExcellence
  http://resexcellence.com/cursors
- WinCustomize (CursorXP cursors collection)
  http://www.wincustomize.com/skins.asp?library=25
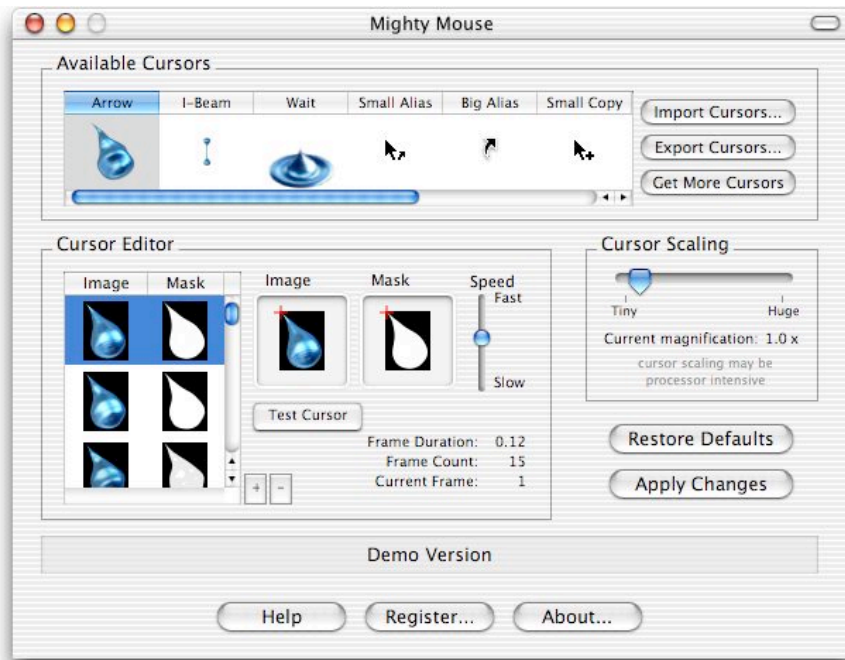
Figure 20 - Mighty Mouse cursor swapping

Sofware:	Mighty Mouse
Price Tag;	$10
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	1.1.3
Homepage	http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/mightymouse
Download URL	http://www.unsanity.net/mightymouse-113.dmg

Changing windows behavior

WindowShade X

This utility allows you to change the way windows minimize in MacOS X. For now, if you click on a window's minimize button or double click its title bar, it'll go in the dock with a "genie" effect. WindowShade X has 5 alternative minimize styles: WindowShade, Minimize-In-Place, Make Window Transparent, Float on Top, Hide Application, and Do Nothing.

It's the neat utility that allows you to put little application windows everywhere on your desktop like this: **Figure 21 - WindowShade effect**

Figure 21 - WindowShade effect

Sofware:	WindowShade X
Price Tag;	$10.00
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	3.5.2
Homepage	http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/wsx
Download URL	http://www.unsanity.net/windowshade-x-352.dmg

Displaying iTunes album covers on the screen, controlling iTunes

One of iTunes' best features is the possibility to associate album covers/art to your library's tracks. If you buy music from the iTunes Music Store, each track you download comes with its own album cover. But if you rip your own CDs you can rely on various applications to retrieve the pictures for you. Like Sofa from Cedric Menard: it will retrieve covers from playing tracks in iTunes and, also, display art cover on the desktop.

But, in this section I want to talk about more specific utilities: **the ones that allows you to control iTunes and display art in a much convenient location than iTunes itself.**

As usual, there is a double advantage using this kind of applications: they generally display covers in a exceptionally pleasant way (which is why we are talking about them here) and they are also very convenient.

Sofware:	Sofa
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Freeware
Current Version	0.6
Homepage	http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/11039
Download URL	Go to macupdate page

Synergy

Probably the best one. It's the one I'm using at least. With it you are able to control iTunes from the menu-bar and via system-wide Hot Key combinations; it also gives you visual feedback about the currently playing tune in a fancy way. It can even download album cover/art from the internet.

As you can see in **Figure 22 - Synergy in the menu-bar**, it's a very unobstrusive way to control iTunes since you can access conveniently to play, pause, FF and RW from any

application (Synergy is the widget on the left of the menubar). Even if iTunes is not the frontmost application.

Best of all, you can use themes with synergy: it even comes with it's own theme selection. The one used in Figure 22 - Synergy in the menu-bar is called "Tabbed".

Synergy installation and configuration is quite simple so I won't cover it here, please refer to the bundled manual for help.

Figure 22 - Synergy in the menu-bar

Figure 23 - Synergy iTunes feedback

Sofware:	Synergy
Price Tag;	€ 5
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	1.7.1
Homepage	http://wincent.com/a/products/synergy-classic/
Download URL	http://wincent.com/a/products/synergy-classic/download

iTunes Companion

I find it less polished than Synergy but it has a big advantage: it's free ! Well not exactly, since you have to install Konfabulator, wich is not (See **Konfabulator** in the next section). But it mostly does everything than Synergy does, except the menubar controller. With "iTunes Companion" you have to drag your mouse over the cover art to display the controls. Also, contrary to Synergy, it displays cover art permanently over your screen. It's more a Sofa clone for Konfabulator than a Synergy-like utility.

In my opinon you need to try the two to find the one that suites best your needs. Or use the two at the same time ?

Figure 24 - iTunes Companion main window

Sofware:	iTunes Companion
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Freeware (but you need Konfabulator)
Current Version	2.5.3
Homepage	http://www.widgetgallery.com/view.php?widget=33155
Download URL	http://www.widgetgallery.com/dl.php?widget=33155&platform=mac

Misc Applications

These are not applications that allow you to customize the aspect of your system, but rather add new effects and features to it. Most of them are skinnable or, at least, look great. On the whole, if you choose the good combination they will be of great help and add a personalized touch to your desktop.

Konfabulator

Konfabulator is a runtime engine for little applications called "widgets", they range from weather utility to rss newsreader, clock, cpu monitor and many other things. Best of all, most of them have nice themes and transparent background so that they look well on your desktop. There are already hundreds of widgets being developed, you can find most of theme at: http://www.widgetgallery.com.

I have used Konfabulator for many months and, despite the fact it's nice, I found it very obstrusive and, finally, unusable. For example, if you use the newsfeed aggregator, you miss most of the features that are available in standalone readers (like NetNewsWire Lite or Newsfire). And the weather-monitoring app is quite basic compared to Meteorologist. Also you never know how to put these little things.

But, still, they look great!

Sofware:	Konfabulator
Price Tag;	$25.00
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	1.8.2
Homepage	http://www.konfabulator.com/downloads/
Download URL	http://www2.konfabulator.com/downloads/Konfabulator_1.8.2.dmg

GeekTool

It's a utility to monitor your system, display pictures, output unix commands results and other things anywhere on your desktop. But, the most common usage is to display system logs on your desktop. Reading this you must wonder why I'm talking about software like that in this guide. In fact, even if you are not interested in the information outputted by the app, it can look pretty cool on a modern/abstract wallpaper. See **Figure 25 - Geektool working on my desktop**. Best of all, it's free (as in beer) !
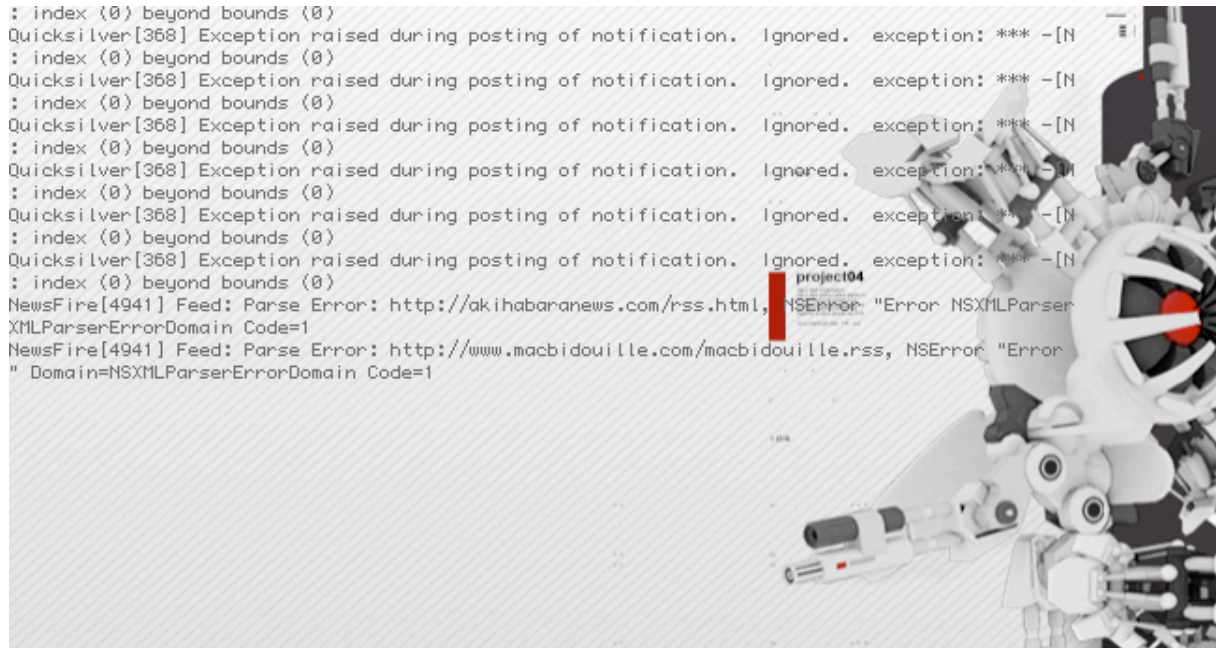
Figure 25 - Geektool working on my desktop

Since it was developed with the geek in mind, the configuration of this preference pane can be confusing some times. You should read carefully the documentation. But if you only want to display the standard console log on your desktop here is what to do:

1. After installation launch the "System Preferences". **Figure 1 - How to access the System Preferences**
2. Open the "GeekTool" preference pane under the "Other" group
3. Once open, click on the "New entry" button. It will add a new entry in the group panel. **Figure 26 - The GeekTool Preference Pane**
4. If it's not automatically selected, click on the newly created entry and select "File" in the dropdown menu on the right.
5. You want GeekTool to read the console.log file normally located under:
    /Library/Logs/Console/YOUR LOGIN NAME/console.log
    Depending on your version of MacOS X it can be in an other place. If this is the case you can try to find it using the embedded search tool in the finder. Or enter this query as using the "Terminal" utility located in */Applications/Utilities* :
    sudo find / –name console.log –print
    (It will ask for your administator password)
    WARNING: using the terminal utility with administrator privileges is a high risk procedure. You can permanently damage your MacOS installation. Use it at your own risks!
6. When you have the correct path to console.long enter it in the appropiate text field of GeekTool.
7. At this point you should be able to drag, resize and choose the style of the text displayed on your desktop. The transparent blue background will disappear when you close the preference pane.
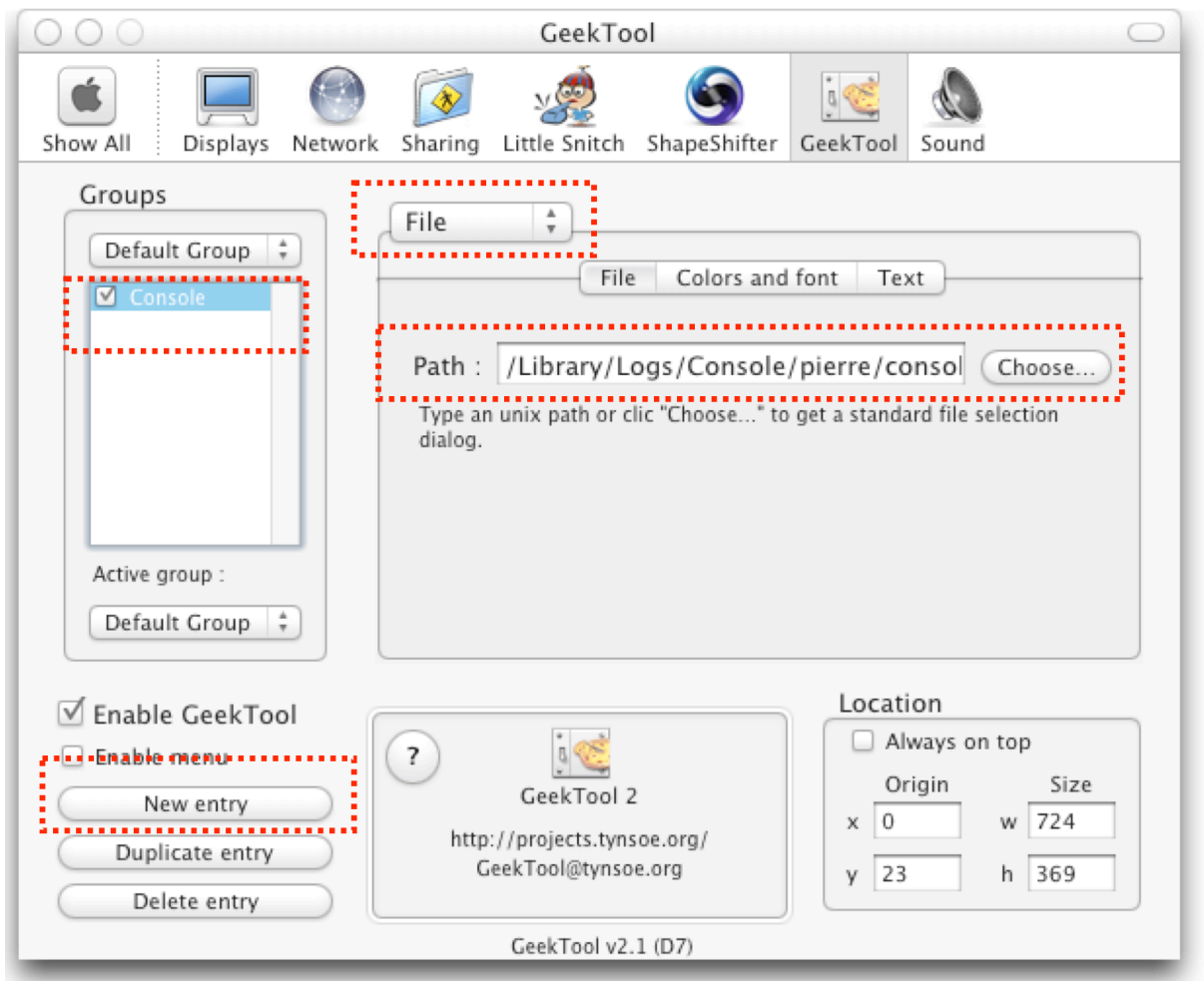
Figure 26 - The GeekTool Preference Pane

Sofware:	GeekTool
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Freeware
Current Version	2.1
Homepage	http://projects.tynsoe.org/geektool/
Download URL	http://www.tynsoe.org/FILES/GeekTool-2.1.dmg

iPulse and MenuMeters

iPulse is a very, very compact system-monitoring tool that support theme files so that you can try to match the system look you are currently using. It displays all the information it can gather from you system (cpu usage, memory usage, disk usage, internet bandwidth, uptime, even a clock) in one place. At start it can be difficult to read but then it can become essential. Just try it!

The same utility with different looks:

Things I find disappointing with iPulse are that they are only few themes being developed, and most of them are of poor visual quality. But there are exceptions. Another deception is that there was relatively few updates since it was released (especially for a shareware). Despite the shortcomings, it's great software.

Places to find great iPulse themes:
- iPulse Jackets by tkoc (try to find the hidden "Dark Star" theme !)
  http://www.xybernation.com/ipulse/
- iPulse gallery at "The Iconfactory"
  http://www.iconfactory.com/ip_gallery.asp
- iPulse gallery at "nonsuchplace.com"
  Special mention for this one: they offers wallpapers matching their iPulse themes.
  http://www.nonsuchplace.com/ipulse/index.html
- ozzpot @ deviantart
  http://ozzpot.deviantart.com/scraps

You can also try **MenuMeters** from "Raging Menace" , it's free, less obtrusive on your screen as it stays in the menu bar, but also less pretty. You can only change the colors and the style of the widgets: no fancy themes or jackets.
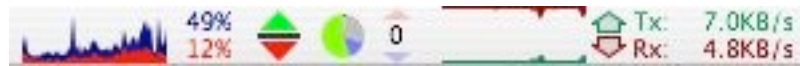

Figure 27 - MenuMeters in the menu-bar

Sofware:	iPulse
Price Tag;	$12.95
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.1
Homepage	http://www.iconfactory.com/ip_home.asp
Download URL	http://www.iconfactory.com/software/iPulse_21.dmg

| Sofware:	MenuMeters
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Freeware
Current Version	1.2
Homepage	http://www.ragingmenace.com/software/menumeters/
Download URL	http://www.ragingmenace.com/software/download/MenuMeters.dmg

Creating new interface elements

Modding themes

The original version of the following indications where published on macNN forums by digitaljames.

Modding existing themes is fun and is a great way to discover what **Themepark** and Shapeshifter can do to the GUI.

Please keep your mods for personal use only and do not redistribute these without prior permission from the original author.

1. Launch ShapeShifter and apply the theme you want to modify.
Then, if you want complete consistency, I suggest you log out and then reconnect. But this is not necessary for modding purposes.
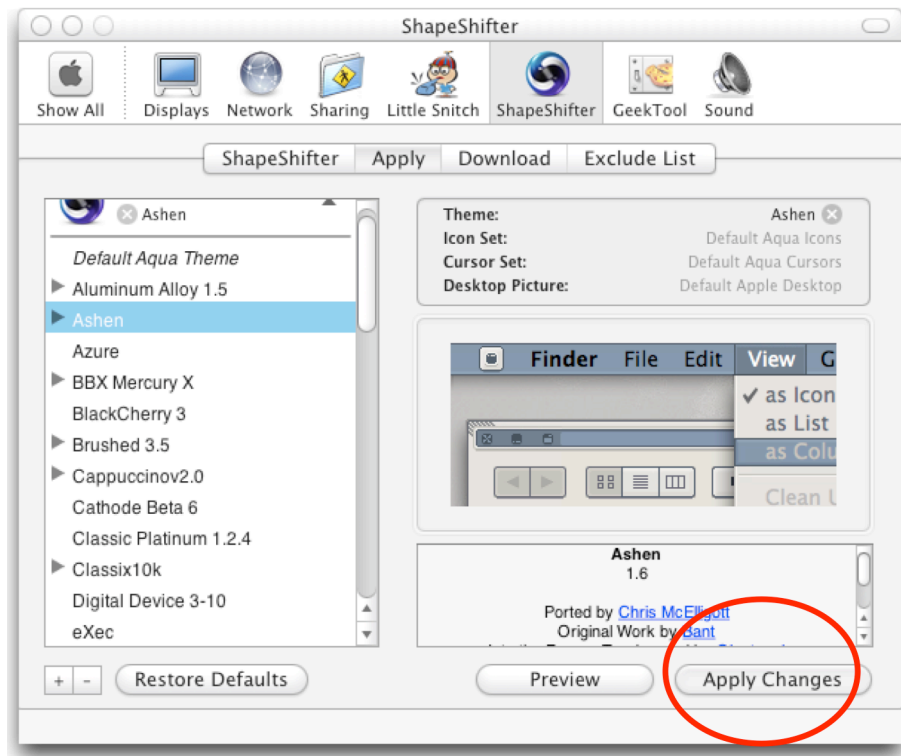
2. Open **Themepark** and go to file➔New guiKit Package....

3. Highlight "Themes" on the left and click the "Add" button.
Note: If the Theme you want to modify has menu enhancements you'll need to also hit "Options" then select "Enable more menu customizations (MenuEnhancer)".
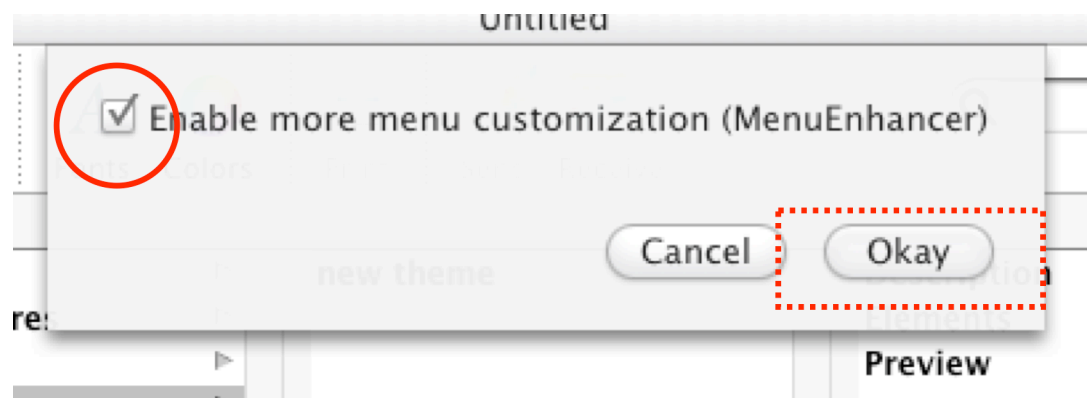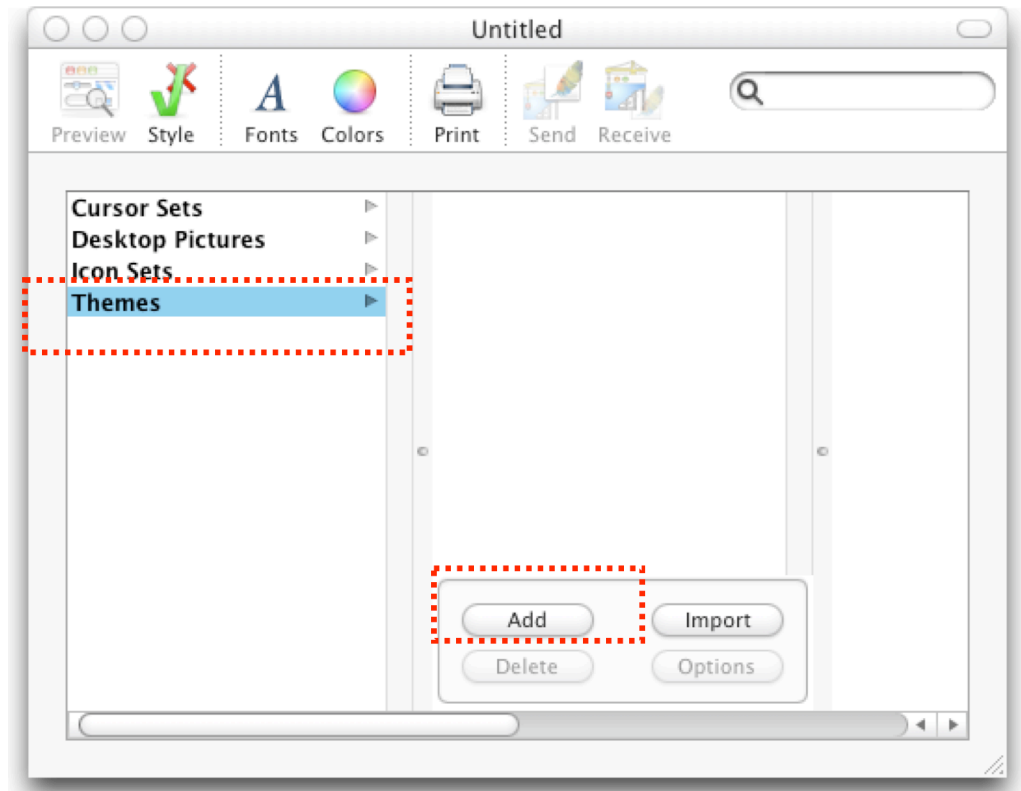
4. Highlight the new "My Spiffy Theme" and rename it (double click on the theme's name, then enter the new name).

5. Now you have to highlight "Elements" and go Theme➔"Merge With Installed Elements" in the menubar.
If your chosen theme to mod has applications skinned (itunes, ical, safari,…) then you will need to go to Elements➔"Application Skins" and add the applications you want skinned and **then go back and merge these with the installed elements again.**

Note: if you're merging elements in ThemePark, you should also make use of the "Prune Aqua Elements" menu command (Theme➔."Prune Aqua Elements"). Basically, this command will remove default Aqua stuff from what you've merged and reduce the size of the guiKit and as an added bonus. **You should be running aqua when you prune.** To

do so, add ThemePark to the exclude list in ShapeShifter and restart ThemePark.
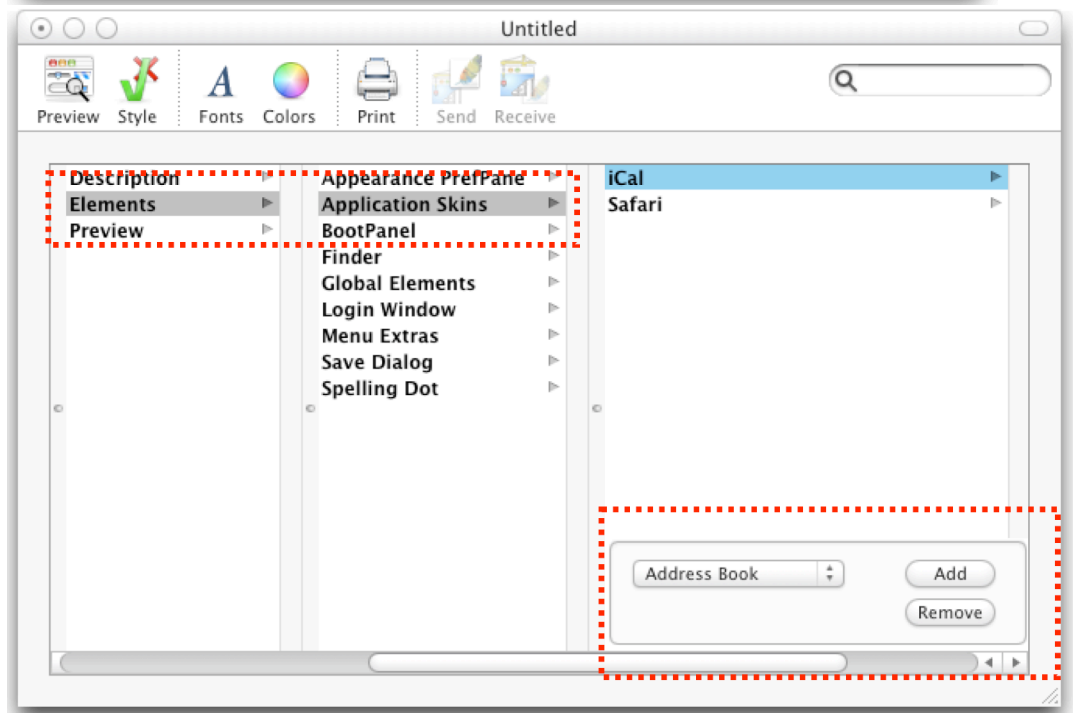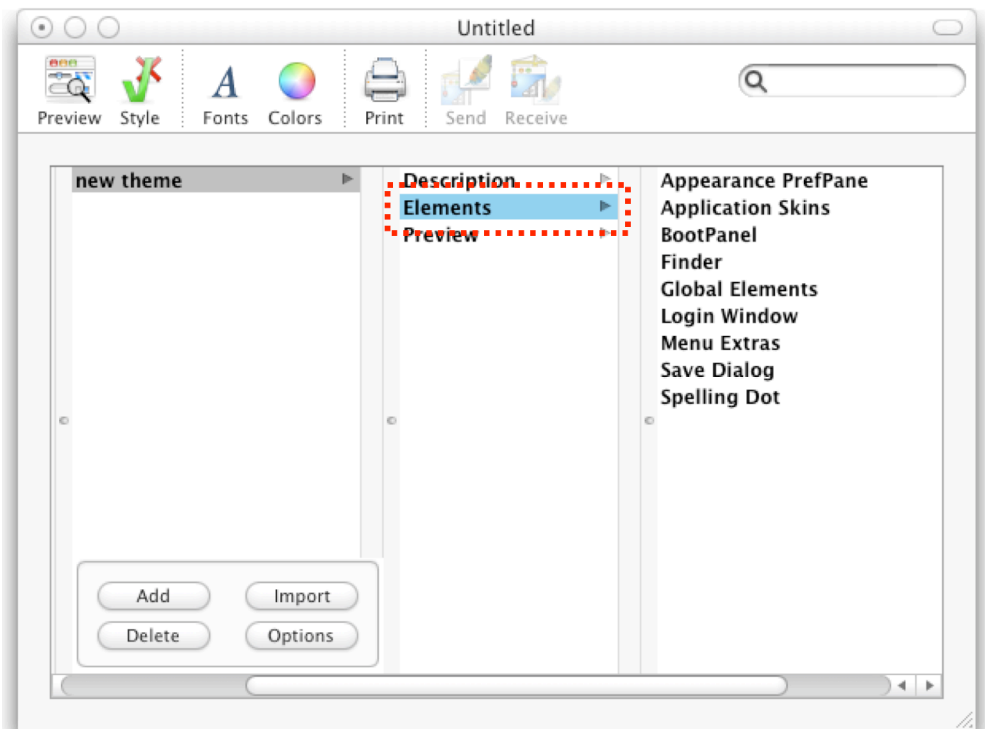
6. Save this as a "your theme name" tpark file (File➔Save in the menubar)
7. Now you have the pleasure of sifting through the 10,397 elements that make up just the GUI. Highlight these elements in the preview pane (right hand side) and hit "send to photoshop". Edit at will and then hit "receive from photoshop....and so on.
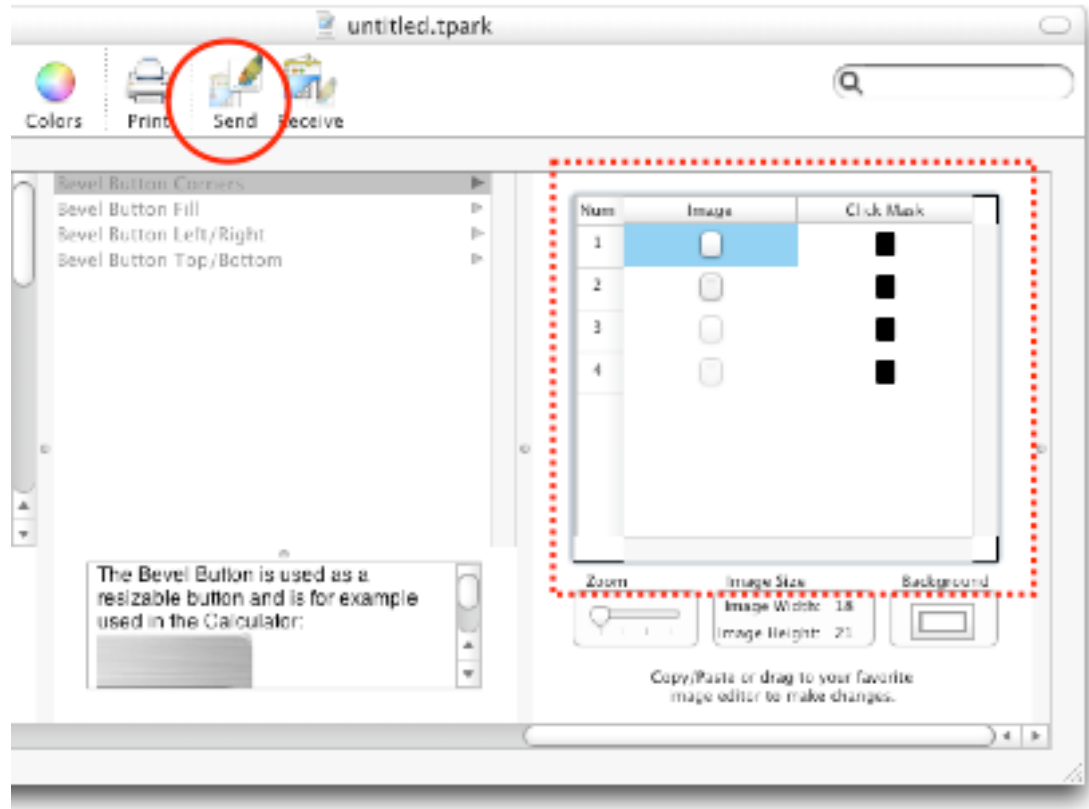
8. If you want to merge elements from another theme into this one here's a quickie.
    a. Apply the theme that has the elements you want add to your tpark file. Log out/in.
    b. Open the tpark file and browse to the element or group of elements that you want to import and go to theme/discard modified elements, hit ok at the prompt. Return to theme/merge with installed elements and then save the tpark file (periodically).

General Note:

Changing text colors will not show up in the preview function. You will need to export the tpark file as a guiKit and apply the theme to see text changes. Changing text colors also does not export to a dtla format theme.

Sofware:	ThemePark
Price Tag;	$20
Licence	Shareware
Current Version	2.0
Homepage	http://www.geekspiff.com/software/themepark/
Download URL	http://www.geekspiff.com/download.php?product=themepark

Sofware:	Adobe Photoshop
Price Tag;	$649
Licence	Commercial

Current Version	8.0 CS
Homepage	http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html
Download URL	Go to homepage to download tryout version

Creating new themes

Teaching you how to do so is way behind the scope of the book. But I can give you indications where to look for.

You will use several applications like a good graphic editor: photoshop or "The Gimp". The second one having the big advantage of being free and distributed under an open-source licence. The first is currently much more integrated in the MacOS environment since it does not require apple X11 usage. You will also need the tool used to build the final guikit with all the widget that you have designed: this tool is called ThemePark (see previous section: **Modding themes**).

Sofware:	The Gimp
Price Tag;	Free
Licence	Open Source
Current Version	2.2.3
Homepage	http://gimp-app.sourceforge.net/
Download URL	Go to homepage for last version