college CD

User interface design (C1U)

Class 7

Website design

Although all the UI and UX structural design considerations we have covered so far are important, and as we also have established, the aesthetic aspect of the websites are very important.

We are not claiming there is only one way to create an excellent website, but the following process consists in the basics of universal visual design development.

Stay away from the computer

One mistake most of unexperienced designers make is to jump on a computer at once in order to start developing a website design. That's a bad idea.

As we have seen with the structural aspects of website design, there are many factors to consider before starting to work. The same rule applies to the aesthetic part of design. Working on the computer limits your imagination, affects negatively creativity and slows you down as you solute technical problems related to softwares instead of finding solutions to design issues.

Example of a rough interface design

Ideas and concepts

Start by generating ideas in order to develop a few satisfying concepts. Apply what you have learned about creation in your conceptualization and colors classes.

Make lots of researches and experiments, and do not hesitate to produce mood boards to orient your work.
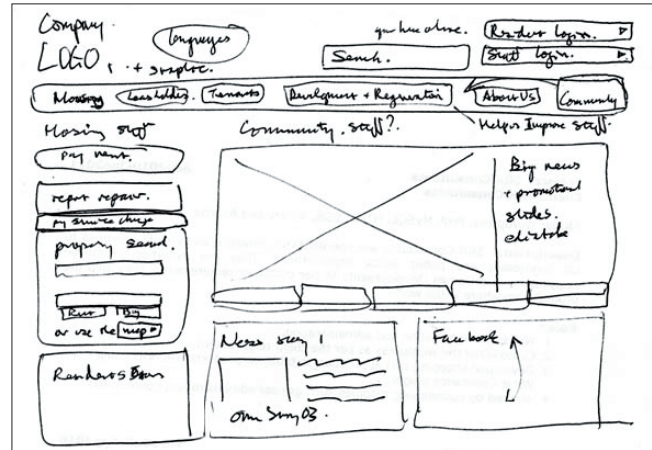
Sketching

Take paper and pencils, and slowly start by making approximate sketches of the website's project. You don't want to lose time creating a pixel perfect interface on what is only some kind of aesthetic investigation.
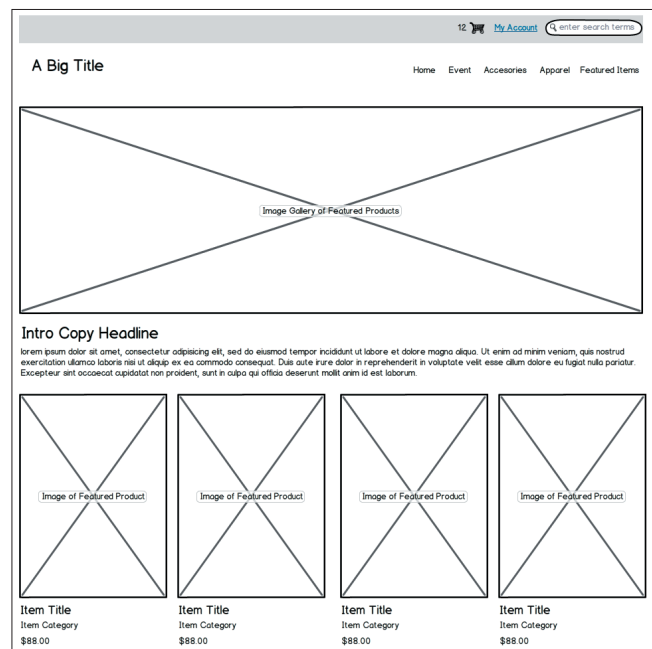
As you are getting closer to a satisfying concept, make more precise sketches of the interface until it seems to be what you want. Start with wireframes, then prototypes.

General interface

Ask yourself questions such as : Will the interface use full width content presentation, 960 or 1440 grid approach? Will it be responsive? Adaptive? Fluid? Degrading? Etc. Will it detect language, country and reorient users automatically? Will you give power to users to decide what they want?

Example of a wireframe

Overall aesthetic aspect

It is important to work on structuring content first then to develop the aesthetic. The aesthetic must serve content and not the opposite.

Navigation

Just like for the aesthetic, navigation should be developed after the structural work is over in order to find the best navigational solution based on the content structure.

Bringing the concept to the computer

When the prototype sketches are final, it is time to start working on the final aspect on the chosen software. You were taught Photoshop and Illustrator, but there are different softwares which can be used for prototyping or creating web designs: Sketch, Adobe XD, Figma, etc.

Simply reproduce your sketch using the software. Using Photoshop, you can use a scan of your sketch and use it as a guide to produce the final aesthetic of the website.

Create the homepage first in both desktop and mobile versions and define the two navigation versions. Usually, top pages contain less text and more graphics.

Then create a section page for both versions. Define the different heading levels, typography, texts, etc. Manage for the section page to have the same look and feel as the homepage while according more space to contents.

If necessary, create a content page for both versions (third level of the flow chart) sometimes giving even more space to contents.

Design tips

Photoshop

Use the web design plans functions. Work in sRGB and 72dpi (for retina screen, 150dpi). Never flatten your layers. Use the pixel perfect approach (no measurements should use decimals). Use guides to divide the interface to ease selecting and copying interface segments.

Illustrator

Use the « snap to pixel grid » option so every element is pixel-perfect (no decimals measurements).

Fonts

Try to use system or web fonts as much as possible so it can be managed with CSS. In some exceptional cases (artistic typographical creations), make images of your typographical creations (if possible in svg).

Logo

Use vectorial logo (svg) instead of a raster image (jpg/png/gif). Not all devices show images the same way.

Segmenting the interface

The Photoshop's slicing function can sometimes be interesting, although, it is most of the time better to save image fragments manually by selecting the fragments and copying it to a new document, then saving it using proper format. Whenever possible, for logo and image titles, use transparent background using an alpha capable format such as png.