Visual Communication: Web Interface design I

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Introduction

- Good Design is about the relationship between the elements involved, and creating a balance between them.
- Fads come and go, but good design is timeless.
- The finishing touches make a big impression.

Layout and Composition

An awareness of design relies heavily on understanding the spatial relationships that exist between the individual components of a design.

Defining Good Design

- The most important thing to keep in mind is that **design is about communication**.
- If you create a web site that works and presents information well, but looks ugly or doesn't fit with the client's brand, no one will want to use it.
- Similarly, if you make a beautiful web site that isn't usable and accessible, people may not be able to use it.

The elements and functionality of a finished web site design should work as a **single cohesive unit**, so that:

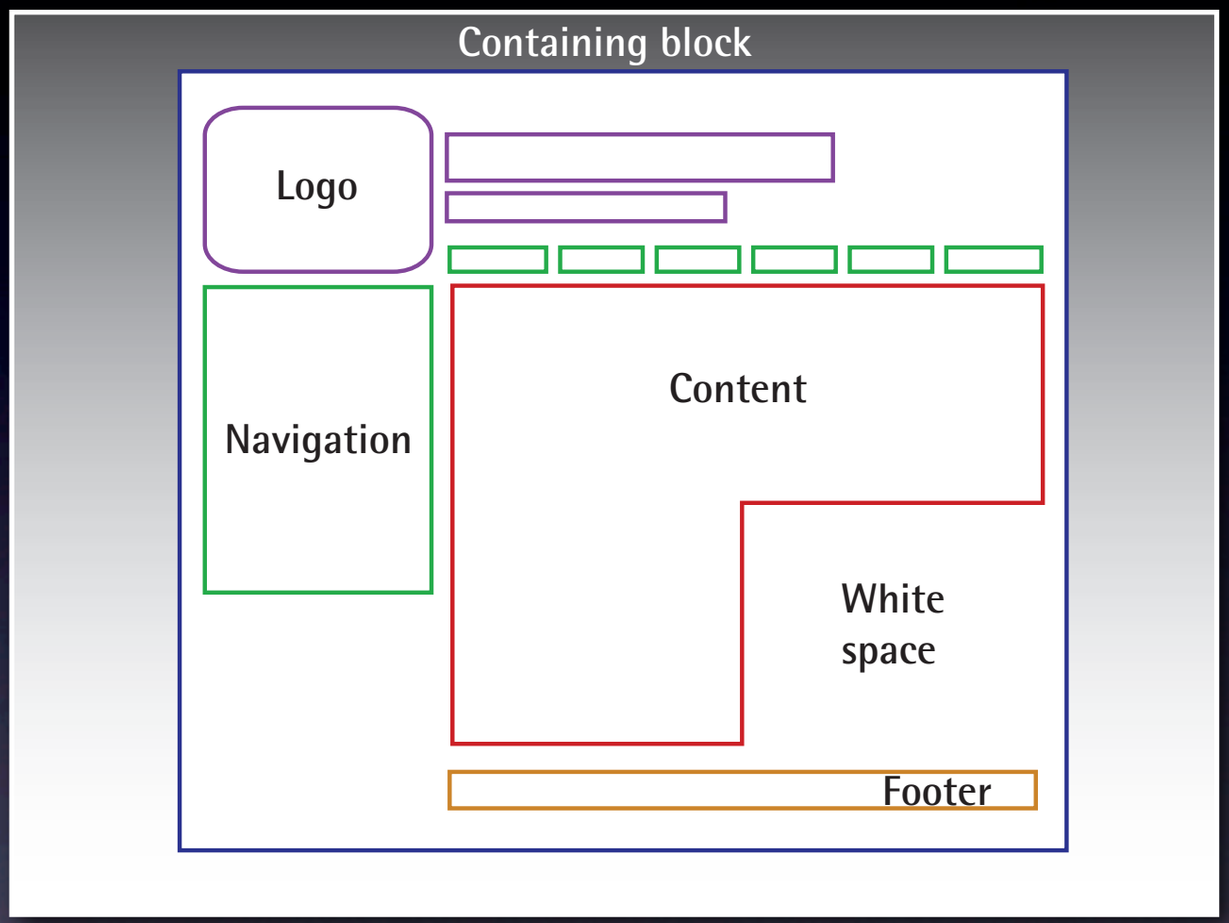
Users are pleased by the design but drawn to the **content**

Users can move about easily via intuitive **navigation**

Users recognize each page as belonging to the **site**

Web Page Anatomy

Although the number of necessary blocks depends on the size and subject of the site, most web sites have the following components:


Containing block
Logo
Navigation
Content
White
space
Footer

- Containing Block
- Logo
- Navigation
- Content
- Footer
- Whitespace

Grid Theory

"Golden ratio or Divine proportion"

- When most people think about grids, they think about engineering and architecture. However, the grid is an essential tool for graphic design asbesto well

- Using a grid is not just about making things be square and line up: it's also about PROPORTION

- The concept of dividing the elements of a composition extends back to the mathematical ideas established by Pythagoras and his followers, who defined numbers as ratios rather than single units.

- A line can be bisected using the golden ratio by dividing its length by **1.62**.

- Rather than relying on artistic notion, divine proportion gives us logical guidelines for producing appealing layouts.

- A simplified version of the golden ratio is the **RULE OF THIRDS**

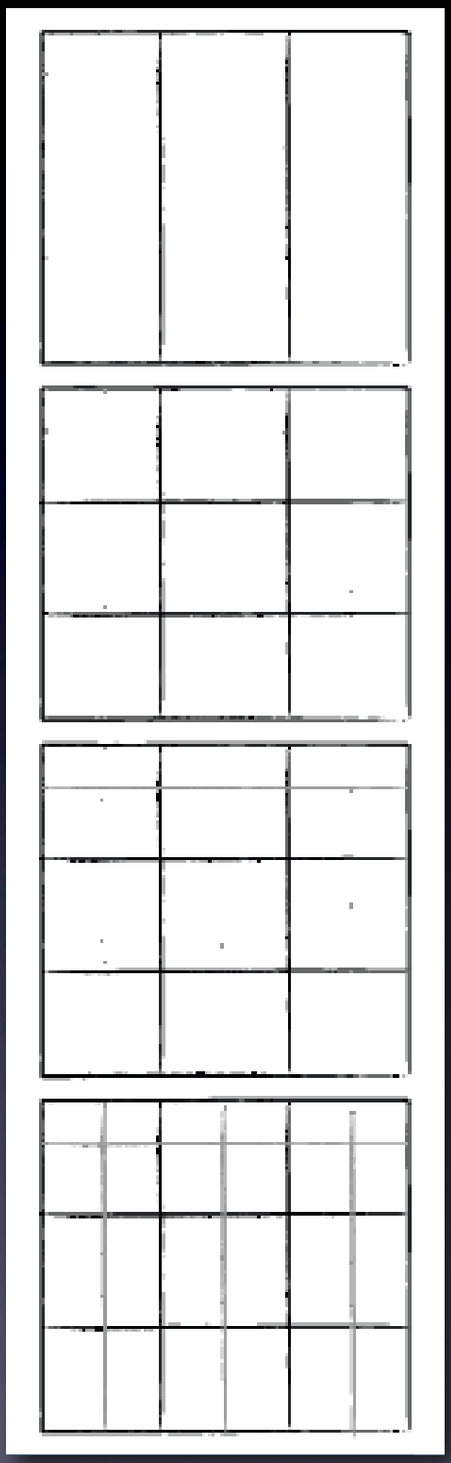
  - Dividing a composition into thirds is an easy way to apply divine proportion.

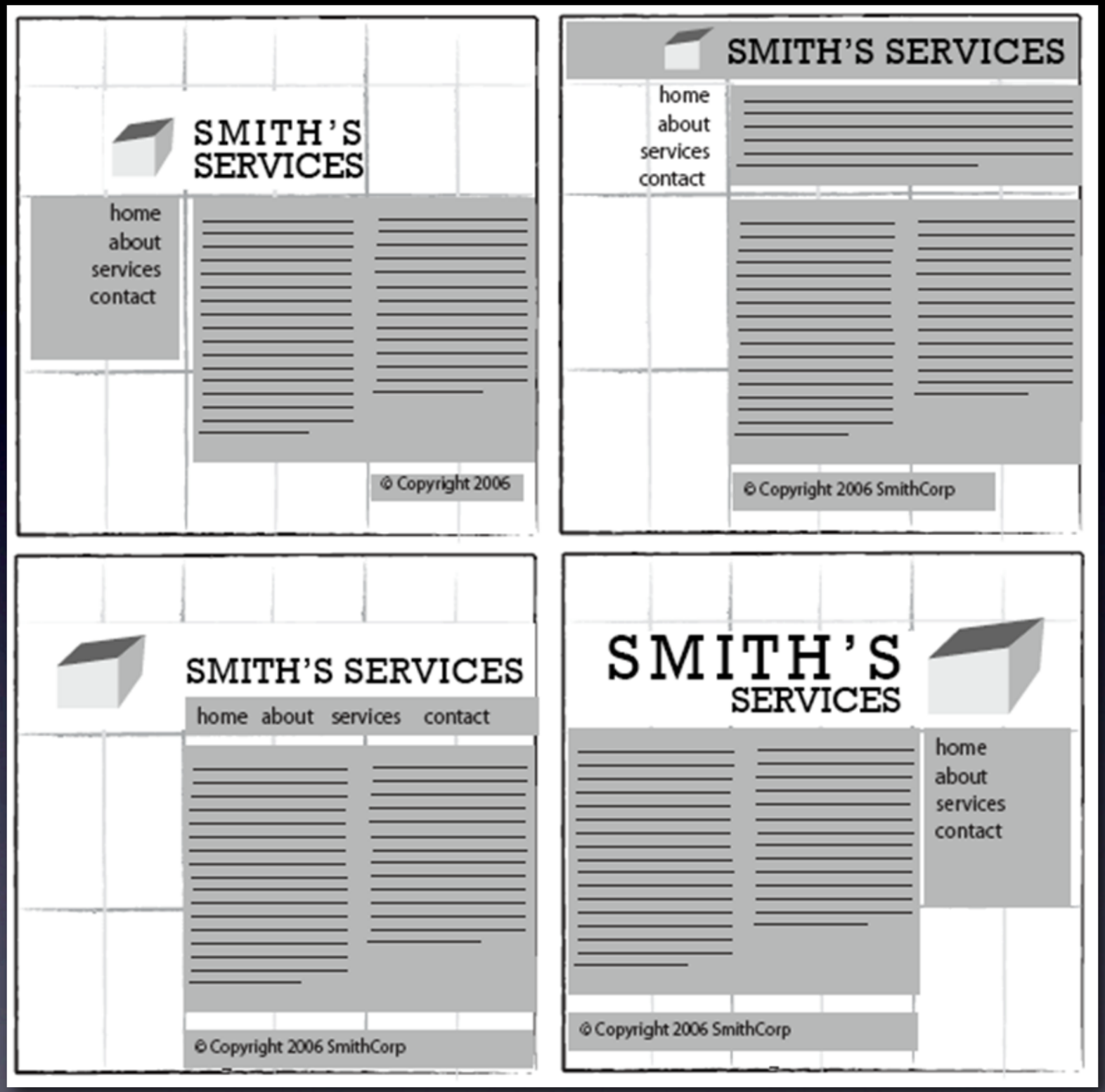
  - To start the pencil-and-paper version of your layout, draw a rectangle.

  - Now, divide your rectangle horizontally and vertically by thirds.

  - Next, divide the top third of your layout into thirds again.

  - Finally, divide each of your columns in half to create a little more of a grid.

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- With this simple gridwork in place, we can begin to lay out our elements
- As you experiment with different arrangements, use the lines that create the three main columns as alignment guides for the identity, navigation, content ecc.

Balance

- A tendency for non-designers working on layouts is to center- align everything on a page. The grid system prevents us from doing that, but there is a reason why we tend to want to centre everything. That reason is a desire for **BALANCE**

- If the elements on either side of a layout are of equal weight, they balance one another.

- There are two main forms of visual balance:

  - SYMMETRICAL
  - ASYMMETRICAL

Symmetrical Balance

- Symmetrical balance, or formal balance, occurs when the elements of a composition are the same on either side of an axis line.
- Notice how the male and female figures in this painting are almost the same in position and proportion.
- Even the shaded background boxes are mirror images of one another.

Symmetrical Balance

- This type of symmetry can be applied to layouts by centring content or balancing it between columns.
- In this example the content areas graduate from a single column at the top of the page, to two columns, to three columns at the bottom of the window; yet the layout still maintains its symmetrical balance.

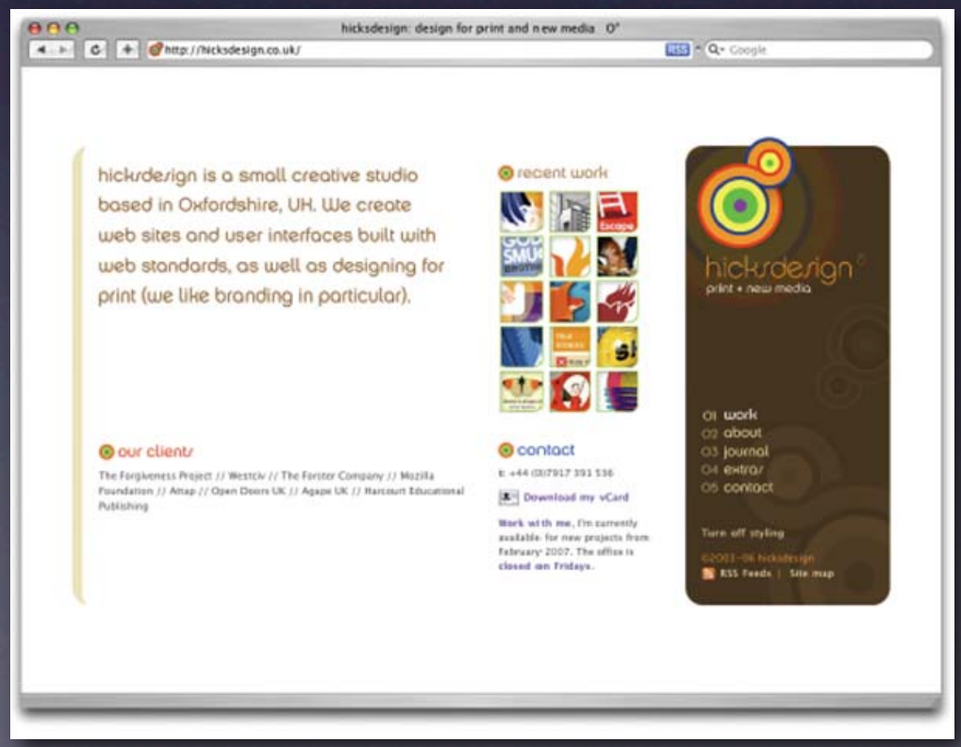
Asymmetrical Balance

- Asymmetrical balance, is a little more **abstract**, and generally more **visually interesting**.
- Rather than having mirror images on either side of the layout, asymmetrical balance involves objects of differing size, shape, tone, or placement.
- These objects are arranged so that, despite their differences, they equalize the weight of the page.
- If you have a large object on one side of a page, and you partner it with several smaller items on the other side, the composition can still feel balanced.
- Unlike symmetrical balance, asymmetrical balance is very versatile, and as such, it's used much more often on the web.

Asymmetrical Balance

- Excellent example of asymmetrical balance.
  - The heavy brown sidebar, which contains the logo and main navigation for the site, stays fixed on the right-hand side of the layout.
  - This element provides interest and balance to the rest of the content on the page.
- http://hicksdesign.co.uk/

- Many principles are at work in the design of this website: great harmony, which comes from the repeated, brightly colored bullets, similarly colored headers, and consistent typefaces. Part of that harmony arises from the fact that the site meets the PRINCIPLES OF UNITY.



Unity

- Design theory describes unity as referring to the way in which the different elements of a composition interact with one another.

- The similar colours and shapes of the monkeys mean that they can easily be recognized as forming a group, rather than merely being four monkeys.

- It's important that unity exists not only within each element of a web page, but across the entire web page: the page itself must work as a unit.

- We can use a couple of approaches to achieve unity in a layout: PROXIMITY and REPETITION.

Proximity

- Proximity is an obvious way to make a group of objects feel like a single unit.
- Placing objects close together within a layout creates a focal point toward which the eye will gravitate.
- Take a look at the digital. While composed of a seemingly random assortment of strokes, the five strokes that are the closest together appear to form a unified object.

Proximity

- The two columns of text look very similar. The only difference is in the placement of the headings.

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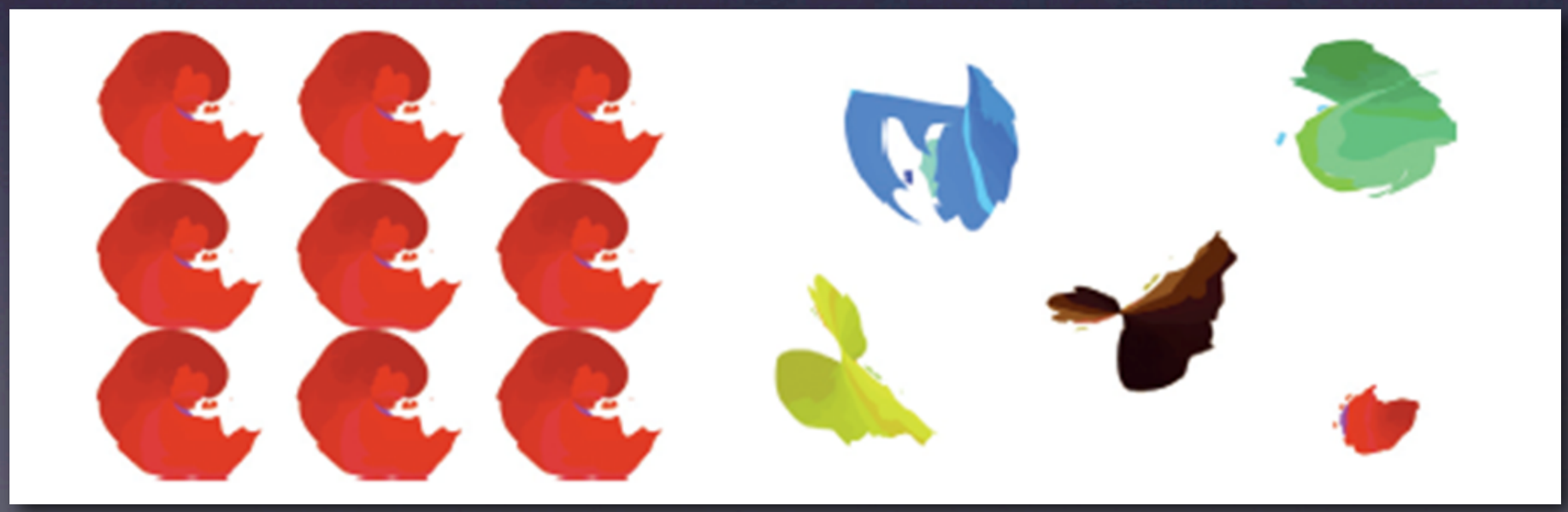
Repetition

- Repetition of colors, shapes, textures, or similar objects helps to tie a web page design together so that it feels like a cohesive unit.

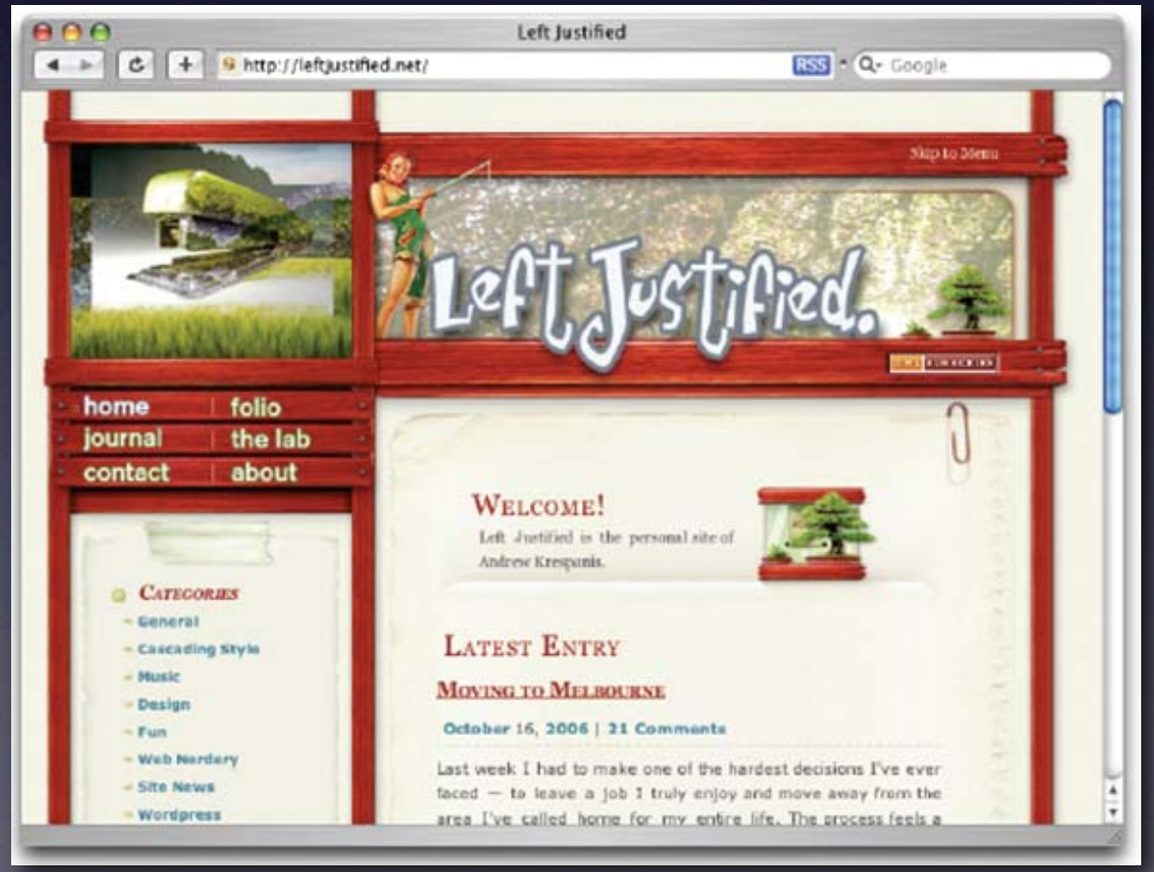
- Even though there are other similar strokes around, the nine red strokes on the left-hand side appear to be a unified group.

- The strokes to the right of this group have no repeated pattern, so they appear isolated even though there are other shapes nearby.



Repetition

- Repetition is often used in web site designs to unify elements of the layout.
- Repeated patterns and textures can also help to unify a design.
- This layout contains many eye-catching elements, but the repeated use of the red wood texture in the header, menu, and page borders literally hold this design together.
- http://leftjustified.net/



Emphasis

Emphasis

- Closely related to the idea of unity is the concept of emphasis or **dominance**.
- Emphasis is about making a particular element draw the VIEWER'S ATTENTION.
- When you design an interface, often you'll identify an item in the content, or the layout itself, that you want to stand out.
- Perhaps it's a button you want users to press, or an error message that you want them to read.

Emphasis

- One method of achieving such emphasis is by making that element into a FOCAL POINT.
- A focal point is anything on a page that draws the viewer's eye, rather than just feeling like part of the page as a whole or blending in with its surroundings.
- As with unity, there are a few tried and true methods of achieving a focal point:

Emphasis - Placement

- Although the constraints of practical web design do not often allow for it, the direct center of a composition is the point at which users look first, and is always the strongest location for producing emphasis.
- The further from the center an element is, the less likely it is to be noticed first.

Emphasis - Placement

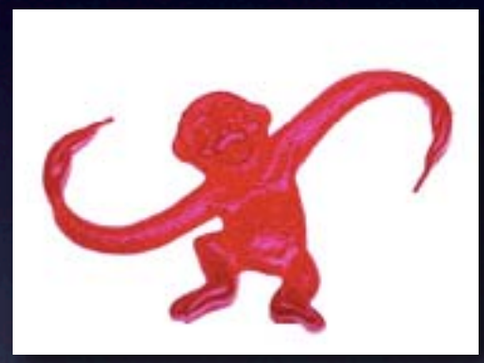
- Although the constraints of practical web design do not often allow for it, the direct center of a composition is the point at which users look first, and is always the strongest location for producing emphasis.
- The further from the center an element is, the less likely it is to be noticed first.
- When our eyes start moving in one direction, they tend to continue along that path until a more dominant feature comes along.

Emphasis - Continuance

- The idea behind continuance is that when our eyes start moving in one direction, they tend to continue along that path until a more dominant feature comes along.
- By default, the left edge of headings, copy, and images placed on a web page form a vertical line down the left side of a page before any styling is applied.

Emphasis - Isolation

- In the same way that proximity helps us create unity in a design, isolation promotes emphasis.
- An item that stands out from its surroundings will tend to demand attention.



Emphasis - Contrast

- Contrast is defined as the juxtaposition of dissimilar graphic elements, and is the most common method used to create emphasis in a layout.

- The concept is simple: the greater the difference between a graphic element and its surroundings, the more that element will stand out.

- Contrast can be created using differences in color (which I'll discuss later), size, and shape.

Emphasis - Contrast

- The site isWoot, web site that sells just one item per day.
- When you look at this layout, what's the first thing that grabs your attention?
- What grabs your eye after that?
- When set against an area of white space, the button has both contrast and isolation working to emphasize it.

http://www.woot.com/

Emphasis - Proportion

- One interesting way of creating emphasis in a composition is through the use of PROPORTION.

- Proportion is a principle of design that has to do with differences in the **scale** of objects.

- If we place an object in an environment that's of larger or smaller scale than the object itself, that object will appear larger or smaller than it does in real life.

- This difference in proportion draws viewers' attention to the object, as it seems out of place in that context.

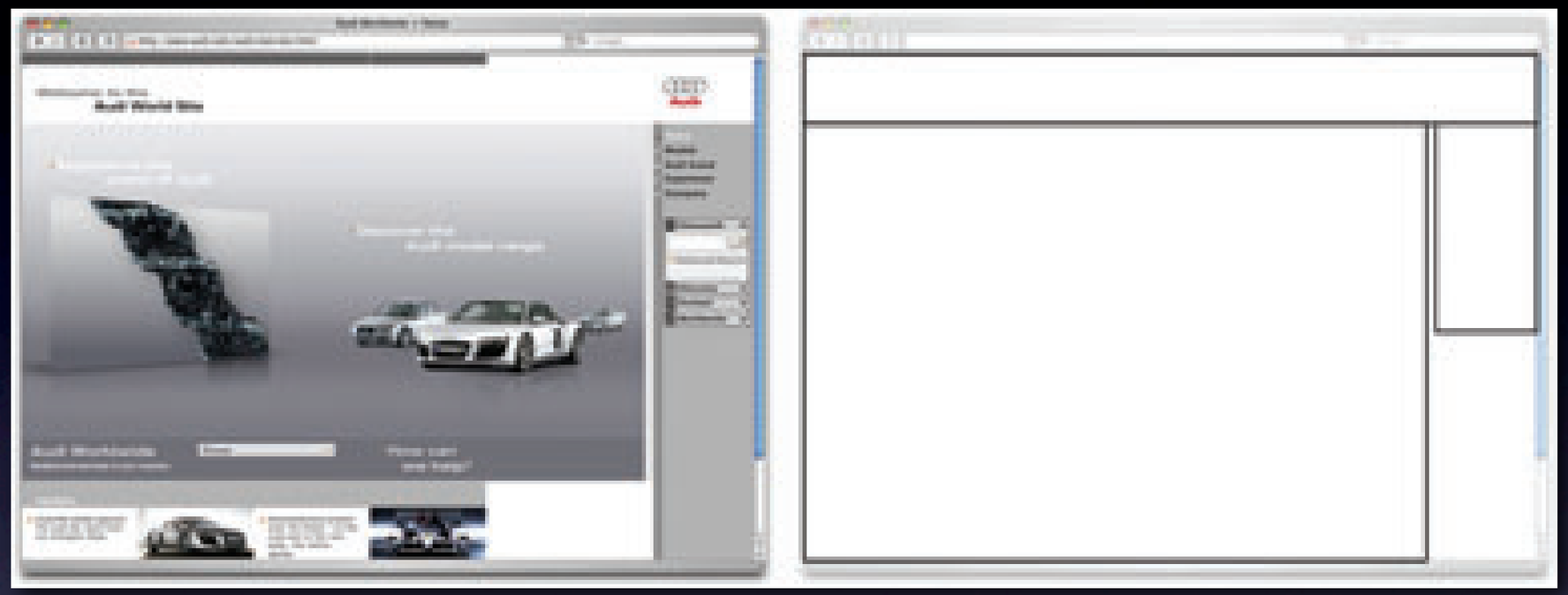
Bread-and-butter Layouts

"When you look out across the Internet, you can see that the possibilities for layout really are **endless**. But, as I said before, only a few of those possibilities make good design sense. That's why we see certain configurations of identity, navigation, and content over and over again."

Left-column Navigation

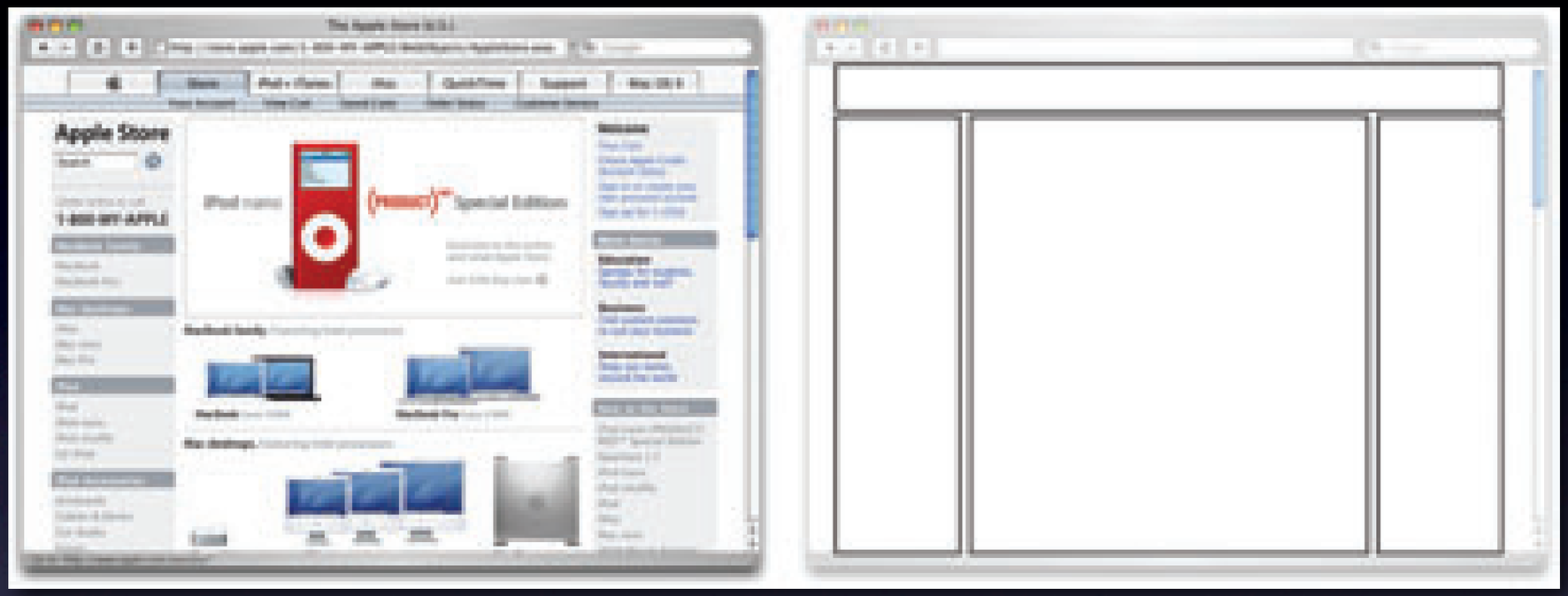
- A layout featuring left-column navigation is a safe choice for any project.

Right-column Navigation



- It's quite easy to find sites that use a right-hand column for sub-navigation, advertising, or sub-content.
- If you want your design to be different from the average web site, but you still want users to be able to find your navigation, you should give a right-column layout a try.

Three-column Navigation



- The typical three-column layout has a wide center column flanked by two diminutive navigational columns.
- It's important to remember that whitespace is essential if we are to keep a layout from appearing cluttered.

Color

The Psychology of Color

- Color psychology is a field of study that's devoted to analyzing the emotional and behavioral effects produced by colors and color combinations.
- Let's explore some general psychological associations that the majority of people in Western culture have in response to specific colors
- It's also interesting to note that many cultures have completely different associations with, and interpretations of, colors.

red

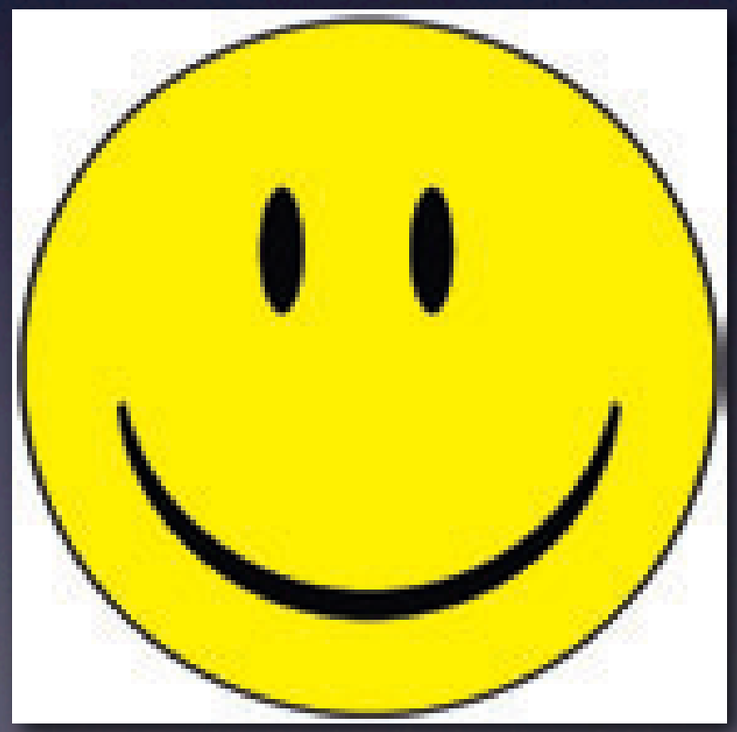
- The color red has a reputation for stimulating adrenaline and blood pressure. Along with those physiological effects, red is also known to increase human metabolism.

orange

- Orange is a very active and energetic color, though it doesn't evoke the anger that red sometimes does. Instead, orange is thought to promote happiness and represents sunshine, enthusiasm, and creativity.

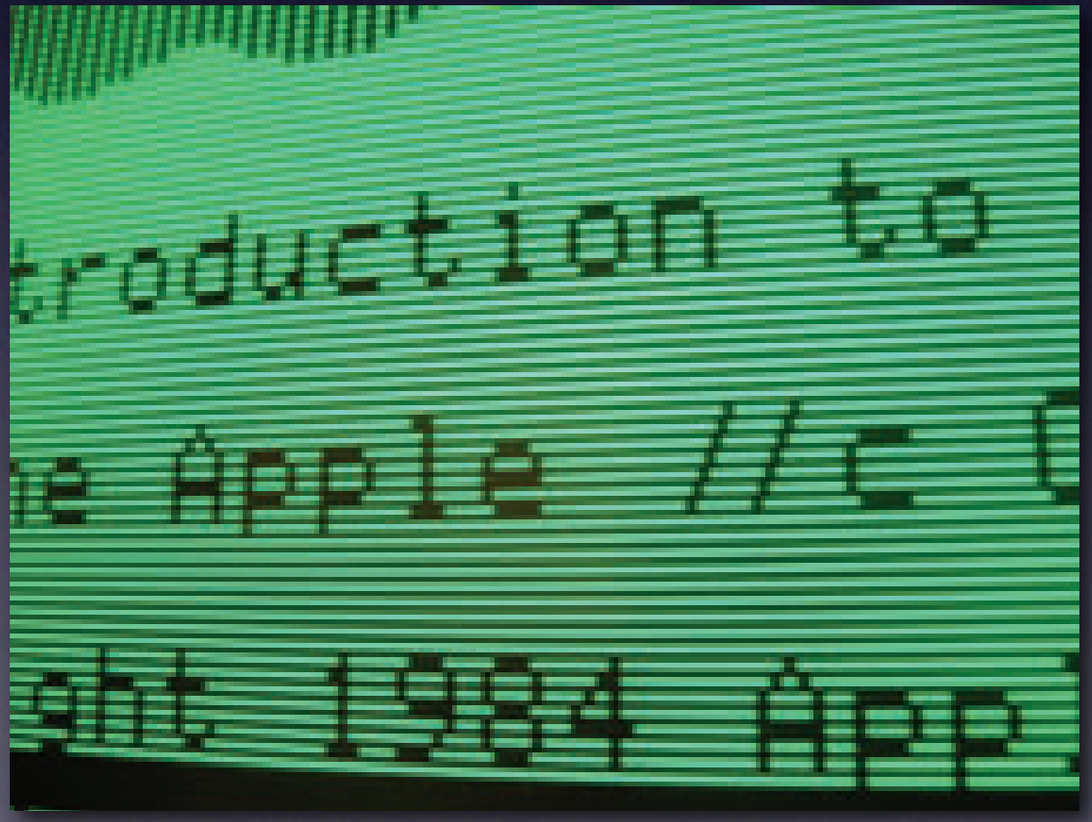
yellow

- Yellow is a highly active and visible color, which is why it's used for taxicabs and caution signs. It's associated with happiness and energy.



green

- Green is associated with nature. It is a very soothing color that symbolizes growth, freshness, and hope.



blue

- On the touchy-feely level, blue symbolizes openness, intelligence, and faith. Physiologically, blue has been found to calm people down, but it can also reduce appetite.

purple

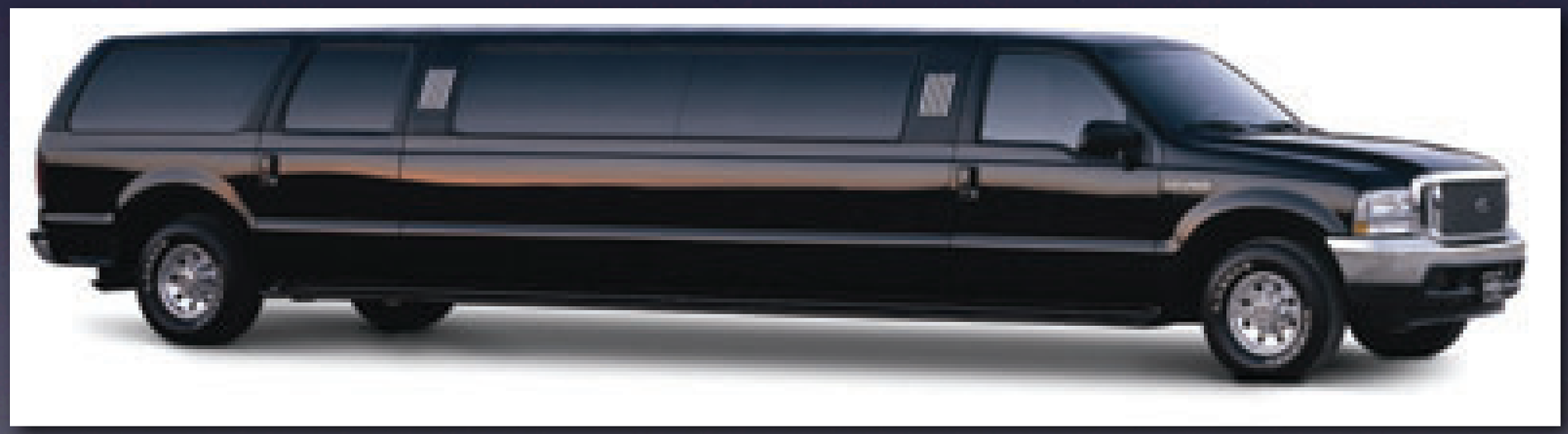
- Historically, the color purple has been associated with royalty and power.
- To this day, purple still represents wealth and extravagance.

white

- When people think "clean," they think of white. White is considered to be the color of perfection, light, and purity.

black

- Although black often has negative connotations such as death and evil, it can also be a color of power, elegance, and strength, depending on how it's used.



"Keep in mind that there is **no wrong color to use**. While psychological reasoning may help get your palette started, the **success** of a color scheme **depends on** the **harmony** that exists between all the colors chosen."

Color Temperature

- One attribute of color that exists across the entire spectrum is the notion of color temperature.
- **Warm colors** are the colors from red to yellow, including orange, pink, brown, and burgundy.
- Due to their association with the sun and fire, warm colors represent both heat and motion.

Color Temperature

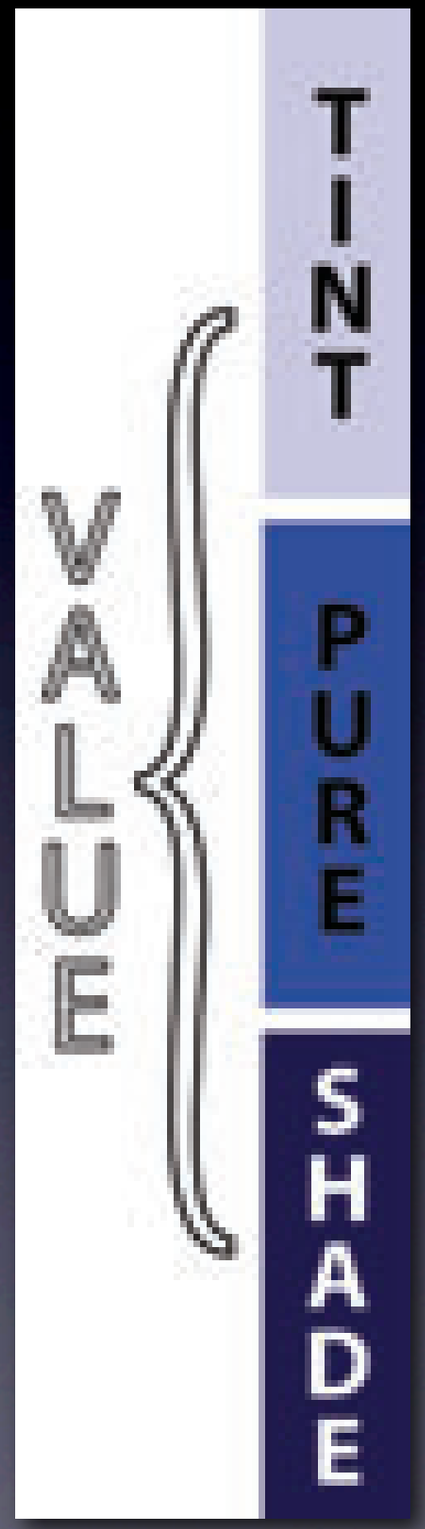
- **Cool colors** are the colors from green to blue, and can include some shades of violet.
- Cool colors can calm people down and reduce tension.
- In a design, cool colors tend to recede, making them great for backgrounds and larger elements on a page, since they won't overpower your content.

Warm Colors

Cool Colors

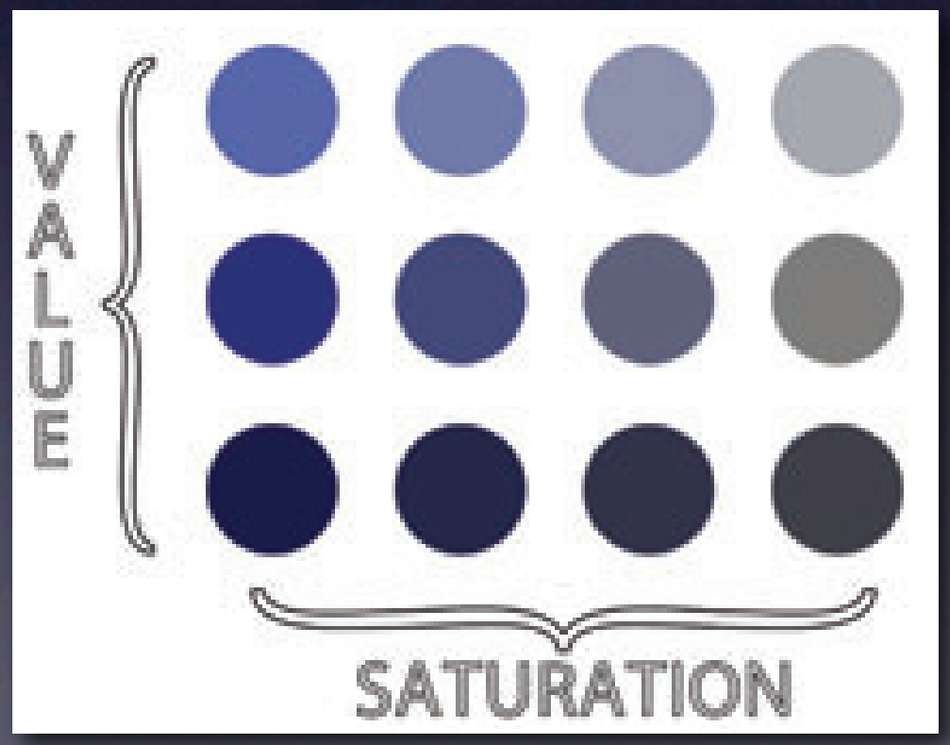
Color Value

- The measure of the lightness or darkness of a color is known as its **value**.
- The use of light and dark colors helps to establish the classic dichotomy of good versus evil.
- A **tint** is made by adding white to a given color, and tints of color tend to look soft and ethereal.
- A **shade** is any pure color to which black has been added.



Saturation

- The **saturation** or **intensity** of a color is described as the brightness or dullness of that color.
- When we add **gray** (black and white) to a color, it starts to become dull and desaturated.

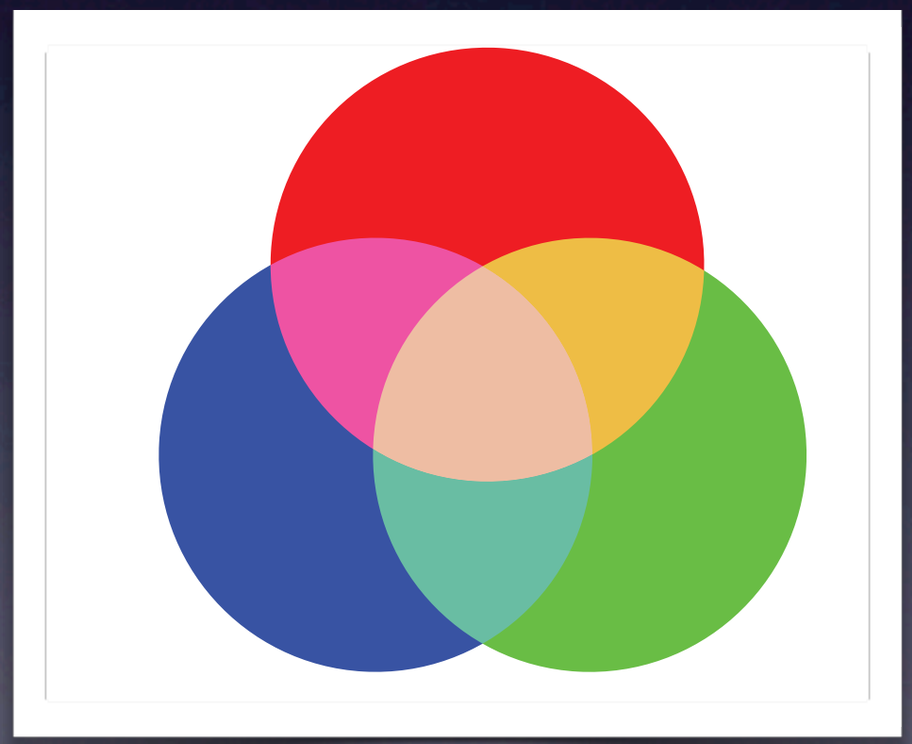


Color Theory

- To take our foundational knowledge of color any further, we'll need to get a grounding in some of the more technical concepts associated with the subject, such as **how colors are formed and how they can be categorized**.

RGB

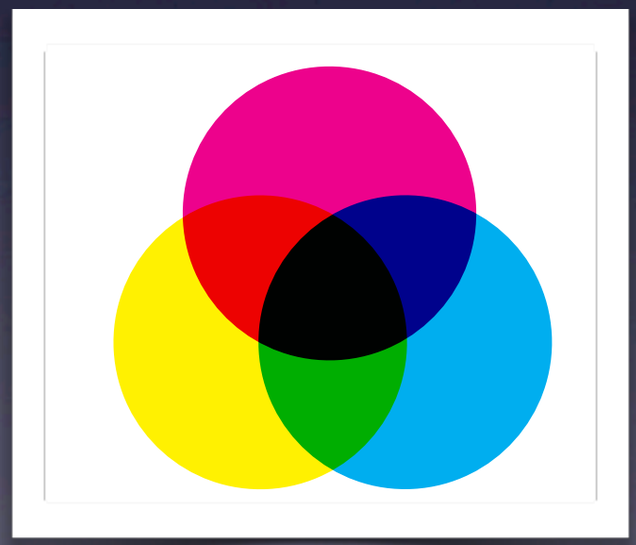
- The colors displayed on computer screens (i.e. the colors we'll bee using in our web site designs) are based on an **additive color model.**
- In an additive color model, colors are displayed in percentages of red, green, and blue (RGB) light. If we turn all three of thesecolors on full blast, we get white light. If we turn red and green all the way up, but switch off blue, we get yellow.



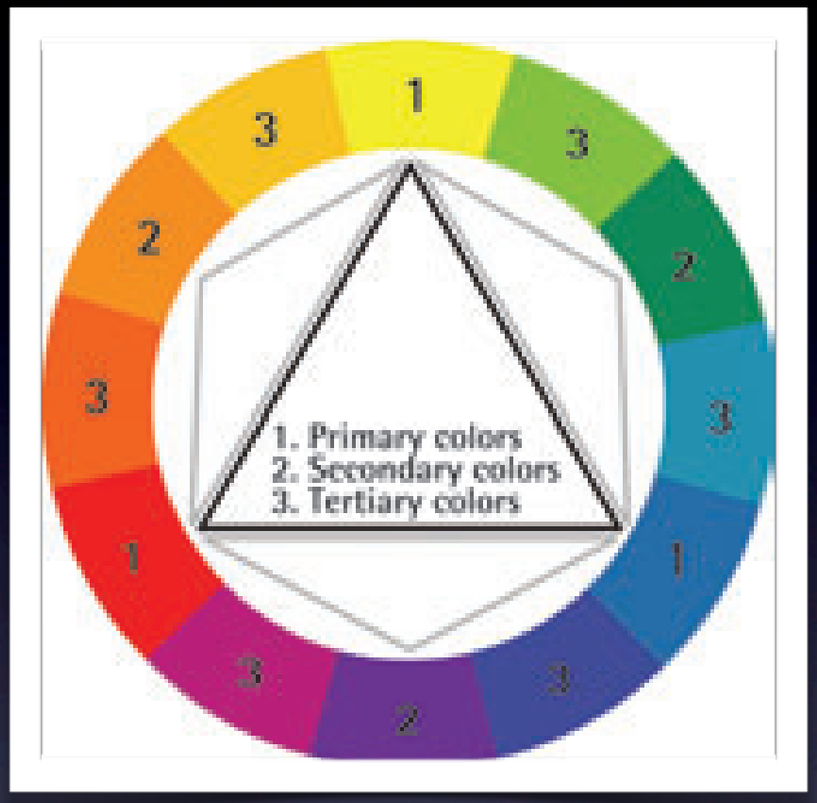
CMYK

- If you've ever owned a color printer, you might be familiar with the acronym CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black). Your inkjet printer, laser printer, and industrial four-color printing press all create images using cyan, magenta, yellow, and black inks or toners.

- This process uses a subtractive color model. By combining colors together in a subtractive color model, we get closer to grayish black. You can't get black from just cyan, magenta, and yellow. You have to have black ink, which is where the K comes in.



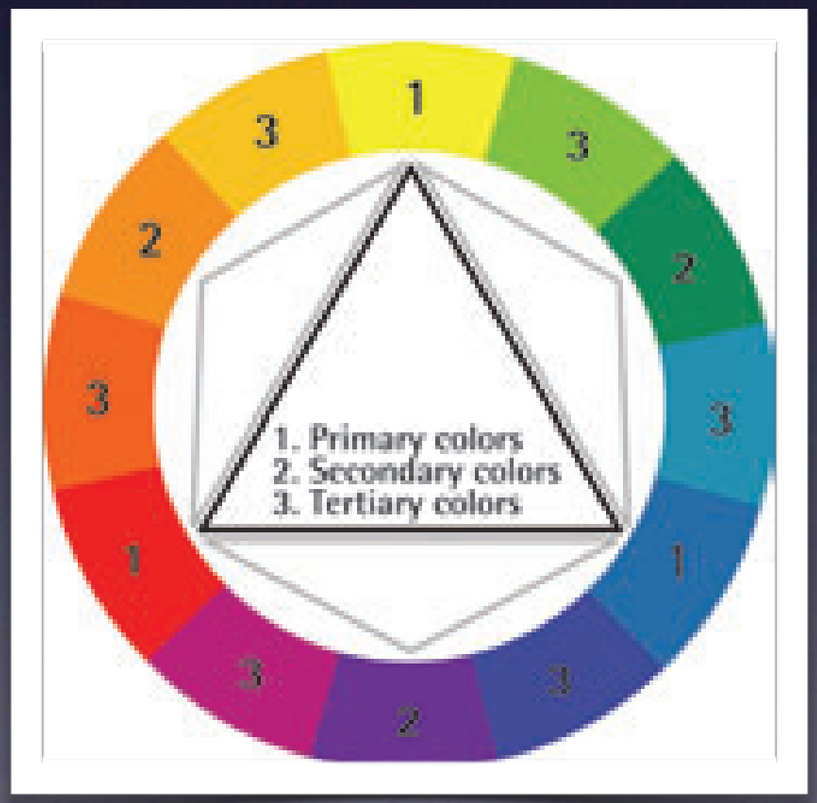
COLOR WHEEL



- The color wheel is a simple but effective diagram developed to present the concepts and terminology of color theory. The traditional artists' color wheel is a circle divided into 12 slices

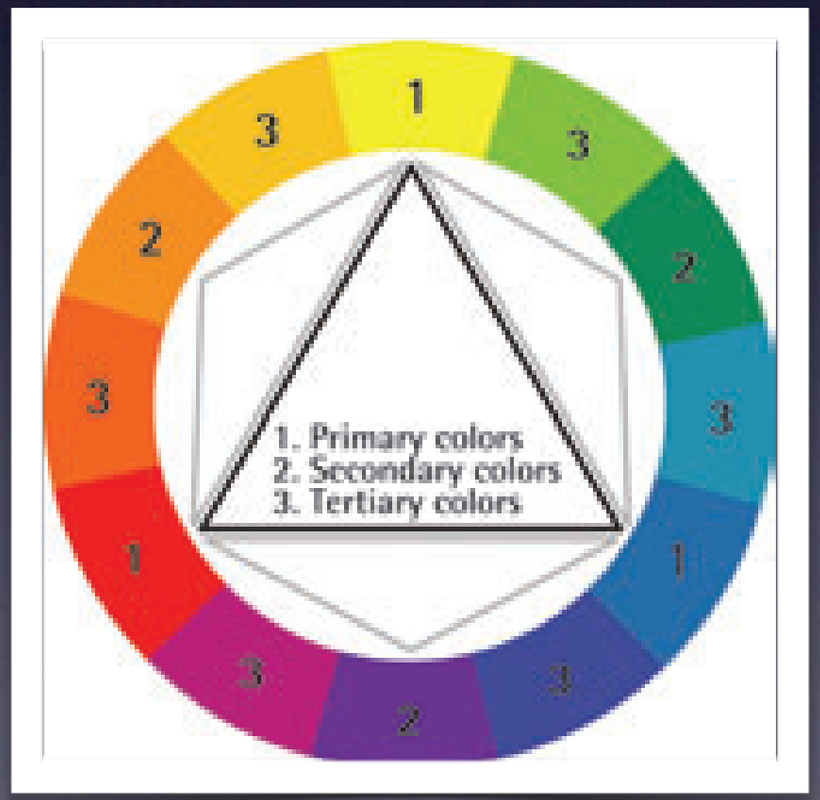
Primary colors

- The primary colors of the traditional color wheel are red, yellow, and blue. These hues form an equilateral triangle on the color wheel, and every fourth color from one primary color is another primary.



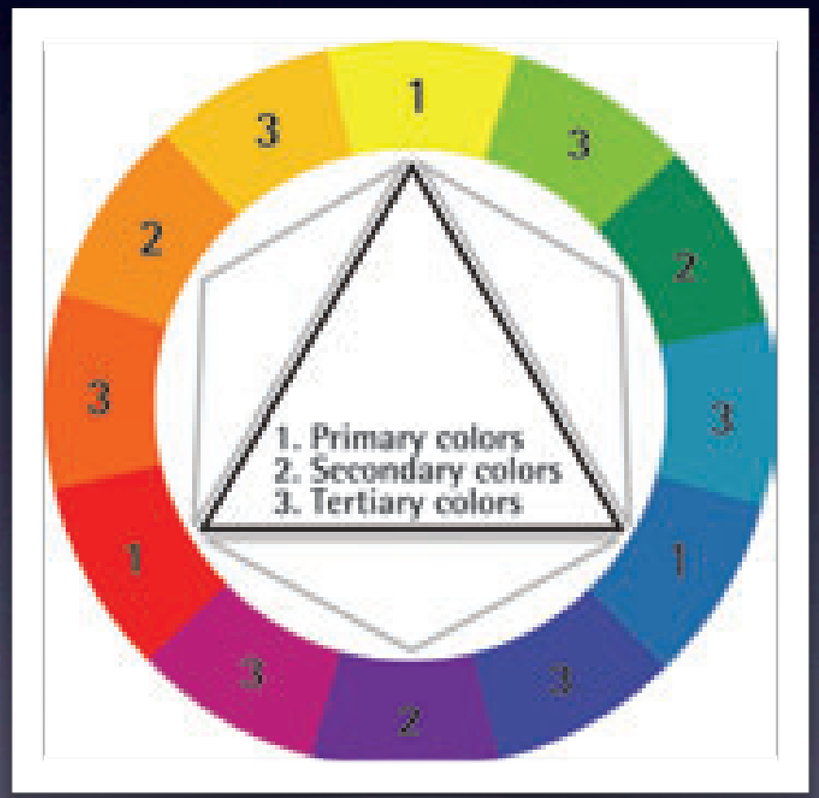
Secondary colors

- By mixing two neighboring primary colors, we create secondary colors, which are indicated here by the smaller gray triangles. The secondary colors are orange, green, and purple.



Tertiary colors

- There's a total of six tertiary colors: vermilion (red-orange), marigold (yellow-orange), chartreuse (yellow-green), aquamarine (blue-green), violet (blue-purple), and magenta (red-purple). As you might already have guessed, the tertiary colors are formed by mixing a primary color with an adjacent secondary color.



The Scheme of Things

The Scheme of Things

- how do we find multiple colors that work together? This is where color schemes come in handy.
- Color schemes are the basic formulae for creating harmonious and effective color combinations.
- Six classic color schemes exist:
  - monochromatic
  - analogous
  - complementary
  - split complementary
  - triadic
  - tetradic (also called double complementary)

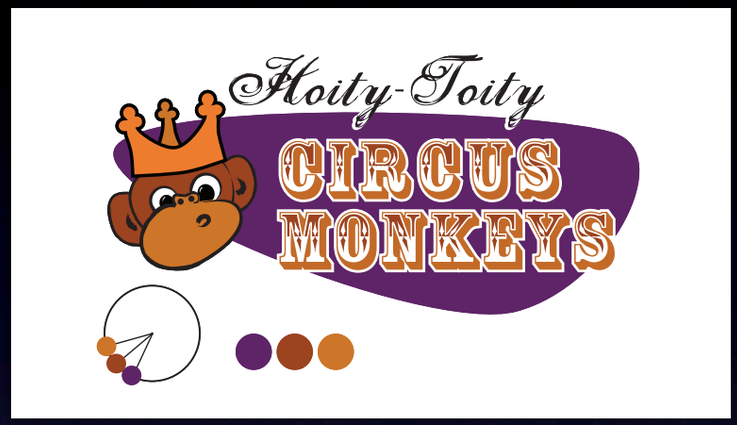
- In order to employ any of these classic color schemes, we must start with a color. Consider the subject of the web site you're working on, and **choose a base color** that suits the site's purpose.

A Monochromatic Color Scheme

- A monochromatic color scheme consists of a single base color and any number of tints or shades of that color.

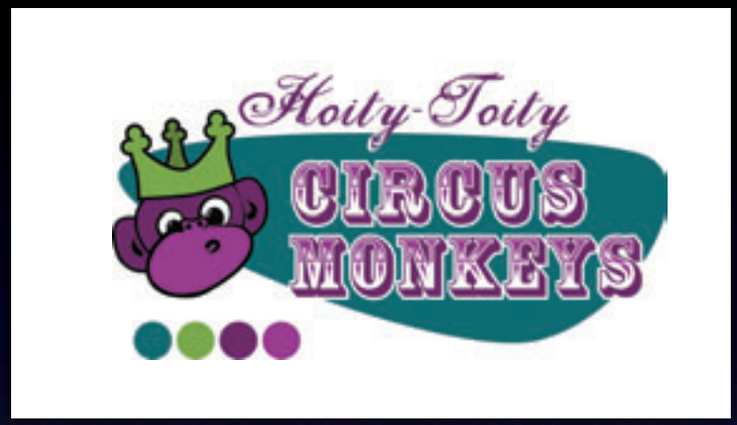
An Analogous Color Scheme

- An analogous color scheme consists of colors that are adjacent to one another on the color wheel.



A Complementary Color Scheme

- Complementary color schemes consist of colors that are located opposite each other on the color wheel, such as green and red, yellow and violet, or orange and blue.

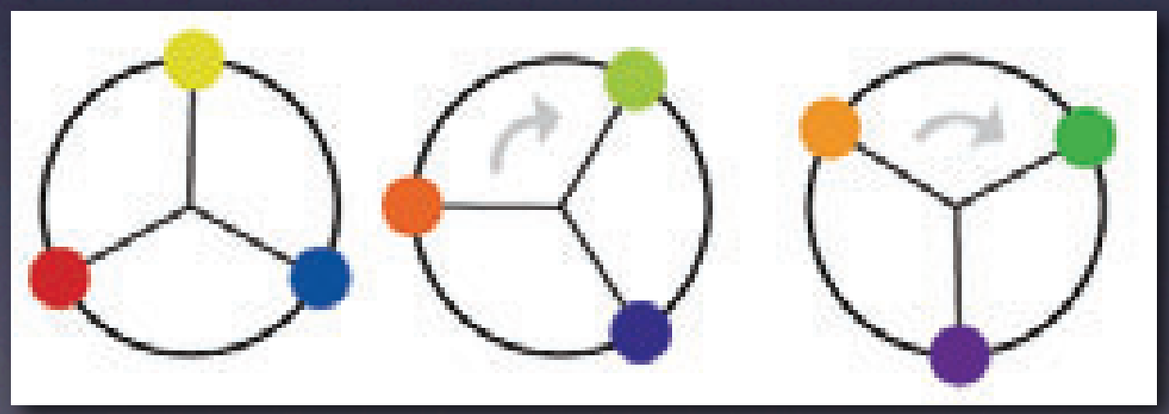


Split-complementary, Triadic, and Tetradic Color Schemes

- To create a **split-complementary** color scheme, use the two colors adjacent to your base color's complement.
- This type of color scheme can look juvenile and extreme.

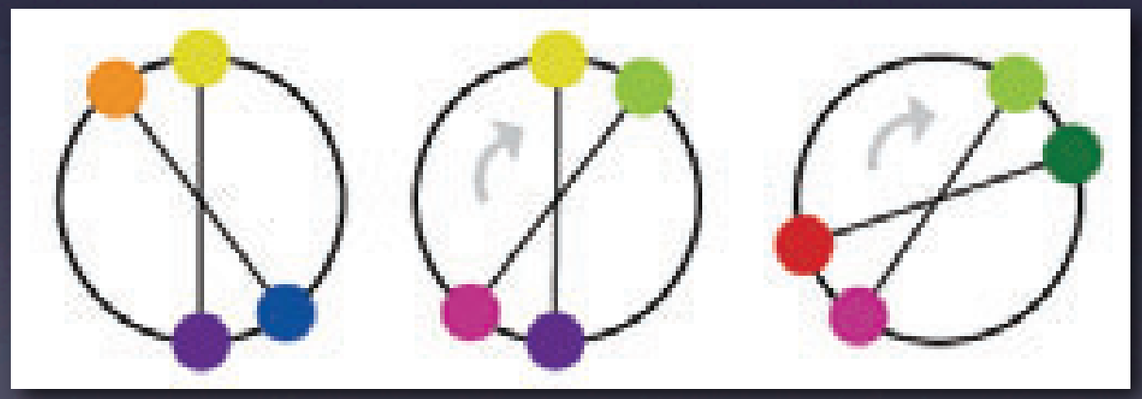
Split-complementary, Triadic, and Tetradic Color Schemes

- For a **triadic color scheme**, we just push our split-complements out one more notch on each side, so that all the colors are equally spaced.



Split-complementary, Triadic, and Tetradic Color Schemes

- A **tetradic color scheme** is one in which any complementary color scheme is combined with another complementary color scheme.



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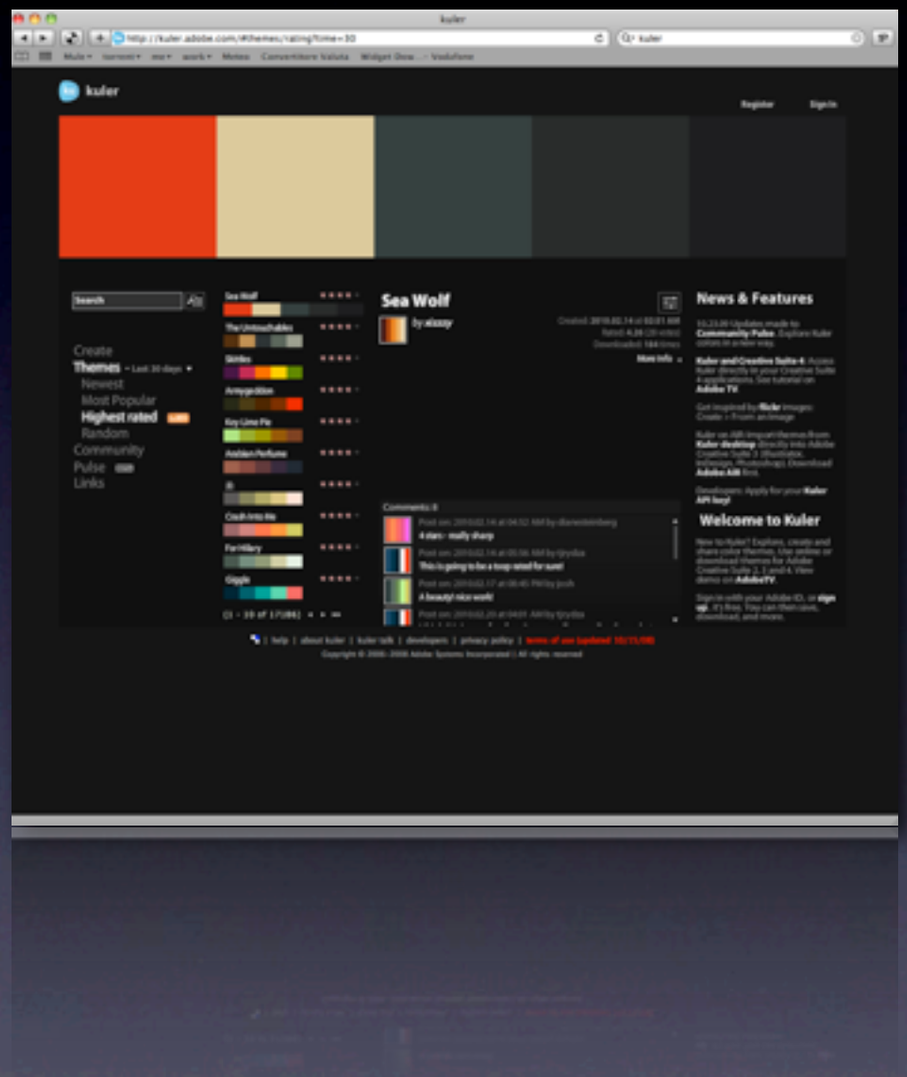
- Create
- Select base color
- Select a rule