Unit 9: Design Critique

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Step 1: Reflection

1. The websites that have inspired my design thus far have been:

    nixon.com
    stance.com
    rvca.com
    nike.com

2. I'm most proud of the simple yet sleek design. I was trying to hit a balance of simplicity and high-end design, and thus far I feel like I have done a good job. There is still plenty of room to improve, I have just started with a solid base.

3. In my design process I was struggling to decide the hierarchy of the information I have on my site. Figuring out what needs to be emphasized and really trying to put myself in the mind of the user was challenging. I had a clear vision in my mind of how I wanted people to use and consume the site, but actually turning that into insightful design was difficult. That is mainly because I don't quite have the page development skills to match my lofty design goals.

4. In page development, I am struggling with layering content. I am struggling with layering photos behind different sections to give the site a sense of depth. I am especially trying to have links with photos as backgrounds, so that when you hover over the photo there is a slightly opaque overlay and it links to another page. Additionally, I am struggling with floating photos so that they look good no matter the window size. Overall I wish to use more photos and embedded videos on my site, but I haven't figured out yet exactly how to do that.

5. Generally responsive design was very difficult. I had a very clear vision of what I wanted, but it was hard to match my site with the design I had in mind after I already started building it. I think in the future if I want my site (or any site) to be responsive I need to design for mobile first…or even design to mobile site separately.

Step 2: Reviews

Group 1 - squarespace.com

Everyone knows Squarespace is highly regarded for their simplicity of design, so that is this page's obvious strength. They have a very sleek and simple typeface, and they very effectively use font size, weight, and style to establish a good hierarchy and general flow. Their navigation is intuitive and clearly marked giving the page a very intuitive flow, but I don't find their layout perfect.

I do criticize the layout of their landing page slightly. The layout of the photos on the right and the type of the left leaves the eye confused about exactly where to look. The scrolling photos distracts the eye from reading the smaller-sized copy on the left. Despite the confusion of the layout on the landing page the hierarchy is solid and the rest of the page is designed beautifully.

Group 2 - http://www2.warnerbros.com/spacejam/movie/jam.htm

There is a lot to say about the design of this site, but the biggest design problem they have is a lack of hierarchy and flow. It is now clear exactly how to navigate the page and what to click on. Our eye is drawn to the logo in the middle of the page, but you can't click on it. After our eye lands on the center logo, it doesn't really know where to go next. What doesn't help their cause is the yellow type on top of a busy black background, it is simply hard to read. Of all the clickable objects surrounding the logo, it is not clear which ones are more important then others. What is the important information to consume on this site?

The one positive thing I will say is that if the lack of hierarchy and flow was intentional, I think it is actually pretty neat. Being a Space Jam fan, I could see the lack of hierarchy, navigation, and flow being intentional. In that case, this site is just about clicking aimlessly and consuming whatever information you want. This website design is inefficient, but the people visiting this site could be interesting in essentially wandering around within it. Overall it is not designed that well, but maybe it doesn't have to be.