

Research on Key Aesthetic Features

Several factors are involved in what the Frutiger family of aesthetics uses as a basis for design, and oftentimes, they seem connected to basic photo editing skills. Still, they are used to make a glossy, realistic photoshopped look.

1. Skeuomorphised UI/UX

Because these interfaces were made at a time when the internet was still being learned, a lot of interactive elements looked and sounded like buttons. One of the best examples of this is the Wii, where the game icons are not only spaced out, but when you hover on them they would expand and make a noise, indicating that it is clickable. Another example is old touchscreen keyboards on phones, where the keys looked like sleeker keycaps.

Things looked more like their intended purpose, and with the rise of technology usage, the need to have as much skeuomorphism in ux declined. I however still think it's really nice to interact with because it gives a clear guide on how people are supposed to use software without needing previous internet experience.

2. Glossy design

All of the Frutiger aesthetics have this sleek "perfection" to them, where the designs look like they are shiny or made of glass (with the exception of Floral Metro and Four Colors aesthetic, which have at most flat 2D shines to them). All of the images are also extremely crisp unless purposefully diffused. While I think this was so they showed up correctly on lower-resolution screens at the time, it gives it a creative touch now.

From looking at reference images, A lot of the shine to them seems to be easily replicable in Photoshop with either lasso tools and Gaussian blur to create the shine, or a gradient from the center out, depending on the angle of the glossy item is at. If it is a button, the general rule is that the shine goes toward the top of the button, and the bottom underneath it there is a drop shadow on the buttons.

3. Frutiger/humanist sans-serif typefaces

Before starting this research, I assumed there was no directly linked font that went with this aesthetic. Come to my surprise to find out it is named after Adrian Frutiger, a well-known typeface designer. The humanist sans-serif designs he created and this aesthetic follows have stronger curves than regular sans-serif, seem more handwritten, and are known for their strong legibility, even from afar.

Along with that, there are fonts that repeatedly show up in designs like Droid Sans, Calibri, Frutiger, Myriad, and Segoe. The header fonts seem to follow the same rules of design, however, they sometimes get the same gloss treatment as other icons and lean towards the technological side of the aesthetic more.

Along with these effects, there are several sub-categories that fall into the Frutiger aesthetic. Below is the extra research I have done on the ones I found interesting, and what portions of them I found to be impactful

Frutiger Aero/Aurora

Aero is the most well known of the styles. It has very interesting idyllic, photoshopped, glossy elements as its main art, and the key elements are a combination of nature and technology, with blue and green as its main two colors. One of its most well know implementations is one of the Windows 95 backgrounds. Because of its connection to the Windows products, their old style of UX/UI was deeply rooted in skewmorphism, and it gave computers a lot of the skewmorphic detailings it still has now.

Aurora also has a long history of backgrounds, even till now. The main focus of this style is looking similar to Aurora Borealis. However as research has continued I'm realizing its more of just the concept of an aurora, with it just being sort of just fun gradient lines and shapes. I think this idea has stuck around even into now, with a lot of the default backgrounds being just gradient lines and shapes.

I think in the modern day a lot of these ideas have stuck, but have evolved and toned down. An interesting direction to go in would be bringing back the more skeomorphic details that have been slowly flattened down, and having the background elements as more of a 3d background experience seems very interesting to me. I also saw a way to be able to click and move things around the screen using jquery, and I feel like that also fits into bringing this aesthetic back into things.

Frutiger Metro

Frutiger Metro (also known as flat Frutiger Aero) uses the Metro design method created by Microsoft, that they still use today. It keeps a lot of the same key elements of nature and natural movements with a gloss, but in a different way. It does a lot of vine and flower elements instead, and chooses to steer away from the false realism of other Frutiger aesthetics. It also has a lot of musical elements involved, with speakers and circle sound balls, and even depicts people often. It is usually very restrained in its color choices, but that is really depending on the type of sub-sub-genre it is. It also has a lot of graffiti elements involved, with the spray texture and bold shapes being clear inspirations.

The reason I find this important to include in the research is because as of the last few years, Y2k aesthetics have been returning into fashion and music, and I feel like there is a lot of overlap between some of the features in this aesthetic and current returning trends. I am still unsure as to how it will be implemented into the website, but maybe a tab for music related things with this aesthetic, because it feels wrong to talk about how to bring Frutiger back without mentioning it.

Conclusion

I think there are some decent ideas that can be fleshed out into a website, but it's really going to need a lot of work and. Figuring out JQuery and 3.js, both of which I am not the most proficient in.

This aesthetic might not be able to return into the mainstream fully, but it does not mean a revival could not work. The main website I used for research talked about how tik tok has recently had a lot of trends with these kinds of aesthetics and trends. And bringing back skewmorphism is just one of those things i enjoy, I think it looks really nice and while the majority of people use the internet nowadays, it does not mean that internet proficiency levels are not low. The further we go from skewmorphism, the harder it is for people to use the internet with ease. Bringing it back is a good move. It also fits in better with my major, and I think it's interesting to experiment with.

Sources

<https://frutiger-aero.org/>

<https://cari.institute/aesthetics/frutiger-aero>

<https://www.are.na/consumer-aesthetics-research-institute/frutiger-aero-ptg8tgmzbig>