Step 1: Reflection

Group 1:

- Which existing websites out there most inspired your web site design thus far?

http://www.adamhartwig.co.uk/

http://taostudiodesign.com/

http://www.gerardmarin.com/

- Which parts of the design are you most proud of?

I usually struggle with keeping things tidy and simple, even though I do believe in the slogan „less is more". For my current project, I really wanted to focus on keeping things very bold and simple on the landing page and to let the visual content on the further sites (that all need to be developed yet) speak the loudest.

- What struggles did you encounter in your design process?

First and foremost, I am struggling with design decisions for this project, as the portfolio is not ready, the work I want to upload needs to be prepared yet, regarding image sizing final logo design etc. Hence, I am putting a lot of design focus on content that does not exist in its final form yet, so the design decision is yet a bit too hypothetical and will need to be altered again, when the content exists to make the landing page and the content line up fluently and neatly.

- Which struggles did you encounter during page development?

Regarding the coding and development, my biggest struggle was understanding, why things don't align the way I want them to and get messed up in terms of margin and padding, when trying to keep them in a container with auto-width, but using floats. Somehow it didn't work and I had to use weird margins to get my header aligned widthwise. That worked somehow, but doesn't seem like clean coding to me eventually. Also, the pages that inspired me for my landing page all work with special hover-effects and animated elements, which I wish to integrate as well, to give the bold and basic design a more catchy and playful twist. That is definitely missing in this stage of the design process, but I do not have the tools for making it work the way I want to quite yet.

- What did you learn from making your project responsive?

I learnt that even the most basic layout needs to consider the user's different needs on different devices. Even if it is just the a:hovers and nav spacings that need attention, containers, margin and padding are definitely elements, I need to understand better, in order to not spend hours on a very simple responsive page.

Step 2: Reviews

Review a website from group 1 and a website from group 2 of the following list, commenting on each website's layout, typography, navigation, and overall flow.

http://www.sagmeisterwalsh.com/

What a unique landing page layout! The designer decided to abandon common standards and created something off the beaten track, by physically embedding the main navigation elements into the background image itself. I find this approach quite brilliant, as it creates immediate irritation/surprise and curiosity to explore further into the site. Especially in times of commonly used template-based web-design, offered by squarespace, wordpress etc., which are great and amazing services, but, help establishing a rather uniform style these days, this site really stands out. In case, users might miss the navigation offered in the center of the background-image, an alternative drop-down navigation is offered in the more common navigation place in the top left corner.

However, the creativity comes at the cost of user experience as there is a certain unease for the eye as it tries to flow with the given elements in the four corners. This may be caused by the overall slightly creative chaos dominating the office setting shown in the background image to begin with. It is certainly enhanced by the choice of color for the nav and the other text elements in the lower corners. The designer chose a black and white color scheme and used black as the typography color. However, as black and white are also the dominant colors on the background image that covers the complete screen, parts of the navigation as well as the typography in the right and left bottom corner get swallowed. This causes that icons and content are hard to read. Hence, the intended flow to direct the eyes towards the different elements in each corner is slightly disturbed.

Trying to tune the background's image overall brightness up a notch in order to give the black typography color more contrast and better readability, or even to decide for a different, more contrasting typography color may have been a better choice. But overall the site is a great example how to create something new, fresh and edgy.

Group 2:

http://mimarch.net/index.html

This page layout uses a black background and a three column grid for the different services of Architecture, engineering and graphics, which are displayed with large

black and white background pictures, creating a sense of luxury and high professionality by the mere use of this color palette. The pictures of the three columns slide in from the bottom of the page aligning the two outer columns evenly at the top of the page, while the clolumn in the center slightly uses less white space towards the top, giving the overall composition a little asymmetrical twist, and leading the eye further towards the navigation bar above it.

Further, unlike the to the two outer columns displaying containers with one background picture at a time, the middle column slides in more variants of pictures sideways, dividing this column into smaller puzzle-pieced section and creating interest to wait a while to look at the images sliding in, before heading on to find further information. Except for the mentioned navigation at the top center of the page, there is another navigation, consisting of 7 elemtents, all of which are highlighted by boxes in different colors. Two of the 7 menu elements are placed on top of the two first colums, while the 5 remaining elements are stacked on top of each other at the right upper side of the page.

While this menu bar adds some extra focal points to the page and adding color to the overall look, 4 of the 7 menu points are repetitive and may have been left out. This would be advisable mainly, because of the fact, that the side menu disturbs the content of the "about" site. It is blocking the face of one staff member completely. (Unluckily this staff member happens to be the only woman and of black skin color, which hopefully is not related to the fact that her portrait is covered by the menu, but it definitely might be misinterpreted and causing harm to the company's image and it definitely seems wrong and dishonoring this staff member.)

Back on the landing page, there is more hidden content to be discovered when scrolling down. Unfortunately, the luxurious style of the black background and the high class black and white images is lost here. This may be due to yet another menu to be discovered, introducing even more options for further reading with more colors for boxes, their borders ,the font and the background, creating a sense of chaos and loss of flow, as the menu bar's links are all displayed as stacked block sections further down along the page. Preferably I would have left it up to the user, to decide which service they would like to have displayed. Instead, the site tries to reveal it all like a one-page design, while all the different menu bars suggests it isn't. This is where it all gets a bit messy and confusing for me as a user.

Typographywise, the designer chose a standard non-serif font in an all uppercase style, except for some content in the footer where the uppercase style is dropped. The only contrast used for headlines, nav and content is font weight, creating a bit of boredom and bad readability of the "what we do" contents.

Sometimes less is more. It seams the designer did not trust the users ability to make there own choices, where to dive deeper, trying to display everything at one time. However, this company offers a lot of different services that seam hard to display smoothly on one page, so maybe a cleaner, more consistent and easy to follow multi-page layout would have been the better option here.