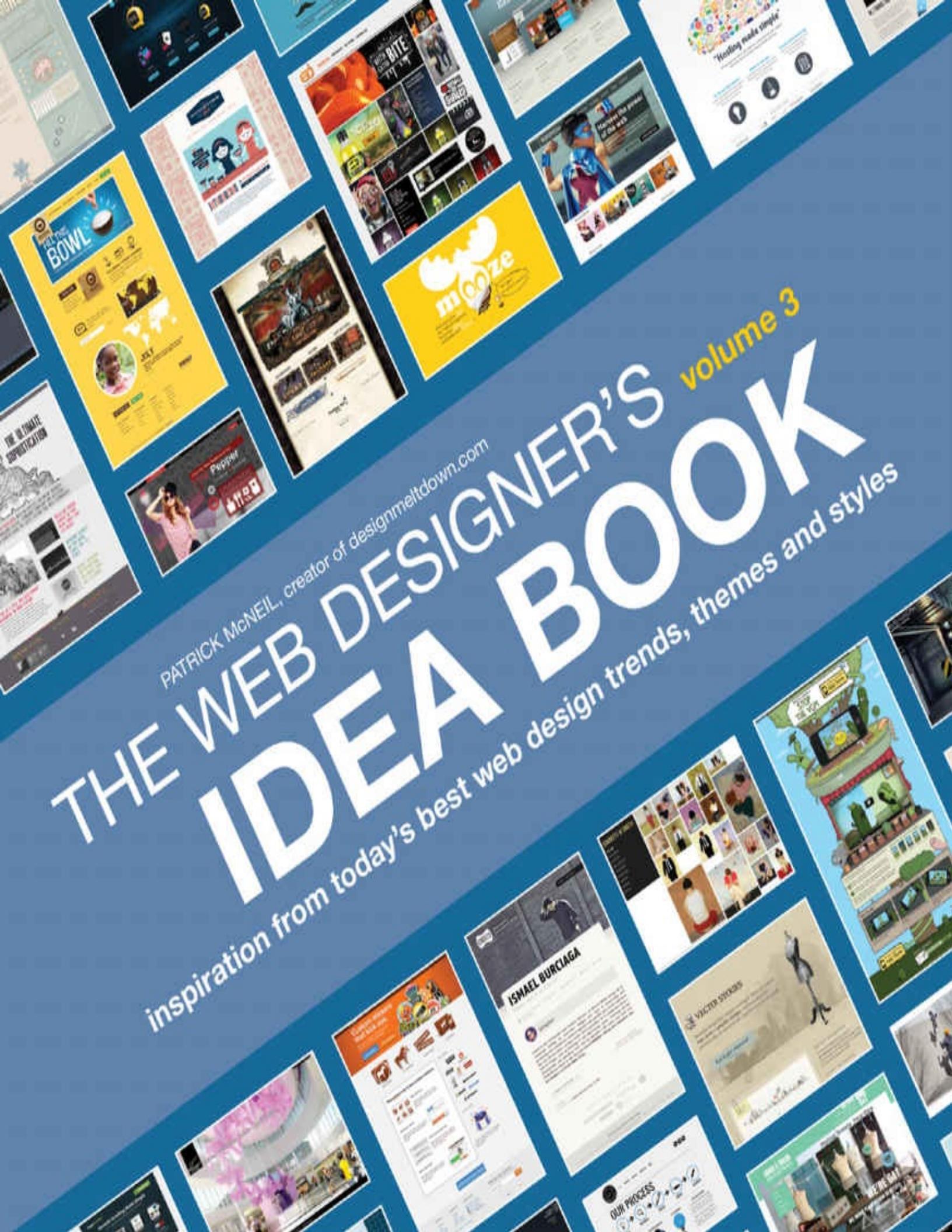


THE WEB DESIGNER'S IDEA BOOK

inspiration from today's best web design trends, themes and styles

PATRICK McNEIL, creator of designmeltdown.com

volume 3



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Volume 3

inspiration from today's best web design trends,
themes and styles



Cincinnati, Ohio
www.howdesign.com

For Angela, Jack and Maizy.

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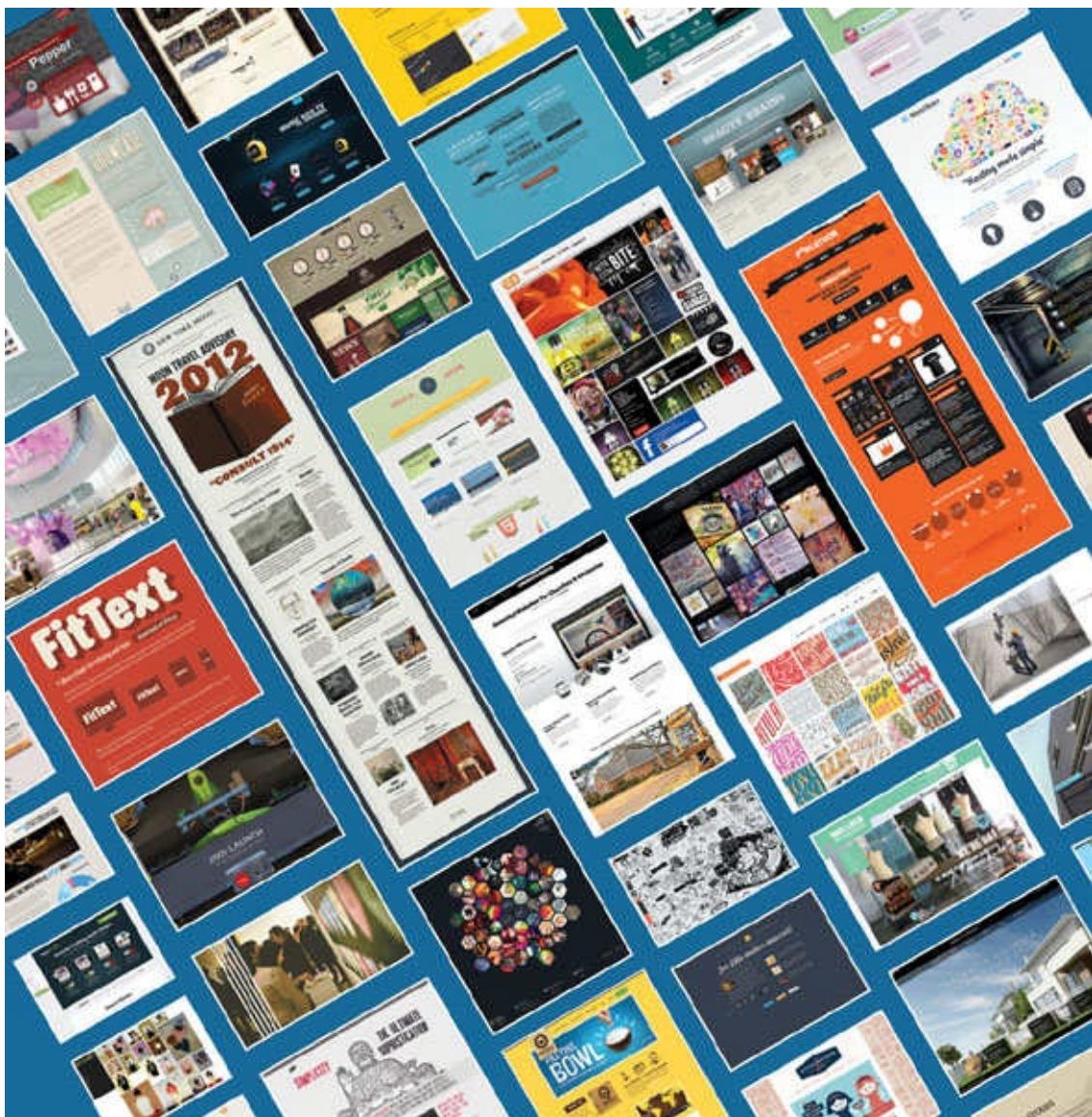
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Word From the Author

Pretty much anytime you wrap up a huge project that you're passionate about, you feel a bit like celebrating. Like when you finish remodeling a house, or when you build a wooden rocking chair for your new baby boy, or when you finally launch a new pet project. Finishing a book is very much like this, and with each new book I manage to wrap up I can hardly believe where I am in life. Writing these Idea Books is about as much fun as I can imagine having at work. I get to sift through thousands of amazing designs, meet many new people and ultimately obsess over the web design industry. To say I am fortunate to be in this role is a vast understatement.

Gushing emotions aside, it truly is fun to see a book like this come together. With each new volume—and a greater history to look back on—it becomes more and more evident how far the industry has come. Each year the industry grows and refines itself further. The quality of design improves, the quantity of great design increases and the sense of community grows stronger. This is what makes the web so special; at the end of the day we are all working together in a complex interchange of ideas, tools and clients. And it is my hope that this book captures a snapshot of the web as it existed in 2012.

One of the biggest hurdles I faced in writing this book is that with each new book, the base of people interested in submitting their work grows. This is obviously a good thing, but it also means I have to pass on more and more work because of limited space. This means hundreds—perhaps thousands—of gorgeous sites I would love to include simply won't fit.

What really inspires me when writing this book series is the amazing designers. For every artist who is in the limelight and whose name many

of us recognize, there are a hundred others lurking in the shadows and cranking out incredible work. Many haven't found their way into the spotlight; others don't want to. I take joy in finding some of these designers who run below the radar. I am frequently delighted to discover that the designer behind a site I love is also behind five others I love as well. It is the work of these unsung heroes that I most love to showcase. Sure, some works you find here come from some very well-known people, but for the most part, you probably have not seen most of the material. I think this is what makes my Idea Books extra special; they offer a fresh set of inspiration rather than the same huge names we all know about.

— *Patrick McNeil*

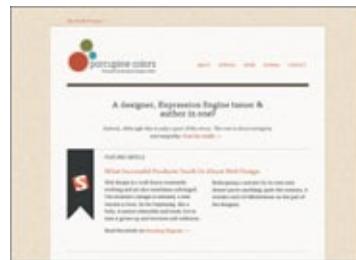
O1 / Technology

One of the reasons many people (myself included) love the web is because it so perfectly combines technology and design. And while technology has always had an impact on design, I believe we are currently experiencing a situation in which many technologies come together and force massive shifts in the industry. The result is a major change in web design styles, trends and techniques.

Consider the following technologies:

- the explosion of new devices (tablets, smartphones, and so forth)
- the progress of responsive designs and development techniques
- refinements in using custom type online
- the introduction of CSS3 and HTML5
- refinements in many content management systems

With all of these areas moving together at once, we can clearly see how the face of the web is changing; in fact, we see it firsthand each day as we use the web. The industry is in a time of increased flux and along with this comes many new design patterns. What I find fascinating is how they interconnect. Each of these technologies has pushed the industry along, but it is the combination of all these things that have become the collective catalyst for change; a perfect storm if you will.



A prime example of this is responsive design. With responsive design, the goal is to have a website adapt to the user's device and function in an

ideal way in each situation. If I view the site on a PC, smartphone or tablet, I basically get a tailored experience for that device. This is primarily accomplished by developing style sheets for each potential layout. As it turns out, with CSS3 we can apply many more visual styles in code, something that was previously accomplished with images. This is rather convenient when we are applying style variations, such as drop shadows, rounded corners or gradients to the same set of elements. Combine this with improvements like the support for multiple backgrounds on one element, which means the HTML is simpler and easier to manage, which reduces the complexity dramatically and really helps when we're creating multiple versions of a page via CSS. Then add to the top of this far greater support for custom type in a page via CSS. Now it's far easier to embed text in a page, reducing the need for things like image-based text or plug-ins that render custom type in a flash ([SIFR](#)). I know this is a lot to process, but I want you to see that it is all woven together into a perfect storm. Each piece contributes to the overall evolution of the process, with the result being rather dramatic change in a much shorter time span than we normally experience. To be sure, the web is in perpetual motion, but for the last few years it has been moving at warp speed.

Let's dig in and look at a variety of technologies that have shaped the web as we find it today. And, of course, along the way we will look at a ton of beautiful designs that demonstrate some of the potential uses of these technologies. While it is not the goal of this book to be a technical manual, I will also provide a brief introduction to each of these topics in case you're not acclimated to them. Ultimately, though, we are here to observe the beautiful designs in an effort to spark ideas and inspire you.

Content Management Systems

A critical part of the web is the use of content management systems (CMS for short). This technology has had a profound impact on the cost and process of getting content online. And while these systems have been around for a long time, in recent years they have reached a truly amazing point.

A CMS allows many people to manage and publish content to a website. At the heart of every CMS is a system for creating page templates. Users of the system populate it with content through an interface streamlined for data and content entry. Then, when the site is displayed for users on the web, the templates and content are merged and result in the output of the actual site. This means the content management is isolated from the structural bits allowing almost anyone to publish content once a site is set up (think WordPress for example).

A CMS is a tremendous tool for saving both time and money. They most often come packed with far more features than you would ever build on your own. And in general they offer so much value that the vast majority of websites are built on one. A few years ago a CMS was an upgrade that clients paid extra for. These days it is a standard feature.

Content management systems fall into two categories: hosted and self-installed. A self-installed CMS is one that you download as a software package and install to your own web-hosting account. A hosted CMS is one that you simply sign up for and instantly begin using. With the hosted option there is nothing to install, it's just a matter of activating an account.

With the self-hosted option, you have ultimate control and flexibility to make changes. You can often install any number of extensions or

modifications to the system and can even change the code that powers the system. In contrast, a hosted platform is typically locked down and has very clear boundaries. The host has total control but is also in charge of maintenance, updates and upgrades. Each approach has its place. A sampling from both categories is represented here.

A small sampling of the CMSes available to the public follow. I tried to hit the big names, but I wanted to include some less-known options as well. I also included a few examples of niche-hosted content management systems, which demonstrate how targeted some of these platforms are becoming.

WORDPRESS

Perhaps the most obvious system to include is WordPress. This CMS comes in both a hosted version (WordPress.com) and a self-hosted one (wordpress.org). At the time of this writing, the WordPress site claims to power in excess of 71 million websites, half of these being on the hosted platform. WordPress is clearly a huge player and impossible to ignore.

While WordPress started as a blogging platform, it has grown into a full-fledged CMS that is capable of handling almost any type of site. In fact, users have morphed WordPress into just about everything imaginable. It has been turned into things like an e-commerce platform, a trouble ticket system, a directory engine and a social network, to name a few. If you need to make your WordPress site do something, there is almost always a good tutorial or plug-in out there to guide you through it.

I am excited to say that the range of sites shown here clearly demonstrate the ability WordPress has to be pushed into nearly any form imaginable (which is true of every CMS presented here). If you currently think of this CMS as merely a blogging engine, the samples here will convince you otherwise.

A great example of the flexibility to be found here can be seen in the Ephus League site ([figure 1](#)). This gorgeous site in no way feels locked in or controlled by the restraints of a CMS. Instead it is clearly laid out in a fresh way that is tailored to the content. Compare this to the Growcase site ([figure 2](#)). The two are nothing alike. The point is that WordPress is a flexible system that results in sites that look and feel unique.

Find more about WordPress at <http://wordpress.org/> and <http://wordpress.com/>.



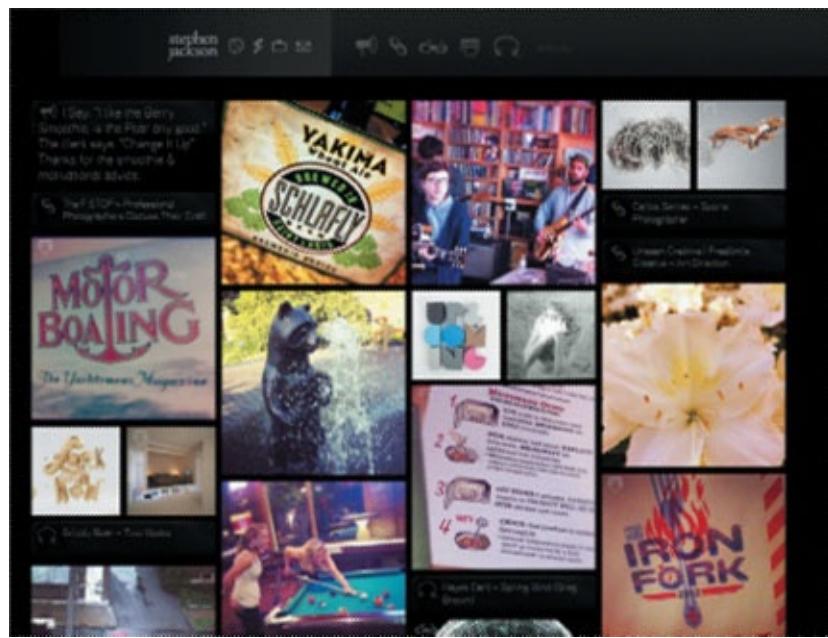
Figure 1 <http://eephusleague.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.growcase.com>



<http://members.photoshopuser.com>



<http://www.stephenjackson.us/socialstream>

Eating in Sydney

Eating in Sydney

Daikichi Ramen – Haymarket, Japanese Restaurant Review

Posted on April 16, 2012 in [Japanese](#) by [Eating in Sydney](#)

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Featured

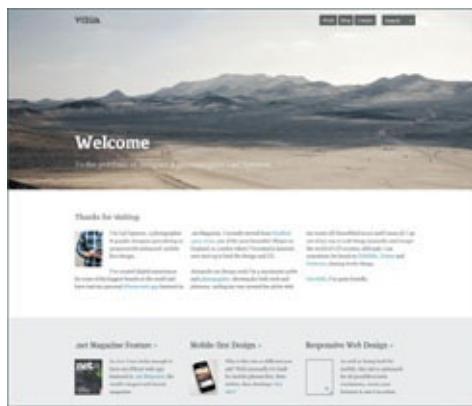
[Out of Africa – Masala, Moroccan Restaurant Review](#)

[Ciao, Hola, Bonjour, Hallo & Alla – A Small Taste of Europe](#)

<http://www.eatinginsydney.com>



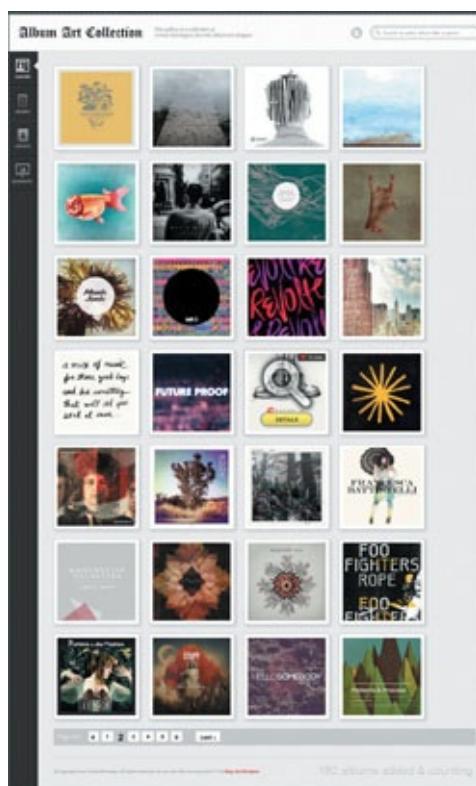
<http://monster.designmeltdown.com>



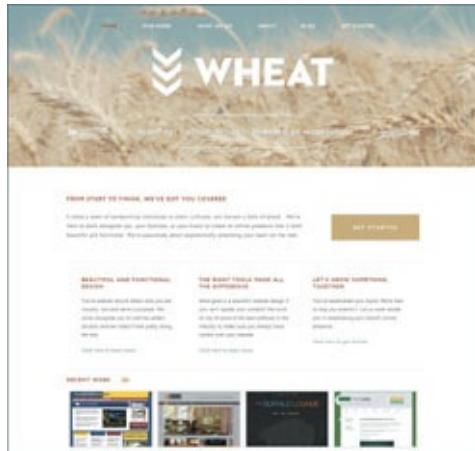
<http://visuadesign.com>



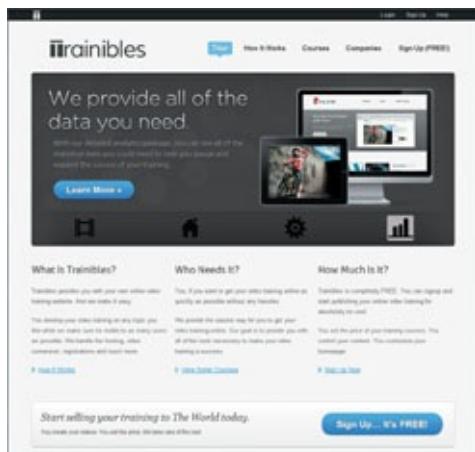
<http://kyletezak.com>



<http://albumartcollection.com>



<http://www.madebywheat.com>



<http://trainables.com>

A screenshot of the Co-Work City website. The top features a circular 'Co-Work' logo. Below it is a large image of a modern office space with a sofa, a dining table, and a yellow wall. The navigation bar includes 'Locations', 'About', and 'Contact'. A call-to-action button at the bottom left says 'Co-Work City'. The main content area has a white background with text and a small image. A sidebar on the right lists 'Why Co-Work?' and a point '1' with the text 'Great value — from just £59 +VAT per desk per week'.

<http://co-work.co>

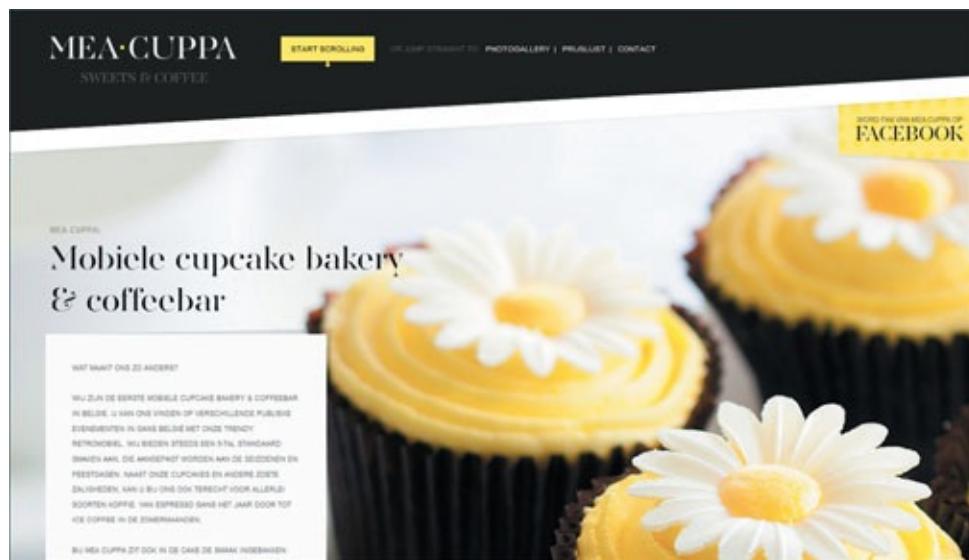
EXPRESSION ENGINE

While many self-hosted CMSSes are entirely free (think WordPress), Expression Engine is a licensed software application that charges a fee for its use. Expression Engine was the number-two most referenced CMS in all of the entries I received for this book (number one being WordPress). Frankly, I was surprised by this fact, but it does prove that this platform has a loyal following of well-respected professionals.

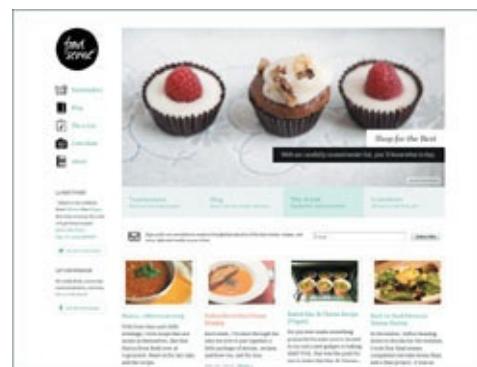
I suspect many of you can't imagine why you would pay for a CMS when so many excellent choices are free. But just like anything, paid versions come with some key perks. Things like guaranteed support, ongoing updates and an ecosystem keyed off of generating revenue. But, of course, the intention of this book is not to sell you on a particular CMS or its merits. My mission here is to inform, inspire and challenge your designs.

This particular CMS can be leveraged in quite a wide range of ways, as demonstrated by the variety of samples collected here. I really love that if you study the samples in this chapter you still will not come up with an obvious visual way in which they are connected. A CMS shouldn't get in the way of the designer, and this one certainly doesn't. If you're approaching Expression Engine for a design project, I hope you find the small gathering of sites here inspiring.

Learn more about Expression Engine at <http://expressionengine.com/>.



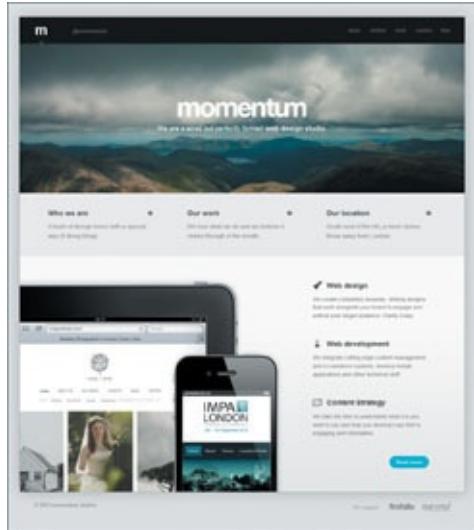
<http://www.meacuppa.be>



<http://foodsense.is>



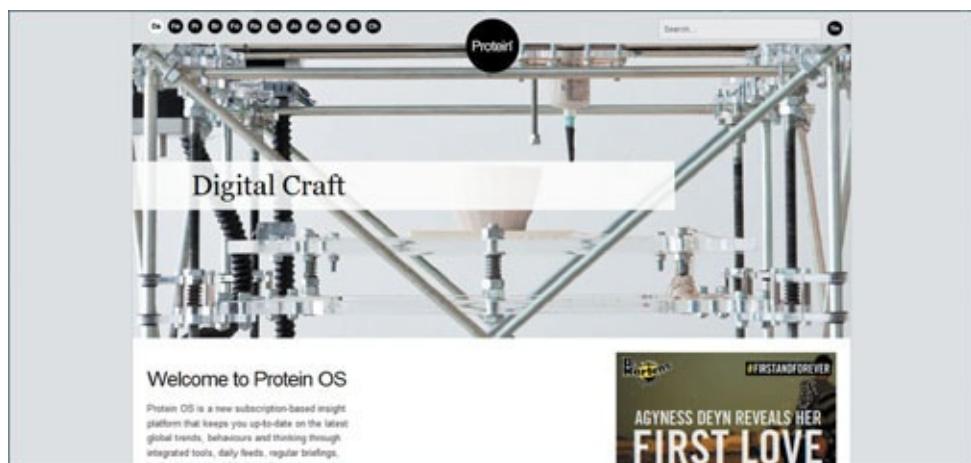
<http://www.clarify-it.com>



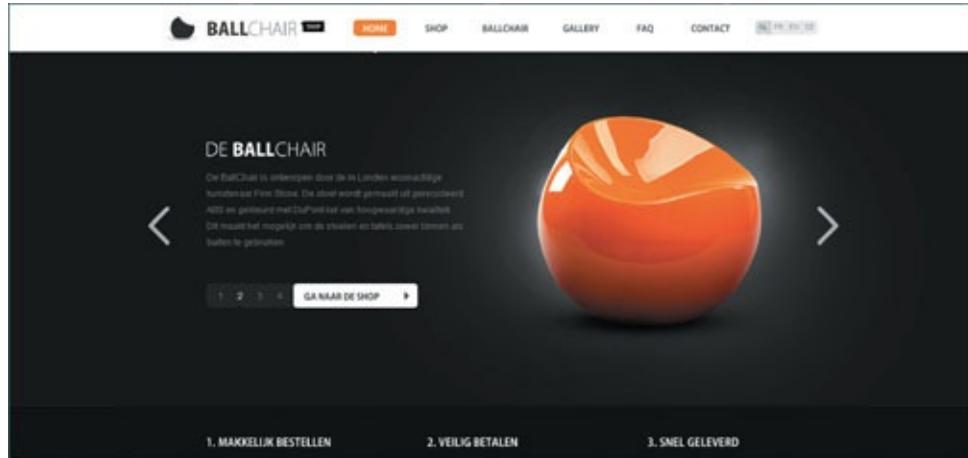
<http://builtwithmomentum.com>



<http://www.sleepstreet.be>



<http://prote.in>



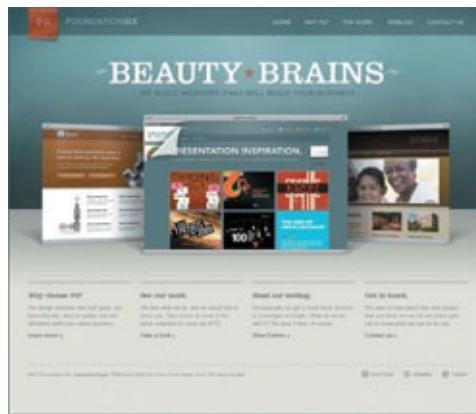
<http://www.ballchairshop.com>



<http://davebrookes.com>



<http://viminteractive.com>



<http://www.foundationsix.com>

DRUPAL

While Drupal is an incredible platform for building sites, I wouldn't say it is as universally approachable as WordPress. But that doesn't in any way detract from the power of Drupal. In order to appreciate Drupal, you must understand the niche it fills. Drupal is a developer-friendly platform that is easily extended, very secure, extremely stable and powerful enough to scale to extremely large volume sites. So while WordPress will let you point and click all around the admin area while you build the bulk of your site, you build a Drupal site mostly outside of the actual interface. But, of course, like any good CMS, the end users can manage the content through an easy-to-use admin area much as you would expect.

Needless to say, Drupal is a slightly different beast, but as you can tell from the design samples provided here, its developer-centric approach doesn't exclude the possibility of great design. In fact, the samples demonstrate that a combination of first-class design and Drupal is a clear possibility.

The Meri Hanko ([figure 1](#)). site is one such sample. Here the layout does not adhere to any predefined norms or standards. It is clear that the interface was designed from scratch. While we can't know whether the CMS forced Meri Hanko to remove any part of the site, there is no reason to believe that the underlying system prohibited the designer from tailoring the site to the client's needs.

To learn more about Drupal visit <http://drupal.org>.



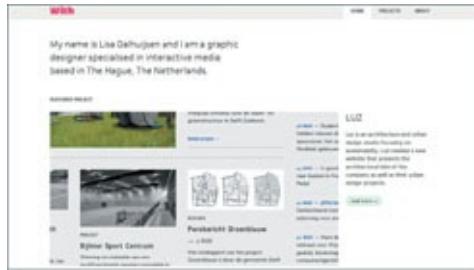
<http://www.nationalparks.org>



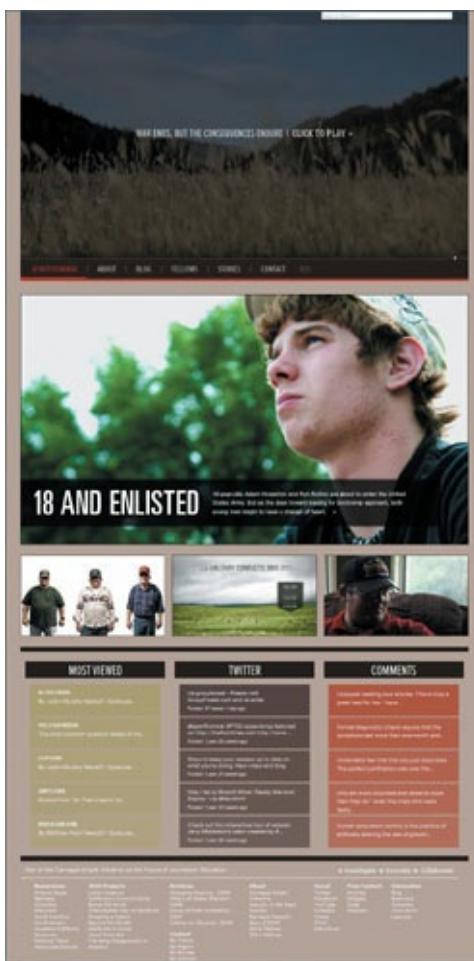
Figure 1 <http://www.merihanko.fi>



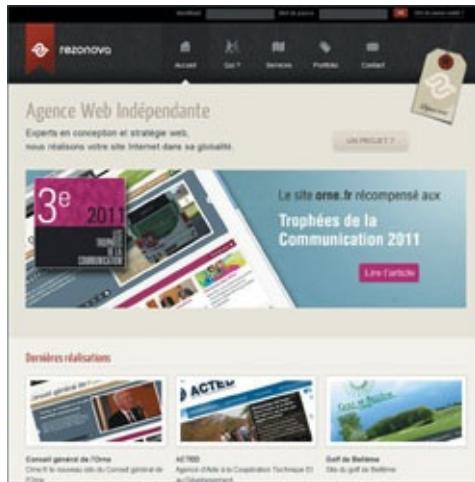
<http://inspiration4web.com>



<http://www.studiowith.nl>



<http://apartfromwar.news21.com>



<http://www.rezonova.com>



<http://paolareina.ru>

A screenshot of the Aon "Pass It On" website. The top navigation bar includes links for Standings, Question Archive, Videos, Photos, Events, Official Rules, Help/FAQ, Communities, and About. A banner on the left encourages users to "Show us your best 2011-2012 community photos! See how we unite locally". In the center, there's a "QUESTION OF THE DAY" for February 16, asking "In what year was Aon added to Standard & Poor's 500 Index?". Below the question, there are buttons for "Submit Your Answer" and "Learn How To Earn". At the bottom, there are three maps showing the distribution of community photos: "Team Americas 62,136 score", "Team Europe/Middle East/Africa 67,284 score", and "Team Asia/Pacific 53,475 score".

<http://www.aonpassiton.com>



<http://www.donttearmediown.com>



<http://www.marimekko.com>

MAGENTO

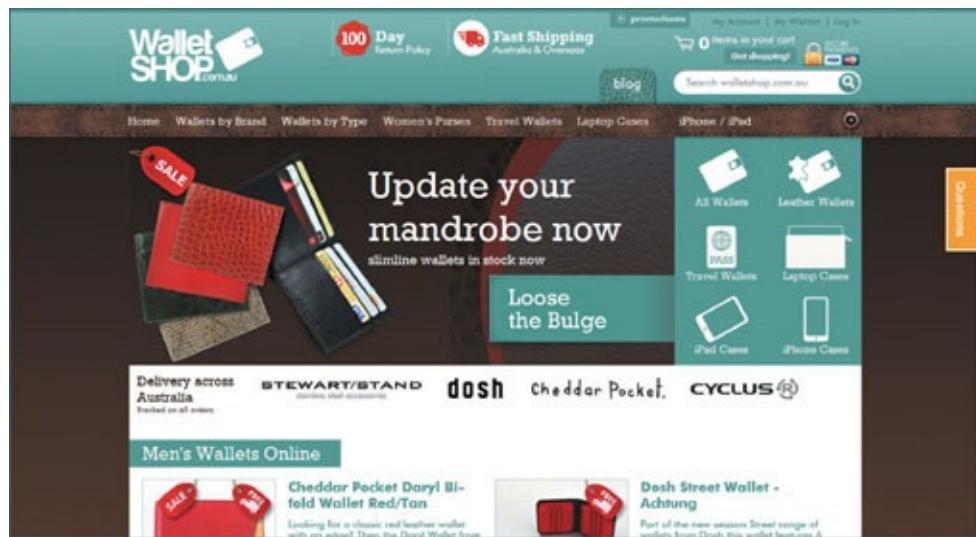
Magento is a slightly different type of CMS in that it is an e-commerce platform. You might not think of an e-commerce system as being a CMS, but in fact, it is. The content used to run an online shop is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of setting up a shop. And populating this content onto a site is a huge task. Thus a streamlined CMS is key to creating such a site.

Magento is an interesting e-commerce system in that it is one of the only open source² platforms. This means that you can download it and run it on your own hosting plan, and also view all of the code used to run it. It is a platform ripe for extension; there is certainly a rich community of developers extending the platform in numerous ways.

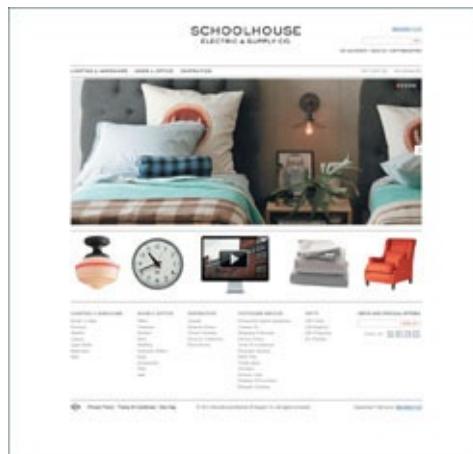
While you can download and run this software on your own servers, you can also pay to have Magento host a site. This is the exact same model as WordPress, and in fact, Magento is really the WordPress equivalent in the e-commerce world. If this sounds interesting to you, check out Magento Go (<http://go.magento.com/>).

So, if you have been reading along so far (and not just looking at the pretty pictures), you have no doubt figured out that a key trademark of a good CMS is its flexibility. As such, we should expect to find a wide range of design options when it comes to using Magento. And, of course, this is exactly what we find. In fact, I worked really hard to compile an eclectic list of e-commerce sites built on this platform for this chapter. I think you will find in the samples here a wide range of solutions that hardly feel tethered by a limited CMS.

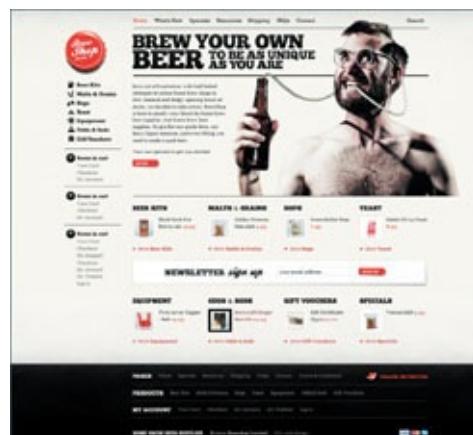
Learn more about Magento here: <http://www.magentocommerce.com/>



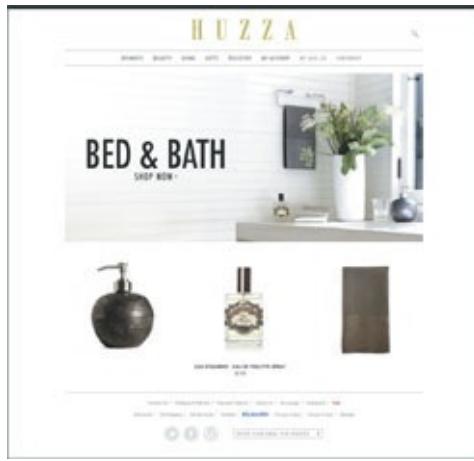
<http://www.walletshop.com.au>



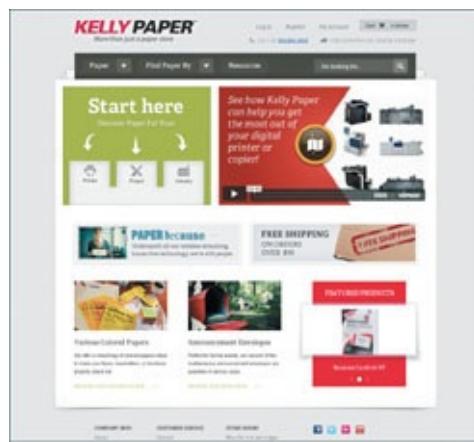
<http://www.schoolhouseelectric.com>



<http://www.brewshop.co.nz>



<http://www.huzza.net>



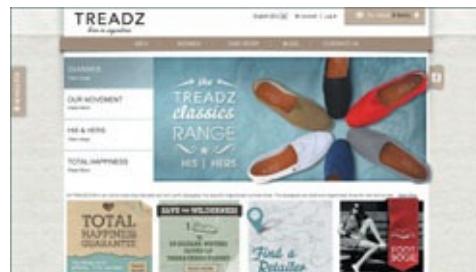
<http://kellypaper.com/shop>



<http://www.mechrystals.co.uk>



<http://www.skullcandy.com>



<http://www.mytreadz.com/eu>



<http://twistedtime.com>



<http://www.prodigia.co.uk>



<http://www.bluesuntree.co.uk>



<http://piorski.com.br>

SQUARESPACE

With all the incredible systems I have presented so far, you might wonder why the world would need more CMSSes. The reality is that not any one CMS, or even any small group of CMSSes, will satisfy all the needs out there. This is why systems like Squarespace, which may very well be new to you, are not only viable products but incredibly successful.

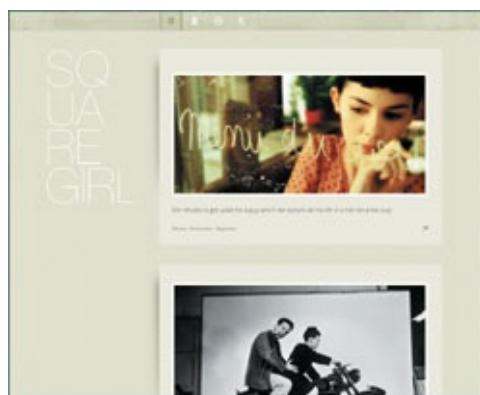
Squarespace can be used for many different types of sites and is extremely flexible, but a few of the core modules make it particularly attractive to those in the creative industry. These include the standard blog modules, but also some incredible image gallery tools and an amazing drag-and-drop interface for laying out pages. This intuitive interface allows you to structure your site the way you want to, without having to dig around in the code. In the end, this makes producing custom content layouts not only easier, but a normal part of building content. Frankly, this system excels in an area most systems pretty much ignore.

Another way in which Squarespace stands out as a leader is in its handling of external tools. For example, when you publish content to your blog via Squarespace, you can at the same time push teasers out to Facebook and Twitter. This might not sound all that revolutionary, but it is a powerful way to publish content and streamline the social promotion aspects of doing so.

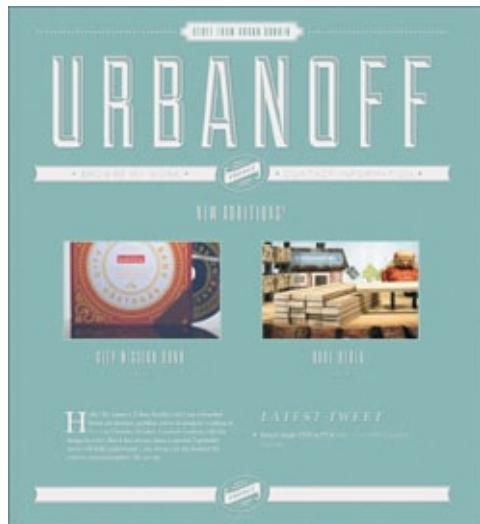
Get more details about Squarespace at: <http://www.squarespace.com>.



<http://rrhys.squarespace.com>



<http://www.squaregirl.com>



<http://urbanoff.com>



<http://www.chookooloonks.com>

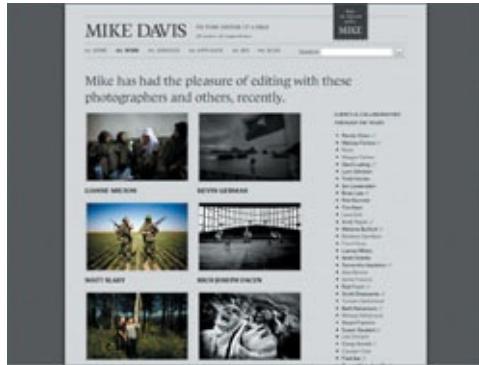


<http://www.statedmag.com>

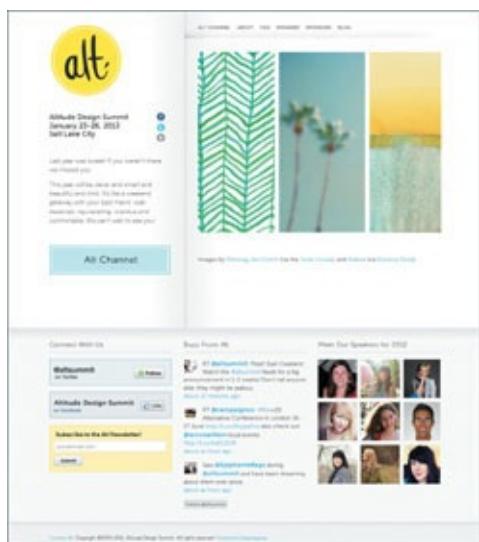


<http://hope-revo.squarespace.com>

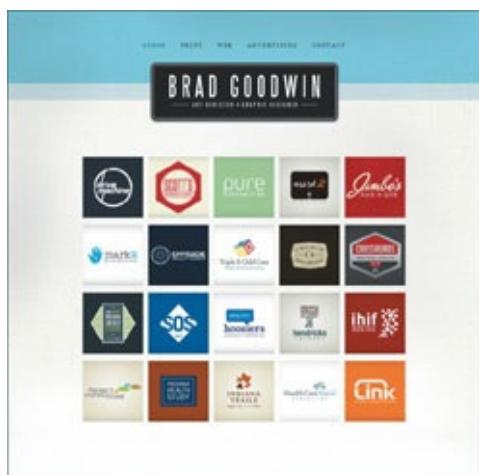
<http://montessorium.com>



<http://www.michaelddavis.com/work>



<http://www.altitudesummit.com>



<http://bgoodwin.squarespace.com>



<http://www.inspiredgoodness.com>

SHOPIFY

Shopify is a CMS with a singular focus: e-commerce. With Shopify you can quickly set up and run an awesome online shop. For many, the single reason for getting online is to run a store. And hosted quick-to-launch tools like Shopify make getting a business online and selling product about as easy as can be. Many contenders occupy this space, but Shopify is definitely one of the leading options.

If you're tempted to compare Shopify to Magento, don't bother. They are entirely different animals, though each has its place. Shopify offers many built-in features and is fully hosted. This means you don't have to worry about the technical complications of running an online store. And the biggest key is that you can be up and selling product exceedingly fast.

Designing and implementing an e-commerce site is no small task. Many pages, elements, forms and widgets must be considered. As such, building on top of solid templates is a fantastic approach. Fortunately, Shopify features a huge array of beautiful e-commerce templates. The templates alone are worth a tremendous amount of saved time and money.

Learn all about Shopify on their site, <http://www.shopify.com>.



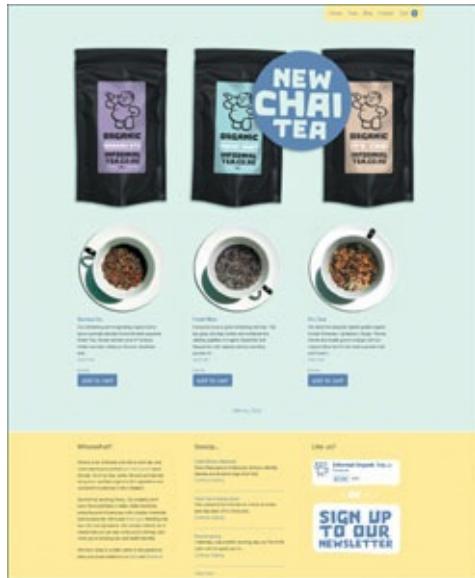
<http://www.dodocase.com>



<http://www.luhsetea.com>



<http://fetchapp.com>



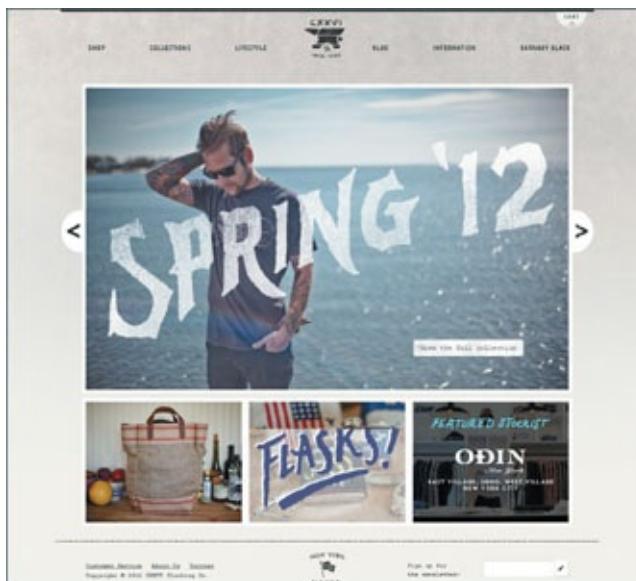
<http://www.informaltea.co.nz>



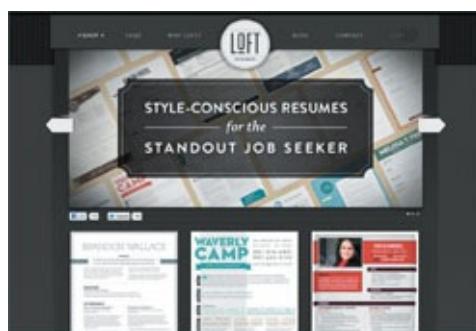
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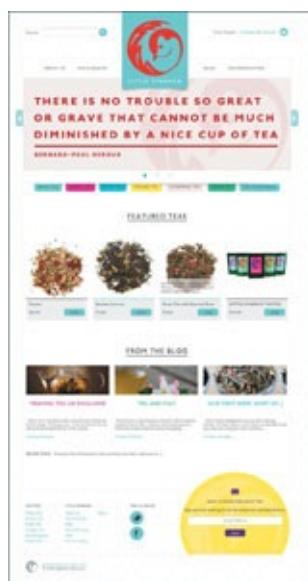
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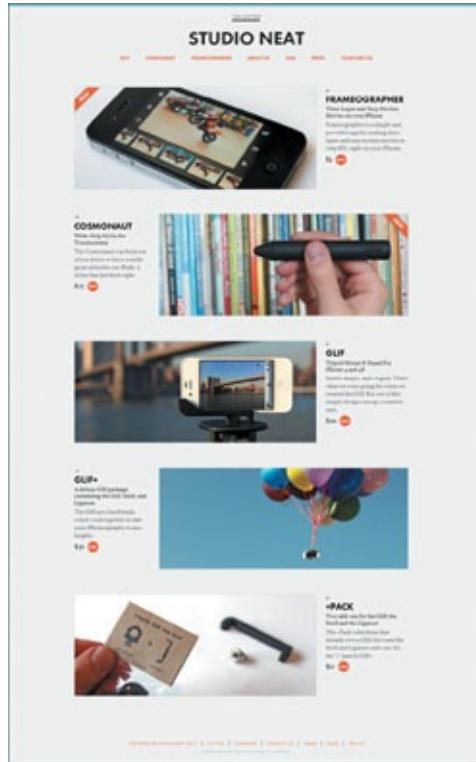
<http://cxxvi.net>



<http://loftresumes.com>



<http://littlesparrowtea.com>



<http://www.studioneat.com>



<http://www.yesnurse.co.uk>

LIGHTCMS

One type of hosted CMS that is becoming more common is what I describe as the all-inclusive approach. Many systems fall into this niche; even Adobe offers one (Business Catalyst). These all-inclusive systems not only allow you to publish content, but also incorporate many diverse features that ultimately cover all the bases; things like e-commerce, blogging, photo galleries, forms, calendars and more. Given the purpose of this book I have settled on showcasing LightCMS for a few simple reasons. Foremost among these reasons is one that strikes at why you are most likely looking at this book to begin with—inspiration. When you survey various systems, it is interesting to observe how some of them seem to have varying degrees of design quality attached to them. Perhaps this is simply due to the audience they attract, or maybe it is more about the quality of the system itself. The answer is, of course, beyond the scope of this book, so let's focus on the aesthetics.

A quick survey of the samples here quickly demonstrates that a strong template offering is not the reason the designs on this system are better than others. You will no doubt notice in the samples a total lack of consistency—it is clear that not everyone on the platform is using the same template. Ah, but this is perhaps a trick, because one of the single best features of LightCMS is that it provides (free of charge) a huge array of absolutely awesome templates. At the end of the day, we can't easily connect these samples to a template without signing up for LightCMS and surveying the templates they provide.

Use the sites here as a source of inspiration and a sampling of what this powerful CMS can do.

Learn more about LightCMS at <http://www.lightcms.com/>



<http://www.rescueher.org>



<http://www.strategynewmedia.com>



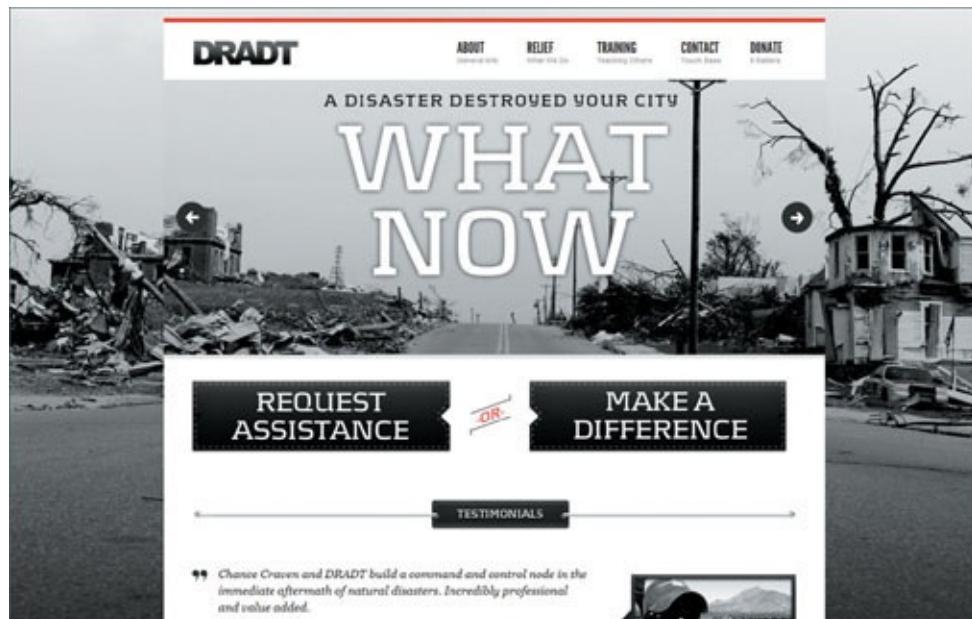
<http://isomusic.org>



<http://www.hansenangusranch.com>



<http://www.steadfastcreative.com>



<http://disasterrelief.cc>



<http://www.rockinhauteconsignment.com>



<http://www.oasmiles.com>

BELLSTRIKE

The final CMS I want to showcase is an unlikely candidate. When we consider giants like WordPress, Drupal and Magento, it is perhaps perplexing why a tiny niche system like Bellstrike makes the list. Well, Bellstrike is here to demonstrate the full range of options available to designers and developers, and one such option is an extremely specific niche system. Bellstrike makes it silly simple to get a nonprofit site up and running—and most important, accepting donations. This last part is the type of thing you should expect from a niche CMS, which typically provides a common foundation (publishing content in some form), along with features that are very specific to the niche market. With this in mind, you might even consider tools such as Shopify a niche product as well. If you want more examples of tools like this, check out [Weduary.com](#), [Ebandlive.com](#) and [Ekklesia360.com](#).

Systems in this line range in flexibility. Some allow users to apply a 100 percent custom design; others allow for only limited customization of fixed templates. Bellstrike falls into the latter category. At the time of this writing, it offers four templates that can be customized in minor ways. As a result, sites built on this (and similar systems) look very similar. One quick look at the samples here and you will easily identify which sites share a common template.

I imagine the designer in you is offended, annoyed or otherwise put off by this limitation and drawback. However, consider the upside: the limited number of available templates makes it more difficult for site owners to break the site, vastly reduces the time to launch a site and gives the CMS provider an easier way to push extra features out to their client base.

Read about Bellstrike here: <http://bellstrike.com>.

 PROJECT
REMIND

Project Remind is a non-profit organization focused on raising awareness and research funds for Frontotemporal Degeneration (FTD).

HOME ABOUT FTD EDUCATION NEON EXTREME UPDATES DONATE 

LATEST UPDATES

Neon Extreme 2012 Success

Published on 05.15.12

"To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." - Steve Prefontaine/Thom Merrill

This past weekend Neon Extreme's group of 36 runners spent 74 hours, 56 minutes, and 40 seconds running a collective 529 miles. Runners ran starting in Carver, MA on Friday morning, one-by-one, day-and-night, until reaching the finish line in Provincetown at the very tip of Cape Cod.

This group of dedicated and passionate friends not only ran an astonishing amount of mileage, but also managed to raise a remarkable \$50,000 for FTD research.

[GIVE ONLINE](#)

[DONATE](#)

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 Like 113  Send

 Tweet 15

<http://www.projectremind.org>

THE KUMARI PROJECT

The Kumari Project empowers Nepalese orphans, especially girls, by providing basic healthcare, education, and job training and opportunities.



HOME ABOUT PROGRAMS PHOTO GALLERY BLOG DONATE 

GETTING HEALTHY

Youth Plus Foundation of Nepal with a team of doctors and nurses from Nepal's premier hospitals volunteered on their Saturday off to host a medical camp on June 8 for children living in Panchthar Children's Home and Sifai Child Protection Home. They provided routine check ups for 90 children and necessary medicines, which were generously donated by several local pharmaceutical supporters.

Thank you to the doctors, nurses, and assistants who cared for the Kumari Project's children:

- Dr. Neelam Pradhan
- Nepal Chandra
- Dr. Prakash Dahal
- Dr. Suran Basnet
- Dr. Rakesh Shrestha
- Niraj Bhandari
- Rajendra Bhandari
- Kishori Thapa
- Dr. Anil Karki



Medical Team with children at Sifai Child Protection Home

[GIVE ONLINE](#)

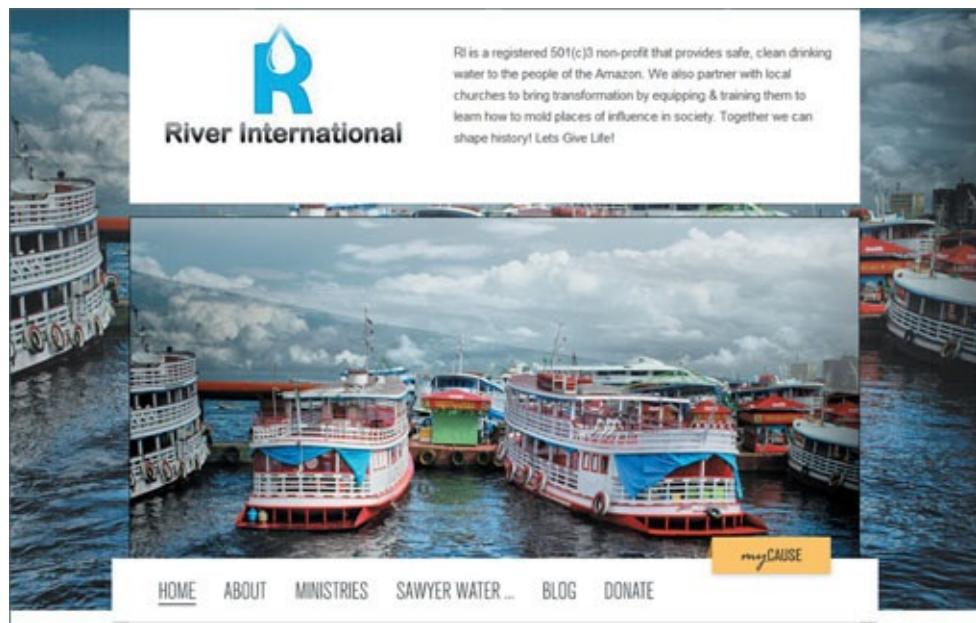
[DONATE](#)

Tell Your Friends About Us

 Like 417  Send

 Tweet 1

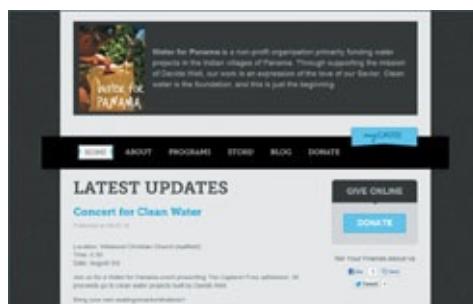
<http://www.thekumariproject.org>



<http://www.riverintl.org>



<http://www.eldersourceinfo.org>



<http://www.waterforpanama.org>

Typography

One of the biggest frustrations of web designers over the years has been the limits put on them in the area of typography. In particular, there are limited options in the area of font selection. Even today, web-safe fonts are a standard go-to list of options. However, many modern developments have made it vastly easier to circumvent the limitations in this area. Yes, there have long been ways around this problem, but recent progress in browser development has given this area of web design a kick in the pants. Let's take a look at a few key technologies and a pile of design samples that go along with them.

@FONT-FACE

In CSS we can use the @font-face option to embed a font file in a page. This then enables us to specify it as the font for a block of text. CSS2 first introduced this feature, which until recently was unsupported by most browsers. In a great bit of irony, Internet Explorer has supported it since version 4. Using @font-face is remarkably simple, and is the most popular way to attach custom fonts to almost any web page.

The one quirk is that different browsers rely on different formats. A key tool for getting around this with ease is Font Squirrel (<http://www.fontsquirrel.com>). It quickly converts a font file into the necessary formats. A number of font services also allow you to embed the font files in your page by copying and pasting a tiny bit of code.

One of the great things about this approach is that you can attach a font to a page and apply it to text written in HTML. This means that the text can be easily managed and updated and the font is automatically applied. In the past, many bits of fancy text would have been rendered with images. The difference between managing standard text and image-based text is night and day. Image-based text has to be re-created, exported and uploaded to the server. In contrast, editable text can simply be updated in the page and the style is “auto-magically” applied. In this way, @font-face is a clear step forward.

Another huge perk to this approach is that it allows you to more easily stylize and adjust the text with standard CSS commands. Combine this with responsive web design and you have a powerful combo. Think of it this way: Responsive web design requires the same content to be styled in a variety of ways, and @font-face based techniques mean that the same text can easily be styled in a variety of ways. With responsive design, you will have the same text to which different sets of CSS are applied,

depending on the user's interface. So the same text can be styled in multiple ways. Image-based text is not nearly as simple.



<http://ablebots.com>



<http://www.sajkomusic.com/en>



<http://www.xhtmllandcssbook.com>



<http://chrisbinou.com>



<http://bord.pixle.pl>

The screenshot displays the LearnUpon website's landing page. At the top, it features the LearnUpon logo and a red header bar with the text "Straight Forward Online Learning that Works!". Below the header, there is a brief description of the software's purpose: "LearnUpon is a user training management solution designed to make it easier for the needs of training, education and content development. Who needs to deliver online courses to their clients, staff or partners? LearnUpon makes it easy, cost effective, secure, flexible and efficient!"

Key features listed include:

- Cloud-based solution (no IT infrastructure required)
- HTML5 browser based (no plug-in or download)
- Create new branded client portals in minutes
- Full content re-use and learning, reusing existing content
- Fully integrated course catalog and shopping cart

The main content area is organized into six numbered sections, each accompanied by a screenshot and a brief description:

- Import SCORM content or create courses**: Import SCORM content or create courses from scratch in LearnUpon.
- Create a branded Portal for each of your Clients**: Create client's logos, then use our branding tools to create your own learning portal. These are now ready to go!
- Assign the courses they have purchased along with number of enrolments for each course**: The customer administrator manually assigned course to manage and monitor performance of their employees in their specific work location. You can set automatic emails to confirm the number of enrolments in each course for each of your clients.
- Invite your clients' employees to the portal, or send a client manager to look after this**: This makes adding users to each client learning portal simple. You just enter a customer representative's email address and send the invites. Then click "invite" to add them to your client's learning portal. You can also invite them to a dashboard to view their performance.
- Easily re-use courses and tools across all your client portals**: Tag your content to reuse commonly used training in many of the different locations. It's fast and easy to reuse content when creating new courses. Once you've created content, it's easy to reuse it.
- Run Reports or view your Client Management Dashboard**: Run time reports of course enrollment, client and competitor information from one dashboard to provide an overview of training activity across each of your clients. The ability to review course learning usage for each of your clients allows you to track learning performance and plan for new training.

At the bottom of the page, there is a red button labeled "Click Here For Alpha Access".

<http://learnupon.com>

Hi, my name is Siska Flaurensia

I'm a Digital Designer.*

THESE ARE SOME OF MY COOL CLIENT PROJECTS

ABOUT: I'm a Digital Designer and Front-End Developer specializes in web, app, e-commerce, and branding, who has the privilege to work on a myriad of creative projects with diverse entrepreneurial and corporate clients all across the globe—from San Diego to Singapore. A “citizen of the world” who loves to travel, sing in the car, and eat red velvet cupcakes.

NOT ONLY DESIGN: I have an experienced background in Marketing & Sales, Management, and Social Media. Love reading the brilliance of 17signals' Rework.

RULE THE WORLD WITH: HTML5, CSS3, jQuery, Magento, WordPress, Adobe Creative Suite, Macbook Pro + iPad, and my intoxicatingly sweet charm.

CONTACT: Say Hello/LinkedIn/Twitter

*SERIOUSLY: Don't try to understand what I do. Just love me!

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— Go back up —

<http://siskaflaurensia.com>



<http://www.invisionapp.com>



<http://www.touchtech.co.nz>

TYPEKIT

Typekit (<https://typekit.com>) is a font delivery service that Adobe owns. This service is entirely based on the @font-face technique for embedding fonts. Users of this system simply attach a CSS file to a page. The file is hosted on the Typekit servers. This CSS file then loads up the requested font, making it available in the normal CSS files you create on the site. Embedding a font in this way couldn't be easier—there's nothing to download. Just copy a line of code and use the font like you would any other typeface inside your CSS.

One important detail about Typekit is that it is a commercial service. You pay for the amount of usage you require. So if you run a large site that is very popular, it will cost you more than a small site with very little traffic. Point is, it isn't free. For many, this commercial aspect is a shortcoming that rules the option out. Others embrace this service for its access to a vast array of top-notch fonts.

Using a custom typeface doesn't mean you have to go over the top. Refer to the Concentrate site as an example ([figure 1](#)). Here the font Adelle₃ was used on the titles and body copy. This nice slab serif font gives the page a unique feel but doesn't get in the way. Sure, the designer could have used a default font with great success, but the unique typeface gives the page a distinct style that helps set it apart.

We find a very similar strategy on the Rocket website ([figure 2](#)). Here, the designer has relied exclusively on the font Future PT₄. One of the biggest benefits of a commercial service like Typekit is not only the quality of the fonts, but the diversity inside a single typeface. Future PT, for example, includes ten different weights. By simply using a variety of weights inside the same typeface, the Rocket site remains unified with a gorgeous typographic feel.

If you're at all interested in Typekit, I encourage you to check out the typographic experiments of Daniel Eden (**figure 3**). This beautiful set of type pairings is entirely based on Typekit. I can't imagine visiting this page and not getting some immediate typographic inspiration. It's definitely one of the best showcases of just how awesome web type can look.



Figure 1 <http://getconcentrating.com>



Figure 2 <http://rocketmobile.co>

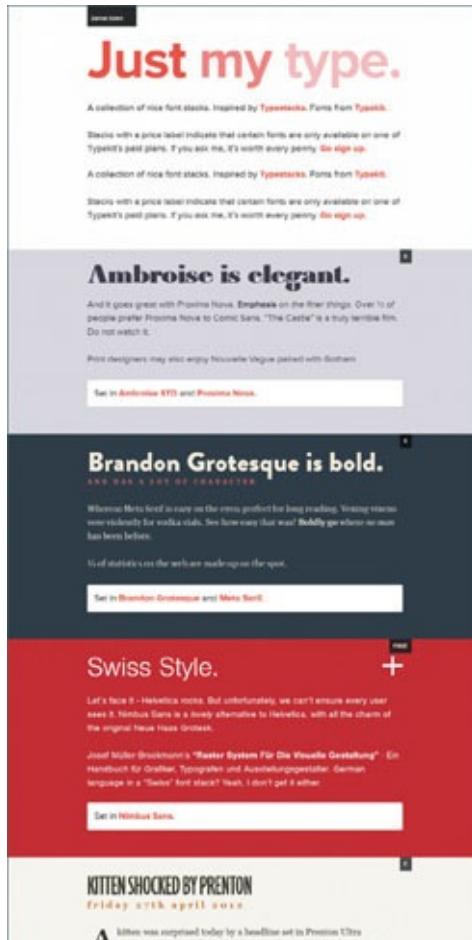


Figure 3 <http://daneden.me/type>



<http://circlemeetups.com>



<http://southernfemme.com>



<http://andyrutledge.com>

The homepage features a red header with the logo 'lmnop' and the word 'STUDIOS'. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home - Our Work - About Us - Get in Touch. To the left, there's a sidebar with sections for 'Web Design' (listing Content Management Systems, E-commerce, Web Apps, Web Banners, Managed Hosting), 'Graphic Design' (listing Visual Identity, Branding, Business Brochures, Illustration), and 'Digital' (linking to a separate page). The main content area has a teal background with white text: 'We are LMNOP Studios, an approachable design agency based in Brighton. Here to help with all your digital & print design needs.' Below this is a call-to-action button: 'We can build innovative websites, create striking'. To the right, there are three starburst-shaped callouts: 'Hello', 'Get in Touch!', and 'We have many happy clients...'. Below these are two sections: 'Client List' (listing Secret Productions, Hayward Gallery, The Sound Works, TG Events Ltd, Cowley Road Carnival, Studio Magazine, West Lexham) and 'Latest Projects' (listing Vong Phaphant & Claire Oboussier / Artists, a new site for a public artist, and a portfolio site for John F / Author).

<http://www.lmnopstudios.com>



<http://www.helpendit.org>



<http://nordicruby.org>



<http://www.prysm.com>



<http://weenudge.com>



<http://bitfoundry.ca>

GOOGLE FONTS

Google Fonts is another font-serving service based on the basic @font-face techniques. In terms of use, it works exactly like Typekit—a remote CSS file is attached to a page and then referenced in the styling of text. Learn more about Google Fonts here: www.google.com/webfonts.

In contrast to Typekit, Google Fonts is 100 percent free. This has made it a popular choice for those not interested in paying to use fonts (and let's face it, that is a lot of people). Fortunately, Google has rounded up some really solid typefaces for interested parties to select from. So while it is free, it isn't a second-rate set of options.

Perhaps the only negative I can think of in relation to this service is that since it is free, many of the typefaces get overused. Lobster, for example, is one frequently used typeface. But, as with any element, regardless of the frequency of usage, it is all about how you actually use it. With this in mind, the samples collected here not only leverage this great service, but do so in reasonable ways that serve to enhance the site's design.

One of many beautiful samples I want to highlight is the ColumnFiveMedia.com site (**figure 1**). Most prominent in this site is the use of the font Josefin Slab in the large text at the top of the page. Interestingly, this site also uses a Typekit font for the main navigation and other supporting text in the page. A mix of solutions is entirely possible and reasonable. In this case the typefaces make for a far more distinct design.

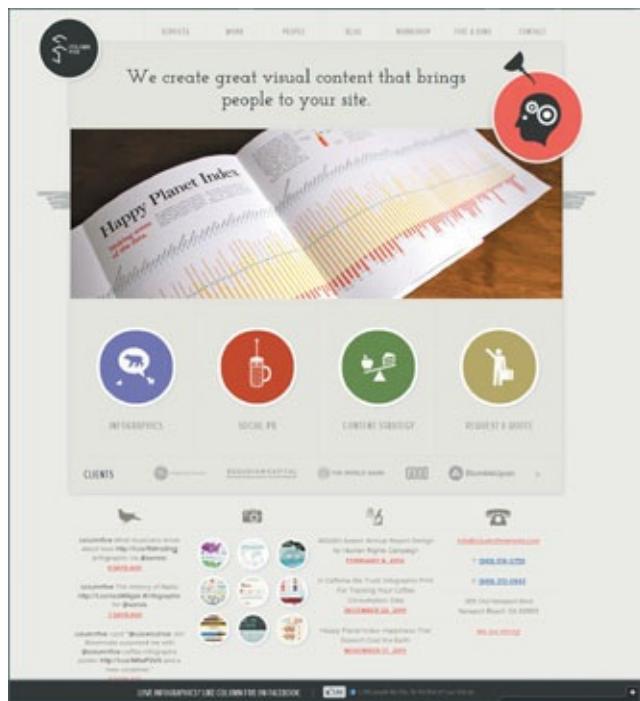


Figure 1 <http://columnfivemedia.com>



<http://thebeautyshoppe.org>



<http://johnjacob.eu>



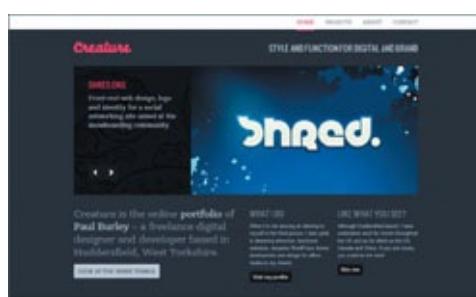
<http://www.emailology.org>



<http://weare2ndfloor.com>



<http://sobuzzme.com>



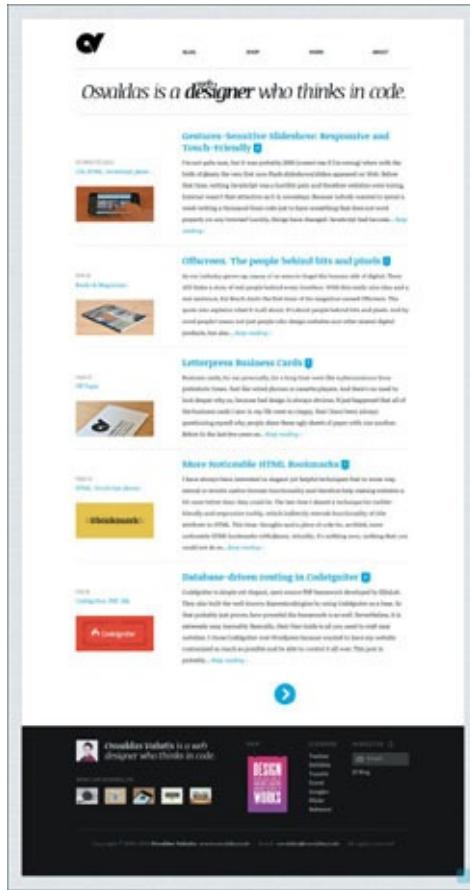
<http://www.madebycreature.com>



<http://www.x-silium.com>



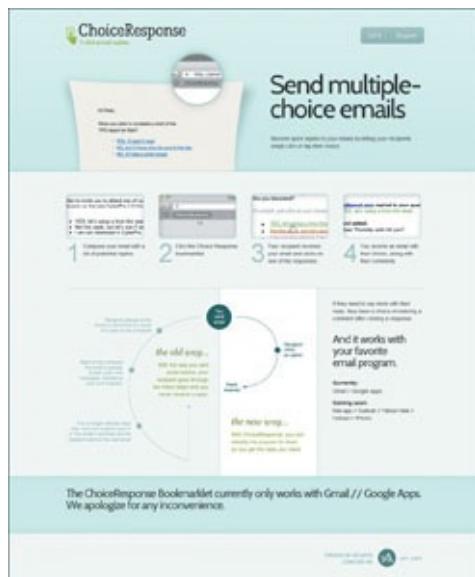
<http://www.ermankutlu.co.uk>



<http://osvaldas.info>



<http://www.joeellis.la>



<http://www.choiceresponse.com>

CUFÓN

Cufón is a JavaScript-based utility that applies custom typefaces to blocks of text as a page loads. At one point in time Cufón was a premier solution used by countless developers. With the forward movement in the support of @font-face, Cufón has fallen by the wayside. Frankly speaking, I was not planning to include this type solution, but I did so for a number of reasons that I will get to later. (Learn more about Cufón at <http://cufon.shoqolate.com/generate>.)

It turns out that many developers continue to rely on this tool for one common reason: browser support. Since not every browser supports @font-face, Cufón is a nice alternative that works pretty much everywhere. So it seems there is still a place in the world for this tool. As such, I wanted to provide some impressive examples of Cufón at work.

Take a look at the Thedroidsonroids.com site (**figure 1**). Here all of the large bold text is rendered with Cufón, including the navigation, the large full-width sales pitch and the bucket headers at the bottom. The typeface used accents the page without looking overly decorative. In this way a unique feel is brought to the page without distracting from the overall design. In more thematic situations such as this one it can be tempting to use a more decorative niche font. Fortunately the designer allowed the illustrations to shine and let the text play a supporting role.



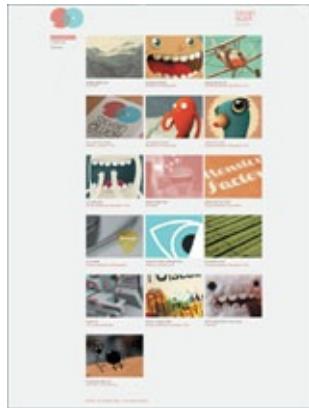
Figure 1 <http://www.thedroidsonroids.com>



<http://www.siblify.com>

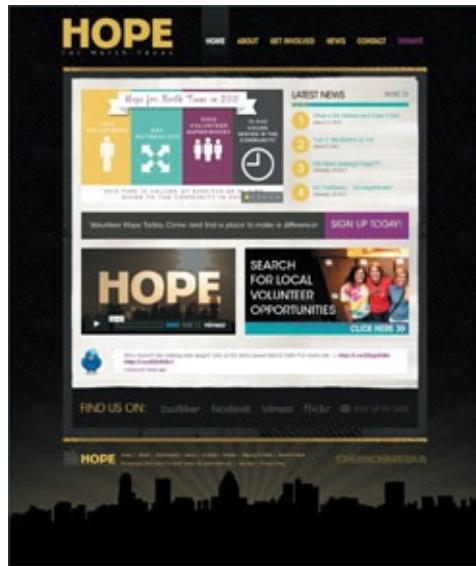


<http://mrbava.com>



<http://www.sylvain-ollier.com>

<http://penandpixel.ie>



<http://hopefornorthtexas.org>



<http://www.jeobutton.com>



<http://www.coucoushop.ch>

Code

While this book is by no means about code, it is not hard to make an argument that code has a radical impact on design. In fact, I have long been an advocate of the idea that a firm knowledge in how things are actually coded will inform and empower designers. With this in mind, I want to briefly focus on a few developments in the area of code that continue to impact the industry and the design of the web.

CSS3

Again, this is not a book on coding, so my introduction to CSS3 is extremely brief and focused on the nuances that impact designers most. Don't let CSS3 scare you off as some crazy new language. CSS3 is nothing more than the third revision to CSS. In fact, what is currently known as CSS is actually CSS2. So someday we will likely simply refer to CSS3 as CSS.

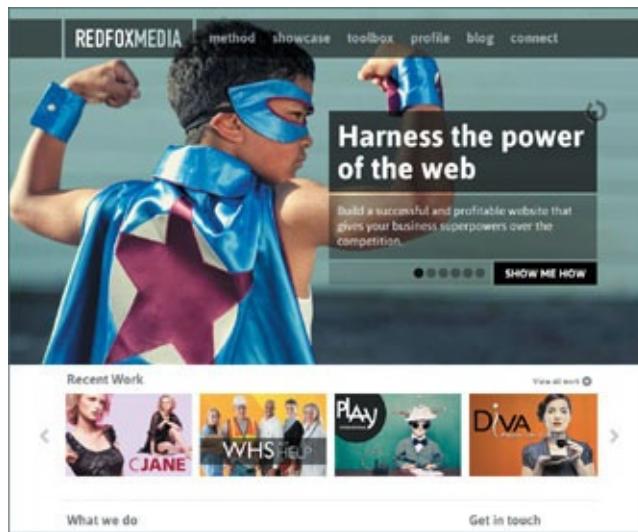
CSS3 builds on top of CSS2. So anything you might have learned about CSS carries forward. There are, of course, a large number of new things in CSS3 and a lot of things that got improved. Many of these dramatically impact the way designers and developers plan sites. Most notable among these are the visual effects that are not possible through code. Prior to CSS3, these elements were implemented with images. Here are some key visuals that are now possible with pure code and no images:

- Rounded corners on containers, images form controls, etc.
- Drop shadows on elements like images and containers
- Text shadows (used to produce the ever-popular chisel effect, as found in the [letterpress section](#) of this book)
- RGBA, which is RGB (colors) with an alpha channel, making partially transparent colors possible
- @font-face for embedding fonts
- Transitions to create animations when CSS changes
- Gradients to apply to text and backgrounds

Of the many samples included here, one that demonstrates well the use of some new CSS3-based techniques is the [Bookmarkly.com](#) site (**figure 1**). A few of the elements on this seemingly simple page are based on CSS3 properties: the rounded corners, drop shadows, text shadows, and the

CSS-based animations when the browser resizes. Most of these styles would have greatly increased the complexity of the site prior to CSS3. The rounded corners would have required a lot of images and a fair amount of extra code. The shadowed text would have required some serious trickery to avoid having it embedded in images. And of course the form controls would have been coded far differently.

The end result is a smooth site that relies heavily on code for styles. This makes it easy to update, restyle and tweak depending on the user's interface (more on this in the [responsive design section](#)).



<http://redfoxmedia.com.au>



<http://john.onolan.org>



<http://getscoreboard.com>



Figure 1 <http://bookmarkly.com>



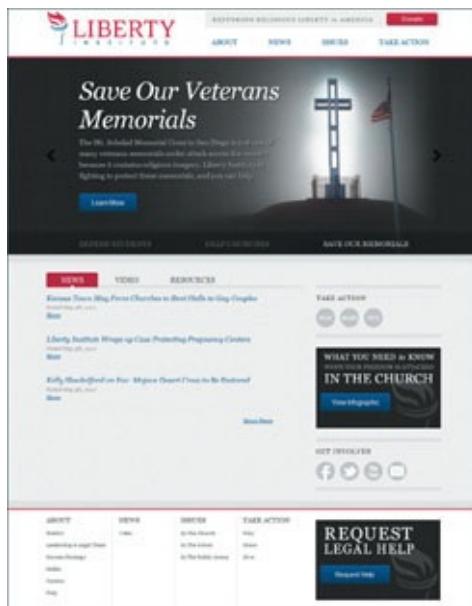
<http://www.iqonicdesign.com>



<http://www.fontfont.com>

A screenshot of the Rule.fm website. The top features a video thumbnail showing three people holding signs that together read 'WORK IS NOW WORKING'. Below the video, a section titled 'Team Collaboration' includes a sub-section about 'Work Management'. The page then transitions into a 'How it works' section, which includes a list of features: 'Get organized', 'Be connected', and 'Stay aligned'. It also highlights 'Customer Relationship Management (CRM)'. At the bottom, there's a call-to-action button 'Start my free 14 day trial with Rule.' and a link to 'Learn more about our company'.

<http://www.rule.fm>



<http://www.libertyinstitute.org>



<http://joelglovier.com>

Hello, I'm a freelance designer based in West Cork, Ireland. I create innovative solutions that make your product or service more effective in the marketplace.



My approach to projects

Some have described me as being ergonomically efficient. I approach my work methodically with realistic goals in mind. Through my many years of experience, I can quickly project as a problem's likely outcome to be solved, what the most efficient and cost-effective solution will be, and how long it will take to get the very best I possibly can reasonably which is reflected in the exceptional design solutions I offer to clients. Noteworthy, I take great pride in my work and my methods, and I am always open to new techniques to be found resulting from those creative contributions.

I'm a designer. If you're looking for web design, logo prints and all other design needs, I'd be pleased to discuss potential opportunities with you.

If there would be no response on a project, please don't hesitate to follow up, you will find that prompt action might help to resolve issues, have to wait previous projects.

Get a Quote

Project Name:

Description:

Location:

Your address:

Phone number:

What's your budget?

Design on Spec (✓)

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Fresh

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Designer Labels

Booking a Wedding Design for Cork City Capital

Booking for Global Shares

Winter Cook Book Design Portfolio

Modern Children's Whimsical Design

Modern Design for Images of Ireland

Atmosphere Food & CO Web Site Design

Modern Design Portfolio for Michael P. Murphy

Web Site Design For Digital Range

Booking for Weddings at The Whitehouse Hotel

Orange Activision Whimsical Design

High End

Modern Design

Whimsical Design

Graphic Design

Business Cards

Logo Design

Branding

Modern Whimsical

Corporate Design

Print Card

Book Cover

Paulo Goodey.com

<http://www.paulogoode.com>



<http://www.solidshops.com>



<http://www.webcoursesagency.com>



<http://litmus.com>

HTML5

Much like CSS3, HTML5 is nothing more than the newest specification for HTML. What we refer to as simply HTML is actually HTML4. And someday we will likely refer to HTML5 as HTML. Unlike CSS3, HTML5 actually has very little impact on the visual side of things. And as such, this chapter is perhaps one of the most difficult to write. In fact, I struggle to draw any real connections between design practices and HTML5.

I did a great deal of research in this arena and I discovered that, for the most part, HTML5 represents subtle shifts in the way things are coded. The only real potential impact on the designer lies in the area of the canvas options inside HTML5. Granted, this opens up a lot of options for the designer but is frankly beyond the scope of this inspiration-oriented book.

I can, however, find plenty of beautiful sites built on HTML5. On the surface they look like normal websites, which is exactly what they are. It just happens that HTML5 has slightly changed how they are coded and has most likely made them a bit easier to maintain.

LIBRARIES

[CREATEJS SUITE](#)

EASEJS | TWEENS | SOUNDS | PRELOADJS

TOOLS

ZOE

SPONSORS



CREATEJS

A suite of Javascript libraries & tools for building rich, interactive experiences with HTML5.

[Download CreateJS](#)

- ✓ Object Management
- ✓ HTML5 Display List
- ✓ Tweasing
- ✓ HTML5 Audio
- ✓ Asset Preload Management

CREATEJS EASEJS TWEENS SOUNDS PRELOADJS ZOE

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APRIL 2012

- ✓ Getting Started with Adobe® Flash® Professional Toolkit for CreateJS video
- ✓ Adobe® Flash® Professional Toolkit for CreateJS Announced
- ✓ CreateJS CDN available
- ✓ EaseJS 0.4.2 available
- ✓ TweenJS 0.2.0 available
- ✓ SoundJS 0.2.0 available
- ✓ PreloadJS 0.1.0 available
- ✓ ZOE 0.2.0 available

THE STORY

Why we built CREATEJS

ABOUT CREATEJS

CreateJS is a suite of modular libraries and tools which work together to enable rich interactive content or open web technologies via HTML5. These libraries are designed to work completely independently, or mixed and matched to suit your needs. The CreateJS Suite is comprised of EaseJS, TweenJS, SoundJS, PreloadJS, and ZOE.

FEATURED PROJECTS

Community Showcase

BKOM ROBOT GAME

A full HTML5 game demo showing basic keyboard integration, character animation and background motion. Please use Safari, Chrome, Firefox or IE 9+ to view this demo. [Click here to view this demo](#)

BY BKOM

Bkcom

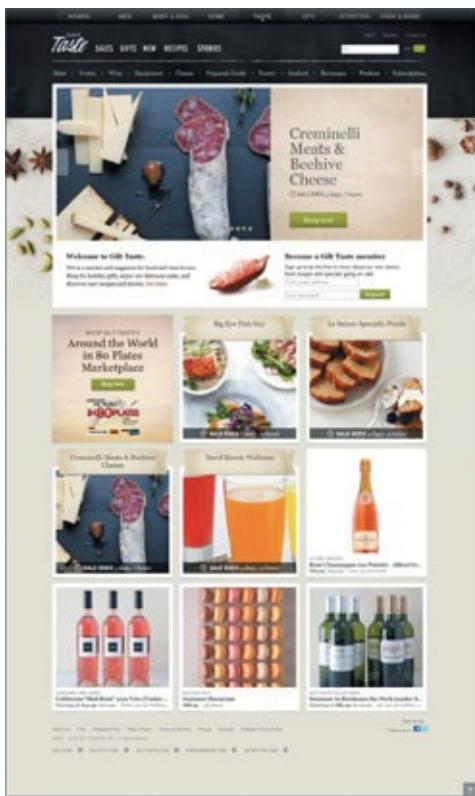


PLAY NOW!

<http://createjs.com>



<http://learnlakenona.com>



<http://www.gilttaste.com>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the GreenWays website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Contact Us, News, Account Login, and a notification icon. The main header features the "GreenWays" logo and the tagline "Total Waste Management". Below the header, a central message reads: "Finally, a rapid, informative, efficient and environmentally conscious waste management service for your business." To the right of this text is a circular graphic containing icons related to waste management, such as a truck, a person, a biohazard symbol, and gears. A green button below the message says "Build a Waste Management quote now!". On the left side, there's a section titled "At Greenways our Total Waste Management service looks after all your waste management headaches, all in one easy package. Hassle free, environmentally conscious and aiming for Zero Landfill. [Learn More](#)". On the right side, a sidebar lists "Key Services" including Total Waste Management, Recycling, Composting, Rents, Hazardous Waste, Processing, and Landfill. Below this sidebar is a box containing the text "Use our quote builder to find out how much it will cost for Greenways to make your waste disposal a breeze." with a "Build a Quote now!" button. At the bottom of the page, there are news sections for Company News and Industry News, followed by a footer area with logos for ACS (ISO 9001), BSI (ISO 14001), and AQES (ISO 45001). The footer also contains links for Total Waste Management services, Company information (About Us, Environmental Compliance, News, Contact Us, Account Log in), and a "GreenWays" summary.

<http://greenways.co.uk>



<http://wijmo.com>



<https://www.shopocket.com>



<http://www.segwayrometours.com>



<http://www.thepurplebunny.com>



<http://marqueemedia.com>

FLASH

While many have declared Flash dead, it is anything but. In fact, there are many implementations of the product that still wow clients and customers. The reality is that the web has advanced, and Flash is not nearly as prominent as it once was. In my opinion, Flash has simply settled into its place in the world.

Perhaps the most glaring problem with Flash is that it can't run on the iPad or iPhone. This simple shortcoming has singlehandedly forced Flash out of the limelight. With this in mind, one of the most critical things a Flash-based site can do is to provide a functional fallback for users on iOS products.

This is exactly what we find on [JordanHollender.com](#) (**figure 1**). Take a look at [figure 2](#) to see how this same site looks on the iPad. Here the designer has prepared an HTML-based alternative to the site. Ultimately this means that the site had to be built twice: once in Flash and again as HTML. Clearly, this extra burden means you better really want to use the functionality of Flash for the benefit of your site. Otherwise you're just wasting time.

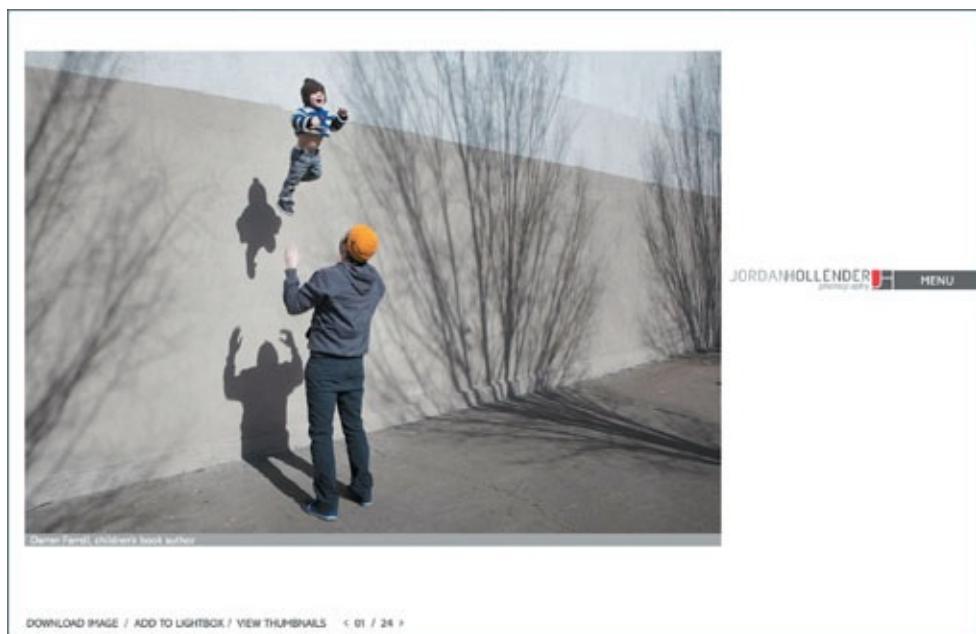


Figure 1 <http://www.jordanhollender.com>, normal view on desktop with Flash



Figure 2 <http://www.jordanhollender.com>, view on iPad without Flash



<http://www.diesel.com/ourglory>



<http://kfgame.ru>



<http://battleofthecheetos.com>, view on iPad without Flash



<http://battleofthecheetos.com>, normal view on desktop with Flash



<http://bankers.ownedition.com>





<http://wall-of-fame.com> Top: Normal view on desktop with Flash,
Bottom: View on iPad without Flash



Normal view on desktop with Flash,

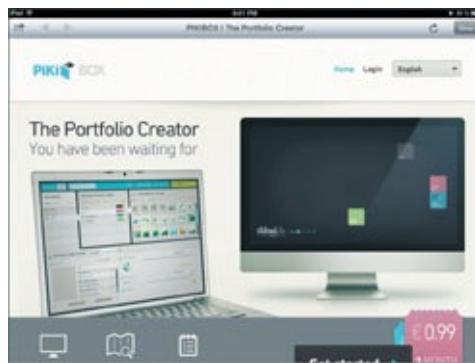


<http://www.lucasarts.com/games/legostarwarsiii/index.jsp>

View on iPad without Flash



Desktop view—note the Flash video player,



<http://www.pikibox.com>

iPad view—note the non-Flash based video module

JAVASCRIPT AND JQUERY

Beyond HTML, JavaScript is one of the oldest and most foundational tools of the web. For many years following its debut in 1995, JavaScript lived in relative obscurity. Around 2005 (give or take a few years), JavaScript slowly started to gain momentum. The industry's perspective changed and JavaScript became a highly valued tool. Fast-forward to today and you will find that JavaScript is quite possibly one of the most powerful tools in the web designer's tool belt. I specifically say *web designers* here as JavaScript enables front-end coders to create interactive designs.

Perhaps the easiest and most concise way to describe JavaScript is this: JavaScript allows designers to modify the HTML and CSS of a page based on various interactions with the user. This allows you to bring pages to life in gorgeous ways. Survey the samples provided here and you will only get a small part of the view. Load these sites into your browser and you will plainly see how JavaScript transforms static HTML and CSS into a far more engaging and beautiful experience.

The portfolio of Andrei Gorokhov ([figure 1](#)). stands as a good demonstration of how JavaScript brings a design to life. His hexagon display of portfolio items might otherwise lack interest for those who view them. Thanks to his use of JavaScript, the elements interact as users hover over them. Even better, the three filter buttons in the middle allow you to highlight the items you're interested in. The site then shows a cross section of items that fit the criteria from the filters. It's a very interesting way to interact with the content from the perspective that matters most to the viewer. If it weren't for the JavaScript at work, the page might be rather dull in comparison.

For those designing a more thematic site, JavaScript is particularly handy. Check out [Fishy.com.br](http://fishy.com.br) (**figure 2**). Here, the ocean-themed site is animated and brought to life with jQuery. It would be a cool site to look at even if it wasn't animated, but the animation brings the elements to life and makes for an unforgettable experience. Here jQuery is the icing on the cake, and the greater understanding the designer has of this tool, the more likely it can be put to work in meaningful and practical ways.



Figure 1 <http://gorohov.name>

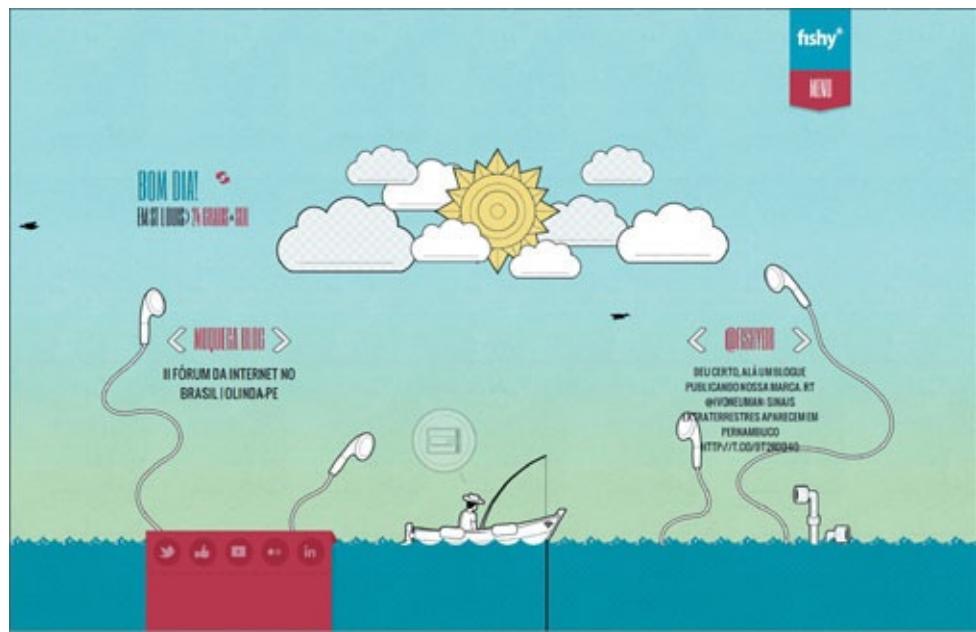


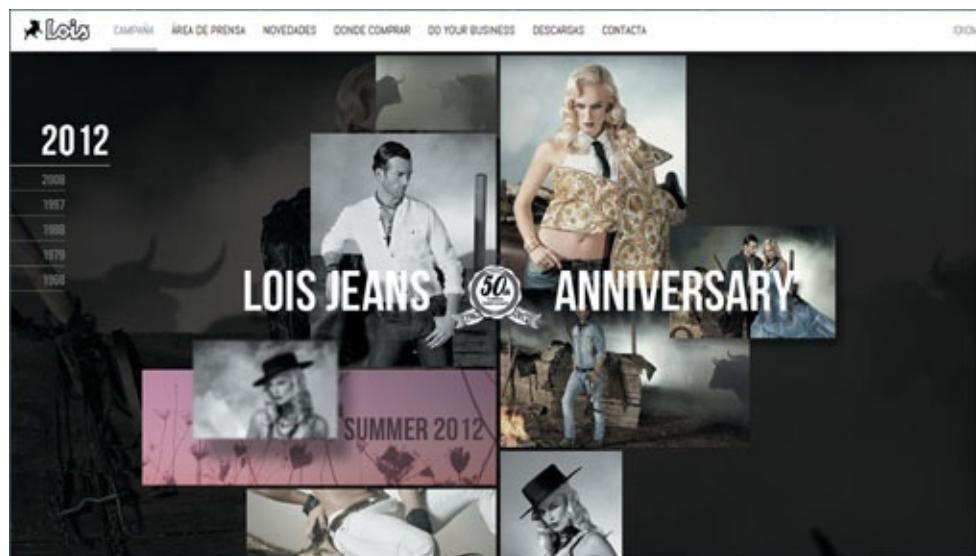
Figure 2 <http://www.fishy.com.br>



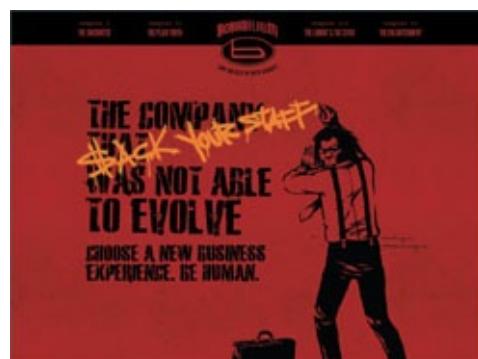
<http://fancyrhino.com>



<http://fusion-room.com>



<http://loisjeans.com>



<http://bobadilium.com>



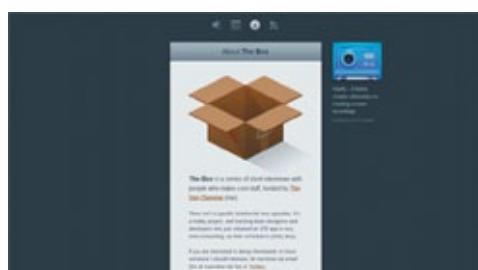
<http://experiment.nl>



<http://jtcdesign.com>



<http://www.unitedpixelworkers.com>



<http://thebox.maxvoltar.com>



<http://whiteboard.is>

Devices

Few things in the history of the Internet have forced change as drastically as the influx of devices has. Currently, this includes a diverse range of tablets and smartphones, but might soon include many other devices like televisions, automobiles, and so forth.

These new devices have an influence over some fundamental web elements. For starters, they come in a wide range of screen sizes, from the very small phone to the medium-size tablets to the standard desktop with monitors up to 30 inches wide. Second, users interact with sites using touch on mobile devices and tablets versus a mouse on standard computers. Finally, users on phones and tablets are on the go, with different needs and much shorter attention spans.

As a result, the industry has undergone some radical changes that significantly change the way sites are designed and built. Here I want to cover several key topics along this line of thinking and provide plenty of inspiration to go along with it.

RESPONSIVE DESIGN

Responsive web design is the practice of designing and building sites in such a way that the site adapts to whatever interface the user views it on. For instance, on a desktop the user might get a standard layout with multiple columns. The same site, when rendered on a smartphone, might reformat into a single column of content. The goal is to present the content in such a way that it can be most easily consumed and interacted with. The end result should be a site that responds to a user's environment instead of a site forced into a single format designed for desktop computers with larger monitors.

I am not going to get into the mechanics of how all this works, but assuming you have some interest or if you want to explore it, I want to point you in the right general direction. Each variation of the site is styled using a separate set of CSS. And the correct CSS is most commonly applied to the page through something called media queries.

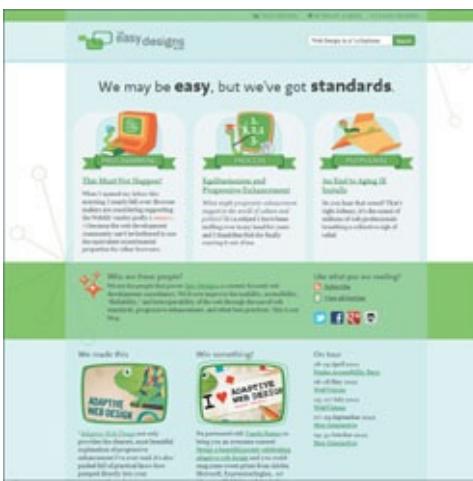
I do want to clear up one detail before I dive into the inspiration part of this topic. I am purposely not going in depth into the topic of adaptive design. Responsive design was originally conceived as being based on sites that are entirely fluid and can scale to any size. In contrast, adaptive sites adapt by stepping to key sizes. That is to say an adaptive site might snap to three or four key sizes but is not fluid over the entire range. This may seem like splitting hairs, and is why many people lump the idea of adaptive design in with responsive design. It seems that many already consider the two interchangeable terms⁵.

Okay, so on with the inspiration. Take a look at the Easy Designs blog ([figure 1](#)). If you view it in a browser you will see that the layout changes and responds with a layout tailored to fit your browser (or device) size. In

this case, not only the format changes, but some of the extra decorative elements get trimmed away as the screen gets smaller and smaller.



<http://www.wpbeginner.com>: desktop



<http://blog.easy-designs.net>: desktop



<http://www.wpbeginner.com>: tablet

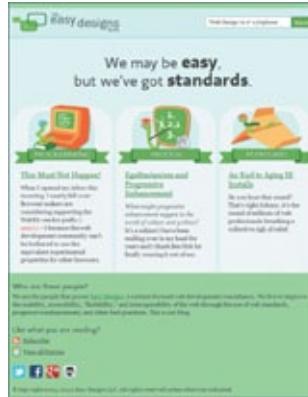


Figure 1 <http://blog.easy-designs.net>: tablet



<http://www.wpbeginner.com>: mobile



Figure 1 <http://blog.easy-designs.net>: mobile



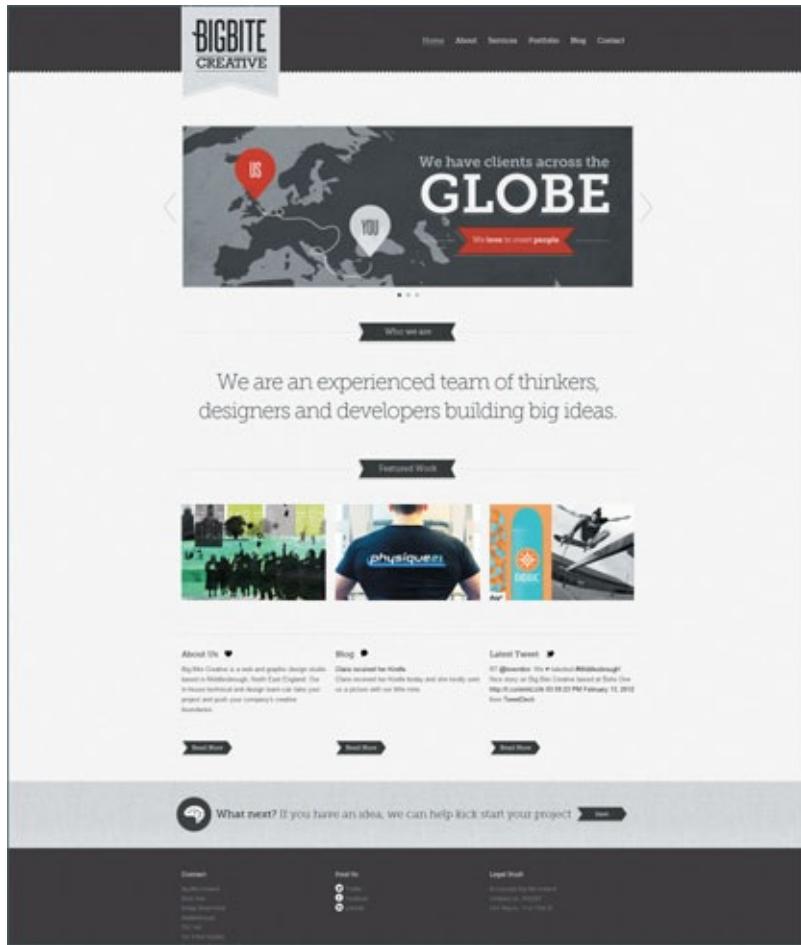
<http://www.tremulantdesign.com>: desktop



<http://www.tremulantdesign.com>: tablet



<http://www.tremulantdesign.com>: mobile



<http://bigbitecreative.com>: desktop



<http://bigbitecreative.com>: mobile



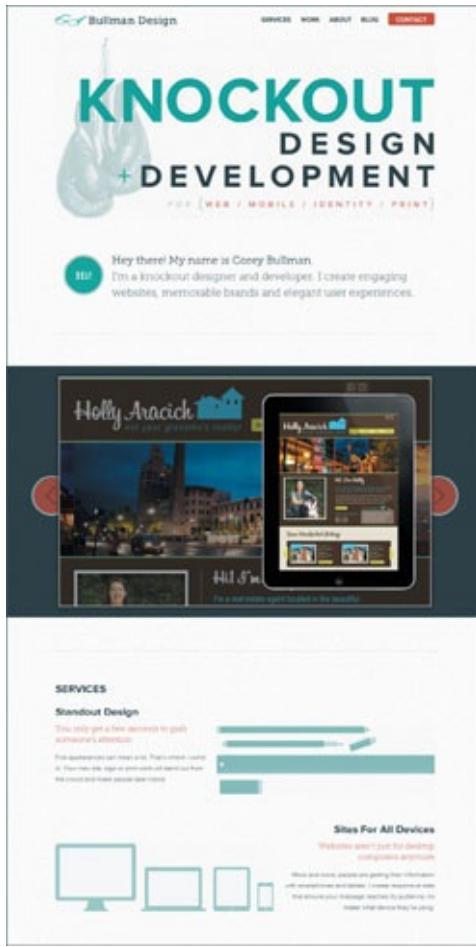
<http://css-tricks.com>: desktop



<http://css-tricks.com>: tablet



<http://css-tricks.com>: mobile



<http://bullmandesign.com>: desktop



<http://bullmandesign.com>: mobile



<http://bullmandesign.com>: tablet



<http://confab2012.com>: desktop



<http://paulrobertlloyd.com>: desktop



<http://confab2012.com>: tablet



<http://paulrobertlloyd.com>: tablet



<http://confab2012.com>: mobile



<http://paulrobertlloyd.com>: mobile



<http://retreats4geeks.com>: desktop



<http://retreats4geeks.com>: mobile



<http://retreats4geeks.com>: tablet

MOBILE SPECIFIC

While much of the industry's focus has been on responsive design, the notion of building a mobile-specific site is still entirely valid. One of the huge perks to building a totally separate mobile site is that you can tailor it to the needs of mobile users. A great example of this is the Penzu site ([figure 1](#)). The desktop version contains all of the elements we might expect to find on a site promoting a software service. In contrast, the mobile site is nothing more than the login screen. This laser focus on helping existing users and seemingly ignoring potential new users demonstrates the type of specialization that is possible here. Responsive design is awesome, but sometimes a separate mobile site is a preferable option. Don't get so caught up in the hype that you forget to consider traditional options, though they might not be as trendy.

There are other reasons to create a separate interface, beyond custom tailoring the content. Consider the Archikon site ([figure 2](#)). The desktop version of this site is built on a very atypical structure and interface. If one were to try and run this same interface on a smartphone it would be a frustrating experience. Instead, they have a totally different interface for mobile users ([figure 3](#)).

For a great demonstration of tailoring the content to the expected interface, look at the Cibgraphics site ([figure 4](#)) and its mobile companion ([figure 5](#)). Clearly, the mobile home page contains almost none of the content the desktop version has. Instead you find the logo, one sentence to introduce the agency and a list of links to the content of the site. The desktop version is stuffed with a lot more information. Imagine how long the mobile version would be if it included everything the desktop version did. Its focus on simplicity is much appreciated and ensures users can dive in without getting overloaded.

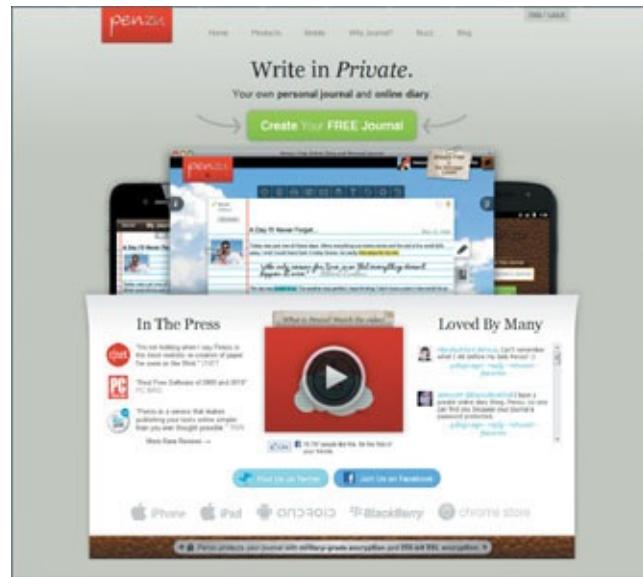


Figure 1 <http://penzu.com>: desktop



Figure 1 <http://penzu.com>: mobile

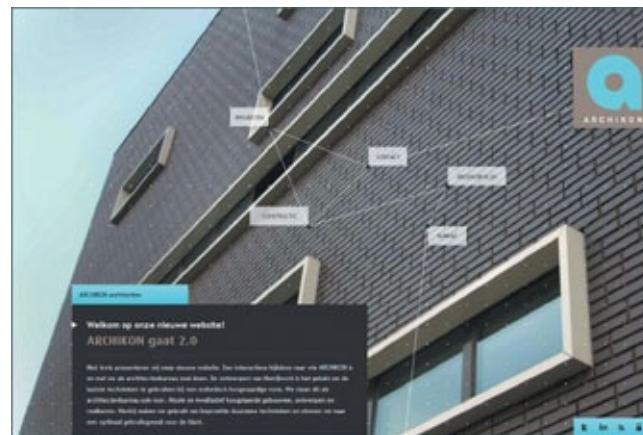


Figure 2 <http://www.archikon.nl>: desktop



Figure 4 <http://www.cibgraphics.com>: desktop



Figure 3 <http://www.archikon.nl>: jquery mobile

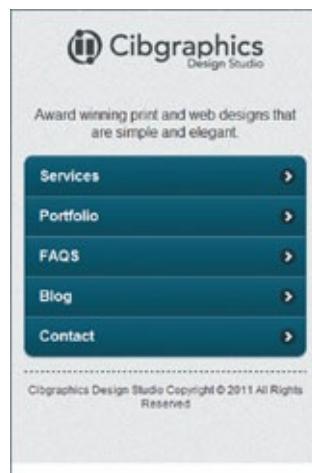


Figure 5 <http://cibgraphics.com/mobile>: jquery mobile



<http://m1k3.net>: desktop



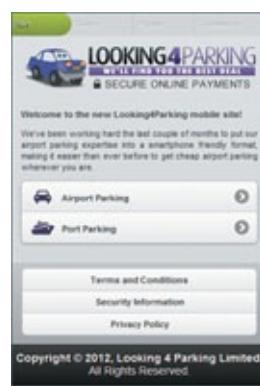
<http://m1k3.net>: mobile



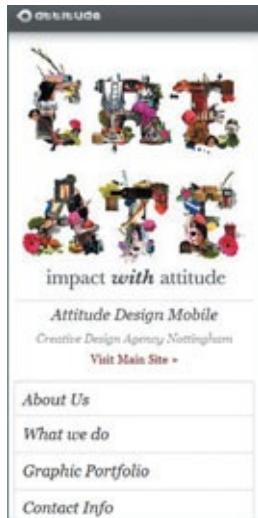
<http://www.looking4parking.com>: desktop



<http://www.attitudedesign.co.uk>: desktop



<http://www.looking4parking.com>: jquery mobile



<http://www.attitudedesign.mobi>: mobile

The screenshot shows the desktop version of 280daily.com. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for "Sign Up For Free" and "Log In". Below the header, there's a section titled "ARCHIVE YOUR LIFE" with a sub-section about journaling. A central feature is a line graph titled "BEST JOURNALIST IN THE LAST 30 DAYS" showing activity over time. Below the graph, there are several statistics: "68", "AVERAGE WORD COUNT", "AVERAGE CHARACTERS PER WORD", and "TOTAL WORDS" (2,139). The page also includes sections for "MICROJOURNAL", "BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY", "TRANSMISSION", "ON THE MOVE", "PRICELESS GIFT", "PHOTO JOURNAL", "FOOD DIARY", "SPORT", "TARGET PROCESS", and "BACKWARDS TO-GO LIST". At the bottom, there are "SIGN UP FREE" and "PLAY VIDEO" buttons, along with a "LINKS" section and a "STATS" section. The footer contains logos for TNW, BUSINESS INSIDER, and app storm, and a note about the service being easy to use with a 280 character limit.

<http://280daily.com>: desktop



<http://280daily.com/m>: mobile



<http://smallstudio.com.au>: desktop



<http://www.smartpowergeneration.com>: desktop



<http://smallstudio.com.au/mobile/mobile.php>: mobile



<http://www.smartpowergeneration.com/mobile>: mobile



<http://explorestlouis.com>: desktop



<http://exporestlouis.com/mobile>: mobile

JQUERY MOBILE

jQuery is a library of pre-built JavaScript functionality. jQuery Mobile is a similar set of tools. It is based on the core jQuery library and adds lots of functionality focused on delivering mobile optimized interfaces for tablets, smartphones and other touch-driven devices.

This tool is powerful and incredibly useful on its own. But given the context of this book (seeking to inspire you), I have opted to include this tool set as it enables some incredible functionality with very little effort. In fact, many of the technical complications of getting a mobile site up and running are removed thanks to this utility. Granted, you still have to do a lot of work to pull it together, but it gives you some robust building blocks to work with.

If you analyze the samples in this chapter, you might notice one common element—the button lists. One of the most powerful features inside jQuery Mobile is its assortment of tools for building navigation and transitioning between content. Given this, a common style emerges that is noticeable throughout this wide variety of samples, which range from Disney to an individual's portfolio. In my opinion, this common element is an asset as users become familiar with the feature and know what to expect.

Another thing to note about these sites is that they are mobile specific (more on this topic in the [Mobile Specific chapter](#)). This means that they are made for the mobile web, and not intended for use on a desktop computer. In fact, many sites built using jQuery mobile automatically redirect you to a desktop optimized version when you try to load it on your computer.

Among these gorgeous samples one of my favorites is the Joy Theater site ([figure 1](#)). One of the details I love is their primary navigation.

Instead of using a standard button bar (as provided by jQuery Mobile), they have opted for these large circular buttons. The shape and size of these elements ensures they are easily touched, which is a plus for the usability factor. At the same time, their design is unique so that the site feels distinct, and it's not easily forgotten.

In contrast, Brett Hayes (**figure 2**). makes use of a standard button bar built with jQuery Mobile (the button bar across the top of the site). In this case it works well and the designer has used other visual elements to ensure a unique experience that is still extremely functional. It isn't always about breaking the norm or reinventing an interface; most often a perfect balance between unique design and familiar functionality leads to very effective design.

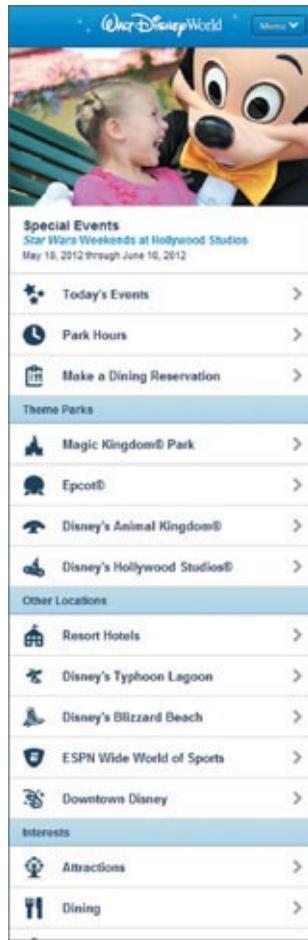
Learn more about jQuery Mobile at <http://jquerymobile.com/>.



Figure 1 <http://m.thejoytheater.com>



Figure 2 <http://m.bretthayes.ca>



<http://m.disneyworld.disney.go.com>



<http://m.fiat.es>



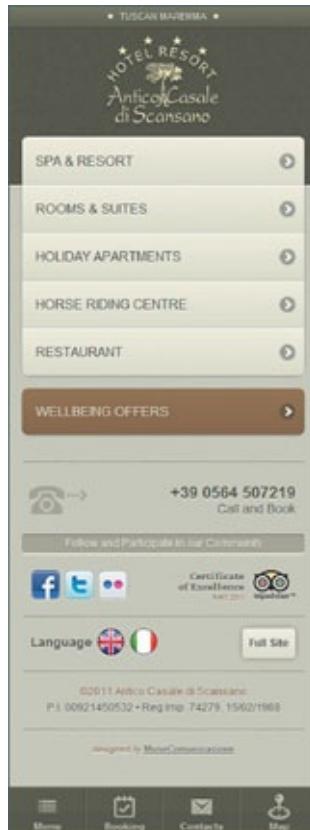
<http://www.hadthatbeer.com/mobile/star>



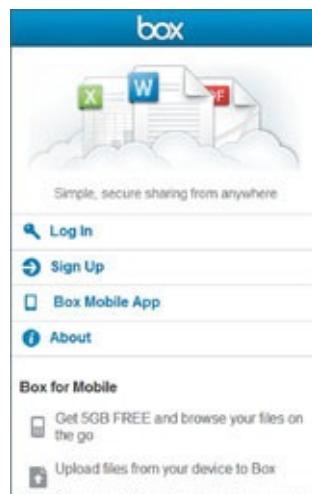
<http://m.veevlife.com>



<http://vaio-s.de>



<http://m.anticocasalediscansano.it/en>



<https://m.box.com>



<http://m.sears.com>



<http://mhome.cisco.com>

02 / Design Styles

One of the core goals of The Web Designer's Idea Book series is to showcase popular styles and trends. As a result I consider this section on current design styles to be core to the mission of this book. Design styles slowly morph and change with time, and though several topics presented here are perennial favorites that show up in each of the Idea Books published, I believe you will recognize clear changes in how they are used. For example, illustration and minimal styles are classic elements that have appeared in each of my previous books. And obviously these styles have histories far beyond my observation of them. So while I attempt to present as many new styles as possible, there will always be a few that show up again and again. (Perhaps someday I can assemble a secondary book that showcases all of the elements from a single style over time.)

THEMATIC DESIGN

Thematic design is certainly not a new idea, but I love the approach designers are currently taking. In years past this style was equally popular, but it seems that the current trend is to shift to a more subtle approach. Certainly this isn't universal, but if you contrast the samples here with those in *The Web Designer's Idea Book, Volume 1* (the Extreme Theme chapter) I think you will agree.

For example, let's consider the Quazar Web Design site ([figure 1](#)). Here, a space theme is rather clearly and prominently used. Note however that the overall layout is familiar and comfortable. In this case, the theme is used to style the elements that we expect to find. In stark contrast, the inTacto site ([figure 2](#)) also uses a space theme. However, in this case it is far more extreme. The layout is totally abnormal. In fact, the page is intended to scroll up, not down. Ironically, this extreme theme approach clearly contradicts my notion of a more minimal approach to themes. But, of course, this is the nature of things, styles are used in countless ways. The point really is to realize the range of possibilities when it comes to implementing a theme. We can paint a theme onto what's considered a "normal" layout, or we can invent a totally thematic interface, and we can do anything in between.

In other cases, the far more minimal approach is rather clear. The Revolver site showcased here, for example, does just that ([figure 3](#)). This beautiful site works a bit of theme into an otherwise minimal, superclean site. Themes can make a site more fun and often easier to design, but don't assume you have to go bonkers with them. Sites like this one demonstrate that a more subtle approach can produce gorgeous thematic designs.



<http://moosylvania.com>



Figure 1 <http://www.quazarwebdesign.com>



<http://www.justaminute.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.intacto10years.com>



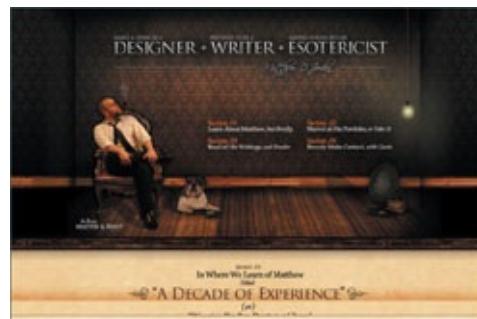
<http://www.peckhamrye.com>



Figure 3 <http://www.revolver-studio.com>



<http://www.warface.co.uk>



<http://www.matthewdjordan.com>



<http://melonfree.com>

The image shows the homepage of Mobile Captain. At the top left is the tagline "Helping You Sail The Mobile Seas". At the top right are links for "Login To Your Account" and a user icon. The main title "Mobile Captain" is centered above two smartphones displaying mobile websites. To the right is a blue call-to-action box with the text "Easily create, customize and market for mobile web!". Below the phones are icons representing customization, fast setup, reaching local users, mobile tools for marketing, admin features, and compatibility with various devices. At the bottom, there are sections for "Try For Free", "Mobile Stats Are In", and "Why Mobile?", each with descriptive text and small icons.

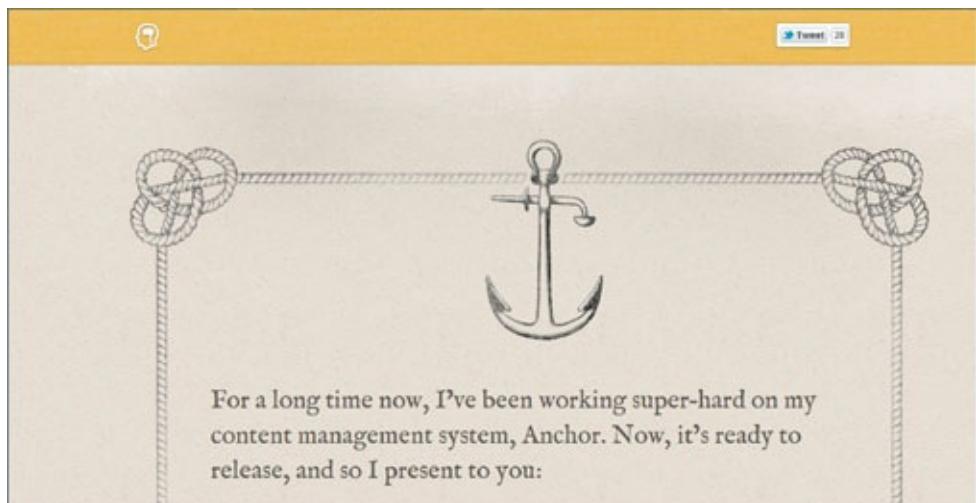
<http://www.mobilecaptain.com>



<http://www.virginiaboxwood.com>



<http://webstandards.sherpa.com>



<http://visualidiot.com>

ART-DIRECTED BLOG

Let's begin by explaining exactly what an art-directed blog is. A blog in this style applies a unique design to each and every blog post. This means the creator not only writes a blog post, but produces a custom style for the page. Clearly this approach is far more time-consuming. Typically a blogger working with this approach will maintain a common structure or framework, as well as a common overall design style. In this way, multiple pages work together, while each stands as an independent creation. Creating a site like this is not for the faint of heart. The amount of work required is not to be underestimated. You will find, however, that, the results can be truly outstanding.

One of the most common elements when it comes to art-directed blogs is a standard page header. This is clearly visible on the Visual Idiot site ([figure 1](#)). as well as on the Lefft site. Through this common element, the users are given something stable to rely on. It's particularly important because each page has the potential to disorient the viewer.

The most significant downside to consider (besides the time drain) is that an overall brand style will likely be lost. You can certainly weave your own personal style into each blog, but a new visitor who lands on an individual page may become disoriented until she realizes each post is custom designed. This makes any common elements extremely important. A common overall style will be a powerful tool for unifying the varying designs.

For a good example of this, take a closer look at the Lefft site. Note that the three layouts presented here ([figure 2](#)). all have a common base. They are all centered around large blocks of solid colors and are largely based on typographic design. As a result, they work together extremely well, while displaying a wide range of styles.

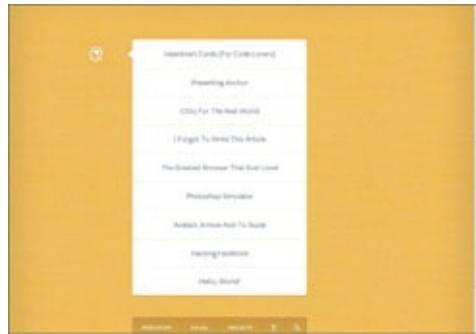


Figure 1 <http://visualidiot.com>



Figure 1 <http://visualidiot.com>



Figure 1 <http://visualidiot.com>



Figure 2 lefft.com





Figure 2 lefft.com

A screenshot of the Steff.me homepage. The top navigation bar includes links for HOME, WORK, CONTACT, JOURNAL, and LAB. Below the navigation is a large grid of colorful icons arranged in a 6x6 pattern. The icons represent various tools and concepts, such as a keyboard, a lightbulb, a gear, a trophy, a house, a star, and a magnifying glass. Below the grid, there are three sections: "Recently I write" featuring a post about Archiving Scribbles, "Find out more" featuring a post about Frontend developer from South Wales, and "Fresh in the lab" featuring a post about CMDT for Meteor (beta), a JavaScript Test on page implementation for Node.js.

A screenshot of a blog post titled "Static Textpattern Forms and Pages". The post content discusses the use of Static Textpattern for creating forms and pages. It includes several screenshots of the Textpattern interface showing code snippets and form designs. The post is dated "2013-07-10" and has a "Read more" link at the bottom.

<http://steff.me>



<http://steff.me>



<http://steff.me>

MINIMAL

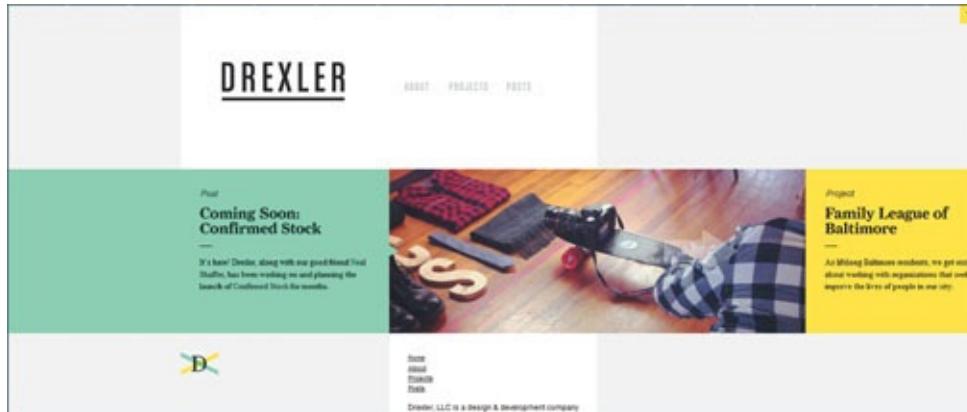
As with my previous writings on the use of minimal design, the samples here by no means embrace a strict implementation of the approach. Each of the designs here could be further refined and made more minimalist, but this is the point of showcasing *real* work here. In reality no one wants a purely minimalist site. Instead, designers prefer the benefits the style offers when paired with their personal style to give it unique flavor. After all, a site that purely embraces the minimalist mentality would likely be extremely homogeneous and perhaps even boring.

The reality is that when we implement a style like this it isn't for the purpose of embracing the style but rather to accomplish some set of needs. In the samples here, the minimal style allows for easy-to-use sites that communicate their purpose in an almost effortless way. The sites leverage the power of the style to accomplish the real goals and purposes of these sites. And in the end, this is the real mission of a web designer. So instead of considering how crazy I am to flag these sites as minimal, look at them and consider how the minimal style has been put to work and how you might do the same.

A perfect example of this is the Unify Interactive site ([figure 1](#)). This site clearly doesn't embrace a strictly minimalist mentality. So much in this design could be cut in the name of minimalism. But then the design would be void of any personality or uniqueness. In this case, the embellishments serve to dress up and give the site a unique style. At the same time, the underlying minimalist approach maintains a clean design that communicates its purpose effortlessly.

Another fine example to look at is the 51bits website ([figure 2](#)). Here the minimal style is evident. The visuals showcasing the agency's work not only show off their portfolio, but give the site some unique visual

elements to help the users create a visual impression of the site. Without these previews, the site would be so minimal that there would be almost nothing to file away in your brain. Instead our attention focuses on their work and it creates a lasting impression.



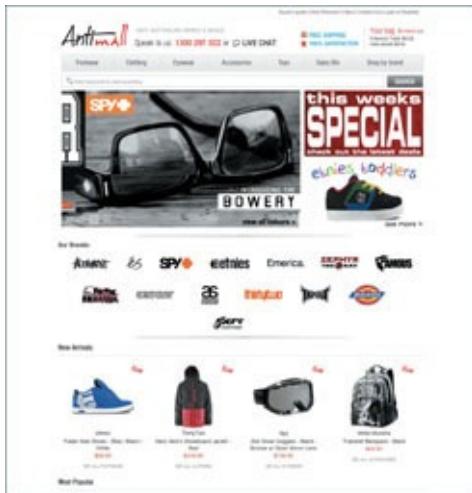
<http://drxlr.com>



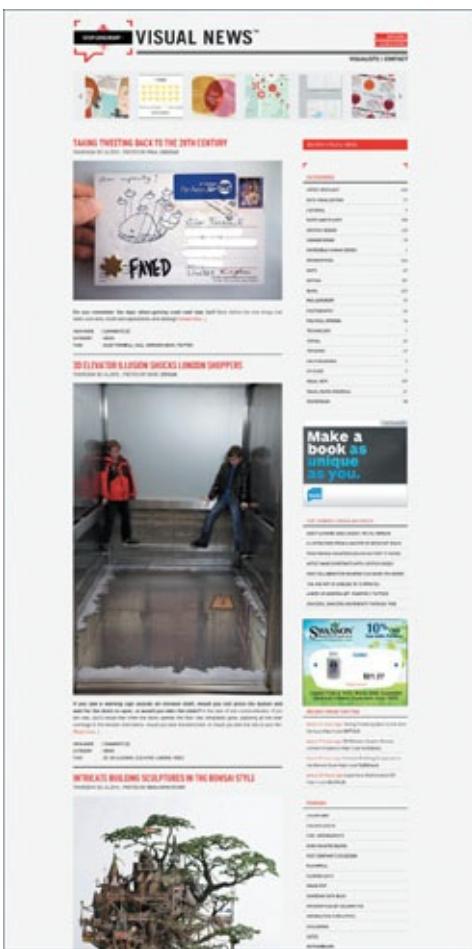
Figure 1 <http://unify.unitinteractive.com>



Figure 2 <http://51bits.com>



<http://www.antimall.com.au>



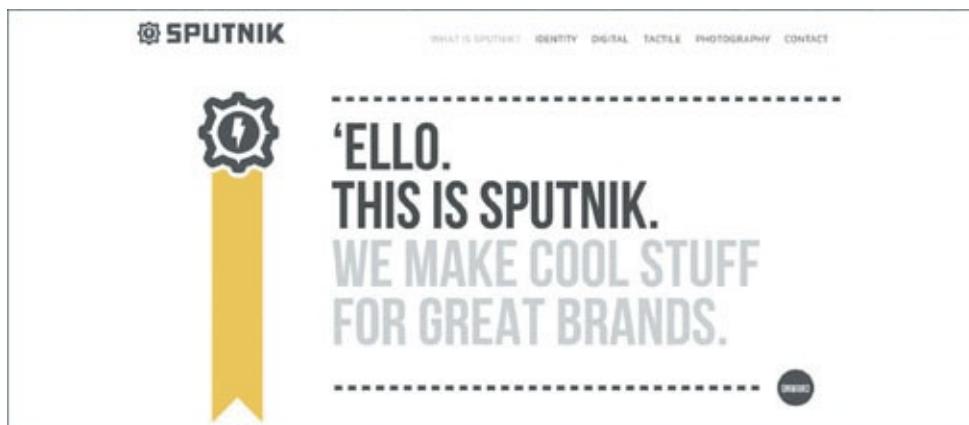
<http://www.visualnews.com>



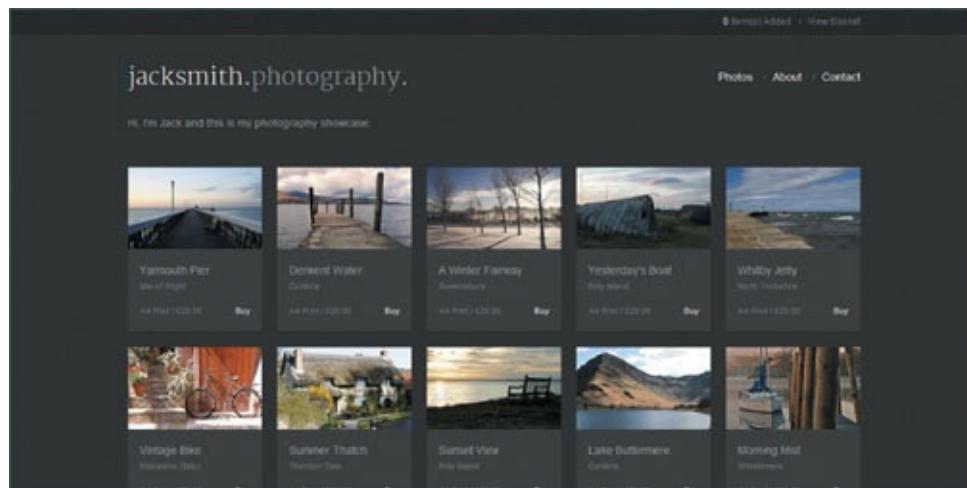
<http://www.polarfoxapp.com>



<http://www.thymer.com>



<http://www.sputnikcreative.com>



<http://www.jacksmithphotography.co.uk>



<http://freelance-html5.com>



<http://madebyrocket.com>



<http://www.bakkenbaeck.no>

MUTED WITH A RAINBOW OF COLORS

It is true, some trends are far more glamorous than others, but don't think for a second that this particular trend doesn't have some serious punch. In this section of the book, I want to showcase sites that are primarily based on a muted color palette (grays and other washed-out colors) and then peppered with a rainbow of colors. Let's review a sample that clearly illustrates this.

Consider the site [SpigotDesign.com](#) (**figure 1**). Here the base white and gray colors are very prominent. Then a splash of color is added that doesn't rely on a single accent color: rather, a variety of colors has been used. This splash of color further highlights the key bits of data on the page and helps drive users to the content they are likely looking for.

Another example that carries this approach to a very effective use is the Regent College website (**figure 2**). Here the colors accent the navigation and also connect to the buckets of content as you navigate the site.

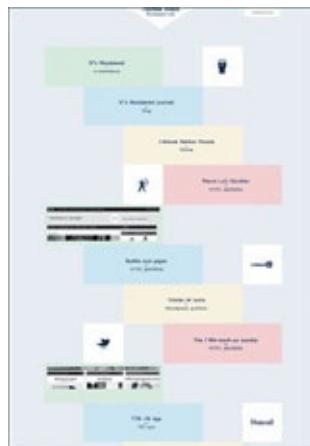
For some strange reason another trend seems to frequently show its face here—circles. In fact, I have a whole chapter in this volume on the use of the circle as a design element. Why it is that these two go together I am not certain. I thought long and hard on the topic and repeatedly reviewed the samples in both categories in search of some connection. Frankly, I have no idea why designers are drawn to such similar solutions. Perhaps they all derive from a similar inspiration source. Regardless, this is part of the fun of exploring trends and themes. Sometimes you stumble upon interesting patterns.

In closing, I want to highlight one key feature of the trend. Given a muted backdrop, the colored elements have the potential to stand out. For this reason, this trend is a powerful way to control the user's behavior

and to encourage them to focus on the most critical conversion points of your site.



Figure 1 <http://spigotdesign.com>



<http://www.thomasrobin.net>



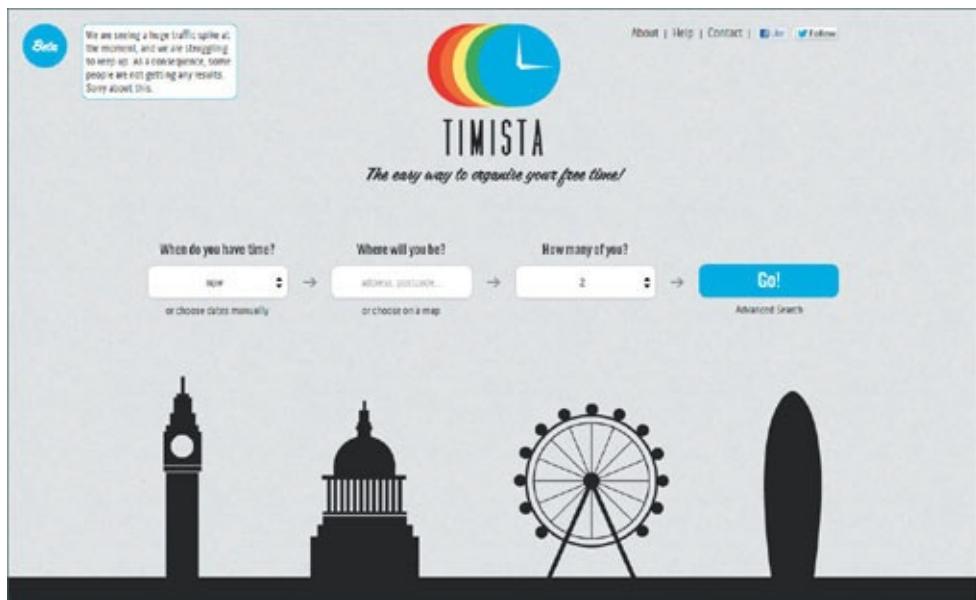
Figure 2 <http://www.regent-college.edu>



<http://www.enlighten-my-mind.com>



<http://www.dreamdust.net>



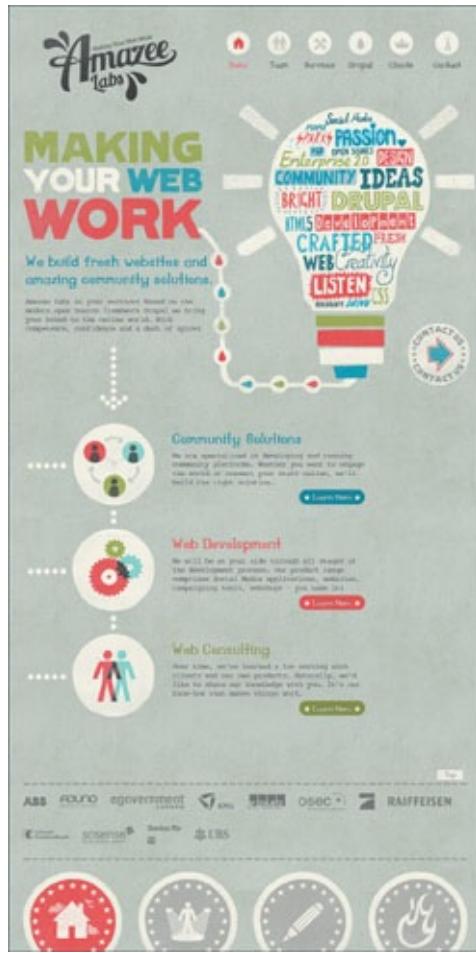
<http://timista.com>



<http://quirktools.com>



<http://geek-rocket.de>



<http://www.amazeelabs.com/en>



<http://feelandlive.com>

ILLUSTRATED

I have frequently stated my opinion that illustration is one of the most powerful tools in the designer's arsenal. Through illustration, an entirely unique design can be created. Many of the most memorable sites are based on unique illustrations that establish a totally distinct brand. A prime example of this is the War Child design ([figure 1](#)). The designers of this site could have gone the photographic route, relying on photographs to send the message. The illustration actually creates a far more distinct image, and the site is almost impossible to forget. You might think photos of suffering children would be unforgettable, and they certainly would be, but they wouldn't be firmly connected with this site. Instead, the illustrations are unique and easily connected to this particular project. In terms of brilliant art direction, sites like these are landmarks.

One less-used approach weaves the illustrations into a site's basic structure instead of creating freestanding illustrations. For an example of this, see the Bellstrike site ([figure 2](#)). Here the illustration is not a focal point as it was on the War Child site. Illustration is used to create the standard components of the site. With this perspective, almost any site might be considered illustrated, but the difference is the artistic approach which demonstrates a unique individual's touch. I bring this up because I think it's valuable to present conflicting approaches in an effort to demonstrate the wide range of possibilities.

Another fine example to study is Hostbox ([figure 3](#)). Here illustration comes in a rather unique form. A large number of icons are combined to create an overall image. The illustration is meaningful and renders a unique style, but it's not all-consuming. The site takes on a typical form and simply weaves illustrations into its structure. Again, the range of

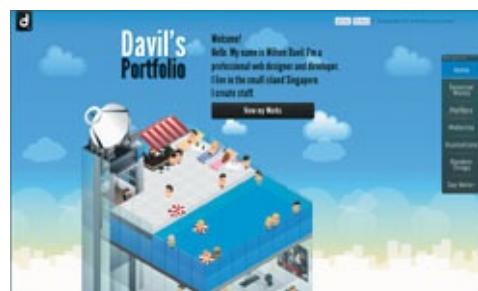
possibilities is huge. If you're stumped because you've been trying to implement an over-the-top illustration-based site, it may be a good idea to consider doing the opposite.



Figure 1 <http://www.warchild.org.uk>



<http://www.egopop.net>



<http://www.wilsendavil.com>

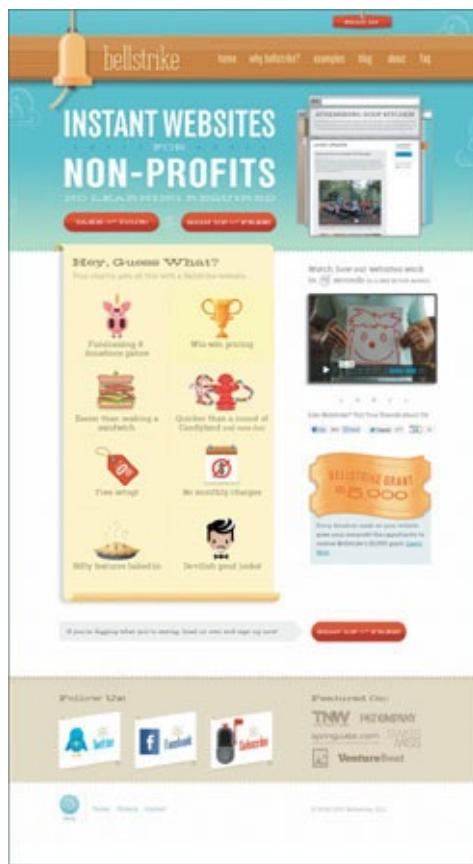


Figure 2 <http://bellstrike.com>

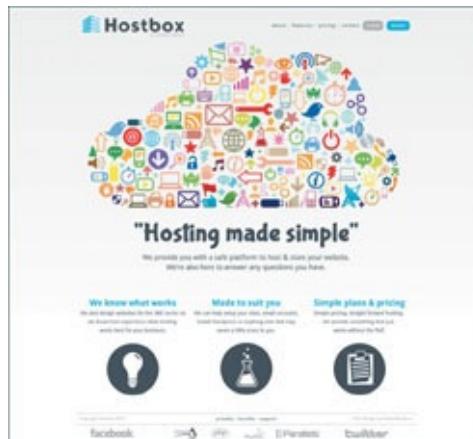


Figure 3 <http://hostbox.ie>



<http://www.uwhealthkids.org>



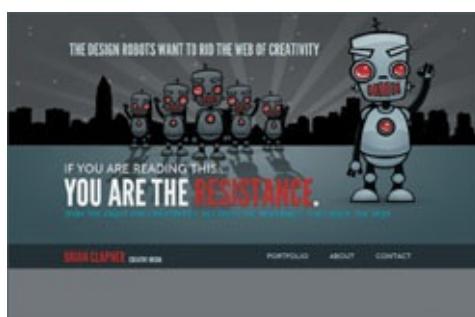
<http://www.stopthevom.com>



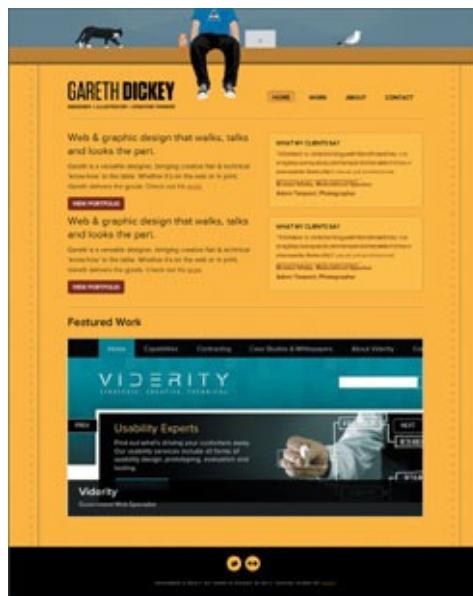
<http://www.tomcash.co.uk>



<http://www.opresume.com>



<http://www.slapner.com>



<http://garethdickey.com>



<http://augustinba.com>



<http://eventipity.com>

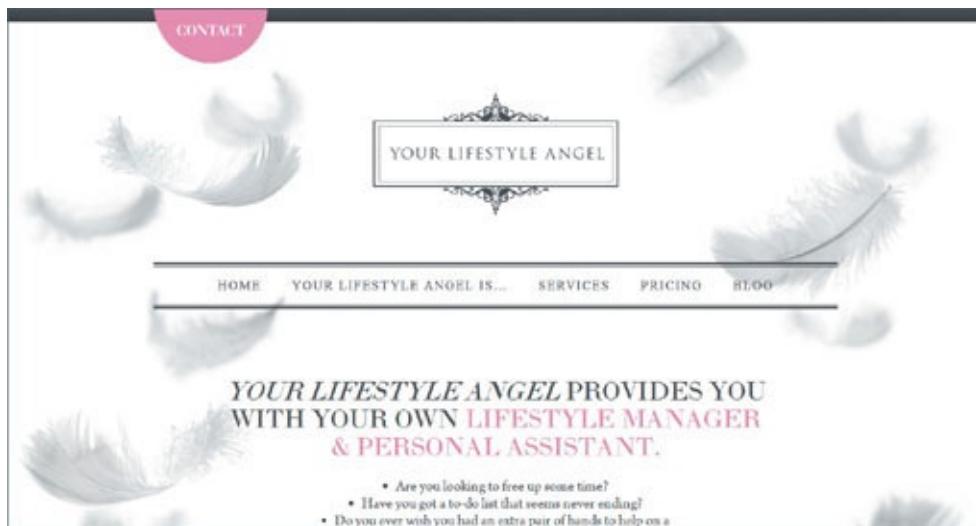
TYPE-CENTRIC DESIGNS

Given the explosion of options for online type, it should come as no surprise that many a designer has opted to create type-centric designs. Presented here is a collection of gorgeous design work that features type as the central focus. Clearly, all of these sites have some supporting elements beyond the text, but for the most part, the style of the site is predominantly contained in the type styles.

The personal site of Chris Davis ([figure 1](#)) is a great example of this. Though the site has some supporting design elements, the majority of the layout is focused on the text. It will not come as a surprise to find that the site makes heavy use of @font-face (see [Chapter 1](#) for more details on @font-face) to embed custom fonts into the page. After all, a site focused on its elegant type is likely to use distinct fonts as a technique for establishing a unique look and feel.

An *even* more type-centric example can be found at [Viljamis.com](#) ([figure 2](#)). This design features next to nothing but text. It's amazing just how unique the design is considering it is almost entirely type based. And, of course, all of the text in the page (sans the logo) is live, editable text rendered using embedded typefaces.

One huge perk to type-centric design, especially when it is all live text (as in not rendered using images), is that it can be adapted very easily to a wide variety of layouts. Remember, responsive design seeks to format a page for a given device. Text-based layouts are particularly flexible and can be a great place to start when venturing into this territory.



<http://www.yourlifestyleangel.com>

The screenshot shows a website with a white background and a decorative border of white feathers. At the top center is a logo with a stylized 'C' inside a circle. Below the logo is a horizontal navigation bar with links: Home, Portfolio, and Case Studies. A large, bold text in the center reads: 'My name is Chris, I create responsive websites.' Below this text is a smaller paragraph about the owner's background. A section titled 'Portfolio' follows, featuring several thumbnail images of different website designs. To the right of each thumbnail is a brief description: 'I help companies and grow business strategy and desi...' and 'I help companies and grow business strategy and desi...'. Below the portfolio section is a section titled 'MEASURE, manage', which includes a thumbnail of a software interface and a brief description: 'I am doing business management software for the industry'. Further down the page are sections for 'About me' (with a photo of a man) and 'Contact' (with a form for message submission). The footer contains legal disclaimers and social media links.

Figure 1 <http://mynameischris.co.uk>



Figure 2 <http://viljamis.com>



<http://www.thisistwhite.com>

Papyrus
Stop wasting time
organizing your business.

Draw up your own intranet with drag & drop and work better together with collaborative documents. Easily share and collect information, files, documents, media, forms and much more.

Try it for free!

Build a personalized intranet for your team.
Drag your own intranet with drag & drop. Easy. Share news, files, images, forms and more with colleagues and clients.

Store and find all your information. Fast.
Any of your work's information, fast, and easy. Publishing tools let you publish with powerful results.

Collect data and process requests with forms.
Add custom online forms to surveys. Let visitors to your site and process requests.

Improve communication, work better together.
Keep track of updates and discussions. Publish programs and reply to comments with a visual interface.

Explore more Features and Benefits.
[Give it a try or learn a little more](#)

We love making your work easier. Our customers love us back:

"I've been looking for the best option for our clients to be able to take and be accessible for the web and mobile and I found Papyrus has the answer, combining a very powerful solution with a super simple approach." - [Philippe Gosselin, CEO, Gosselin](#)

"I really like Papyrus as it is ready the first time. It's built on a complete framework, so our customers (and us) don't have to do much work. I'm curious about the new possibilities." - [Philippe Gosselin, CEO, Gosselin](#)

Papyrus offers a rich, intuitive intranet solution to streamline and organize your company's workflow.

No technical knowledge or costly installations required. Our user-friendly editor to create pages or documents is easy to use and doesn't require any programming knowledge or code, just drag & drop.

Great support. We strive to make sure that you're happy every step of the way, giving you the support you need.

Secure access from anywhere, any time. Whether you're on road, at home or at the office, you can easily log in to Papyrus to access your online presence.

Get free trial. Want to give Papyrus a try? Sign up now for a free 30-day trial no obligation.

Nothing to install or maintain. Papyrus is fully hosted, with no servers. That means you don't need to worry about updates, maintenance, upgrades and installations. Forget those in-house costs.

We love making software simpler. We design everything with you, the user, in mind.

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Papyrus is based in Montréal, Québec, Canada. As the first Canadian company to offer a cloud-based intranet solution, we've been creating intranets for over 10 years. We've helped thousands of companies around the world to increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve communication.

Solutions
Papyrus offers a range of solutions to fit your needs, from basic intranets to complex collaboration platforms.

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- Business Management
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- Employee Communication
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Contact
Need help? Contact us at [support@papyrus.com](#). We'll give you great feedback, and help you make the most of Papyrus.

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<http://www.papyrus.com>

Luke Williams
Entrepreneur, Writer

About Me
An experienced entrepreneur and a proven leader in the design and development of digital products. I have a passion for innovation and a desire to constantly push the boundaries of what is possible. I am a strong believer in the power of technology to transform the way we live and work, and I am always looking for ways to apply my skills and expertise to solve real-world problems.

Skills
A comprehensive list of skills including: Project Management, Business Development, Marketing, Product Management, UX/UI Design, and Data Analysis.

Experience
University of West Missouri, May 2009 – July 2011
An experienced entrepreneur and a proven leader in the design and development of digital products. I have a passion for innovation and a desire to constantly push the boundaries of what is possible. I am a strong believer in the power of technology to transform the way we live and work, and I am always looking for ways to apply my skills and expertise to solve real-world problems.

Old West - Creative Web, June 2007 – Present
Old West is a creative web design studio, specializing in web design, development, and marketing. We offer a wide range of services, from website design and development to digital marketing and social media management. Our team of experts is dedicated to creating unique, effective, and visually appealing websites that help our clients stand out in their industry.

Education
University of West, May 2009 – July 2011
An experienced entrepreneur and a proven leader in the design and development of digital products. I have a passion for innovation and a desire to constantly push the boundaries of what is possible. I am a strong believer in the power of technology to transform the way we live and work, and I am always looking for ways to apply my skills and expertise to solve real-world problems.

Endorsements

<http://red-root.com/cv>

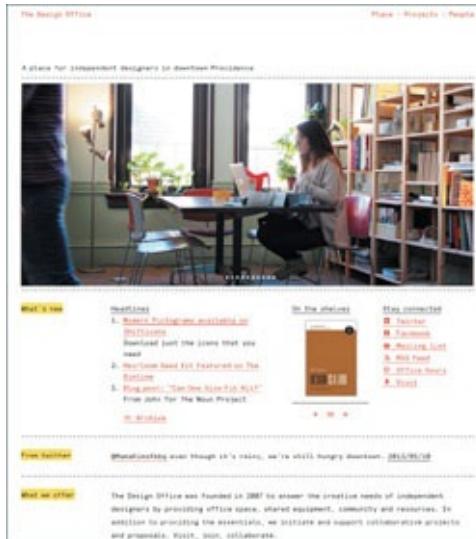


<http://promo.8vodesigns.com>

<http://johanbrook.com>



<http://www.blueion.com/gomobile>



<http://thedesignoffice.org>

<http://www.waywardirregular.com>

<http://www.offscreenmag.com>

SKETCHY

One design style that seems to return over and over again is the use of sketchy elements. Granted, it reinvents itself to fit the modern landscape. Sketchy elements are designs based largely on what appear to be hand-drawn elements. The degree of uses range from minimal to extreme, but the results are quite often fantastic.

Two key factors make this style desirable. First, sketchy elements tend to have an organic, or nontechnical, feel to them. As such, they provide a great way to express a disconnection from the digital connotations of the web. For a good example, see the portfolio site of Adrian Baxter ([figure 1](#)). Though Adrian does outstanding web work, his portfolio site takes you to a very different place. The tangible, artistic beauty of the site focuses on the less technical. He sells himself as a web developer in an uncommon way.

Sketchy elements also can be extremely unique. Sometimes it seems that half the world is building sites using the same fonts, icons and stock photos. If you want to stand out from the crowd, sketchy elements can help establish a completely new style. Adrian's site is again a great example of this. Consider also the Van Nieuwe Waarde site ([figure 2](#)). Here the sketchy style is used in a more subtle, less prominent way. But the results are very similar. The site feels current. It fits into the style and expectations of modern work. Yet, there is something different about it. In my opinion, the number-one factor in making this gem of a site stand out is the subtle use of sketchy elements. Ironically much of it is based on a font in this style.

Another example I instantly fell in love with is the My Pizza Oven site ([figure 3](#)). Here the sketchy elements dominate the page but never feel over the top or obnoxious. Instead, they set the tone and style of the site

and provide for a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, which seem like rather significant accomplishments for such a simple technique.



Figure 1 <http://www.apbaxter.com>

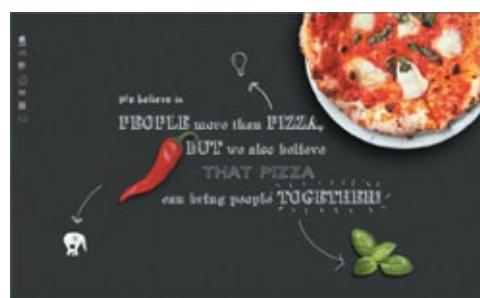


Figure 2 <http://vannieuwewaarde.nl/voor-wie>



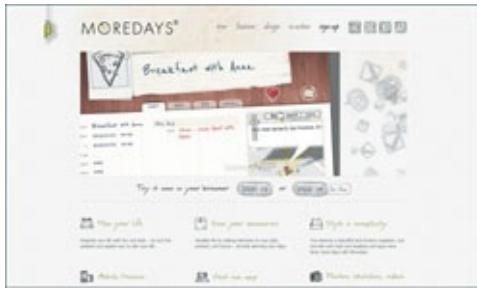
Figure 3 <http://mypizzaoven.nl>



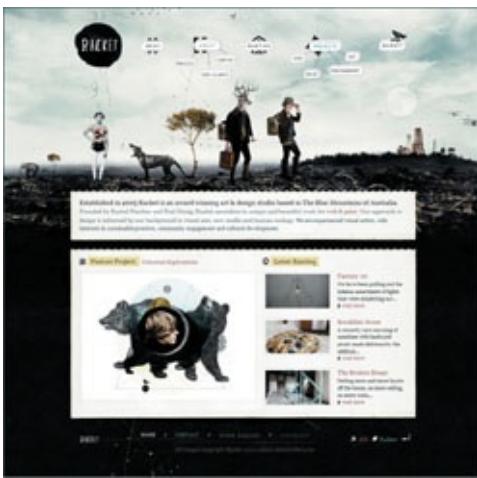
<http://www.geckoboard.com/>



<http://couchkumaras.com>



<http://www.moredays.com>



<http://www.racket.net.au>



<http://www.the-neighbourhood.com>



<http://2009.legworkstudio.com>

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Every now and then a common theme emerges that becomes popular for unknown reasons. Recently there have been quite a few sites popping up that incorporate text and illustration styles that resonate with nineteenth-century artwork. A clear demonstration of this is The Mischief Co.'s design ([figure 1](#)). The three illustrations on the home page clearly exude a nineteenth-century style. This is, of course, supported by an overall style that merges well with this theme.

One thing you will notice is that many of the sites that use this style tend to rely on a black-and-white or a gray-scale color palette. I imagine this is to connect with the stereotypical black-and-white letterpress work you might expect from this period. I love that this bare-bones color set allows the designer to inject an accent color that really pops. Check out The Mischief Co.'s design and then take a look at the Kilian Muster design ([figure 2](#)), which demonstrates the style in a slightly less aggressive way.

While most of the sites in this style rely on illustrations, some of them focus more on the style of the type. A nice example of this can be found on mo.markheggan.co.uk. ([figure 3](#)). Here the reference is far less obvious, yet the type styles connect with the featured period. I appreciate this particular sample because it proves you don't have to fall back to a plain black-and-white design in order for this approach to work. The richly colored background brightens the page and gives it a pleasant punch.

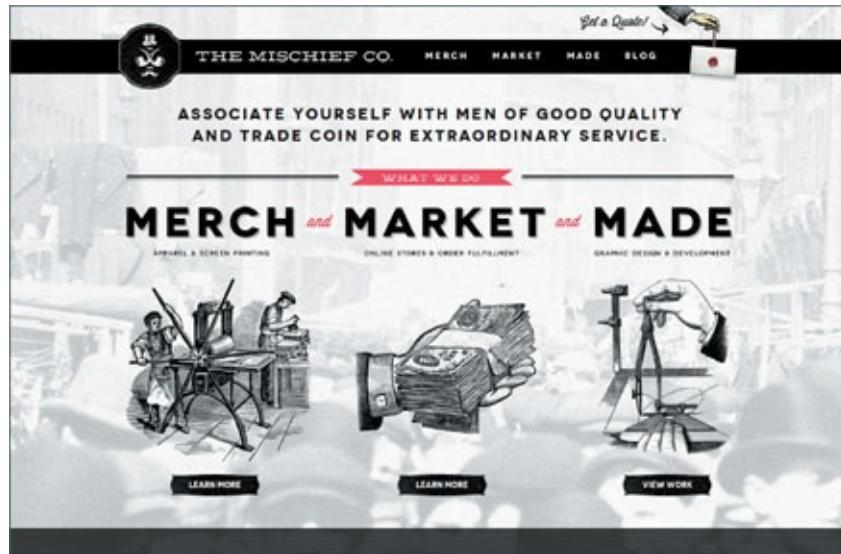


Figure 1 <http://themischiefco.com>

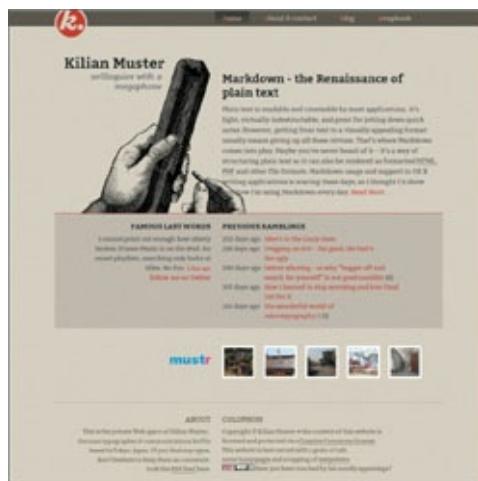


Figure 2 <http://kilianmuster.com>

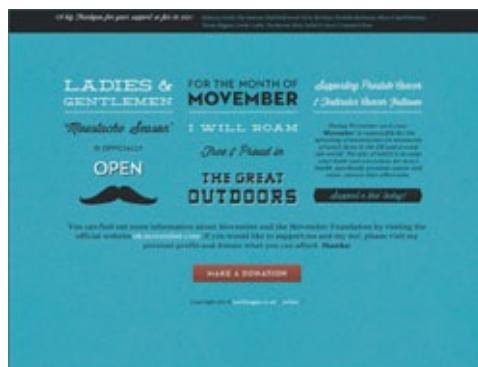
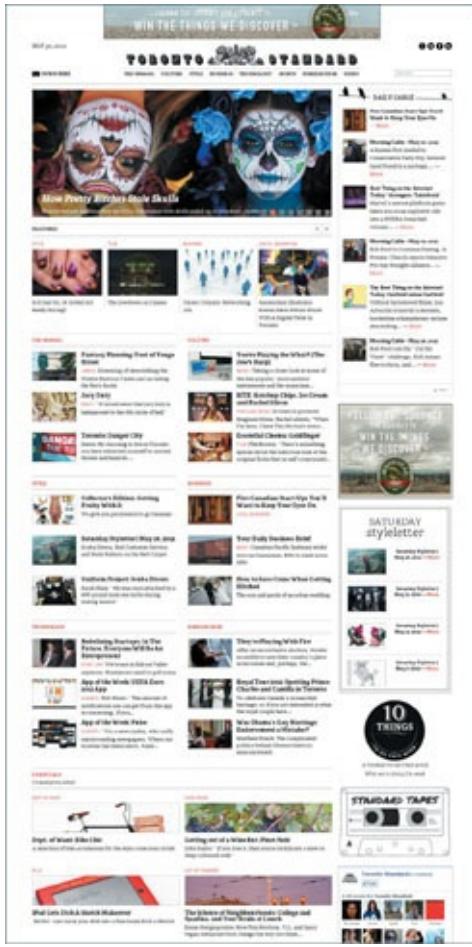


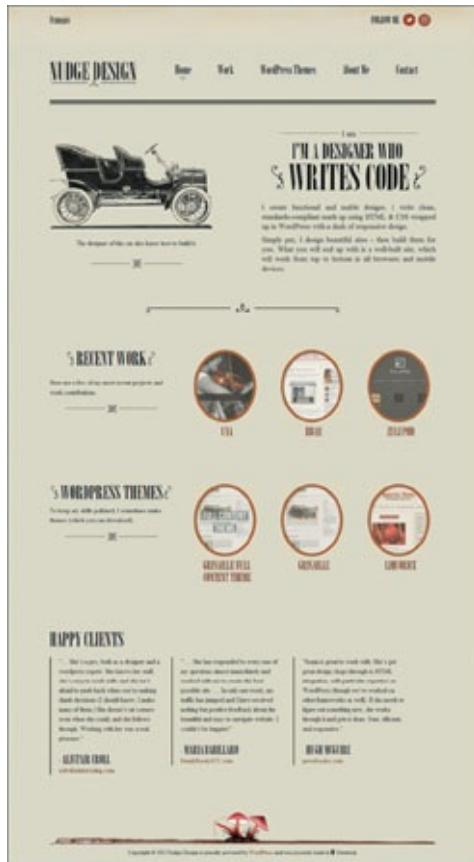
Figure 3 <http://mo.markhegan.co.uk>



<http://www.torontostandard.com>



<http://chimpchomp.us>



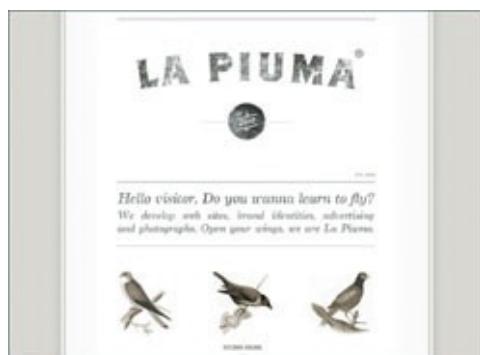
<http://nudgedesign.ca>



<http://cappellosglutenfree.com>



<http://www.henry-realestate.com>



<http://www.lapiuma.com>



<http://thebarrelhouseflat.com>



<http://shoshorov.net>



<http://www.rideforthebrand.net>



<http://colly.com>

SUPERCLEAN

As I catalog sites for my books, one set of sites always stand out as favorites, though they defy categorization. While some of them could fit into categories, many of them are incredibly elusive. So I invented a label for them: I call them “superclean.” These sites, though rich with content, are incredibly easy on the eyes, what I call “clean.” These are the sites I really wish I had designed.

Thewp.co ([figure 1](#)). is a great place to start. The design is not quite minimal, is kind of type-centric and has some illustrations. It could fit into another category, but somehow it feels richer and yet so easy on the eyes. The primary purpose of the site is easy to grasp and the call-to-action items are easily found, yet not too in-your-face. In my humble opinion the site is perfectly balanced and absolutely delicious.

In this edition of the superclean topic, I ventured into some slightly different territory. A great demonstration of this is Jason Weavers site ([figure 2](#)). This site is a clear step outside of my typical superclean collection, and yet it still fits in so nicely. I realized there was a certain overall style I tended to place in this section, and I wanted to demonstrate some diversity. As a result I think you will find this site fits the bill, yet challenges the norm in this collection.

Just to reinforce a point I have already made, I want to focus on the Commentary Box design ([figure 3](#)). This superclean site is packed with content. I really wanted to point out that superclean doesn’t mean the site has to be void of meat. On the contrary, Commentary Box’s content-rich site maintains a style that is clearly representative of this category.



<http://www.dailydigital.com>



<http://www.fitbit.com>



Figure 1 <http://thewp.co>



<http://www.iavra.com>

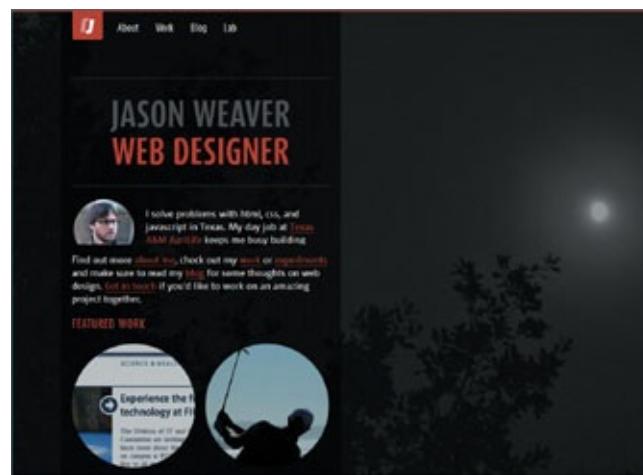


Figure 2 <http://jasonweaver.name>



<http://folyo.me>



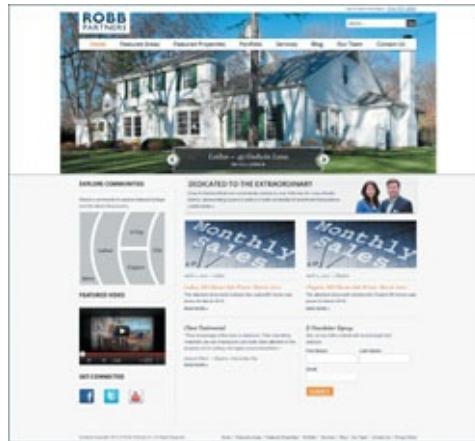
Figure 3 <http://www.commentarybox.co.uk>



<http://2pxborder.co.nz>



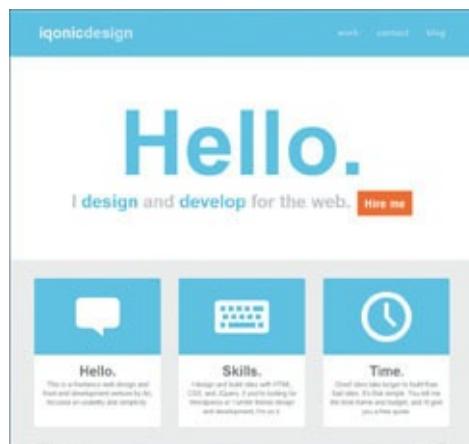
<http://mokader.com>



<http://robbpartners.com>



<http://www.bonfyreapp.com>



<http://iqonicdesign.com>

LETTERPRESS

In a way, it is rather ironic to have a design trend in the web industry based on the letterpress, and yet, the trend is running rampant.

Obviously we're not cranking sites out on actual letterpresses; that would be silly. Rather this trend incorporates aspects of the letterpress look and feel. Here I want to present a collection of sites that make use of various styles (most frequently CSS3 drop shadows) to create letterpress-like effects. Most frequently this comes in the form of what appears to be inset text, through the use of a drop shadow inside the text. This extra bit gives the text the impression of being pressed into the page.

Throughout his site, Alex Buga ([figure 1](#)). prominently demonstrates this effect. The text and icons all have inset shadows that make them appear to be pressed into the page. This is further accented with color choices that complement the background in such a way that they look as though they were a part of it. Background and foreground elements blend together in a unified way. In this case, the letterpress effect is further accentuated by the use of cards. The white cards in the page contain text and take on a 3-D effect thanks to a drop shadow that surrounds them. The combination of techniques makes it feel even more like something printed.

As I survey the set of samples provided here I notice an interesting pattern. Many of the sites in this style have two common elements in addition to the use of inset text that play into what I consider a letterpress style or feel. First, many of them are generally based on text. You see lots of supporting textures and patterns, but most of the sites primarily use text in prominent and decorative ways. Second, many of them have a central symmetry. Certainly they are not perfect, but a preference for such an approach is evident. Again, to me this echoes a letterpress-

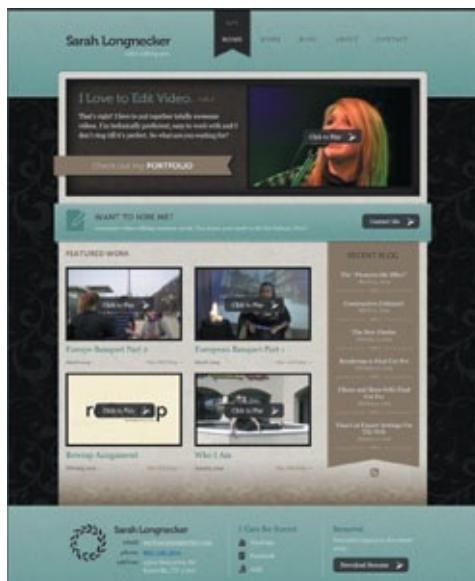
oriented mentality. No, not all letterpress is center aligned, but something about it resonates with what you might find in a letterpress poster. If you do a quick Google image search for “letterpress poster” you will see hundreds of examples of just such an approach.

One example I want to point out is a bit of an outlier in this category. It’s called Monkey Republic (**figure 2**). In my opinion this site has a letterpress feel, but it goes about it in a totally different way. The approach used is not new—in fact, I discussed it in Volume 1; it simply emulates a real-life newspaper, and by doing so, it creates a style that also connects back to the letterpress.

Perhaps the biggest irony with this style is that in real-life letterpress work, the mission or goal is to *not* have revealing impressions. Considering that most work is printed on both sides of the page, those operating letterpresses worked really hard to avoid such impressions (which would create a total mess). On the web, however, the designer may not intend to make a letterpress reference but that is ultimately what ends up happening.



Figure 1 <http://www.alexbuga.com>



<http://sarahlongnecker.com>



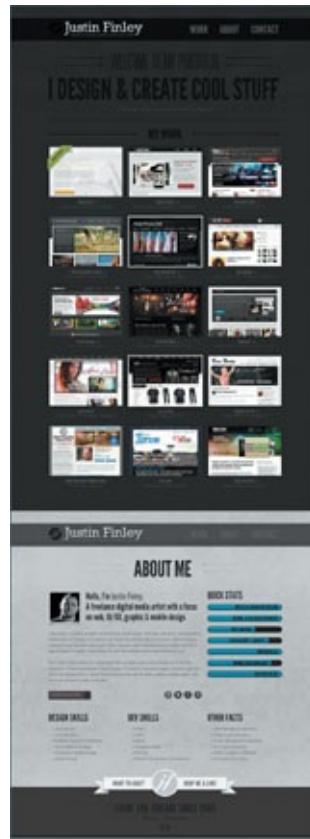
<http://dimitropoulos.info>



<http://www.apgdesign.co.uk>



Figure 2 <http://ilovemonkey.nl/EN>



<http://www.justinfinleydesign.com>

A screenshot of a website for "R.Davis". The top navigation bar has links for SHOWREEL #1, PORTFOLIO #2, R.DAVIS (highlighted with a blue circle), ABOUT ME #3, and CONTACT ME #4. The main content area features a "Welcome" message and a large, bold statement: "I CREATE BEAUTIFUL WEBSITES & MOBILE UI DESIGNS PROVIDING MY CLIENTS WITH PIXEL PERFECT GRAPHICS.". On the left side, there are four red decorative flags.

<http://www.rdcreativedesign.eu>



<http://67pixels.com>



<http://www.raymacari.com>

OSBA EVENT EVITE

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WEB DESIGN

From WordPress powered sites, eContent creation, social media management, & email marketing design, we know how to craft your company's online identity.

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THE SWEETENER[ECOSPHERE TECH INFOGRAPHIC](#)[NEW WEB PROJECT: LIMBACH](#)[WE ALL UP IN INSPIRED MAG!](#)[READ MORE](#)

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We're ready to roll!

Check us out:



TWEETS

- Peep This! Sosweet! Fiddle of cool animated text effect with CSS3 transforms & keyframes: <http://bit.ly/2UyWzHw> (about 4 days ago)
- On my, it is most certainly on move <http://bit.ly/2VrA18K> (about 1 days ago)

Follow Sosweet on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#)

SWEETENER

 Ecosphere Tech Infographic
Here's another infographic, guys, we coded up for Ecosphere ... [More](#) New Web Project: Limbach
With after much time, and many "revisions," I finally got L ... [More](#)

03 / Design Elements

While design styles focuses on overall styles of pages, this section on design elements focuses on individual design nuances. Some of these are trendy items that will come and go, while others are staples of design that will likely never fade from use. As you browse the collections here for fresh ideas, I encourage you to study this section and consider how these ideas can be adapted to fit your needs. Be careful, however, never to just copy elements without carefully considering how they might impact your overall product. While ribbons are an extremely popular design element, it doesn't mean you have to be yet another photocopy. Instead, consider each element, its hidden meanings and how it might connect with the design you're working on in a meaningful way.

TEXTURE

Texture is a design element that I frequently discuss, and it appears in each volume of this book series. And as I have previously mentioned, though it is an element that never goes away, the ways designers use it change over time. For this particular design element the trend seems to be toward dulling the effect to a more supportive role. This is quite different from the in-your-face textures popular in years past. In general, a shift toward more subdued effects is widespread, occurring in most styles and patterns.

A fine demonstration of this is Mark Heggan's personal site ([figure 1](#)). Though textured elements appear throughout the design, texture is never the focus of the design. It helps set the tone of the site and is one of the most powerful elements in determining the overall look and feel of the site, but it does not dominate the design. You don't look at this site and say, "Wow, look at all that texture." But as you dissect the design, you'll notice the texture has been used to unify the entire layout.

In order to reinforce this perspective, compare Mark's site to the Final Elements site ([figure 2](#)). Here the texture, used as a backdrop for the entire site, is extremely bold. It implies a raw, rebellious sort of style—clearly a very different purpose. Yet the result is intentional and a powerful way to help position the brand.

Last of all, I want to consider the [121cc.com](#) site ([figure 3](#)). more closely. Here we see another popular approach to texture, and that is using a large variety of them. I counted about ten distinct textures at work. That's a lot of texture! Given that none of the textures are all that bold, they serve as a common backdrop for the various elements in the page. And it works.

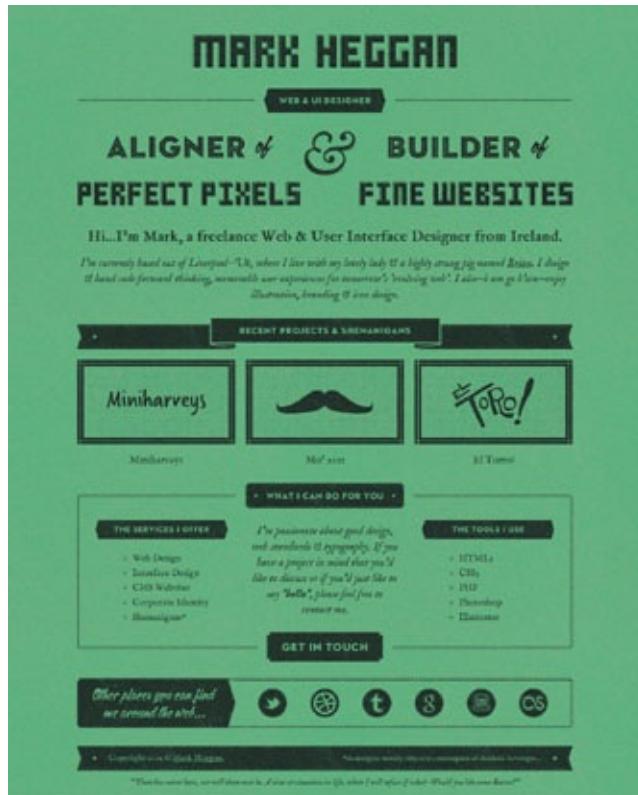


Figure 1 <http://markheggan.co.uk>



Figure 2 <http://www.finalelements.com>



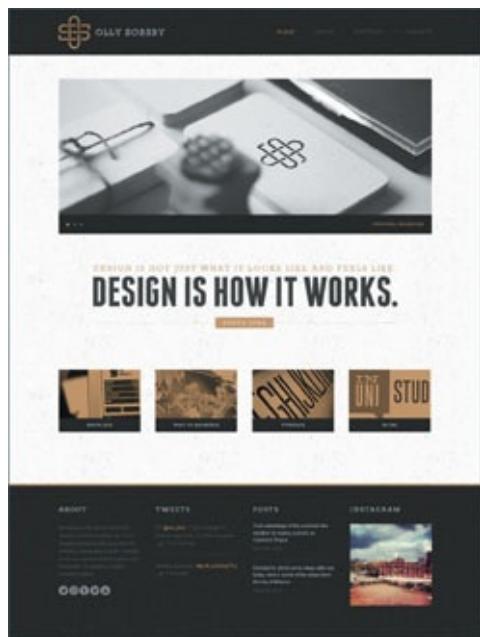
<http://missionhillschurch.com>



<http://blog.ismaelburciaga.com>



Figure 3 <http://www.121cc.com>



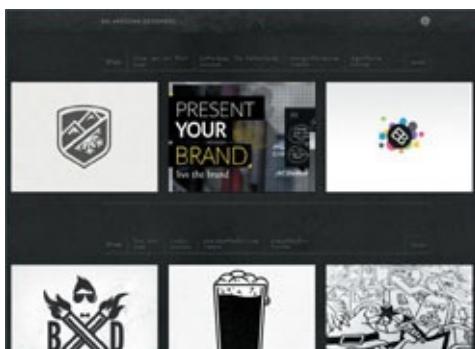
<http://ollysorsby.co.uk>



<http://www.henry.brown.name>



<http://365awesomedesigners.com>



<http://www.vectorstories.com>



<http://madebyscogle.com>



<http://www.joppdesign.com>

GOUPIE™
THE AFFORDABLE INDULGENCE

Home Goupie Shop Events Stockists Trade Contact

Cart: 0 items £0.00 | Checkout

A devilishly moreish **chewy chocolate** confection with a hint of **crunch**

GOUPIE A TASTE OF CHRISTMAS

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Share this on Twitter Tweet: 29

Welcome to Goupie Goupie Groups Facebook Like: 248

What we're tweeting

Christmas is coming so why not try our new festive flavours? Our customers have been going crazy for them! [#GoupieChoc](#)

@goupiechoc | follow us

Explore Goupie

Hazelnut Orange Chilli Dark Lavender White Lavender

[View all flavours](#)

A Bit About Us

Goupie is a devilishly moreish chewy chocolate confection, hand-produced by a small, dedicated team, led by Janet and Joe Simpson, in Goudhurst, Kent.

Using a genuine family recipe, Goupie is made fresh every week to order and then hand-cut into distinctive triangular pieces.

Goupie is made from high quality natural ingredients, topped with fine dark Belgian chocolate containing a minimum of 50% cocoa solids.

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Latest News

MAR 16 Goupie is going to be at the Brighton chocolate Festival this weekend (17th & 18th March). Come and see us near the Pavilion Gardens between 10a... [Read more](#)

MAR 13 Please note that the Goupie phone number 01803 211489 is not in service today Tuesday 12th March 2012. BT has been informed but "It's not our fault" ... [Read more](#)

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RIBBONS

As someone who obsesses over trends and patterns, I am always trying to figure out where exactly the trends and patterns originate from.

Sometimes it's impossible to identify just where a trend began. That is the case with ribbons. At some point in the last year this element was leveraged in massive quantities. The samples collected here are a tiny subset of the many sites that are putting ribbons to work.

I have many theories on why ribbons are such a popular element, but all my theories come back to one point: Ribbons look nice. It may sound trite, but it's still true. All of the sites presented here get a touch of style from using ribbons. The ribbon is somewhat universal, so it is easy to understand why it is so popular. It allows designers to highlight something important in a nice supportive way. It's not inherently thematic, so it fits into nearly any layout. As a result, they are used all over.

As styles come and go, I suspect ribbons will be a passing trend. And as with all trends, it will find its suitable place in the designer's toolbox. Eventually it will feel dated and designers will only use it when it truly resonates with the topic at hand. This is the life of all trends.

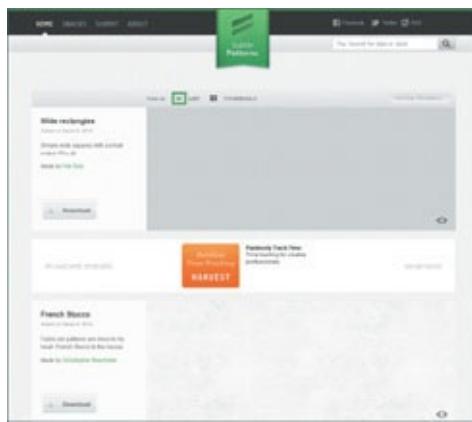
In many ways, the ribbon is nothing more than the modern badge (check out badges in *The Web Designer's Idea Book, Volume 1*). See Andy Widodo's personal site as an example ([figure 1](#)). Here the ribbon is brightly colored and overlaps multiple elements, thereby gaining the focus of the user. What could be more important than a call to action to hire the individual? That's the purpose of a portfolio site, so using a flashy ribbon element to highlight the conversion point makes perfect sense.

The screenshot shows a clean, modern website layout. At the top left is a black header bar with the letters 'AW'. On the right side of the header are icons for a mail envelope, a user profile, and a red ribbon banner with the word 'HOME' on it. Below the header, the main content area has a white background with a light gray grid pattern. A large, bold heading 'Hello, I'm Andy!' is centered at the top. Below it is a bio section with a small profile picture of a man, his name 'Andy Widodo', and his title 'WebUI Designer & Front-end Developer'. The bio text describes his experience in web design and development for various clients both domestic and abroad, emphasizing his focus on accessibility, usability, and clean code. To the right of the bio is a 'Strength' section with a sub-section titled 'What People Said' containing a testimonial from 'Domestic Savvyer' about Andy's exceptional front-end skills. At the bottom of the bio section, there are links to download his resume in PDF format.

Figure 1 <http://andywidodo.com>



<http://www.milkandgroceries.com>



<http://subtlepatterns.com>



<http://www.lesleemitchell.com/blog>



<http://christopher-scott.com>



<http://ricebowls.org>



<http://truettbrooklynburciaga.com>



<http://pongathon.com>



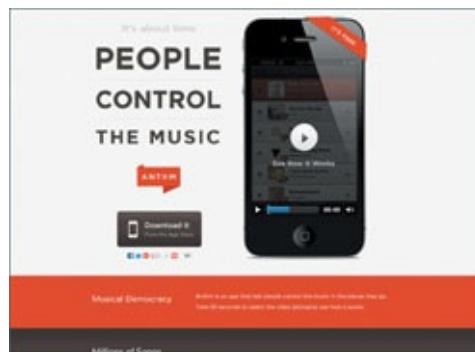
<http://www.eleventhedition.com>



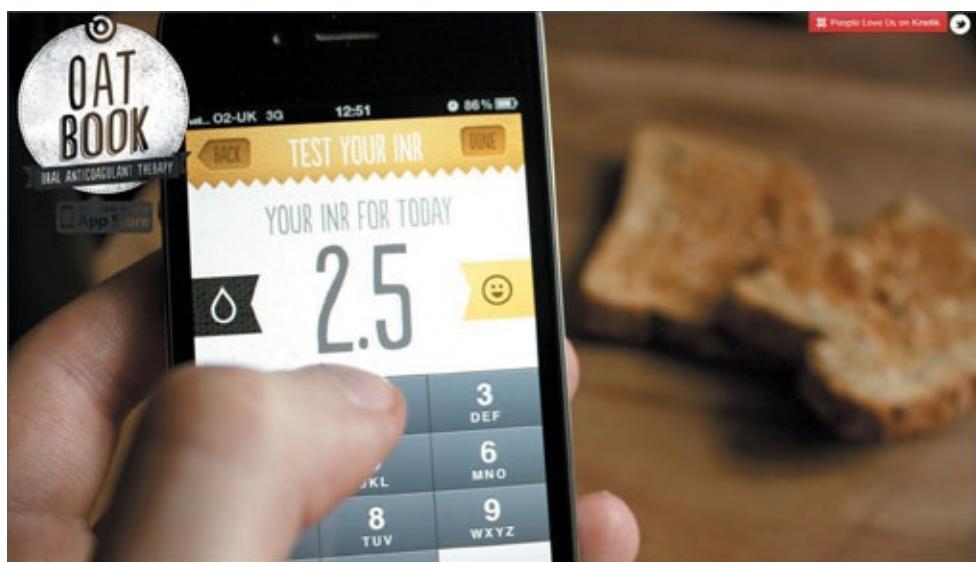
<http://www.andypatrickdesign.com>



<http://lisher.net>



<http://anthmapp.com>



<http://www.oatbook.co.uk>



<http://www.dannypostma.com>

THREE-DIMENSIONAL

The web is an inherently flat medium, and short of some insane technology, it will remain that way for the foreseeable future. What makes this little collection of sites unique is that they all make use of visual tricks to give the illusion of depth and create a 3-D feel. None of the samples are over-the-top 3-D worlds, mind you. These are fairly typical sites that add a dimensional effect to give their pages some visual appeal.

Start by looking at the Love Leadership book site ([figure 1](#)). The most noticeable element here is the large three-dimensional book. It might seem the obvious choice: to show a book in such a way. However, I think there is more to the story. Not only has the designer rendered a literal view of a book in a way that gives it volume, but he or she has also drawn the viewers' eyes to the main focus of the page. If nothing else, you see the cover of the book and that it stands out from the rest of the content. In this way, the image takes first place in the hierarchy of things viewed and effectively ingrains itself upon your memory. We find a similar effect on both the Pro Foods ([figure 2](#)). and the Coalma ([figure 3](#)). sites. In all of these cases, ensuring that the actual product garners attention is perhaps the greatest goal. The three-dimensional trick is the perfect tool to lay the focus on the featured products.

The 3-D effect is used to solve other problems as well. Consider the Beckin site ([figure 4](#)). Here the photograph is part of the overall page, not just placed in the page. It is not framed in its own background and situated in a box. Instead the image is clipped out to the contents and shadows are added. It looks like a 3-D object on the page. The product is freed of drab containers. It has a much more interesting feel, and also unifies the rest of the page.



<http://rtl.co.>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Love Leadership book. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'HOME', 'ABOUT THE AUTHOR', 'WHAT'S NEW', 'REVIEWS', 'MEDIA', 'CONTACT', and 'SPEECHES'. The main content area features a large image of the book 'LOVE LEADERSHIP' by John Hope Bryant. To the left of the book image is a bio for John Hope Bryant, mentioning his role as author of 'OVERCOMING', CEO of Global Leadership, and his work on 'LOVE LEADERSHIP: The New Way to Lead in a Fear-Based World'. Below the bio is a signature. Further down the page are sections for 'BUY NOW' (with links to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Nook), 'REVIEWS' (with a quote from Jim Rohn), 'INTERVIEWS' (with a quote from Jim C. Johnson), 'SOCIAL MEDIA' (links to Twitter and Facebook), and 'MEDIA' (a gallery of video clips). At the bottom of the page is a footer with links for 'HOME', 'ABOUT THE AUTHOR', 'WHAT'S NEW', 'REVIEWS', 'MEDIA', 'CONTACT', and 'SPEECHES', along with a copyright notice: '© 2010 LOVE LEADERSHIP. All rights reserved.'

Figure 1 <http://www.loveleadershipbook.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.pro-foods.com>



Figure 3 <http://www.coalma.it>

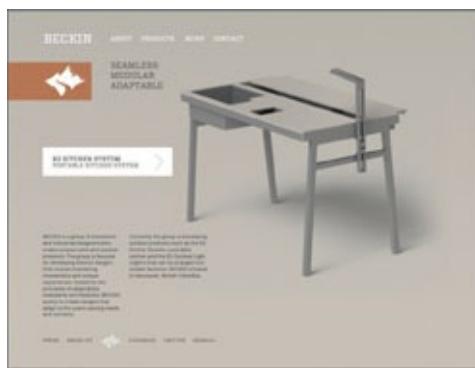


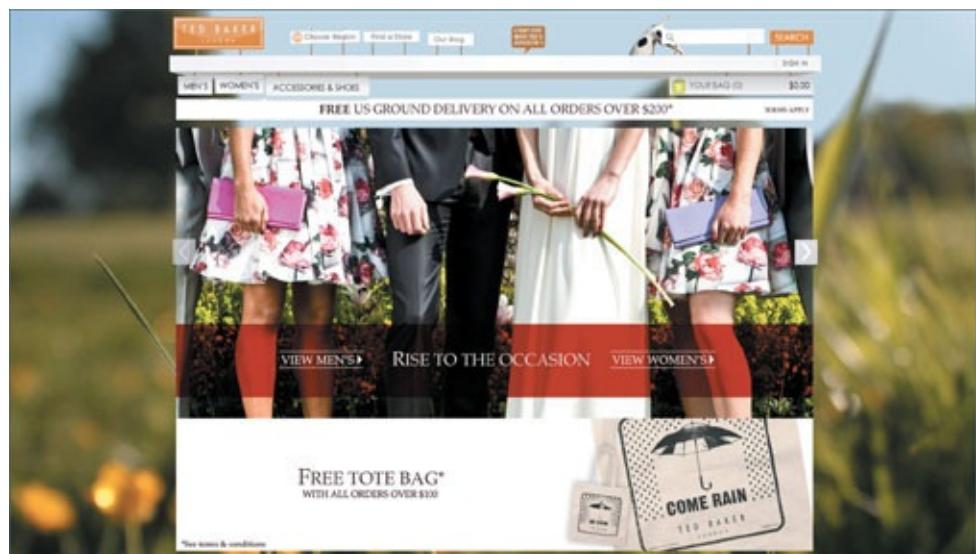
Figure 4 <http://www.beckindesign.com>



<http://www.mylexicon.co.uk>



<http://www.tobiaswenzel.com>



<http://www.tedbaker-london.com>



<http://www.thefountain.com>



<http://atanaiplus.cz>

EDGE TREATMENTS

Edge treatments are another type of design element that has become a current trend. The predominant style of choice is the zigzag edge. This is one of those things that feels sort of silly to call out, and yet it is showing up in so many places, it's hard to ignore. In fact, I could have placed one hundred sites in this chapter without too much effort. When I see a trend I report on it, so let's study this small detail and how designers are putting it to work.

As hard as I try to understand the meaning of any design element, this one seems nearly impossible. At its core this simple element is nothing more than decoration. And in this role it operates effectively. In pretty much every sample presented here, the edge treatment could be omitted and a straight line used instead. The designs wouldn't fall apart or fail. Instead the jagged edge dresses it up and gives it an extra touch of style.

The Atommica site is one of my favorites in this category ([figure 1](#)). The jagged edge that runs at an angle across the page serves as a great break between the contrasting colors of the page. Yes, the design would do just fine without it, and yet it adds a gorgeous touch to the page.

As always, don't abuse the element but keep it in mind. It might give your design that extra punch it needs.

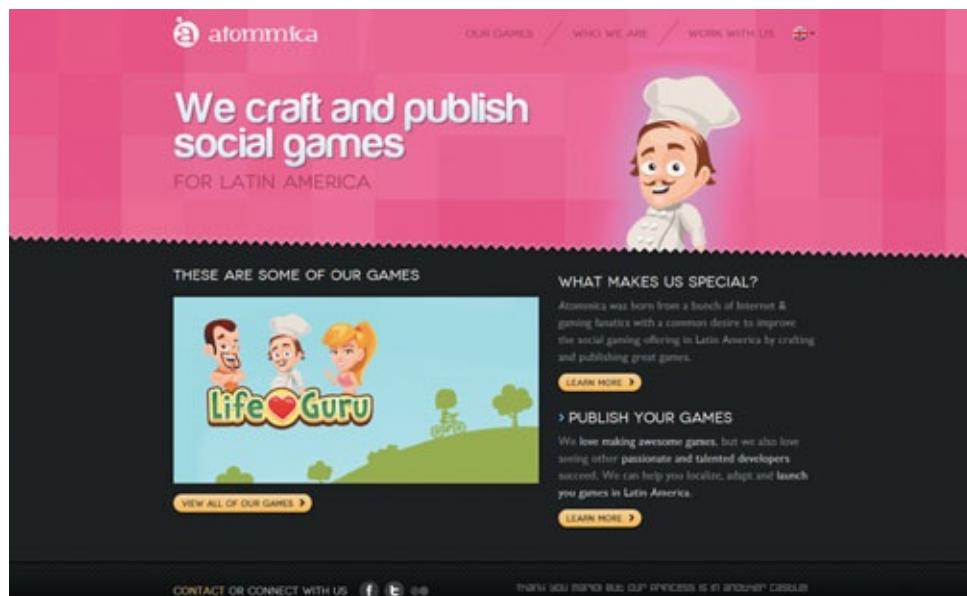


Figure 1 <http://www.atommica.com>



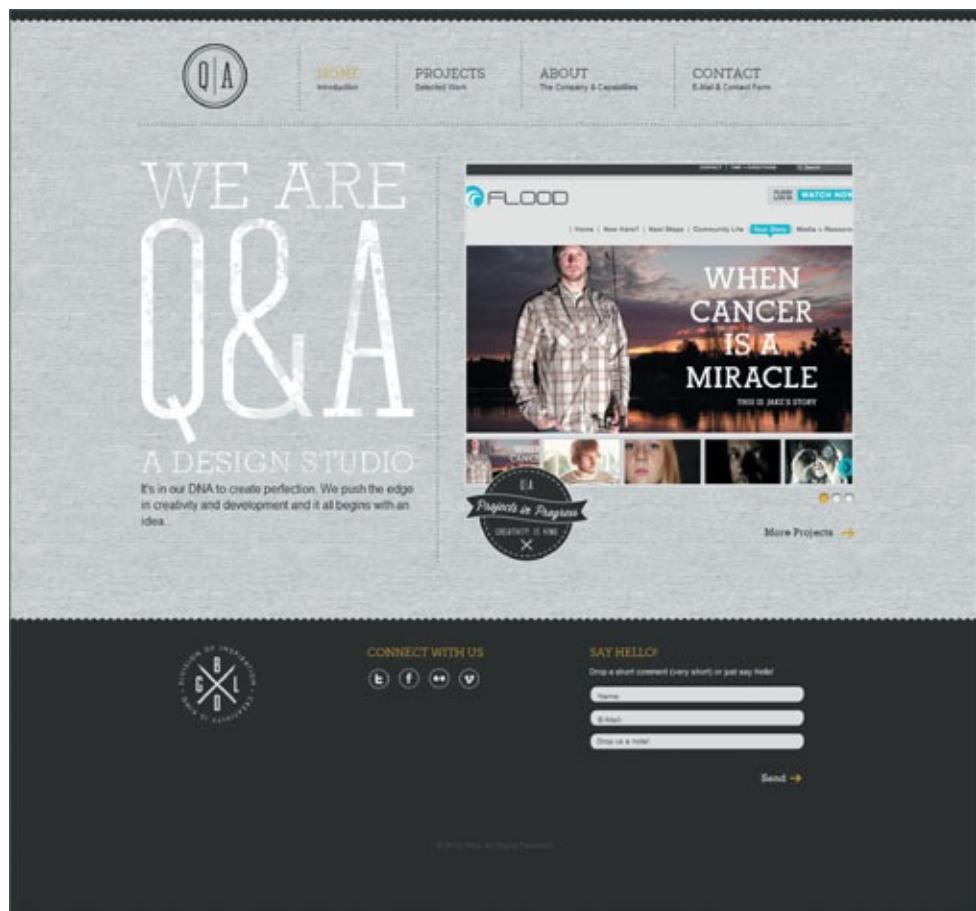
<http://kennysaunders.com>



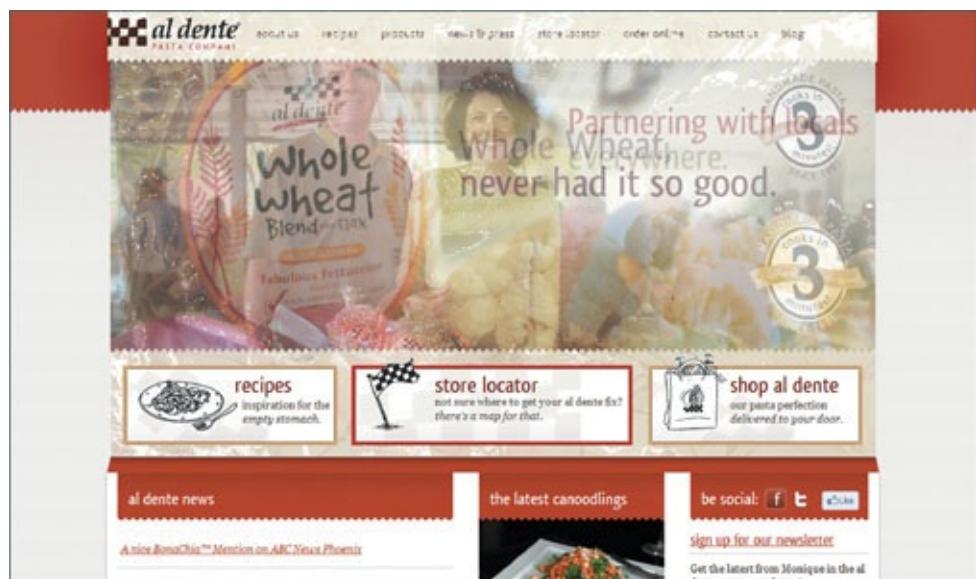
<http://www.artisanmedia.com>



<http://www.goodiesforgifts.com>



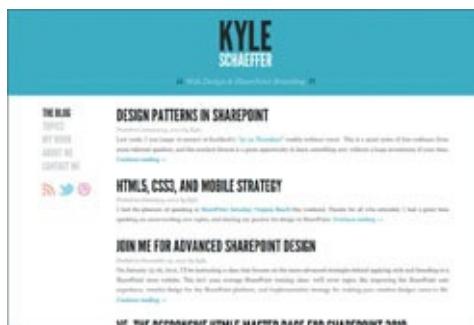
<http://qnacreatives.com>



<http://www.aldentepasta.com>



<http://www.popset.com>



<http://kyleschaeffer.com>



<http://www.w3counter.com>



<http://maximebrunelle.com>



<http://jeff.wintersinger.com>

PATTERNS

Clearly we can't claim that the use of patterns in design are anything even remotely new. Patterns have been used for thousands of years. All the same, there has been a surge in the use of patterns in web design in the last year or so. In particular there seems to be a strong interest in more subtle patterns (as epitomized in the free resource [SubtlePatterns.com](#)), but bold uses are still to be found.

It seems to me that patterns serve an important role. They can add style to a design while only adding tiny amounts of data. This means a small pattern has very little impact on the load time of a web page. Most patterns can be created by repeating a very tiny image. Patterns are also pleasant because they play a more supportive role. That is, they typically don't contain information, so they don't tend to distract.

A great example to start with is Laura Burciaga's site ([figure 1](#)). Here the simple stripes and other patterns serve to stylize the page. And while they dress the page up, they don't steal the show from the featured content.

In other cases we certainly find more prominently styled patterns—such as in the Maryland Craft Beer Festival design ([figure 2](#)). In this example, the bold yellow pattern offsets a content area that's based on matching colors. In this way the yellow background doesn't overtake the content. And again, the pattern doesn't compete for the primary focus of the page. In this case the pattern provides a distinct style, making it far more memorable.



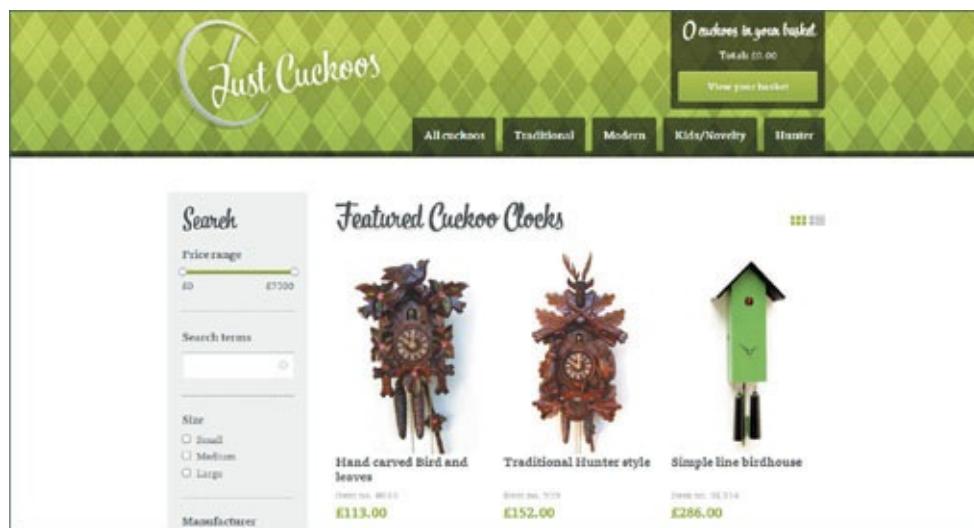
<http://www.eddiediazdesign.com>



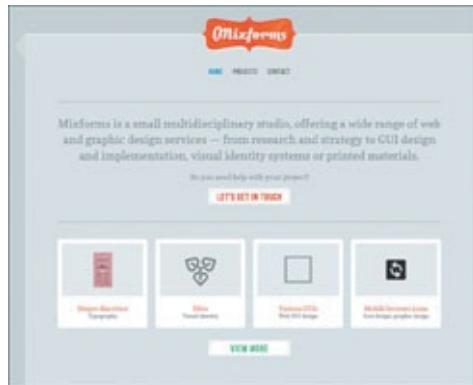
Figure 1 <http://lauraburciaga.com>



Figure 2 <http://mdcraftbeerfestival.com>



<http://www.justcuckoos.co.uk>



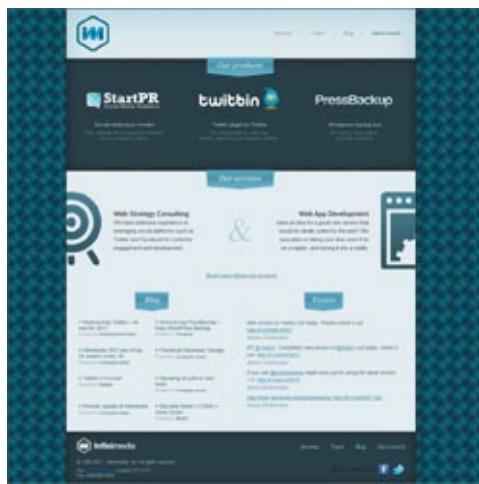
<http://mixforms.com>



<http://drleaf.com>



<http://elegantseagulls.com>



<http://infinimedia.com>



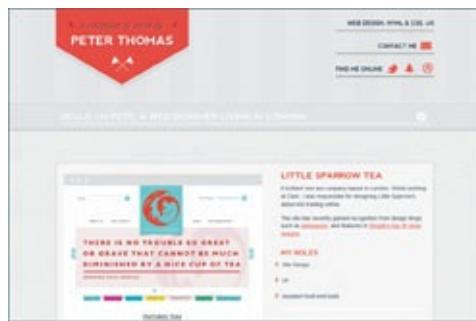
<http://www.handsetdetection.com>



<http://www.negociodemulher.com.br>



<https://www.projecturf.com>



<http://madeforthe.net>

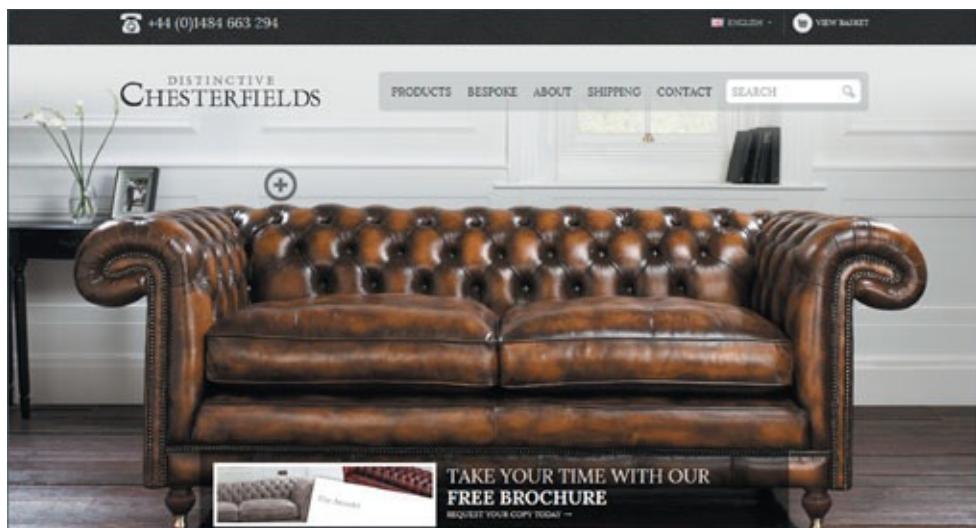
FABRIC

Another trend that is extremely popular right now is the use of fabric in web design. Quite often this is a style accomplished through the use of repeating patterns, subtle textures and the illusion of stitching. Its origin is hard to discern. Certainly it is a visually appealing style, so it isn't hard to imagine why designers have latched onto it.

In my opinion one of the main draws for this style is that it disconnects the viewer from the technical underpinnings of the web. The sites based on fabric patterns tend to have an organic, tangible feel with a texture you can imagine feeling, though it clearly doesn't exist. The result is a distinct look that creates a comfortable and inviting mood. Keep this in mind as you view the samples provided here.

I love showing extreme opposites when it comes to a particular style, so with this in mind I turn your attention toward the Poco Nico site ([figure 1](#)). Here the use of fabric styles is all-consuming. It really becomes a theme, not just a stylistic element. The tone set here is fun and playful, and matches the product offered, which happens to be children's clothing. It's an appropriate use of the style.

In stark contrast I love the way Pagelift ([figure 2](#)) uses fabric. Here the implementation of the style is incredibly minimal: nothing more than a pair of buttons with stitching at the top of the page. In this case, the fabric doesn't set the tone. In reality it plays into the tone that's established by the other design elements in the page. Always consider the range of options you have when it comes to the use of any stylistic element. It can be over the top or extremely subtle and anywhere in between.



<http://www.distinctivechesterfields.com>



Figure 1 <http://www.poconido.com>



<http://www.shoepassion.de>

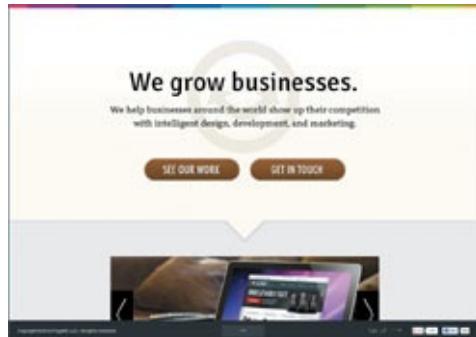


Figure 2 <http://www.pagelift.com>



<http://ethercycle.com>



<http://www.drwoe.nl>



<http://kiskolabs.com>



<http://www.rodolphecelestin.com>



<http://www.quoteroller.com>



<http://www.greenchameleondesign.com/rollosride>



<http://calebogden.com>



<http://www.zwartwitmedia.com>



<http://hellomio.com>



<http://www.stylapps.com>

PEEKING OUT

Some styles speak for themselves Sometimes a trend is simply a trend. I think this is exactly such a case. I see a few brief things I want to comment on, but overall the approach is pretty clear. For many designers, the fact that so many have already used the approach will be a deterrent, while others will be inspired by an interesting design element.

In all of the samples here you will find hands holding the content containers. Most often this ends up giving the illusion that the content exists on some form of paper or board. The approach tends to add a great deal of depth to a page, most often creating three distinct layers. The foremost being the content layer, next the individual holding the content and finally the background. It is interesting how this visually pushes the content toward the viewer.

Conceptually I like the idea; it is as though the artists are literally presenting their work and clearly associating themselves with the work they do. The connection is positive and leaves a distinct impression of the individual. In other cases it seems to be less for the purpose of branding and more about adding some clever detailing.

This is the type of trend that is sometimes used flippantly. Be sure to consider the message you want to send and how this particular approach might help accomplish your goals. Maybe you want to add some fun to your design; if so this is a great way to do it.

Even better, use the samples here as inspiration. Where might you take this approach to make it your own? What twist, change or addition can you make that will make your use more unique and effective? Use the examples here as stepping stones to find your own visual solution.



<http://www.petit-team.com>



<http://andrewshanley.co.uk>



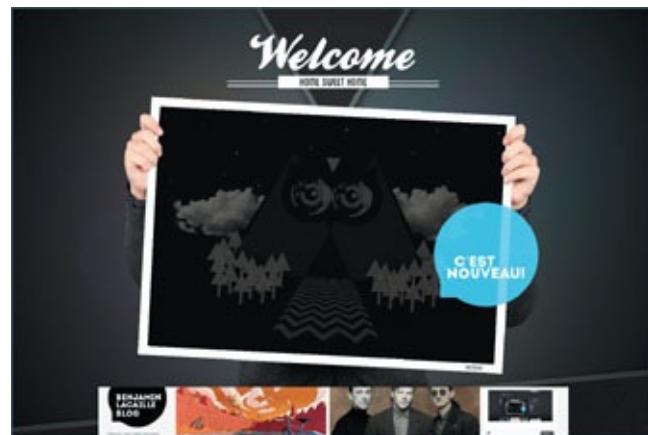
<http://www.focadesign.com.br>



<http://handmadestudio.info>



<http://andresgallo.com>



<http://imp3rium.free.fr>



<http://itaiinselberg.com>



<http://markjaworskistudios.com>



<http://www.audio-logic.net/signup.php>



<http://www.mathieulanglois.com>

MIXED TYPE

Typography is one of the most critical tools in the designer's utility belt. And at times principles of typography get put to work in ways that not only create beautiful type, but also push it to the foreground as a work of art in itself. With the explosion of web-based type, as highlighted in the large section of web typography earlier on in this book, I have featured a lot of beautiful type. This small section is intended to highlight a subsection of typography that takes the type to an artistic level. Here we find prominent blocks of text used to create visual interest by combining many different typefaces into a single block. Sometimes they are the same font, but in different weights, and in others it is a mishmash of radically different fonts.

Consider first the example found on Roxanne Cook's site ([figure 1](#)). Here the large text block is by far the most prominent element on the page. In fact, depending on your screen size, it might very well be the only thing you see beyond the navigation. The typography not only demonstrates Roxanne's skills, but it also contains text that explains what she does. In other words, it's not only visually interesting, it communicates something at a literal level.

A slightly different take on this style can be found on the Flint Boutique site ([figure 2](#)). Here the use of mixed type plays into the crafty style of the site and the services they offer. Obviously the words communicate a message, but their visual role seems to far outweigh what they actually say. In fact, I find it kind of hard to read. With this in mind I propose that the visual purpose is the primary goal and ultimately presents the intended message: This site is about crafty, handmade stuff. The intended audience is the bride-to-be, so clearly the style and mood are not in the

traditional overly formal style. They are targeting a different kind of customer in this niche, and the mixed type plays into this nicely.



Figure 1 <http://roxannecook.com>



<http://www.wearedolly.fr>



Figure 2 <http://www.flintboutique.co.za>



<http://www.ajmarksberry.com>



<http://joshgarrels.com>



<http://thegooodetimegals.com>



<http://www.castirondesign.com>



<http://www.kitchensinkstudios.com>

CIRCLES WITH TYPE

When I started writing this category, the idea of circles as a trend seemed silly. Yet the more I looked, the more I found them. In fact, if you browse through this book, you will find many other examples that I could have included in this chapter. Initially I was limiting myself to logos that are set inside of a circle, but then I added samples that used circles in other ways as well.

Take a look at the Meltmedia ([figure 1](#)), Javier Lo ([figure 2](#)) and Jude's Jewels ([figure 3](#)) sites. In all of these (and a few others from the samples) the logos either consist of or are contained inside of a circle. This all begs a single question: Why?

It isn't hard to find the circle theme far beyond a container for the logo. For example, the English Workshop ([figure 4](#)) or the Imagen y Código (in English: Image and Code) ([figure 5](#)) sites both make use of circles in very decorative and supportive ways that are not tied to the logo.

I don't think there is a deep underlying meaning at work here. It is simply a decorative element that works well with most any design. It happens to be a practical trend.

Part of me suspects the use of the circle is rooted in the fact that thanks to CSS3, we can now render rounded corners inside of the browser. If you set up rounded corners just right on a square element, you magically have a circle. This might not sound all that exciting, but I am fairly certain that this trick was used here and there, and the next thing you know the design world has circles on the brain.

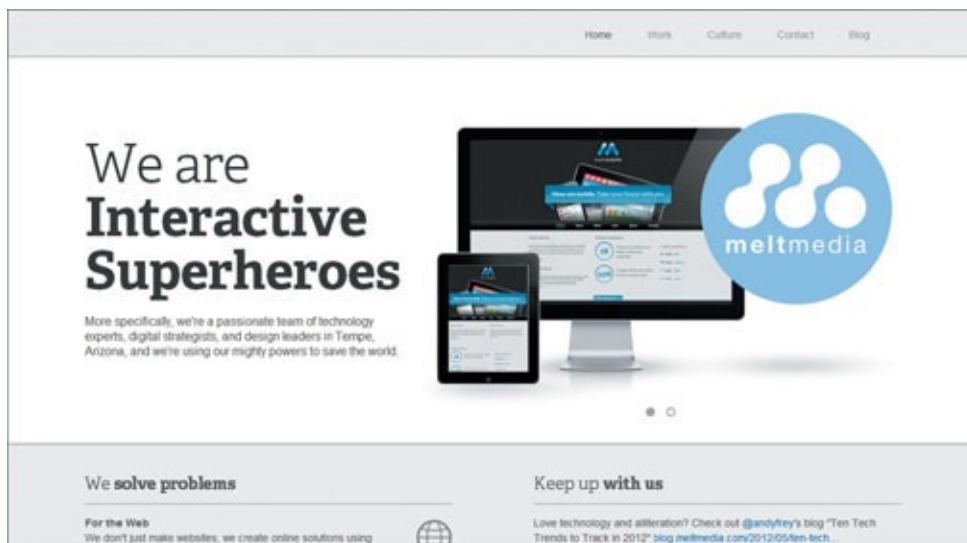


Figure 1 <http://meltmedia.com>

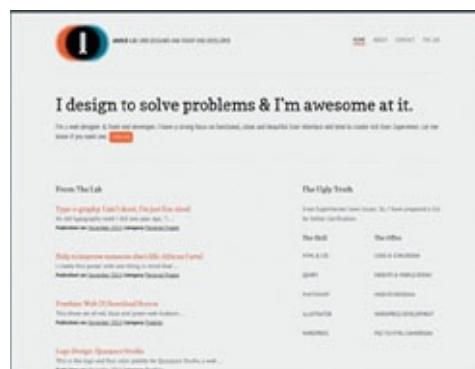


Figure 2 <http://www.javierlo.com>

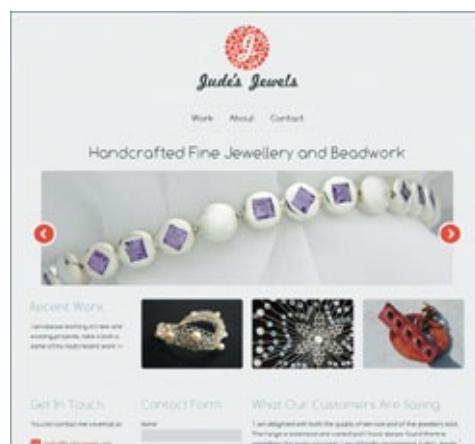


Figure 3 <http://www.judesjewels.net>



Figure 4 <http://www.englishworkshop.eu>



<http://charlottetang.com>

I like design, make design & write about design. I like pens—digital and analogue ones. I like special characters and ligatures.
I \heartsuit the internet.

Ich mag Design, mache Design, schreibe über Design, ich mag Stifte – digitale und analoge. Ich mag besondere Buchstaben und Ligaturen. Und das Internet.

NEWS

[Rallygirls](#)
Mon., 15 Apr 2013, 06:00 UTC
After six years of planning

[LogoWorks Website](#)
Tue., 16 Apr 2013, 16:30 UTC
LogoWorks website relaunch

Twitter [@charltetang](#)

LinkedIn [charlottetang](#)

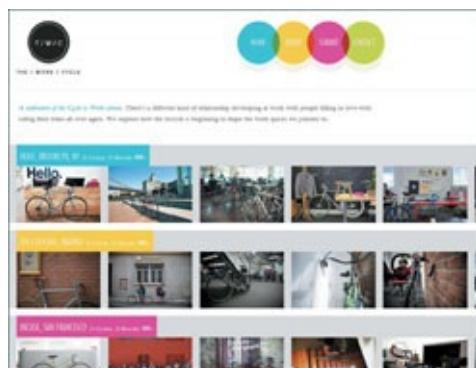
<http://nadine-rossa.de>



<http://2011.thehappybit.com>



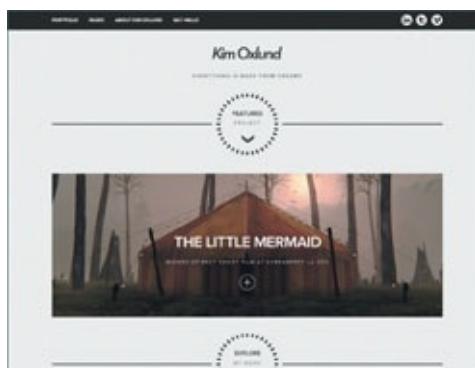
<http://www.weareo3.com>



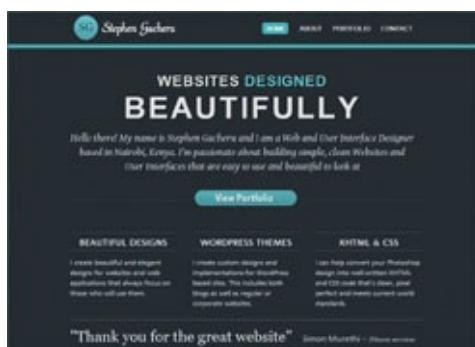
<http://www.theworkcycle.com>



Figure 5 <http://www.imagenycodigo.com.ar>



<http://kimoxlund.com>



<http://stephengacheru.me>

SKEUOMORPH

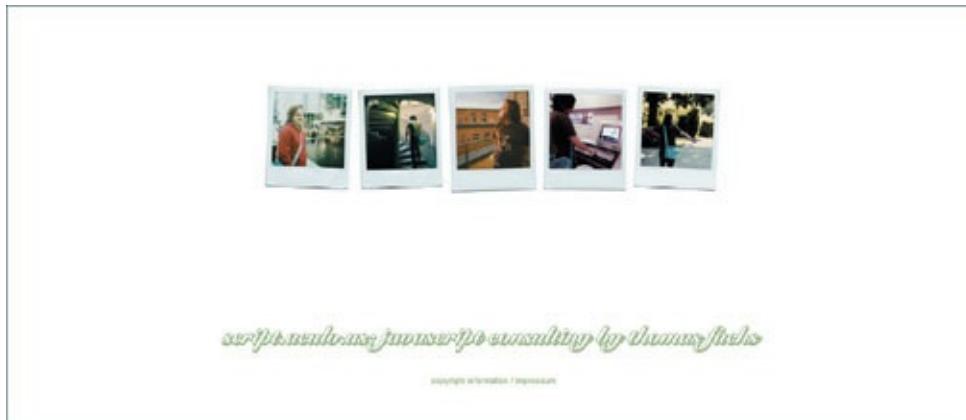
A skeuomorph is typically defined as a derivative object that has decorative design elements that come from the original. Skeuomorphs are used to reference the original and thereby create a familiar object. For example, many homes have nonfunctional shutters. In fact, I bet there are more homes with fake ones than real ones. Every house in the neighborhood I grew up in had them. The point is that they don't function, but they are familiar elements that decorate an object in a familiar way. Fake shutters aren't necessary on a house, but they sure do look nice.

Translated to the web, this definition breaks down a bit. Skeuomorphs presume that the object (in our case the web) is a derivative of some other element from which it draws inspiration. I am going to shift this to include any web interface that references real-world things with the intent of implying purpose or function. A sample will demonstrate what I mean.

The Cascade Brewery Co. website ([figure 1](#)). is a perfect example of a skeuomorph. Here you will find a menu system that filters the elements found below. The elements are presented as gauges and switches with a clear reference to things you might find in the brewing process and on some sort of control panel. Not only are they pretty to look at, they also communicate their function and purpose.

Another example that is packed with lots of skeumorphs is the Fine Goods website ([figure 2](#)). For example, the red and white awning is pretty and decorative, but it is also informative. It is a clear reference to the awning you find in front of a physical Fine Goods store. We also find that the product is visually placed on "shelves." Clearly we don't need shelves to hold up digital images. But the structure does highlight the

product that is for sale as well as separate each item. Finally, you will notice that the link navigation on the left appear to be drawers. Again, websites don't need drawers, but it is a metaphor for containers of content. There are more skeuomorphs packed into this site, but I'll let you discover them.



<http://script.aculo.us/thomas>



<http://www.shelfluv.com>



<http://jackjohnsonmusic.com/welcome>



Figure 1 <http://www.cascadebreweryco.com.au>



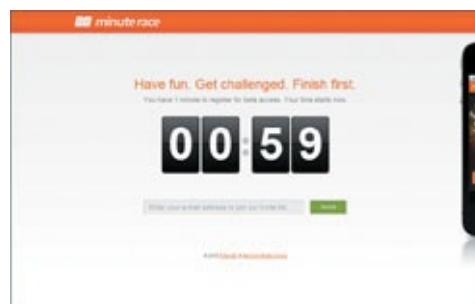
Figure 2 <http://www.finegoodsmarket.com>



<http://www.43folders.com>



<http://www.13creative.com>



<http://minuterace.com>

MONSTERS

Mascots are certainly nothing new to web design. I could have easily made this chapter about ninjas, robots, aliens and a number of other frequently used character types. I settled in on monsters as an example of this particular genre. This is partly because I actually used the approach myself (see [the WordPress section](#) for Monster Meltdown). Mascots, and in this case monsters, serve many purposes. A quick survey follows.

Perhaps the most common use of a mascot is to simply provide a personality for—or characterization of—a product. Such is the case with the Solid Giant design ([figure 1](#)). Here the monster becomes a symbol for the company and a very memorable part of the design.

At other times, the monster’s role is to simply lighten the mood. I think the Quodis sample is a perfect demonstration of this ([figure 2](#)). Here we see a monster leaving a “web boutique.” Buying a website can be an intimidating process. This simple illustration with a silly smiling monster sucks the anxiety out of the situation. Suddenly the process feels lighthearted and friendly. Seems like a pretty good sales pitch for potential clients. In this case, notice that the monster doesn’t become a symbol for the site. The brand retains its identity. It uses the silly monster for just one purpose.

Perhaps one of the most iconic samples is from the Beercamp website ([figure 3](#)). Here the monster is large and in charge. In fact, it dominates the home page. I wouldn’t be surprised at all if the monster became a symbol for the event. It would make for cool shirts and all sorts of extensions. It’s fun, memorable, quite unique, and just works really well.

As you consider using monsters or other mascots in your design, take a good look at the way others have put it to work. Not just from a visual standpoint, but from a strategic perspective as well. All design elements,

big and small, can play into the overall message. Don't just use a monster because you feel like it that day. Put the tool to work for you in a meaningful way.



Figure 1 <http://solidgiant.com>



Figure 2 <http://quodis.com>



<http://www.imaginamos.com>



<http://tutimi.com>



<http://www.chilid.pl>



Figure 3 <http://2012.beercamp.com>



<http://playtend.com>



<http://www.srburns.es>

TILED

Given a problem, designers are quick to find solutions. Consider my earlier discussion of responsive design. When faced with the question of how to fill the space available with content, one such solution is to put everything into a grid as blocks, or tiles, then simply have them flow to fill the space available. It's a simple approach that adapts to most any size screen. Naturally clever designers observed the problem and built sites around this approach. With this perspective it shouldn't be all that surprising to find this chapter in this particular volume. Though not all of the samples here adapt to the screen, and in some cases the tiling is simply decorative, it is still a valid approach that we see used on many sites.

A clear demonstration of this is Erik Marinovich's site ([figure 1](#)). Since all of the elements are the exact same size, it isn't too hard to have the CSS tile them in a way that fits your screen. Load this one up in a browser—then change the size of the browser to see the results.

Another site that follows the pattern, but not with the same simplicity, is Bernd Kammerer's ([figure 2](#)). Here the tiles are of varying sizes, and you have the option to filter your view based on the items you want to see. Clearly a site like this takes a bit more planning. For example, you would most likely prototype something like this first, then set up some design guidelines for the project for the designer to then work within, especially since it is based on a jQuery plug-in called “vGrid” that accomplishes much of the hard work (and provides its own set of boundaries)⁶.

Another example I particularly like is the Skive Festival site ([figure 3](#)). Again this site allows you to filter the content based on your area of interest. What I like about this one is how the functionality carries through to the subpages. By doing so they improve the chance that people

will understand how to use the site; repletion helps them establish the use of the site. In this case, another jQuery plug-in is at work; this time, one called Isotope⁷.

An interesting point to make here is how effectively these two samples make use of prebuilt plug-ins. You don't look at either of them and get the feeling that some tool was bolted into place. Instead they have a totally custom feel. This is a fantastic demonstration of how a tool can inspire and empower a design, resulting in a delicate dance between what is possible and what is needed. Consider, for example, that the Istotope plug-in used above is around 700 lines of JavaScript code. The time savings there alone is huge. Playing within the boundaries of such tools can be very profitable.

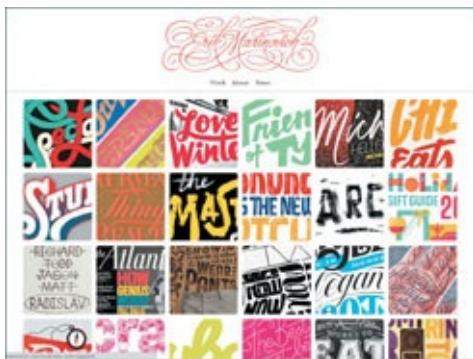
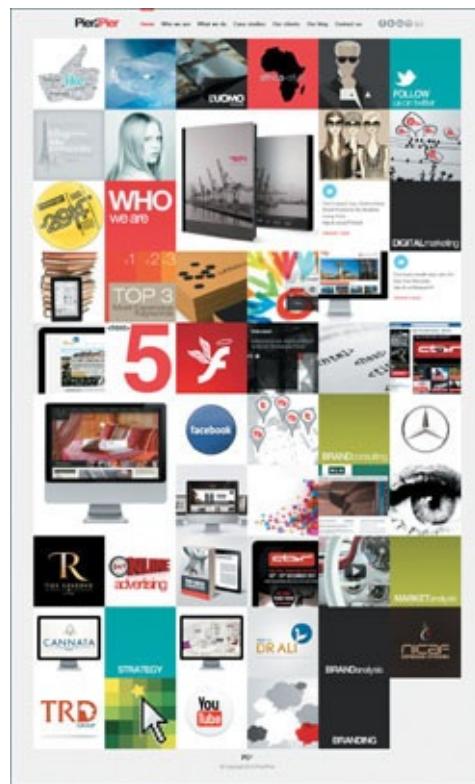


Figure 1 <http://www.erikmarinovich.com>



Figure 3 <http://skivefestival.dk>



<http://www.pier2pier.co.za>

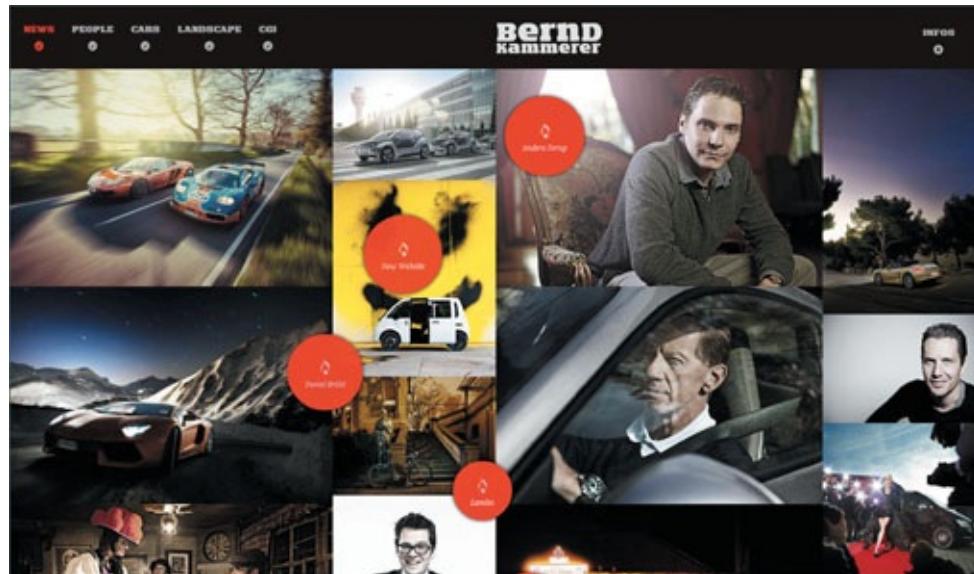


Figure 2 <http://berndkammerer.com>



<http://www.ricardocastillo.com>



<http://www.killingsworthstation.com>



<http://www.fiaschi.org>



<http://quelifranco.com/#home>



<http://www.premiere.fr/35ans>

WOOD

The use of wood in web design is another common design element. I covered wood previously in Volumes 1 and 2, but also on DesignMeltdown.com many years ago. With trends like this I am always torn between finding something new to cover and including patterns people frequently use. In the end, I decided to cover it because it is still such a popular style.

The use of wood in the samples included here is not hard to pick up on; most demonstrate bold usages of the element. Interestingly it is mostly a supporting element; the remainder of the structure for the site relies on other elements. It is these elements that ensure the design is modern and fits into current styles. In this way, the use of wood in design is a clear demonstration of how a single element can grow and change over time to fit in with almost any style.

A perfect example of this is the Queen City Merge site ([figure 1](#)). Here the wood background sets a tone and mood for the site but does nothing in terms of structure or content. It's a purely supporting role that works well and can easily fit with any site's style. This makes it an easy-to-use option and it is no wonder designers so often turn to it.

In slight contrast to this, take a look at the Tuff Kookooshka design ([figure 2](#)). Here the wood is much more dramatic, though it still fills a background role. In this case, the style of the wood much more vividly plays into the style of the product being presented. As with all design elements, the wood element offers a lot of room for variation.

For every design element there is always a way to take it over the top. Such is the case on the Enochs website ([figure 3](#)). Here the use of wood has been transformed into a full on theme and finds a role as the primary containers for content. Clearly the usage fits well with the theme of the

site and narrowly avoids being hideous. Sites with extreme themes commonly walk the line between terrible and awesome—and fortunately this one falls on the good side.



Figure 1 <http://www.qcmerge.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.tuffcookie.net>



<http://woodtype.org>



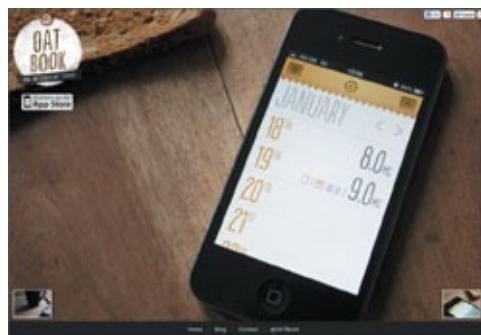
Figure 3 <http://www.enochs.co.uk>



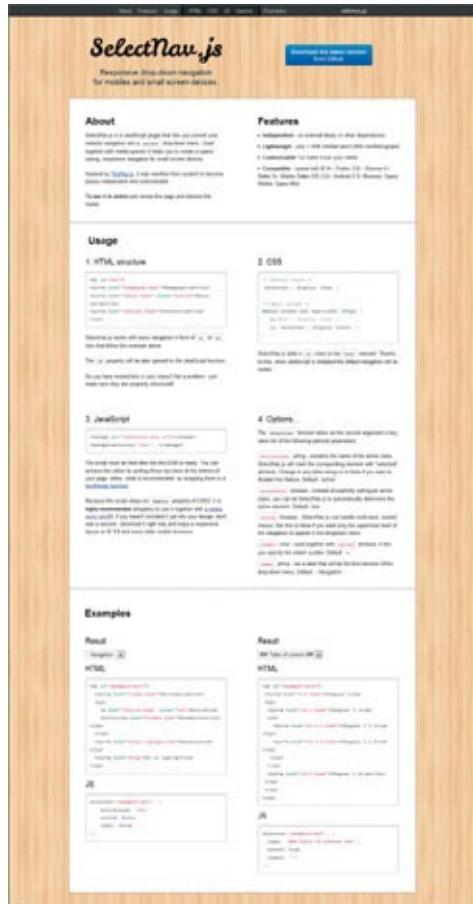
<http://www.bluenectartequila.com>



<http://moni.whitewaterlabs.com>



<http://www.oatbook.co.uk>



<http://lukaszfiszer.github.com/selectnav.js>



<http://camilaprada.com>



<http://www.galandesign.com>



<http://www.jomedconstruction.com>



<http://www.taskburnapp.com>

SPACE

As someone obsessed with the song “Spaceman” by The Killers (which I am using as inspiration while I write this), I am excited to present a small chapter here on space-inspired web design. Sometimes pulling a specific niche chapter like this together with sufficient samples can be difficult, but not so with this particular theme. It seems that the use of space in web design is popular right now. In fact, you will find a number of samples used elsewhere in this book that easily fit the role.

To begin, I would like to consider the design of the 40Digits web site ([figure 1](#)). In this particular case the space theme gives the designer something visually interesting to work with and demonstrates to clients the quality of the design work. In many cases the design is meant to blend in and the content is meant to pop. Themes used as they are on this site create an alternate scenario where the design of the theme is a clear demonstration of the team’s abilities; perfect for an agency site. Even better, a space theme oozes with connotations of forward thinking and modern practices. Why theme yourself in the past when you can be so futuristic? Check out the chapter on nineteenth-century design for the opposite perspective ([Chapter 2](#)).

Another example that strongly relies on the connotations and associations of the space theme is the Themify site ([figure 2](#)). Here the usage is extremely light—simply a stylized photograph of space that’s used as a background in the header. This is certainly a much more supportive role than the 40Digits sample, but the results are very similar. The space element works to set a modern feel and places the product in a favorable light. Another extremely similar usage is the QuickSend site ([figure 3](#)).

Finally I want to take a closer look at the Lander site (**figure 4**). Here the space theme is narrowed down a bit to the idea of “landing,” something that we closely connect with the moon. Thus we have a moonscape combined with some sketchy drawings of space elements to help viewers draw the connection (otherwise it might be mistaken for a desert). You have no doubt noticed that the name of the product, Lander, and the theme fit very nicely together. Cases like this are the ones that I tend to really fall in love with. Anytime a design style, theme or other element has a double meaning it works that much better. In this way, the design represents the brand in a literal way. And with samples like this, we can clearly see how perfectly matched topic and theme can be.



Figure 1 <http://4odigits.com>

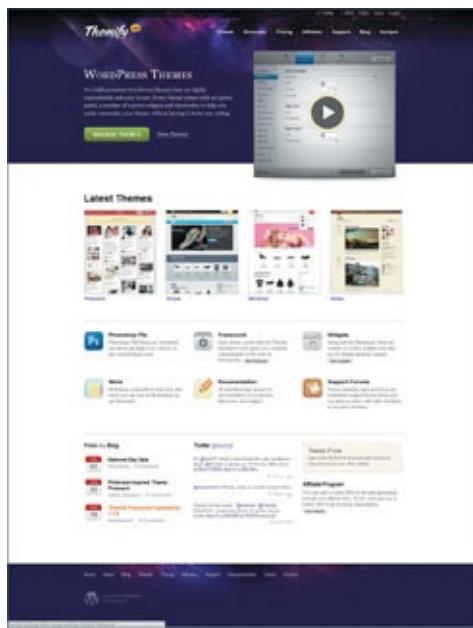


Figure 3 <http://moeedm.com/quicksend>



Figure 2 <http://themify.me>



<http://www.newicemedia.com>

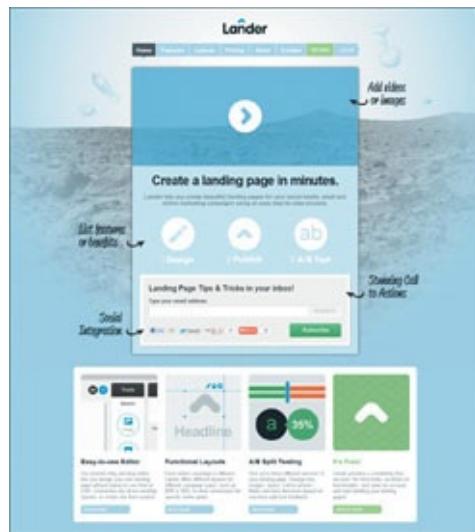


Figure 4 <http://www.landerapp.com>



<http://wearekiss.com>



<http://www.noeldesign.net>



<http://www.pixelbaecker.de>



<http://www.apollohq.com>

04 / Site Types

In order to identify some design trends we look at specific things like the use of patterns, fabrics or ribbons—but in order to spot other trends we need to look at specific topics and a collection of sites that can give some indication of a particular style at work. In this section, we will focus on a number of specific industries or topics and any trends we can potentially find in their designs. It seems that nearly every topic or industry forms a set of common patterns that people draw on inside the space. Ironically this is even evident in the websites used by design agencies. Buying into a trend isn't inherently bad—playing into the norms people are familiar with is actually a good thing.

AGENCY

One of my favorite places to look for industry trends is on the agency sites. Agencies are supposed to be leaders in the online space, so they can be great places to spot innovation. One trend that seems rather clear is that agency sites have gravitated toward simpler, cleaner sites. Certainly there are still over-the-top agency sites, but for the most part there has been a huge move toward usability and extremely clear communication. Most agencies have a small set of core skills that drive most of the work they do. As such, it makes sense for an agency site to quickly communicate this niche rather than to try to convince visitors that they can do it all. The trend seems to be to focus on connecting with potential clients that closely fit the type of work the agency is interested in doing.

To illustrate this point I want to highlight a rather extreme case—Church Media ([figure 1](#)). This agency focuses on building sites for churches and their associated ministries. It's a pretty clear niche. As it turns out, they produce some of the finest sites in the space and are clear trendsetters. Most of the styles found in their work show up in countless other sites that were no doubt inspired by a Church Media design. In general, you will notice that this site is extremely simple and clean. The focus is on the five-word sales pitch and a showcase of their work. In this way, they quickly filter out any visitors in search of other types of design work.

A nice contrast to Church Media is the Myjive design ([figure 2](#)). Though the sites are in the same ballpark visually, both quickly establish their niche through the use of their clear content. In Myjive's case the scope is a bit wider than Church Media, but all the same a topic and area of expertise is established. They make no mention of industrial design, print design or any other medium; the focus is on digital work.

Again, the industry trend seems to be toward simplicity and clarity. This is a mentality that will do well in almost any area of online work.

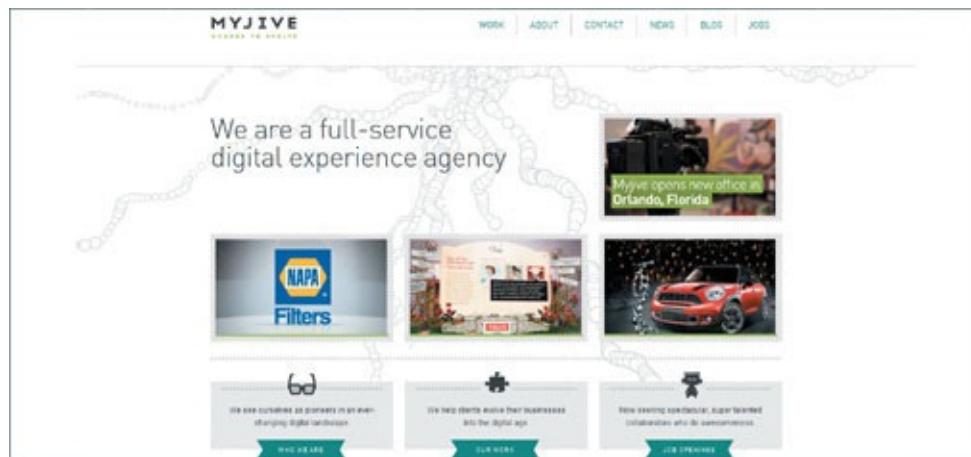


Figure 2 <http://www.myjive.com>

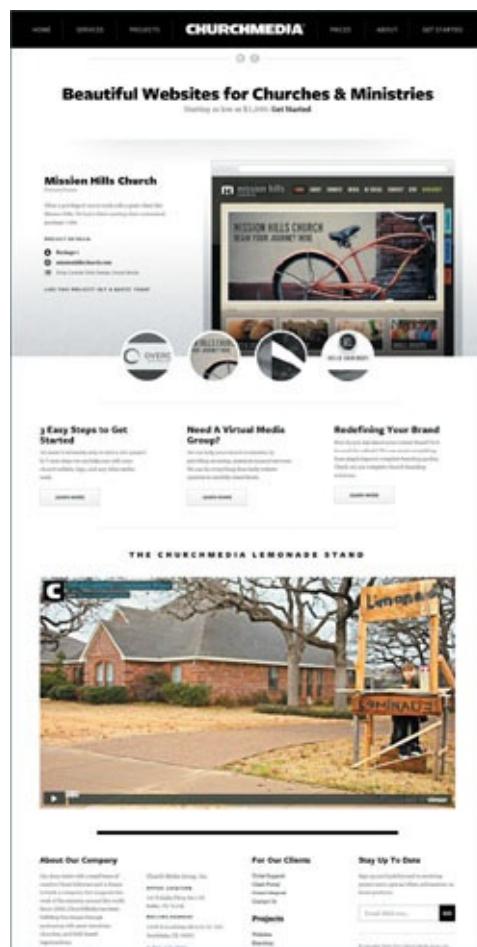


Figure 1 <http://churchmedia.com>



<http://burstcreative.com>



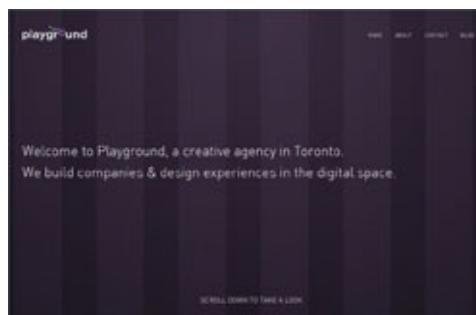
<http://fleava.com>



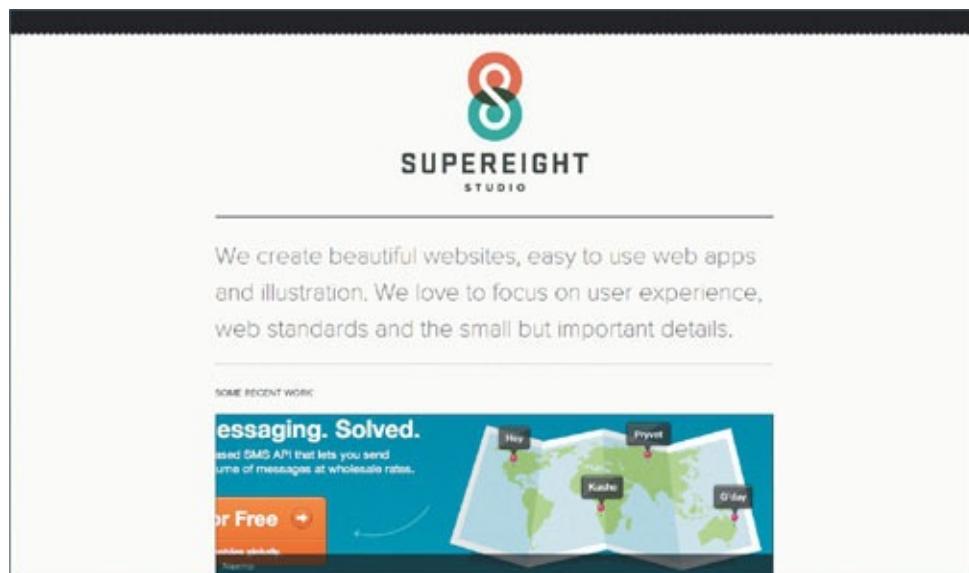
<http://www.uniongasworx.com>



<http://www.worryfreelabs.com>



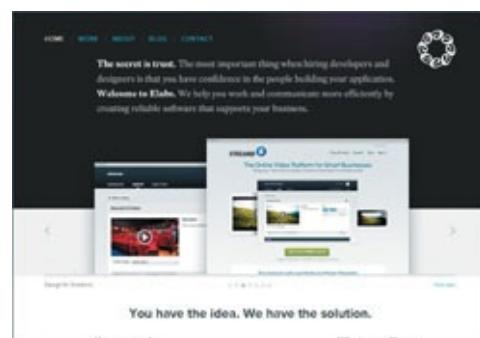
<http://playgroundinc.com>



<http://www.supereightstudio.com>



<http://www.basili.co>



<http://elabs.se>



<http://www.moozedesign.com>



<http://toopixel.ch>

PORTFOLIO

A personal portfolio site is often cited as one of the most painful sites to build. It turns out that the lack of client restrictions drives most designers toward insanity. Without requirements, anything can be done. As a result, portfolios can be created in seemingly infinite ways. This makes it hard for someone like me to spot trends. After all, how can twelve or so samples begin to sum up the work of every creative person out there? Of course that is impossible, but I can still highlight some beautiful samples that are sure to get you thinking.

To begin, we will look at an extremely conservative sample. I recently read a description of portfolio sites that went something like “the fancier the portfolio site the crappier the work.” The statement is fairly accurate. Fortunately for Marus Friberg ([figure 1](#)), his insanely tame and minimal site contains samples of his awesome work. How is it that the better the designer, the less over-the-top their portfolio becomes? In fact, it seems that at some point there is a whole mess of incredible designers who don’t bother with a portfolio anymore.

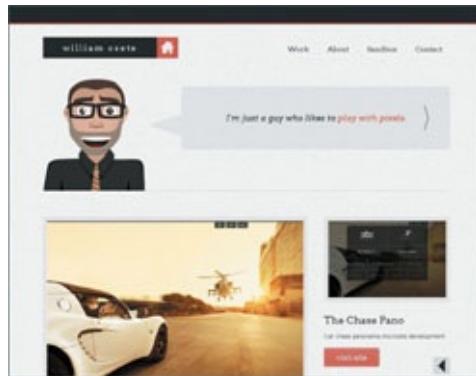
But a portfolio can present your own personal style while playing into the simplicity-based approach. Take the portfolio of Levin Mejia ([figure 2](#)), for example. This is the type of site I find easy to fall in love with. I can’t imagine a single tweak to the design. It’s gorgeous, easy to read and paints an incredibly positive view of the individual—so much so I don’t even mind that I have to dig for his name. Frankly, if I was looking to recruit someone, I would do whatever it took to find him.

Finally, we do still find some experimental work that stands as a portfolio piece all on its own, even though it does contain great design work—thereby breaking the stereotype presented above. Consider this awesome interactive creation on [JayarajPR.com](#) ([figure 3](#)). In this case,

the portfolio speaks volumes about the capabilities of the individual. In fact, the whole thing feels as much like an experiment as anything could. Instead of coming across as over-the-top for the sake of getting attention, it gives the impression of a really competent designer/developer who is playing around. And that is far more appealing to recruiters.



Figure 1 <http://www.marcusfriberg.com>



<http://www.williamcsete.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.fourandthree.com>

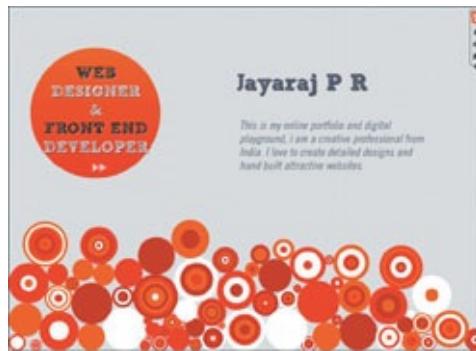


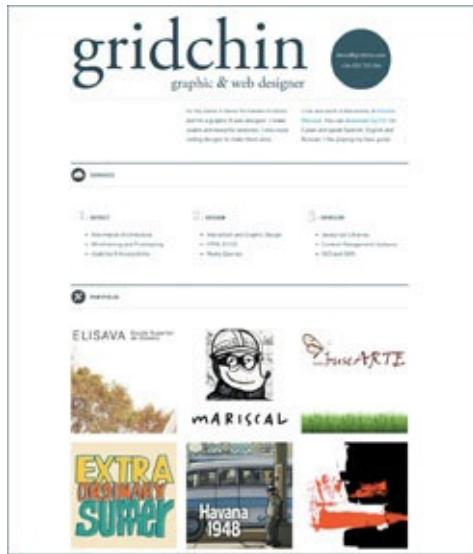
Figure 3 <http://www.jayarajpr.com>



<http://www.cleansimpleclear.com>



<http://www.joelreed.co.uk>



<http://www.gridchin.com>



<http://www.jessicahische.is>



<http://www.jeremymadrid.com>



<http://www.ggmusicandaudio.com>



<http://havocinspired.co.uk>

E-COMMERCE

Some topics present a particularly interesting opportunity to build some inspiration, and in my opinion e-commerce is one of those. This is clearly an area strongly rooted in making money and optimizing for return on any and every design change. This is certainly the approach taken by e-commerce giants like Amazon. With this in mind, I love collecting a small set of sites that are not only gorgeous in design but also do two things: First, they break the mold and don't follow the "standard" formula. Second, they are fairly unknown when compared to Amazon and the like. Let's face it, you don't need to see Amazon for inspiration; what you need are fresh ideas. So with this type of thinking I present to you a diverse set of e-commerce sites that I hope will result in new ideas for your work.

To illustrate this, please take a look at the Krystalrae landing page ([figure 1](#)). This is not the brand's main home page. There is much that I love about this page, but I want to focus on one small element. In the screenshot, you'll notice that the border of the first large image matches the actual product. It gets even better. When you hover over an item, the border changes from white to a pattern that is drawn from the individual product. Even better, the borders are animated and move as you maintain the hover state. Extra details like this provide the awesome sauce that takes a superclean and minimal design (already beautiful) and pushes it over the top. It's the kind of site that is inspiring to work on and frankly is a very different kind of e-commerce site.

Some sites have the luxury of having to showcase a single product. This creates a unique opportunity to craft a design entirely around that product and minimizes the need for supporting structure. The *A Book of Beards* site (a book by Justin James Muir) ([figure 2](#)). is one example. Only having to sell viewers on one item allows the site designer to present

a clear and bold picture of what this product features—beards. Personally I think this approach also could be applied when you are dealing with multiple products.

Finally, this chapter features a few samples that don't necessarily deviate from the traditional layout formula in a radical way, but they do clearly set themselves apart. Consider the Swedish Hasbeens site ([figure 3](#)). as an example. Here the typical layout is fairly clear, yet the overall style is anything but “normal.” Instead, the thematic approach plays perfectly into the product and does much more to support it than provide a clean, unobtrusive interface to make a purchase. The process of shopping on the site becomes an experience in itself, one in which you become immersed in a style that matches their product.



Figure 1 <http://shop.krystalrae.com>



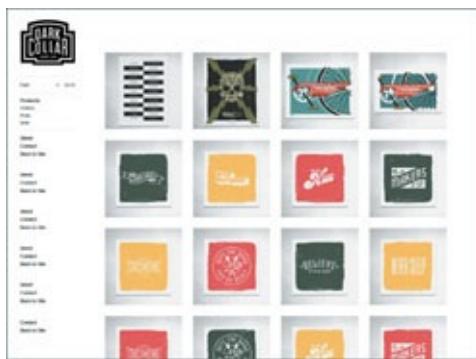
Figure 2 <http://bookofbeards.com>



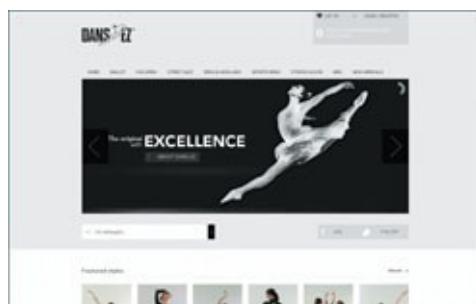
Figure 3 <http://www.swedishhasbeens.com>



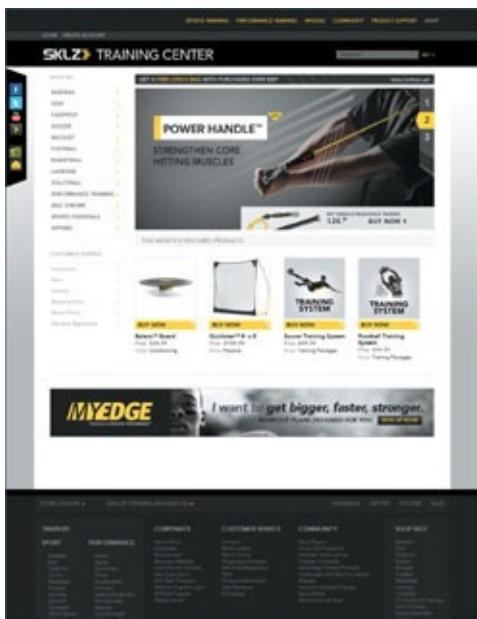
<http://www.moo.com>



<http://store.darkcollar.com>



<http://www.dans-ez.com>



<http://www.sklz.com/shop>



<http://meanbeanies.com>



<http://www.yuppiechef.co.za>



<http://www.stickermule.com>

BLOG

Much like the previous chapter on e-commerce, the blog section represents a very familiar topic with some easy-to-identify landmarks. And as with the e-commerce chapter, the goal here is to inject some fresh ideas into the mix. As such, you won't find any big names or well-known sites here.

Some of the most interesting ideas are found in samples that are not so economically driven. Most blogs (at least the big names you might think of) are driven by revenue. They are stuffed full of ads and are there to make money. In contrast, blogs like Hidden Logic ([figure 1](#)). are not focused on money at all (at least not as obviously as blogs stuffed with ad blocks). This delicious site draws on some old-school inspiration, namely the Italian Renaissance. This particular style combined with some beautiful typography makes for an aesthetically pleasing site. Even better, I love the way the designer presents the list of blog posts. The result is super easy to use and enticing to dig into. I find the less-overwhelming approach pulls me in and makes me want to read more. Compare this to the more typical approach of blasting the viewer with a mountain of content. I am going to play favorites in this chapter and name this one of my best loved.

Incidentally another Tumblr-based site that is also one of my favorites is the New York Moon site ([figure 2](#)). In this case, bold visuals combined with a clear typographic hierarchy make the site easy to consume. Interestingly this sample also lacks advertising, which would greatly deteriorate the quality of the design.

I particularly appreciate the site of Sacha Greif ([figure 3](#)). First, I want to highlight just how easy it is to skim the content of this site. Notice in particular how the sidebar elements take second place in the visual

hierarchy due to the reduced contrast of the text on the background. This allows the user to focus on the content first and the secondary elements, well, second (and only if interested). From a style (or trend) perspective, notice that the use of circles in this design is supported by the nice round typeface for the larger text and a simpler sans-serif font for the body copy. The text and imagery style go together really well. Also notice that the designer didn't go overboard making everything round. You really can overdo it and this is a fantastic example of striking a balance and not carrying a style too far.

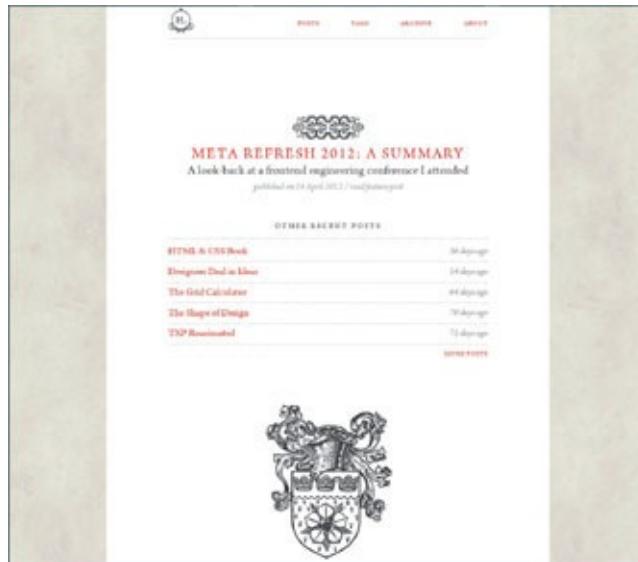
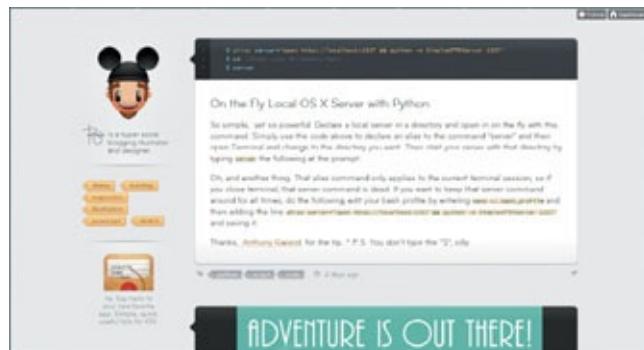


Figure 1 <http://hiddenlogic.in>



<http://rog.ie>



Figure 2 <http://editions.nymoon.com>

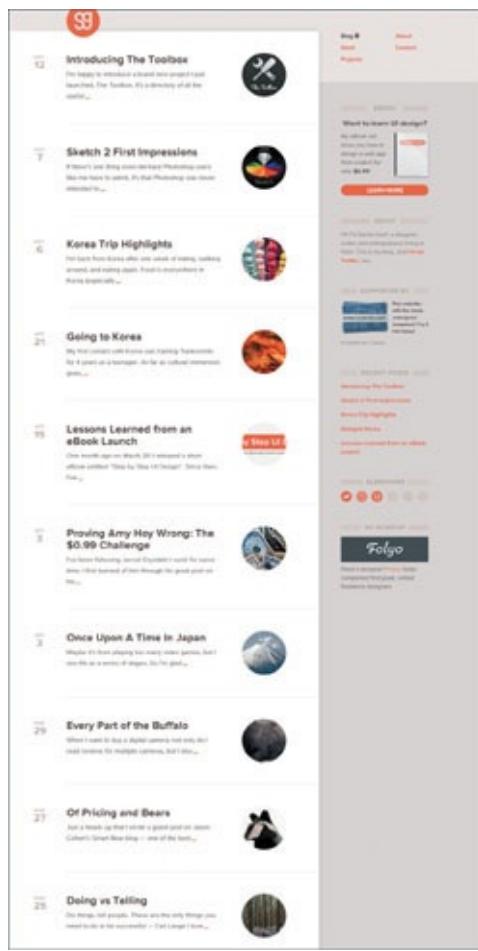


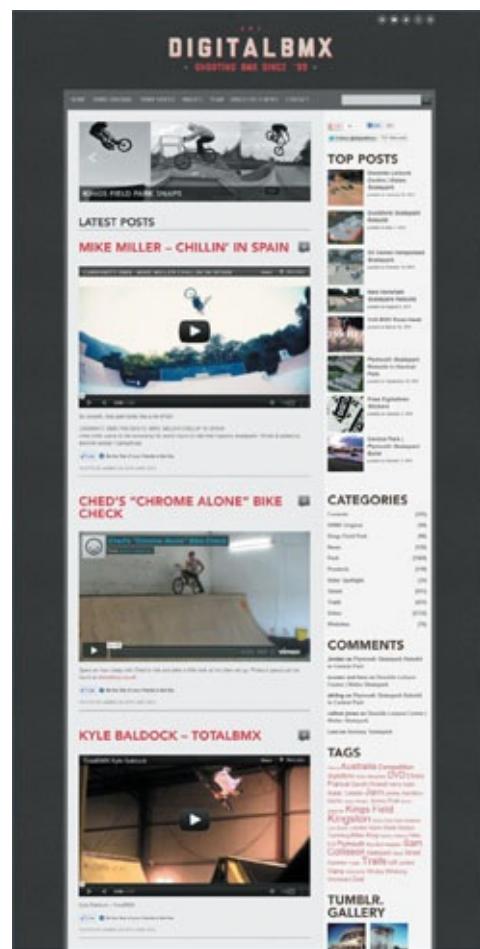
Figure 3 <http://sachagreif.com>



<http://www.okaygeek.com>



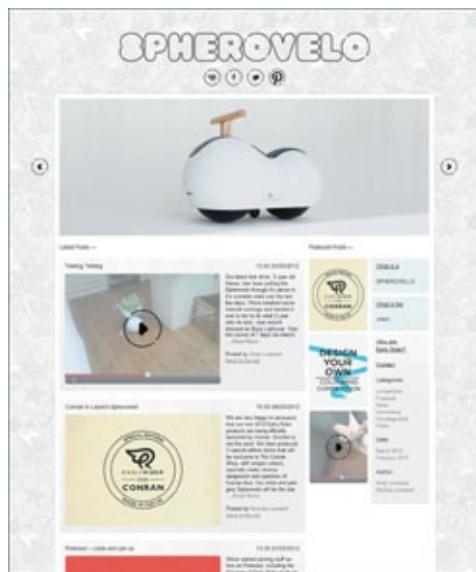
<http://www.goodsandstuff.com>



<http://www.digitalbmx.com>



<http://travelllll.com>



<http://www.spherovelo.com>

PRODUCT

The product category is an interesting type of site. These microsites represent a specific product (not an entire brand). For example, the Nokia Swipe site ([figure 1](#)). isn't for the entire Nokia brand, rather it is a focused presentation of a single product. This focused approach tends to lead to a lot more inventive work. An all-inclusive brand site must accommodate for a potentially huge range of products and most often requires updating and maintenance over many years. In contrast, individual product sites seldom, if ever, change. This can lead to experimental—and often cutting edge—work.

A great place to start is the previously mentioned Nokia Swipe site. This superclean design showcases the product in a way that complements what the product is supposed to be. The design of this phone is modern, atypical and supersmooth looking. So much so, that the images of the photo almost look three-dimensional. The point is that the site is able to reflect the style and functionality used to sell the phone.

In a radically different way, the Coast microsite ([figure 2](#)). seeks to set a mood, rather than reflect some intrinsic quality in the product. Here a background and overall stylistic theme sets the tone for the page and resonates with the brand in an obvious way. After all, it is a soap site, and as such it gets right to the point. Playing into the brand in an obvious way is a safe route to go.

It is amazing how exciting a product can be when it's presented in a creative way. Consider the TruMoo site, for example ([figure 3](#)). It's a site that promotes milk, which doesn't leave a lot of room for blowing consumers' minds. Chances are, a customer wants to know where to find the product or wants to simply get a coupon. This simple site manages to

make milk look better than I would have thought possible. And it does it without any of the most obvious visuals: cows.



<http://www.libbysnectars.com>



<http://aisle411.com>



Figure 1 <http://swipe.nokia.com>



Figure 2 <http://coastsoap.com>



Figure 3 <http://www.trumoo.com>



<http://space.angrybirds.com/launch>



<http://www.amperbranch.com>



<http://gesty.pixle.pl>



<http://ubooly.com>



<http://www.getharvest.com>



<http://www.stayfocused.fi>



<http://www.gosphero.com>

BANDS AND MUSIC

While band sites might seem like an area of interest only to those who build band sites, I think there is a lot to learn from this niche that can apply to most other sites. This is particularly true for the designer who is looking to inject some raw beauty into his work. Many designers I work with get hung up on wanting to make sure their designs reflect a personal touch. They want their sites to be works of art as much as they are functional sites. Many have forged this path, but few have come out with something worth looking at. With this perspective in mind, let's dig in and consider the band sites collected here.

The first sample I want to look at is the beautiful home page for Snow Patrol ([figure 1](#)). The most prominent of design elements is the band's name, the title of their latest album and the huge illustration of an eagle. These elements are directly pulled from the album art, which is hardly a surprise. What I really appreciate is that they chose not to display the album in 3-D form. Instead they broke it up and made it fit into a website. So rather than have a large image of an album, we have a clear reinforcement of the product—but in a way that fits the medium. This is perhaps an obvious step to take, but I would argue that it is not the norm. What's more, they have merged live data, videos and more into the mix to literally bring the album to life. It isn't just a site for the band; it is a way to extend the album and interact with it.

Another example of album art driving the design of a site and making the website like a modernized version of classic album art is the Revive website ([figure 2](#)). Here, once again, imagery has been taken straight from the album and applied to the website. In this particular case it is easy to see how the site could change with each new album (or CD) cover. Change some images, adjust some colors and swap out some typefaces,

and the design could likely match most any album the group designs. Notice, for example, that they didn't go with some crazy thematic design and custom navigation system that somehow mirrors the theme of one of their songs. Getting over-conceptual in this way gets in the way of the purpose: to sell albums and concert tickets and to connect with fans. Thus, maintaining strong usability and an easy way to adapt to future needs while maintaining the same structure is a powerful and well-thought solution.

You will notice that all of these sites are beautiful; most include at least a touch of art via illustration or photography; and all function as easy-to-use, practical websites. They all strike a balance between ubercreative and practical.



<http://www.sebastiengueze.com>



<http://www.arcticmonkeys.com>

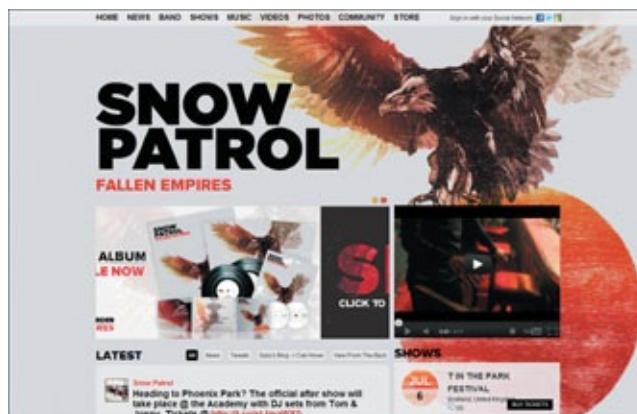


Figure 1 <http://www.snowpatrol.com>



Figure 2 <http://reviveband.com>



<http://www.zacbrownband.com>



<http://www.thestrokes.com>



<http://thenewcolors.ca>



<http://www.littlekingblues.com>



<http://decemberists.com>

The screenshot shows Jamie Cullum's website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'MUSIC / EVENTS / TOUR / GALLERY / ABOUT / SHOP'. Below the navigation is a large image of Jamie Cullum. Underneath the image, there's a section for 'NEW ALBUM THE PURSUIT' with a play button icon. A quote from 'The Cole Porter cover at the start won't surprise you, but the house track at the end just might... it's bold, experimental and the best thing Cullum's done.' is displayed, along with links to 'iTunes', 'Amazon', and 'Spotify'. At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'ALBUMS', 'SINGLES', and 'COMPILATIONS', followed by thumbnail images of four of his albums: 'JAMIE CULLUM THE PURSUIT.', 'JAMIE CULLUM', 'Jamie Cullum', and 'JAMIE CULLUM TWENTY-SOME-THING'.

<http://www.jamieculum.com>



<http://music.studiowith.nl>



<http://www.rocketclub.info>

NONPROFITS

Nonprofits face many difficulties, and I imagine that setting aside the funding for a solid website is one of them. It can be hard to find impressive examples in this area. Because I filtered through a ton of them, I was able to find the gems I present to you here. Having a gorgeous site isn't critical to every nonprofit, but for some I am certain it is key to their success.

First, I want to take a closer look at Rice Bowls ([figure 1](#)), a nonprofit targeted at raising money to feed orphaned children. You are most likely familiar with the TV commercials that run for organizations seeking to do the same—the ones filled with destitute little children. Perhaps this dose of reality works to raise money. But I love the rice bowls site because it doesn't focus on the downside—that kids are starving. Instead it focuses on what you can do to help. In fact, when the site finally does feature one of the troubled kids, it shows a happy one. As someone who has personally visited one of the poorest areas in Haiti (one of the poorest areas in the world), I can attest to something important here: The kids don't mope around all day. They are remarkably happy. And that makes me want to help them even more. This approach won't work for all nonprofits, but in this case putting on a happy face and making the process fun is a powerful way to get people to participate.

In stark contrast to the rice bowls site, consider the Hello Somebody organization site ([figure 2](#)). Here an image of one of the people the organization seeks to help is central. The adjustments to the photo and the content of it play perfectly into the message of the site. It doesn't feel as though the site is solely pulling on your heartstrings with an emotional photo; rather the role of the photo feels much more functional. The image reveals the purpose of the site and helps the visitor to quickly discern its

purpose. Beyond this, the overall style of the site is not light and fun. Instead it feels somewhat formal and serious.

Compare the two examples. Both are serious issues, and while their tones are different, the designs of these sites match their core purposes very well.



<http://www.villahope.org>



Figure 1 <http://ricebowls.org>

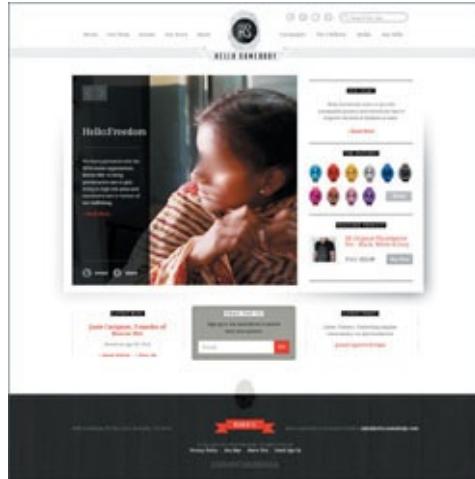


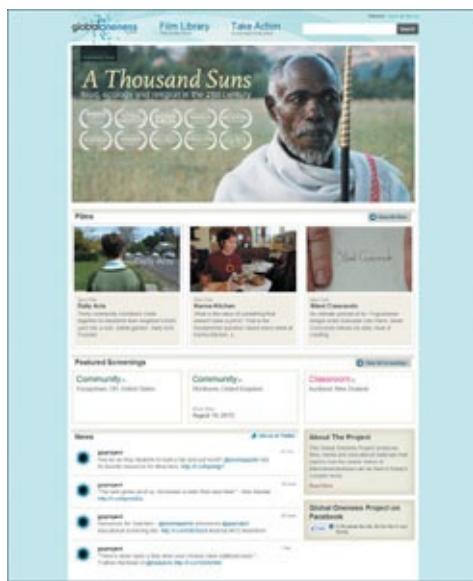
Figure 2 <http://hello-somebody.com>



<http://thepainteddoor.org>



<http://www.charitywater.org>



<http://www.globalonenessproject.org>



<http://www.change.org>



<http://columbusfoundation.org>



<http://annualreport.jewishminneapolis.org>



<http://www.commendablekids.com>

UTILITIES

One of the most amazing things about the web community is its willingness to give things away. This section features a variety of web-based utilities that are almost exclusively free. Some also offer paid-for versions, but all allow you to use them in some form for free. Some of them are so amazingly useful you may find yourself wishing you could pay for them. While it is fun to show off cool tools, the focus of this book is inspiration, so we will look at these utilities with inspiration in mind.

I think you will find lots of fresh ideas in this section. In fact, I think this is a section that people may tend to overlook, but there is a great deal to learn from these samples. Many of these utilities rely on web interfaces that are anything but normal. In these cases, designers and developers created interesting solutions to strange needs. These aren't your everyday brochure sites after all; each has a distinct and unusual function. With this in mind, let's take a closer look at a few of them.

First I want to look at one of my favorite tools, jsFiddle ([figure 1](#)). This handy tool lets you write and test code in your browser. And more important, it lets you save your work and generate a unique URL that you can share. This URL will allow anyone to view the snippet of code and play with it. If you have ever shared code, you will realize how simple this makes things and how handy it is. Technical issues aside (imagine building an app to work with HTML, CSS and JavaScript with the same tools—simply mind boggling), this site has some clear obstacles to overcome. The result is an interface that feels at home on the web though it feels nothing like a “normal” page. Your project may not warrant such a radical shift from the everyday site, but that isn't to say you can't find nuggets that apply to your work.

One of my favorite features found in these utilities sites is a singular focus. Take the CheckMyColours utility (**figure 2**). for a great example. Here the whole point is to get users to enter their URL and actually use the utility. As a result, the main form is at the top of the page and closely connected with the main brand. Even if you don't know what it does, you might give it a try. If not, you can scroll down and read more about it. This try-it-first approach is an interesting inversion of the typical "explain something and then ask the user to do something" approach. Perhaps the project you're working on could do with a radical shift in perspective.



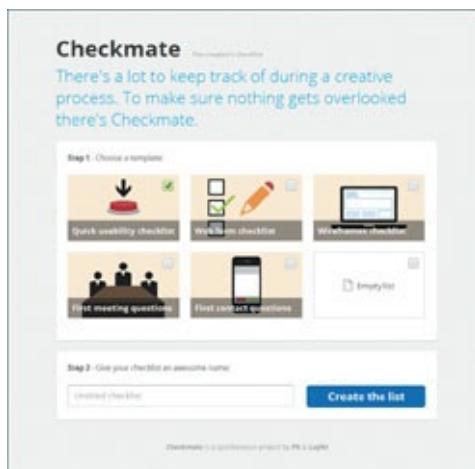
<http://www.prchecker.net>



<http://responsivepx.com>



Figure 1 <http://jsfiddle.net>



<http://www.checkmateapp.com>



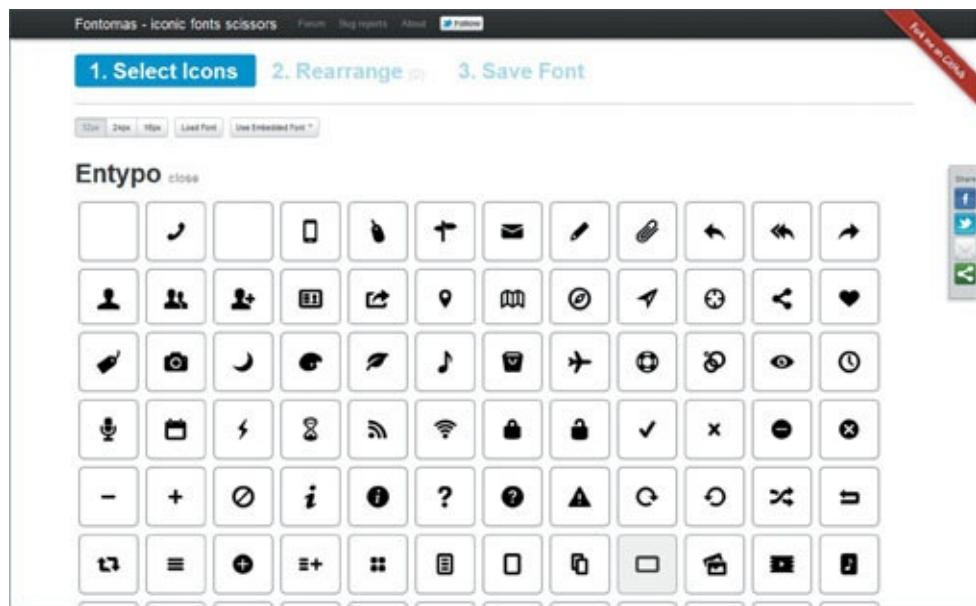
Figure 2 <http://www.checkmycolours.com>



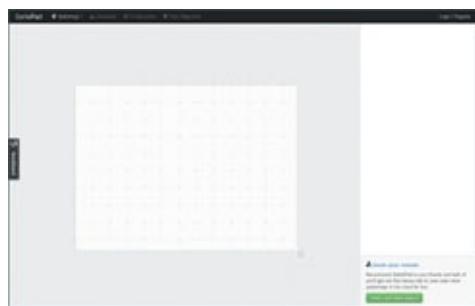
<http://notlorem ipsum.com>

The screenshot shows the homepage of Bear CSS. It features a large central illustration of a brown bear sitting on a brick wall, holding a pencil and a book, with a city skyline in the background. To the left of the bear is the text '{bear} bear css' and 'Helping you build a solid stylesheet foundation based on your markup'. To the right is a section titled 'INSTRUCTIONS' with three steps: 'Upload your HTML document', 'CSS-Normalite is generated based on the HTML elements used', and 'Download CSS File'. Below these steps is a large orange 'UPLOAD HTML' button. At the bottom of the page, there are three columns: 'ABOUT', 'COLOPHON', and 'CONTACT'. The 'ABOUT' column includes text about the tool and credits to two students. The 'COLOPHON' column details the tool's creation using PHP, jQuery, and CSS3, and mentions original illustrations. The 'CONTACT' column provides email and social media information for the creators.

<http://bearcss.com>



<http://nodeca.github.com/fontomas>



<http://spritepad.wearekiss.com>



<http://minus.com>

FREE PLUG-INS

As a follow-up to the utilities sites, I want to present a collection of sites for free plug-ins. These plug-ins are small bits of code that implement some functionality. What blows my mind is how much work people put into the presentation of these free resources. Much love and care has gone into the presentation and delivery of these tools; something that is reflected in the quality of the tools as well.

Why go to so much work with something you're only giving away? I think the answer is fairly simple. These tools draw lots of attention and traffic. If they are presented well, their success reflects a very positive image onto the creators. As a result, these tools are, in essence, powerful marketing tools. Want to achieve major recognition in the industry? One way to do it is to put out an awesome resource in a beautiful package. The industry will respond, and you will most certainly build an audience.

To begin, take a look at the FitText sample ([figure 1](#)). This great little jQuery plug-in capitalizes on the energy and momentum behind responsive design techniques. Not only was it among the first tools in this niche, it is clearly presented in a beautiful way. And, of course, you notice the claim to fame in the footer where they spell out who is providing you this free awesomeness.

Another great example is Font Awesome ([figure 2](#)). In this case, the tool is clearly delivered and easy to download. While the people behind it aren't quite as well-known, Font Awesome is still a powerful tool that has achieved a lot of visibility in the industry.

What I find interesting is how some of these tools sum up whole trends, in a way. For example, single page sites are rather popular. And there are some basic elements that go along with this, such as in-page scrolling. With this in mind, check out PageScroller ([figure 3](#)). This slick tool

makes it really easy to create in-page scrolling effects with sticky navigation (navigation that stays put even though the page scrolls). This tool makes it simple to implement this sort of functionality and plays directly into the current trends. It's a smart tool beautifully presented.



<http://tableclothjs.com>



<http://www.turnjs.com>



Figure 1 <http://fittextjs.com>

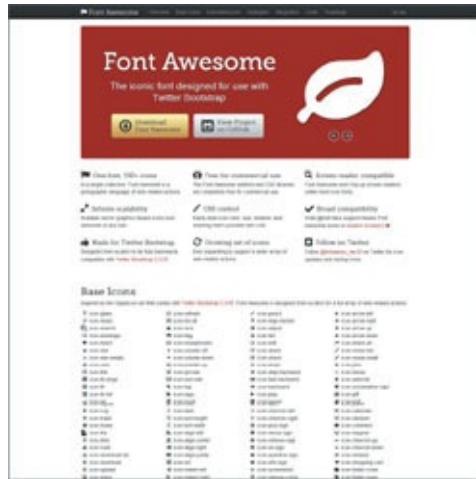
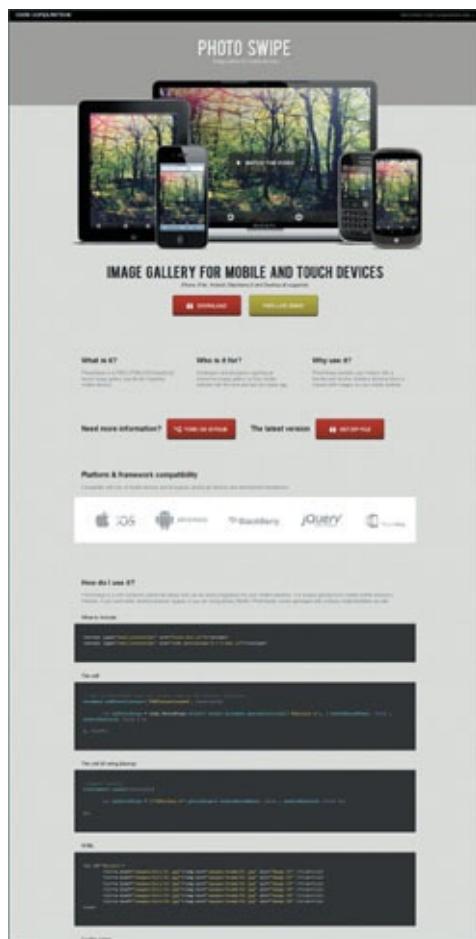


Figure 2 <http://fortawesome.github.com/Font-Awesome>



<http://www.photoswipe.com>



<http://letteringjs.com>



Figure 3 <http://pagescroller.com>



<http://widgets.better2web.com/loader>



<http://twitter.github.com/bootstrap>



<http://www.frequency-decoder.com/demo/slabText>



<http://simplemodal.plasm.it>



<http://kiro.me/textualizer>

LEARNING SITES

What started out as a very short list of sites quickly grew into a much larger list than I expected. As someone interested in teaching outlets I was familiar with many of these sites, but I had never noticed just how many of them there were or just how gorgeous many of them are. It seems that learning online is in vogue right now. Not all of the sites here feature online learning outlets, but all of them do make use of the web to sell their services.

One detail I want to highlight is just how common a clear sales pitch is. These sales pitches are often made with language that challenges the viewer and probes her toward taking a step to use the resource. At a minimum, the sales pitch clearly sets the stage for the purpose of the site. Here are a few:

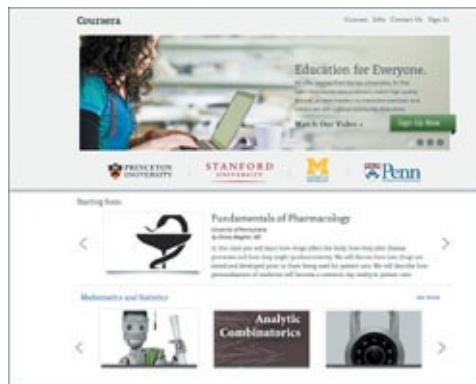
- “Become a web developer in 8 weeks. Are you ready for the challenge?” ([figure 1](#)).
- “There’s still time! Learn to code in 2012. 448,920 people are learning to code this year. Why not you?” ([figure 2](#)).
- “30 Days to Learn HTML & CSS” ([figure 3](#)).
- “Take and build online courses on any subject” ([figure 4](#)).
- “Introducing Pathwright—Everything you need to create, teach, and sell beautiful online courses.” ([figure 5](#)).

This particular trend is one we find used on many sites well beyond the education arena. But it is interesting how often it appears in the learning arena. At the end of the day, making people guess about the purpose of your site or product is never a good thing. The sales pitches in these

samples clearly articulate their purpose. As you work on your project, carefully consider whether the site's purpose and product is clear. If not, a bold sales pitch might be in order.



<https://learnable.com>



<https://www.coursera.org>



Figure 1 <http://www.bloc.io>



Figure 2 <http://codeyear.com>



Figure 3 <http://learnccs.tutsplus.com>



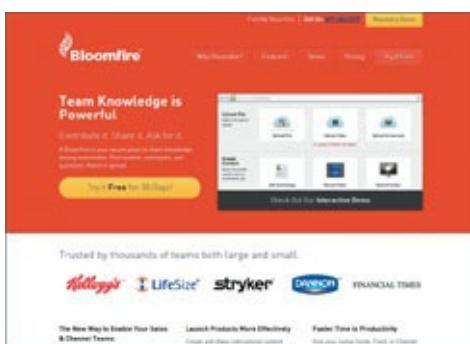
Figure 4 <http://www.udemy.com>



Figure 5 <http://www.pathwright.com>



<http://hackerbuddy.com>



<http://www.bloomfire.com>



<http://teamtreehouse.com>



<http://www.codeschool.com>



<http://www.webcoursesbangkok.com>



<http://railsforzombies.com>

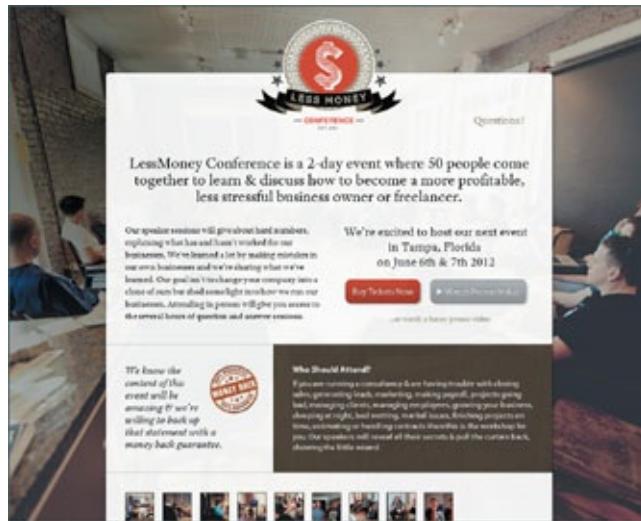
EVENTS

Getting together is something that is particularly appealing to the web community given we don't have to meet face-to-face in order to do it. For many, it is the only opportunity to meet people, since they may live on opposite sides of the country, or even the world. Though many of the sites featured here are specific to the web community, I have diversified the collection to include several samples from outside this limited scope. Cross-pollinating ideas from various industries is perhaps one of the most effective ways to leverage inspiration. You can simply cherry-pick the best ideas from one field and apply those ideas to your field. I hope this small sampling of sites provides some big ideas.

This diverse set of samples highlights one thing very clearly for me; that the tone of an event site typically matches the purpose of the event. A vivid demonstration of this is the Ampersand event ([figure 1](#)). It shouldn't come as a surprise that an event about typography features great typography on its site. The Sustainable Operations Summit event site echoes this approach ([figure 2](#)). Here the illustrations and color palette represent what we might think of as sustainable. Finally, look at the Circles site ([figure 3](#)). Though it doesn't thematically match the topic at hand, it is insanely gorgeous and refined, which ultimately appeals to the designer audience it seeks. As with any product, knowing your audience is key, and these samples all play well into the areas they focus on.

Another interesting observation about event sites is that they don't seem to have a normal formula. Yes, most of them rely on similar elements like selling the speaker list or driving people to a sign-up form, but if you compare them structurally, you won't find a standard formula at work. I think event sites actually present an interesting opportunity to

the designer. An event site has to sell the user on why this event is worth it. After all, most conferences are not cheap to attend, and then there's airfare to consider, as well as the cost of a hotel and lost time at work. So the sales pitch has to be compelling. You will find that each of these sites has been carefully crafted to appeal to their audience in a unique way, and one of the ways they do it is to break from the traditional.



<http://lessmoney.lesseverything.com>



Figure 1 <http://2012.ampersandconf.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.sustainableoperationssummit.com>



<http://www.wiredevent.co.uk>

The screenshot shows the official website for WMC Fest 2012. At the top, there's a banner with the event name 'WMC FEST' and the location 'CLEVELAND, OHIO'. Below the banner, there's a section with the text 'WMC Fest is the premier design conference and music festival in the Midwest.' and 'WMC Fest 2012 is over; stay tuned for photos, videos, and more.' There are three large images below this text: '20 SPEAKERS', '20 DESIGNERS', and '30+ BANDS'. The main content area features a 'SPEAKERS' section with a grid of 20 speaker profiles, each with a photo and name. Below this is a 'SPONSORS' section featuring a grid of logos from various sponsors like omedia, VIRB, bound, Cleveland, ARSENAL, PUFFL, and many others.

<http://wmcfest.com>



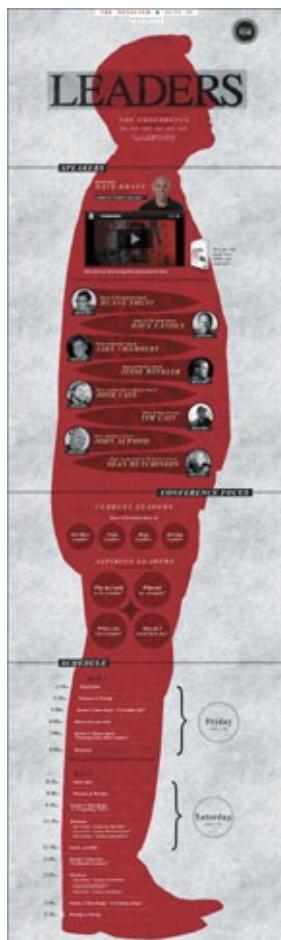
<http://2011.beyondtellerrand.com>



<http://www.agileux.it>



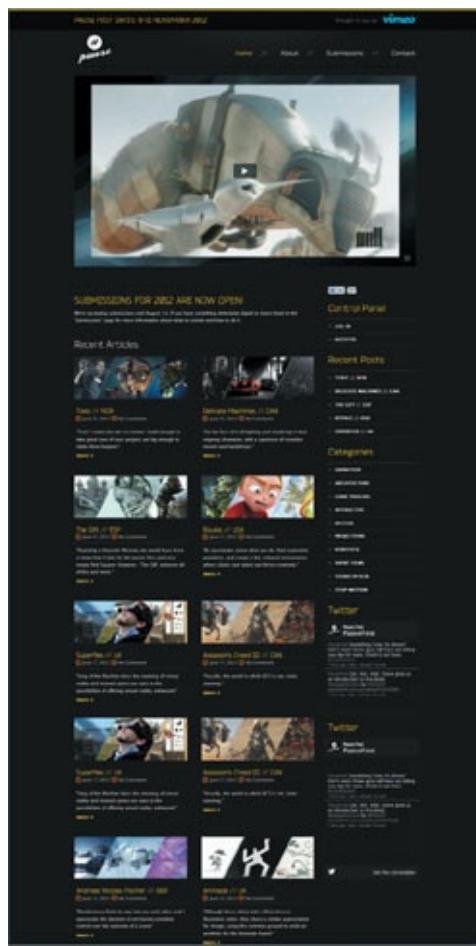
<http://2012.hd-live.co.uk>



<http://www.leaderstheconference.com>



Figure 3 <http://circlesconference.com>



<http://www.pausefest.com.au>

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05 / Site Structure

At first glance, a section covering various site structure patterns might seem out of place in a book all about inspiration. On the contrary: I find that designers often forget the wide range of options they have when designing sites. With this in mind, this section is largely focused on the outliers—the site structures that break the norms and forge their own path. With this kind of thinking, you are certain to discover fresh ideas to challenge your assumptions and inject a dose of inspiration into your work.

ATYPICAL LAYOUTS

One of my favorite categories is the atypical layout. Here I always collect a radically diverse set of examples: everything from sites that mash the normal elements around to those that capture the radically unusual. I love the broad range of ideas to be had, and I like to be reminded of the web's extreme possibilities.

First let's consider Ismael Burciaga's site ([figure 1](#)). This site feels fairly normal, and yet it doesn't follow the standard formula. The logo and main navigation follow the rules (so to speak), but after that things take a whole new route. I really appreciate this approach, which roots the site in familiar formulas but proceeds to surprise. Sites like this are a wonderful balance between creative solutions and playing into people's expectations.

For a radical contrast, take a look at the We Heart website ([figure 2](#)). Not only is the content presented in an unusual format, the main navigation and logo are found in unusual places. What's interesting is that though the site feels radically different, it is still easy to find your way around. The shifts in navigation are small enough, in contrast to the radical content styling, to keep it from being confusing.

Atypical layouts are risky business. Oftentimes the sites that push the envelope end up feeling overdone or they are painful to use. I believe the key lies in making sure there is a method to your madness. Don't create the atypical layout simply for the sake of creativity. If your approach plays into the purpose of the site, then go for it. But if you find that you're more focused on the creativity of your solution and less on solving the problems of the site, you might want to reconsider.



<http://www.garyrozanc.com>

The screenshot shows a event page for "ISMAEL BURCIAGA" on Friday, April 27 at 11:30 am. The page features a photo of a man with his hand to his head. Below the photo, the title "ISMAEL BURCIAGA" is displayed in large letters, followed by the date and time. A bio for Ismael is provided, mentioning his role as Co-Founder and Creative Director at Church Media Group. A "I WANT TO ATTEND" button is visible, along with a note about food and drink being provided. The page also includes logos for ChurchMedia and MailChimp.

Figure 1 <http://circlemeetups.com>

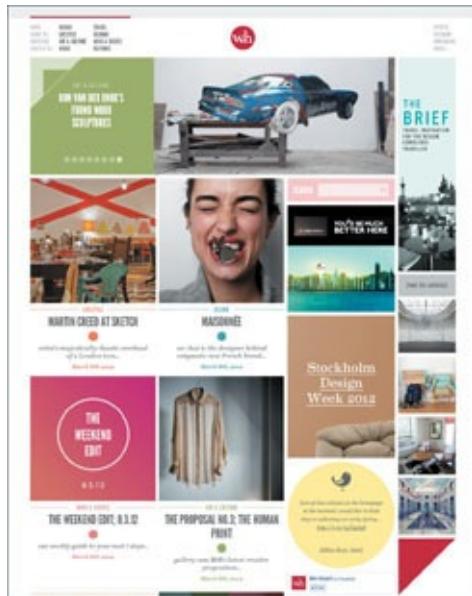


Figure 2 <http://www.weheart.co.uk>



<http://www.andrewrevitt.com>



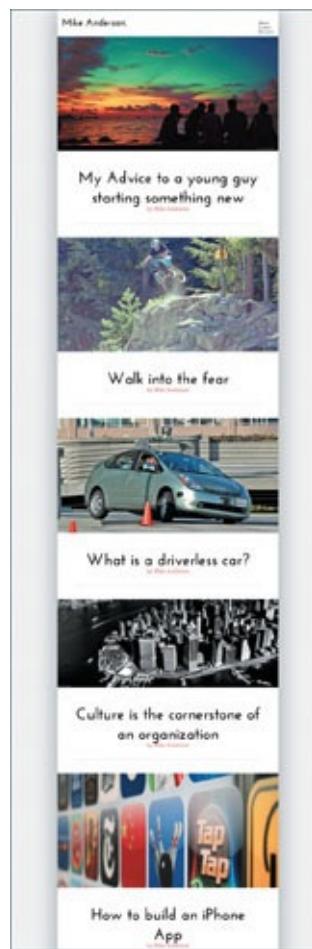
<http://www.eclipse-creative.co.uk>



<http://www.bichomalvado.com>



<http://gorohov.name>



<http://mikeyanderson.com>



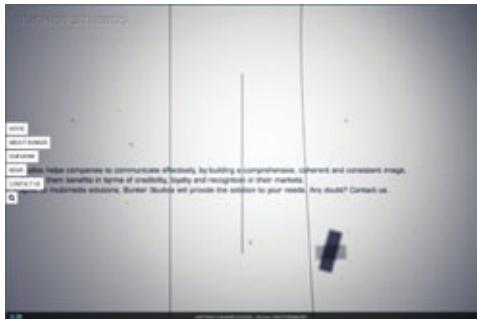
<http://www.jlern.com>



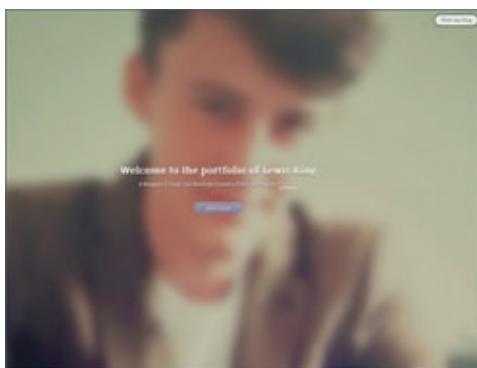
<http://www.graceandtailor.co.uk>



<http://36creative.com>



<http://www.bunker-studios.com>



<http://lewisking.net>



<http://messagela.com>

ONE PAGE

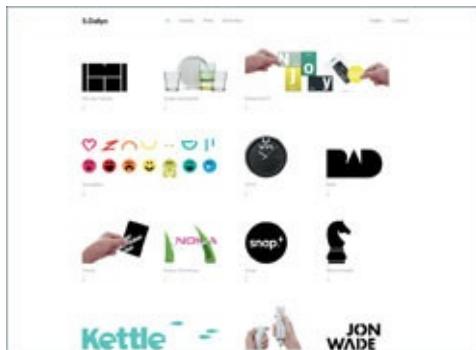
The single-page approach has become insanely popular. This is a trend I really appreciate and enjoy. If you follow me on twitter or read any of my online articles, you already know it is a topic I am borderline obsessed with. With this in mind, I will do my best not to sound overly biased.

I have many reasons for my obsession. First among these is simplicity. By condensing all of the content to a single page, many sites trim extra fat that would have been necessary only to fill space. Sites like [Kisielki.com](#) (**figure 1**). demonstrate this perfectly. This site establishes the work they do, provides examples of said work and finishes off with a way to get in touch. This is about as condensed as a portfolio site can get. And I love it.

Another aspect of the single-page design that I admire is a bit harder to describe. When the end product is a single page, the flow of the page changes dramatically. In my opinion, it becomes very much like a digital version of poster design. Since all of the content is packed into a single page, the creators often have greater control over the order in which you consume the content. The same thing is certainly not true of the standard multipage site. A good example of controlled interaction with the content is found on [Soul-Reaper.com](#) (**figure 2**). Interact with this page and you may be shocked to find that it is built on HTML and CSS (no Flash).

One of my favorite things about one-page sites is the speed. Instead of watching a page load, picking an item and repeating forever, one-page sites can produce very fast interfaces. [Cleanet.cz](#) (**figure 3**). highlights this with fast moving in-page animations. And yes, some one-page sites end up much larger since everything is packed into a single page—note the previously mentioned Soul Reaper site that comes complete with a loader sequence to control this—but in many cases the whole site loads at once with little impact on the user's interface. As a result of this you can

often browse the entire contents of the site with almost no wait time. Reducing the load time to a single block helps ensure you maintain a user's interest.



<http://www.samdallyn.co.uk>



<http://jpunt.nl>



Figure 1 <http://kisielki.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.soul-reaper.com>



Figure 3 <http://www.cleanet.cz>



<http://www.drewvergara.com>



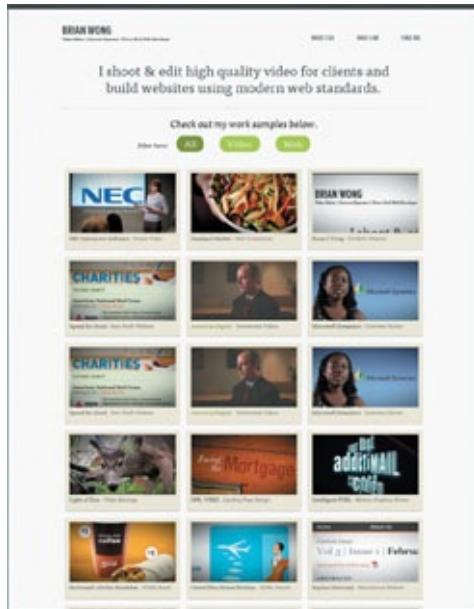
<http://getgalleried.com>



<http://scentrend.com>



<http://danielhritzki.com>



<http://www.brianjwong.com>

A screenshot of Bloom's website. The header features the word "bloom" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the header, a large image of a flowering plant with purple flowers and green leaves is centered. To the left of the plant, the text "We're Bloom. A branding agency." is displayed. Below this, there is a brief description of what Bloom does, followed by a "Contact us" button. The main content area is titled "About us" and contains a detailed description of their services, including branding, design, and marketing. To the right of the text, there is another illustration of a plant with large green leaves and red flowers. At the bottom of the page, there are three arrows pointing right, each containing a small illustration of a flower or leaf and a short description: "Our story in a nutshell", "Brighten Branding Bright Ideas", and "Our people Bright people want to meet". At the very bottom, there is a section titled "What we do" with a small description.

<http://www.bloom-london.com>

ONE-PAGE SALES PITCH

Given my previously confessed obsession with one-page sites, I have added this second chapter on the topic to indulge my guilty pleasure. This subset of one-page creations is focused on driving users to some conversion point. While most sites have some task they hope users complete, this set is driving toward the goal in far more focused and determined ways. The easiest way to understand this is to look at some examples, so let's dive in.

[LiveSceneApp.com](#) (**figure 1**). demonstrates the spirit of this collection perfectly. This supersimple one-page site is also superfocused. The goal here is to get people to download the app or vote for your city. Either way, the focus is on boosting app downloads. You may get the app now, or you may vote for your city and sign up to be notified when it is added to the app. Sometimes the product is so easily explained (eleven words in this case) that driving people toward the conversion point is actually the point of the site.

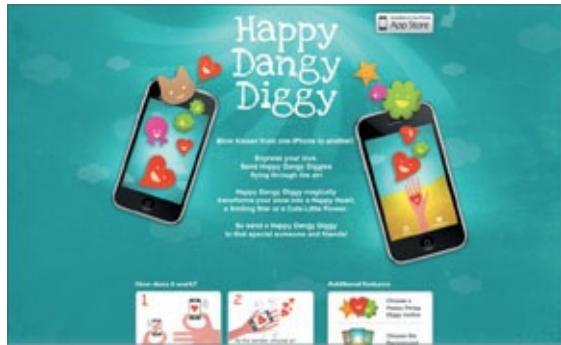
Sometimes the product is a bit more complicated and requires more explanation. All the same, the goal is still highlighted and often repeated throughout the one-page design. Consider the ButtonBar site for example (**figure 2**). Here the Buy Now buttons repeat in every section of the page. If at any point during the sales pitch the user decides to buy the product, a button is always in sight.



Figure 1 <http://livesceneapp.com>



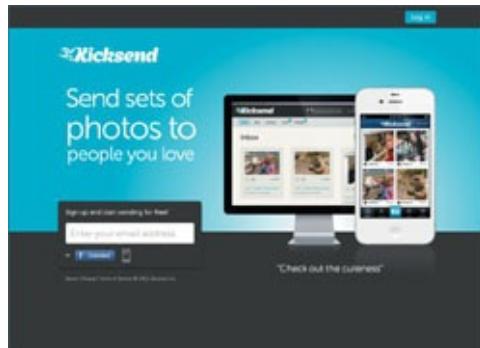
Figure 2 <http://www.buttonbar-plus.com>



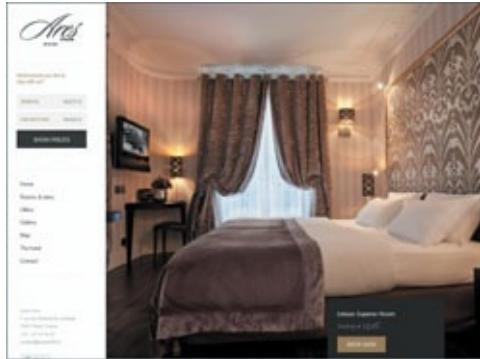
<http://www.happydangydiggy.com>



<http://www.peakcitypigfest.com>



<http://kicksend.com>



<https://convertdemo.com>

Your projects on display

Statusboard Update

15:52

Join the open beta!

NEVER MISS A THING

EASY AND BEAUTIFUL BACKEND

BETA RELEASE

STATUSBOARD UPDATE

BASECAMP SYNC

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

TWITTER GAUCH

Statusboard is a great tool for business insights and project management.

Basecamp Integration

Easy Setup

API

<http://statusboard.me>



<http://shauninman.com/noisees>



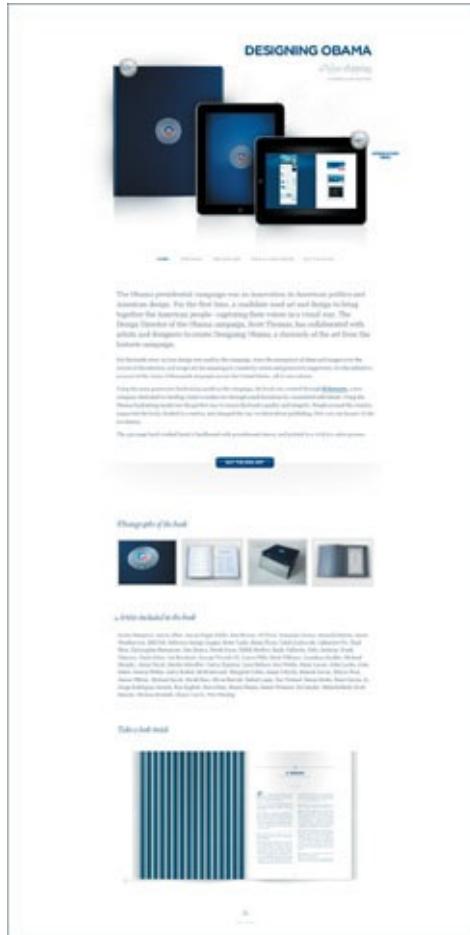
<http://www.price-cooker.com>



<https://sendgrid.com>

The screenshot shows the Oempro homepage. The header features the company logo and the tagline "Email marketing software, designed for you". Below the header, a main heading states "On average 30% of email marketing campaigns are deleted without getting opened. Oempro makes easier to manage your lists, create and send amazing email campaign and track results. Get the most from your email campaigns." To the left, there's a "Standard Service" section with a "TRY IT FREE" button. The right side contains a "Marketing Automation" section with a "GET STARTED" button. The central part of the page has a large screenshot of the software interface showing various charts and data. Testimonials from users like "Carrie Bent" and "Matt" are displayed. At the bottom, there's a "MailChimp" integration section and a "Download the free email marketing guide now" call-to-action.

<http://octeth.com>



<http://www.designing-obama.com>

PAGE FILLERS

Every once in a while I identify a trend that doesn't have a label. This is one of those cases, and I am dubbing the collection "page fillers." Some aspects of this approach are well-known (and even labeled), but the combination of these approaches doesn't have a name—so page fillers it is.

What exactly is a page filler? Page fillers share two common properties. First, it is content that fills the page. Sometimes it is just a background that expands to fill the space and give the space the appearance of being full. Other times the content sizes and moves to fill the full space of the browser. Second, a page filler does not use scroll bars. This means the content sizes to fill the browser, while not occupying more than a single screen worth of space. If it were not for this second property, these would simply be fluid layouts (a commonly accepted industry term).

The samples here tend to make use of page-filling layouts that break the rules. For example, many have the navigation anchored at the bottom of the page. The result is that these pages maximize the user's screen space while avoiding any sort of scrolling.

Many of you will recognize this formula. This is pretty much what countless Flash-based sites have done. In so many ways, this is the new approach to sites that would have previously been built on Flash. In past books, I referred to this as "pseudo Flash," but naming something based on its resemblance to a technology it displaces seems odd. We don't call cars "pseudo horses" after all. Time marches on, and I think we need to name this approach something useful.

A clear demonstration of this approach can be found on The Remington Centre website ([figure 1](#)). Here the image scales to fill the space and the controls for the page move to the edges of the browser, with

the main navigation fixed to the bottom of the page. Typically I would not want to highlight pages with the navigation stuck to the bottom. In most cases it creates a poor user experience, but as with all things, it can work. Fortunately for the creators of this site, the approach works well as it is implemented here.



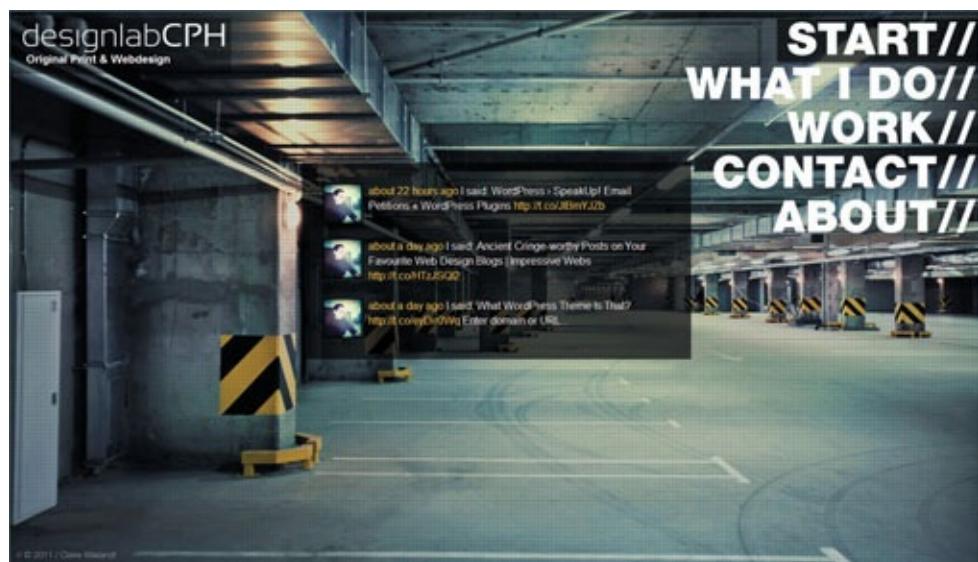
<http://www.anagnoris.us>



Figure 1 <http://remingtoncentre.ca>



<http://www.nextpagemedia.ca>



<http://designlabcpch.com>



<http://permanentadg.com>



<http://www.danthienne.it>



<http://www.nikkei225.es>



<http://confirmedstock.com>



<http://www.leading-art.com>

SITE SELECTION
FILTER > ART WORK SHOP

- 1. Abac Tea work
- 2. Air art
- 3. Animation work
- 4. Apples art
- 5. Artera work

<http://lorem ipsum.ro>



<http://www.monarchsfamily.com/home>

MAP-BASED

Many sites feature location-oriented content, but few of these focus attention on the actual map in the way this small set of sites does. These sites feature location-based content—and the mapping interface—in incredibly prominent and beautiful ways. It's an unusual approach to building a site. The beauty of these sites is inspiring, but I find an even more inspiring element at work. The designers of these sites didn't just churn out a standard layout. Instead, they took a step back, considered the content and crafted an interface that revolves around the content exclusively. In this way the maps become the primary interface on which everything else is built. By thinking like this, designers often find radical solutions that work amazingly well, all the while abandoning the norms.

Consider Mapitat and how atypical the layout is ([figure 1](#)). I say it is atypical, though it feels incredibly intuitive. When looking for an apartment, location is often the most important element, second only to price. The site's interface allows you to filter options based on these primary criteria. You visually filter the locations, and the prominently placed slider allows you to reduce the results. This approach does not follow the typical search/results/details approach to filtering data, and it probably isn't the easiest or most obvious approach. It is, however, an awesome solution to the problem at hand.

Another excellent example is [Whatwasthere.com](#) ([figure 2](#)). Again, this site could simply be a listing of samples. But through the use of Google Maps and a totally custom layer of development, the end product is intuitive and fun to use. A long-running list of the same data would be far less interesting.



Figure 1 <http://mapitat.com>



Figure 2 <http://www.whatwasthere.com>



<http://mapeas.com>



<http://worldofmerix.com>



<http://www.mealtime.ie>



<http://50problems50days.com>



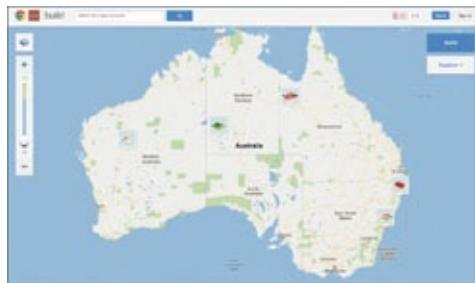
<http://sna.pr>



<http://www.taocommunity.com/home>



<http://www.sepiatown.com>



<http://www.buildwithchrome.com>



<http://trendsmap.com>

PINTEREST EFFECT

Before I dive into this topic I want to start with a disclaimer, so as to avoid all the objections I am likely to receive. Though the following sites clearly resemble the structure of Pinterest, some of them predate Pinterest, and many others most likely were developed without inspiration from this source at all. In fact, the structure you find on Pinterest is based on a formula that came about long before Pinterest did.

So why would I label this the “Pinterest effect,” thus implying that the Pinterest design inspired and resulted in a number of followers? Well, like it or not, Pinterest is probably the biggest name attached to this particular layout method. Therefore, it gets the name. It might not be perfect, but it certainly describes the trend and most definitely demonstrates how effective it can be.

Begin with a look at [Brosmind.com](#) (**figure 1**), where we find a layout similar to Pinterest, though far from matching it. In particular you will notice that the blocks making up the page are all the exact same size. This gives the site a great deal of flexibility, makes the coding a bit easier and gives it a very consistent feel. I also appreciate that the same-size approach makes the content much easier to scan.

On the flip side, we find the website of Harry Roberts (**figure 2**), where the blocks are not all the same size. In this case, I find that the content is harder to scan. But I also find that I much prefer this layout to one huge list stacked on top of itself. The reduced scrolling is a benefit that offsets the increased challenge of scanning the content. It also highlights the need for strong visual hierarchy in the text, so viewers can quickly find the title or label for a block of content. This is something you find at work in the Captain Daylight sample (**figure 3**), where the title text for each block is large and easy to find, and thus much easier to scan.

Of course, a few samples here very clearly follow the Pinterest design and structure, like TheCodePlayer (**figure 4**). or Usabilla (**figure 5**). But emulating Pinterest isn't a negative. Each of these sites has its own subtle twists and each certainly uses the approach effectively. Mimicking the patterns found on other sites can be a viable option when done responsibly.



Figure 1 <http://www.brosmind.com>

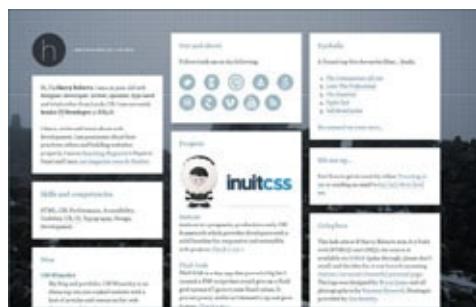


Figure 2 <http://hry.rbrts.me>

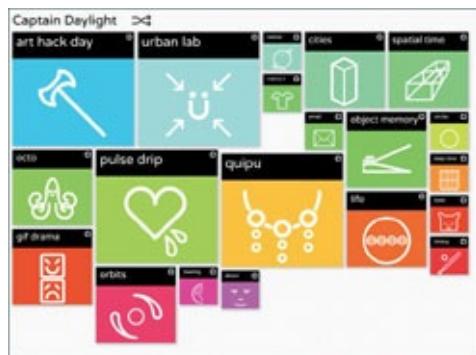


Figure 3 <http://captaindaylight.com>



Figure 4 <http://thecodeplayer.com>

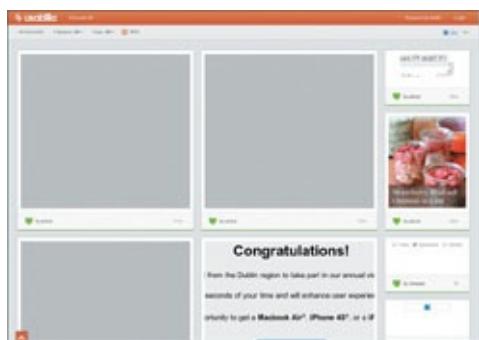
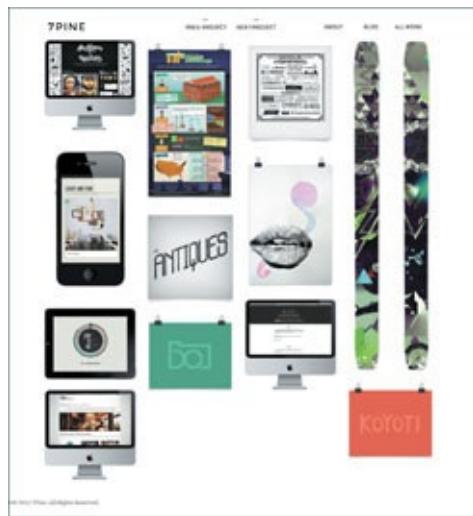


Figure 5 <http://discover.usabilla.com>



<http://www.brit.co>



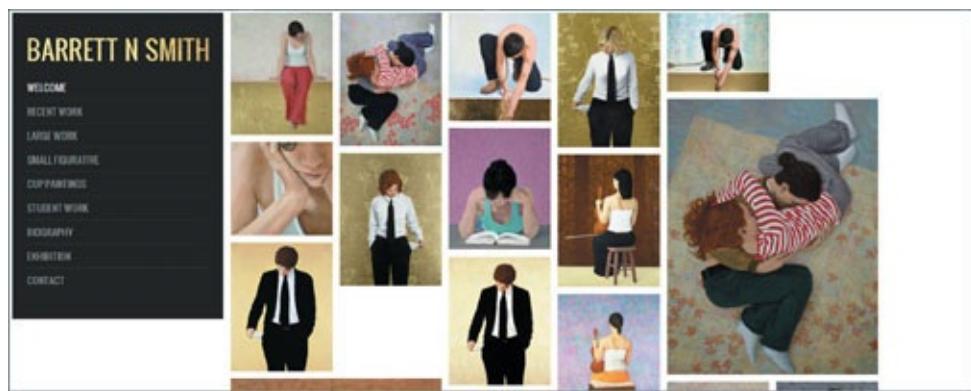
<http://7pine.com>



<http://benjaminminnich.com>



<http://www.surfaceview.co.uk>



<http://www.barrettnsmith.com>

About the Author

To say that Patrick is obsessed with web design is a bit of an understatement. What began as a simple exploration of design on his blog DesignMeltdown eventually turned into a best-selling series of books. With a passion for technology and design, Patrick McNeil has found himself at home on the web where these two fields merge so perfectly. His love of design drives him to obsess over the trends and patterns collected in his books. Beyond observing trends, Patrick is focused on front-end development techniques and teaching designers to effectively leverage the web as a design medium. For more information about Patrick, visit his personal site, pmcneil.com or follow him on Twitter [@designmeltdown](https://twitter.com/designmeltdown).

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Note

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Endnotes

1. (p. 003) <http://www.mikeindustries.com/blog/sifr>
2. (p. 018) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source
3. (p. 040) <https://typekit.com/fonts/adelle-web>
4. (p. 040) <https://typekit.com/fonts/futura-pt>
5. (p. 071) To hear an outside voice on the topic, check out this post from Zeldman: <http://www.zeldman.com/2011/07/06/responsive-design-i-dont-think-that-word-means-what-you-think-it-means/>
6. (p. 186) <http://blog.xlune.com/2009/09/vgrid/>
7. (p. 186) <http://isotope.metafizzy.co/>