THE MAKING OF NANOTT.NET

A web process book by Adriana Nottestad at http://nanott.net

PURPOSE

Simply put, my portfolio exists to showcase my skills while giving the viewer insight into who I am. For the most part, I'll also use my portfolio to persuade a potential employer to contact me with job offers.

How do I achieve my purpose?
Providing the viewer with examples of my work is the best way to accomplish the first part my purpose. Each example will list the skills showcased as well as a brief description to give the viewer more insight as to why the example is designed and coded the way it is.

Displaying a handful of examples isn't enough, however. The viewer needs a reason to view them all. To accomplish this, my portfolio design will include interesting aspects that will entice the viewer to keep scrolling and keep clicking to see more. Examples of what can be considered enticing are parallax effects, eye-catching images or animation, and unique features that will surprise them (in a good way). Likewise, I will also need to avoid accidentally promoting that the user leave my site. Examples of how I can prevent this is by not linking off my site a lot (and open links in a new window), use colors and fonts that are pleasing to the eye and not painful to look at—and most importantly—make navigating the site a simple task. The more time a user has to spend searching for the next page or debating where to go next, the less time that user is spending actually reading and viewing your content. The site should flow like a story book.

"Welcome to my portfolio! I am Adriana Nottestad, a user experience designer and web developer located in San Francisco, California."

FLOW CHART & SITE NAVIGATION

Home
The user lands on my home page and sees where he is and where he can go (navigation), and a short introduction. The introduction tells the user what he can expect to see.

My Skills
A brief overview of my skills show what I mean by front-end developer and UX designer. They will tell the user what I can do, whereas the work section will be proof of those skills. Again, it's giving a the user a brief idea of what's to come below.

My Work
A gallery of my work will display my coding, design, and UX skills. There will be live previews for current work, descriptions that state a little about my work on the site, and proccess books for UX work.

About Me
The page will give the viewer a brief bio about me. This is important because potential employers or future partners would want to know about who they would be working with before they make an offer.

Contact
A form will be used for easy contact. I'll also include my email address for those who wish to email me manually, a link to my Linkedin account and links to my social network accounts. (Github, Dribbble, etc.) This section will be within the about section.

RESEARCH

I split my research up into two categories—general websites and portfolio websites that had good designs. To find these sites, I browsed web pages that gave out awards, had an active community, and were kept up to date.

Examples of Good Websites
http://www.kahuna-webstudio.fr/

http://www.welikesmall.com/work/
- eye-catching and unique features like the footer that slides up add to the site's design

http://fivetailors.com/#!home
- scissors move when the page is loading
- interesting hover animation

http://www.visual-kitchen.com/
- interactive walkthrough of what they do

Examples of Good Portfolios
http://www.thisismyonlineportfolio.com/

http://www.caavadesign.com/
- uses same color theme (coral + beige) except for work pieces

http://www.narrowdesign.com/
- interesting scroll, the beginning animation entices the user to continue scrolling to see what happens next.
- when viewing work, browsing the example images has a unique horizontal drag that increases the interesting part of the page

The main conclusions I have drawn from my site research are:

One page layouts are a simple and concise way of displaying your work. They mean a larger initial loading time, but it's worth it since the user will not have to load any pages afterwards.

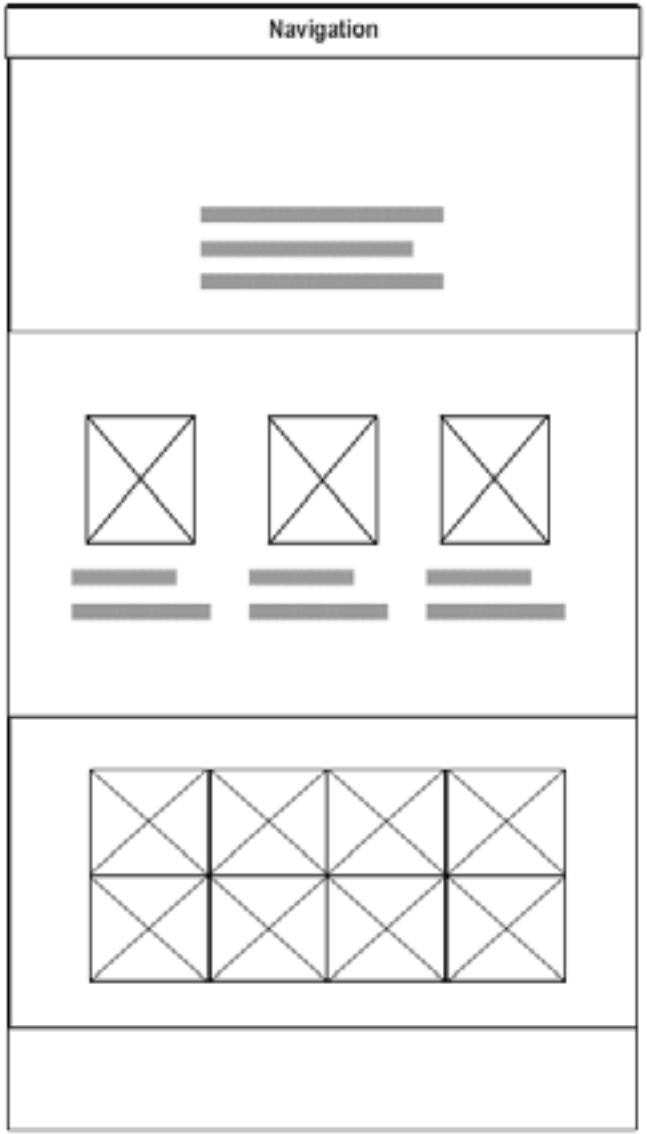
Adding small, subtle animations will make the page more interesting as long as there are not too many.

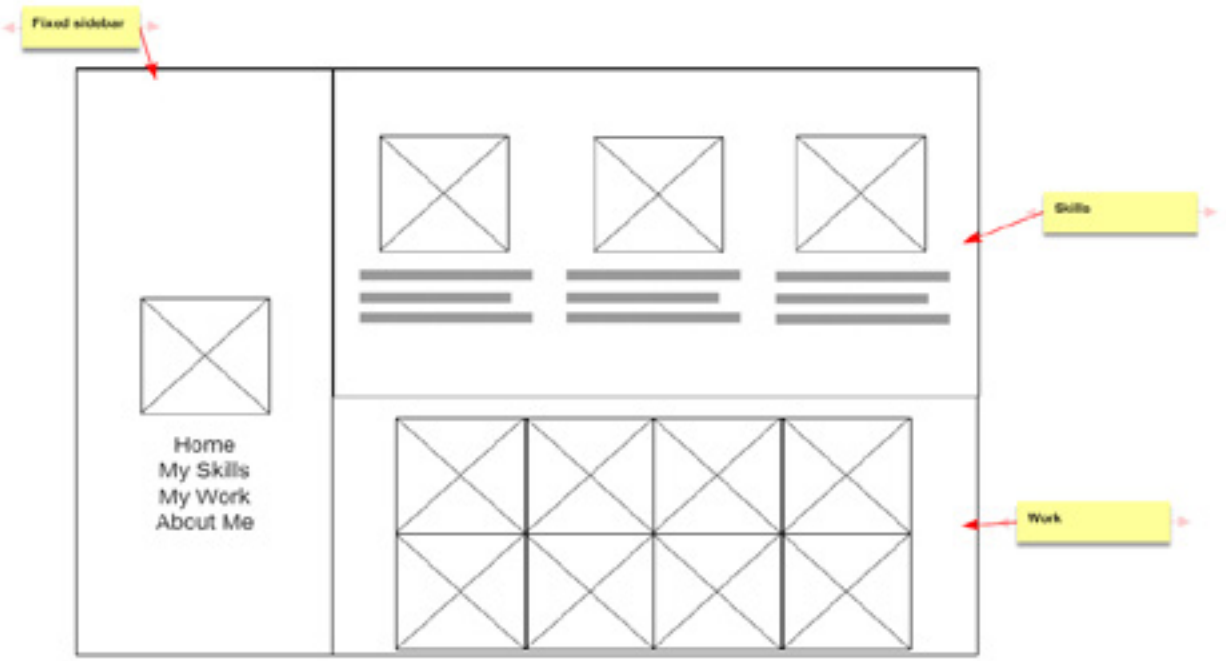
Portoflio work has a next and back button so that the viewer can quickly look through all pieces without having to open them individually.

Horizontal pages work best if "scrolling up/down" will make the page scroll left/right.

WIREFRAME: PART ONE

Out of twenty basic wireframes, I narrowed down my choices to two. I focused more on the overall layout and ignored the individual sections since each section was my version of a page. They would be mocked-up individually later on.





DESIGN: INSPIRATION

Taking a look at the current trends, I decided to create my web page with the 'flat' style. I wanted the focus to be on my work and less about the flashiness of my web portfolio and a simple style would help accomplish this goal.

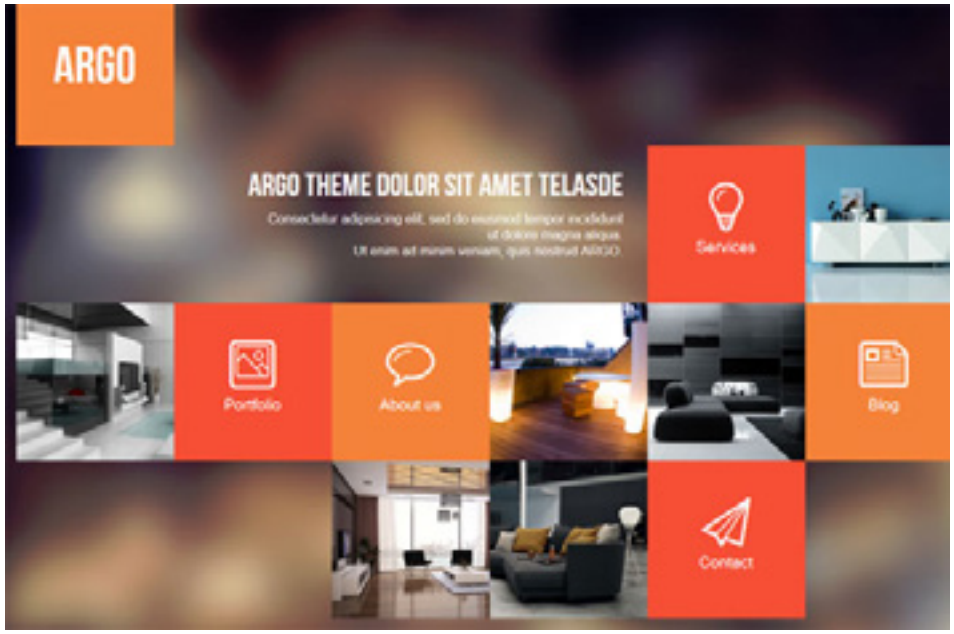
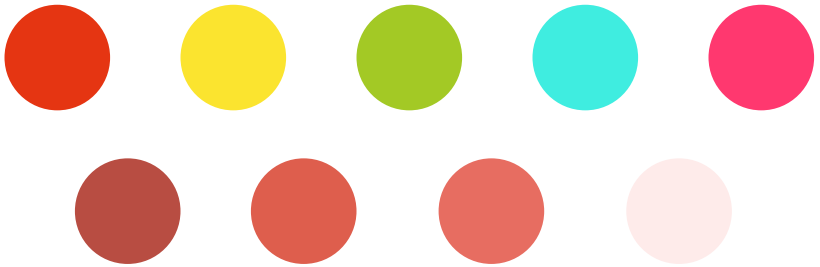
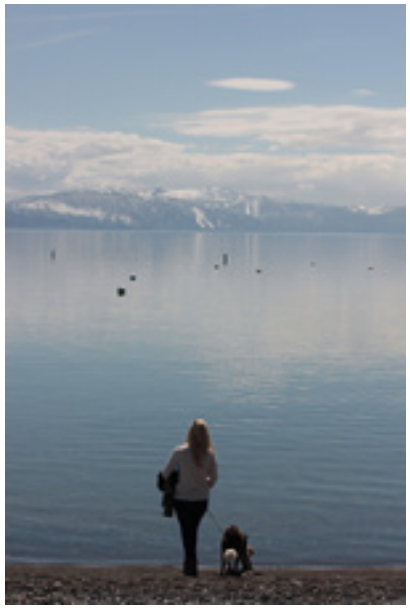


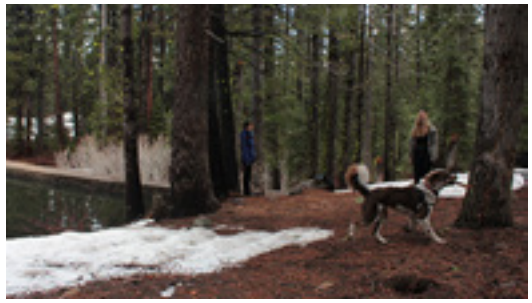
Photo credit: Argo theme template

Since my portfolio represents me, I choose a colors that were my favorites, then narrowed it down to the right shades.

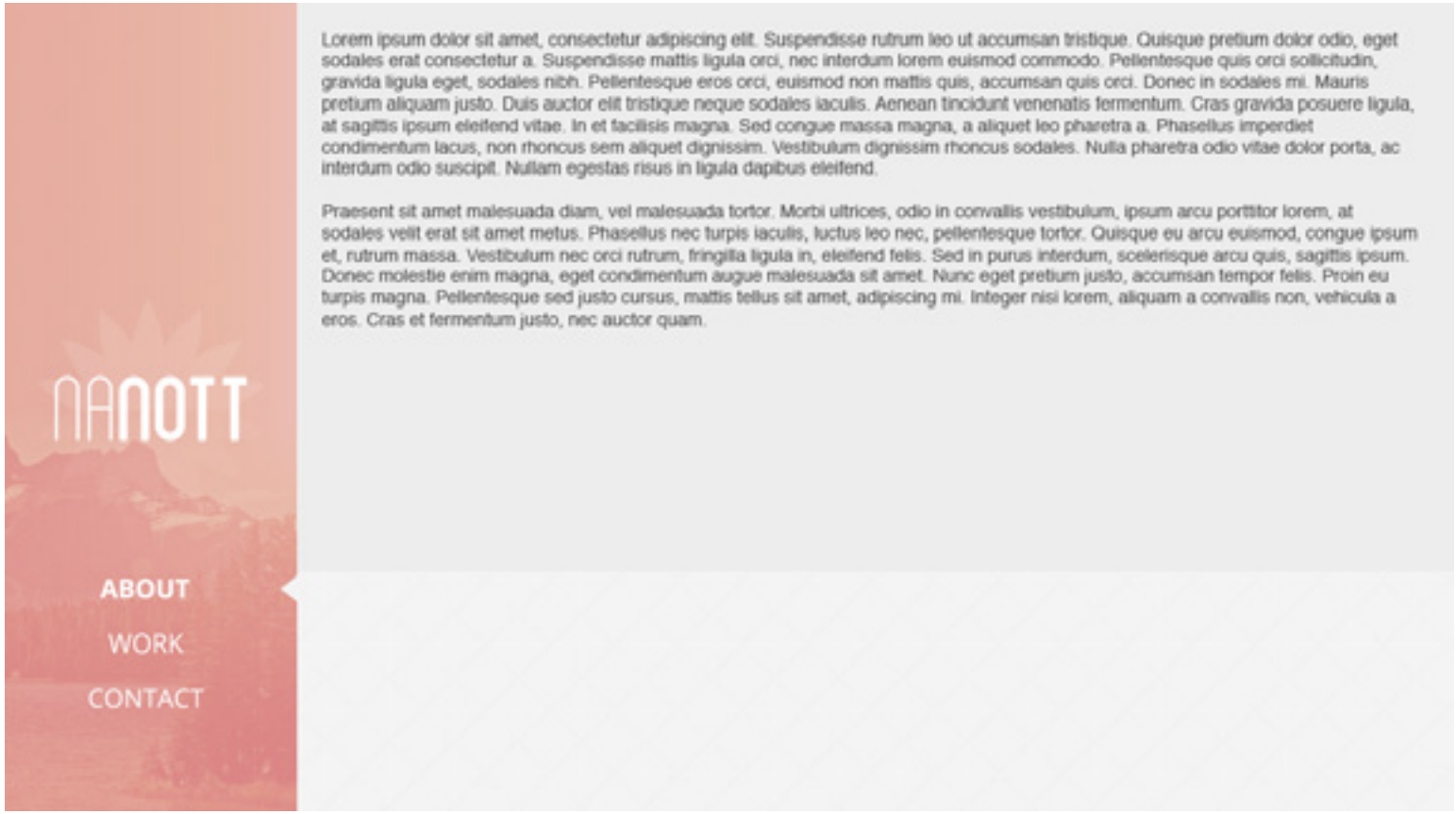


When it came to photos, I avoided using generic stock images. Out of the photographs I had, I chose ones taken from a Lake Tahoe trip.





DESIGN: MOCK-UP A



I liked the idea of a fixed sidebar, as it was unique and more interesting than a top navigation. The UX problems the came up in the process, however, are what led me to choose to proceed further with Mock-up B.

A few of the problems included:
Bar + arrow lead you to believe that the pages should scroll horizontally. I wanted a vertical scroll because it would be less of a shock to the user.

Creating colored sections made a horizontal T shape. It was distracting. Each section would have needed the same background or a different way to switch from section to section.

Tall screens. Would the menu align to the bottom, center, or top? Bottom looks best, but do users keep their mouse in that area? Users may have to move their mouse more in order to navigate.

DESIGN: MOCK-UP B

This is the mock-up that I proceeded with. The simple design left little to distract the users. It allowed for more flexibility in each section design-wise. The overall layout would be simple, and each important section could have its own unique features.

The top navigation would remain fixed, allowing easy access to each section. Since this navigation was fixed to the top and not the side, it followed the conventions used on most websites currently.

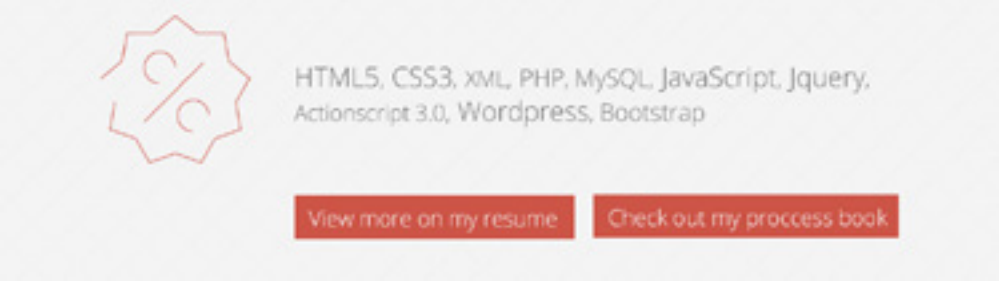
Only shades/tints of one color was used along with shades of greys. It keeps the design consistent and allows areas with multiple colors to stand out more—my work section, the most important part of the page.

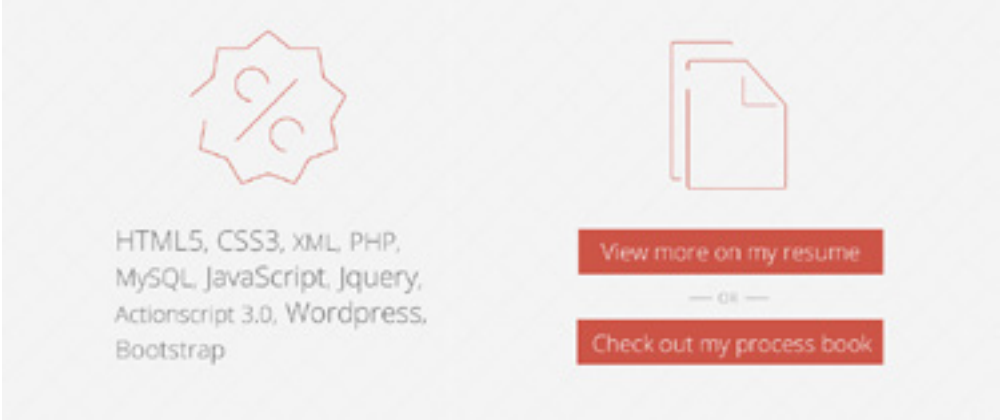
DESIGN: SKILLS SECTION

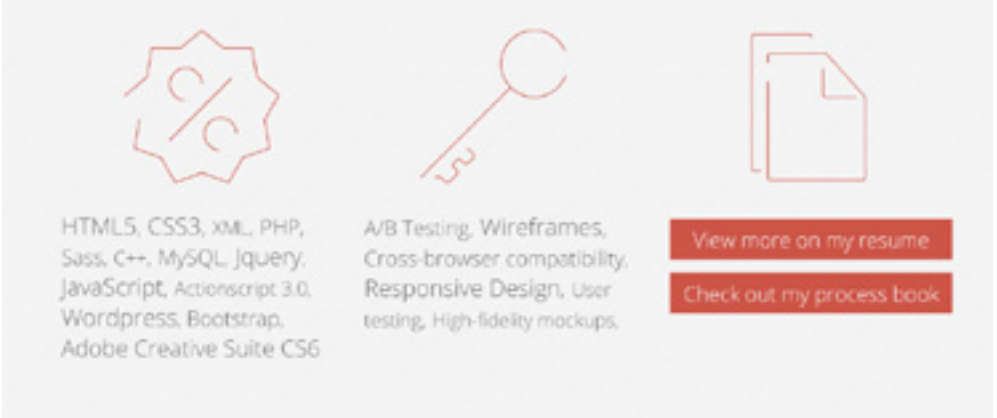
After choosing a base design, I made more detailed wire-frames of each section. The first section I focused on was my skills. The skills could be divided up multiple ways.

Sections could be split up based on content. The skills could be divided as 'developer' and 'designer' columns, foundational and soft skills, etc. The sections could also be displayed vertically or horizontally, and in multiple rows. I created wireframes of each possibility, then created digital mock-ups in photoshop.

Final decision
I went with the third mock-up because I decided that my skills would be best seperated as UX and developer since I am specifically marketing myself as those two roles. It was easier to read in thing columns instead of multiple long rows.

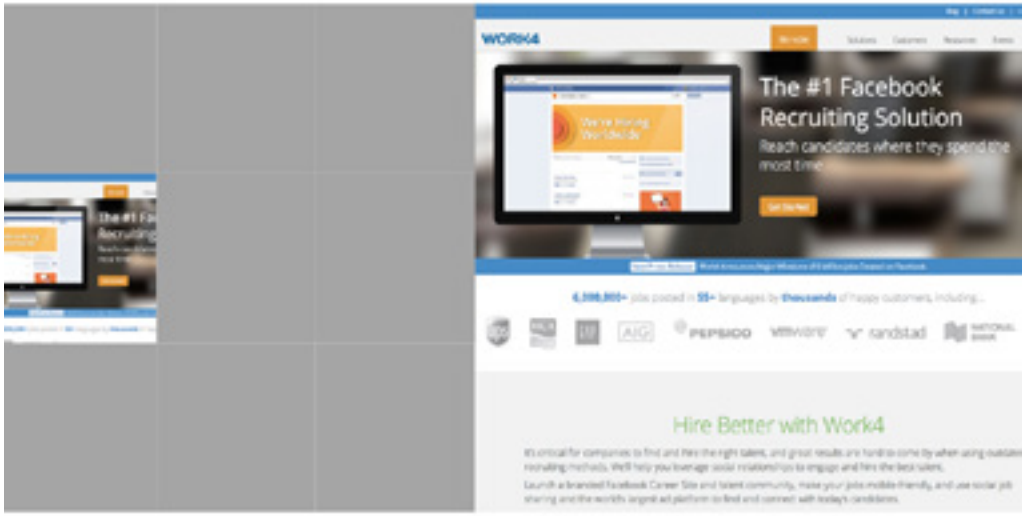






DESIGN: WORK SECTION

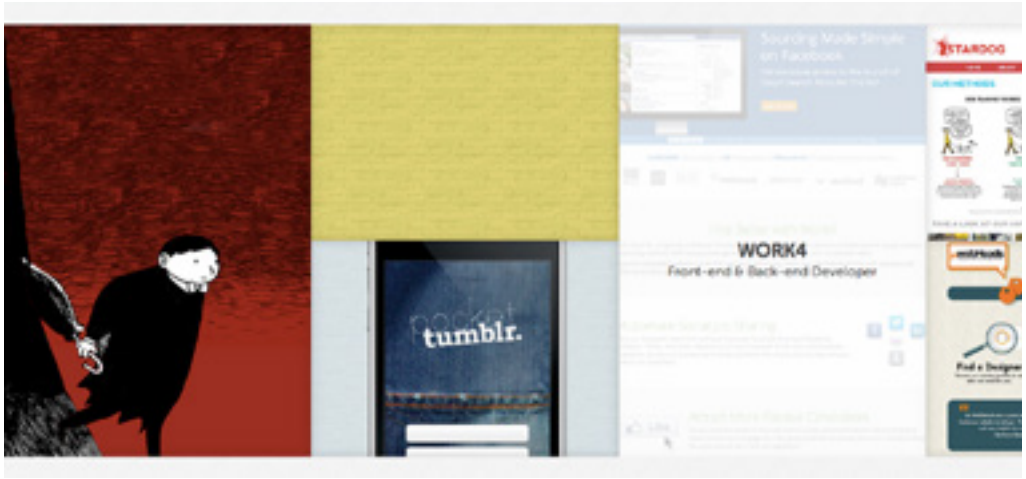
Similar to the skills section, I went back and created multiple wireframes for the work section. I narrowed it down to two. The best way to display work is with photo thumbnails. The designs that are most attracting to the viewer will likely be the ones they click first. Large blocks would dominate the screen and help prevent the user from being distracted by content elsewhere.



Clicking a thumbnail would open a block over the thumbnails, giving an overview of the piece as well as a preview image, a live view option, and a process book if the piece had one. There would be an option to click through each piece on that screen, or they could close the block and choose another piece from the thumbnails.

Final decision

I went with the second design because of UX problems with the first. Once work is displayed in the first design, the image screen was meant to change into a slider. Arrows for the slider and arrows for the content box made it confusing. Which arrows switched between the work, and which arrows witched between the slides?



The second design also allowed the thumbnails to take up more space on the screen, and since the user would see a larger screen capture once they clicked a thumbnail, the extra preview area in the first design was not neccessary.

FUTURE PLANS

The website will be improved upon after user tests have been completed. The testing pool will contain mostly web-savy users, as my intended audience would be employers from design or software companies, or those who are interested in web design and development. Since there are chances that I could have users who aren't web-savy, I plan on including some testers for that user group as well. Both genders will be included. Ages will be from 16 to 50 years old. After the test, I would watch the users and ask them questions about the following areas:

Navigation
Was it easy to navigate? Did they ever seem lost? Did they scroll or did they use the top navigation?

Content
Was there enough content? Did they expect more? Less?

Colors
Were they too bright? Did the images distract from the text?

Easter eggs
Did they know what to do with the social media icons? Was the work slideshow browsed through as predicted? Did they notice the animated skills icon? If they did, what was the reaction?