

HELLO DESIGN WORLD

A VISUAL WEB DESIGN
GUIDEBOOK FOR DEVELOPERS

Preface

This book is for my programmer friends who are hackers at heart, but want to learn design on the side. It is a great place to start if you want to be a pro at web design. Or if you just want to be “not horrible” at web design, it’s good for that too :)

The lessons in here are meant to be practical. Too many design books think you need to know the history of design before doing it. Fooey, I say.

I encourage you to approach each chapter as if you were learning a new programming language. For example, look at the examples in the typography chapter and try to mimic the leading (letter-spacing) in the examples. Pick a style from the style chapter and try to recreate it. Pick a color palette for your project based on the principles of color theory mentioned in the color chapter.

Each of these are your own little “Hello World” experiments.

Once you’re more comfortable, try your hand at the exercises at the end of the book. How will you know if your experiments get compiled correctly? Compare it to work you admire online. But only the parts you’re experimenting with. That’s important. It’s easy to get overwhelmed if you compare your small typography experiment to a fully completed site on Dribbble.

Additionally if you’re struggling with something and need some feedback, hit me up! I’m at hello@designbynumbers.io.

kind regards, Mason

Table of Contents

Research.....4

Concept.....11

Brand.....27

Style.....33

Composition.....62

Alignment.....77

Typography.....85

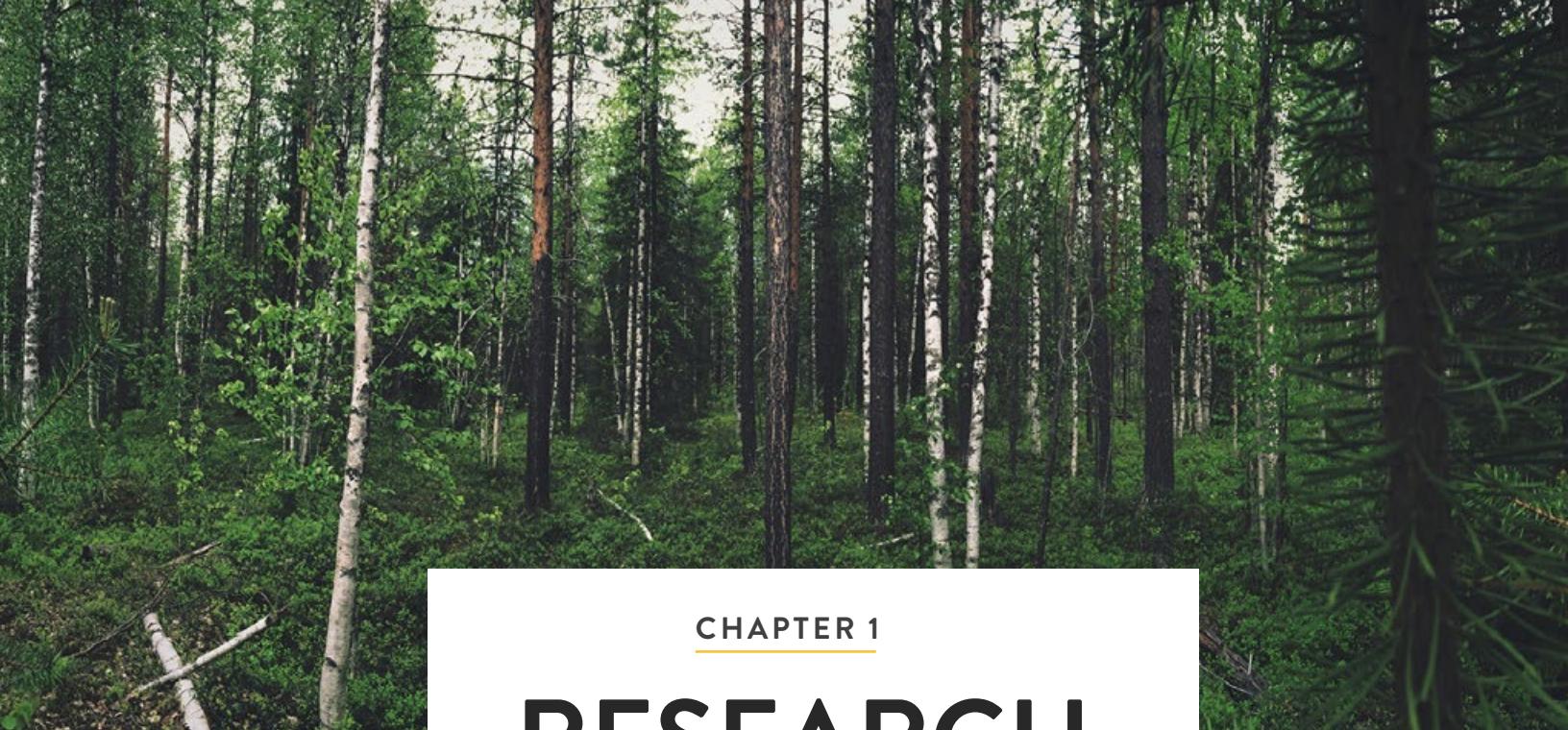
Hierarchy.....95

Color.....105

Proximity.....130

The DxN framework.....141

Exercises.....150



CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

– Abraham Lincoln



Introduction

Doing your design research is like going backpacking. The more you prepare up front, the fewer headaches you'll encounter later on. Beginner designers often want to jump right into Photoshop when starting a new project, however that puts you in a position of having to do research while you design. That's not ideal because it will pull your brain in opposite directions.

You might be tempted to skip the research step. If you do, it will come back to pester you in some way and force you to change course – likely after you've already poured many hours into your design. I once spent an entire day on a site design after barely skimming the creative brief that morning. Only later did I realize that the brief called for specific fonts and colors that I hadn't been using. D'oh!

Do your research first and save yourself time later. In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *The creative brief*
- *Competitive analysis*
- *Mockup site vs. real site*
- *Getting inspired*
- *Wireframes*

The creative brief

Reading the creative brief is the first step of your research. All agencies, design firms, and other creative places use them. The format is a one to two-page document that sums up the deliverables of the project.

If you're a developer at a startup or other non-design focused business, this section still applies, although the document you receive will be called a "project brief" or something similar. It's important to try to get your hands on it. I've worked in several environments where the developers and designers sit in different parts of the building and don't talk to one another. So when it comes time for development, the programmer's input has less importance because so many decisions have already been made. For that reason, **Seek out the creative brief when the designers get it** so you can talk it over with them. It will take some poking and prodding of producers and managers but good things happen when designers and developers work together from the start.

I don't know what environment you're currently working in. So let's look at the creative brief at three common types of companies:

- *Large agencies & design firms*
- *Boutiques*
- *Individual situations*

Large agencies & design firms

A word of caution: if you're a developer at a big agency, it will be difficult (but not impossible!) to start doing design work. These places have systems and departments in place to keep things organized. You the programmer are asking to do something outside of that system. Your best bet is to

befriend designers you've collaborated with and try to get involved in that way.

You can do it!

Creative briefs at large companies are usually created by a producer, brand person, or account person. That's because these people have a relationship with the client and understand the client's business objectives.

Often there will be a meeting set up specifically for the creative team (designers, writers, and creative directors) where the account team will go over the creative brief. In the biz this is called "getting briefed."

[Here](#) is what one of these briefs looks like. Read it closely but don't let it intimidate you. The brief is meant to help you understand a long series of conversations the account team has had with the client.

To summarize: At a big studio, it's the account team's job to define (with a creative brief) what the problem is that needs to be solved. In this setting, it's the designers job to come up with a creative solution. So many design ideas start with the brief. So if you're a programmer trying to learn design in a large agency setting, try to get into the briefing meetings or at the very least get your hands on the brief afterward.

Boutique shop briefs

If you're part of a medium-sized team (5-20 people), it's more likely that you'll be given the brief verbally by a coworker who met with the client. Or maybe you're part of a startup and the product person is telling you

what the site needs to look like. It would be great to have a brief written for you like at the bigger companies, but in my experience, shops of this size don't do this because it's not a task that will make the company money. Smaller places are much more concerned with efficiency and they prefer to keep people busy with revenue-generating tasks. Since you may be told the brief verbally, take notes and ask questions.

If you're at a startup, things move so fast that much of what you're told will change based on unforeseen circumstances. It's annoying. But try to figure out what key principles won't change. What does the company stand for? Why does it exist? Try to extract some overarching themes for your brief. Your later design will be based on the brief. So if it's based on certain core tenants of the site, it will be less susceptible to future changes in product and strategy.

Individual briefs

In this scenario, you're in charge of the brief. You'll need to get into the client or user's head and figure out what problems she's trying to solve. If you're working with a client, take good notes and summarize back to her the key things she's trying to accomplish. These will mainly be business goals. If you're working for a startup, you'll need to think about what the user goals are.

It's good to write down these business goals because later on you'll come up with some wild and creative website ideas - some good, some bad. If you have the site's objectives written down, you'll be able to see how your

ideas measure up.

Competitive analysis

Once you have the creative brief, you can start researching the competition. If you're part of a large team, sometimes the strategy department (if there is one) will likely do some of this work.

Competitive analysis identifies places where the competition is doing something poorly, or can't compete with your client. In the late 90's every computer was beige and ugly. Then Apple came along and made beautiful multicolored iMacs.

Consumers took notice, but competitors didn't copy them because they didn't understand design. Design was like a foreign



Design was Apple's competitive edge

language to them. But design was one of Apple's core strengths, so they ran with it.

Here's another example of competitive

analysis at work. I once had an assignment where I was tasked with designing a new website for a custom home builder. During the research phase, when I printed out the websites and brochures of their competitors, every one of them used American flags or some kind of Normal Rockwell imagery.

Their competitors all looked the same. That informed our decision to push the client into having a more modern looking site. And it worked! Most of the their key website metrics improved after the new site launched. If we hadn't done our research first, we wouldn't have had that insight.

Look for places where your site design can differentiate itself in a way that will help it achieve your client's goals. What does your client or company do well that the competition can't? Maybe they manufacture their blue jeans in the U.S., unlike their competition. If they all use photography on their site, consider doing an illustration styled site. If they all use American flags on their site, think about going modern. Research the competition and write down your findings. You'll be surprised at how often this research will help shape the design direction of your website. Having these tidbits to draw from will help prevent you from staring at a blank screen later.

When should I copy the competition?

I won't pretend copying doesn't happen. I'm guilty of it. We once had a fashion client who loved the online retailer Nasty Gal. So we implemented a lot of the same features as Nasty Gal for the client's new site.

But after a while, the good parts of our site

that *were* original lost their importance. We were measuring ourselves against Nasty Gal and not thinking for ourselves. That's a bad spot to be in. It's difficult to be innovative while simultaneously copying others.

It's wrong to copy. But many clients and startups don't care about the moral arguments against it. Hell, Samsung's entire business model is to copy other companies. A better argument is to explain to your client that copying puts them in the mindset of being a follower. That's a dangerous place to be because consumers will sniff that out and you'll lose their respect. Consumers will also pay you less money because your brand will be weaker.

Or in the case of a product, look at how few features Snapchat copies from other startups. It's that willingness to stand out and have a point of view that endears them to users. And when others copy them (like Instagram), any short term growth they gain comes at the expense of user loyalty.

Our Nasty Gal copycat site didn't work out because once we launched, the features that we copied from their site had been removed. Either they tried it and it didn't work, or users grew tired of it. Who knows.

Worse still, we didn't have a hypothesis or data that suggested we make each feature. So when it came time to judge if it should stay or go on our site, there was nothing to measure it against because it was simply something that we had copied.

Mockup or real site?

This is an important step that often gets overlooked. We need to know the nature of the site we're designing before we can begin. Is this a mockup or a real site?

The creative brief should give you a sense of this in a section called "deliverables" or something similarly named. The scope of work is written here by the account or product team. It won't use the words "mockup" or "real," but it will say things like:

- *5-6 web pages needed for client's board meeting (a mockup site)*
- *20-30 page website (a real site)*
- *Three different home page styles to be assessed for look and feel (a mockup site)*
- *Vendor will design and do front-end development of site (a real site)*

It's important to get clarity on what kind of site you're designing. If it's a mockup site, you can use images from anywhere! This can dramatically improve the look of your design.

Mockup site

The goal of a mockup site is to give the client a glimpse of what their site could be. The designer can use imagery from anywhere. It doesn't matter that you're "stealing" images because they won't ever appear on a live site. These images are called "for placement only"

or F.P.O for short. They're meant to give a sense of what the site would look like if the client gives approval to make it real.

Real Site

If you know your website will eventually go live, then it's a good idea to pick images that you'll be able to buy later. Stocksy.com is a useful resource, and occasionally gettyimages.com will have good stuff too. If the project has a small budget, keep that in mind while searching for imagery (Stocksy is cheaper than Getty).

[Here's more](#) about the difference between mockup and real sites, as well as some good places to find imagery.

Getting inspired

This step is meant to inspire you and form a path your design might take. When I see something I like, I'll drag it to an "inspiration" folder on my desktop. [Here's](#) my inspiration folder for [this site](#) I did for HCB. Additionally, here are some places where I look for inspiration:

<http://mindsparklemag.com>

<http://designspiration.net/>

<http://ffffound.com/>

<http://awwwards.com/>

<http://thedsgnblog.com>

<https://dribbble.com/>

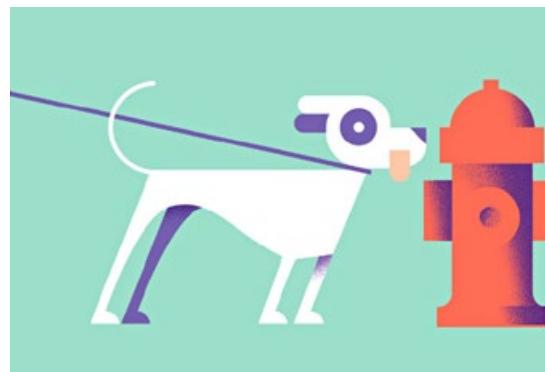
<https://www.behance.net/>

Sometimes this step will heavily inform your site design and sometimes it won't; I've had it go both ways. Don't feel bad if you don't feel "inspired" right away by what you've gathered.

A few years ago, I had to design a new website for a mortgage company. I had a brief, and the strategy department said they wanted the company to move to a more human, customer-centric approach with its messaging and how they did business. So we wanted the site to reflect that.

My first step was to look for examples of design that inspired me, both related and unrelated to homes, mortgages, etc. Our creative team liked the idea of illustrations because they were friendly and none of the client's competition were doing it.

After deciding to go with illustrations, we narrowed our search to five illustrators. We finally decided on [Andrew Colin Beck](#) because his work was beautiful, had a friendly vibe, and



An Illustration by Andrew Beck

he used unique shadows that were subtle, but gave objects a nice dimensional feel. [Here's](#) a zip file of the final five illustrators we

considered if you're curious.

to draw from?

Wireframes

The last step in the research phase is getting wireframes from the UX team (if there is one). Sometimes you'll get wireframes when designing a site and sometimes you won't.

Real sites are more likely to have wireframes than mockup sites. Larger sites are more likely to have them designed too.

For our purposes, don't worry too much about wireframes yet. It's a different animal from visual design and requires a different type of thinking. I don't want to overwhelm you. Just know that wireframes are meant to be a rough guideline about what elements should be on a page.

Chapter summary

It's important to know all the goals and background of what you're building. Even if the site is for personal use, doing your research is a good habit to get into.

Ask yourself:

Have I read the creative brief?

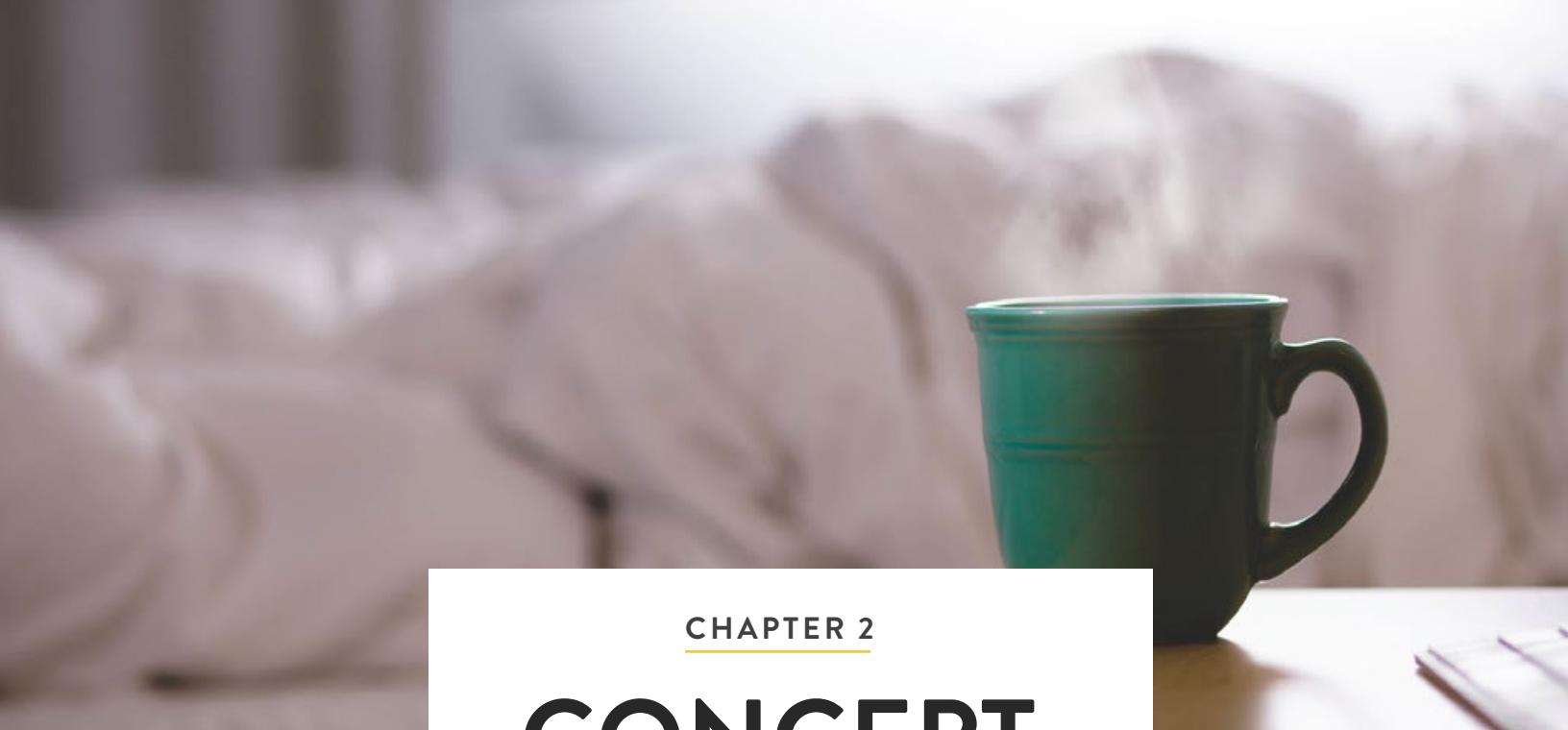
What does the competition do well?

What do they do poorly?

What is their competitive edge?

Is this a mockup site or a real one?

Have I collected inspirational design images



CHAPTER 2

CONCEPT

“Practice Safe Design, use a concept.”

– Petrula Vrontikis



Introduction

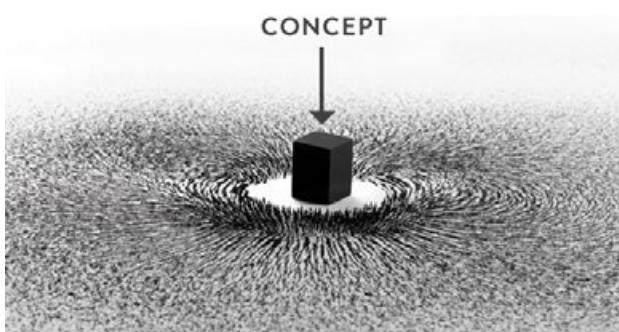
In graphic design, it's often useful to use a concept while designing. A concept is an idea or style around which you build your website. Concepts are valuable because they turn your website into a story. And as you may know, people love stories. It makes the content on your site more accessible.

In this chapter:

- *The Concept Magnet*
- *'Preserve' case study*
- *What determines the concept*
- *Guess the concept*

The concept magnet

A good concept is like a magnet. It commands every element on the page. Typography, color, style, and copy – they're all attracted to the magnet and do what they're told. This is a good thing because it creates order. All of the elements work together. Think of a themed



The magnet attracts everything around it

wedding. When a bride chooses a concept, there are dozens of items that need to work

together to support the idea. The invitations, the cake, place settings, dresses, food, and photography - all map back to the central



Everything here supports the wedding's concept concept. The wedding theme is the magnet holds it all together. If the concept is vintage, everything will look old. If the concept is beach themed, there will be plenty of starfish and seashells around.

'Preserve' case study

Preserve is a website that is part editorial, part e-commerce. They highlight stories about woodworkers, tailors, blacksmiths, and other artisans. Each of these craftspeople makes their products from scratch.

Once the site's designer determined the purpose of the website from the creative brief, she decided that the concept for the site design should be "handmade". She reasoned that if all the stories were going to be about these artisans, the site should reflect that.

From there she made many deliberate design choices, all of which mapped back to that concept. Look at the final site on the next few pages. Is the "handmade" concept evident?

Enlarge

JUST US GREATER GOOD **SHOP** FPO MY PRESERVE

CATEGORY: ALL ▾ PRICE: ALL ▾ SORT BY: FEATURED ▾

NORDIC WARE WOK
BY SELETTI
\$48.50

FORMAGGI DAL PIEMONTE
BY THE ITALIAN
\$28.25

ITALIAN LOAFER
BY EMERSON FRY
\$245.95

DERBY EN TOILE SHOE
BY APC
\$126.95

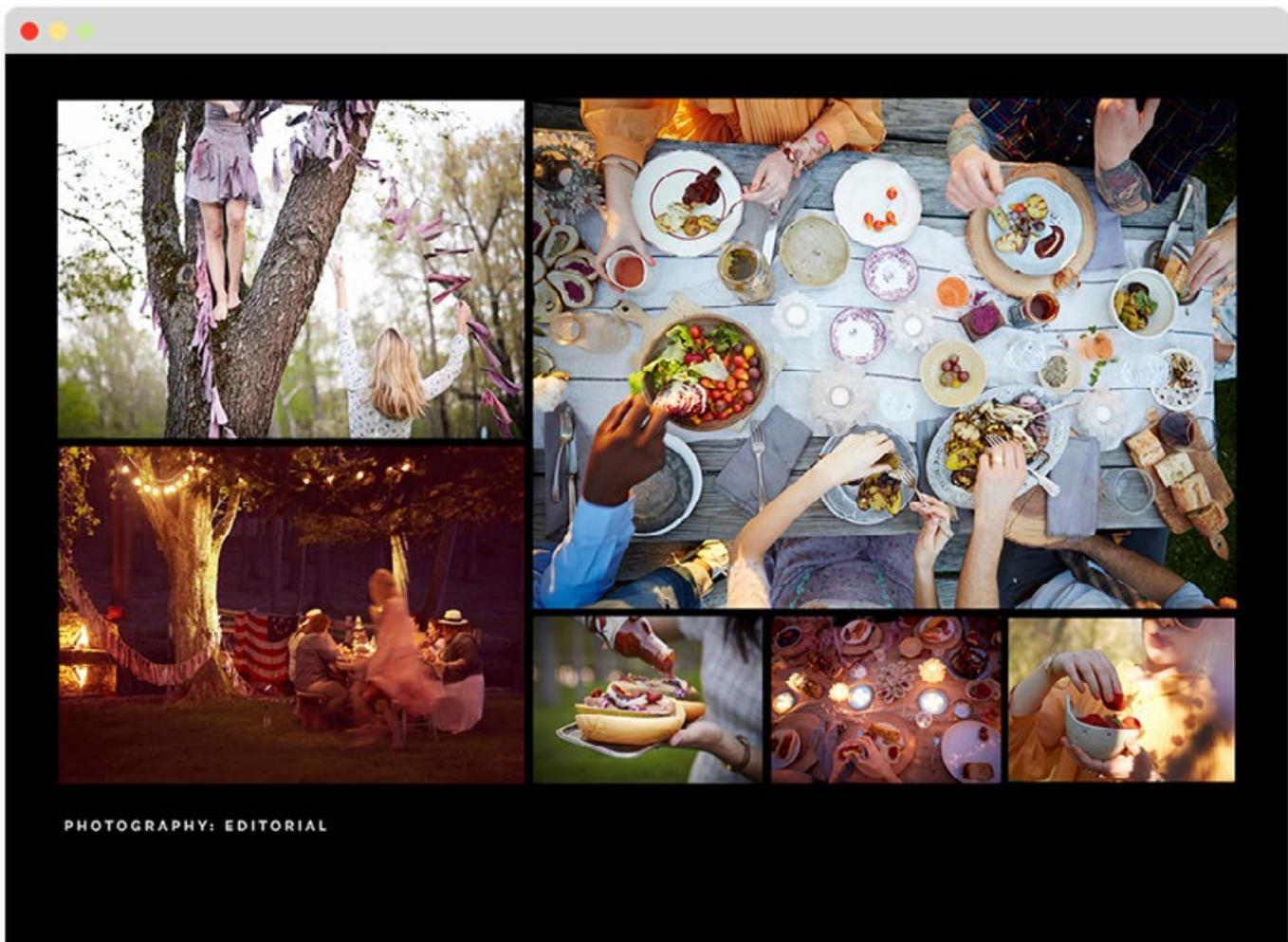
EDISON CHANDELIER
STEPHANE HUBERT
\$198.25

ARTISAN FOCACCIA
BY THE BREAD SHOP
\$8.75

BLAKE'S BEST

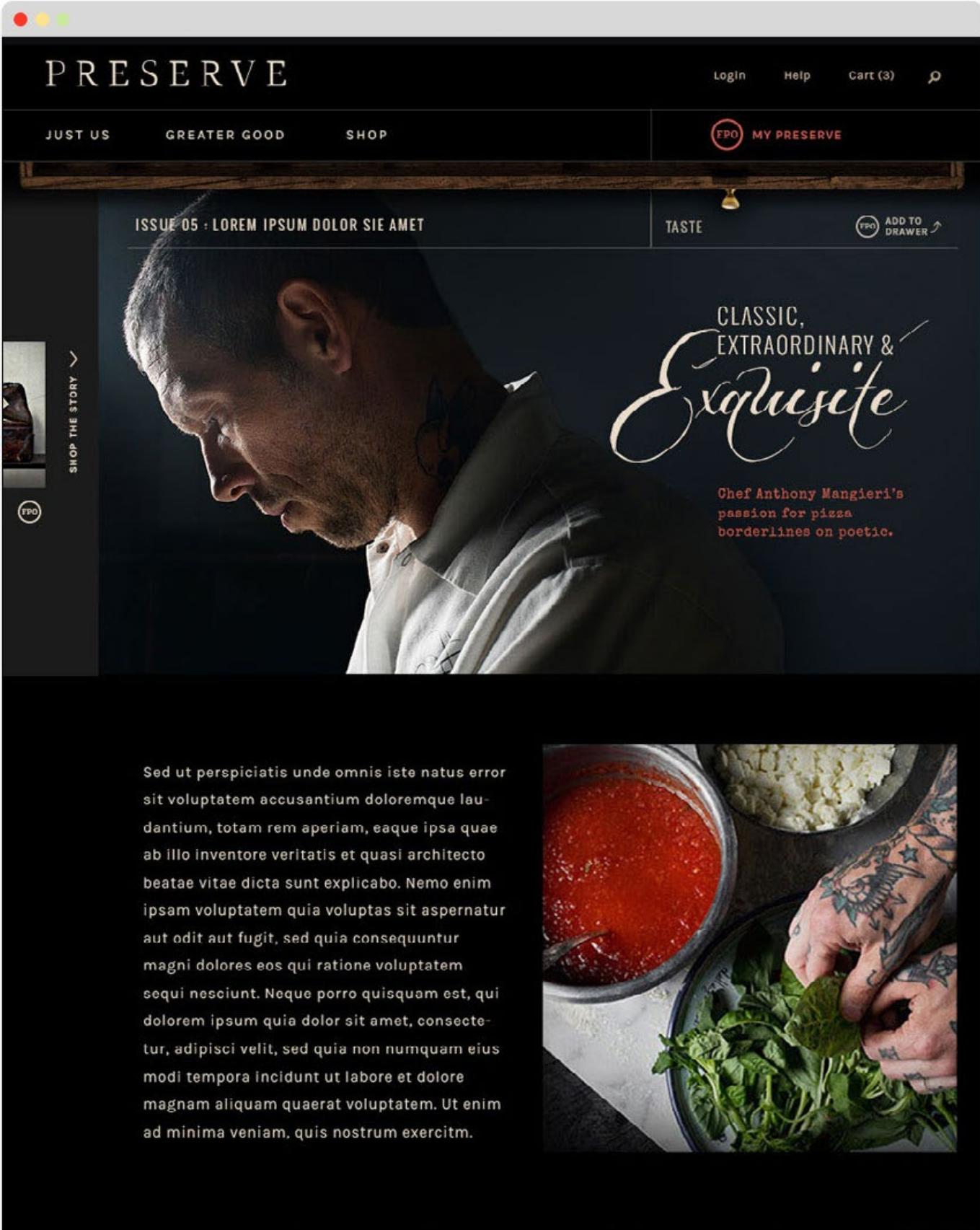
LAVENDER JAM
BY: ONCE UPON A CAKESTAND

 [Enlarge](#)



PHOTOGRAPHY: EDITORIAL

 Enlarge



The screenshot shows a digital magazine issue titled "ISSUE 05 : LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIE AMET". The main headline on the cover reads "CLASSIC, EXTRAORDINARY & Exquisite". Below it, a quote says "Chef Anthony Mangieri's passion for pizza borderlines on poetic." On the left side of the cover, there is a portrait of a chef, identified as Chef Anthony Mangieri, looking down at a dish he is preparing. The right side features a close-up of hands with tattoos preparing ingredients: a bowl of red tomato sauce, a bowl of white cheese, and a bunch of fresh basil leaves.

PRESERVE

JUST US GREATER GOOD SHOP

ISSUE 05 : LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIE AMET

TASTE

ADD TO DRAWER

CHEF ANTHONY MANGIERI

CLASSIC, EXTRAORDINARY & *Exquisite*

Chef Anthony Mangieri's passion for pizza borderlines on poetic.

Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incident ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitm.

Yes, I think the “handmade” concept comes through very well. Notice all of these elements in the design:

- *Textured Typography*
- *Wooden drawer to save favorites*
- *Typewriter font*
- *Intimate editorial and lifestyle photography*
- *Textured recipe cards*
- *Products photographed on textured surfaces*

All of these elements support the concept of “handmade”.

These design choices were not solely a reflection of the designer’s ego. If she made the site based only on her whims, it may have been done in a trendy style like “flat design”. But it would probably be weird seeing images of craftspeople with dirt on their hands on a clean and minimal website.

The *concept* led her down this design path. In a way, this is freeing because many of the things that determine the concept aren’t decided by you.

What determines the concept?

There are three things that inform what the

concept will be. They are as follows:

The Audience

1/3 of the concept is shaped by the audience. If the audience is bankers, your concept will be conservative. If your audience is kids, your concept can be playful. Think about who the audience is and what their goals are as a user. Does the concept work within those constraints?

The site’s brand

1/3 of the concept is determined by the client’s brand. How do they present themselves and what they stand for? Your job is to have a site that doesn’t stray too far from what the brand stands for and looks like. For example, a well-worn and textured site like Preserve wouldn’t work well for a company like Target because they have a clean red and white aesthetic. And none of the products Target sells are handmade. So using textures on a Target website would be off-brand.

Your inspirational images

1/3 of the concept is influenced by the images you collected in the inspiration exercise from your research. This is where your personal preferences come in to play. Look at the images. What do you like? Are there visual elements or concepts in those designs that resonate with you?

Often a successful site will have just one concept. One big idea.

Deciding on a concept is one of the more difficult exercises in this book. I know it feels like there's a lot riding on it but try not to sweat it. You can always change it later.

Guess the concept

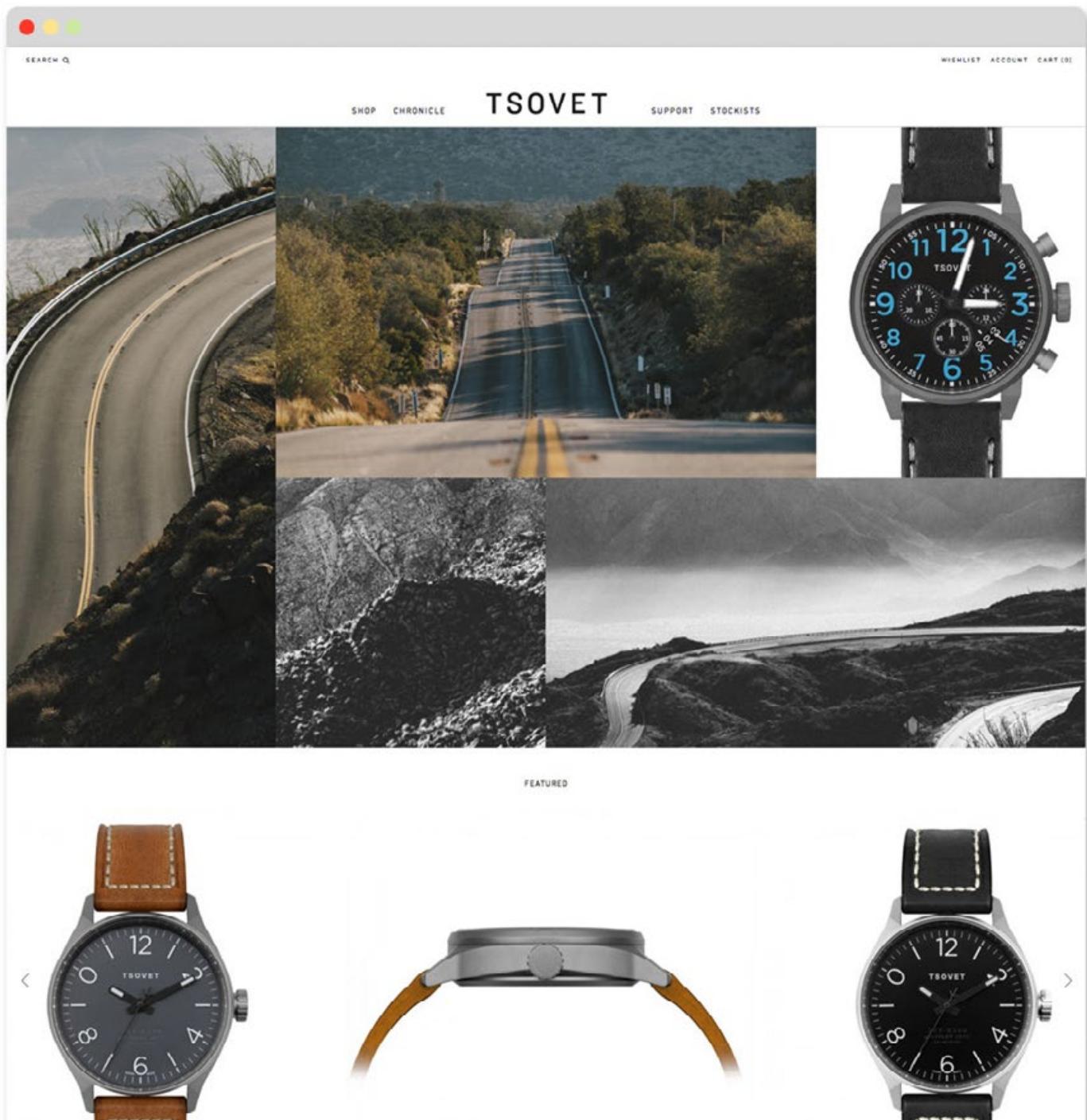
Let's do some exercises. Look at the examples on the next few pages and try to figure out what the concept is before looking at the answer at the bottom. Btw, these will get progressively harder as you go.

Tsovet

<https://www.tsovet.com>

What's the concept? Answer at the bottom.

Enlarge



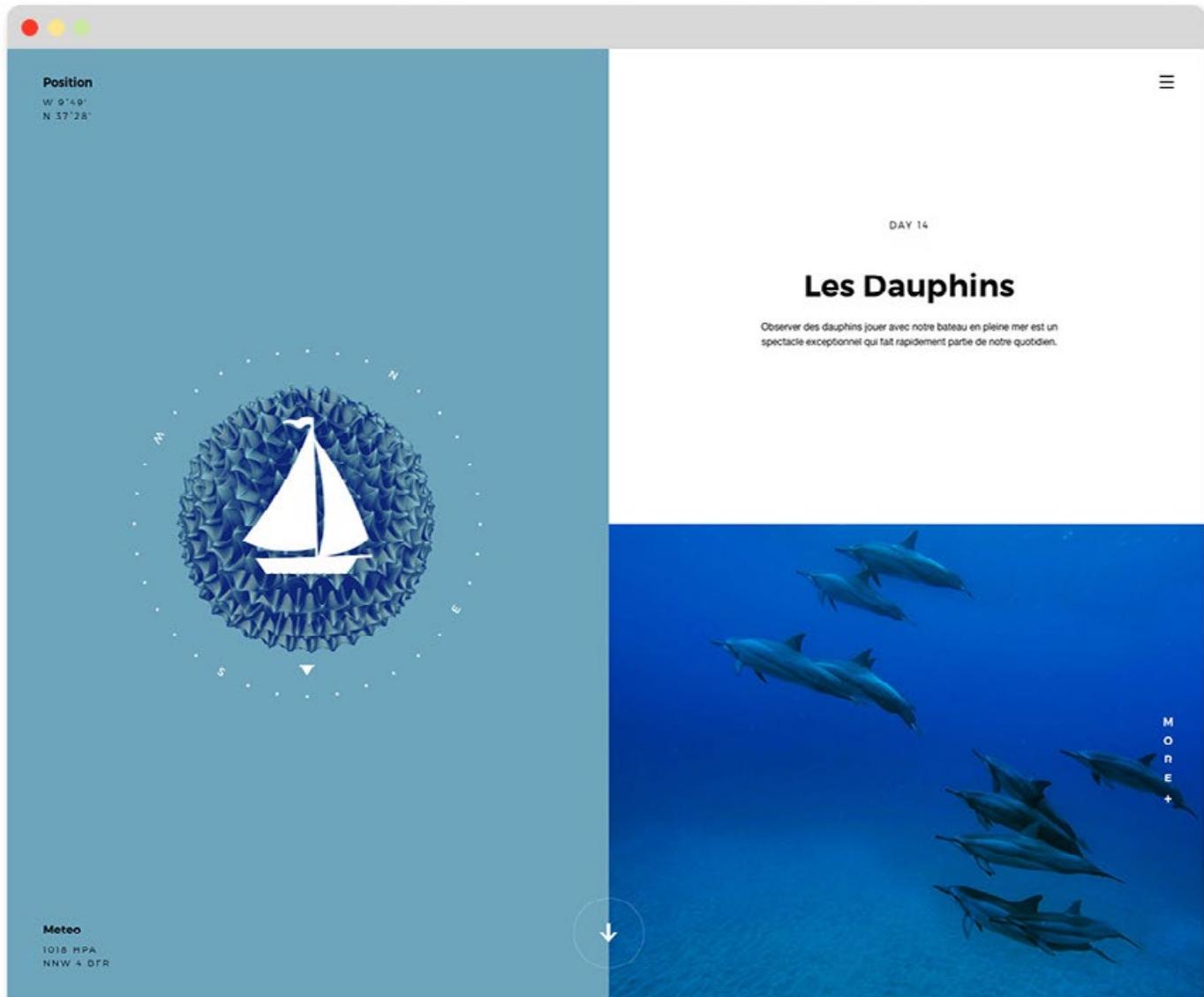
A: Travel /Adventure

Si Le Soleil

<http://silesoleil.com>

What's the concept? Answer at the bottom.

Enlarge



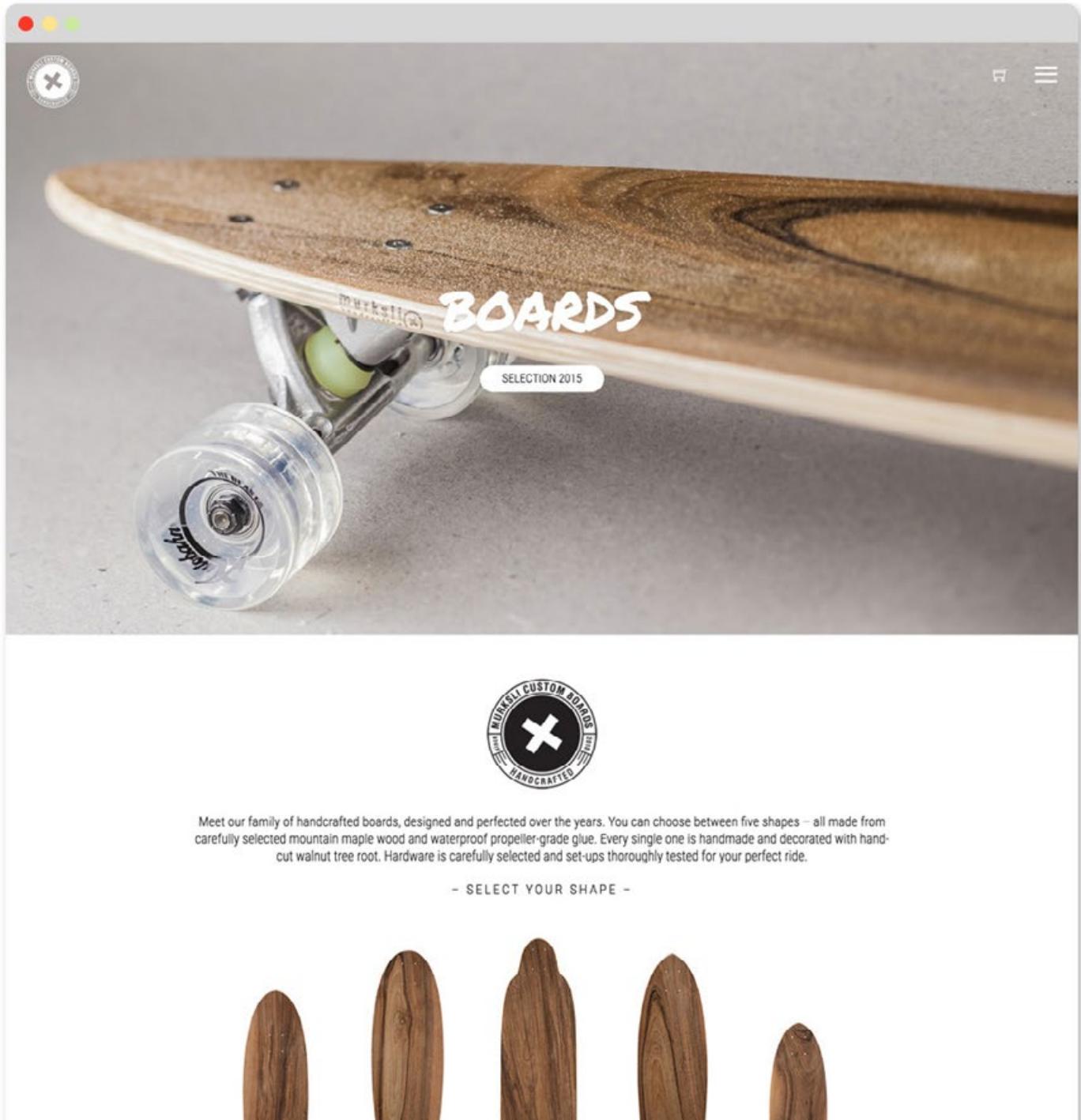
A: The Ocean

Murksli Skateboards

<http://murksli.com>

What's the concept? Answer at the bottom.

Enlarge



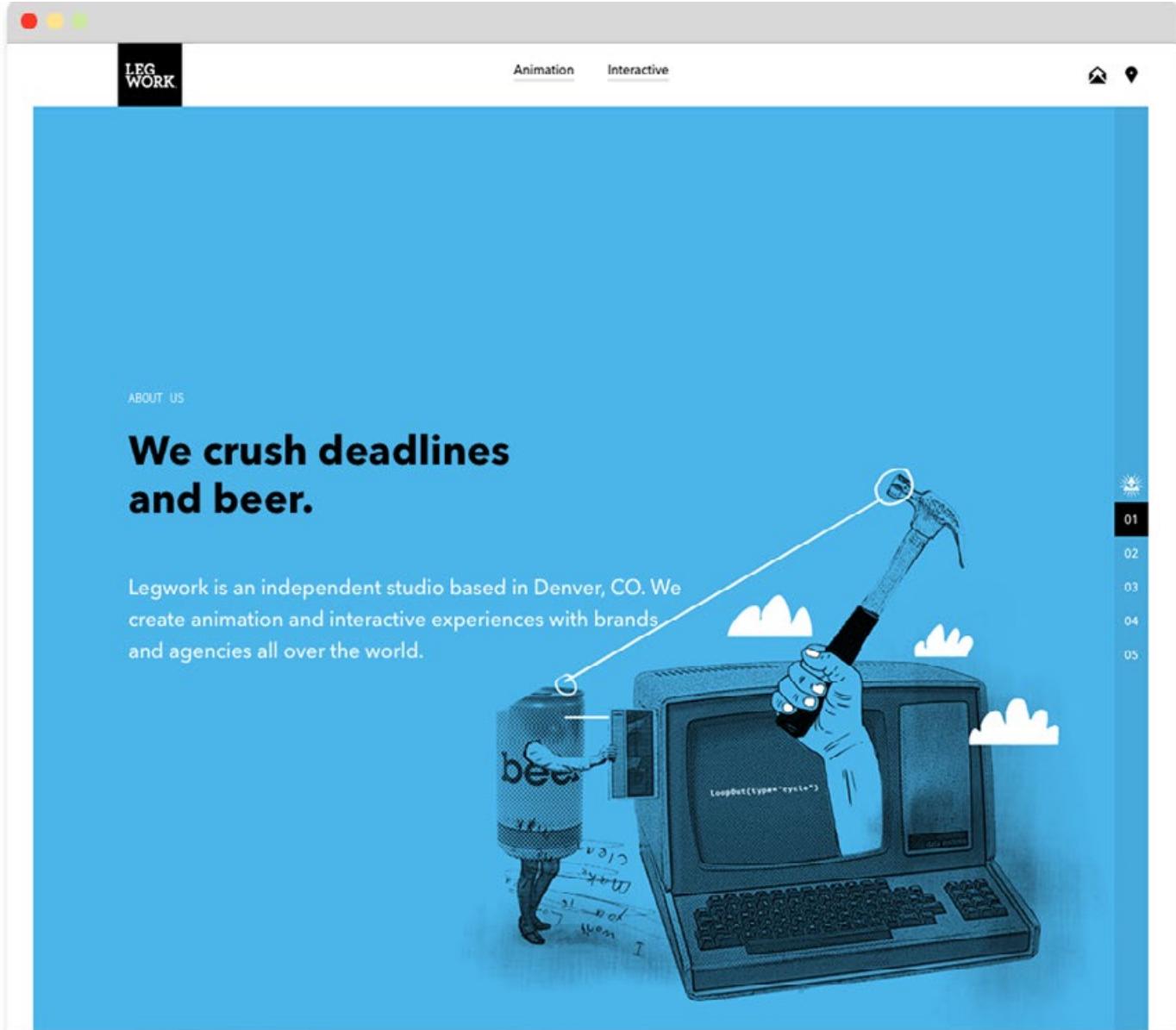
A: Craftsmanship

Legwork Studio

<http://legworkstudio.com>

Visit their site for the full effect. What's the concept?

 [Enlarge](#)



A: The concept is whimsy. Every illustration has a silly face of some kind. The copy is super playful too.

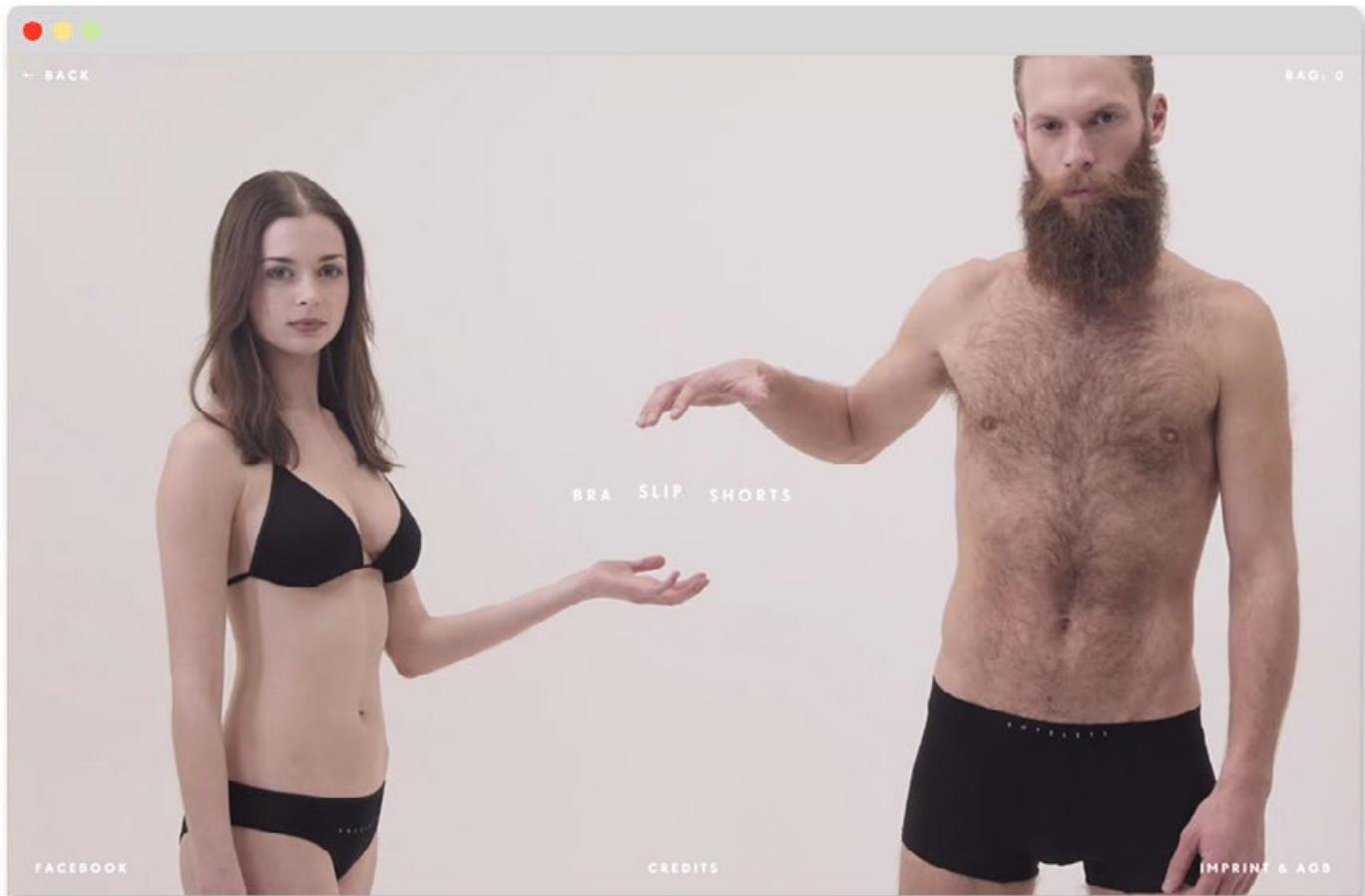
Kotelett

<http://kotelett.info>

They make underwear. What's the concept?

Answer at the bottom.

Q [Enlarge](#)



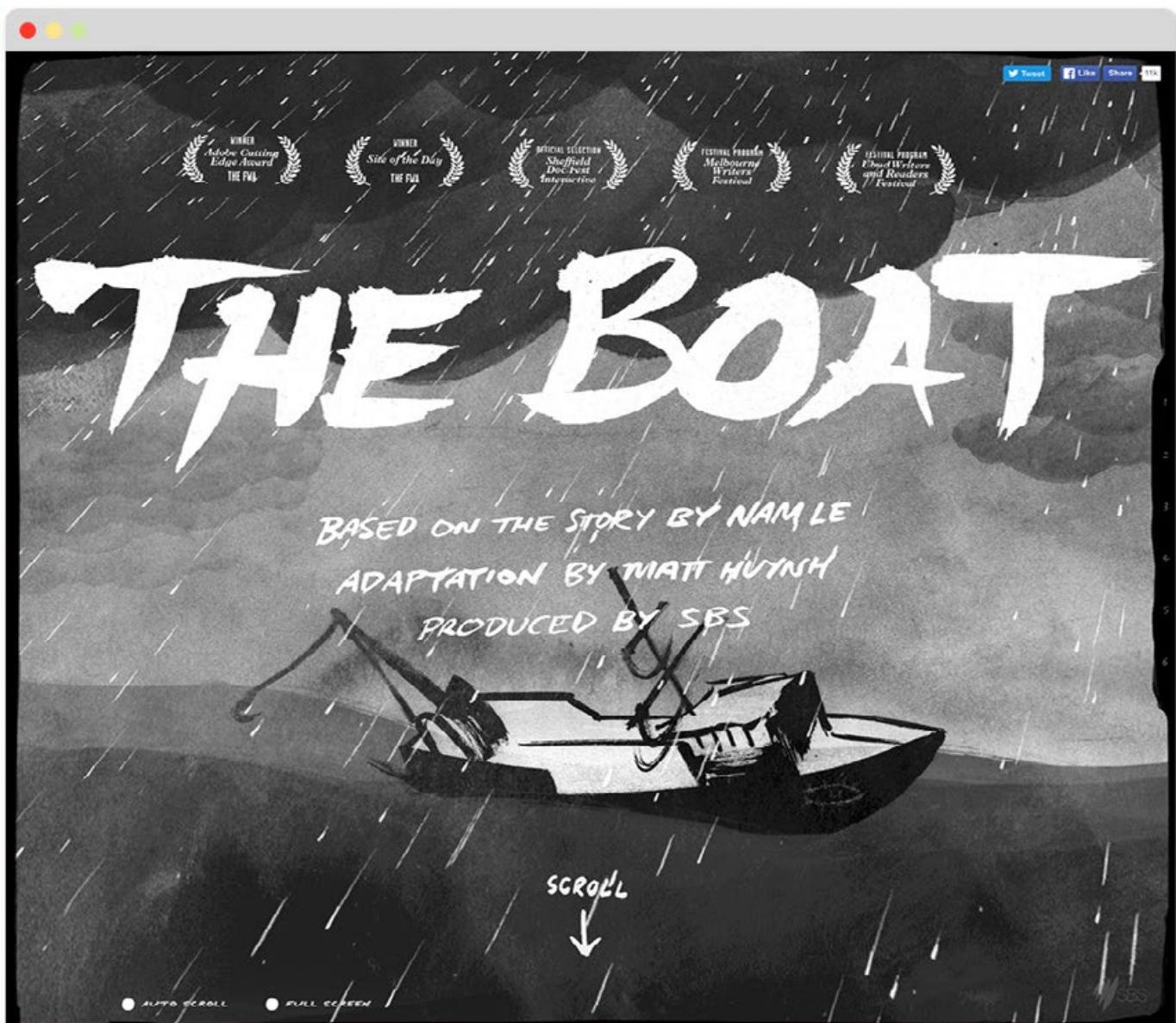
A: I was on the fence about this one but I think the concept here is "sex". The company makes underwear so in a way they HAVE to show lots of skin in whatever they do. However some of the videos on the site are weirdly evocative. Much more so than the stuff in my mom's Macy's catalog. So yeah, it's "sex".

The Boat

<http://sbs.com.au/theboat/>

This one is tricky because it's not really "designed"- the whole thing is animated. But it does have a concept. See if you can guess.

Enlarge



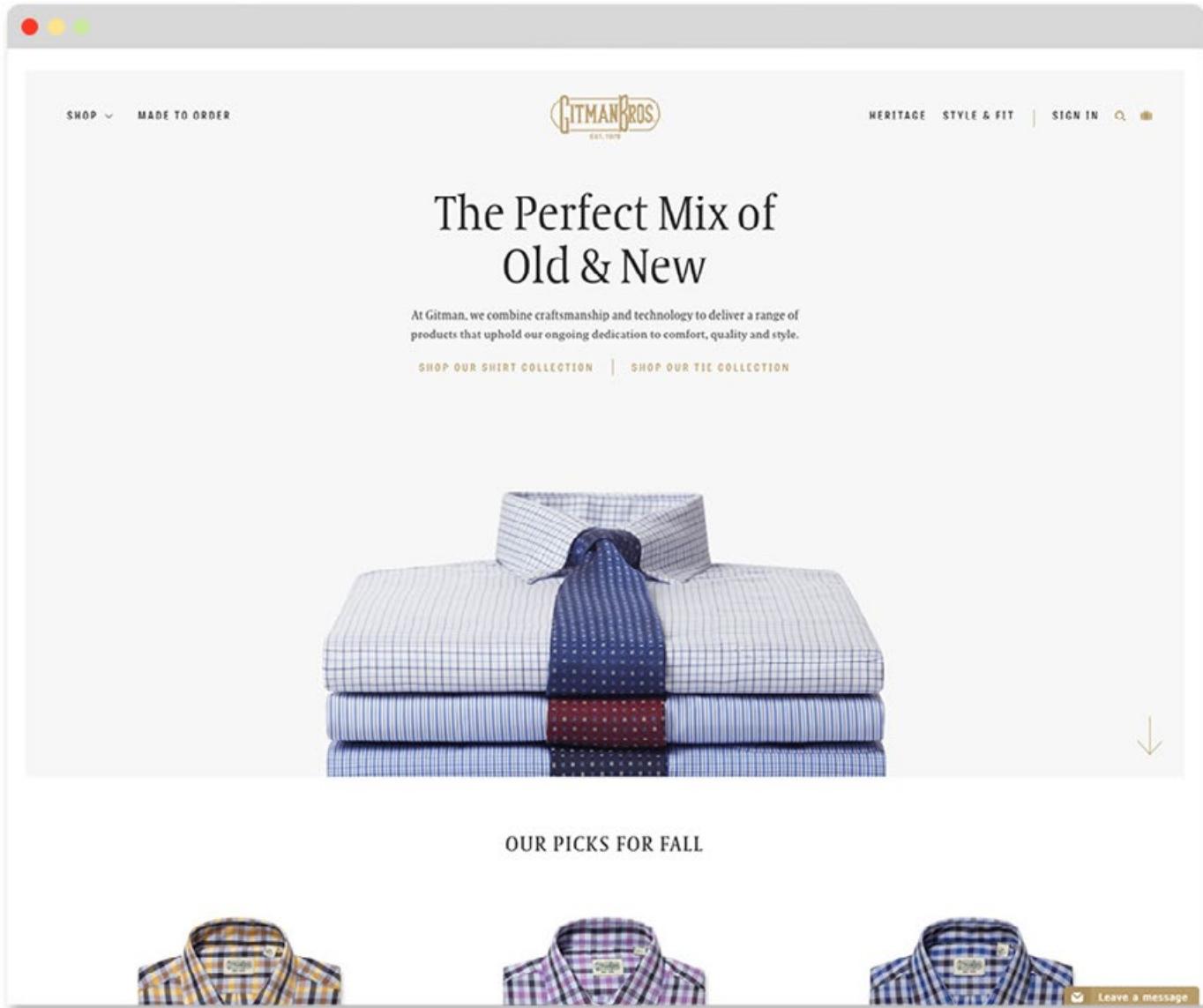
A: They're using the entire site to tell a story. So I'd say the concept is "narrative". If you thought the concept was a boat or the ocean, that's true, but if you zoom out even further the entire site is a vehicle for the story.

Gitman Bros.

<http://gitman.com>

This company makes men's shirts and ties.
What's the concept? Answer at the bottom.

 [Enlarge](#)



A: The concept here is clean/minimal. The product is high quality, so they wanted that to be the focus. Now "clean/minimal" seems like more of a style than a concept right? That's true! Since there's no analytical concept, the style becomes the concept.

Virgin Airlines

<https://virginamerica.com>

This one is tricky. Visit the site and click around a bit. What's the concept?

Q Enlarge

The screenshot shows the Virgin America website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for BOOK, CHECK IN, MANAGE, Deals, Flying With Us, Where We Fly, Fees, Flight Status, Flight Alerts, elevate, Sign In, and Sign Up. Below the navigation bar, there are three radio button options: Round Trip (selected), One Way, and Multi City. The main heading "Where would you like to go?" is centered above input fields for Guests (1 ADULT), From (LOS ANGELES), and To (CITY). A "SEARCH FLIGHTS" button is located below these fields. To the right, a small note says "Best Fares Guaranteed online". Below the search area, there are three promotional sections: "Super Bowl 50" (with a Visa 50 logo), "Crème De La Crème" (with a robot icon), and "Take Off Faster" (with a credit card icon). Each section has a "LEARN MORE" button. At the bottom, there are six icons with corresponding text: SWIPE FOR THE SKY (camera icon), FIRST ONE ON, FIRST ONE OFF (two people icon), FEEL THE UPGRADE (arrow icon), TAKE THE FAST TRACK (checkmark icon), CORPORATE REWARDS (dollar sign icon), and PACK YOUR POINTS (airplane icon).

A: If you tried to buy a ticket you probably noticed how simple and intuitive the process is. It's easier than any plane ticket I've ever bought. I'd say the concept here is "ease of use/friendly". The creative team put a lot of thought into optimizing the user experience. That's what they optimized for, everything else was beholden to the UX. As for the friendliness, that's evident in the colorful icons used throughout out the site.

Chapter Summary

A concept is usually just one dominant idea. Any more than that and it won't communicate as well. Whenever possible, your site design should revolve around a concept. It will make your design more cohesive visually and conceptually.



CHAPTER 3

BRAND

“We use brands to project who we want to be in the world, how we want people to perceive us, and how we want to feel about ourselves.”

– Debbie Millman



Introduction

Let's look at two companies, Dell and Apple:

Dell was innovative in the 90's because they cut out the middleman in their supply chain. Their website allowed you to customize your new computer, click the buy button, and have the computer shipped right to your door. Since there was no retailer to take a cut, the machines were cheap. The Dell brand was price-focused, and they shaped their brand around that. This tactic worked great until other manufacturers figured out how to sell on the Internet. Once this happened, Dell no longer had a competitive advantage. Worse still, Dell's previous customers weren't loyal to them because all they cared about was price.

Apple, on the other hand, was one of the most expensive computers available in 2000. Their brand was design-focused. They labored over how the plastic felt, what color it was, and if it was transparent or not. The result was a drastically different computer than every beige desktop on the market. These handmade touches made customers smile, and they became devoted Apple fans. Apple could charge more because they created a feeling of delight. That was their brand.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Why branding matters*
- *Examples of personal brands*

- *How to determine your client's brand*
- *How to define a brand from scratch*
- *Sample target audiences*

Why branding matters

Branding is the way a company talks to you, what it looks like, and how it makes you feel. Brands exist because marketers want us to have a relationship with their business. They want you to connect emotionally because emotion-based decisions lead people to spend more money on products. As developers we often have an innate aversion to this. If the HP has a faster processor, more RAM, and a lower price than the Mac, people would be foolish to buy the Apple. The ideal world for the developer is a meritocracy. But unfortunately the world isn't that rational. The way a Mac looks and feels is as important as how well it works.

Most human beings are greatly influenced by their emotions. That's why branding matters.

Branding isn't always touchy-feely. Look at Stripe or Twilio. They have great developers and their API is pleasant to use. They have a positive brand amongst developers for their engineering chops.

As a developer doing design work, figuring out the brand's messaging probably *won't* fall on your shoulders. Unless you're a founding member of a small startup. Either way, I think

it's good to explore the topic so that when a designer talks about something being off-brand, you'll know what she's talking about.

Examples of personal brands

I think a good way to understand branding is to first look at notable public figures. While attributing personality traits to companies may seem silly, recognizing the differences in people comes easier. See if you agree with the characteristics I've listed next to the individuals below. I've also added some visuals and colors that come to mind.

Batman:

Moody. Lone wolf. Single street light on a dark corner. Bats. Technology. Psychologically vulnerable. Cropped photos of his face. Photos with his back toward the camera. Strong but silent.

Possible colors:

Dark blue, grays, blacks. Maybe some yellow as a highlight color.

The Pope:

Revered. Holy. Progressive. Portraits by Renaissance painters. Calm. An overall mood of quiet and respect. Muted pastels. Textures. Serif typography.

Possible colors:

White, light gray, maroon, pale yellow (like old weathered paper).

Oprah:

Warm. Engaging. Curious. Helpful. Motivated. Generous. Photos of her helping people or learning something. Happy.

Possible colors:

Warm hues of orange and yellow. Maybe purple as an accent color.

Audrey Hepburn:

Classy. Elegant. Stylish. Gracious. Modest. Photos of her dressed well. New York. Walking a dog. Friend to animals.

Possible colors:

Lots of white, yellows, pinks. Or black and white with a bright accent color like pink.

Jay-Z:

Iconic. Brooklyn. The street. Marcy Projects. Strong contrast in photos. Authentic. Successful. Entrepreneurial. Sincere. Wise.

Possible colors: Blacks, whites, golds.

All of these people conjure up an image in your mind, right? Their unique accomplishments and personality traits make them easy to remember. And while I loathe the phrase, these are things that make up their "personal brand."

Companies want to be remembered too. And they want you to have a strong opinion about them. Coke and RC Cola are the same product, but only Coke has distinct enough brand attributes that make it memorable.

RC Cola has no distinct brand attributes. So when emotionally-driven consumers see it at the store, they won't pay much money for it. It's a commodity item.

Here are characteristics (both good and bad) of some famous brands:

Apple:

Designed. Obsessive. Elitist. Focused. Expensive. Minimal. Easy to use. High quality.

Porsche:

Speed. History. Design. Performance. Technology. Sophistication. Snobby.

Starbucks:

Comfort. Atmosphere. Personalization. Ritual. Customer service. Consistent. Yuppies. Tasteless.

Google:

Smart. Innovative. Powerful. Experimental. Visionary. Big Brother.

Target:

Value. Clean. Design conscious. Friendly. Cheap.

Notice all of these companies have distinct attributes, just like individual personalities we discussed before. It may seem like a bad thing that some people hate these companies, but that's actually a good thing. It means they have a point of view about how the world should work. If they tried to please everyone, they would lose the respect of their fans.

How to determine your client's brand

If your company or client has over 100 people, they'll probably have a brand guideline, brand book, or both. Brand books are similar in concept to coding guidelines or API documentation, but for designers. The brand book defines in specific terms how the brand should be portrayed. It describes things like the typography you should use, colors, and tone of voice. Here are some sample brand books:

[Adobe](#)

[Nike Football](#)

[UNICEF](#)

If you've ever wondered why you had to use a certain font on a site, it's quite possible that the decision came from the brand book. I've found that in general, the larger the client, the more likely it is you'll have to adhere to a brand book.

How to define a brand from scratch

For small or new companies, you may have to determine what imagery, typography, and copy is appropriate for your client or company. This can be tricky. If they haven't defined their brand, then all of their past marketing materials, ads, and sites will likely look disjointed and you probably can't use them as a reference.

I suggest doing two things:

1) Find the things in their business they do well. Ask their customers why they choose them over competitors. If they're a regional web hosting company, maybe they have more personal customer service than Go Daddy. If they're a wood flooring company, perhaps they only harvest wood that is environmentally certified.

All of these things are competitive advantages and a big part of their brand. Find out what these things are and communicate them in your design and site copy.

2) Find out who the target audience is. A person who buys clothing from Luis Vuitton has a different worldview than someone shopping at Ross. Figure out what kinds of messages the customer responds to and work backward from there.

Look at Axe Body Spray. We know the target audience of young men who are into sex, sports, and adventure. So from that, we can start to define the brand and figure out what imagery would be appropriate to show them.

One thing I like to do when branding is to look for companies that have a distinct brand in a similar or complementary field. You've probably heard companies say "we're the Apple of X." What they're saying is that they think their toasters/pens/curling irons are akin to Apple's aesthetics and beliefs. Whether that is true is another story, but they're mapping themselves to Apple which is a helpful exercise.

If you can find a brand in a similar space, with

the same ideals and aesthetic as you, you can use it as a placeholder for your own newly-formed brand.

Here are some more examples of target audiences:

- *Senior citizens*
- *Price conscious moms*
- *College athletes*
- *New homeowners*
- *NASCAR fans*

Each of these groups has a worldview. Certain words, colors, and ideas will resonate with them. If you understand what the business is good at, and you know who the target customer is, that will go a long way toward defining a brand.

Does a website always need a brand voice?

No. If you're designing a site for Toyota so they can better monitor their parts inventory, you don't have to think about branding. In that case, usability is more relevant.

Branding is important when your audience is the general public. Less so for B to B,

internal facing projects, and government websites.

Branding isn't important in the early days of a startup. Many designers may disagree, but I think you can avoid coming up with a logo for a long time. Just use Helvetica in all caps with wide tracking (letter-spacing). Once the startup develops a tone of voice and personality, *then* consider having a logo made.

I don't recommend creating a logo for yourself or trying to learn how, for two reasons:

1) How many times in your life will you need to create a logo? Maybe a couple at most? It's probably not worth the time investment unless you just want to learn for fun. Learning to design a nice website, on the other hand, will reap benefits for years, because design and development happen close together.

2) The people who create logos and wordmarks have been doing it for years. Whatever you do won't be as good. Find the best person you can and hire them. Here are some recommendations:

<http://www.brandclay.com>

<http://jessicahische.is>

<http://michaelspitz.com>

<http://www.simonwalkertype.com>

<http://www.jfletcherdesign.com>

on, but it's good to know what the brand is.

To define the brand, ask yourself:

What are some characteristics of the client/company?

Who is the company visually and personality-wise? Do they have a mantra?

If the client or company you're designing a website for was a person, what would they look like? How would they talk? What are they known for? Playful, rebellious, kind, high-quality, unique, authoritative, sophisticated, rugged, helpful, daring, transparent, etc...

If the company is consumer-facing, it will likely need a brand.

Chapter Summary

As a developer you probably won't have to define the brand for the site you're working



CHAPTER 4

STYLE

“An artist should never be a prisoner of himself, prisoner of style, prisoner of reputation, prisoner of success, etc.”

– Henri Matisse



Introduction

Beginners often think that design and style are the same thing. It's an easy mistake to make because style is so easy to see and describe. On the web, there's an overemphasis on style, often at the expense of other design principles.

The style of a website helps set the mood of your site, much in the same way color does. There are just five styles in this section that you can use for your projects. I did that because I don't want you to get overwhelmed with options. You can accomplish a lot with just these five.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Style Mapping*
- *The Five D_xN Styles*
- *Full-Color Photo*
- *Duotones*
- *Black & White*
- *Illustration*
- *Collage*

Style Mapping

When you sit down to design a website, there are a dozen different visual directions it can go. Should it be illustrated? Black & white? Full color?

Many designers will choose whatever style is popular at the moment. Currently, that style is "flat design." But choosing something

trendy is shortsighted because it's probably not the best way to communicate your site's message.

I prefer an approach I like to call "style mapping." It's a relatively simple technique once you get the hang of it.

Here's how it works. First, ask yourself the following three questions:

1) What is the essence of the brand?

If you're doing a project for a large client, they'll have a distinct brand. Think of Starbucks, Lego, Nike, or Hyundai. They're all very different, so a style that's right for one company may not be right for another. For example, a website for Lego can be illustrated because the company caters to kids and is playful. But that style probably wouldn't look right for Hyundai, a company which needs full-color photos of cars on its site.

If your client or company has a brand book, look to see what they allow. Can you use any colors you want, or is it limited? Are there pre-determined fonts you must use? If the client's brand always uses the colors blue and yellow, like IKEA, then a black & white style won't work. If they're a large client like McDonald's, the collage style is probably out because it's too edgy. If they only use photography in their marketing material, then an illustration style won't be a good fit.

Smaller clients won't have a well-defined brand. You will be more at the mercy of their tastes. Before starting, ask them for a list of five websites that they think are well-designed and ask them what they like about

each. That last part is important because it's going to tell you what's important to them. Write it down and keep it in mind while designing. Later, when you present your design, show them how their initial feedback influenced your design. It will make them feel like they've contributed and it's more likely you'll get approval.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

The second step in style mapping is to ask yourself, what is the concept of the site and what is its purpose? If the concept is "handmade" like in the Preserve example from concept four, the style should support that idea. The style of a site should complement its purpose.

For example, an e-commerce site is highly functional and wouldn't work well in a loose collage-style. An educational website for kids may not keep them engaged if done in black & white. If you're having trouble, think about what the audience would and wouldn't respond to and work backwards from there.

3) What do you like?

Now you can think about what you like. For this step, look at your inspiration folder for sites and design styles you might like to mimic. You can add stuff to your inspiration folder at any time.

Putting it all together

After you've done all three steps, compare the inspiration images from step three (inspiration) to the answers you gave on questions one (brand) and two (purpose).

Ask yourself, which images in the inspiration folder would support the **brand** and **purpose** of the site?

Notice that you haven't started designing yet, you're just comparing other people's work to your brand guidelines and concept. After you find inspiration that works well with both of those things, you'll have a much clearer idea of how you might style your site.

The five possible design styles:

Now that we've done some research about the sites, brand, and purpose, we can start to consider different design styles. The Design by Numbers framework contains five possible styles you can use for your site: **Full-Color Photo**, **Duotone**, **Black & White**, **Illustrative**, and **Collage**. There are certainly more ways to visualize a website than these five, but try to limit yourself for now. Remember, when you're learning design on the side, you have limited energy and time, so it's best to keep it simple.

As a developer, it's likely that you'll want to use Sketch instead of Photoshop. I get it. I just want to advise you not to choose a design style based on whether or not it will work well in Sketch. In this book we're optimizing for design. So if the best tool to achieve your vision is Photoshop, then I would suggest you use it. Ok, let's take a closer look at those five styles.

STYLE ONE

FULL-COLOR PHOTO

Many sites use full-color images. One thing to keep in mind for this style is that whenever possible, you should choose photos that were shot in the same style. If you have five images on your homepage and they're all taken by different photographers, it's going to communicate five different moods.



* Note: The designer's comments on the following pages are not actual quotes. They were created to illustrate how style mapping works.

Molino

<http://bit.ly/1N8leaP>

These photos were all taken under similar lighting conditions, and they're all food shots. When viewed together the design feels cohesive through all the photo sets. The site may have worked if all the photos were thumbnails on one page, but it wouldn't have been as striking.

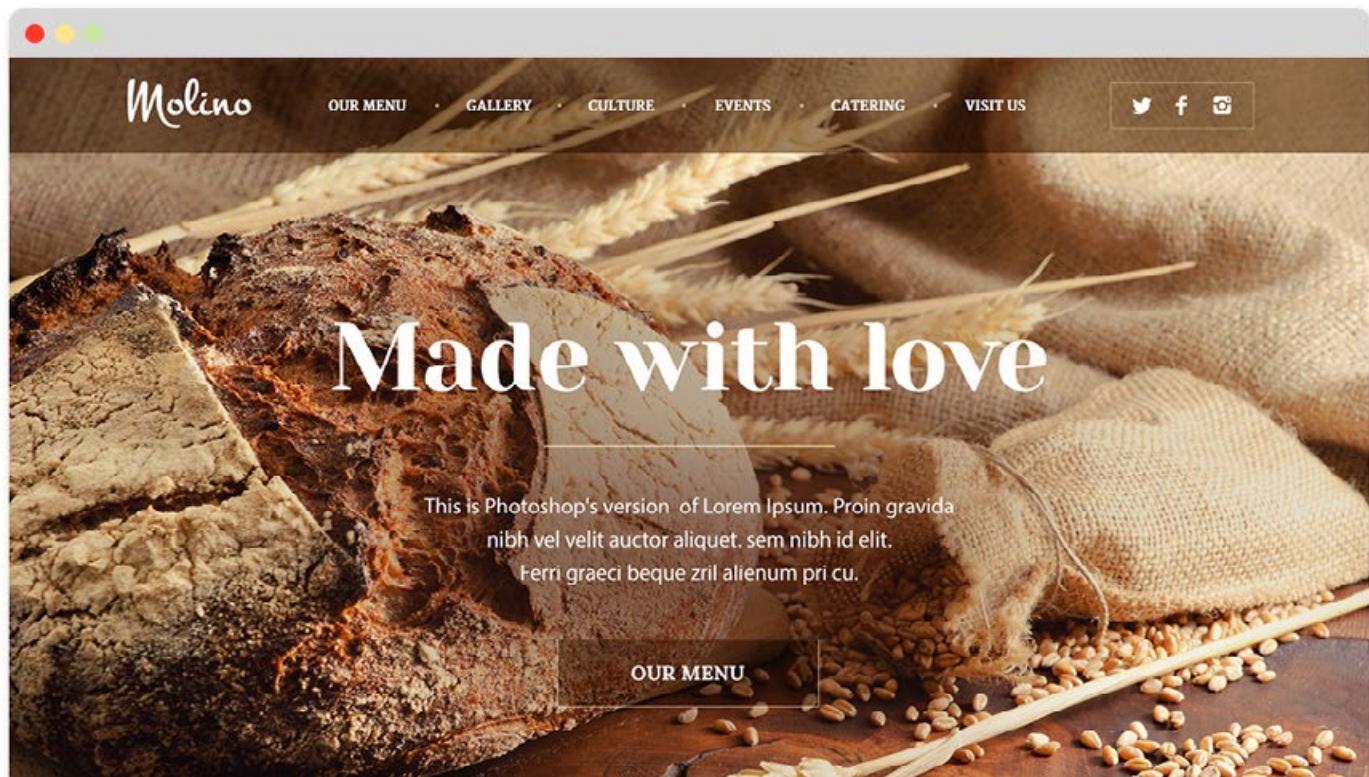
1) What is the brand like?

Customers love to look at and smell the freshly baked goods on display. A large part of the store experience involves delighting the senses.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

The business owner stated her goal for the

 [Enlarge](#)



Full-color photo

site was to promote her business. Some new customers had found her on Yelp and she wanted to send them to a site where they could see more.

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for styles that evoke the senses.)

Designer's Comments:

"We wanted to mimic the in-store experience of looking through the glass at all the fresh baked goodies. Of course, there's no smell on the internet, so we used rich and colorful photos of everything they make to delight the eyes."

Meshable

<http://meshablewatches.bigcartel.com>

Here's a simple site that sells watches. Very minimal. Note the top section is reserved for branded imagery - it's meant to convey what Meshable represents. In this case, luxury with a little bit of quirk.

1) What is the brand like?

Elegant but not quite luxurious.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To sell watches and portray the brand in a

strong light.

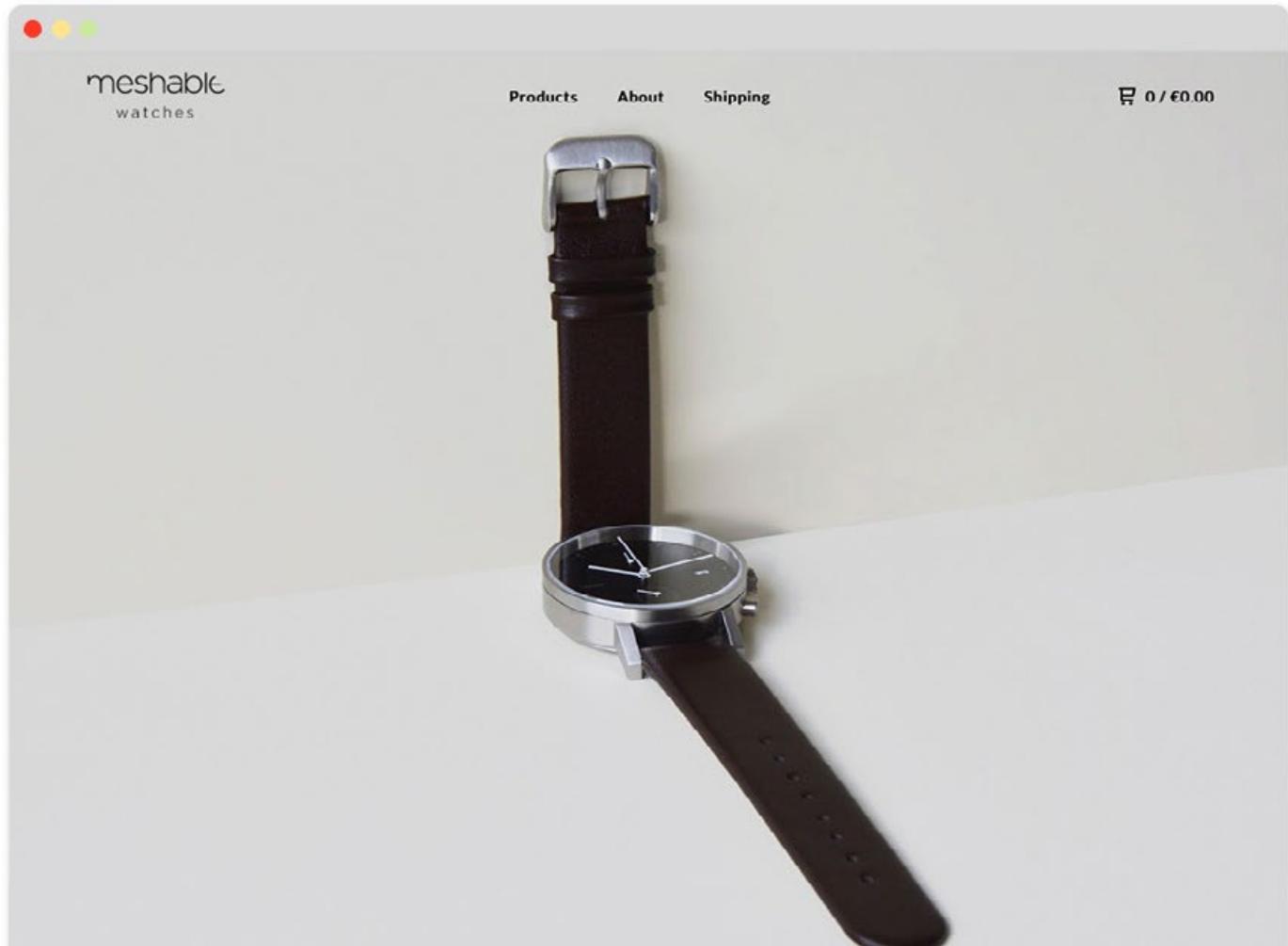
3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for styles that tackle high-end products.)

Designer's Comments:

"When the client came to us, they had already invested in some great photography. We also knew there would have to be photos of the watches so we picked a full-color photo style."

 [Enlarge](#)



Full-color photo

Jetlag Photos

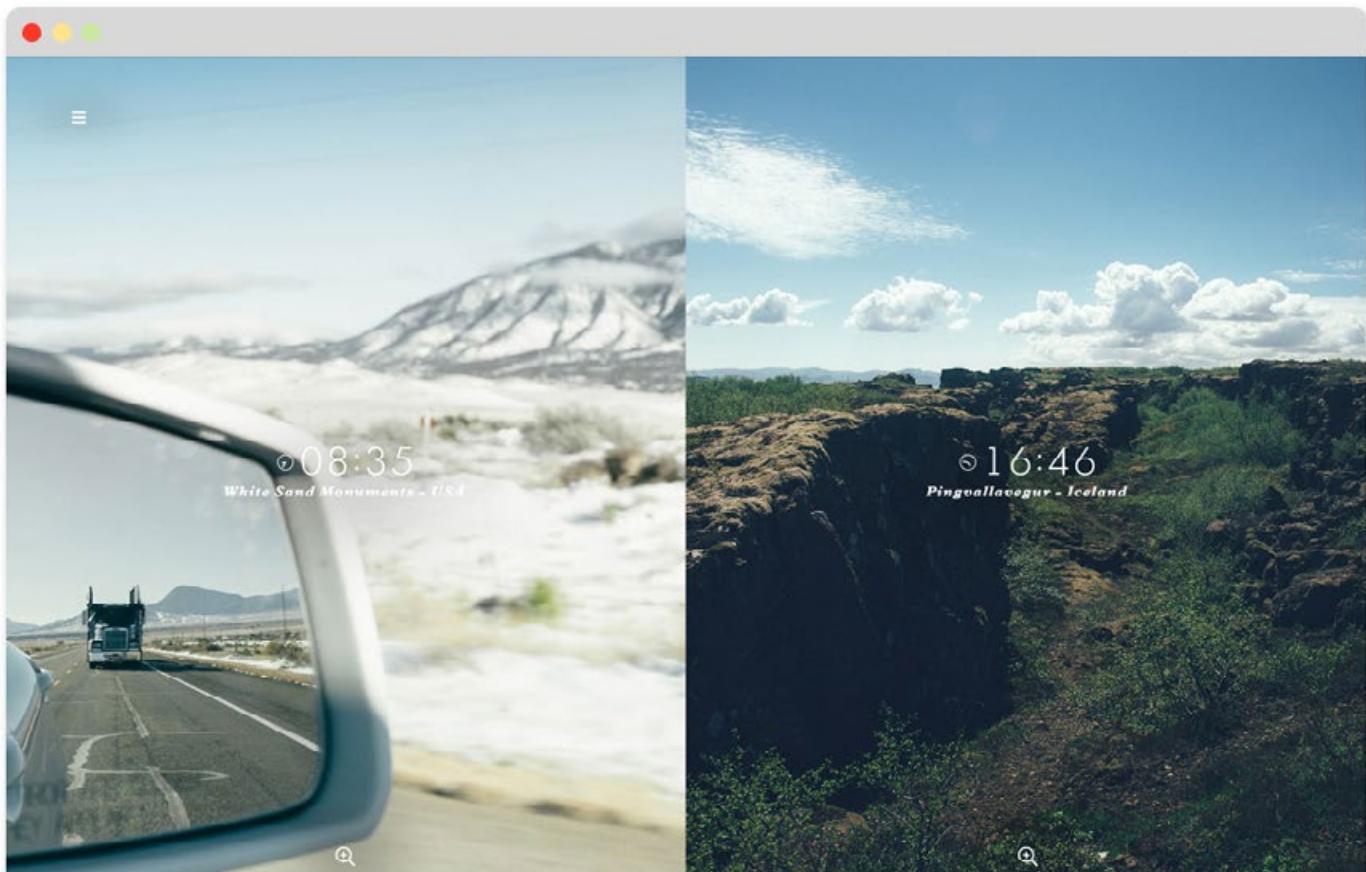
<http://jetlag.photos>

The idea behind the Jetlag project is for two photographers to take a photo at the same time in different parts of the world. To highlight that concept, the screen is simply divided in half as you navigate through all the photo sets. The site may have worked if all the photos were thumbnails on one page, but it wouldn't have been as striking.

1) What is the brand like?

There's no brand per se, however, we wanted all the photos to have a similar contemplative mood.

 [Enlarge](#)



Full-color photo

Bonham Hats

<http://bit.ly/26ChJ2F>

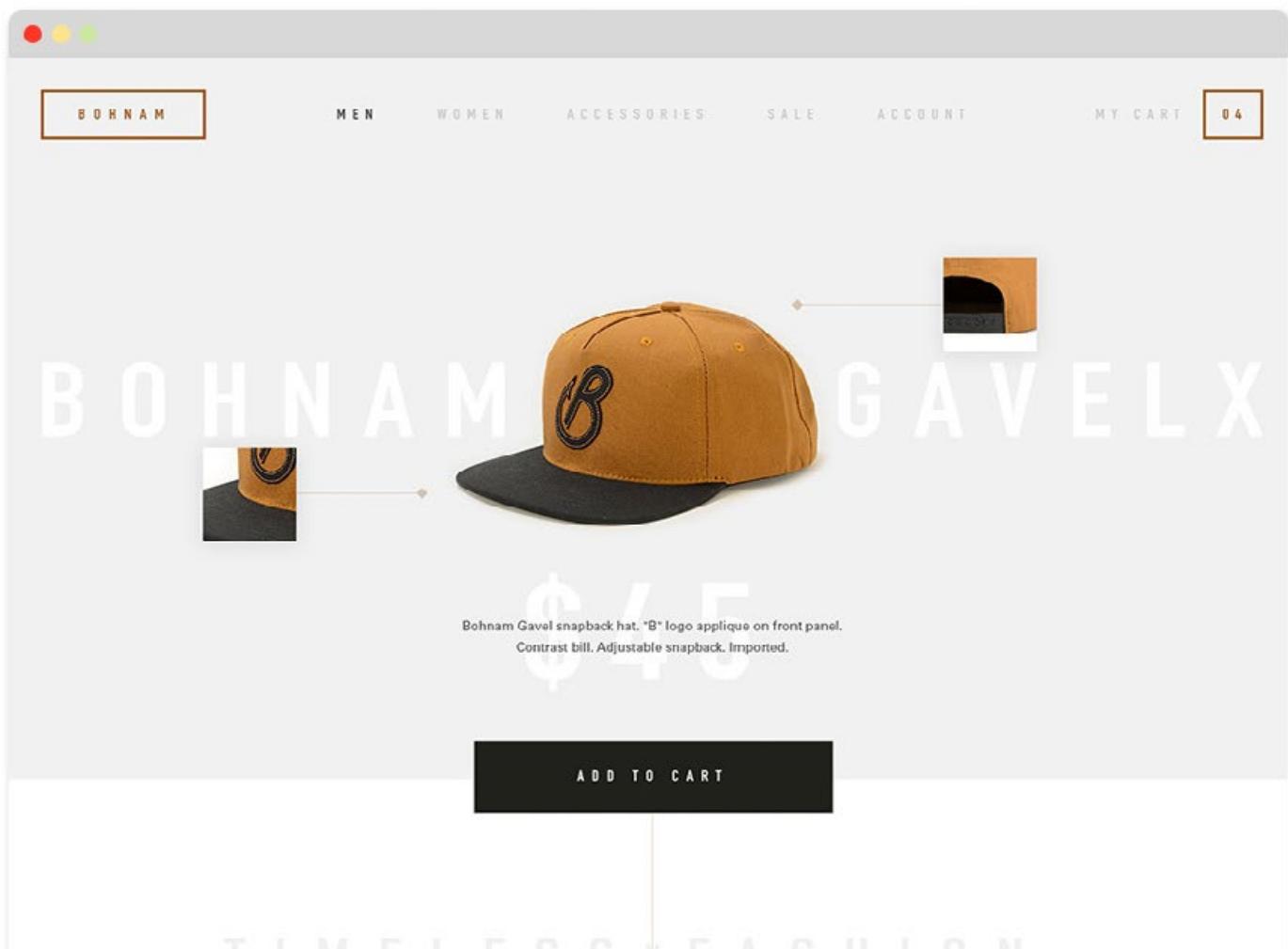
In contrast to the previous site, this design uses photos sparingly. In the previous design, the full bleed photos engage the viewer in a loud way, whereas this site chooses to have fewer photos. This makes for a more contemplative mood.

1) What is the brand like?

Bonham is an upscale surf brand.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

 [Enlarge](#)



To sell hats.

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for styles that cover upscale and beach fashion.)

Designer's Comments:

"A lot of the competing surf sites in our research were loud and over the top. We wanted to convey a sense of calm. That also served the brand well because it's pricier than competitors."

STYLE TWO

DUOTONES

Duotones help make a photo look more graphic, which in turn makes it quicker for the viewer to internalize the message. This look can be achieved in two ways:

- 1) The easiest way is to use the multiply blend mode in Photoshop. Simply convert your image to black and white, create a solid color layer on top of it, and then set the blend mode of the color to multiply, screen, or overlay. This doesn't work with all images though, so play around and see what looks best.
- 2) If you aren't getting good results, here's another method which gives you more control: [Duotone Tutorial](#).



Saloon

<http://www.saloon.li>

Here's a great example of the designer converting multiple disparate images into duotones to make them all connect.

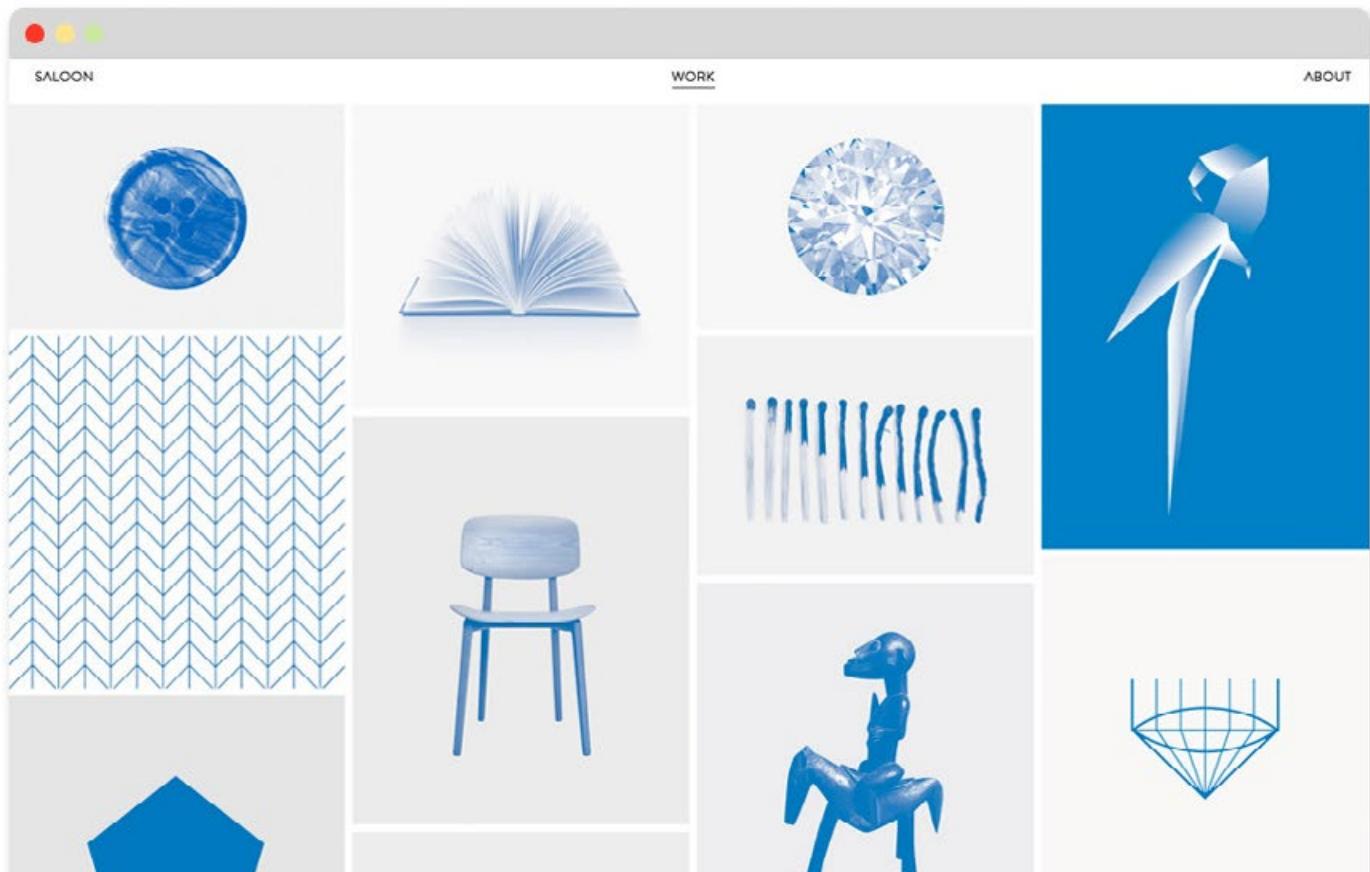
1) What is the essence of the brand?

Saloon does a broad range of creative work from industrial design to illustration to graphic design. Clients like that they can handle any kind of project.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

Saloon wanted a new site to show all of their past work.

 [Enlarge](#)



Duotone

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for websites that tackle multiple topics.)

Designer's Comments:

"Having such a wide variety of projects presented a challenge. Each project had its own style so to feature them all on the same page would make it feel disjointed. So we made all the project thumbnails duotones and that pulled it all together successfully."

Sublime

<http://sublime.fyi>

The rich colors and thoughtful poses make these interviews feel important.

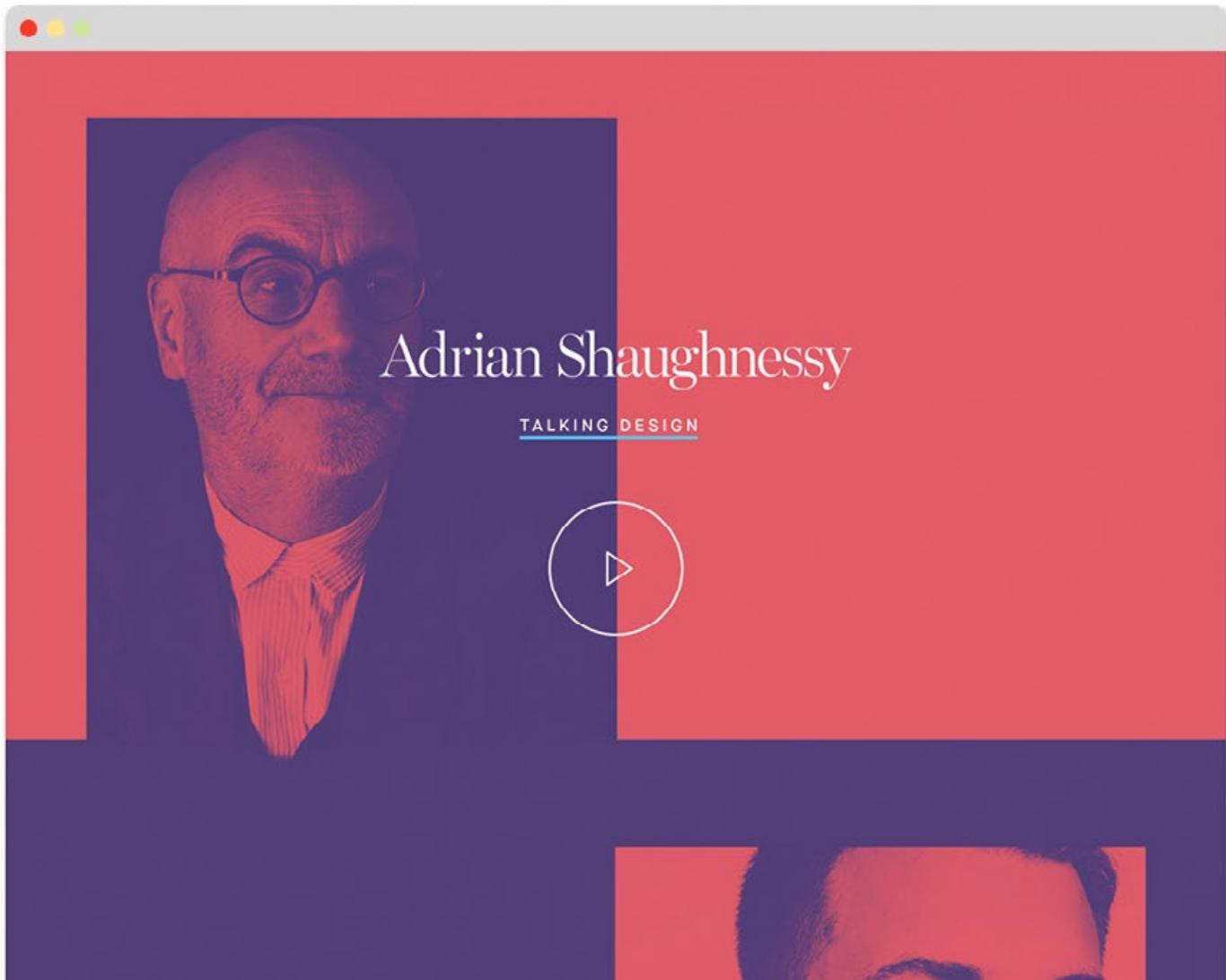
1) What is the essence of the brand?

There's no brand, but they are targeting creative types.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

It's a promotional device for Brand + Co, a design agency in Vienna.

 [Enlarge](#)



Duotone

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for websites that tackle artsy topics.)

Designer's Comments:

"This was an internal project for our agency. We had a limited budget, so we took high-quality photos of the speakers from their media kit and turned them into compelling duotones."

Smile Bar

<http://bit.ly/1QFV7CF>

The bright colors match the happy mood of this dentist office.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Smile Bar's waiting room is well designed and friendly. The staff always wear bright scrubs.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To promote the business and make it easier for existing customers to book appointments

 [Enlarge](#)

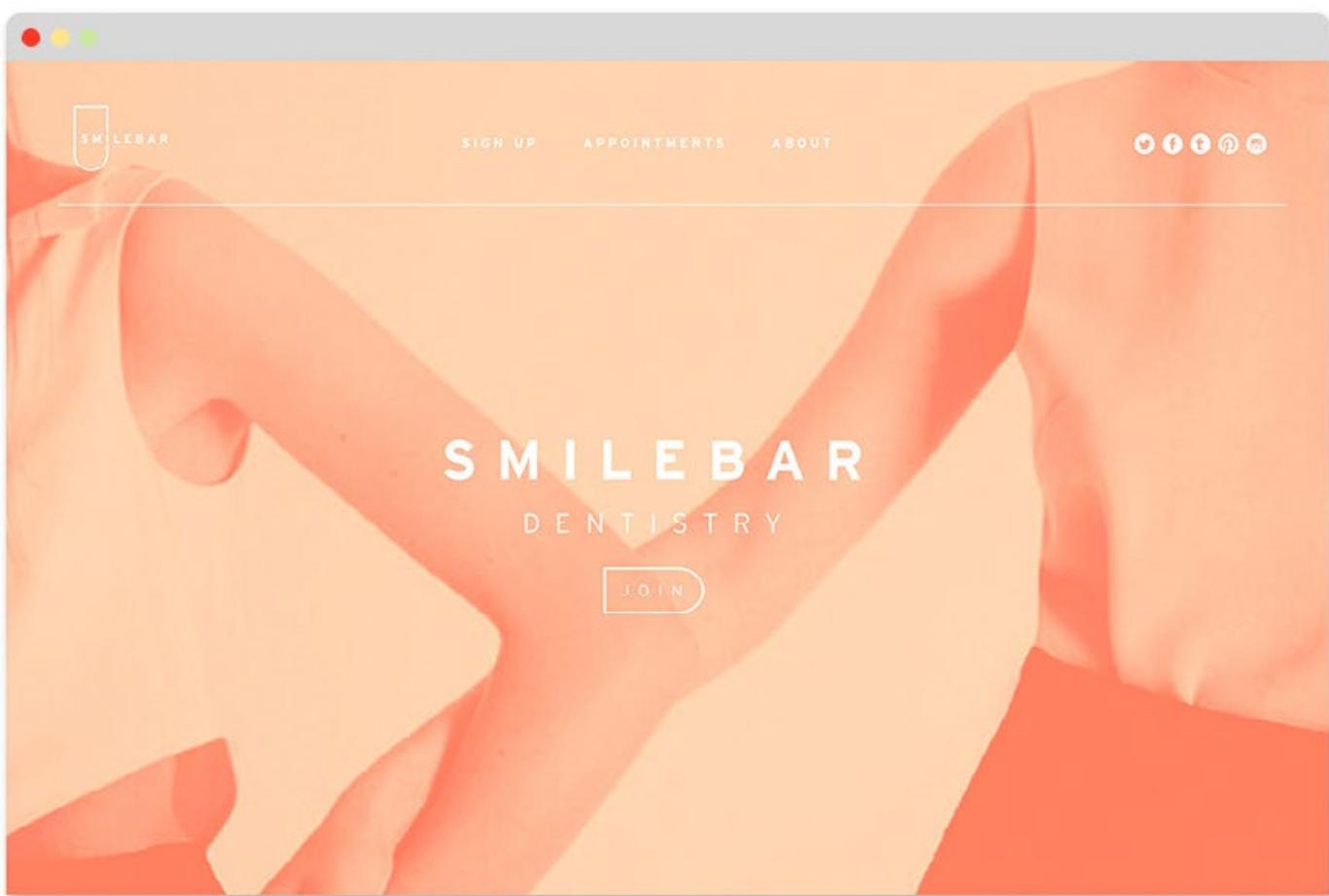
online.

3) What do I like?

(Most websites in the dentist and medical fields are bad. So look for all kinds of sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"Dr. Bolar didn't trust his creative eye so he was happy to let us do what we wanted for the site – as long as we made it easy for patients to book appointments. We took inspiration from the interior of the office space."



Duotone

Holm Marcher & Co

<http://holmmarcher.dk/en/n>

The photos here take a back seat to the copy.
The photos are a bit generic, so this was
probably a good choice.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Holm is one of the better headhunting services in their niche.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To attract both employers and employees

 Enlarge

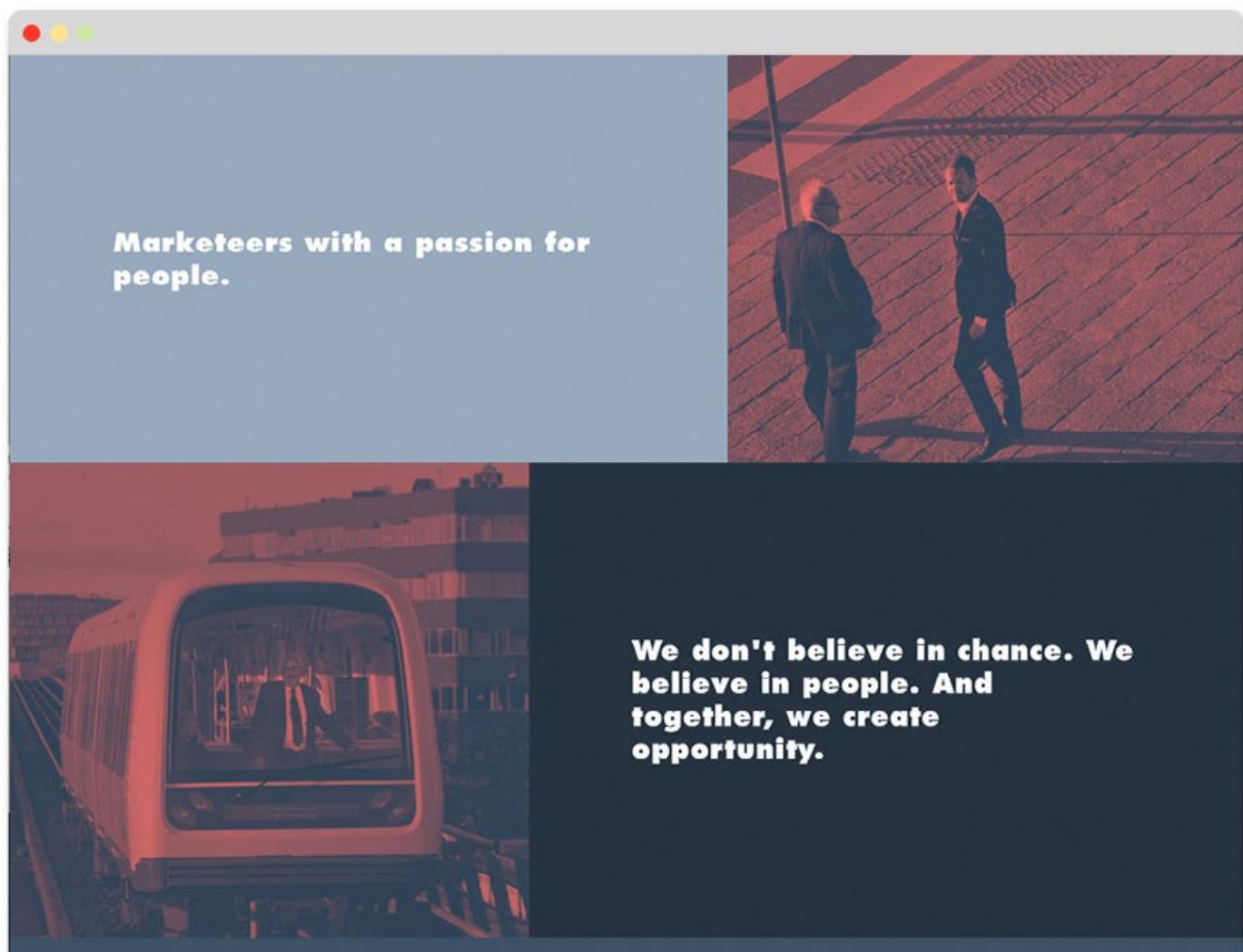
looking for work.

3) What do I like?

(Most websites in the headhunter field are bad. So look for all kinds of sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"This industry is kinda boring to be frank. To attract the target audience, we felt it was important to make them stand out visually. Also they had photos they wanted used that were poor quality, so we converted them to duotones."



Duotone

STYLE THREE

B&W PHOTO

This style is simple. You either use photos that were shot in black & white or [carefully convert](#) full-color images to black & white. If the concept of your site is sophisticated, consider doing it in black & white.



Calvi on the Rocks – Édition 2015
Exponentiel

Voir le projet

Web

St. James's Square

<http://www.3sjs.london>

This site was made to attract tenants to the building. It's located in a posh part of London which explains why the site feels so sophisticated.

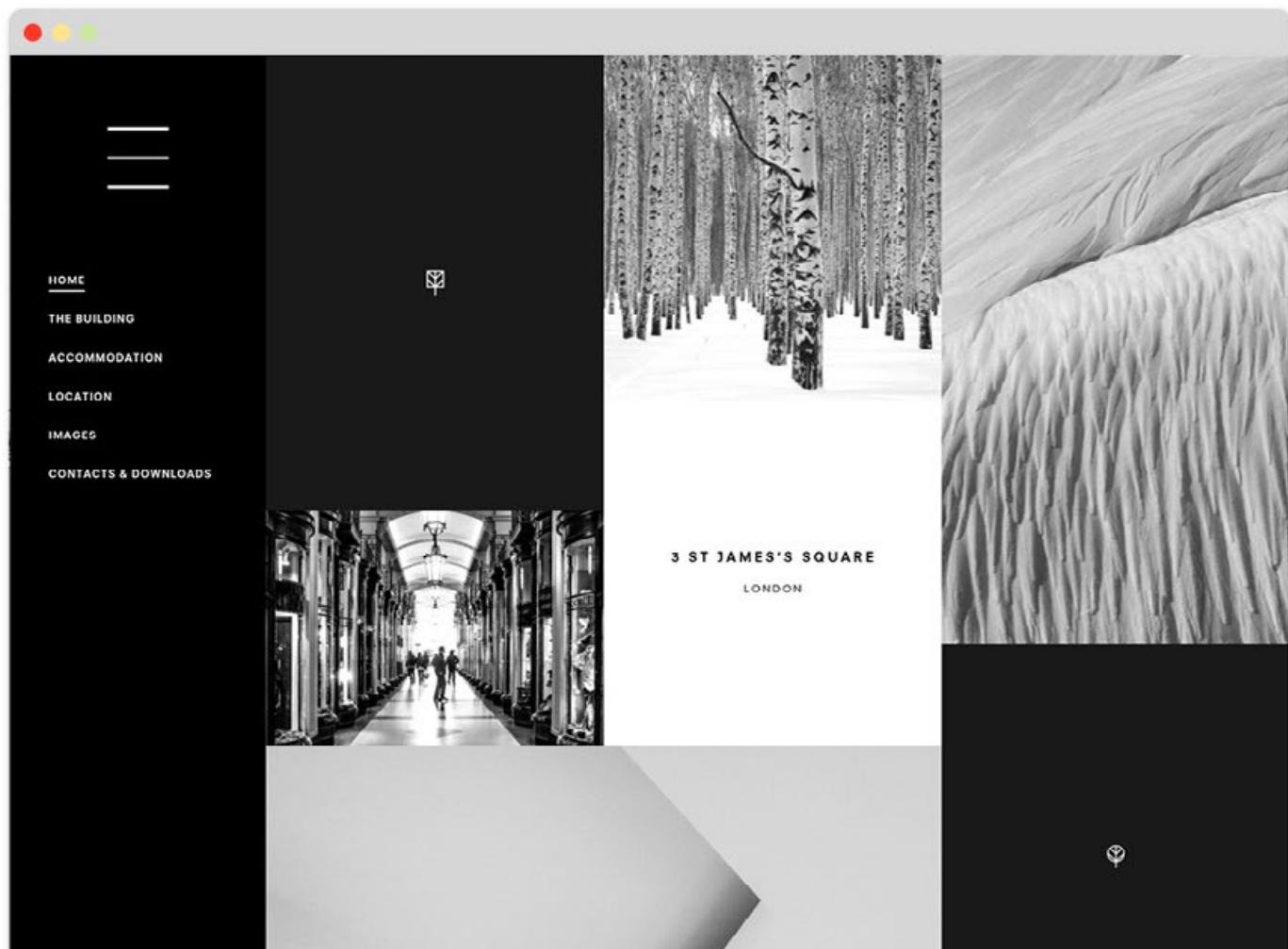
1) What is the essence of the brand?

It's a high-end exclusive commercial building.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

The building owner wanted to attract tenants who appreciated immaculate office spaces.

 [Enlarge](#)



Black & white photos

Twofold

<http://twofold.com>

The designer used just a touch of gold here and there as a highlight color. It works well.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Twofold is a creative agency.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To be a portfolio to send to potential clients.

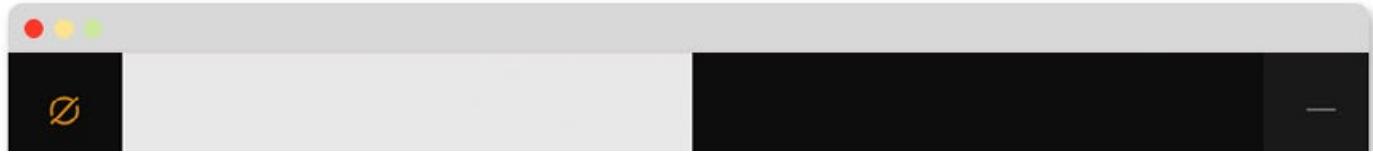
3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for agency sites and other portfolio sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"We did the site in black & white because there were so many projects in different styles in our portfolio. To have multiple dissimilar full-color thumbnails on the same page would have made it feel disjointed."

Q Enlarge



Black & white photos

Mario Frigerio

<http://fotofrigerio.verganiegasco.com/en>

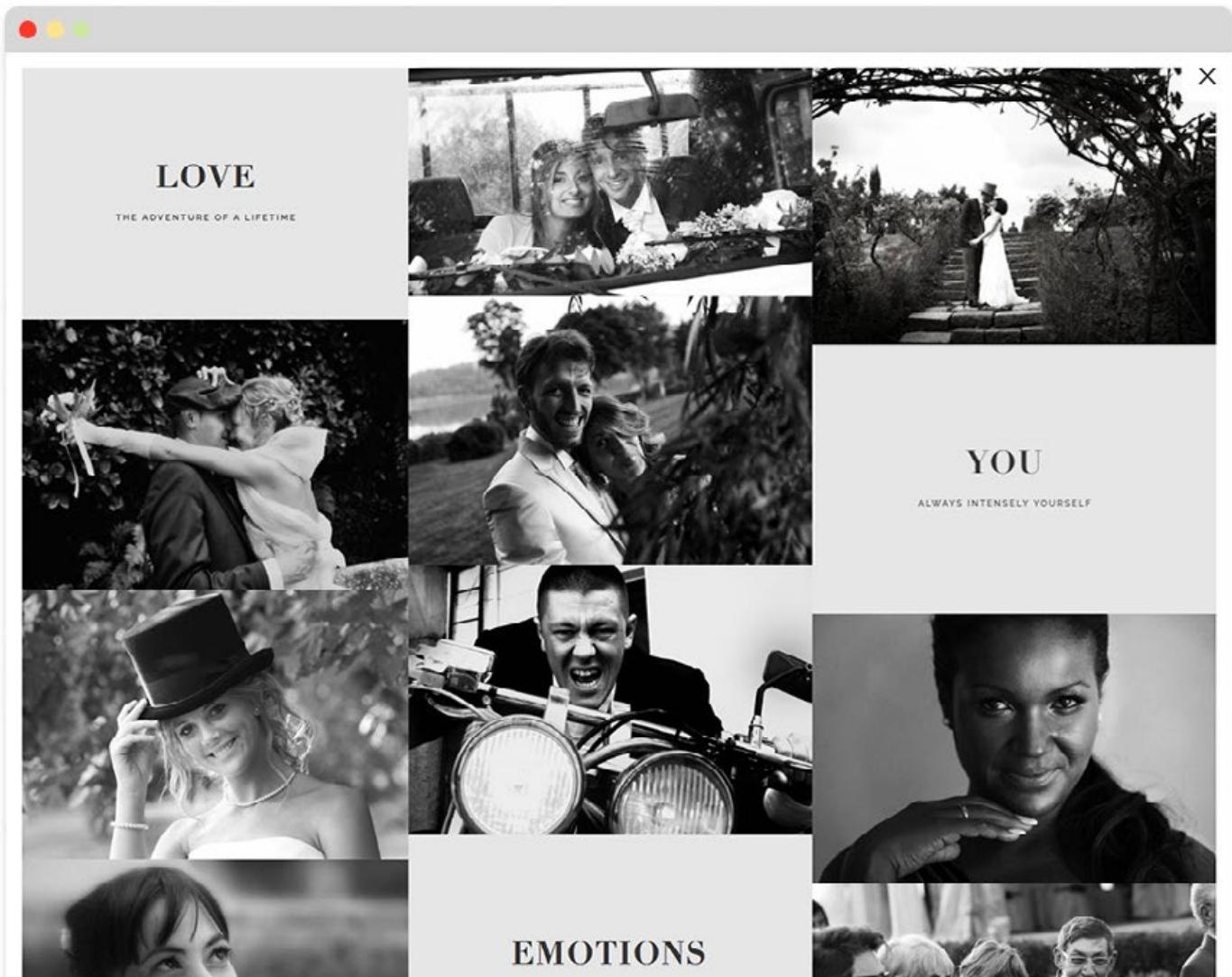
Notice the black color isn't black at all. It's a very dark gray. Often you'll find that 100% black or 100% white is too intense.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Mario's wedding photography has the feel of lifestyle photography.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

 [Enlarge](#)



Black & white photos

To be a portfolio to send to potential clients.

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for portfolios of photographers.)

Designer's Comments:

"Mario is more expensive than many wedding photographers and he wanted his site to reflect high quality."

Valentinvezinat

<http://valentinvezinat.com>

Portfolio for a graphic design firm. When you rollover each project, part of it will become colored.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

This is a graphic design company with a penchant for art direction.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To be a portfolio to send to potential clients.

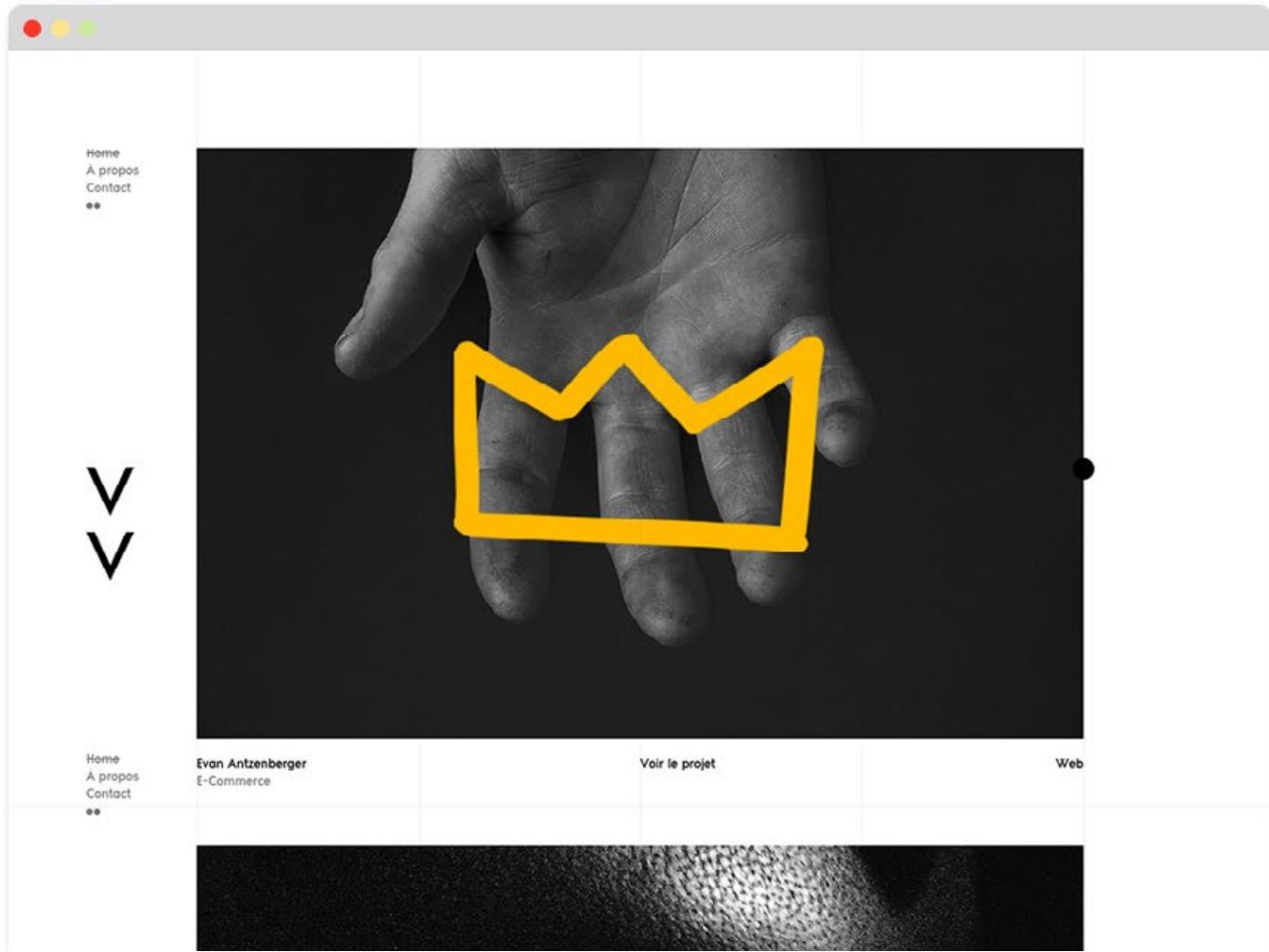
3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for agency sites and other portfolios.)

Designer's Comments:

"This was an in-house project. All of the highlight colors and elements on rollover are part of the portfolio piece."

Q Enlarge



Black & white photos

STYLE FOUR

ILLUSTRATION

I can't draw well, so whenever I do an illustrative site, I either purchase illustrations somewhere or work with an illustrator who was specifically hired for the job. Sometimes beginner designers see an amazing site and think that one person created it all. Unlikely! More often it's a collaborative process between several people.

Like the other styles, you should aim for consistency in styles. That means every illustration should look related.



Hotel Esencia

<http://hotelesencia.com>

The hand-drawn illustrations here elicit a feeling of relaxation. Perfect for a resort like this. The main image almost feels like a New Yorker cartoon which might be confusing, but the nondescript scene steers it away from that.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

A high-end hotel in Mexico with a rich history.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

The owners wanted to attract foreign tourists and convey that this wasn't an ordinary hotel.

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for hotels and travel destinations.)

Designer's Comments:

"During our research, we noticed that 100% of the hotel imagery we found used photos. And while we liked many of them, it made us realize this was an opportunity to help the client stand out from competitors. In our pitch, we said people would be immune to yet another hotel site with pretty pictures. The client agreed! So we told the story of the hotel with illustrations instead."

 [Enlarge](#)



Illustration

Be Visionare

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

This is a micro-site to promote a goal tracking app. It's likely that an illustrator was hired to create imagery for this site.

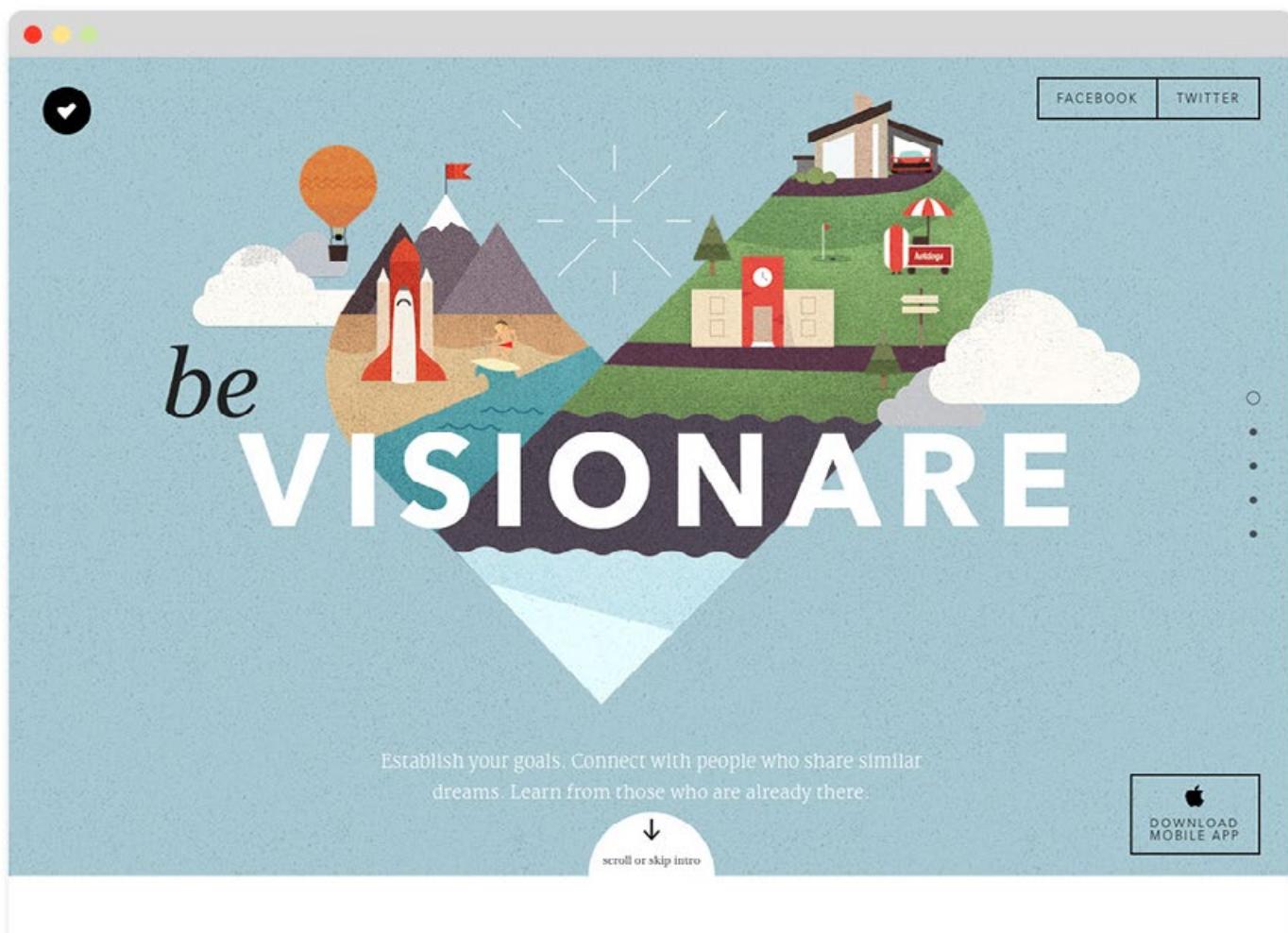
1) What is the essence of the brand?

The Visionare app is meant to inspire people to create and track goals they set for themselves.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To provide information and entice people to download the app.

 [Enlarge](#)



3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for sites that want to inspire or change people. Weight loss and therapy sites for example.)

Designer's Comments:

"We wanted a destination site for people to visit when our app was written about in articles and blogs. With so much noise in the app store, we wanted to provide a wonderful web experience, which would in turn endear users to us when they were considering downloading the app."

Illustration

Sun Valley

<http://portfolio.tofslie.com>

Sometimes vintage clip art illustrations can be used to create a fun retro vibe. The designer here used clip art as an homage to 1950's ski resorts.

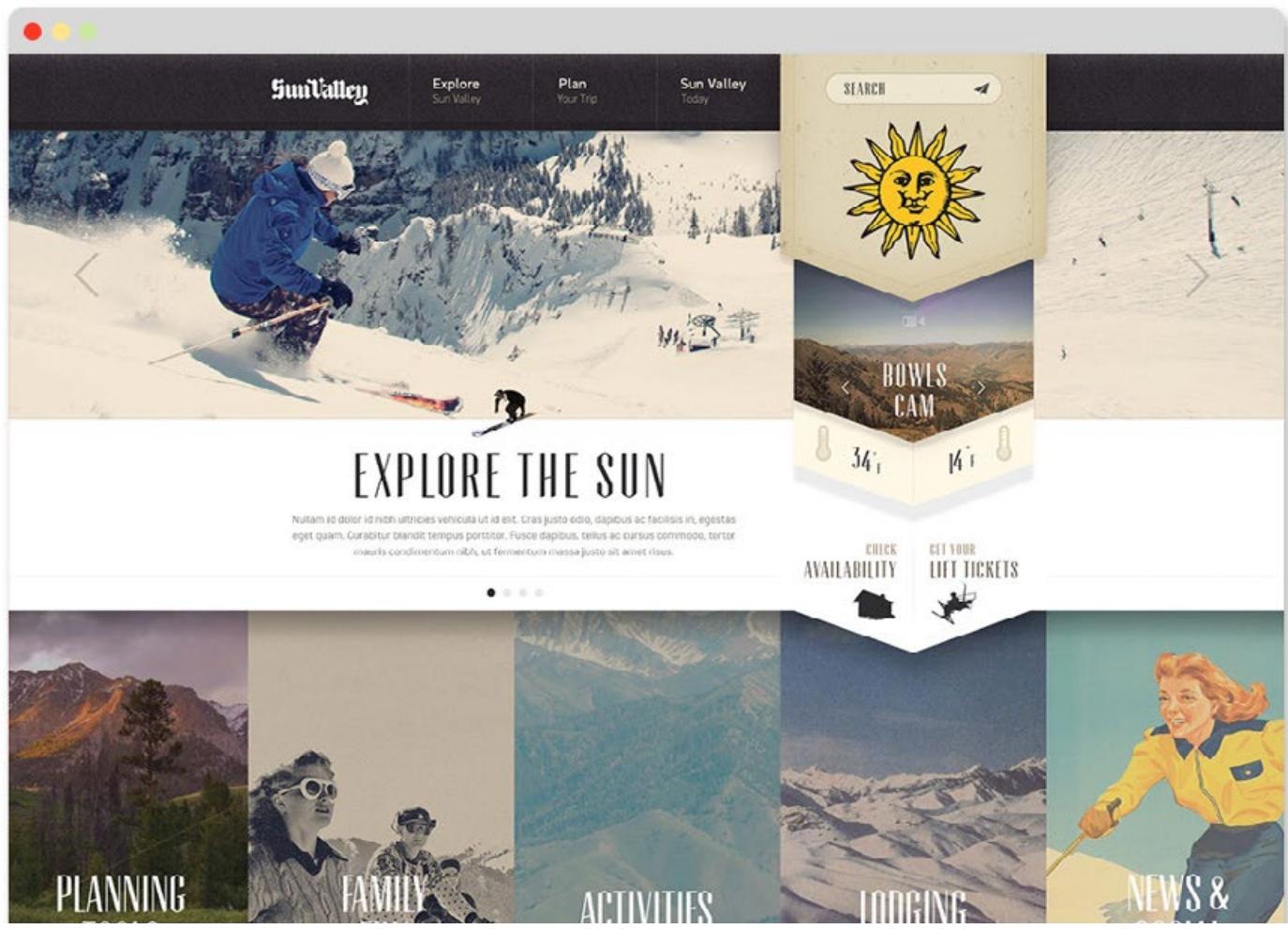
1) What is the essence of the brand?

Sun Valley is ski resort in Idaho that's known for catering to families. They've been around since 1936.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To entice skiers to vacation at the resort.

[Enlarge](#)



Illustration

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for travel and vacation sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"All of the competitor sites used similar looking photos. You couldn't tell any of them apart. So we pitched the client on these vintage illustrations. They thought it was a good match for their family-friendly resort and gave us the greenlight to design the rest of the site."

Beyond This Point

<http://beyondthispoint.design>

The illustrations here are very basic, but combined with the color, it's enough to create a distinct mood.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Beyond This Point is a podcast featuring interviews with artists, business owners, and leaders of all types to put a spotlight on different ways of seeing, thinking, and making.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To be thought-provoking, and to promote "Civilization," a company that develops

brands and experiences.

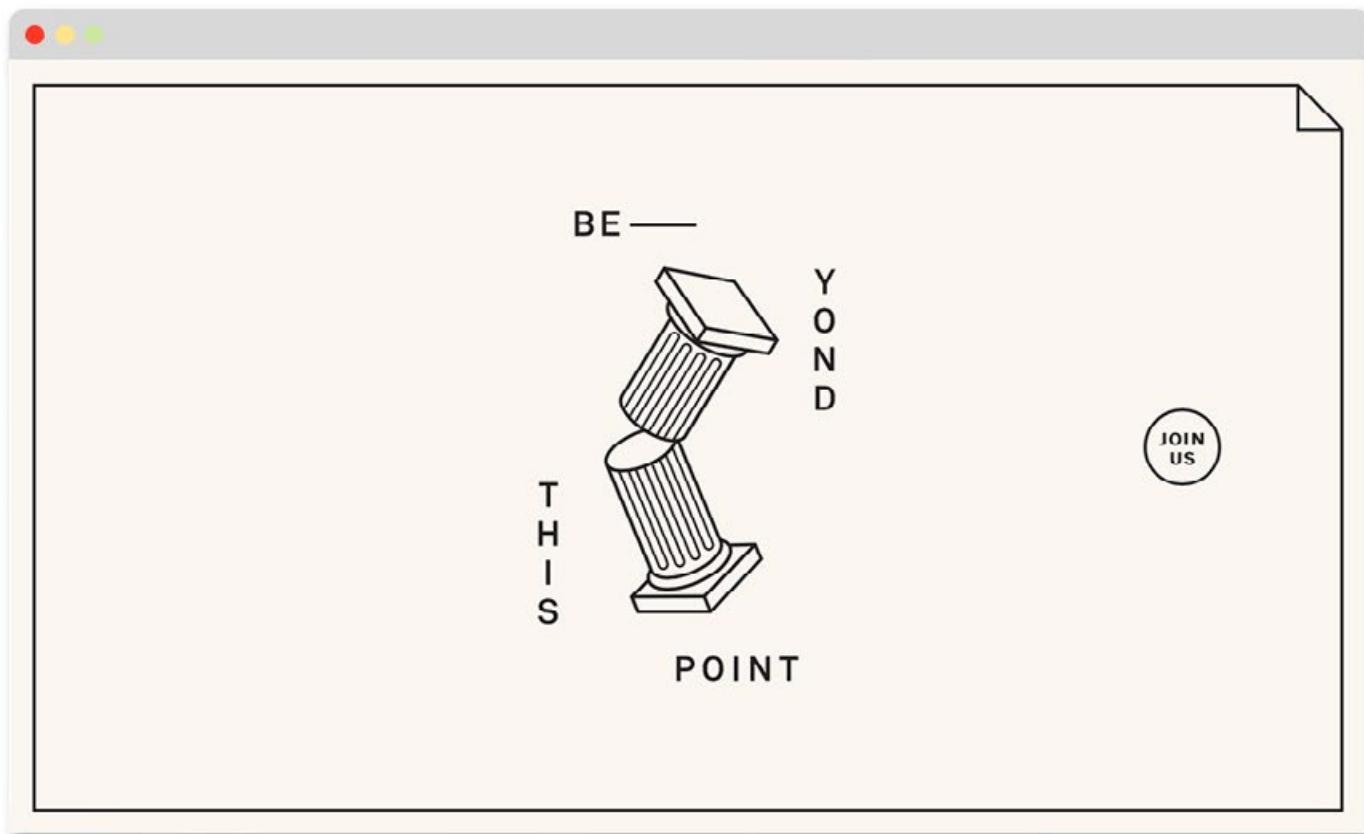
3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for sites with a single focus.)

Designer's Comments:

"The client wanted a place outside of iTunes where people could go to learn more about the podcast. When deciding the color and illustrations, we just tried to portray the tone of the show."

 [Enlarge](#)



Illustration

STYLE FIVE

COLLAGE

Collage uses multiple elements to make a cohesive design. Unlike earlier styles, you have more liberty to use photos of a different style, because if enough elements look different, that can create a kind of cohesion in itself.



Frank Chimero

<http://www.frankchimero.com/writing/>

This is a personal site for designer, writer, and illustrator Frank Chimero. He works in several mediums and the site design reflects that.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Frank is a playful designer, writer, and illustrator.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

Frank wanted a new site for his projects.

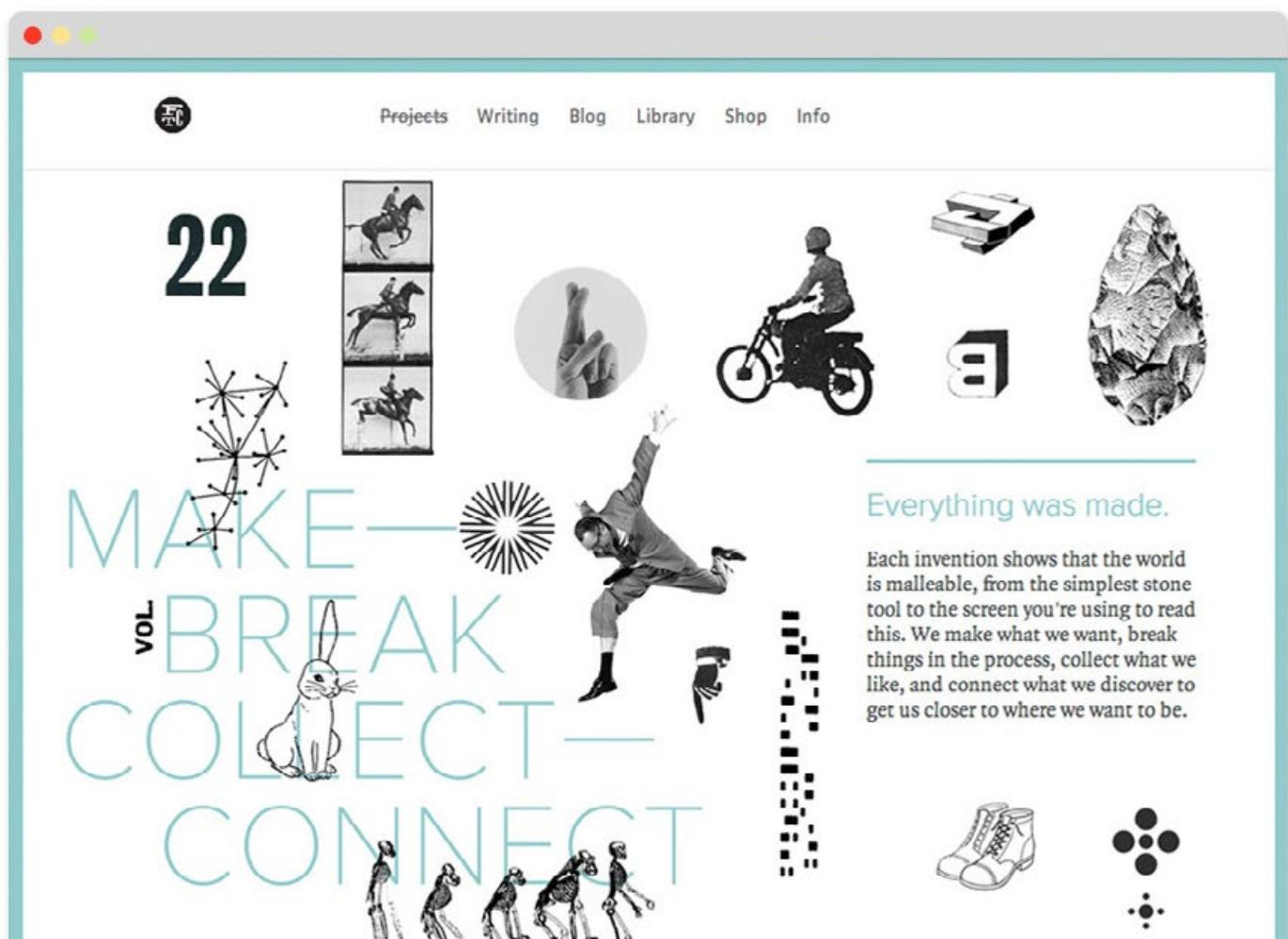
 [Enlarge](#)

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder and look for websites that tackle multiple topics.)

Designer's Comments:

"Frank is a creative person with many talents. We didn't want to show those talents in a literal way on the homepage, rather we wanted to reference them in an abstract way by using a variety of clip art and other ephemera. Because this was his personal website he gave us a lot of creative license and let us go nuts."



Rogue Society

<http://roguesocietygin.com>

This is a website for a gin company. They distill their gin in a hand-beaten, 19th-century copper pot, which explains some of the vintage-feeling imagery.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Rogue approaches gin making as a fine craft.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To promote the gin to potential distributors.

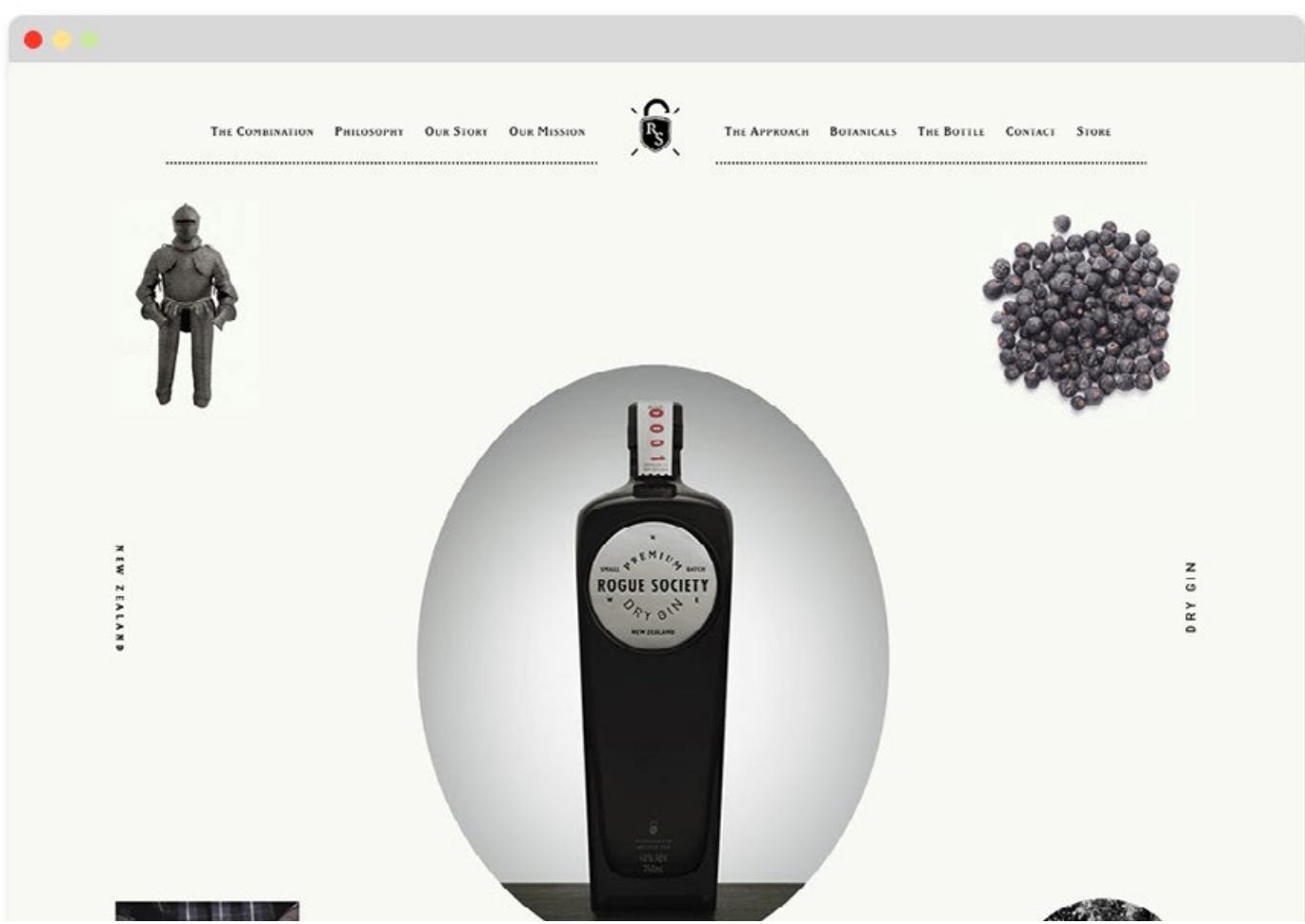
 [Enlarge](#)

3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for sites with craft-related subjects, like woodworking.)

Designer's Comments:

"This was a new company and the founders were having a hard time cold calling and emailing distributors. No one knew who they were. To combat this, they needed a site that made them look like a serious operation. They didn't have a budget for photography or illustrations so we found old clip art that worked well."



Collage

The Conference

<https://2016.theconference.se/>

This site mixes illustrations, geometric shapes, and photos. The copy conforms to a grid, but the other elements seem to be strewn about. This helps separate the two layers and makes the site readable among the chaotic elements surrounding it.

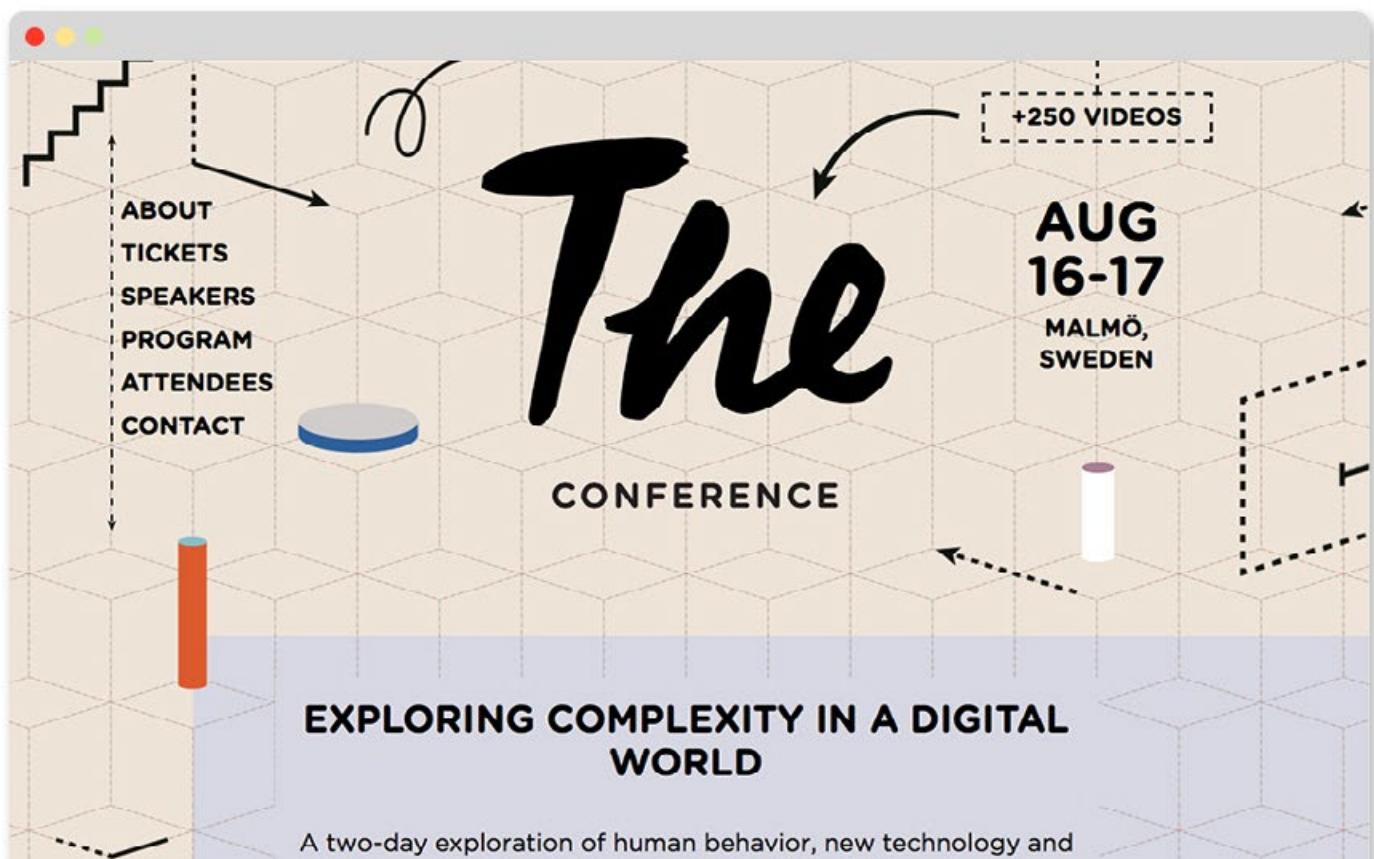
1) What is the essence of the brand?

The Conference is a two day event exploring the tech world through multidisciplinary perspectives.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

To promote the event and allow people to

Q Enlarge



register for it.

3) What do I like?

(Most websites for conferences are lousy. So look for all kinds of sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"The Conference is about connecting the dots between different fields. So we put doodles all over the page, using them as gestural elements. This created a mood that matched the content of the event."

Curious Space

<http://www.curiousspace.com>

The photos here seem to float above everything. And even though it looks like there's no strict grid keeping them in place, it works because the placement of the photos leads your eye down the page.

1) What is the essence of the brand?

Curious Space creates and designs physical spaces for museums, galleries, and public spaces.

2) What's the purpose of the site?

The client had a difficult time describing the various projects they've done, so they wanted

a site to show people.

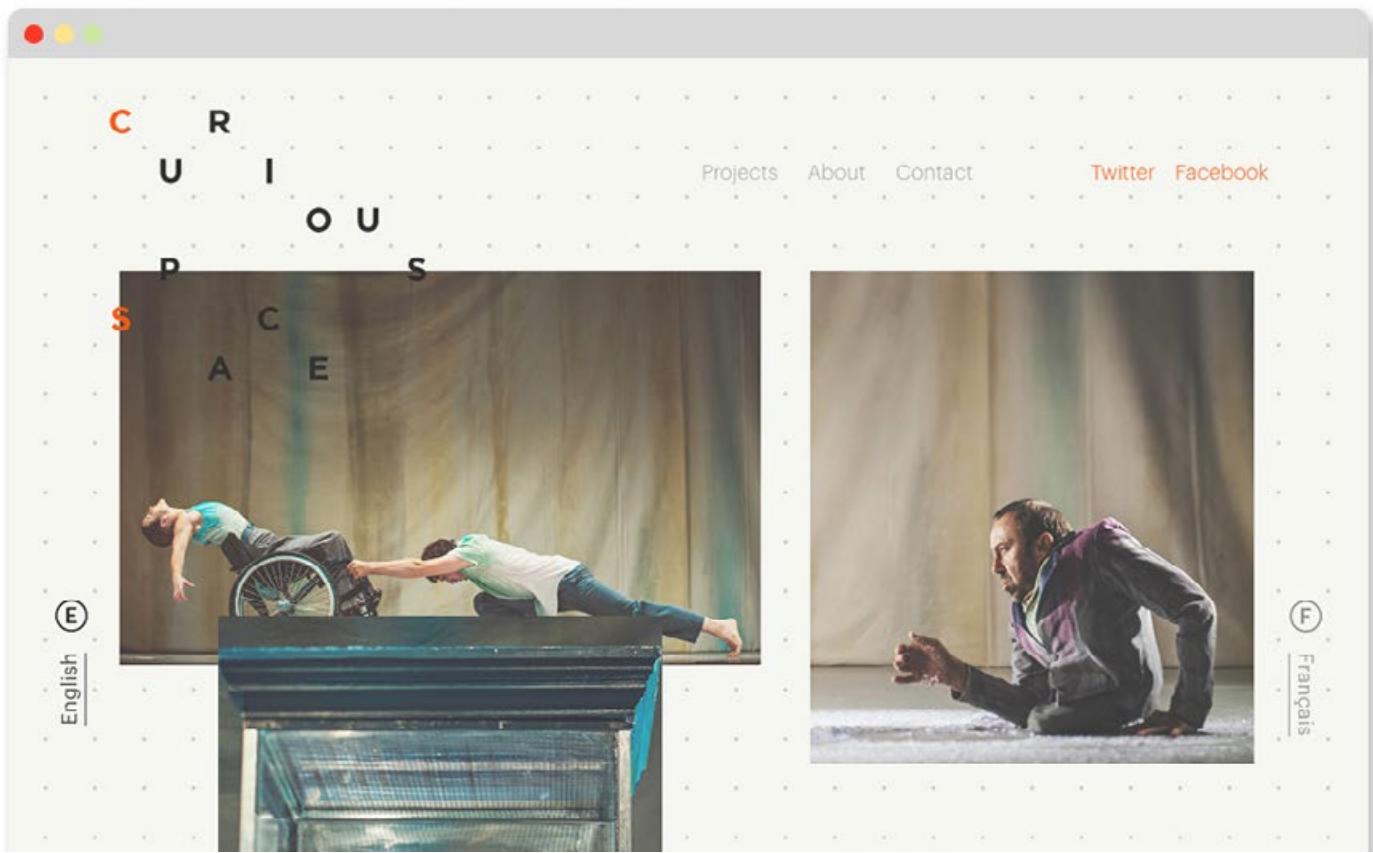
3) What do I like?

(Browse through the inspiration folder for portfolio sites.)

Designer's Comments:

"Curious Space does a lot of work with dancers, artists, and other performers. We wanted to reflect the expressiveness of those performers by having a loose and playful layout."

Q [Enlarge](#)



Chapter Summary

Use style mapping to figure out what style to use for your site. Choose one of the five styles and do the entire site in that one style. Remember, your style and concept should work well together

Quick hacks

[Here's](#) a tutorial on how to create duotones.

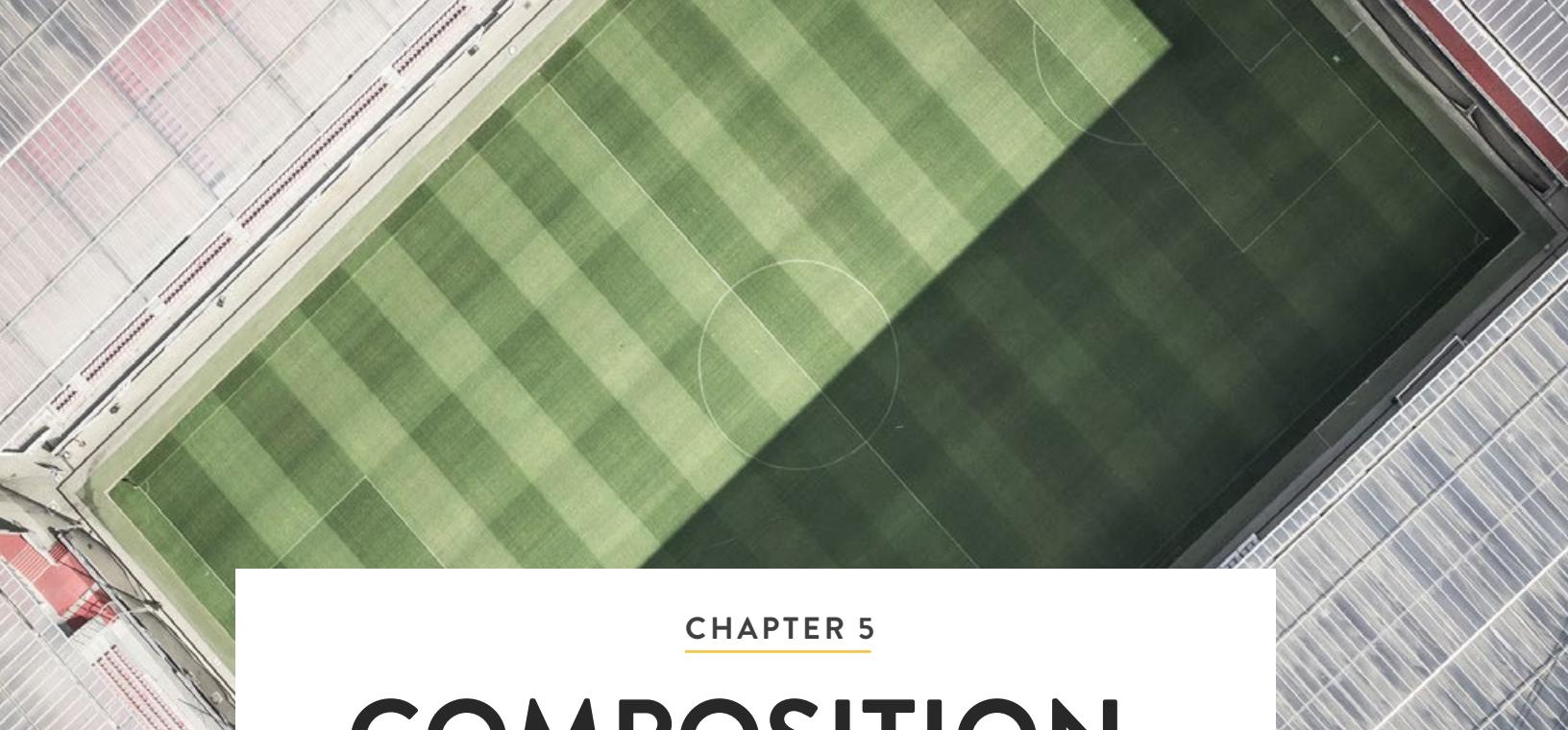
If you have good photos, try a **Full-Color Photo style**.

If you have photos that were taken at different times by different people, try using a **Duotone style**.

For a sophisticated look, try a **Black & White style**.

For simplicity, or to create a specific mood, try an **Illustrated style**.

For something artsy/experimental/personal, try a **Collage style**.



CHAPTER 5

COMPOSITION

“Design should never say, look at me. It should always say, look at this.”

– David Craib



Introduction

Composition is the placement of visual elements on a page. A good composition will create visual interest. It will present information in a way that doesn't overwhelm the user.

primary links and navigation elements. When you look at each example, ask yourself if the composition is simple or complex. And notice how that influences the way in which you digest the page.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Examples of Good Compositions*

Grids

"How wide should my photoshop file be?" There can be multiple answers to that question, but for our purposes, make it 1200px wide. [Here are](#) a .psd and .ai file with those dimensions courtesy of [1200px.com](#).

Examples of good compositions:

The following pages have some examples of websites with nice compositions. Notice how there's never too much information on the page. Even when a page contains many elements, there's a logical grid structure to hold everything in place. Some of the layouts are simple and some more complex, but they all have a grid of some kind that supports the content.

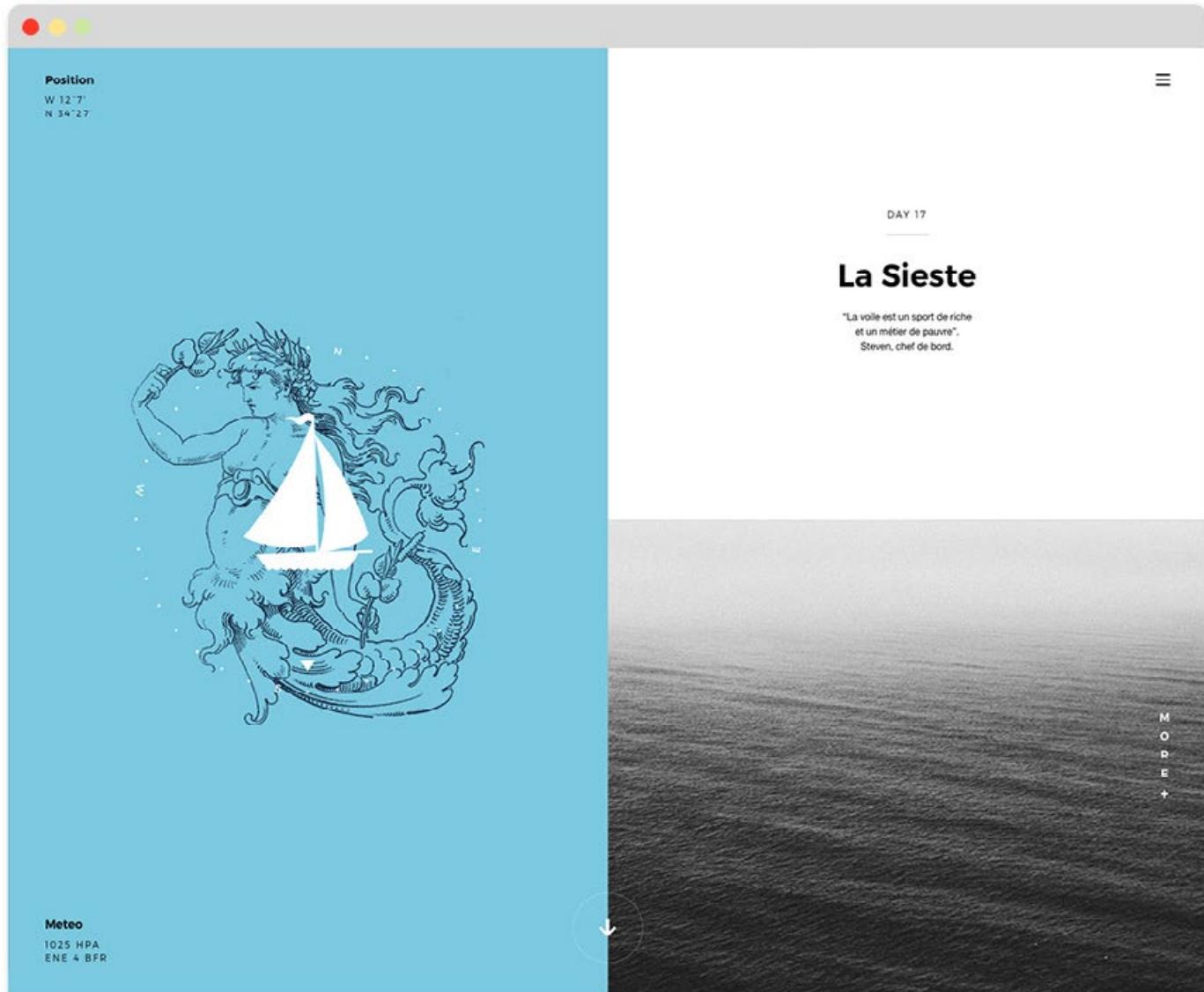
After each screenshot, the gray layouts show how the page is broken up visually (and programmatically with DIVs), along with

Si Le Soleil

<http://silesoleil.com>

This site contains many interactive elements.
Because there is so much animation, they
decided to use this simple layout.

Q Enlarge

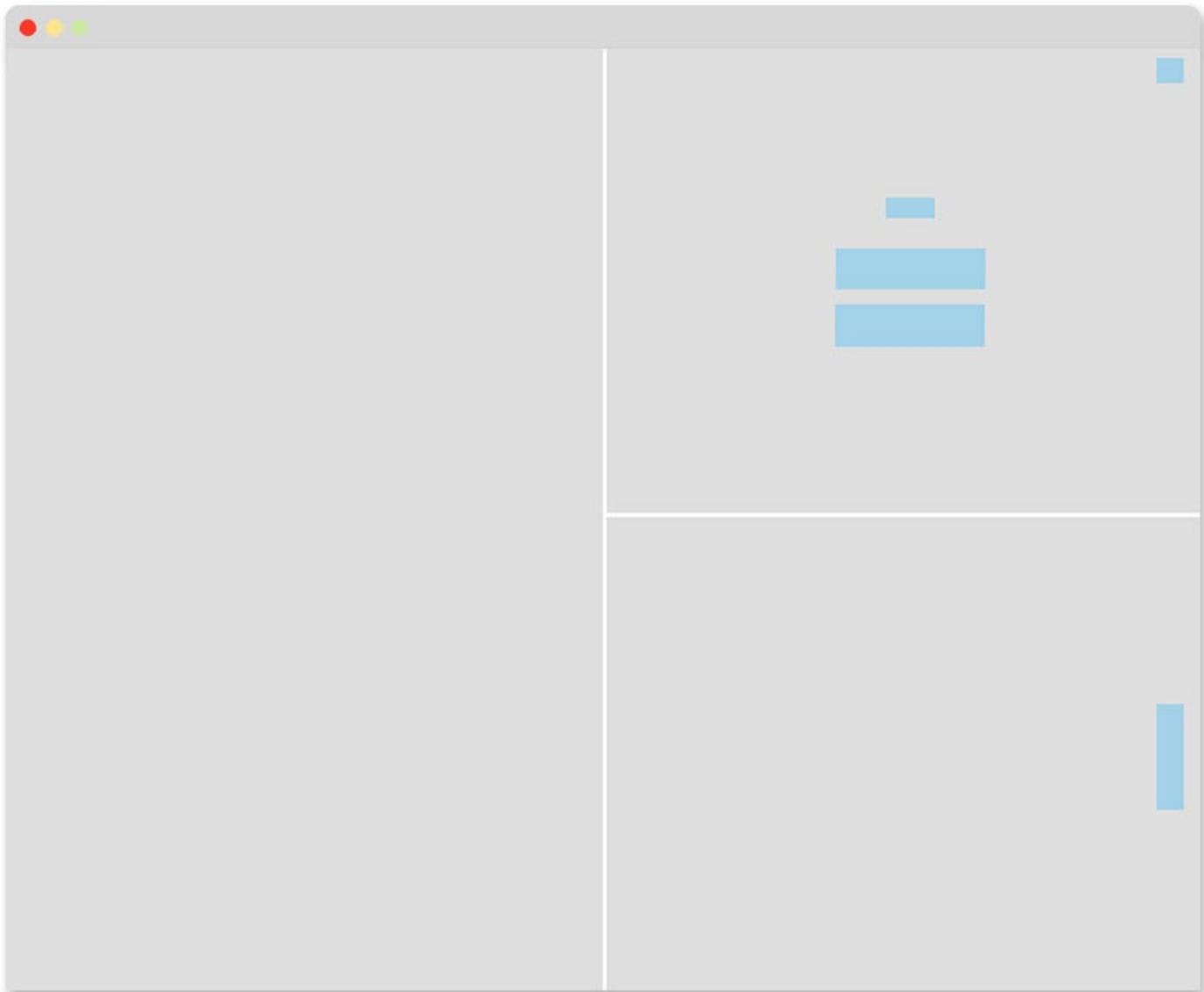


Si Le Soleil Ctnd.

<http://silesoleil.com>

Here's how the page is broken up:

Enlarge



Bartaile

<http://bartaile.com>

This is a fashion site, so the mood they convey is important for the brand. On the first screenshot below, the entire page is a branded image. However when you click the

button below the woman's feet, the page becomes highly functional.

 [Enlarge](#)



Bartaile Ctnd.

<http://bartaile.com>

Here's how the page is broken up:

Enlarge

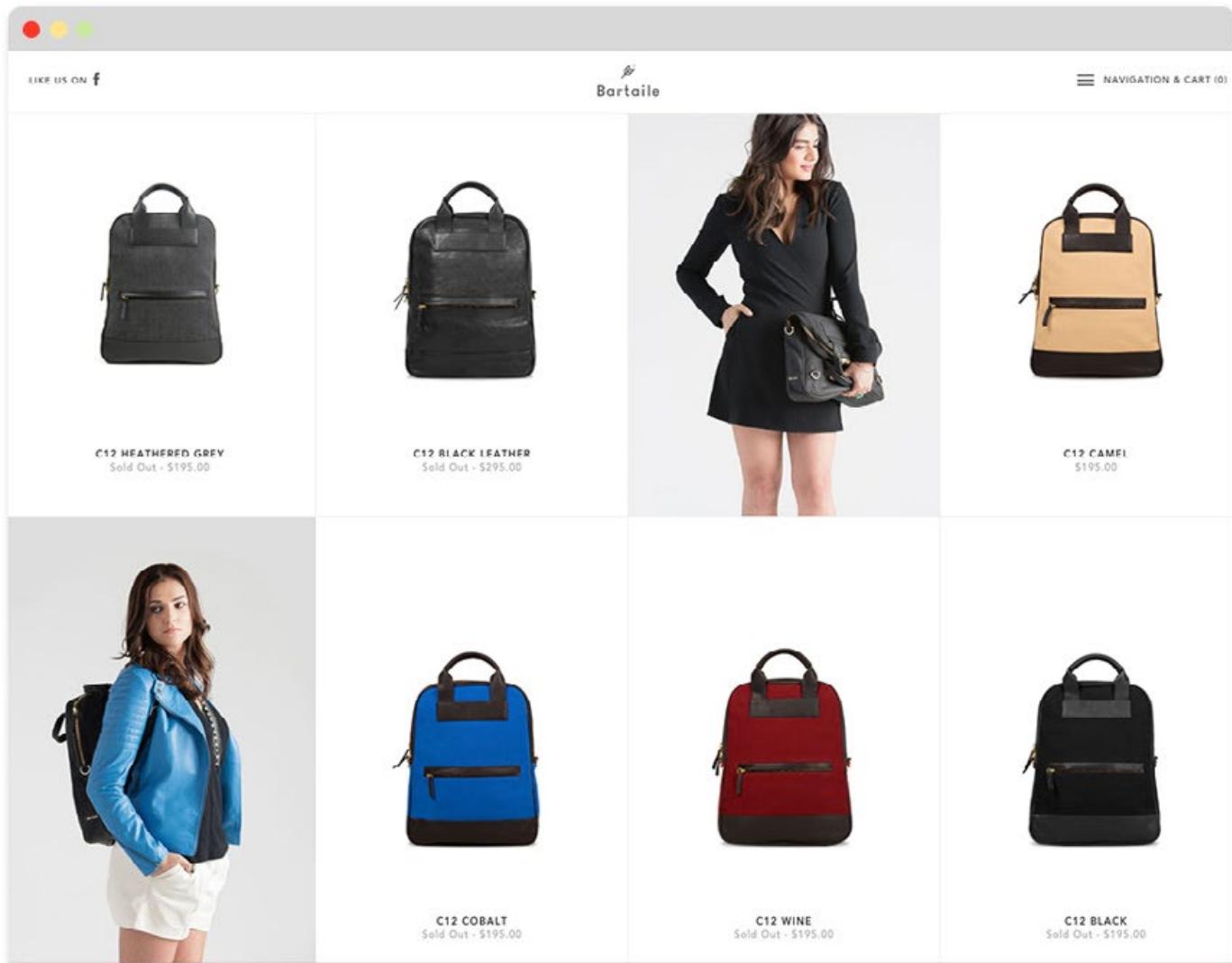


Bartaile ctnd

<http://bartaile.com>

Here's the functional bit. It's more complex than the first image with the single woman, but the two compositions still feel related.

Q Enlarge

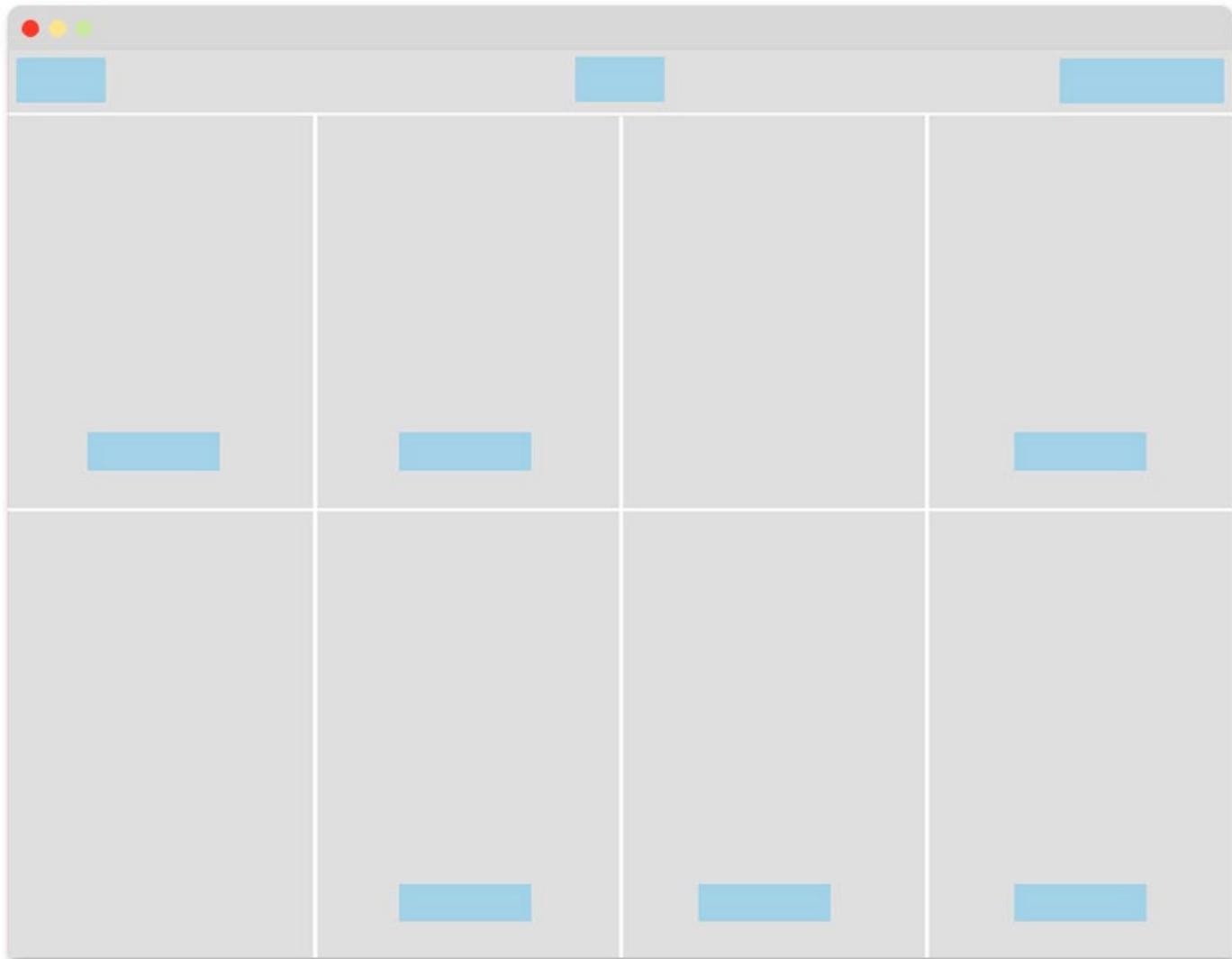


Bartaile Ctnd.

<http://bartaile.com>

Here's how the page is broken up:

 [Enlarge](#)



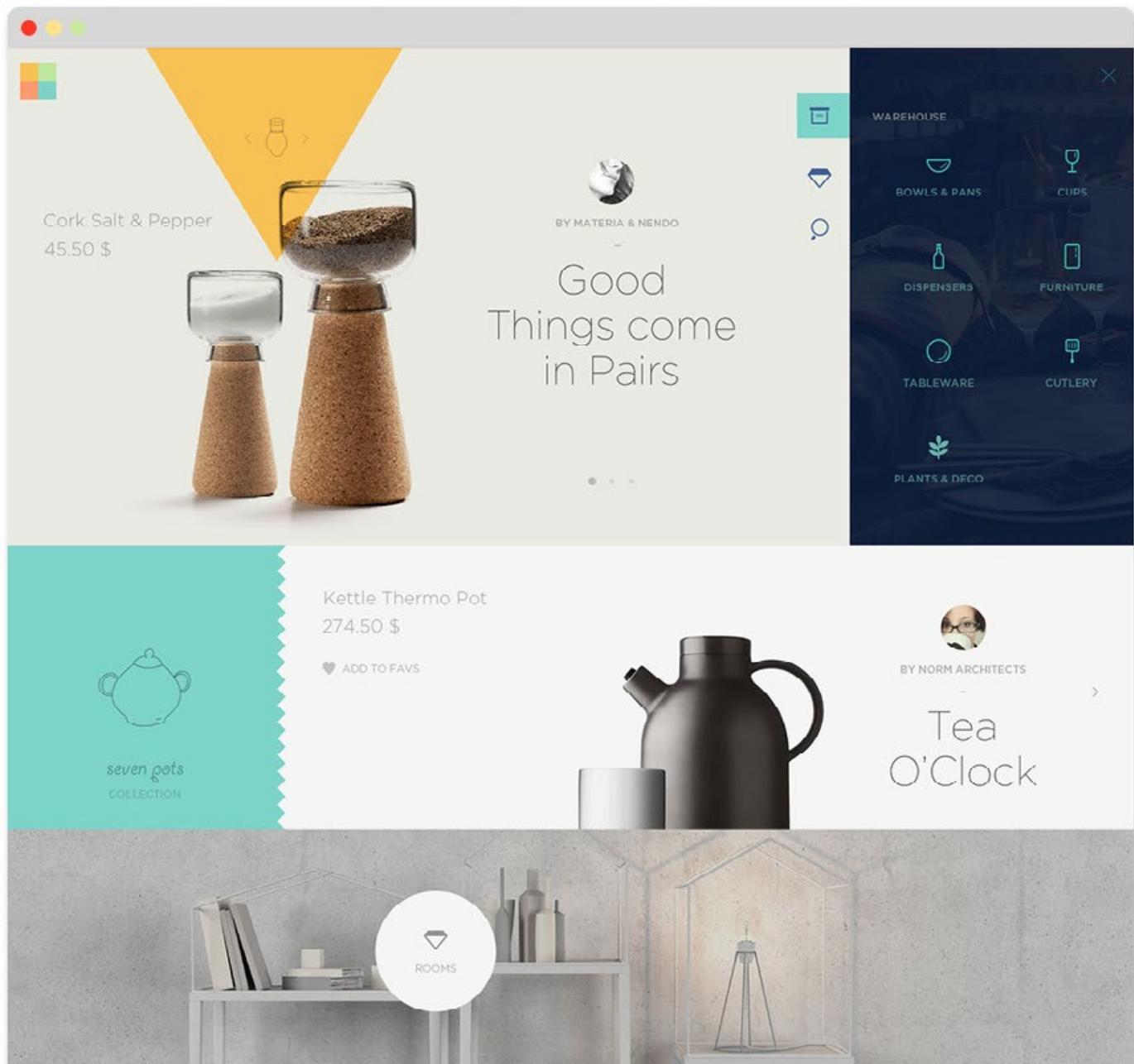
Warehouse Kitchenware

<http://bit.ly/1roms7V>

This composition has sections that are always split at the 3/4 or 1/4 mark (it flips back and forth). This creates a nice variety. And to ensure it's not too repetitive and chaotic, they

include a full bleed section immediately after. There's a lot going on here, but the "3/4ths, 1/4th" pattern provides structure to make it work.

Enlarge

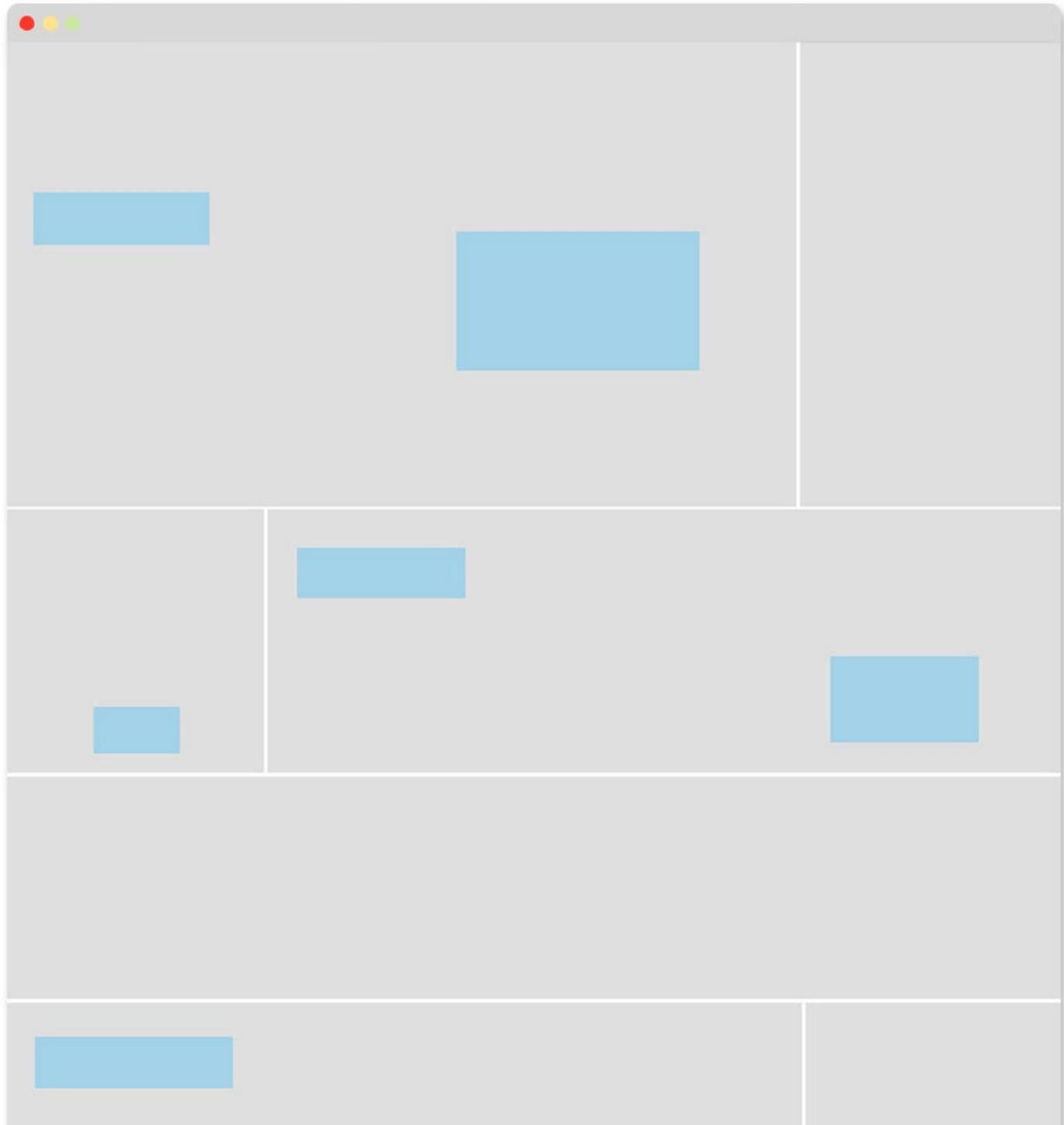


Warehouse Kitchenware Ctnd.

<http://bit.ly/1roms7V>

Here's how the page is broken up:

 Enlarge

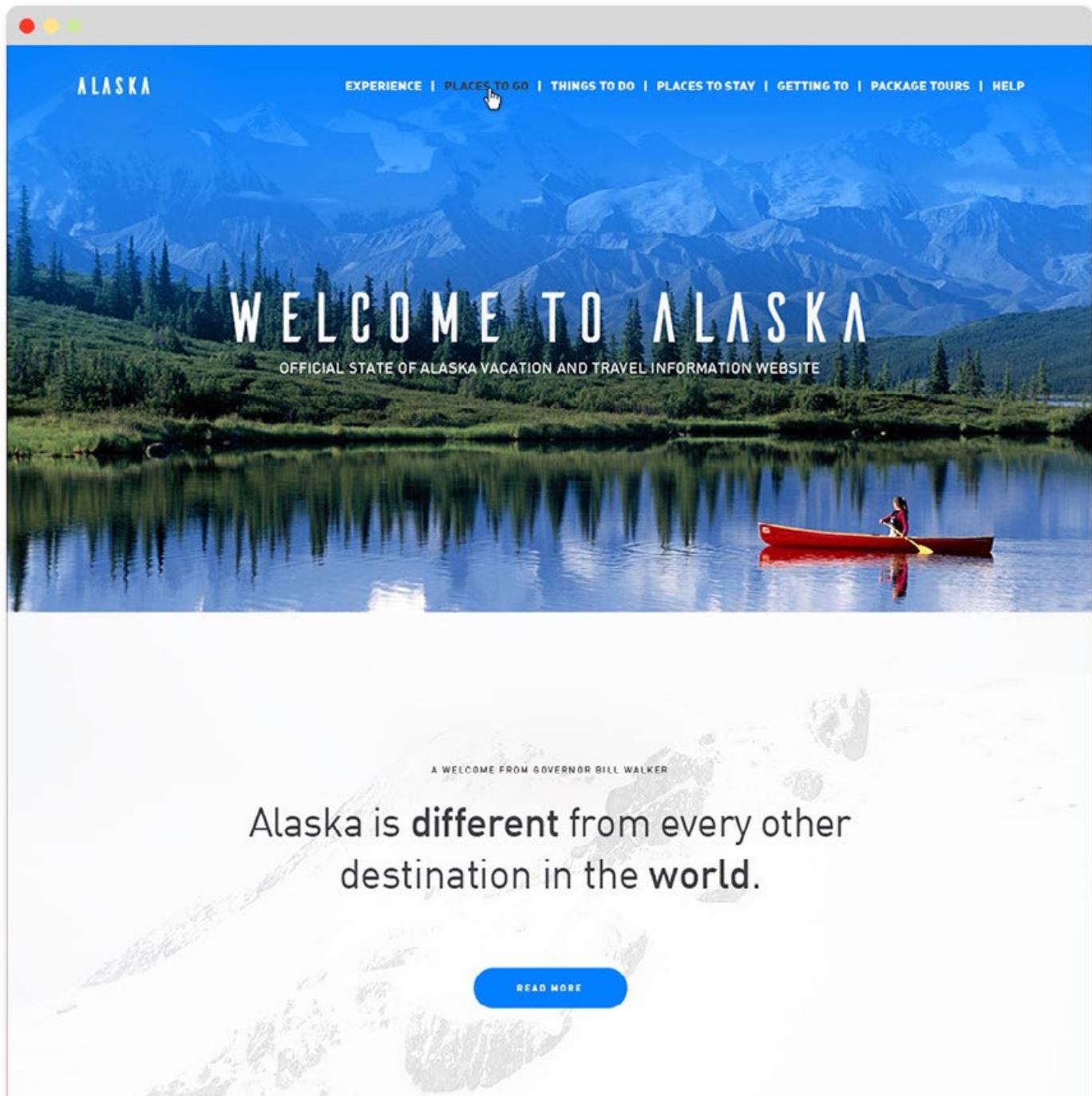


This is Alaska

<http://bit.ly/1OT5FRo>

Similar to the previous example, the image and copy alternate from side to side, midway down the page. It's a good way to lead the viewer's eye where you want it to go.

[Enlarge](#)

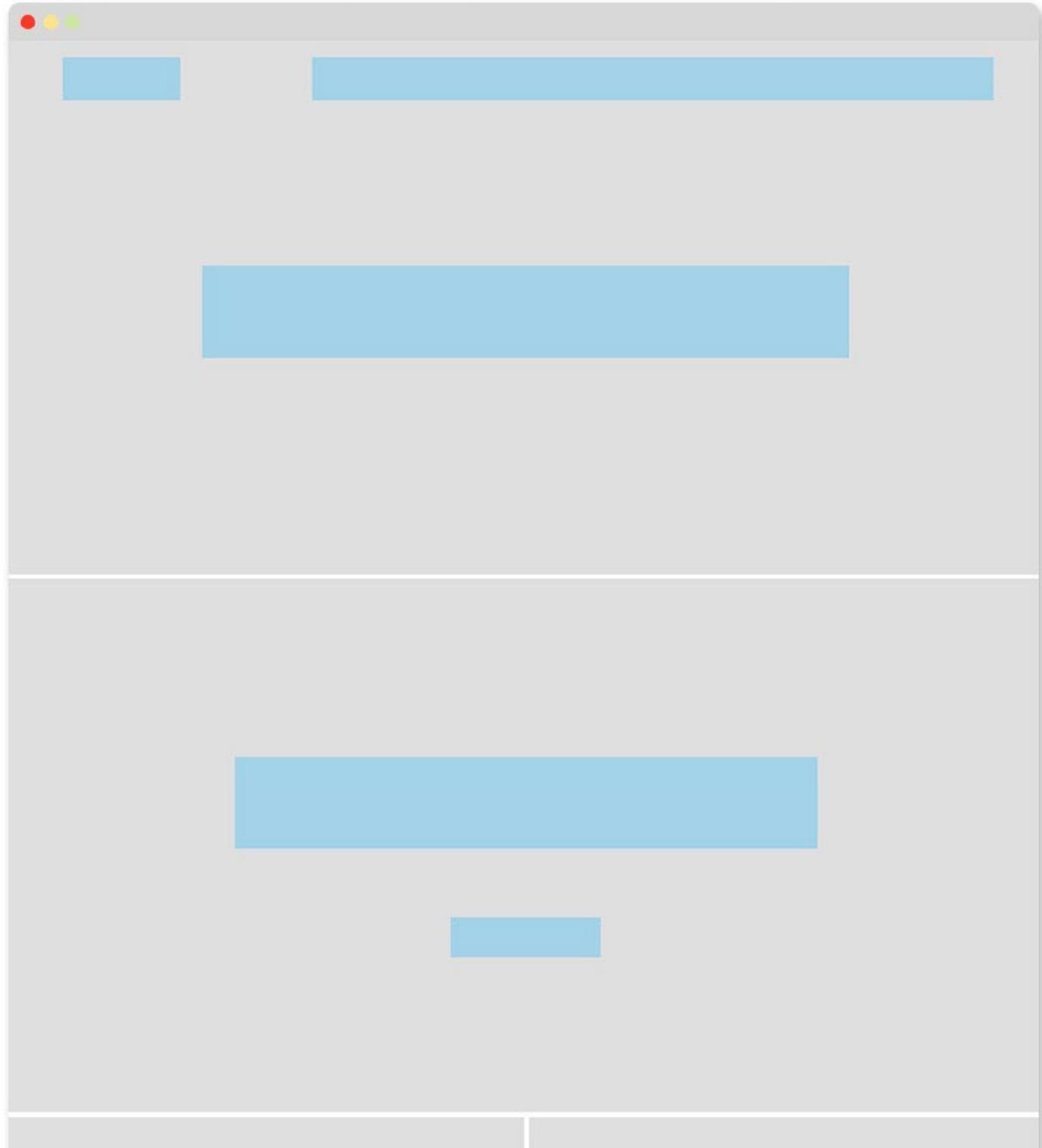


This is Alaska Cntd.

<http://bit.ly/1OT5FRo>

Here's how the page is broken up:

 Enlarge

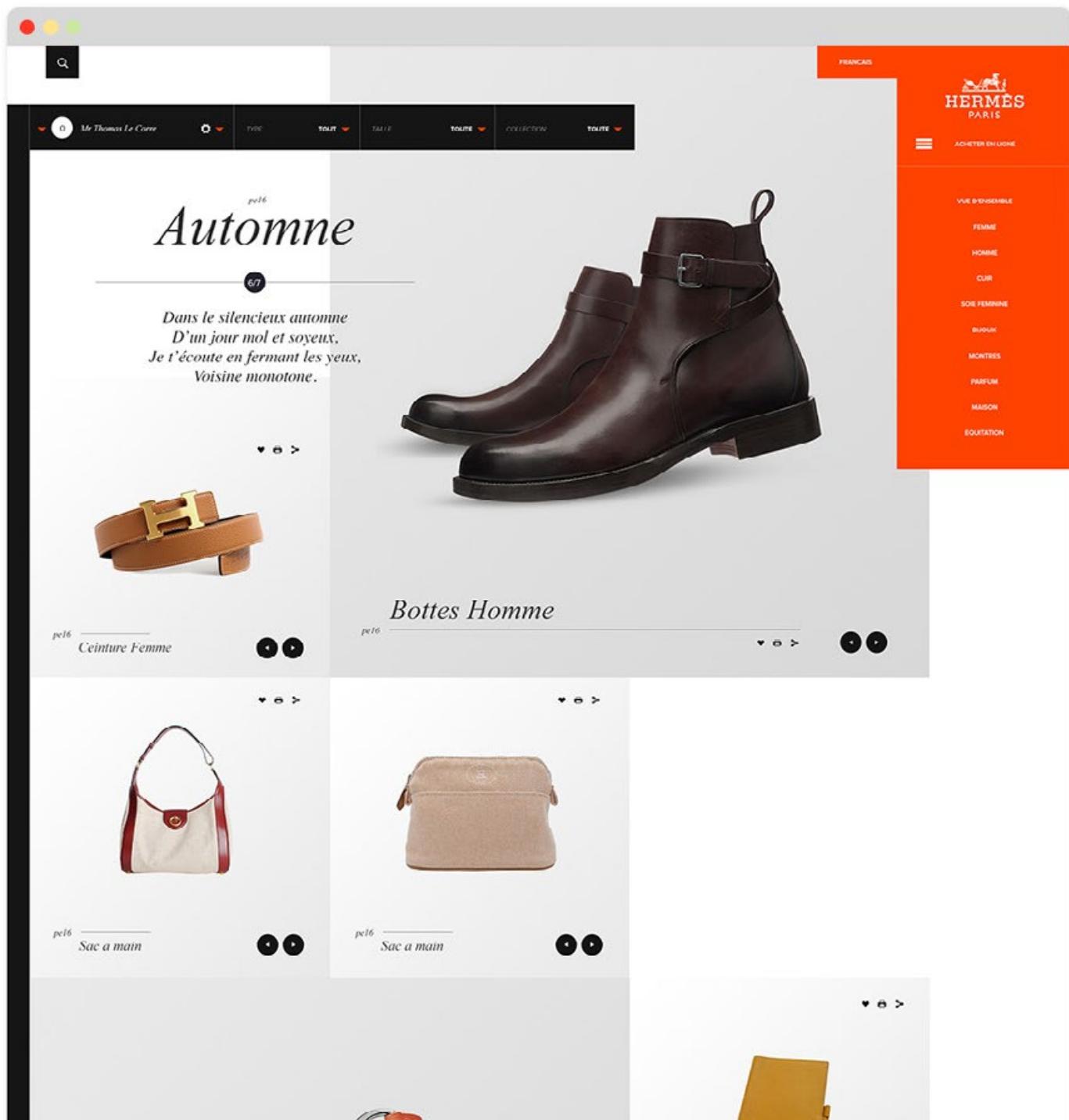


Hermes

<http://bit.ly/1UmvC05>

This is a more complicated layout than the others we've seen but notice there is still a clear grid.

Q Enlarge

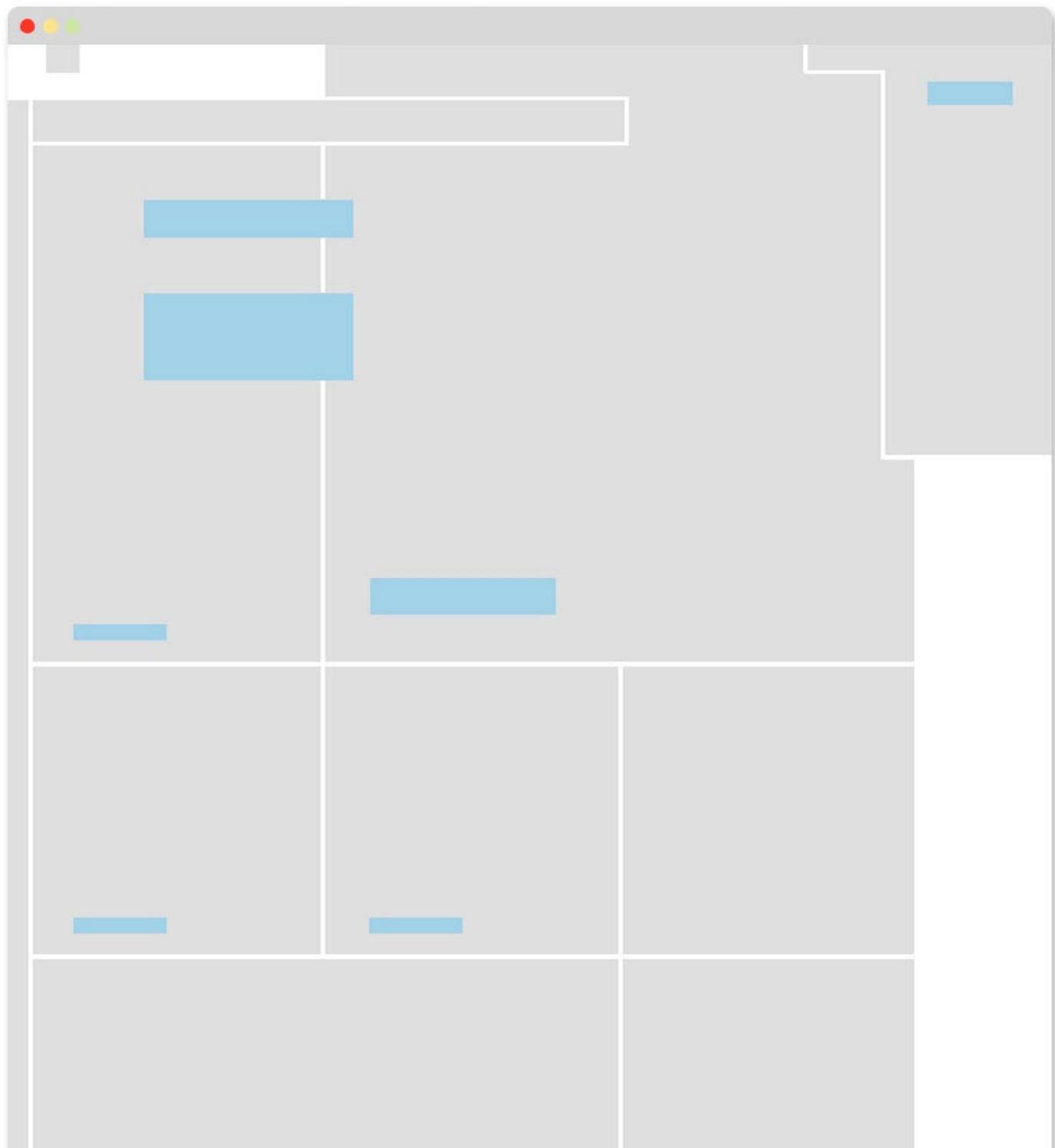


Hermes Cntd.

<http://bit.ly/1UmvC05>

Here's how the page is broken up:

Enlarge



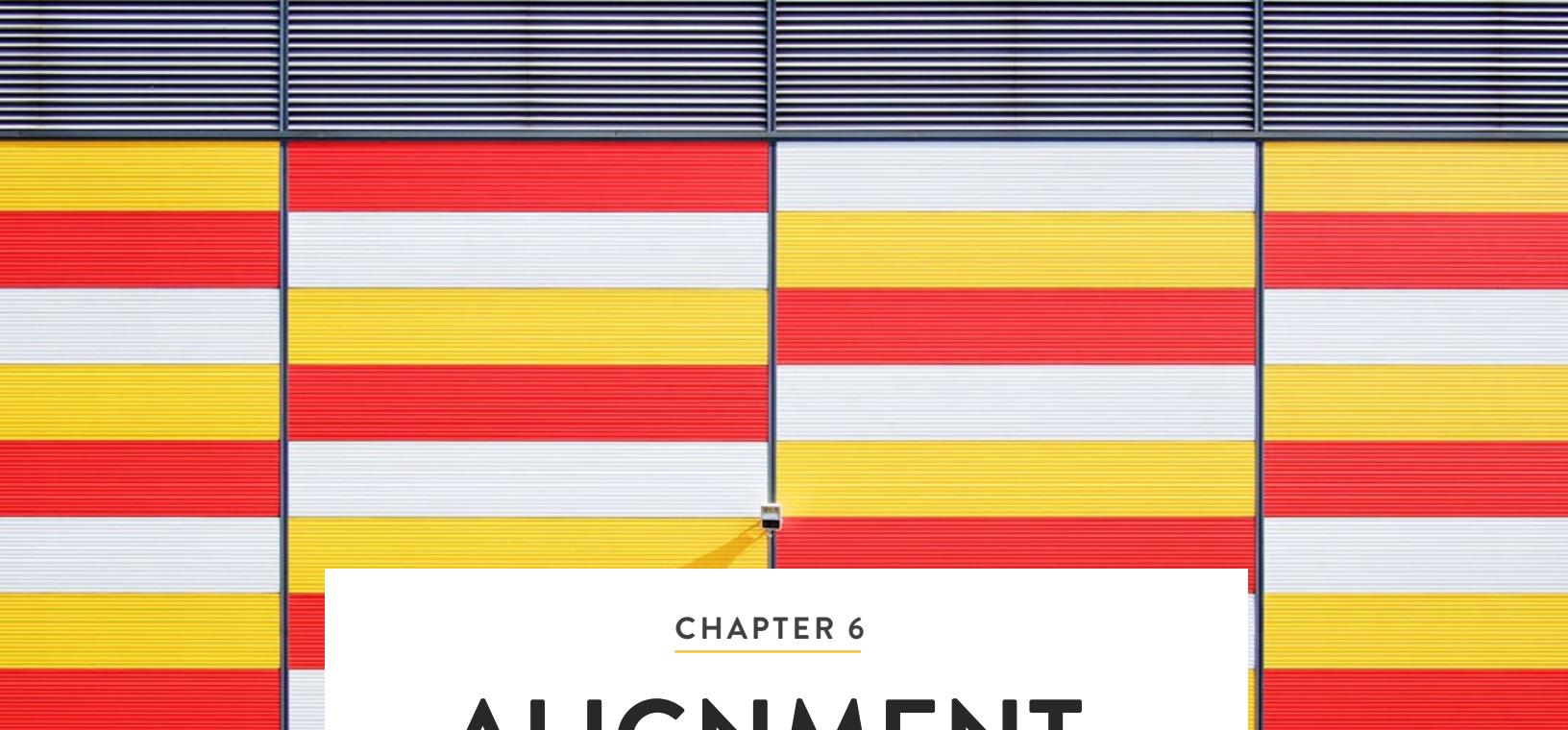
Composition Summary

When doing your layout, try to think with rectangles. Big and small.

Quick hacks

For your first couple sites, try just copying the layouts from this chapter or from sites in your inspiration folder. Then as you build confidence you can work from scratch.

If you design a site where the hero image always has a 100% width, it can look weird on a large screen. For that reason, I recommend defining a max width.



CHAPTER 6

ALIGNMENT

“Design is the conscious effort
to impose a meaningful order.”

– Victor Papanek



Introduction

Alignment is stacking elements on top of one another, either along the edges or down the center.

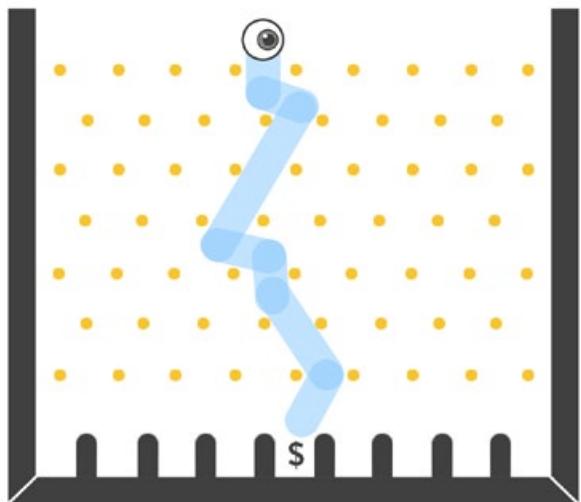
When elements on a page are aligned, it creates order. If you have several dissimilar elements on a page, aligning them can make them feel related. It helps your design communicate quickly and clearly.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

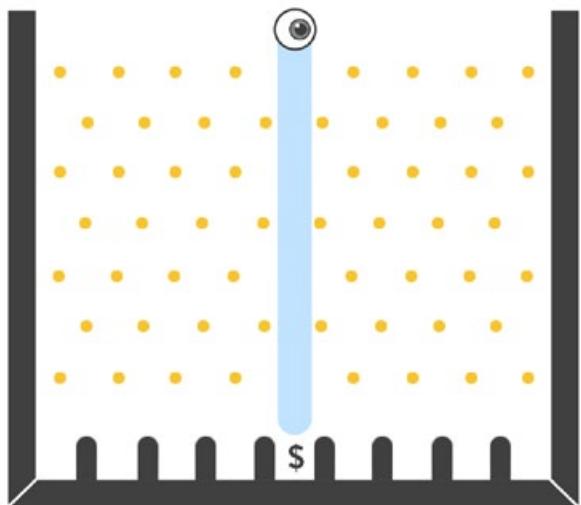
- *Why alignment matters*
- *Alignment of page elements*
- *Typographic alignment*

Why alignment matters

Think of alignment like a Plinko board. When your typography or imagery isn't aligned, your eye bounces around as it moves down the page. A website that uses alignment communicates much faster. When type and images are aligned, it's like a Plinko board with the middle pegs removed. Your eye can move straight down the page quickly.



When elements are not aligned.



When elements are aligned.

Alignment of Page Elements

Take a look at this product page. What works and what doesn't? The typography is pleasant, the product photography is clear, but something feels off. Can you see it?

The product page for 'White Etheriana Hand Crème' is displayed on a computer screen. The main visual is a tube of hand cream with a black base and a white floral pattern. The label on the tube reads 'WHITE ETHERIANA mimosa, bamboo and lime' and 'HAND CRÈME CRÈME POUR LES MAINS'. To the right of the product, the title 'White Etheriana Hand Crème' is written in a large, bold, serif font. Below the title is a price box containing '\$8.99' and a red 'BUY AT TARGET' button. The page is divided into several sections: 'ABOUT' (describing the product's ingredients and benefits), 'DIRECTIONS' (instructions to apply to clean, dry hands), 'TIPS' (advice to use with other products from the family), and 'INGREDIENTS' (a dropdown menu). The overall layout is clean but exhibits poor alignment, particularly between the left-hand product image and the right-hand text and buttons.

White Etheriana Hand Crème

\$8.99 [BUY AT TARGET](#)

ABOUT
The non-greasy, non-sticky hand crème is enriched with natural shea butter, vitamin E, aloe vera and botanical oils to nourish hands. The healing treatment provides ultimate hydration and protection against drying elements, while absorbing quickly into the skin.

DIRECTIONS
Apply to clean, dry hands as often as needed.

TIPS
Use with the other products from this family for a cohesive fragrant body routine.

INGREDIENTS ▾

Cntd.

You guessed it, the alignment is off. The elements aren't aligned straight.



White Etheriana Hand Crème

\$8.99 [BUY AT TARGET](#)

ABOUT
The non-greasy, non-sticky hand crème is enriched with natural shea butter, vitamin E, aloe vera and botanical oils to nourish hands. The healing treatment provides ultimate hydration and protection against drying elements, while absorbing quickly into the skin.

DIRECTIONS
Apply to clean, dry hands as often as needed.

TIPS
Use with the other products from this family for a cohesive fragrant body routine.

INGREDIENTS ▾

Cntd.

Now look at this one. Isn't it easier on your eyes?



White Etheriana Hand Crème

\$8.99 [BUY AT TARGET](#)

ABOUT
The non-greasy, non-sticky hand crème is enriched with natural shea butter, vitamin E, aloe vera and botanical oils to nourish hands. The healing treatment provides ultimate hydration and protection against drying elements, while absorbing quickly into the skin.

DIRECTIONS
Apply to clean, dry hands as often as needed.

TIPS
Use with the other products from this family for a cohesive fragrant body routine.

[INGREDIENTS ▾](#)

Cntd.

When everything is aligned, it reads better.

WHITE ETHERIANA
mimosa, bamboo and lime
mimosa, bambou et lime

HAND CRÈME
CRÈME POUR LES MAINS

2 fl oz / 60 ml

White Etheriana Hand Crème

\$8.99 [BUY AT TARGET](#)

ABOUT
The non-greasy, non-sticky hand crème is enriched with natural shea butter, vitamin E, aloe vera and botanical oils to nourish hands. The healing treatment provides ultimate hydration and protection against drying elements, while absorbing quickly into the skin.

DIRECTIONS
Apply to clean, dry hands as often as needed.

TIPS
Use with the other products from this family for a cohesive fragrant body routine.

INGREDIENTS ▾

Typographic Alignment

Alignment happens on a smaller scale too, within individual paragraphs. One thing to keep in mind is once you decide on how you want your type to be aligned, the copy elsewhere on the site should be aligned in the same way. This creates a consistent viewing experience. Here are the most common ways to align type:

Flush left

Copy that is flushed left and ragged right is the norm for most websites.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris hendrerit euismod augue vitae placerat. Duis at ex metus. Nam quis volutpat odio, non aliquet nunc. Quisque eleifend, orci nec tincidunt dignissim, nisl massa maximus eros, eu convallis lacus justo egestas quam. Vestibulum in ultrices tellus, eu molestie velit. Integer id eros ac sapien fermentum vehicula. Nullam feugiat consectetur dapibus. Etiam risus velit, viverra posuere vehicula at, efficitur in sem. Nulla nisl arcu, mollis sed erat a, vehicula iaculis metus. Donec ac arcu a quam egestas ullamcorper.

Flush right

You may find that flush right works better in your design.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris hendrerit euismod augue vitae placerat. Duis at ex metus. Nam quis volutpat odio, non aliquet nunc. Quisque eleifend, orci nec tincidunt dignissim, nisl massa maximus eros, eu convallis lacus justo egestas quam. Vestibulum in ultrices tellus, eu molestie velit. Integer id eros ac sapien fermentum vehicula. Nullam feugiat consectetur dapibus. Etiam risus velit, viverra posuere vehicula at, efficitur in sem. Nulla nisl arcu, mollis sed erat a, vehicula iaculis metus. Donec ac arcu a quam egestas ullamcorper.

Centered

Center aligned copy is more common in recent years due to the rise of responsive sites.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris hendrerit euismod augue vitae placerat. Duis at ex metus. Nam quis volutpat odio, non aliquet nunc. Quisque eleifend, orci nec tincidunt dignissim, nisl massa maximus eros, eu convallis lacus justo egestas quam. Vestibulum in ultrices tellus, eu molestie velit. Integer id eros ac sapien fermentum vehicula. Nullam feugiat consectetur dapibus. Etiam risus velit, viverra posuere vehicula at, efficitur in sem. Nulla nisl arcu, mollis sed erat a, vehicula iaculis metus. Donec ac arcu a quam egestas ullamcorper.

Justified

This guidebook has justified type. It looks nice, but avoid developing too many gaps in your paragraphs called "["Rivers"](#)".

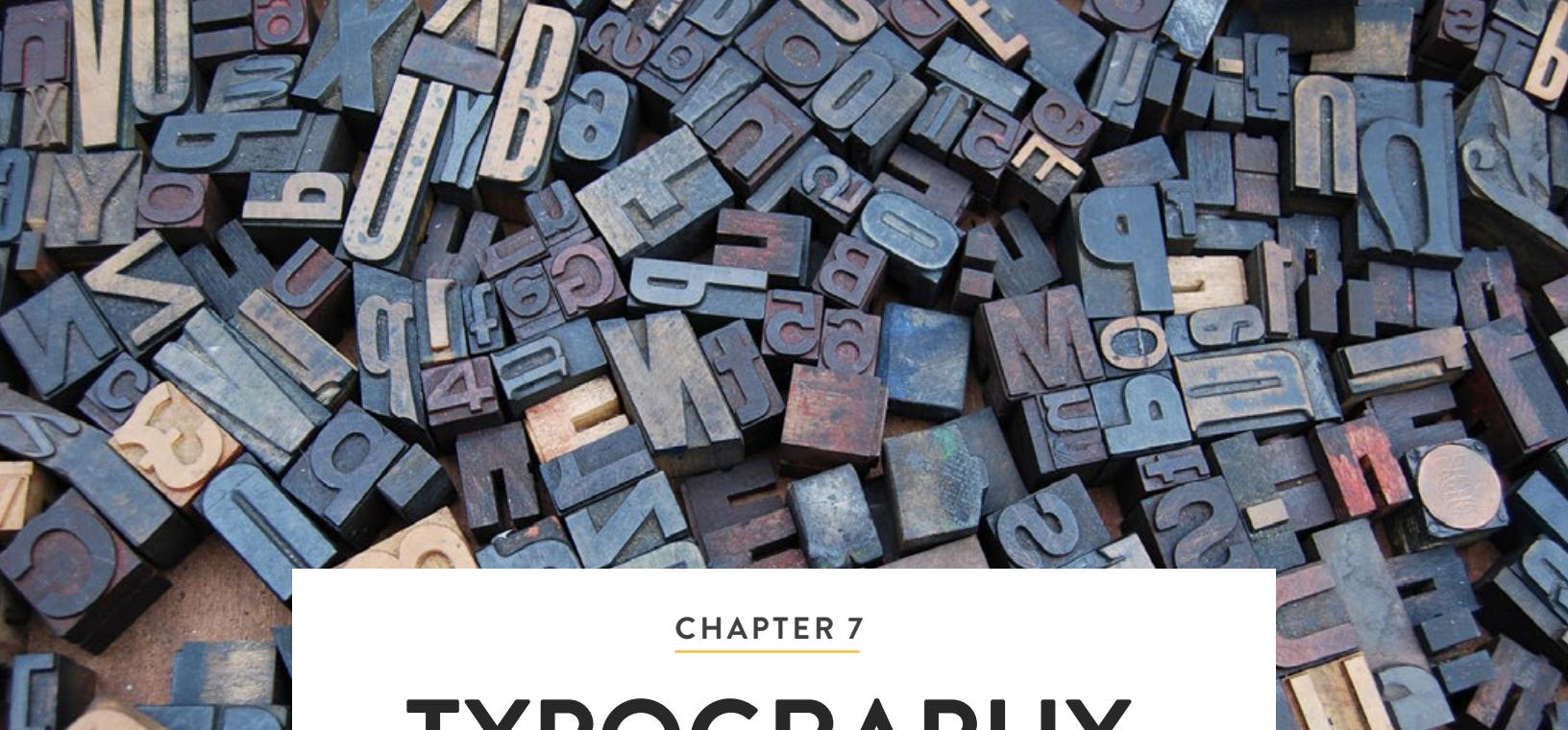
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris hendrerit euismod augue vitae placerat. Duis at ex metus. Nam quis volutpat odio, non aliquet nunc. Quisque eleifend, orci nec tincidunt dignissim, nisl massa maximus eros, eu convallis lacus justo egestas quam. Vestibulum in ultrices tellus, eu molestie velit. Integer id eros ac sapien fermentum vehicula. Nullam feugiat consectetur dapibus. Etiam risus velit, viverra posuere vehicula at, efficitur in sem. Nulla nisl arcu, mollis sed erat a, vehicula iaculis metus. Donec ac arcu a quam egestas ullamcorper.

Chapter Summary

Images and copy look better when they're aligned. Your eye can move faster down the page.

Quick hacks

As you go around the Design by Number items, this one is easy to check for. Either your elements are aligned in the same way or they're not.



CHAPTER 7

TYPOGRAPHY

“Times New Roman is not a font choice so much as the absence of a font choice, like the blackness of deep space is not a color.”

– Matthew Butterick



Introduction

Good typography is tricky for beginners to pin down. A great typeface isn't as easily recognizable as a finely crafted suit or a beautiful photo.

You need to be exposed to good and bad type repeatedly before you start to appreciate what looks good. These are the basic things about typography you should know when designing for the web.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Using fonts on the web*
- *Usage tips*
- *Leading*
- *Tracking*
- *Kerning*

Using fonts on the web

For many years, web designers could only use [web safe](#) fonts. Web safe fonts are those that are common on popular operating systems, like Windows and OS X.

Then around 2010, [Typekit](#) was launched and it opened up a whole new world of fonts. With Typekit, font libraries are stored on their server, and if you want to use one, you just paste some javascript on your site to make it work. As a bonus, if you have Photoshop CS,

you can import the Typekit fonts into your document.

Type foundries liked this solution because it allowed font usage to be tracked and monitored.

Google fonts

If you don't want to use a subscription service, you can host fonts on your own server. **Most free fonts are not good**, but you can find some if you search carefully. [Here](#) are the 30 best designed Google fonts as determined by TypeWolf. TypeWolf is a great resource to use for comparing and selecting fonts.

Personally, I use Typekit 90% of the time. If I want a particular font that I can't find there, I'll use the font's own hosting package. For example, we used Hoefler for a site once and that font is only licensed by [Typography.com](#). They have their own font hosting system that works much like TypeKit.

Usage tips

As a general rule of thumb, serif fonts are often used for body copy, and sans-serif fonts are used for headlines. That's because serif copy is easier to read when there's a lot of it. And sans-serif fonts are easier to read quickly, so it makes sense to use it for headlines.

Leading

(Pronounced led-d-ing)

Leading is the space between the baseline of each line of text. The word itself is a reference to how they used to separate lines of type - they would literally insert strips of lead. On the web, leading is referred to as line-height.

Tracking

Tracking is the space between multiple letters. On the web, it's called letter spacing.

Kerning

While tracking is the space between a group of letters, kerning is the distance in between individual letters. For the longest time, it wasn't possible to kern on the web. Now you can with tools like kerningjs.com, although it's rarely done.

Kerning is a critical concept in print and other mediums, so why is it ignored on the web?

I think this is mainly due to established ways of working. When working with CSS, the expectation is to define your selector and then have your changes take effect sitewide. But changing a single headline with kerning.js would run contrary to that idea. I think developers have just gotten comfortable telling designers, "*kerning isn't possible on the web,*" and I can't say I blame them.

For our purposes, I think it's good to know the concept of kerning, even though you probably won't use it on the web.

On the following pages, you'll see examples of both good and bad leading and tracking.

Leading Too Tight

If your leading/line-height (the space above and below your copy) is too tight, your eyes will have a hard time separating one line from another. When you finish a line of text and

go to the next one, it's difficult to tell which line you just read. The leading below is much too tight:



The image shows a Mac OS X window with a title bar and a close/minimize/fullscreen button. Inside the window, there are two columns of text. The left column contains the following text:

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Cras pretium ex a urna mattis porttitor. Sed dapibus, libero vel finibus vestibulum, lectus ex placerat felis, in iaculis metus sem vitae ipsum. Mauris varius aliquet augue in blandit. Vivamus sed hendrerit dolor. Proin rhoncus mauris velit, nec aliquet nibh ultricies quis. Vestibulum maximus leo quis nisl sollicitudin, vehicula pulvinar ex tincidunt. Duis vestibulum tellus tortor, sit amet vehicula sapien pellentesque id.

The right column contains the following text:

Mauris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut elementum metus. Nunc imperdiet magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus. Nam tortor est, vulputate eu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue.

Below these columns, there are two more paragraphs of text:

Nam congue, massa a semper vehicula, urna diam aliquam justo, ac tempus purus arcu in sem. Mauris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut elementum metus. Nunc imperdiet magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus. Nam tortor est, vulputate eu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue.

Nunc dapibus, arcu ac molestie rhoncus, leo purus sagittis ante, eu molestie risus nunc ut felis. Aliquam iaculis cursus nulla sed congue. Phasellus

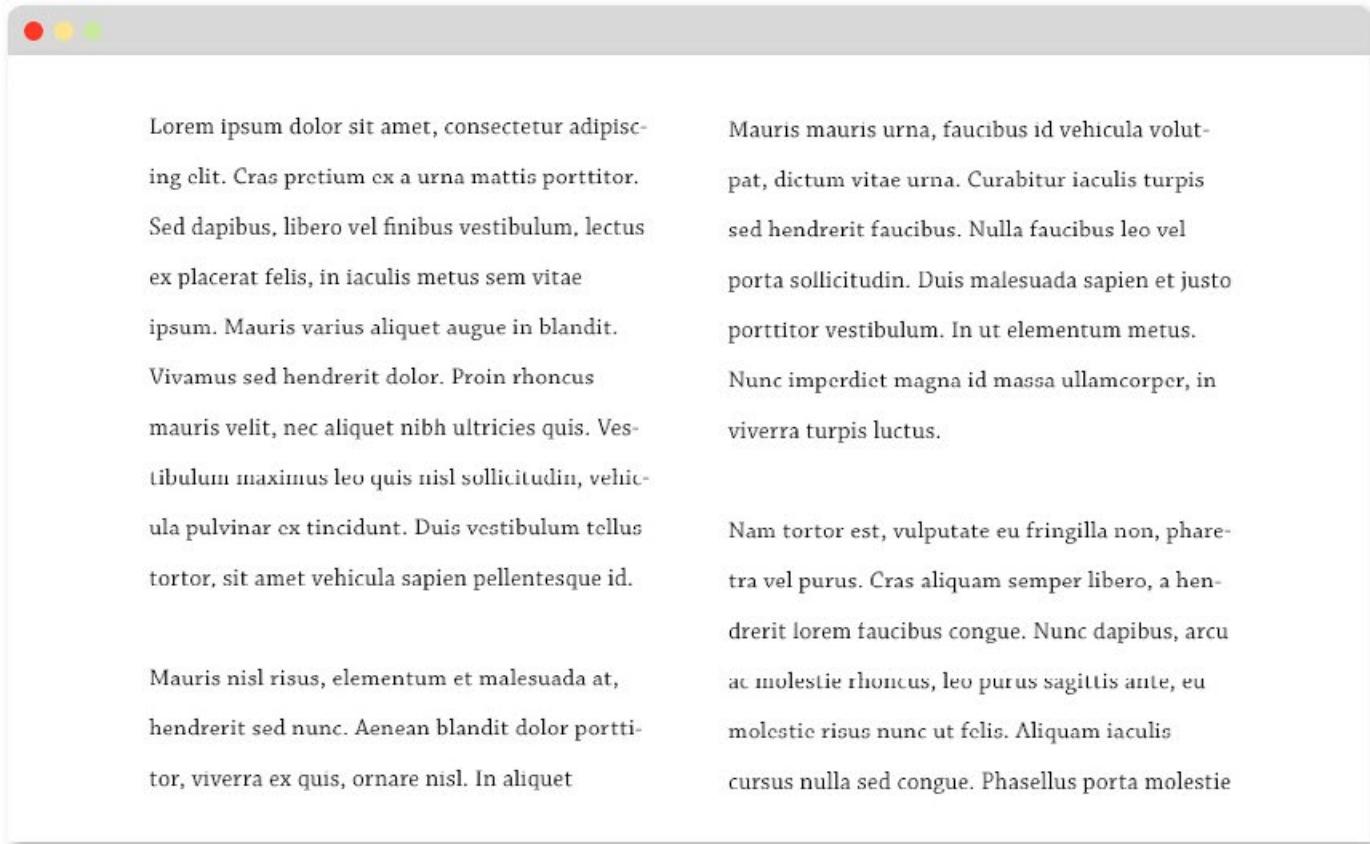
The right side of the image shows the continuation of the text from the second column, demonstrating how the tight leading makes it difficult to read the next line.

Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, 14pt leading

Loose Leading

Leading that is too loose makes the eye have to jump too far from line to line. While loose leading can be pleasant to look at, it must also be readable. Loose leading often make more sense on a fashion or artsy site than

say a news site. The difference is that the artsy site can be more expressive, but the news site needs to be focused on conveying information. This leading is too loose:

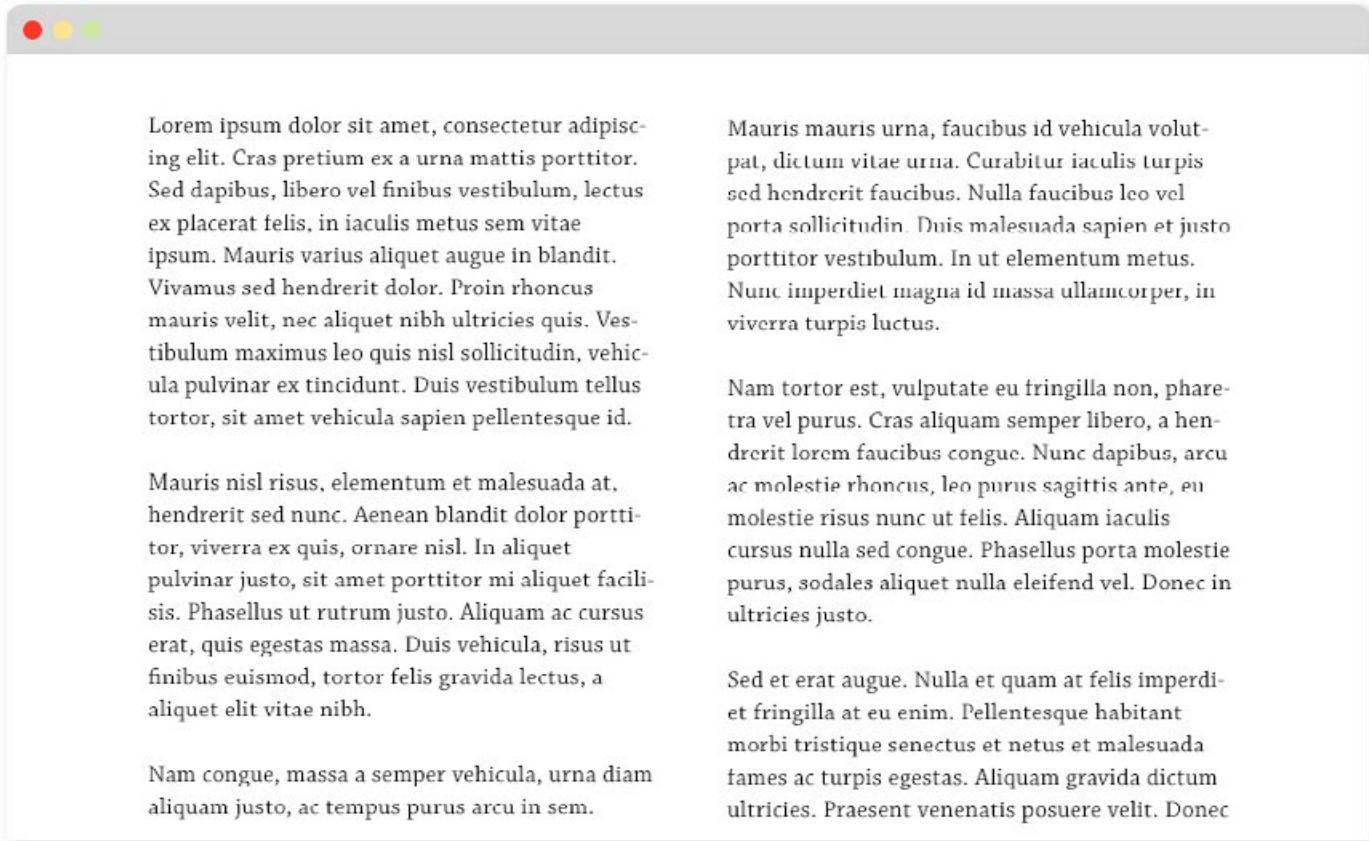


Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, 34pt leading

Proper Leading

The sweet spot is somewhere in the middle. Your leading should be at or a little above the size of your type. So if your font is 16pt, then your leading should probably be somewhere between 16pt and 22pt. Try a few values and see what looks good.

The paragraph below is 16pt, and the leading is 22pt. I prefer my leading a little more open as I feel it helps the design breathe. But if you think 18pt leading looks good with the 16pt font you're using, go for it.



The screenshot shows a Mac OS X window with a light gray background. At the top left are three small colored circles (red, yellow, green). The window contains two columns of text. The left column has a heading "Proper Leading" and two paragraphs of placeholder text. The right column has a heading "Mauris mauris urna" and two paragraphs of placeholder text. The text is in a serif font, likely Chaparral Pro, and the leading is clearly visible as the space between the top of one line and the top of the next.

Proper Leading

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Cras pretium ex a urna mattis porttitor. Sed dapibus, libero vel finibus vestibulum, lectus ex placerat felis, in iaculis metus sem vitae ipsum. Mauris varius aliquet augue in blandit. Vivamus sed hendrerit dolor. Proin rhoncus mauris velit, nec aliquet nibh ultricies quis. Vestibulum maximus leo quis nisl sollicitudin, vehicula pulvinar ex tincidunt. Duis vestibulum tellus tortor, sit amet vehicula sapien pellentesque id.

Mauris nisl risus, elementum et malesuada at, hendrerit sed nunc. Aenean blandit dolor porttitor, viverra ex quis, ornare nisl. In aliquet pulvinar justo, sit amet porttitor mi aliquet facilisis. Phasellus ut rutrum justo. Aliquam ac cursus erat, quis egestas massa. Duis vehicula, risus ut finibus euismod, tortor felis gravida lectus, a aliquet elit vitae nibh.

Nam congue, massa a semper vehicula, urna diam aliquam justo, ac tempus purus arcu in sem.

Mauris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut elementum metus. Nunc imperdiet magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus.

Nam tortor est, vulputate eu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue. Nunc dapibus, arcu ac molestie rhoncus, leo purus sagittis ante, eu molestie risus nunc ut felis. Aliquam iaculis cursus nulla sed congue. Phasellus porta molestie purus, sodales aliquet nulla eleifend vel. Donec in ultricies justo.

Sed et erat augue. Nulla et quam at felis imperdi et fringilla at eu enim. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Aliquam gravida dictum ultricies. Praesent venenatis posuere velit. Donec

Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, 22pt leading

Tracking Too Tight

When there's not enough space between letters (letter-spacing), it can be difficult to read. And in some instances, it may even cause words to form that you didn't intend!

When there's not enough space between letters (letter-spacing), it can be difficult to read. And in some instances, it may even cause words to form that you didn't intend!

Maoris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut elementum metus. Nunc imperdier magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus.

Nam tortor est, vulputate eu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue. Nunc dapibus, arcu ac molestie rhoncus, leo purus sagittis ante, eu molestie risus nunc ut felis. Aliquam iaculis cursus nulla sed congue. Phasellus porta molestie purus, sodales aliquet nulla eleifend vel. Donec in ultricies justo.

Sed et erat augue. Nulla et quam at felis imperdier fringilla at eu enim. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Aliquam gravida dictum ultricies. Praesent venenatis posuere velit. Donec aliquet at erat at volutpat. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Cras pretium ex a urna mattis porttitor. Sed dapibus, libero vel finibus vestibulum,

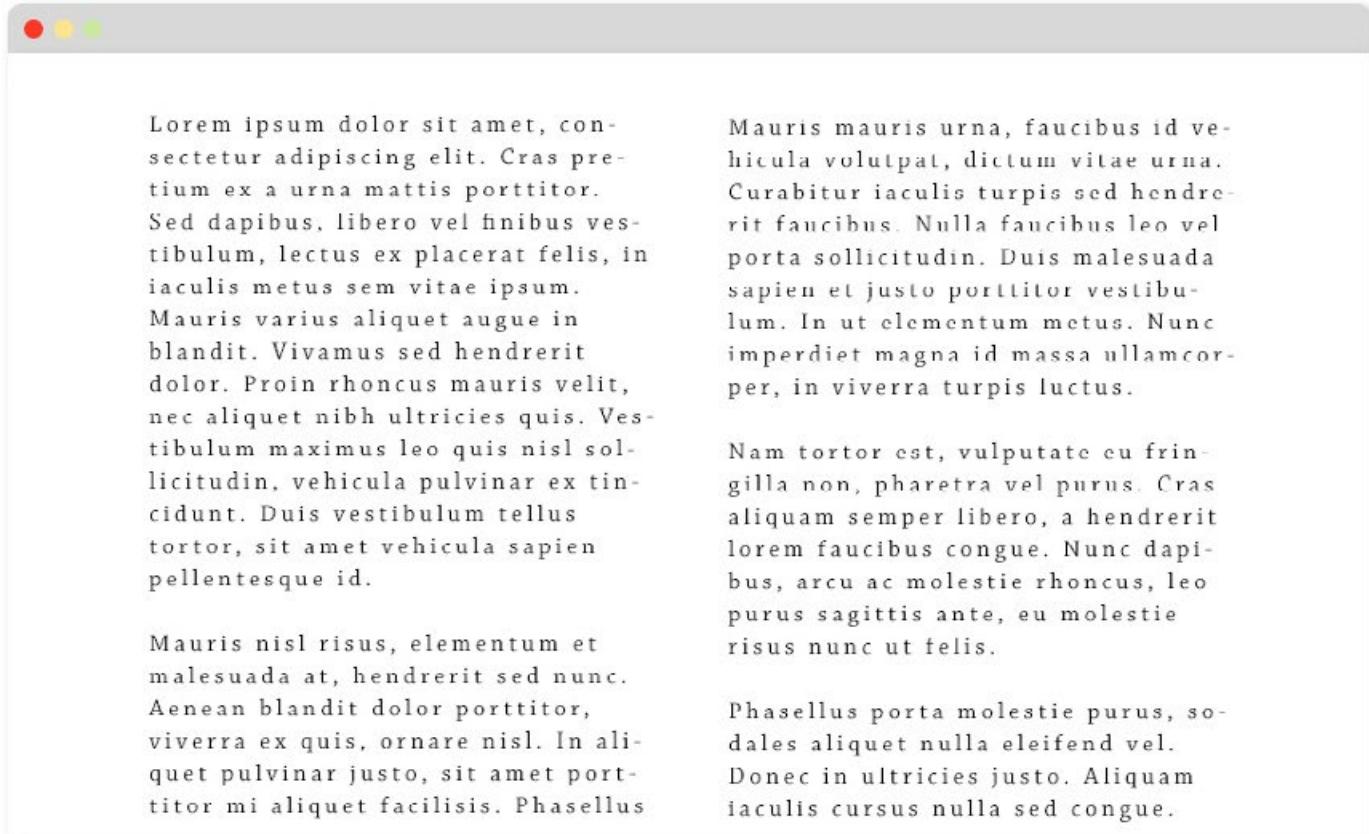
Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, -50 tracking



I'd rather not, thank you.

Tracking Too Loose

When there's too much space between letters, it makes words difficult to read.



When there's too much space between letters, it makes words difficult to read.

Ma

lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Cras pretium ex a urna mattis porttitor. Sed dapibus, libero vel finibus vestibulum, lectus ex placerat felis, in iaculis metus sem vitae ipsum. Mauris varius aliquet augue in blandit. Vivamus sed hendrerit dolor. Proin rhoncus mauris velit, nec aliquet nibh ultricies quis. Vestibulum maximus leo quis nisl sollicitudin, vehicula pulvinar ex tincidunt. Duis vestibulum tellus tortor, sit amet vehicula sapien pellentesque id.

Mauris nisl risus, elementum et malesuada at, hendrerit sed nunc. Aenean blandit dolor porttitor, viverra ex quis, ornare nisl. In aliquet pulvinar justo, sit amet porttitor mi aliquet facilisis. Phasellus

Mauris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut clementum metus. Nunc imperdiet magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus.

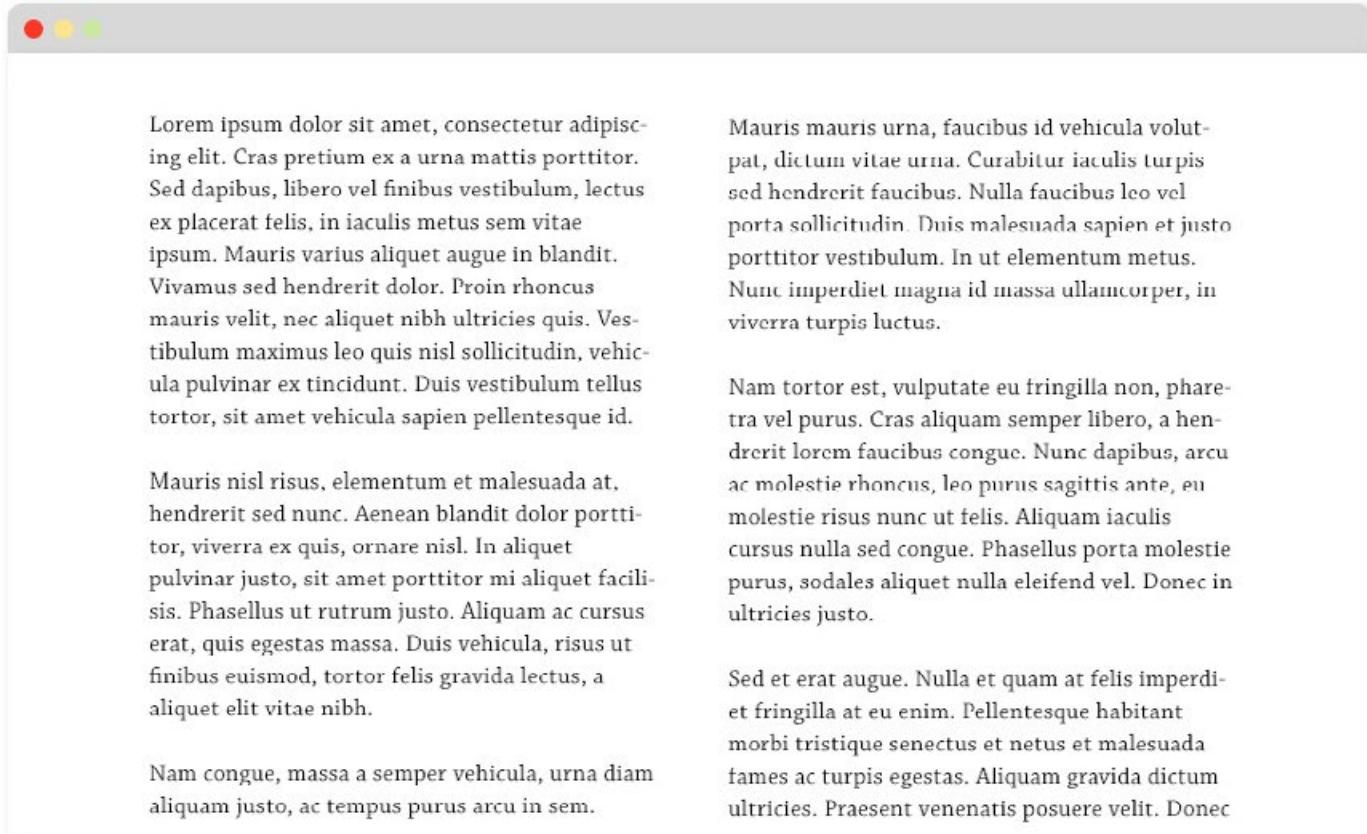
Nam tortor est, vulputate cu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue. Nunc dapibus, arcu ac molestie rhoncus, leo purus sagittis ante, eu molestie risus nunc ut felis.

Phasellus porta molestie purus, sodales aliquet nulla eleifend vel. Donec in ultricies justo. Aliquam iaculis cursus nulla sed congue.

Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, 200 tracking

Proper Tracking

This has a nice amount of space between the letters. It's not too cramped and not too loose.



The screenshot shows a Mac OS X window with a title bar and three colored window control buttons (red, yellow, green). Inside the window, there are four columns of text. The first column contains a single paragraph of text. The second, third, and fourth columns each contain two paragraphs of text, illustrating how text looks with proper letter spacing (tracking).

Column 1:

Column 2:

Column 3:

Column 4:

Mauris mauris urna, faucibus id vehicula volutpat, dictum vitae urna. Curabitur iaculis turpis sed hendrerit faucibus. Nulla faucibus leo vel porta sollicitudin. Duis malesuada sapien et justo porttitor vestibulum. In ut elementum metus. Nunc imperdiet magna id massa ullamcorper, in viverra turpis luctus.

Nam tortor est, vulputate eu fringilla non, pharetra vel purus. Cras aliquam semper libero, a hendrerit lorem faucibus congue. Nunc dapibus, arcu ac molestie rhoncus, leo purus sagittis ante, eu molestie risus nunc ut felis. Aliquam iaculis cursus nulla sed congue. Phasellus porta molestie purus, sodales aliquet nulla eleifend vel. Donec in ultricies justo.

Sed et erat augue. Nulla et quam at felis imperdiet fringilla at eu enim. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Aliquam gravida dictum ultricies. Praesent venenatis posuere velit. Donec

Chaparral Pro, 16pt font, 25pt tracking

Typography Summary

If you follow the examples on the preceding pages, you'll be 80% there. The rest is finding a font that fits the concept you're going for. And that just comes with practice and getting feedback.

Quick hacks

Don't use free fonts unless they've been vetted by a good designer. Unlike free open source projects, free fonts are often amateurish.

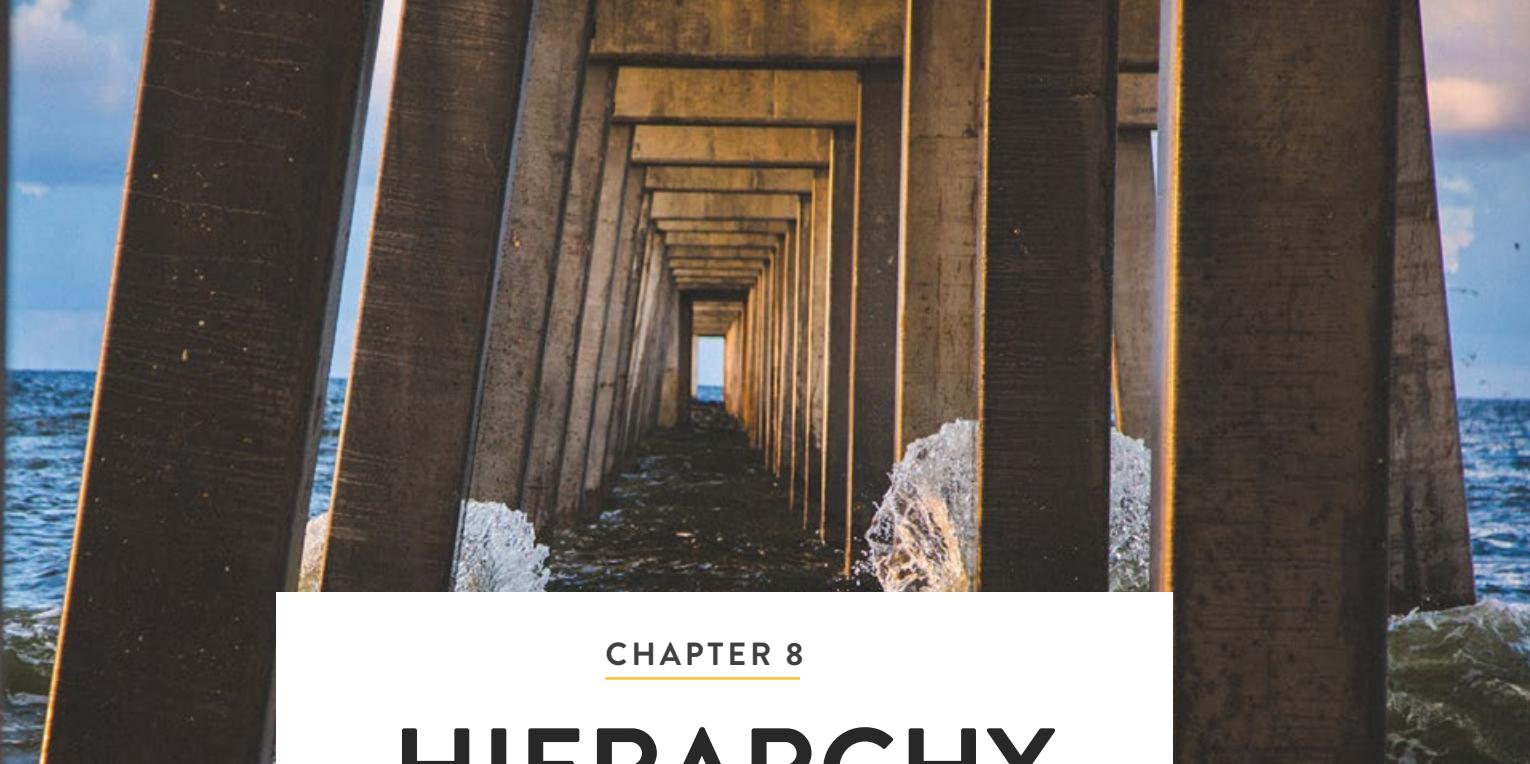
Here are some great modern and classic serif fonts:

- *Source Serif* (2014)
- *FF Tundra* (2011)
- *Sentinel* (2009)
- *Miller* (1997)
- *Mrs. Eaves* (1996)
- *Palatino* (1948)
- *Bodoni* (1798)
- *Baskerville* (1757)
- *Caslon* (1722)
- *Garamond* (1530)

And here are some great modern and classic sans-serif fonts:

- *Brandon Grotesque* (2010)
- *Proxima Nova* (2005)

- *FF Din* (1995)
- *Avenir* (1988)
- *Meta* (1985)
- *Univers* (1954)
- *Trade Gothic* (1948)
- *Futura* (1927)
- *Franklin Gothic* (1902)
- *Akzidenz Grotesk* (1896)



CHAPTER 8

HIERARCHY

“Good design is a lot like clear thinking made visual.”

– Edward Tufte



Introduction

Every website will have some elements that are more important than others.

Often the first element a user sees is large, and the less important parts are smaller. Some beginners have a tendency to make everything big and important. They'll use lots of colors, big images, and large typography. But that doesn't work. As the saying goes, "*If everything is important, then nothing is.*"

As you work through the examples, you may notice that hierarchy and composition are closely related. A good composition often has nice hierarchy.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Good examples of hierarchy*

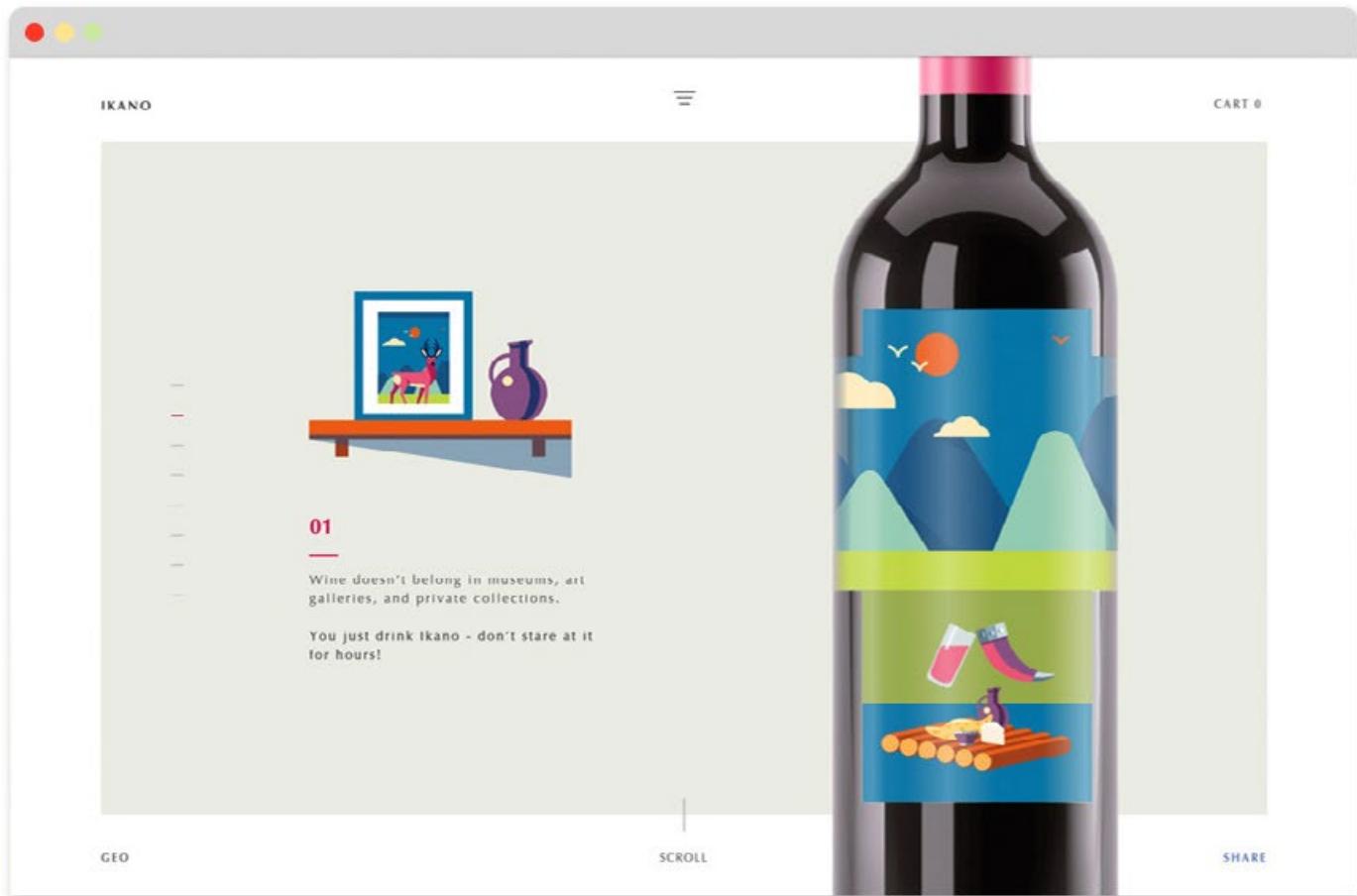
Ikano Wine

<http://ikano.ge>

Comedians use contrast in their jokes for greater impact. Contrast can be used in design in a similar way. In the example below, the difference in scale between the large bottle

and small shelf is striking and draws you in. On this page, hierarchy is used to create visual interest.

[Enlarge](#)



Compliments Furniture

<http://compliments.dk>

A person's eye moves from top to bottom when they look at a web page. So if your site has a lot of content, you'll want to put the most important stuff at the top. This

furniture store recently released their new collection. It's important to them, so they feature it at the top.

Enlarge

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Compliments Furniture website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'PRODUCTS', 'FIND STORE', the 'compliments' logo (with the tagline 'MAKING HOME HOME'), 'ABOUT', and 'MENU'. Below the navigation is a large banner featuring a grey sofa with several pillows and a small potted plant on a wooden stand. The text 'NEW COLLECTION' is prominently displayed in the center of the banner, with a smaller subtext 'Check out our Autumn/Winter Collection 2015'. A 'SEE CATALOGUE' button is located below the main image. The main headline 'MAKING HOME HOME' is centered below the banner. Three smaller sections are shown below: 'CUSHION' (with a black armchair and a pink cushion), 'BED LINEN' (with a blue duvet cover and a green plant), and 'YOU & ME' (with a blue and white duvet cover).

Hoover-Mason Trestle

<http://hoovermason.com/>

This site documents the historic Hoover-Mason trestle in Pennsylvania. The first black and white module is the largest because it links to the main interactive experience on

the site. The smaller modules on the right are first-hand accounts from workers and a page that has directions to the trestle. Those sections aren't as important, so they're less prominent.

 [Enlarge](#)



Weber Grills

http://bbqcultures.com/en_GB/intro

This is a microsite for Weber Grills. The primary experience is a journey around the world which explores how different cultures barbecue. It makes sense that the “continue

the journey” module is large and at the top - it's what's most important.

 Enlarge



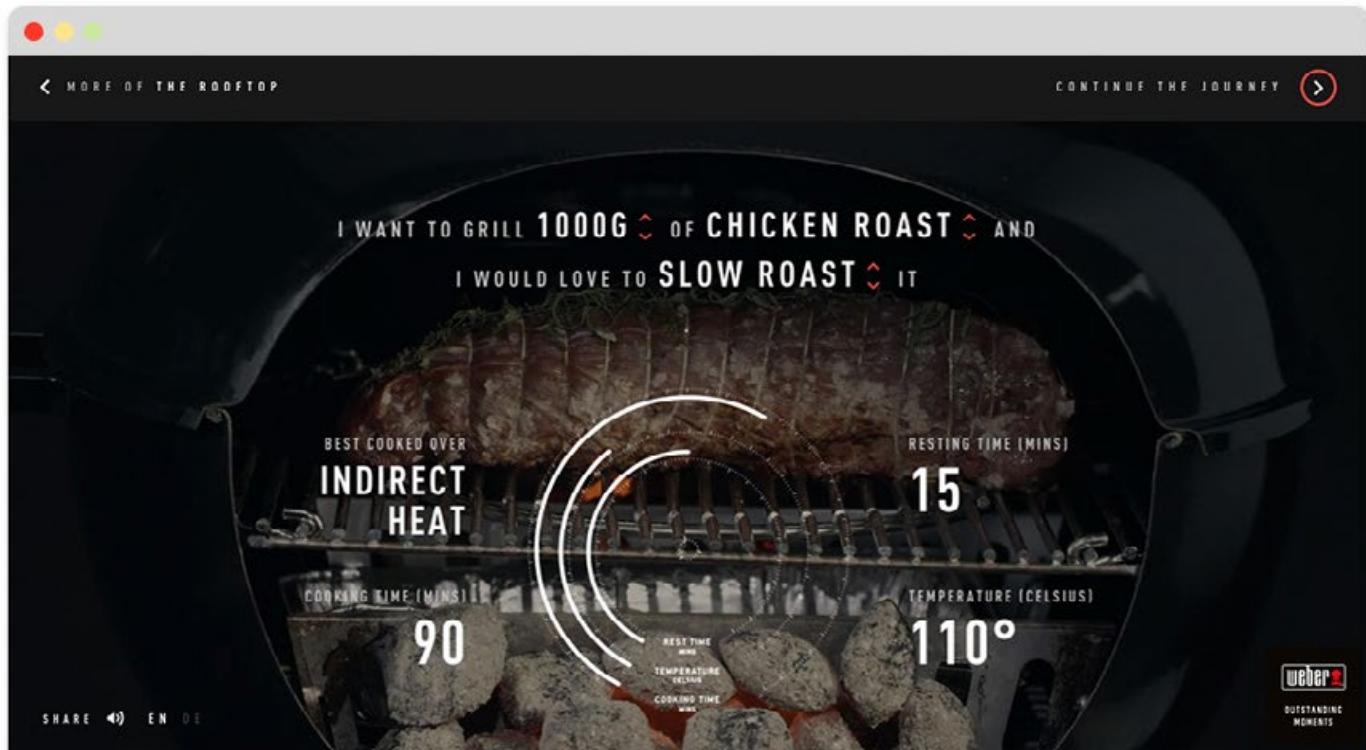
Weber Grills

http://www.bbqcultures.com/en_GB/intro

Below is an interactive experience within the Weber Grills site. The grill options here have a nice hierarchy. Notice the primary options at the top: **weight**, **type of meat**, and **type of cooking**. If you think about the barbecuing process, those three

things are most important. Only later in the process do you consider details like temperature and cook time. Those settings are further down the page, as you would expect.

 [Enlarge](#)



Oribe

<http://www.oribe.com>

Hierarchy in typography is an important thing to master. The headline below (Colorful Secret) is large, and the subheadline below it is small. This allows the reader to see the headline and if they're interested, they can read more. But if not, they haven't invested too much time. If the headline and the

subheadline were the same size, it would flood the user with too much information. That's a lot of what design is about - giving the user just the right amount of information at the right time. Also, the model is facing the headline which further emphasizes it.

 [Enlarge](#)



SHOP BACKSTAGE CARRY US ABOUT

SALON LOCATOR SIGN IN BAG (0) 

ORIBE

Colorful Secret

*Introducing Airbrush Root Touch-Up Spray Platinum
For those with something to hide*

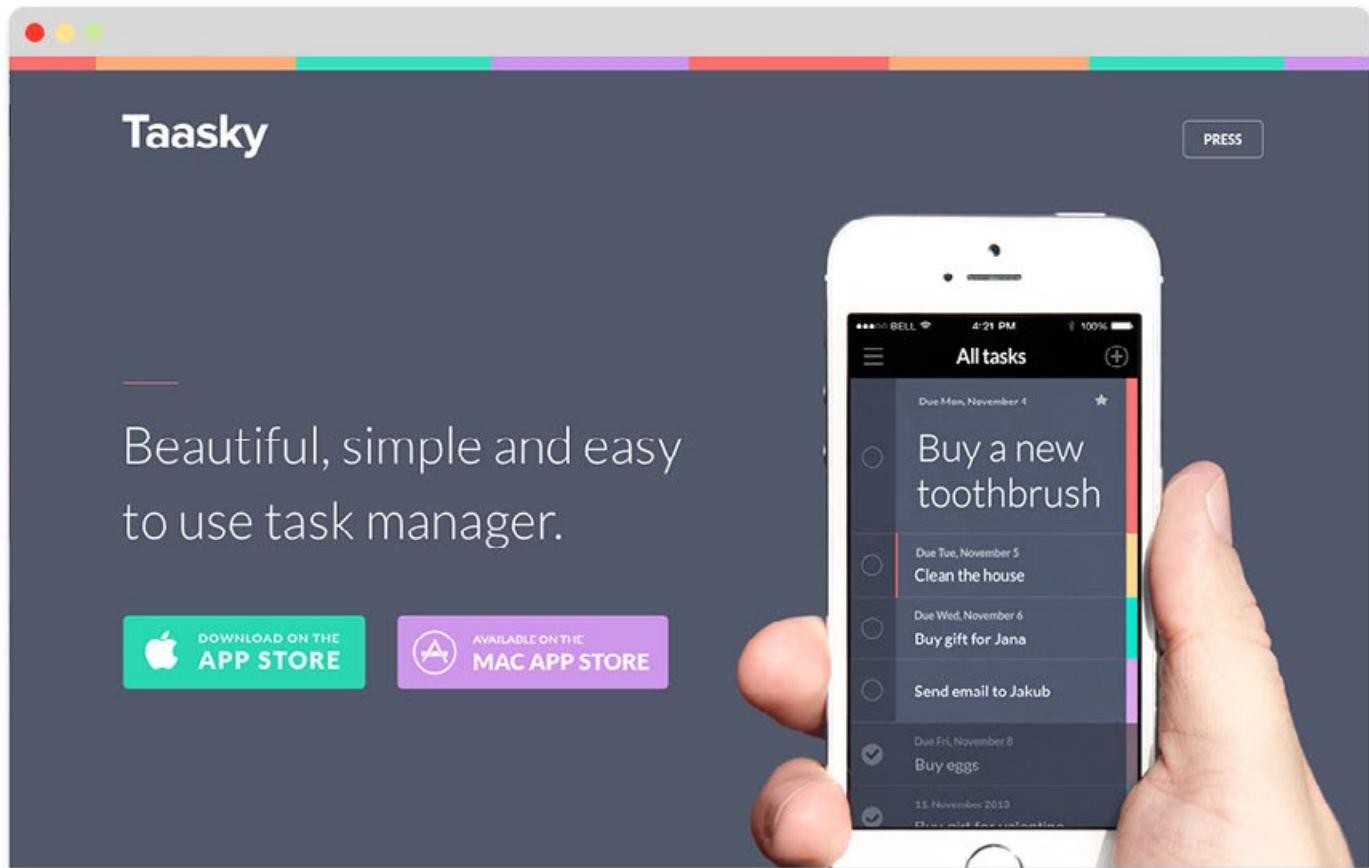
Hair styled with:
[Bright Blonde Shampoo and Conditioner](#), [Grande Rose Hair Plumping Mousse](#)
& [Dry Texturizing Spray](#)

Taasky

<http://www.taasky.com>

Even your website's colors can have a hierarchy. Here the bright colors serve to highlight things like buttons, whereas the warm gray is always used in the background.

 [Enlarge](#)



Hierarchy Summary

Use hierarchy to let your user know what is important. The largest element on the page is often the most important.

Quick hacks

Try to find a simple large image that you like and then fill in the rest with supporting images.



CHAPTER 9

COLOR

“Color does not add a pleasant quality to design – it reinforces it.”

– Pierre Bonnard



Introduction

Color is an underrated design tool. When used correctly, it can make a website sing. When I was a beginner designer, I often used too many colors in my designs. This section will help you avoid that mistake. It will also help you approach your color choices methodically. You'll have tangible reasons for why you picked that dark purple or that candy apple green. Most importantly, all your colors will work with your website's concept, brand, and style to tell a cohesive story.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *What influences your color choices*
- *B&W + One Color*
- *Analogous*
- *Complementary*
- *Split Complementary*
- *Triad*

What influences your color choices

When thinking about colors, you should keep in mind the following three things:

Concept (Chapter Two):

If your concept is water-related, using lots of red probably won't work well. Water & the

color red live in different worlds. Your colors should support your concept. Or at the very least, not conflict.

Brand (Chapter Three):

Say you're doing a site for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. That's a very serious subject. The tone of any war memorial is respectful and serious. So your color choices should reflect that. Bright happy colors would feel out of place, in the same way that someone selling balloons near the memorial would seem tacky.

Also, respect the client's brand guidelines. If you're doing a microsite for IKEA, it's likely you'll have to use their signature blue and yellow.

There are some instances when the site experience is so far removed from the brand that you can use other colors. But before doing this, make sure you clear it with your creative director or the client.

Style (Chapter Four):

Here's where your personal tastes can have a voice. What style(s) are you considering from the style section? Your color choices should support that style. Design trends can be considered too.

I would recommend choosing a palette rooted in color theory. This will help your design have more structure and impact. As you explore the color options on the following pages, imagine what colors might work well with the design style you're considering.

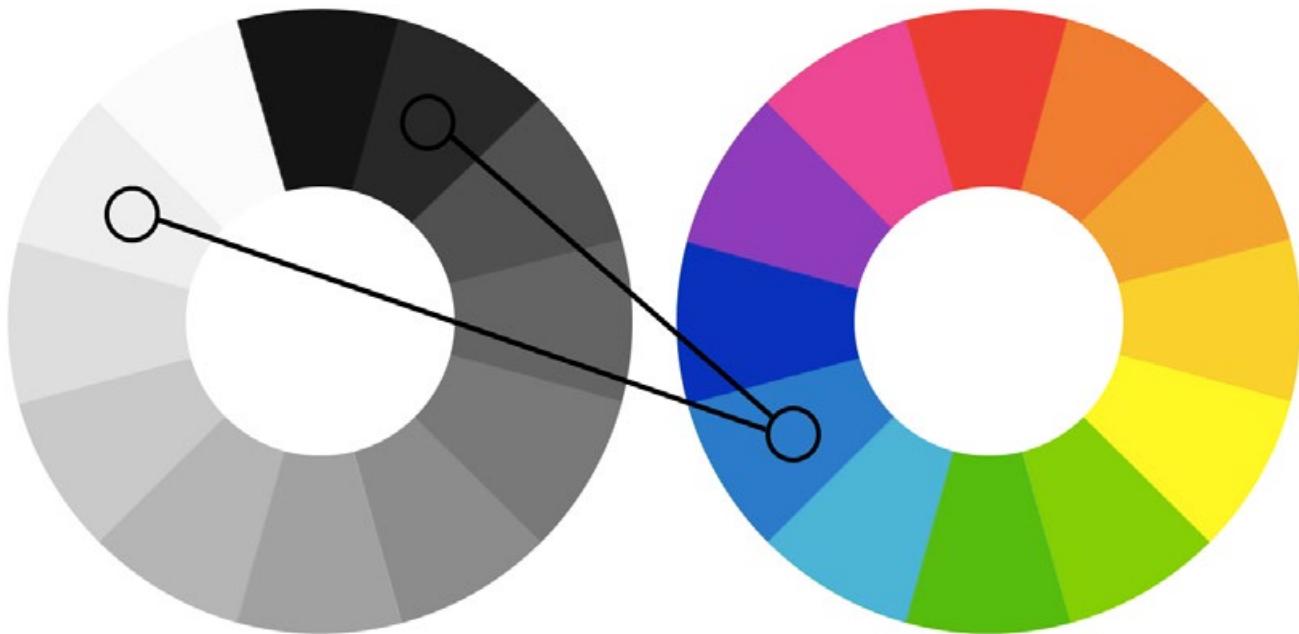
COLOR STYLE ONE

B & W Plus One Color

This first style isn't part of color theory like the rest of the chapter, but it is a simple and effective approach that can work well.

POSSIBLE USES:

- *To make dissimilar images cohesive*
- *To bring attention to conceptually important colors*

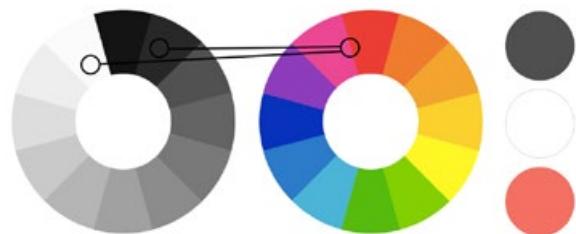


Necon

<http://www.necon.pl/en/>

This is a portfolio site for an ad agency. Necon has executed dozens of projects for clients with various photography and art direction styles in them. This is problematic because showing multiple projects in full color on their site could make it feel disjointed. They solved this by using a coral color as an overlay on top of all the images. It makes the page cohesive. When every image has coral in it, they have a common denominator that anchors them. You can still hover over an image to reveal

a full-color screenshot of a project or click through to view the individual project page. I think the color coral was a stylistic choice rather than a conceptual one, although it's hard to say without knowing the background of the project.



[Enlarge](#)

A screenshot of the Necon website. The header features a logo with a stylized 'N' inside a laurel wreath and the word 'NECON'. Navigation links include 'Polski', 'Client Panel', 'Agency', 'Offer', 'Work', and 'Contact'. The main headline reads: 'Necon is a multidisciplinary creative agency. We do creation in the field of branding, print and new media. This is our site.' Below this, a section titled 'OUR LATEST PROJECTS' is shown with five project cards: 'PRIORI MANUFAKTURA' (Branding, Web), 'LINGUA VIVA' (Branding, Print, Web), 'EUROPEJSKIE CENTRUM PODATKOWE' (Branding, Print, Web), 'BANANAZ CLUB' (with a small image of a banana), and 'NAPIDEA' (with a small image of a textured surface).

PRIORI MANUFAKTURA

— PRIORI

Branding Web

BANANAZ CLUB

NAPIDEA

LINGUA VIVA

OUR LATEST PROJECTS

EUROPEJSKIE CENTRUM PODATKOWE

TERRA

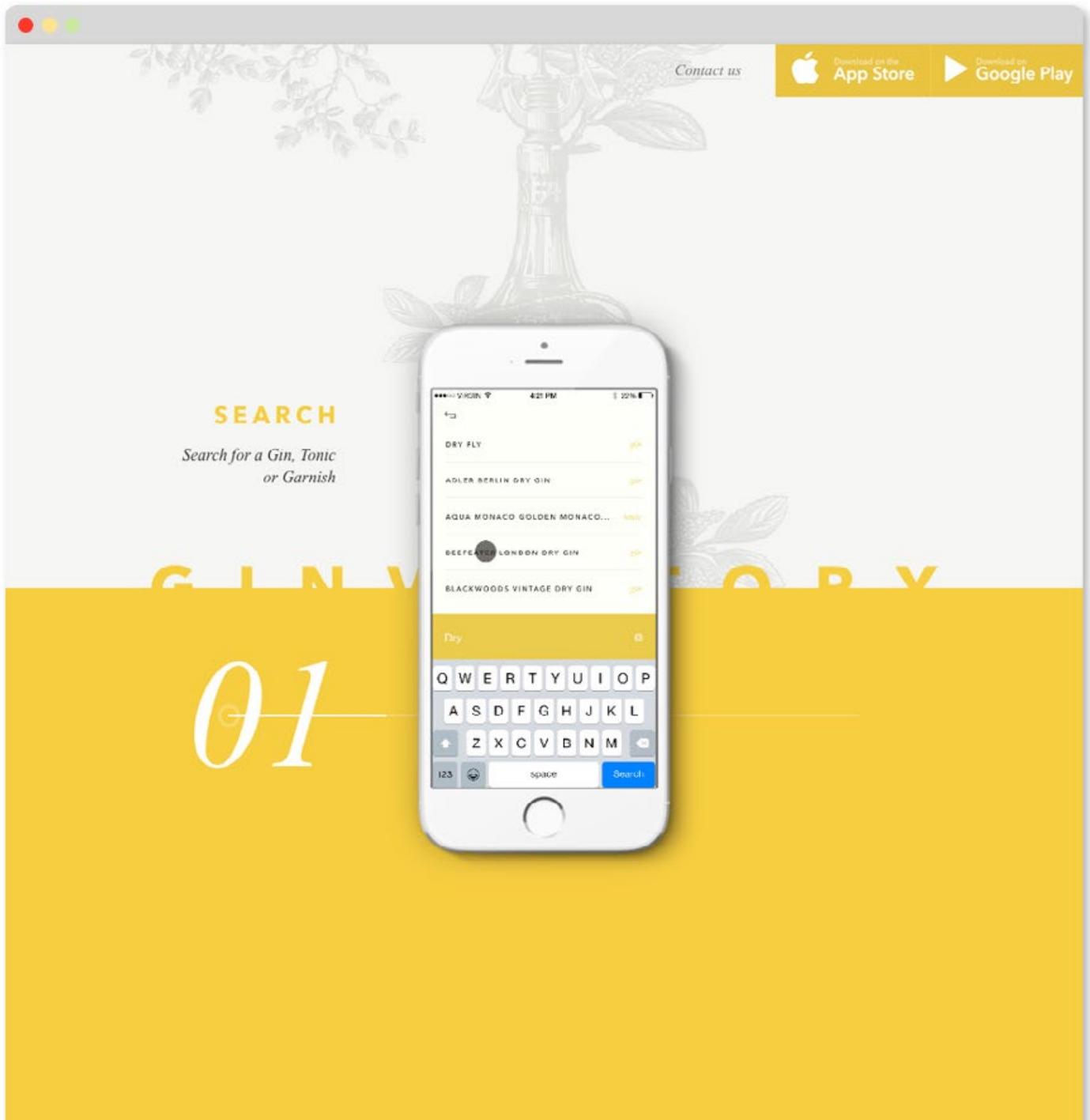
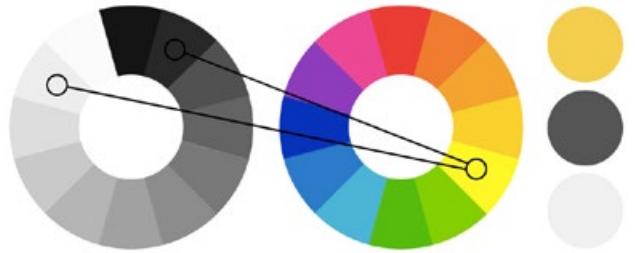
Black and White + One Highlight Color

Givventory

<http://www.givventory.co>

This is a promotional page for a gin recipe app. The yellow color comes from the concept. Gin is a pale straw color, so it's a nod to that.

 [Enlarge](#)

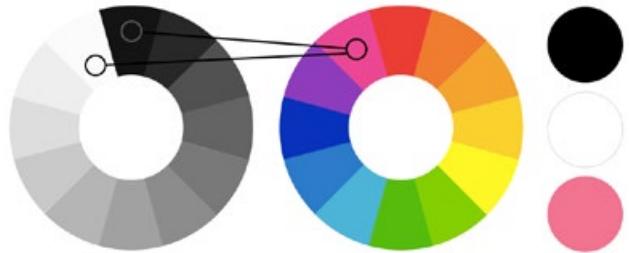


Black and White + One Highlight Color

Beoplay/Rapha Headphones

<http://bit.ly/1QwCemQ>

This is a cross-promotional product page that Beoplay made for their 'Rapha'-style headphones. Rapha is a company that makes cycling clothing and accessories. Pink is their signature color, so Beoplay wanted to highlight it, rather than use their own colors and photography style.



[Enlarge](#)

PLAY

Speakers Headphones All Products The Journal Shop

H6 RAPHA EDITION EXPERIENCE TECH SPEC BUY

USD 429 BUY

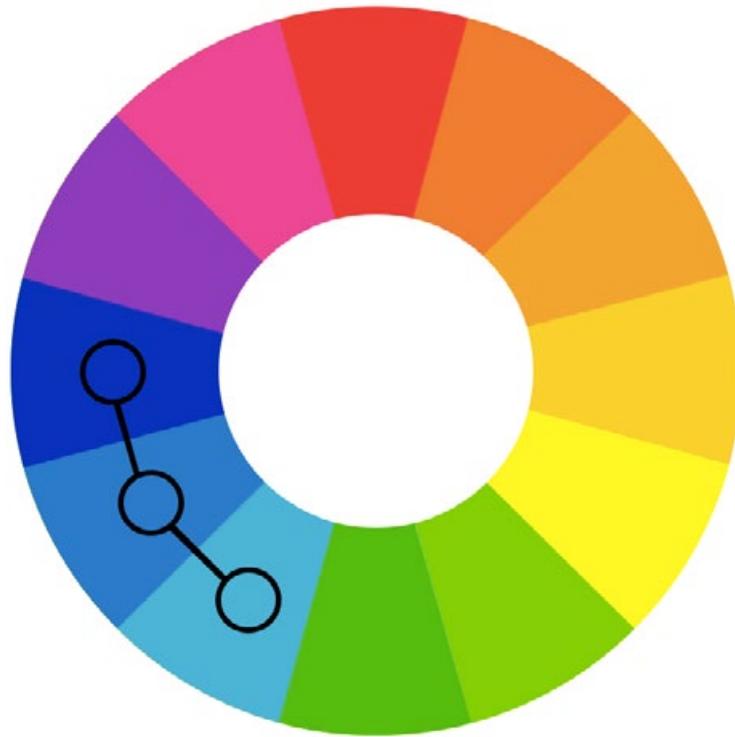
COLOR STYLE TWO

Analogous

Analogous colors are near each other on the color wheel. This style works best when three or four colors are used. Often there will be one dominant color which the other colors defer to.

POSSIBLE USES:

- *To convey a harmonious mood*
- *When the content of the site is friendly*



Mambo Mambo

<http://mambomambo.ca>

This is a portfolio site for a creative agency in Québec, Canada. I think the tropical aesthetic here is done ironically because Québec is awfully cold! The green and yellow creates a happy and friendly feeling.

 [Enlarge](#)



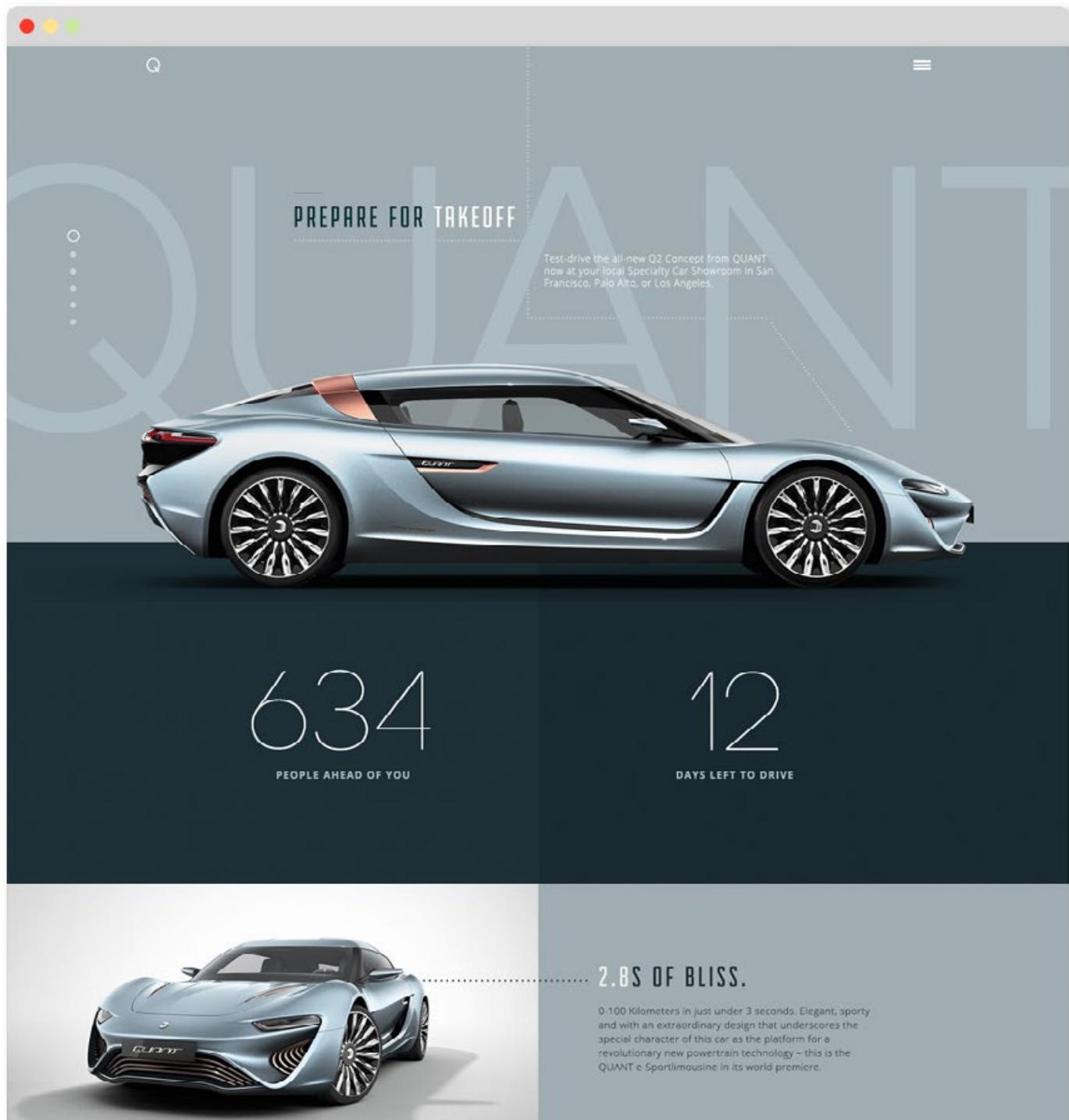
analogous

Concept Car Site

<http://bit.ly/1QwCkuO>

This is a homepage mockup designed by Vivek Venkatraman. The blues and blue grays create a pleasant and consistent mood.

 [Enlarge](#)



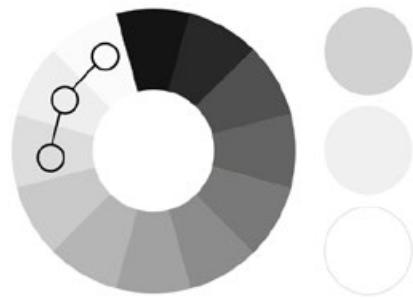
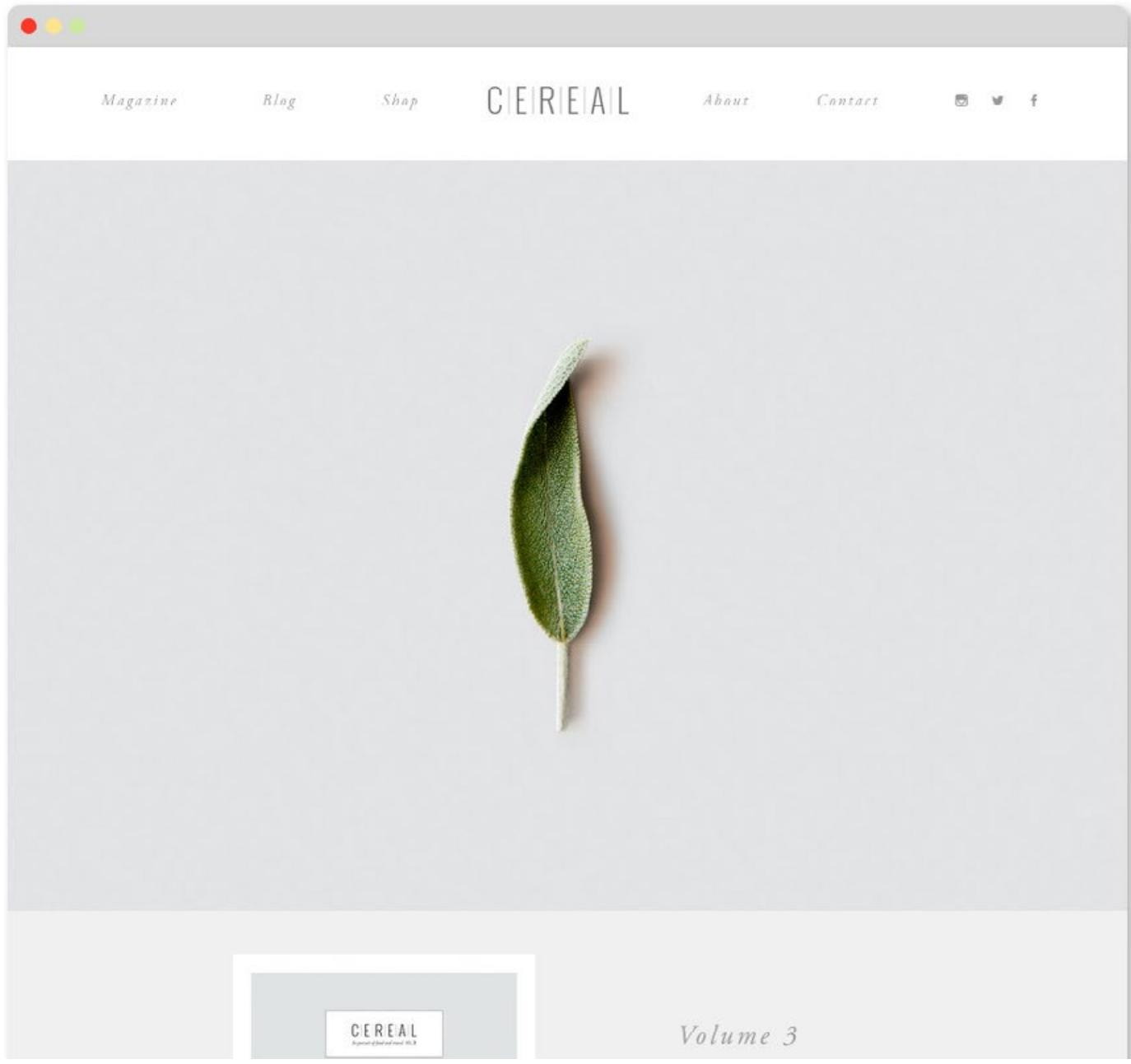
analogous

Cereal Magazine

<http://readcereal.com>

This site uses a lot of grays throughout. Because these grays are neutral, it allows you to put just about any style or color of photo you want over it. The green leaf was one of several different colors placed on top of this backdrop.

 [Enlarge](#)



analogous

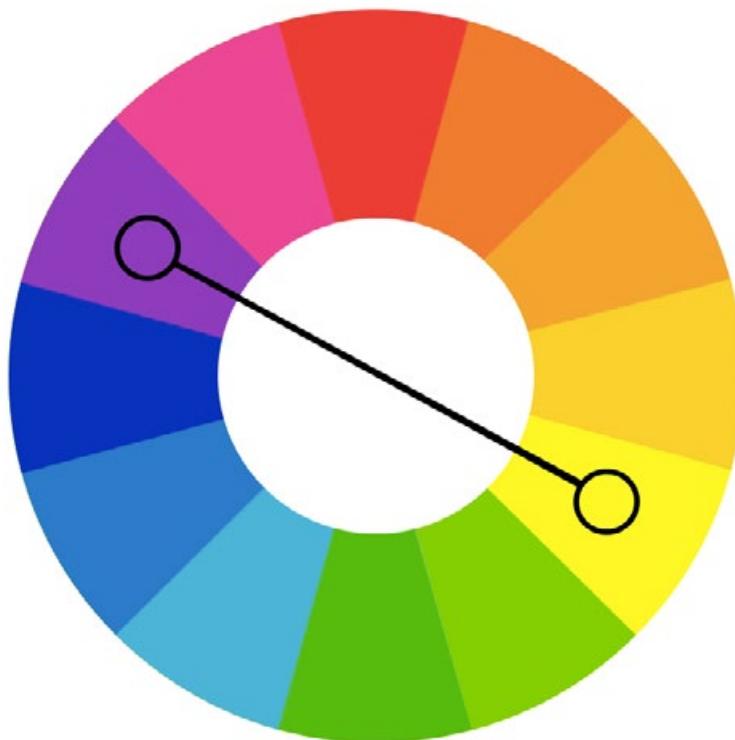
COLOR STYLE THREE

Complementary

Complementary colors are on opposite sides of the color wheel. Complementary colors should be approached with caution on the web because they create a lot of tension. If you have large areas of the page with these colors, it can hinder communication. The examples below are a few complementary colors that work well.

POSSIBLE USES:

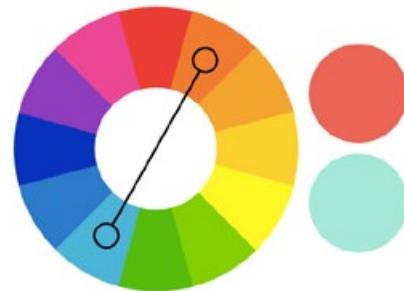
- *When you want the page to pop*
- *To create excitement if the content of the site is dull*



Sonor Design

<http://dribbble.com>

Sonor Design uses a muted red/orange and a light blue/green. The design works because the colors aren't too intense.



Enlarge

The website for Sonor Design features a color wheel graphic at the top. The main section has a teal background with a central smartphone displaying a logo, flanked by two headphones. Below this are three service sections: User interface, App development, and Webdesign. At the bottom, there's a section titled "From the logofolio" showing a grid of logos on a laptop screen.

User interface
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adip elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore.
[DEMO](#)

App development
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adip elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore.

Webdesign
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adip elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore.

From the logofolio
A selection of beautiful logos & typafaces

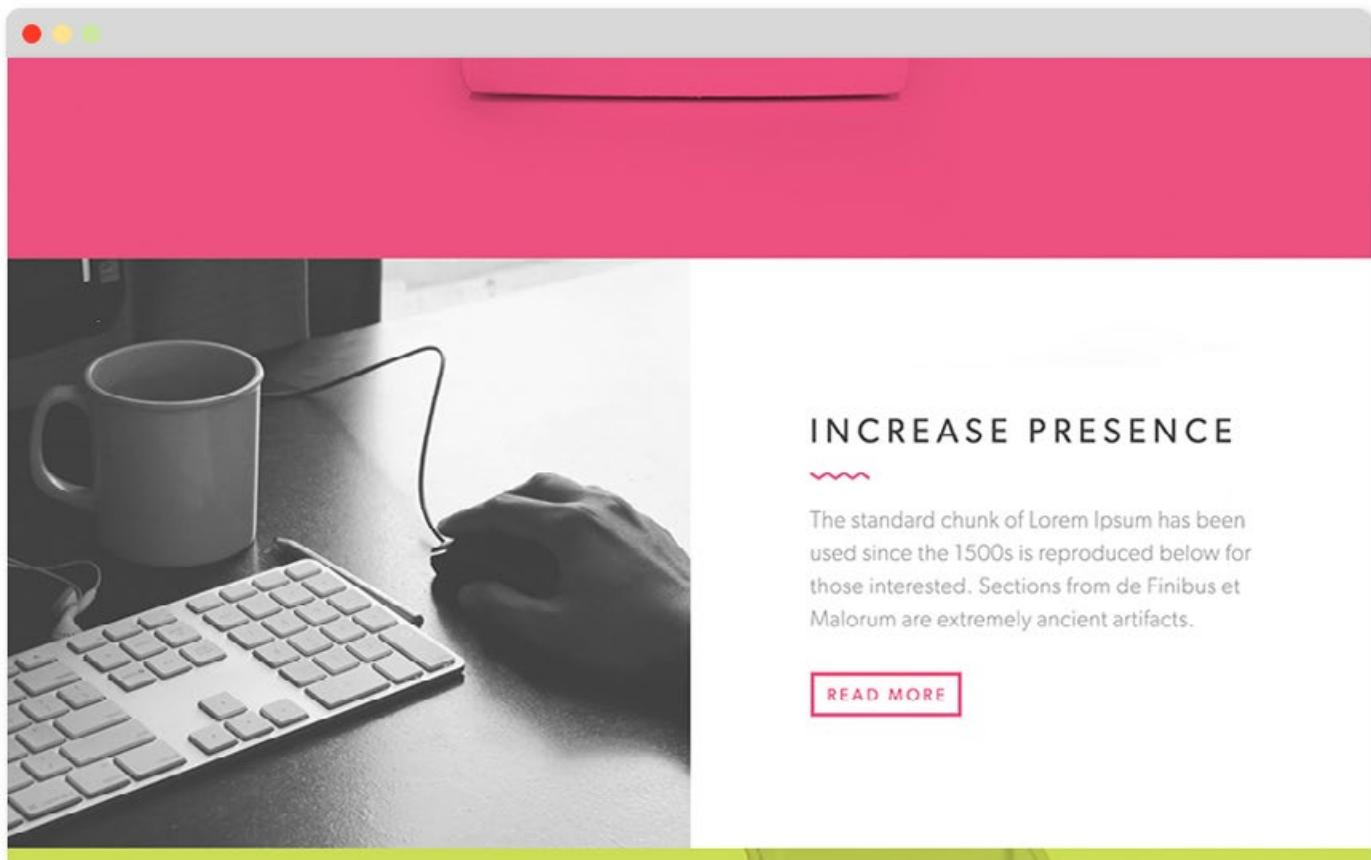
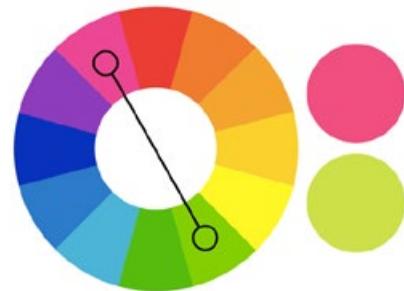
complementary

Orange PR & Marketing

<http://bit.ly/22o2V4S>

The use of color is leaned upon heavily in this design, more than any other example shown. It works well here because the colors aren't fighting other elements for attention.

 [Enlarge](#)



A screenshot of a website featuring a large, solid pink header. Below it is a black and white photograph of a person's hand resting on a white keyboard next to a white coffee mug on a desk. To the right of the image is a white sidebar with the text "INCREASE PRESENCE" and "The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum has been used since the 1500s is reproduced below for those interested. Sections from de Finibus et Malorum are extremely ancient artifacts." At the bottom of the sidebar is a red "READ MORE" button.



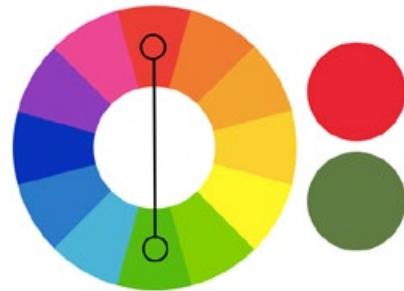
A screenshot of a website featuring a large, solid lime green header. Below it is a close-up photograph of a camera lens. To the left of the image is a white sidebar with the text "PICTURE PERFECT PR & MARKETING" and "The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum has been used since the 1500s is re-".

complementary

Specialized

<http://bit.ly/1OUUqo9>

From the designer: "The design itself was largely inspiring by the angular shape of the frame which is translated through the cutaways and diamond shapes throughout the design."



Enlarge

S-WORKS
Camber Carbon

◆ FEATURES

The top-shelf S-Works Camber 29 combines 110mm of plush and efficient FSR suspension with a Kashima-coated FOX Float CTD Factory Series shock and premium component package for uncompromising and versatile trail performance.

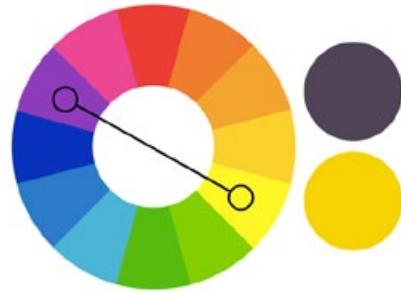
complementary

Financial Claims Made Easy

<https://financialclaimsmadesimple.co.uk>

Notice how they use the heavy purple sparingly. It allows the lightness of the yellow to come through.

 Enlarge



The screenshot shows the website's layout. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Find your PPI', 'PPI Claim Calculator', 'Track your claim', and 'About us', 'FAQs', 'Testimonials', 'Our fees', and 'Contact us'. A dark blue circular logo on the left contains the text 'Financial Claims Made Simple'. The main heading 'Claiming back mis-sold PPI never felt so simple' is centered over a yellow background. To the left, there's an illustration of a computer monitor with the text 'No forms to fill in'. In the center, a cartoon character named 'Sam' is shown holding a small notepad. To the right, a dark call-to-action box contains the text 'Let's get started!' and fields for 'Full Name', 'Email', and 'Phone number', with a 'Call me back' button at the bottom. Below this section, the heading 'Why choose us?' is followed by a quote: 'Because we've made financial claims so simple! We simply make your life easier by doing all the work for you.' Three white boxes below provide more information: 'Not sure if you had PPI?' (with a question mark icon), 'Track your claim anytime online' (with a stopwatch icon), and 'No need to complete any forms' (with a clipboard icon). Each box includes a brief description and a link: 'Find your PPI Now', 'Track your claim online', and 'You probably want to appoint a claims management company because you simply don't have the time or the patience to deal with the banks in reclaiming your PPI (and we don't blame you). We will complete every form, send every letter, make every call and check every possible detail to ensure that you get the compensation you deserve.'

complementary

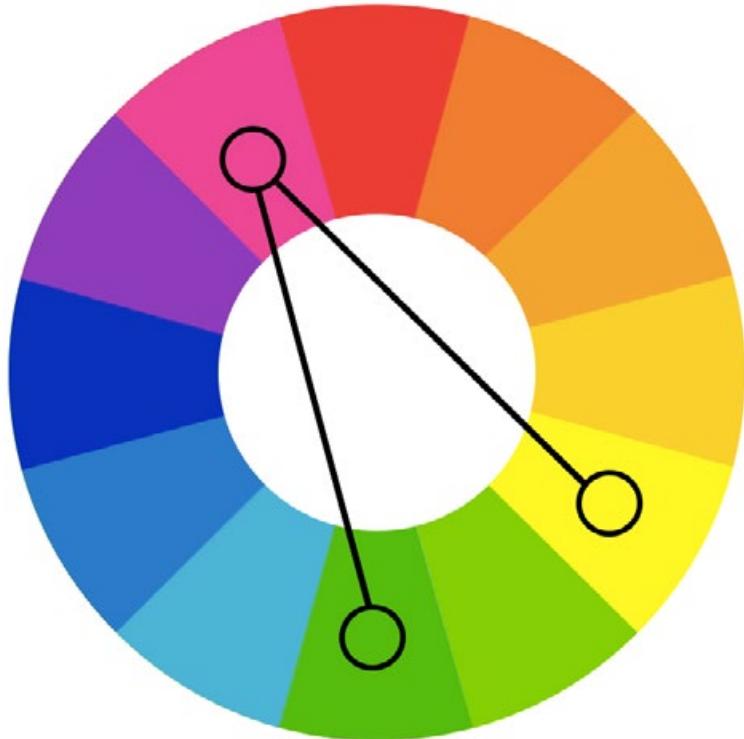
COLOR STYLE FOUR

Split Complementary

Split complementary colors are nice because they combine the pleasantness of analogous colors with a bit of spunk.

POSSIBLE USES:

- *Almost anywhere*

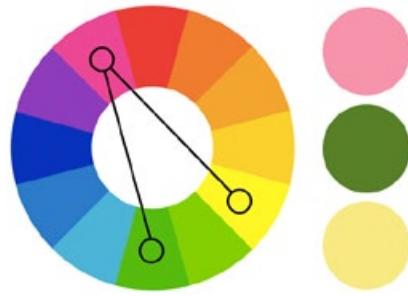


Spina

<https://spinanyc.com>

Spina is a flower shop in NYC. You could almost say this color scheme is complementary because the greens and pinks are so dominant, but I think there's enough yellow sprinkled throughout for it to be split complementary.

 Enlarge



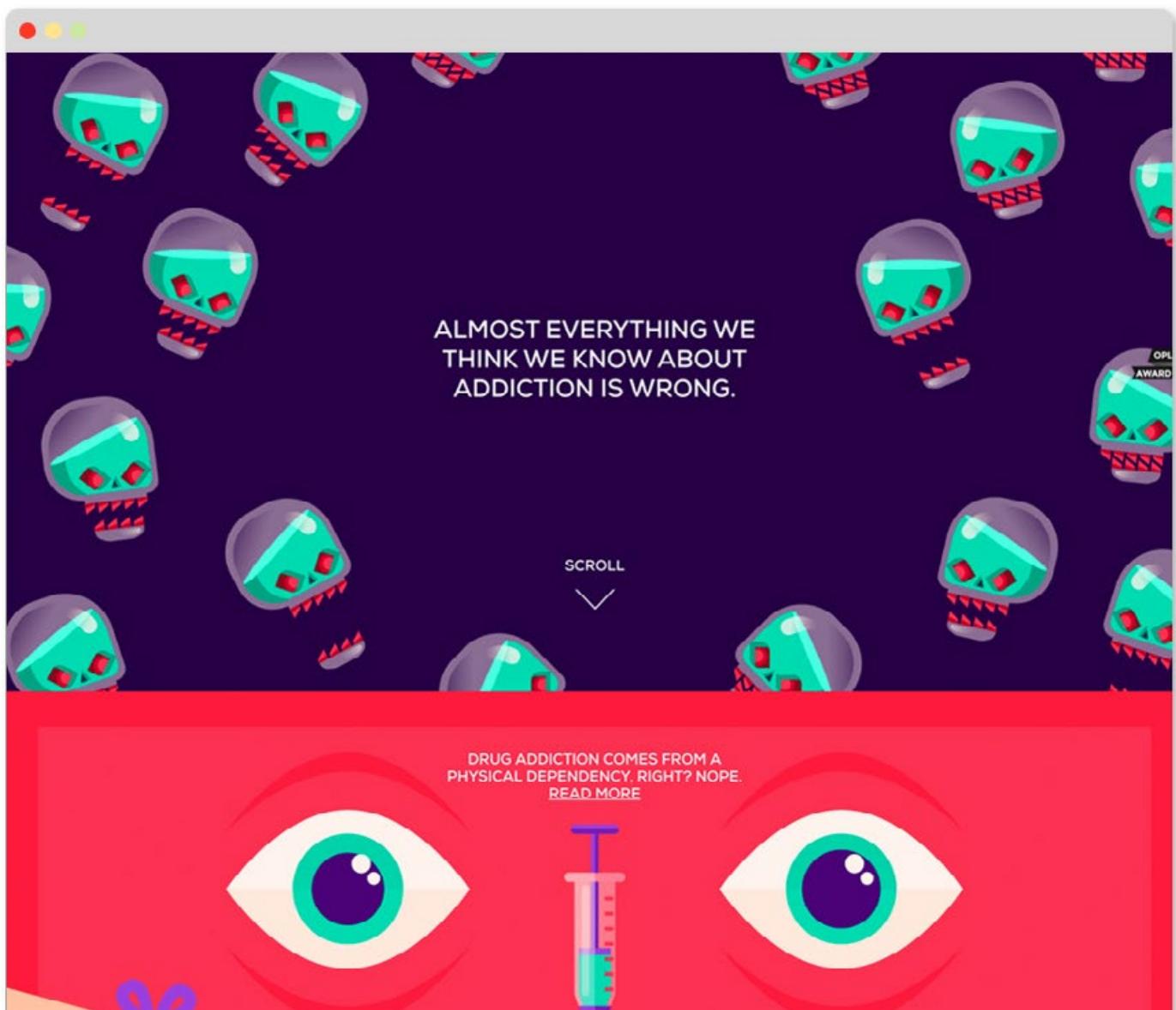
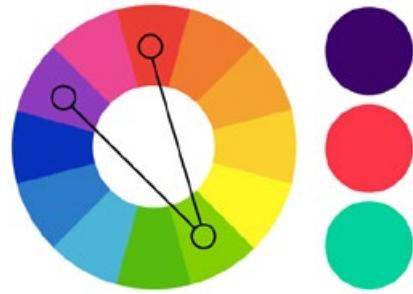
split-complementary

Drug Addiction PSA

<http://www.addiction.mobydigg.de>

This site explores what causes drug addiction. The purple and red are very bold and impossible to ignore. Notice that the green has a little blue in it, that's ok! I bet they started with a more neutral looking green but then tweaked it to feel more dangerous and drug-like.

 [Enlarge](#)

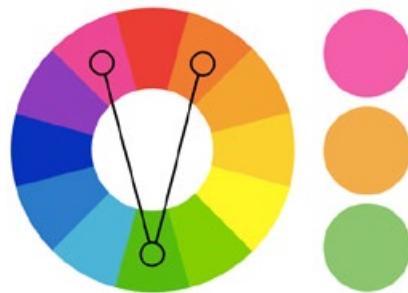


split-complementary

El Burro Mexican

<http://elburro.no>

This site is for a Mexican restaurant in Norway. Notice how the colors also appear in photos of the food. That helps hold the composition together. And it was possibly the inspiration for the pink, orange, and green color scheme.



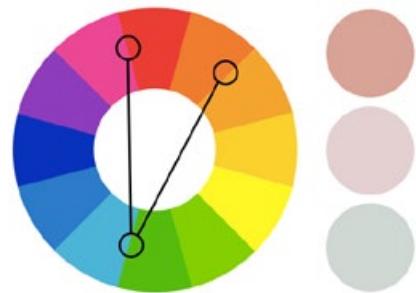
[Enlarge](#)

split-complementary

Guess

<http://bit.ly/1p3Drf1>

Here the designer wanted people to focus their attention on the spring/summer line, so she used colors from the actual products and photo shoots. Notice how muted the colors are - it makes the contrast between the colors less intense, thus allowing MORE color to be used. If the colors were not muted, the page would likely be too intense.



[Enlarge](#)

split-complementary

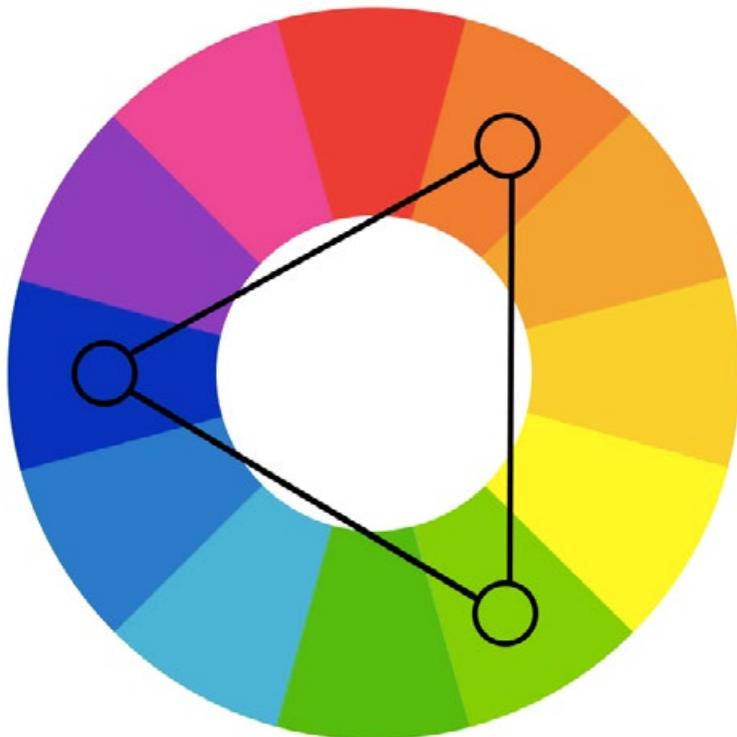
COLOR STYLE FIVE

Triad

Triads use three colors, all equidistant from one another. Triads create a more mature variety of color, as opposed to energetic split-complementary colors. If split-complementaries are the lively 1963 ‘She Loves You’ Beatles, Triads are the more mature 1970 “Let it Be” Beatles.

POSSIBLE USES:

- *To create variety without much drama*
- *To convey a sense of strength*

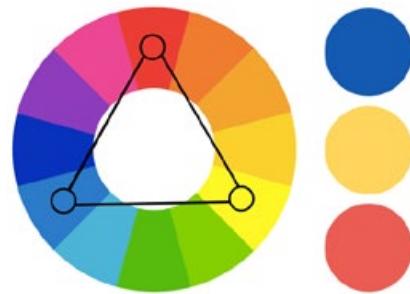


Lorenzo Verzini

<http://lorenzoverzini.com>

This is the online portfolio of an art director/designer. Online portfolios can use just about any color scheme, so perhaps he simply liked how these colors looked.

 Enlarge



The screenshot shows a website with a yellow header bar containing a logo (a stylized 'L' composed of red, white, and blue), navigation links for 'WORK', 'PROFILE', and 'JOURNAL', and a search icon. Below the header is a large yellow section featuring three icons: a red, white, and blue 3D-style letter 'L', a white head profile with a blue eye and yellow iris, and a red, white, and blue pencil. A thin vertical yellow line descends from the top of the yellow section to the bottom of the blue section. The blue section contains a small circular icon with a blue eye and the word 'HELLO' below it. To the right of this is a block of text: 'My name is Lorenzo Verzini, italian designer & art director living in London, working in the field for more than 9 years. I create digital branding experiences for small and big companies.' At the bottom of the blue section, there is a note: 'PS: I am currently available for work, get in touch at l@lorenzoverzini.com.', a 'VIEW PROFILE' button, and the 'triad' logo.

WORK PROFILE JOURNAL

l@
lorenzoverzini.com

VIEW PROFILE

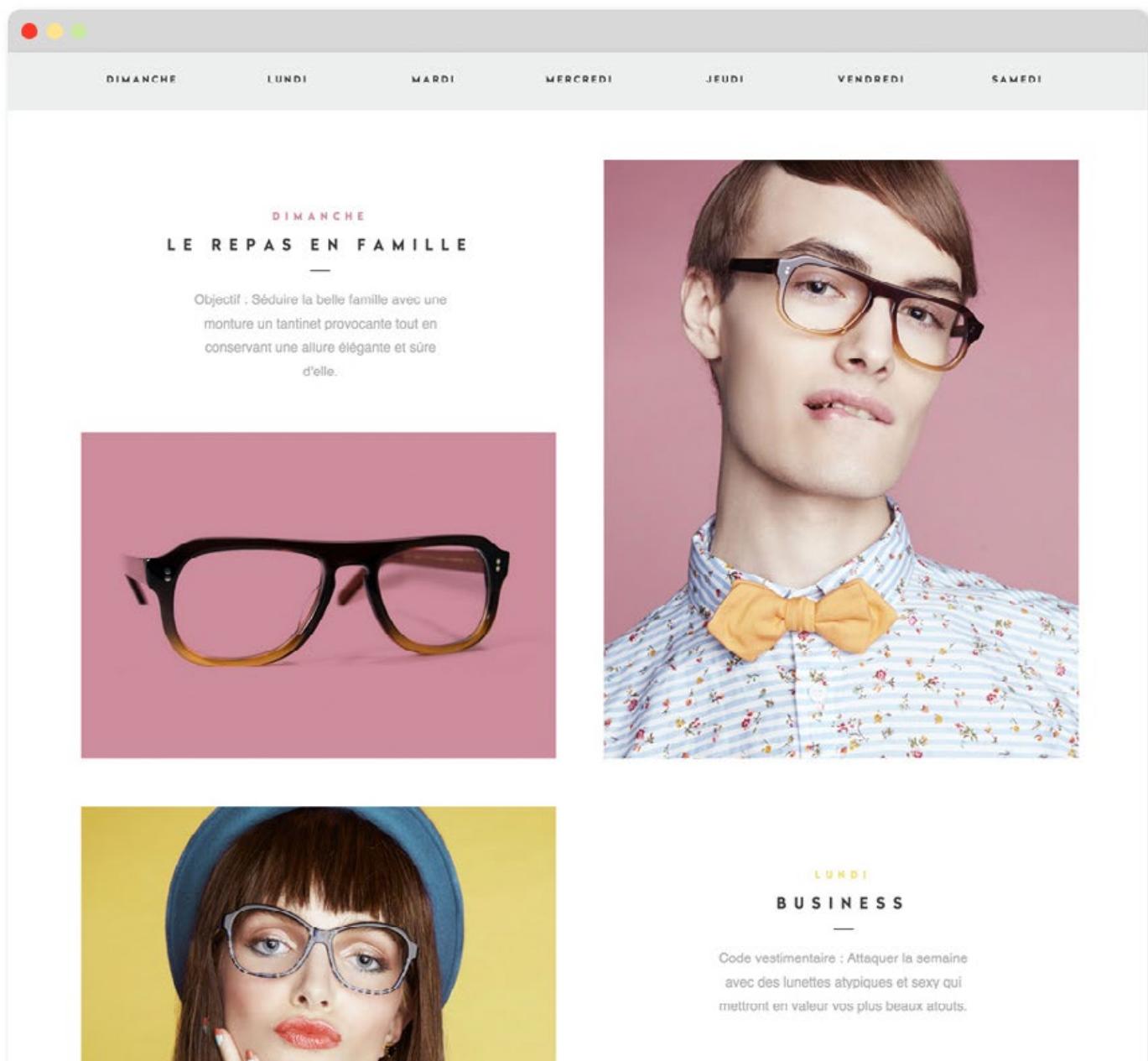
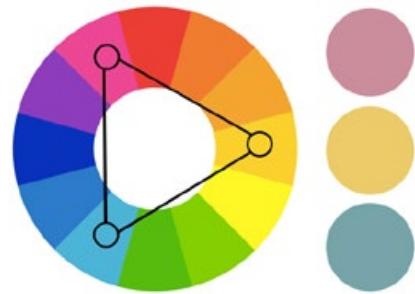
triad

Antoine Laoun

<http://antoinelaoun.com>

Antoine Laoun makes stylish glasses. Personally, I have mixed feelings about this design. I like the colors and the layout, but it's unclear why each pair of glasses was designated that particular color (besides the blue pair). So in this example, the colors and concept aren't quite working together.

 [Enlarge](#)



DIMANCHE

LE REPAS EN FAMILLE

Objectif : Séduire la belle famille avec une monture un tantinet provocante tout en conservant une allure élégante et sûre d'elle.



LUNDI

BUSINESS

Code vestimentaire : Attaquer la semaine avec des lunettes atypiques et sexy qui mettront en valeur vos plus beaux atouts.



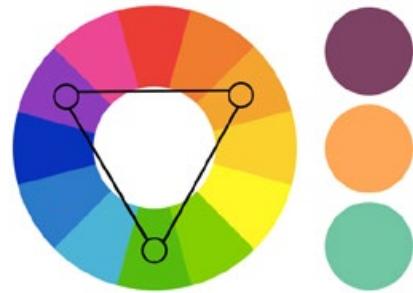
SAMEDI

triad

Triplagent

<http://www.triplagent.com>

Triplagent is a website and travel app. The rich colors on the page pull you in.



Enlarge

The screenshot shows the Triplagent website and a mobile application interface. The website has a dark purple background. At the top left is the logo (a stylized leaf inside a circle) and the word "TRIPLAGENT". The main heading "DISCOVER NEW ADVENTURES" is in large white capital letters. Below it, a subtext reads "FIND THE BEST PLACES IN THE WORLD FROM PEOPLE WHO SHARE YOUR INTERESTS.". To the right is a smartphone displaying a grid of nine colored squares with text labels: TASTEMAKER (top-left), ADVENTURER (top-right), BADASS (second row, left), FREE THINKER (second row, right), LUXY (third row, left), DANDY (third row, right), EARTHBING (bottom-left), and ARTSY (bottom-right). Below the phone is the text "JOIN THE ADVENTURE" and "CLAIM YOUR FRONT ROW SEAT TO OUR LAUNCH". A form field for "Your email" is followed by a "rocket" icon. At the bottom, there are three small images: a green building, a yellow umbrella, and a person sitting at a table. The word "triad" is written in the bottom right corner of the image area.

Color Summary

Color can be tricky. Use the color theories mentioned to keep you on the right path.

Quick hacks

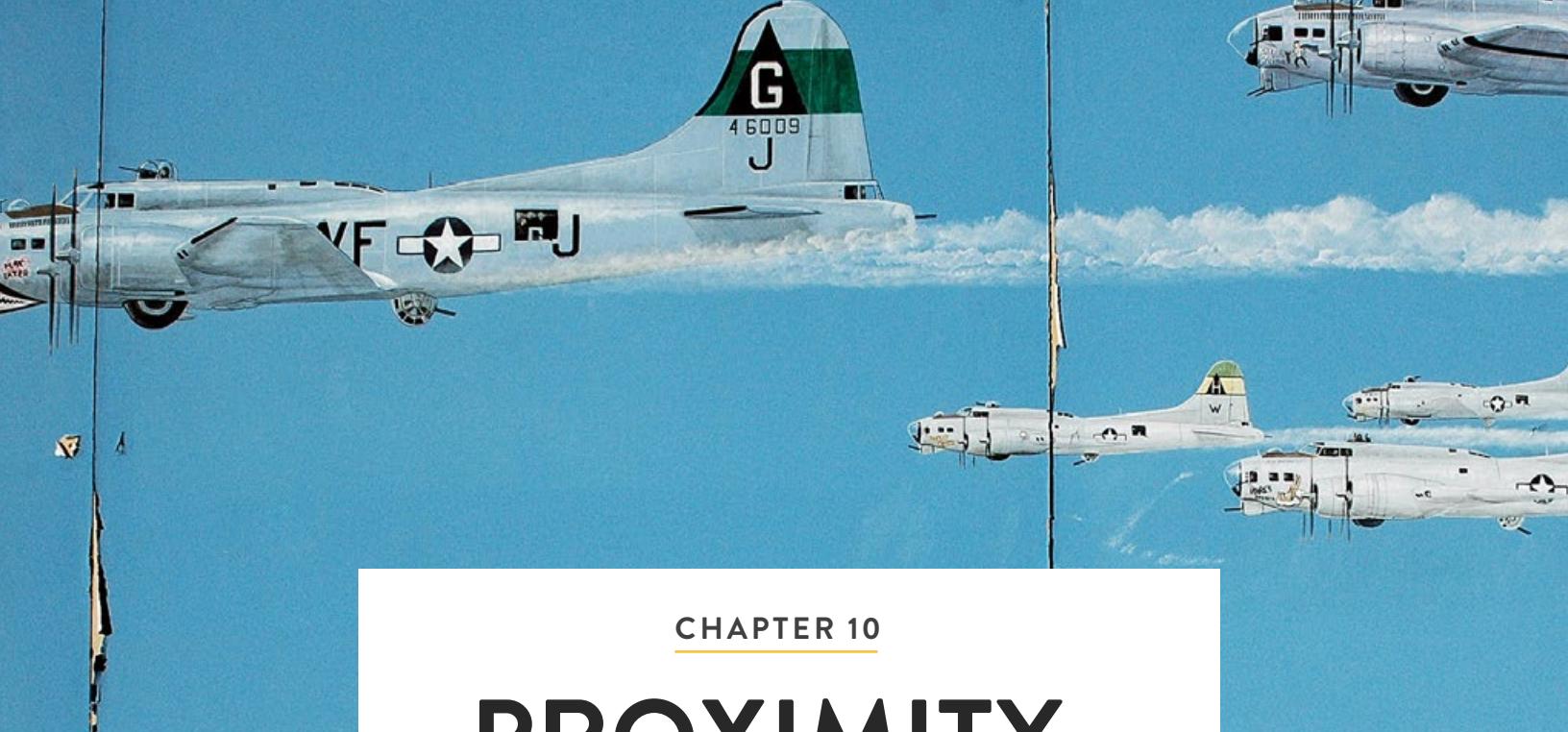
If your site concept is friendly try an **analogous color scheme**.

If your site concept is hip or fun try a **split-complement color scheme**.

If your site concept is bold, try a **complementary color scheme** (but be careful not to use too much color or it will overpower everything else on the page).

If your site concept is grounded, try a **triad color scheme**.

If you need more help visit <http://colorsupplyyy.com> for initial inspiration, then tweak from there.



CHAPTER 10

PROXIMITY

“A user interface is like a joke. If you have to explain it, it’s not that good.”

– Martin LeBlanc



Introduction

When two or more graphic elements are close to one another, it implies there's a relationship between them.

The concept of proximity wasn't created out of the thin air. It was informed by the way humans observe and interpret our surroundings. When we see a herd of elephants walking across the Savanna, we assume they're together. If we see a broken window and a baseball on the ground next to it, the closeness of the ball to the window implies it broke it.

In this chapter we'll discuss:

- *Proximity in nature and design*
- *Proximity on the web*

Proximity in nature and design

Two scenes with the same elements can convey different messages if the proximity of the elements is altered. In the images on the right, each image tells a different story when the proximity of the people is changed.

Proximity in design works the same way: when elements are close to one another, it implies a relationship.



These two people are strangers.



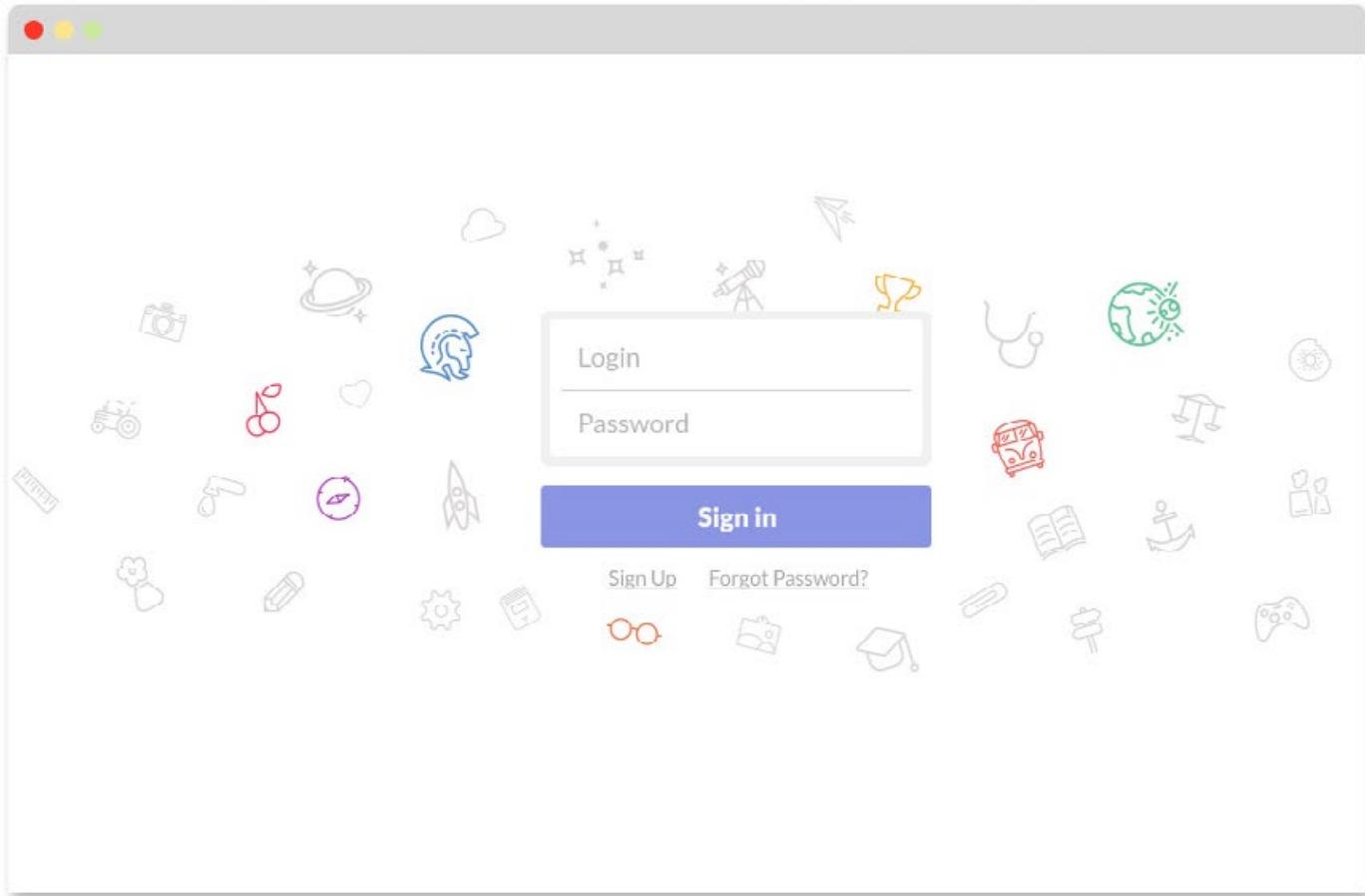
But this is a couple.

Simple Login Form

<http://bit.ly/1r3GFiQ>

A login, password, and sign in button are all needed to sign in to the site below. By putting them close together, the user will (correctly) assume they're related.

 [Enlarge](#)



E-commerce Prototype

<http://bit.ly/1r3GOTE>

In the example below, once the user understands that many filters are on the left, they will (correctly) assume that a filter they *haven't* used yet is also located there. Putting

features with similar functionality near one another like this reduces the user's cognitive load.

Q Enlarge

The screenshot shows a web-based e-commerce interface. On the left side, there is a sidebar containing several filter categories:

- CART** (checkbox): No items in cart.
- CATEGORIES**: New Arrivals, Accessories, Bags, Dressed, Jackets, Jewelry, Shoes, Shirts, Sweaters, T-shirts.
- COLORS**: Beige, Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Grey, Orange, Purple, Red, White.
- SIZES**: XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL.
- PRICE RANGE**: A horizontal slider with two arrows at the ends.

The main content area displays a grid of eight dresses, each with a thumbnail, name, description, and price (\$39). The dresses are:

- FLUTED HEM DRESS (Summer dress)
- PLEAT PRINTED DRESS (Summer dress)
- FLOWY SHIRT DRESS (Summer dress)
- DOUBLE LAYER DRESS (Summer dress)
- Bead Detail Dress (Summer dress)
- Pleated Detail Dress (Summer dress)
- Printed Dress (Summer dress)
- Printed Dress (Summer dress)

At the top of the page, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, BRANDS, DESIGNERS, and CONTACT. To the right of the navigation, there is a message: "Add to cart Interaction prototype by Virgil Pana" and "Follow me on [Dribbble](#) | [Twitter](#)". There are also icons for a heart and a magnifying glass.

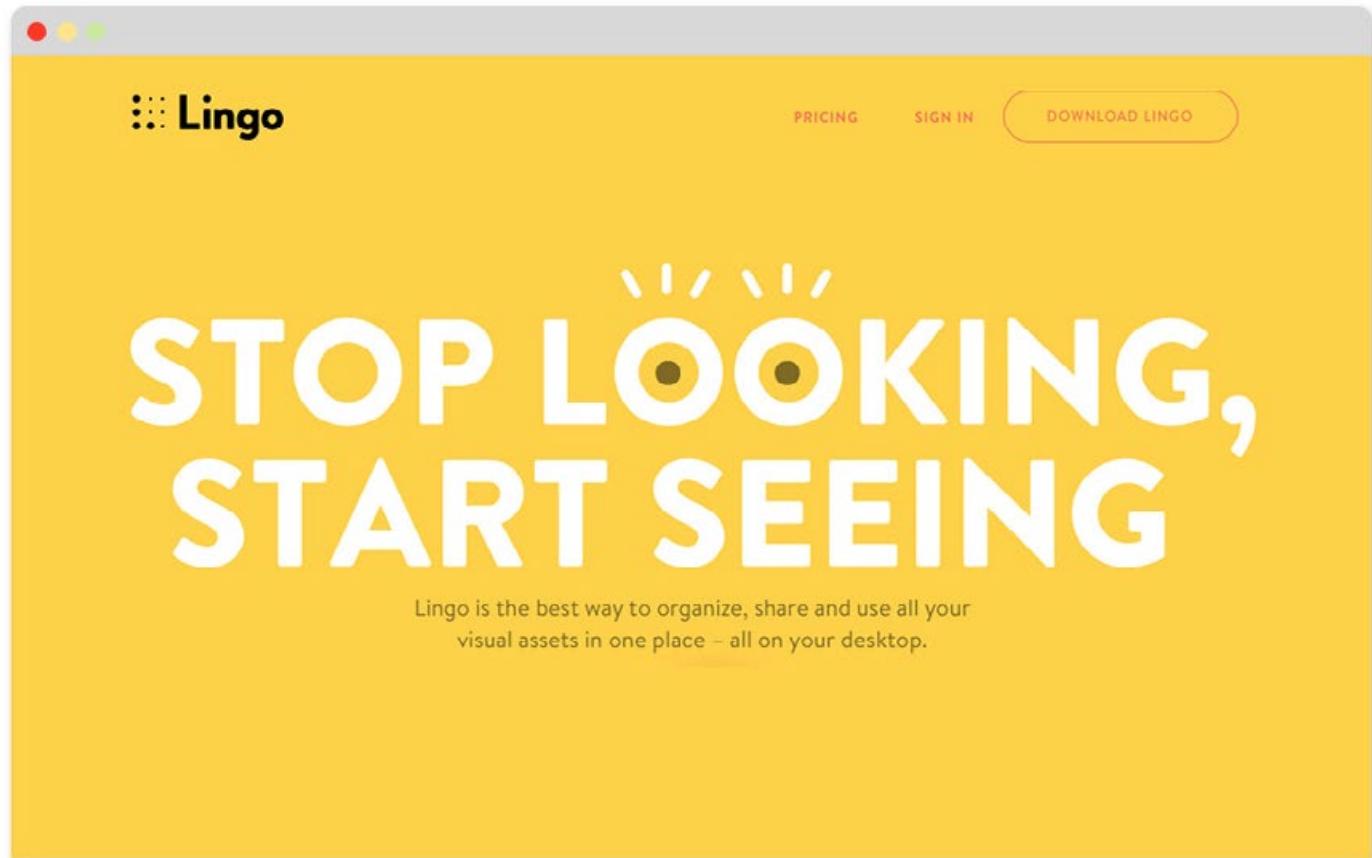
Lingo

<https://www.lingoapp.com>

This headline and sub-headline are related - that's why they're so close together. The headline catches your attention and the sub-

 [Enlarge](#)

headline explains it. Take note that this is also a good example of hierarchy.



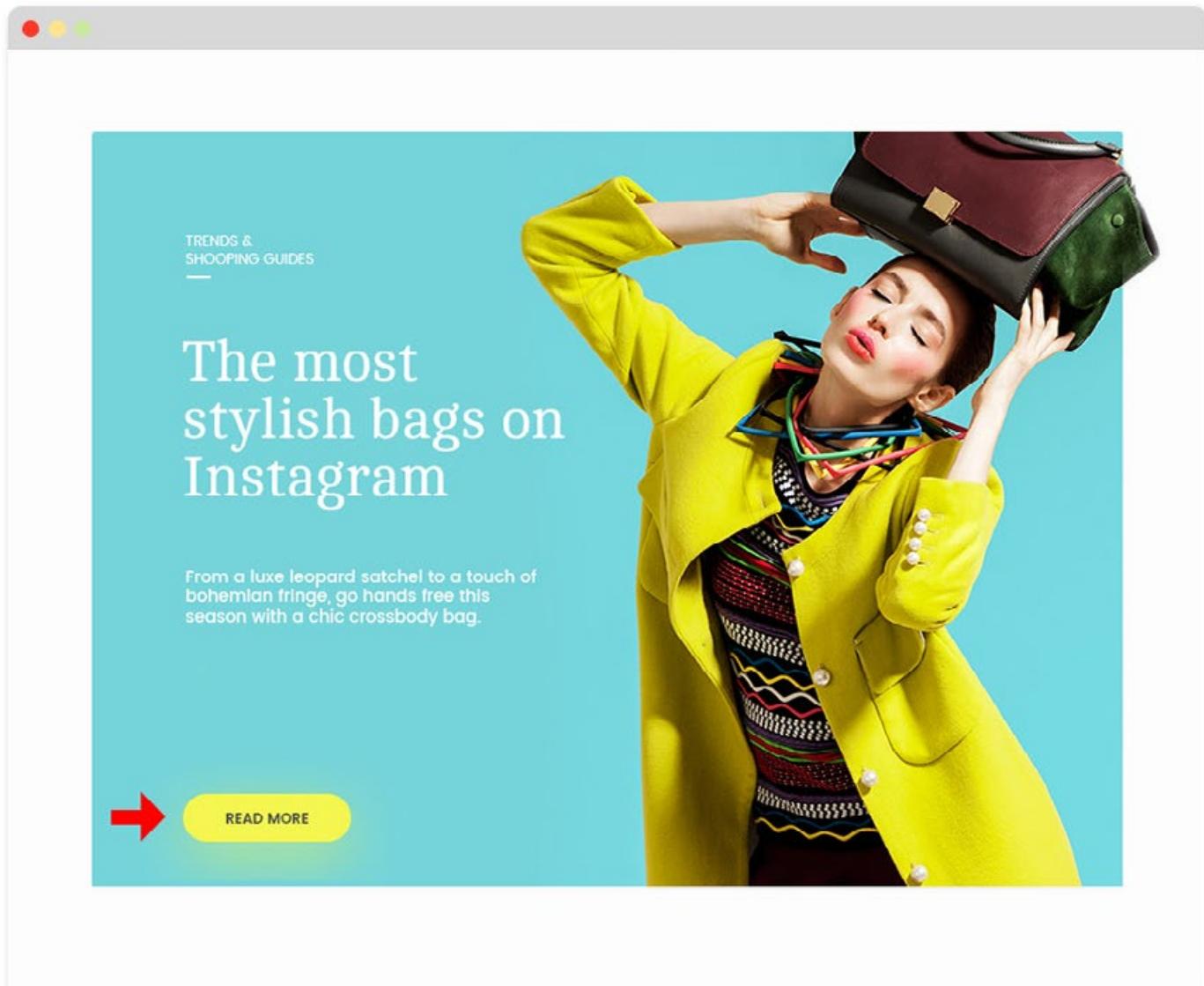
Stylish Bags

<http://bit.ly/1YWCH6V>

Look at this “read more” button. It’s not near the paragraph in the middle of the page, but it should be because the designer wants the user to read that paragraph and then click “read more.” Remember that couple in the

field sitting far apart from the beginning of the chapter? That’s what this is out-of-place button is like.

Q Enlarge



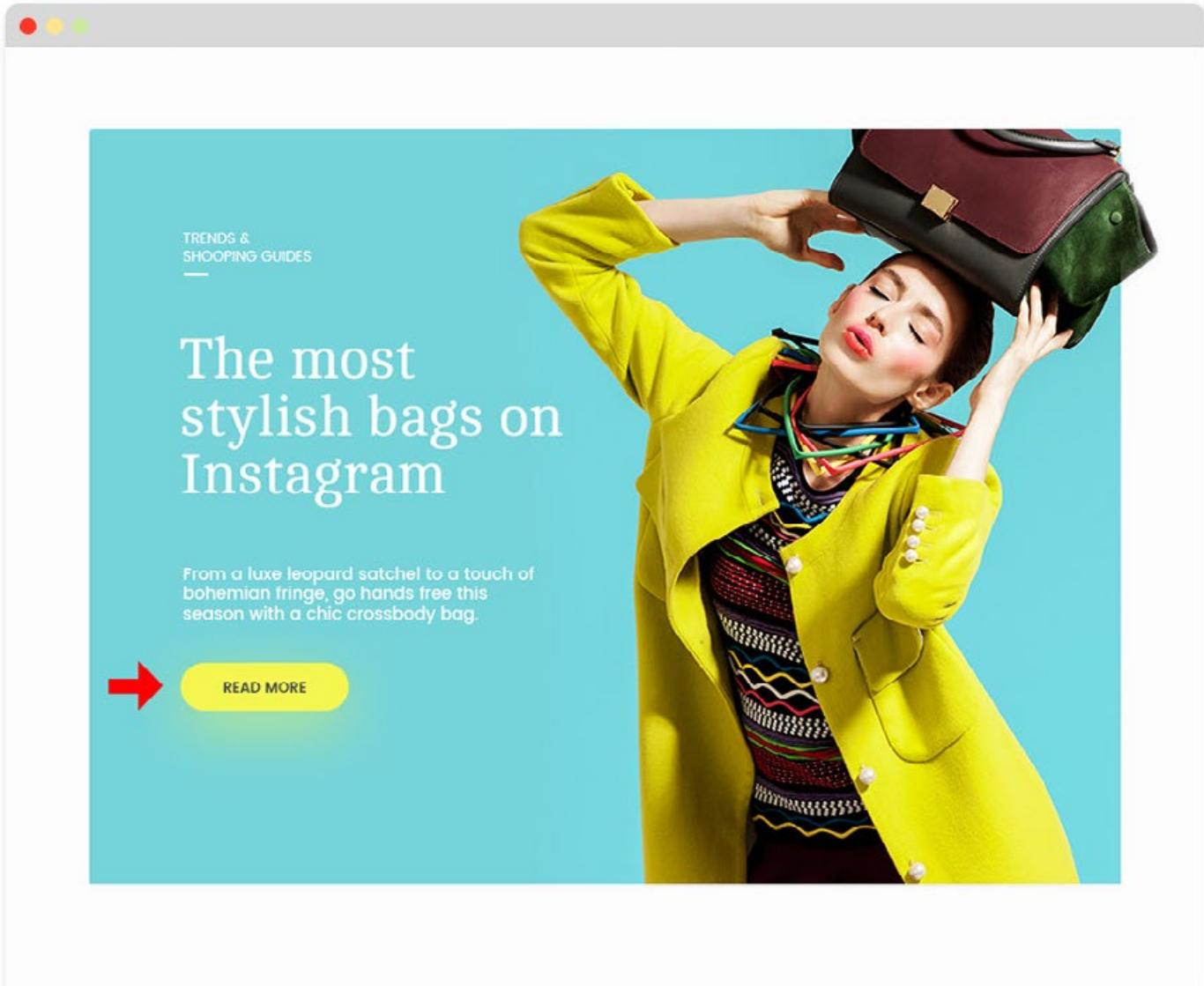
Cntd.

<http://bit.ly/1YWCH6V>

Now look at it. This position is much better. We have a headline, subheadline, and a call to action (the “read more” button), all similarly spaced apart. It’s a group. So when you quickly scan the page and see those three elements,

your intuition tells you they’re related in some way. Just like the couple sitting near one another in the park.

Q Enlarge



Vibrant Composites

<http://www.vibrantcomposites.com>

Sometimes combining type and image will make something more striking than if they were separate. The way the type touches the hand here is nice. It draws you in. The photo

of the hand is also a good use of imagery - it's an indicator that what's to come is related to touch in some way (the page is about haptic sensors). The photo supports the concept.

 [Enlarge](#)

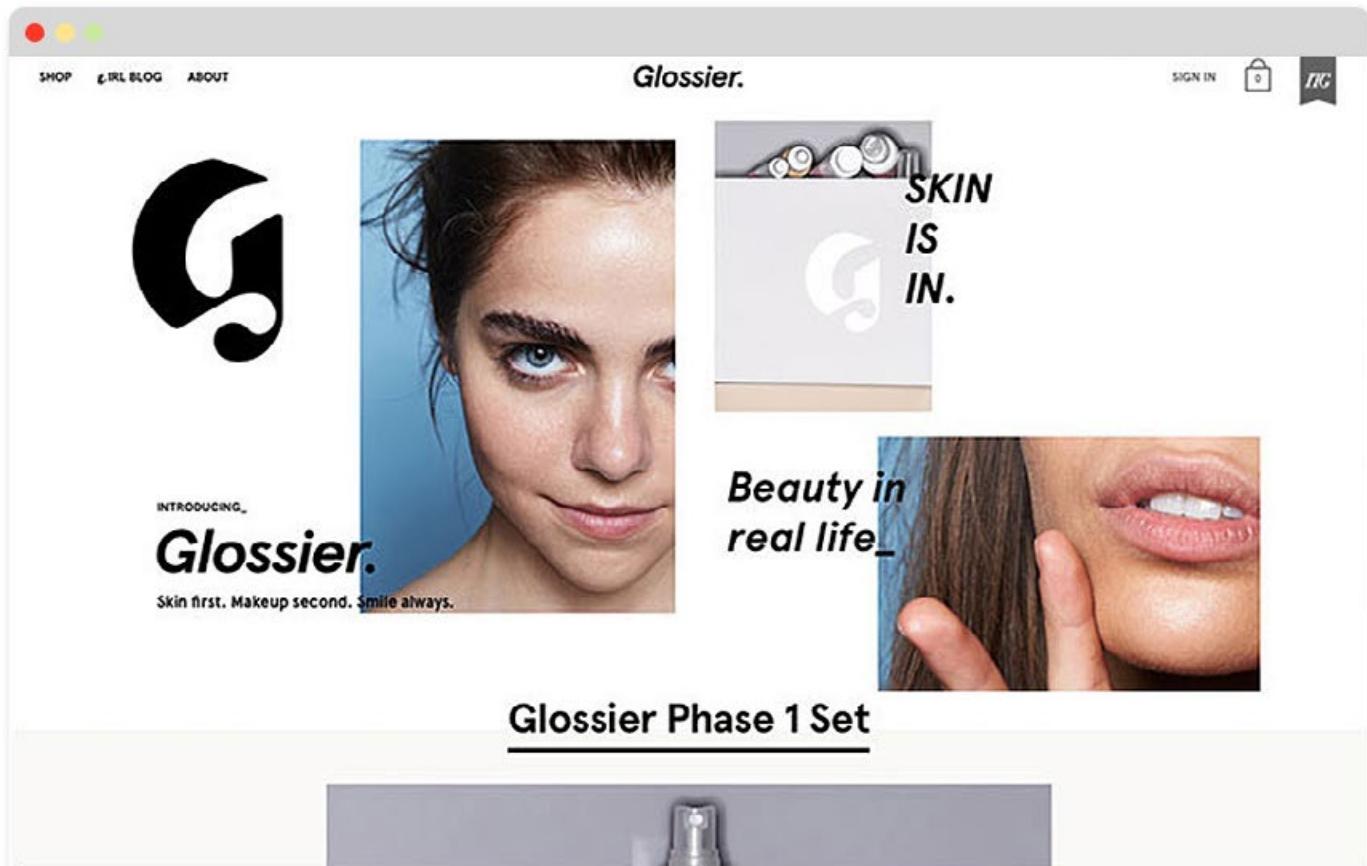


Glossier

<http://www.godynamo.com/project/glossier>

Even though this type is loosely placed over the images, each headline touches an image, implying a relationship.

Enlarge



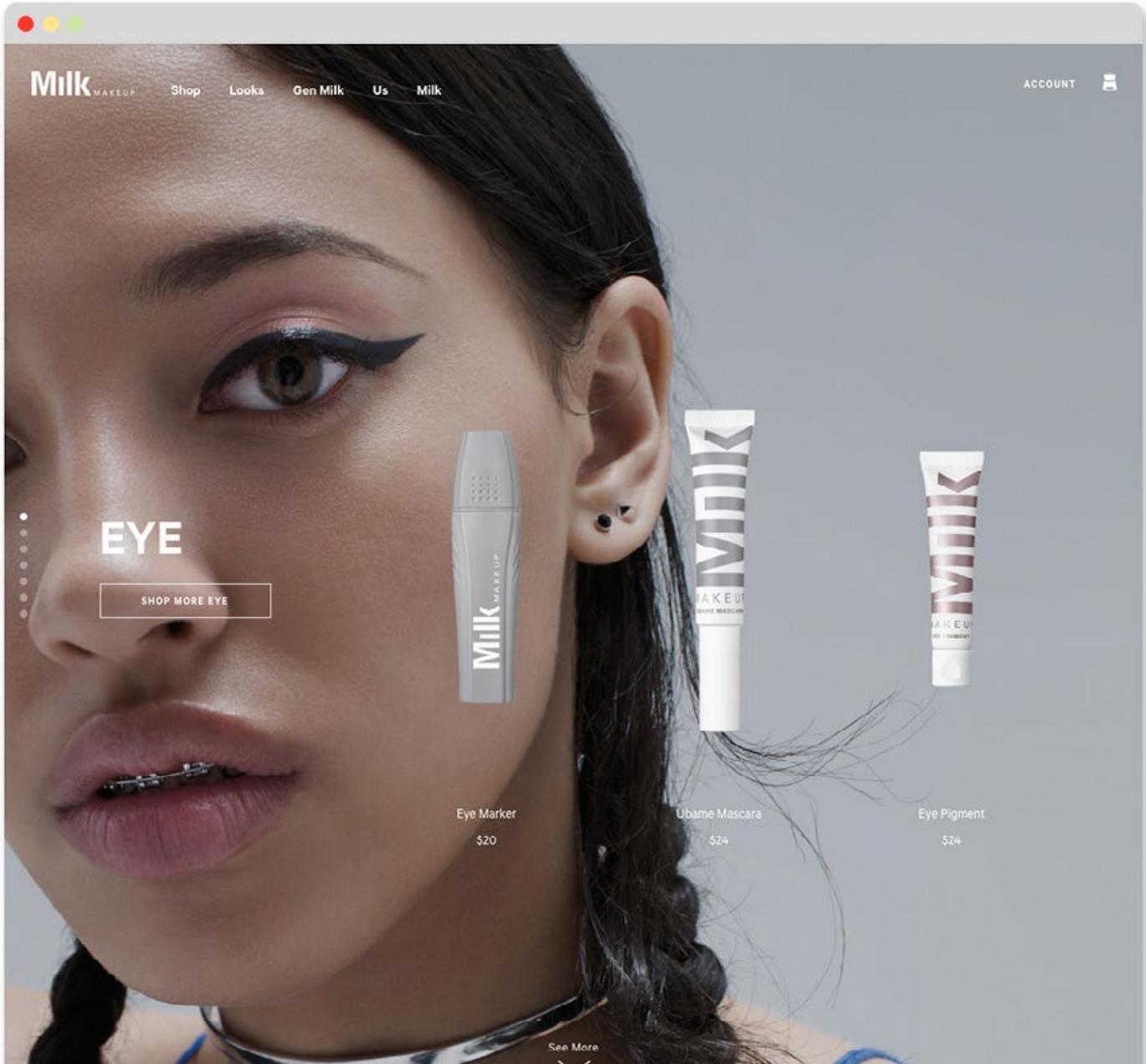
Milk Makeup

<https://milkmakeup.com>

This one is interesting. Everything we've seen so far has been an example of proximity along the x and y-axis. But this one uses it along the z-axis. It's a nice approach because on one plane you see the makeup, and on the

other plane you see the woman's eye with the makeup applied. They're far apart. They don't have to compete for space so both use the entire canvas of the page.

 [Enlarge](#)



Chapter Summary

When two or more graphic elements are close to one another, it implies there's a relationship between them. When you want to associate two images, put them together. When you don't, position them far apart.



CHAPTER 11

THE D_xN FRAMEWORK

“Rule books tell people what to do. Frameworks guide people how to act. Rule books insist on discipline. Frameworks allow for creativity.”

– Simon Sinek



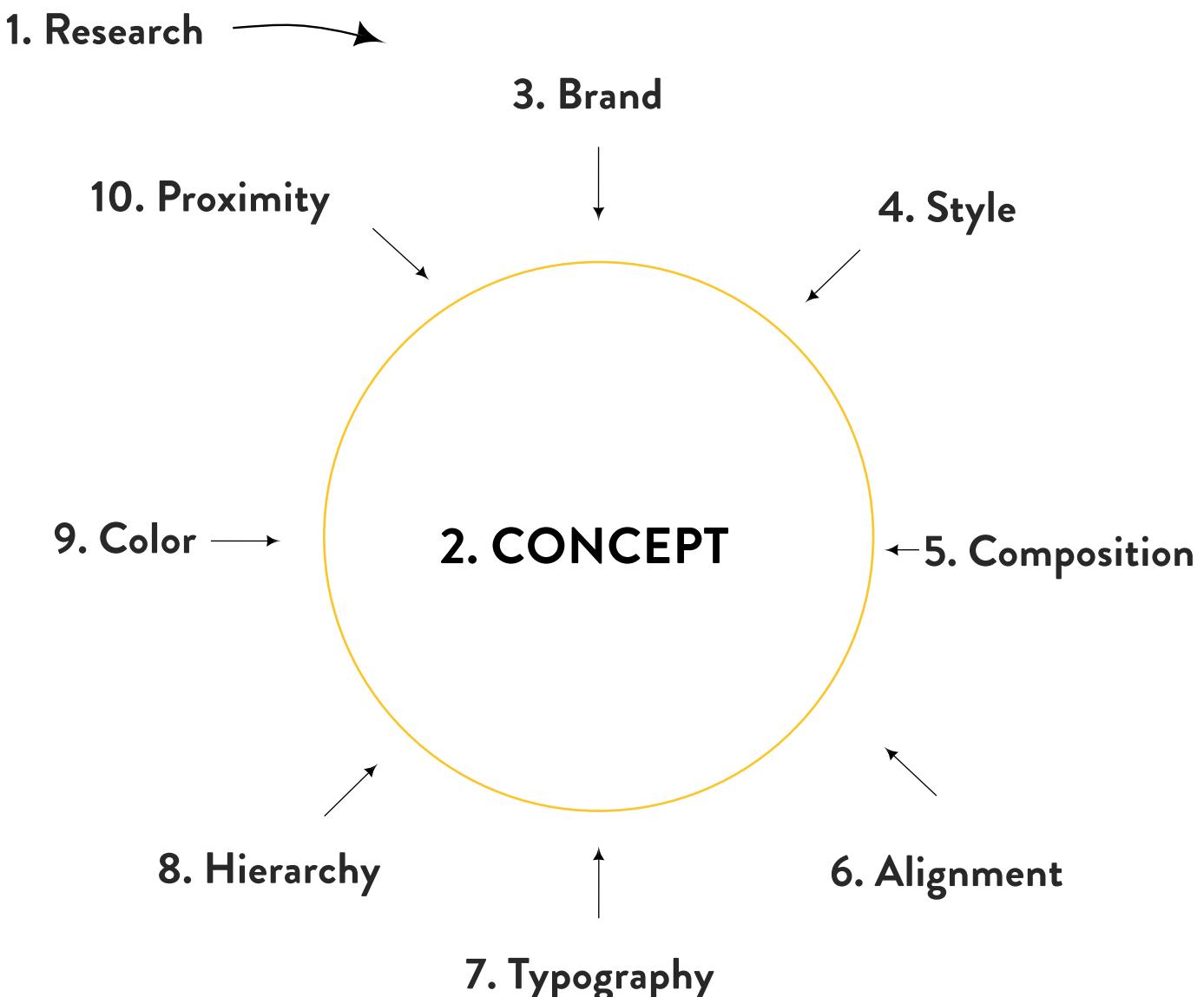
Design by Numbers

No, sorry, this is not a software framework. You got a little excited there, didn't you.

Design by Numbers is a *mental* framework that's going to help you learn to design a website from scratch. Any site can be designed by adhering to the ten principles we just covered: *Research, concept, brand, style, composition, alignment, typography, hierarchy, color, and proximity*. Below is

a diagram of how the framework fits together. **Research** happens once at the start of a project, that's why it's outside the circle. **Concept** is in the middle because it influences what everything else will look like.

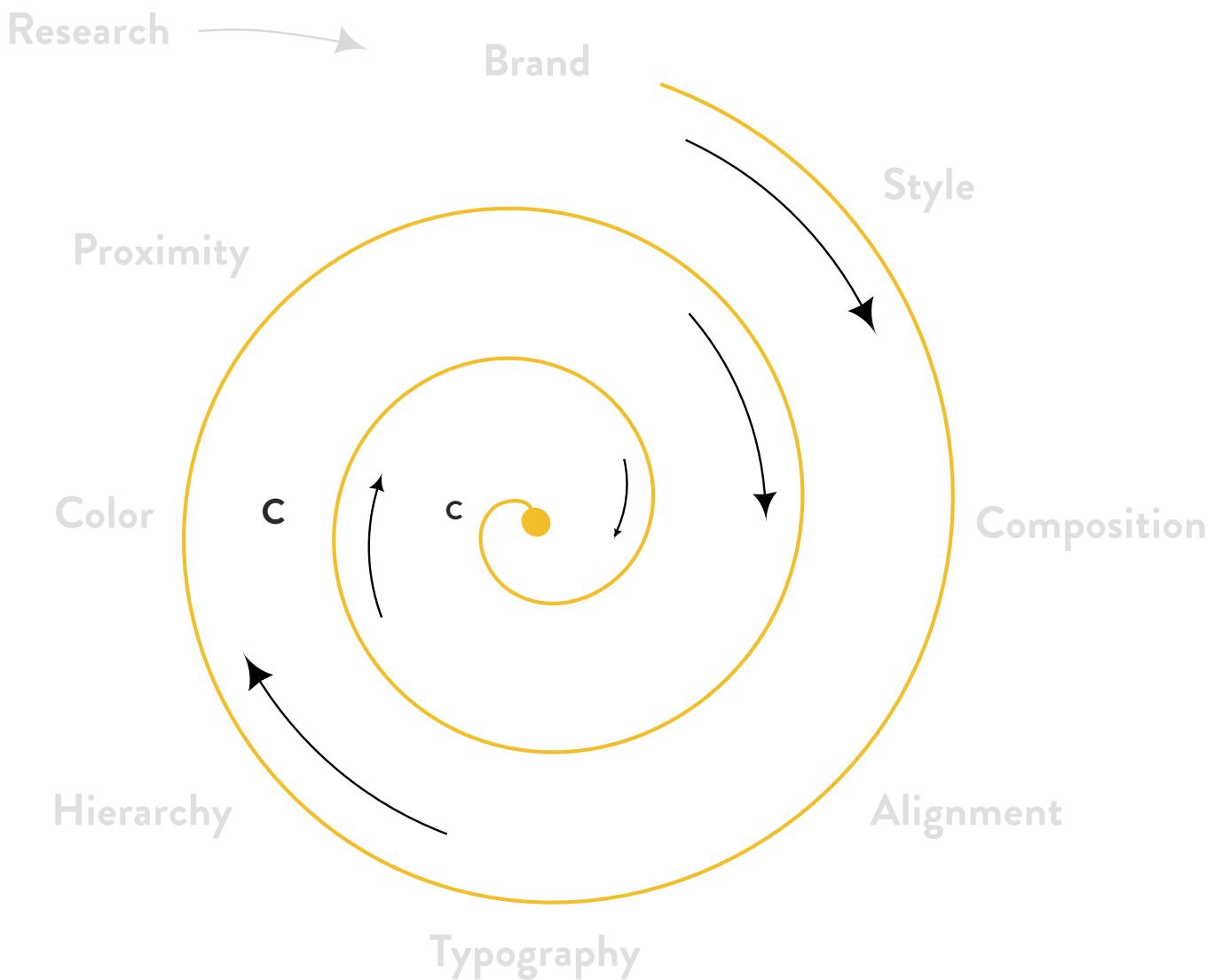
But something is still missing. When you're designing something, you don't go around the circle once, you do it repeatedly. It's a



process.

So if we want to get picky, it's more like a spiral. And each time you go around, your design gets tighter and more refined. I call this process the refinement spiral and it looks like the diagram below. Let's look at one item, color. Imagine we printed out the spiral and we're working our way around it, making sure to hit each design principle along the way. As we move toward

the center, each time we hit color, our palette options will get more refined. That's because when you go around the spiral, the choices you make may also affect color! On the first pass our color options are wide open. But then you read the creative brief which influences the kinds of colors you're considering. Your options narrow. Then a couple passes later your concept changes slightly. Your color options narrow further.



Eventually you will have narrowed it down to just a couple palettes.

Some steps will be repeated more than others. Color, typography, hierarchy, and proximity will probably be tweaked the most, whereas research happens just once. Your concept won't change much either. If it does change, you may be better off starting over, because the concept influences so many other (already worked on) sections. But don't get worried about that - if you have to change your concept it will save you time in the long run.

The design process is actually quite similar to how we code. When you're programming, you don't go line by line until you're finished, you work on things in sections. One moment you may be writing a function, the next minute you scroll down and add a div to your markup. You make tweaks to this thing here which affects that other thing there.

Design is the same way.

Once you understand that's how the process works, it will get easier. Experienced designers will have confronted the spiral many times, so they won't need to go around it as much as you. That's ok! As you go through each step, over and over, I encourage you to write down the decisions you make at each step. Have some colors in mind at the beginning of the project and write them down. Have a concept in mind? Write it down.

Then as you go around the spiral you can

scratch those old notes out and revise them as needed.

On the following pages, we'll explore what it feels like each time you go around the refinement spiral.

Refinement Spiral

1st Pass

This is what the 1st pass around the spiral looks like.

Research

- Read the creative brief
- Research what the competition is doing
- What does your site and the competition have in common?
- What can you do that's different from them?
- Is this a mockup or real site?
- Start saving visuals to an inspiration folder

Brand

Write down in words and phrases what you think the client's brand is about. If they don't have a well-defined brand, find out what they do well in their business and who their target audience is. Write those things down.

Concept

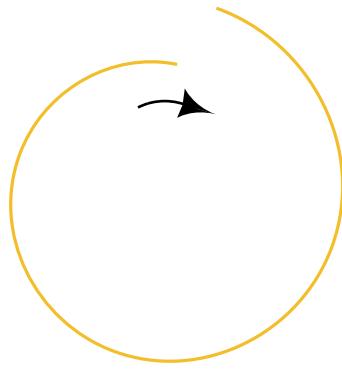
Concept = brief + client's brand + inspiration.
Write down some possible website concepts.

Style

Style is: The essence of the brand + The purpose of the site + Your personal tastes

Look at the five styles and pick one that you think will work with the three factors above.

- Full-color photo
- Duotone
- B&W photo
- Illustration
- Collage



First pass

Color

Think about the concept, brand, and style, then pick one of the five color styles from the color chapter that you think might work with it.

Typography

(n/a for this first pass)

Composition

Make sure you use a grid to give your design structure. Use copy from the current site and lay it out on the screen. Is there a composition from chapter four that might work well for the amount of copy?

Hierarchy

(n/a for this first pass)

Proximity

(n/a for this first pass)

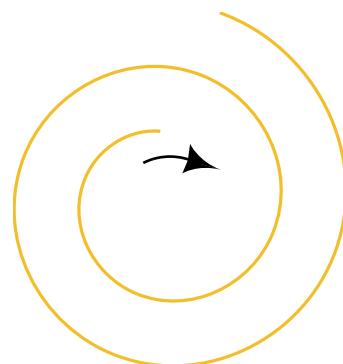
Alignment

Decide how you will align your copy. (Flush left, flush right...etc.)

Refinement Spiral

2nd Pass

This is what the 2nd pass around the spiral looks like.



Research

Completed during the 1st pass.

Brand

Completed during the 1st pass.

Concept

Maybe you have three concepts you're considering, but you like one more than others. Try using that one.

Style

Let's say you picked the full-color photo style. Start looking on the web for photos you can use.

Color

In your 1st pass, you picked split-complement as your color style. Start trying out individual colors now. Do your colors work with the site's concept, brand, and style?

Typography

Take some copy from the client's existing website and paste it into your Photoshop document. Pick one font for your headlines and one for body copy. Use Typekit or fonts from [this list](#) of 30 quality Google fonts. Pick fonts that you think support your concept.

Composition

Use the compositions from chapter 4 as an inspiration and start making a grid in Photoshop with empty rectangles to represent where content might go.

Hierarchy

Start to look at the rectangles from earlier and consider if some rectangles are more important than others (that's a good thing).

Proximity

(n/a)

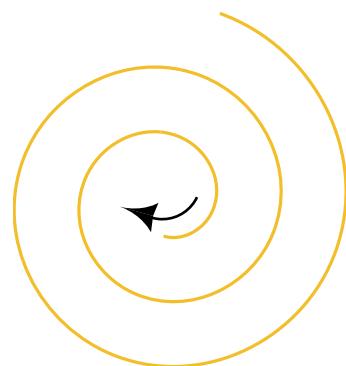
Alignment

Make sure the rectangles from the previous step are aligned.

Refinement Spiral

3rd Pass

This is what the 3rd pass around the spiral looks like.



Research

Completed during the 1st pass.

Brand

Check to see if your design still supports the brand.

Concept

Check to see if your design still supports the concept.

Style

You've picked the full-color photo style, found photos that will work well in your comp, and you've started adding and removing them to see what works well.

Color

You picked some split-complementary colors you like. It supports the site's concept, brand, and style.

Typography

Are your headlines larger than your subheadlines? Good. Is your body copy easy to read? Good.

Composition

Insert all of the website copy into the composition. The more important stuff should get more real estate on the page.

Hierarchy

Some sections should call attention to themselves more than others.

Proximity

Are elements that are about the same thing, near one another? They probably should be.

Alignment

Make sure your copy is aligned according to how you decided during the first pass.

Refinement Spiral

4th Pass

This is what the 4th pass around the spiral looks like.



Research

Completed during the 1st pass.

Completed design

Brand

Check to see if your design still supports the brand.

After moving things around a lot, the hierarchy now makes sense.

Concept

Check to see if your design still supports the concept. In particular, do the colors and style work well together?

Proximity

All related elements are near one another.

Style

You found photos that work well together and support everything else on the page.

Alignment

Everything is aligned!

Color

You tweaked the colors a bit. But it still supports the site's concept, brand, and style.

Typography

You changed out a font for a new one. You're happy with your font choices now.

Composition

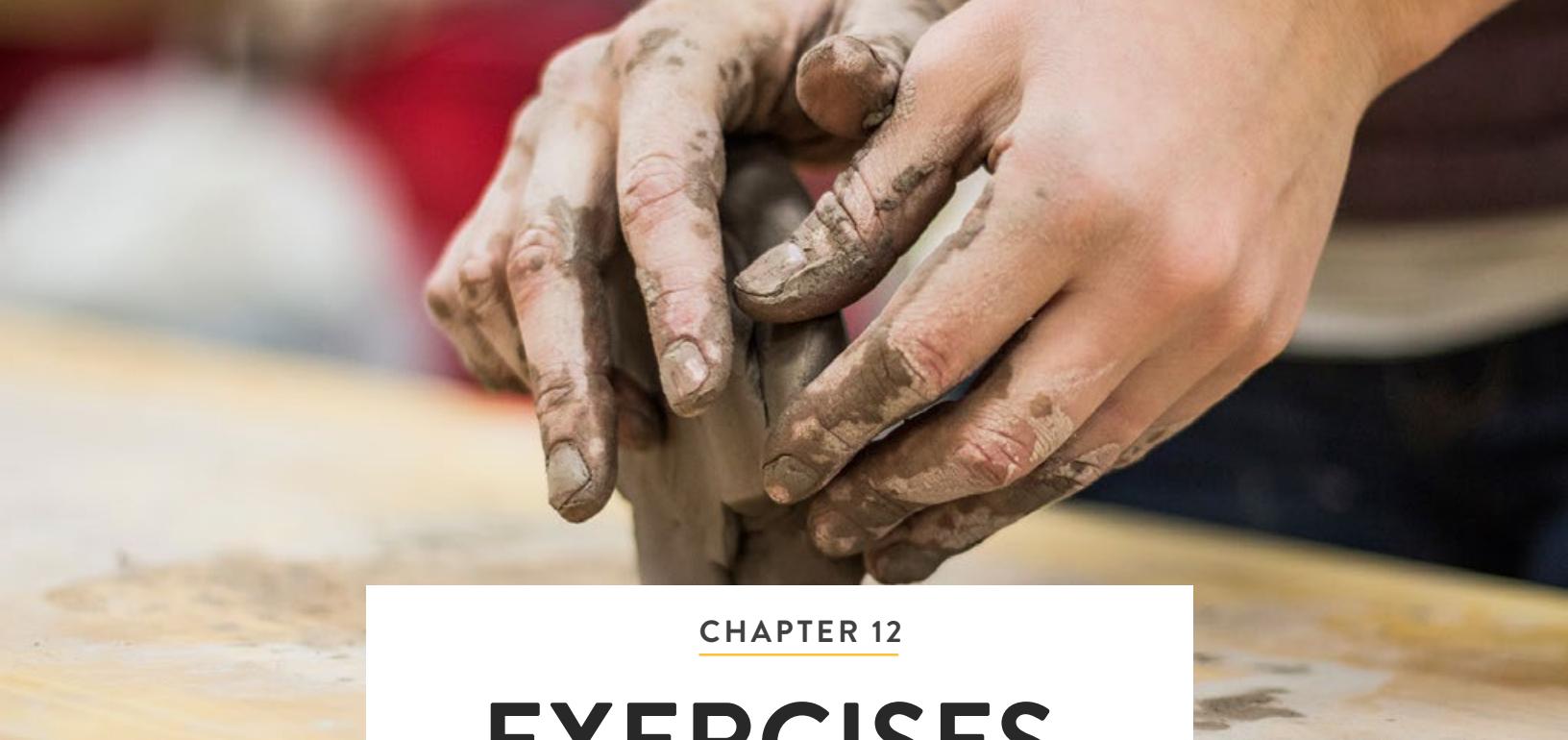
Adjust the composition as needed.

Hierarchy

Chapter summary

To prevent yourself from spinning your wheels, follow the ten steps as you design. Try to do them in order, at least in the beginning. As you keep going around the spiral, your design will get refined. There will be times you'll get frustrated, but knowing you're following a process should reduce that feeling.

Lastly, as a beginner, you have less RAM in your head than a professional designer. So write down all the design decisions you're making. Copy and save [this outline](#) and jot down your notes in your preferred note taking app.



CHAPTER 12

EXERCISES

“Practice puts brains in your muscles.”

– Sam Snead



How to Approach these Exercises

As I mentioned in the very beginning of the book, the best way to get better is to practice. On the following pages are five creative briefs. They may seem intimidating, but I encourage you to try to execute them by using the Design by Numbers framework.

Good luck!

Creative Brief One



Client:

Disney

Background:

The Pirates of the Caribbean franchise started in 2003. There have been four films to date and Disney has decided to do a fifth. It will have the same stars as the other films. They often have a site for their movies but they're putting a little more money into this one.

Who are we influencing?

The target demographic is young people ages 10-34.

The Problem:

The client doesn't think they have a problem that needs solving, rather the site is part of a larger budget to promote the movie. We just need to make the site as compelling as possible.

Competitors:

Other films opening the same weekend.

What do customers believe about the films?

Some people think the franchise has run its course and are weary of another movie. It might be a challenge to make it seem like this 5th film is new and different.

Deliverables:

One homepage (for now)

Live site or mockup?

The client wants to see a look and feel execution of the homepage and we'll go from there.

Creative Brief Two



Client: HCB

Background:

The client is an online fashion boutique.

How they describe themselves:

"H.C.B. is for every girl who loves getting dressed in the morning. For the lady who loves to laugh, to smile, and to feel beautiful, both inside and out. It's for the woman who surrounds herself with wonderful friends, family, and significant others, and goes through life sharing her experiences with all of them. She's sometimes professional, sometimes casual, sometimes modest, and sometimes likes to look a little sexy and have a great night out. And this is her closet. May she always love every piece and every moment she has in it."

Who are we influencing?

Young women ages 15-22.

The Problem:

HCB recently conducted a survey which found that their primary customer base is

developing more sophisticated tastes at an earlier age. Whereas before their customers would start with HCB and then move on to H&M sometime in college, now they are shifting toward "cooler" stores much earlier. The brand voice is weak and the homepage doesn't feel cohesive.

Competitors:

Charlotte Rouse, Forever 21, H&M, ASOS.

What do customers believe about HCB?

Older girls think HCB is for young girls and tweens. They don't like it the way they did when they were younger.

What would we like them to believe?

That HCB can go toe-to-toe with Forever 21 and H&M. However, they don't want to be so hip that it makes parents uncomfortable. It can't be too edgy because their clothes aren't.

Deliverables:

One homepage. It is not a responsive site. The client wants three design options to choose from, and this will be one of them.

Live site or mockup?

The client eventually wants a real site, but this phase is to determine look and feel. That is, they want us to pitch them what the final site might look like, including photography style, links, content, and anything else we think is necessary.

Creative Brief Three



Competitors:

Patagonia, Eddie Bauer, LL Bean

What do customers believe about REI?

Older people like them, younger people are indifferent or don't like them.

Deliverables:

A homepage concept reflecting the new brand direction.

Live site or mockup?

Mockup.

Client:

REI

Background:

REI is a privately held American retail store organized as a consumers' cooperative, selling outdoor recreation gear, sporting goods, and clothing via some 143 retail stores in 36 states, catalogs, and the Internet.

Who are we influencing?

Millennials. But not at the expense of loyal Baby Boomers.

The Problem:

REI is doing fine with Baby Boomers. They've grown up with REI and trust them. However, surveys conducted with millennials have indicated that REI isn't for them - it's a store that their dads like. The task is to modernize the brand without alienating the Baby Boomers. The client believes Patagonia straddles this line very well.

Creative Brief Four



sophisticated brand.

Deliverables:

One desktop product page.

Live site or mockup?

Live site. Use real product shots, even though they will be replaced later with images on their server.

Client:

Ping

Background:

Ping is an American manufacturer of golf equipment, based in Phoenix, AZ. Ping was founded by Karsten Solheim, following a career as an engineer at the General Electric company.

Who are we influencing?

Golfers of all ages.

The Problem:

Ping has respectable clubs but they don't have the brand sophistication of competitors like TaylorMade or Titleist. They're updating their brand and a new website is part of that update.

Competitors:

TaylorMade, Titleist, Callaway.

What do customers believe about Ping?

They like their clubs and customer service. Customers don't report a problem per-se but when surveys are taken, Ping is not seen as a

Creative Brief Five



Few buyers know anything about them when looking for a home.

Deliverables:

One desktop and mobile product page. The site will be responsive.

Live site or mockup?

Mockup.

Client:

Bellwether Mortgage

Background:

Bellwether Mortgage is the opposite of the big faceless lender. Most of their lenders have lived in the areas they service for decades. A large portion of their revenue helps housing initiatives for low and moderate income families in diverse, thriving communities.

Who are we influencing?

New home buyers.

The Problem:

The advantage Bellwether has over everyone else is their handholding and customer service. It's what they're known for. However, none of this is reflected in their marketing material or on their site.

Competitors:

Stearns Lending, Caliber Home Loans, LoanDepot.

What do clients believe about Bellwether?

Thanks!

I tried to make this guide in a way that was easier for my developer friends to understand. If anything is unclear or needs further explanation, please let me know. There was a lot to cover in this book, so pat yourself on the back. And now that you're all done, start practicing!

best, Mason