Reflection

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I have done some designing of websites as freelance work, and have done a few full websites by utilizing themes up until this point, so I think that my design inspiration comes from general trends in web design lately. Some of these trends require a lot more Javascript knowhow to accomplish the interactivity of a lot of modern sites. As far as styling is concerned, I've utilized the large hero image and bold text that is often found these days. I've tried to use defined sections using bold color but I'm realizing that I may be using too much color. Websites can appear very clean with lots of white and negative space as long as the text is properly aligned and consistent.

I would say that at this point I am most proud of the initial page landing along with my typeface choices of Cubano/PT Sans. I had used Cubano in creating a logo for Jason, so I decided it would be perfect for large headers. Otherwise PT Sans is my general body copy for the rest of the page. I needed a typeface with a lot of character since I already knew I was going to be using flat spaces of color, and the Lost-Type Co-Op never fails in that objective.

My first logo for Spokes wasn't very good for the medium, and I'm finding an inconsistency in the color being displayed in my hero image and the same web-safe color being used as the background color of a DIV. These are easily solvable though, so I feel that from a design perspective I am doing alright.

Sadly, at this point I haven't fully actualized a wireframe of mine yet. I find myself getting most of the nav,header, and hero set the way I want, but I was running into issues getting the other content DIVs to align properly and stay at the correct width. After a 1:1 and a little Googling I've figured out the issue so I think I'll be able to create my structure quicker and style it to work correctly as well.

At this point we haven't dealt much with Responsiveness besides using 'ems' and percentages. I've tried to use those values as much as possible throughout the page because it seems to be easier to adjust down the road and its not as finicky. I think in the next few weeks we will be jumping in 'media-querys' so that our pages will be much more flexible for all devices.

Critique

- Layout
  - Lately the one-page trend has been really popular, and the research shows that people are more comfortable scrolling down long pages as opposed to switching pages and as often. This allows the designer to create a single 'story' or experience a lot easier. SquareSpace uses scroll effects, animated/Java slideshows (that are much more engaging than a standard carousel) and a simply layout. It seems to be a mostly 3 column layout but it doesn't strictly adhere to that grid since the scroll effects act as almost second windows.
- Typography
  - SquareSpace elected to use a hairline/thin typeface for its headers which works quite well. Simply using scale to indicate headlines as opposed to thicker faces. The typographic color is pleasant throughout,the headlines don't seem too heavy and the body copy uses a slight grey even when it is a compact paragraph which doesn't stop the eye anywhere for too long.
    - Looking at their code shows that they used the Gotham family. A classic by any means, but I don't know that I've seen it as often in web uses. It definitely works here however.
- Navigation
  - Along the top center are 'pseudo-anchors'. Instead of dragging you down the page to the appropriate headline, they instead switch the displayed page to highlight more features about SquareSpace. A great way to offer a tour of their services.
  - Theres a 'hamburger' icon at the top right that when clicked reveals the rest of the pages needed to sign-up, log-in, and further information. I think that at this point the 'hamburger' is ubiquitous in web design so most will understand it. However, hiding the majority of the functions behind it may be a mistake. Doing so creates a much more elegant 'cover' site though, and making the user see how wonderful their website could be is the main selling point for SquareSpace. I think a case could be made for both options.
- Overall Flow
  - The flow is quite wonderful. A smooth scroll effect is used as you move down the page and the colorful content that moves in and out keeps interest as you move. However, when you get to the bottom of the page, you either have to scroll back to the top (which takes longer than desired due to the scroll effects) or you click the SquareSpace logo in order to reload the homepage so that you can look at the other feature pages. The only other option is to use the call to action labeled 'Get Started' which is a good idea, but if the user needs a little more convincing they need to a better way to return to exploring.

- Layout
  - There appears to be an underlying structure of 7-8 columns and some content is placed using the left edge of its parent DIV. However the page itself doesn't scroll down at all and all of the content is displayed in the initial page load. There is not an established top necessarily either, as the elements on the page don't align with each other in any kind of rational way.
- Typography
  - They have used Helvetica,Arial,Verdana,Sans-Serif throughout the page but the scale doesn't change and doesn't engage in any way. Things that should be smaller, or placed below other things like annotations or footer information are floated the the far left above some more relevant content.
- Navigation
  - On first glance, most of the links are placed in small paragraphs relevant to the page they link to. They have the default blue and underlined appearance which makes them easy to find, but not optimal by any means. When you jump to any of these pages there is no nav bar to return to where you were, so you must use the Forward/Back buttons to navigate throughout.
  - After looking a little more I realized that some of the images themselves are separate links too. The student portal is linked by the 'fuzzball' image that is placed on the page. It isn't labeled and the image isn't relevant to where you would desire to go. From a user standpoint this is strange and could be frustrating.
- Overall Flow
  - The flow is quite jumbled. My eye first hits the large blue headline "Center for Advanced Visual Studies" attemps to move left to look at some body copy, but then moves back right to the .GIF above the headline that doesn't really serve any function besides being a flash distraction. My eye then falls on the .GIF of a man waving his arm around, I actually like this image itself, but it isn't placed correctly and using multiple gifs in a single pane can be extremely disorienting.
  - Perhaps MIT thinks it is being 'avante-garde' by not following established design ideas, but this seems to fall flat on its face.