Unit 9 | C R I T I Q U E

REFLECTION

Site Inspiration: My goal for this circuit was to update my creative portfolio. A lot of the more modern portfolio sites utilized a one-page site design. I really liked the clean and streamlined look and polished feel and the break from the more traditional multi-page layout. I knew that with the amount of work I wanted to display I would probably need more than one page, but I wanted to incorporate the best elements of a one-page design and pare down extraneous material.

Two sites that caught my eye from the beginning were Design Director Nathan Riley's personal site (http://nrly.co/) and Infinvison Design Agency's website (http://infinvision.com/). Infinvision was a great resource in showing how to streamline content on multiple pages and effectively using sections within the page to delineate importance and add visual interest. Both websites have a clean layout with a relatively simple color palette and a professional feel, which is what I strove to emulate in my own site design.

Best Of – Personal Site Design: The part of my website that I feel was a big accomplishment and a definite step forward in the development process was the design of my personal logo. Initially, my "logo" was simply styled text inside my navigation, but the overall look seemed unfinished. After several iterations with just typography, I used Photoshop to pair a small, flat illustration with text that had a cleaner look to it. The addition to my logo was simple, but refining it helped me to focus the look and feel I wanted out of my logo and helped me to pin down the accompanying title font for the name.

Design Struggles –Site Design Process: One of my biggest struggles in the design process was deciding how to layout and structure my site and finding a good compromise between the one and multi-page site design. A one-page site was my ideal, but there seemed no middle ground with the amount of work I wanted to display: I could either have a site that seemed to scroll forever or create a separate project page for all my work, which would create a too many sub pages to the site, something that I was trying to get away from. It boiled down to priorities – looking over my projects and choosing the best examples of to display and deciding what core information was necessary. Once I finalized my design and found a solution for a gallery (the lightbox plug-in) that could showcase my images on the same page, all that was left was how to make my wireframes come to life.

Design Struggles – Page Development: When I realized I wanted to use the lightbox javascript to display the images for my graphic design and photography pages, I was overwhelmed, both with the different options to choose from and also in how to incorporate the different files and code in my HTML and CSS. I kept having the problem of the images showing up, but the lightbox script not running, in addition to the sizing being off. After the 4th or 5th different plug-in still didn't work, I went back to basics. My solution came in simplifying what I was looking for and incorporating a very basic plug-in with a detailed step-by-step that did not call for anything beyond basic HTML/CSS understanding to know how to incorporate it into my code.

Revelations – Learning From Responsive Design: Making my page responsive really helped me to see how important organization was in my code. Being able to quickly find the places where measurements needed to be made relative or what sections needed to be changed in my media queries was invaluable. Without clearly defining sections with tabbing or commenting in my CSS, it would have taken much longer to finish my projects, plus the possibility of problems being missed would have been that much greater. Responsive design has also helped me to really have a clear vision of how I want my site to look since consistency is key in making my page mobile-friendly. This focus has made it easier to work on my media queries and prioritize my content.

REVIEWS

Group 1 // http://squarespace.com/home/overview/

The squarespace site is very visually pleasing at first glance. The color palette is very neutral and serves to highlight the dynamic content within the viewport. The navigation, though small, is one of the first things you see and the links are padded so the user has a good amount of clickable space. The hierarchy of the page is well defined, with large images, larger headlines and sub-headings and body text with good readability due to line spacing. The sans-serif typeface helps not to distract from the content and feels modern, especially at the bottom where there is only text and flat icons.

I really like how the different projects are displayed with scrolling text on the right and a fixed image on the left. The flow is intuitive and follows a comprehensive one-page design with top to bottom scrolling. The site is well executed and the overall user experience is positive.

Group 2 // http://cavs.mit.edu/

There are so many things going on with this site, that it's hard to know what to focus on. There seems to be no organization or hierarchy, aside from the title text placed in the center of the page; all other text is the same size (too small for easy readability) except for the links, which are even small than the body text. The typography is thankfully simple, and the blue of the title text is where the eye keeps being drawn, but the images that are the same size as the heading take away from its importance and disrupt the visual rhythm of the page. The site's flow seems to go a big circle around the title text in the center, as there is no indication of where the user should go beyond the blue of different active links. The navigation is non-existent, but luckily is stuck in the top left of the page, seeming more like a happy accident than thoughtful placement.

The overall feel is of confusion, and a negative user experience since relevant information is so hard to find.