

Abstract Browsing with Rafael Rozendaal

by Marvin Jordan

This site is DIS Magazine, an online publication that explores contemporary issues and politics, primarily related to Internet culture. Many articles are reactions to mainstream media, so it seems almost necessary to feature new artists that are exploring similar topics in their works as well.

The site is designed in a way where the topics are pretty bizarre but also refreshing for radical contemporary artists, designers, and intellectual readers. I would guess the typical age of readers is at a higher reading level. It seems accessible for older people who may have interest in technology but are not familiar with the newer formats of click-hole sites or startling Flash-powered animations.

A goal of any publication is to achieve a cohesive viewing experience, from the content to the specific visual qualities of the accompanying images. In this particular article, Rafael is known for his self-proclaimed 'post-internet' art, as he relies on the Web as his medium (he auctions the hosting rights to the sites he creates).

This interview is set up in a pretty standard way, featuring a picture of whoever's being interviewed (in this case, Rafael Rozendaal), followed by his artwork, in a single column of text. The column is centered on the page, with paragraphs of justified text.

Along with images of him and his work, DIS also features a Chrome extension that turns every feature of a webpage into blocks of random color. Embedding this feature into the interview is a nice way to let readers experience and interact with his work directly. (This instant interactivity allows the ownership of these works to be dealt with in a separate and distant realm, one that has already existed in this way for decades.)

It becomes easy to imagine that the webpage must be built on a 4-column grid, and this could be the case, however the text also seems to be layered on a virtually shadowed sheet of paper, a style similar to when viewing a PDF or MS Word document.

Maybe because DIS's philosophy is so Internet-centric, the idea is to not create in-your-face online graphics but for the experience to serve as a passive platform for the content itself.

But... don't let this fool you into thinking there is not a deliberate aesthetic to the seemingly default typefaces (Helvetica, Myriad Pro?), white foreground and grey, subtly shadowed backgrounds. This plays into the idea of blending the typical, even ubiquitous online experience into the pieces that feature criticisms of this particular environment.

Something else worth noting aside from its intentional ubiquity is the primary use of linear scrolling. This is integral to all deeply engrossing online consumption, automatically making the site very easy to navigate or just poke around. Tumblr follows this very format, and has won several awards for the simplicity of its web and app designs.

<http://dismagazine.com/discussion/73124/rafael-rozendaal-abstract-browsing/>