

ISS 740 – Fundamentals of Web-based Communication

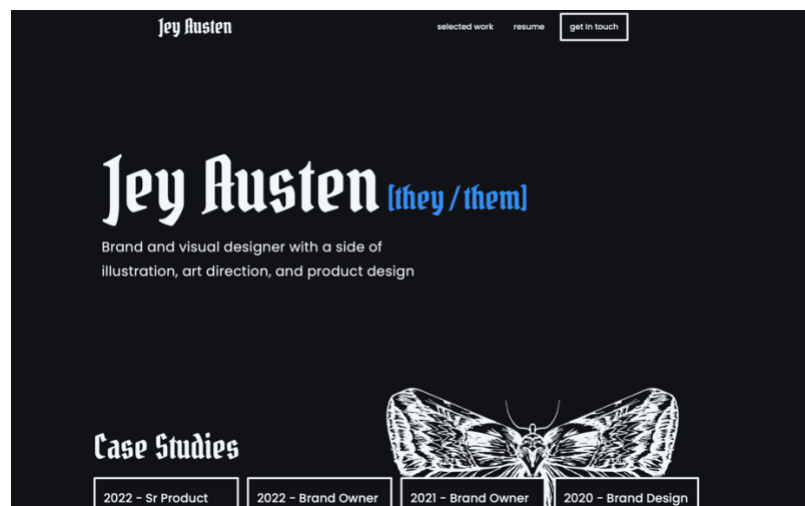
Midterm Documentation – Personal Portfolio Site

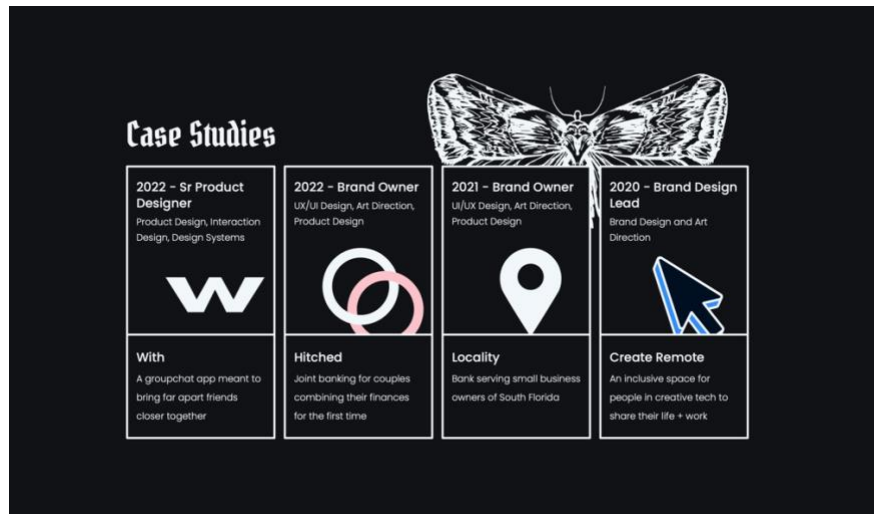
Zelo Zhou – mz171@duke.edu

Visual Research:

Crafting a personal portfolio is akin to painting a self-portrait in the digital age. Seeking inspiration, I looked into a variety of portfolios, spanning different industries and identities. From tech designers to wedding photographers and from bio artists to HCI scholars, the diversity was immense. Each design, whether minimalist, vibrant, experimental, or data-rich, offered unique insights. This exploration highlighted the myriad ways professionals convey their journeys, and within this array, I found the sparks for my own digital presentation.

1) [Jey Austen](#) – Visual Designer





- **Layout:**

The landing page is structured with a clear hierarchy. The name "Jey Austen" is the most dominant, immediately establishing the identity of the portfolio owner.

Navigation links are positioned at the top right, a horizontal placement that's familiar to users.

The sub-heading beneath the name provides a brief introduction about professional expertise.

The moth graphic acts as a central visual anchor, drawing attention to the case studies section below.

Case studies are presented in a grid format, organized chronologically, providing clarity and making it easy for users to navigate through the various projects.

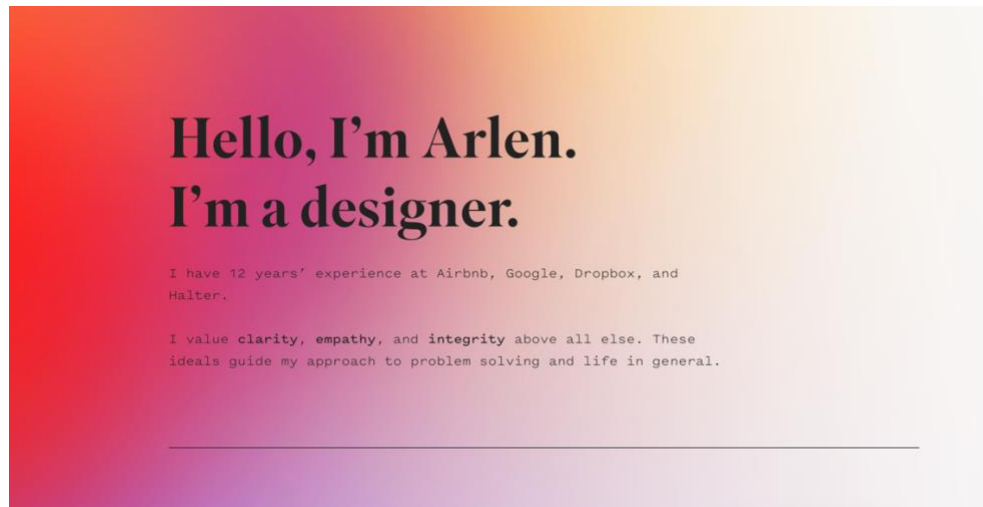
- **Color, Fonts, and Visuals:**

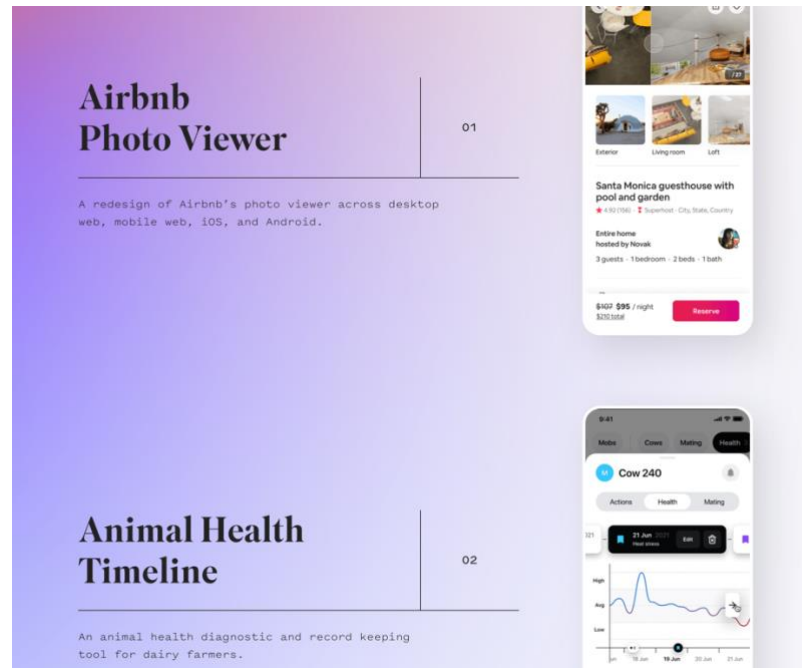
The black and white conveys a sense of density and full-bodiedness. The font *Moyenage* reflect a sense that resembles medieval castle, while the *avenir* provides sense of modernity and simplicity. This illustrated the designers' personal style of modern minimalism but also with a vintage, elegant, sophisticated heritage. The detailed moth illustration acts as a contrast to the otherwise minimalist design, adding

an artistic touch. It could symbolize transformation or growth, a fitting metaphor for a portfolio.

In sum, this design provided a strong professional sense, while also presented the designer's artistic styles and aesthetics.

2) [Arlen McCluskey](#) – UX Designer





- **Layout:**

Arlen McCluskey uses a modern and minimalist design style that reflects his role as a digital UX designer. The top design has a centralized layout, with the main text positioned as the focal point. Information about experience and personal values follows underneath, organized clearly and legibly.

The bottom design showcases examples directly. It uses a clean grid layout, combining text descriptions on the left with visual representations on the right. This layout facilitates easy scanning and understanding of the showcased work. There are now subpages and therefore no navigation sections.

- **Color & Fonts:**

A modern, sans-serif font is utilized, which communicates a contemporary and professional feel. The top design uses a gradient that transitions from a warm pink to a cooler purple. This creates a visually appealing backdrop that captures attention and brings a sense of warmth and creativity. The general feeling is light, warm, and interactive.

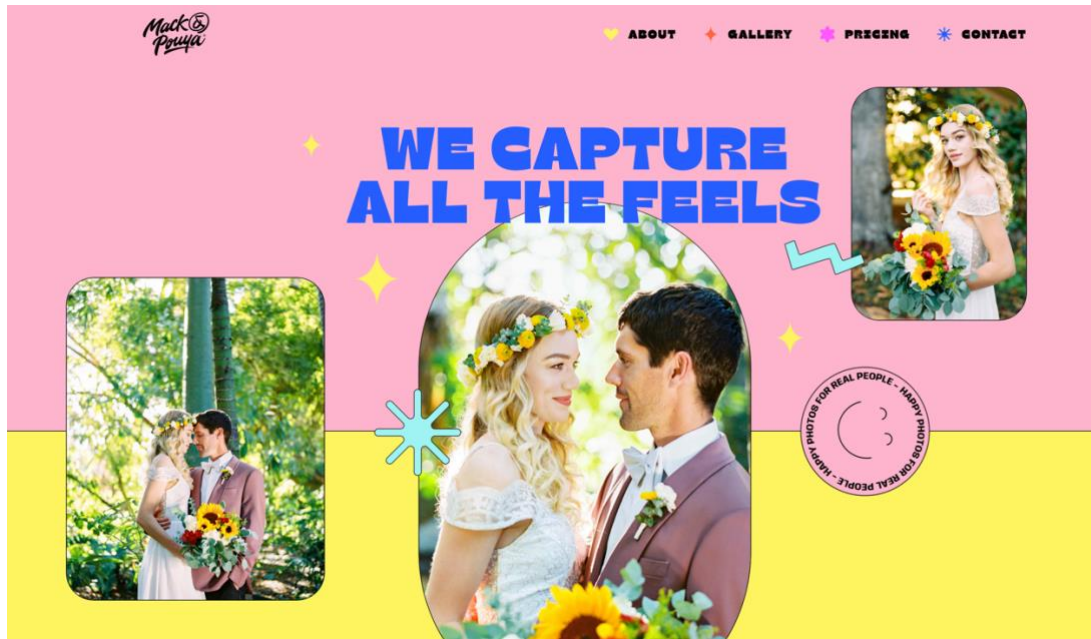
3) [Vivian Xu](#) – Bio artist & University scholar



- **Layout:**

The website embraces a minimalist design ethos. The monochromatic color palette is reminiscent of many modern portfolio sites by experimental artists, focusing the viewer's attention on the content (GIF in the middle) itself rather than on distracting embellishments. The site's layout, particularly with the navigation bar to the right, reflects a structure that's both intuitive and familiar to most users, ensuring easy navigation. The site's visual design leans heavily into the principles of industrial minimalism. From the grayscale palette to the clean lines separating content, everything is pared down to its essential form. This design choice complements the nature of Vivian Xu's work, which itself intersects the realms of the organic and the manufactured. The overall design resonates with the experimental nature of Xu's work. The simple design choices ensure that the artworks, which are deeply experimental and boundary-pushing, remain the focal point. Moreover, the visual cohesion between the site's design and the content it hosts is notable—it feels like an extension of Xu's artistic expression.

4) [Mock & Pouya](#) – Commercial Photographer



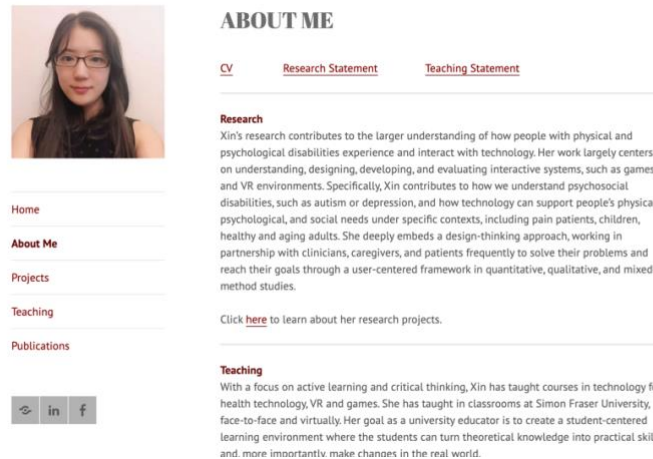
- **Layout:**

The page layout is divided into distinct sections, each serving a unique purpose. The prominent circle in the center acts as the main focal point, drawing attention to the intimate moment between the couple. The visual impression of the landing page is distinct from designers and artists, in the sense of cartoon-ish, warm, and young. The navigation menu is horizontally aligned at the top, ensures intuitive browsing. The shapes of the galleries are diverse with unique icons (heart, star, snowflake, and compass). These icons add a playful touch and might help users quickly associate each section with its function or content.

- **Color & Fonts:**

The website uses a vibrant and cheerful color palette, with dominant pastel pink and bright blue, complemented by pops of yellow. These colors evoke feelings of happiness, warmth, and romance. The pastel hues imbue the design with a sense of joy and positivity. The combination of pink and yellow can be associated with warmth and happiness, which aligns well with the "capturing feelings" theme of the website. The fonts showcase softness and aligns with the sense of weddings.

5) [Xin Tong](#) – HCI Scholar



- **Layout:**

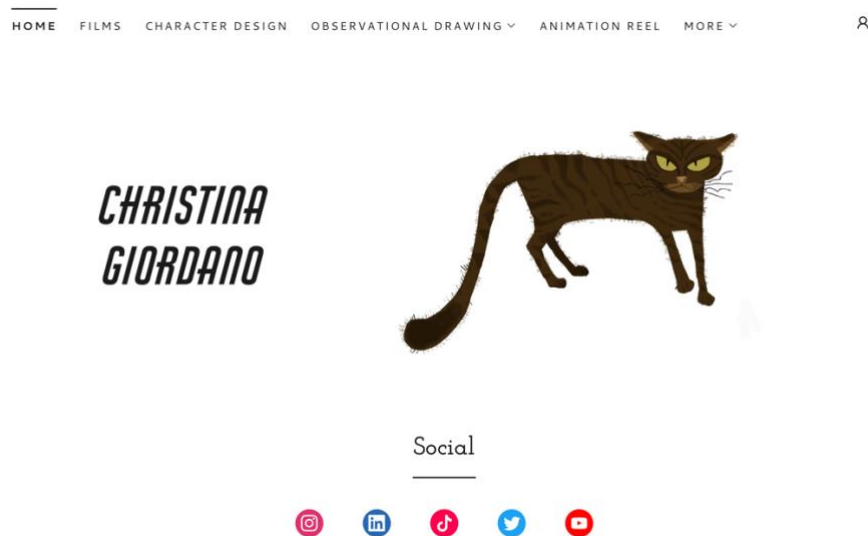
The layout is organized, with a clear division between the profile picture, the title, the main content, and the sidebar navigation. This well-structured design conveys a sense of academic professionalism. The primary shape used in the layout is the rectangle. From the sidebar to the content blocks, everything adheres to a rectangular format, giving the page a sense of structure and order. The consistent use of rectangles also aids in visually compartmentalizing information, making it more digestible for the user. The layout follows a two-column format, with the main content on the right and secondary navigation on the left. This clear demarcation ensures a straightforward user experience, guiding visitors intuitively through the page's content. The generous use of white space further emphasizes a clean design, making it less cluttered and more readable.

- **Color & Fonts:**

The minimalistic use of color ensures that there aren't any distractions. Links are highlighted in a subtle blue, which is a universal signifier for clickable content, making the navigation straightforward. The fonts chosen appear to be Times New Roman for the body text. The combination is classic for academic and professional settings. Serif fonts, often associated

with print and scholarly works, give a sense of credibility and formality, especially when used in titles.

6) Christina Giordano – Animator



- Layout:

The illustration of the cat immediately positions the site within the realms of cartooning and animation. Its exaggerated features and playful stance are reminiscent of animated characters, setting the tone for the site. The design is streamlined with a lot of white space, which emphasizes the essential elements: the name, navigation links, the animated figure, and the social icons. This uncluttered layout is a hallmark of minimalist design. Despite the playful nature of the cat illustration, the layout is organized and symmetrical, lending an air of professionalism. The navigation is clearly presented at the top horizontally, and the alignment of the name with the social section below is balanced.

- Color & Fonts:

The muted colors of the cat illustration—specifically the earthy browns—are not overly bright or saturated, subtly nodding to a more mature, possibly professional animation style rather than a child-focused one. The color scheme is restricted, relying heavily on the

white background with black text and a few colors in the illustration and icons. This limited palette aligns well with minimalist design principles. The bold, uppercase font used for the name "CHRISTINA GIORDANO" has a modern feel, yet its chunky nature also alludes to the world of animation and cartoons, fitting the theme of the page, a great balance of the playful style of animation and professionalism.

7) Summary

Beyond these examples, I also looked at dozens of other portfolio sites. Through a comprehensive exploration of diverse portfolios across fields such as visual design, UX, bio-artistry, photography, HCI academia, and animation, distinctive design elements and thematic choices emerge. Each portfolio offers a unique blend of professional and artistic identity. Harnessing these inspirations can pave the way for a design that resonates with my personal and professional journey, positioning myself distinctively in the vast digital landscape.

There are several major takeaways:

1. Professional sense vs. Personal (experimental) sense:

Design of the visual layout of the website would showcase the utility direction of the site. Some choose to present a more professional (according to their own industry-specific identity) feeling while some tends to be more experimental.

2. Font:

Font plays a pivotal role in visual presentation. It not only conveys style and sets tone, but also harmoniously complements other design elements, ensuring readability and enhancing user experience. A cohesive font selection strengthens brand identity and effectively communicates the intended message.

3. Navigation:

The navigation section is crucial in guiding users seamlessly. While horizontal layouts often exude a corporate aura, vertical ones impart a personal touch. Regardless of orientation, ensuring a clean, intuitive design is pivotal, facilitating ease of use and enhancing overall user experience.

4. *Landing Page:*

The landing page is pivotal, immediately establishing a brand's impression and purpose. A clean, navigational layout prioritizes user guidance and simplicity, while a complex, presentational design showcases depth and detailed content. Both approaches aim to capture attention but differ in their method and user experience focus.

Design Documentation:

1) Landing Page:

Reflecting on the design choices for my site, it became clear that a one-size-fits-all approach wouldn't work for me. Jay Austen and Arlen McClusky have masterfully tailored their sites to reflect their strong professional orientations. Their decisiveness is commendable, but my identity doesn't quite align with a singular professional narrative. While Jay's and Arlen's platforms are focused on professional goals, my intention leans towards a more holistic presentation.

I aimed for versatility. The term "omni-adaptable" comes to mind. My site isn't a static representation for career development; I hope it be a fluid space that adapts and resonates with a broad audience. Be it an artist, a professional, or an occasional visitor, the site's design aims to be inclusive.

Drawing inspiration, Christiana's and Vivian's platforms exemplify a delightful mix of the artsy yet approachable. While I admire their aesthetics, I wanted to ensure that my design didn't alienate those unfamiliar with art jargon or nuances. Cleanliness and simplicity became a key

guideline. This isn't about minimalism for minimalism's sake; it's more about clarity and intention.

2) Font: Monomaniac One

Among hundreds of fonts available in Google Fonts, I eventually choose **Monomaniac One**.

Duke University

Figure 1 Sample Text



Monomaniac One felt modern and clean, kind of like popular sans-serif fonts, such as Avenir and Montserrat. But what set it apart was its unique flair.

Looking at the image, you can see it's not typical sans-serif. Each letter has its own character but still fits nicely with the others. It's not as sharp and somewhat intimidating like typical industrial minimalism font. It's distinct without being distracting, which I think is important when you're presenting content.

What I really liked about Monomaniac One were its rounded edges. They add this friendly touch to it. This was exactly the vibe I wanted for my site – something that's easy-going, a bit playful, but still keeps things looking neat and professional.

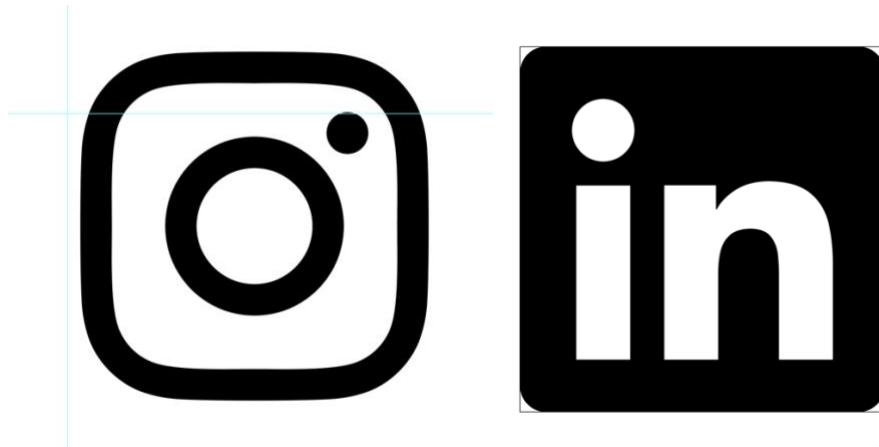
All in all, I felt Monomaniac One hit the sweet spot between looking fresh and being functional and friendly. It's modern, but with a twist, and aligns well with how I want my site to feel: open, approachable, but with a sprinkle of fun.

3) Navigation section

One of the major feelings I had from case studies was that horizontal, top-positioned navigation bar tend to have a more corporate, professional feeling, whereas vertically ordered. In this regard, I decided to use vertical navigation bar to present a more individualized visual sense.

4) Icons

To ensure visual consistency across elements, I took out the icons for links to my social media and added some visual twists to them. I pulled their edges and turned them into rounded ones to align with my font and the general visual sense that I want to present to my audience. I hope this **rounded-ness or spherical feeling** would present a more personal feeling as opposed to professional feeling.

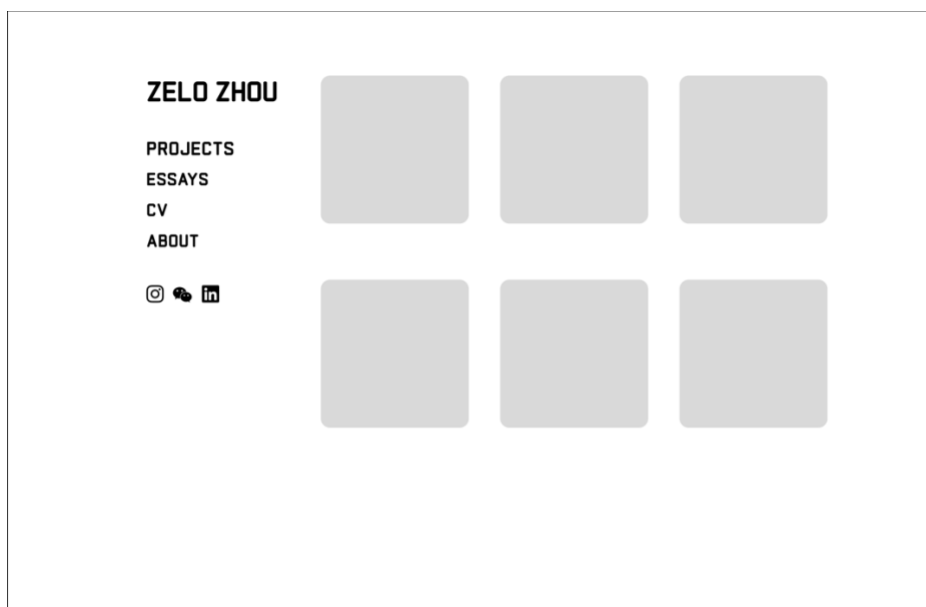


5) Layout Prototyping



I made this polygon on the left in this shape because I feel like it can balance the weight of the page. It stretches the focal area of the page to the right and work well with the left-leaning navigation section. My idea is that it can be a mask layer and the image changes as season changes or maybe even time of the day.

The icon on the top right is a Chinese-English switch button for bilingual audiences.



ZELO ZHOU

PROJECTS

ESSAYS

CV

ABOUT



Duke University

M.A. in Digital Art History & Computational Media

Durham, USA

Aug 2023-May 2025

Contemporary Media Theory; Web-based Multimedia Communication; Digital Humanities; Spatial Data Analysis

Duke Kunshan University

B.A. in Digital Media and Arts (by DKU)

Suzhou, China

Aug 2019-May 2023

Media, Arts, and Critical Theory; Culture and Industry; Contemporary Political Ideologies; Sociology Theory and Society; Media and Arts Practicum; Methods of Historical Research; New Media and Society; Global Media History; Arts Management; Programming and Data Structures

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ABOUT



I think this clean and flexible structure align with my expectation for the website visually. It also allows room for future updates and iterations.

6) Coding

Clean semantics in html:

I made some choices of elements such as `<nav>` for navigation, `<header>` for the heading section, and `<div>` for grouping content. These elements offer context. For instance, `<nav>` tells both developers and user agents like screen readers that this section contains navigation links. All my links are wrapped in anchor tags with a clear href attribute pointing to the destination, such as `PROJECTS`. This is not only good practice but also ensures that the links are recognizable and usable by all, including those using assistive technologies.

Responsiveness with Media Queries:

I was hoping to achieve some kind of responsiveness for not just laptops but also tablets and phones.

```
@media (max-width: 991px) {  
  .header {  
    max-width: 100%;  
    flex-wrap: wrap;  
    margin-top: 0px;  
    align-items: flex-start;  
  }  
}
```

This particular media query targets screen widths of up to 991 pixels because I wanted to make certain layout changes for devices that might fall within the range of tablets or phone screens. For instance, within this query, I adjusted the header to occupy the maximum width available and wrap its content if there isn't enough horizontal space. This ensures that the header elements don't become squished or overlap, preserving the user experience.

```
.main-image {  
    aspect-ratio: 1.22;  
    ...  
}
```

The **aspect-ratio** property here ensures that the image maintains a consistent shape and size, which is vital for preserving the visual integrity of the site, especially when viewed on various devices.

In general, I used combinations of flexbox and specific value for display. The site is still under construction and many sections are currently unfinished. My plan for the future is probably to build it on hosting service platform such as Honstinger or Wix instead of hosting it on Github with index.htmls, considering the convenience of easy iterations and online hosting.