WEB PORTFOLIOS THAT WORK

PRESENTED BY NANCY YEN-WEN CHENG, AIA
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
- If you actively participate in this seminar, you will:
- understand key methods for presenting your project
- see cutting edge examples of web-based marketing
- develop ideas on how to
    - *present your own projects*
    - *create web graphics*
    - *adapt marketing material to the Web*

OVERVIEW
- I. Context & Definitions
- II. Planning Considerations
    - *buzzgroup discussion*
- III. Components & Technologies
    - *buzzgroup planning*
- IV. Process How-to
    - *questions & answers*

ARCHITECTS & THE WEB
- Opportunities
  - *World-wide teams*
  - *New markets, niche markets*
  - *Transformed practice*
- Necessities
  - *Web presence*
  - *Contact information*

DEFINITIONS
- Network: a system of computers interconnected to share information
- Internet: network of networks
- World Wide Web:
  - *A distributed global hypermedia system on the Internet*
  - *Standards for publishing Graphical & Interactive Multimedia*

DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)
- Server: a networked computer that supplies information or services
- Client: a networked computer that uses server functions
- Hyperlinks: shortcuts to other information
- Web page: a composite document written in HyperText Markup Language (HTML)
  - *May contain text, images, links, drawings, multimedia*

PART II: PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

AUDIENCES: WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
- Plan for accessibility
- Market segment by building type, size, location
- Peer recognition
- Personnel Recruitment
- Intranets (in-house communications)
- International (possibly slow connections)

HOW TO PORTRAY YOURSELF??
- Strong identity: What's unusual about what you do?
  - *Create a company or personal statement*
- How would you characterize your work? (bold, elegant, fresh)
- Graphic look & message: who you want to be

PRINT TO WEB: GRAPHIC CONTINUITY
- Mining existing corporate identity visuals
  - *Layout proportions, column grids*
  - *Fonts, Logo*
  - *Color, shape, line weight, line type*
- New look Vs. Gradual update (Betty Crocker)

BEYOND PRINT
- Download speed (file size matters)
- Interactivity: response
- Multimedia

WHAT TO SHOW: CONTENT BREADTH
- Different kinds of thinking:
  - *Analytical diagrams & Experiential perspectives*
- Different scales:
  - *Urban context & detailed development*
- Different representations:
  - *Orthogonal & 3D views*
- Different phases of the design process

CONTENT STRUCTURE
- Nested Hierarchies
- Levels of Privacy
  - *In-house or project intranet (password)*
  - *Public*
- Chunking Information (could be playful or thematic)
  - *Klein-Dytham Architecture, http:// http://www.klein-dytham.com/*

CONTENT STRUCTURE: HOW TO CUT IT?
- Building types (Retail, residential etc.)
- Project Size or Scope
- Context (geographical region, urban vs. rural)
- Design or Service Themes
- Timeline

VIEWING WEB STRUCTURE
- File Directories separate from Link View

GROUPING & SEQUENCING IDEAS
- Guided tour (linear) vs free choice (multiple choices)
- Plan a tour, a story
- Start strong & end strong
- Allow shortcuts

NAVIGATION
- Mixtures:
  - *Guided segments or chapters*
  - *Site Search*
  - *Supplementary site map (table of contents)*
  - *Supplementary alphabetical index*

BUZZGROUP DISCUSSION

- Questions
- Where are you in the web planning process?
- What makes your services unusual? How can you portray that?
- What headings would you use in your main menu?

TEMPLATE PAGES
- Site graphics
- Standard layout
- Navigation tool

NAVIGATION AIDS
- Buttons
- Navigation bars
- Site map

LAYOUT TOOLS
- Tables
- Frames
- Layout Grid

IMAGES
- Smaller = faster download
  - *# of pixels*
  - *Color depth (bits per pixel)*
  - *Compression (run length encoding)*
- File Formats:
  - *Compuserve Graphic Information Format (GIF):*
    - 256 colors, good for computer graphics
  - *Joint Photographic Experts' Group (JPG):*
    - full color, lossy compression.
  - *Portable Network Graphics (PNG):*
    - full color, compact, NOT compatible with all browsers

HOW CAN IMAGES BE USED?
- Plain image source (IMG SRC)
  - *Scrolling horizontal image http://www.saucierperrotte.com*
- Image map (picture with hot linked areas)
- Background image
- Rollover image: (mouse on switches images)

DRAWINGS: VECTOR GRAPHICS
- Compact, Retains precision with scaling
- File Formats
  - *Macromedia Flash*
  - *Autodesk Drawing Web Format (DWF) + Volo View*
  - *Adobe Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG)*

INTERACTIVITY:
- JavaScript Rollovers & Actions
  - *Add Inc., http://www.addarch.com/*
- Flash (2D Multimedia) & Director

INTERACTIVITY: FORMS
- Common Gateway Interface language
- Purpose
  - *Feedback, Maintenance*

ANIMATION

- Types
  - *GIF Animation*
  - *Flash Animation (see Matt T. Eastwood designer,* http://www.matheweastwood.com*)*
  - *Dynamic HTML*
  - *3D Walkthrough or Object animation*
- Purposes
  - *Captivate the audience (graphic elements),* *(DegreZero,* http://www.degrezero.com*)*
  - *Explain time-based processes (construction, daylight, design)*

SOUND

- Quality depends on sampling frequency, compression
- Can be large files
- Purposes
  - *Music sets mood (Minoru Yamasaki Associates,* http://www.m-yamasaki.com*)*
  - *Sounds give feedback, reinforce clicking*

VIDEO

- Types
  - *AVI, Quicktime*
- Quality dependent on Coder-Decoder (Codec)
- Large files
- Purposes
  - *Talking head: humanize site*
  - *Capture nature*
  - *Explain time-based processes*

3D ON THE WEB

- Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) = platform-independent 3D format
- Quicktime Virtual Reality (QTVR) = illusion of 3D from series of 2D images
- Proprietary formats
- Purposes: simulate 3D form or space (i.e. housetour, product)

DATABASE ACCESS

- Filemaker Pro / Claris
- Microsoft Access

PRIORITIES & PAYBACK

- Information
- Graphic identity
- Interactivity

BUZZGROUP DISCUSSION

- Questions:
- What technologies make sense for you?
- What personnel and technical resources do you have available?
- How can you supplement what you don't have?

A. IDENTIFY AUDIENCES & CONTENT SCOPE
- Define objectives
- Plan web site as an experience
  - *Schneider + Sendelbach Architekten, http://www.schneider-sendelbach.de/*

B. DEFINE CONTENT STRUCTURE
- Start simple
- Plan directories
- Create a file naming convention

C. DEFINE GRAPHIC IDENTITY IN TEMPLATE PAGES
- Create layout thumbnails
- Select color scheme
- Create standard site graphics
  - *navigation bar*
  - *Borders*
  - *backgrounds*
- Define graphic identity:
  - *Cover pages*
  - *Project template pages*
  - *Quantity of information*
  - *Contact person*
  - *Mix of image types vs. consistency*

D. DEFINE TECHNICAL MEANS & TOOLS
- Desired Web technologies
  - *Sound, Animation, Video, Forms, Etc.*
- Required resources
  - *Pentium II or III, Mac G3 / G4 workstations*
  - *Local Area Network & Internet access*
  - *Scanner*
  - *Optional: Digital Cameras, Color printer, video*
- Software:
  - *Imaging (i.e. Adobe Photoshop 5.5)*
  - *Web Authoring (i.e. Macromedia Dreamweaver)*
  - *Multimedia (i.e. Macromedia Flash)*

E. DEFINE WORK ROLES, HIRE HELP
- Personal or In-house
  - + *controlled*
  - *limited*
- Team building with consultants
  - *Divide work by time, territory or roles*
  - *Scope of work*
  - *Schedule,deliverables*

F. SET SCHEDULE
- Production
  - *Writing Content*

    – *Preparing Site Graphics*
    – *Preparing Project Images & Multimedia*
- Review
    – *Content according to different audiences*
    – *Usability: flow of links*
    – *Accessibility*

G. REFINE & TROUBLESHOOT
- Testing, testing, testing
    – *Fresh eyes pages for usability*
    – *Automated spelling & link checkers*
    – *Plan for bug fixes, correction cycles*

H. UPDATE: KEEPING IT ALIVE
- Delegate page maintenance
- Keep content fresh
    – *Press Releases*
    – *Events*
- Make it interactive
    – *Mail links*
   – *Forums*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIOGRAPHY

Nancy Yen-wen Cheng, AIA, teaches architectural design and computer methods at the University of Oregon. She explores how digital media can enrich the design process. Since 1994 she has led remote design collaborations and explored how the Web can enhance classroom teaching. Her classes look at how digital media can communicate a sense of place and engage team members into productive partnerships. Professor Cheng serves on advisory boards for computer-aided architectural design groups and regularly presents papers on digital design media and teaching at international conferences. Her digital design collaboration with A. Scott Howe for the 1999 Shelter Resorts competition resulted in a Gold Medal for Environmental Sensitivity.

Professor Cheng taught at the University of Hong Kong from 1993-1996. Her background includes a bachelor's degree from Yale and a master's degree from Harvard and 8 years in Boston architectural including Kallmann McKinnell & Wood. See: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~nywc

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MATT T. EASTWOOD, DESIGNER

http://www.mattheweastwood.com
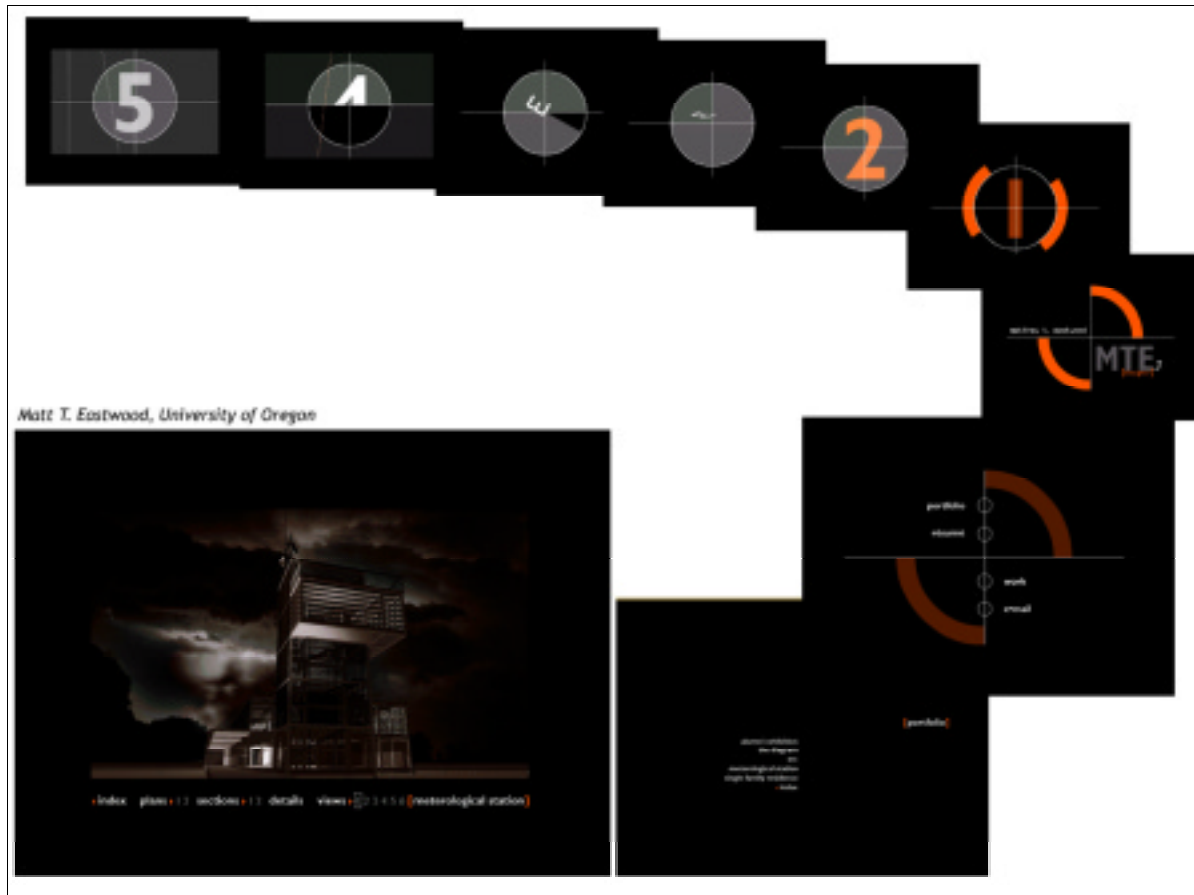
Cover Flash animation counts down as in an old movie. Gradually the countdown dial becomes a logo. Bubbles emerge from the center to create bullets for the main menu of Portfolio, Resume, Work and E-mail. Portfolio pages are formatted to center a small image dramatically in a black field. Images come in off a menu as Javascript rollovers for quick loading.

KLEIN-DYTHAM ARCHITECTS

British architects practicing in Japan give a lively, yet professional feel to their site. White supergraphics complement other subdued fonts. Simple color scheme allows vivid photos of work to shine. Layout keeps left column for text and right menubar over graphics. Exhuberance expressed both through photo and through playful categories including: fetish, sold out, deluxe, now!

MARBLE FAIRBANKS ARCHITECTS

http://www.marblefairbanks.com/

Classic color scheme of black and white with small green & orange accents highlights photography and graphics. Scrolling frames are used to keep fixed proportions and support browsing. White horizontal band highlights primary project selection thumbnails, vertical thumbnails at left provide alternative glimpses into project.

SCHNEIDER + SENDELBACH ARCHITEKTEN BDA
http://www.schneider-sendelbach.de/

Spare monochrome site highlights small swatches of textures and nature.
Ghosted images provide a rich backdrop for text and images. Main menu of
Material, Profile, Projects and Guestbook. Under Material (upper right),
evocative swatches are linked thematically to a list of projects (lower left).
Individual projects are shown with a spectrum of very small images.
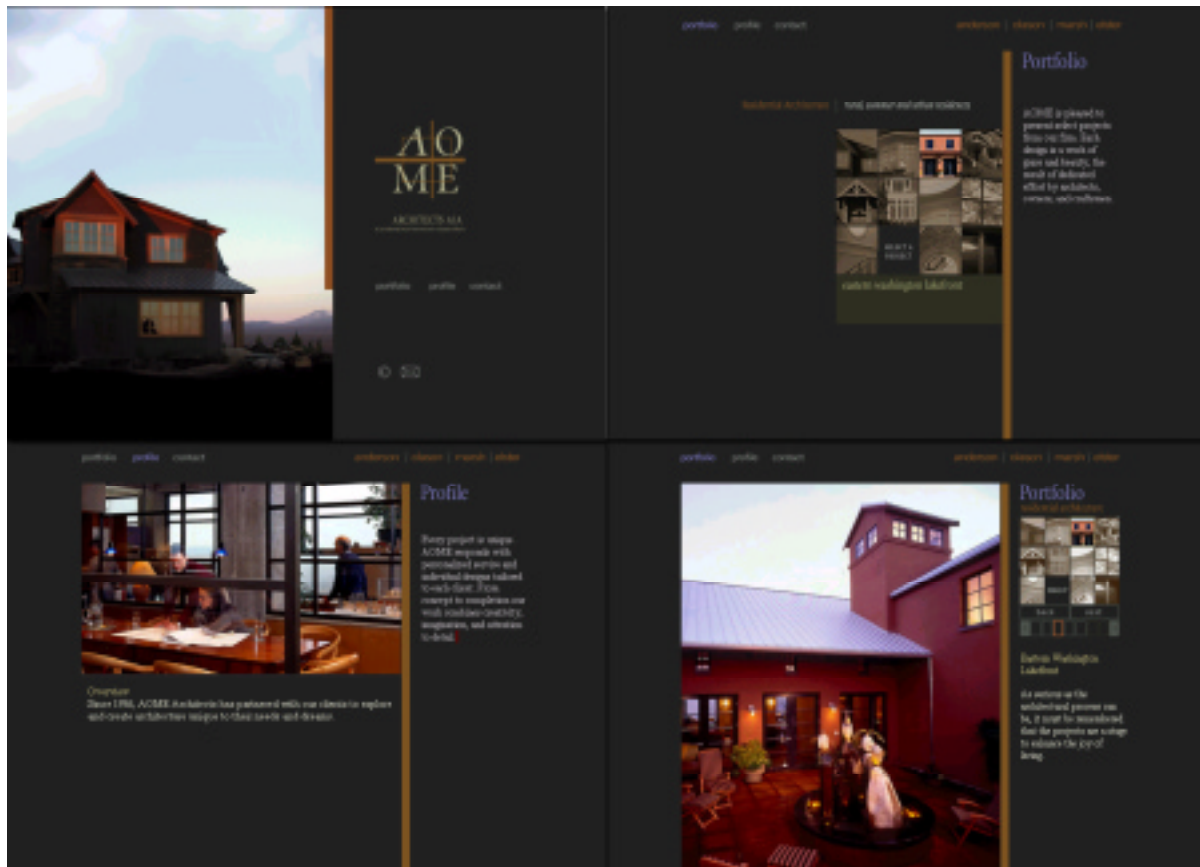
AOME ARCHITECTS

Aome Architects site by Formstudio shows how well chosen colors, shapes and typography can give a simple site an elegant feel. From an opening cover shot, the site unfolds to a monochrome matrix of projects (upper right). On mouseovers, each square turns full color and triggers a text legend below, allowing access to portfolio pages (lower right) with a click. On the portfolio pages, a clean navigation system allows perusal of either one projects photos or links to other projects with a reduced matrix. Throughout the site, use of subdued highlight colors and a mouse grey background allows glowing residential photos to shine.

ADD INC.

Add Inc. opens with a computer-generated graphic with colorful inserts activated by menu mouseovers. Care is given to attract both potential clients and potential employees with an inviting description of the company culture (upper right). Corporate logos on project page are graphically unified through color and drop shadow matrix. (lower left)

http://www.m-yamasaki.com
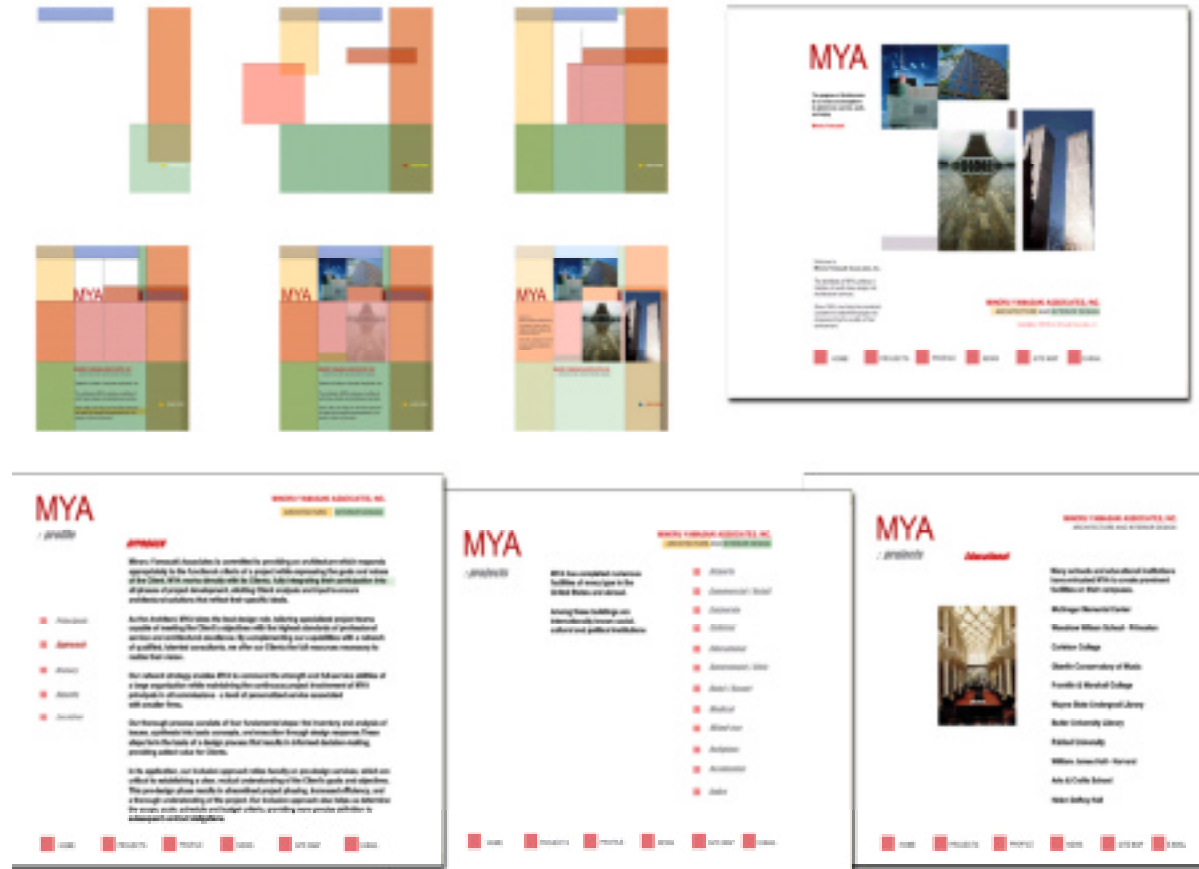
In the opening Flash animation, transparent color blocks elegantly slide into place to music by Bach. The company logo and photos gradually take their place in the scene and the color blocks fade away. The remainder of the web site maintains a clean, modern feeling with a white background and small touches of color block animation.