Back
in
Black

*An interactive experiment aimed
at changing the status quo of
online editorial content*

backinblack.ch

CONCEPT INTRODUCTION

1

Online information and content have become de-valued goods. Through the excess of informa-tion its lost its value and therefore the engage-ment of online readers.

The internet landscape allows us seemingly countless possibilities to present media, news, stories, etc. The simplicity of publishing on-line has led to digital pollution in which mass and speed are the norm. Most websites try to release as much content as fast as possible. The user has become attune to searching and jumping through content. So much infor-mation is jumped through that the value of that information has dropped. The online experience has dismissed interactivity and engagement to disperse information as fast as possible through as many channels as possible. I want to explore the possibilities of creating a valuable experience online. How can we regain an appreciation for an experience as apposed to simply throwing content out like the blog format we have all become accustomed too. Is this even possible online? This project aims to take a deeper look into this topic and try to create an online experience through narrative experiments.

The goal for the ephemeral project is to create value online through another form of narra-tion. One that puts quality and experimen-tation as the focus. Trying to combine mixed media and user engagement to tell a story differently than what we know from tradi-tional media. Using the power of the digital interface to uncover a new dimension in modern day narratives. Hopefully grant-ing the user a well thought out and designed experience as apposed to the status quo on the web where the user decides when and what they want to consume.

In the following pages I will introduce you to some of the best examples of traditional media. Look at how they transfer their medi-ums online. Examine great examples of digital storytelling and narration. Summing it up with my thoughts on the digital medium and how narration and content can be made more engaging through interaction design with examples of some people making strides in the domain.

Today the internet has become the premier way we digest media of all types. News, TV, social interaction, Stories, etc. The internet is now on a multitude of devices from your TV to your phone.

The way we consume the media through the medium internet has changed how we consume the media and the value we place in it.

Years ago, the format vinyl defined music. It has a physical presence and could only carry a certain amount or length of music. Through this musicians crafted a piece of work and spent a lot of time creating a narrative that held value. Customers would gladly wait and purchase the piece of work. It held value and time was taken to appreciate and listen to the piece.

Online, music can be consumed through video's on youtube or on dedicated music apps/sites like soundcloud or spotify. Because its so readily available and there is such an abundance the value of the piece of work is lost. So much so that its a challenge for a user to sit through an entire song yet alone an album.

This same transition has morphed many industries into rethinking how to present their content online. The print industry is always re-thinking ways in which they can present content online. Lately the focus has been on tackling mobile users getting to content as fast as possible. This involves making the navigation as seamless and user friendly as possible and how to present the text and photo's in an efficient way. Surprisingly, the experience is left out of the conversation.

The media companies are stuck on the stigma that the online experience should be designed by the user. They decide where to navigate and what they want to read. A very different experience to the paging from left to write, the norm in print. Although the benefit of the internet is putting the user in control, there is value in creating an experience where the user trusts the editor to present them with information.

2

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Whats happening now in the print and online industry

3

A deeper look into some examples
of offline media

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

In this section there are examples of traditional media and what characteristics make them popular or good examples in their field. The following section should make clear why traditional media has remained so relevant and how they create value for their respective customers.

Gourmand

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Magazine	http://thegourmand.co.uk/	1-2 hours

Gourmand is the 2012 winner of Magpiles best new magazine award and a good way to assess what is deemed a good magazine in 2012. Here is how they describe themselves;
"A Gourmand is a person who takes pleasure and interest in food of all kinds and The Gourmand is a new food and culture journal that binds inspirational words, images and ideas with the humble and universal subject of food."
The magazine manages to engage readers because of the absence of advertisements and high quality illustrations and photos in the magazine. The paper is top notch making it a high quality object to touch and read.

CONTENT

Photo Interview – 14%
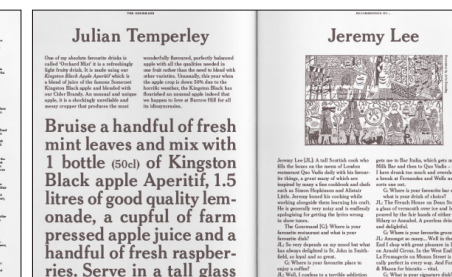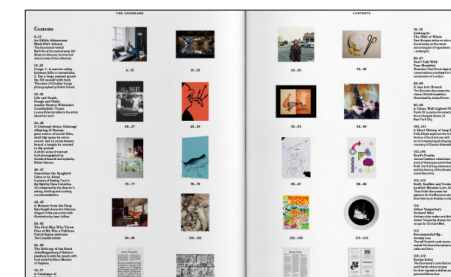*Interview – 12%*
Photo Editorial – 35%
Illustration – 20%
Article – 19%

+ *Very clear subject matter and target audience.*
+ *Adhere sharply to a grid based layout.*
– *Not very experimental with layouts and typography.*
+ *great photos and insightful articles*

Purple Fashion

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Magazine	http://purple.fr/	6 hours

Purple Fashion magazine is a french publication that has risen to be the best and most sought after fashion publication in the world. Olivier Zahm and his team have since branched out throughout the success of the magazine to open clubs, create creative collaborations and shoot for the fashion houses portrait in the magazine. To me the magazine is a success because its a unwavering view of the fashion world through one mans aesthetic. He does what he wants with the magazine and collaborates with those he deems fit. Something lacking in other magazines and online.

CONTENT

Photo Interview – 22%
Interview – 12%
Photo Editorial – 40%
Illustration – 0%
Article – 26%

+ tied to the vision of editor in chief Olivier Zahm.
+ team of photographers and stylists that are close friend with mr. Zahm.
+ forward thinking and raunchy thanks to Mr. Zahm.
+ great online presence through short films and a insightful blog labels simply as the "diary".
+ lots of advertising. a norm in the fashion industry so excusable.
+ comes with a small art zine magazine usually profiling a photographer or artist.
+ released twice a year.

Apartamento

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Magazine	http://www.apartamentomagazine.com/	3 hours

Apartamento is the poster child for the rebirth of magazines. By taking a different approach to the norm and creating a living space magazine that showed an honest way of how people where living they managed to find a cult following and gain more readers with each issue. The material is honest and once again has a clear vision. Each article is typically done in their style a laid back aesthetic and no fear to be playful have made this magazine very popular! Heres how they explain their concept;

"For too many people, being happy at home is pretty much an abstract idea, something they can't know or imagine, until it appears on some taste maker's must–have list, or in a magazine, or reposted on Tumblr. A home sweet home is not curated or produced by acquiring a perfect arrangement of chairs, lamps and friends. A real living space is made from living, not decorating. A bored materialist can't understand that a house has to become a home. It happens, not through perfection but by participation."

CONTENT

Photo Interview – 44%
Interview – 19%
Photo Editorial – 16%
Illustration – 12%
Article – 9%

+ simple format. small and easy to take wherever you go!
+ doesn't change. their first issue to their 10 all look and feel the same. readers know what to expect.
+ hardly any advertisements. And the ads that do make it share apartamento's ideals.

AMOK Album

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Vinyl (Music)	http://atomsforpeace.info/amok/	1 Hour

The album artwork for the new AMOK cover shows the direction that labels are going whilst releasing an album. Because the medium they are selling is becoming less sought after as physical artifact they are creating a work of art essentially in the packaging. With expensive methods of printing and essentially an art piece on the cover the company hopes to create value and a collectors spirit urging music lovers to buy the vinyl.

*+ high quality print*
+ art work as album cover by Stanley Donwood

Stones Throw Records

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Record Company	http://www.stonesthrow.com/	...

Stones Throw record companies is an anomoly in the record business. They are small and carry alot of Hip Hops most respected albeit more obscure artists. By always doing their own thing they have been able to stay relevant. Stones throw is a good example to look at because of the things they do to raise their customers attention. They released a cassette tape long after they became obsolete and create limited edition toys and lately even releasing an arduino powered drum machine that was sold out the morning it was released!

+ forward thinking
+ work well with limited editions
+ release toys and casettes! something no other record company does
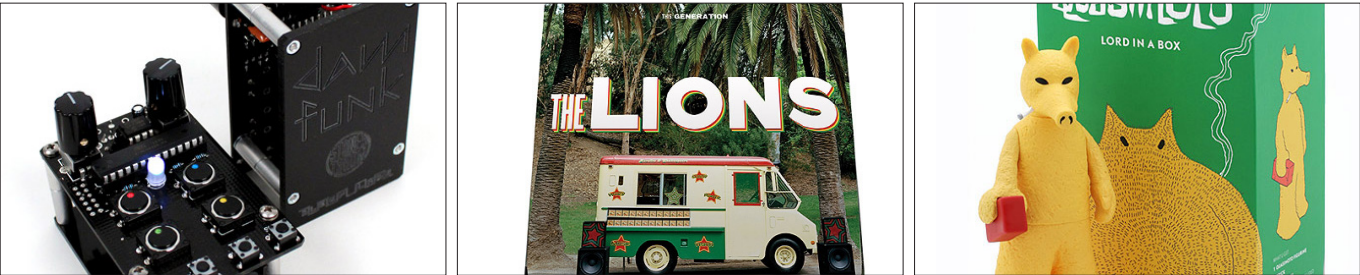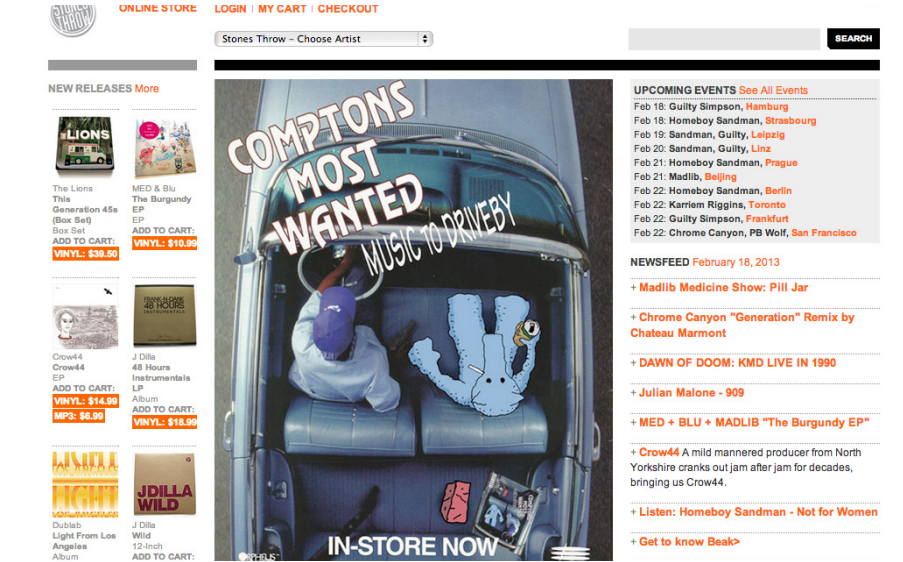
*How traditional media vendors
are moving content online*

THE TRANSFER

11
-
12

4

*Newspapers, magazines, record companies etc
have in essence made their online presence an
analogy to their traditional media. Text and
photos printed on a page are recreated online.
As is music and film. Simply copied and pre-
sented just as it was in its traditional form.*

In a nut shell traditional media companies create analogies of their content online. Which makes sense. The content they release as films, music, text, photos is taken and presented online. There is nothing wrong with that. But with the amount of media shown online in the same format these companies are losing their users interest and engagement. Because most websites look the same its difficult to capture a user long enough to share something valuable.

People are taking content and sharing them on their own platforms. Most of the time not even going onto the website because we have a new breed of tools that take the content and present it in another way. See google reader, flipboard etc. This I feel is a direct result of the fact that there is no experience linked to the content. So when a article is posted its in the same format as the rest of the web. Photo text and maybe an embedded song for good measure. There is no deeper interaction that would animate the user to go to the website of the provider and experience the content through the providor. Because the content is made up of something that easily shared. Purely text, sound,video and photo. There is no experience. It can be taken and shared.

This is where I see the problem. To create value in a website and thus have people visit it. It needs to provide an experience.

"The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention."
–Thich Nhat Hanh

13
-
14

"Its tragic how everyone is trying to translate print onto digital format what we will see at some point is for someone to take the medium and do something thats appropriate and magical and enhances the experience."
–Helen Walter
(Researcher at Doblin)

ONLINE

5

*A look at the most interesting ideas
and movements online*

Obviously with the millions of websites online one cant generalize the web. But in this section are a collection of websites that portray an idea or concept particularly well. It seems that now is a time of experimentation online and thanks to certain web developers the internet is starting to look different very slowly. The trend now is to consolidate media and present it on a multitude of devices. This is used extensively in the news industry. Instead of creating different designs for each device an API with well structured content can disperse the content to multiple devices and take care of the design itself. Thus saving time and again making it easy and fast to get the content out there. What still hasnt been adressed is no one is pushing the boundaries of high quality valuable content. There is too few experiences available. The following online mediums are pushing the envelope.

Technology

With the release of HTML 5 and CSS3 the possibilities are wide open. The animational prowess that was once why designers used flash is now possible to recreate with HTML. This opens the doors to create truly immersive mixed media websites. Its still a new technology and so it will unfold in the next year and we will continue to see interesting ways of mixing media.

In terms of storytelling and immersion the iPad has been the go to device for designers and developers. Using apples framework to create gestural applications there has been a huge surge in apps combating the same problem of presenting stories or news on the new device.

The best examples of immersive storytelling is suprisingly found in childrens story apps. The news industry is more focused on using the new technology to make finding news or commenting on news easier as apposed to changing the experience of consuming news.

With all the new technology and the examples illustrated in the next section it obvious the time is right to experiment with the questions raised in the concept introduction.

The technology is up to the task its only a question about creativity and finding the correct solution to the problem of presenting content.

Form Follows Function

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Website	http://fff.cmiscm.com/#!/main	40 Minutes

Form Follows function is a small website that focuses on interactive experiments using "new" web technologies CSS3 & HTML 5. This is more of a resource and provides inspiration for how users can interact with different elements on a webpage.

+ *excellent seamless interaction*
+ *works on the ipad!*
+ *engaging*
+ *minimal navigation*
– *element of surprise*

Moving Six

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
IPad Application	Moving Six App (Itunes Store)	15 Minutes

Moving six is an application by comme de garcons. They took photos from a magazine they released in teh 80's and re-used them in this application. This is the direction I think digital media should be going in. Its experimental and engaging. Allowing the user to play simply with media and create their own experience to a degree. Its a tight and engaging piece of work that uses the advantages of the ipad to show and present their media in a new way. Great work by Comme de Garcons!

+ *engaging*
+ *new ways to interact with content*
+ *very simple navigation*
+ *limiting the user to a few interactions per "chapter"*
+ *fine line between art and interaction*
+ *images still ooze quality although they are presented in a digital space*
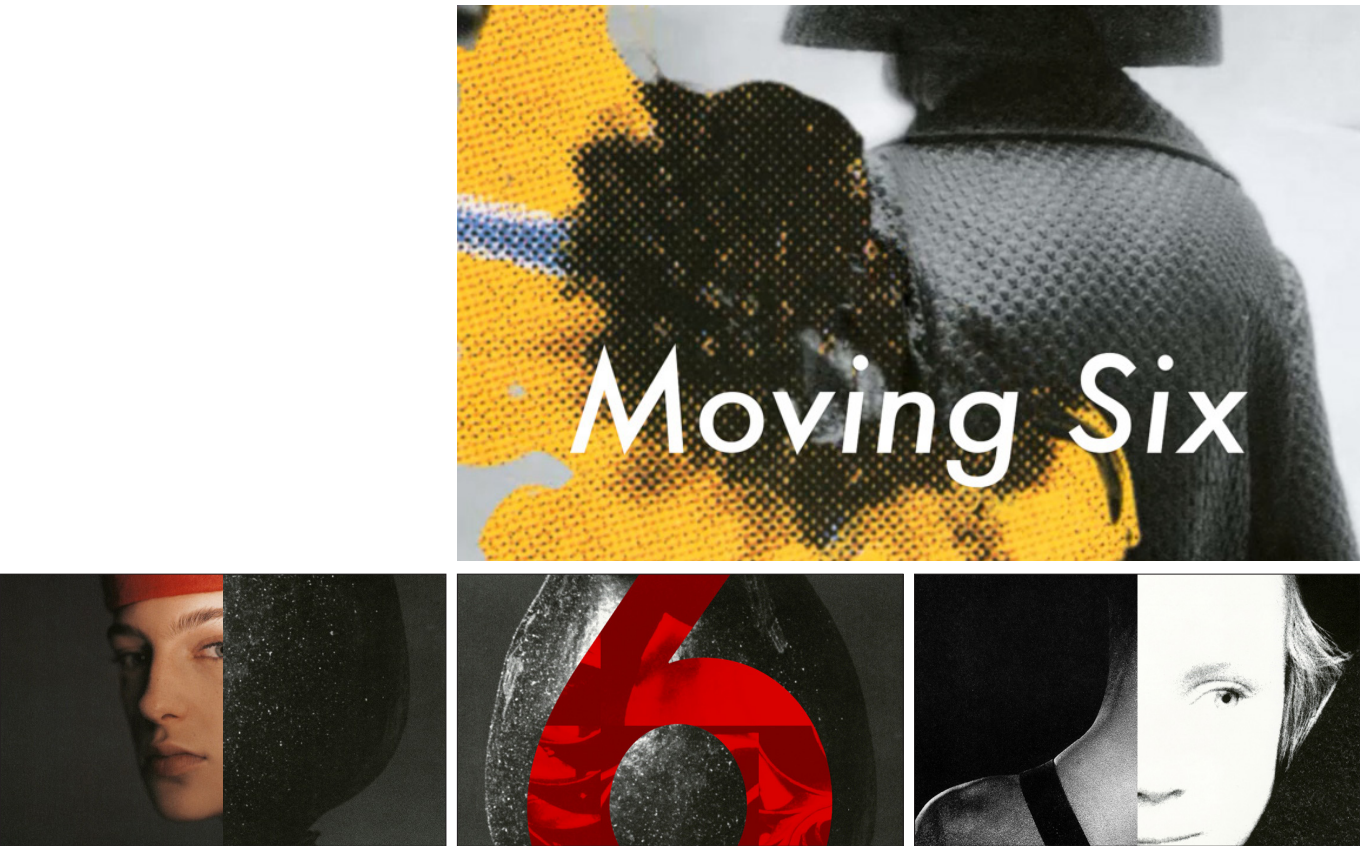
Remembrance

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Website	http://remembrance2012.co.uk/	15 Minutes

Remembrance is a british site that reminds its visitors to remember the british soldiers that dies in world war. Through the poppy seed (which happens to be the sole navigation of the website) a clever full screen background video and interactive statistics tell the user a story about the war and soldiers lost. Its very engaging and a perfect example of giving the user an experience as apposed to letting users click through a bunch of links. Excellent small website!

+ one navigation button (the poppy seed)
+ full screen background video
+ uncluttered and interesting
+ an immersive experience

Thinking for a Living

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Website	http://www.thinkingforaliving.org/	...

Thinking for a living is the result of some very interesting creatives from multiple fields coming together to create a website. The website takes the blog format and re-thinks it to create a intelligent website. The user can use their keyboard to navigate and they chose to use a vertical format as apposed to the horizontal up and down format that we have come to expect from blogs. Great website to play with and discover different ways to interact with a blog.

+ Clean
*+ Vertical blog format*
+ grid based design
+ keyboard navigation
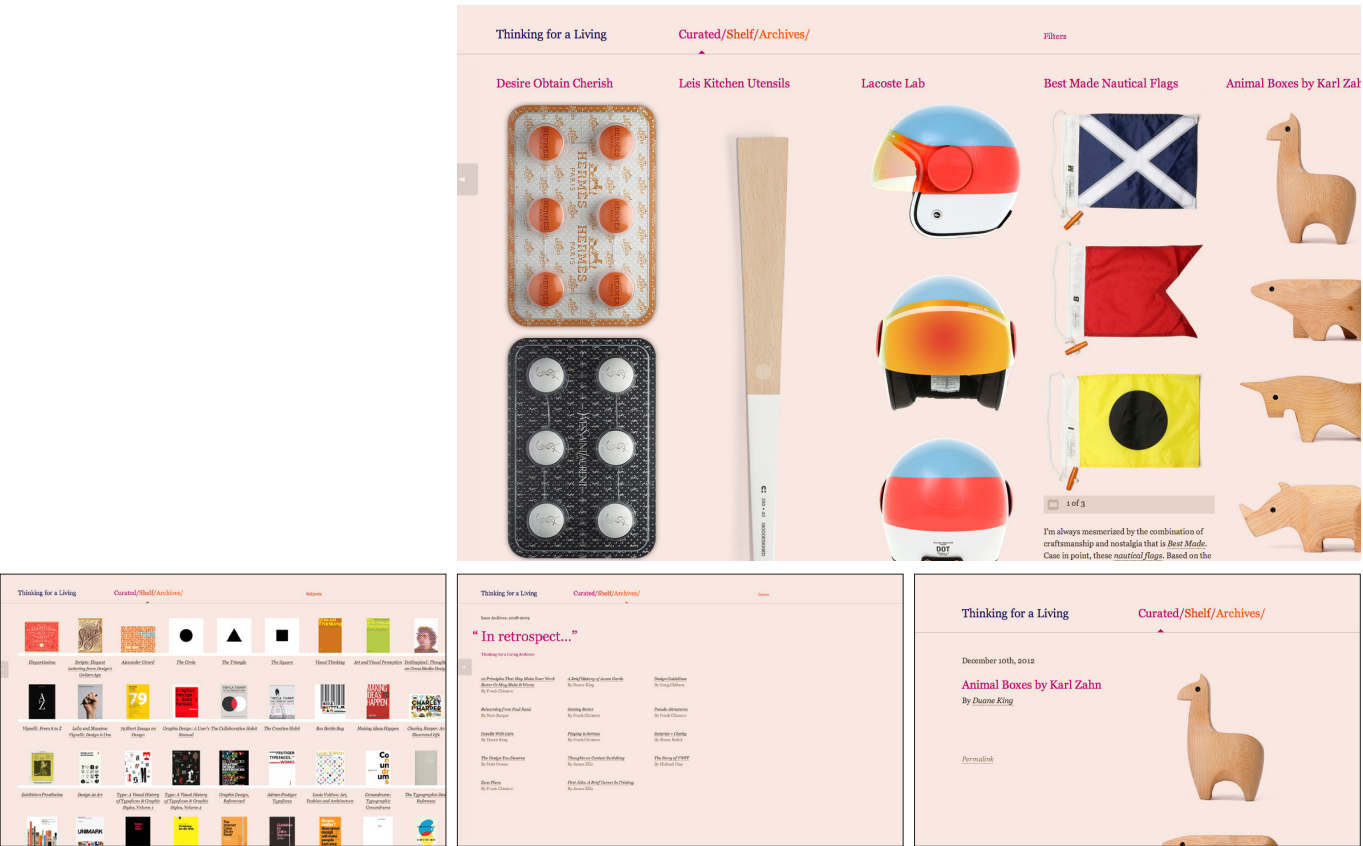
Snow Fall Article

MEDIUM	ADRESS	ENGAGEMENT TIME
Website	http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/ snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek	20 Minutes

The snowfall article by the new york times is what reading an article online should look like. The mixed media is shown here controlled by simple scrolling. Its more engaging and uses the simple nuances of new web design tricks to further engage the user and immerse them into the story.

+ *Scrolling as navigation*
+ *mixed media to tell story*
+ *dynamic article*
+ *auto play video's enhance article*
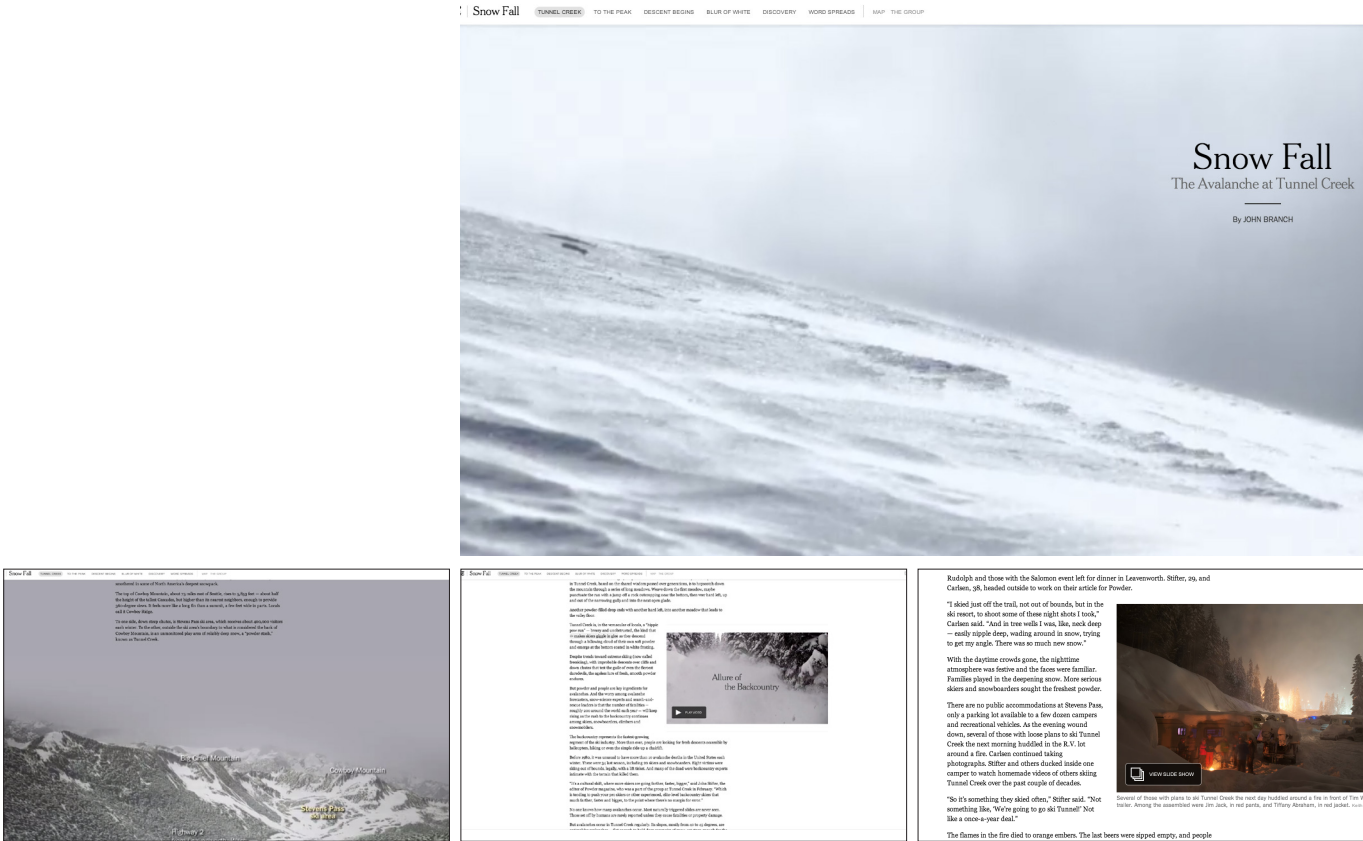
Gaining insight into the concept through discussions & an Expert Interview

CONTEXT RESEARCH

The context research should be used to solidify my concept and make sure I'm going in the right direction. To do this, instead of interviewing alot of people I decided to go the direction of an Expert Interview with Steve Watson, founder of Stack magazine. A web based subscription service for print magazines. Our hour long discussion solidified alot of assumptions I had and allowed me to gain further insight into the topic from one of its most respected individuals.

6

Steve Watson

Writer at Little White Lies magazine // Founder of Stack Magazines

http://www.stackmagazines.com/

"...one of the great things about magazines is that they are so limited. Compared to the web you cant do much. Its within those limits that you can build a relationship.

"Alot of the magazines that are out there now, would not exist if it werent for the web. The only way at looking at it is if print and digital work together with a clear strategy in mind."

And thats why people are passionate about these things because they can focus on that thing and nothing else and thats valuable in itself."

"I dont spend alot of time with any websites and I think thats what websites are kind of about. The average user coming to the stack site is a couple of minutes. And thats great! Im happy with that. Not just for me but all over the web two minutes is great for everyone. I go to a website and read a little bit of a story and then ill go to a link and read something else. I think thats how people use websites. They dont really read anything for a hour.

"The nice thing about independant magazines is that the people are so passionate about their product."

7

Concepting content.
Examining how to best trans–
fer the content online.

CONTENT

The following was a summary of the arti-cles I had selected to be represented in the experiments. Each Article was going to showcase an interaction.

5 Thoughts

5 thoughts should be a small collection of random curated thoughts much like most magazines have at the beginning. A profile of an interesting object that often goes unnoticed or a thought that get the reader interested in finding out more. What makes these sections interesting is the obscure things presented that are presented nicely visually and create a feeling of longing or appreciation for the object. For examples see dapper dan or l'officiel homme or fantastic man.

A good photo and a little text is often enough. What magazines can't do is show the object in motion or an iteration of the idea. Experiment with this who knows if its better to include this or just go the route of simply photo and text.

Evan Glodell Interview

The Interview is short and the reason i chose this one is that Evan Glodell isn't your typical movie maker. His indie film bell-flower is refreshingly different to mainstream movie making and Mr. Glodell has a very DIY way of making movies which is in-teresting. The interview in general is used to give a small insight into the mind of a person. Usually pertaining to a single topic. In print they use smaller photos beside the text to illustrate some things that where mentioned in the conversation. And a photo of the person in question.

Print has limitations in showing the person's personality more through the photos. Something that would be interesting to experiment with on the web. How can I use video and photos to give a more insightful view on who the person being profiled is.

For this; I have footage of the movie Bellflower in which Evan stars to play with.

Back in Black : Glenn O Brian

Back in Black is a nice article explaining one mans desire to wear black again. Architects and creatives are very fond of creating a uniform, lots of them opt for the color black. Its a nice easy to read view on what black means in terms of style and its history. The article uses simple illustration to accompany the piece. The article is great and could live alone as simply text.

For this piece I am having trouble thinking about what reason and how I could interaction to make it more interesting or engaging.

The obvious answer would be to use black in some kind of way but I don't want it to end up to gimmicky.

The creative process : Paulo Coelho

The creative process is simply a smart shorter article explaining the creative process and what it means to be creative. The follow-ing doesn't really fit into the concept and was more a text that I wanted to underline a collage or some other interaction. Thinking about an interaction and then finding the fitting article to accompany it didn't work in this case and I'm not sure if that

is the best way to do it. I may be taking this article out of the mix later.

Kristen Photo editorial

The Kristen photo editorial is interesting because it combines photography and art. A model was photographed and painted at the same time. This comparison between real and the subjective eye of the artist is a beautiful thing to compare. And in print one can simply print one page and opposite the comparison. With html 5 there should be more interesting ways to explore this comparison and that should be the goal of this section of the online experiment.

Snake Eyes French Fries (Incl. both video & photo)

This Editorial and video combine a mans best friends. Woman and machines. The editorial is as classic an editorial as it gets. Whats nice here is that the video allows me to experiment or use video to enhance it. The classic editorial is a collection of nice visuals. Here the interaction will need to be very subtle and present the content with as little distractions as possible so that the viewer can really dive into the editorial. Here the order and presentation of the content will be the main focus. Keeping it as reduced as possible.

The Chevalier ring

The chevalier ring is just a photo editorial explaining what a chevalier ring is. The black/white photos are really nice and minimal. A simple object and simple black and white photos that might allow some interactivity. There is nothing here but the simply showed text and photos. There is nothing explaining how the ring is made or a closeup of the beautiful details rendered in the object. Maybe another dimension could be added whilst maintaining the simplicity the article sits.

Olaf Hajek Appartment Visit

The Hajek apartment visit is two nice online editorial s from the biggest online apartment visits series the apartment from the selby unden. On the back of the selby and the apartment this segment of editorials has exploded and having a constant rotation of visitors. This has led to collabo's with big companies like mercedes that want to tap into the exclusive views into interesting peoples homes. The Hajek apartment editorial would be nice because of the beautiful pictures and also the accompanying devonfreunden. There is also a video. The problem I see here is that the apartment is so clean that there doesn't seem much to do. Another profiled apartment on the selby that might work better is that of Philip Crangi. This is a nice person who designs for the web and interviews. This would allow me to better craft a more engaging editorial simply because the content would be more diverse and interesting in its unpolished aesthetic. This section I want to try to put a twist or another take on the tried and true method of presenting editorial photos of an apartment. Also besides the apartment I could bring some of his products into the profile in an intelligent way that doesn't distract from the space.

Art / Tattoo (Garage Mag Editorial)

Men Losing it (Man About Town article)

The Men losing it article is a simple article taking on a interest-ing topic. Celebs losing their cool. Because the article is mainly text the goal for the article is to make it as readable as possible and allow the reader to enjoy small tidbits along with the text but keeping their focus on the text. Its a long article and will therefore be a challenge to put seamlessly online. The goal is to not have any changing of pages as is customary in a magazine but allow the whole article to be read using scroll and some form of autoload.

"Scale it Back" Dj Shadow // D'angelo with video & photo montage

The scale it back or d'angelo part of the experiments should focus on the music. I wanted to create a multichannel experience where the user could turn music of/on but couldn't find a fitting song. The closes was scale it back but it doesnt really work in that context. The next idea is to go for something as done on the pitchfork advance site. Abstract fullscreen video is joined to the music and allows for a more concentrated listening experi-ence. The listener is kept on the page by the visuals and thus sits through the whole song, or that should be the goal.

Instead of creating one interaction per article the scope of the project changed. The Back to Black article will be the focus of the whole website and the article will be the central theme. The interactions will be used to enhance and engage the reader through reading this single article. By fo-cussing on the Back to Black article the ex-perience becomes a cohesive one and more time can be spent on creating interesting interactions as apposed to thinking about content.

Back in Black by Glenn O Brien

From the Winter '12 L'Officiel Hommes Issue

The following section is a analysis of the Back to Black article by Glenn O' Brien., a successful writer for newspaper and magazines. His loose personal writing style fits the medium perfectly. Before I start to think about how to best port the article online, I need to analyze the article and pick the parts of it I want to enhance. The following analysis should later help to figure which interactive elements I want to add or how I can best bring out the important points made in the article.

The article doesn't have a set structure or build up so the interactivity doesn't need to strengthen some kind of tension. Its a loose opinion piece on the color black as a style choice and has a lot of references. This is the content that I need to focus on enhancing. The power to show media about the references should be the main focus for this article. Below are ideas on how best to do that.

The Article

Here is the article as seen in the magazine. As you can see its a article very focused on text. The illustrations are more or less decorations showing Mr. Glenn O Brien in random scenes around what should be his appartment. So the editor focused on the text and added the illustrations as a slight extra. This gives me alot of space to work and interpret the text however I see fit online. So the first step was dissecting the text into sections that made sense. Below is the text from the article split into the sections I chose.
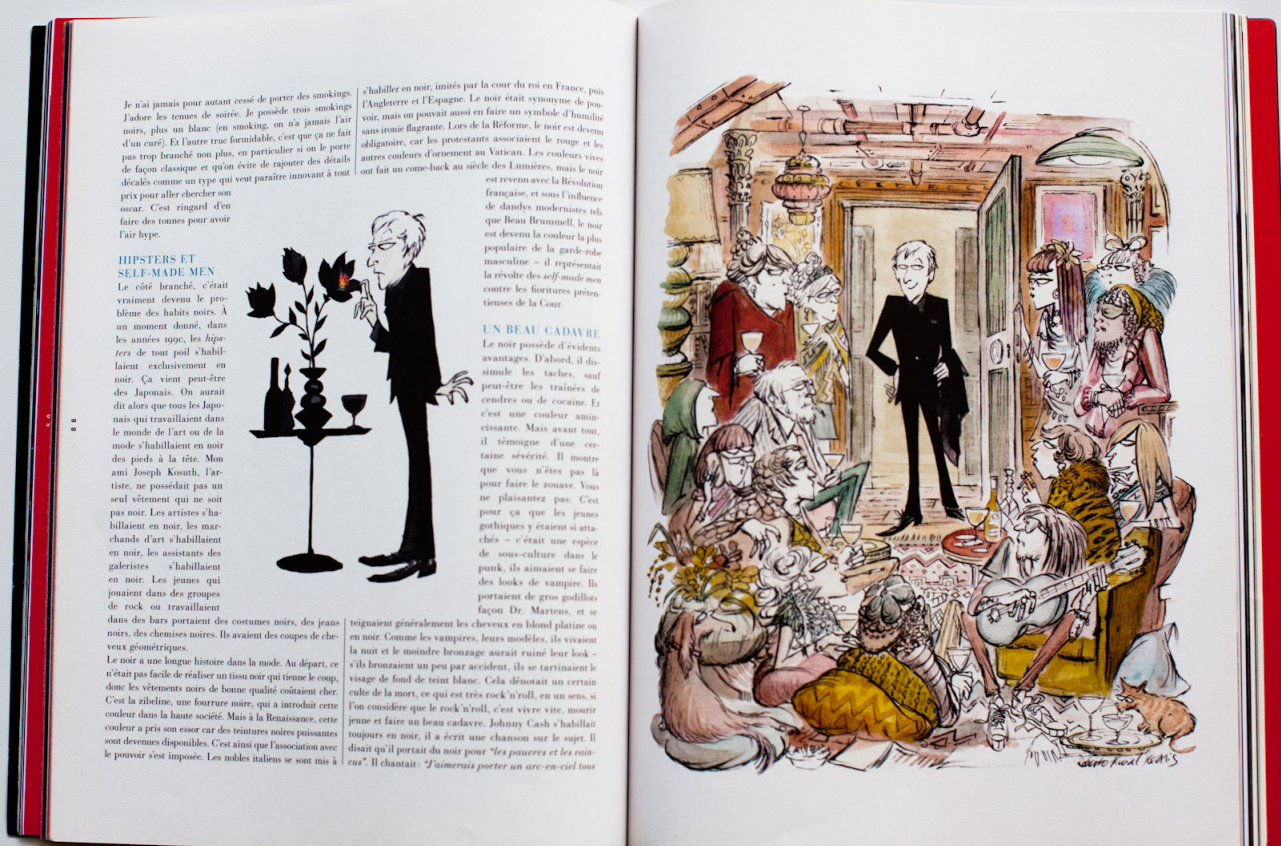
1 * I just started wearing black clothes again. A little big. I didn't wear black for years. Why did I avoid wearing one of fashions most popular colors–the non color black?

2 * For one thing there is my Irish face. Maybe its my pinkish complexion but somehow in a black suit I seem to look a little too much like a priest. In fact my friend Sante D'Orazio used me to practice on when he was embarking on his artists as priests portrait series where he ended up photographing Francesco Clemente, Jeff Koons, Maurizio Catalan, Alex Katz, Philip Taaffe, Damien Hirst in cassocks and birettas. I must say I looked pretty authentic. And thats not really the image I want to project. Celibate. Or possibly perverted. Obedient. Orthodos. Forget that!

3 * I have had a black suit in the closet for many years and at a certain point it only started coming out of the closet for funerals. And then I started wearing dark gray to funerals and the black suit just lived in the closet. I started thinking that dark gray was black for gentlemen. Oddly though, I would always wear a tuxedo. I love black tie. I own three tuxes, not to mention a white dinner jacket, but the thing is that you don't look like a priest in a tuxedo. And the other great thing about a tuxedo is that you don't look too hip in one, especially if you follow the conventions and avoid looking like someone who was nominated for an academy award and got "creative" with black tie.

4 * Looking too hip is really not hip. The hipness things was definitely a problem with wearing black. At a certain point in the nineties everyone who fancied themselves hip started wearing all black. Maybe the Japanese started it. It seemed like every japanese person in fashion and art wore only black. My friend Joseph Kosuth, the artist, didn't own anything that wasn't black. Artists wore black, dealers wore black, gallery assistants wore black suits. Young guys in bands or behind the bar wore black suits, black jeans, black shirts. They had geometric haircuts.

5 * Black has a long history as a fashion color. It wasn't easy to achieve a good black fabric, so good black clothes were expensive. Sable, the black fur, was the first black high fashion. But in the Renaissance black took off as a rich black dyes became available. This is when the association with power began. Italian nobles began wearing black, then the French court, then England and Spain. It signified power, but it could be ascribed to humility with ought any obvious irony. In the Reformation black became obligatory, who associated red and other ornate and decorative colors with the Vatican. Bright colors made a comeback during the Enlightenment, but with the French revolution black came back, revolution black came back, and through the influence of modernist dressers like Beau Brummell it became the most popular color for mens dress–a revolt of self-made men agains the pompous gilt of the royal courts.

6 * Black obviously has certain advantages. For one thing black doesn't show soiling unless something light like ashes or cocaine. Black also slimming. But more than that it has a certain severity. It says you're not messing around. You're serious. Thats why the goth kids wore it– they were a sort of sub cult of punks that liked looking like vampires. They wore big clunky boots, like Dr. mMartens, and usually dyed their had blown of black. Liked the vampires they resembled they lived by night and having a tan would ruin the whole look, so if they accidentally got a tan they would slap on some white make up. It had a soft of death cult feel too it, which is very rock'n'roll, I suppose, since rock'n'roll is supposed to mean live fast, die young and leave a good looking corpse.

7 * But more than that I think that the all–black look was about solidarity. It was a uniform of sorts. It was a way for the kids who were perhaps the most unpopular in their individual high schools to bond together and look disaffected and slightly menacing. In a group dressed all in black the ugly kids didn't quite look so ugly and the good looking kids didn't look quite so good looking. It was a fashion statement that didn't seem absolutely sure what it was about. It was a little bit anarchist, as in the black flag, and a little bit Amish, a little Hasidic, a little Viet Cong and a little SS. If there was a skinny long black tie involved there was also the MIB association, the Men in Black who were supposed to show up in black cars or black helicopters when there had been a UFO sighting and questioned people and intimidated them. Supposedly. Which , of course, led to those awful movies with Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith.

8 * Psychologists have theories about black. They see it as protection from emotional stress. It is associated with power and control. Is that why the clergy have worn black for centuries. Is it a source of intimidation, as in the Nasi SS, Italian blackshirts, ninja warriors and SWAT teams. Black has long been associated with evil, ruthlessness and death. "Come over to the dark side, Luke," said Mr. Vader, all dressed in black. Black sports uniforms have often been chosen for the intimidation factor. A 1988 study at Cornell University that examined records from American professional football and hockey leagues found that teams wearing black uniforms incurred significantly more penalties for misconduct that teams wearing nonblack uniforms.

9 * The Oakland Raiders, the longtime bad boys of the National Football league who have traditionally welcomed other teams castoff felons and eccentrics and prided themselves in an intimidating attitude, have turned their black uniforms and pirate in a football helmet over crossed swords logo into a black solidarity alternative to the gang colors of the Bloods and Crips. Black is beautiful. It is also bad.

10 * Now I did have mixed feelings about not wearing black. Black is very slimming. Doesn't show the dirt, like I said. Its kind of an all occasion look. You can wear black to a funeral, a wedding, a rock concert. If you're in black you'll never clash with your date and if you're the black type your date will probably wear black too, so you'll match and look really together.

11 * Black is camouflage for the night. Its good for burglary, sneaking into nightclubs, or running from the police. If you want to hide you can blend in with a bunch of priests or nuns. If you have a hole in your black clothes it probably won't be noticed if you're wearing a black T-shirt or undershorts. Black also doesn't reveal much detail so you look almost as good in the H&M black as in the Balenciaga black. Well, almost. Black is also warm. It absorbs solar heat, so in fact, black is green. If the fate of the universe is to disappear into a cosmically immense black hole, then maybe things ending up black is a good idea. If you get a stain on your white shirt you can always die it black. Black is easy. Its low maintenance. And it has metaphysical overtones.

12 * Johnny Cash always wore black and he wrote a song about it. He said he wore it for "the poor and the beaten down." He sang "I'd love to wear a rainbow everyday and tell the world every things OK, but ill try to carry off a little darkness on my back, till things are brighter Im the man in black." But, of yours, Johnny Cash looked quite good in black. Its dramatic and its slimming. Which is why Ive started wearing a little black again.

13 * I have a black overcoat, a black car coat, a black raincoat, a black sweater, a black shirt, various black T-shirts and black jeans. I have two black leather Schott motorcycle jackets. And I still have my black suit sitting in the closet. But Im not going to wear them all together. Im just going to work it in like another color. Of course black shoes are an old standby. They really seem to be the best choice for evening and they are the only possibility for formality in footwear. I also like black cars. I had a black Mercedes E- Class station wagon with a big V-8 that blew away sports cars, but I never would have bought a black S-Class. If you don't have a chauffeur you look like the chauffeur. Or a rich priest. The other thing that looks great black is a jet black jet. The Mexican police have several of them and they look really bad. Scary. Hugh Hefner had the Big Bunny jet, an all black DC-9 with a white bunny logo painted on the tail. The F-117A looks pretty sharp too. And so does Giorgio Armani's black yacht. Black ships have been chic since at least the Trojan War.

14 * Now one thing that black is absolutely brilliant for is a house. Artists Rob Pruitt and Jonathan Horowitz bought a big old Victorian house in upstate New York village and they painted it jet black. Ornate things look really good in black. Like Louise Nevelson sculptures. The people in the town hated it, but I love the idea of a stealth house. If your house is all black it will probably keep away salesmen, burglars and religious proselytizers. Lately Ive been thinking about black wall paint and black dogs and black comedy. I like the idea of black Ad Reinhardt paintings and Louise Nevelson sculptures against black walls. I think its the final frontier in decor. Black is the new black.

Interactions to Sections

Now that the sections where defined I needed to think of ways to add interactions to each section. I thought I had hundreds of ideas and it wouldnt be a problem but once I started sketching out ideas the problems started to arise. When I thought about how it would play out on a website it didnt work for reasons such as readability and the interaction being to playful. There is a fine line between creating a small "aha" moment for the user vs the interactions being so animated and wild that it becomes more of a game than a way of simply enhancing the story.

Here are a few sketches and pictures illustrating those first few trials on certain sections with captions explaining the problem faced in each of them.

Jumping to conclusions?

When faced with the task of transferring this article online I jumped into visualizations on photoshop. Simple ones with images in the background or on the side of the text. In essense they where what I wanted to avoid in the concept phase. It was an analogy of the print medium. The photos where displayed with merely a simple scroll effect. Nothing far from what we know from magazines and books.

After meeting with the mentors I scrapped those ideas and took a step back working with pen and paper and focusing on enhancing each section of the article through interaction and mixed media.

In the next section you can see the results of those sketches .
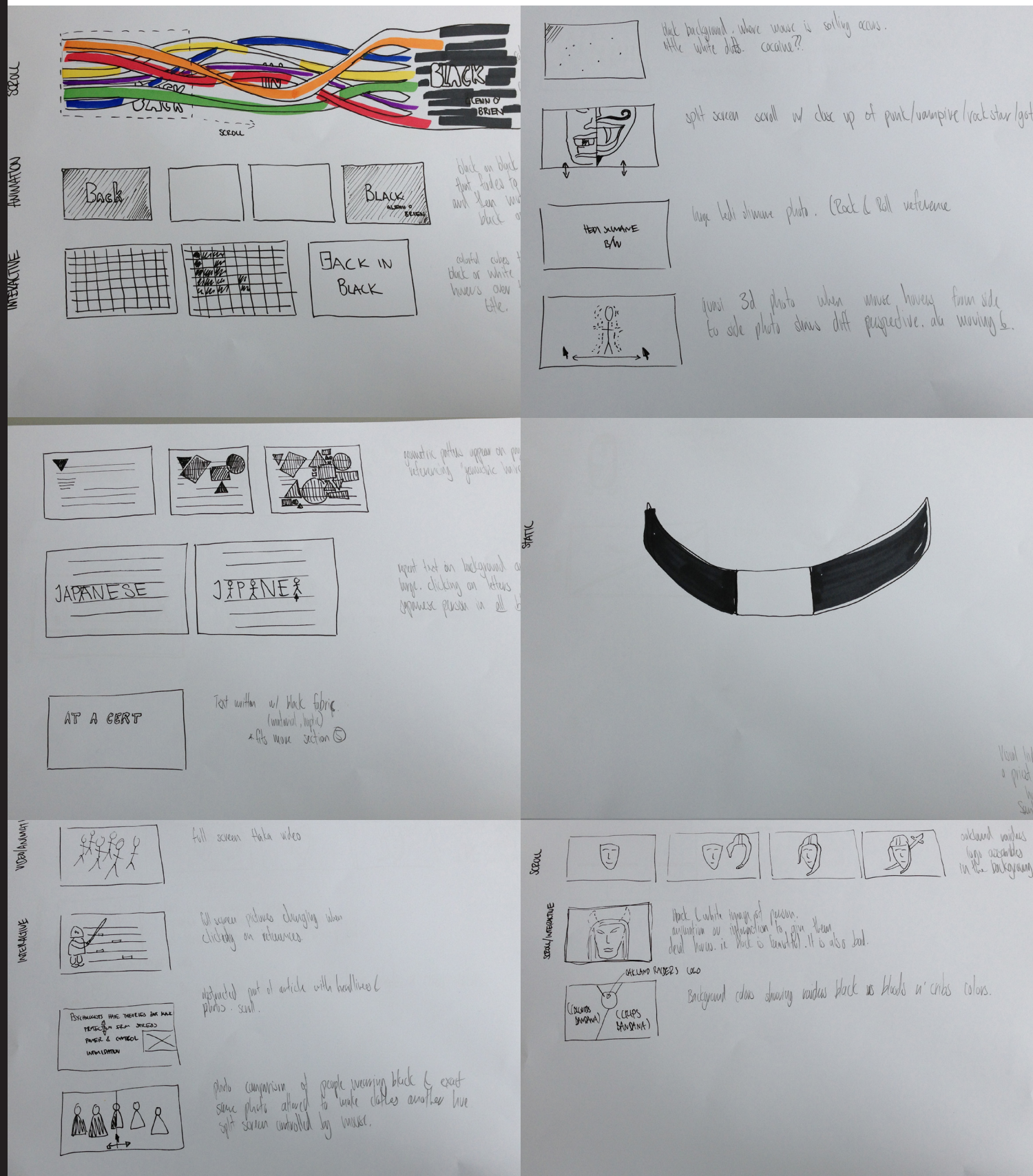
Interaction Concepts for Back to Black

Each sketched page holds some ideas to enhance that section. In this phase I didnt limit myself to thinking about the technology. Simply choosing what I wanted to enhance in the text and then thoughts about how best to do that in web form.

Once I had the ideas I chose my favourites and created a timeline or narrative through the whole article. Placing the interactions next to each other made it easier to imagine the user experience through the whole article as apposed to just one interaction.

Placed out infront of me, the storyboard was easy to alter and organize my thoughts. Through many iterations I settled on the one you see below.

The photo shows each section and its order as apposed to the others.

This is the first real wireframe of the website.

41
-
42
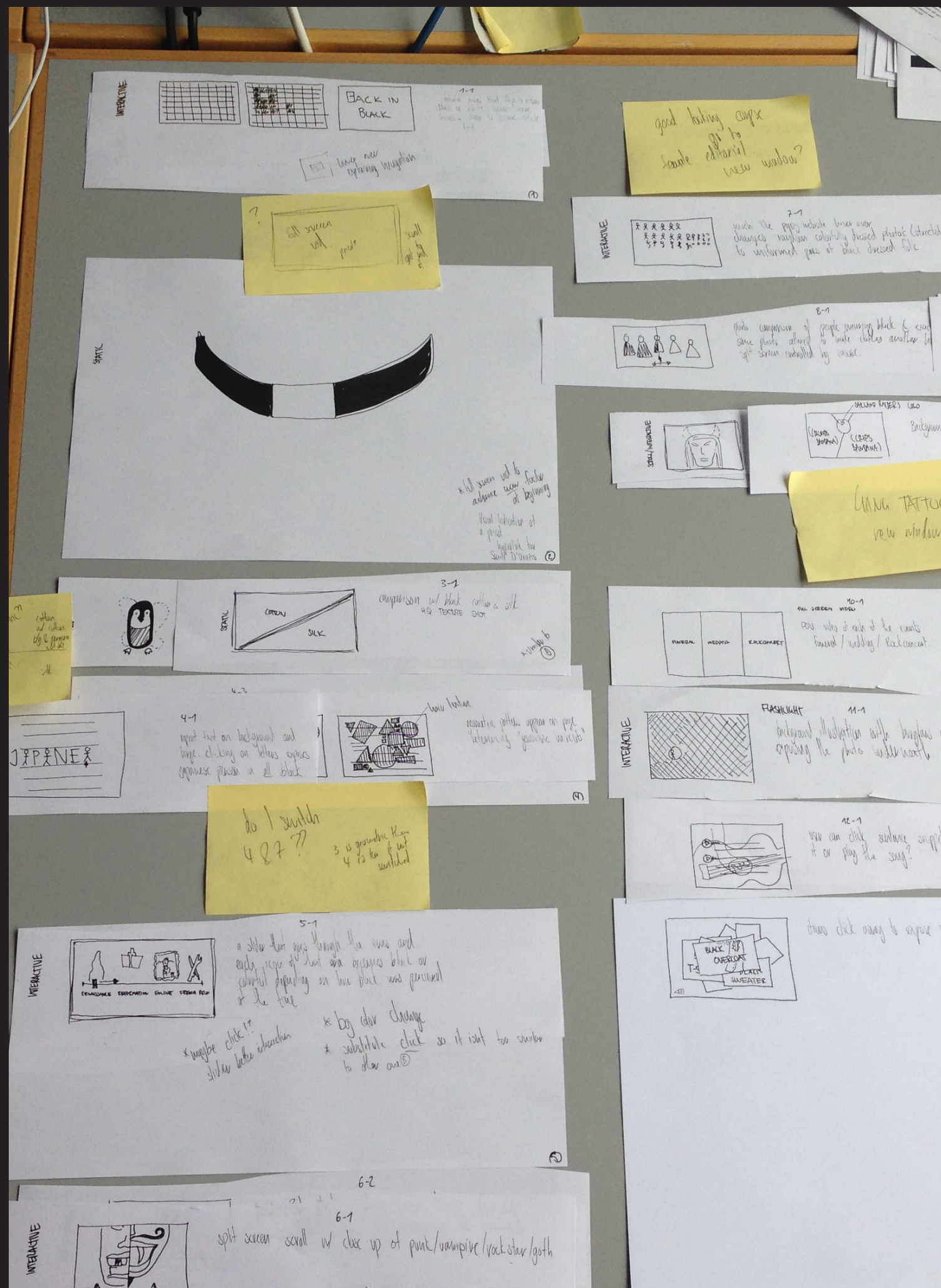
Section 1 Title page is black. By moving the mouse the squares you hover over automatically flip much like a airport flipboard and convert to a colorful or white fill whilst others create the title text "Back In Black".

Section 2 A large detail shot of the priests collar. Optional; Link to Sante D'Orazio's website. Fullscreen video in background should the priests collar not be interesting enough.

Section 3 A geometric scroll that enhances the cotton and silk materials found in a tuxedo. Example of geometric scroll; http://navasca.com/nate/

Section 4 Here I am not sure if I should switch with section 7 but for now the two ideas where; 1) Large typographic word such as FASHION and when user clicks on the letter a Japanese designer dressed in all black is seen replacing the letter. 2) A geometric pattern is on the page or appears via scroll referencing the sentence "geometric haircuts." in the text. Problem with idea 2 is that section 3 will most likely be geometric.

Section 5 A slider that allows user to move from each era. The illustrations are icons of each era simply outlined. As one scrolls the icons and background fill with color or black depending on how popular black was in that era.

Section 6 This section references a few groups (punks vampires goths etc). I thought a detail shot of their face and shoulders would be interesting to play with as a scroll section so you could combing the face of a punk with that of a vampire etc etc.

Section 7 A plethora of "style" shots of people in their different colors. When you hover over them they gradually change to people wearing black showing that black is a type of uniform as everyone on the page starts to look the same since wearing all black.

Section 8 Here a picture of people wearing a white or a different color can be altered to black by pulling on a screen. Much like the before and after interactive photos online only I would change the hue of their clothes to black. Example; http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_21915774/hurricane-sandy-before-and-after-images-interactive

Section 9 This section is a haptic comparison of the Bloods and Crips blue and red bandana's with the Oakland Raiders Black and White Logo.

Section 10 Full screen video of 3 scenarios. The ones mentioned in the article; Funeral, Wedding, Concert. Would be great if they where all shot in first person perspective.

Section 11 A black page with a flashlight like interaction that you can only see whats behind the black with where the mouse is. In the background a photo of a burglar or similar. :-)

Section 12 The song Man in Black by Johnny Cash. Have audio snippets linked with the text so you can hear Johnny sing the line when clicking on it.

Section 13 This section has a lot of picture references. A strong typography photograph of the item stacked in the order they appear in the paragraph. User can click on top of stack to make the photo disappear. Example; http://aude-debout.fr/

Section 14 A Louise Nevelson Sculpture on a black background. So barely visible. The mouse then acts much like the sun would and when user moves the mouse the drop shadow changes exposing the sculpture and giving a illusion of depth.

Mentor's Input

So once the project was laid out as seen previously I sat down with my mentors and discussed the ideas and interactions with them. Out of that came valuable input.

In essense the imagery was uninventive and too obvious when compared to the content. It was the first thing that came to ones head when reading the text and thus didnt really grasp or interest a reader because it was too obvious for lack of a better word.

Also, the texts where really long in all the sections. Leading to the problem that online, the text shouldnt be too long as that loses the interest of the reader. Which was part of my initial research. Reading large passages doesnt happen very often online.

Whilst reading a book, the reader knows exactly how far is left to go because of the phyiscal nature of the object. Online should one know how far is left in the article or is it better to leave the reader guessing.

I also need to be more adventurous in the interactions and media I choose. The article doesnt have to be a strict illustration of the content but something that should act as a binding factor. I shouldnt need to be afraid to play more with the story and content.

Using this input i went back to the drawing board and drew up some new interactions and played with the order in which the sections where to enhance the flow of the story and make sure the interactions following each other werent too similar.
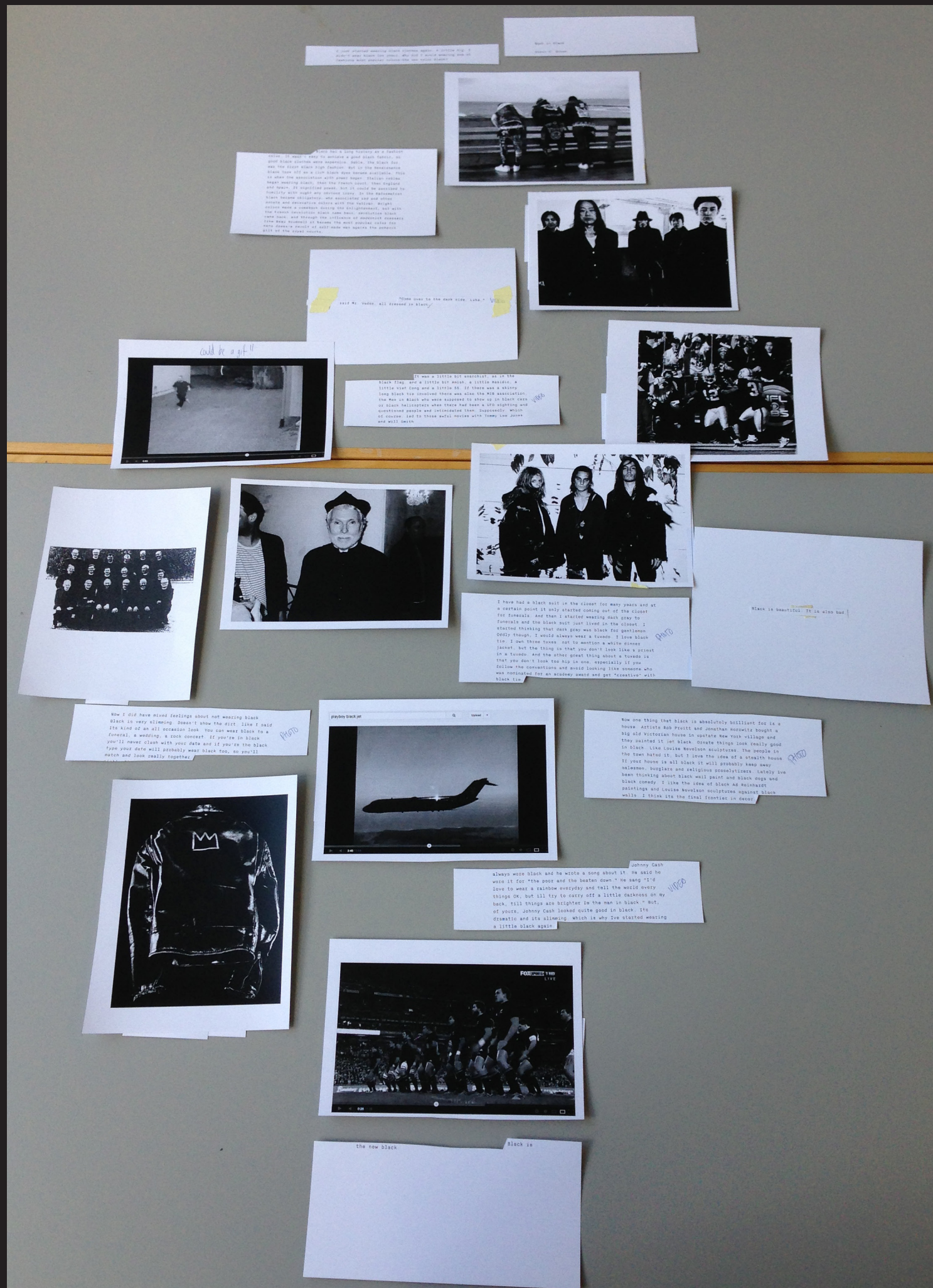
Once the story board was laid out, what followed was about a two week period of going back and forth with sketches and ideas for interactions. Multiple sketches for each section where made until I was happy with the results and the mentor's approved. This stage took alot longer than I had imagined. The feedback from the mentors always stayed the same. The static nature of the text was a problem that I was having trouble finding a solution for. How does one play with the text but keep it readable? To get further along and not stay stuck in the concepting phase I decided to start prototyping online and attempt to take the concepting onto the digital realm hoping it would spur some inspiration and new ways of looking a each section.

47
-
48

DEVELOPMENT

7

Technology

The concepting phase of enhancing the article through interaction is finished. Next is looking at what technology would be best to make the concepts a reality through HTML 5 and CSS3.

Through tests and examples from all over the web I hope to make all the concepts a reality.

I am concentrating on creating the interaction aspect of each section and will think about how to implement text and navigation in a later stage. Now the interaction plays the most important role .

Nabis Film

http://www.nabisfilm.com/

I liked the use of fullscreen video on this website.

Aude Debout

http://aude-debout.fr/

Here the fact that one can click and the photos simply dissapear is a nice effect as it makes the user really focus on the photo once the realize it will be gone when they click for the next photo.

53
-
54
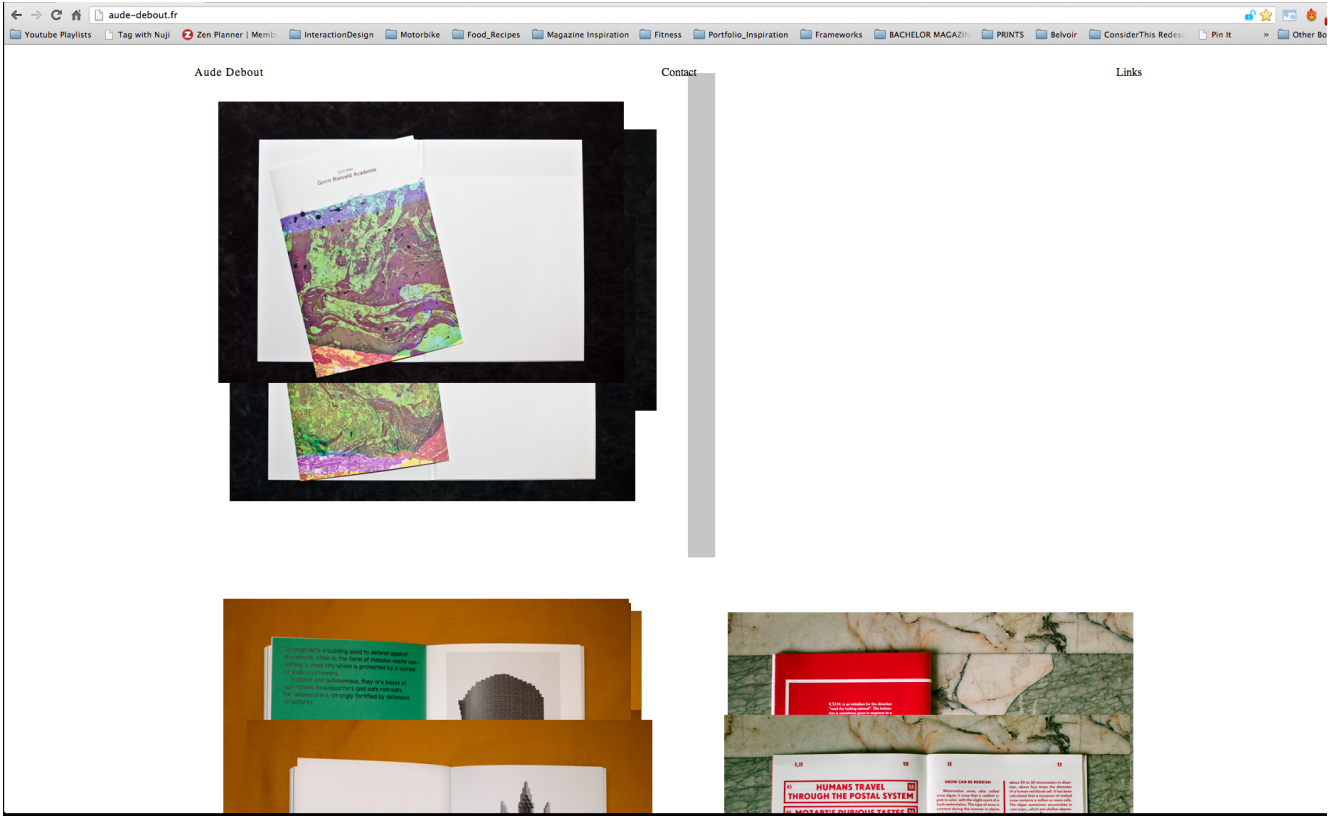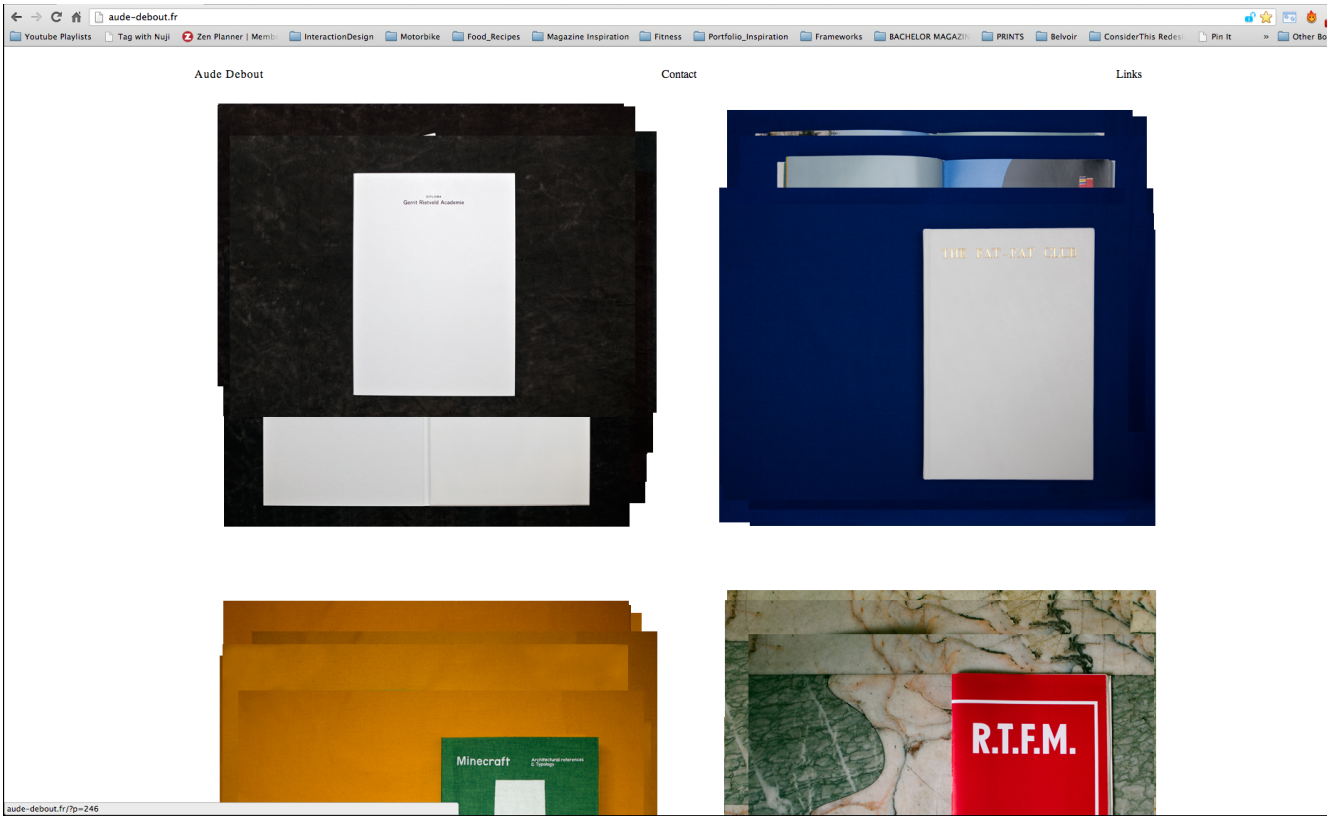
Pitchfork Bat For Lashes Story

http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/bat-for-lashes/

This interview uses images to simulate a very loose photoshoot setting allowing bat for lashes attitude to come through a little more. Great use of a simple effect to enhance the story.
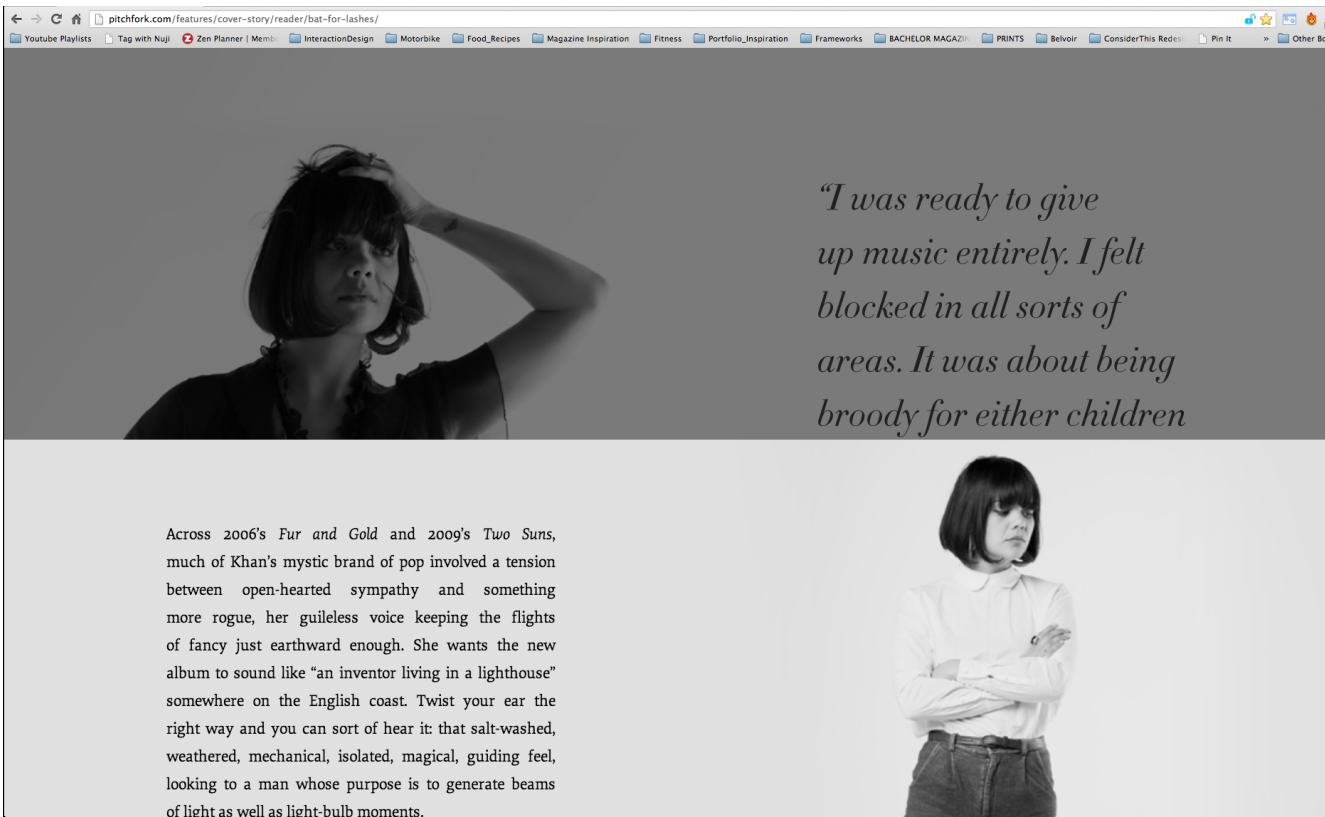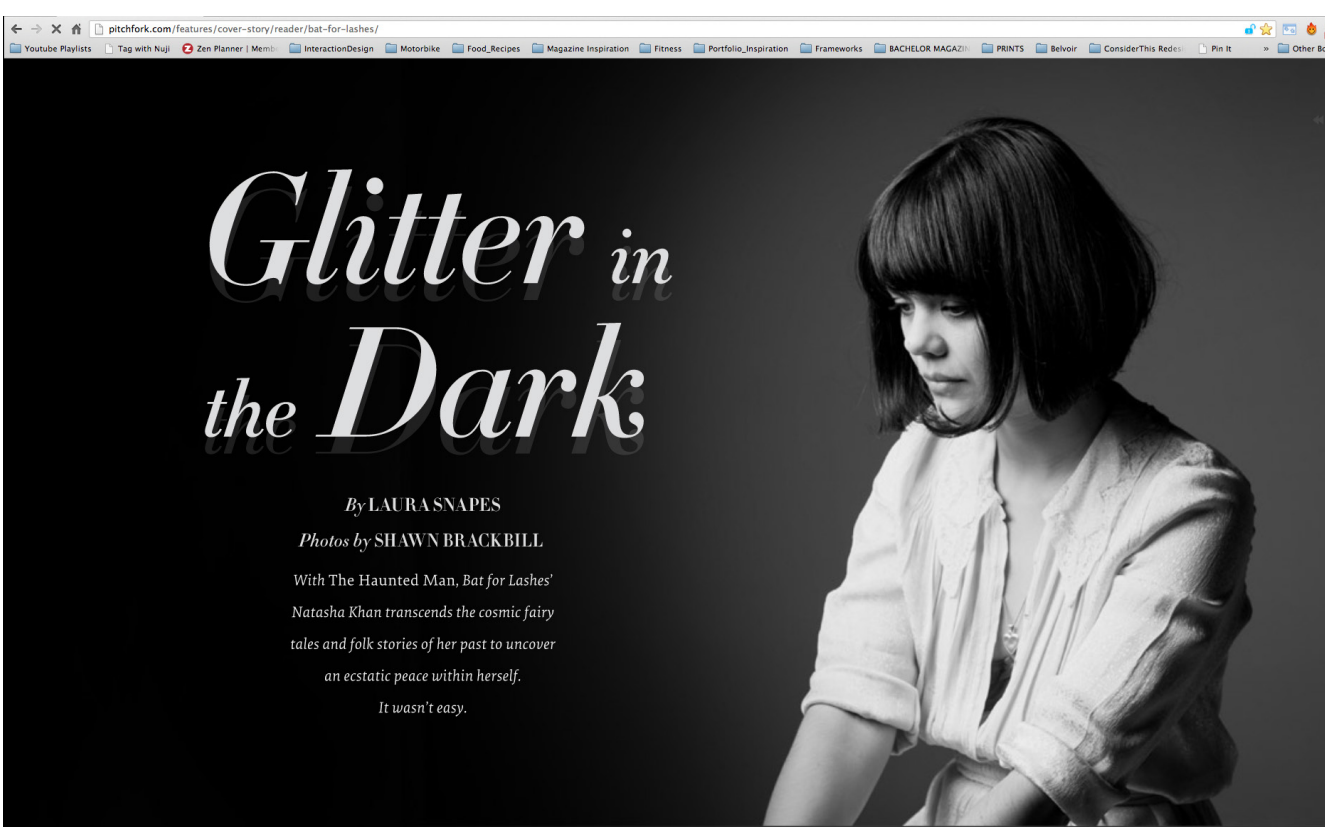
Pitchfork Advance

http://pitchfork.com/advance/

Pitchfork uses their advance platform to showcase new music. Each album gets its own simple animated imagery to animate the user to immerse themselves more into the webpage.
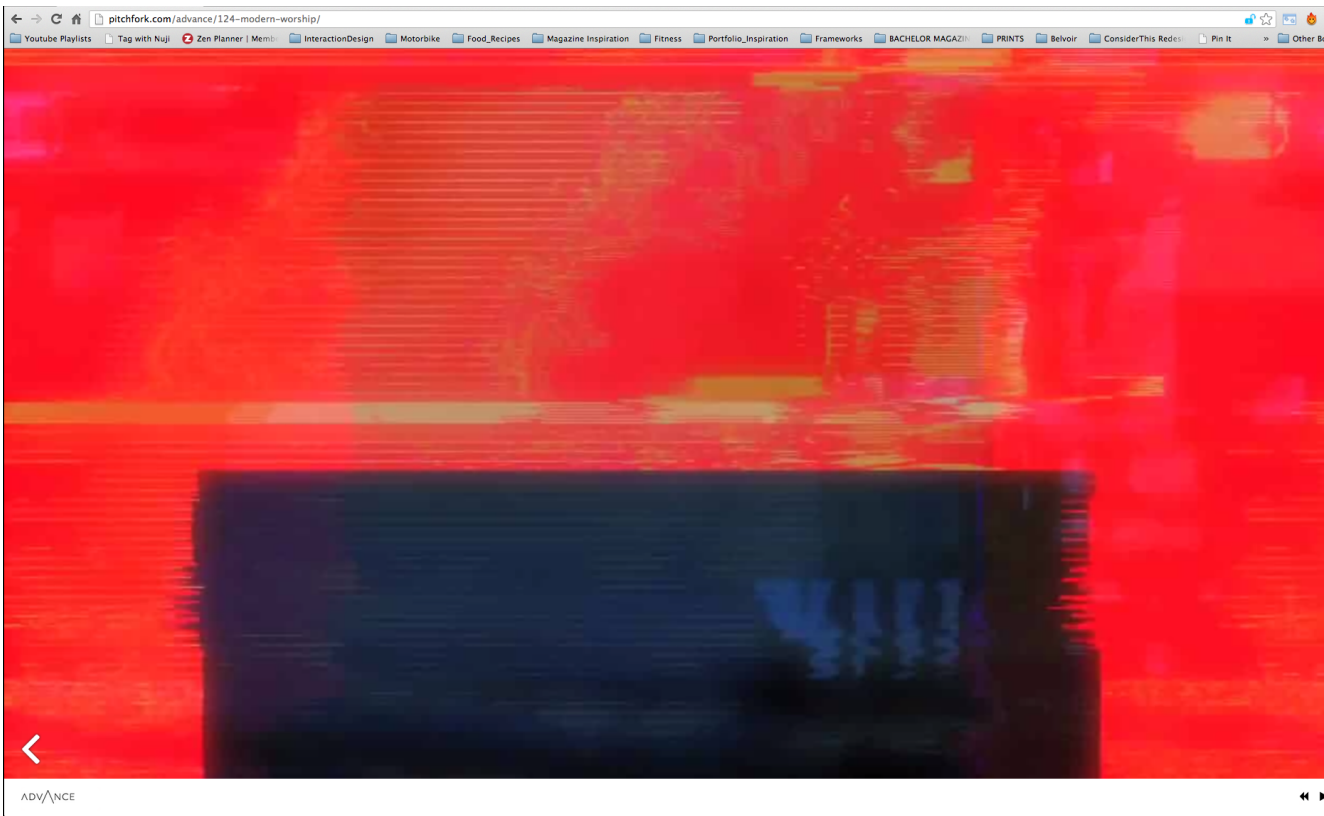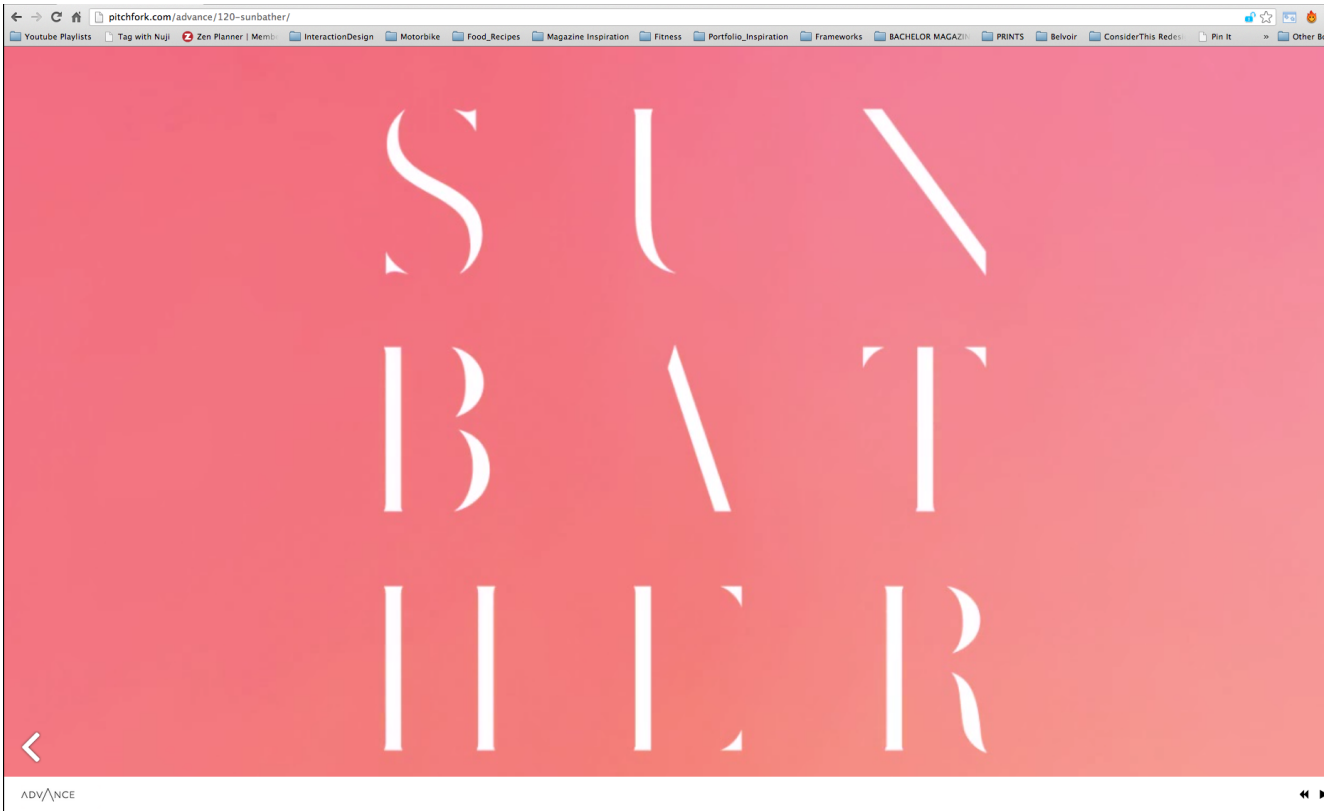
Rick & Drew

http://www.rickanddrew.com/

Excellent simple website using interaction to enhance content. Full screen video and hover over text to change the background works great in previewing work!
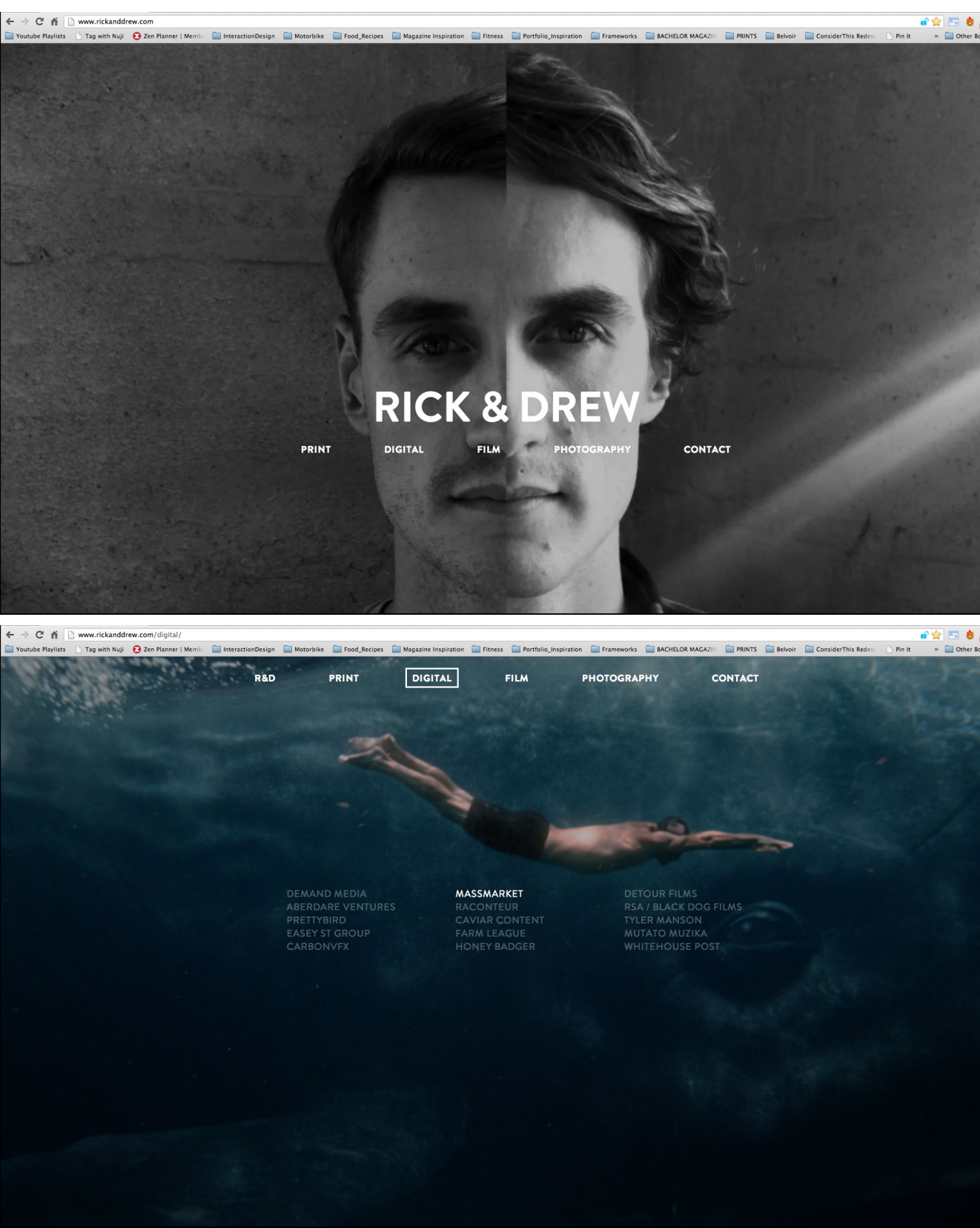
Andrew McCarthy

http://andrevv.com/

Beautiful use of scrolling sections to create the illusion of an animation.
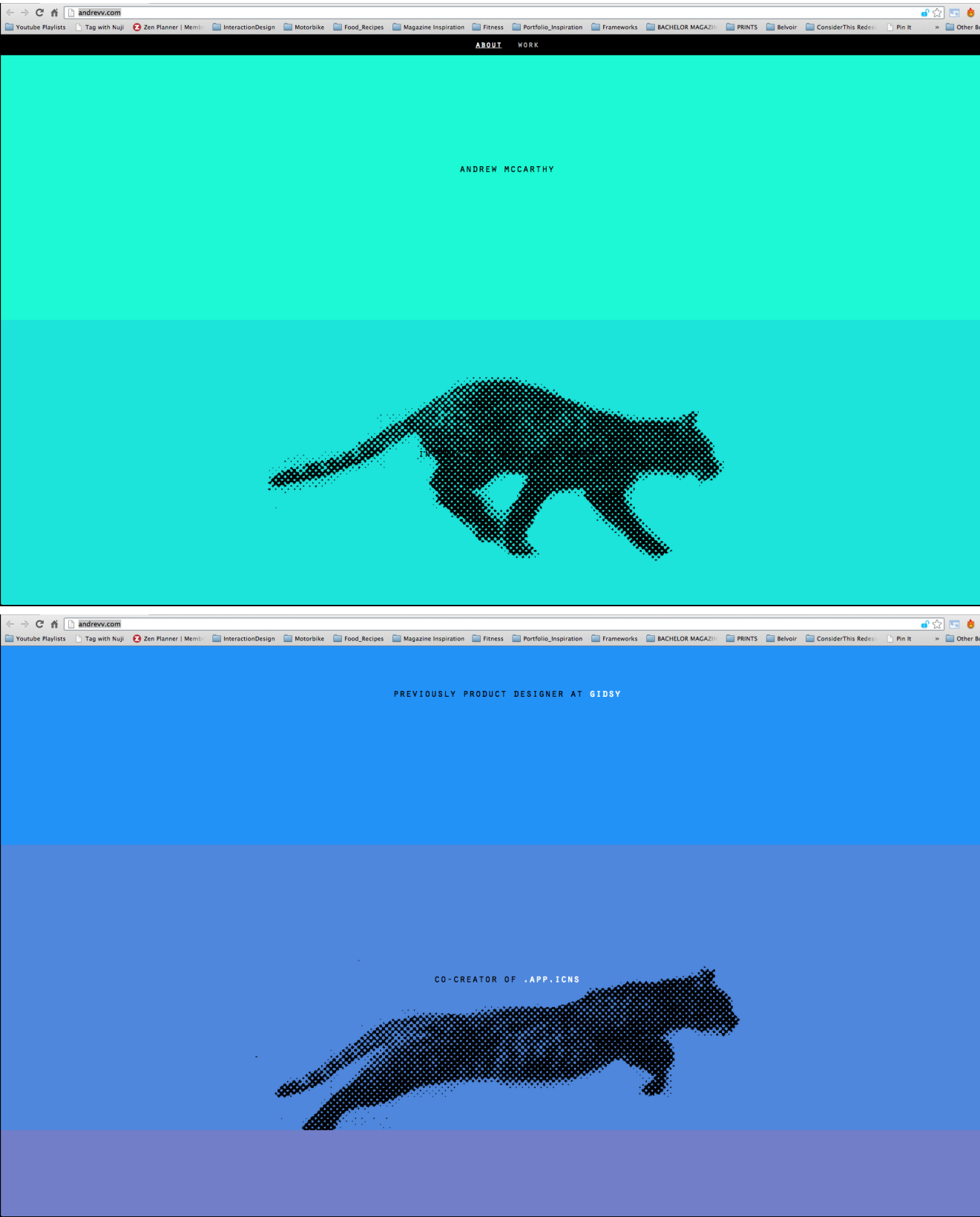
Trials

Once I had some examples of javascript technologies I could use I used them as inspiration to craft my own narrative through trial and error. Some websites where made with flash which was something I wanted to avoid by all means. It was always the goal to stay strictly html css and javascript.

The website was build using the Initzializr framework as the starting point; http://www.initializr.com/

Once I started collecting photos and arranging the text on the pages ideas where quickly scrapped and new ones formed. The prototyping phase on the web platform was necessary and I am glad I had time to really try things out on that platform. Had I stayed in the paper prototyping phase too long I might have run into more problems.

On the left is a photo of one of the first tests with a simple hover over effect. This later evolved to be the walking man on the final website.

61
-
62
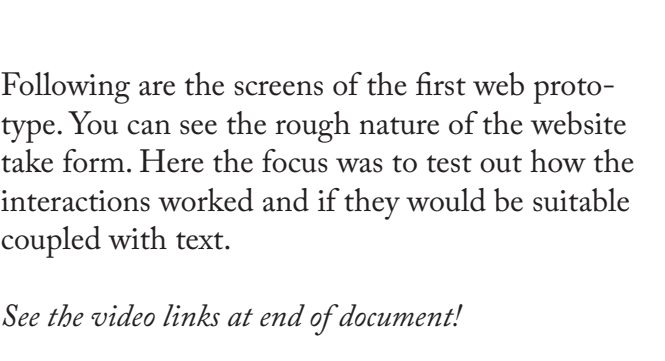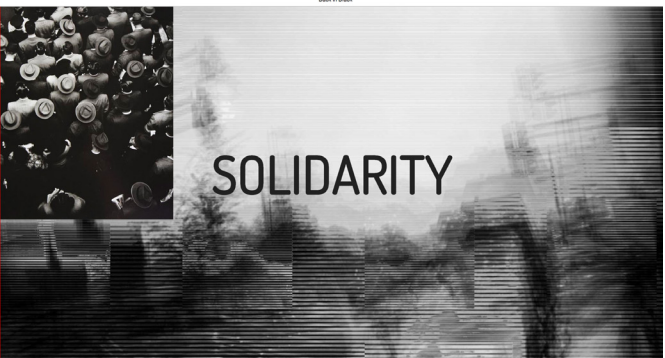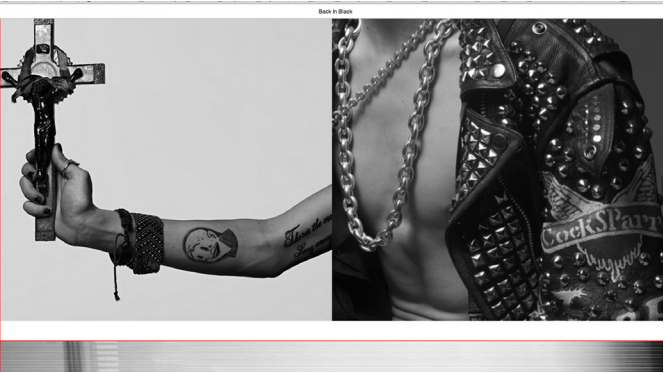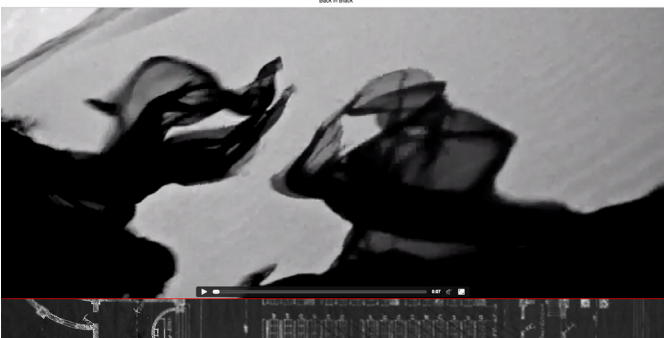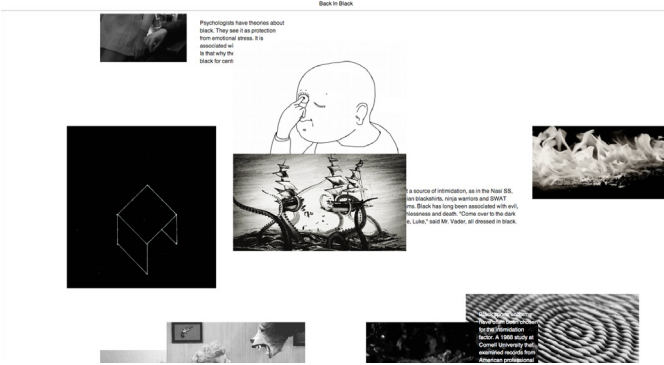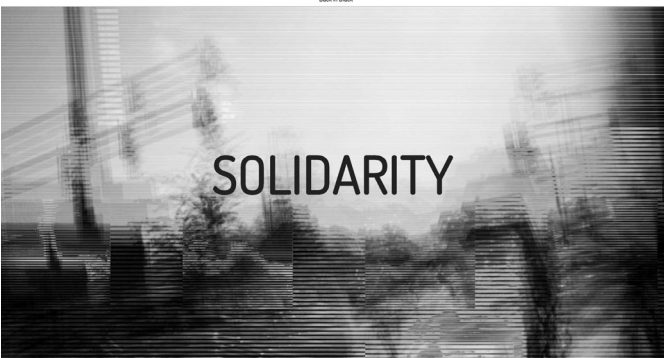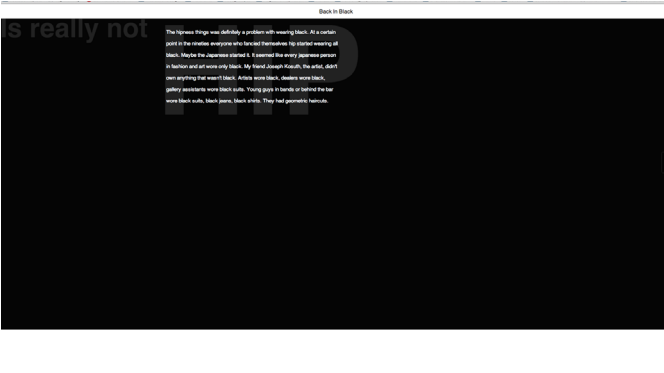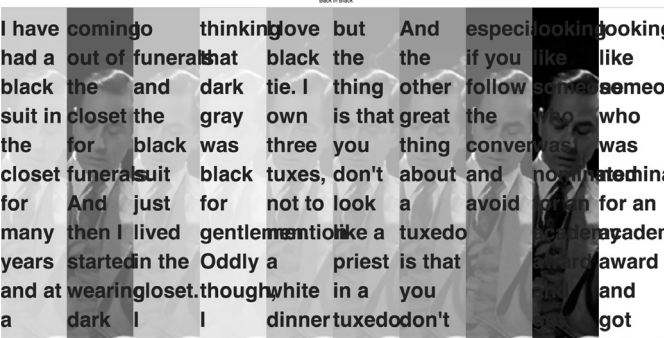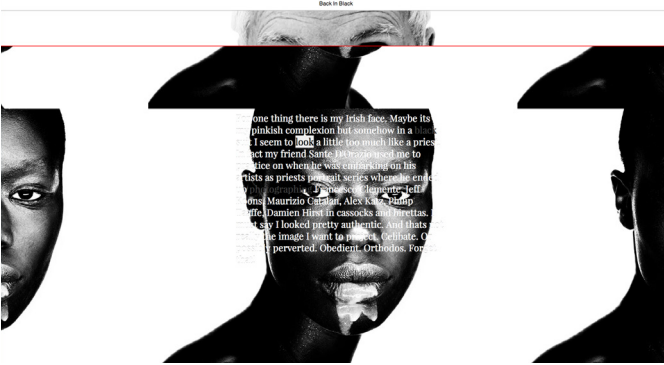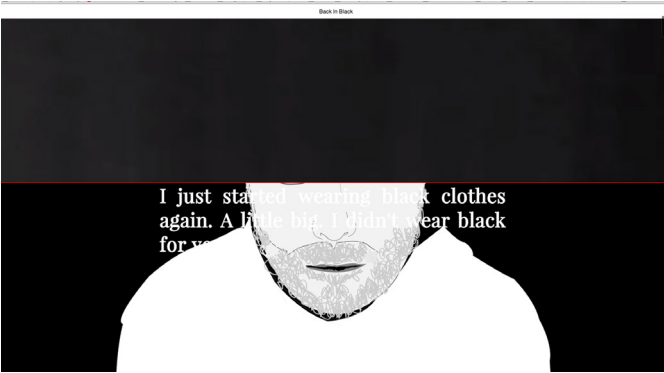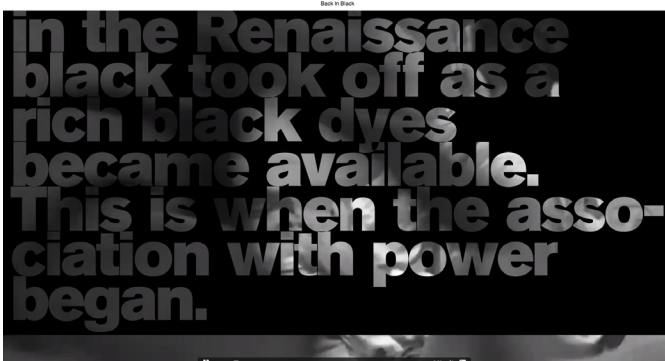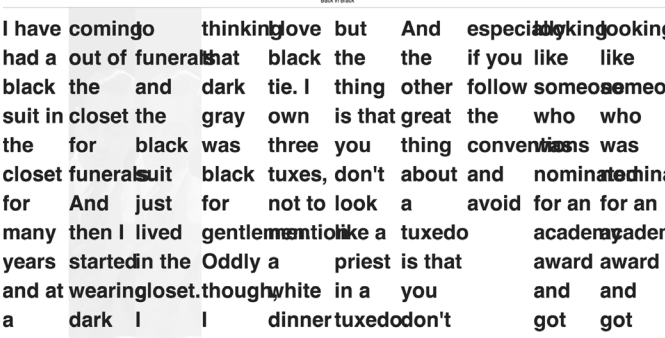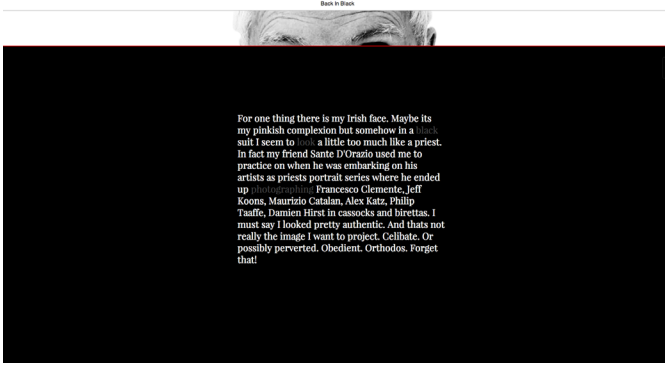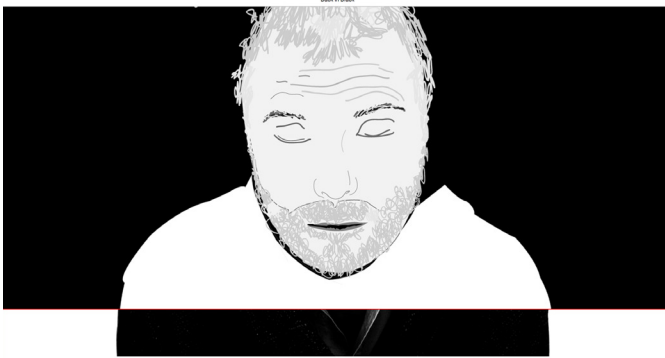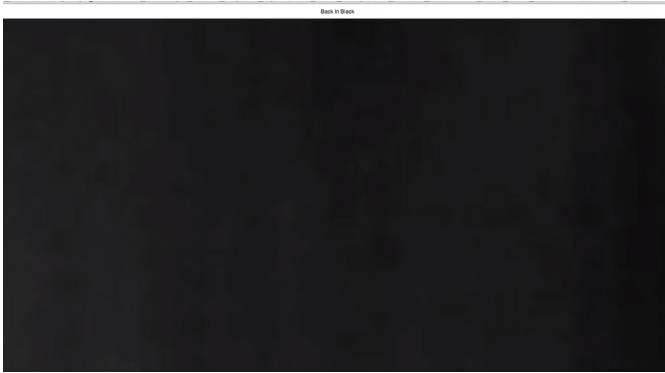
Following are the screens of the first web proto-type. You can see the rough nature of the website take form. Here the focus was to test out how the interactions worked and if they would be suitable coupled with text.

See the video links at end of document!

Mentor's Input

After this phase the input from the mentors was once again very helpful in keeping me on track and getting me further. I was urged to try playing with typography more and spacing of the text. Also to enhance the fullscreen nature of the webpage. Going for a almost cinematic approach.

And once again, to be more experimental with the text. Because as it was the text was simply stamped on the page which makes it boring to read and out of place compared with the animations and movement of the pictures and full screen video.

So with the excellent input in the back of my head I set about to alter sections to cater to the problems and hopefully make some changes that could rafity the static nature of the text.

Also, the decision to go monochromatic arose through discussions with my Mentors. To reduce it to stark black and white fit the topic obviously as well as gave everything the same language since photos and media where taken from multiple sources.

Navigation

The navigation was kept as simple as possible. I didnt want it to interfere with the full screen nature of the whole website. At first I wanted to create a navigation bar but that would just take up precious screen real estate.

Instead there are three simple icons on the page. Home, Info & Sound. Im happy that it stayed that reduces as any more is simply unecessary clutter.

Introduction Video And First Sections

Full screen Text & Walking Animation & Masked Video

The intro video is simply a fullscreen video of water. Its purpose was to slow down the reader and allow them to understand that they where about to experience something special. fullscreen web video is still largely void on the web and it hints at a more interactive immersive experience then a conventional webpage. Coupled with the illustrated title and sleek navigation it envited the user to dive into a story. Much like a magazine cover hints at the content hidden inside.

The author is then introduced as a simple graphical character with his eyes closed asking himself a question. A scroll inverts the color of the font the background as well as the photo of Glenn O'Brien who now has his eyes open. There are no other interactions as this section should simply create the entrance to the rest of the article.

The first paragraph is simply littered with associations that I have with certain words. These appear when hovering over the text to revieal a full screen image of the assosiation.

The walking man is simply a row of divs with a eased in hover over. This makes reading slightly more interesting because the hover over creates a simple effect that is fun to play with.

Further is the masked text with an underlying full screen video of a man dancing. The section illustrates the history of the color black and so I chose to go with a simply video of a man in a suit so to not distract too much from the text. It really works well and is something I havent seen anywhere else on the web.

The next section is slightly longer and uses scrolling and controlling the background color to guide what the user is focused on reading. The background reveals and hides text controlling the order and way a reader consumes content.

The split screen drag and drop is a playful way for the user to interact with imagery whilst reading the article. By using photos that fit the content of the text the user can create a simple collage with two photos whilst taking in the image like text passages.

Scroll & Split Screen Drag & Drop

Click Layouting & Animated Text & Gifs

In this section the user can layout the page whoever they want. There are three photos that can be shown on the page at any given time. By allowiing the user to choose they can layout the page whoever they see fit. This section was one of the hardest to create and although its very heavily inspired by print I like the simple Idea that picture choice could be left to the user.

The next section discusses black and its psychological effects. Because of this I wanted to create a chaotic effect with the text. So the text is animated and unreadable until the user hovers over the image next to it. Then the text slowly unscrambles itself to become readable. Although not all users found this effect I like that those that did all experienced a small "wow" effect.

Music & Click Away Image

The section with the fullscreen video of the woman in the dessert is more of a transitional section and should hopefully relax the user and take them back to purely reading and enjoying the beautiful visual.

The section with the masked images refers to how black is an excellent color to hide with. So I decided to hide the text in that way that the user can almost use a flashlight like mask to expose and read the section.

Full Screen Video & Masked Blueprint

When scrolling into the Johnny Cash section the song "Man In Black" begins to play. Scrolling out of the section turns of the song and resumes the background music of the website. This is a simple effect but very effective in turning the focus on Johnny Cash's words. In addition the user needs to hover over to expose Glenn O'Briens words regarding Cash as I wanted only the lyrics to be relevant in this section.

Next the user sees a image with holes in it and should see the other images stacked underneath it. By clicking on the screen each image dissapears slowly revealing the text lying underneath. Again, this was a simply way to control where the focus of the user was and forcing them in a sublte way to take in the imagery before they read.

Opacity & End

The opacity sections is made up of a text passage that one cant read if the mouse is on the upper portion of the page. Its just a grid of letters. When the user moves the mouse towards the bottom of the page the text begins to fade to black making it readable and the passage becomes readable. With the scrolling this sections interaction happens almost automaticall which is a good thing. Its easy to read and makes a in my opinion boring section a little more user friendly.

Then Mr. O'Brien closes the article with a sentence "Black is the new Black." To me, this doesnt mean anything and can be used with any term. Using that Idea I created a flicker board of many terms that would stop when the user hovered over the words showing that the sentence and any term could be used with it.
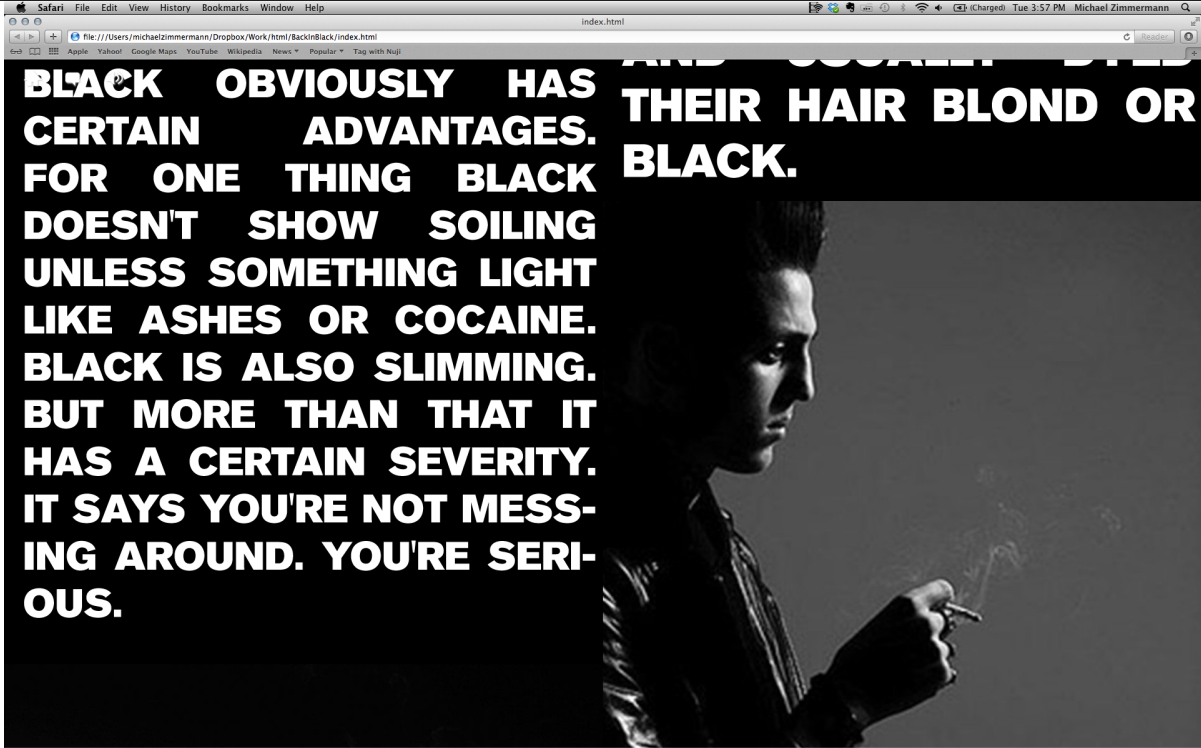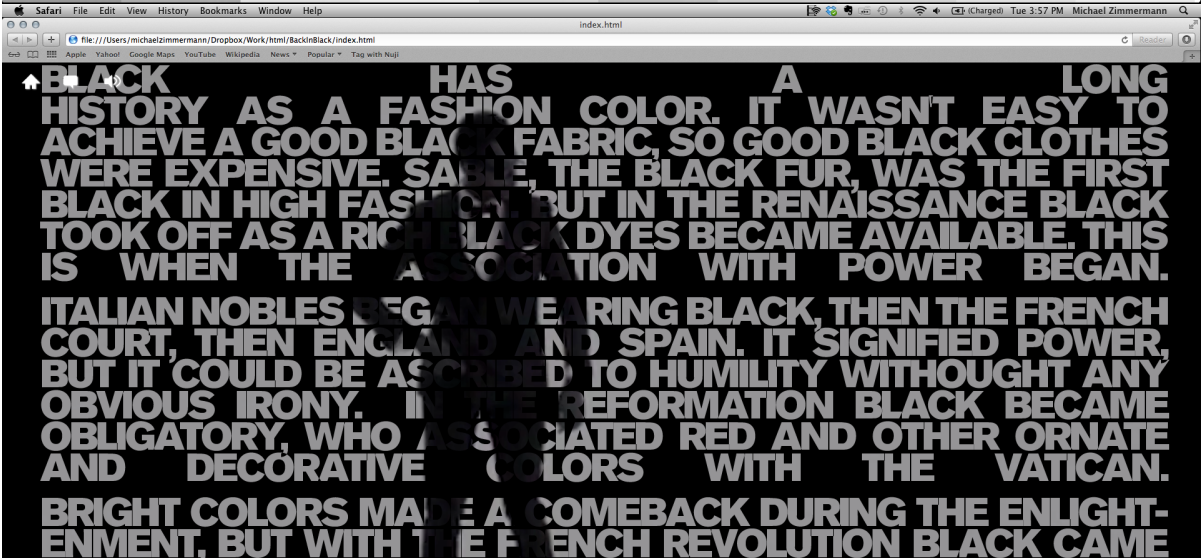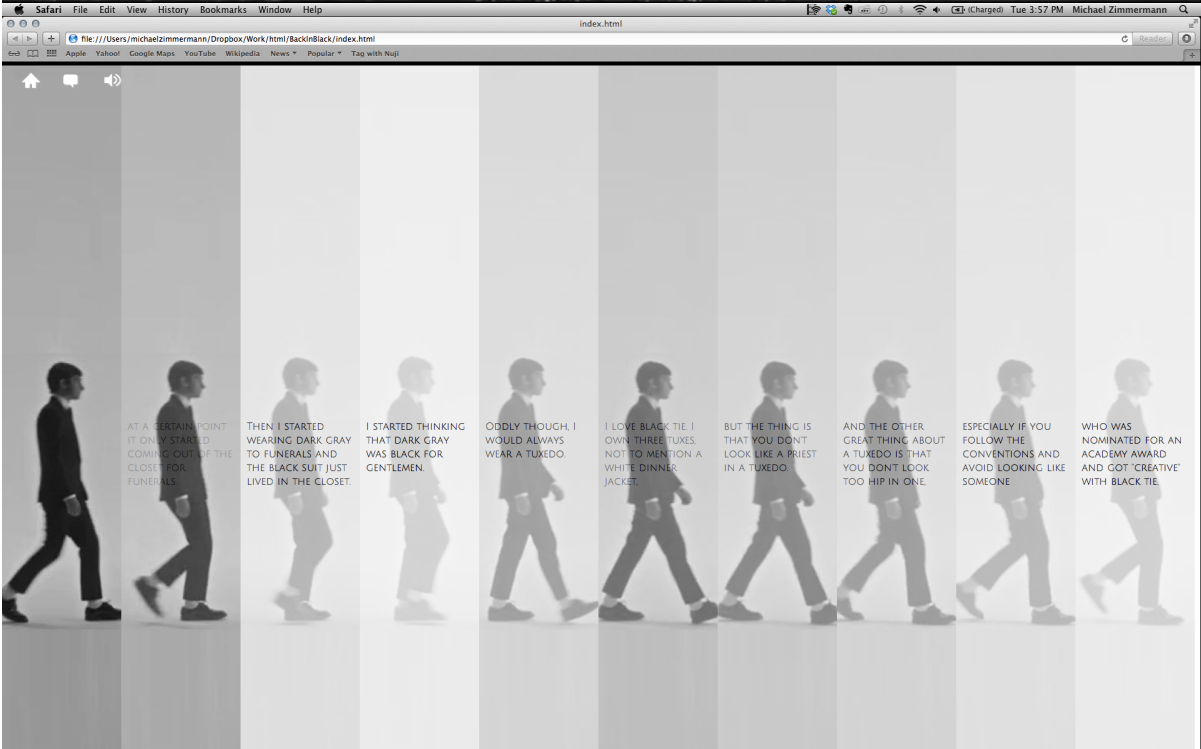
Video Links

Prototype Video 1

May 5 2013; https://vimeo.com/66712720
Password; backinblack

Prototype Video 2

May 29 2013; https://vimeo.com/67628970
Password; backinblack

Exhibition Video

https://vimeo.com/67631707
Password; backinblack

Research / Concept & Content/ Development

75
-
76

7

IN CLOSING

Target Audience

I hope the work is appealing to those who appreciate print. A magazine is an entity that one focus's on and enjoys conciously. The Back in Black experiment should give that same feeling to its target audience. I would guess that anyone can appreciate the article and its interactions. As well as the imagery that accompanies it. Someone that loves the internet for its speed and simply jumps from link to link will not have the patience to enjoy all the work that went into the article and thats fine. But for those that do enjoy a good story I hope they enjoy the whole thing.
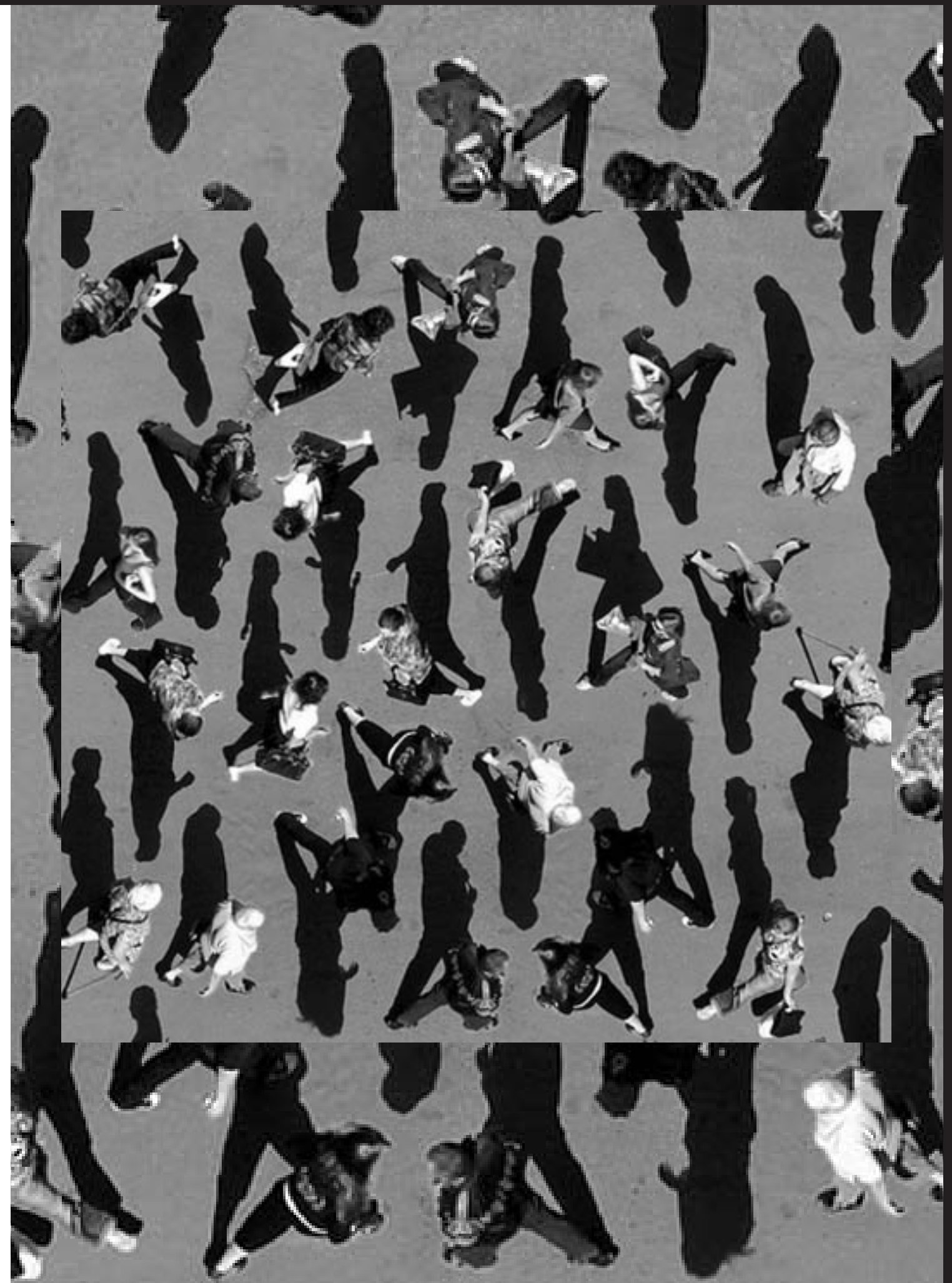
Experience vs Content

As mentioned before, it was important to find a good balance between what the user experience in each section and the content. First and foremost its an article and its important to be treated as such. To allow the content room to breath and enhance it withought chocking it by the imagery and videos. This was a difficult undertaking but I feel to have succeeded in that endeavor. The content doesnt take a backseat to the content. Some sections its less relevant than others but thats the nature of the article. Not all passages are as interesting as others!

The way the article is created online is its inherent value. It would have been much easier to simply tranport the article as a static piece of text online. But, as is inline with the concept, I dont think that that form of presentation is suitable for the online realm. Yes, its expensive to create articles like this. But its also what seperates your article from the million others published online. So in the future, I dont think any other magazine based articles will be able to garner any attention withought somehow being enhanced and created into a worthwile experience. Like I stated before, attention is valuable. And to get it online, you as a supplier of content need to present that information like you value it and feel its worthwile for the reader. And in quality presentation and a thought process catered to the content you create quality. The reader will notice that once landing on the page. And that quality will give you his attention.

Connecting *by Basset & Partners* https://vimeo.com/52861634
Thinking for a Living *by multiple authors* http://www.thinkingforaliving.org/
Remembrance *by Ed Harrison* http://remembrance2012.co.uk/
Moving Six *by Comme de Garcons* itunes store
Form Follows Function *by Jongmin Kim* http://fff.cmiscm.com/#!/main
Apartamento *by Omar Sosa* http://www.apartamentomagazine.com/
Purple Fashion *by Olivier Zahm* http://purple.fr/
Grourmand *by David Lane & Marina Tweed* http://thegourmand.co.uk/
Amok *by Thom Yorke & Amok http://atomsforpeace.info/amok/*
Stones Throw *by Stones Throw Records http://stonesthrow.com*
Snow Fall Article *by New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek*
Nabis Film *by Nabis http://www.nabisfilm.com/*
Aude Debut Graphic Studio *http://aude-debout.fr/*
Bat For Lashes Article by Pitchfork Media *http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/bat-for-lashes/*
Pitchfork Advance by Pitchfork Media *http://pitchfork.com/advance/*
Rick & Drew *http://www.rickanddrew.com/*
Andrew McCarthy *http://andrevv.com/*

SOURCES

backinblack.ch

z _ hdk .
.
.

interaction
design