Graphic Skills Portal

Introduction Handout

4 PRESENTING

URBAN GRAPHICS SKILLS

BSP Graphic Skills Portal
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What makes a layout successful?

- **It attracts attention**

- **It conveys a clear and powerful message**

- **It tells a story**

What makes a layout unsuccessful?

- **It is cluttered**

- **It is confusing**

- **Even "dull"**

When designing your portfolio, the last thing you want to be is dull. Your job is to stop your reader, impress them, and give them the message.

Inspiration for layout can come from anywhere, the trick is to be able to deconstruct the world around you

As early as humans started trading, they used graphic design to attract more customers. Hopefully the Greek pottery would sell better than the Venetian if it attracted more attention.

Layout can use contrasts in colours, symmetry, repetition or variations in fonts and typography to convey originality.

LAYOUT ELEMENTS

<u>Using shape and line to guide your reader.</u>

In the real world, you recognise what you see by attributing meaning to shapes.

In graphic design it is not much different in the sense that the first thing we do when looking at posters, books, magazines, etc. is to try to identify what it is that you are looking at.

Thinking about your portfolio, every section, every page, and every element that's in there needs to be clear as to what it is, what it represents, and why.

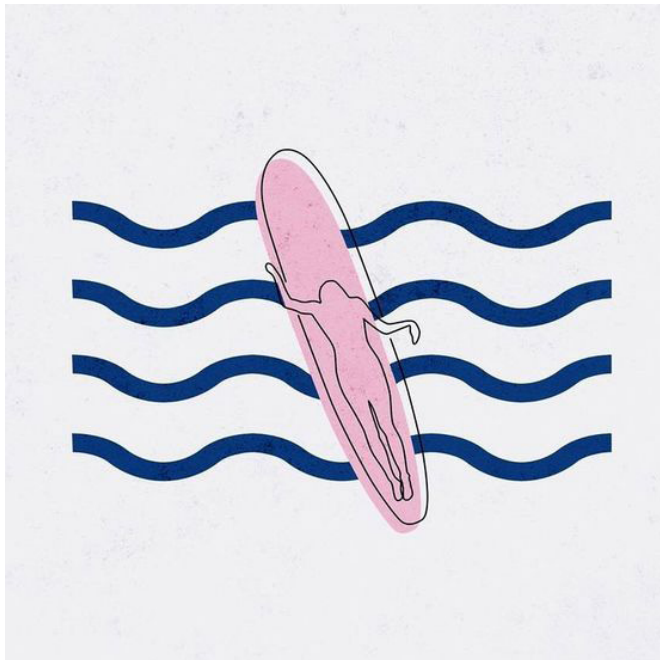Therefore, in graphic design two attributes are of extreme importance:

o   clarity and

o   legibility
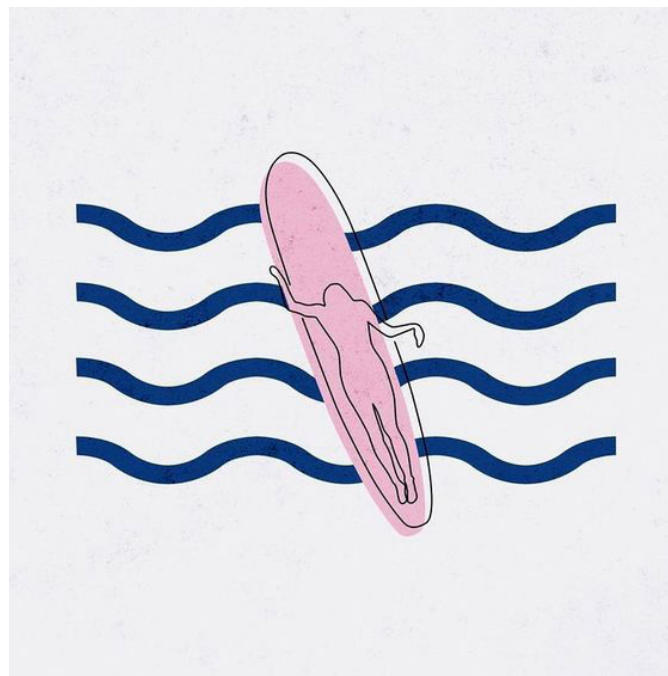
LAYOUT ELEMENTS

However, it is quite remarkable how much the human brain can understand without having the full picture by assuming and by drawing from past memories.

For example, the posters:

It is simply a set of coloured lines and shapes. There is in fact no actual image of a beach or surfboards. You look at the shapes, and assign to them meaning, eventually solving the puzzle of what you're looking at.

The faster you can achieve this with the least amount of information the better. As it puts your readers brain to work and relate on a more personal level with your graphics.

It is important however to keep a sense of unity. In the tones of your colours, in the type of shapes you will use and even in the underlying/hidden structure of your composition.

Lines or rules are what organise and divide your information.

They help identify areas on a page and provide structure .

- Again, these lines or rules can be hidden just like the guides you created in InDesign

- It is important however to retain a certain logic and hierarchy.

- The thicker rules or lines relate to headings and main separators (this applies to actual lines but also font).

- The thinner rules or lines relate to more detailed information

Determining the structure, rules and shapes beforehand is always a good point to start when creating graphic design documents. Don't worry you will always be able to diverge from these but please never start working on a

booklet without having predetermined the general rules that will govern the entire document

These are essentially what we reviewed when starting up InDesign

- Size of page and its format

- Size of margins and numbers of columns per page

Then, depending on each section and type of project:

- *Where are the headers going to be?*

- *Where will the main body of text be?*

- *How many pictures per page can you fit?*

- *Will you overlap text and pictures?*

2.1
NACKA CONTEXT

The municipality of Nacka is the third largest municipality in the Stockholm Region (Nacka Municipality, 2016). It consists of four districts: Boo, Fisksätra & Saltsjöbaden, Sicklaön and Älta (Nacka Municipality, 2016). Nacka City is situated in the western part of the Sicklaön district hence, also known as Västra Sicklaön, approximately 2.5km from Stockholm city centre.

Nacka City has been identified as a strategic area for further growth within the Stockholm Region (RUFS, 2010). Hammarby Sjöstad is located on the eastern side of Nacka City, . This is Sweden's first internationally renowned urban eco district, developed in the 2000s.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The municipality covers some 9550 hectares of land and water (Nacka Kommun, 2012), including 34 km² of water area and 10 km of coastline (Nacka Kommun, 2012a).

It is located in close proximity to Stockholm City, as the map of the Stockholm region shows, and surrounded by the municipalities of Stockholm, Lidingo, Vaxholm, Varmdo and Tyreso.

The municipality is part of the Stockholm Archipelago and surrounded by many waterways, natural reserves and forests, and has stunning waterfronts. The majority of the maritime traffic for Stockholm City passes through Nacka's coastal waters.

NACKA

STOCKHOLM

Stockholm region. Source: Adapted from image by Nordelch (2008)

LAND USE

As the map below suggests, Nacka City offers a good mix of uses including residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural, and can be broadly classified as brownfield land. The area has cultural roots in a strong industrial heritage of mills and machinery manufacturing, and farming heritage.

The municipality owns some 4,800 hectares of land, including natural areas and undeveloped plots. The built-up land is mainly owned by private owners such as property companies, developers, housing associations and private individuals (Nacka Kommun, 2012a).

POPULATION

The municipality has a relatively young population. The average age is 38 years, compared with 41 years which is the national average (Nacka Kommun, 2012b).

It is estimated that the municipality's population will increase by 23,000 between 2011 and 2020 from ca. 90,000 to over 113,000 inhabitants. The expected net average migration is about 1,700 people per year, with 8,600 expected immigrants per year (Nacka Kommun, 2012a).

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Chiesa Rossa district, Children playing soccer in the middle of the street
(photo by Sergio Cossu, 1966)

SCARCITY

In a time of many monetary crises and cutback in public services, the idea that cities can have something in 'excess' or in an amount that would be more than necessary, like space, becomes extremely attractive... and perhaps a bit arrogant: as if normal restraints could turn suddenly into an asset.

Indeed, 'excess' appears a puzzling notion in today's world. Everything we do seems born out of the opposite idea, that of scarcity. Our entire economic system is built around the assumption that production factor inputs (i.e., capital, labor, and land) are limited.

Recent economic theories, from Doughnut Economics to Blue Economy to Circular Economy, highlight the dangers of the limited availability of resources, of the planetary boundaries we operate in —and the far-reaching implications for economic growth when we would take these boundaries into account.

Urban design and planning exist

because of the need to rationally allocate space and resources by growing well-being and reducing negative externalities in a highly capital intensive activity like urbanization is. And architecture as a discipline is equally built around the same postulates: being austere with space and material means while rising comfort and beauty.

'Excess' space is what these post-war housing estates have plenty. The rapid population growth governing their existence resulted in an 'excessive' urbanization, and consequently in a surplus of public space, whether dedicated to streets or amenities.

This 'excess' does not mean though that it is readily available or accessible to anyone. The access to it is deep-rooted in a diverse, contingent, and often contradictory set of regulations, practices, and physical artifacts. They ultimately filter out who and how one would have the right to

COLOUR

There are not many rules in design but when it comes to colour there are a few things to keep in mind

There is no real right or wrong when using colour. Granted, there are colours that are more or less in fashion, colours that theoretically complement one another, colours that are brighter, other that are more subtle.

However, if you are ever looking at a piece and find it unattractive, timid or bland, very often colour is the reason why.

To avoid this, feel free to use <u>any combination of colours</u> but be confident and systematic. Set rules as to what each colour represents, or what it is used for.

For example, *if you use one colour for*

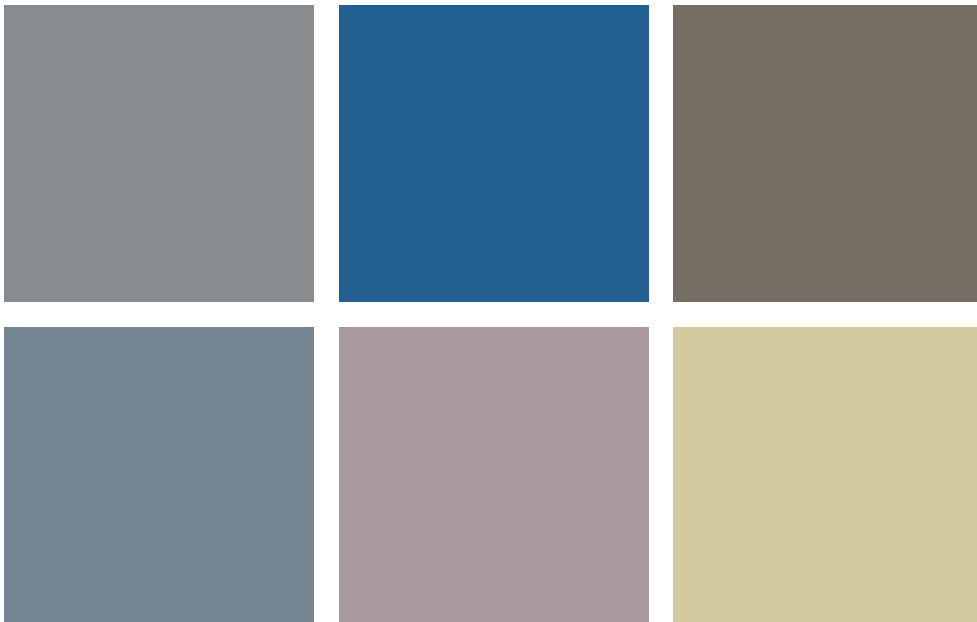*Titles and a second for Body don't switch in the middle of the publication or the section.*

<u>Regarding colours:</u>

Bright colours attract attention:

Put two toys in front of a child one with bright pinks and yellows and one grey or beige. Chances are the kid will choose the first high-contrast toy.

Subtle tones convey sophistication:

In the end the choice and the interplay between these will be your choice only.

Use colour to drive your reader into your piece and to differentiate space.

Colour is a great way to create **sections and subsection** that are clear and well organised. To highlight the head from the body or the side bar from the main parts.

It can also serve as a code to help identify **similar content.**

• Use the same colour-code to represent similar elements

• This helps if you are faced with too much information to organise, too many graphs, maps, text, photographs etc. Which is something very common in portfolios.

• Colour helps group the important information and draw attention to it.

Colour however can also make your portfolio fail if you use it in a manner lacking any obvious principle of organization.

• Your reader's brain will naturally try to find patterns and apply order and clarity.

• If there is no logic underlying your choices, then the only possible result will be confusion.

So, **use colour to guide the viewer, create interest, organise and add legibility to your portfolio to obtain the best results.**

One note of caution. Colour is a very cultural thing. Some parts of the world but also fields of work (i.e. industry vs academia) will prefer different colour palettes.

Some firms might be in the avant-garde and love very bright and flashy designs while other will give more consideration to more grounded, less frivolous designs.

Therefore, when designing your portfolio, keep in mind who is it for and adjust.

BUILDINGS   VEGETATION   PUBLIC SAPCE   ACTIVITIES   SOCIAL   TREES   ROUTES   WATER
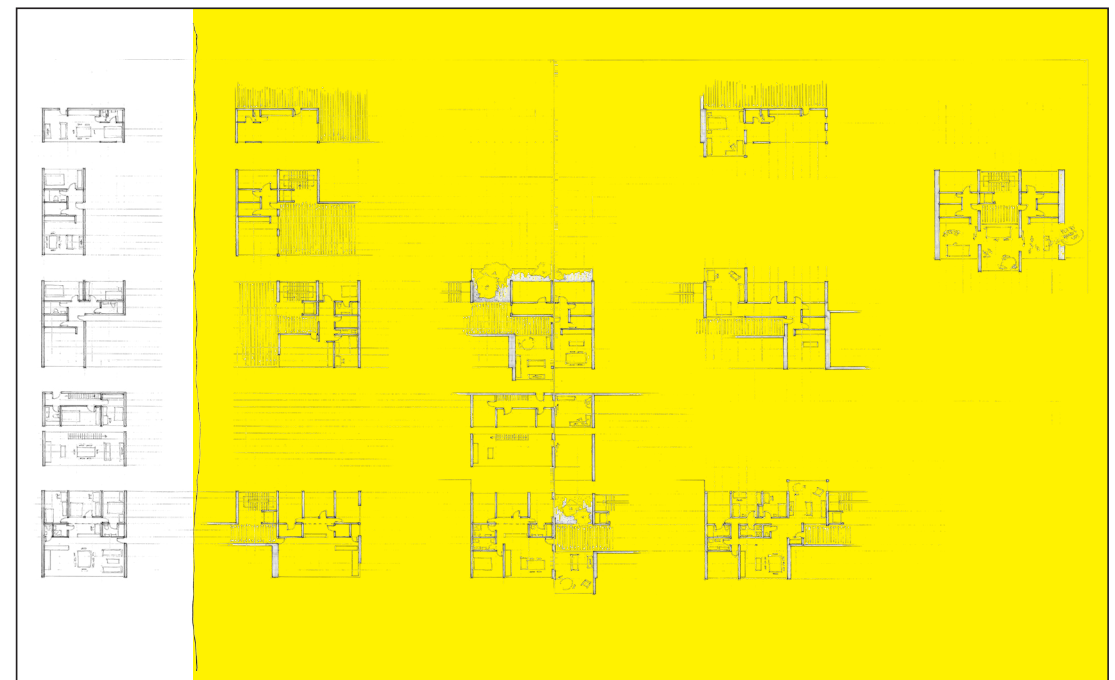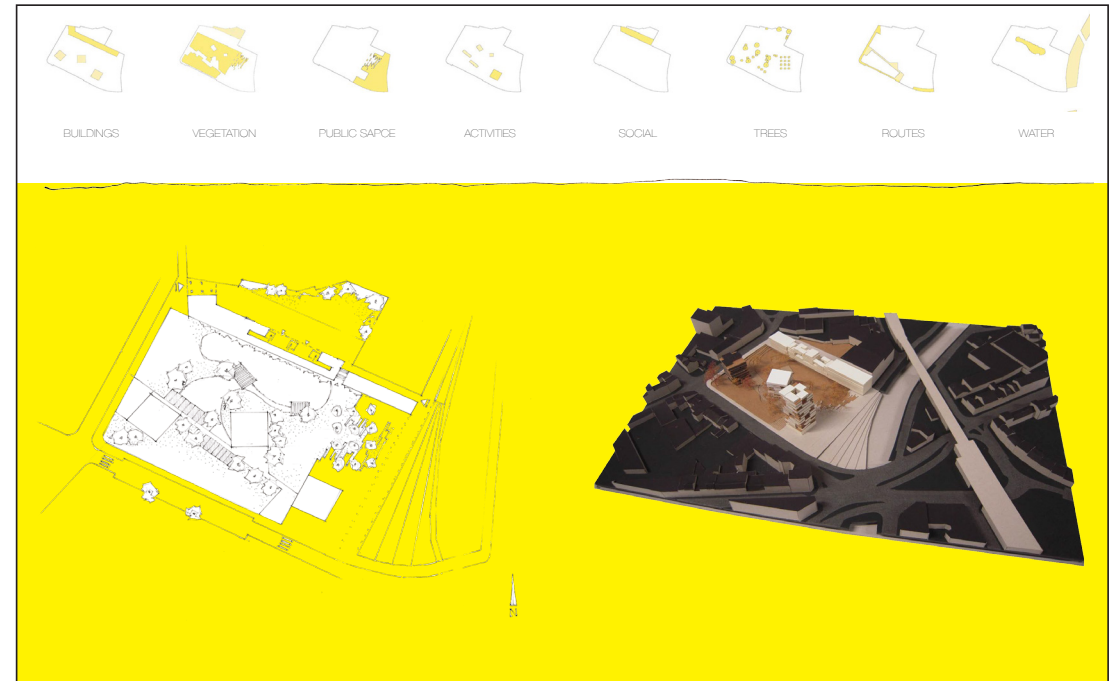
TEXT AND FONTS

Moving on to text, choosing the fonts you will use is crucial to the overall narrative of your portfolio.

Different fonts convey different messages even if the written text is exactly the same.

Essentially fonts are divided into two categories:

* Serif fonts and

* Sans serif fonts

Serif fonts are letters that include a small line or stroke at regular places of each letter.

Sans serif fonts conversely are letters that lack these 'extending' features.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Serif fonts are more playful while sans serif is considered more serious and official

You should also consider the **weight** of your font, from light to medium to heavy.

* **lightweight fonts** work well in clean designs.

* **medium fonts** often carry a sense of authority.

* **heavyweight fonts** work well only when used sparingly to highlight some specific aspect but otherwise can overwhelm if overused.

Don't use only one font but don't use too many either.

Try to find which fonts will work best for titles, headings, body of text, captions, etc.

While you might think that using different weights of one font might be enough, it rarely is. See fonts as tools. They serve a specific purpose each time. And although you could use one Chef's knife to cut everything in your kitchen, you will find that a specific knife will work best for meats, another for vegetables, a third one for cheese.

Choosing fonts is something that should happen at the very beginning of the process of creating your portfolio.

Choose your fonts and create very strict rules as to what each font will be used for.

Then follow those rules. Don't use the font you've selected for your title in your body of text, and vice versa.

This might seem obvious but you would be surprised how many people starting in composing their first graphic works disregard this completely.

Feel free to explore the variety of free fonts available in the Creative Cloud Library: *https://fonts.adobe.com/fonts*
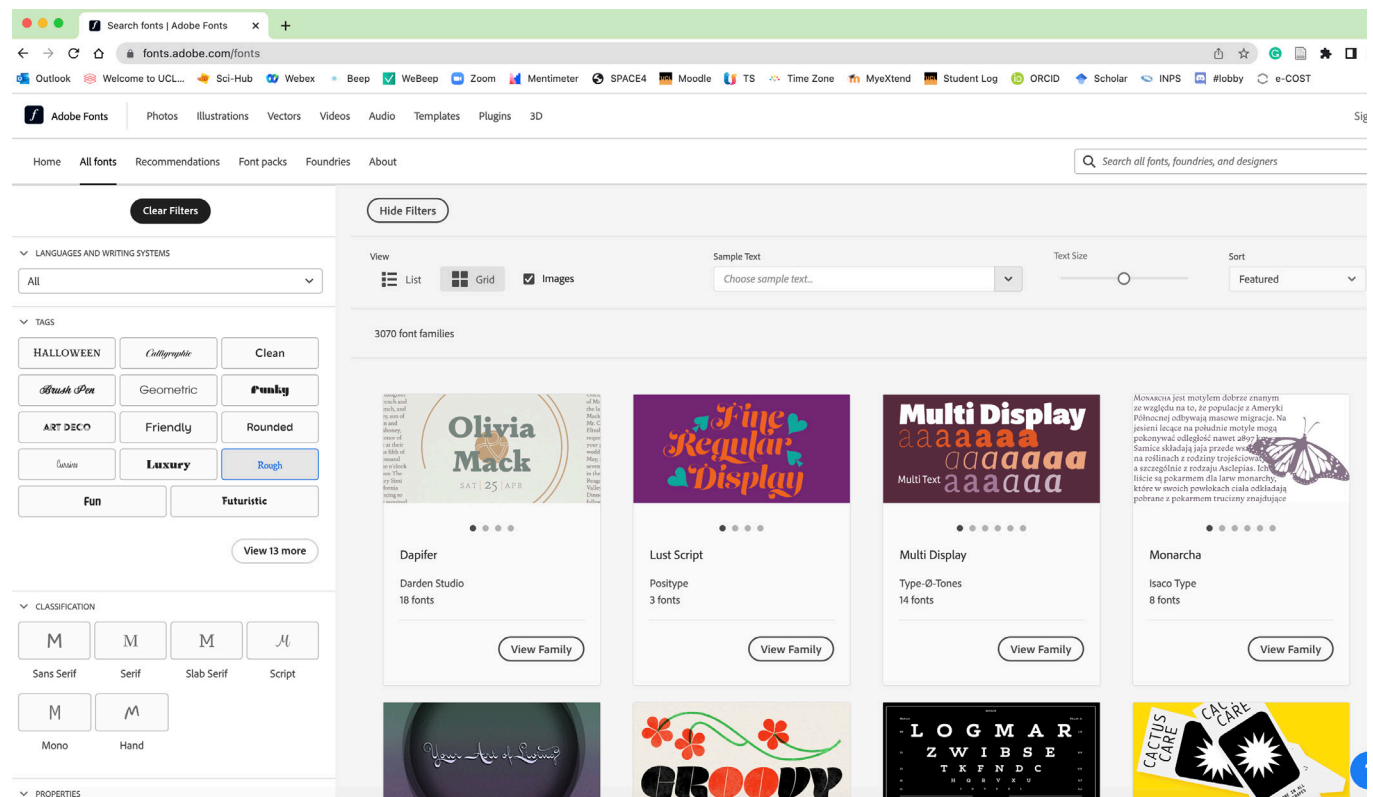
COMPOSITION AND BASICS

Balance and tension:

In our daily lives we usually strive for balance and try to avoid tension.

In graphic design however, balance and tension are two opposing aspects that keep the reader involved.

They create excitement in something very mundane.

Take the example of walking on a tight rope. There is balance and tension. There is the excitement of wondering whether the person you are watching will make it or will fall. Still you are watching someone practicing a very mundane act: walking. Arguably this is much more exciting however than watching someone walk through a corridor.

The same thing applies to graphic design.

You are looking at something very common: a book, a magazine, a webpage, a portfolio, etc.

Successful layouts create tension while remaining balanced

How does all that relate to a portfolio in practice?

- Don't cut the page in half. This creates equal spaces that are uneventful

- Don't organise your layout around one central element towards the edge of the page. This is again a very safe environment where your eye is not drawn to a specific place.

- Similarly avoid strict centred layouts

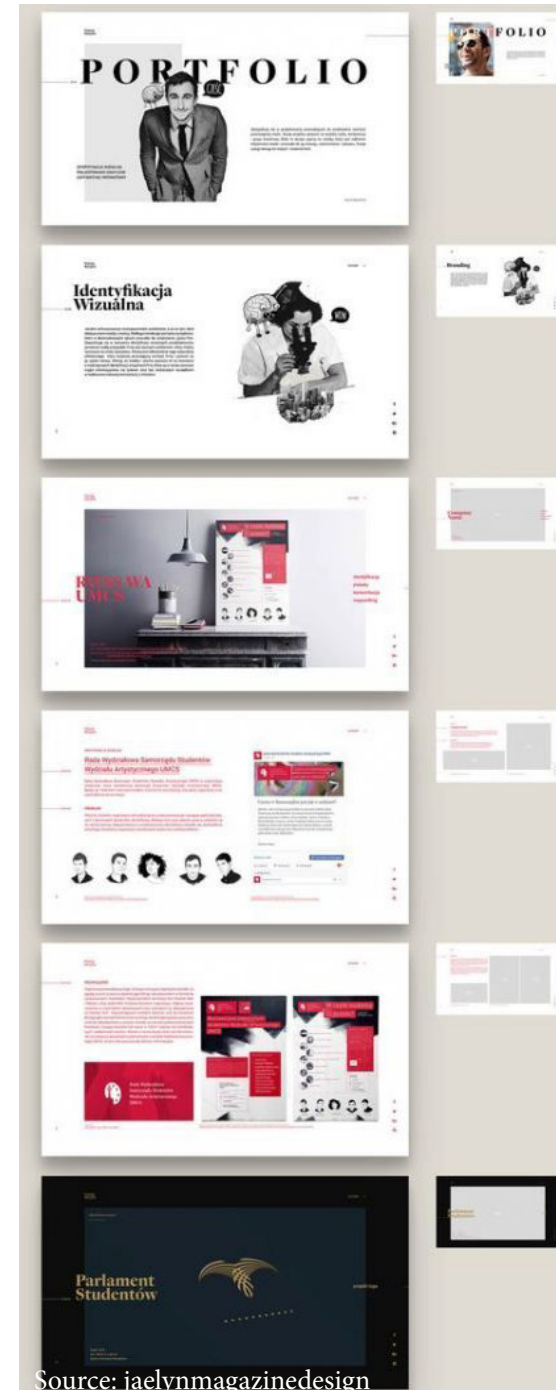- To avoid this play with scale to tip the balance towards the elements you want to highlight.

Of course, the goal is not to create a booklet that is irritating to the eye. Simply one that maintains interest.

Source: fontsinuse.com

Source: popsmservice.ru/

Source: jaelynmagazinedesign

COMPOSITION AND BASICS

Scale:

So, let's talk about scale!

Scale in composition and layout refers to the size of the elements and the relations between these elements

Having elements of the same scale coexist next to one another results in a page with no gravity. No spice. Everything is the same and grey.

- When all text is of the same font, all pictures are of the same size there is no sense of priority, of guidance.

- Take a look at the two compositions on the right. The first is dull and expected, by shifting the size and location you create something unexpected and your composition has energy.
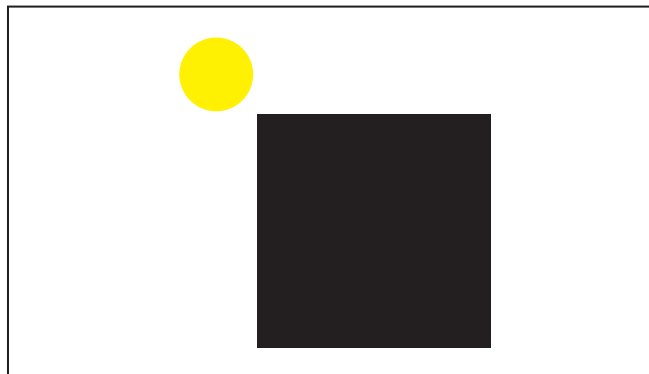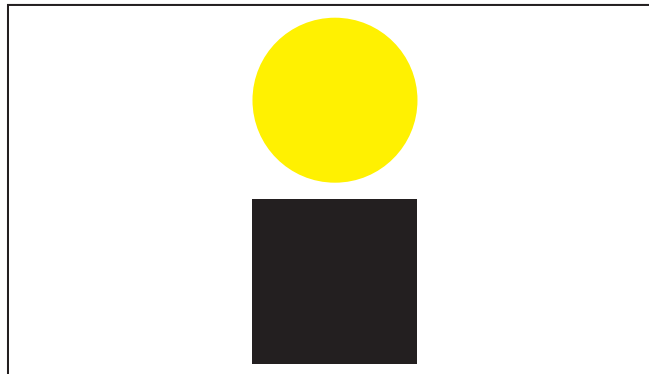
Contrast in scale between two elements creates a dynamic relationship between them as a large element will look larger next to a smaller one

Evidently, the eye will be drawn to the large element first and then to the rest of the page

- Hence when it comes to designing your portfolio, enlarge anything that relates directly with your main 'vision'. Anything that really show who you are and what you are best at.

- Go overboard with this, don't be afraid.
    - Make something huge, let it overflow on multiple pages.
    - Put next to it smaller illustrations and details, things that need more careful consideration.
- The point is to ensure that your reader will read what you want them to read. Don't assume they will read every single line you wrote. As a matter of fact (given the amount of applications and portfolios they receive) they might not even read a single line if the graphic part and the illustrations you put don't draw their attention and MAKE them read.

By creating dynamic and unexpected compositions you force your reader to ask questions, and to try and search answers to these in your portfolio.

So, *think big*. Is something important?

- Enlarge it to 300%, make it huge.

Finally, *experiment, experiment and experiment non-stop.*

- Don't think that the first composition you will draw will be the final one
- Work with crazy gestures and shapes
- Experiment with pages that only show one tiny tiny image, others that are just text, or one enormous impression of your project
- Find what works for you
- Remember that in order to find what you like it is always easier to find what you don't like. So, CREATE and discard what doesn't work.

GRID AND RHYTHM

Still, there needs to be a sense of underlying structure to your work and grids and rhythm are key to that.

A grid doesn't equal strict and boring design. A grid is a guide.

The basic elements of a grid in a book are:

- **The margins**
    - Margins are the space between the end of your page and where your content sits.
    - They are totally up to you to set and can be very large or very small
    - Typically, more formal layouts use large margins while more progressive ones use narrower

- **The columns**

  - The columns are the guide to positioning your content vertically.

  - You can have one or as many columns as you like as long as the way you are supposed to read your work remains clear and the eye doesn't need to bounce up and down, right and left to understand where is the end of the paragraphs

- **The gutters**

  - Gutters are the space between the columns and serve as dividers that clarify when it is time to change column

- **The hangings**

  - Hangings are the guides that organise your content horizontally and are extremely important

MARGINS

HANGLINES

GUTTERS

COLUMNS

MARKER
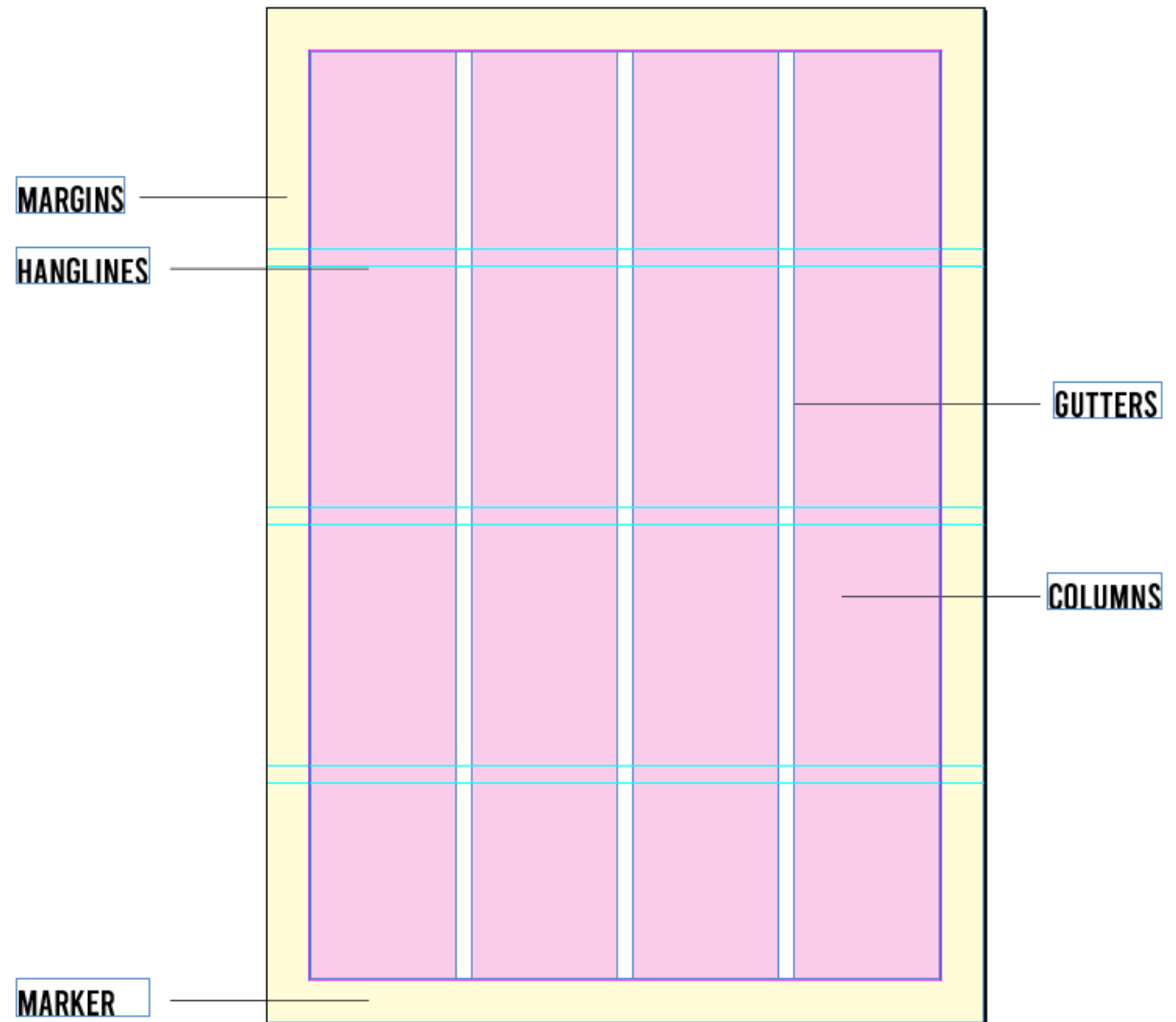
- Hangings are the guides from which you will "hang" content consistently throughout your publication

- The same type of content needs to "hang" from the same.

- So, headers, subheaders, text, photographs, etc. will always start at the same location on your pages.

- In that way, the reader knows what they're reading and what to expect

- **The marker**

  - Markers are where your running heads and page numbers are located.

  - These can be at the top, the bottom of your pages or both.

All these elements compose a clear and pristine grid or structure that creates certainty and homogeneity throughout your work.

Just like the basic elements of design we worked with previously, these need to be set at the very beginning of the process.

Also, similar to scale, experimentation is key. There are so many different types of grids, that you will have to test as many as you can before selecting which fits best your needs.

Draw inspiration from other portfolios, books, magazines, etc. and try to understand the underlying grids they are employing.

However, no grid works well if it isn't broken now and then.

Experiment as much as you can, but always remember to come back to your base grid.
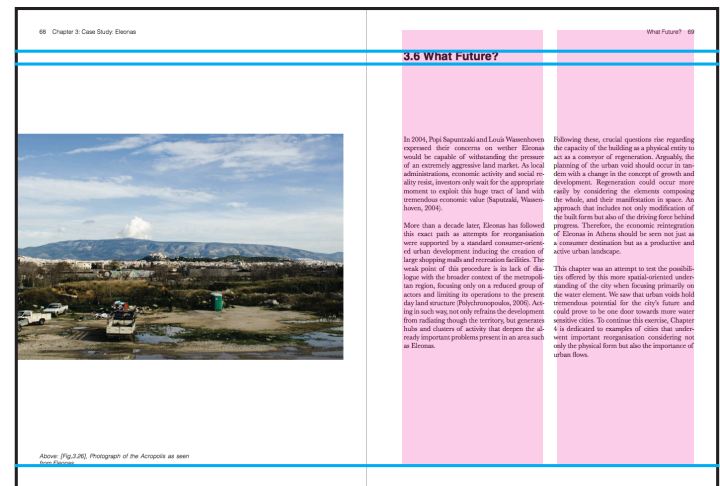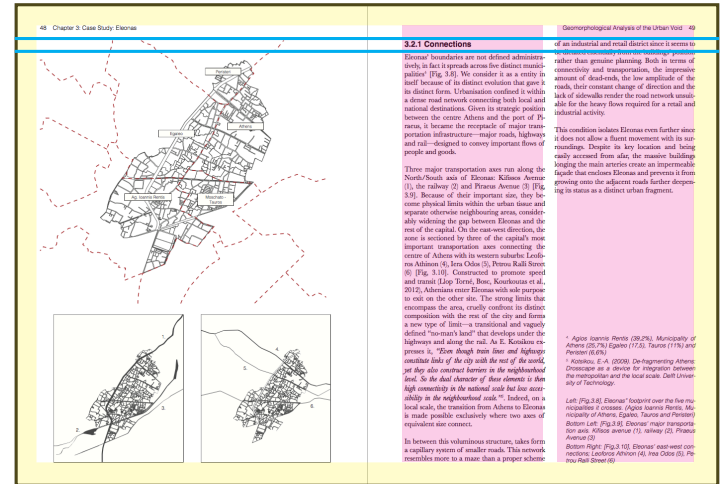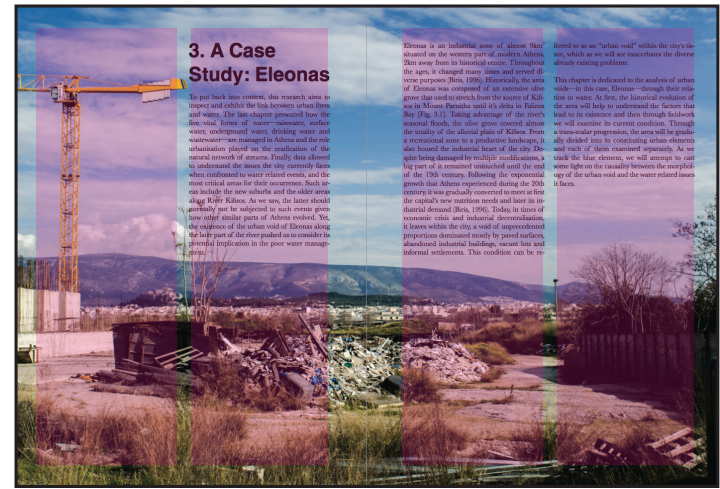
BREAKING THE RULES

To compose a great portfolio, a poster, a booklet or any other piece of graphic design, is like giving in to multiple personalities and this can be a very frustrating process. You will need to:

- pay attention to the smallest detail of each but see the bigger picture of your portfolio's role.

- rigidly follow the rules you set but at the same time ignore them whenever you see fit.

We saw multiple ways to start constructing a good portfolio. It is now time to forget all of it and think how and when you can break all these rules.

You will find many examples that seem to be completely opposed to anything we said about colour, about structure, grids, and fonts.

- Absolute lack of grids that leave the typeface guide the design

- Lo-fi and "old-fashioned" styled compositions that attract the eye

- Ultra-cluttered layouts that overwhelm the reader

If you break a rule it must be to support the message and concept. Breaking the rules works only where there is a good understanding of the basics.

So, we would encourage you to *get inspired by others, attempt new and exciting things.*