Learn to Design Attractive Web Sites
Andreas Veglis • Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The Principles of Beautiful Web Design
Jason Beaird
168 pages
US$39.95
Sitepoint, 2007

As the number of Web sites increases, so does demand for Web sites that not only function properly but also are beautiful. In The Principles of Beautiful Web Design, Jason Beaird aims to cover this demand by targeting Web site designers who want to learn how to make Web sites look more attractive. In five chapters, he covers all the basic principles of graphic-design theory: layout, color, texture, typography, and imagery. The book includes many examples, as well as screenshots from dozens of sites to illustrate graphic-design principles. Additionally, each chapter includes a case study to help the reader understand the theory’s application.

Intended audience
This book will help anyone who works on the Web understand exactly why some designs work while others don’t. It covers graphic-design principles in a straightforward, easy-to-follow way. You’ll benefit from this book even if you have no formal art or design training.

Except for some CSS here and there, the book contains no code. There also isn’t much discussion of graphic tools, except a few examples that employ Photoshop. But you must be familiar with how to convert an image mock-up into an HTML/CSS document.

Organization and content
Chapter 1 deals with layout and composition. Beaird discusses the concepts of grid theory and how you can improve a site’s visual appeal. Plenty of examples illustrate the principles of balance, unity, and emphasis. The next chapter discusses color and shows how to learn from attractive Web sites instead of mindlessly imitating them. It also includes many good tips on how to create a pleasing palette for your Web site project.

Chapter 3 covers texture, including ways to use style and make your designs more eye catching. It discusses such topics as gel buttons, gradients, and backgrounds. Chapter 4 teaches you how to make the most out of typography by understanding letter spacing, justification, and font usage. The last chapter covers imagery, including tips on finding stock photos and useful information concerning license agreements.

Strong points, weak points
I recommend this book for Web designers who want to enhance their work with graphic theory. The text is readable, packed with examples and nice screenshots. Of course, the book has only 180 pages, and many subjects might require more detailed study. Reading this might motivate you to investigate further into the subjects it covers.
However, the book includes little about the graphic-design principles behind imagery. It examines images almost entirely as content and not as design elements. On the other hand, it discusses the sIFR technique (Scalable Inman Flash Replacement), which uses Flash and Javascript to display fonts that might not be on your computer.

Jason Beaird is a Web designer. He has BAs in digital media and graphic arts and has worked for many companies as a Web designer. He wrote this book for Web designers with computer-oriented backgrounds who want to improve their work from an aesthetic point of view. From this perspective, the book fulfills its purpose. I enjoyed it; it offered me new knowledge and motivated me to seek additional material on graphic theory.

Andreas Veglis is an associate professor in the Media Informatics Lab of the Department of Journalism and Mass Media Communication at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Contact him at veglis@jour.auth.gr; http://pacific.jour.auth.gr/veglis/english/enindex.htm.

Cite this article:

Department Editor:
Marcin Paprzycki, marcin.paprzycki@swps.edu.pl, Archives page:
(http://dsonline.computer.org/portal/site/dsonline/menuitem.bc6cc7000140e2ec2587e0606bcd45f3/in dex.jsp?pName=dso_level1_home&TheCat=1010&e=dso_level1_article_list&TheCat=1010&)