

Moodboards

One of the challenges of designing for clients are the ideas, or preconceptions (or even prejudices) that clients bring with them into the conversation. Many, many people are unable to visualize an idea. You can describe the concept, the image, even the colors, but it is very likely that they will be imagining something completely different than what you have in mind. And it can get worse than that. You also have clients who come into a meeting thinking that a leaf (or another object) is the only possible image to represent their company or that the color purple is the only way to go (or their spouse has told them that it is the 'it' color). This can happen from the very beginning of the conceptual stage and can run throughout the entire creative process. So, anything we can do to create better/clearer communication will help!

The first step we're going to look at in this process is Moodboards. Moodboards can help preempt the inevitable debate brought on by clients thinking that the early comps you are showing them are 'final' and need a lot of input/changes (something often brought on by computer-generated 'sketches' which can look too polished). At this stage we need to client to concentrate on the broader concepts and not the minute details.

I first came across moodboards being used in interior design. In that instance an interior designer gathers samples of wallpaper, paint, upholstery, curtain material, etc. and arranges them on a board with a sketch showing their vision for a room. In a similar manner, we can gather sample materials (i.e. photos, sketches, illustrations, color swatches, patterns, icons, text blocks, headlines, font samples) and arrange them on a Photoshop page to communicate a concept and feeling of a design. These could be done with paper, scissors, magazines & glue, but we're going to use the vast resource of the internet to gather digital pieces.

The goal is for our moodboards to help us:

- 1. Separate concept from final form:** The collage format will help clients concentrate on the concept, instead of thinking that they are final designs. That allows you to discuss the concept instead of details.
- 2. Build consensus in large groups:** Some clients will bring numerous people into the decision process who have differing opinions (even between blue and red). Because moodboards emphasize the concept, they can help facilitate discussion on that and encourage early agreement.
- 3. Involve more people in the design process:** Because moodboards are primarily a gathering exercise, you can have the client supply you with images and swatches that they like. This helps build a collaborative spirit with the client and helps reduce the chance of disagreements later in the process.
- 4. Prototype rapidly:** Designers can easily get caught in the details of a project, trying to make everything perfect. This can be a huge waste of time when you're trying to develop many ideas. Moodboards help you move things along by not worrying about the final execution.
- 5. Narrow our focus:** It is possible to start wandering off in many, different directions while working on a design. That is not necessarily a problem in itself (exploring ideas), but the general concept and mood need to be narrowed down before client presentation (or broken into different moodboards).

Because you've thought about your concepts and gathered materials to help a client visualize that concept, it will be apparent that you've thought them through and are doing physical work on them. More importantly, moodboards encourage conversation and give you something to refer back to when making decisions.

Definition: <http://www.aqr.org.uk/glossary/index.shtml?moodboard>

A form of visual stimulus material, usually comprising large boards covered with images (often cut from magazines) and designed to represent a mood, atmosphere or feeling. They might be used as enabling materials, to explore respondents' experience of an activity or brand. They can also be used to represent the 'feel' of an intended advertisement, or to explore a number of alternatives (for example bright, sharp and fresh, or slow and sultry). These are part of the repertoire of materials often necessary to research ideas for advertisements which are not yet made, but which will rely on their finished form for their effect.

Interesting References On Moodboards

AOL Research & Learn example: <http://www.brianvargish.com/moodboards.html>

14 Months of Weekly Life Moodboards: http://circadianshift.net/archives/cat_mood_board.html

Some are definitely more interesting than others, but it's an interesting exercise where a person tried to do a moodboard each week summarizing their life, moods, etc.

In Your Face examples: <http://www.inyourface.com/moodboards/>

[other Photoshop examples from class]

Other Examples

1970s Inspired example: http://www.stuffandnonsense.co.uk/archives/design_mood-boards.html

circaVie example: <http://design.aim.com/?m=200707>

Varying Moods example: <http://www.chungdha.com/2007/10/moodboard-for-glr-packaging.html>

Fashion Moodboards: http://www.fashion-era.com/Trends_2006/fashion_mood_board_colours_2005.htm
<http://www.thefashionspot.com/forums/f90/mood-boards-scrapbooks-2939.html>

Examples from the fashion industry.

Some Of My Favorite Resources

Color:

Kuler: <http://kuler.adobe.com/>

Great tool for color combinations

Color Scheme Designer: <http://www.colorschemedesigner.com/>

Another one for color combinations and imagining what they would look like.

ColourLovers: <http://www.colourlovers.com/>

ColorCombos: <http://www.colorcombos.com/>

Images/Icons:

stock.xchng: <http://www.sxc.hu/>

Create a free login to download free photos!

CompFight: <http://compfight.com/>

A search engine sorting through Flickr images

Google Images: <http://images.google.com/>

The search engine giant's listings of web images (searchable, of course)

iStockphoto: <http://www.istockphoto.com/>

Download photo comps for your designs (check out the Find Similar link).

Free Icons for your Website: http://www.creativetechnics.com/iq/free_icons_for_your_website.html

What more is there to say about that?

Collection of Free Icon pages: <http://michaelhayes.biz/msp5/2008/11/22/free-icon-sets-links/>

Fonts:

DaFont: <http://www.dafont.com>

Lets you type a word and then display it in your desired font. You can then take a screenshot of that to use on a moodboard.

Web Navigation:

Navigation Design Showcase: http://www.smileycat.com/design_elements/navigation/

A "best of" list for web navigation.

Photoshop Review

Layer Basics: <http://www.sketchpad.net/psdlayer1.htm>

Multi-part review session on Photoshop layers.

Photoshop Basics: <http://graphicssoft.about.com/od/photoshop/l/blps5out.htm>

Extensive tutorial.

Class Project #1: Moodboards (Due: February 26, 2009)

Develop three moodboards for the design or redesign of a website. Each moodboard is based on a theme:

- 1–Modern/Cutting Edge
- 2–Corporate/Traditional
- 3–Fun/Youthful

Use icons, photographs, text, slogans, illustrations, color swatches, texture, patterns, etc. to *show the mood*, not just to gather a collection of elements.

- Collect a range of materials which will inspire the design of the finished piece of work
 - Arrange them on a Photoshop page (11" x 17")
 - Remove any elements which do not suit the rest of the scheme
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Developing Moodboards

Open Photoshop and press CMND-N for a new file. Change WIDTH to 17 inches and HEIGHT to 11 inches, make the RESOLUTION 150 ppi.

With the new window open, hit the CMND-R keys to turn on RULERS. Select the Square Marquee Tool on the Toolbar. Draw a marquee box from the top corner of your page at the ½" mark top and left side then drag down to the 16.5" and 10.5".

On the Layers panel, create a NEW LAYER by clicking the small Layer page icon next to the trash can icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel, or hit the CMND>SHIFT>N. Name the layer STROKE.

Make sure BLACK is the default FOREGROUND color by hitting the 'D' key. Go to the top Menu EDIT and choose STROKE from the menu. Make the STROKE 2 pixels and click OK.

To develop your mood boards, start by gathering content from multiple online sources that will allow you to begin developing a theme. To accomplish this you will need to visit anywhere from ten to one hundred different websites.

All of your mood boards should contain photographs, navigational elements such as buttons or nav bars (drop down navs, horizontal navs, creative navs), icons, illustrations and typography. All of the above items need to work together to form a cohesive theme. But remember, a moodboard is not a website design! Just a collection of elements that together visually communicate a mood or feeling.

You can take screenshots of elements from the websites you visit by clicking CMND>SHIFT>4 and dragging the marquee around the appropriate area. This will create a file on the desktop named Picture (followed by a number) that you can open in Photoshop and copy into your moodboard file.

You are creating three moodboards. One for each of the following keyword sets:

- 1–Modern/Cutting Edge
- 2–Corporate/Traditional
- 3–Fun/Youthful

IMPORTANT: A MOODBOARD IS NOT A WEB SITE DESIGN.

Moodboards are a compilation and collage of multiple elements; icons, photographs, text, and illustrations that are combined with a specific color theme (or visual theme) to create an overall feeling or "mood" when a client looks at the page.

You do not want the client to look at a moodboard and say "I want that design". You want them to look and say "I like the feeling of this page". You then take the moodboards the client likes and begin developing website designs based on the theme.

The site comps you design will include imagery and colors from the moodboards, as well as the overall theme which could be "slick", "techno", "playful", "conservative", "edgy", or any of the other themes you might come up with when developing the moodboards. Usually these themes are decided ahead of time when talking with the client so you are heading in the right direction from the very beginning of the process.