

/gallery

Christian Hall reveals this month's hottest new websites

1-5 Filippa Smedhagen Sund

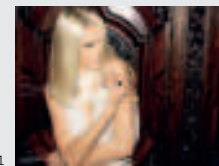
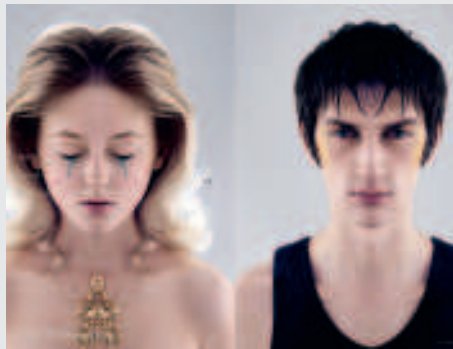
URL filippasmedhagensund.com

Company MocoRo

URL www.mocoro.com

Novel navigation is difficult to master and easy to get wrong. There are so many ways to interact over the internet, but here's how to go back to basics to provide a brand new experience. This fashion photographer's site is like a flick-book, and gives the sense of browsing through a photo album by just dragging and dropping with the cursor.

"I got the idea for the navigation while playing Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, which has a drag-and-drop interface for some of its menus," says designer Hugo Ahlberg. "Since then, we've been waiting for a suitable project. When a friend told me about Filippa, a makeup artist who needed an online portfolio, it sounded like a perfect match, so we presented the concept to her."



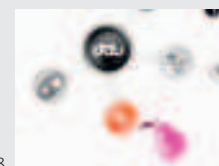
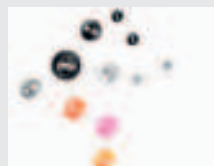
6-10 Devolution GbR

URL www.dev-gestalter.de

Company In-house

URL In-house

The debate rages on about whether Web 2.0 has a style, but it can't be denied that, in web design today, shiny buttons and easy-on-the-eye icons dominate the landscape. German designer Devolution GbR doesn't offer any Web 2.0-style functionality, but its site invokes Web 2.0 styles to great effect. Visitors roll from one icon to another, with each icon revealing new options. The "tree branch" effect has been used countless times before, yet there's a fresh feel to this particular navigation. It's often said that beauty is only one element of the design, but here the beauty is the design and navigation as one. It may not be to everyone's tastes, but it certainly brims with originality.



"I got the idea for the navigation while playing Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney"

Hugo Ahlberg



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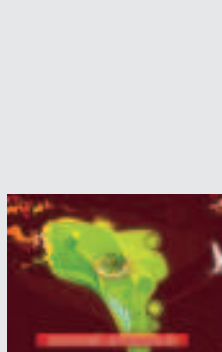
1-5 Web Designer Wall

URL www.webdesignerwall.com

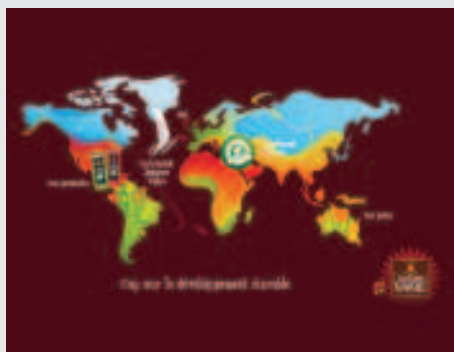
Company N.Design Studio

URL www.ndesign-studio.com

Web Designer Wall is an article-based site that focuses on web trends, tutorials, and any design-related topics. "We wanted to have a unique design," says designer Nick La. "We thought that by mixing traditional art techniques, we'll make the site stand out, so we incorporated the oriental watercolour art into the design and the outcome is great." There's much more to Web Designer Wall than just gorgeous artwork, though. It's also a standards champion and has RSS and tagging capabilities. "The site has been tested on various browsers under different operating systems. We also ensured that the JavaScripts are unobtrusive and have fallback functionality, meaning the site is still accessible even when JavaScript is disabled."



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6-10 Jacques Vabre

URL www.jacques-vabre.com

Company Square Glasses & BETC Euro RSCG

URL www.squareglasses.com & eurorscg.com

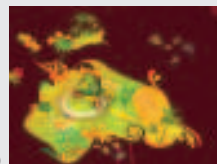
The Jacques Vabre company is passionate about the origins of its coffee. The company partnered with the RainForest Alliance NGO in order to make coffee using sustained development principles. "The RainForest Alliance logo is symbolized by a frog, BETC Euro RSCG then suggested the design of a frog travelling throughout the world discovering Jacques Vabre's coffee," says creative director Christophe Clapier. "Most coffees come from South America. We focused on illustrations from this part of the world, their wealth of warm colours and exuberant patterns. The work of the Brazilian Adhemas Batista mainly influenced the illustrator." The site even makes use of 3D animation in video, providing a sense of rainforest activity.



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"The work of Brazilian Adhemas Batista mainly influenced the illustrator"

Christophe Clapier



1-5 Nonaology

URL www.learnlakenona.com
 Company Push
 URL www.pushhere.com

There's a lot to be said for the age-old art of newspaper design, the tangible nature of the pages, pleasing typefaces and an order dictated by a series of columns. It's hard to replicate those attributes without completely copying a newspaper, but this site had successfully applied newspaper conventions to a particularly modern site.

Florida's Lake Nona development is the setting for this work, which combines text, maps and photographs in a way that seems at home in the 21st century. It's much like being in a library looking through old local records, and fairly quickly too, with a Flash-based CMS that reorders itself to make space for new content. Elegant, thoughtful and without a glossy property brochure in sight.



6-10 Zen777

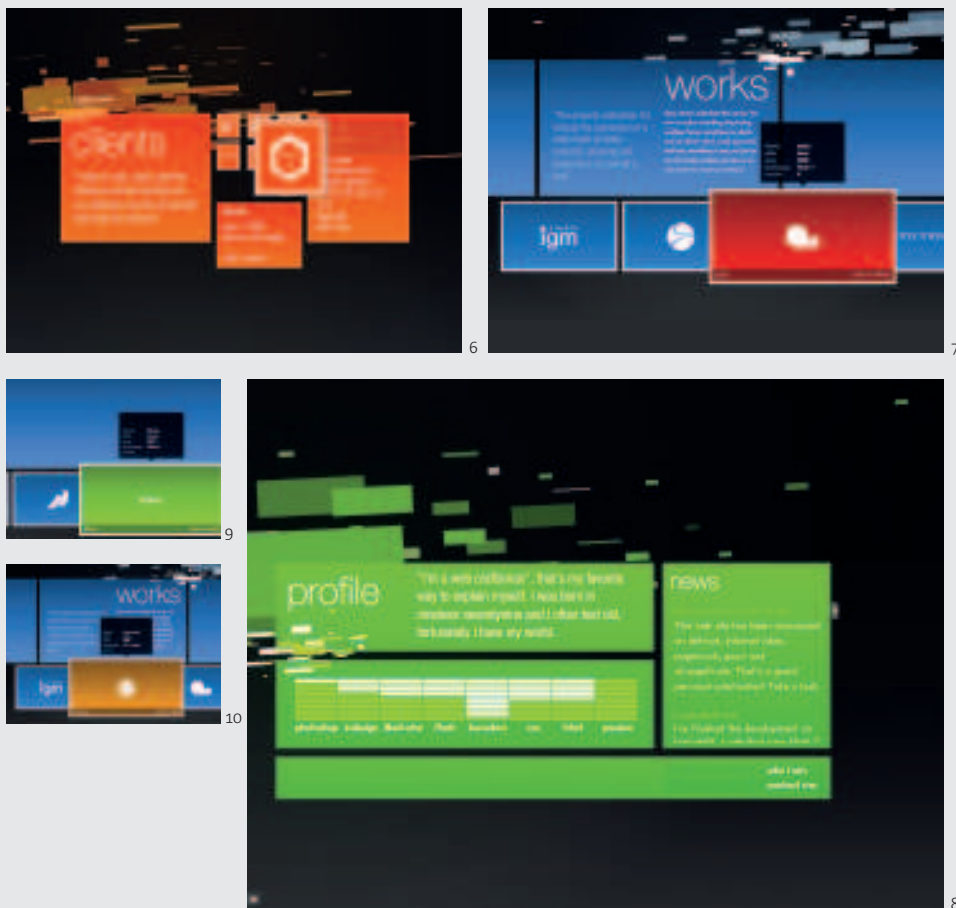
URL www.zen777.com/flash.html
 Company In-house (Francesco G Di Bene)
 URL In-house

This portfolio for a self-described "web craftsman" presents a deceptively simple approach to showcasing design talents to prospective clients. The clean lines paired with a modern soundscape make you feel as if you've arrived at the future of web design.

"I think that, for every designer in the world, the hardest project is to make their own portfolio," says owner Francesco. "I tried to follow some simple concepts: The idea of less is more, my personal passion for parallax animations, and the idea that the user's screen isn't a TV but rather a window to something." Francesco's challenge was to create something simple yet graphically interesting, and with good standards.

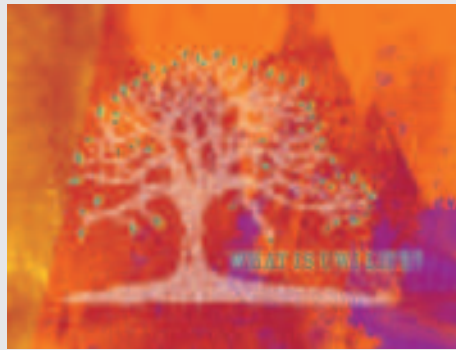
"I think that, for every designer, the hardest project is to make their own portfolio"

Francesco G Di Bene





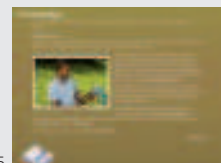
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1-6 UWI Life

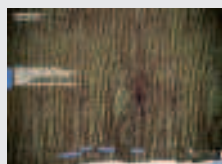
URL www.sta.uwi.edu/uwilife

Company In-house (University of the West Indies)

URL In-house

This college site for the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, is what Facebook would look like if it had any imagination. It's also proof that the simplest concepts can look stylish and have a real wow factor, yet still sport excellent CSS.

The tree motif at the top of the homepage offers all the navigation. The site's editors claim that the great thing about UWI Life is that it means many different things, and that's why the experiences of many in the UWI Community are diverse and unique. This idea has been successfully transferred to the tree concept, where visitors click the words around the tree to learn more out about UWI life. Clicking the links zooms visitors down the page, which is subtly gradated to distinguish each section.



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7-11 Bee Studio

URL beestudio.pl

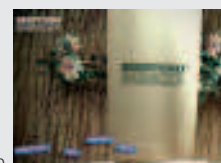
Company In-house

URL In-house

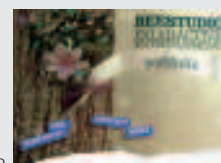
Polish design studio Bee has introduced subtle motion video into the backdrop of its site – a technique that's becoming more common yet rarely as well-executed as here. "The last Bee site was very minimal, so this time we were ambitious for more fun and visual experience," says MD Agnieszka Bajurska. "We needed something magical and hypnotic." The challenge for Bee Studio was getting the highest quality video with the "lowest weight". Nothing is overdone and the combination of smooth video and a touch of Flash for the menus works perfectly. It's also a site that doesn't buckle under the latest accessibility guidelines. "We always try to do something fun and simple. If this is good web standards then good for us!"



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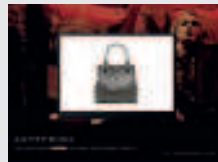
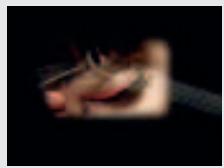


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"We needed something magical. We always try to keep things fun and simple"
Agnieszka Bajurska



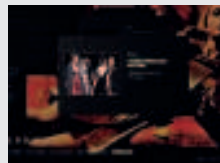
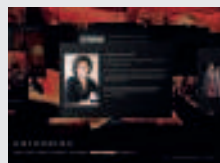
1-6 Anteprima

URL www.anteprima.com/fw07

Company FICC Inc

URL www.ficc.jp

Fashion houses such as Anteprima are gold dust for web designers. Big budgets are just the start, but far too many sites look the same. Anteprima packs a punch with the glossy photography, but in a particularly interesting way. Attention to detail in the user experience is astonishing, particularly in the sound, which alters its stereo qualities the further left or right you move through the collection. There's also the still photographs themselves, which can be browsed back and forth like a real catalogue. "The 3D panel layout makes for an impactful presentation and easy navigation," says FICC's Flash developer Akira Fukuoka. "New challenges and expression are possible with the improved performance of ActionScript 3."



7-12 Eepmon

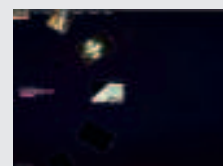
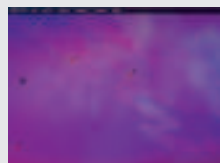
URL www.eepmon.com

Company In-house (Eric Chan)

URL In-house

If you can't get Flash and good HTML to sit side by side, then don't be afraid to offer both as separate sites. That's the philosophy behind Eepmon, a site for new media artist Eric Chan. Eepmon's Flash version shows you just how far you can push a WordPress back-end, and the HTML version packs in the content without confusing the visitor.

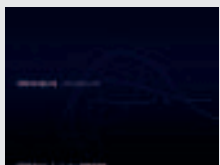
Influenced by Japanese print, graffiti and music, Eric's work explores the creative intersections of art and technology. It's fitting then that Eepmon is truly multimedia in nature having both an extravagant Flash site and tidy HTML version. Eric's art extends to a variety of platforms, including websites, fashion, displays, gallery exhibits, magazines, print art, and large-scale installations.



"New challenges are possible with the improved performance of ActionScript" Akira Fukuoka



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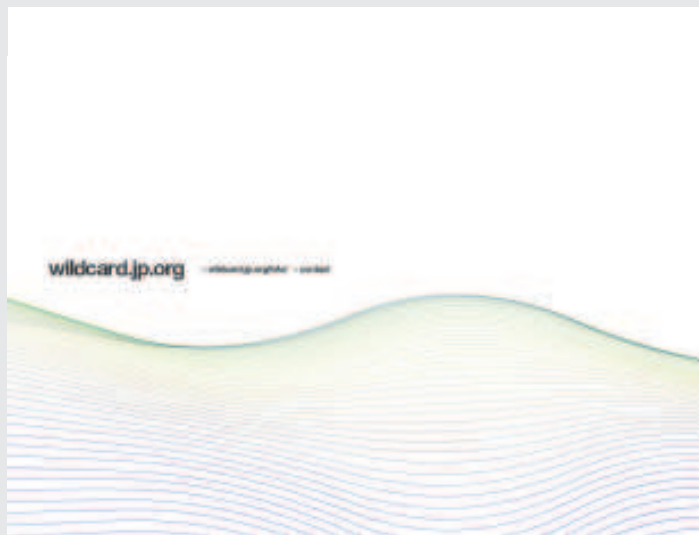
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1-6 Wildcard Inc

URL www.wildcard.jp.org

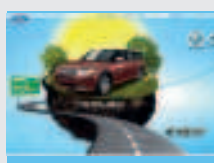
Company In-house (Hisayuki Takagi)

URL In-house

Wildcard Inc, a showcase of Hisayuki Takagi's design skills, is an extraordinary approach to web design and one that has aspects that are commonly used yet takes the concept of visitor interaction to a new, aesthetic level. "I believe Flash plays a role in interactive designing," says Takagi, "but I look forward to a time when we can have other choices besides Flash." That might be so, but if you ever wanted to see Flash used sparingly but intelligently, then Wildcard is it. Visitors can change the backdrop by clicking on a button for a new design, and the transition between each style is seamless. Takagi has clearly been influenced by his Japanese surroundings, and minimalism is essential to the look and feel of Wildcard.



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7-11 Ford Flex

URL fordvehicles.com/flex

Company Big Spaceship

URL www.bigspaceship.com

Broadband and Flash are taken for granted, so creating sites with family appeal should be easy. The trouble is casual internet users expect a lot, particularly from big brands. This new site from Ford manages to make the family viewers feel comfortable, yet also offers a bit of fun and provides just enough information about the product to make the site worth visiting. The architects of such a great consumer site could only be an agency with some serious industry clout, and Big Spaceship has pulled another rabbit from a hat. From the twisted roads on the loading screens to the fun navigational journey, Flex is dominated by one theme which stylishly knits each element of this site together.



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"I look forward to a time when we can have other choices besides Flash"

Takagi Hisayuki

Want to see your work here? Think your work should be in Gallery? Tell us about it at mailus@netmag.co.uk



1-5 Shylands

URL www.shylands.com

Company In-house (Steven Hylands)

URL In-house

Steven Hylands has mastered the balance between colour, form and function. As a freelance designer, his site needs to reflect his talent and ooze style from every corner. Shylands has everything in the right proportions, and it's easy to see how clients are attracted to his business. "I wanted to explore colour with a funky and fun style while maintaining a clean, consistent, standards-based approach," he says. "It's always a challenge to develop something truly creative, and I find CSS helps rather than hinders a web designer's vision. My goal was to represent my own personality as best I could through the design." If that's what it takes, then personality is as important as any skill a designer can learn along the way.



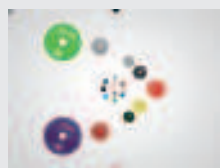
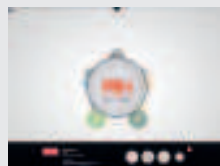
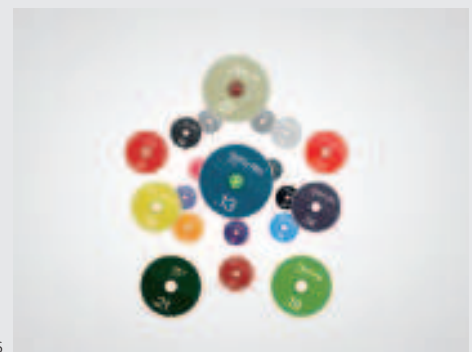
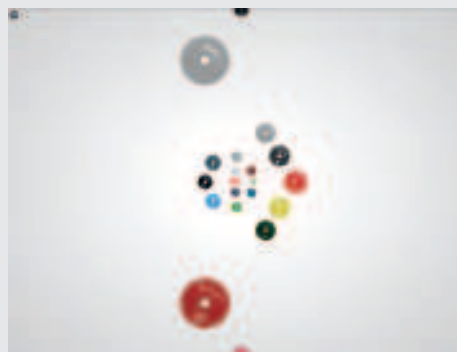
6-10 A-I

URL www.a-i.tw/root.html?lang=en

Company In-house

URL In-house

A-I is a Taiwanese interactive media company with an eye for minimalism. The fisheye effect of each content module, bulging when a user hovers over it with the mouse cursor, is superbly executed. The white space dominating the screen space suspends each portfolio work, and gives the sense that A-I's creations are in stasis, preserved forever in a digital vault. Pretentious, possibly, but rarely has slow-moving Flash animation on top of a minimalist backdrop looked so inviting. The developers at A-I haven't forgotten those who prefer a more traditional navigation route – move your cursor to the top of the screen and a content banner will appear. It goes to show that playing around with visual space still leaves room for the basics.



"I find that CSS helps rather than hinders a web designer's vision"
Steven Hylands