Aesthetic Analysis

Pick two UI exemplars to engage in UI aesthetic analysis. The two example UIs you choose will serve as pieces of “competitor analysis” for your UI, with an emphasis on aesthetic.

Why did you pick these two examples? How do they relate to your UI design? Describe your choice in this text box.
Timeline

The Timeline app is heavily weighted towards usability. The app’s appearance draws minimal attention to itself, and is focused on letting the reader read. The layout helps the reader navigate by having clear buttons to interact with, and limiting the number of interactions to what’s necessary. The buttons are the only part of the UI that have color (excluding content-related photos). There’s a button to enter and exit the timeline. There’s a faint timeline on the lefthand side of the app with a blue dot representing where the content falls in the historical arc of the article. The animation of opening and closing the timeline also invites the user to try pinching and flinging to close and open sections.

The combination of typefaces feels a bit jumbled, but the Timeline app does a nice job of visually breaking the text into approachable units and creating visual hierarchy with font weights and sizes.

The article list isn’t beautiful to me; the article images feel like they clash and bump up against each other. However, the articles themselves are beautiful. They’re straightforward and elegant.
Analysis 1

Examples

01 - Mid-article
The middle of an article in the regular article view. The blue dot on the right indicates where in the timeline this piece of history lies. There's also a button on the bottom left to switch to the “timeline” overview.

02 - Timeline view
The same piece of content in an timeline view. Users can pull open to go back to the full text, or use the “X” button on the bottom right to go back.

03 - Article list
A list of articles, distinguished by the text and lead images.
Objective 1: Put current events in their historical context.
Objective 2: Allow users to focus on the text and image content, and read the full article.
Objective 3: Easily switch back and forth between a traditional article view and a timeline.
Users

Timeline

People who are interested in the news use it. They use it as a supplement to their regular news reading, to get a deeper context for current events.

The app allows users to understand how events are related to each other through history, and to switch between text content and an overview of the article (and history’s) organization.

Users would use this app on the go, for instance on the train. They might particularly look at it in the morning, switching back and forth between Timeline and a newspaper app like the New York Times.
Analysis 1

Color Palette

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<td>01 - Black</td>
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<td>04 - Teal</td>
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<td>R - 240%</td>
<td>R - 65%</td>
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<td>G - 240%</td>
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<td>B - 240%</td>
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Label
The predominant color was white, as the background for the text. They also used light grey for borders, and dark grey for some buttons. The key UI elements were in blue, which drew attention to them.
I think the color choice is functional. The app is a container for the text and image content, and so it needs to get out of the way. The colors are chosen to avoid drawing attention to themselves. There is one highlight color, blue, which they use to switch between the timeline and article view and to highlight where in the timeline an article section lies (on the left side of the screen).
Typography

Type Inventory:
There are 4 fonts. One of them seems to be a sans serif version of the sans font used for the article headlines and body text. Approximate typefaces: Kandal, Andkula Sans, and Distefano Slab.

How many sizes are there within those fonts? Only one font appears in multiple sizes, and it appears in two sizes.

What do those variations represent?
Article headline: Distefano Slab, bold
Location: Andkula Sans, italic and light
Date: Andkula Sans, uppercase
Body text: Distefano Slab
Image caption: Distefano Sans
I think the designers chose Kandal, a serif font, as the typeface because serif fonts have been shown to be better for longer term reading. The use of the font for headlines and body text seems to be to emphasize the main content for the articles. Andkula Sans and Typo Distefano Slab are used for dates and locations, supplementary information to support the main text.

The choice seems mainly functional, I imagine that they chose typefaces that would show well on mobile.

I would probably limit myself to three fonts. I would choose a unique typeface for the headlines. I would use a unique font for the body content. Finally, I would use a third font in different weights and sizes for any other content, such as dates and bylines.
1973 - 2000

THE BRIEF
A band you may not have heard of is influencing the music you hear every day.

Four decades ago Kraftwerk experimented with a minimalism that dispensed with the catchy hooks that had become the prop of popular music. The British press jokingly dubbed it “krautrock.” No one could have foreseen the influence one of its leading lights would have on music.

To hear how Kraftwerk influenced the last four decades, click on the videos below or load up our “Kraftwerk: Big as the Beatles” Spotify Playlist.

1973

Kraftwerk invents electro
Dusseldorf, West Germany

One man took in $139,000 in disaster relief payments using fake Social Security numbers. FEMA spent $8 million to turn a shuttered army base into a shelter for evacuees, then closed it after a month when almost no one showed up. Two agency officials pleaded guilty to taking $200,000 in bribes from a contractor.
Analysis 1

Imagery

Timeline

Kraftwerk Are as Big as The Beatles
Without the German synth pioneers, beat-based music wouldn’t be the same

The Ticking Time Bomb Goes to Washington
How a purely fictional scenario came to inform real CIA policies

Homeland Security’s Awkward History of Financial Incompetence

Running Application for iPhone

Interface Aesthetics
Spring 2015

Elisabeth Prescott & Kimiko Ryokai
The imagery of the app is focused on lead images for articles and article sections. I think the imagery is mainly functional in the context of the app, such as in the article list view, to separate articles. Within the articles, it’s both aesthetic and functional, adding some color and visual interest to break up the long chunks of text.
The New Yorker (iOS)

The New Yorker digital magazine for iOS is a somewhat strange beast. It has to work with the existing brand of the print magazine. It has its own distinct aesthetic, but it also rests within an Apple app that has its own design rules, Newsstand. For example, the contrast for the magazine is red, but for iOS it’s a teal color. Some of the failure seems to be a clash between its own aesthetic and that of the app it relies on.

The app seems to weigh usability and aesthetics relatively evenly. It uses the same techniques as the print magazine to handle having a large amount of text: put the text in columns and make it feel less interminable by including periodic images. It also fills up the entire screen, keeping the reader’s eyes from flicking over to the time or notification bar.

One thing that works well in The New Yorker’s app does well is reconsider the unit of the article. Rather than dealing with pages, it treats each article as one long, scrolling body of text. Readers then swipe between articles.

The digital magazine is beautiful to me because I don’t really notice it. I’m focused on the unique content, the text itself as well as the cartoons or the lead images. I’ve also always been drawn to the Irvin typeface, which adds some flair; I could look at a black cover with text written in Irvin, and I’d still associate it with the magazine.
Analysis 2

Examples

01 - Table of contents
The table of contents for the latest issue of The New Yorker. It uses red as the highlight color.

02 - Beginning of an article
The beginning of the article features The New Yorker’s iconic typeface for the headline. It uses an image to lead the article and visually distinguish it from other ones. Again, red is the highlight color.

03 - Mid-article
A cartoon breaks up the long column of text. There's the option to share the article at the bottom, an indicator of which section of the magazine you’re in at the top, and a red + to allow you to zoom in on the cartoon.

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The New Yorker (iOS)

Objective 1: Create an immersive reading experience so readers can read long form articles.
Objective 2: Offer easy navigation between articles.
Objective 3: Allow users to share content via email or social media.
Objective 4: Create a phone-appropriate facsimile of the print magazine.
The New Yorker (iOS)

Both print subscribers and digital-only subscribers use The New Yorker’s iPad app. Many of them likely use it in addition to the print magazine, so they need to be able to easily skip to the article they were reading in print. The app allows them to access multiple issues of the magazine without carrying it around, and also lets them have access to enhancements such as authors reading their poems that are featured in an issue. Users probably use it in transit, sometimes unable to finish the full article before having to put it down.
Analysis 2

Color Palette

01 - Red
R - 240%
G - 21%
B - 45%

02 - Black
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

03 - White
R - 255%
G - 255%
B - 255%

Label
The predominant color is white, for the background. Black is the body text and headlines, and red is used for UI elements such as the “+” button to expand images.

The New Yorker (iOS)

01 - Red
02 - Black
03 - White
The New Yorker (iOS)

The colors are the same as the main colors in the print magazine. This includes having the highlight color as red. The colors are primarily functional, but the red is also a bit aesthetic. A white background with black text is how people have been reading text for hundreds of years, and keeping up with the aesthetic of the magazine helps to keep it within the brand. The red helps to break up the large amount of black text and adds some visual interest. It also helps draw attention to key some of the main UI elements.
Typography

The New Yorker (iOS)

Type Inventory:
How many fonts are there? 3: Irvin, Caslon, Neutraface
How many sizes are there within those fonts? There is only one size within the fonts. They introduce variation with color, and by
What do those variations represent?
Section name - Neutraface, uppercase
Article headline - Irvin
Byline - Neutraface, uppercase
Article summary - Caslon, italic
Body copy - Caslon

This is consistent across the UI. The one exception is that the table of contents you access in the UI rather than in the magazine is set in Helvetica, which may be because the magazine is nested within the Apple Newsstand.
I know from reading about the history of *The New Yorker* that the art deco typeface Irvin was designed by the first art director, Rea Irvin, for the magazine in the 1920s. The magazine was new and needed to distinguish itself, and has now become iconic. The designers continue to use this typeface because it’s one of the strongest visual associations for the magazine. It also calls to mind how long it’s been in publication.

Neutraface new to the app and online version of the magazine. It is in keeping with the art deco style of the headline. However, it was created as a headline typeface and is more readable when it’s smaller. It’s therefore useful for things like bylines and section titles.

Caslon is an older typeface from the early 17th century. It’s used in the magazine, and the medium-high contrast makes it good for reading longer passages.

I think the combination of typefaces is successful. One thing I might consider is choosing a body text typeface that’s designed specifically for screens.
Analysis 2

The New Yorker (iOS)

Assets

The New Yorker (iOS)
Analysis 2

Imagery

The New Yorker (iOS)
The New Yorker (iOS)

The imagery falls into three categories: brightly colored photographs, black and white photographs, and black and white cartoons. Both the brightly colored and black-and-white photographs are used to introduce articles. The smaller cartoons are used to break up the text. The magazine also occasionally includes smaller illustrations.