I picked Mapbox Studio and \_.

Mapbox Studio is a program that allows you to design your own maps. Our project will partially deal with photos and videos referenced on base maps, and so I wanted to explore mapping designs.
Mapbox Studio

Overall, I think the appearance of Mapbox is beautiful. Moreover, I think that it balances usability with aesthetics. That is, the visual aspect enhances the usability. The visual elements lead me through many of the actions of the app. Color is subdued and used in a way to indicate what can be pushed. The layout is dominated by large panes in which it is clear that you should work and design. There is almost no text or wasted space, and the important tools you need to work, are emphasized by size and color. Small-but-important text draws the eye in from the right-hand corner.

Whatever pitfalls in usability there are seem to come from interaction problems, like whole missing elements that lead to poor learnability or a lack of transparency, for example.

An interesting part of the aesthetic of Mapbox is also its output. The maps that you can create from this tool are, or can be, beautiful, which on some level adds to the (not necessarily visual) beauty of the program.
Analysis 1

Examples
Mapbox Studio

The primary purpose of this app is to create custom maps. While it does provide a few decent templates or starting points, the power of this program is that you can edit or code a map of your choice. The company strives for beauty on some level—they actually call the output of their program beautiful several times on their site. It’s really clear that they tried to create a tool with an aesthetic that reflects the beauty you can make with it. More than aesthetics or identity though, for Mapbox, the beauty it wants to create goes hand-in-hand with usability. There is a lot of function that needs to be fit into map-design programs, and especially when I juxtapose Mapbox with the clunky, gray, government-type mapping interfaces that I mostly see, I think Mapbox had to rely on visual design to make its functionality usable and the beautiful maps it wants you to create, possible.
Mapbox Studio

According to the Mapbox site, industries from Real Estate to Finance to Insurance to Media use this tool. Generally, this tool is to design, not to program, and so it is very visual and WSIWYG, and the individuals in these industries who actually use it are probably not highly technical, at least not to where they can program the same thing. While they purport to empower you to produce beautiful maps, Mapbox actually seems very useful for companies, and users use it largely during the work day. I imagine that the ability to make a highly customized version of “place” both stems from and fosters feelings of ownership and protection.
Analysis 1

Color Palette

01 - #FFFFFF
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

02 - #1D405C
R - 29%
G - 64%
B - 92%

03 - #3D86C3
R - 61%
G - 134%
B - 195%

04 - #303030
R - 48%
G - 48%
B - 48%
The color palette of the Dashboard page and the identity as a whole, is very typical flat design—shades of a main, bold color punctuated by white and black. White space is actually blue space, for no functional reason, which is fine, but the shades aren’t quite different enough. It gets tiresome to look at for too long.

The workspace though, lets whatever base map is present be the dominant color. With a dark gray toolbar and white icons and a light gray code panel, the colors of this screen are mostly conducive to work. The toolbar is a little too dark and heavy, which makes it stand out a bit in the periphery when I’m focusing on the map and code panels.
Typography

Mapbox Studio

Is this consistent across the UI? (If not why is it broken?)

The font used seems to beBrandon.

In the dashboard, there are three sizes, two weights, and three colors used. Headlines are bold, bigger than the rest, and brighter (white). Body copy is smaller, normal weight, and white. Labels are light blue and bold but a smaller size. In general, I think the type on this screen is too small and light—especially for a bright blue background.

In the workspace, there are only two sizes and two weights used. The tool labels are bold, white, and about body-copy size. The meta information in the top right of the map panel is smaller, light gray, and a normal weight.

Overall, the type achieves a lot of consistency by only using one type face. I’m not sure the mapping of weight, size, and color to every element is very consistent. There are many elements that should indicate the same functionality but look differently.
I think the use of the typeface was largely an aesthetic decision. It is just the kind of typeface found in flat designs, so it feels trendy. It looks great at large sizes or for headlines, but this program is supposed to be for making and working and requires a lot of very small text, and I don’t think the typeface is very readable on that level.
Imagery

Mapbox Studio

The icons are purely functional. They communicate that they are tools and indicate what the tool might be used for.

The map layers are aesthetic. They give the user a place to start, as well as show them what is possible to customize and design.
Google Maps Explore - iOS

The Explore feature on Google Maps iOS balances usability with aesthetics because it uses beautiful imagery, text, icons, and controls in a very economical way. On a micro-level, every visual element seems to mean something, and when you zoom out and consider the whole layout, hierarchy is created. The important things stand out. You want to push what you’re supposed to push and move where you’re supposed to move. The visual elements make you want to do something.
Analysis 2

Examples

01 - Place page
The place page is a good example of how this feature calls out the most important information and actions. The main information about the place is prominent in the blue bar, while the main action to take—getting directions to that place—uses shadow to push it up. Secondary actions are blue with icons so they stand out from the copy text, but they do not have a shadow and do not move from the page like the button. The use of shadow on the top image also indicates there is something to drag—and when you do, the app puts you on the map at that place.

02 - Map view
The aesthetic of the map view of a place is mostly determined by the map (as it should be). There are shadowed buttons again on this screen that take you to immediate actions like locating yourself and getting directions to this place. Even the top white bars have a bit of shadow, which puts them up the z-axis and makes you want to push them. When you do, the app leads you to a different place or functionality.
Objectives

Google Maps Explore - iOS

This UI strives to associate information, imagery, and actions associated with a particular place. Different media have to be brought together to give users the essence of a place.
Google Maps Explore - iOS

One group of users of this app is composed of tourists, visitors, or people who are unfamiliar with a particular place and want to know it through as many lenses as possible—visually, through opinions of others, factually, etc. It is necessary to be as holistic as you can because no one lens will really convey the sense of place; no one medium will communicate all the information. Users might use it at any time of day or night, but likely as they are planning trips.

A second group of users might be those who contribute content, reviews, and photos to a place. Perhaps they want to communicate the essence of a place in as many ways as possible. They use the feature as they travel to the places they love and frequent. This feature then, allows them to have some kind of ownership or stake in the identity of a place.
Analysis 2

Color Palette

01 - #EC751A
R - 236%
G - 117%
B - 26%

02 - #4285F3
R - 66%
G - 143%
B - 233%

03 - #FFFFFF
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

04 - #343434
R - 52%
G - 52%
B - 52%

Google Maps Explore - iOS

Aerial Imagery Platform

Interface Aesthetics
Spring 2015

Elisabeth Prescott &
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The colors in this feature seem to mean something. The bright, non-white colors are important actions or information. Throughout the feature, blue indicates action, while orange indicates user opinion (reviews, ratings).

The subtle, paler colors of the map are aesthetic, although their value is probably also functional. It is so much real estate and needs to hold so much detail, that it cannot be composed of bright, bold colors.

Overall, the colors are consistent and fit in Google’s brand.
Analysis 2

Typography

Google Maps Explore - iOS

Type Inventory:

There is only one font throughout this app—Roboto. It is used in black, white, and gray at two weights and 3-4 sizes.

Bold weight and the largest size are reserved for headlines, while plain, black text makes up the body copy. Labels, meta information, and subtitles are gray and a bit smaller than body copy.

The color, weight, and size of the type is consistent throughout the feature, which is consistent with the rest of the design—every visual element means something. I can rely on the visual design to tell me what is important and what is not, what I should do and what I should not do.
Google Maps Explore - iOS

Roboto is a good choice for this feature. It balance aesthetics with usability. It is an attractive font, especially at larger sizes, but since the feature is mobile, it is imperative that the font is readable at small sizes, and I think Roboto achieves this.
Imagery

Google Maps Explore - iOS

The imagery in this feature is present because it is functional, but it is laid out aesthetically. The icons indicate actions or information that is better displayed visually, while the images try to convey actual visual information about the place, which is part of the objective of the feature.