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.
- Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum
- FiveThousand Fingers: Black Visual Archive

Two different archives that need to display information in a digestible way. They relate to my UI design because the both organize information in a clean fashion, letting the contents speak for itself.
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

Write a comparison that weighs usability vs. aesthetics. When is the designer taking design liberties for aesthetic reasons? How does the design layout help you or the user navigate successfully or unsuccessfully? Was its success or failure due to aesthetics or technology or something else? Is the overall appearance beautiful to you? Why?

Usability weighs heavily on the Cooper Hewitt website as they are catering mostly to the general public. The design is relatively simple and is kept consistent since the content can be fairly complex.

This UI is successful in the ways in which it presents collection information and the varieties offered on how to search, however, because there are so many uniquely design aspects to the site, they can get lost or come off confusing.

Overall, I feel that it is beautiful in its attempt at simplicity, although I felt that aspects could be improved.
Analysis 1

Examples

01 - Label
Users can search the collection based on color.

02 - Label
Query fields, although numerous, have nice explanations.

03 - Label
Artifacts are clearly displayed to peruse.
Cooper Hewitt

Objective 1
Find objects in the collection

Objective 2
Find objects in the collection in unique ways, even if user doesn’t know what they are looking for

Objective 3
Display objects and their information clearly.

The need for this UI is to find out information about the museum, and specifically to be able to locate items in the museum’s collection in unique ways mostly for the general public.
Cooper Hewitt

Who uses this? How do they use it? How if at all does it change their behavior or the behavior of whoever is around them? What is the need for this? Are there work arounds? What time of day do they use it? Anything else

I would say that the Cooper Hewitt online collection aims to serve the general public. Although most museum archives exist to facilitate researchers finding something specific, the outward facing online museum usually hopes to engage novice users in interesting ways.
Color Palette

About the Colors

The Cooper Hewitt color palette is relatively simple, with one main text highlighting color and a few other minimally used bright colors.
Color

Cooper Hewitt

The Cooper Hewitt color pallet is relatively simple. Since the objects in their collection — the display of which is the sole purpose of the website — are varying in color, the simple UI doesn’t complicated the viewing of them. The firecracker red is a bold and uncommon color, so using that to highlight is a smart aesthetic decision to pop important links into the foreground.

The color pallet is consistent with their brand and they use it across their marketing materials.
Typography

Cooper Hewitt

Type Inventory:
There is only one font: Cooper Hewitt, the font by Chester Jenkins

How many sizes are there within those fonts?
Uppercase: 2
Sentence case: 3

Uppercase
Small: all menu items
Large: Title

Sentence case
Large: Item description, brief
Medium: Item description, detailed
Small: Info about website use

This is consistent across the UI.
Cooper Hewitt

Why do you think the designers chose this typeface(s)? Is this successful or unsuccessful? Are they functional or aesthetic decisions? What would you do differently?

Cooper Hewitt had this typeface specifically designed, “to support the newly transformed museum.” They wanted a bold font to show a bold, contemporary museum.

Aesthetically, I believe the typeface is successful. It is clean, almost Helvetica-like, but modern. It seems to be most an aesthetic choice, although it is functional.
The new typeface, Cooper Hewitt, is a contemporary sans serif, with characters composed of modified-geometric curves and arches. Initially commissioned by Pentagram to evolve his Polaris Condensed typeface, Chester Jenkins created a new digital form to support the newly transformed museum. “Developing this typeface specifically for Cooper Hewitt has been enormously gratifying,” said Jenkins. “Instead of building on the Polaris structures, I drew everything from scratch, using
Cooper Hewitt

The imagery that Cooper Hewitt uses is strictly of their museum and collections. Occasionally imagery that represents their design process will be used.

Imagery supports the function of this website: to illustrate a space or to show artifacts.
FiveThousand Fingers: Black Visual Archive

Write a comparison that weighs usability vs. aesthetics. When is the designer taking design liberties for aesthetic reasons? How does the design layout help you or the user navigate successfully or unsuccessfully? Was its success or failure due to aesthetics or technology or something else? Is the overall appearance beautiful to you? Why?

The aesthetics of Black Visual Archive (BVA), although support usability, are mainly intended for aesthetic purposes. The design layout helps users find past and current editions of writing for this blog. The writing covers black visual culture, so the importance of aesthetics is intrinsic.

For someone who doesn’t understand this style of design, the layout can be a bit confusing as to what they are supposed to do after reading the initial article.
Analysis 2

Examples

01 - Label
Past articles - hovering box

02 - Label
About BVA - hovering box

03 - Label
Example of a full article

Running Application for iPhone
Black Visual Archive

Objectives

Objective 1
Display writing in editorial form

Objective 2
Find and view previous posts

Objective 3
Learn about the project

The need for this UI was to translate the editorial style of the blog.
Black Visual Archive

Mostly regular readers visit this website. Visual artists, who are often subscribers, use the UI to find about how the author writes and ties in contemporary black visual art with history. They can learn about other artists and their historical context as well as how to contact the author to do commissioned writing.

Since this is fairly straightforward, the UI of the BVA helps people quickly navigate to aspects they might be looking for.
Analysis 2

Color Palette

01 - Links
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

02 - Background
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

03 - Header
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

03 - Text
R - 0%
G - 0%
B - 0%

About the Colors

Black Visual Archive
Black Visual Archive

Why do you think they chose these colors? Are they functional or aesthetic decisions? When are they functional and when are they aesthetic? How does it fit within a brand or does it stand alone?

The colors used are subtly bold. Simple, primary highlights with an understated gray background. Functionally, they do the job, but they seem to be chosen more for their sophistication and the style that they reference.

The colors and fonts build on a consistent aesthetic.
Typography

Black Visual Archive

Type Inventory:

There are 2 fonts: Calluna and the logo font

Calluna: 3
Logo: 1

Calluna:
Body text, citations

Logo:
Logo, menu items

The fonts are consistent across the UI.
Black Visual Archive

Why do you think the designers chose this typeface(s)? Is this successful or unsuccessful? Are they functional or aesthetic decisions? What would you do differently?

The serifed sophistication of Calluna gestures at the editorial style from which it came. The modern, uppercase logo is a contemporary minimalist design. Both are incredibly successful in building a complete aesthetic experience. The only thing I would change is the side navigation arrows, since they are small and difficult to notice.
Analysis 2

Assets

Large sheets of paper that have been put together, the dismantled text sentences that leave the letters with the initial intention. In the gallery a political vocabulary but by reading many of the letters, we are left with words that, for the most part, sound like a child — one who is yet to be aware of the way society will construct the

Tony Lewis

e e e e e e e e e e e, 2011
Pencil and graphite powder on paper
84h x 60w in (213.36h x 152.4w cm)

Queen and Country, Installation View

Coincidentally, the parade route’s proximity to the Art Institute of Chicago held an unknowst significance since at the time the museum had been exhibiting British-artist Steve McQueen’s memorial to Fallen British Iraq Veterans entitled Queen and Country. A recipient of the Caméra d’Or

photographed temporary shelters built by the United States military inside of Saddam Hussein’s imperial palaces. Lavishly constructed, the palaces now stand as architectural exoskeletons to poorly assembled shanties of plywood. Again, Mosse locates and documents the surreal that can exist amid conflict.
The Radio Show

Analysis 2

Imagery

The same historical well, Dancer/Choreographer Kyle Abraham mixes the radio stations of his hometown of Pittsburgh, WAMO-AM and WAMO-FM. A narrative of his father’s loss of speech due to complications from a stroke is accompanied by an R&B soundtrack spanning the gospel roots of Aretha Franklin’s “Mary Don’t You Weep” and The Johnson’s stripped cover of Beyonce’s “Crazy in Love”. The Radio Show is a rich tapestry of cultural commentary through music and radio personality pontifications. Over the course of two acts, 860 AM and 106.7 FM, Abraham begins the show warmly greeting the audience, traversing the venue barefoot. Periodically, he appears still, as he becomes momentarily still for the exception of a quivering hand. Despite the event, the performance rarely centers on Abraham himself. Instead, his work is the first half in small groups and is surprisingly dominated by female performers, reflecting strong communal ties as many of the dancers (Beatrice Capote, Indi Hopkins, Kirk, Chalvar Monteiro, Connie Shiu, and Eric Williams) perform large ensembles.
Black Visual Archive

The imagery used on BVA is solely functional. The only images used on the website are to highlight the works being discussed. BVA’s initially intense UI lets the writing and images describe the work and the context in which it was created by being clean and falling to the background.