Design Rationale

Objective

Produce a small website, comprising 3 webpages. The design is focused entirely on typesetting and color. The homepage features a 600+-word piece of text, and two supplementary pages of content have ~600-word objective and subjective analyses of the text.

Problem to Solve

Present large blocks of text in a readable, attractive way, without relying on imagery to break up the text.

Process

- Prepare documentation, select visual elements and create a plan.
- Select a 600+-word section of the original text and write the supplementary content.
- Organize the content correctly in HTML following best hierarchical practices and minimalist, semantic code.
- Implement the visual plan via CSS.
- Gather feedback and refine prior to submission.

Visuals

Since the text discusses accessibility and inclusivity, the page design reflects this too. Fonts and colors were carefully selected so many different types of readers are able to engage with the text.

Fonts

Lora meets key criteria for being an inclusive font: each character looks distinct (see Example 1), and no letters mirror each other (see Example 2). These are factors that align with the ethos of the text – to consider all potential users, especially those different from yourself.

Example 1: Lowercase "L" vs. Uppercase "I"
lI (Lora)
lI (Arial)

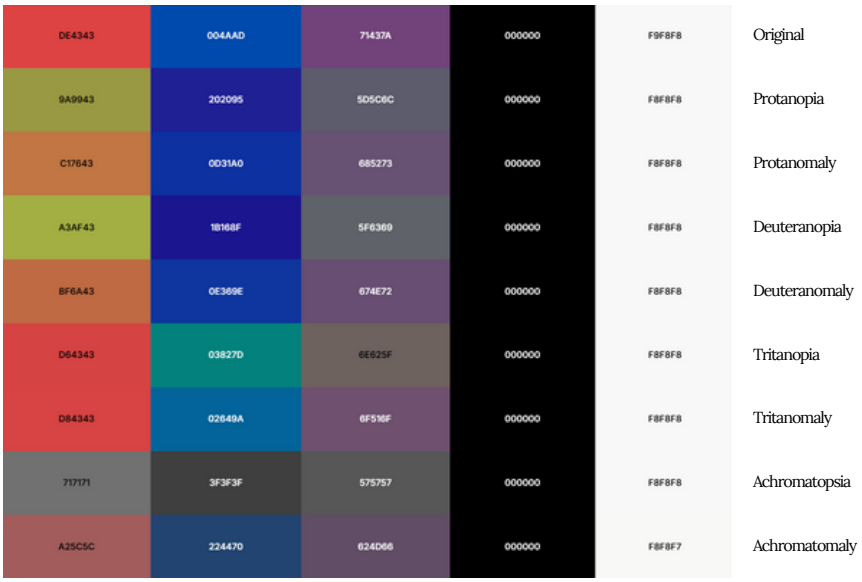
Example 2: Lowercase "Q" vs. Lowercase "P"
qp (Lora)
qp (Arial)

These guidelines allowed me to rule out most sans serif fonts altogether. Since it met the criteria above, aligned with the sentiment of the book, and established an educational tone, Lora was well-suited for this project.

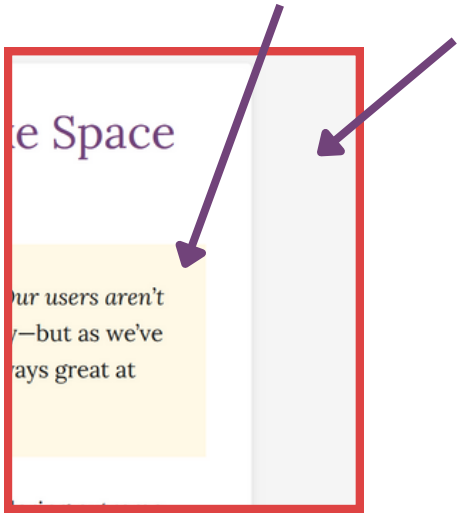
Colors

Again, accessibility was key here, due to the nature of the content I was working with. I found many online tools that help select accessible color palettes. I ultimately went with coolors.co's palette selector, which let me explore lots of combinations and test them in different eyesight filters (shown below).

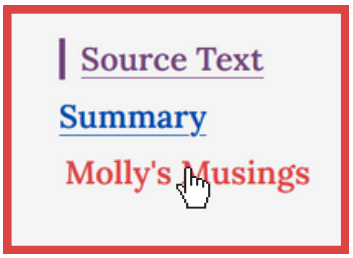
I knew I wanted to challenge myself to go with a bright color scheme, since that is completely out of my comfort zone. I tend to opt for minimalist aesthetics and earth tones. I started with the bright poppy red, something I would never ordinarily choose, and let the coolors selector guide me from there to create something easily distinguishable for any viewers.



As I began compiling my page in the browser, that's when I added soft background colors to help with readability and a distinct visual hierarchy.



I'm particularly pleased with how nicely these colors look with link effects – something I recently learned how to do, and excited to be able to include in this design.



Layout

I decided to pivot away from my initial layout idea in my slides since learning how to make columns and grids. The left-aligned menu allows users to explore the different pages while the text panel remains the main focus. There's also a fixed max-width on the menu so that as a browser expands, the main reading panel is able to use the new added space instead of the menu taking up any of it.

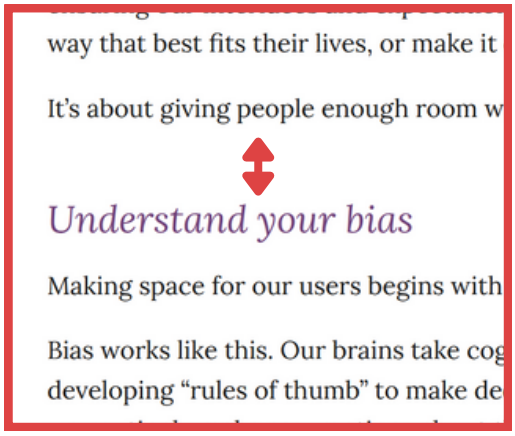
Within the reading panel of the grid, distinctive header styling and spacing is used to create a visual hierarchy to guide readers in their initial skim through the page.

Additional Design Decisions

There were a few elements that I went back-and-forth over for awhile, but through research and consulting my classmates, I made some strategic decisions.

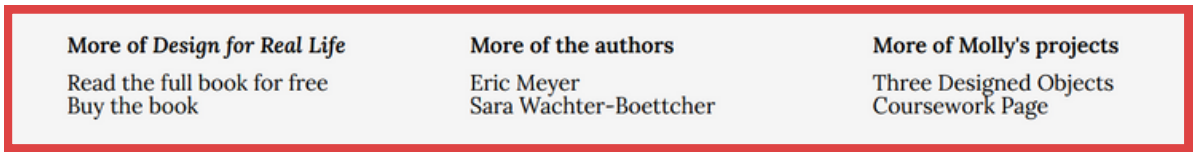
<h2> spacing

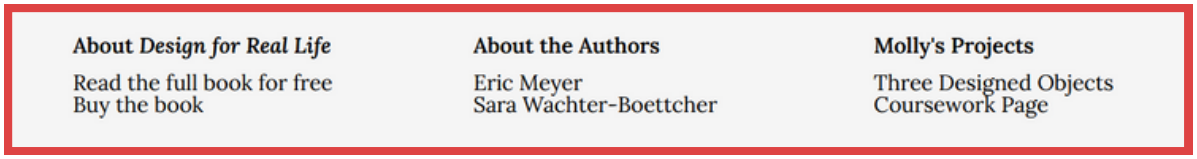
I spent a lot of time spacing out the subheads, since I wanted to make a distinct gap, but there are only two of them in my selected text, so I quickly discovered that too much of a gap for this particular selection looked really strange. I landed on a larger gap than a normal paragraph break, but nothing too extreme.



Footer language

Since I wanted to keep the footer minimal, I went back and forth about how to label the three columns. I could either choose to be very specific with my language, which better described the content below it, or choose phrases that were more vague and the short length fit my layout better. I ended up deciding on the latter.



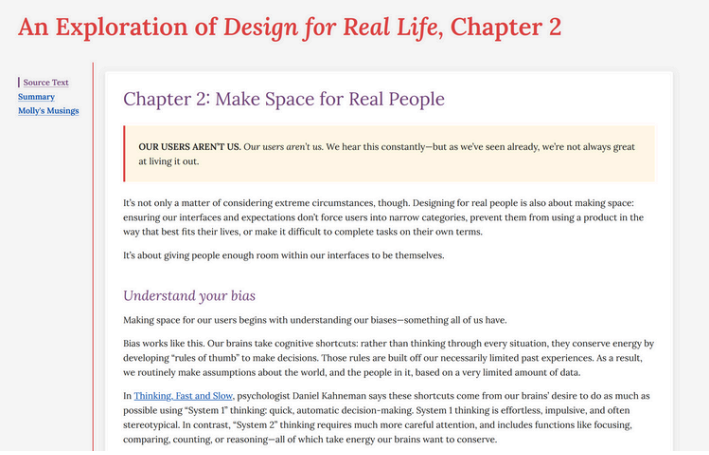


Borders

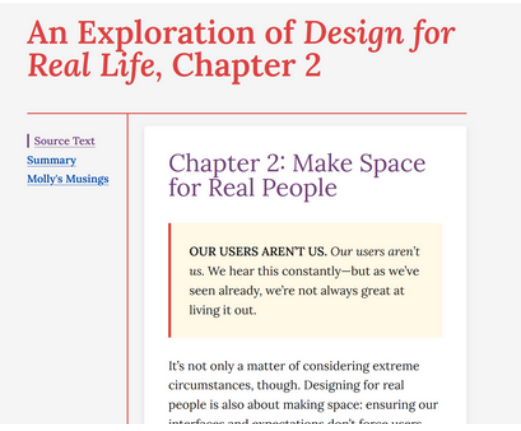
The last design decision that I spent a significant portion of this project debating about was the border lines separating the sections. I liked the clear division that guides the eyes between the different sections. However, my minimalist-loving brain crept in and kept saying “but... wouldn’t it be cleaner without it?”

I sent around screenshots of both options to a few classmates, and consulted some design articles. I thought that no header border looked better on mobile/small breakpoints, but it looked too empty for wider monitors. So ultimately, borders won out – which aligns well with my goal of pushing myself out of my minimalist comfort zone.

No top border, skinny



No top border, wide



Top border, skinny

Top border, wide

References

Scope for Business

How to Choose a Font

Butterick's Practical Typography

Coolors

Adobe Color

Inclusive Color Palettes for the Web

Design for web - Typography

Design for web - Colour