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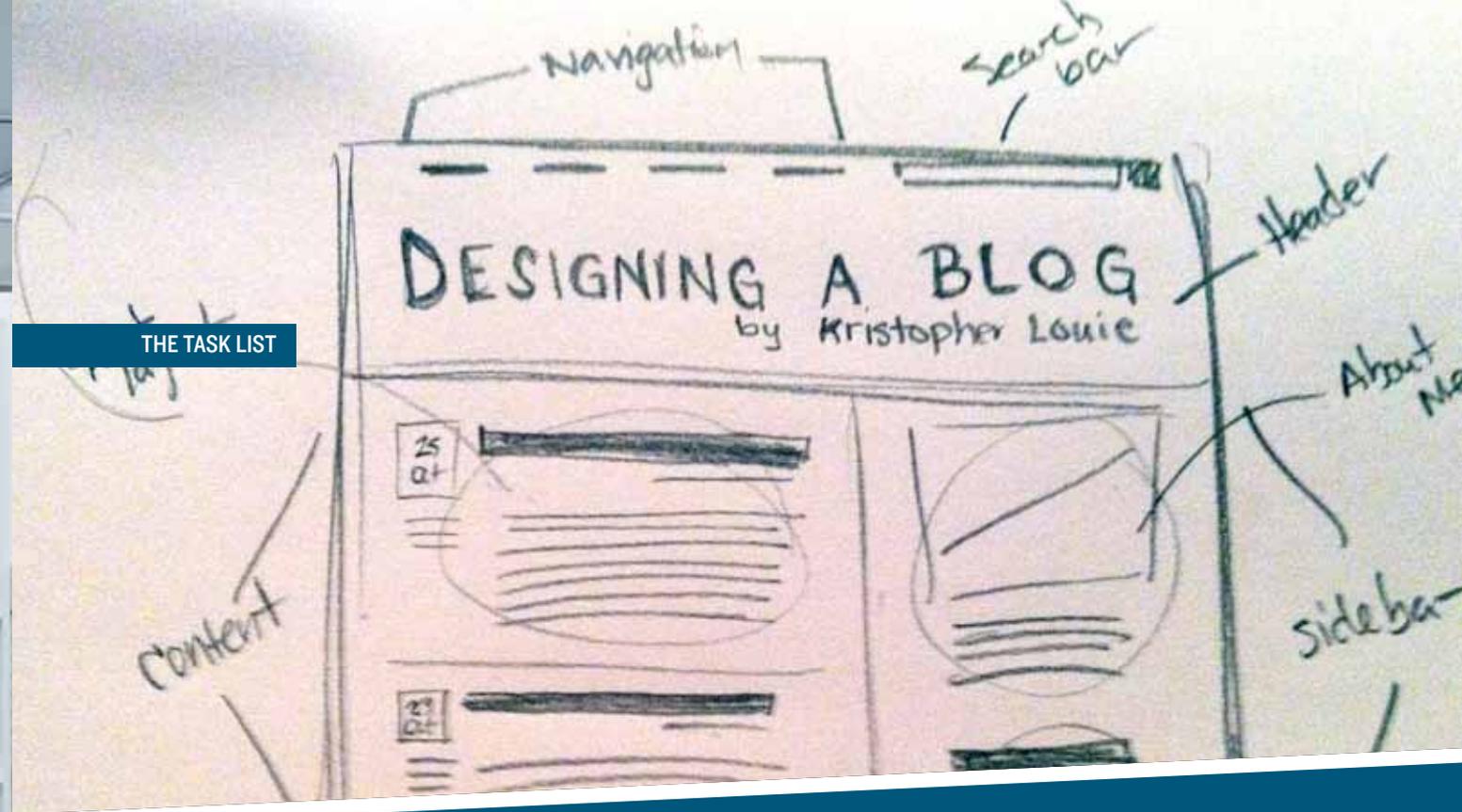
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our clean room

THE TASK LIST



The first time I designed a blog was back during the Xanga and LiveJournal era. Now there are various Content Management Systems (CMS) that can act as a blogging platform, ie. Wordpress, Expression Engine, Drupal. Out of the bunch I decided to go with Wordpress because of its opensource and user friendliness. As I started to design my own blog, I encountered a lot of questions and issues that required a lot research in order to solve. Since I wanted to have a complete grasp of a concept before I started it took time before I fleshed out a finished design. I'm glad it took as long as it did because I learned a lot and in the end improved on some essential skills.

With this article, I want to share with you the resources I discovered and hopefully provide a better understanding of the blog design principles through a series of articles which will eventually form into a solid guide from start to finish.

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DESIGN STANDARDS AND VALIDATION

Before designing a blog, you should have a grasp of the current web standards. Although there are a lot of blogs that aren't completely up to date with these standards, and a lot of bloggers would say it's something very minor, following web standards will help you learn the proper way of coding, leading to a validated blog.

Why is validation so important? Having a validated web site will: increase your search engine ranking, allow your blog to be cross-browser compatible and be less likely to "break".

Don't believe me? Well here's a list of web sites and articles discussing web standards:

Validating a Web site

http://codex.wordpress.org/Validating_a_Website

Wikipedia: Web Standards

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_standards

Web Standards Group

<http://webstandardsgroup.org>

The Web Standards Project

<http://www.webstandards.org>

W3Schools

<http://www.w3schools.com>

As you begin to design and develop using the current standards it's important to validate your code. The easiest and most efficient validator is W3Schools' Validator (<http://validator.w3.org>). If your code is valid you'll be prompt with a congratulations page, if it isn't it will list all the lines which are believed to be at fault.

THE HEADER

The first layout element that I suggest designing is the header. As one of the most important parts of your blog, other than the content itself, this is the area of your blog that readers will see first. So you might want to make it stand out from all the other blogs. As with all designs, the key to making your header, let alone anything, memorable relies on several basics: Color, Contrast, Shape, Size, Space and Texture. By utilizing these elements of design, you can achieve phenomenal results.

What should you incorporate in your header? Many web sites, some of which you will see throughout the article feature two essential parts: the logo and the main navigation. The logo is essential so that the viewer is aware of the web site. The primary navigation is a standard that most viewers today have grown accustomed to. It's not to say that the primary navigation is always in the header but it is normally within close range of the header.

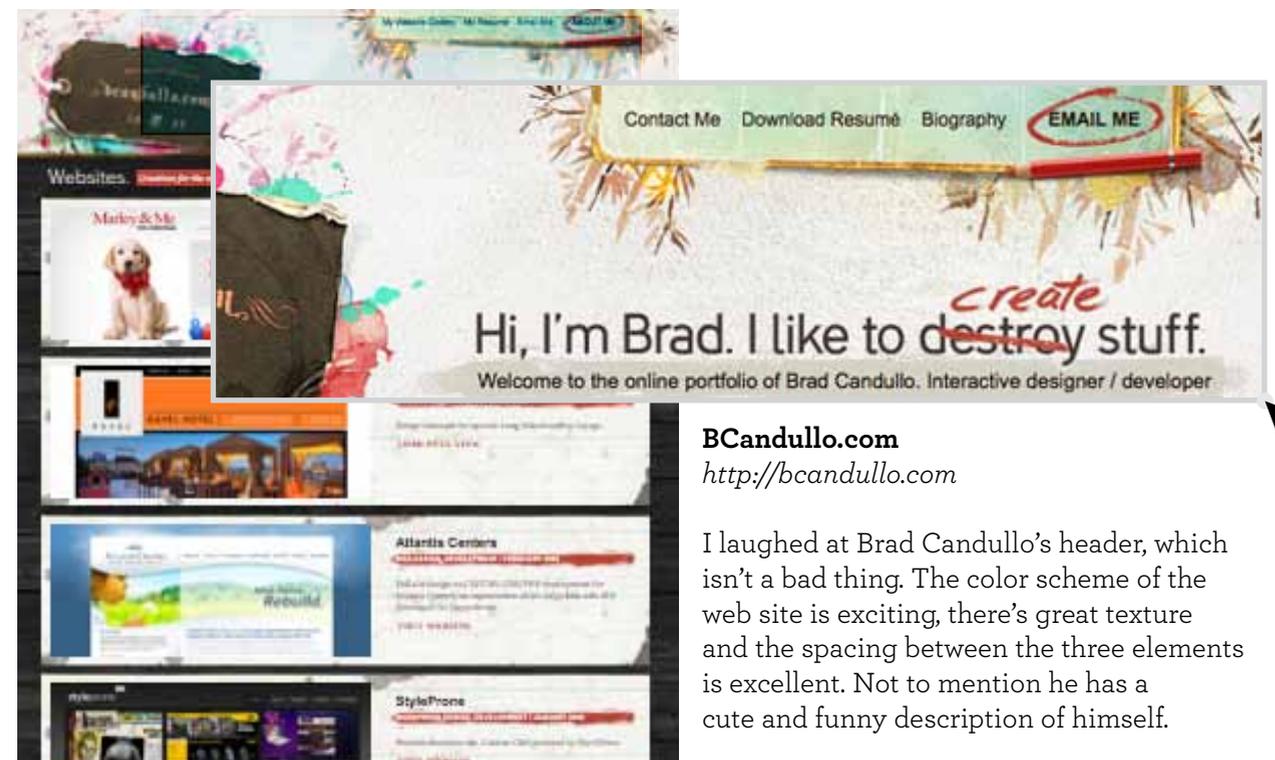
Are you wondering what a good header looks like? Let's take a look at some examples...



Viget Inspire

<http://www.viget.com/inspire>

Viget Inspire has a beautifully edited photograph with very subtle shades of color which gives a very nice aesthetic. The logo is large and at the top, receiving the most focus in the header.



BCandullo.com

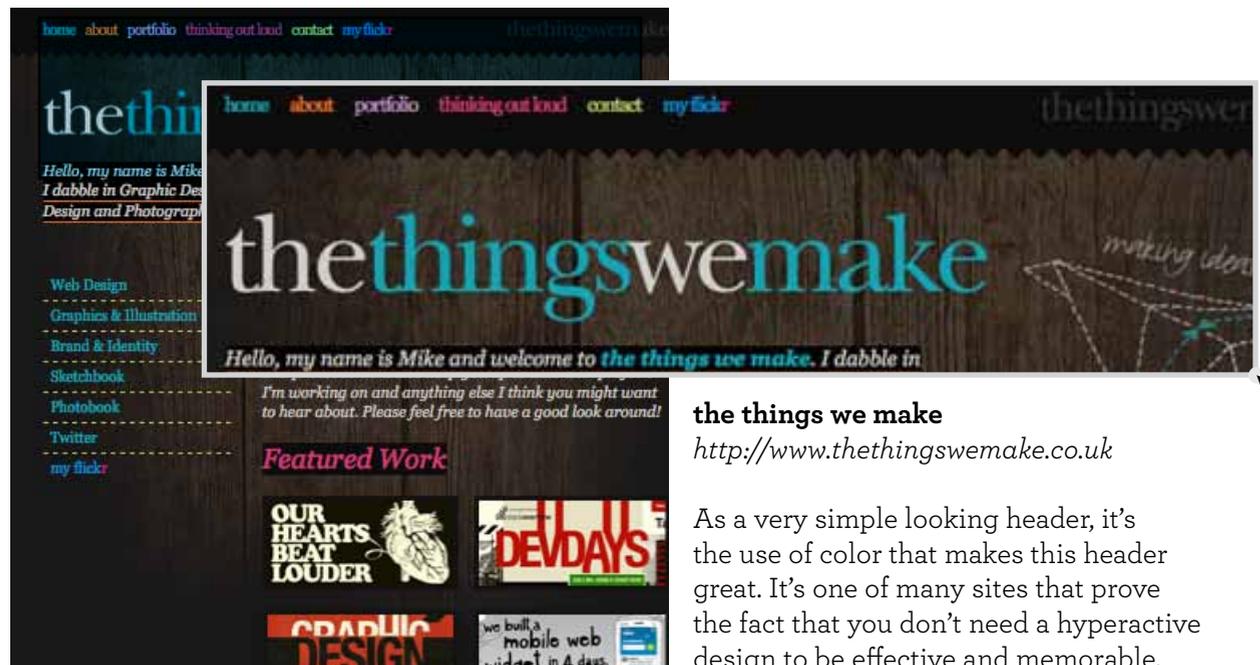
<http://bcandullo.com>

I laughed at Brad Candullo's header, which isn't a bad thing. The color scheme of the web site is exciting, there's great texture and the spacing between the three elements is excellent. Not to mention he has a cute and funny description of himself.



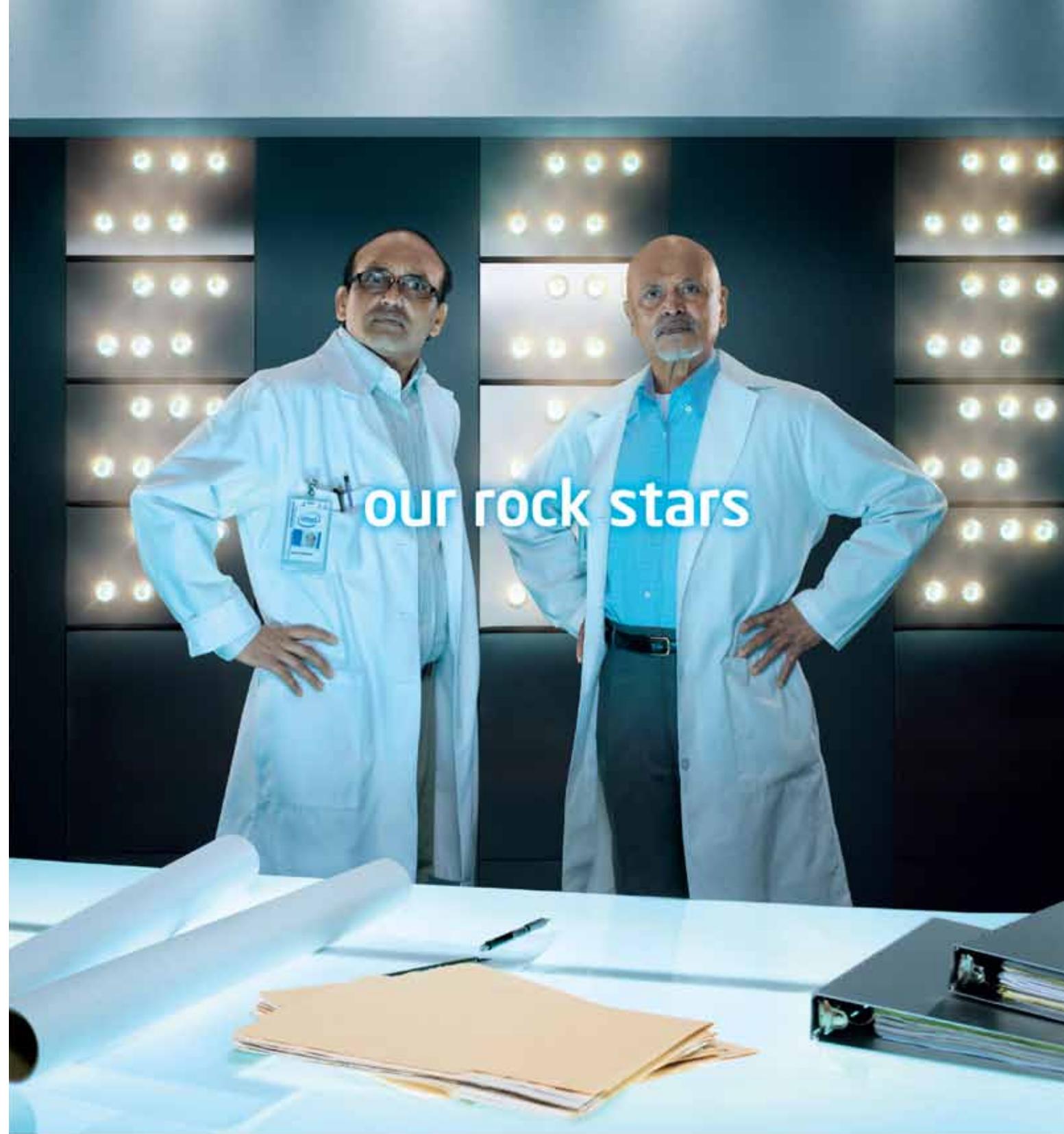
Web Designer Wall
<http://webdesignerwall.com>

One of the most memorable headers I've seen is WebDesignerWall's. There are so many hand-drawn elements with a lot of vibrant colors that make certain elements pop out. Also the flow of the shapes move the eye from left to right and back again. It's definitely one of a few headers that stick out in my mind.



the things we make
<http://www.thethingswemake.co.uk>

As a very simple looking header, it's the use of color that makes this header great. It's one of many sites that prove the fact that you don't need a hyperactive design to be effective and memorable.



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