

## Graphic User Interface (GUI) design mini-project

The art and design elements that go into a graphic user interface (GUI) of a website, software application, or other monitor- or projector-based medium, are extremely important, since the GUI represents both the identity and function of the product or website. Art influences design, which influences communication, and these factors determine function (ease-of-use, navigation, and control). These factors can play a vital role in whether a product is a success or failure. That is why digital artists should concern themselves with all aspects of basic design, layout, and concept before they create a GUI for a product (e.g. a kid's website or an interactive museum kiosk).

This project is concerned with these issues of design and function, where you will create a GUI for an imaginary website. Your graphic could be used as an image map for an opening splashscreen with clickable "hot" link areas or even "rollovers" embedded within it (we might not do that part, but easily could, and I'll probably demonstrate the basic techniques later). This project will eventually be utilized in Adobe ImageReady for specific web-related objectives.

(see [www.3dotstudio.com/NSCCdigital](http://www.3dotstudio.com/NSCCdigital) for some examples)

### Some major objectives:

1. using basic art and graphic design principles to communicate information effectively, especially in regards to graphic user interface (GUI) design for the Internet
2. moving between applications and various file formats for effective productive workflow, especially for web designers.
3. re-purposing artwork from print-based to web-based media or vice-versa

### BASICS:

the major design rule to follow is: "***Form follows function !***"

### Technical details:

- for print, we will first set resolution to 150ppi; later in the project, for web browser use, we will resample down to 72ppi
- always work in RGB color; the web works on RGB. Also, consider using the 216 color web-safe color palette (available in both Illustrator and Photoshop).
- Size: For the Web, the main splashscreen interface should fit conveniently on a standard monitor; remember, lots of people use laptops (and now even cell phones, iPods, PDA's etc) for web browsing and not everyone in the world has a 24" flatscreen LCD Trinitron!! Because of graphics cards and their ability to adjust resolution, if you set the dimensions to **11"wide x ~8" high** (or 800 pixels wide x 600 pixels high @72ppi) you will be right on target.
- You can create your initial image in either Illustrator or Photoshop. If you create the image in Photoshop, you must create at least one element (a graphic, logo, shape, design, button, etc) in Illustrator to bring into your Photoshop image. Either way should refresh you on working cross-application, which is an important working routine to be comfortable with.

-- If you design initially in Illustrator (not a bad idea, but optional) you can bring it into Photoshop to add enhancements (drop shadows, layer effects, textures, etc). Note: When you open the native vector .ai image in Photoshop it will be rasterized to a bitmap image). Alternatively, you could use the "Save As" command to save as a .eps or .pdf format, or using the "Export" command, can export the file in native .psd format (which can preserve any Illustrator layers). In any case, at some point you will be asked to specify resolution, color space, size, background.

--If you create the main design in Photoshop, bring in something from Illustrator that you can utilize in your Photoshop-designed interface. That, too, will at some point be rasterized, and you must provide the needed information for that process. Or, you can just try using the simple "copy and paste" method between applications to get a selection from Illustrator to Photoshop.

- Utilize the tremendous advantage that working in layers offers for web design, in either Photoshop or Illustrator. If objects are isolated in layers, it can allow very easy creation of image maps, slices, and rollovers, etc. Especially useful for buttons and other navigational items in an interface.

#### Design details:

- theme should be harmonious with the graphic elements, colors, typography, format used -- form (design, layout) must reflect function (content, purpose)
- identity/purpose should be obvious; no guessing or confusion or the viewer is gone! Effective titling and/or branding is essential.
- navigation and nav symbols should be simple, clean, obvious and design should be in keeping with content (e.g. using soft,oval buttons vs sharp, rectangular buttons). Use symbols wisely.
- print should always be clear, legible; keep words to a minimum on an interface
- Consider major rules of good graphic display of information -- composition & use of pos/neg space, line and contour, perspective/proportion/scale; balance and contrasts; rhythm and energy; texture; and color.
- color can dominate all other graphic elements, so it's use must be carefully considered. Think about cultural, emotional,symbolic aspects of color as well as the technical aspects of color
- When in doubt, minimalism is usually best. "Less is more!" But remember that in design, simplicity (simple but **not** dull!!!!) is often much harder to get right than is complexity.