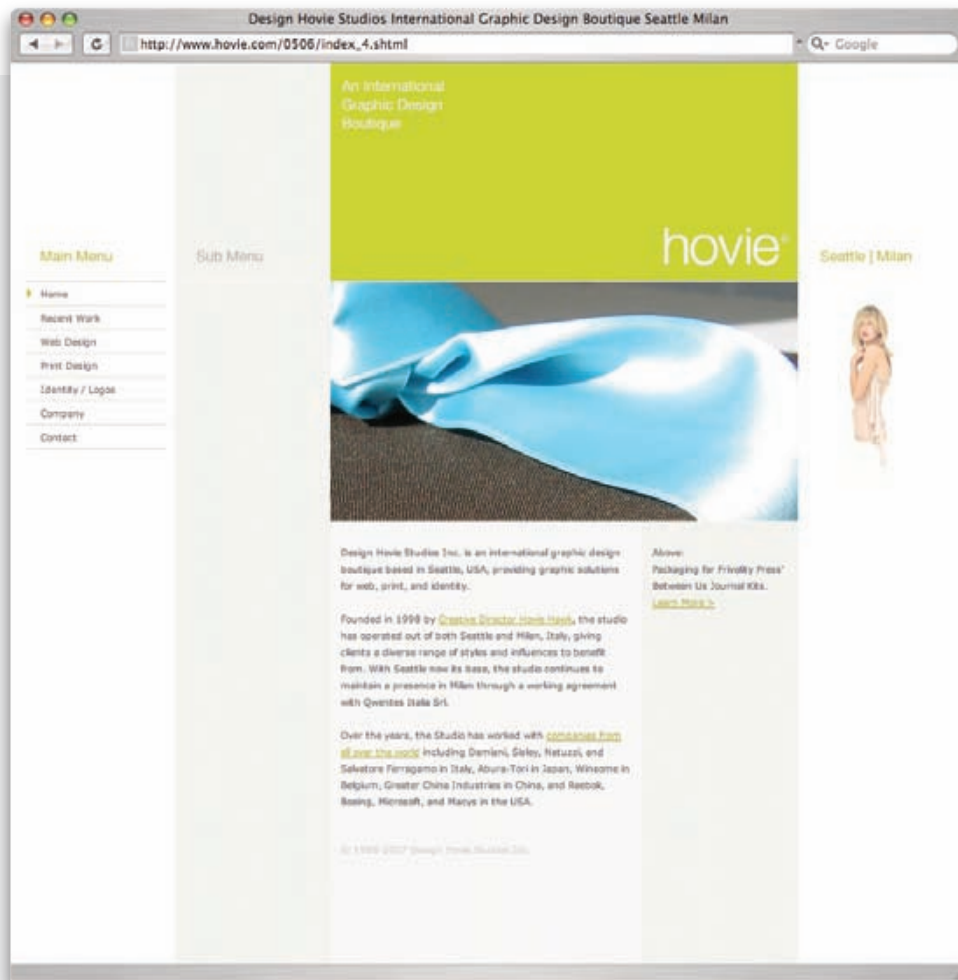


A site of unusual clarity

A portfolio site shows that pure design is beautiful design. *Continued* ▶

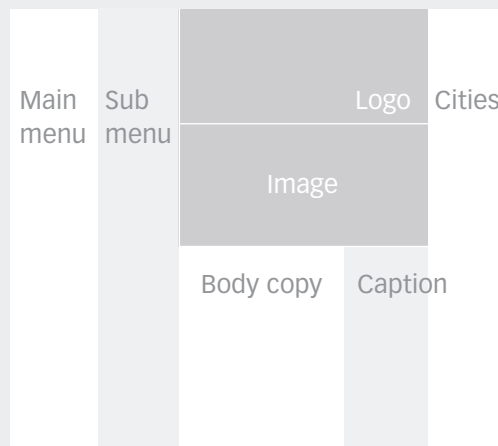
A site of unusual clarity

Design Hovie Studios' portfolio site shows that pure design is beautiful design.



www.hovie.com

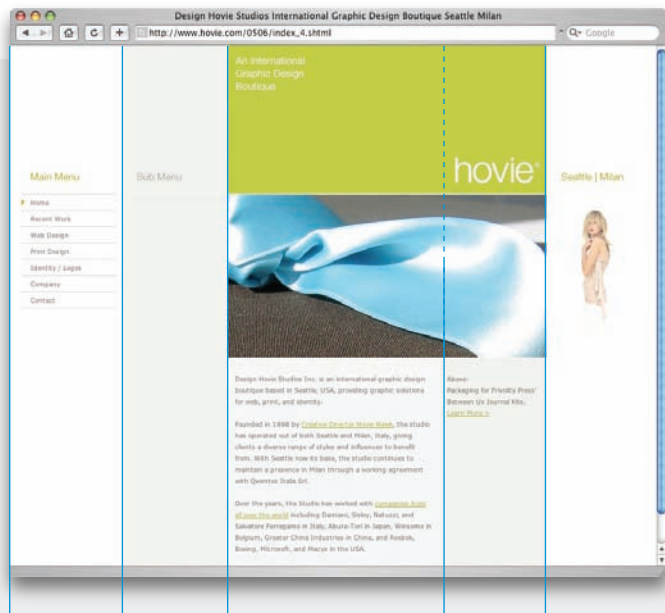
Is it just us, or is the Web improving? We're seeing more beautiful sites than ever. This one belongs to Design Hovie Studios, Inc. of Seattle. It's a site of mostly light, open space, unusually spare, and startling in its clarity. What we especially like is that its beauty is achieved purely with layout. The site has no popups, nothing moves; there's not even a roll-over. Let's see what we can learn.



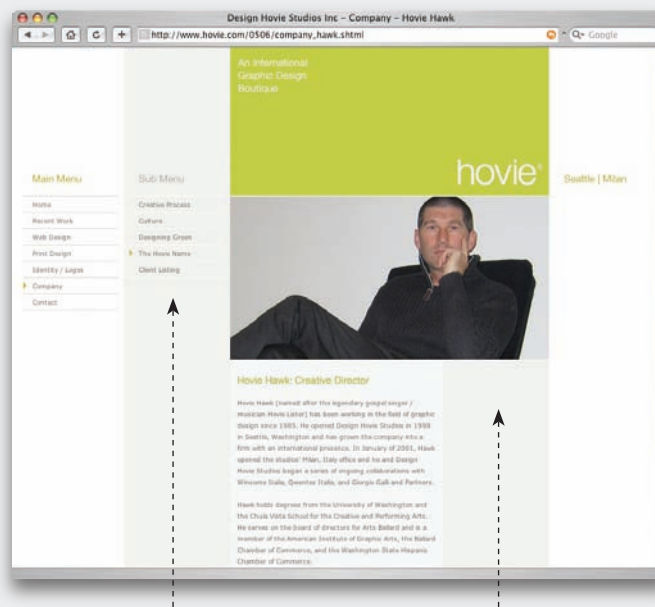
A place for everything
Everything's in the open on Hovie's site; it has no hidden menus, popups or rollovers. All the text is a single size, all highlights are a single color (green), and the format is constant from page to page.

Structure

The site is built in five columns; stories are told in the middle column. Its focal center is a permanent green field atop a photograph that changes from page to page.



The medium is part of the message. Conveying the studio's design aesthetic is a beautifully *minimal* site. Its left four columns are light as air; the white, right-hand "column" is a phantom that we perceive only because of its tiny bit of text (and on the home page, a model); expand the window, and its white expands endlessly (below).



Like a gallery Each column contains one kind of copy. If on a page there's no copy for that column, it remains empty. You can see this above, where Sub Menu links are now visible, and the caption column is empty. What's interesting is that each page has less data than structure. It presents its material one small bite per page, like paintings hanging on gallery walls. Very easy to "read."

Main Menu

- Home
- Recent Work
- Web Design
- Print Design
- Identity / Logos
- Company
- Contact

Sub Menu

- Creative Process
- Culture
- Designing Green
- The Hovie Name
- Client Listing

It's pure. With no clutter fighting for attention, details can be equally minimal. Above, tiny green arrows guide navigation; white lines divide links. Handsome here, neither could succeed on a busy site.

Type

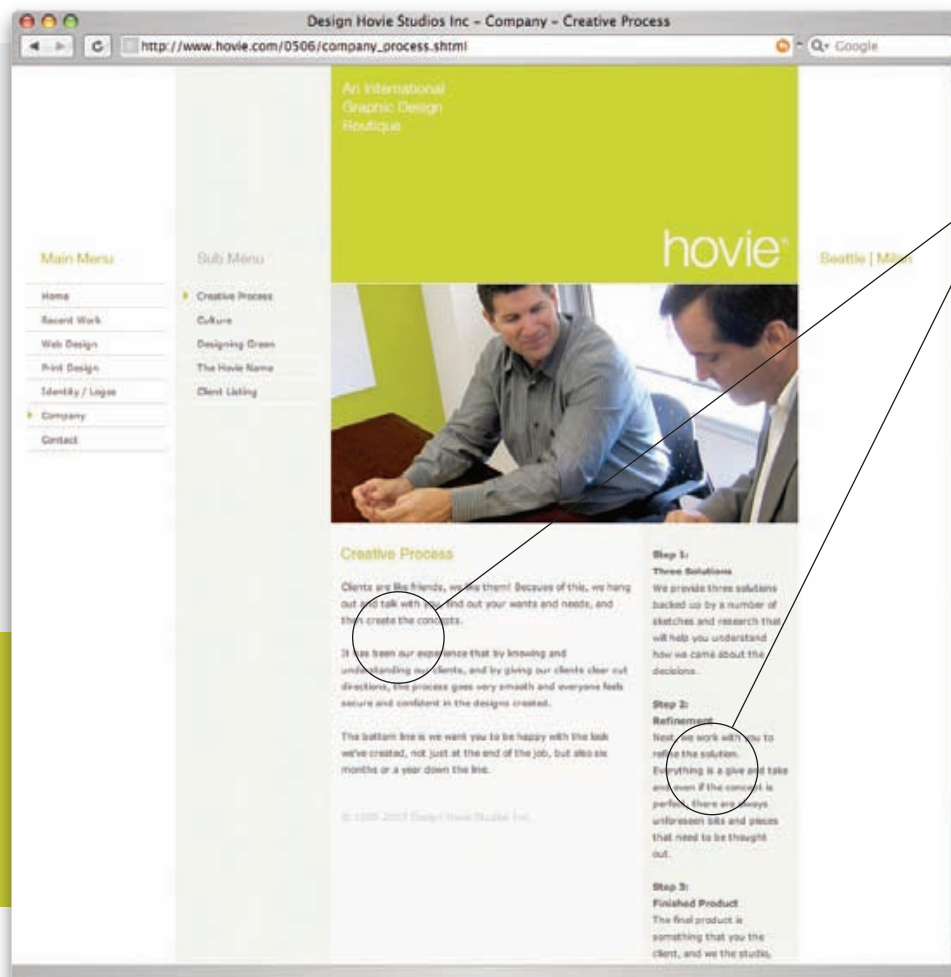
Two similar, sans-serif typefaces are used more or less as a single face—light Helvetica heads set the design style, and Verdana makes the small text clear and readable.

Light Helvetica is the quintessential minimalist Swiss style. Helvetica makes an excellent display face, but at low Web resolution it's a poor text face. So here, its use is limited to the "hovie" logotype and the small, style-setting heads (below). Opposite is Verdana (far right), which is ho-hum at display sizes but excellent as Web text. Together they work as one.

hovie®

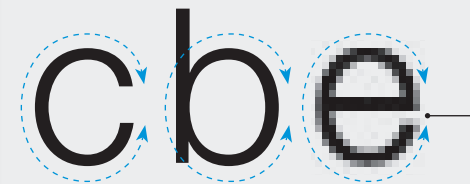
An International
Graphic Design
Boutique

Main Menu
Sub Menu
Seattle | Milan



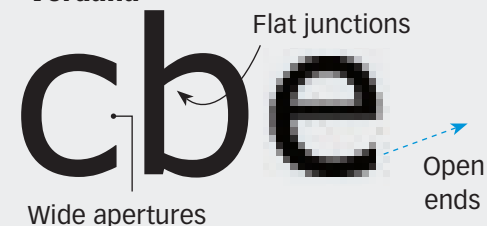
Verdana is the Web's most legible text typeface. Sans-serif Verdana pairs well with Helvetica. Two qualities make it clear at small sizes—its wide apertures that remain "open," and normally similar letters (**cbe**, below) that look different.

Helvetica



At low resolution, identical "roundness" makes small letters hard to differentiate, and narrow apertures "close" (above).

Verdana



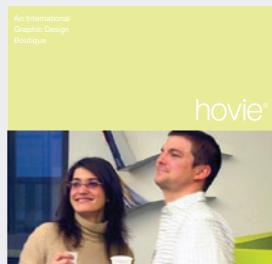
Wide apertures

Flat junctions

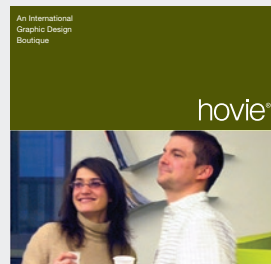
Open ends

Color

Spring green, the color of *new life*, is the only color in the design and does double duty; it's visually vivacious and also conveys the studio's interest in environmental issues.



Light: No presence

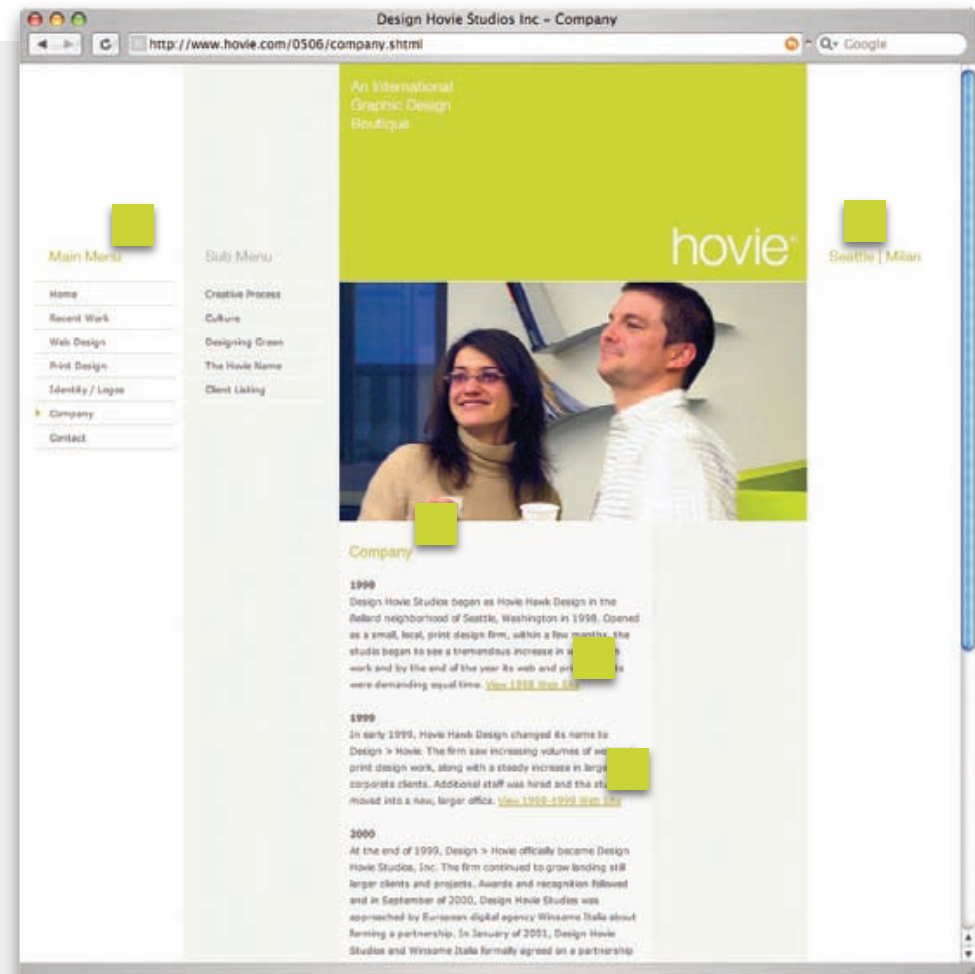


Dark: Too strong



Medium: Just right

Medium is best. Rectangular green field is the visual anchor for the site. Because this field is always present, key was to find a color that would work with the ever-changing images beneath it. That's a lot to ask, and it helps that there are more hues and shades of green than any other color. It had to be the right *value*, too. Note above that too light has insufficient presence; and too dark, while it looks good with many images, would become cloying with repetition. **Apply the color throughout.** The green is eyedropped and applied site-wide to heads and links (right). The single-color motif makes a simple, beautifully *coherent* look.



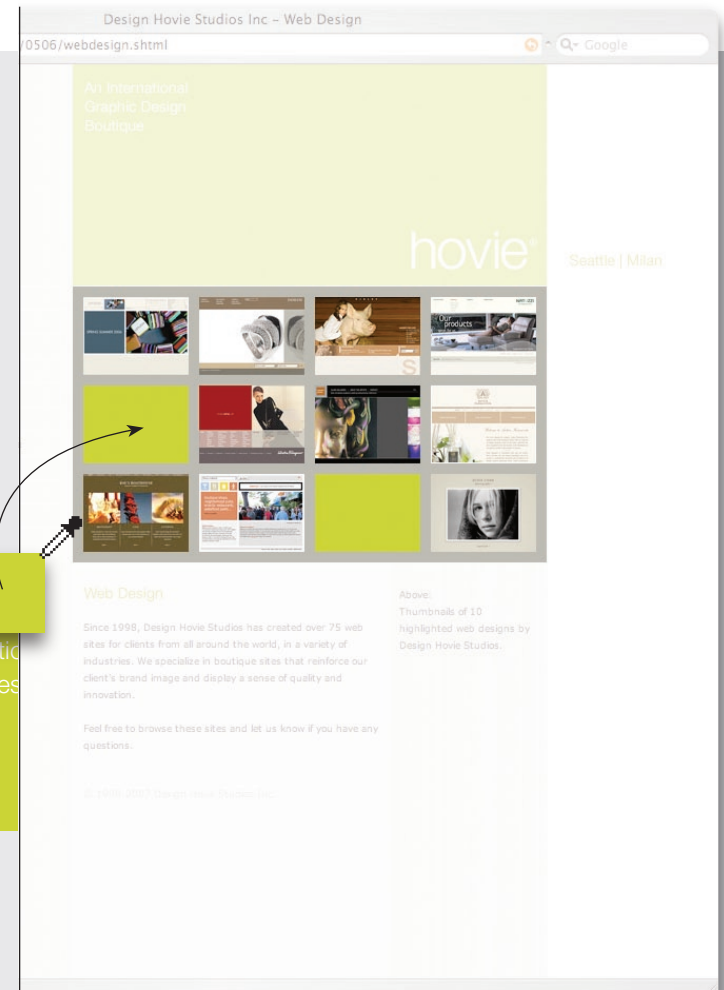
Photos

Photos are limited to a single, fixed-width field beneath the green rectangle. This restriction means that the space is sometimes shared and must be purposefully arranged.



No zig-zags One key to the site's clean look is that sight-lines run only vertical or horizontal and edge to edge in any field (above, left). There are no zigzagged or diagonal arrangements; nor are there overlapping shapes. (All would add complexity.) Photos that share space, therefore, must be in full rows or columns. But in a space that holds 12 photos, the site uses only 10 (above). Key is that they're arranged not in a zigzag but scattered (right), and the two empty spaces filled with the site's trademark green. Nice.

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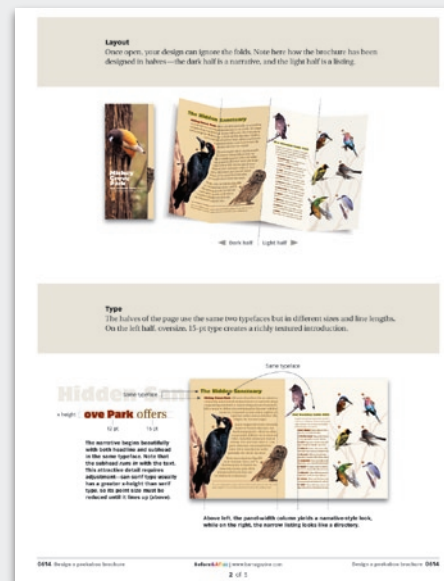


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Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

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[Print: \(Specify pages 9–12\)](#)





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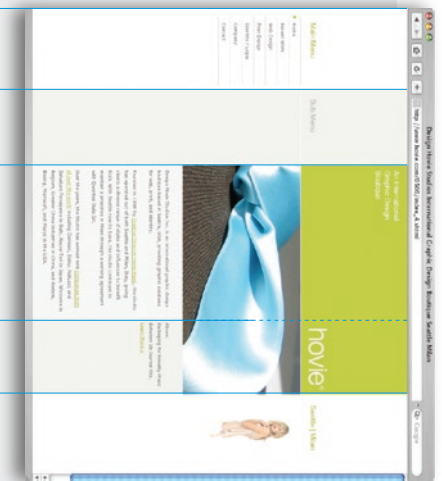
Main menu	Sub menu	Logo	Cities
		Image	
		Body copy	Caption

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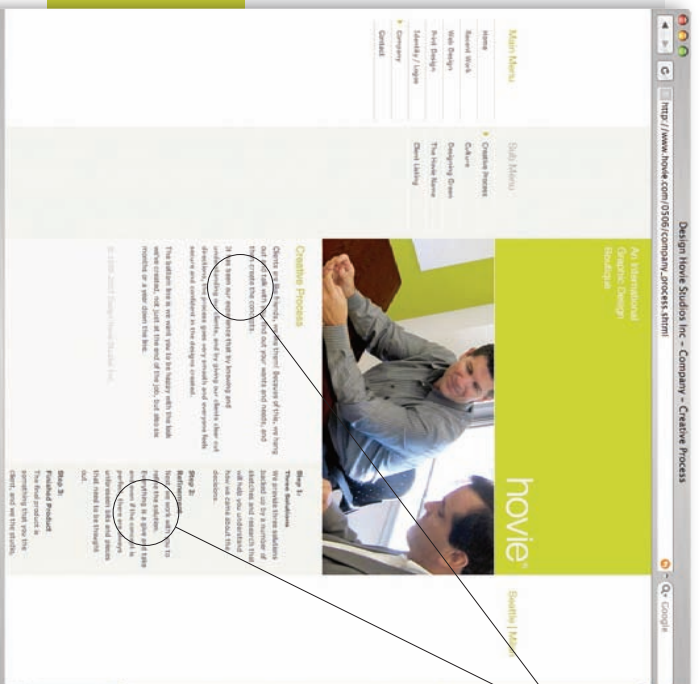
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Flat junctions
Wide apertures
Open ends

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