Perpendicular Angel Design

Organizing and simplifying, one illumination at a time

An Event Apart Seattle 2017: Designing with Grid by Jen Simmons

Posted on **April 7, 2017**

Jen Simmons' talk picked up essentially where Rachel's left off, filling in a lot of the blanks that we might've had around CSS Grid, while also stressing that the new layout options will change how we approach the web as significantly as 25 years of filmmaking affected the film industry.

She also covers some of the core concepts of visual design as codified in the last century of graphic design and similar fields. For those of us who aren't visdes workers on a regular basis,

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CSS grid will make it much easier to code layouts. it also fundamentally changes our medium to an artistic design #AEASEA

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One of the very first films - 1896 - The Kiss. Very simple, but freaked people out #AEASEA
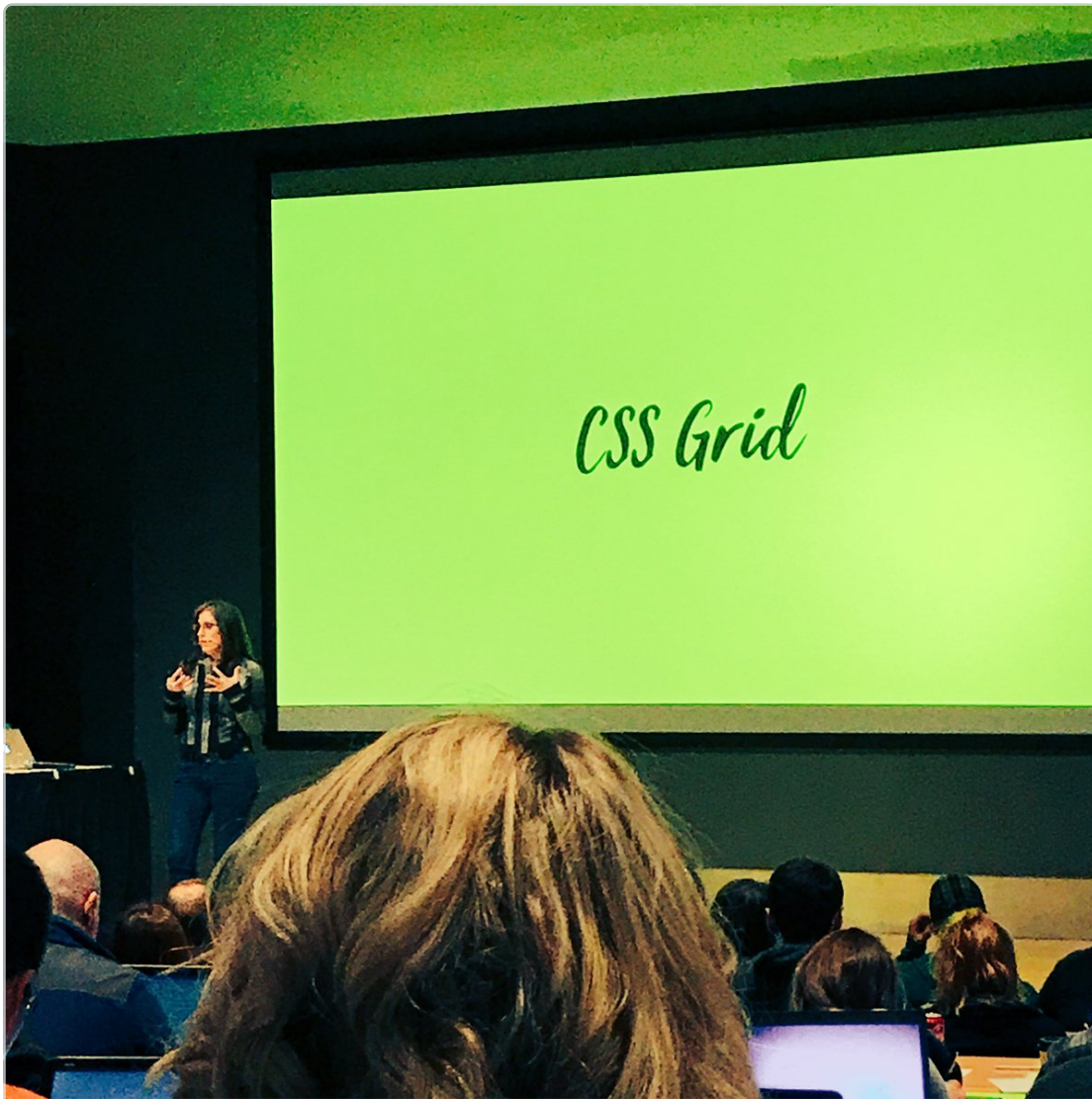
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Even the actors back then didn't really understand what it meant to be making a film #AEASEA

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Josh Larson
@jplhomer

The theme of #aeasea in one photo.

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(I would argue that "design patterns" or "don't do what other people are doing just to follow the trend" were also valid themes of this year's conference.)

Greg Whitworth
@gregwhitworth

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And now, @jensimmons about CSS Grid and The Little House on the Prairie? #aeasea

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Little House on the Prairie was a very different way to tell stories than House of Cards #AEASEA

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Our medium is similarly not done. If 1993 was the beginning, we're at year 25. We're in the 1917 of film. #AEASEA

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Layout design - from text to tables to lots of circles. In large part because of table layout #AEASEA

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when we switched to floats, lots of work started to look like a lot of other work #AEASEA

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960 Grid became the dominant layout. Then there was a device explosion, then responsive design #AEASEA

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Break the pages in sections in boxes in thirds and halves. We punted on branding and differentiation #AEASEA

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It's important to have starter kits. You don't have to start every project with a blank page #AEASEA

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You want to design in a system of components. But we can add layout to what we're doing #AEASEA

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Color palette
Typography palette
Layout palette

Don't just abandon beautiful components in a boring layout #AEASEA

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David Watson
@caughtexception

The technology really does inform—and in some cases has constrained—our inspiration. #webdesign #aeasea

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We don't have to use a 12 column grid. (You can if you have to tomorrow, but in the next year maybe mix it up a bit) #AEASEA

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What is grid really good at? What does CSS grid want us to do? #aeasea

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The nature of CSS Grid: it's different from what you're expecting #AEASEA

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Explicit vs Implicit.
You define the size and or number of rows and or columns vs browser does it #AEASEA

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You place each item into a specific cell or area or you let the browser auto-layout things #AEASEA

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WE HAVE ROWS - and we can work with them #AEASEA

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Stephanie
@seaotta

Mastering CSS Grid is mastering the art of knowing when to define what you want vs letting the browser decide for you. #aeasea

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You can tell the browser to size the content by the size of the track, or size the track by the content #AEASEA

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Content doesn't have to fill a track. Because the content is the track before now, this is a new #AEASEA
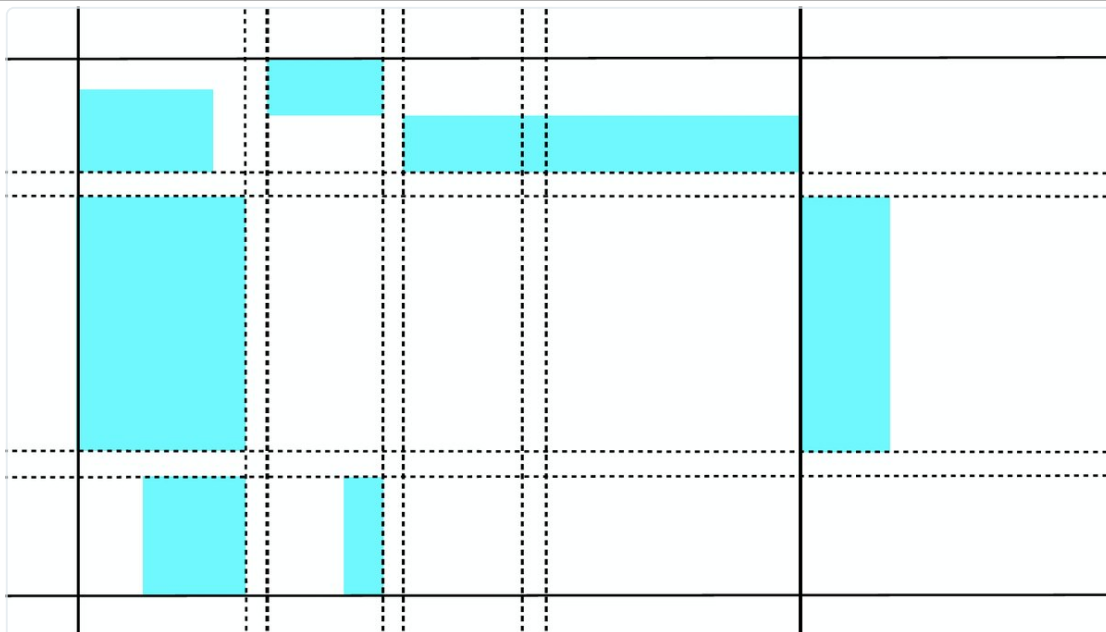
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we can align things left, right, center, stretch, top, bottom, middle, stretch…. it's a whole new world #AEASEA

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Here's a picture of what a CSS grid might look like with the blue boxes being the content within the grid.

jared bishop
@bishopart

I like puzzles #aeasea @jensimmons

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You can use grid to line things up but you don't have to line things up with CSS grid #AEASEA

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How do you know where to put things? We're going to need to go back to the last century of graphic design learning #AEASEA

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Visual hierarchy - you don't have to put important things wherever you want if you use these principles to make them stand out #AEASEA

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Symmetry and asymmetry both have their place on the web #AEASEA

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Proximity principle - if you put things with other things they think they go together. (I love this principle) #AEASEA

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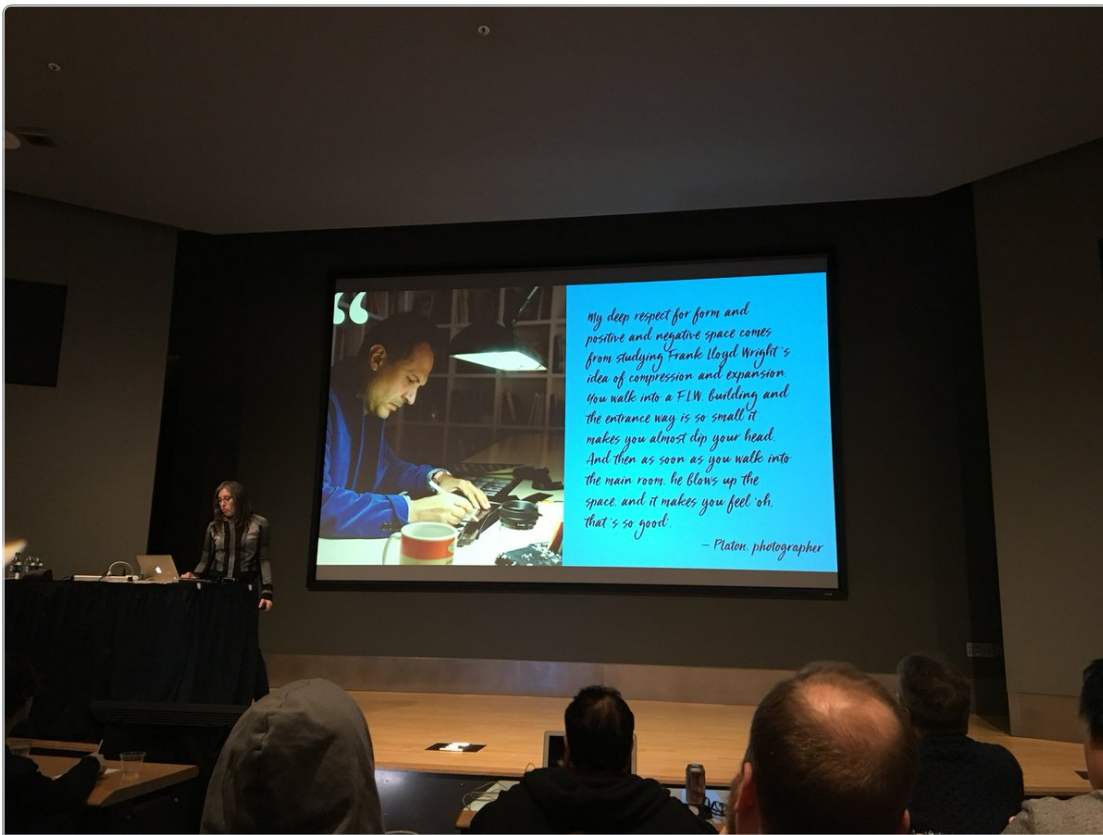**Anne Gibson**
@perpendicularme

Bring graphic design back to the web. Articulate theory that's *of* the web #AEASEA

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A quote by Platon #aeasea

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Discovery in 6 parts
1. Overlap. You can stack things over each other. it's been hard until now #AEASEA

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Grid makes it easy to overlap things. #AEASEA

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Firefox makes it easy to view grids by clicking the "waffle icon" in Inspector to see the grid lines #AEASEA

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Overlap - translucent circles overlapping each other - can have a cool effect #AEASEA

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We don't have a mental model of an entire page all at once but that's how we design #AEASEA

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What's it mean to be designing content as an experience that has an element of time (through scrolling) #AEASEA

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(@scottmccloud books are a great source of info on designs over time because that's what comics *do*) #AEASEA

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If you're a designer (or developer) and you haven't read Understanding Comics or Scott McCloud's other books, you're missing an incredibly accessible crash course in visual design and how the human brain turns what it sees on paper or in screens into information.

Stephanie
@seaotta

There's something a little bit broken in our process of thinking about a website - we don't design the whole experience. 1/2 #aeasea

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How do we show an experience over time (by scrolling down the page), the experience in the viewport? 2/2 #aeasea

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Even the process of storyboarding has evolved over the years, and we should be looking at them #AEASEA

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Break up the page into storyboards for what it will look like when people scroll down the page #aeasea

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the design of the page should always look great no matter how big the screen is. Use the up-down dimension #AEASEA

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Experiment with grid rows and columns, alignment, viewport units #AEASEA

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Framing: what does it mean to have a frame and fit things inside a frame? It's not an easy question in film #AEASEA

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How do you tell a story through a little tiny viewfinder? #AEASEA

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Meaningful moments - a "close push" (zoom in on a face) is extremely powerful to show meaning #AEASEA

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What does it mean to have a reading experience or interaction experience with a frame, where things move in and out of that frame? #AEASEA

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White space: Ultimately the most important tool is the management of the white space in layouts. #AEASEA

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Bad layouts have no space left for breathing - every little space is covered by a cacophony of type sizes images & screaming titles #AEASEA

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Grid gives us the tools we need to put space between things both vertically and horizontally. #AEASEA

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A lot of modernists took a page, decided how many modules to use, etc. #AEASEA Grids and grids.

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Does having CSS grid mean we need modernist grids in browsers? Maybe and maybe not #AEASEA

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(Ugh. I hate modernist art.)

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we can't control the size or aspect ratio of the page, but we can create white space, line things up, maintain aspect ratios #AEASEA

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. @markboulton has done a lot of writing about grids #AEASEA

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Come up with fresh ideas and reinterpret what grid means #AEASEA

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Verticality. We make a lot of sites that scroll vertically. What should we do to design in the vertical direction? #AEASEA

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there's a lot to be mined from responsive Mondrian but there's a lot to be found in Arabic or Asian graphic design #aeasea

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Japan, China, Korea, languages were typeset vertically. Japan has clung to their vertical typesetting #AEASEA

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@zeldman

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The Vignelli Canon (free PDF) ℅ @jensimmons #aeasea #design #CSSgrid #gridvignelli.com/canon.pdf

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Get outside of the idea that Swiss/European Modern design is THE way to design. #aeasea

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Horizontal text typeset into very vertical spaces. Japanese handle grids very differently than we've otherwise seen #AEASEA

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Stephanie @seaotta   4 Apr
Get outside of the idea that Swiss/European Modern design is THE way to design. #aeasea

Stephanie
@seaotta

What about Asian & Middle Eastern history and art? Look for interesting and new layouts in these cultures for inspiration. #aeasea

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How can we use vertical space in different ways? (Lots of inspiration from Japanese graphic novels, etc.) #AEASEA
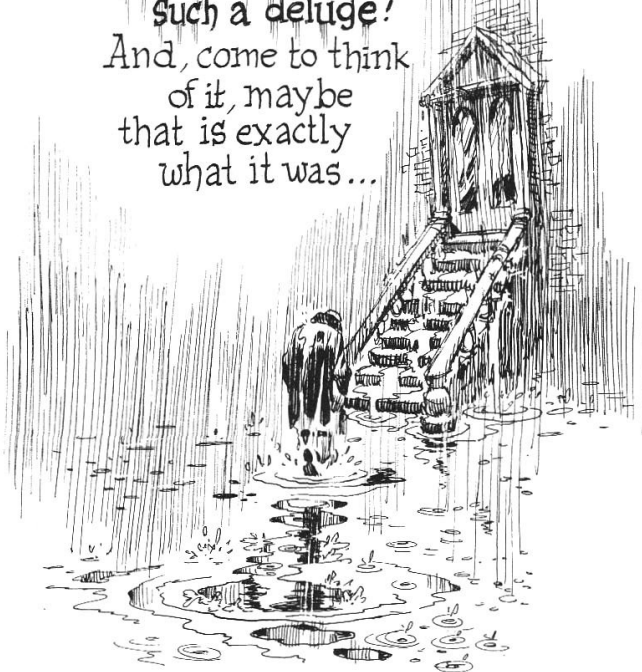
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Japanese films and graphic novels are a good place to look for examples of verticality, where the subject of the screen is a small part of a very tall view.
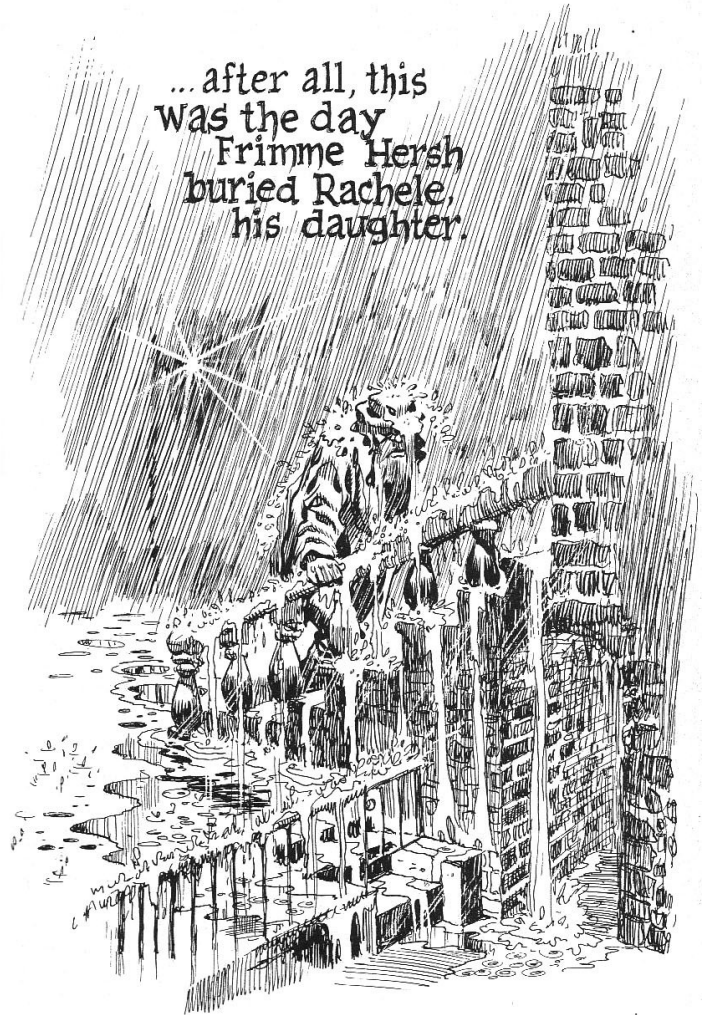

Comics genius Will Eisner was also a master at using the power of

verticality in his designs, and since I love Will Eisner's work, here's an example.

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We can explore verticality much more than we have. We're under a lot of pressure to push everything to the top #AEASEA

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Flexibility is being redefined as the tools change because the tools defined it until now #AEASEA

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Min-content
Max-content
For
Minmax()#AEASEA

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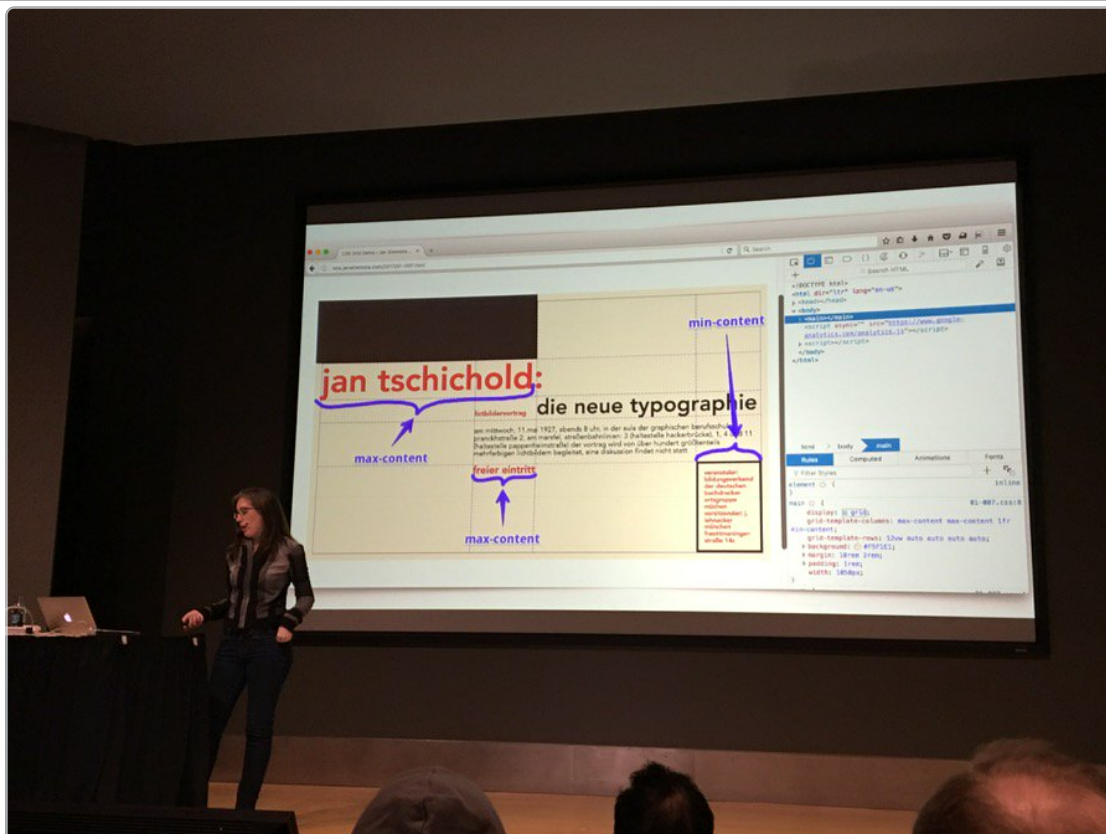@perpendicularme

Max-content defines the container by the length of the full content
Min content - by the length of the longest word #AEASEA

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Examples of max-content and min-content #aeasea

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What's an fr unit?
Right now we do a ton of algebra to figure out grid gutters and even then it's painful #AEASEA

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We generally throw bootstrap or whatever to not have to do the math #AEASEA

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"Now you don't have to use Boostrap, you can just use 'fr' units. (Computers are really good at math.)" @jensimmons #aeasea

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An FR unit allows us to say the gutters are 2em and the inbetween sections are 1 fr - fr stands for fraction #AEASEA

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Can set first column to 100px and the other columns to 1fr each and they'll squish accordingly #AEASEA

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In other words CSS Grid allows us to do a whole lot of "the computer will do the math" #AEASEA

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We can mix units or mix numbers of fractions #aeasea

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Articles with examples:markboulton.co.uk/journal/five-s…alistapart.com/article/conten…#AEASEA

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Content-out Layout

Grids serve well to divide up a predefined canvas and guide how content fits onto a page, but when designing for the web's fluid nature, we need

alistapart.com

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"Pixel perfect" is so completely over, even if the memo didn't get to everybody #AEASEA

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What happens when parts of the content/interface are missing or shorter/longer than the ideal? #AEASEA

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Minmax gives us the ability to say "size it between 40 characters and 65 characters" #AEASEA

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Flexibility - storyboard one moment, storyboard a different moment, then figure out what you can do #AEASEA

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Even the masters of the new tech don't know what can be done yet. Experiment #AEASEA

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Creativity: there is no single new way to design with grids #AEASEA

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There is no "download THE grid" #AEASEA

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Greg Whitworth
@gregwhitworth

"It's time to get creative." - @jensimmons #aeasea

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You can have some things that are static on a page and the rest will be super responsive and flexible #AEASEA

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You can make fixed-sized elements again, and then figure out how to build around them for all screens sizes #AEASEA

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Josh Vickerson
@joshvickerson

"It's definitely a time to play. It's definitely a time to learn." -
@jensimmons #aeasea

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Play and learn. layout.land is not yet up but you can sign up to get
email when it's done #AEASEA

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Jensimmons.com also has other talks she's done about layouts that
are worth watching #AEASEA

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Josh Vickerson
@joshvickerson

"I hope we all go figure out how to make layouts that really say
something." - @jensimmons #aeasea

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Zeldman
@zeldman

A giant list of links to resources for learning CSS Grid
#AEASEAjensimmons.com/post/feb-27-20…

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The Experimental Layout Lab of Jen Simmons
labs.jensimmons.com @jensimmons #aeasea

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