Perpendicular Angel Design

Organizing and simplifying, one illumination at a time

An Event Apart 2017: Design Beyond Our Devices by Ethan Marcotte

Posted on **April 5, 2017**

Ethan Marcotte was the final presenter on the first day of the conference, and his presentation was about the steps beyond responsive design. It covers his exploration into using patterns to drive design decisions, what the benefits of patterns and pattern libraries are, and how best to use them.

An Event Apart 2017 Design Beyond Our Devices by Ethan Marcotte (pdf in case twitter goes down.)

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In 2010 @beep introduced us to @RWD on this stage at this conference :) #AEASEA

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Visualization of 2 centuries of ocean journeys #aeasea

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Where are we going?

Understandable if we're afraid, mobile exploded & took us off guard #AEASEA

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Nobody can effectively point to where we're going #AEASEA

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One recent change we've done has been from page to patterns. Modular design principles #AEASEA

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This is a huge shift from how we used to think about web design. Grid-first design #AEASEA

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Now our work begins a level below the page, below the grid #AEASEA

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Trade the control in photoshop for a new kind of control: flexible grids flexible images media queries to build a network of content #AEASEA

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The patterns in our designs may have little responsive designs in themselves, to stitch together to build pages #AEASEA

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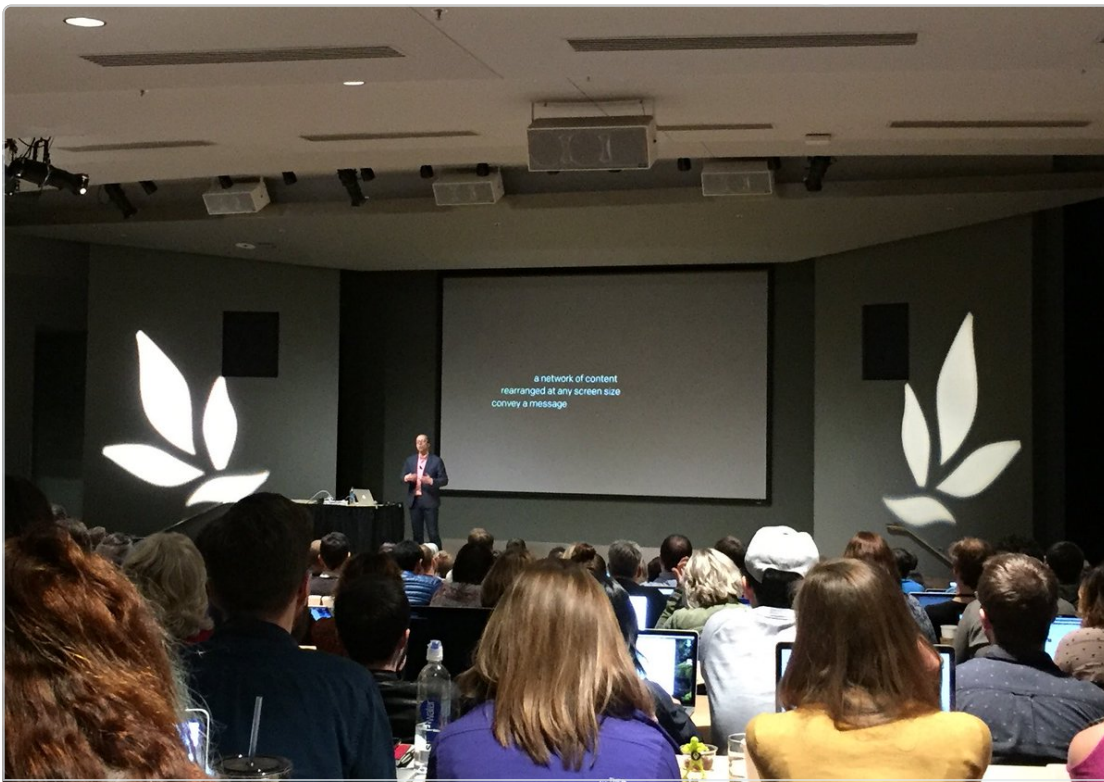**Anne Gibson**
@perpendicularme

Pattern-driven design is the biggest change in @beep's work, even bigger than @RWD #AEASEA

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kellydrodofsky
@KellyDrodofsky

"I thought I'd redesign some patterns...but patterns redesigned me." #aeasea

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The Toast - the-toast.net - relies on a small collection of patterns for thousands of chunks of content #AEASEA

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The Toast - A willing foe, and sea room.
A willing foe, and sea room.
the-toast.net

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"The teaser" - in its simplest is a headline with a link. often has an image. #AEASEA

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"I design patterns (small responsive designs themselves) that ultimately stitch together to create pages." @beep #aeasea

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From a structural standpoint all of these pieces are identical and have pieces added on depending on the design #AEASEA

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If we translated a design directly based onto its display, we might put code in order of display #AEASEA

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"What if someone doesn't browse the web like I do?" This question checks default assumptions & biases #AEASEA

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My view of encountering the web isn't representative of everyone's view of the web #AEASEA

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DESIGN THE
PRIORITY
NOT THE
LAYOUT

A Brave New
@abravenew

Excellent reminder from @beep to focus on priority before you focus on layout #aeasea

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If the most important piece is the headline, lead with that. If the comment count is least important end with it #AEASEA

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Once the markup structure is in place, mirror it in the HTML, then use CSS to visually rearrange with flexbox #AEASEA

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If a browser understands flexbox, move the comments to another location #AEASEA

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Build a baseline structure and layout, conditionally enhance it to the final refined design #AEASEA

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If the test relies on javascript, it's a bit fragile to use as a test. Feature queries @supports rules help us test w/o javascript #AEASEA

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"Support" doesn't mean "getting the same experience". (olookexactlythesameineverybrowser.com) #AEASEA

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Lead story, image, footer of related content. #AEASEA Visual design & Guardian html are in a different order using flexbox #AEASEA

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Guardian uses flex-direction row-reverse to put the image to the right of the content #AEASEA

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If Guardian user doesn't pass Javascript test, they still get a baseline foundational layout w/access for everyone #AEASEA
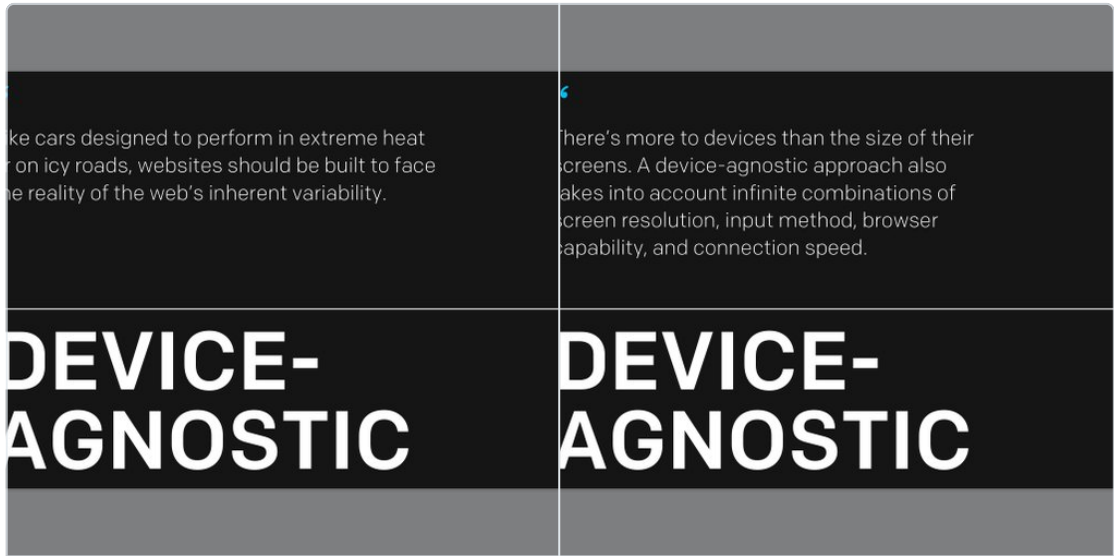
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A well-crafted responsive design has to be device-agnostic by default. #AEASEA

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ke cars designed to perform in extreme heat
on icy roads, websites should be built to face
e reality of the web's inherent variability.

There's more to devices than the size of their
screens. A device-agnostic approach also
akes into account infinite combinations of
screen resolution, input method, browser
apability, and connection speed.

DEVICE-
AGNOSTIC

DEVICE-
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Trent Walton talks about how we have to be prepared for infinite and changing design #AEASEA

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Non-ideal net and browsing experiences: we need to talk about them! #AEASEA

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3 most common words on a responsive design project are mobile, tablet, and desktop… which are useless #AEASEA

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Everyone has a slightly different definition of "mobile". But specific design conditions we should talk about #AEASEA

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Input method, screen size, network speed, network conditions… these are conditions and features, not devices. Talk about them. #AEASEA

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"Mobile" might mean small screen, but doesn't mean "slow" or "unreliable" necessarily. Desktops aren't necessarily fast. #AEASEA

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Commuters using 3G on the train may have a wide screen but slow and spotty connection #AEASEA

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Ensure something usable is there for everyone - a single-column mobile-friendly layout. Design for the non-ideal #AEASEA

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Luke Wroblewski
@lukew

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input? it's complicated. #aeasea

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Text-heavy websites might be the easiest, but this works for transactional interfaces #AEASEA

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A not-totally-ideal baseline experience will still give access that can be improved #AEASEA

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Device-agnostic design patterns should be as responsive *and* as resilient as possible #AEASEA

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The dirty little secret about responsive design is that it's not the hard part anymore. #AEASEA

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The biggest challenge that we face is documenting and communicating how, why, and when we do what we do for responsive design #AEASEA

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Starbucks launched a responsive redesign *and* publicly launched their style guide #AEASEA

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Ushahidi provides a pattern library online used globally #AEASEA

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A style guide or pattern library has become the de facto artifact to come out of a responsive redesign #AEASEA

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Benefits
Central shared repository of front-end patterns and code
Bridges "the collaboration gap" between design & dev#AEASEA

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Helps onboarding new team members with the design language
Helps facilitate in-browser design, review, and testing#AEASEA

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How to build a style guide
Create a visual inventory
Pattern naming and organizing
Translating inventory into html and CSS #AEASEA

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1. Visual inventory. Either when start or near end, find all the unique patterns that are in the site. #AEASEA

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Translate that inventory into HTML and CSS #AEASEA

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Automate as much as you can #AEASEA

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Styleguide by Devbridge rely on comments in the code to identify patterns #AEASEA

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Fractal - by Clearleft - component-first design process. Geared toward integrating style guides into sites & products #AEASEA

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Airbnb "airshots" lets them work in-house to automate style guides #AEASEA

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A List Apart has a great article: alistapart.com/blog/post/styl…
#AEASEA

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Style Guide Generator Roundup

Ready to use a style guide generator for your next project? Susan Robertson did the research and shares a number of options to try out, depending on

alistapart.com

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Clear and sensible naming. Modularity requires significant effort and commitment. Start with language, not interfaces #AEASEA

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Alla's referenced article: alistapart.com/article/langua… #AEASEA

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The Language of Modular Design

Teams who want to adopt a modular design approach should start with a shared vocabulary, emphasizes author Alla Kholmatova.

alistapart.com

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Polynesian tradition for navigation uses a star compass. #AEASEA

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The center of the compass is the boat, and the edges are the stars. The chant was how they learned #AEASEA

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Shared and common language in a chant, but it's the most consistent method to learn possible. #AEASEA

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Internalizing the sky lets them make decisions when they're not staring at the star compass #AEASEA

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Challenges: when to reuse, how to make patterns distinct, how to avoid duplication… naming & language #AEASEA

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(Yes this means you need to information architect your style guides just like you information architect the output of them) #AEASEA

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Cobbler's kids have no shoes, and style guides often get neglected information architecture.

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Atomic Design by Brad Frost is a great metaphor for style guides. Atoms to molecules to organisms #AEASEA

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When we put it into practice, the atomic design language can make things muddy #AEASEA

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David Watson
@caughtexception

"There are only two hard things in Computer Science: cache invalidation and naming things." Shared vocabulary and language matters. #aeasea

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Is a search box that expands an atom? No… but it's not a full page layout. Is it a molecule or an organism? #AEASEA

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This isn't a life-threatening issue whether a complex component is a molecule or an organism. But it's a problem #AEASEA

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A group glossary for a project may be an answer #AEASEA

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The naming of components can interfere with the team's ability to use it. Success or failure hinges on the words used #AEASEA

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Before you commit to any metaphor ensure everyone is using it the same way - clarity and agreement #AEASEA

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kellydrodofsky
@KellyDrodofsky

"A style guide's success or failure hinges on the words we use to talk about it." Love this! @beep #AEASEA

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It is great to use language and meaningful to your organization and the users of the pattern library #AEASEA

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An effective name determines how it will be used and ensures it's used consistently #AEASEA

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Charlotte Jackson's article alistapart.com/article/from-p… will help empower the team to name patterns #AEASEA

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From Pages to Patterns: An Exercise for Every…
Get away from the screen! Break out the paper and scissors! Charlotte Jackson shares an exercise for developing pattern thinking.
alistapart.com

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A collaborative review can identify conflicts and potential replacements. Are two patterns the same thing? Should they be merged? #AEASEA

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A good styleguide focuses on the content and functionality the patterns support #AEASEA

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From content model to design pattern - each type of article, what was required to present it #AEASEA

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When it came time to name and structure the patterns, it used the content model language, which the client knew #AEASEA

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Ultimate goal: integrate the design language into the company culture.#AEASEA

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From pages to patterns to principles; principles help us design things we haven't even invented yet #AEASEA

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How Vox judges a pattern #aeasea

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Design principles push to a design system, which gives us a compass for navigating wherever we're going next #AEASEA

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Zeldman
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"The web doesn't evolve in a straight line. We can't assume it will be viewed on better & better devices by people like us." @beep #AEASEA

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Our industry's definition of "smartphones" is way too narrow. Look at how Syrian refugees use phones #AEASEA

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Cheaper low-powered devices are going to be coming on line for the "next billion" users #AEASEA

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Create well-formed design principles and device-agnostic site so everything we have is accessible to as many as possible #AEASEA

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Sketch notes by Krystal Higgins

Notes by Luke Wroblewski

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