

Identity and Business System for Carly Jean Photography

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Art and Design Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Fine Arts

by

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Abstract

This report contains all information regarding the research, creation, and refinement of a business system and website for a photographer. The first part of the report explains the background context and ideation of the design problem. The next part goes through the development of each part of the identity system, and how my goals were achieved. The rest of the report is a summary of my process and my experience in doing this project.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Senior Project is a chance for students to explore a topic of their liking and experience the need for self-motivation and time management required to complete it on time. I chose to create an identity system and a portfolio website for my sister, Carly, and her budding photography business. My topic was chosen because I wanted to have a stronger identity piece for my portfolio (as my current identity works are only mediocre), to give me more experience in web design and coding, and to help my extremely talented sister get a head-start for her business endeavors, as she is slowly building a clientele.

As a photographer, it is important that Carly stand out amongst her peers and fellow professionals—not only within the scope of her photographic works but also as a brand. Gaining business within her personal network or posting ads on the internet are one thing, but having a consistent business system and public presence are, what I believe, what will take her to the next level professionally. The purposes of this project, other than having a public presence, are to emphasize Carly's talent, and ultimately gain her clients. The only limitations I have imposed are that of budget: my goal was not to exceed \$200, which is to cover printing costs of the business system elements—contract forms, model releases, and invoice sheets— and the web domain name and server space.

Glossary of Terms

Identity: Assumes business and graphic identity. Includes all of the components of the brand that work together to create the visual signature, look and feel of the business, including the logo, name, color palette, etc.

Business System: A collection of business collateral pieces of the same identity, including but not limited to: a logo or mark, business card, invoice sheet, contract forms, and model release

Type: refers to any text element in a design

Typeface/face: a set of one or more fonts designed with stylistic unity

Typography: the art, technique, and craft of handling type in its arrangement, design, or modification

Serif: semi-structural details on the ends of some of the strokes of letterforms (example serif font: Times New Roman)

Sans-serif: a typeface in which characters have no serifs (example sans-serif font: Helvetica)

Descender: The stroke that extends below the baseline of a letterform (examples of letters with descenders: g, p, q, y)

Bracketed Serif: A serif typeface in which the transition from the stem stroke to the serif stroke is a fluid curve. Serif faces are designed with different degrees of bracketing

Font-Family: A set of typefaces with similar characteristics (example: the Helvetica font-family includes Helvetica Regular, Helvetica Italic, and Helvetica Bold)

Small-caps: small capital letters that are the same height as lowercase letters in a given typeface

Script: a typeface with fluid strokes, much like cursive handwriting

Adobe Illustrator: A vector graphic editing program

Live Trace: a tracing tool within Adobe Illustrator that converts raster or bitmap images into vector based images

Weight (font): the thickness of the letterforms (example: a heavy font weight is “bold”)

Positive/Negative: space that is filled with elements (positive) vs. background area (negative)

Flush-left: type set to line up on the left side

DeviantArt: online artist portfolio community where users can upload artistic works and receive feedback

Craigslist: a website where users post classified-type ads

Chapter II

Review of Research

The business identity for a photographer (as with any profession) has the opportunity to make a great first impression on a potential client, even before they review the photographer's work. If the identity is attractive and compelling, it will lure the potential client in to review the photographer's work and make possible contact, and vice versa if the identity is not attractive and compelling. Not only that, but the identity must separate itself from others to show what makes this particular photography business unique. It is for that reason that it is very important to create the identity that speaks of the nature of the photographer in the design alone. The identity should be a representation of the business it corresponds to, so that when it stands alone it will convey a message without explanation.

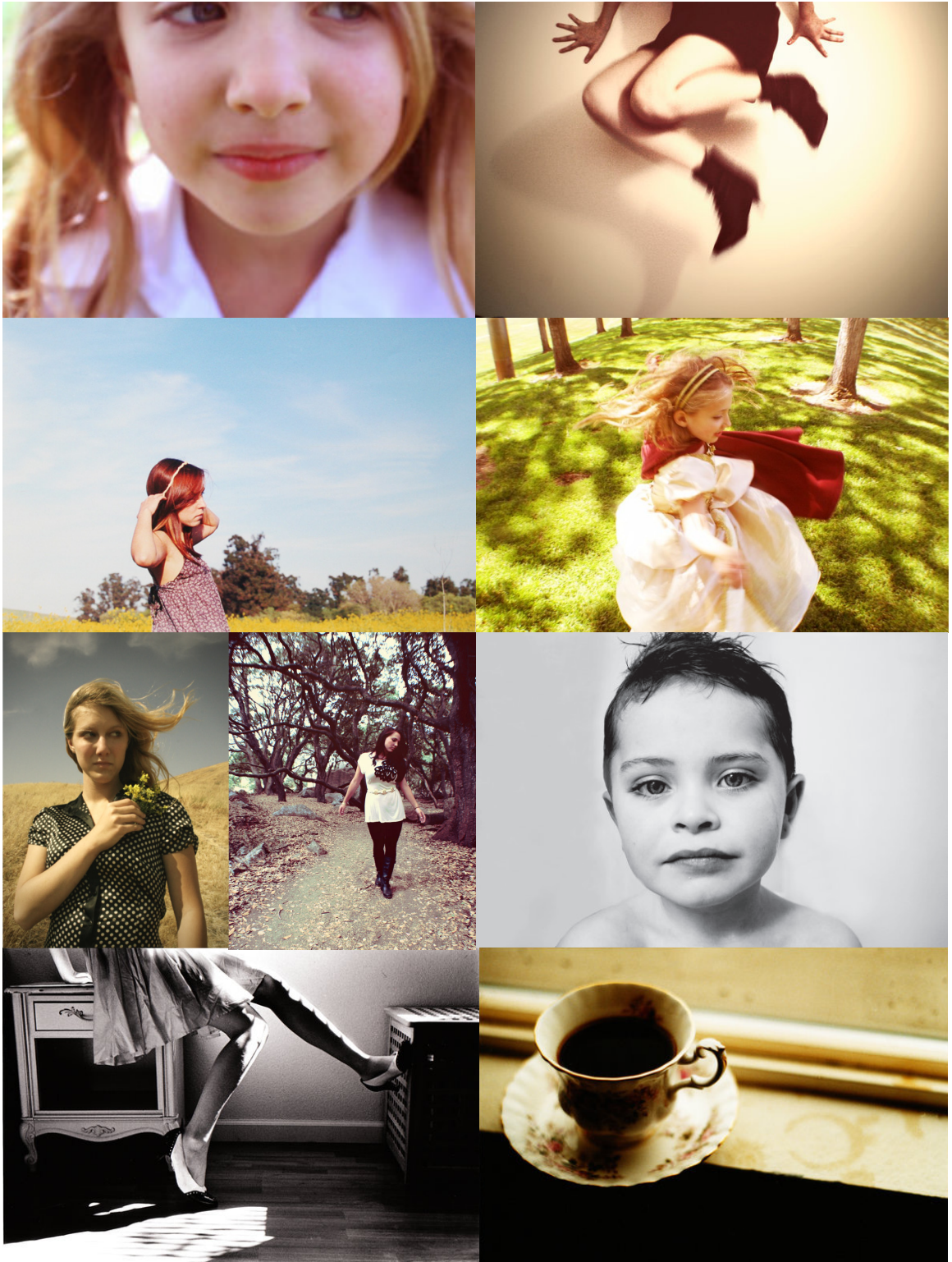
When researching other photographer's logos (*Figure 1a*), it was surprising to me just how many logos looked almost exactly the same. Most seemed to be just the photographer's name in nice type, a name with decorative elements around it, or something to do with a camera or its parts. Very few logos had a creative symbol incorporated, so I knew that Carly's logo had to be a unique design so it would be a distinctive mark.

Figure 1a: Examples of other photographer's Logos



Carly's photographs (*Figure 2a*) are beautiful in a way that is timeless. She avoids over-idealized, over-glamorized, pose-y shots. She prefers more candid, natural moments that convey emotion. She loves old cameras, often brings antique props to use in her photo-shoots, and likes to edit her photos in a way that gives them a sense of nostalgia. She rarely uses artificial lighting and prefers to shoot outdoors in forests, fields, and other places where there is open nature. When asked what key things she wanted to have her identity say, she replied, "Something artistic, feminine, vintage or old fashioned, and creative."

Figure 2a: Examples of Carly's Photographic Works



All of these things had to be represented in her identity without words. I began thinking about things that would relate to photography but still have some sense of nostalgia or antiquity. I began by sketching out old cameras, Polaroid prints, and different ways of drawing her name and initials (*Figure 3a-d*). Though these ideas were alright, they were a bit cliché and didn't say enough about Carly as a photographer.

I then began to think about photographs themselves and what they mean to people and why they hire photographers in the first place: to preserve memories, to have moments captured forever, to keep precious bits of history in a tangible form, or for documentation purposes. Thinking about this led me to sketch picture frames (*Figure 3d*)—where the most important photographs are preserved. I began researching different types of frames when I stumbled upon a photo of a locket. I liked the idea of a locket because, much like a photo frame, it captures and holds a memory in its photograph, but it is an even more precious keepsake item. The image of a locket would convey a sense of antiquity because they are perceived as being old-fashioned. It would also give the mark some feminine flair, which is another aspect Carly wanted to portray. The locket idea was the foundation for all further design decisions.

I then compiled a mood board (*Figure 4*), a collection of inspirational designs and photographs that will inform my methodology and direction. Some of these are Carly's photographs, but most have been found on graphic design blogs or online portfolios. Having a mood board is helpful because it gives the infinite arena of possible solutions some focus as to the look and feel that is to be achieved in a design solution. What I was looking for in these images are color palette, style, type treatments, textures, feelings, and patterns, among other things.

Figure 4: Mood Board



Figure 4 Continued

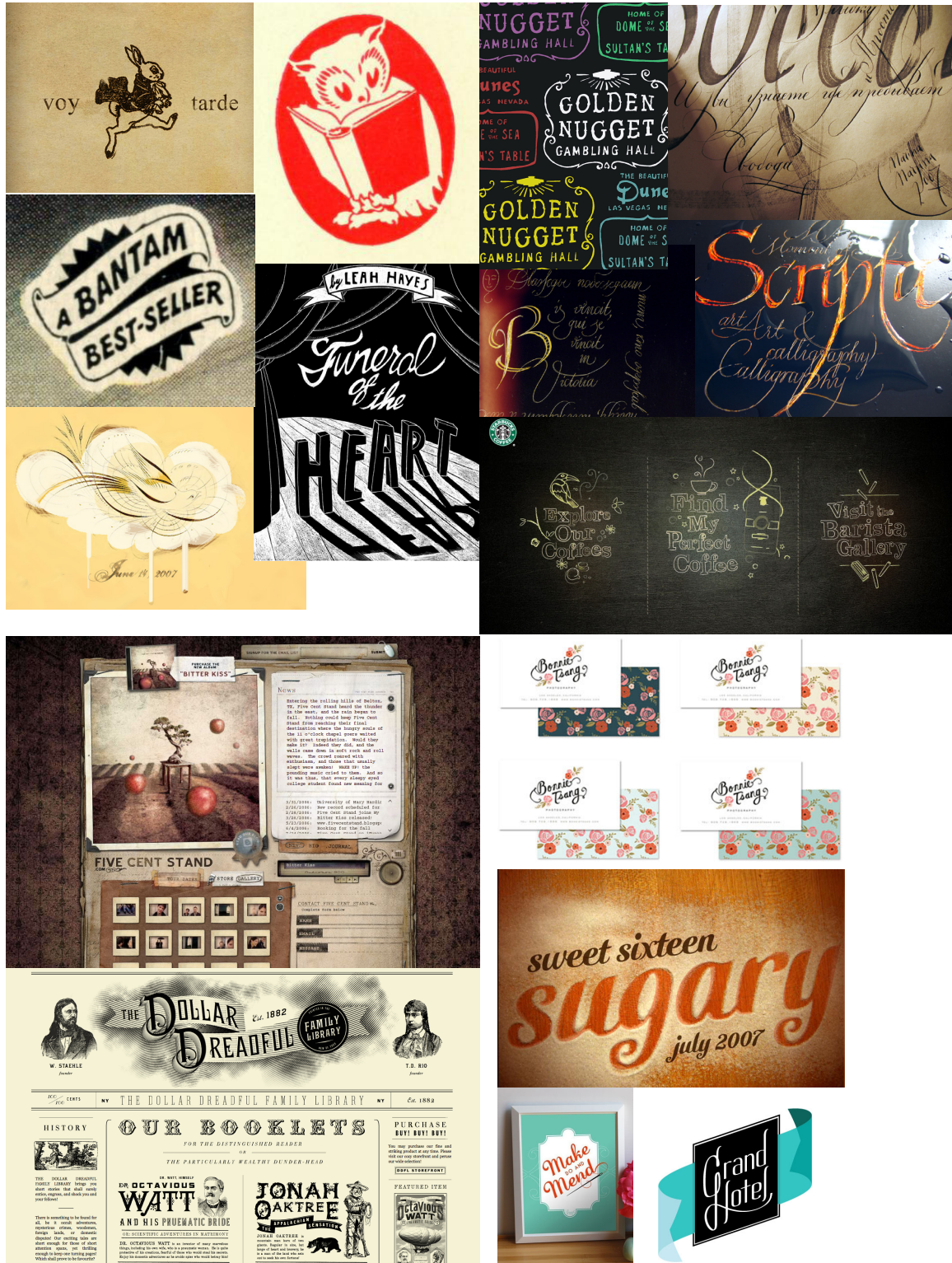
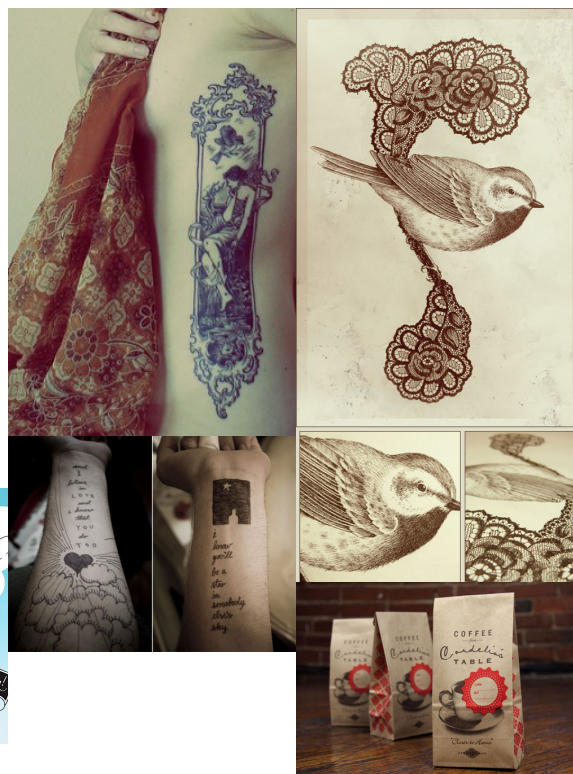
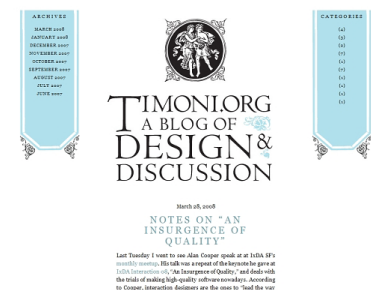
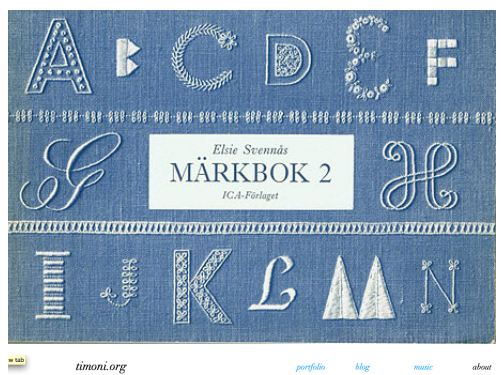


Figure 4 Continued



Chapter III

Procedures and Results

The Logo and Type Treatment

My initial locket sketches (*Figure 5a-c*), as rough as they were, showed some promise. I liked playing with the idea of having the logo appear sketchy and hand-drawn. Much like her photography, a hand-drawn feel to the logo would portray the sense of antiquity and uniqueness I was going for. It would add a personal touch as well. I created a few variations of the sketch along with some hand-drawn type for her name. I did some type experimentation with various fonts to see what would work best for the idea.

Though I felt confident in my idea, there was much more exploration needed in terms of typography and other ways of rendering the locket. I had to study more locket styles and play around with different drawing utensils to get the effect that would work best as a logo.

The initial sketches were much too cutesy and elementary—not mature enough for a professional. They were also far too complex; they did not hold up when enlarged and when they were shrunk down all of the detail was lost. “Carly Jean” written in the tiny space inside the locket was not going to be read if the logo had to be set at an inch high. A good logo must be simple enough to be read at very small sizes (for example, on a business card), but must also hold up when enlarged.

The type was another issue I had to tackle. Though I had done some studies of typefaces, I had not done nearly enough. Most of what I had studied were hand-drawn looking

Figure 5a-c: Original Locket Sketches

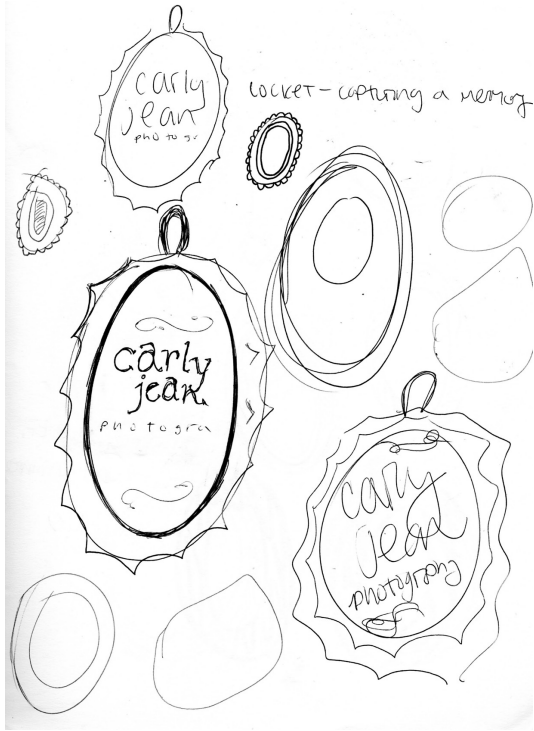


Figure 5a



Figure 5b



Figure 5c

typefaces, and almost no classic looking serifs. To elevate the maturity and legitimacy level of the mark, I needed to find a serif face that would play into the antique locket feel without overpowering it but still read as important.

Media experimentation for the locket drawings (Figure 6a-d) did not prove to be the answer I was hoping for. I tried using a brush-tipped marker (*Figure 6a*), which gave the locket a more contemporary, less antiquated look, as did the felt-tipped marker (*Figure 6c*). I used an ink pen (*Figure 6b*), which was getting closer to what I wanted but was too scratchy looking and not very forgiving. The China marker studies ended up looking like a child's crayon drawing. I liked the pencil sketches (*Figure 6d*) but they turned out much too detailed and “quick-sketch” looking—not refined at all.

Figure 6a-d: Media Explorations



Figure 6a

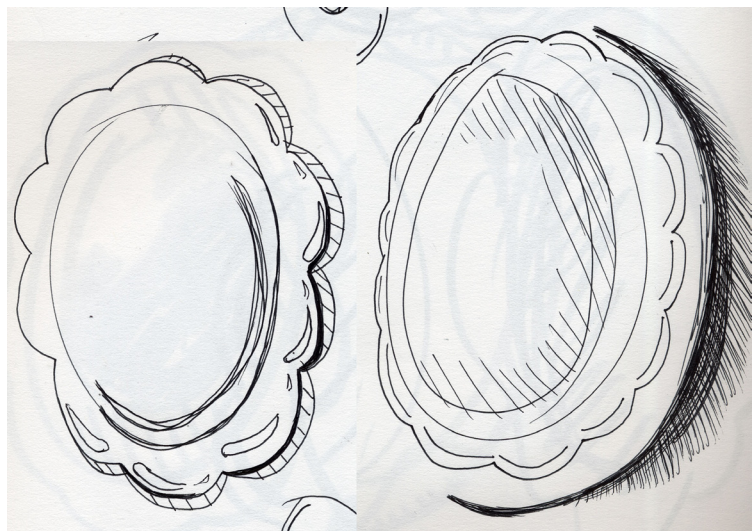


Figure 6b



Figure 6c

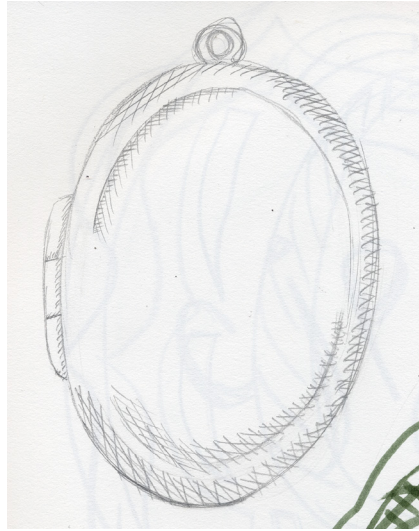


Figure 6d

What I did learn through these studies, however, was that a simpler locket shape would work best. A simple locket frame would look classic, the most recognizable, and would still allow for some detailing on the inside rim.

Finding the right typeface took a lot more time and care than I thought it would. I originally went through the font library on the Art and Design Department server (about 8,000 fonts), and wrote a two-page list of the font families that I thought might work. From there I digitally comped up a locket shape and paired each typeface with one (*Figure 7a-c*).

I realized that even though “Carly Jean” was not going to fit in the logo, “CJ” would. Not only was I studying “Carly Jean Photography” in each typeface, but I had to pay close attention to how the letters “C” and “J” might fit together and fit into the oval shape of the locket. I discovered that there were a lot of subtleties that each letter brought that changed the whole dynamic of the monogram. For example, the roundness of the “C”, the length of

the descender of the “J” and how far it extended into the oval, how high the dot above the “J” went, whether the serif was bracketed or not, etc. I also wanted “PHOTOGRAPHY” to be underneath “Carly Jean,” and found that it looked best if the font family had a small caps font. Many of the typefaces I liked didn’t have a small-caps version, which helped me to narrow down my choices.

Figure 7a-c: Type Studies

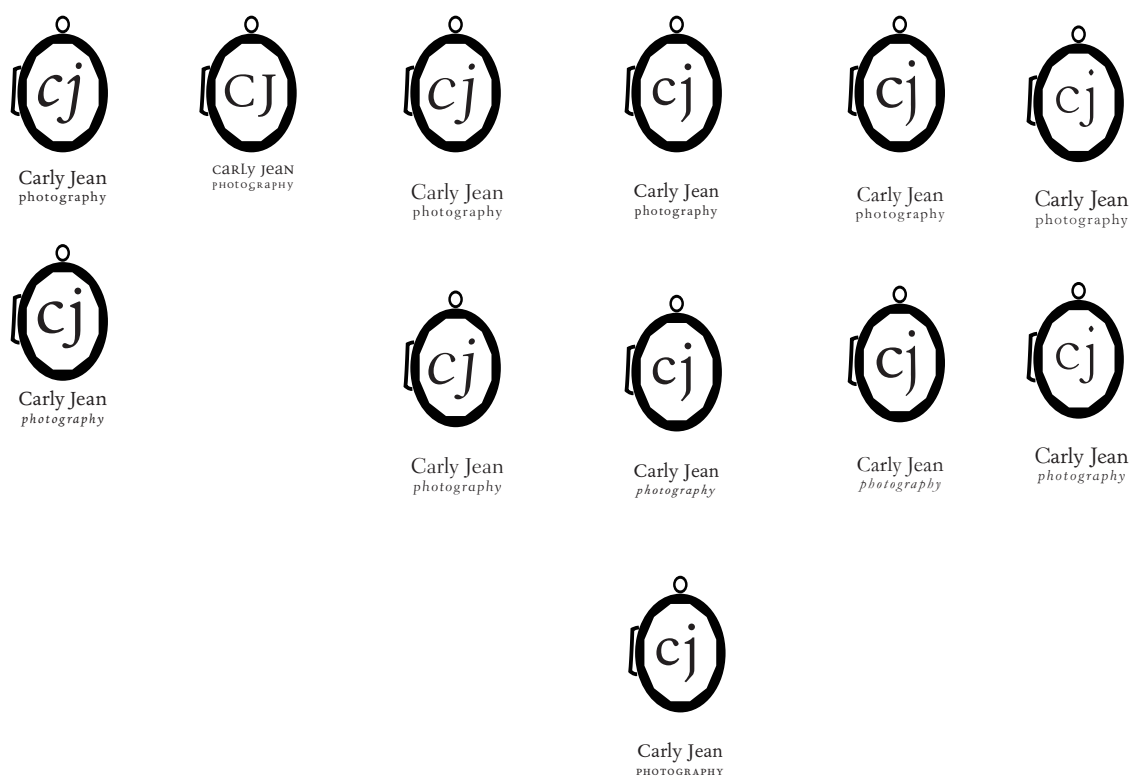


Figure 7a

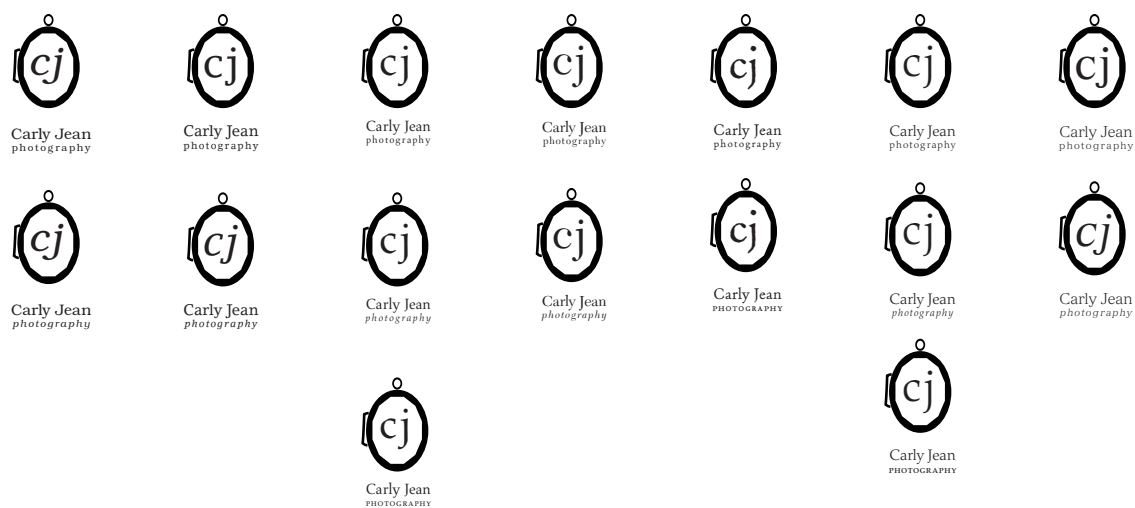


Figure 7b

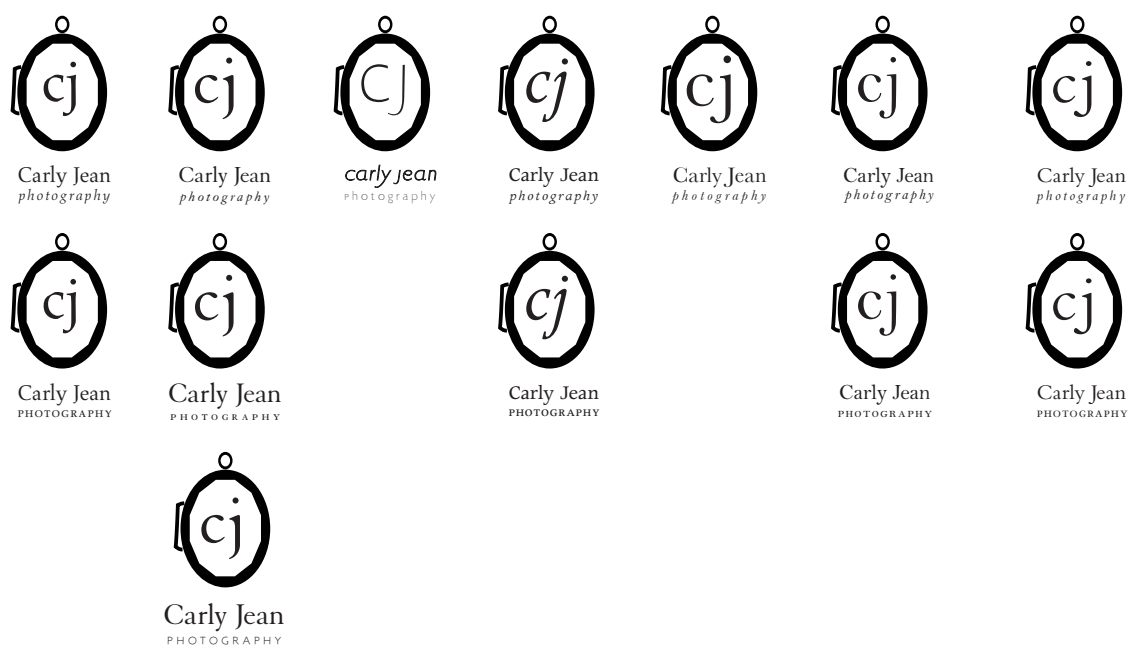
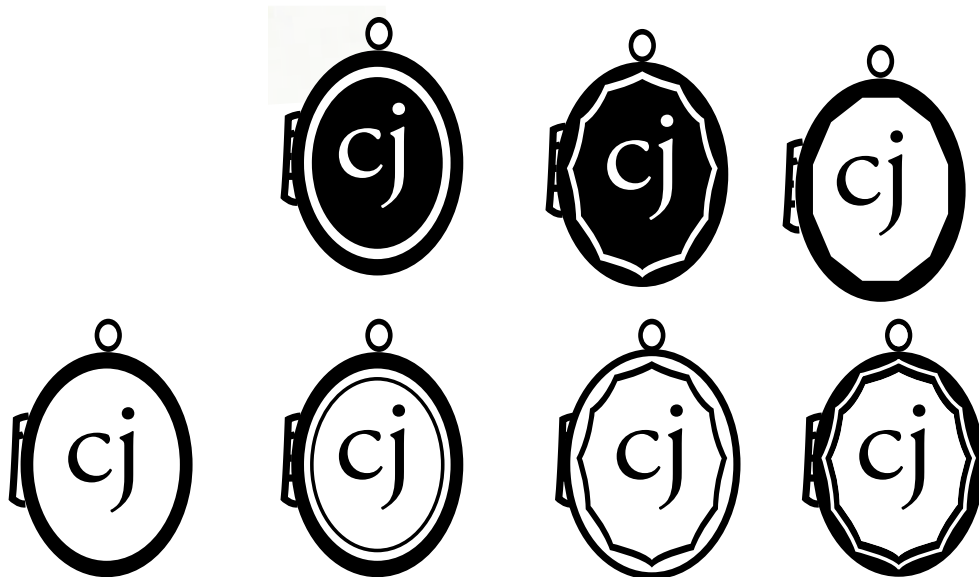


Figure 7c

After reviewing all of the typefaces I originally chose to consider with Carly, we were able to eliminate more after each round of discussion. I went from having 80 font-families, to about 9, then 6, when I finally settled on the typeface “Granjon” for “Carly Jean.”

Now that I had the type mostly figured out, I went back to studying locket shapes. I found it was easier to study locket shapes and different detailing digitally (*Figure 8*), since a locket is a symmetrical shape and to hand-sketch many variations would require a lot of skill and precision. I played with lines within the locket frame, different ways of framing the “CJ” space, adding a hinge on the side of the locket, and playing with strictly oval shapes or polygonal ones. I found that I liked the simple oval shape best for the frame, but wasn’t yet sure about the inside.

Figure 8: Locket shape digital experimentation



My next experimental phase was spent on the light table. I printed out several different locket forms that I digitally composed, and traced over them on a new sheet with a pen (Figure 9). This would ensure a more accurate sketch, as well as the hand-drawn look I wanted to achieve.

Figure 9: Light table tracings of locket shapes



Now throughout this process I had been receiving feedback from my Senior Project Advisor, Charmaine Martinez. One of her critiques at this point was that the “CJ” monogram was too simple a configuration and that it could be explored and become much stronger on its own. She also suggested using a sans-serif typeface for “PHOTOGRAPHY” to contrast with the serified “Carly Jean.” She was worried that the logo would be too cutesy and precious. My next order of business was to explore new typefaces for the monogram.

I spent more time looking for script fonts that might work for the monogram. This proved to be very difficult because of the space they were put in, the illegibility of the letters together, and illegibility in having a script face with single letters outside of the context of a full word. There were a few configurations I found that could have worked, but they didn’t seem to flow with the rest of the logo like I’d hoped.

Figure 10: Script font monogram studies



Figure 10: Continued



I decided I would try to hand-draw the “CJ” instead, as it would give me total control over the legibility and how the monogram interacted with the frame. Again, I played with different pens to get a range of looks for the monogram. I was able to draw a few solutions that I liked better than the script font configurations from before.

Figure 11: Hand-drawn monogram studies

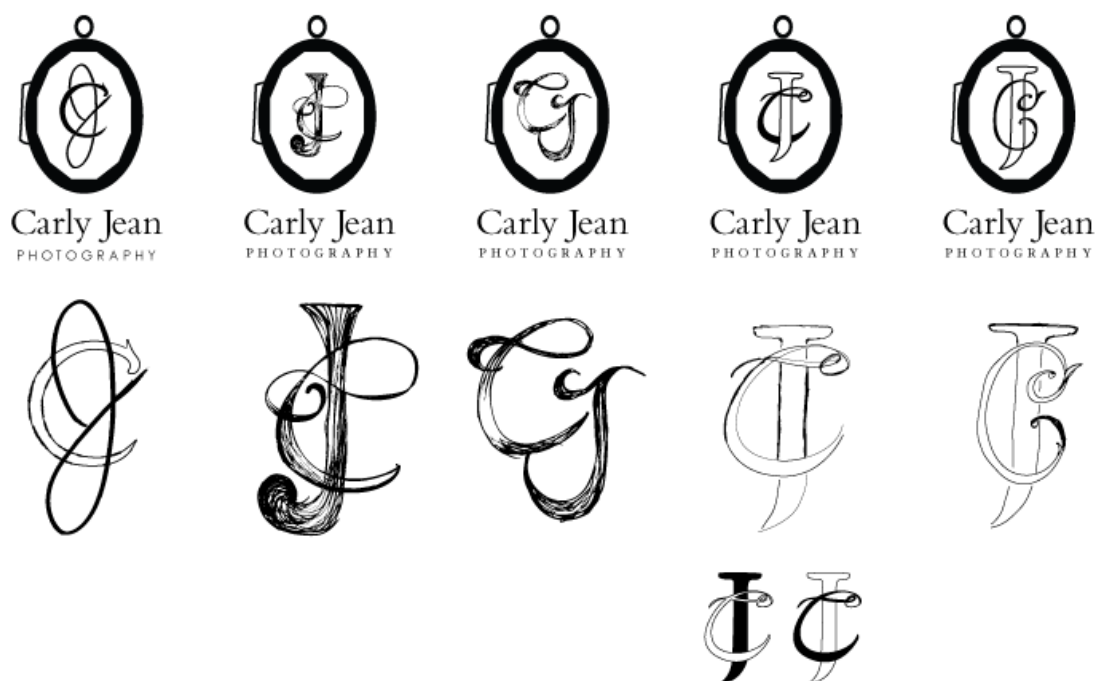


Figure 11 Continued

There was one “CJ” configuration that worked particularly well, and I set out to refine the shapes. I had a moment of realization that the medium I work best with is a regular black ballpoint pen. After years and years of doodling in the margins of my notebooks, I’ve gotten to be quite skilled with drawing and shading with this simple tool. I went back to the light table, and traced the locket shape and my original “CJ” configuration with an elegant shaded technique (*Figure 12a*). I drew a few versions of these, some with “CJ” drawn on top of each other and some with the letters separated. From there, I was able to scan my drawings and play with placement of the letters and monogram until I had it right (*Figure 12b*).

Figure 12a-b: Final monogram sketches and “C” “J” letter placements



Figure 12a

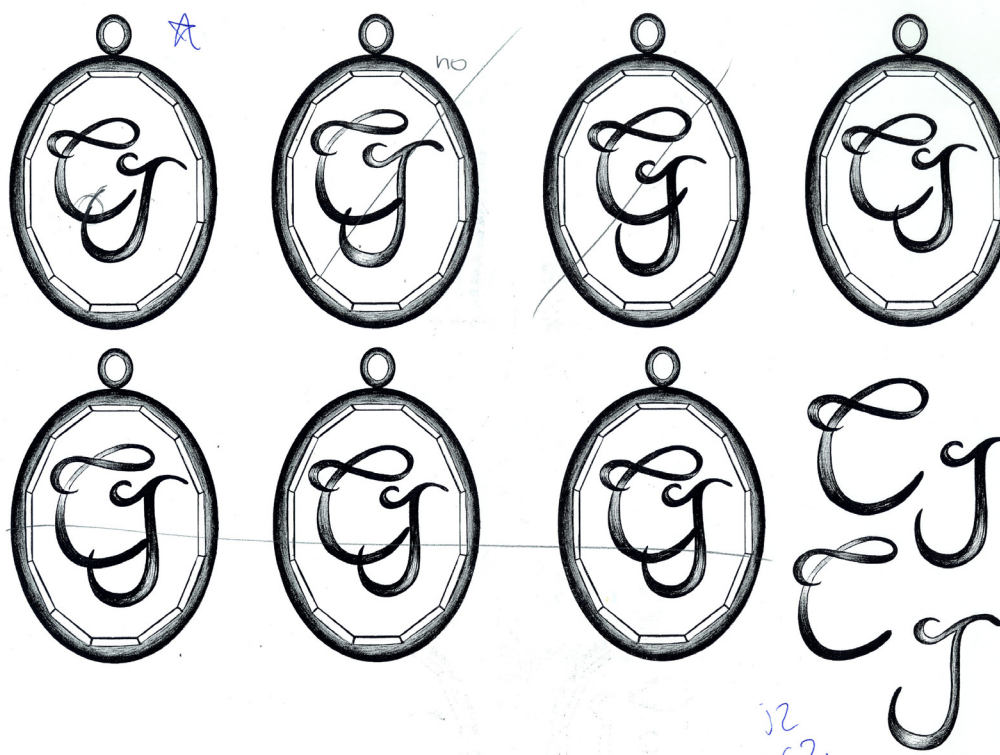


Figure 12b

I finally had a locket symbol that worked well for Carly's logo, and still had the hand-drawn look I wanted. However, since the logo was created from a scanned drawing, I had to convert it to a digital shape in order to resize it easily, colorize it if needed, and easily manipulate it to use it in all of its applications. I took my drawing into Adobe Illustrator and tried different live trace settings to see how I could best preserve my drawing and make it seem as if it wasn't digital (*Figure 13*). After printing several of the live trace results out, I was able to choose the one that most closely matched the original drawing. At last I had my symbol! I also played with a few sans-serif faces for "PHOTOGRAPHY" and settled on Century Gothic, which looked nice with "Carly Jean" in Granjon and also had the proper weight. Finally, the basis for the business system was complete (*Figure 14*).

Figure 13: Live trace studies

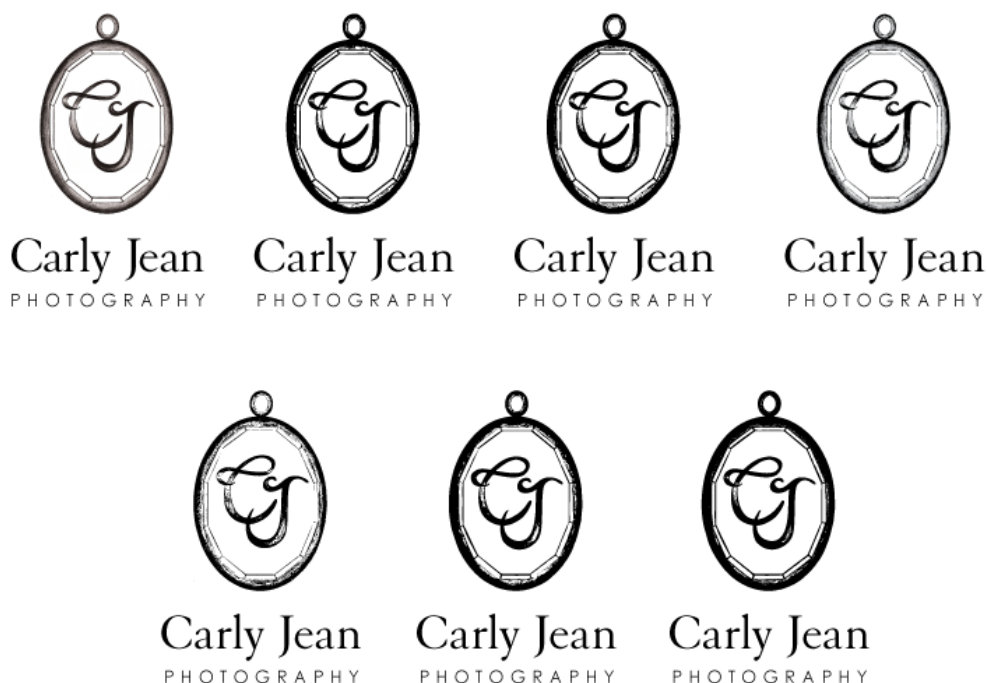


Figure 14: Final logo



The Color Palette

Color has such a large impact on design. It affects the overall mood, can play into the visual hierarchy, and can either help or hurt the elements and their interaction. Choosing a color palette for a photographer's identity in particular comes with specific concerns. Since I knew that the colors I used were going to be applied on the portfolio website, they had to be compatible and complimentary to Carly's photographs. The colors could not distract or take attention from the photographs, but rather had to emphasize and complement them. Since not all of the photographs are similar in color or dynamic, the color palette had to be neutral enough to allow for differences and variety.

I began to first look to the mood boards I compiled for color inspiration. I was able to pull from them several color collections that worked well together and could possibly work for the system (*Figure 15a*). I asked for Carly's input on colors she liked and felt best represented her. She was able to immediately eliminate some for being too bright and cheery—far from the antique, Victorian appeal we wanted to aim for.

We both agreed that a deep grey-purple scheme (*Figure 15b*) would be appropriate. It was feminine, vintage-looking, and gave a sense of antiquity and validity, yet still was neutral enough to pair with photographs nicely. Most photographers' websites use black or white as a background to their images. Having a bit of color would emphasize Carly's brand as well as give a unique look to her business system and webpage.

Figure 15a-b: Color palettes



Figure 15a



Figure 15b

The Pattern

Creating a pattern would add some visual interest to the business system and could be used in many applications, like the business cards and the website. I found that in order to be successful, a pattern must have a good positive and negative balance. If the pattern's elements are too close together, the individual pieces get crowded together and it all becomes a mess.

I wanted to incorporate part of the symbol into the pattern. I started by using the “CJ” monogram along with some flourish elements in various configurations.

Figure 16: Pattern studies

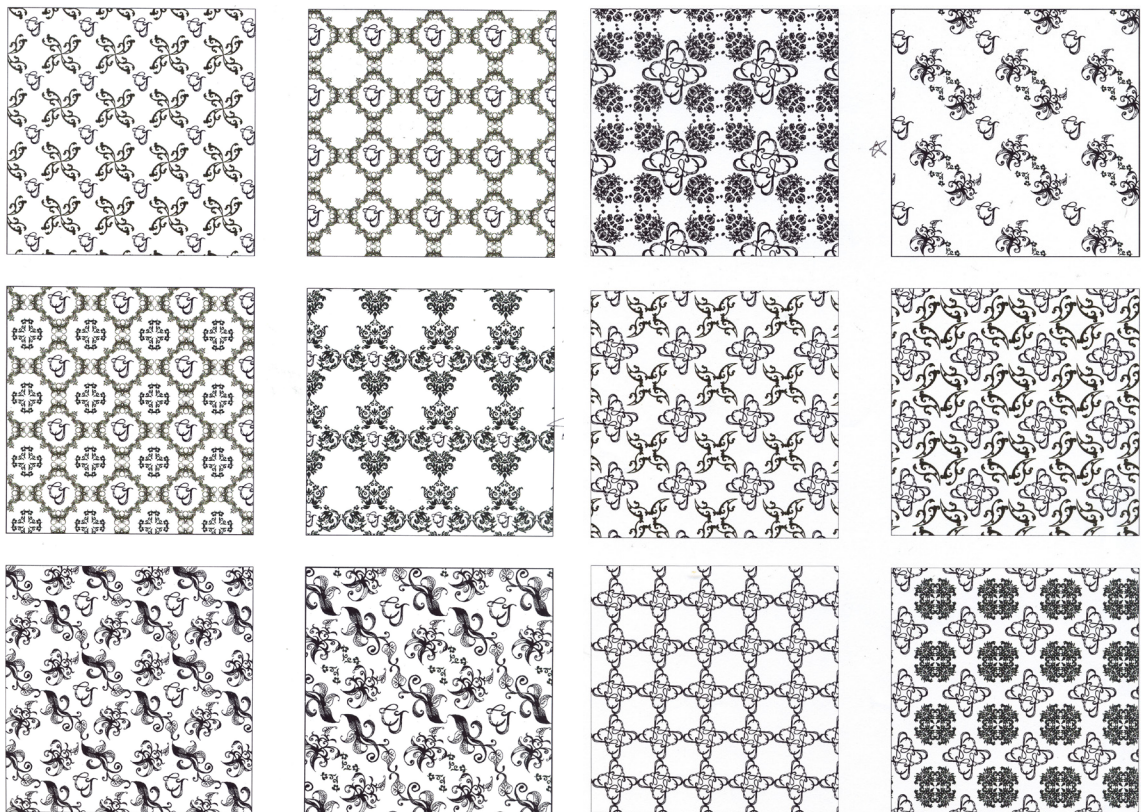




Figure 16 continued

I liked that the “CJ” was included, but unfortunately in the context of a pattern it became a bit hard to read and got lost. I didn’t like how it wasn’t standing out and that some of the patterns began to look too stripey or too checkered-looking. I also found that when the elements got too small they lost all of the detail. Overall these patterns were far too busy and compacted. I needed to explore simpler patterns that didn’t include the “CJ” monogram.

I ended up taking one of the Victorian flourish shapes I had used in a pattern study and printing several of them on paper to trace over the light table like I had done with the symbol (*Figure 17*). This would ensure that the style of the symbol was translated into the pattern, even if I wasn’t able to include the actual elements. The flourish I used was one of the simpler shapes I had been studying, allowing me to simplify the pattern.

Figure 17: Hand-drawn flourish element for pattern



Once I settled on a pattern design, I had to implement the color palette in a way that would give the positive and negative elements the right amount of contrast (*Figure 18*). I wanted the flourishes to pop off of the background, but not so much that it would overpower anything else that might be in juxtaposition with it in the business system.

Figure 18: Final pattern design



The Business Card

The business card was where everything I had done up to that point would come together. It was important to take special care in designing the business card because if Carly were to give them to prospective clients, or people who would deliver them to prospective clients, they have to give the right first impression, and compel these people to contact Carly or visit her website. In many ways a businesses card is the first way a business makes sales, and for photography there is no exception. I wanted the card to look dignified but still infuse a sense of Carly's personality and style, which would reflect on the quality of her work.

I comped up several layouts using the logo, Carly's contact information, and the pattern. I found that the vertical layouts worked better since the symbol itself required more vertical space to balance it out than horizontal space. I thought I liked the one with stripes of pattern on each side, but when I printed this one out, it made the card seem too narrow and it needed more room. I ultimately went with a plain front with only the logo and contact information on one side, and the pattern on the back. The design was simple but classy, with just a bit of ornament and a luxurious feel.

Figure 19: Business card layout studies

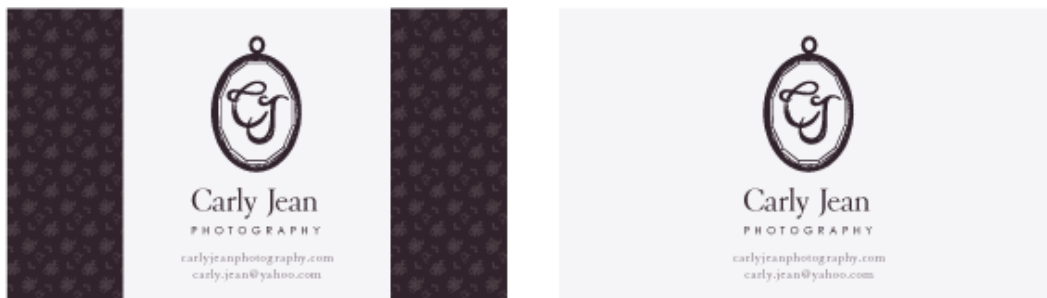


Figure 19 continued



I ordered 500 heavyweight matte business cards from PSPrint.com, which luckily was having a 60% off sale for business card printing at the time (*Figure 20*). I was able to order rush delivery since I had extra room in the budget and time was getting short. The total cost of the printing and delivering cards came to \$62.50. Not bad! The cards were delivered two days after I ordered them, just in time for the senior project deadline. It was a risk ordering 500 business cards without having the printing company send a proof print so I could be assured they would come out exactly as I ordered, but I had worked with PSprint.com before and knew their quality and customer service was top-notch. I also knew that they frequently had great sales, and in this case, their sale helped me greatly.

Figure 20: Final printed business cards



The Business System

Carly needed a business system that incorporated her brand. I wanted her contract sheets, invoice papers, and model releases to be elegant, simple, sophisticated, and reflect the attitude of her business card and website. I used center alignment for the logo on top, and the rest of the information flush-left.

The designs mostly focus on having nice type, clean lines, and simple layouts (*Figure 21*). They are cost effective because they can be printed in black and white, in case these forms are to be emailed to clients and printed. They can also be nicely printed with the type in the deep grey-purple color on a heavier paper to add more elegance.

Figure 21: Final printed business system

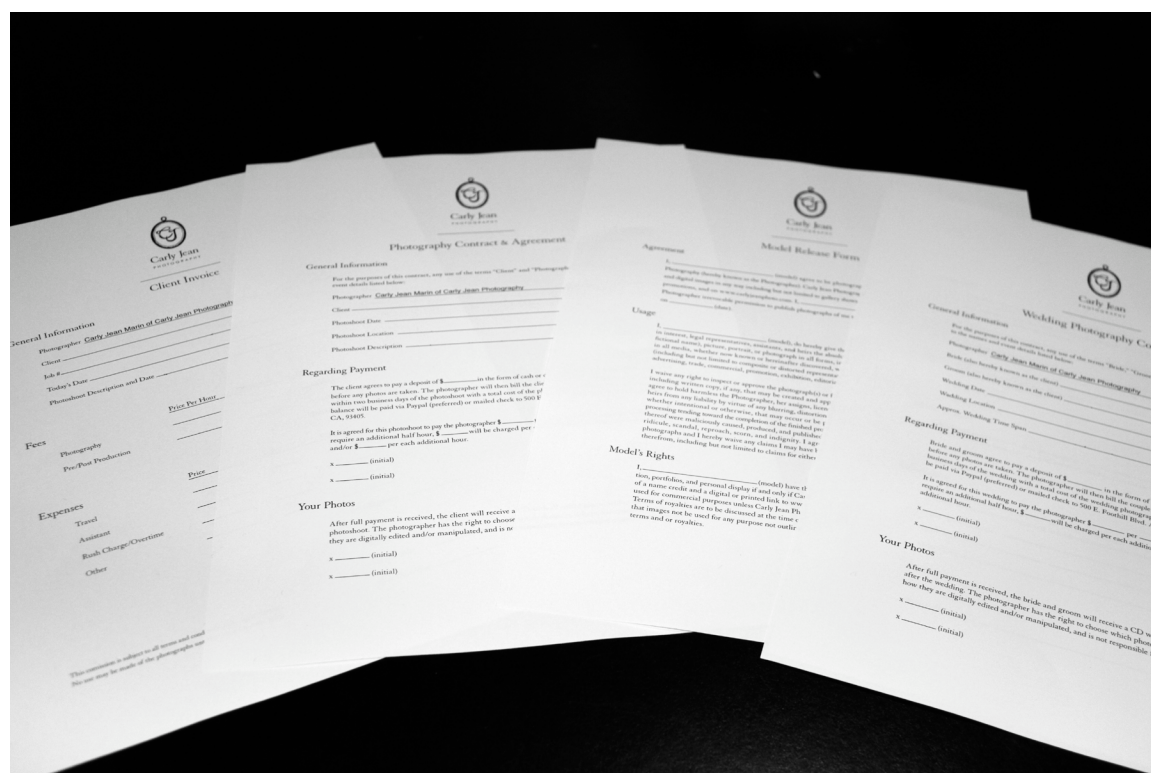
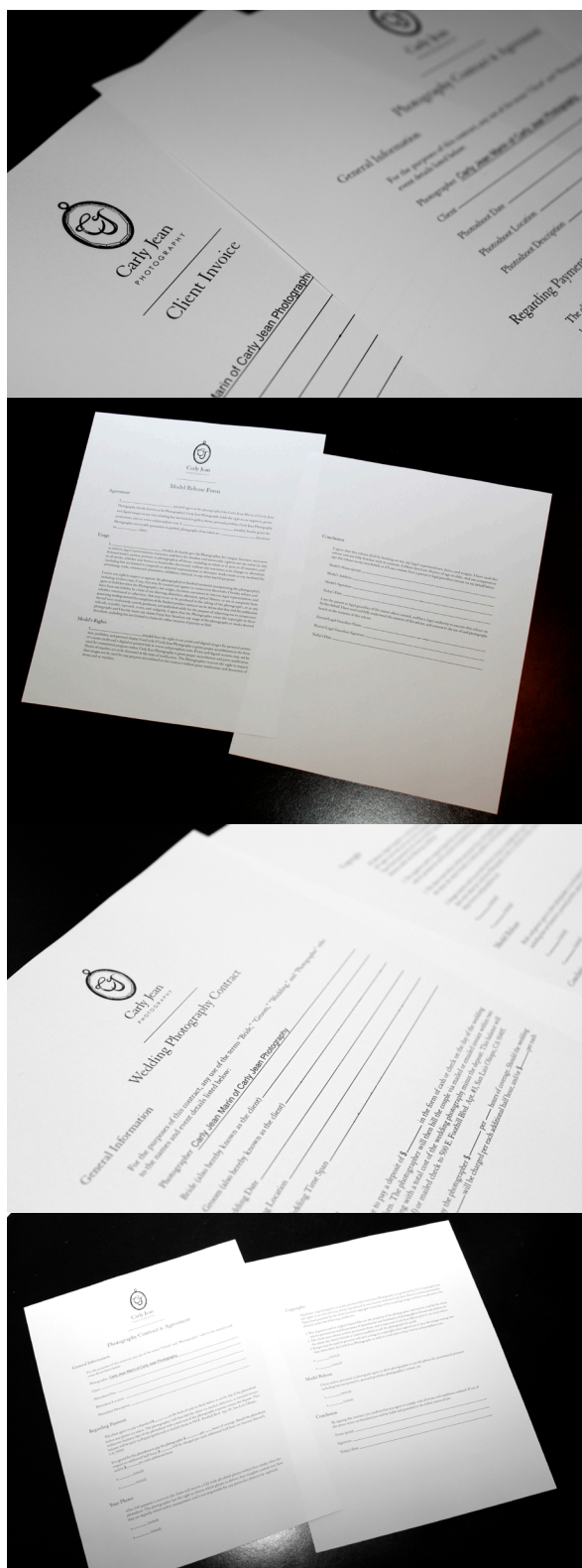


Figure 21 continued



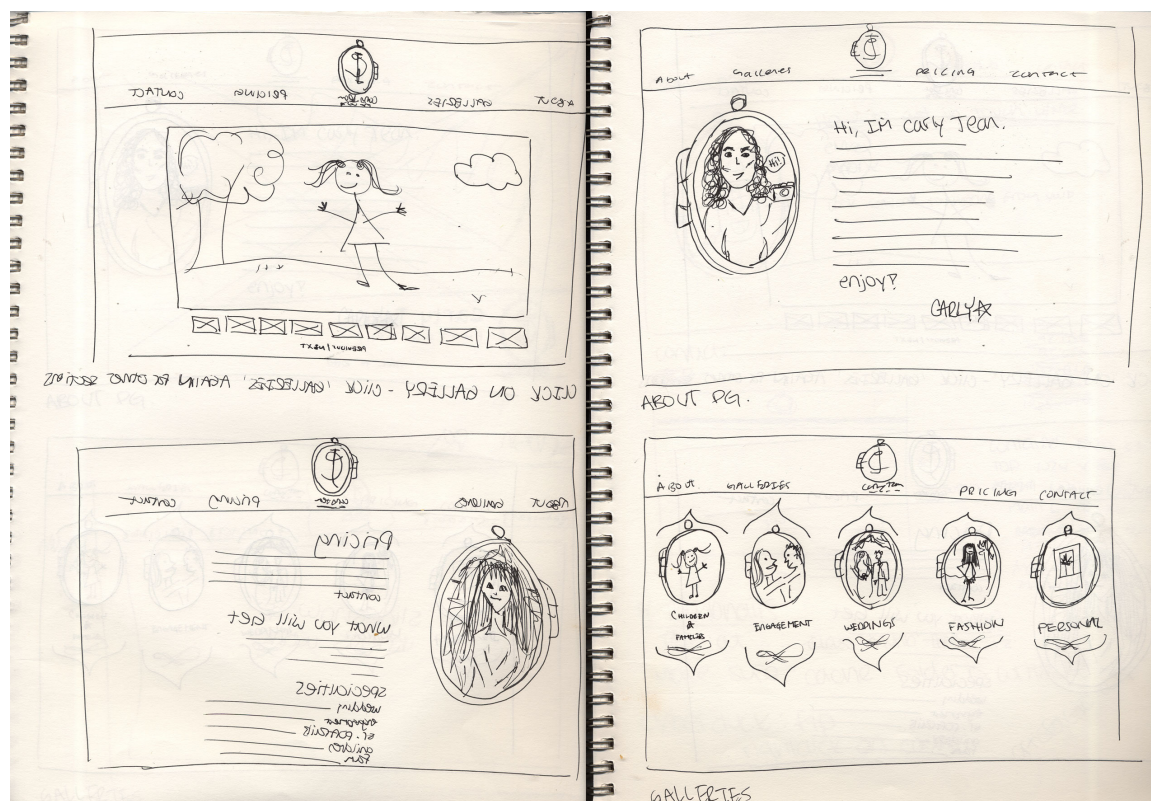
The Website

I knew I wanted the website design to be simple, easy to navigate, and visually appealing. I had to consider screen and resolution sizes of people who would be looking at the site, and made the design the largest size that most people could view without having to scroll much to see the full site. The size was 1024 by 800 pixels.

Figure 22: Website layout sketches



Figure 22 continued



I kept the navigation area on the top, so that photos underneath could be as large as possible. The overall layout is centered around the logo being on the top of the page. There are two links to either side of the logo: “About,” “Galleries,” “Pricing,” and “Contact.” Each link has a hover image using the flourishes used in the pattern. I was able to use the pattern as a background to the top portion after playing a lot with its color and opacity—it had to be faded enough so you could read the text and logo over it, but contrasted enough so you could see the pattern was there.

I wanted a dynamic slideshow application implemented so that the photos would be displayed with elegance and ease. After a lot of research I was able to find an application called, “SmoothGallery 2.0” by Jonathan Schemoul of JonDesign. This application was simple to manipulate, and I was able to understand the code even with my limited knowledge of JavaScript. I could make the images the size I wanted (840 by 560 pixels), could adjust the fade-in fade-out settings as well as the length of time each photo would be shown, and I was able to implement the Victorian flourish elements as the right and left arrows that would allow the user to flip through each gallery.

In designing each of the pages (*Figure 23a-e*), I was going for simplicity. I had Carly write out her “About” section (*Figure 23b*) to share about her passion for photography and give some personality to the site. The “Galleries” section (*Figure 23c*) displays a thumbnail image of each of the photo galleries: Engagements, Weddings, Kids and Families, Personal, and Fashion. Each thumbnail takes the user to the corresponding slideshow of photographs. The “Pricing” section (*Figure 23e*) gives potential clients an idea of how Carly Jean Photography runs as a business, and gives some price estimates for photoshoots. The “Contact” section (*Figure 23d*) is simple, with a link to Carly’s email address and what a potential client should include if they are asking about hiring.

Having an official website will give Carly’s future clients an easily accessible way to contact her or view her work. She will be perceived as a professional, and will be treated with more respect than if she were still showing her work through a public domain (such as websites like DeviantArt or Craigslist). She will also have the ability to easily edit and

Figure 23a-e: Website screen captures

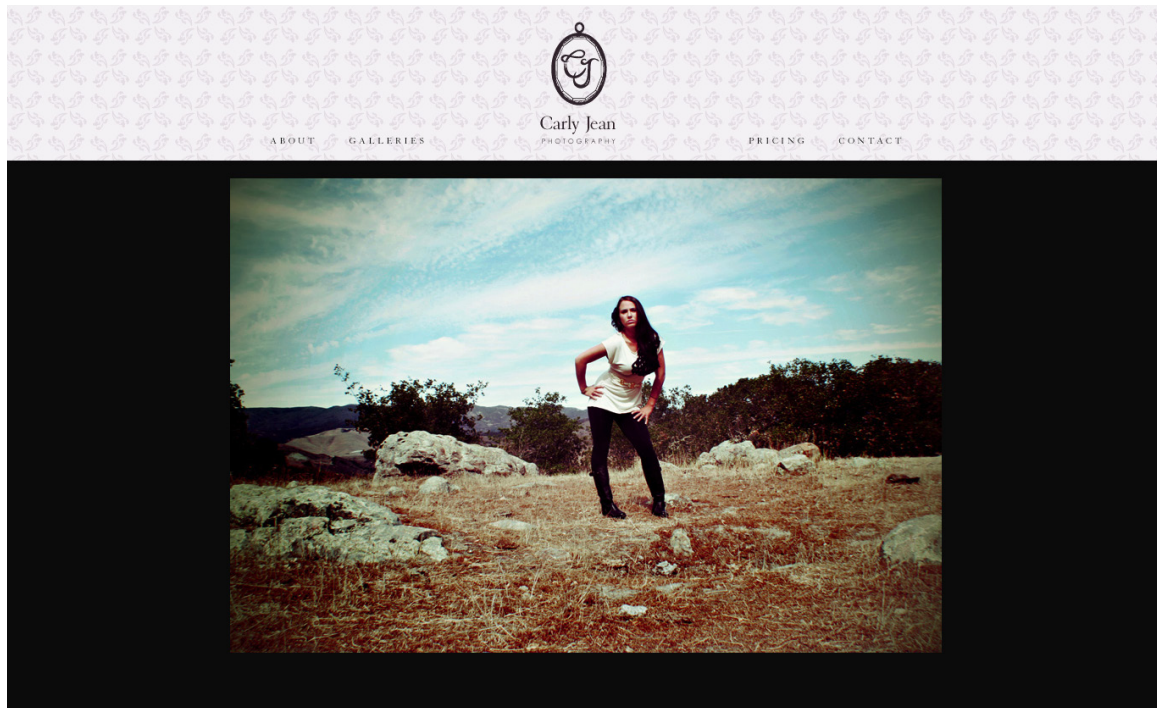


Figure 23a



Figure 23b

Figure 23a-e continued



Figure 23c

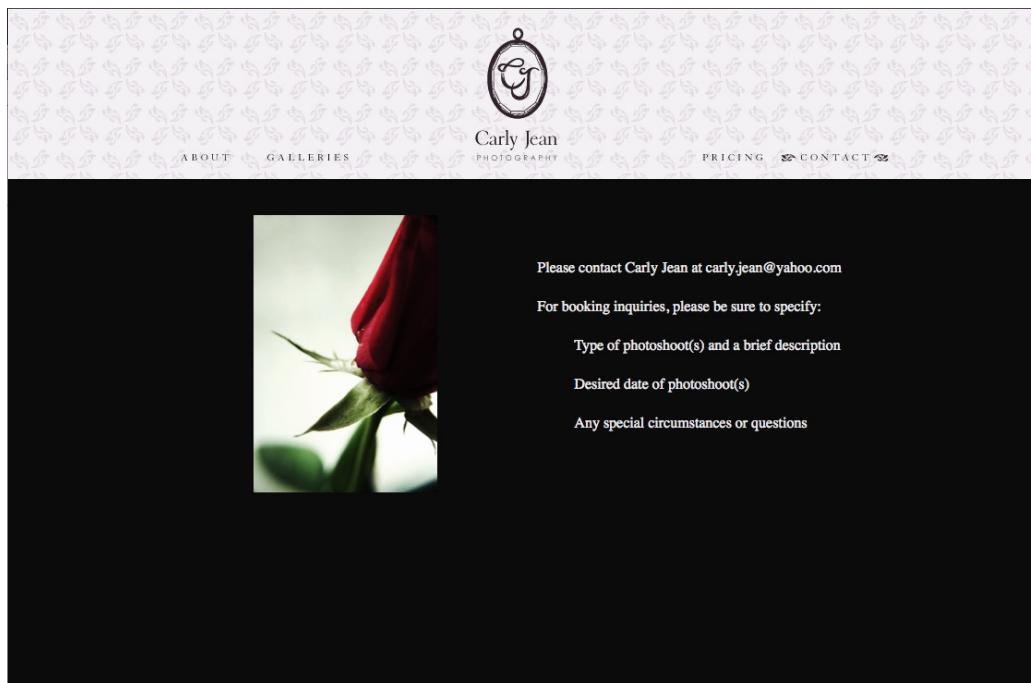


Figure 23d

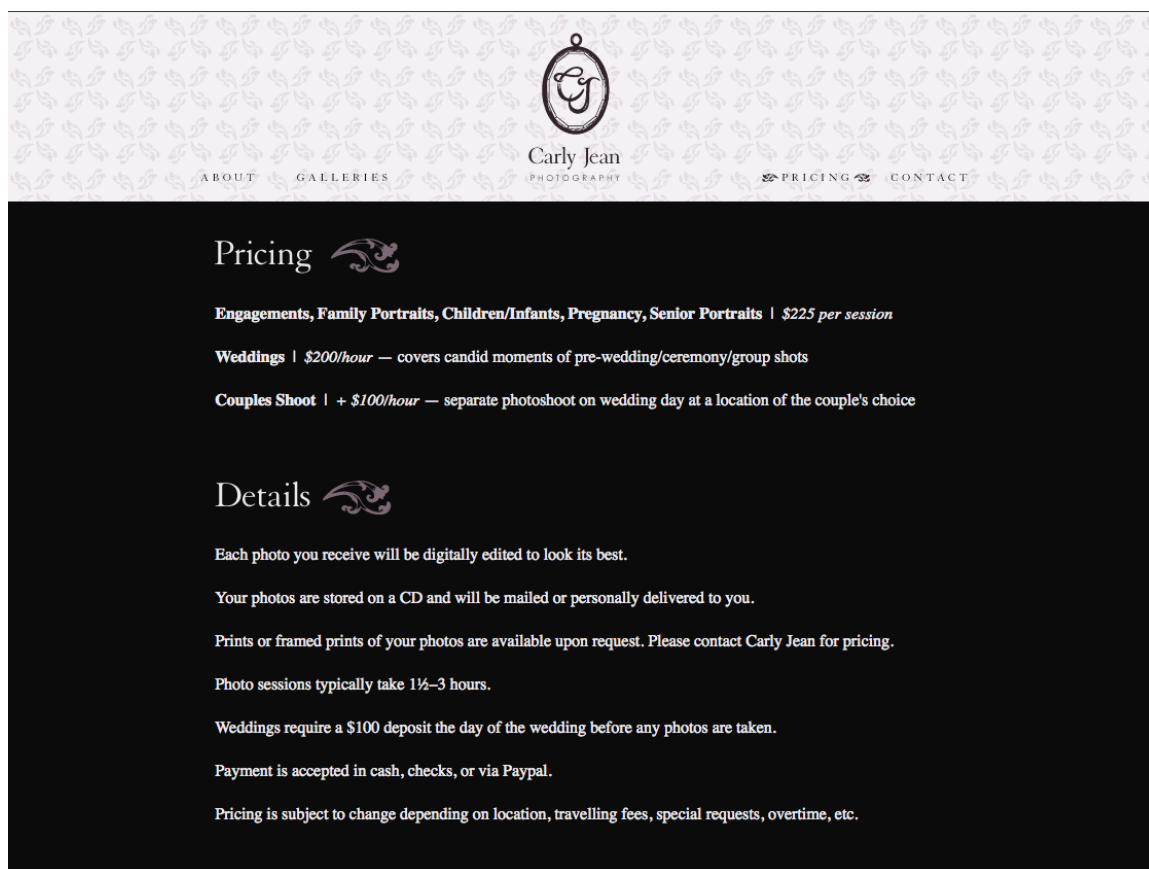


Figure 23e

update the content of the site as her portfolio expands or prices change. This website will be able to expand as her business expands, and will be a great way to publicize her budding business.

As for the process of buying a domain name, I was a little bit disappointed in not being able to secure the domain name “carlyjeanphotography.com.” I was frustrated by the fact that the domain appeared to be available, but when I tried to purchase it, the hosting companies I visited showed that the domain was previously secured by another. However, I found that “carlyjeanphoto.com” was available and close enough to the domain I originally wanted.

Last June I designed and purchased “christinemarindesign.com” as a personal portfolio website, and luckily the server allowed me to purchase another domain name but still use the same server space. The cost of Carly’s domain name was only \$15—much less than if I were to purchase her domain and server space to go with it. It was exciting to be able to upload the files to the site to see it live on the web. After a couple of days worth of tweaking little glitches in the code, I could say that the website was ready to go public.

The Budget

My goal for this project was to not exceed \$200. The printing of the business cards cost \$62.50, and the domain name cost \$15. This leaves me \$122.50 left over. Since Carly has jobs coming in one at a time, and slowly (only one or two per month), we decided to print her business forms off of a standard printer only as needed. In the future, as business picks up and we can estimate how many she will need, I am planning to use the money left over from the budget to look into getting business papers printed professionally, probably on a resume grade paper with the colored logo and text. I estimate the printing of these papers not to exceed the \$122.50 remaining. I am happy to finish the project with so much left over, and was glad to be able to have the 60% discount for the business cards and glad I was able to save money on the web server space. Every penny counts, especially since the funding came out of my own pocket.

Chapter IV

Summary and Recommendations

Completing a Senior Project has been a very good experience. It forced me to manage my time well, stay on top of working, and have a good documentation system along the way. I was able to challenge myself with creating an identity system (not my favorite graphic design application) that I can say I'm proud of, as well as helping out my sister with a professional presence that will carry her as her career progresses.

I didn't quite realize how much work would go into just making the symbol. The quarter was already halfway over when I realized I had to start working on the applications and website. I spent too much time picking over details and didn't have enough focus on the bigger picture. I learned that if I'm stuck on a certain part of the project, I should set it down and work on something else. Time is limited, and there is no benefit to staying stagnant.

There have been many people who have said that you should never work for a family member because there is no pleasing them. I've experienced this somewhat, but with this project I found it actually to be beneficial. Having my sister there to be a part of every step of the process and being able to hear her feedback (almost daily) helped me keep focused and made her feel like I really took her ideas into consideration. Though this was a unique client experience, it taught me the value of having good communication throughout the development of a project. It also taught me that when a client is nonchalant about a certain part, I as the designer have the power to make executive decisions and have control over the

final piece. In the end, the client is whom a designer needs to please. However, it is important to have integrity in a one's work and be able to compromise if necessary to achieve a final design solution—one that pleases the client and one that the designer can stand by proudly. I highly recommend having a good relationship with the client but still make all final decisions.

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