ASSIGHMENT 1—Anne Prather

Of the sites I read (and I read them all) three struck me especially.

The first was the one that talked about user experience. I thought I was the only one who really cared about the width and height of the hot spot enough to struggle over it on each and every assignment. Yet this was the first point made in the article. Or one of the first, anyway. Likewise, the bit about centering the text in a button using the UPPERCASE letter rather than the lowercase was a relief. To the best of my ability, I try in tis regard. In fact, every suggestion in that article is something I've done my best to incorporate into the pages I've written. In fact, I could have written that article.

And now to the video. This one makes me laugh.. Here you have a man talking about Web design as art, but when you watch the video all you can see is *him*—not his (presumably) very beautiful slides. His point however, was clear—good design has both functionality *and* beauty.

Let me expand on this point a bit, because I think it's even more important than he made it. Malcolm Gladwell has made the point that it takes 10,000 hours to master something. But what makes people want to spend the time required to master a skill? Is it that they started with a love for the skill and then spent the time on it? Or did some external purpose make the person spend the time, with the lov coming as mastery increased? It's a very circular problem with some implications for the role of function and beauty in design.

If something is purely functional, is it ever really ugly? Because if it were ugly, would you spend the time required to learn to use it? Conversely, can beauty alone motivate a user to spend the time required to master a device or Web site?

I agree with Michael that beauty is essential to design for the reason stated above. But beauty to whom? I've seen some sites greatly admired that left me cold. My mother can't stand some of the sites I love. So the target user has a huge role in the idea of beauty in design.

And then there are the New Year's resolutions, particularly the one about not using Mom as an excuse.

Really.

Neither my mother nor my mother-in-law are good candidates for this usage. My MIL just refuses to use computers of any sort and would disconnect herself from the Internet if she had a choice. My mother has a Facebook account and an iPad that goes with her everywhere. Neither is stereotypical.

But—sorry—I will write my sites so Mom wants to use them. Because my mother has a big lovely circle of friends and is insanely proud of me. So she'll show off my site everywhere, eloquently and with great articulation. But for my mom it's not "so easy even she—" but "so lovely she adores it".

And then there's performance. Let's face it. I have a server with unlimited space and I love my big background images. So I'm going to back to the performance article again…and again…and again until

I've explored every single option for increasing download efficiency. That article I loved. I mean, the soul of the fifth-grader who read professional genetics journals found that article entrancing.

Part of being a good Perfect Practice mentor is knowing precisely what reading to assign students. It should be readable, relevant, and rich. These articles ran the gamut from the almost humorous to the deeply technical. All in all, an excellent experience.