

THE ATLAS

Design Standards

Version 1.0

A living handbook documenting the philosophy, visual language, editorial systems, interaction principles, and technical foundations of an evolving digital publication.

Washington, D.C.

2026

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The Atlas is intended to function as a continuously evolving publication. As its content, structure, and philosophy develop, these standards should evolve alongside it while preserving the core principles established in Version 1.0.

Revision History

Version	Date	Summary
1.0	Summer 2026	Initial publication establishing the philosophy, design system, editorial standards, and technical foundation of The Atlas.

Preface

Every website communicates something beyond its content.

Some communicate professionalism.

Some communicate creativity.

Some communicate technical skill.

Most communicate only what a person has done.

The Atlas was conceived from a different question.

Rather than asking,

"How can a website present my work?"

it asks,

"How can a website make visible the way I think?"

That distinction shapes every decision contained within this document.

The Atlas is not intended to function as a traditional portfolio. It is not designed as a digital résumé, a gallery of completed projects, or a personal blog. Those formats document accomplishments. The Atlas documents inquiry.

Its pages are organized around ideas rather than media, questions rather than categories, and relationships rather than chronology. Photography exists alongside strategy. Organizational psychology informs communication. Reading influences design. Observations from everyday life become evidence within larger investigations.

The objective is not to present isolated artifacts, but to reveal an interconnected body of thought.

These Design Standards exist to preserve that philosophy.

They define the principles governing the Atlas's visual identity, editorial voice, information architecture, interaction patterns, and future development. More importantly, they explain *why* those decisions exist.

Technology will change.

Frameworks will evolve.

Design trends will come and go.

These standards should remain useful because they describe enduring principles rather than temporary solutions.

The Atlas should never feel finished.

It should feel alive.

How to Use These Standards

The Atlas is intended to evolve over many years.

Accordingly, these standards are written as a living document rather than fixed documentation. Every new essay, gallery, research report, photograph, or feature should be evaluated against the principles described here before implementation.

When uncertainty arises, the question should never be,

"Would this look impressive?"

Instead, ask:

Does this help the Atlas communicate ideas more clearly?

If the answer is yes, it belongs.

If the answer is no, it should be reconsidered regardless of how visually appealing or technically impressive it may appear.

Each Standard within this handbook contains five recurring sections.

Purpose

Defines why the standard exists and the problem it solves.

Guiding Principle

Summarizes the philosophy governing all decisions within the standard.

Design Implications

Explains how the philosophy translates into tangible design choices.

Practical Rules

Documents implementation guidelines to ensure consistency.

Future Considerations

Anticipates future growth while protecting the integrity of the system.

This structure ensures that future decisions are guided by principles rather than precedent.

The Atlas Philosophy

Before discussing typography, color, navigation, or code, one idea must be understood.

The Atlas is built upon a single belief:

Knowledge becomes more valuable when its connections become visible.

Every feature exists to reinforce that belief.

The Atlas does not separate photography from strategy because both begin with observation.

It does not isolate psychology from business because organizations are collections of people.

It does not divide communication from design because every visual decision communicates something.

Every domain informs another.

Every page should lead naturally toward another page.

Every project should become one coordinate within a much larger map.

The Atlas is not organized to minimize clicks.

It is organized to maximize discovery.

Visitors should leave with a deeper understanding than the one they arrived with—not because they consumed more information, but because they discovered relationships they had not previously considered.

This philosophy should remain unchanged regardless of how the Atlas expands.

Guiding Rule

If only one sentence from this handbook were to survive, it should be this:

The Atlas is not designed to showcase accomplishments. It is designed to make visible the habits of observation, synthesis, and reasoning that produced them.

Everything that follows exists to support that objective.

Standard 01

Manifesto

"Everything begins with a question."

Purpose

The Manifesto establishes the intellectual foundation of the Atlas.

Unlike a biography or mission statement, it does not describe achievements, career goals, or personal history. Instead, it articulates the worldview from which every project on the website emerges.

The Manifesto exists to answer a single question:

Why does the Atlas exist?

Every subsequent design decision—from typography and navigation to writing style and page structure—should reinforce the ideas expressed here.

If a future addition cannot be reconciled with the Manifesto, it should not become part of the Atlas.

The Manifesto is therefore the highest governing document within these standards.

Manifesto

I do not believe organizations can be understood through business alone.

Organizations are shaped by people.

By communication.

By psychology.

By incentives.

By history.

By design.

By culture.

By technology.

By the cities they inhabit and the communities they serve.

They are living systems composed of countless individual decisions, each influencing the next in ways that are rarely visible from the outside.

Understanding an organization requires more than reading financial statements or studying marketing campaigns.

It requires paying attention.

To conversations.

To architecture.

To photographs.

To language.

To rituals.

To systems that appear ordinary until examined more closely.

This website is my attempt to practice that kind of attention.

Every essay, strategy memo, research paper, case study, photograph, reading reflection, and field note represents one attempt to better understand how organizations create meaning, earn trust, and make decisions.

Some projects begin with business questions.

Others begin with observations made while walking through a city.

Others emerge from books, classrooms, conversations, or photographs.

None of them exist independently.

Every project is a coordinate within a larger map.

That map is the Atlas.

The Atlas is not intended to provide definitive answers.

Its purpose is to ask better questions.

Because better questions produce better observations.

Better observations produce better understanding.

And understanding is the beginning of meaningful strategy.

Guiding Principle

Curiosity is infrastructure.

Curiosity is often treated as a personality trait.

Within the Atlas, it is treated as a design principle.

Curiosity determines navigation.

It shapes page structure.

It influences writing.

It governs photography.

Rather than presenting conclusions immediately, the Atlas invites readers to investigate alongside the author.

Questions appear before answers.

Relationships appear before categories.

Readers are encouraged to explore rather than consume.

The website should never reward speed.

It should reward attention.

Design Implications

The Manifesto influences every major aspect of the Atlas.

Projects begin with questions rather than descriptions.

Navigation emphasizes relationships rather than hierarchy.

Photography functions as evidence rather than decoration.

Reading becomes an active dialogue rather than passive recommendation.

Observations are treated with the same seriousness as formal research.

No page should exist merely to display work.

Every page should contribute to a larger understanding of organizations and the people within them.

Practical Rules

The following rules emerge directly from the Manifesto:

- Every project begins with a question.
 - Every project connects to related work.
 - Every domain informs at least one other domain.
 - Every artifact demonstrates process rather than only outcomes.
 - Every essay should leave readers with a broader perspective than when they began.
 - No content should exist solely to promote the author.
 - Curiosity always takes precedence over performance.
-

Future Considerations

The Manifesto should remain remarkably stable over time.

Individual essays will change.

Research interests will evolve.

Entire domains may eventually be added or removed.

The technologies supporting the Atlas will certainly change.

The Manifesto should not.

It defines the identity of the Atlas independently of any visual style or technical implementation.

If, years from now, the website expands into printed publications, lectures, newsletters, research collaborations, or entirely new platforms, the Manifesto should remain recognizable as the philosophical center from which those projects continue to grow.

Standard 02

Project Vision

"Design is not what people remember. It is what allows them to remember the ideas."

Purpose

The Project Vision establishes the long-term direction of the Atlas. It defines what the publication is attempting to become, who it exists for, the experience it should create, and the principles by which its success should be measured.

Unlike the Manifesto, which articulates the philosophy behind the Atlas, the Project Vision is practical. It translates belief into intention.

Every future decision—whether adding a new domain, redesigning a component, publishing an essay, or introducing new technology—should reinforce this vision.

The Atlas should remain recognizable not because it looks the same over time, but because it continues to pursue the same purpose.

Vision Statement

The Atlas exists to make visible the relationships between people, organizations, and the systems that shape them.

It is a digital publication where strategy, psychology, communication, design, photography, and observation are treated not as separate disciplines, but as complementary ways of understanding organizations.

Rather than documenting experience, the Atlas documents inquiry.

Rather than presenting credentials, it presents patterns.

Rather than encouraging quick consumption, it rewards thoughtful exploration.

Every addition should deepen the publication rather than simply expand it.

The Problem

Traditional portfolios are organized around work.

Traditional résumés are organized around experience.

Traditional websites are organized around navigation.

The Atlas is organized around ideas.

This distinction solves several problems.

A résumé can describe a project in two bullet points, but it cannot reveal the thinking that produced it.

A portfolio can display photographs or presentations, but it rarely explains why they matter or how they relate to broader questions.

Professional websites often divide creative work, research, and writing into separate categories that never intersect, unintentionally suggesting that each discipline exists independently.

The Atlas rejects this separation.

It assumes that the most interesting work emerges where disciplines overlap.

Business strategy benefits from psychology.

Communication benefits from design.

Photography benefits from observation.

Research benefits from curiosity.

By making these relationships visible, the Atlas becomes more than a collection of work—it becomes a map of ideas.

Audience

The Atlas is written for people who value thoughtful work over polished presentation alone.

Its primary audience includes:

- Strategy consultants.
- Corporate communications and public affairs professionals.
- Researchers and policy analysts.
- Marketing and brand strategists.
- Designers and creative directors.
- Professors, mentors, and collaborators.
- Future colleagues.
- Anyone interested in understanding organizations more deeply.

The Atlas does not assume that every visitor will read every page.

Instead, it assumes that each visitor will enter through one domain and gradually discover connections to others.

A strategy consultant may arrive for a market entry analysis and unexpectedly discover field notes from Shenzhen.

A communications executive may begin with a crisis communication simulation and continue into organizational psychology.

A designer may come for editorial work and leave after reading essays on trust and consumer behavior.

Discovery is intentional.

What the Atlas Is

The Atlas is:

- A digital publication.
- A research archive.
- A personal knowledge system.
- An editorial platform.
- A long-term body of work.
- A record of evolving thought.
- A place where disciplines intersect.

It should feel alive, growing through curiosity rather than accumulation.

What the Atlas Is Not

The Atlas is not:

- A résumé.
- A project gallery.
- A Behance portfolio.
- A social media feed.
- A startup landing page.
- A personal branding exercise.
- A chronological archive of every project completed.

Not every piece of work belongs in the Atlas.

Only work that contributes to the larger conversation should be included.

Curation is a design principle.

Desired Experience

The Atlas should reveal itself gradually.

Visitors should experience different things depending on how long they stay.

First Minute

The website should feel calm.

The visual language should communicate confidence through restraint.

The visitor should immediately understand that this is not a conventional portfolio.

Nothing competes for attention.

Curiosity replaces urgency.

Five Minutes

The visitor begins reading.

They encounter thoughtful writing, carefully structured analysis, and meaningful visual work.

They recognize that the Atlas values depth over volume.

Fifteen Minutes

Connections begin to emerge.

A research report references a reading reflection.

A photography collection links to a field note.

An essay leads naturally into organizational psychology.

The visitor realizes that every page participates in a larger conversation.

Thirty Minutes

The visitor no longer thinks in terms of projects.

Instead, they begin to understand the worldview behind them.

The Atlas becomes memorable not because of any individual artifact, but because of the coherence of the whole.

This is the desired outcome.

Success Criteria

The success of the Atlas should not be measured through conventional web metrics alone.

Page views, session duration, and traffic are useful, but they are not the primary indicators of success.

Instead, success should be evaluated by the quality of the conversations it creates.

The Atlas is successful when:

- A recruiter references a specific essay during an interview.
- A visitor spends time exploring multiple connected domains.
- Someone returns to read newly published work.
- A project sparks a meaningful conversation rather than simply receiving praise.
- The website becomes a resource rather than a presentation.

The ultimate goal is not attention.

It is intellectual trust.

Design Implications

The Project Vision establishes several practical consequences.

The website should prioritize reading over browsing.

Projects should begin with questions rather than summaries.

Navigation should encourage exploration instead of efficiency.

Long-form writing should be treated as a first-class medium.

Photography should function as observation rather than decoration.

Every page should connect to related work.

The Atlas should always feel larger than the page currently being viewed.

Non-Goals

To preserve the integrity of the Atlas, several objectives are intentionally rejected.

The Atlas is not attempting to:

- Impress through visual excess.
- Follow contemporary web design trends.
- Maximize engagement through endless interaction.
- Showcase every technical skill.
- Replace professional networking.
- Become a content marketing platform.
- Encourage rapid consumption.

These omissions are deliberate.

Every feature removed creates more room for thoughtful reading.

Future Considerations

The Project Vision should remain stable even as the Atlas expands.

New domains may emerge.

Technology will evolve.

The publication may eventually include printed editions, public talks, collaborative research, newsletters, or interactive visualizations.

None of those additions should alter the central purpose established here.

The Atlas should continue to answer the same question it asks today:

How do organizations earn trust, create meaning, and make better decisions?

Every new coordinate added to the Atlas should represent another attempt to answer that question from a different perspective.

Why This Standard Exists

Without a clearly defined vision, websites gradually become collections of unrelated pages. Every new project feels reasonable in isolation, but the publication slowly loses coherence.

The Project Vision prevents this drift.

It establishes a shared direction for every future decision, ensuring that the Atlas grows through intention rather than accumulation. The result is not simply a larger website, but a richer one—one where each new essay, photograph, case study, or field note strengthens the network of ideas that already exists.

Standard 03

Design Principles

"Every design decision is an editorial decision."

Purpose

The Design Principles define the values that govern every decision made within the Atlas.

While the Manifesto explains why the Atlas exists and the Project Vision describes what it aims to become, the Design Principles explain **how** those ideas are translated into practice.

Every page, interaction, piece of writing, photograph, animation, navigation element, and future feature should be evaluated against these principles before implementation.

Unlike visual trends or technical frameworks, these principles are intended to remain stable over time. They should continue guiding the Atlas regardless of how the website evolves or what technologies are eventually used to build it.

When uncertainty arises, these principles take precedence over aesthetics, convenience, or novelty.

Principle One

Curiosity Before Credentials

Questions create stronger first impressions than accomplishments.

Most portfolios begin by establishing authority.

Degrees.

Internships.

Awards.

Job titles.

The Atlas deliberately takes the opposite approach.

Visitors should first encounter curiosity.

Only later should they discover experience.

This shifts the relationship between the reader and the work. Instead of evaluating accomplishments, the visitor begins participating in an investigation.

Projects should therefore begin with questions.

Not summaries.

Not achievements.

Not learning outcomes.

For example, instead of presenting:

Juicy Couture Brand Audit

the Atlas presents:

Can heritage brands reinvent themselves without losing authenticity?

Likewise, instead of introducing:

Google Organizational Behavior Memo

the page begins with:

Can autonomy and organizational cohesion exist at the same time?

Questions invite exploration.

Credentials establish permission.

The Atlas earns credibility through curiosity.

Design Implications

- Questions precede descriptions.
 - Curiosity precedes biography.
 - Visitors explore before evaluating.
 - Projects feel discovered rather than presented.
-

Principle Two

Reading Before Scrolling

The Atlas is designed to be read, not consumed.

Most contemporary websites optimize for movement.

Scrolling.

Animations.

Infinite feeds.

Rapid interaction.

The Atlas optimizes for attention.

Whitespace should encourage slower reading.

Typography should reward sustained focus.

Pages should feel closer to printed essays than social media timelines.

Reading is the primary interaction.

Scrolling is merely how readers move through text.

Whenever a design decision prioritizes visual novelty over readability, readability should win.

Design Implications

- Comfortable line lengths.
- Generous margins.
- Minimal distractions.
- Long-form writing treated as primary content.
- Motion used sparingly.

Every page should quietly encourage the reader to stay.

Principle Three

Calm Over Clever

Confidence rarely needs to announce itself.

The Atlas should never attempt to impress through excess.

Complex interactions.

Unexpected animations.

Experimental layouts.

Decorative effects.

These may be technically impressive, but they often compete with the ideas being communicated.

Instead, the Atlas should communicate confidence through restraint.

Visual design should feel inevitable rather than surprising.

Interfaces should disappear.

Typography should carry the experience.

Readers should remember the ideas—not the animation that introduced them.

Design Implications

If two design solutions communicate equally well, the simpler solution should always be chosen.

Elegance is measured by clarity rather than novelty.

Principle Four

Show Thinking, Not Just Outcomes

The work is important. The reasoning behind the work is indispensable.

A finished presentation reveals only the conclusion.

The Atlas should also reveal the process.

Research.

Iterations.

Rejected ideas.

Sources.

Frameworks.

Artifacts.

This transparency serves two purposes.

First, it demonstrates rigor.

Second, it invites readers to learn alongside the work rather than merely observing it.

Every substantial project should include evidence of how conclusions were reached.

The Artifact section exists specifically for this reason.

It transforms projects from polished deliverables into documented investigations.

Design Implications

Artifacts are required whenever meaningful.

Research should remain visible.

References should be celebrated rather than hidden.

Process deserves the same visual attention as outcomes.

Principle Five

Observation Is Evidence

The smallest observations often reveal the largest patterns.

Not every insight begins with formal research.

Sometimes it begins with a photograph.

A conversation.

A subway station.

A museum.

A sports game.

A storefront.

A poorly designed sign.

The Atlas treats observation as legitimate evidence.

Photography is therefore not decoration.

Notes are not filler.

Reading reflections are not side projects.

Each contributes another perspective toward understanding organizations.

This principle intentionally dissolves the distinction between "professional work" and "personal curiosity."

The Atlas assumes that both enrich one another.

Design Implications

Photography appears throughout the website.

Field Notes receive equal editorial treatment.

Cities become case studies.

Everyday experiences become opportunities for organizational analysis.

Principle Six

Everything Is Connected

Knowledge becomes more valuable when its relationships become visible.

This is the defining principle of the Atlas.

Nothing exists in isolation.

A market entry analysis may connect to consumer psychology.

A photography collection may connect to urban planning.

A reading reflection may influence a consulting case study.

The Atlas should continually reveal these relationships.

Navigation exists not merely to move readers through pages, but to help them discover unexpected connections.

The goal is not efficiency.

The goal is synthesis.

Design Implications

Every project ends with Continue Exploring.

Cross-links should be intentional.

Domains should overlap naturally.

Readers should gradually construct their own understanding of the Atlas.

Principle Seven

Design for Rereading

A memorable publication rewards return visits.

Many websites are optimized for first impressions.

The Atlas is optimized for lasting impressions.

The first visit should introduce the publication.

The fifth visit should reveal new relationships.

The tenth visit should uncover something previously overlooked.

Readers should not feel that they have "finished" the Atlas.

Instead, they should feel invited back.

This philosophy influences how projects are organized, how navigation works, and how future content is added.

The Atlas grows through accumulation of ideas rather than replacement.

Design Implications

New work should strengthen existing work.

The Observatory should change regularly.

Continue Exploring should evolve over time.

The Atlas should become richer rather than larger.

Principle Eight

Editorial Before Digital

The Atlas should behave like a publication before it behaves like a website.

This may be the easiest principle to forget.

Whenever uncertainty exists, imagine the Atlas as a printed journal.

Would this interaction still make sense?

Would this layout still communicate clearly?

Would this page remain compelling without animation?

The Atlas borrows more from books, museums, newspapers, research papers, and architecture than it does from social media or software dashboards.

Technology serves the editorial experience.

Never the reverse.

Design Implications

Typography leads.

Images support.

Navigation recedes.

Reading remains central.

Technology quietly enables rather than announces itself.

Applying These Principles

Every future feature should be evaluated using a simple checklist.

Before implementation, ask:

- Does this encourage curiosity?
- Does it improve reading?
- Is it calmer than the alternative?
- Does it reveal thinking rather than simply outcomes?
- Does it treat observation as meaningful?
- Does it create new connections?
- Will someone discover something new on a future visit?
- Does it strengthen the Atlas as a publication?

If the answer to several of these questions is no, the feature should be reconsidered.

Why These Principles Exist

Without shared principles, design becomes reactive.

Every new project introduces new preferences.

Every redesign introduces new trends.

Eventually the publication loses coherence.

The Design Principles prevent this drift.

They establish a stable philosophy that remains consistent even as the Atlas evolves over years or decades.

Good design systems do not preserve appearance.

They preserve intention.

Future Considerations

These principles should remain remarkably stable over time.

Individual components may change.

Typography may be refined.

Technology will certainly evolve.

New domains will eventually be introduced.

None of those changes should require revising the Design Principles unless the fundamental purpose of the Atlas itself changes.

Future additions should therefore ask a single question before anything else:

Does this deepen the Atlas, or merely expand it?

Only additions that deepen the publication belong within it.

Standard 04

Brand Identity

"A visual identity is not a style. It is the visible expression of a way of thinking."

Purpose

The Brand Identity defines the personality of the Atlas.

Unlike a conventional visual identity system, this standard does not begin with logos, colors, or typography. Those elements are expressions of identity rather than identity itself.

The Atlas should be recognizable before a reader notices the typeface, the color palette, or the layout.

Recognition should come from consistency of thought.

Every visual decision should reinforce the same personality, editorial voice, and intellectual character.

If the Atlas feels different from page to page, the identity has failed regardless of how consistent the colors or typography remain.

This standard therefore establishes the emotional and intellectual qualities that should remain constant throughout every part of the publication.

Identity Statement

The Atlas is an editorial publication dedicated to understanding organizations through multiple disciplines.

It approaches business with the curiosity of a researcher.

It approaches psychology with the structure of a strategist.

It approaches design with the restraint of an editor.

It approaches photography with the patience of an observer.

The Atlas is not trying to impress.

It is trying to understand.

Personality

If the Atlas were a person, it would possess the following qualities.

Curious

The Atlas asks more questions than it answers.

Its confidence comes from investigation rather than certainty.

Readers should feel invited into an ongoing conversation rather than presented with finished conclusions.

Thoughtful

Nothing appears accidental.

Every photograph.

Every caption.

Every paragraph.

Every line of typography.

Every interaction exists because it serves a purpose.

The Atlas should never feel rushed.

Observant

Small details matter.

Architecture.

Conversations.

Transit systems.

Museum signage.

Typography.

Cities.

Organizations reveal themselves through ordinary moments.

The Atlas pays attention to those moments.

Structured

Ideas are carefully organized.

Complexity is welcomed, but confusion is not.

The Atlas should simplify without oversimplifying.

Readers should never feel lost.

Humble

The Atlas does not claim expertise in everything.

It acknowledges uncertainty.

It cites sources.

It distinguishes observation from evidence and opinion from conclusion.

Humility strengthens credibility.

International

Organizations do not exist in isolation.

The Atlas recognizes that geography, language, history, and culture influence every system it studies.

Experiences from Washington, D.C., Shenzhen, New York, Hong Kong, and future places are not travel stories.

They are opportunities to understand organizations through different cultural lenses.

Voice

The Atlas should sound like a thoughtful researcher writing for an intelligent general audience.

Writing should be:

- analytical
- clear
- reflective
- precise
- conversational without becoming casual
- intellectually generous

Avoid:

- buzzwords
- unnecessary jargon
- exaggerated certainty
- motivational language
- corporate clichés

The Atlas should never sound like marketing.

It should sound like inquiry.

Tone

Tone changes slightly depending on the medium while remaining recognizably Atlas.

Research Reports

Objective.

Structured.

Evidence-driven.

Professional.

Essays

Reflective.

Analytical.

Narrative.

Notes

Observational.

Personal.

Quiet.

Reading

Curious.

Interpretive.

Respectful.

Photography

Minimal.

Allow the images to speak.

Writing should frame rather than explain.

Editorial Influences

The Atlas draws inspiration from publications and institutions known for thoughtful communication rather than visual excess.

Editorial influences include:

- Independent literary journals.
- Long-form magazines.
- Museum exhibition catalogs.
- University presses.
- Consulting reports.
- Research institutions.
- Field notebooks.
- Architecture monographs.

The objective is not to imitate any single source but to combine the editorial clarity of publications with the analytical rigor of professional research.

Visual Influences

The visual language should feel timeless rather than fashionable.

Influences include:

- Museums.
- Libraries.
- Printed books.
- Academic journals.
- Editorial magazines.
- Well-designed annual reports.
- Architectural drawings.
- Archival collections.

The Atlas should feel like something that could exist equally comfortably as a printed publication.

Emotional Goals

Every visitor should experience a gradual emotional progression.

Arrival

Calm.

The interface disappears.

Curiosity begins.

Exploration

Interest.

Readers discover unexpected relationships.

Questions encourage further investigation.

Understanding

Patterns emerge.

Separate disciplines begin connecting.

Readers begin understanding how the Atlas thinks.

Departure

Inspiration.

Not admiration.

Visitors should leave wanting to observe organizations differently in their own lives.

Brand Values

Every decision should reinforce these values.

Curiosity

Questions come before conclusions.

Integrity

Evidence matters.

Sources matter.

Accuracy matters.

Craft

Details matter.

Typography matters.

Writing matters.

Editing matters.

Generosity

The Atlas exists to share understanding, not to demonstrate intelligence.

Ideas should remain accessible.

Continuity

Every new project contributes to an evolving body of work rather than existing independently.

Things the Atlas Never Does

The Atlas should never:

- chase trends
- use design purely for decoration
- exaggerate expertise
- optimize for attention over understanding
- overwhelm readers with information
- publish unfinished thinking simply to remain active
- prioritize quantity over quality

Restraint is part of the identity.

The Atlas as an Editorial Publication

Every decision should pass one final test.

Imagine this website printed as a quarterly journal.

Would it still feel coherent?

Would the typography still communicate hierarchy?

Would the writing remain compelling?

Would the photography still have purpose?

Would the navigation become a table of contents?

If the answer is yes, the design is likely serving the publication rather than the technology.

The Atlas should always behave like a publication first.

A website second.

Design Implications

The Brand Identity influences every subsequent standard.

Typography should prioritize readability over novelty.

Photography should reinforce observation rather than decoration.

Writing should remain intellectually generous.

Motion should remain restrained.

Navigation should encourage discovery.

Visual hierarchy should reward sustained attention.

Every component should quietly support the identity established here.

Why This Standard Exists

Visual identities often become collections of aesthetic decisions.

A logo.

A color palette.

A font.

Those elements are important, but they are also the easiest to imitate.

Personality cannot be copied as easily.

By defining the Atlas through its character, voice, values, and editorial philosophy before documenting any visual components, the identity becomes resilient.

Future redesigns may alter layouts or technologies.

They should never alter the personality.

If, years from now, someone familiar with the Atlas visits a redesigned version, they should immediately recognize it—not because the colors are identical, but because it still feels like the same publication.

Future Considerations

As the Atlas expands into new forms—research collaborations, newsletters, presentations, printed publications, or future digital experiences—its personality should remain consistent.

Every new medium should answer the same question before publication:

Does this sound, feel, and think like the Atlas?

If the answer is no, the work should be revised until the identity is recognizable again.

Standard 05

Color System

"Color should guide attention, not compete for it."

Purpose

The Atlas uses color as an organizational tool rather than a decorative element.

Unlike many digital products where color is used to create excitement or reinforce branding, color within the Atlas serves a quieter role. It establishes hierarchy, defines structure, communicates interaction, and creates a calm environment for sustained reading.

Every color should have a responsibility.

No color exists simply because it is visually appealing.

The restrained palette allows typography, writing, and photography to remain the primary focus while giving the publication a recognizable visual identity.

Color should never become the subject of attention.

It should quietly direct it.

Guiding Principle

The Atlas is fundamentally a reading experience.

Its palette should support concentration rather than stimulation.

The website should feel closer to a printed book, museum exhibition, or research journal than a marketing campaign.

Readers should notice the content before they notice the interface.

Color exists to create clarity.

Not personality.

Personality emerges from consistency.

Philosophy

The Atlas intentionally limits its palette.

A smaller palette creates stronger associations.

Readers gradually learn that certain colors carry certain meanings.

Over time, color becomes part of the language of the publication rather than simply its appearance.

Each color is assigned a specific role.

These roles should remain consistent throughout the entire system.

Consistency creates familiarity.

Familiarity creates trust.

Primary Palette

Floral White

HEX: #FFFD8

Role

Atmosphere

Whitespace

Background

Reading environment

Floral White forms the foundation of the Atlas.

Pure white often feels clinical and digitally harsh.

Floral White introduces a subtle warmth reminiscent of printed paper.

It softens the interface without reducing contrast.

Readers should never consciously notice the background color.

Instead, they should simply feel comfortable reading for extended periods.

Usage

- Primary page backgrounds
 - Reading pages
 - Essay layouts
 - Navigation backgrounds
 - Image margins
 - White space surrounding photography
-

Avoid

Never use Floral White as an accent.

It is atmosphere, not emphasis.

Ink Black

HEX: #222222

Role

Information

Typography

Icons

Primary interface elements

Ink Black replaces absolute black.

Just as Floral White softens the page, Ink Black softens typography.

Pure black creates excessive visual contrast that becomes tiring during long reading sessions.

Ink Black preserves readability while creating a quieter visual rhythm.

It should be used for nearly all written information.

Usage

- Body text
 - Headlines
 - Captions
 - Navigation labels
 - Icons
 - Metadata
 - Dividers
-

Avoid

Do not introduce additional dark grays without a functional reason.

Consistency strengthens hierarchy.

Blue Ink

HEX: #2F4156

Role

Structure

Navigation

Framework

Persistent interface

Blue Ink is the architectural color of the Atlas.

It represents permanence.

Whenever readers encounter Blue Ink, they should instinctively understand that they are interacting with the structure of the publication rather than its content.

This color intentionally appears sparingly.

Its rarity gives it authority.

Usage

Persistent right-side panel.

Primary navigation.

Atlas framework.

Major page dividers.

Section introductions.

Interactive map elements.

Observatory framework.

Avoid

Blue Ink should never dominate an individual page.

It should frame the experience rather than become the experience.

Burgundy

HEX: #6B2D3A

Role

Interaction

Questions

Links

Calls to action

Moments requiring attention

Burgundy is the only intentionally expressive color in the Atlas.

Its purpose is not decoration.

It signals moments where the publication invites participation.

Readers should immediately recognize Burgundy as an invitation rather than information.

Usage

Hyperlinks.

Hover states.

Buttons.

Interactive elements.

Selected navigation.

Questions.

Important references.

Continue Exploring.

Avoid

Never use Burgundy for large blocks of text.

It loses meaning when overused.

Functional Hierarchy

Every color belongs to one of four responsibilities.

Atmosphere



Information



Structure



Interaction

These roles should never overlap unnecessarily.

Readers should gradually learn this hierarchy through repeated exposure.

The color system becomes intuitive through consistency.

Secondary Colors

The Atlas intentionally avoids a large secondary palette.

Additional colors should appear only when required by content.

Examples include:

- charts
- diagrams
- maps
- annotated photography
- research graphics

Whenever possible, visualizations should remain monochromatic.

If multiple colors are required to communicate information, they should be muted and subordinate to the primary palette.

Content-specific colors should never become part of the Atlas identity.

Photography

Photography introduces its own color language.

The interface should never compete with photographs.

When displaying galleries:

- allow images to provide visual richness
- avoid surrounding photographs with unnecessary interface colors
- maintain generous white space
- preserve accurate color reproduction

The interface should disappear.

Accessibility

Every color combination should satisfy WCAG AA contrast standards at minimum.

Special attention should be given to:

- Burgundy links
- Blue Ink navigation
- Metadata
- Captions
- Mobile viewing conditions

Accessibility is not a technical requirement added after design.

It is part of the design itself.

Emotional Effect

The palette should produce a gradual emotional experience.

Readers should feel:

Calm.

Focused.

Curious.

Unhurried.

Supported.

Nothing about the palette should encourage urgency or distraction.

The Atlas should feel like entering a quiet reading room.

Implementation Guidelines

Developers should treat colors as semantic tokens rather than fixed values.

For example:

--color-atmosphere

--color-information

--color-structure

--color-interaction

Avoid naming variables after literal colors.

Names based on function preserve flexibility if the palette is refined in future versions.

Why This Standard Exists

Most websites use color to establish recognition.

The Atlas uses color to establish orientation.

Rather than asking,

"What color represents the brand?"

the Atlas asks,

"What responsibility does this color have?"

This distinction creates a calmer and more coherent reading experience.

Over time, readers stop consciously noticing the colors.

Instead, they begin instinctively understanding what each one means.

That subtle familiarity contributes to the feeling that the Atlas is a publication with its own visual language rather than a website assembled from components.

Future Considerations

The palette should remain intentionally limited.

Future domains, essays, galleries, and features should continue using the existing system rather than introducing additional colors for differentiation.

If expansion becomes necessary, new colors should represent entirely new responsibilities rather than aesthetic variation.

The objective is not to increase visual variety.

It is to preserve clarity.

Standard 06

Typography System

"Typography is the voice of the Atlas. Everything else is illustration."

Purpose

Typography is the primary medium through which the Atlas communicates.

Unlike many websites where typography supports images or interface elements, the Atlas reverses this relationship. Writing is the central experience, and typography exists to make reading effortless, immersive, and memorable.

Readers should spend significantly more time reading than interacting.

Accordingly, typography should receive greater attention than animation, iconography, or decorative graphics.

Every typographic decision should reinforce one goal:

Help the reader think.

Guiding Principle

Typography should disappear.

Not because it lacks personality, but because it serves the ideas rather than competing with them.

Good typography is not invisible.

It is inevitable.

Readers should never become aware of individual font choices while reading.

Instead, they should simply feel that every paragraph, heading, quotation, and caption occupies exactly the place it belongs.

Philosophy

The Atlas treats typography as architecture.

Buildings organize physical movement.

Typography organizes intellectual movement.

A page should communicate hierarchy before a single word is read.

Readers should instinctively understand:

- where to begin,
- what deserves attention,
- what provides context,
- what can be skimmed,
- and what deserves careful reading.

Hierarchy should emerge through scale, spacing, rhythm, and restraint—not through excessive styling.

Font Pairing

The Atlas intentionally uses only two typefaces.

Every additional typeface weakens consistency.

The chosen pair reflects the balance between editorial writing and structured information.

Libre Baskerville

Role: Voice

Libre Baskerville is the editorial heart of the Atlas.

It represents reflection.

Inquiry.

Argument.

Narrative.

It should feel timeless rather than fashionable.

Readers should associate it with thoughtfulness rather than decoration.

Used For

- Homepage statement
 - Manifesto
 - Project titles
 - Questions
 - Essays
 - Pull quotes
 - Long-form body copy
 - Reading entries
 - Notes
 - About page narrative
-

Characteristics

Libre Baskerville should create the feeling of reading a printed journal rather than a website.

It rewards sustained attention.

Its slightly traditional character reinforces the Atlas's emphasis on permanence and careful observation.

Montserrat

Role: System

Montserrat provides clarity, order, and orientation.

Where Libre Baskerville asks readers to think, Montserrat quietly explains how the publication is organized.

It should feel precise.

Never cold.

Its purpose is navigation rather than expression.

Used For

- Navigation
 - Coordinates
 - Metadata
 - Reading time
 - Dates
 - Buttons
 - Tabs
 - Labels
 - Captions
 - Folder names
 - Observatory metadata
 - Continue Exploring links
-

Characteristics

Montserrat should almost disappear.

Readers should rarely notice it consciously.

Instead, it quietly establishes consistency across every interface element.

The Relationship Between the Two

Typography within the Atlas follows a simple conversation.

Libre Baskerville speaks.

Montserrat listens.

Libre Baskerville tells stories.

Montserrat provides structure.

Libre Baskerville carries ideas.

Montserrat carries information.

Neither should compete with the other.

Together they create rhythm.

Hierarchy

Typography should establish hierarchy through restraint.

Every level should feel related.

Never disconnected.

Level One

Homepage Statement

Largest text in the publication.

Reserved exclusively for:

- Homepage introduction
- Major opening statements
- Section title pages

Readers should encounter this scale sparingly.

Its rarity creates significance.

Level Two

Project Titles

Reserved for:

- Essays
- Case studies
- Reading entries
- Photography collections
- Domain introductions

Titles should remain concise.

Ideally fewer than ten words.

Level Three

Questions

Every substantial project begins with a question.

Questions are not subtitles.

They are invitations.

They should feel conversational without sacrificing precision.

A successful question encourages curiosity before explanation.

Examples:

Can organizations maintain trust after abandoning remote work?

Why do heritage brands struggle to reinvent themselves?

Questions should never summarize conclusions.

Level Four

Body Text

The body copy defines the reading experience.

It should remain exceptionally readable.

Paragraphs should breathe.

Lines should never feel crowded.

Readers should be able to comfortably spend twenty minutes reading without fatigue.

Level Five

Metadata

Metadata includes:

- Reading time
- Coordinates
- Publication date
- Category
- Sources
- Captions

Metadata should remain visually quiet.

It exists to support reading rather than interrupt it.

Level Six

Footnotes

The smallest typographic level.

Still fully readable.

Never decorative.

Footnotes should reinforce the scholarly nature of the Atlas while remaining visually unobtrusive.

Rhythm

Typography is not only about fonts.

It is about rhythm.

Every page should establish a consistent reading cadence.

Large statement.

Pause.

Question.

Pause.

Paragraph.

Whitespace.

Image.

Paragraph.

Quote.

Paragraph.

Readers should feel guided rather than hurried.

Whitespace is therefore considered part of typography rather than layout.

Pull Quotes

Every substantial essay should contain one carefully chosen pull quote.

Pull quotes should not summarize.

They should amplify.

Readers encountering only the pull quote should become more curious about the surrounding argument.

Pull quotes should be visually generous.

Large margins.

Ample whitespace.

No decorative quotation marks.

The typography itself provides emphasis.

Lists

Lists should remain rare.

When used, they should communicate clarity rather than efficiency.

Avoid long uninterrupted bullet lists.

Instead, favor grouped ideas with short explanatory paragraphs.

The Atlas is an editorial publication, not technical documentation.

Numbers

Numbers should always improve understanding.

Avoid excessive precision where approximation communicates more naturally.

Examples:

Instead of

17.3%

consider

approximately 17%

unless precision itself is meaningful.

Reading should remain conversational.

Emphasis

Emphasis should be achieved through hierarchy rather than decoration.

Preferred methods:

- Position
- Scale
- Whitespace
- Weight

- Italics (used sparingly)

Avoid relying on:

- Multiple colors
- Underlining
- Excessive bolding
- Decorative styling

When everything is emphasized, nothing is.

Reading Width

One of the defining characteristics of the Atlas should be comfortable line length.

Text columns should remain narrow enough to encourage sustained reading.

Readers should never need to search for the beginning of the next line.

Long-form essays should prioritize comfort over maximizing screen width.

The Atlas should always feel like opening a well-designed book rather than stretching a document across a monitor.

Responsive Behavior

Typography should scale proportionally across devices.

On smaller screens:

- hierarchy remains identical,
- proportions remain consistent,
- reading comfort remains the priority.

No typographic level should disappear entirely because of device size.

The publication should feel like the same publication on every screen.

Accessibility

Typography should remain accessible to all readers.

This includes:

- generous line spacing,
- strong contrast,
- scalable text,
- semantic heading structure,
- distinguishable links,
- readable metadata,
- sufficient spacing around interactive elements.

Accessibility should never be treated as a compromise.

Clear typography benefits every reader.

Design Implications

Typography influences every subsequent standard.

Layout exists to support typography.

Motion exists to protect typography.

Photography exists to complement typography.

Color exists to organize typography.

The Atlas should always feel designed around reading rather than around screens.

Why This Standard Exists

Digital design often treats typography as one component among many.

The Atlas rejects that hierarchy.

Typography is the publication.

Every page ultimately asks a visitor to spend time reading.

The success of the Atlas therefore depends less on visual novelty than on the comfort, clarity, and rhythm of its typography.

If readers remember the ideas but forget the interface, the typography has succeeded.

Future Considerations

The typographic system should remain remarkably stable over time.

Future redesigns may introduce new layouts, interactions, or technologies, but the relationship between Libre Baskerville and Montserrat should remain unchanged unless a compelling editorial reason emerges.

The Atlas should eventually become recognizable from typography alone.

If all photographs, colors, and interface elements were removed, a reader familiar with the publication should still recognize it immediately through its rhythm, hierarchy, and voice.

Layout System

"Space is not empty. Space is where understanding happens."

Purpose

The Layout System establishes the spatial language of the Atlas.

Rather than maximizing the amount of content visible on a screen, the Atlas prioritizes comfort, rhythm, and sustained attention. Every margin, column, image, and block of whitespace exists to support reading rather than density.

The layout should disappear behind the content.

Readers should never think about grids.

They should simply feel that every element occupies exactly the space it needs.

The objective is not efficiency.

The objective is clarity.

Guiding Principle

The Atlas should feel designed for thinking.

Thinking requires room.

Pages should breathe.

Ideas should have space to develop.

Images should have room to exist.

Nothing should feel compressed in order to fit more content above the fold.

Whitespace is not empty.

Whitespace is editorial pacing.

Philosophy

Many modern websites are designed around dashboards.

The Atlas is designed around books.

When reading a well-designed book, the margins are never questioned.

They simply create comfort.

The Atlas should function the same way.

Every page should feel like opening the next spread of a carefully typeset publication.

Scrolling replaces turning pages, but the experience should remain similarly calm.

Layout Hierarchy

Every page follows the same spatial rhythm.

Statement



Question



Reading



Reflection



Connection

Readers should always understand where they are within a page without consciously interpreting the interface.

The layout itself should communicate hierarchy.

Reading Width

Reading comfort takes priority over available screen space.

Long-form text should never span the full width of a large monitor.

Instead, the Atlas maintains a fixed reading column that encourages sustained attention.

Readers should be able to move naturally from one line to the next without searching for the beginning of the following sentence.

Extra screen space should become margin rather than additional text width.

Large displays should feel more generous.

Not more crowded.

Grid Philosophy

The Atlas uses an invisible grid.

The grid exists to support consistency rather than visual rigidity.

Readers should never perceive the grid directly.

Instead, they should experience alignment, rhythm, and balance.

The grid should remain flexible enough to accommodate essays, photography, presentations, diagrams, and research reports while preserving a recognizable visual language.

Consistency is more important than symmetry.

The Persistent Panel

The Blue Ink panel is the only permanently fixed architectural element within the Atlas.

It is not a sidebar.

It is not navigation alone.

It is orientation.

Throughout the publication, the panel quietly reminds readers where they are.

It should feel similar to the spine of a printed book.

Constant.

Reliable.

Never distracting.

The panel anchors the reading experience while allowing the primary content to change freely.

Purpose of the Panel

The persistent panel should contain:

- Name
- Academic affiliation
- Current location (optional)
- Contact information
- Primary navigation
- Download CV
- Theme switch (future consideration)
- Atlas coordinate (where appropriate)

Its content should remain remarkably stable.

Readers should quickly learn that this area communicates structure rather than content.

Margins

Margins are not decorative.

Margins provide cognitive rest.

Every page should include generous outer margins regardless of screen size.

Margins separate the reader from the edge of the browser and create the feeling of entering a publication rather than an application.

The Atlas should never feel crowded against the edges of the screen.

Whitespace

Whitespace is an active design element.

It performs several functions simultaneously.

It slows reading.

It establishes hierarchy.

It separates ideas.

It frames photography.

It creates emphasis.

Whenever uncertainty exists, prefer additional whitespace over additional visual elements.

Whitespace is rarely wasted.

Vertical Rhythm

Every page should follow a consistent rhythm of expansion and compression.

Large statements receive generous spacing.

Questions breathe.

Body copy becomes more compact.

Images introduce pauses.

Pull quotes create moments of reflection.

The spacing between sections should become recognizable over time.

Readers should begin anticipating the rhythm subconsciously.

This rhythm contributes as much to the Atlas identity as typography or color.

Images

Images should never interrupt reading.

Instead, they should punctuate it.

Every image should have a clear editorial purpose.

Images may:

- provide evidence
- establish atmosphere
- introduce observation
- support an argument

Images should never exist solely to decorate empty space.

Image Width

Images should align to the reading grid.

Exceptionally important photographs may intentionally exceed the reading column to create visual emphasis.

These moments should remain rare.

Their rarity creates impact.

Long Reports

Research reports require a modified layout.

The primary reading column remains unchanged.

However, a secondary navigation column appears on the right.

This floating column provides:

- section headings
- current position
- quick navigation
- progress indicator

The navigation should remain subtle.

Readers should always feel encouraged to continue reading rather than jump ahead.

Presentation Layouts

Design projects differ from essays.

Slides become the primary content.

Speaker notes become the secondary content.

Both should remain visible simultaneously whenever screen size allows.

The objective is to recreate the experience of presenting the work rather than merely displaying exported slides.

Reading Entries

Reading entries intentionally simplify the layout.

Photo.

Title.

Question.

Read Original.

Summary.

Favorite Passages.

My Worldview.

No additional navigation.

No complexity.

Reading entries should feel intimate.

Notes

Notes represent the simplest page type within the Atlas.

Title.

Short introduction.

Essay.

Embedded photographs.

Nothing else.

The simplicity distinguishes Notes from formal research.

They should feel closer to journal entries than publications.

Photography

Photography galleries require the most restraint.

The interface should almost disappear.

Navigation should remain visible without competing with the images.

Captions should appear quietly.

Large margins should frame photographs rather than contain them.

The gallery should feel like walking through an exhibition.

Not scrolling through social media.

Observatory

The Observatory deliberately contrasts with the Atlas.

The Atlas represents completed investigations.

The Observatory represents ongoing curiosity.

Its layout should feel lighter.

More open.

Readers should understand immediately that these pages document work in progress.

Not finished conclusions.

Continue Exploring

Every project concludes with Continue Exploring.

This section is not a recommendation engine.

It is an editorial transition.

Readers should leave one page already thinking about the next.

Connections should feel intentional rather than algorithmic.

The Atlas should resemble a museum where one room naturally leads into another.

Responsive Design

The Atlas should remain fundamentally the same publication across every device.

Responsive design should preserve experience rather than duplicate layout.

On smaller screens:

- typography scales proportionally,
- margins remain generous,
- hierarchy remains unchanged,
- navigation simplifies without disappearing,
- reading remains the priority.

Mobile should never become a reduced version of the Atlas.

It should become a more intimate one.

Design Implications

Layout decisions should always answer one question:

Does this make reading easier?

If the answer is no, reconsider the decision.

Beautiful layouts that reduce comprehension have failed.

Simple layouts that encourage sustained attention have succeeded.

Why This Standard Exists

Most web layouts optimize for interaction.

The Atlas optimizes for contemplation.

Its readers are expected to spend ten, twenty, or even thirty minutes with a single piece.

That behavior requires a fundamentally different approach to spatial design.

Instead of maximizing content density, the Atlas maximizes intellectual comfort.

Every margin, grid, image placement, and section break contributes to this goal.

Readers should leave remembering the ideas.

Never the interface.

Future Considerations

The layout system should remain remarkably stable over time.

New domains, page templates, and content types should be accommodated by extending the existing layout language rather than inventing new ones.

Future interactive features should always defer to the editorial structure established here.

The Atlas should grow like a library.

Each new addition should feel immediately at home beside everything that came before.

Standard 08

Motion System

"Motion should reveal, never perform."

Purpose

The Motion System defines how movement behaves throughout the Atlas.

Unlike many contemporary digital experiences, the Atlas does not use animation to entertain, attract attention, or demonstrate technical sophistication. Motion exists solely to improve comprehension by communicating hierarchy, continuity, and interaction.

Every animation should answer a question.

What changed?

Where did it go?

What can I do next?

If motion cannot answer one of these questions, it should not exist.

Movement is a communication tool.

Never decoration.

Guiding Principle

The Atlas is a publication.

Publications are remembered for ideas, not animations.

Movement should therefore feel almost invisible.

Readers should rarely notice transitions consciously.

Instead, the experience should feel calm, continuous, and uninterrupted.

When motion succeeds, it disappears.

Philosophy

The internet often treats animation as spectacle.

Buttons bounce.

Cards spin.

Menus explode.

Elements slide across the screen.

These interactions may demonstrate technical ability, but they often compete with reading.

The Atlas rejects this philosophy.

Movement should behave the same way punctuation behaves in writing.

A comma slows the reader.

A paragraph break creates space.

A chapter introduces a transition.

Motion should serve the same purpose.

It should create rhythm rather than excitement.

The interface should never ask readers to admire itself.

Principles of Motion

Every interaction within the Atlas should follow four principles.

Motion communicates.

Animation should explain relationships between interface elements.

It should never exist solely because movement is possible.

Motion reassures.

Subtle transitions confirm that an action has been completed.

Readers should always understand what changed.

Motion preserves continuity.

Pages should feel connected.

Moving between domains should resemble walking through adjacent rooms rather than teleporting between unrelated screens.

Motion respects attention.

Animations should never interrupt reading.

Once reading begins, the interface should become still.

Where Motion Is Appropriate

Motion should appear only when it improves understanding.

Examples include:

- Hover states
- Page transitions
- Expanding folders
- Opening project cards
- Image loading
- Navigation feedback
- Search results
- Tab changes
- Continue Exploring transitions

Each of these interactions communicates a meaningful change in state.

Where Motion Is Not Appropriate

Motion should never be used simply to create visual interest.

Avoid:

- bouncing elements
- parallax scrolling
- decorative page reveals
- automatic carousels

- looping interface animations
- unnecessary loading effects
- attention-grabbing hover animations
- background animations

If movement competes with reading, it should be removed.

Hover States

Hover interactions should communicate possibility.

Nothing more.

Readers should understand:

"This element is interactive."

Hover states should remain understated.

Preferred changes include:

- subtle color shift
- slight underline
- gentle opacity adjustment
- minimal elevation

Avoid dramatic scaling, rotation, or exaggerated motion.

The Atlas should reward precision rather than surprise.

Page Transitions

Transitions between pages should reinforce continuity.

Readers should feel they are moving through a connected publication rather than loading isolated webpages.

Transitions should be:

- brief
- smooth
- understated
- predictable

Navigation should never feel abrupt.

Equally, transitions should never delay access to content.

Atlas Navigation

The Atlas itself provides one of the few opportunities for expressive motion.

When a visitor selects a domain, the transition should feel like moving deeper into the map.

Circles should not explode outward or dramatically rearrange.

Instead, they should gently yield to the next layer of information.

Movement should reinforce the metaphor of exploration.

Not software navigation.

Folder Navigation

Folders should open with restraint.

The interaction should resemble opening an archival drawer.

Not launching an application.

The transition should feel deliberate.

Readers should sense that they are uncovering material rather than triggering software.

Photography

Photography deserves particularly quiet transitions.

Images should appear gradually.

Never abruptly.

Gallery navigation should remain unobtrusive.

The viewer's attention belongs to the photographs.

Not the gallery interface.

Reading Experience

Once reading begins, motion should nearly disappear.

No animated sidebars.

No floating effects.

No distracting interface changes.

The publication should become still.

Reading itself becomes the interaction.

Scroll Behavior

Scrolling should feel natural.

No scroll-jacking.

No forced transitions.

No artificially slowed movement.

Readers should control their own pace.

The Atlas follows the reader.

Never the reverse.

Loading

Loading should communicate patience rather than delay.

Whenever possible:

Content appears progressively.

Text loads immediately.

Images follow.

The interface should never block reading while waiting for secondary content.

Fast loading is preferable to elaborate loading animations.

Observatory

The Observatory represents ongoing curiosity.

Its interactions may feel slightly more dynamic than the Atlas itself.

However, even here, movement should remain restrained.

The Observatory should feel active.

Never busy.

Accessibility

Every animation must respect user preferences.

Reduced-motion settings should be fully supported.

No essential information should depend upon animation.

The Atlas should remain completely understandable without motion.

Movement enhances clarity.

It never creates it.

Timing

Animation timing should remain consistent throughout the publication.

Readers gradually develop expectations.

Consistency creates confidence.

Transitions should generally complete before they become noticeable.

Long animations increase perceived effort.

Short animations increase perceived responsiveness.

The Atlas should occupy the middle ground.

Design Implications

Motion should always feel editorial.

Not theatrical.

Readers should never describe the Atlas by saying:

"That website had cool animations."

Instead, they should struggle to remember whether the site used animation at all.

What they should remember are the ideas.

The smoother the reading experience becomes, the less visible the motion system has been.

Why This Standard Exists

Digital products often celebrate motion because motion demonstrates interactivity.

The Atlas celebrates stillness because stillness demonstrates confidence.

A publication does not need to constantly reassure readers that it is modern.

It needs to reassure readers that it values their attention.

Restrained motion reflects that respect.

Every unnecessary animation asks readers to divide their focus.

The Atlas asks them to deepen it instead.

Future Considerations

Emerging technologies will make increasingly sophisticated animations possible.

The Atlas should adopt new interaction techniques only when they improve comprehension without disrupting attention.

As the publication expands into interactive maps, research visualizations, and future digital experiences, movement should remain subordinate to ideas.

The central philosophy should never change:

Readers should remember what they learned, not how the interface moved.

Standard 09

Information Architecture

"Organization is itself a form of communication."

Purpose

The Information Architecture defines how knowledge is organized throughout the Atlas.

Unlike conventional portfolios, where work is separated by medium, chronology, or employer, the Atlas organizes information according to questions, disciplines, and relationships.

This structure reflects the publication's central belief:

Knowledge becomes more valuable when its connections become visible.

The architecture therefore exists to encourage discovery rather than navigation.

Readers should gradually build an understanding of the Atlas by moving between related ideas instead of following predetermined paths.

The objective is not efficiency.

The objective is synthesis.

Guiding Principle

The Atlas should behave more like a library than a filing cabinet.

A filing cabinet stores information.

A library creates relationships.

Readers should constantly discover ideas they were not originally looking for.

The Atlas should reward curiosity.

Philosophy

Traditional websites answer the question:

"Where is the page I'm looking for?"

The Atlas answers a different question:

"What should I discover next?"

This distinction changes everything.

Navigation is no longer about minimizing clicks.

Navigation becomes editorial.

Every transition becomes an opportunity to introduce another perspective.

Every connection becomes another coordinate within the larger map.

Readers should feel that they are exploring.

Not searching.

The Hierarchy

Every piece of content belongs within the same organizational structure.

Homepage



Atlas



Domain



Folder



Project



Artifact



Continue Exploring

Every page in the publication should occupy one identifiable position within this hierarchy.

No content should exist outside the system.

The Homepage

The homepage serves only one purpose:

Orientation.

It should never become a landing page filled with recent work, announcements, featured projects, or promotional content.

Instead, it introduces the central question of the Atlas and invites readers to begin exploring.

The homepage consists of only three sections:

1. Hero Statement
2. The Atlas
3. The Observatory

Nothing more.

Its restraint communicates confidence.

The Atlas

The Atlas is the primary navigation system.

It is not a menu.

It is not a sitemap.

It is a conceptual map.

Each circle represents a major domain of inquiry.

Rather than categorizing work by format, the Atlas categorizes work by the questions it seeks to answer.

The current domains are:

- Strategy

- Communication
- Design
- I/O Psychology
- Reading
- Notes

At the center sits:

Organizations

This is not a clickable element.

It is the conceptual center of the publication.

Every domain ultimately returns to this idea.

Domains

Domains represent broad areas of investigation.

They are intentionally stable.

New projects should almost always fit within an existing domain.

New domains should only be created when an entirely new body of inquiry emerges.

Domains answer broad questions.

Examples:

Strategy asks:

What should organizations do?

Communication asks:

How should organizations communicate?

I/O Psychology asks:

Why do people behave this way?

Design asks:

How does design shape understanding?

Reading asks:

What ideas have changed my thinking?

Notes asks:

What have I been noticing?

Domains should remain intellectually distinct while overlapping naturally.

Folders

Folders introduce the second layer of organization.

Unlike domains, folders describe more specific areas of investigation.

For example:

Strategy

↓

Market Entry

↓

Project

or

Communication

↓

Crisis Communication



Project

Folders should remain practical rather than philosophical.

Their purpose is orientation.

Readers should immediately understand the kind of work contained within them.

Projects

Projects represent the fundamental unit of the Atlas.

Every project should answer one meaningful question.

Projects may take several forms:

- research reports
- essays
- communication simulations
- presentations
- reading entries
- photography collections
- notes

Despite these differences, every project should feel like part of the same publication.

Consistency comes from structure rather than format.

Artifacts

Artifacts document evidence.

Every substantial project should conclude with an Artifact section whenever appropriate.

Artifacts may include:

- source material
- interview notes
- process sketches
- datasets
- presentation decks
- annotated references
- additional photography
- research frameworks
- implementation documents

Artifacts demonstrate how conclusions were reached.

They transform finished work into transparent investigations.

Continue Exploring

Every project concludes with Continue Exploring.

This is one of the defining characteristics of the Atlas.

Rather than ending a reader's journey, every page should begin another.

Continue Exploring should never function like algorithmic recommendations.

Instead, it should be curated.

Connections should reveal meaningful relationships between ideas.

For example:

A project about Google's hybrid work policy might connect to:

- Worker Motivation

- Microsoft's Organizational Culture
- Observations from the Shenzhen Metro
- The Culture Code
- Office Architecture Photography

The objective is synthesis.

Not engagement.

The Observatory

Unlike the Atlas, which contains completed investigations, the Observatory documents work in progress.

It provides visibility into current curiosity rather than completed conclusions.

The Observatory contains:

- Currently Reading
- Currently Researching
- Currently Photographing
- Currently Exploring
- Questions I'm Living With
- Upcoming Essays

These pages remain intentionally unfinished.

They remind readers that the Atlas continues evolving.

The Index

The Index functions as the publication's back matter.

Every page within the Atlas appears alphabetically.

Readers should be able to browse:

Organizations.

Books.

Concepts.

Cities.

Companies.

Projects.

Essays.

Photography.

People.

The Index is not intended as primary navigation.

Instead, it rewards readers already familiar with the publication.

It reinforces the feeling that the Atlas behaves more like a book than a website.

Atlas Coordinates

Every project receives a coordinate.

Coordinates quietly reinforce the conceptual map.

Examples:

S-03

Strategy

Market Entry

COM-07

Communication

Crisis Communication

IO-12

Consumer Psychology

Coordinates should appear consistently across every project.

Small.

Subtle.

Systematic.

Readers should gradually recognize them without requiring explanation.

Growth Without Reorganization

One of the primary goals of the Information Architecture is permanence.

New work should be added without requiring existing work to move.

If a domain consistently becomes overcrowded, folders should expand before entirely new domains are introduced.

The Atlas should grow through depth rather than fragmentation.

Readers returning years later should still recognize the publication.

Search

Search exists as a tool.

Not a replacement for exploration.

Readers searching for:

"Google"

should still encounter related material beyond the original report.

Search results should emphasize relationships alongside exact matches.

The Atlas should encourage accidental discovery.

Design Implications

The architecture influences every subsequent design decision.

Navigation should encourage wandering.

Folders should reduce complexity.

Projects should answer questions.

Artifacts should reveal process.

Continue Exploring should strengthen relationships.

The Index should reinforce completeness.

The Observatory should communicate ongoing curiosity.

The architecture should make the Atlas feel infinite without ever feeling overwhelming.

Why This Standard Exists

Information architecture determines how readers think about a publication.

Organizing work by employer, semester, or media type encourages readers to view projects as isolated accomplishments.

Organizing work around ideas encourages readers to construct a mental model of the author's thinking.

That distinction lies at the heart of the Atlas.

Visitors should not remember individual projects first.

They should remember the network connecting them.

When readers begin saying:

"I remember that essay connected to another piece about trust..."

rather than

"I remember seeing a PDF about Google..."

the architecture has succeeded.

Future Considerations

The architecture should remain stable for many years.

Future domains should emerge only when genuinely new areas of inquiry develop.

The Atlas should resist unnecessary expansion.

Every addition should answer a single question:

Does this deepen the map, or merely add another destination?

Only additions that deepen the relationships between ideas belong within the Atlas.

Standard 10

Wayfinding & Navigation

"The best navigation disappears. The best wayfinding helps people understand where they are."

Purpose

The Wayfinding & Navigation System defines how readers move through the Atlas.

Unlike conventional websites that prioritize speed and efficiency, the Atlas prioritizes orientation, context, and discovery. Readers should always understand where they are, how they arrived there, and what meaningful directions they can explore next.

Navigation is not simply a method of moving between pages.

It is an editorial device.

Every navigational decision should reinforce the Atlas as a connected body of knowledge rather than a collection of isolated webpages.

Readers should feel less like users navigating software and more like visitors moving through a thoughtfully curated archive.

Guiding Principle

Navigation answers the question:

"Where can I go?"

Wayfinding answers the question:

"Where am I?"

The Atlas should prioritize the second question.

Readers should rarely feel lost.

More importantly, they should understand the relationship between the page they are reading and the larger publication surrounding it.

Orientation always precedes movement.

Philosophy

The Atlas borrows more from museums, libraries, universities, and exhibition design than from modern software interfaces.

When someone visits a museum, they are not simply told which room comes next.

They are shown where they are within the larger exhibition.

Each gallery belongs to a wing.

Each wing belongs to a building.

Each building contributes to a larger story.

The Atlas should create the same experience.

Readers should gradually construct a mental map of the publication as they explore it.

Navigation Hierarchy

Navigation should exist at four distinct levels.

Each serves a different purpose.

Global Navigation

The primary navigation remains visible throughout the publication.

Its role is orientation rather than exploration.

It should remain stable regardless of where the reader travels.

Items include:

- Search bar
- Atlas
- Writing
- Photography
- Index
- About

These items should rarely change.

Stability builds familiarity.

Domain Navigation

Entering a domain changes the reader's focus.

Rather than overwhelming readers with every available project, domains reveal only the folders relevant to that area of inquiry.

For example:

Strategy

Market Entry

Competitive Landscape

Growth Strategy

Strategic Partnerships

Business Models

Industry Analysis

This transition should feel like entering another room within the same building.

Folder Navigation

Folders introduce specific investigations.

Readers should immediately understand the scope of work available.

Every folder contains project cards following a consistent structure.

Each project card displays:

- Hero image
- Project title
- Guiding question
- Estimated reading time
- Atlas coordinate

No additional metadata should compete with these elements.

Project Navigation

Within individual projects, navigation becomes minimal.

Once reading begins, the interface should withdraw.

Readers should focus on ideas rather than options.

Project pages include:

- Overview
- Analysis
- Recommendations
- Artifact

or alternative structures depending on project type.

These tabs exist to organize long-form content.

Not to encourage jumping between sections.

Persistent Orientation

Every page should quietly communicate three pieces of information.

Where am I?

What larger section am I inside?

How does this connect to everything else?

This information should remain visible without interrupting reading.

Readers should never need to reconstruct their location.

Breadcrumbs

Traditional breadcrumbs communicate hierarchy.

The Atlas should communicate context.

Rather than:

Home

Strategy

Market Entry

Costco

The Atlas should present:

Atlas

Strategy

Market Entry

S-03

Coordinates become part of orientation.

Not simply labels.

The breadcrumb should feel like locating oneself on a map.

Atlas Coordinates

Coordinates reinforce the conceptual geography of the publication.

Examples:

S-03

Strategy

Market Entry

COM-02

Internal Communications

IO-07

Organizational Behavior

Coordinates should appear:

- beneath project titles,
- within breadcrumbs,

- inside the Index,
- within search results,
- inside Continue Exploring.

They should never dominate the interface.

Instead, they quietly teach readers that every page belongs somewhere within a larger system.

Continue Exploring

Continue Exploring is the most important navigational feature in the Atlas.

Unlike "Related Posts" or algorithmic recommendations, Continue Exploring is entirely editorial.

Every recommendation should answer one of four questions:

Expand

Show a broader perspective.

Example:

Google Hybrid



Worker Motivation

Compare

Offer an alternative example.

Example:

Twitter Rebrand



Patagonia Brand Identity

Deepen

Introduce supporting research.

Example:

Duolingo



Habit Formation

Observe

Shift from formal analysis to lived experience.

Example:

Public Transit Strategy



Observations from the Shenzhen Metro

These relationships should be curated manually.

The Atlas should never rely on automated recommendation systems.

Editorial judgment is part of the publication's identity.

Search

Search should behave like a research tool.

Not a file finder.

Searching for:

"trust"

should return:

- essays,
- books,
- photography,
- notes,
- case studies,
- communication simulations,

organized by relevance to the concept rather than content type.

Search should encourage synthesis.

Not simply retrieval.

The Index

The Index functions as the Atlas's master catalogue.

Unlike search, which begins with a query, the Index invites browsing.

Every project should appear only once.

Entries should remain concise.

Readers should gradually realize the scale of the publication through browsing the Index.

The experience should resemble flipping through the final pages of a reference book.

The Observatory

The Observatory intentionally breaks traditional navigation.

Readers do not descend through folders.

Instead, each circle opens directly into a living page.

For example:

Currently Reading



Current books



Notes



Favorite passages



Questions

The Observatory feels lighter because it documents active curiosity rather than completed work.

Dead Ends

The Atlas should never create dead ends.

Every page should provide a meaningful next step.

Readers should never encounter a page and think:

"I'm finished."

Instead, they should naturally ask:

"Where does this idea lead?"

The Atlas should continually answer that question.

Navigation Density

Navigation should remain remarkably sparse.

Whenever possible:

show fewer choices.

More options create more hesitation.

The Atlas should reveal information progressively.

Readers should never feel overwhelmed by menus.

Complexity should emerge through exploration rather than presentation.

Mobile Navigation

Mobile should preserve orientation rather than duplicate desktop behavior.

The navigation should simplify without losing structure.

The persistent panel transforms into a collapsible Atlas drawer.

Coordinates remain visible.

Continue Exploring remains unchanged.

Reading remains the priority.

The Atlas should feel equally coherent on every device.

Design Implications

Navigation should create confidence.

Readers should understand:

- where they are,
- where they came from,
- where they might go next,
- why those places are connected.

If readers begin exploring without consciously thinking about navigation, the system has succeeded.

Why This Standard Exists

Most websites treat navigation as infrastructure.

The Atlas treats navigation as storytelling.

Every transition contributes to the reader's understanding of the publication.

Every recommendation teaches another relationship.

Every breadcrumb reinforces the conceptual map.

Good navigation helps people reach a destination.

Good wayfinding helps people understand the landscape.

The Atlas should always prioritize the landscape.

Future Considerations

As the Atlas grows to hundreds of projects, navigation should become richer through relationships rather than more complicated through menus.

Future additions may include:

- concept maps,
- thematic collections,
- seasonal reading paths,
- curated exhibitions,
- research trails,
- interconnected essays.

Each addition should preserve the central philosophy:

Readers should never feel like they are clicking through a website.

They should feel like they are exploring a living archive.