

The Chopping Block

Graphic design **with a twist**

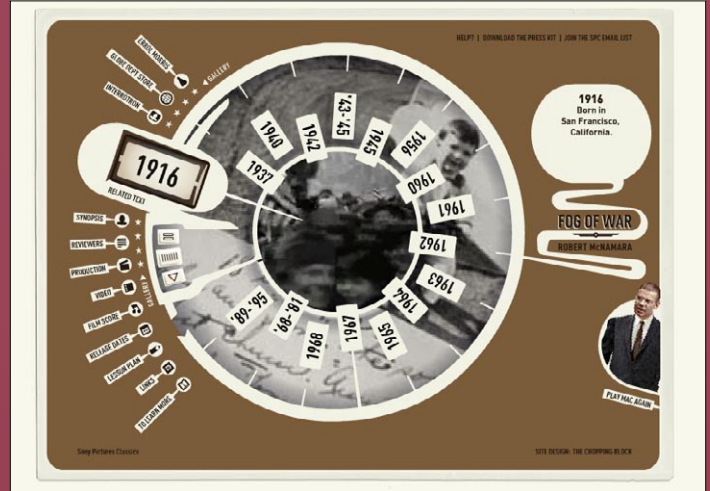
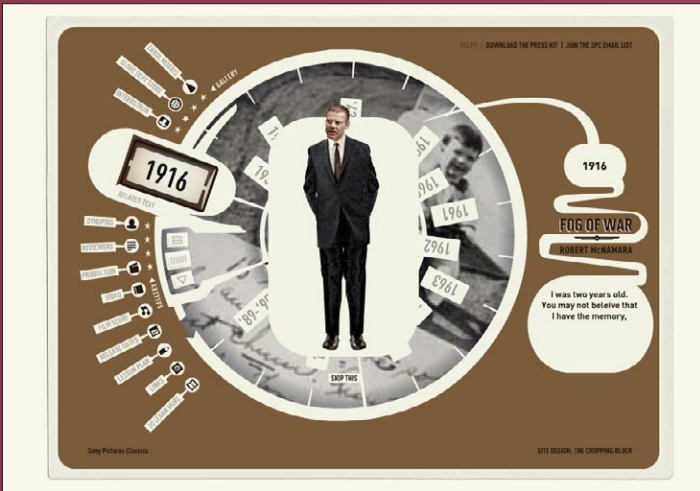
The Chopping Block's keen sense of humor and design shine using Adobe® Photoshop® CS software



In 1996, a group of Cooper Union graduates with a common vision and the motto, “World Domination through Graphic Design,” established The Chopping Block, Inc. in New York City. Today The Chopping Block is going stronger than ever.

Along with its keen sense of humor, “The Block” is known for its fun, irreverent, and original designs for Web sites, advertising campaigns, brand identities, kiosk applications, and print projects. Adobe Photoshop software has become increasingly essential to the firm’s ability to realize its fresh design concepts, executed across a wide variety of media.

The Chopping Block designers found the scripting capabilities and support for metadata in Adobe Photoshop CS especially important in creating a photo-intensive Web site for the documentary *Fog of War*.



“Adobe Photoshop is a great bridge between the worlds of still imagery, motion graphics, and the Web, making it crucial to our workflow.”

Chandler McWilliams, senior design technologist,
The Chopping Block, Inc.

“Good design spans all media,” says Chandler McWilliams, senior design technologist for The Chopping Block. “Adobe Photoshop is a great bridge between the worlds of still imagery, motion graphics, and the Web, making it crucial to our workflow.”

With the introduction of Adobe Photoshop CS, Photoshop has become an even more essential tool in The Chopping Block’s design repertoire. One of the firm’s specialties is creating image-intensive Web sites—an area in which Photoshop CS excels. The newest version of the software makes it easier

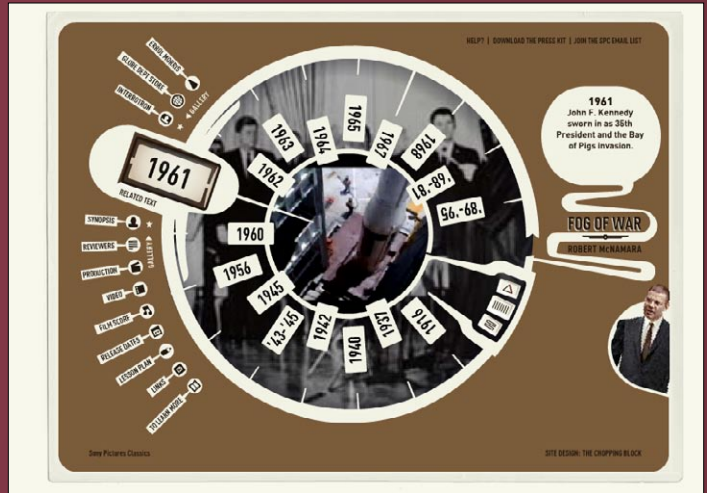
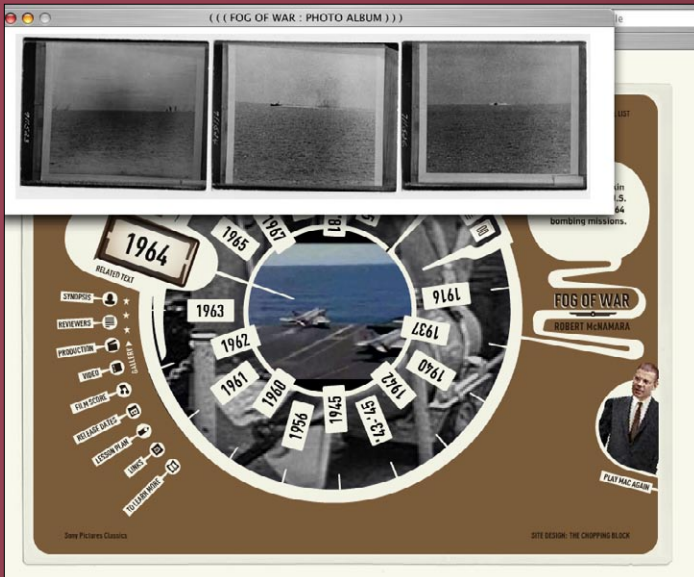
than ever to bring still imagery to the Web and provides powerful new scripting capabilities that automate manual tasks and streamline handling of copious media assets.

800 images to manage

Scripting and support for metadata in Photoshop CS were especially important in creating a Web site for the Sony Pictures Classics movie *Fog of War*, which focuses on the life of former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. According to McWilliams, one of the main design goals was to link the Web site closely with the film by making the site very photo-intensive, with a lot of primary-source photography used to add validity.

As the basis for the site, The Chopping Block was given 10 CDs with close to 800 images—almost too many to manage—from sources ranging from the National Archives and old newspapers to McNamara’s family pictures. “With this site, the biggest pitfall was figuring out where to start because there were so many assets and so much

Using the enhanced File Browser in Photoshop CS, The Chopping Block team was able to organize almost 800 images by date, subject, and other criteria, making it easy to locate the appropriate images for each section as they built the Web site.



content,” says Rachel Bell, The Chopping Block project manager. “We did a lot of brainstorming to figure out the best way to present the assets and worked closely with the studio, Sony Pictures Classics, and Director Errol Morris. We wanted to be sure that we reinforced the film but also educated viewers with additional content.”

Metadata streamlines the project

The firm used enhanced scripting in Adobe Photoshop CS to add metadata to the images. Then, taking advantage of support for metadata in the enhanced File Browser in Photoshop CS, the team organized images by date, subject, and other criteria. Later, the team quickly found images that were appropriate for each section of the site. “If we had not been able to use scripting and metadata, we probably would have had to hire a full-time intern just to organize the images,” says McWilliams.

McWilliams adds that although it would have been possible to create the site without using Photoshop CS, it would probably have taken twice as long. “Honestly, it would not have been much fun,” says McWilliams. “Without Photoshop CS for image processing, it would have been a nightmare.”

Productivity through integration

The project was also streamlined because enhanced integration across the Adobe applications that are now part of the Adobe Creative Suite, including Adobe Photoshop CS and Adobe Illustrator® CS, also helped streamline the project. Many of the vector-based shapes for the *Fog of War* site, such as the stars and the wheel-shaped timeline for navigation, were created in Illustrator CS.

“It is getting easier all the time to move between Photoshop CS and Illustrator CS, making our workflow more efficient,” says McWilliams. “In particular, bringing Illustrator CS files into Photoshop CS is a matter of copying and pasting. It seems like a small thing, but it’s a big time-saver.”

The Chopping Block used Macromedia® Flash™ on the *Fog of War* Web site to embed stock video footage and tie back to the look and feel of the film. The integration of Photoshop CS with Flash was helpful in completing this part of the site efficiently.

Company

The Chopping Block
New York, New York
www.choppingblock.com

Challenge

Work efficiently with hundreds of images for a complex Web site.

Solution

Use enhanced scripting and support for metadata in Adobe Photoshop CS software.

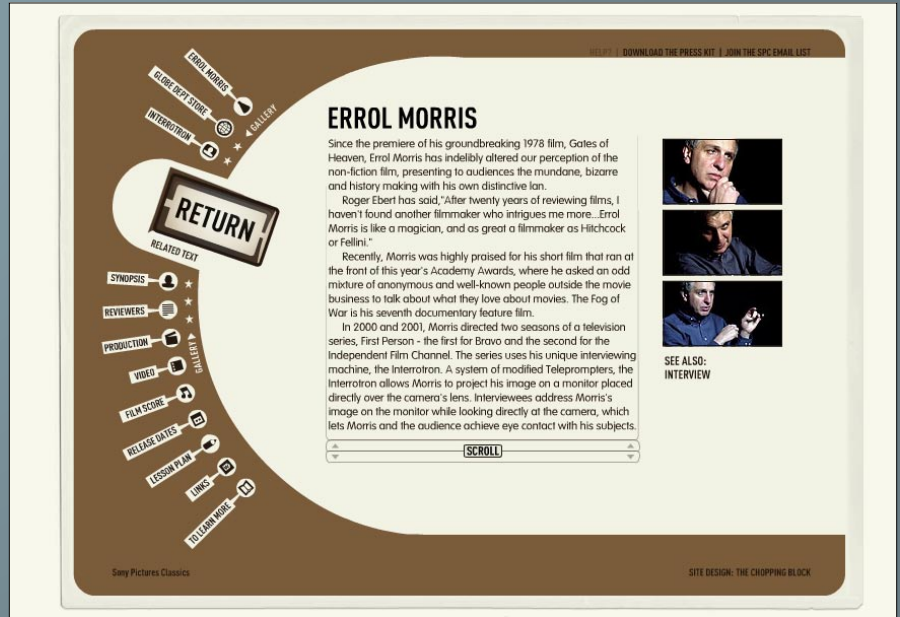
Benefits

The Chopping Block can organize media assets more efficiently, leaving more time for creative tasks.

Tool Kit

- Adobe Acrobat®
- Adobe Illustrator CS
- Adobe InDesign® CS
- Adobe Photoshop CS
- Apple Power Macintosh G4 computer

Enhanced integration across Adobe applications in the Adobe Creative Suite helped streamline production. Many of the vector-based shapes for the *Fog of War* Web site, such as the stars and the wheel-shaped timeline used for navigation, were created in Illustrator CS, and then copied and pasted into Photoshop CS.



“For a movie site, it’s nice to be able to show footage rather than having something like a list of images and thumbnails on an HTML page,” says McWilliams. “The integration between Flash and Photoshop CS definitely helped in easily showing footage of the film on the site.”

For the *Fog of War* Web site and other projects, great design at The Chopping Block relies on a workflow with Photoshop CS at the hub. “The exceptional speed and stability of Photoshop CS help us work faster and complete the highest-quality work,” says McWilliams. “We’ve used Photoshop since The Chopping Block’s founding and now, with Photoshop CS, Photoshop becomes more pivotal to our workflow every day.”

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Chandler McWilliams, senior design technologist,
The Chopping Block, Inc.

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