Objective
To locate and analyze the visual design of a corporate identity on the web.

Documentation
The two interfaces that I chose for visual design are www.ethelm.com and the Marshall Fields Bridal Registry kiosk. EthelM specializes in making chocolate as well as other sweet treats and Marshall Fields is a high-end department store founded in Chicago, IL. These interfaces contain an electronic environment, which consist of a dynamic boundary between the user and the machine that facilitates their control. Also, they contain more than five pages that display information intended for feedback or control and should be considered multi-page interfaces. The medium used for EthelM is a hybrid. It’s a website that requires the use of external devices such as the mouse and keyboard. The Marshall Fields Bridal Registry kiosk is not a hybrid; it is an interface that is displayed through a touch screen medium. The following are screen shots of the main pages. However, throughout the analysis I will include other images in reference to the analysis where appropriate.

Analysis for www.ethelm.com

- Proximity
At www.ethelm.com, (beginning from left to right of the homepage), the image references the Easter Holiday by showing relevant metaphors in the picture of rabbit ears and chocolates. The navigation bar lives in the middle section and it begins by showing links of the two approaching holidays, Easter and Mother’s Day at the top, below that are the links to their products, followed by other specialty or miscellaneous areas. All the other Easter related images are on the right side of the page and are grouped together and are not found in different areas of the page. This grouping emphasizes that there is a relation.

While at first glance, their use of proximity seems to be effective; it weakens after further exploration of the site. I hovered the mouse over every image to read the alt tags and discovered that only the images on the right side are hot/clickable. The blue squares are not clickable. Also, the image in the center of that area titled, Down with Love does not have any relationship to this company’s expertise. It’s an advertisement for a movie starting Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor. I took a look at the movie trailer and didn’t see much relating to EthelM. I did see that Ewan McGregor had a lollipop and that perhaps it was an EthelM product, but the site does not provide any information.
There are two items on that section that do not have any relation to Easter. At the very top there is a heart-shaped chocolate and on the second row to the left an image of a chocolate coin. I clicked on the images to see where I would be taken and the information on these pages regarding the products promote them as favors for other special occasions while the other images apply to the Easter theme.

The rest of the pages throughout the site have three icons in proximity of one another on the right side between the navigation, but do not have any relationship to one another. The My Account and Gift Center do not have a strong relationship to the links of the navigation section.

- Alignment
The text on the homepage is centered justified and this is evident throughout the navigation and the text in the right section.
The text on the pages found in the sections beginning from Deluxe Assortments to Internet Specials is aligned left justified within the columns. All the images are aligned to the left, underneath one another and the navigation is also aligned to the left in the column.

• Repetition
The secondary pages do not follow the homepage style. However, if you’re in a particular section, for example Truffles & Cremes all the images are underneath one another and the descriptions next to the images. The use of aligning the text and images consistently in the same fashion through the pages shows strong use of repetition. It’s evident that there is frequent occurrence of line (invisible), shape of the images, spatial relationship (adequate use of negative space). There are also about 3 or more typefaces, type sizes, weights, and colors used consistently on the secondary pages. Also, the consistent use of yellow, red, black and gray is consistent throughout the pages.

• Contrast
The homepage uses dark text on a light background for the navigation and light color text on a dark background. In saying that, the use of these contrasts are in contrast with one another as well. There are also about 3 or more typefaces, type sizes, weights, and colors used on the secondary pages. The font is also italicized and bolded for emphasis. Also, the uses of colors are warm such as yellow and red, but monochromatic tones are used as well such as black and gray.

• Text
There are also about 3 or more typefaces, type sizes, weights, and colors used on the secondary pages. They are also italicized and bolded for emphasis. The styles used seem to be Times New Roman, Arial and Verdana. The font styles that can be found consistently throughout the site are Sans Serif and Serif fonts.
• **Color**
The use of color creates a rich colorful scheme that relates to the colors of the images displaying the products. There is great use of browns, yellows, off-whites and reds. It definitely reaches the sweet tooth craving and subconsciously encourages purchasing the product!

• **Grid**
The images, text and navigation throughout the site (excluding the homepage) are evenly balanced in a 3-panel layout. All images are on the left side, descriptions in the middle and the navigation on the right panel.
Analysis for Marshall Fields Bridal Registry Kiosk

- **Proximity**
  All the buttons displayed are close to one another showing that there is a relationship. If the user chooses the Stork Club, the next page will display the options for running a search using the mother or father’s name.

If the person you are looking for cannot be found in the system, it will return a message displaying verbiage that there aren’t any names matching the systems information. The related information is close to one another emphasizing that there is a relationship. It is then followed by space and more verbiage offering assistance for the user. The information is also close to one another showing that there is a relationship.
The following is another example showing how the buttons are close to one another and how effectively the first six months of the year are on the left side of the screen and the other six months are on the right side and negative space divides the two columns.

• **Alignment**
  All the text on the screen and within the buttons is aligned in the center. The buttons are all the same size unless they do not have a relationship to one another. In the above example all the buttons displaying the months and the ‘unknown’ button are the same size, but the Quit and Go Back buttons are not because they do not have a relationship to running a search for an event taking place during the year.

• **Repetition**
  There is frequent occurrence of the shape of the buttons, size, typeface and weight of the text, use of the colors and design elements. Regardless of the page that the user may be on there remains a consistency of all of these features.
• **Contrast**
The main page has first letter of the word in a larger font, color and within a dark background for visual clarity.

The pages of the interface have dark text on a light background and light color text on a dark background for the buttons.
• **Text**
The text used for all the pages is a Sans Serif font and is used consistently throughout. The font size is the same with an occasional word in all caps. The example below shows the word PRINT in caps.

![Screen shot of gift registry system](image1)

• **Color**
The colors used in all the pages are white, black, green and brown. The text is either black or white, the color of the buttons are the famous green the Marshall Fields uses and the Quit and Go Back buttons are brown.

![Screen shot of gift registry system](image2)
• Grid
The use of the grid varies throughout the pages anywhere from one to four panels.

One Panel:

Three Panels:

Four Panels (split down the middle and half going horizontally):
Comparison
The designers for www.ethelM.com do not show a strong hierarchy of the information architecture. The birth of the company was due to their specialty in chocolate making and yet the top navigation (excluding the homepage) contains information about gardening and tours of their garden. It would be nice to see those links at the bottom of the pages and move the right navigation (products) to the top primary navigation bar. The designers did use some of the conventions to break up the page information into more defined areas by their use of the grid, negative space, text and image alignment. Yet, their overuse of different fonts, font sizes and colors did not add any value for further clarification. It was difficult to differentiate what was clickable and what was not.

The designers for the Marshall Fields Registry kiosk do show a strong hierarchy of the information architecture. A user is asked to pick an event and everything thereafter is very intuitive. The designers did use the conventions to break up the page information into more defined areas by their use of color, font family and size, the grid, negative space, text and image alignment. All the information displayed had a clean look and feel that added value to how the information was displayed. It was obvious was ‘clickable’ due to the consistent use of the buttons.

Conclusion
Both interfaces are similar in that they make heavy use of color, contrast and alignment. However, they differ by how well and effectively the designers used these elements. EthelM struggled in making those features be effective leaving the user to muddle and think about what was clickable. It makes the user think that if a link or image were clicked where would it go? While, the registry kiosk was designed very simple, its effective use of one font type and size, limited use of colors and same size buttons displayed consistently throughout the interface eliminate user error and few guessing.