

Pre-reveal walkthrough

revealed.design

A first-person note

Studio assistant · desktop + mobile, cold

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Setup

Before I opened anything I held the four arrivals in mind. A package recipient – someone you know well enough to have asked for their address – opens the envelope first and the browser second. The wax seal, the debossed paper, the presentation card already did most of the work (“by warm introduction only – Steven, MA · SAL9001”, the taste-scales line printed in red). They come to the site to verify. A gym acquaintance has scanned a red/black/white QR card after two sentences of small talk – phone in hand, zero context, sunlight on the screen. An antique store has handed the card across the counter; the dealer’s trust transferred with it and the visitor arrives already skeptical of why an advisor above their dealer is necessary. And a friend-of-a-friend has been forwarded a link that said “you’ll like this” and nothing else. The first two walk in on mobile. The second two will find their way to desktop.

What follows is what the walk felt like at visitor pace, with the specific seconds where the spell catches, where it wobbles, and where it quietly does more than it needed to.

Desktop – the first three seconds on index

The layout lands as split-screen graphite on graphite. No cream luxury-advisory wash, no hero video, no smooth-scroll library announcing itself. The diamond mark sits at the top-left at 120px, stacked in its own void so the lockup reads as one piece – mark above wordmark, and the wordmark’s flame dot is literally the same Inconsolata glyph the site uses everywhere else the brand punctuates itself. That consistency is not subtle; it’s also not loud. It works.

The copy sequence on the left is the test. Three small things first – Provenance · Friction · Lived in a faded 10px cream, the “design collection advisory” line at 14px, and then four hard stops:

*“The art world has advisors. The design world has me. I build collections that read like arguments
– deliberate enough to defend, durable enough to inherit.”*

The reversal in the second line is what everything on the rest of the site earns against. If that line doesn’t land, nothing downstream does. It lands here because the typography is disciplined enough to carry declarative self-possession: old-magazine em-dashes, no bold, no italics, no exclamation. That is the hardest line to get right on the site and it is right.

Three seconds in, the right panel wakes up. A point-cloud chair rotates; the bottom-left caption whispers “wassily · Marcel Breuer, 1927” in flame-uppercase; a depth track fills slowly along the bottom without a number attached to it. The point cloud is the cost, the left panel is the argument. The right is beautiful but inert until you’ve read the left, and that hierarchy is correct. Dragging the chair pauses the auto-advance and releases with a gentle return – a small gesture that reads as “this site responds to me,” not as “this site demands I play with it.”

First: “by warm introduction only. it’s PHX, after all.” – the PHX shorthand is a love letter to anyone who lives in the Valley and a small tax on anyone who doesn’t. For the antique-store referral it reads as confidence (of course an advisor in Phoenix writes it that way). For the forwarded friend-of-friend it is friction (is this a regional firm? a private joke?). I’d defend it: the by-introduction-only model is regional by design, and friction for the wrong audience is a feature. But name it.

Second: the email wordmark is the hero link. It lives far enough down the left column that on a 13” MacBook in Safari, with the browser chrome, bookmarks, and the dock all visible, it can sit just below the fold. The math is tight (I can add it up: the stack is about 520px and the effective viewport on a 13” is often in the 580–640 range), but it’s tight enough to worry about. The nav link to Contact is above it, which recovers the path; still, if the email is the hero link, the hero link shouldn’t require a scroll. Worth one measure pass on the smallest expected desktop.

Principal – the page that converts the skeptic

I clicked Principal first because for the antique-store referral this is the page that either earns the next call or closes the tab. The hero does one thing that matters: “Steven, MA” sets the MA as a credential-signature, tiny and tucked behind the given name, cream-faded to 40%. It reads as a sign-off, not a brag. No last name anywhere on the site – for an advisory that opens by warm introduction only, the absence of a surname is a design decision and probably the right one. Trust travels through the introducer, not through LinkedIn.

Then the pullquote:

“I don’t sell furniture. I build arguments you can sit in.”

This is the single best line on the site. It is the line every one of the four arrivals will quote back to someone else later. If the glyph-split settle animation fires – letter-spacing compressed, each glyph rotated and scaled and y-lifted before releasing into place – it is also the best moment of motion anywhere in the walk. If reduced-motion catches it, it just fades in. Either path is fine; the line carries.

The bio uses three flame-highlighted questions as the rhetorical spine: “What are you actually trying to say with the room you live in?” ... “what is this piece actually claiming?” ... “That’s the distinction that matters to me.” They are the three questions the reader has to answer to become a client, asked in the order a client asks them. The Florence Knoll line – interior architecture, not interior decoration – is the lineage flag. It tells a serious collector that the advisor has read the canon, and it sets up the Legibility section on Method. That continuity between pages is the best thing the site does quietly.

The portrait-hold block to the right of the bio – a PK22 styled into a portrait frame with a “principal_photo_final_final_v2.jpg” missing-image caption – is a design gag. For a reader who already loves the package, it lands as confidence (“they can afford to joke”). For a forwarded-link reader on first contact, it reads as unfinished (“did they forget a photo?”). I’d defend it but only if every other piece of polish on the page is locked; a deliberate missing-photo gag next to any other visible glitch reads as two glitches. The

Advisory Engagements closer – “Two or three clients at a time. Six months minimum. By the end, you won’t need me. That’s the point.” – is the line that earns the meeting. It inverts the retention model and says the quiet part out loud.

Method – the copy-to-image page

USM Haller modular shelving, assembling out of a field into sixteen configurations, with a flame ball at its center in the held moment, disassembling, cycling. The hero both advertises the aesthetic (Bauhaus-descended, cult object, collectible as furniture in its own right) and illustrates the argument (the same pieces rearranged into different compositions = an argument that rearranges). Paired with the page’s title – “Acquisition as Argument.” – it is the tightest copy-to-image integration on the whole site.

The thesis stack runs clean: most collecting happens by accident; this practice exists because I think it shouldn’t; every acquisition is a position, defended by provenance, tested by friction, validated only if it gets lived with; the framework isn’t a checklist, it’s a filter. Then the five defining words. Provenance: “Who made it? Who owned it? What it survived. If the chain of custody doesn’t hold, the object doesn’t enter.” Friction names the admission price – “Anyone can buy an Eames lounge on a Tuesday” – where “Tuesday” actually swaps to the current day, a small delight that rewards the careful reader. Accumulation name-drops a Burdick against a Kukkapuro; an antique-store referral either knows those names or doesn’t, and if they don’t, they weren’t the client. Legibility calls back to Florence Knoll. Lived closes: “Nothing is roped off. The scratch on the dining table is twenty years of dinner parties. That’s the point.”

The permanent collection section is where the economic argument lives:

“An Eames lounge is \$7,360 new. Your grandchildren will argue over who gets it. A mass-market lounge will be in a landfill before the warranty expires. The difference isn’t taste – it’s thesis.”

This is the line that would make an antique-store referral close their laptop, call the dealer back, and say “send me Steven’s contact.” It is the single most quotable economic claim on the site, and it earns itself by being specific (the \$7,360 price, the grandchildren frame) instead of gesturing.

Collection – the stage, the warm word, the footer

Neon “Collection.” title with a flicker-marquee on the wordmark; subtitle “current rotation,” and the word “rotation” itself rotating through a small set of synonyms. Below, the stage – a single inventory card at a time, with left/right arrows that only appear when they’re needed, and a glimmer canvas giving the page a very faint motion that reads as attention rather than decoration. Counter below: I – n. The register is the museum, not the showroom.

The footer does two good things. The “by warm introduction” line sits next to a small thermometer glyph and the current Phoenix temperature, and the word “warm” flips between flame (if it’s above 80°F) and a cooler bitossi blue when it isn’t. It is the kind of detail nobody asks for and everybody remembers. It also serves as proof-of-life: the site is alive, pulling live data, specific to where the advisor actually works. The

colophon link – “made by steven and SAL9001” – is an inside joke. For a reader who’s already on the hook it’s charming. For the forwarded-link arrival it introduces a name (SAL9001) that the page doesn’t resolve in situ; the colophon does, and that’s a long scroll away.

One honest concern: if the current rotation doesn’t carry many pieces at any given moment, the copy (“rotation”) sells the card better than the inventory delivers. For an antique-store referral, provenance cues matter – dealer, year, history – and if the card view is closer to “image + caption” than “image + provenance line”, the Method page has to carry that work alone. Worth checking what a card actually shows next to what Method promises it will.

Contact – the show page

The SAL panel lands hero-sized: a 3D Cobb-Douglas utility surface rotating in the left half of the panel, an email composition window already open in media res in the right half (to-line pre-filled, subject editable, blinking cursor waiting for the first character), a BRB clock hanging above-left on the wall, a ticker and a Phoenix clock along the plinth, a bezel stacked with a small operating system of toys – terminal, typist, pomodoro, invaders, sudoku, snake. A sound toggle at the bottom right. It is extraordinary.

It is also, by a meaningful margin, the page with the widest spread of reactions across the four arrivals. For the package recipient: validation. The package landed the brand, and the site delivers the studio. For the friend-of-friend forward: a room they didn’t know they’d walked into; they’ll stay longer than they meant to and leave with the feeling of having visited somebody’s actual desk. For the gym QR scanner: a little too dense, probably, on their first mobile load – they’ll see SAL’s 3D surface, miss the email-in-media-res, and tap the “to” line if they find it. For the antique-store referral: risk. If their prior is “professional advisor,” the bezel mini-OS can read as vanity before it reads as craft. The page asks to be decoded before it lets you leave a message.

Two small mercies save it. The email address is the first visible composed field; it’s clickable; the mailto-fallback copy-card appears if the visitor is still on the page ~1.6s after the tap, which means nobody loses the address. And the BRB clock’s small “why don’t you call at a reasonable hour?” snark dissolves the one-way-mirror quality of the panel – the studio is a person, and the person is at their desk, and the person has a sense of humor about being at their desk at this hour.

Gallery and colophon – the two pages that reward the curious

Gallery isn’t in the main nav. You find it through the screensaver on the contact panel or by URL. A photo conveyor swells each frame to a plateau at center and away; keybinds B/W, D dither, F flame, H halftone, T threshold, K CMYK, R riso, C compare, S save, arrow to skip, space to pause. Pressing C drops a 2×3 compare grid on the center-most slot – raw / threshold / misregistered CMYK across the top, riso / AM 16×16 / FM halftone across the bottom. A Kare-pixel ESC keycap lives top-right as the exit affordance. The whole thing reads as a print-shop sandbox disguised as a screensaver. For a package recipient who has

already touched the lenticular card and the wax seal, this is the page that confirms the site is downstream of the same eye that made the print artifacts. For the other three arrivals, probably never found – and that’s correct. Reward, not requirement.

Colophon is the closer. A slow scroll of film-industry credits – “principal cast”, “executive production”, “cinematography & light”, “art department” down through “in memoriam” and the actual typeset colophon at the bottom – all written in a voice that is confident, specific, and loving. The typography commentary in the middle is the single strongest document on the whole site: the weight ladder (nine cuts of Gill Sans MT Pro deployed, twelve held in reserve), the two-typeface rule, the palette explanation, the AM clustered-dot screen math, the rejected Bitossi+Flame duotone (“the blue’s R-channel sits at 0.12, which annihilates the flame in multiply... some duotones do not work and the only honest response is to not ship them”), the ILM swell, the service worker.

The “in memoriam” section lists ideas that were tried and abandoned – the Bitossi-Flame duotone, the password gate on /contact, Deliverable 109a. Showing the reader what didn’t make it is one of the rarest forms of credibility, and it’s here. The dedication – “for anyone who read the source” – is the quiet thank-you that rewards the kind of reader who actually views-source. The last line of the page: “Written in a small room over several evenings. Deployed by git push.”

For the antique-store referral who found Contact too playful, Colophon rescues. They arrive on a page that reads like a serious craftsman’s workshop notes, they see the decisions that produced the Contact panel, and the Contact panel re-reads on the way back as intentional rather than ornamental. The site is self-rescuing if the reader is patient. Which is to say: the visitor who makes it here is the visitor who becomes the client.

Mobile walk – the short version

On a phone the index reflows to vertical: the left panel becomes the top 36vh with mark, wordmark, descriptor, about, advisory, and email stacked; the chair morph takes the bottom 48vh; the nav becomes a fixed bar across the bottom. Everything fits, everything breathes. The “I build arguments you can sit in” line is still the single most memorable moment. One technical concern: iOS Safari’s bottom toolbar disappears and reappears with scroll direction, and the fixed nav bar sits where Safari’s toolbar returns to. With `env(safe-area-inset-bottom)` accounted for it should clear, but the 44px nav + Safari’s 44px toolbar can look crowded when both are present. Worth a test on a physical iPhone, not simulator.

Principal’s portrait-hold drops below the bio on mobile and the missing-photo gag reads cleaner there because it’s on its own vertical rhythm. Method’s USM hero scales gracefully; the five words section is the strongest mobile page because it’s already vertical in its native layout. Collection’s stage works at any size. Contact is the risk – the SAL panel wants to be hero-sized, and on a small screen the bezel toys and the email composition compete for the same inches of vertical. If the gym QR arrival is going to bounce, they’ll bounce from Contact. The mitigation is that the nav link also goes to Contact and the email address is the first visible composed element; the risk is that they never scroll past the Cobb-Douglas surface.

The four arrivals, one more time

The package recipient is the arrival that does best, but the reason is paradoxical: they arrive already convinced. The envelope, the wax seal, the debossed card, the business card's cosmic field, the QR card that is itself a piece of graphic design, the lenticular and the M&Ms – those artifacts did the persuasive work. The site's job for this arrival is to not break the spell, and it doesn't. The flame dot on the wordmark is the exact same punctuation as the presentation-card tagline; "taste scales" printed in red on the card is the same "taste scales." line that lives on Method; the colophon's palette description reads like the printer's job sheet for the envelope. Continuity across substrates is the single hardest thing for a studio to pull off and it is pulled off here.

The gym QR scanner is the hardest arrival and the site is calibrated for them about as well as it can be. They get the index, the about copy, and probably one tap – the odds favor Method over Contact if only because "Method" reads first and is the shorter scroll on mobile. If they reach Provenance ("Who made it? Who owned it? What it survived.") and Lived ("the scratch on the dining table is twenty years of dinner parties"), they have two lines they can repeat later. That's all they need. Success for this arrival is not conversion; it's memorability.

The antique-store referral is the arrival where the site does the most work. Method carries. Colophon closes. Contact is the inflection point – if they bounce there without going further, they leave with the wrong impression; if they keep reading or click through to Colophon, the playfulness re-frames as craft. I'd name Method's permanent-collection paragraph as the single highest-leverage piece of copy on the whole site for this persona, and I'd defend Contact's density only because Colophon rescues it. If Colophon were removed, Contact would need to be quieter.

The forwarded friend-of-friend is the arrival most likely to bounce fast and most likely to remember. "By warm introduction only" is the line that saves this visit, because it gives them a story to tell: "I found this site that said it only works by introduction – it's like a private design advisory in Phoenix." That sentence is the brand building its own network, out of visitors who were never going to be clients, through a line of copy that would look like a flaw on a conversion-first site and is instead the feature.

What I'd change, what I'd defend

Change: measure the 13" Safari fold on index and raise the email wordmark, or compress the about stack, so the hero link is reliably above it. Ship. Small decision, disproportionate payoff – the hero link shouldn't ask for a scroll.

Change: an iPhone physical-device pass on Contact's fixed-element stacking, specifically where Safari's returning bottom toolbar intersects the fixed nav bar on scroll reversal. Not a redesign; a check.

Defend: the PHX line on index. It is doing deliberate filtering work and I wouldn't dilute it.

Defend: the missing-photo portrait gag on Principal, provided every other piece of polish on that page is

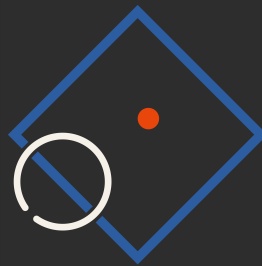
locked. The gag costs credibility only next to visible glitches; next to a polished page, it reads as confidence.

Defend: the SAL panel as-is, because Colophon exists. The density of Contact is the price of admission for a page that says, in the plainest possible way, that the studio has a sense of place and a sense of humor and real hardware on its desk. The site that ships without that page is a shorter site and a weaker brand.

Last thing. The real move on this site is not any single page; it is that the four substrates – the wax-sealed envelope, the presentation card, the business card, the site itself – all speak the same language, and the language is small, specific, and owned. Gill Sans MT does the talking. Inconsolata does the pointing. The dot is always flame and it is always the same dot. Taste scales, and it is the taste that scales, not the operation. I'd ship it.

– studio assistant





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every stroke earns its place

made by Steven and SAL900X

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