Planned Accidents:
Unit 2 Research Proposal

How do graphic design students utlise the internet for research?

Is it effective?

Or is it just eye candy?

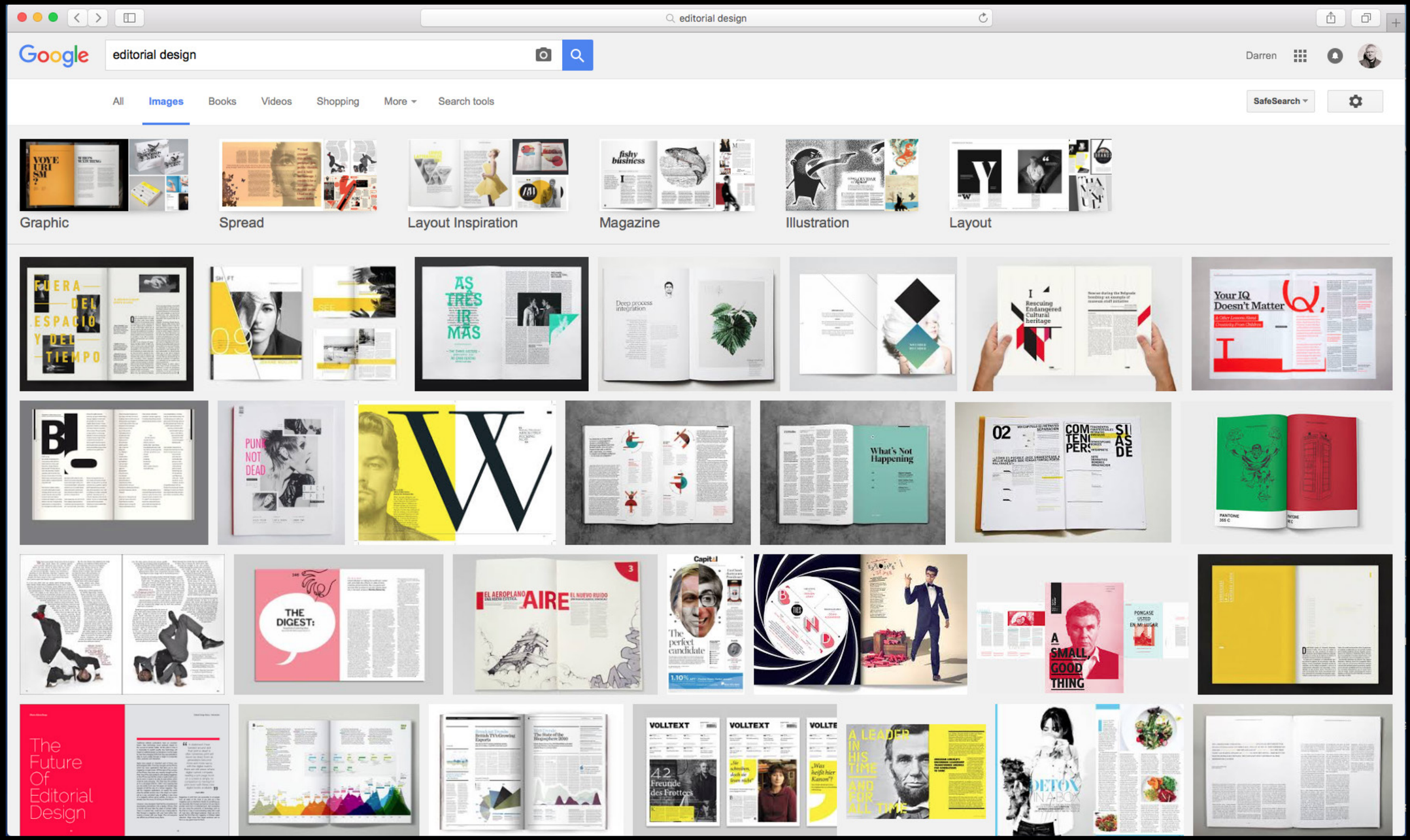
Can it be improved?

PG Certificate unit 2 / research proposal / 25.05.16 / Darren Leader

"How do your students typically research their projects?"

Question to Noel Douglas, Senior Lecturer and
Graphic Design Programme Leader, University of Bedfordshire

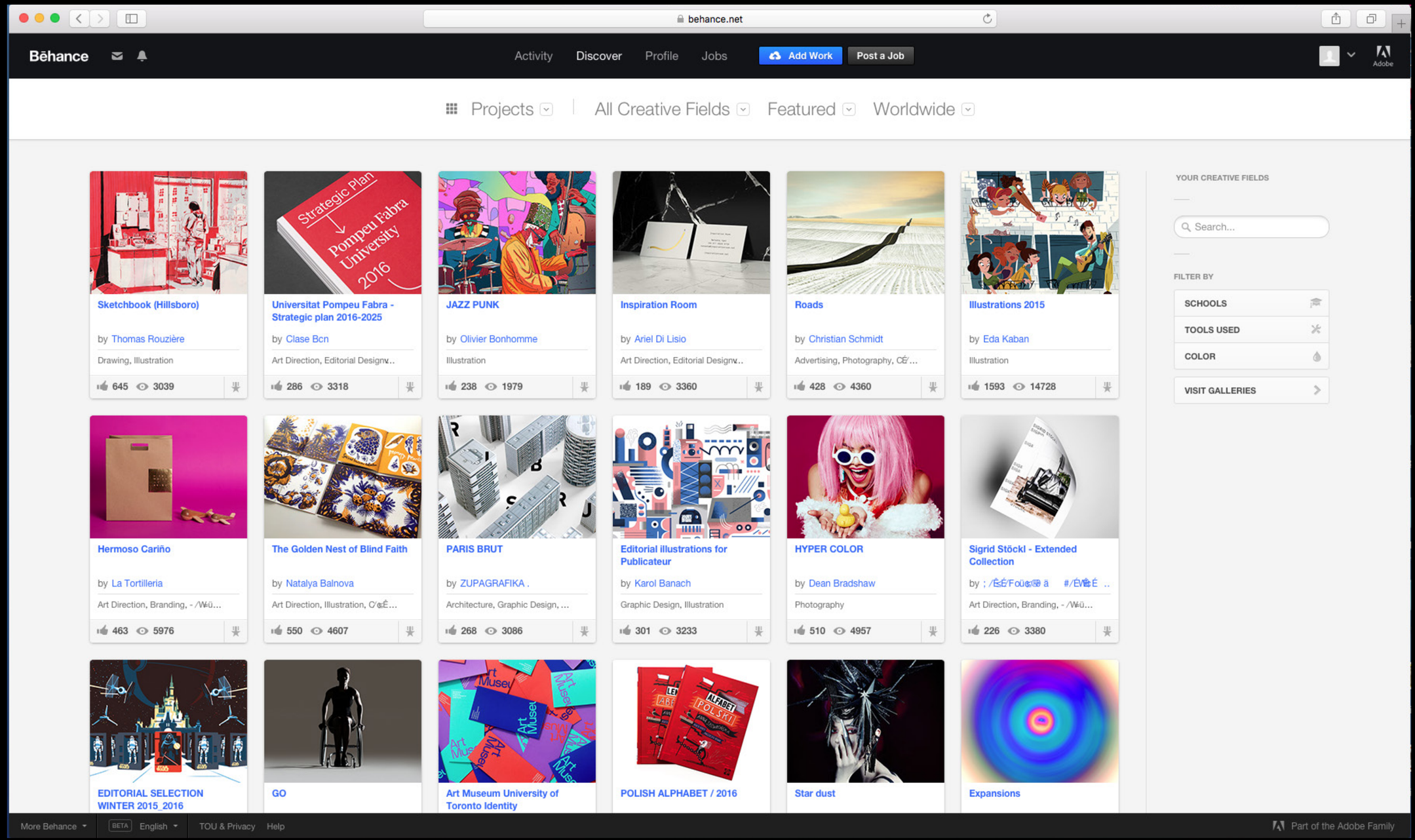
"... Google images."



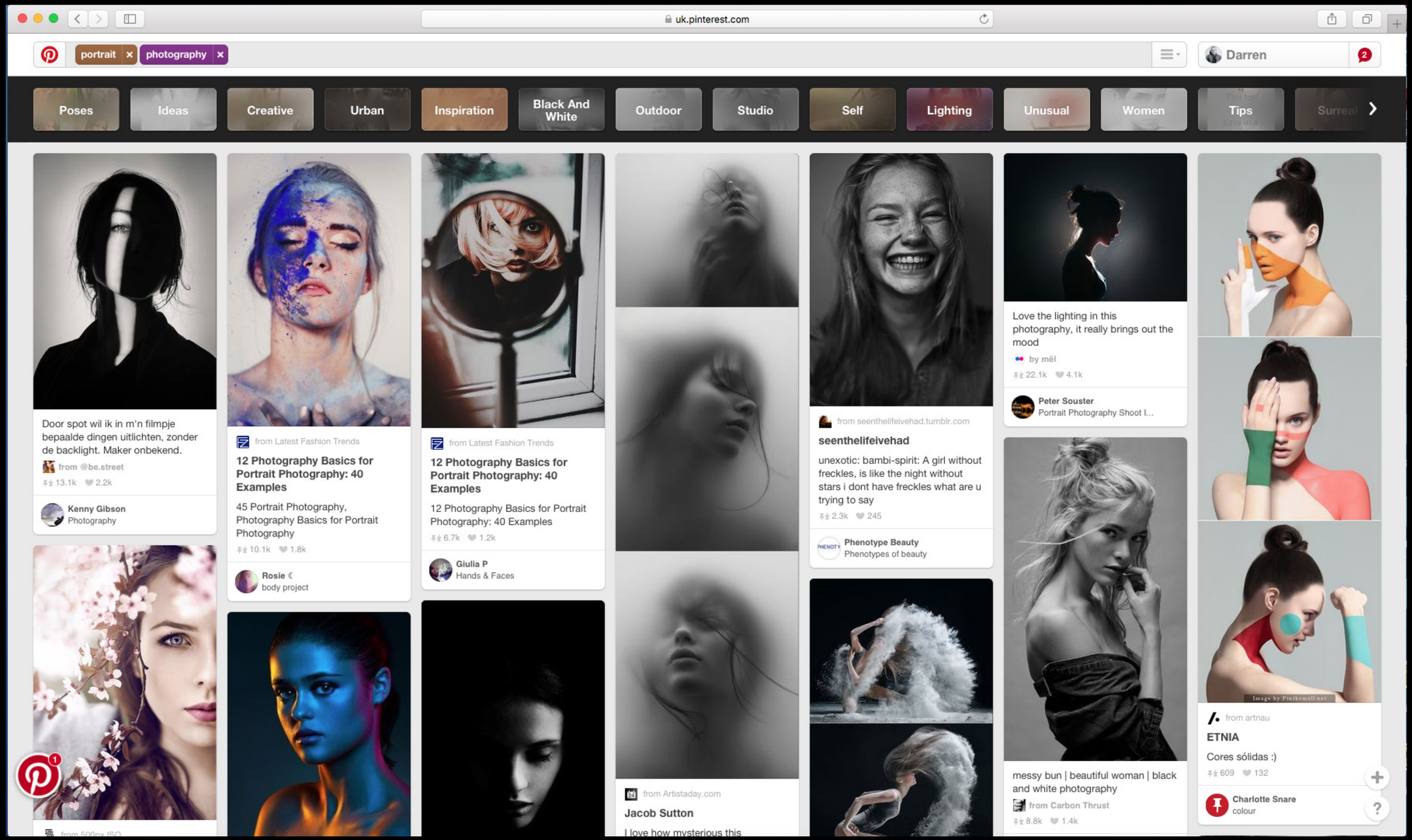
Are there other typical sources that undergraduates visit online?

Based on my own conversations with BA graphic design students

Behance – online portfolios



Pinterest – tagged areas of interest, eg. portrait photography



So what is the problem?

There is more to discover from specialist areas than relying upon first page results.

Do such shallow methods of research encourage deeper research?

Are these shallow methods a quick fix and prompt a box-ticking approach?

As undergraduates progress through their study, do they identify ‘trusted critical voices’, such as Its Nice That, Dezeen or Creative Review

Are key practitioners being identified and researched?

Does online research become a natural, daily task of discovery?

You can find a lot on the internet
but it is all about editing.
The book as a solid container becomes
more and more valuable.

Irma Boom



How to proceed

Create a one hour research workshop

Ideal participants: degree level, year one and two

Review results and reflect on the usage of the internet as a tool

Workshop activity

Research a key specialism in the context of a brief, eg. magazine design

Document sequence of research results

Consider

How does the student gather their material?

Are the workshop results appropriate?

Does it reflect their aesthetic ambition?

Does it prompt experimentation or confusion?

Is there an established pattern of search, eg. social media or blogs

Current problems

Timing of Unit 2 during NUA assessments and degree show season

No access to NUA undergraduates during summer recess

Remedy

Recruit participants in further education, aged 18+ working toward H.E.

2–4 recommended students from Norwich School and City College Norwich

Propose similar workshop task at beginning of the next NUA academic year

Objective

Identify current undergraduate online research methods

Propose a more defined research technique

Recommend trusted critical sources, curated content and key practitioners

Encourage undergraduates to share their discoveries and sources

Reading list

'The University of Google', Tara Brabazon

'The Shallows', Nicolas Carr

'The End of Absence', Michael Harris