Chapter 1: Photographer's Portfolio

*L*ike the proverbial plumber with the leaky faucets in his own house, our websites need some TLC. Doug has a couple of websites, and when he gets a chance, he revises them in conjunction with the latest technology. In this chapter, we focus on a site that Doug is revising — the website for his business — in conjunction with this book. Doug runs a photography business with his significant other, Roxanne. Photography websites have certain needs. They need to be state of the art and artistic, but not so artistic that the site distracts viewers' attention from the images displayed. In this chapter, we give you a behind the scenes look at the revision of Doug's website. Of course, by the time this book is in print, he may decide to do something totally different.

Deciding What a Photographer Needs

When a photographer creates an image, he decides what stays in as well as what stays out of frame. A photographer is a visual storyteller. He uses light and shadow to create images viewers will give more than just a casual glance. A competent photographer can create a properly exposed image, but a photographer who has transcended digital technology creates something that is a work of art. A photographer's website is the frame for his artwork.

In many instances, the images that photographers create are minimal: a collection of shapes or colors that are artistically arranged in the viewfinder. Less can definitely be more. The site for Doug's company underwent a transformation shortly before the first words of this book were written. That site featured a slideshow on the home page (see Figure 1-1), and a thumbnail gallery on the portfolio pages. The site had white text on a black background with minimum intrusion from menus and other devices. The images were definitely the focal point of the site.

Figure 1-1:
A minimalist photographer's website.

Knowing When Less Is More

While pondering a site revision, Doug was reading a book about the innovation secrets of Apple founder Steve Jobs. Apple products are sleek, with minimal intrusion from switches, keyboards, and other appendages. An iPod has one button and two camera lenses. The iPod and iPad navigation systems are accessed by touching the screen, an extension of the user. Doug decided to try a sleek minimal approach for his site and made the decision to use an off-white background. He created the header and menu in Adobe Fireworks CS6 (see Figure 1-2) and exported it as images and HTML. For more information on creating graphics in Fireworks CS6, read Book V, Chapter 2.

He created the site in Adobe Dreamweaver CS6 by creating a new HTML document and then importing the HTML he exported from Fireworks (see Figure 1-3).

After laying out the site with placeholders for text and other content, Doug saved the file as a Dreamweaver template in the DWT format. Then, all remaining pages would be created from this template.
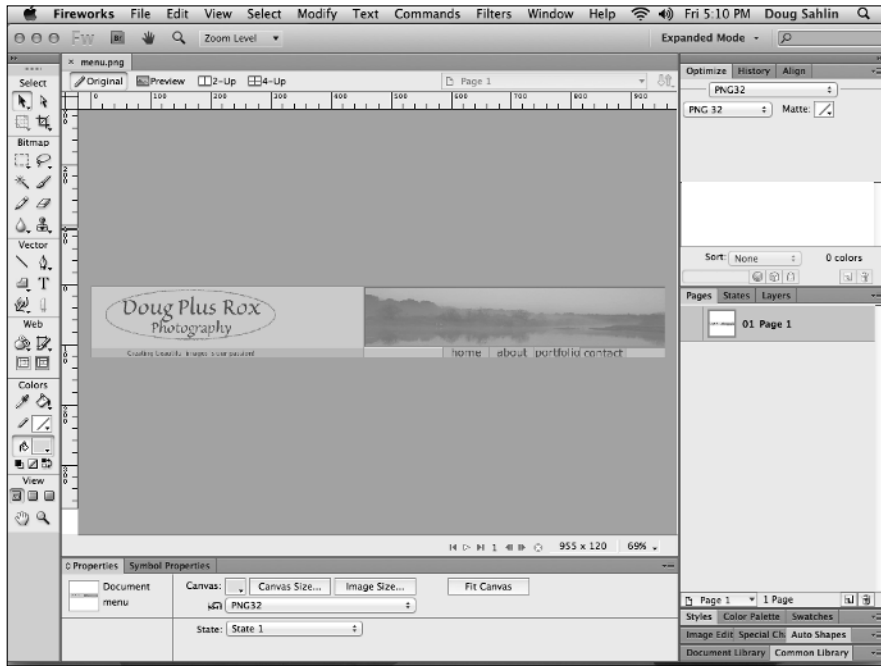
Figure 1-2:
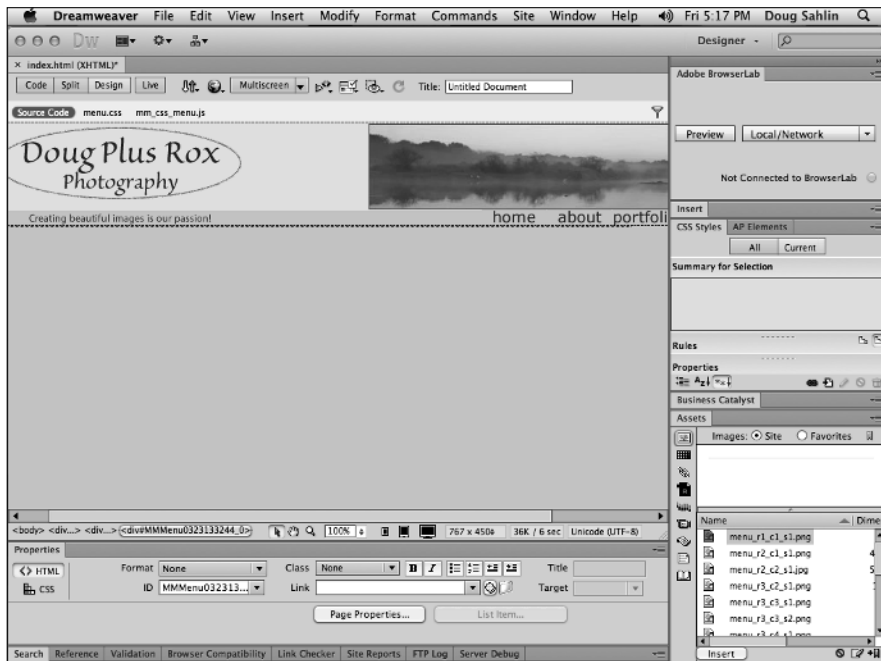Creating the
header and
menu.

Figure 1-3:
Laying the
groundwork.

Fleshing Out the Site

The home page needed to have a bit of panache to announce to visitors that they had definitely landed on a photography website. He decided that a slideshow of fine art images would be just the ticket. The slideshow needed to be compatible with portable devices like the iPad. Therefore, using Flash was out of the question. After doing some research, he decided to use the Image Rotator Magic Dreamweaver plug-in from Project Seven (www.projectseven.com) to create a non-Flash slideshow on the site home page (see Figure 1-4).

Image Rotator Magic is a powerful plug-in that enables a designer to create animated banners, sidebars, and slideshows. The Dreamweaver extension has a user-friendly interface (see Figure 1-5) that enables you to choose which images you want to include, determine the length of time for which an image is displayed, and much more. The beauty of the application is that the end result is not Flash, which means it can be viewed on portable devices like the iPad. The extension also creates all the code used to switch images.

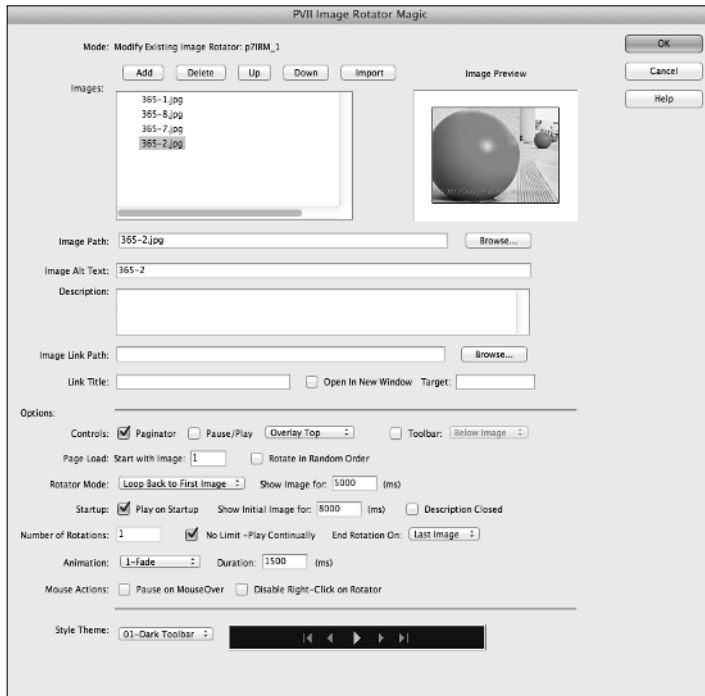**Figure 1-4:** Adding a slideshow to the home page.

Figure 1-5:
The Image
Rotator
Magic
extension at
work.

Creating the Gallery

Every photography website needs a gallery of some sort. Doug's company
creates images in a couple of different genres. Rather than have a separate
drop-down menu for each gallery, Doug wanted to create a single gallery that
featured all genres of his company's work. Project Seven was the source for
yet another elegant solution. A combination of the Horizontal Glider exten-
sion, which was used for the gallery menu, and Image Rotator Magic, which
was used to create the individual galleries, proved to be the ideal solution
(see Figure 1-6).

Figure 1-6:
Multiple
galleries
displayed on
one page.
Sweet!

Finishing the Site

After creating the gallery, Doug designed the About and Contact pages based on the template he created when he started the project. He was thinking about search engine optimization (SEO) when he created the home page and the other pages. He used the Google Keyword tool to find the optimum keywords for his photography business and peppered them in the text, page titles, and alt tags.

Alt tags — accessibility options used by people with screenreaders as descriptions of the image — are picked up by search engines.

As this book comes to a close, Doug is putting the finishing touches on the site. At the end of a project, Doug typically lets a client site breathe for a couple of days before adding his finishing touches and then presenting it to his client for final approval. In this case, he's going to set the design aside for a couple of weeks before tweaking the design. Then he's going to present it to his business partner for final approval. So, the site that is uploaded to his server may be different than what you see on these pages.

In designing this site, Doug's goal was to create a simple site that was aesthetically appealing and showcases his company's photography. Did he achieve his goal? That will be decided after he uploads the site and starts getting some visitors. He will also carefully monitor the site's stats from month to month to see whether he needs to fine-tune the new content.