



NYXIE

an art history app for artists and galleries

Sarah Robinson

PROJECT OVERVIEW



The Product:

This is an app intended to make obtaining information about artwork (and artists) more accessible.



Project Duration:

The project was started in January of 2022 and completed in May of 2022



PROJECT OVERVIEW



The Problem:

Art is one of the fundamental and universal aspects of human culture. However, information about the artwork we view — contemporary and classical works alike — isn't always accessible. The information we seek could be in another language, or it could be absent altogether. Whether it's a piece hanging in a waiting room, or a statue in a gallery, art can leave us with more questions than information present (if any) can answer.



The Goal:

To create an app that can not only provide art lovers (novices and enthusiasts alike) an easy and accessible way to not only learn about the works they're viewing, but the stories, inspirations, and influences of the artists who created them.

PROJECT OVERVIEW



My Role:

As this was a solo project, I was the lead UX designer and researcher for this project.



Responsibilities:

I was responsible for all aspects of the project, from research and wireframes, to the hi-fi prototype and the polished design.

UNDERSTANDING THE **USER**

- User Research
- Personas
- Problem Statements
- User Journey Maps

USER **RESEARCH**: *Summary*



I conducted user research using an online survey and empathy maps in the hopes of understanding the needs of the users I'm designing for. A primary user group that I identified were people who wanted to better understand and connect to artwork by learning more about the artist, their mediums, inspirations, and influences.

This user group not only confirmed initial thoughts about the potential users of the app, but also revealed an interest in using technology to make viewing art in a gallery more engaging (example: VR/AR opportunities & QR codes)

USER **RESEARCH:** *Summary*

1

Connection

A common pain point for users is a lack of connection with the art and the artists.

Having information available in the moment will not only allow users to learn more about the artists (their inspirations, their mediums, their influences,) but help users form stronger emotional connections to the artwork.

2

Context

Another common pain point was a lack of historical context for classical artwork. Providing a means to gain this context in the moment will provide users a deeper understanding of the world and time the artists lived in, and perhaps gain a better understanding of the artist's work.

3

Confidence

Users sometimes experience what could be described as a sort of “impostor syndrome” when visiting art galleries or museums. Often, that feeling stems from their lack of experience, or knowledge about the subjects or works on display. Being able to find out that information in the moment may make users more comfortable in galleries and empower them to continue exploring and learning.

4

Engagement

Information about artists isn’t always presented in a sufficient manner. Having a point of access to the artist’s information could allow users to visit their website, view the artist’s other works, and purchase prints and merchandise (if available) to show their support.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Victoria _____ is a/an _____ novice art enthusiast

user name

user characteristics

who needs _____ an easy-to-access source of information about the artists and artwork
she's viewing _____

user need

because _____ she wants to know more and build better connections to the artwork. _____

insight

PERSONA: *Victoria*

Problem Statement:

Victoria is a novice art enthusiast who needs a way to learn more about the art she's viewing (and the artist who created it) because she wants to gain a better understanding of the artist's intentions and form a closer connection to the artwork itself in the moment.



Victoria

Age: 35

Education: High school

Hometown: Columbus, TX

Family: Mother, cat

Occupation: Flight attendant

"What's the point of living in a great, big world if you don't stop to enjoy it once in awhile?"

Goals

- Have more opportunities to explore the art scene around her.
- To gain a better understanding of the artists and the work they create.

Frustrations

- "I wish I had known that gallery was having an show when I was in town!"
- "If I had easy access to information in the moment, I could form a better connection to the artwork."

Due to her job and travel schedule, Victoria rarely has time to take in the cities she visits, but when she does, she tries to find a gallery or museum nearby. Sometimes she feels a little awkward in galleries, as she doesn't know much about the artists, and often wishes she had more info about the artists and their inspirations so she could form a better connection to the artwork.

USER JOURNEY MAP

Creating Victoria's user map revealed how useful it would be for visitors to have access to an app that provided information and a means of supporting the gallery and artists.

Persona: Victoria

Goal: Visit an art gallery while in town for the weekend

ACTION	Arrive at the gallery	Walk around and appraise the art	Look up supplemental info on phone	Visit the Gift Shop / Store	Leave the gallery
TASK LIST	A. Look up the gallery information B. Purchase a ticket C. Enter the gallery	A. Walk around B. Look at the paintings and sculptures	A. Perform internet searches for further info on the artists/medium/style (or historical context if needed) B. Keep notes for later research and browsing	Tasks A. Go into the gift shop B. Browse items. C. Make a purchase	Tasks A. Collect artist business cards if available to make sure she remembers names correctly B. Leave the gallery
FEELING ADJECTIVE	Excitement, nervousness	Interest, curiosity	Curiosity, Frustration, Discomfort	Mild indecisiveness	Happiness, Satisfaction

Persona: Victoria

Goal: Visit an art gallery while in town for the weekend

ACTION	Arrive at the gallery	Walk around and appraise the art	Look up supplemental info on phone	Visit the Gift Shop / Store	Leave the gallery
TASK LIST	A. Look up the gallery information B. Purchase a ticket C. Enter the gallery	A. Walk around B. Look at the paintings and sculptures	A. Perform internet searches for further info on the artists/medium/style (or historical context if needed) B. Keep notes for later research and browsing	Tasks A. Go into the gift shop B. Browse items. C. Make a purchase	Tasks A. Collect artist business cards if available to make sure she remembers names correctly B. Leave the gallery
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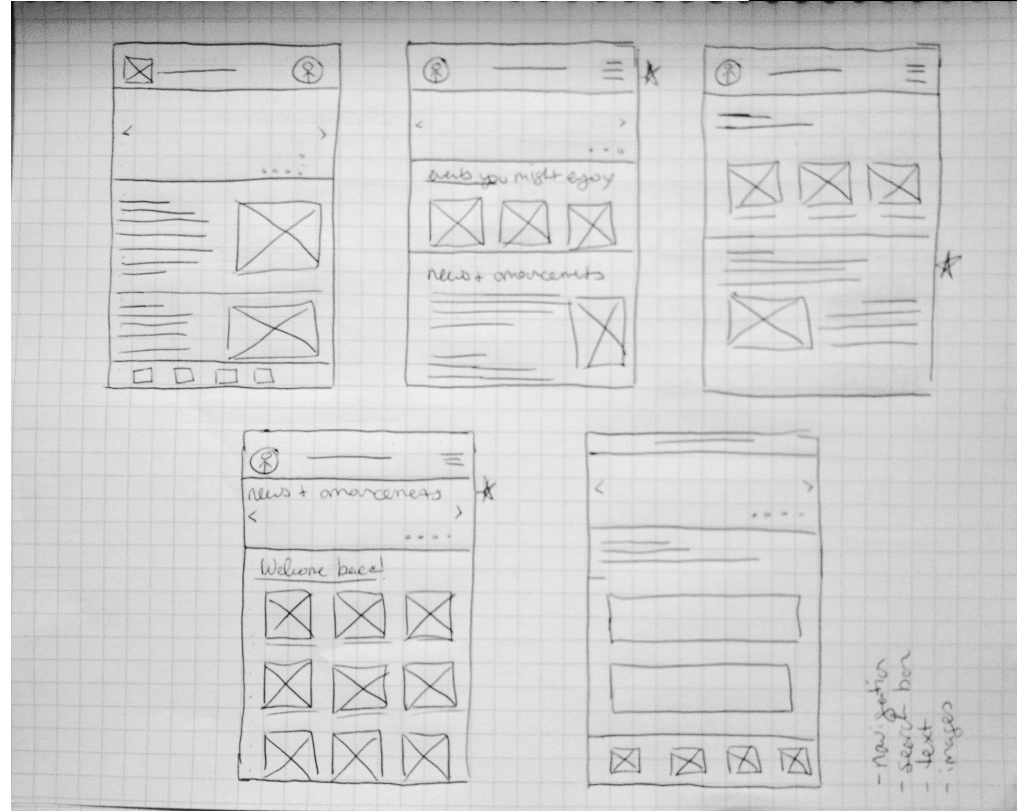
ACTION	Arrive at the gallery	Walk around and appraise the art	Look up supplemental info on phone	Visit the Gift Shop / Store	Leave the gallery
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	An app could give visitors an easy point of access to learn of upcoming events (and purchase tickets for those events) well in advance.	Information in small print on artwork/artist tags could be difficult to read for those with visual impairment. Larger print (or an app that can provide easier-to-read information) would likely be helpful.	Having supplementary information in a readily accessible, searchable (and translatable) app could be tremendously helpful for both visitors and guides. Some visitors may not speak the language (or may not feel entirely comfortable asking a guide.) It could also make answering questions easier for guides as a point of reference.	An online gift shop or e-commerce platform could allow visitors to purchase souvenirs, trinkets, and custom prints of artwork they enjoyed at their leisure – well after they've left the gallery – and show support for the artists and gallery.	Having information in an app could be particularly helpful for visitors who realize they have more questions after they've left the gallery.

STARTING THE DESIGN

- Paper Wireframes
- Digital Wireframes
- Low-Fidelity Prototype
- Usability Studies

PAPER WIREFRAMES

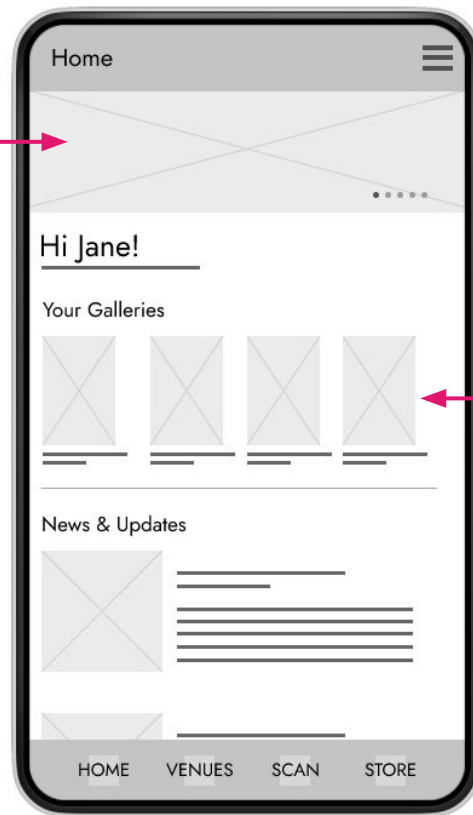
I started by putting the designs I imagined to paper, exploring different configurations and approaches, to see what I felt worked (and what didn't.)



DIGITAL **WIREFRAMES**

Satisfied with what I had put together on paper, I moved from paper-and-pen to mouse-and-screen to begin recreating my sketches in Figma.

Cycling carousel announcing new events and additions.

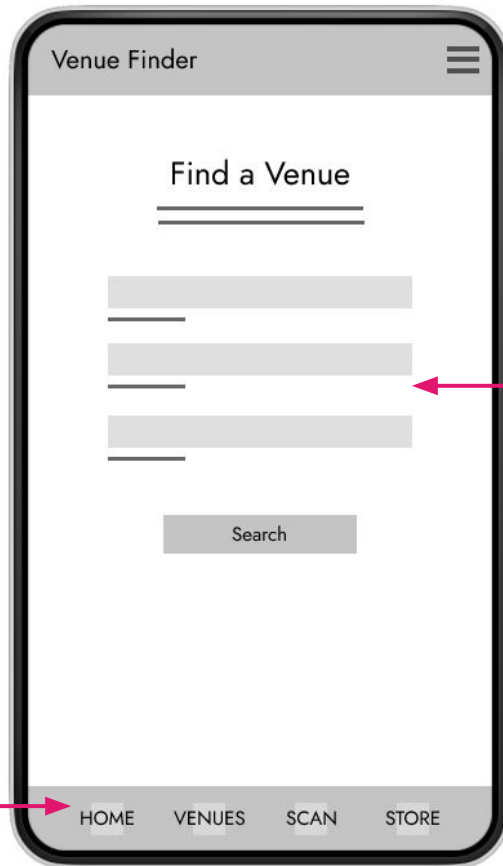


A selection of saved galleries for the user to revisit and switch between.

DIGITAL **WIREFRAMES**

Once I'd settled on the general architecture of the design, I expanded on the flow, adding and building on the roughest concept of the design to something that resembled an actual app.

Bottom menu bar allows for fast, easy navigation of the app.

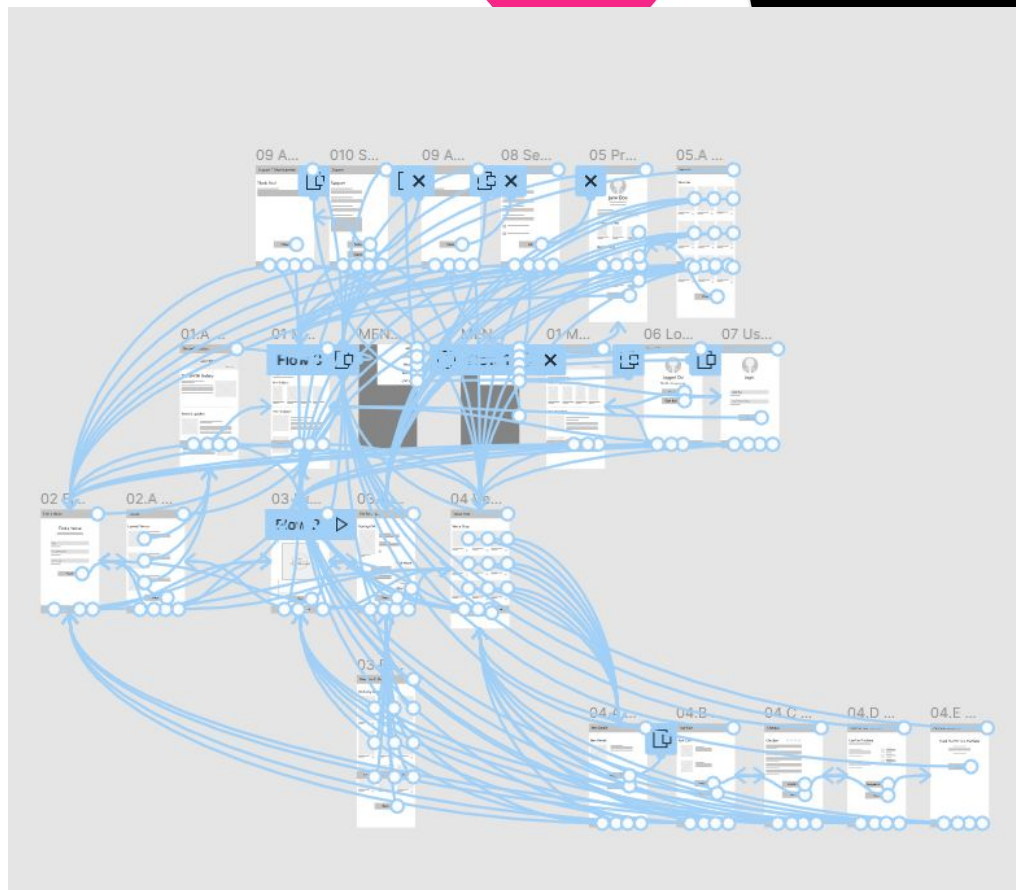


The user can find nearby venues by entering location information (city, state, province, etc.)

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPE

From digital wireframes came the concept in motion: a low-fi prototype, created in Figma, that demonstrated the basic flows of the app itself: the ability to find venues, scan a QR code to learn more about an artwork/artist, a way to favorite artists, venues, and artworks, and more.

Link: [Project](#) | [Prototype](#)



USABILITY **STUDIES:** *Summary*

With a low-fidelity prototype established, it was time to test the design. I conducted a moderated usability study with five participants to test the general design, flow, and overall concept of the app itself, followed by an unmoderated system usability scale (SUS) survey to get a better feel for how participants felt using the app.

Round 1 Findings:

1 Participants overall found the general design to be easy to use and expressed confidence in their ability to use the app (if it existed) in a real-world setting.

2 Some participants found the presence of the “Your Galleries” section of the (logged in) homepage to be distracting/confusing when trying to find a venue. This section was moved to its own page in the next iteration.

3 During testing, participants brought to light some navigational oversights that were missed when the prototype was being designed.

Their recommended changes — adjustments to the “Find a Venue > List of Venues > Venue Page” flow and a separate login button on the home screen — will be implemented in the next design iteration.

USABILITY **STUDIES:** *Summary*

Once the high-fidelity prototype was put together, I conducted a moderated usability study to test the design and flow. I was able to call on the same five participants from the first study, which allowed me to see if the improvements I had made based on previous feedback met their needs and expectations. I had them test the flow and design, then fill out an unmoderated system usability scale (SUS) survey.

Round 2 Findings:

- 1 In the test and follow-up SUS survey, participants expressed that the design to be easy to use, and that they felt comfortable navigating.
 - 2 One participant felt that the size of the text labels for the buttons was too small and recommended resizing to make it easier to read.
 - 3 There were a few additional suggestions that were made: a way to separate venues by type (classical, modern, etc.), and a further expansion of the “help” tutorial to include information about adding things to favorites.
- Participants were overall pleased with the changes made to the design based on their recommendations from the previous study.

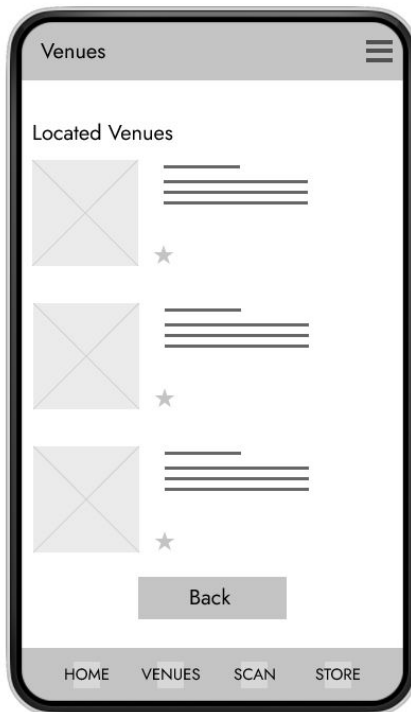
REFINING THE DESIGN

- Mockups
- High-Fidelity Prototype
- Accessibility

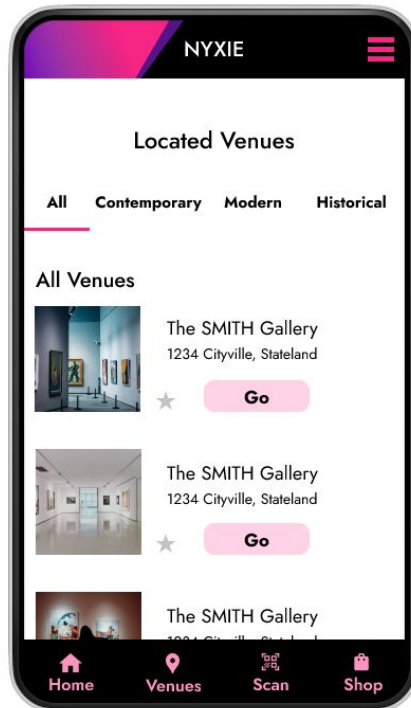
MOCKUPS

A particularly important change that came from the second usability study was giving users the ability to sort search results by venue type.

Before usability studies



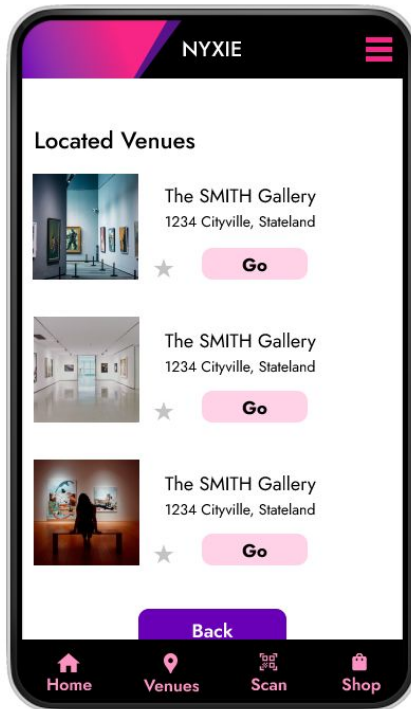
After usability studies



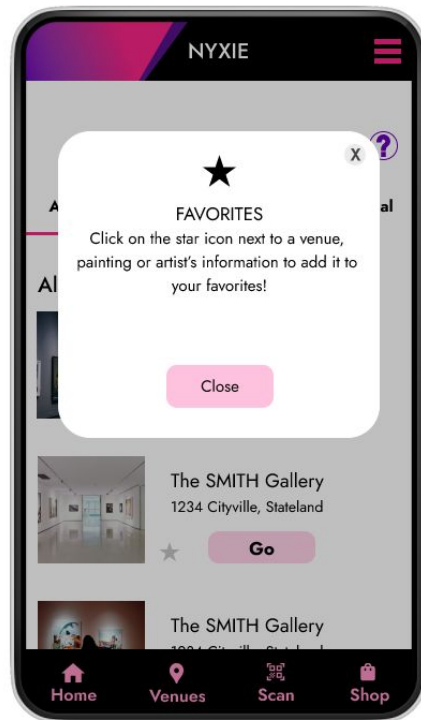
MOCKUPS

To help users better understand the interface, the “help” tutorial was expanded to include other areas of the app.

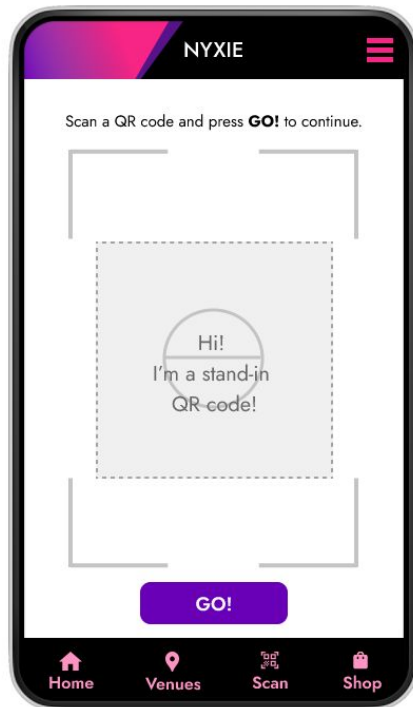
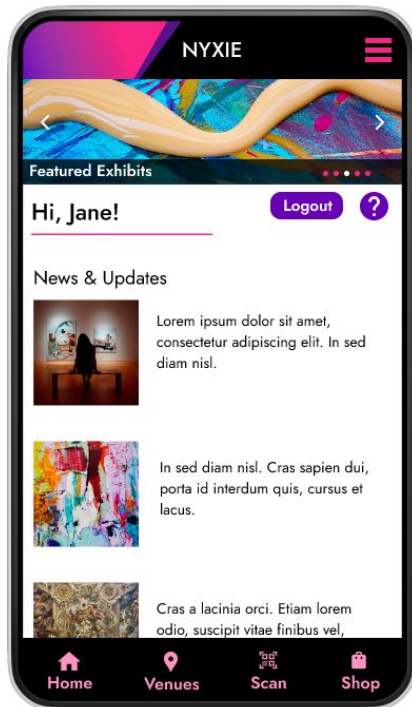
Before second usability study



After second usability study



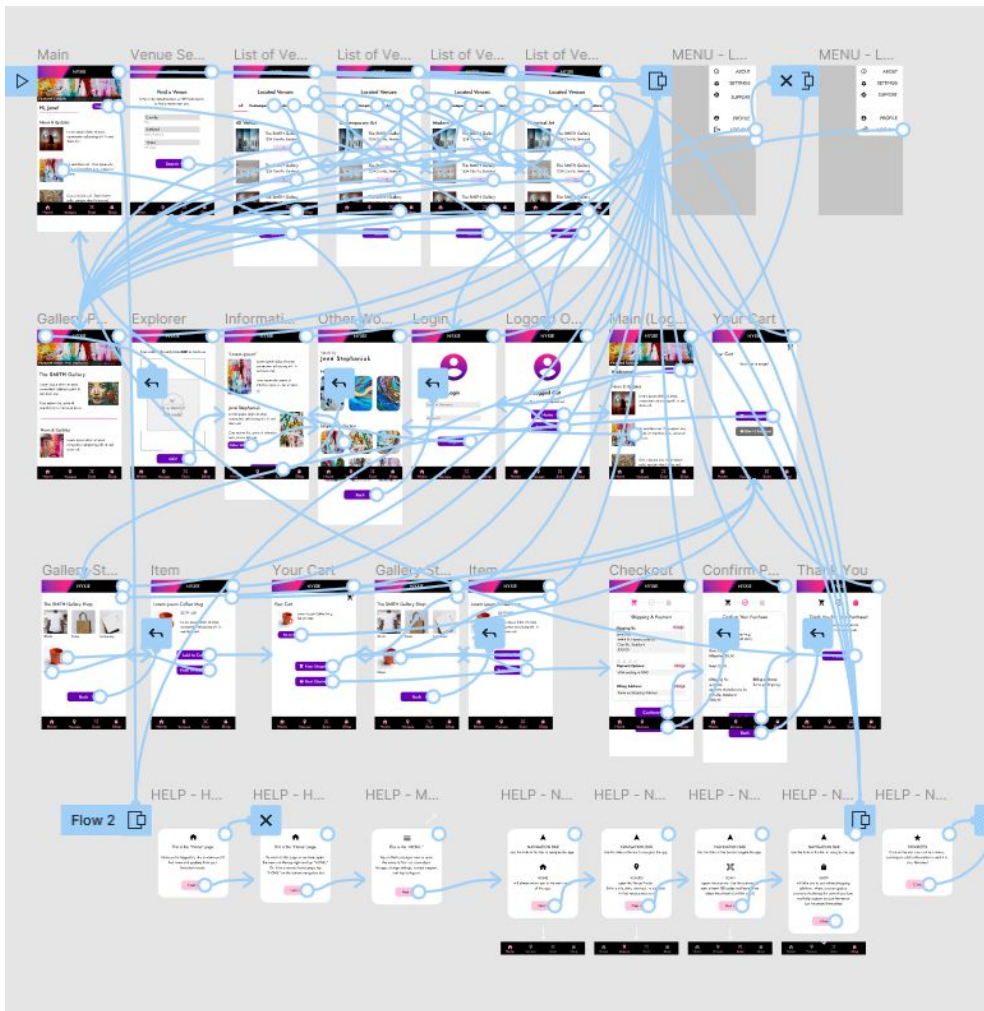
KEY MOCKUPS



HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPE

Once the mockups were finished, I put them together and brought them to life in Figma as a hi-fi prototype, demonstrating three user flows: searching for a venue, scanning a stand-in code to load an art/artist information page, and a flow for purchasing a souvenir from the venue's online store.

Link: [Project](#) | [Prototype](#)





ACCESSIBILITY **CONSIDERATIONS**

1

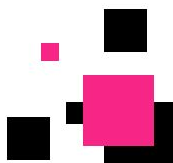
QR codes (and similarly-functioning technologies, such as NaviLens) provide a fast and easy method of accessing information, and are increasingly being recognized, developed and used as a type of assistive technology.

2

Providing the information via mobile device makes the information much more accessible, as it can be read by screen readers, resized to be more legible, or translated into other languages.

3

The app's visual design was created to be compatible with web accessibility guidelines regarding color and contrast with the intent of make the app easier to use for those with low-vision and color blindness.





GOING **FORWARD**

- Takeaways
- Next Steps

TAKEAWAYS



Impact:

This was a course project, so the impact of this design can only really be measured through the (very positive) responses and feedback I received from my peers and test participants.

"I loved the color choices! It is beautiful!! Also, it was a very intuitive user flow!" - Jéssica Loreto

"Wow, wonderful colour scheme and excellent base for these principles. Now this will work into a very solid project." – Gobinath Aroganam



TAKEAWAYS



What I Learned:

This was my first UX project; to say it was a tremendous learning experience would be an understatement. What began as creating an “art history app for an art museum,” quickly grew into a vision of an app that could make learning about artwork more accessible for everyone, not just to satisfy curiosity, but to perhaps also form deeper bonds to the works we view.

It was a long path that was sometimes humbling, sometimes frustrating, sometimes confidence-boosting, but always rewarding. I was introduced to Figma, and with it learned new design skills (and sharpened old ones.) I stumbled on [Jené Stephaniuk](#), whose work I featured in my designs (and who turns out to be a fellow Austinite. Small world!) And, perhaps most importantly, I found a new lens to look at the world through: the contemplative, critical, problem-solving eye of a UX designer.





NEXT STEPS

1

Continuing to research, refine, and expand on the design to provide the best user experience.

The design would be expanded upon to include aspects not currently included, such as a user profile, favorites page, and multiple themes (including a dark mode.)

2

QR codes are a well-known technology, but could also pose a potential security risk. As the design centers heavily around scanning technology, the need for further investigation and research into scanning technology – and ways to ensure the feature is safe and effective – is critical.

3

Consideration for the inclusion of a kid-friendly mode and associated features, such as games or activities (which, in theory, could also be included in the standard mode.)

Additionally, consideration for social media interaction.



LET'S CONNECT!



Thank you for your interest in my work!
If you'd like to contact me (or review more things I've done), please don't hesitate to reach out!

— Sarah Robinson —
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