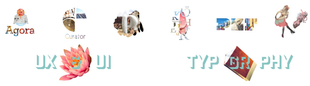
setting the scene

Urban Fuchs wasn't always UF. Once upon a time, there was Sprachschule. I had constructed a website and portfolio with a Squarespace template some time in May, 2019, filling content first, with branding only slapped on as an afterthought. The results were muddled, with a lack of any particular identity for the most important product: me.

Legibility was severely compromised. In addition to the rough-to-figure German words, there was no telling what the work beneath icons would look like. But the deeper problems laid in the architecture of the site.



original sitemap

With UX/UI split off from the design portfolio, and an overtaxed homepage that had to serve as an about, the pages felt deeply imbalanced. While home and UX/UI held few elements, the design page was horribly long, with a need for carousels to fit all projects.

etching it out

My initial sketches provided two elements I'd carry forward, though most of it was left behind, including the name 'Umbral Fuchs.' I felt a strong affinity to the 'uf' monogram, and offered it up for peer feedback. There was consensus in favor of developing the monogram as a concept, and keeping the fox, who could pop up where least expected.

More than that, the lettering I'd devised was an audience pleaser. The typeface seemed a natural fit for my identity, so I developed it out into my third ever typeface, Parlance.

Using a personal typeface made an immediate link between my logo and page headings. I would also be able to present identity with a minimal touch, without clashing against project images.

urban fuchs

With the design oriented around the monogram, it was time to pick the name. Urban Fuchs plays with my last name, which means 'fox,' and places a whimsical concept in an unexpected environment. It was also shorter than 'Raccoon Who Understands Trashcan Lids,' which evoked a similar image, but with less social appropriation on sharing it.

Stepping forward into stationary design let me abandon old conceits and read the project with fresh eyes. I experimented with proportions and color, and through numerous iterations arrived at the first glimpse of the final designs.

gathering elements

I looked over elements which had received positive feedback and had appeared as motifs in my work. Flowers, public domain cut outs, and ethereal imagery were distilled into a few 'guidance' elements.

Through dozens more iterations, I was able create a painterly illusion of space and depth by layering watercolor strokes screened over hyper-zoomed imagery. Feedback to this design was overwhelmingly positive; it felt playful and mysterious, "like you." Correspondingly, the tagline 'joy to function' was well received, as an aesthetic and a summary of my ambitions.

business card

press folder

site development

architecture

After analyzing numerous other designer's sites, I decided that ultra-tabbed links and endless streams didn't speak for me. I wanted people to take time with a few, highlighted projects, not to show off every little thing I'd made. The revised sitemap put these works front and center, leaning into the portfolio page as the main purpose of the site.

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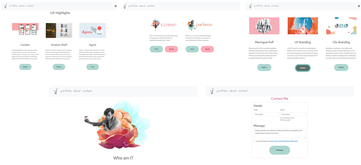
landing the landing

The landing page was a development keystone. After modeling the monogram, it was time to learn three.js. This pushed the limits of my javascript ability, but added in interactivity expectations from moment one. The model was shaded to look flat, tricking a user into assuming it is flat, until they provoked a surprising response when they went to scroll.

imagery adaptation

It was essential to adapt the identity to flow through stand alone elements floating on the page. My new carried the color themes with a more definite, grounding figure, keeping them from too much chaos. These motes of identity branded imageless projects, almost invisibly.

website results



going forward

Substantial stabilization still needs to be performed on the site's javascript. Additionally, there is room for some updates to the content I put into promotional materials.

Overall, though, the feel has finally settled in. All brands, like the people they represent, continue to evolve over time. That will keep happening with my own brand and website, but their consistency and tone now fully feel like they speak to what I wish to present the world about myself.