

Process Documentation: CCT360 Project 2

INTRODUCTION

The CCT360 Project 2 tasked me with designing and implementing a professional portfolio website that reflects both my technical skills and my creative approach to web development. The primary goal of this project was to create a responsive, visually appealing, and user-friendly website using Bootstrap 5.x, enriched with original media assets and adhering to web accessibility standards such as WCAG 2.0. This website serves as a digital showcase of my work, skills, and professional journey.

In this process, I aimed to strike a balance between aesthetic appeal and functional usability. My design journey evolved significantly through various iterations, influenced by lessons learned from my previous project (a microsite with an earthy aesthetic) and new inspirations. By leveraging Bootstrap's components and customizing them with CSS, I was able to meet the technical requirements while ensuring the site remains responsive and accessible across various devices. This introduction lays the foundation for the detailed exploration of the design and development process that follows.

PLANNING & CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

I started with an earthy, nature-inspired aesthetic, drawing on the success of my previous "Sage & Sip" microsite I developed for Project 1. This initial design featured muted tones, such as greens and browns, combined with serif fonts and organic textures, aimed at evoking a sense of warmth and professionalism. However, I soon realized that this aesthetic closely resembled my earlier project and lacked the distinctive character needed for this portfolio. To explore a fresh direction, I experimented with a neon gamer aesthetic. This design used a black background with neon accents in purple, blue, and pink, paired with pixelated fonts for a bold, high-contrast look. While visually striking, this aesthetic felt overly niche and less representative of my professional identity, leaning more toward a thematic gaming style than a polished portfolio for UX and digital media.

Earthy Design

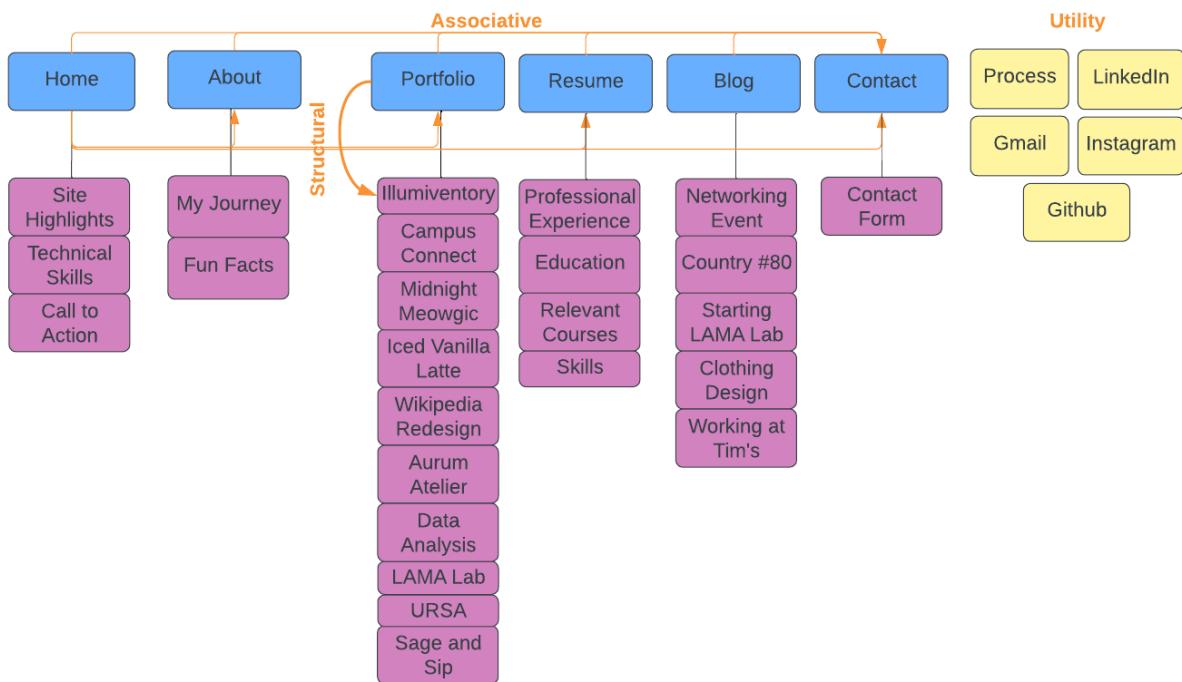
This screenshot shows a clean, earthy-toned website design. At the top, a dark green header bar contains the name "Natasha Barekman" and a navigation menu with links to Home, About Me, Portfolio, Resume, and Contact. Below the header is a tan-colored main section with a "Welcome to My Professional Portfolio" heading and a sub-headline "Natasha Barekman – UX & Digital Media Student". A prominent green "View My Work" button is centered. Three white rectangular boxes below the headline provide links to "About Me", "My Portfolio", and "Resume", each with a brief description and a "Learn More" or "View Portfolio" button. At the bottom of the main section is a dark footer bar with the copyright notice "© 2024 Natasha Barekman | Contact | Process".

Neon Design

This screenshot shows a modern, neon-themed website design. The top features a dark purple header with the name "NATASHA BAREKMAN" and a navigation menu. The main title "WELCOME TO MY PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO" is displayed in large, glowing pink letters against a dark background. Below the title, the subtitle "Natasha Barekman – UX & Digital Media Student" and a pink "View My Work" button are visible. The main content area has three black rectangular boxes with rounded corners, each containing a title and a description, followed by a "Learn More", "View Portfolio", or "Download Resume" button. The overall aesthetic is vibrant and contemporary.

After reflecting on my goals and target audience, I refined my design to combine the energy of the neon aesthetic with a more modern, professional tone. The final concept uses clean, colorful gradients (red, pink, purple, orange, turquoise) with neon accents and a dark-themed background to create a visually dynamic yet professional feel. The typography shifted to clean and legible fonts, balancing the boldness of the color palette. This design evolution aligns with my intention to create a portfolio that is approachable, creative, and reflective of my skills, while maintaining professionalism for academic and industry audiences.

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE (IA)



For structural navigation, I've included a global navigation bar on every page, linking to the primary sections: Home, About, Portfolio, Resume, Blog, and Contact. This setup ensures that visitors can quickly access key areas of my website, no matter where they are. On the Portfolio page, each project has its own modal, allowing users to explore details without leaving the main page. Similarly, my Resume page is organized with clearly labeled tables that make it easy to scan my professional experience, education, and skills. I've also added associative navigation elements to create a smoother user journey. Buttons like "Explore Now" on the Home page guide visitors to my portfolio, while the call-to-action section encourages collaboration by linking directly to my Contact page. On the Resume page, a "Download Resume" button makes it simple for potential employers or collaborators to save a copy of my CV. These elements are placed strategically to guide users from browsing to taking action.

For utility navigation, I've included links to my social media profiles and email in the footer of every page. This ensures visitors can connect with me outside of the website. The Contact page features a video introduction and an easy-to-use form, making it approachable and personal for anyone who wants to reach out. I've also focused on creating a clear visual hierarchy throughout the site. Bold headers and subheaders, like the welcoming text on the Home page, draw attention to important sections. I used card-based layouts on both the Home and Portfolio pages to keep content visually engaging and easy to digest. Overall, my site's layout is designed to guide visitors through my work and story, whether they're potential employers, collaborators, or simply curious viewers.

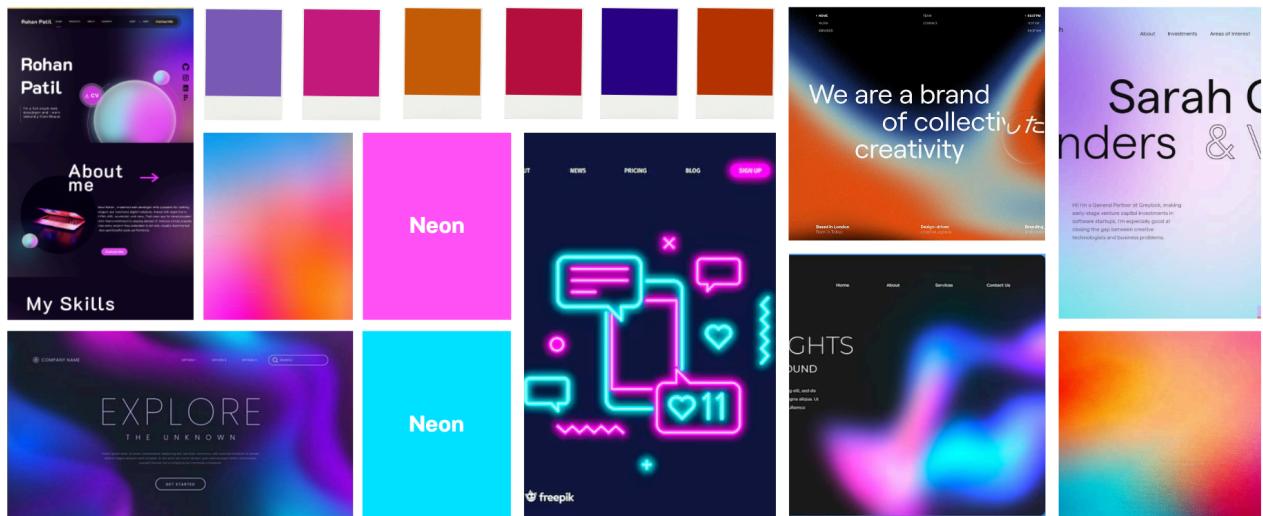
RESEARCH

To inform the design and structure of my professional portfolio website, I explored *Start Bootstrap* and *BootstrapMade*, focusing on their templates to analyze effective layout designs and dynamic visual components. For instance, Start Bootstrap's "Freelancer" template provided significant inspiration for incorporating modals to display project details on my portfolio page. Similarly, BootstrapMade templates demonstrated the creative potential of integrating different kinds of

navigation and landing page structures. For design inspiration, I browsed *Behance* and *Webflow*, two platforms renowned for showcasing innovative and high-quality projects. On *Behance*, I analyzed portfolios that balanced creativity and usability, observing how visual hierarchy and typography contribute to user engagement. *Webflow* inspired the use of clean, modern gradients and interactive features, emphasizing functionality without compromising aesthetics.

To refine the color palette and ensure cohesiveness, I created a mood board with screenshots of my inspirations and finalized a palette that incorporates vibrant neon tones of purple, pink, orange, and turquoise on a dark background. This choice reflects a dynamic yet professional aesthetic, aligning with my personal branding and the intended user experience. Additionally, I consulted the official Bootstrap Documentation to understand the components required for responsive design, including navbars, grid systems, cards, and progress bars. This guided the customization process, ensuring the components matched the envisioned design while adhering to web standards and accessibility requirements. This research approach provided a strong foundation for creating a visually engaging and functional website that met the project's goals.

Concept Moodboard



REFERENCES AND TOOLS

- Bootstrap Documentation: [Bootstrap Official Documentation](#): Used to implement responsive design elements like navbars, grid systems, and progress bars.
- WCAG 2.0 Guidelines: [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#): Consulted to ensure the website meets accessibility standards for all users.
- Start Bootstrap: [Portfolio & Resume Themes](#): Provided inspiration for layout structure and interactive components like modals.
- BootstrapMade: [Portfolio Templates](#): Explored for creative ideas on combining professional layouts with modern design.
- Behance: [Gradient Website Inspiration](#): Analyzed for innovative uses of gradients and typography in portfolio designs.
- Webflow: [Neon-Inspired Projects](#): Studied for clean, neon-themed designs that emphasize modern aesthetics.
- Adobe Creative Suite: Utilized for creating custom media assets, including page headers, as well as editing images and videos.
- Canva: Leveraged for designing polished graphic elements, including page body backgrounds with its design assets.
- Adobe Dreamweaver: Used for coding and efficient file management during the development process.

DESIGN ADJUSTMENTS

Throughout the design process, several significant adjustments were made to refine the website and improve its structure, functionality, and visual appeal. These changes reflect a thoughtful evolution from the original concept to the final structure represented in the wireframes. Initially, the Portfolio Page was designed with images placed alongside full text descriptions for each project. However, this

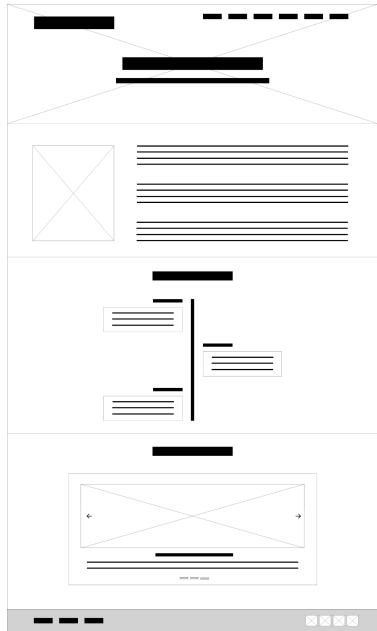
format felt cluttered and risked overwhelming users with too much information at once. To address this, the page was redesigned into a gallery-style layout that exclusively uses images as project thumbnails. Clicking on a thumbnail now opens a popup modal with detailed text descriptions, allowing users to explore content without being overloaded upfront.

On the About Page, a timeline was introduced to visually represent key milestones and achievements. This addition enhances the page's visual interest and provides a structured, narrative flow for the content. By shifting away from purely text-based descriptions, the timeline creates a more engaging user experience. The Home Page was updated to immediately showcase technical skills through the use of progress bars. These bars are visually striking and give users an at-a-glance understanding of key proficiencies, setting the tone for the professional capabilities highlighted throughout the site.

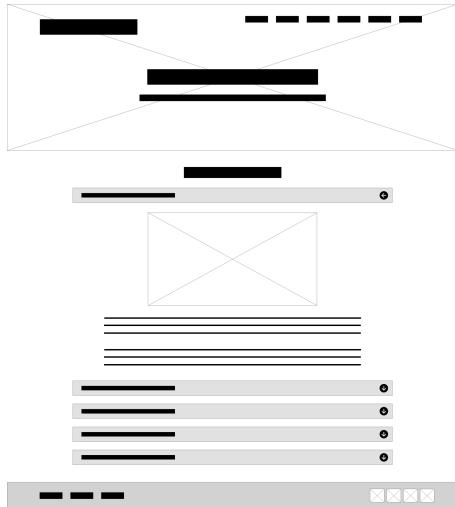
To add a personal touch, the website's logo was transformed into a handwritten font, creating a friendly and approachable feel. This adjustment helps distinguish the site and aligns with the overall branding goal of balancing professionalism with personality. To enhance user experience, animations were applied to page headers, making the design feel more dynamic and modern. Additionally, the navigation bar was made to disappear upon scrolling, ensuring it doesn't obstruct content or distract users as they explore the site. On the Contact Page, a video of me waving was added next to the contact form. This personal touch makes the page feel more welcoming and humanizes the interaction, helping to establish a stronger connection with visitors. These design adjustments demonstrate a commitment to improving the website's functionality, aesthetics, and user engagement. Each change was made with the goal of creating a cohesive, polished, and highly accessible portfolio that effectively communicates both professional skills and personal branding.

WIREFRAMES

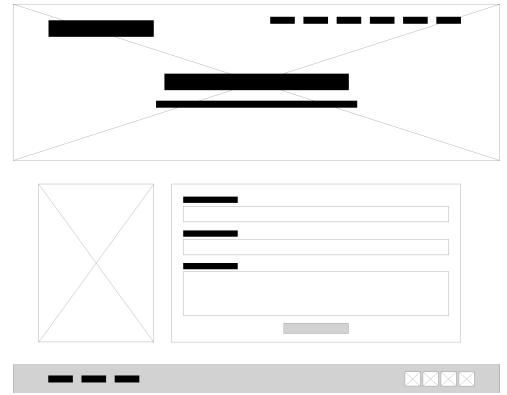
Home (index.html)



About (about.html)



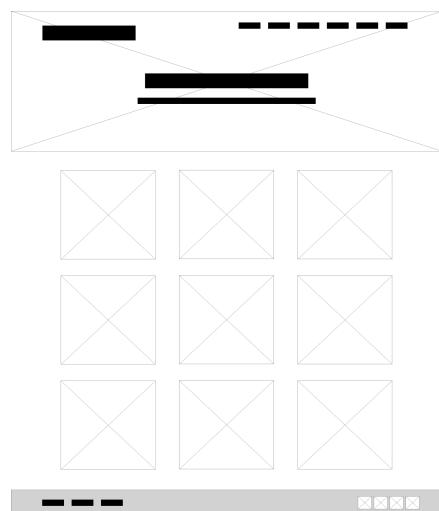
Portfolio (portfolio.html)



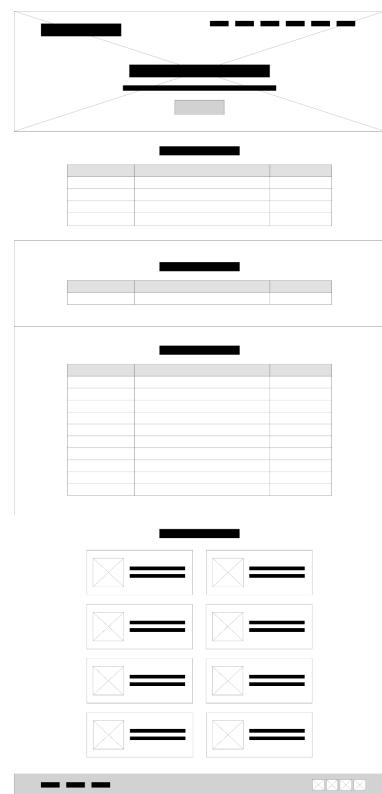
Resume (resume.html)



Blog (blog.html)



Contact (contact.html)



The wireframes for the website are designed to establish clarity, engagement, and ease of navigation across all pages. The Home Page features a prominent jumbotron with a tagline and

call-to-action button, ensuring that users are immediately drawn to the portfolio section. Below, three cards highlight key sections (About, Portfolio, and Resume), providing a clear entry point for exploring the site. The global navigation bar at the top ensures accessibility and seamless transitions between pages.

Each content page, About, Portfolio, Blog, Resume, and Contact, follows a structured layout that balances text and visuals to optimize user engagement. For instance, the About Page features a split layout with a profile image alongside descriptive text, complemented by a timeline showcasing milestones. The Portfolio Page organizes projects in a grid format with hover effects and modals, enabling users to view details without leaving the main page. These layouts prioritize readability and keep users focused on the content.

Responsiveness and accessibility were key considerations throughout the wireframe design. The use of styled tables on the Resume Page ensures information is easy to scan, while the Contact Page includes a straightforward form paired with a personal video to create a professional yet approachable feel. Across all wireframes, Bootstrap's grid system and breakpoints ensure adaptability to various screen sizes, delivering a consistent and modern user experience.

BOOTSTRAP IMPLEMENTATION

The website extensively utilizes Bootstrap components to ensure a modern, responsive, and visually engaging design. At its core, the Navbar is implemented across all pages to provide consistent navigation. Positioned as a fixed-top element, it collapses into a toggle menu on smaller screens using the 'navbar-toggler' class. This ensures seamless usability across devices while maintaining a sleek appearance. Bootstrap's grid system plays a vital role in structuring content across the site. On the Portfolio page, a responsive grid layout is used to display project thumbnails, ensuring proper alignment and scalability for all screen sizes. Similarly, the About page employs a two-column grid layout to align the profile image next to descriptive text, enhancing readability and balance.

To improve the visual hierarchy, Bootstrap's typography classes are leveraged to style

headings, subheadings, and lead text across the site. For example, the Home and Contact pages use ‘.lead’ to emphasize introductory content, creating a clean and professional presentation. Cards are used on the Home page to showcase key sections such as About Me, Portfolio, and Resume. These cards, styled with hover effects, provide a dynamic way to engage users, while the Blog page uses cards to present posts in a structured and user-friendly format.

The Resume page features tables to present information about Professional Experience, Education, and Relevant Courses. Using Bootstrap's table classes, such as ‘.table’, ‘.table-striped’, and ‘.table-hover’,, ensures a clean, organized, and visually appealing layout for this critical information. One of the most dynamic components is the modals used on the Portfolio page. Clicking on a project thumbnail opens a popup modal displaying additional details, allowing users to engage with content without navigating away from the page. This approach keeps the interface clean and minimizes navigation disruptions. Similarly, the Blog page incorporates collapsible accordions to display posts, ensuring the page remains uncluttered while allowing users to expand content as needed.

The Home page prominently features progress bars to visually represent technical skills. These progress bars are styled with Bootstrap’s ‘.progress’ and ‘.progress-bar’ classes and customized to align with the site’s vibrant color palette. Additionally, a jumbotron is implemented to anchor the Home page with a bold introduction, combining a striking heading, a subheading, and a call-to-action button.

The Contact page adds a personal touch by incorporating a local video of me waving, positioned next to the contact form. This element uses Bootstrap’s responsive utilities to ensure the video adjusts seamlessly across devices, making the page both engaging and user-friendly. Each Bootstrap component has been thoughtfully implemented to maintain a cohesive and professional design. Combined with custom CSS modifications, these elements create an interactive and visually compelling experience that adheres to modern web design principles.

CUSTOMIZATION AND STYLING

While Bootstrap provided the structural foundation for the website, I extensively customized its components to align with the site's unique neon aesthetic and personal branding. The entire website maintains consistency in typography by using the “Varela Round” font, chosen for its clean, modern appearance and legibility. This uniformity in font creates a cohesive look across all pages, ensuring that the design remains professional and visually pleasing. Additionally, I used custom CSS variables to define a vibrant color palette featuring gradients of pink, purple, orange, and turquoise, complemented by glowing effects to emphasize the neon theme. These colors were applied to buttons, headers, and navigation elements, creating a visually dynamic experience.

Interactive hover effects were integrated to enhance usability, using transitions and box shadows to make elements like buttons, cards, and navigation links feel responsive and engaging. The navigation bar was further styled to disappear upon scrolling, avoiding overlap with content while retaining accessibility. To add movement and interest, animations were applied to headers, ensuring smooth entry effects that draw attention without overwhelming users. Other personal touches include a handwritten logo font, which adds warmth and individuality, and a consistent footer design with neon accents and high-contrast text for clarity and visual appeal. These customizations reflect a commitment to balancing aesthetic appeal with functionality, resulting in a polished and engaging website.

RICH MEDIA PRODUCTION

To bring the visual elements of the website to life, I relied on a combination of tools and techniques to produce rich media that aligned with the site's neon aesthetic. Adobe Creative Suite was instrumental in creating custom media assets, such as page headers and jumbotron gradients. I designed unique bubble elements with ombre edges, smoothing and blending them into cohesive compositions. These bubble designs added a sense of depth and vibrancy to the site. Adobe tools were also used to edit images and screenshots featured in the Portfolio and About Me sections, ensuring they

were visually consistent and high-quality. Additionally, I edited the video of myself for the Contact page, enhancing its clarity and color to fit seamlessly within the website's overall theme.

Canva was leveraged to create polished graphic elements that add depth and texture to the design. For instance, page body backgrounds featuring small, colorful gradient bubbles on a black backdrop were designed using Canva's intuitive tools and pre-made assets. These backgrounds add subtle movement and vibrancy, enriching the site's visual appeal and contribute to the cohesive neon theme without overwhelming the content. Together, these tools enabled the creation of high-quality, visually engaging media assets that significantly enhance the user experience and reinforce the website's aesthetic theme.

Example Canva Design Assets



RESPONSIVE DESIGN

Responsive design was a critical aspect of this portfolio website, ensuring that it adapts seamlessly to various screen sizes and devices. By leveraging Bootstrap 5.x and custom CSS, I created a design that is visually appealing and functional on screen sizes from desktops and tablets, to smartphones. This approach enhances user experience and aligns with modern web development standards. The foundation of the website's responsive design lies in Bootstrap's grid system and

predefined breakpoints. The grid system allowed for flexible layouts that automatically adjust based on the screen size. For example, on larger screens, the portfolio page features a multi-column grid displaying project thumbnails side by side. On smaller screens, these thumbnails stack vertically to maintain clarity and usability. Breakpoints were utilized to refine layouts for small ($\geq 576\text{px}$), medium ($\geq 768\text{px}$), and large ($\geq 992\text{px}$) devices, ensuring an optimized experience across all viewports.

Specific design elements were tailored to enhance mobile usability. The navigation bar, for instance, collapses into a hamburger menu on smaller screens, saving space while retaining full functionality. Form fields and buttons were resized and spaced appropriately to accommodate touch interactions. Images and videos were also made responsive, resizing fluidly within their containers to avoid cropping or distortion. To further refine the experience, custom media queries were used to address specific design challenges. For example, font sizes and padding were adjusted for smaller devices to ensure readability and accessibility. The hero section on the home page, which features a headline and call-to-action button, was designed to scale proportionally, maintaining its visual impact across all devices. Hover effects on interactive elements like buttons and project cards were supplemented with focus states for touch devices, providing consistent feedback regardless of the input method.

The responsive design also incorporated performance optimizations to improve load times on mobile devices. Images were compressed and implemented with responsive attributes, such as ‘srcset’, to deliver appropriate resolutions based on the user’s device. These optimizations ensured that the website not only looks great but also performs efficiently on a range of devices and network conditions. Testing was an integral part of the responsive design process. The website was tested on multiple devices and emulators to identify and address layout issues. Bootstrap utilities, combined with manual adjustments, allowed for quick iteration and refinement. This comprehensive approach ensured that the website delivers a consistent and enjoyable user experience, whether accessed on a desktop monitor, a tablet, or a smartphone.

USABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Usability and accessibility were key priorities in designing and developing this portfolio website. Following Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and best practices, I ensured the site is inclusive, intuitive, and functional for a diverse audience, including those relying on assistive technologies. The website incorporates features to enhance navigation, interactivity, and readability while maintaining a cohesive and engaging design. Testing and validation played an essential role in ensuring adherence to usability and accessibility standards. Feedback from university peers and my parents as an older audience with poorer vision was key in refining navigation and usability.

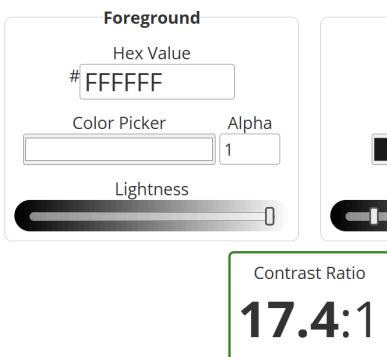
A consistent navigation system is present on every page, providing seamless access to all major sections of the website. The navigation bar includes dropdowns and collapsible menus to optimize usability on smaller screens, ensuring the interface remains compact and functional. Interactive elements, such as buttons, cards, and links, feature hover effects to provide clear visual feedback, helping users identify clickable items with ease. The website layout emphasizes clear visual hierarchy, using prominent headings and strategically placed calls-to-action, such as “Explore Now” and “Download Resume,” to guide users intuitively through the site.

Accessibility was addressed through a combination of ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications) labels, alt text for images, and keyboard navigation support. ARIA labels were applied to interactive elements like buttons and forms, improving screen reader compatibility. Alt text was added to all images, including project thumbnails and decorative visuals, ensuring visually impaired users receive descriptive content when navigating the site. The site also supports full keyboard navigation, enabling users to interact with all elements without relying on a mouse. Logical tab orders and visible focus indicators further enhance this functionality.

Color contrast and responsive typography were carefully implemented to improve readability for all users. The neon-themed color palette maintains high contrast between text and background, verified using the WebAIM Contrast Checker to meet WCAG 2.0 standards. Text is scaled using relative units (e.g., rem), allowing it to adjust dynamically based on user preferences and screen sizes.

Form fields on the contact page are equipped with proper HTML labels and placeholders for guidance, with error states clearly distinguished visually and compatible with assistive technologies.

Text Color vs. Card Background



Neon Heading vs. Page Background



The website adheres to WCAG 2.0 principles, ensuring it is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. Content is accessible for users with sensory impairments through alt text and high contrast, while all functionalities are operable via keyboard and mouse. Intuitive layouts and clear language enhance understandability, and compatibility with modern browsers and assistive technologies ensures robustness. These efforts resulted in a professional portfolio that is inclusive and user-friendly for a diverse audience.