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GIT 480: Senior Project

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Michelangelo Exposition Ticketing Website

Brainstorm Phase

What problem(s) will each idea solve?

Tutorial Website: Addressed the lack of beginner-focused, engaging digital learning resources. Many existing tutorials are overly technical or rely on passive text-based instruction, creating a significant barrier for newcomers.

Website for Local Business/Non-Profit: Outdated or nonexistent websites severely diminish an organization's ability to communicate its mission, connect with audiences, and manage events effectively. This hinders outreach, reduces service utilization, and limits potential donor engagement.

Event Website for Art Exhibitions/Events: Promoting art events online presents a challenge due to the sheer volume of digital noise. Many traditional art event websites offer static presentations, failing to capture the exhibitions' vibrancy and struggling to reach new audiences.

Solution for each idea

Tutorial Website: Creating a user-friendly platform offering clear, step-by-step tutorials. Key features include embedded coding environments for real-time experimentation and gamified elements to boost motivation.

Website for Local Business/Non-Profit: Designing a modern, responsive website with intuitive navigation and visually appealing content. Integrating a user-friendly event management system would optimize event promotion and streamline online engagement.

Event Website for Art Exhibitions/Events: Design a visually dynamic website showcasing high-quality imagery and well-formatted typography. Features would include an interactive event calendar, detailed artist profiles, and an integrated ticketing system for ease of purchase.

Thought process in determining the viability

I evaluated each project based on scope, potential real-world impact, and alignment with my skill set. I wanted to select a project that offered complexity and the chance to implement diverse techniques in user experience design, front-end development, and content management.

Reflection

While the tutorial website appealed to my interest in interactive learning, I chose the Michelangelo Exhibit project. This website offered a compelling blend of immediate, real-world applications with opportunities for creative implementation in line with my design interests. It felt like a project where I could make a direct contribution.

Identify Phase

Most Viable Solution

I identified the development of a promotional website for a Michelangelo Exhibit as the most viable idea because it addressed a tangible need to increase awareness and drive attendance for a physical art exhibition. The primary solution was a website designed to educate potential visitors about Michelangelo and provide an immersive, compelling experience that seamlessly led to ticket purchases.

Reflection

I expanded the solution to provide promotional material and an immersive educational experience to enhance visitor engagement and exhibit attendance. It now features a virtual tour showcasing Michelangelo's works, an interactive timeline exploring his life, and a more sophisticated ticket booking system for user convenience.

Define Phase

Project Plan

The project plan focused on developing a promotional website for a Michelangelo Exhibit. I structured the timeline to ensure the completion of the following milestones within specific timeframes.

Milestones and Timeline

- Research and Conceptualization Jan 29
- Low-fidelity Wireframes Feb 4
- High-Fidelity Design Feb 18
- Final Website Feb 27

Inspiration

My inspirations were deeply rooted in Renaissance art and Italian architecture, specifically referencing Michelangelo's works like David, the Sistine Chapel, and his sculpting tools.

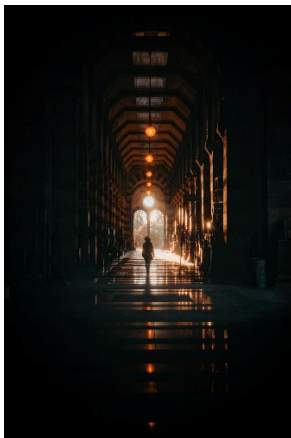*Figure 2.1 (David)*

Figure 2.2 (Tower of Pisa)

Figure 2.3 (Sistine Chapel Ceiling)

Figure 2.4 (Man Walking on Street)

Figure 2.5 (St. Peter's Ceiling)

Figure 2.6 (Sculpting Tools)

Figure 2.7 (Lemon Fresco)

Figure 2.8 (Paint Brushes)

Reflection

The project primarily adhered to the original brief, focusing on creating an engaging and informative user experience. The timeline was closely followed, with slight adjustments to extend the content development phase to ensure quality and accuracy.

The research and design phases went exceptionally well. However, challenges arose in sourcing high-quality images and creating the media for the exhibits, requiring additional resources and slight adjustments in the timeline.

Ideate Phase

The ideation process involved creating wireframes for different pages of the Michelangelo Exhibition Website, including the home page, tickets page, gift shop, and checkout page—each page designed to offer an immersive and intuitive experience that mirrored the grandeur of Michelangelo's works.

Reflection

I do have a second set of wireframes. I turned down the idea of integrating the checkout onto the ticket and merch pages. Creating a separate checkout page helped decrease the congestion and gave more focus to the respective pages.

The final design closely adhered to my selected wireframes, with some adjustments made based on peer feedback. This feedback simplified the navigation menu and enhanced the visual hierarchy on crucial pages. These changes resulted in a more streamlined and accessible website, improving user engagement and satisfaction.

Wireframes

Prototype Phase

I translated my wireframes into low-fidelity prototypes using Figma. This allowed me to quickly experiment with layout, basic interactions, and visual hierarchy. I then progressed to high-fidelity mockups, refining the visual style and ensuring page consistency.

The Renaissance theme was a guiding principle during the prototyping phase. I chose a rich color palette inspired by frescoes and incorporated subtle textures reminiscent of marble and aged paper. Typography was carefully selected—Cinzel, a bold decorative serif with classic Roman inspiration, was used for headings. At the same time, the warm and readable Palatino Linotype, a humanist sans-serif, provided clarity for the body text. Cormorant Garamond was used on features that needed to stand out, like button text. This combination enhanced both readability and the period feel. I further engaged users with interactive elements such as subtle hover effects on buttons and a dynamic image carousel on the homepage.

One key challenge was finding high-resolution images of Michelangelo's artwork that could be used without copyright restrictions. I spent considerable time exploring open-source repositories and was able to locate a majority of what I needed. I explored the possibility of creating my own stylized illustrations for certain pieces.

Reflection

I received good critiques from my peers for my wireframes, mostly involving congestion, so I addressed those issues before starting the prototype. My designs in the past have been very flat, so I wanted to incorporate textures into this project. I decided to use Photoshop some marble and fresco images into patterns and used them as overlays on top of my background colors. My biggest obstacle was opting to create something new rather than redesign a website. Finding high-quality images of the artwork isn't too tricky, but when I have to design the merchandise and my exhibits, it adds much more time than I anticipated; I would have chosen a different strategy. I had to scrap the gallery section because so much time was spent generating exhibit images, which I felt necessary.

Test Phase

Due to project constraints, testing primarily focused on gathering feedback from peers within my design program. I presented my prototypes, explaining my design choices and the intended user experience. Individual critiques and group discussions allowed me to collect valuable insights. Feedback was generally positive. Peers appreciated the overall Renaissance aesthetic and the seamless ticket-purchasing experience. They suggested reducing text-heavy sections by incorporating more visuals on pages like "Michelangelo's Life." Additionally, they recommended adjusting the gift shop color scheme for greater cohesion with the main website.

I used the peer feedback to inform refinements. Where possible, visually breaking up large blocks of text improved readability. I also experimented with revised color palettes for the gift shop until I achieved a more integrated appearance.

Prototypes

Reflection

I was only able to show the prototypes to my peers. They commented positively about my website's layout, color scheme, and overall theme. They particularly liked the "Purchase Tickets" page. However, they did offer some constructive feedback. They suggested I work on the typeface to create more contrast, especially in the subheadings. They also felt that the white text in the navigation was a bit hard to read against the gray background and recommended higher contrast colors. Finally, my peers suggested I add more whitespace to some pages for a less cluttered look.

Refine Phase

I carefully considered the feedback received from my peers. I focused first on addressing usability concerns, such as breaking up dense text blocks on the "Michelangelo's Life" page and reworking the gift shop color scheme to align more closely with the overall site theme.

To increase text-heavy sections' visual appeal and readability, I incorporated additional images and experimented with shorter, easily scannable text sections. I tested several alternative color palettes for the gift shop until I found a combination that better fit the Renaissance aesthetic. I also made subtle tweaks to aspects like font weights and spacing based on my design sensibilities.

While peer feedback was crucial, I also trusted my judgment as a designer. Not every suggestion was implemented directly. This balance between outside perspectives and personal vision helped me refine the website to achieve a cohesive and satisfying experience.

Reflection

The final website successfully incorporates feedback while maintaining the integrity of my initial vision. The collaborative process led to a significantly more user-friendly experience with greater aesthetic appeal.

Seeking feedback, even informally, is invaluable. Outside perspectives helped me identify improvement areas I missed. In future projects, I aim to incorporate peer review stages earlier in the design process to allow for more iterative refinement.

Implement Phase

Although the HTML and CSS are complete, the JavaScript still needs much work. I wanted to include reactive elements in the page, so I outsourced a vanilla reactive system(Marc Grabanski) from GitHub. I still need to focus my efforts on the JS for the Gift Shop and Checkout Pages. While vanilla JavaScript offers complete control, I quickly realized the complexity of building a reactive system from scratch. If I could start over, I would create the project using a lightweight framework like Vue.js or Svelte to streamline the implementation. These frameworks provide built-in reactivity mechanisms that significantly reduce development time and make the code more maintainable.

Reflection

Although I'm submitting my incomplete project, I plan on revising my project timeline to incorporate a framework learning curve and time for code refactoring. I'll also use this experience to fine-tune my estimation skills for future projects, factoring in more contingency time for potential technical hurdles.

Researching available frameworks upfront can be invaluable. I'll now evaluate popular solutions based on project scale, complexity, and my or my team's skill set. This proactive approach will ensure I have the right tools from the start.

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