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## PHOEBE ESPIRITU

### PORTFOLIO

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[simplifierlab.com](https://simplifierlab.com)

[25x52.com](https://25x52.com)

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### Experience

#### **Product Designer, Skylight — Jan 2020 – present**

Product design lead on an engagement that helps ensure female pilots are equipped with gear that meets their physical and functional needs.

#### **Product Designer, GitHub — Sep 2018 – Jan 2020**

Used data to help understand user behavior and inform product decisions. Conducted remote user research; responsible for authoring research plans, recruiting users, moderating the interviews remotely, and synthesizing findings.

- Led the onboarding and IA redesign for GitHub Classroom as a result of findings from research interviews with new and experienced users
- Led a design experiment that resulted in an 8% increase in the number of organizations choosing a paid plan over free
- Worked on fine-grained permissions for GitHub Enterprise — one of the highly-demanded features unveiled at GitHub Satellite

#### **Innovation Specialist, 18F — Oct 2015 – Apr 2018**

Service Designer/Design Lead on cloud.gov, a secure and compliant PaaS for government teams; Product and Design Lead on the discovery research and site launch of NSF Seed Fund (formerly known as NSF SBIR); Service Design Lead on a discovery engagement for procurements with CFPB; Product Design Lead for myUSCIS, an effort to bring innovation and human-centered design to citizenship and immigration services.

#### **Product Design Consultant — Jun 2004 – Oct 2015**

Areas of focus include early-stage product development, Lean UX, product design. I help early-stage teams with customer and product validation, finding product-market fit, and building design teams and their capabilities.

- Led and facilitated design sprints and various design and research methods such as contextual inquiry interviews, usability testing, journey mapping, service blueprinting, and data analysis to uncover customer insights.
  - Worked with stakeholders to clarify and validate product priorities
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- Worked in Agile teams, pairing with product and engineering team members either onsite or remotely
  - Provided UX/UI deliverables such as wireframes, mockups, clickable prototypes and HTML/CSS markup

**Adjunct Professor, Parsons | The New School — Jan 2012 – Dec 2013**

Taught Entrepreneurship — a product design course — at Parsons' Design + Technology MFA program. Rewrote an outdated syllabus to make it relevant for New York City's flourishing startup environment. The syllabus included business model design, customer development, and product management. Brought in guest lecturers each week to inspire and provide a fresh set of design role models. Guests included David Karp, founder of Tumblr, Naveen Selvadurai, co-founder of Foursquare, Phin Barnes, Partner at First Round Capital, Charles Adler, Co-Founder of Kickstarter and Mike Karnjanaprakorn, CEO/Co-Founder of Skillshare.

**Hackstar (Managing Designer-in-Residence) — Jan 2011 – Mar 2014**

Provided hands-on product and design support as an embedded team member to dozens of early-stage startups that were admitted into the 12-week accelerator. Recruited 5-8 developers and designers per program — despite having no marketing budget to work with, a mere 4-week timeframe to complete recruitments, and a below-market stipend to offer to candidates. A few accomplishments worth noting:

- Selected by the founders of ThinkNear to work with them exclusively to help design, build, and validate product-market assumptions. ThinkNear shortly found traction and was acquired in just a little over a year after graduating from the program in one of the larger Techstars exits to date.
  - The founders of Smallknot, a crowdfunding site for local businesses, initially needed help to improve their rewards selection flow. But, upon digging into the product, I realized they were prematurely optimizing features before they had validated core assumptions. With only four weeks left until demo day, I led them through a product triage to validate their riskiest assumptions first:
    - Conducted competitive research. I worked with the founders to define the brand values that differentiated Smallknot from other crowdfunding sites like Kickstarter or LuckyAnt.
    - Performed a heuristic evaluation of their current product and suggested a few improvements.
    - Worked with the CEO to understand the business model using the Business Model Canvas, paying close attention to the value
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generation. I led their team through a redesign to focus on aligning the product—not just with the founders’ vision — but with their customers’ values as well.

- After listening to weeSpring’s target customers, I learned that the founders built the wrong product. Their most engaged users — new or soon-to-be parents — instinctively used their phone when making critical purchasing and childcare decisions. User logs confirmed that most of the returning traffic came from phones. I subsequently led the team through a responsive redesign of their site as an interim solution.

#### **Design Lead, Shapeways — Apr 2011 – Dec 2011**

Solo designer with split responsibilities among Product (data analysis, user research, wireframes, card sorting), UI (Photoshop mockups, HTML, CSS) and Marketing (landing pages, print and other offline collateral). Identified an opportunity to take advantage of Black Friday and led an aggressive product launch that resulted in an unprecedented volume of orders. Discovered marketplace anomalies by analyzing logs and subsequently recommended shifting the brand and product to focus more on creators and makers in order to simplify the product offering and improve user experience.

#### **Creative Director, Paltalk — Jan 2006 – Dec 2008**

Paltalk is a SaaS videochat application with over 100 million users. Inherited an underperforming 3-person group and turned it into a motivated, technically-competent design team. Introduced user-centered design research to help shift from stakeholder-driven product decisions. Led the product redesign of the core software that resulted in improved usability and increased user engagement. Worked closely with Product, Marketing, and Engineering to make product improvements — using heatmaps, multivariate testing and analytics to help inform product decisions.

#### **Instructor, NOVA Community College — Jan 1999 – Dec 2000**

Taught a continuing education course on interaction design in the evenings.

#### **Design Director, AOL — Jan 1997 – Sep 2001**

I’ve been designing for the web since the early AOL dial-up days where we had the opportunity to help define and test interaction patterns that have consequently become established in how we use the web. I learned the proprietary technology, Rainman, on my own in order to build interactive prototypes and understand the technical limitations.

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- I oversaw and contributed to AOL's design systems (back when they were known as design guidelines). I was also responsible for managing the expanding portfolio of brands that have expanded through growth and acquisitions (i.e., Netscape, CompuServe).
  - Promoted from senior designer to art director after 3 months, then promoted to Design Director after 8 months. Led an award-winning design team while also serving as the design lead for AOL Small Business, Educational, Transactional, and e-Commerce business units.
  - Led the design team in the execution of AOL 4.0, a radical overhaul of the client interface.
  - Responsibilities included developing sites from concept to functional UI using AOL's proprietary tools, overseeing product quality, art directing 8-15 projects per week. Supervised 2-5 direct reports.
  - Appointed to serve as a senior ambassador, part of an executive team to help with three post-acquisition initiatives: facilitate integration of product across AOL, Time-Warner, and Netscape's product design groups; draft cross-brand standards and evangelize best practices; promote harmony across different design cultures

## **Education**

### **M.P.S., Interactive Design, NYU/Tisch Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP)**

Coursework included Physical Computing, Introduction to Computational Media, Dynamic Web Development, Game Design, Design & Redesign.  
GPA: 4.0

### **B.A. Liberal Arts, SUNY at Stony Brook**

Academic emphasis in Biology, Linguistics, and Art History. Studied under the Scholar Incentives Program, an accelerated learning track. Clara Abbott Scholarship recipient for academic achievement.

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## Related Activities

### 25x52

A personal initiative to launch [25 projects in 52 weeks](#). Projects vary in size and scope but generally have educational value and serve to be useful to others. A few noteworthy projects include:

- [Project Moccasin](#): An opportunity to spend a day with a design or product mentor to see what it's like to be in their shoes. I created and single-handedly produced this mentorship event as a way to offer access to some valuable mentors while understanding their actions in their context. The pilot program ran in the Fall 2014 in New York and Spring 2015 in two cities, New York, NY and Austin, TX.
- [Google Fonts Typography Project](#): A collaborative typographic project to help provide inspiration for combining typefaces using the Google Font catalog. The project has garnered attention from [Khoi Vinh](#), [Product Hunt](#), [Hacker News](#), [How Design](#).

### Design Trust

[Assembled an elite group of product designers](#) from New York's startups to participate in TechCrunch's Disrupt Hackathon NY (2011-2013). The goal was two-fold: (1) Provide the hacker teams with access to designers and incorporate design thinking from the outset instead of just applying it cosmetically; (2) Get more designers involved in developer-heavy hackathons to spur more innovative thinking

### Select Talks and Lectures

- Lean Launchpad at NYU ITP, guest Q&A on Accelerators and Early-Stage Startups, New York, NY 2014
  - "Conducting Product Research," workshop presented at NYU ITP, New York, NY 2014
  - The ARK Challenge, mentor Q&A, Fayetteville, AR 2012 - 2014
  - "Designing for the Brain," visiting lecturer at Cooper Union, New York, NY 2012
  - "Does Your Blog Have a Business?" SXSW panelist, Austin, TX 2005
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### **Awards and Distinctions**

- Named among "25 Women Driving NY's Tech Scene," 2011 ([archived link](#))
- Winner, Gold Award for Teen Online category awarded by Society of Publication Designers, 2000

### **Publications / Press**

- [What Matters Now](#), contributing author
- Work featured in the [35th Publication Design Annual](#) by the Society of Publication Designers

### **Technical Skills**

Proficient in Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, HTML and CSS, Git/GitHub. Also experienced in InVision, Sketch. Dabbled in Python, React, Swift.

View my [GitHub profile](#) to view my public repositories.

### **Languages**

Bilingual in English and Filipino (Tagalog).

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