

# hello!

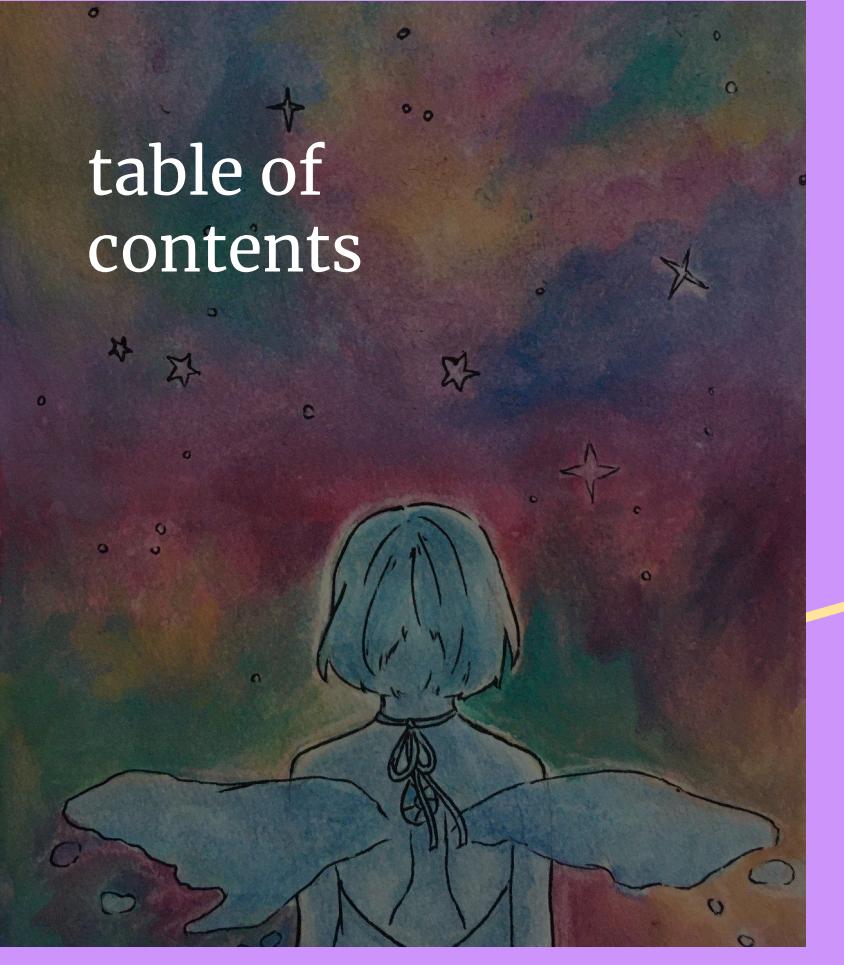
my name is Sissi Zhu,  
and I'm a designer based in  
Toronto and Chicago.



**My design philosophy** centers around intentional choices to make digital spaces more readily accessible and appealing.

I studied psychology, computer science, and visual arts at the University of Toronto, which allows me to understand **human-computer interaction** through a multidisciplinary lens.

Ultimately, this empowers my design work in crafting more informed design solutions.



# table of contents

## UI/UX Design

Utradea Digital Platform	4
Slow Burn Leather Branding	13
Personal Website	22

## Product Design

Morya Jewelry	28
Utradea Company Stickers	31

## Graphic Design

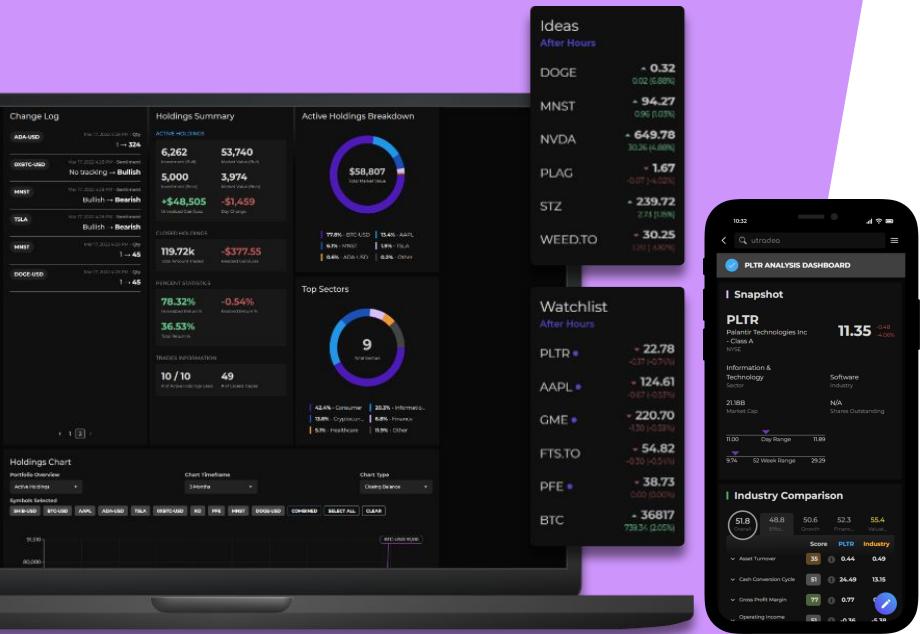
Architecture Logos	33
Utradea Advertisements	34

## Illustration

Fashion Illustration	38
Personal Illustration	39

# UI/UX Design

# Utradea Digital Platform



During my time at Utradea, an investing analytics platform, I worked on the website and mobile app interface designs. There were **two key design skills** I learned from the experience:

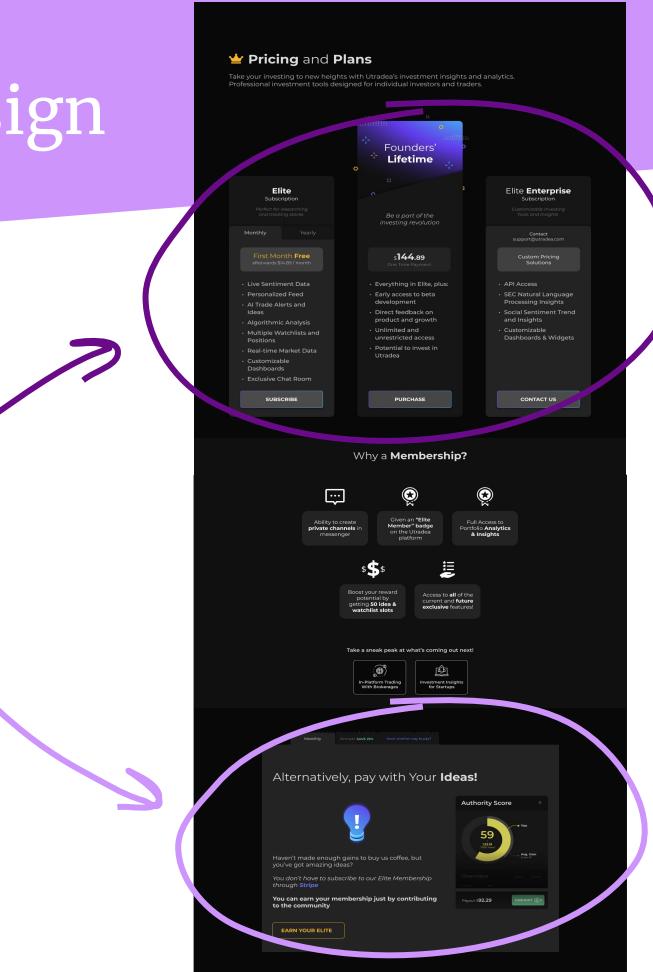
1. Presenting rich and complex data in a visually clear way
2. Intentionally designing content that could be easily adaptable for different screen sizes (desktop, mobile, and tablet)



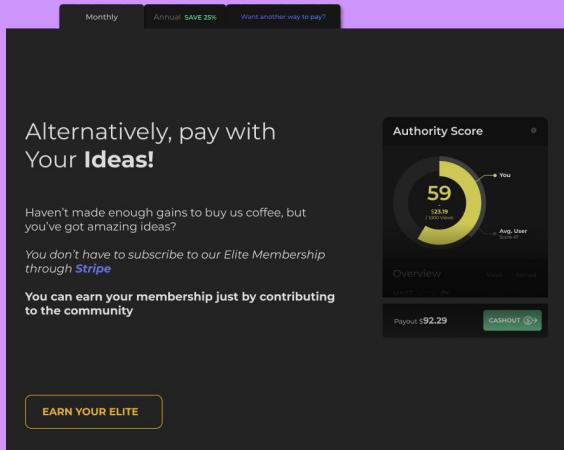
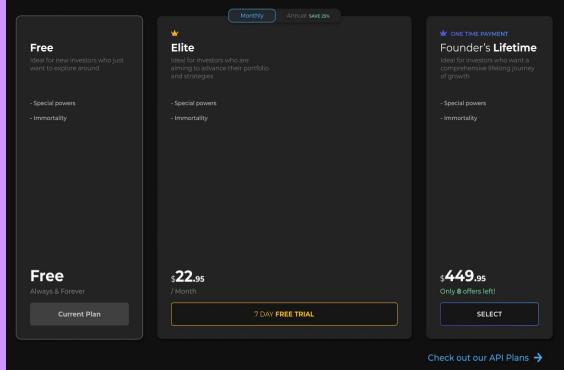
# Utradea Pricing Page Redesign (Case study)

**Problem:** The webpage for pricing plans was **too cluttered**.

1. Differences in membership plans weren't clear and relied overly on text
2. The pitch for an alternate way of payment was visually convoluted
3. The webpage needed to **present pricing plans for a new platform service**, which corresponded to membership plan tiers



# Utradea Pricing Page: Redesign Result



**New version**

The new version of the pricing page has a dark background. It displays the same three membership plans: 'Free' (Monthly \$22.95), 'Elite' (Monthly \$449.95), and 'Founder's Lifetime' (Annual \$144.89). Each plan card includes a 'SELECT' button. Below the cards is a call-to-action: 'Check out our API Plans →'. A prominent 'Why a Membership?' section is added, featuring icons for private channels, badge, portfolio analytics, and more. The 'Pay with Ideas!' section from the original version is removed.

**Original version**

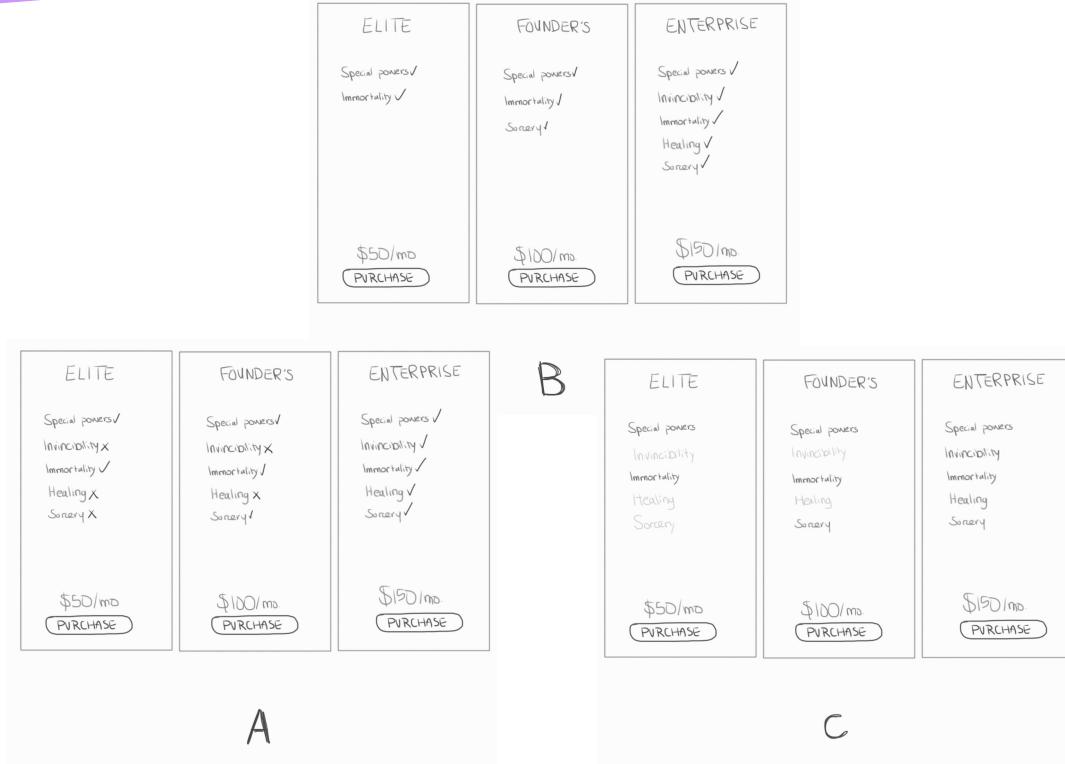
The original version includes a 'Why a Membership?' section with icons for private channels, badge, portfolio analytics, and more. Below this is a 'Take a sneak peak at what's coming out next!' section with two cards: 'Autumn Update' and 'Innovate for Change'. The 'Pay with Ideas!' section is also present at the bottom.

# Utradea Pricing Page: Exploring Structure

*How did I get started?*

First, I created iterative sketches to explore how to best **capture differences between the three membership tiers.**

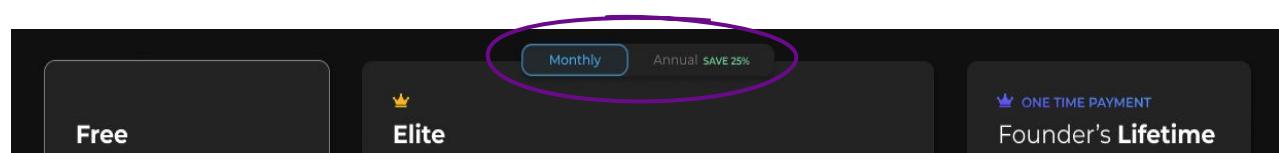
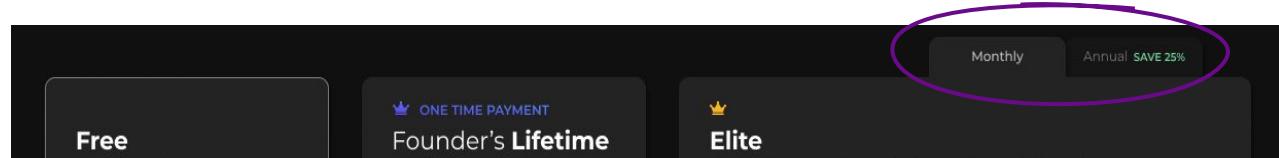
Ultimately, I decided to move forward with Version C to **avoid visual clutter** with too many icons.



# Utradea Pricing Page: Exploring Structure

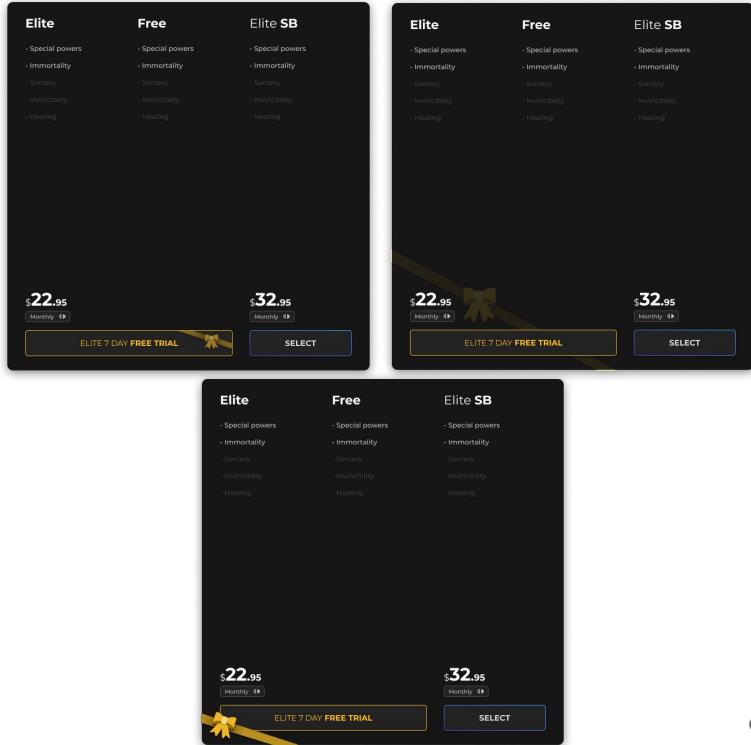
Next, I mocked up toggle buttons and tabs for users to **navigate between monthly and annual prices.**

I found that coloured toggle buttons stand out more because of the dark background.



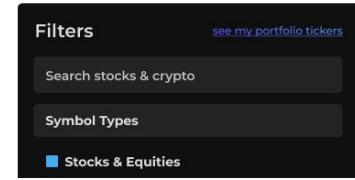
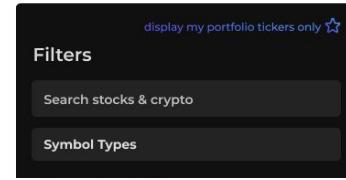
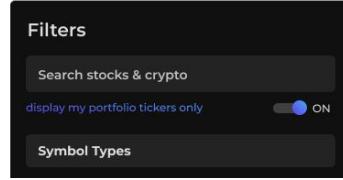
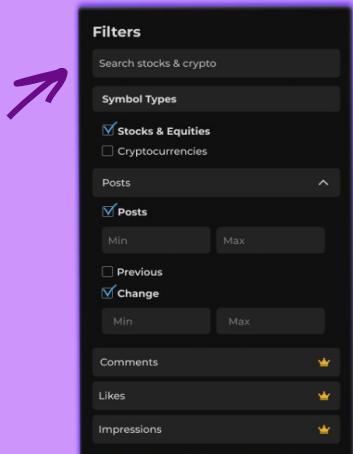
# Utradea Pricing Page: Membership Banner

To highlight the attractiveness of the highest tier membership and its **limited free trial**, I created sketches and mockups of graphic banners. They didn't make it onto the final pricing page, but they were useful for A/B testing.



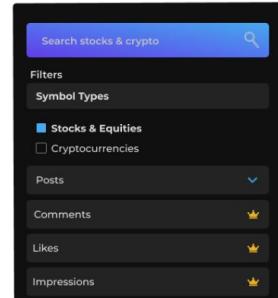
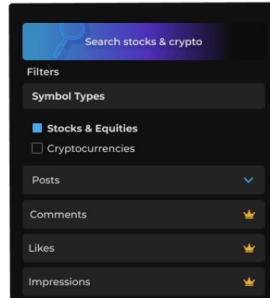
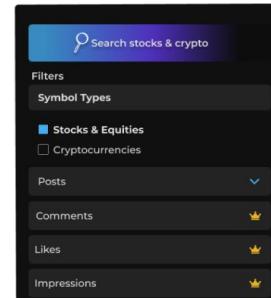
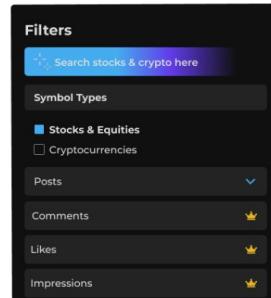
# Utradea Search Bar Redesign

**Problem:** The mobile app search bar for stocks and cryptocurrencies was **not eye catching enough** and was getting lost on the filters menu.



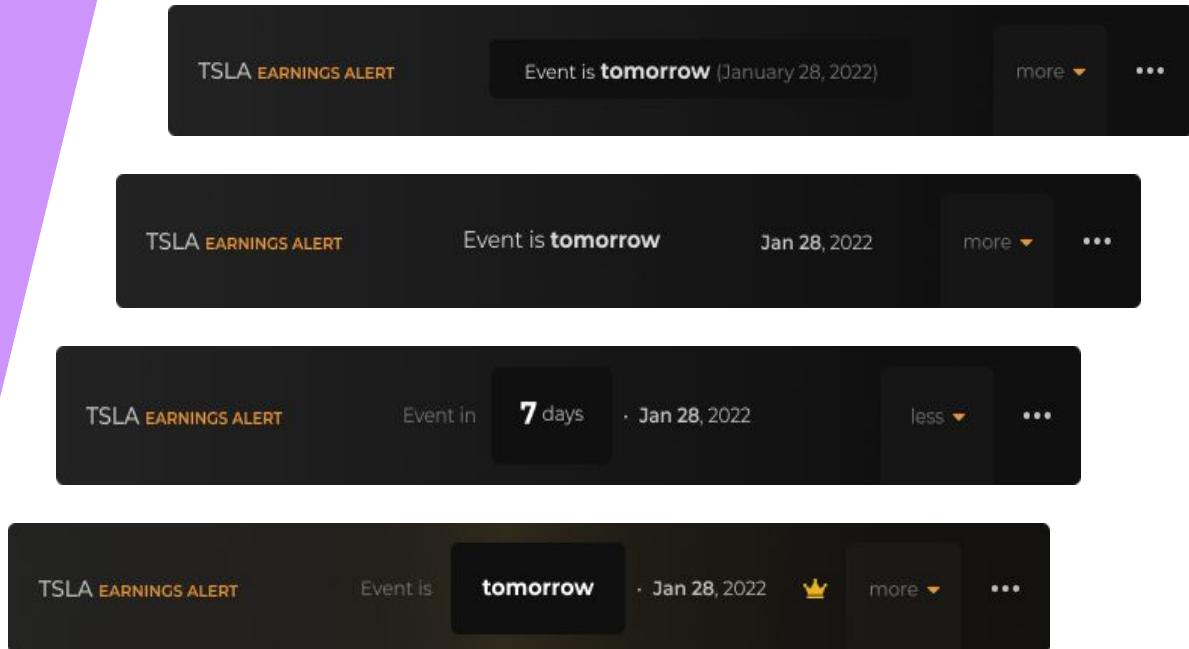
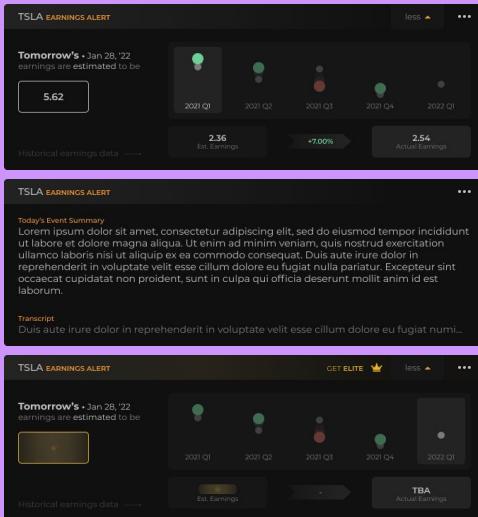
**Action:** I iterated versions of a button for quick access to a user's investing portfolio (shown above) since that was a likely use case for the search bar.

I also created mockups of different versions of the search bar for A/B testing (shown below).



# Utradea Mobile Alerts

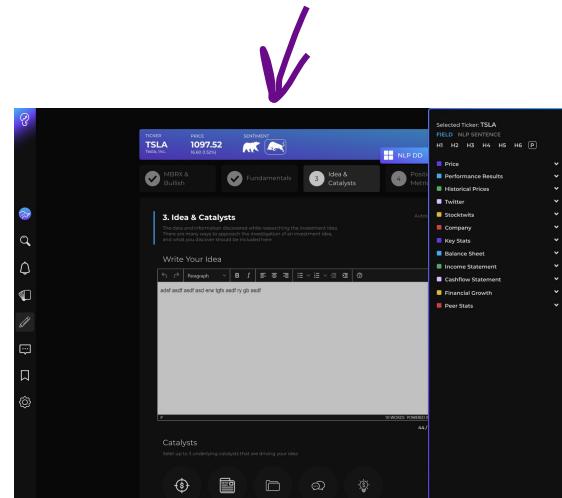
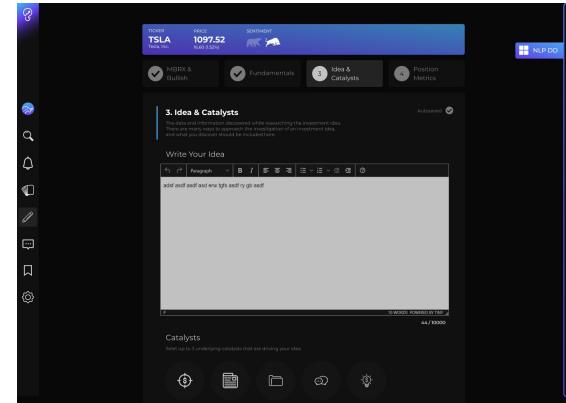
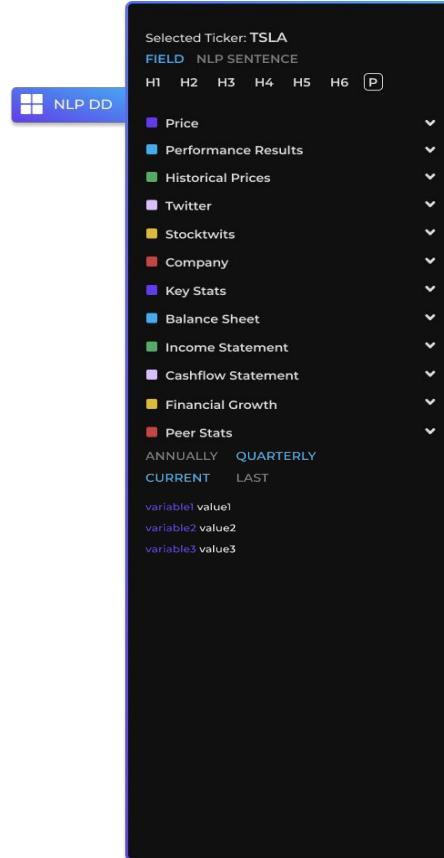
Other interface features I designed include **stock earning alerts** to incentivise users to frequently check the mobile app. The **mockups on the right** are adapted from the desktop alerts shown below.



# Utradea Sidebar

I also designed a sidebar that tracks data for a specific stock ticker on the desktop website. The sidebar pulls out when users hover on it, and users can click on drop down options to expand on details.

Because there's several categories of complex data, I colour coded the categories to make them more visually salient.



# Slow Burn Leather Branding (Case study)



**Slow Burn Leather (SBL)** is a Toronto-based small business that makes **leather accessories** for both fashion and play.

While working on their branding and website, I faced **two design objectives**:

1. Design a memorable website that clearly communicates the SBL identity
2. Customize a Shopify template with code to bring more personality to the website

# SBL Branding: Final Desktop Website

Welcome to the website soft launch! Products will be available to purchase next week after the final update.

Handmade leather harnesses for fashion and play.

Shop all

Adjustable leather body harnesses, cuffs, bondage gear, equestrian tack, and modular accessories. Slow Burn Leather's signature full body harnesses with decadence and lavish hardware.

Everything is made to measure to fit your unique body.

Handmade by a proud femme leatherqueer in Toronto, Canada for all bodies and orientations.

Please tag me in your photo I want to see how my designs look on other people. It continues to inspire me when I see other people wearing my leather with joy and pride and fierceness.

Categories

Ready to Slip • Chest • Body •

View all

Home page

All Harnesses

Filter: Availability ▾ Price ▾ Sort by: Alphabetically, A-Z ▾ 10 products

Basic Slave Harness \$20 CAD

Basic Slave Harness \$20 CAD

Front or Crossed Backless \$25 CAD

Halter Style Reversible Chest \$25 CAD

Internal Offering Back Harness \$20 CAD

Last Bits of the Evening Harness \$20 CAD

Ultimate Cleavage Harness \$25 CAD

Ultimate Reversible Chest \$25 CAD

Shop page

Welcome to the website soft launch! Products will be available to order in early August.

## About

Slow Burn Leather's body harnesses feature a wild and decadent signature style, with bold leathered angular straps and bold hardware. The brand's design philosophy embraces versatility for both fashion and play. Every piece is handcrafted using full grain veg tan leather sourced from European and Indian tanneries. Made to measure is available by request and a client-focused approach is utilized for bespoke projects.

### Who is Slow Burn Leather?

Slow Burn Leather is lovingly hand-crafted, signature leather harnesses, leather and leathered clothing, and leather goods. Based in Toronto, Canada, I am deeply grateful to the communities and brands who have believed in and supported my small ones. I try this to support my values and intentions for this leathercraft practice. This practice has been born out of a desire to create with my hands once again, to feel and see something come together under your influence, to see that spark ignited.

I love making bold, forward-thinking harnesses and accessories to layer with clothing, whether they're decorative or utilitarian. At the same time, I am deeply called to making hardcore bondage gear, with strength and restraint at the forefront. I'm just so excited to think around and bring all my ideas to life.

### Safety

I take safety in BDSM very seriously. If a harness or set of cuffs are suitable for heavy restriction, the quality will be indicated in the description with an exclamation mark. However, I do not make straps for heavy restriction. I do not make straps for heavy restriction because the straps are usually not reinforced to bear significant loads of weight. Straps built of this width are not intended for heavy bondage.

If you ever need to quickly shear yourself out of one of my harnesses during a scene, don't feel bad about it! I can help you replace or repair your piece. Email slowburnleather@gmail.com. Be careful when using scissors or razors to cut yourself out of bondage like leather or rope.

### Leather and Materials

Leather lovers, you're home.

My working relationship with leather is imbued with a respect for the animal life and the labor that transformed it from raw hide to tanned leather. Each hide of leather calls in to pay attention to their specific qualities and to honor their unique characteristics. Listen to it – it tells us when it's under too much tension, when it's too dry, when it's too wet, when it's too hot, when it's too cold, when it's wearing with love. In fact last decades, if not a lifetime, I've been learning to listen to the material by caring for it and respecting its needs.

I prefer to use full grain, vegetable tanned leather and water buffalo feathers. Sometimes, I dabb with calfskin, sheepskin, lambkin, and deerkin, but more for living or bags. Occasionally, I will use cotton, silk, lamé, Lycra, and painted leather, which are exceptionally easy to take care of. I do not use leather or leatherette or bonded materials. Plant-based leathers and plastic-based leather alternatives are currently not available on my site, and I'm keeping me eye out for truly greater eco-friendly materials.

About page

Shop ▾ Info ▾ About ▾

Ready to Ship Harnesses Accessories Bondage

Full body Collars

Head Cuffs

Chest + Add Ons

Bottom Quotations

Measuring tips

Navigation bar (mega menu)

Want to stay up-to-date on new product releases, bespoke project openings, and special events?

Sign up for email notifications or follow @slowburnleather on Instagram!

Email →

@slowburnleather on Instagram

See many cute pictures from the leatherqueer pride... - [August 26, 2021](#) [slowburnleather](#)

New look at the leather Tribe of The Labyrinth Collective - [August 26, 2021](#) [slowburnleather](#)

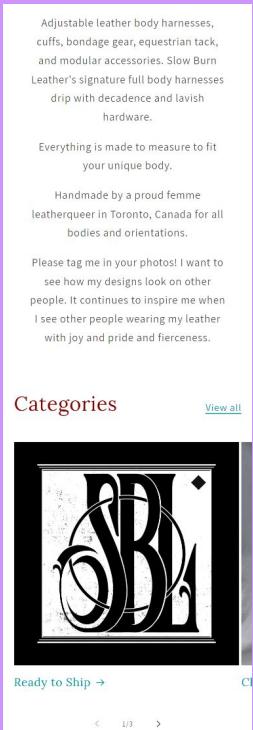
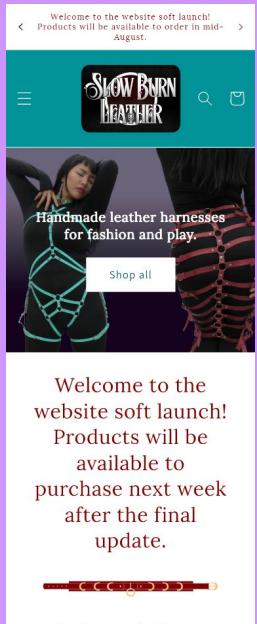
Lately, the dominatrix here neighborhood (Bromley) tends to sleep all night and play... - [August 26, 2021](#) [slowburnleather](#)

Logo by [overexitable\\_stan](#)  
Website design by [stan.zm](#)

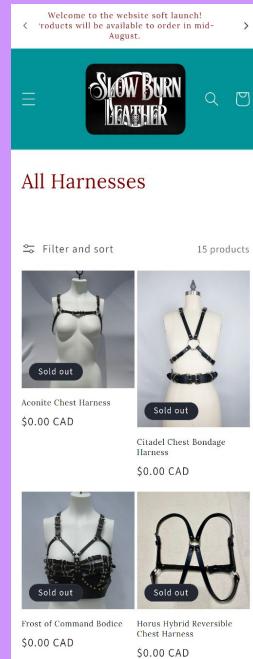
© 2021, Slow Burn Leather - [Refund policy](#) - [Shipping policy](#) - [Contact Information](#)

Footer

# SBL Branding: Final Mobile Website



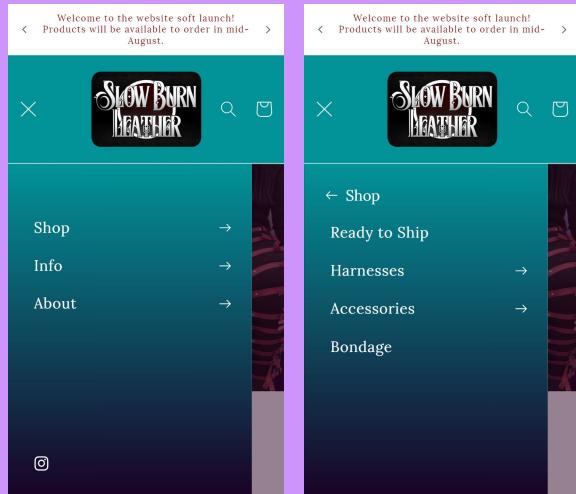
Shop page



About page



About page



Navigation bar (mega menu)

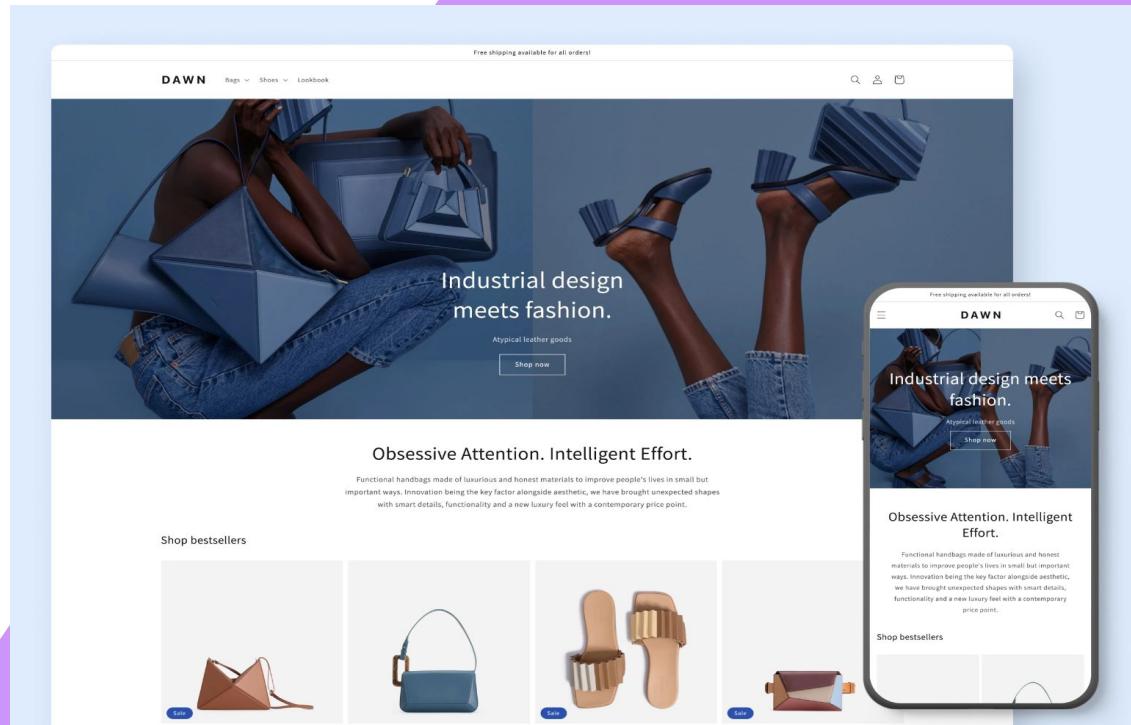
Home page

# SBL Branding: Platform Research

*How did I get started?*

**Problem:** My client's preferred website platform was Shopify's Dawn template, which **limited website modification** due to its existing design and code structure.

**Action:** Before any design, I learned **Liquid**, Shopify's web templating language, to fully understand how much I could customize the website. This included learning the **organization of existing code**.

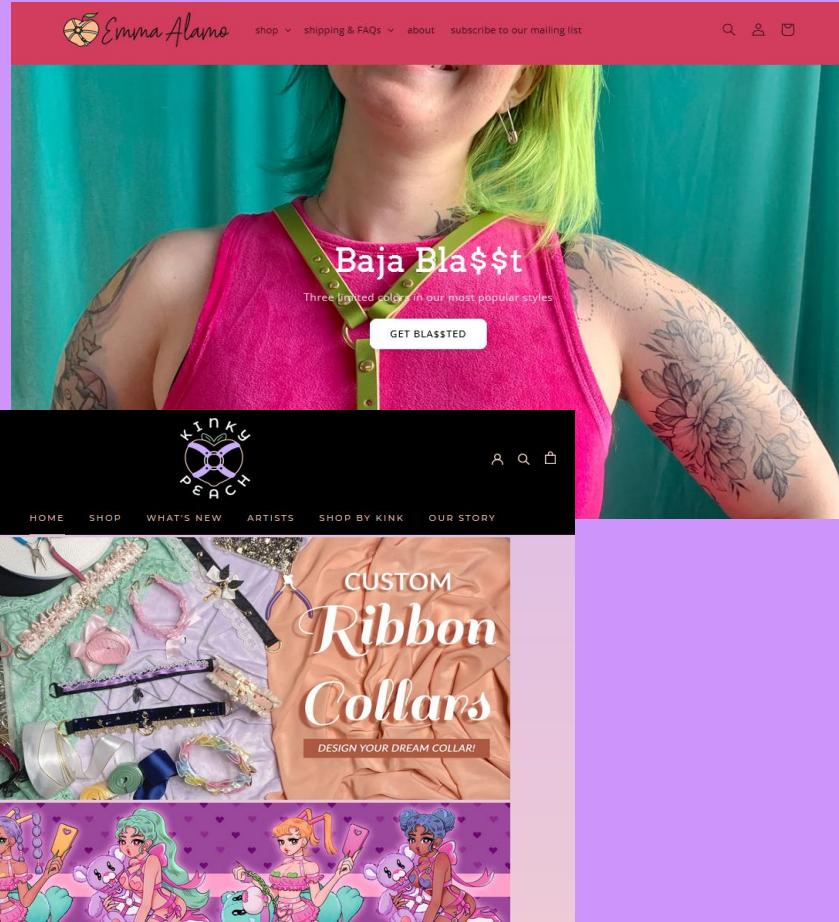


The default Shopify Dawn template

# SBL Branding: Competitor Research

**Insight:** Many competitors have similar websites due to using the same Shopify templates and bright, playful colours. They can be differentiated through **product photos, typography, and logos.**

**Action:** My client wanted jewel tones or muted colours that weren't too unapproachable. Based on research insights, I suggested leaning into cooler or darker jewel tones and centering the website around strong product photos to be **visually distinctive** from other brands.



Websites of two direct competitors of SBL

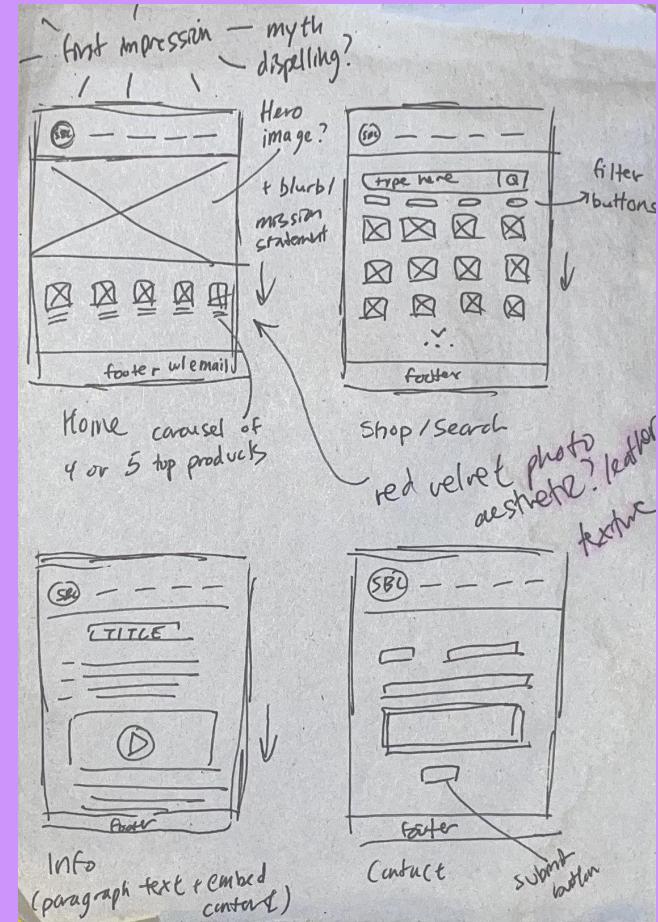
# SBL Branding: Low Fidelity Wireframe

**Design direction:** I explored using **memorable product photography** as a focal point to guide the website aesthetic.

This is also consistent with the **brand identity**, which hinges on unique craftsmanship and quality leatherwork.



Trademark SBL products



# SBL Branding: Digital Media

**Aiming for media consistency:** Throughout the project, SBL was working with a graphic designer to create logos.

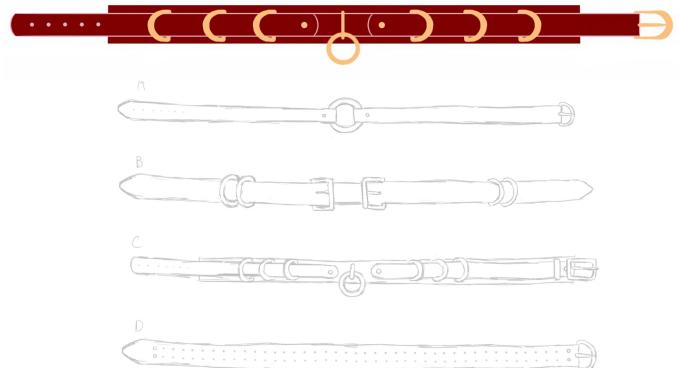
In addition to keeping communication open between everyone, I considered using **colour continuity** to make the website more visually cohesive. This included using a purple and dark red shades for the digital media and in iterative colour theme sketches.



SBL digital media



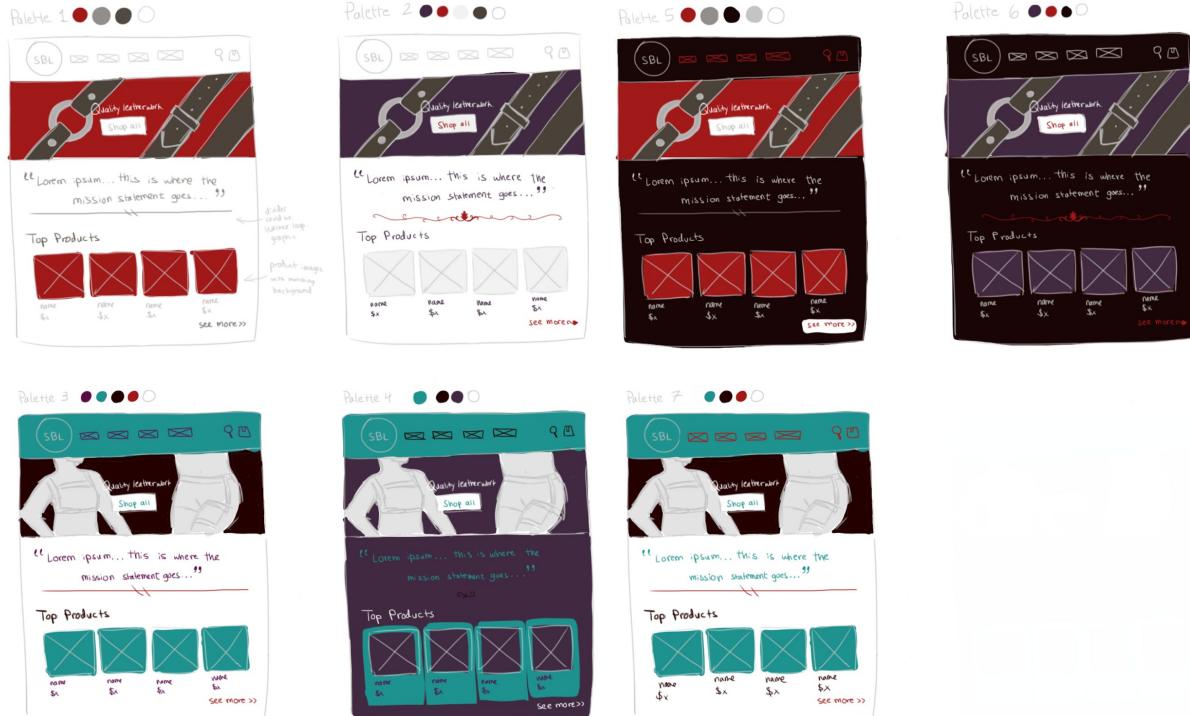
Banner and divider



# SBL Branding: Iterative Sketches

**Designing for accessibility:**  
One concern I had for the website was **readability** across mobile and desktop versions and light and dark modes.

To address the problem, I ran text and background colour combinations of all iterative sketches through a **colour contrast checker**. This ensured the website colour theme met the level two Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

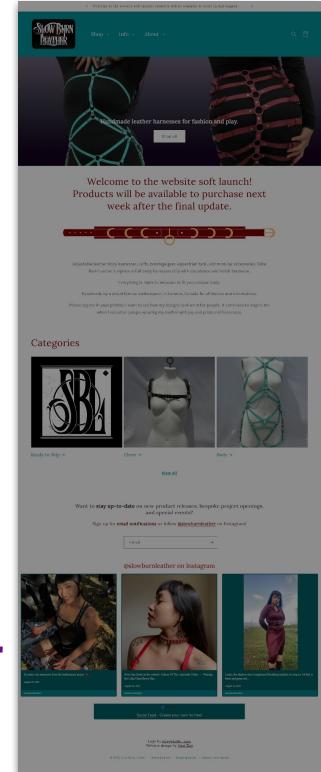
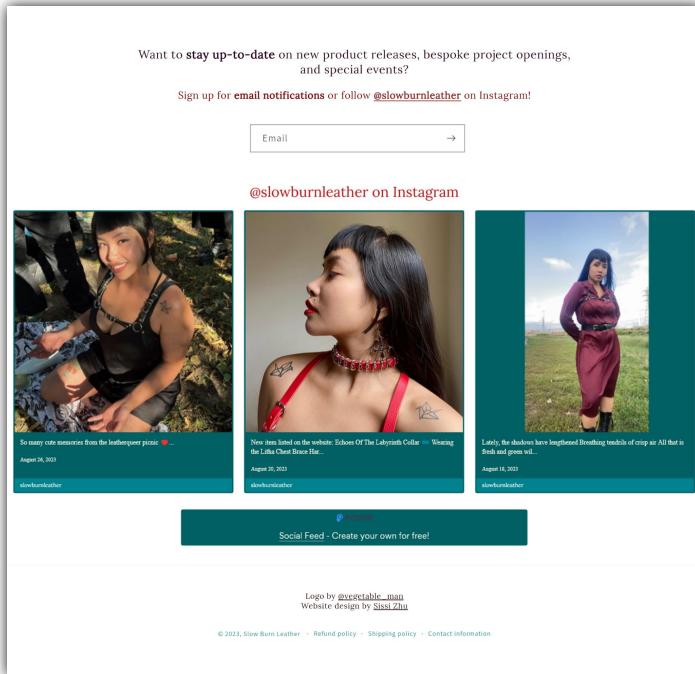


# SBL Branding: Customization

Overall, the custom changes I made to the template included:

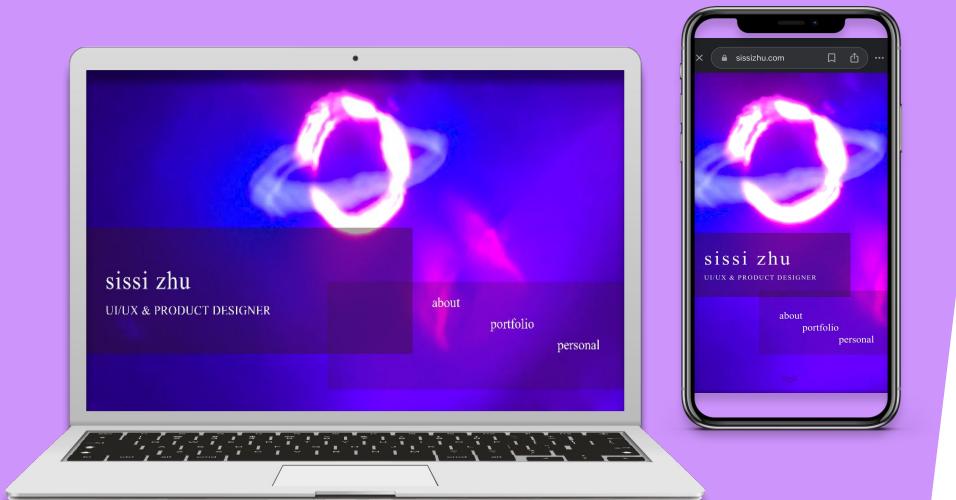
- Accessibility friendly font types and size
- Website colours
- Menu layout and gradient background
- **Embedded SBL Instagram feed in the website footer**

These website customizations help **humanize SBL more** and allow **personality to shine through**. It also positions the brand as bold and vibrant in appearance, but also poetically sensual.



# Personal Website

## (Case study)



**Back to Basics:** This project helped me better understand the worlds of design and code as collaborative rather than independent. I also gained a deeper understanding of the building blocks of websites, HTML and CSS, which also brought me **new insights as a website designer.**

To orient myself for the long term, I initially set myself **two main goals:**

1. Code the website from scratch **without using external plugins or templates**
2. Dig deep to learn about the proper **setup and maintenance of websites**

# Personal Website: Final Mobile and Desktop Versions



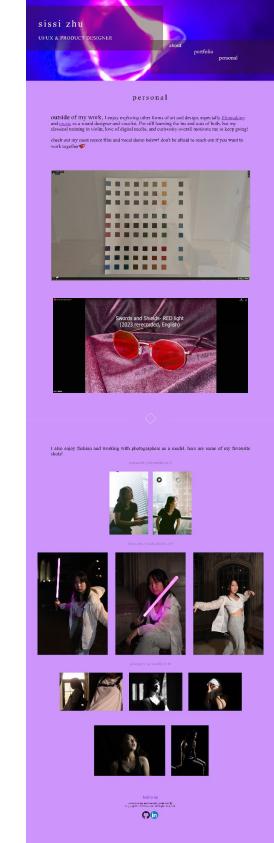
Mobile



about



portfolio



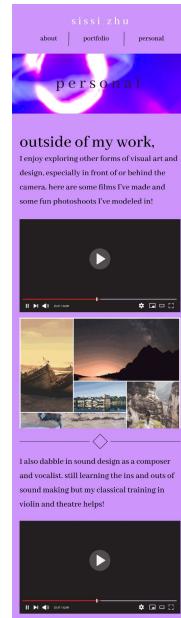
personal

# Personal Website: Visual Inspiration

*How did I get started?*

Due to its vibrant and dreamy colours, my main guiding visuals were images taken from my short film “Dream.”

I wanted to show my **reflective personality**, so my initial mockups centered on using the images consistently as a theme.



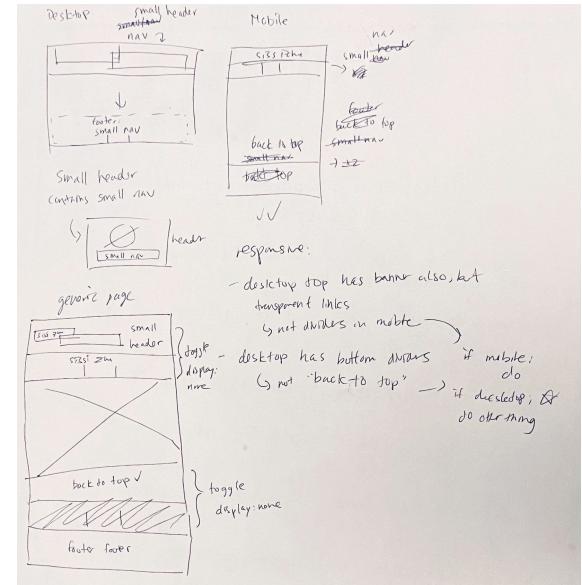
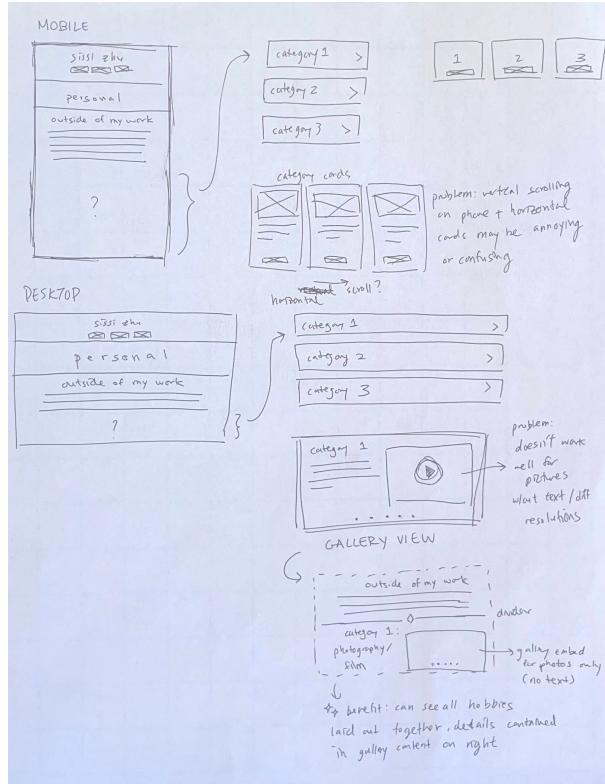
Initial wireframes

# Personal Website: Responsive Design

To optimise responsive design, I realized two key guidelines:

1. The layout of photos, videos, and embeds should scale well with screen size
2. Webpage navigation shouldn't overly rely on vertical scrolling

Through explorative sketches and mockups, I decided to use **slightly different navigation bars and content layout** depending on screen size.



# Personal Website: Coding Practices

Through the development of my website, I thoroughly learned some good coding practices:

- Using **Git for version control** ([gh/sissizhu12/website](https://github.com/sissizhu12/website))
- Ensuring regular and organized commits
- Proper coding practices such as comments and file organization
- Proper setup of automatic **website deployment** on GitHub workflows
- Appropriate HTML and CSS strategies for responsiveness

In sum, this experience made me appreciate the coding side of website development more. I found myself **moving back and forth between designing and coding**, which allowed me to use new insights from one role to support the other.

The screenshot shows a terminal window with two panes. The left pane displays the contents of the `personal.html` file, which includes the `<head>` section with meta tags and links to style sheets. The right pane shows the output of a `git log` command, listing three commits. The first commit is dated Jan 18, 2024, and the second is dated Jan 1, 2024. Both were made by the author Sissi Zhu. The third commit is dated Dec 31, 2023, and was also made by Sissi Zhu. The logs show the addition of embeds and photos to the personal page, and updates to the portfolio pages and CSS icons.

```
personal.html > ⚡ html
<html lang="en">
  <head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible" content="IE=edge">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
    <title> Sissi Zhu </title>
    <link rel="icon" type="image/x-icon" href="/media/favicon.png">
    <link rel="stylesheet" href="/css/style.css">
    <link rel="stylesheet" href="/css/personal.css">
  </head>
  # style.css > $@ header
  @media (min-width: 1000px) {
    html {
      scroll-behavior: smooth;
    }
    header {
      position: relative;
      width: 100%;
      height: 100vh; /* fallback state in case browser doesn't support svh */
      height: 100vh; /* smallest viewport height, resizes to collapsed viewport */
      background-image: url("../media/index_backdrop.png");
      background-size: cover;
      background-repeat: no-repeat;
      background-position: center center; /* horizontally and vertically centered */
      color: #1a1a1a; /* font colour within header */
    }
    footer {
      height: 10vh;
      padding: 10px;
    }
  }

```

```
git
commit ca769fa9fb059dc610d538add4f1fc3cde6b182a (HEAD -> main, origin/main, origin/HEAD)
Author: Sissi Zhu <sissizhu12@gmail.com>
Date: Thu Jan 18 08:44:10 2024 +0500
  added embeds + photos to personal page
commit 678a099186f9c273a9577a744baed6d1b8874a
Author: Sissi Zhu <sissizhu12@gmail.com>
Date: Mon Jan 1 21:56:06 2024 -0600
  update personal + portfolio pages
commit 1aa498c011a0953239c9775e63185a00475269
Author: Sissi Zhu <sissizhu12@gmail.com>
Date: Sun Dec 31 01:07:37 2023 -0600
  updated portfolio css and icons
```

# Product Design

# Morya Jewelry Product Design

Morya Jewelry prides itself on sustainable and **futuristic designs that elevate the everyday outfits.**

I was brought on as a **jewelry designer** to realize their vision with hard metals like chrome, recycled plastic, and crystals.



MORYA



MORYA



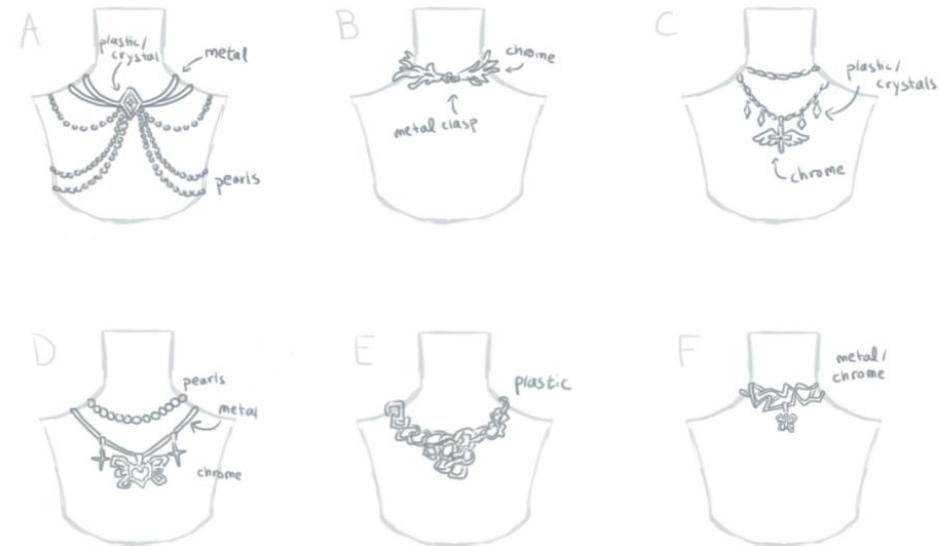
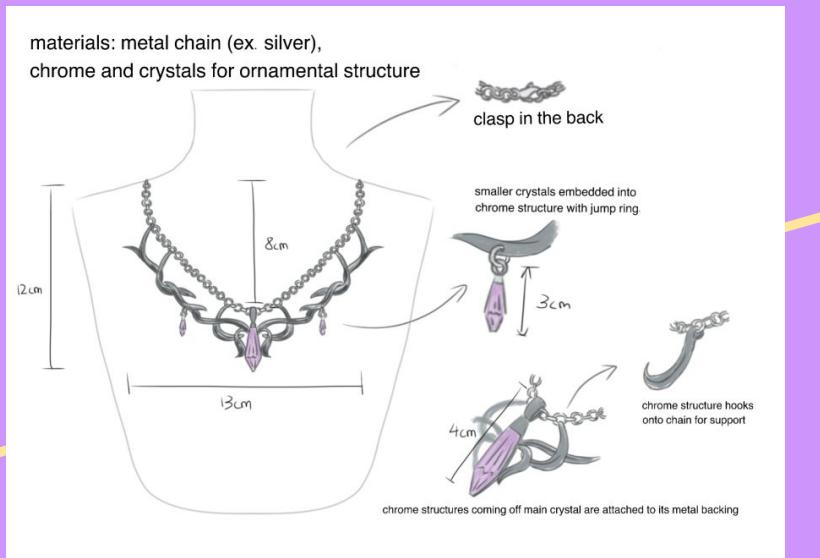
MORYA



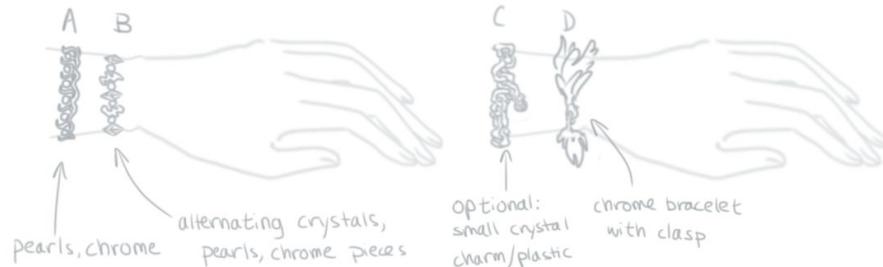
MORYA

# Morya Jewelry Product Design

## Necklace and bracelet designs

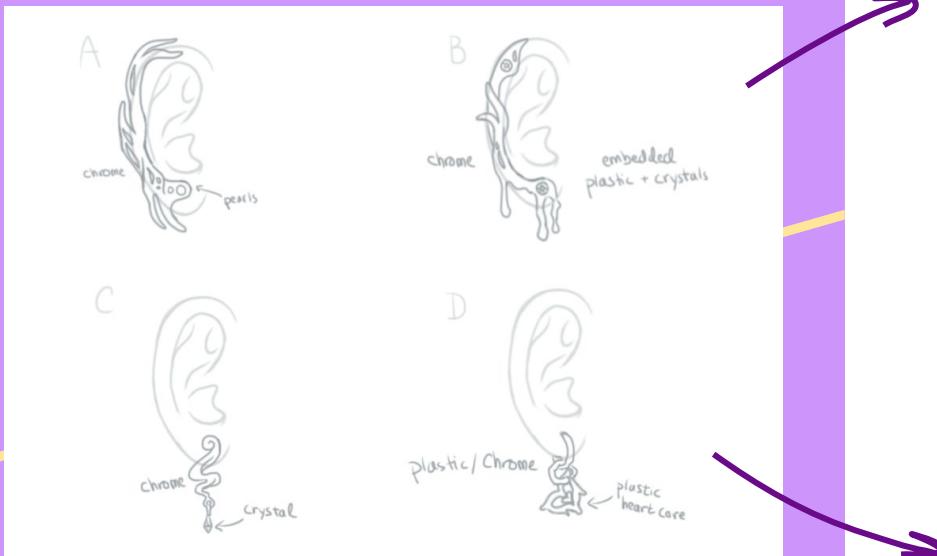


For D-F, plastic could be embedded in chrome/metal structures

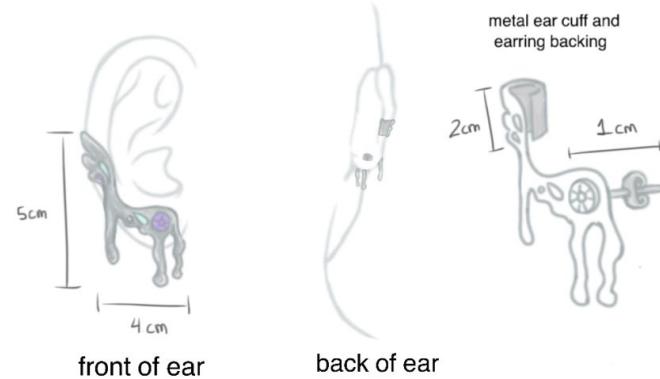


# Morya Jewelry Product Design

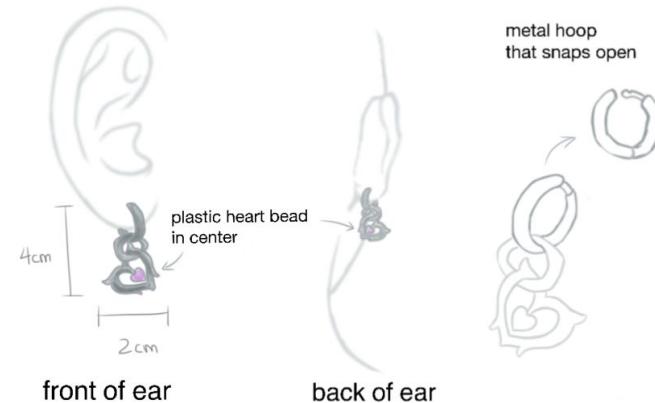
## Earring designs



materials: chrome base structure,  
embedded plastic and crystals, metal



materials: chrome, plastic, metal



# Utradea Company Stickers Design

These **initial concept sketches** showcase small sticker designs that read well with minimal colour.

The stickers' playful and fresh aesthetics incorporate the Utradea logo, mission statement, and interface features.



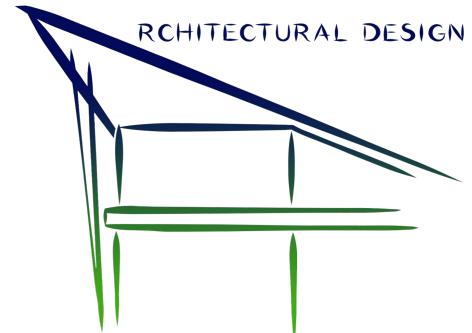
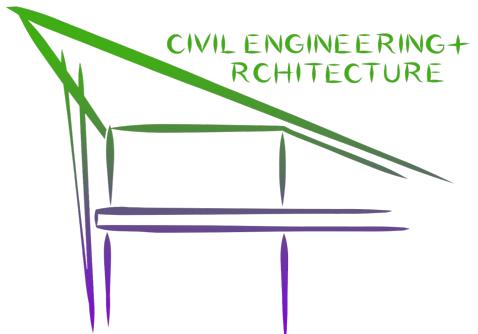
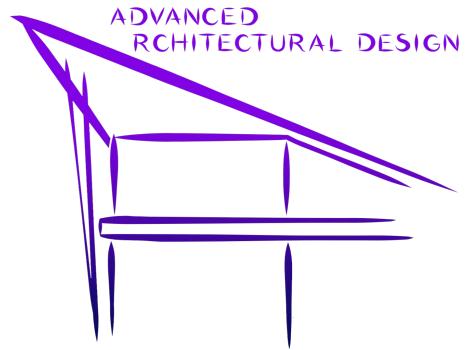
# Graphic Design

# Architecture Logo Graphic Design

Logos for a high school architecture department

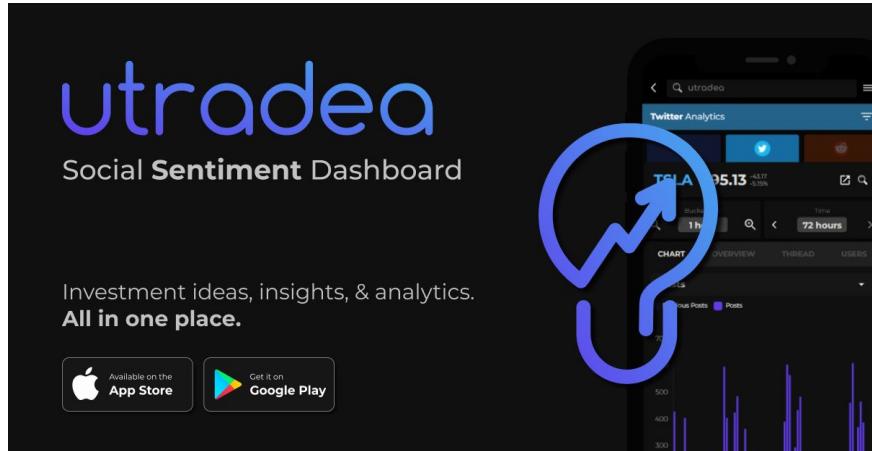
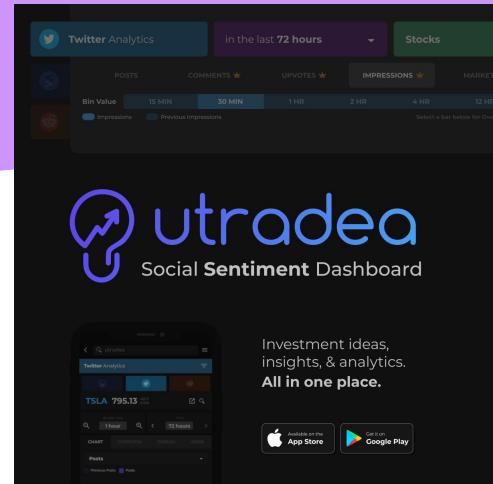
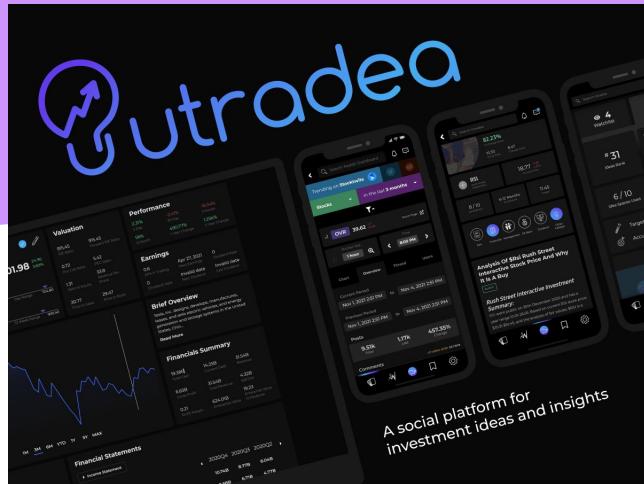


Inspired by iconic school architecture



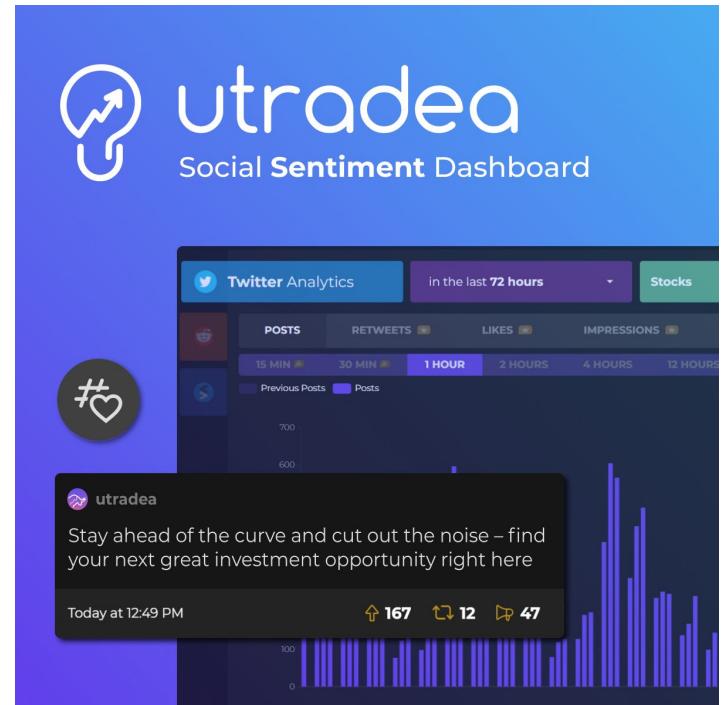
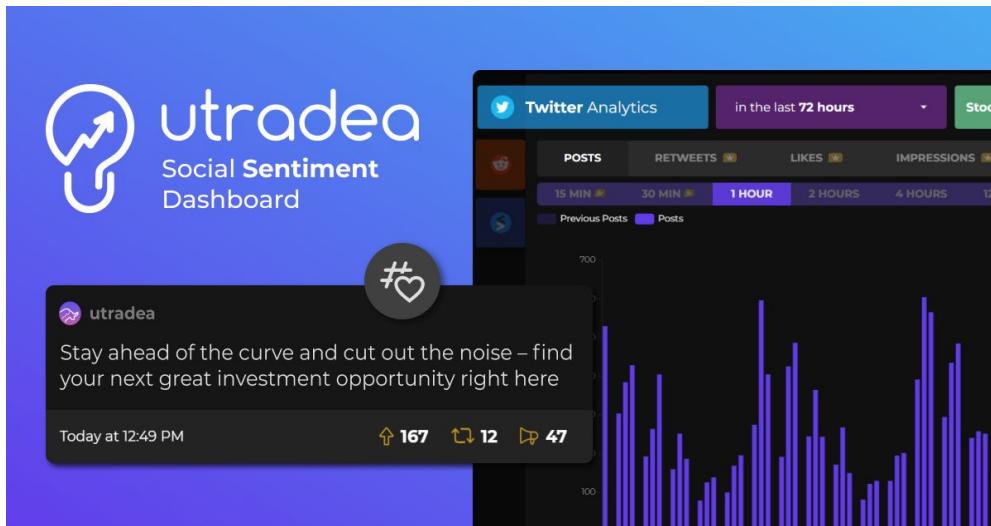
# Advertising Graphic Design

Utradea investing platform  
Meta and Twitter advertisements



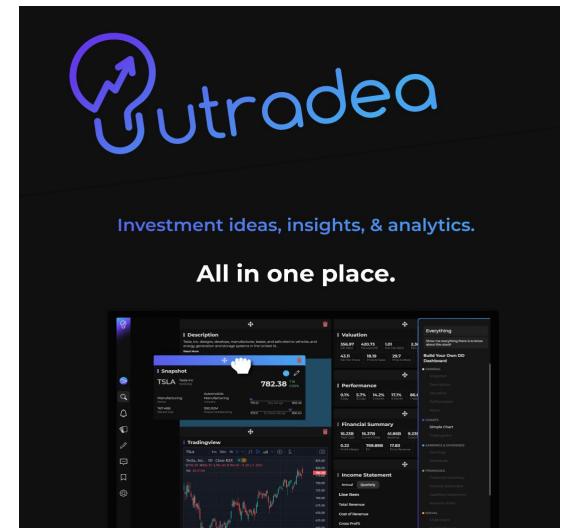
# Advertising Graphic Design

Utradea investing platform  
Meta advertisements



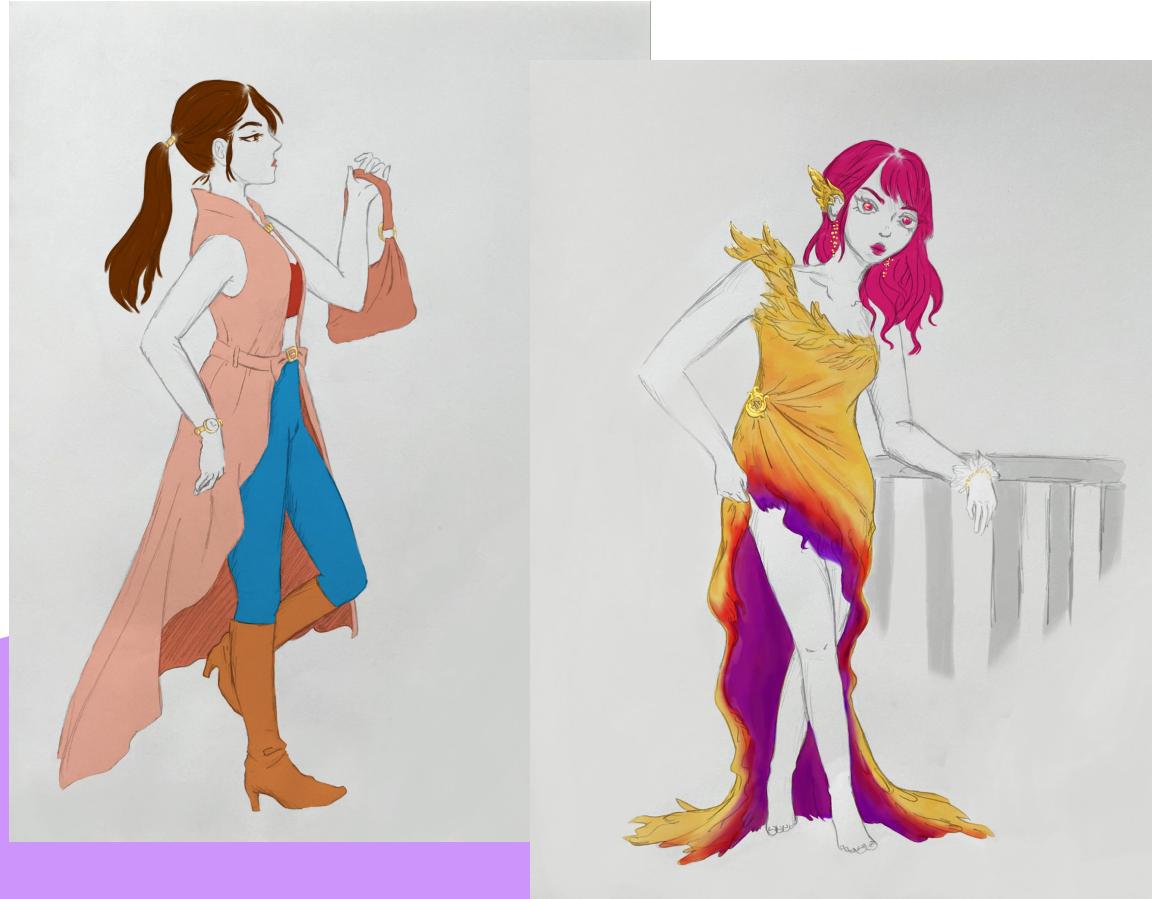
# Advertising Graphic Design

Utradea investing platform  
Instagram advertisements

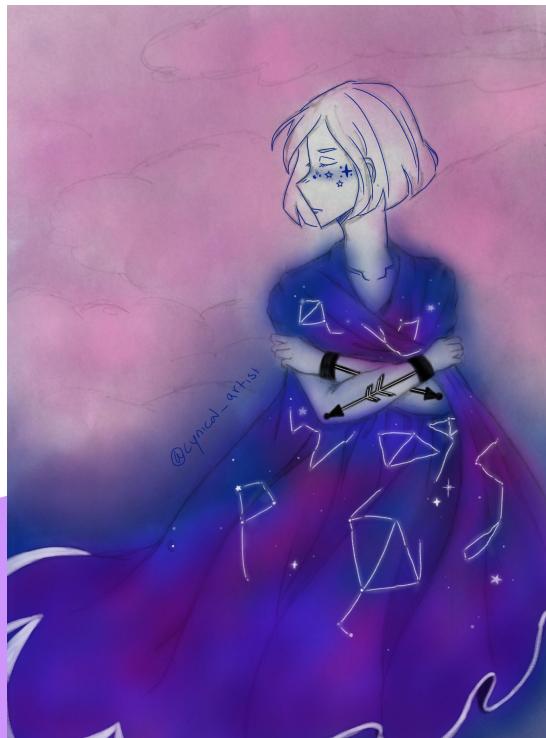
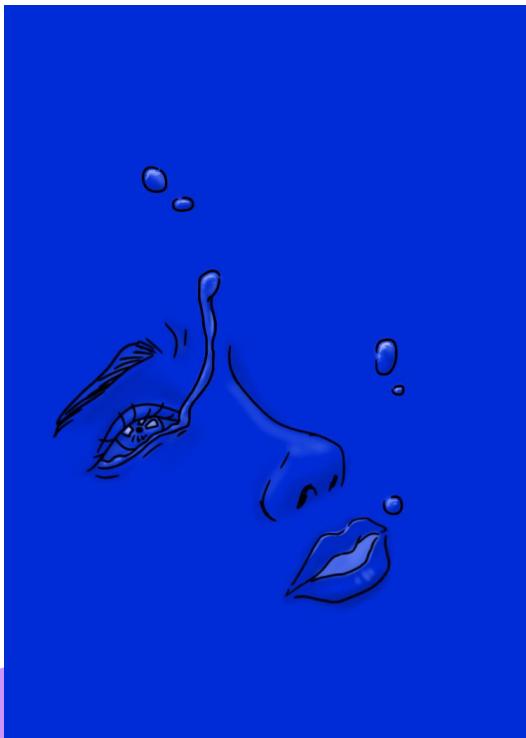


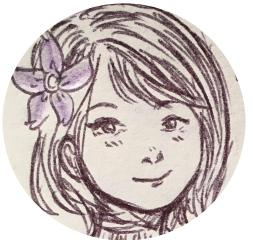
# Illustration

# Fashion Illustration



# Personal Illustration





# contact me

Email: [sissizhu12@gmail.com](mailto:sissizhu12@gmail.com)

Linkedin:

[https://www.linkedin.com/in/  
sissizhu12/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sissizhu12/)

