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MINT COLLECTIVE

MFA Thesis Proposal
10_24_2006

Ed Salvaña
02153082

Catherine Lee
02235135

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- 1 What is Mint Collective?
- 2 Competitive Analysis
- 3 Target Audience & Platform
- 4 Making A Rich User Experience
- 5 Flowcharts & Usability
- 6 Timeline
- 7 Inspirations

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Abstract

A gallery is an exhibition space. It serves two primary purposes: it displays the talents of an artist and is a venue for creative people to share ideas, inspiration and techniques. Add the accessibility and ubiquity of the web to this age-old concept, and the effect of a gallery is increased a thousand fold. It is the merging of these two spaces, the creative and technological, that this project hopes to attain.

Mint Collective will provide a venue for the new generation of artists to showcase their skills to potential clients as well as share their passion with their peers. Here Illustrators, Graphic, New Media, Motion Graphics and Industrial Designers will come together to form a potent community of creatives. They will be provided with tools to effectively market their talents, attain industry visibility, recognition, and sustain their creative drive.

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Proposal

There are 2 categories of websites that allow users to upload their artwork for public viewing; the hobbyist and the employment centered. Both types have their strengths and weaknesses: the former allow artists to share ideas and constantly keep in contact with each other, but provide little commercial opportunities. The latter allows professionals to keep abreast of work opportunities, yet does so without regard for encouraging interaction between designers.

It is the main goal of this project to combine the aforementioned strengths and improve on them through new and emerging technologies in which the end result is a fully functional prototype.

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Social networking concepts that have been tested will be integrated for easier interaction between artists as well as clients. Richer user experience and interactivity from mature technologies such as Flash 8 will enable a more intuitive and pleasant experience, departing from the often linear and repetitive process of plain HTML. Taking full advantage of server-side programming and database management, the project will allow tools such as personal light boxes and personalized syndication of new information.

Mint Collective is a place where designers can publish their work for free, be able to build their reputation, find work, collaborate, be inspired and constantly be reminded why they love design.

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Statement of Interest

We believe that this web-application will greatly benefit the design community. It will offer a venue for creative minds to gather and encourage the development of concepts and emerging technologies in art from anywhere within the confines of a broadband connection.

A strong network is the driving force and the test of longevity behind the concept of Mint Collective. As of now, the internet is the main and logical method that will be used as a catalyst to grow and explore these relationships.

The planning and production of Mint Collective involves almost all disciplines of New Media. The degree of difficulty and scale is one that challenges and pushes our creative/technical thresholds.

Our collaboration is just the beginning of a network. Both of us have different strengths to contribute to the project which will complement each other in the course of completing this program.

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Ed Salvaña is versed in systems and programming, Cat Lee in visual design. There is great potential in our collaboration to learn from each other and grow as a team. Each step of the process (design and implementation) will be one that mimics working in a New Media design firm and will prepare us for our futures in the field.

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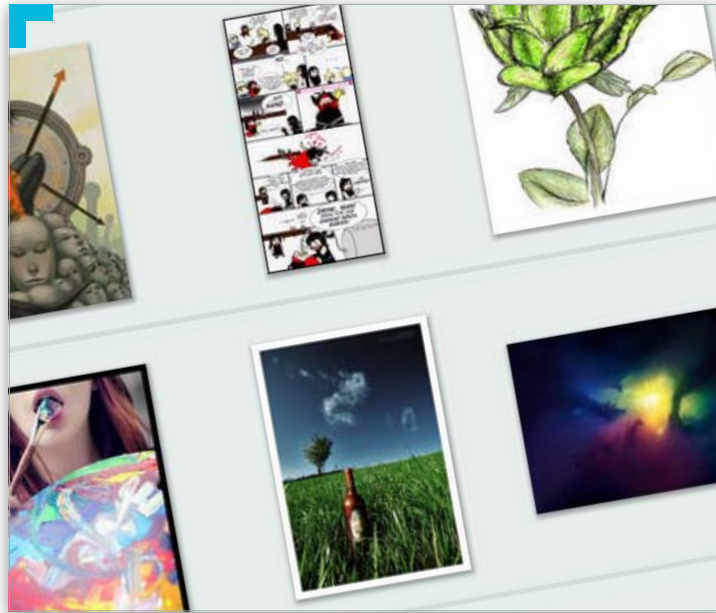
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02235135

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

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Deviant Art

<http://www.deviantart.com/>



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Strengths

LARGE USER BASE

A network ranging in artists from seasoned veterans to novices

DIVERSE RANGE OF CONTENT

Content that is diverse in content as well as media

COMMUNITY TOOLS

Has many tools to support and cultivate user interaction

Weaknesses

LOW QUALITY CONTROL

Quality of artwork varies according to their large target audience

UNINTUITIVE INTERFACE

Has many usability issues regarding user navigation

LIMITED SEARCH CAPACITY

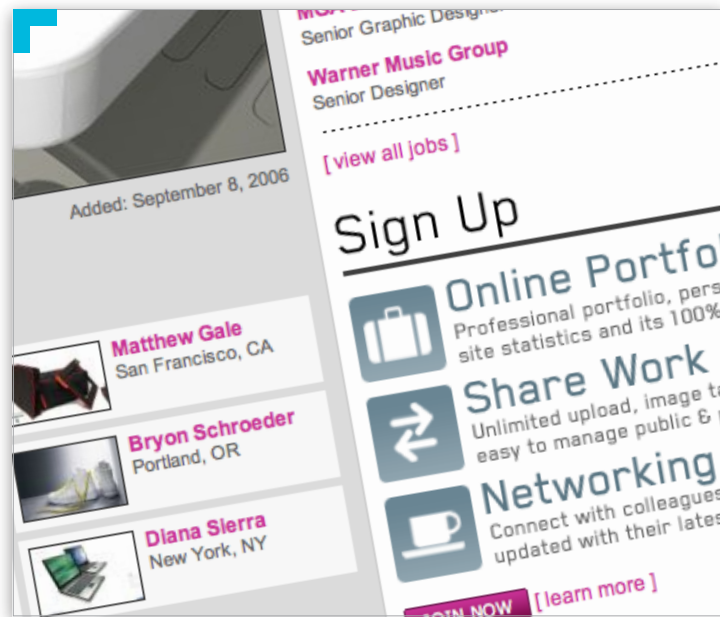
Search results does not return relevant material

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Coroflot

<http://www.coroflot.com/>



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Strengths

GLOBAL DIRECTORY

Large and growing database of jobs and portfolios

NETWORKING

Create your own basic network of users

JOB ALERTS

Receive updates based on personal preferences

COROSPY

Tracking portfolio activity in real time (allows the user to see what other members are viewing)

Weaknesses

LIMITED SUPPORT FOR NETWORKING

Not enough tools to facilitate interaction between users

LIMITED SEARCH CAPABILITIES

Site navigation relies heavily on browsing. Search engine is not as developed as their taxonomy

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LIMITED SUPPORT FOR MEDIA FILES

Video and sound files are not supported. Artwork can only be viewed in static form

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TARGET AUDIENCE & PLATFORM

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Target Audience

PRIMARY AUDIENCE

The intended audience are young designers, aged 18-35. They are students, fresh graduates and relatively new to their professions. These individuals will need as much publicity and exposure as they can get while at the same time be conscious of their peer's works. The fields of expertise will be primarily, but not limited to Illustrators, Graphic Designers, New Media, Motion Graphic and Industrial Designers.

SECONDARY AUDIENCE

Small design firms, typically 5 to 10 people will be looking for free-lancers or interns. These agencies are either starting out or want to keep their business small. They will be an excellent source of work as well as experience for the primary audience.

STAKEHOLDERS

Art Schools will benefit greatly from having their students gain increased visibility and commissions. It is a means to promote their programs and indirectly increase admissions.

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Clients will ultimately be affected from the greater ease and choice of designers available for hire.

People who are thinking about design related careers will be able to see the opportunities as well as the practical application of each field's expertise.

Target Platform

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MAC OSX
WINDOWS XP
G4/PENTIUM
256 MB RAM

BROWSER REQUIREMENTS

IE6
FIREFOX 1
SAFARI 1

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

BROADNBAND CONNECTION
FLASH PLAYER 8
JAVASCRIPT ENABLED

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Target Technology: An Objective Comparison

OVERVIEW

There are two popular platforms for building Rich Internet Applications: Adobe Flash and AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML). The group has determined to use Adobe Flash for the reasons stated below.

Flash has a robust, standardized framework for building large-scale, graphically heavy applications using its native object-oriented language, ActionScript 2.0. It is extensively documented and has been proven to be capable of handling dynamic data when integrated with popular web technologies like PHP and MySQL. Examples include Fotologue (<http://fotologue.jp>) and Neovisions (<http://neovision.jp>). The main strength of Flash is in relatively easier deployment of desktop-like behavior in a web-browser, i.e. drag-and-drop, keyboard commands, and animation. Although it requires a proprietary plug-in, the ubiquity of the Flash Player (version 6) hovers 97 percent. Most computers come pre-installed with the Flash Player, eliminating the need to download it to view flash web sites.

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The main feature of AJAX is its capability of remaining stateless, or dynamically update an HTML web page without having to refresh the browser. It is steadily growing in popularity, with individuals and organizations like Yahoo! releasing JavaScript libraries to extend traditional limitations of interactivity of HTML. Web sites like Googlemaps (<http://googlemaps.com>) and Yahoo! (<http://yahoo.com>) are integrating AJAX into their services. A main note about AJAX based applications is that they are entirely HTML-based. They do not require any plug-ins other than JavaScript being enabled for the browser. It is appropriate for web sites that generate a large amount of text content that require advanced interactivity.

COMPARISON

In terms of graphic integration and browser independence, Flash has the advantage over AJAX. Flash applications are mostly backwards compatible with earlier versions and it behaves consistently across all browsers. Although AJAX is entirely browser technology based, it consists of more components (i.e. HTML, CSS, JavaScript) which increases the chance for potential compatibility pitfalls due to varying browser implementations of said technologies. Being browser based however, it is naturally inclined to accommodate large quantities of data (i.e. scalable page length), an ability which needs to be specially worked into Flash.

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Download time/speed is another crucial factor that is considered. Overall, AJAX has smaller file sizes which equate to faster download times. Flash however has superior support for vector graphics as well as a robust drawing api which can significantly reduce file sizes.

CURRENT GROUP SKILL SET

A main point with using Flash is the group's capabilities. Group members have a greater experience developing in Flash than using the AJAX approach. Furthermore, there is greater support in the Academy of Art University for Flash development (i.e. Action Scripting and Experimental Interactivity classes) than AJAX.

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, both technologies offer advantages and disadvantages in terms of developing Mint Collective, at the time of this writing, it is the group's belief that Adobe Flash is the platform which will allow us to complete a more appealing, usable, and innovative final project.

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02153082

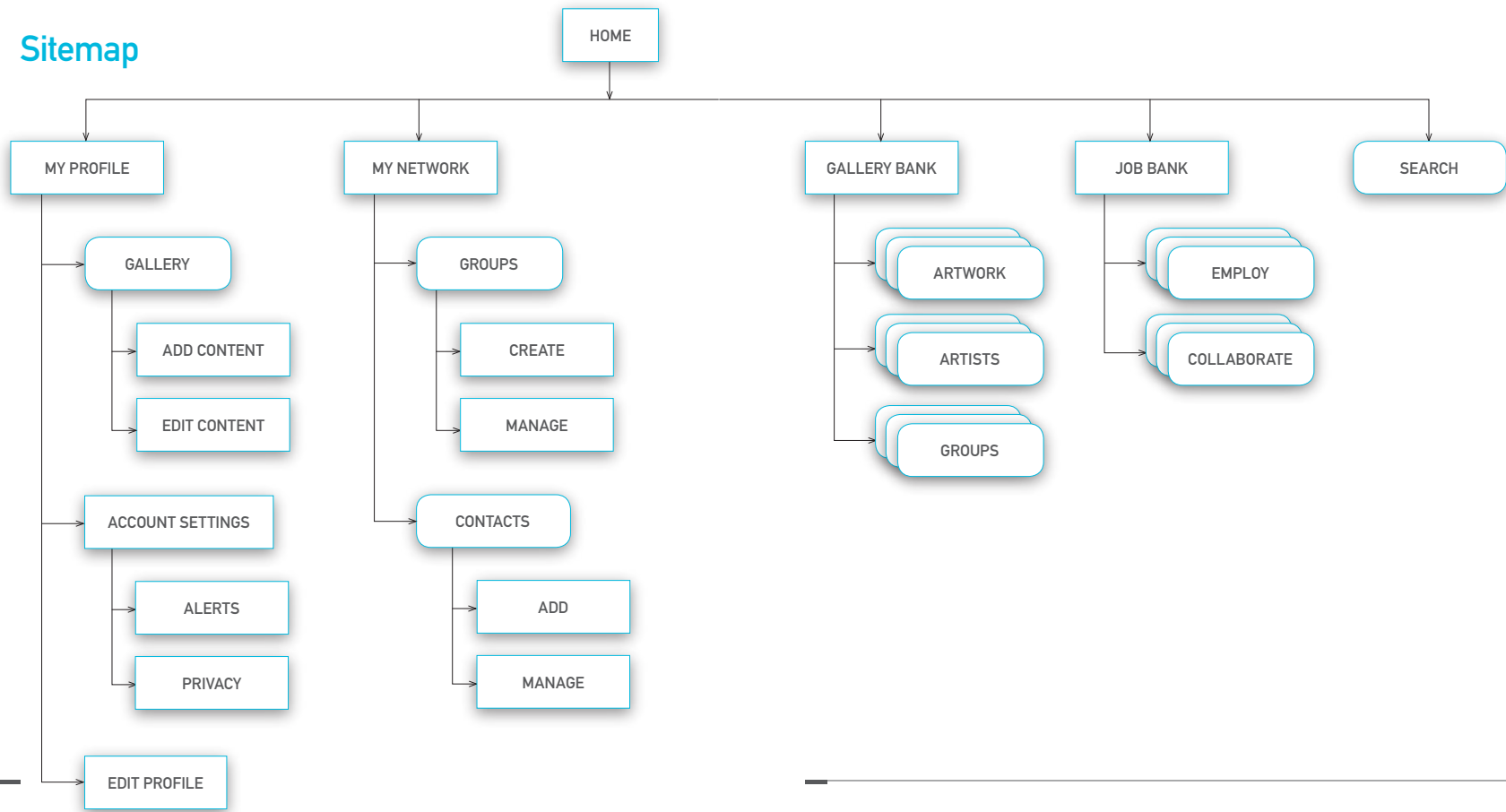
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MAKING A RICH USER EXPERIENCE

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Sitemap



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Functional Specifications

PORTFOLIO APPLICATION

Allow users to create their own url within the community and upload their artwork to view publically or privately.

USER CENTERED CLASSIFICATION

Users and artworks are categorized using a mixture of folksonomy and taxonomy.

ACTIVITY TRACKING

User's can track statistics of their profile, artwork views and popularity.

CLICK LESS

Retrieve relevant information efficiently.

START, STOP, SAVE & SHARE

Save search results and pick up where you leave off and share it with fellow community members.

SEARCH RESULTS RETURNED BY RATINGS

The ranking system is based on peer reviews, number of posts, and site activity.

CUSTOMIZATION

Customize features for a personalized experience.

SMART SEARCH

System learns user's viewing patterns/preferences and recommends artwork.

COMMUNITY TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

Salary surveys, collaborative competitions, groups, artwork channels are provided to foster a thriving participation economy.

CONTENT SYNDICATION

Keep abreast of new jobs, artwork, and postings with RSS feeds and email notifications.

SUPPORT FOR THE POWER USER

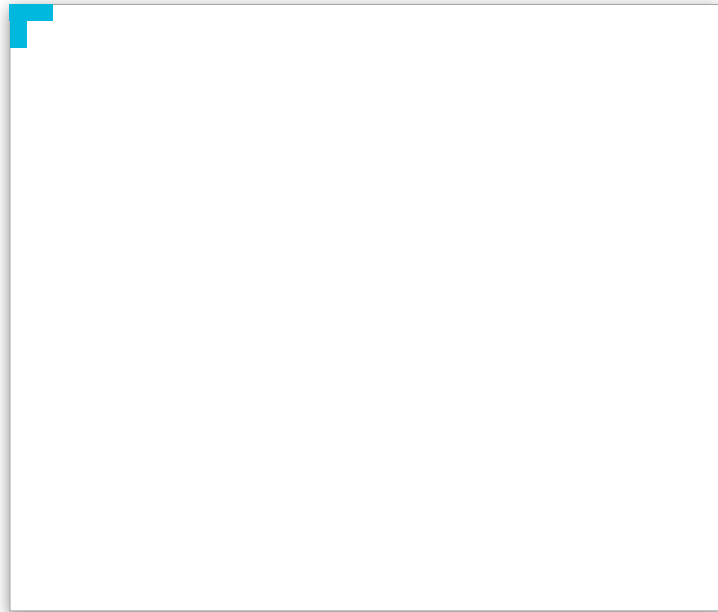
Offering more affordances to achieve the same task with multiple methods using common input devices. (i.e., keyboard shortcuts, right clicking and keyboard/mouse hybrid)

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Concept Sketches

MANAGE ARTWORK

(Show sorting by tag, date, etc.)



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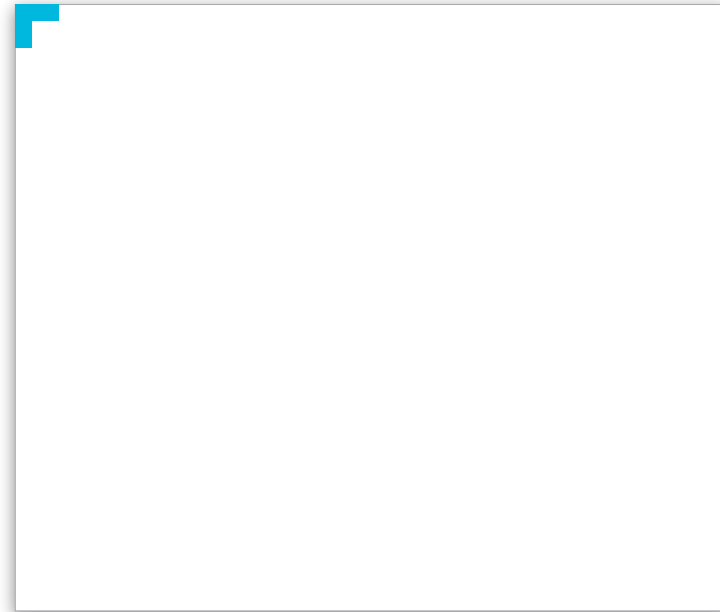
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MANAGE ARTWORK

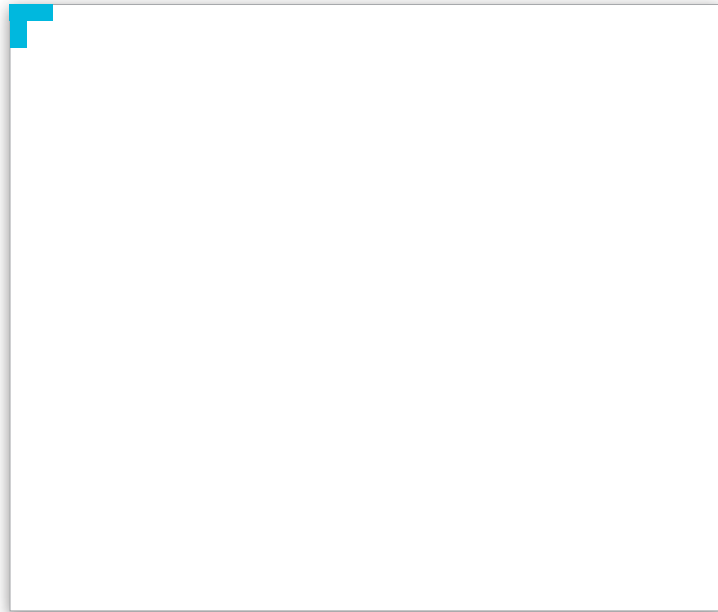
(Show manual sorting --drag and drop)



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SEARCH PREVIEW A
(User selects images from search results --Drag and Drop into dock)



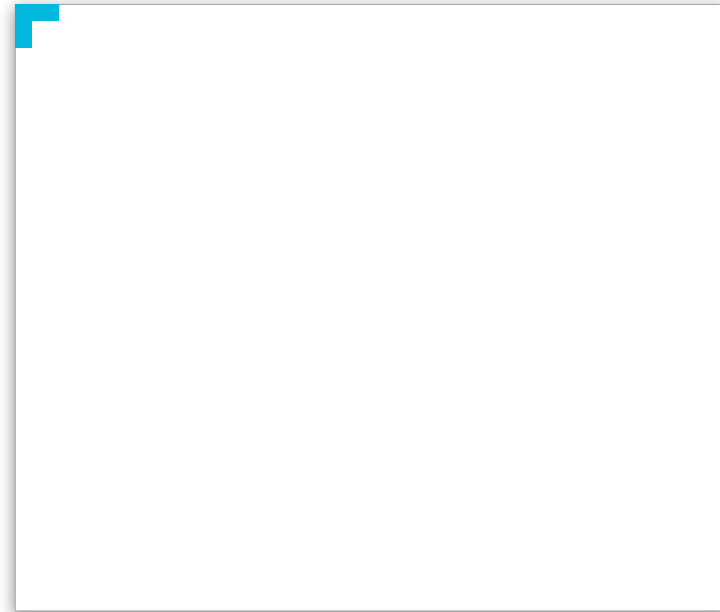
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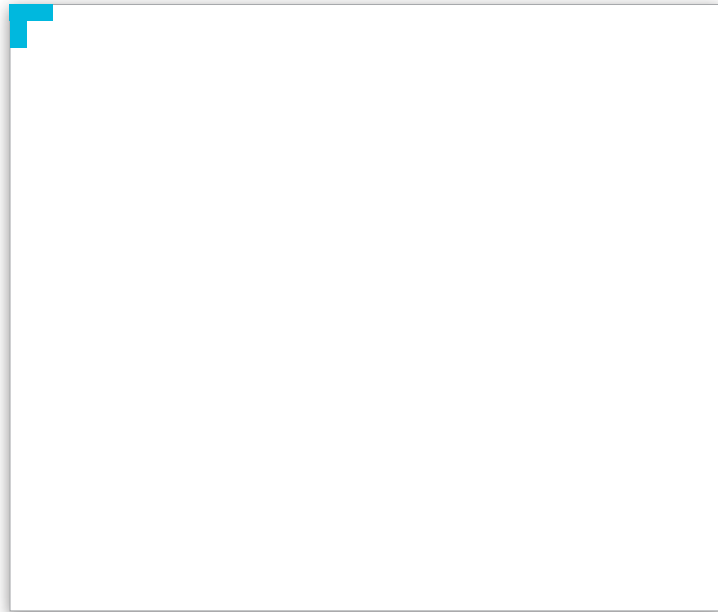
SEARCH PREVIEW B
(User launches preview mode--show slideshow results)



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SEARCH PREVIEW C
(Customizing show slideshow results)



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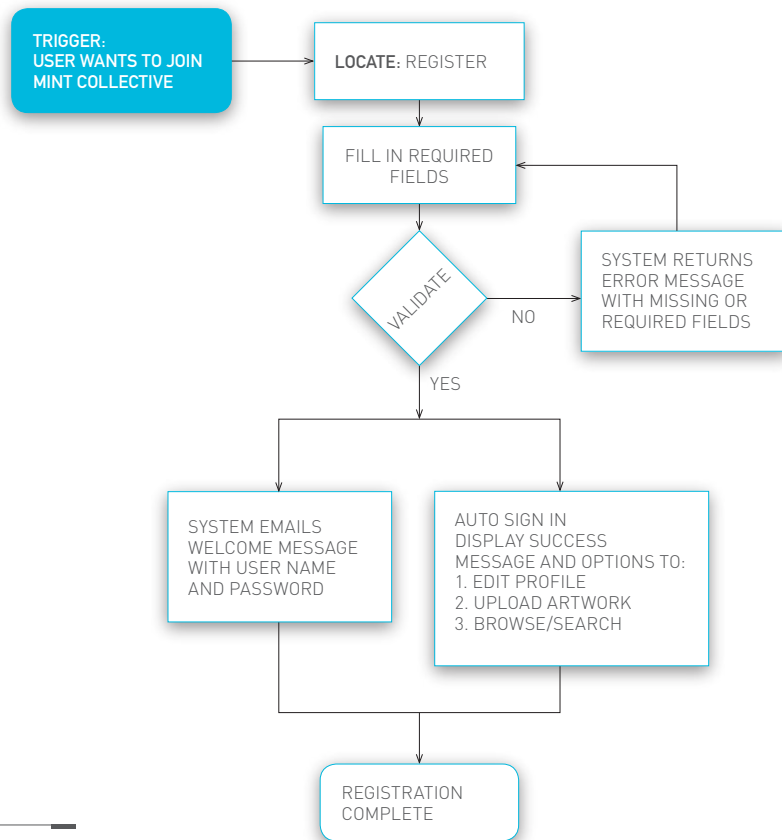
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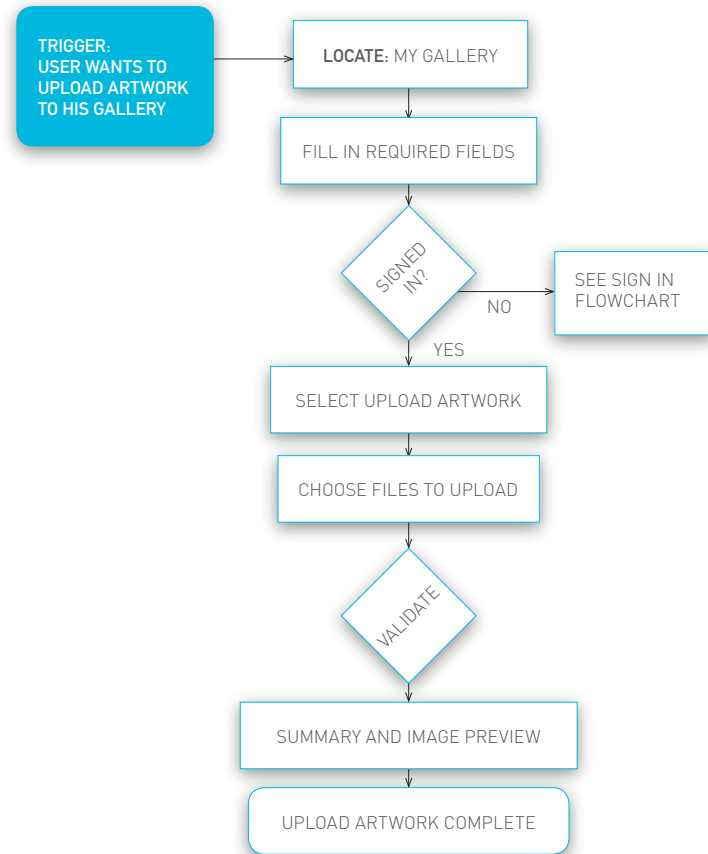
FLOWCHARTS & USABILITY TESTING

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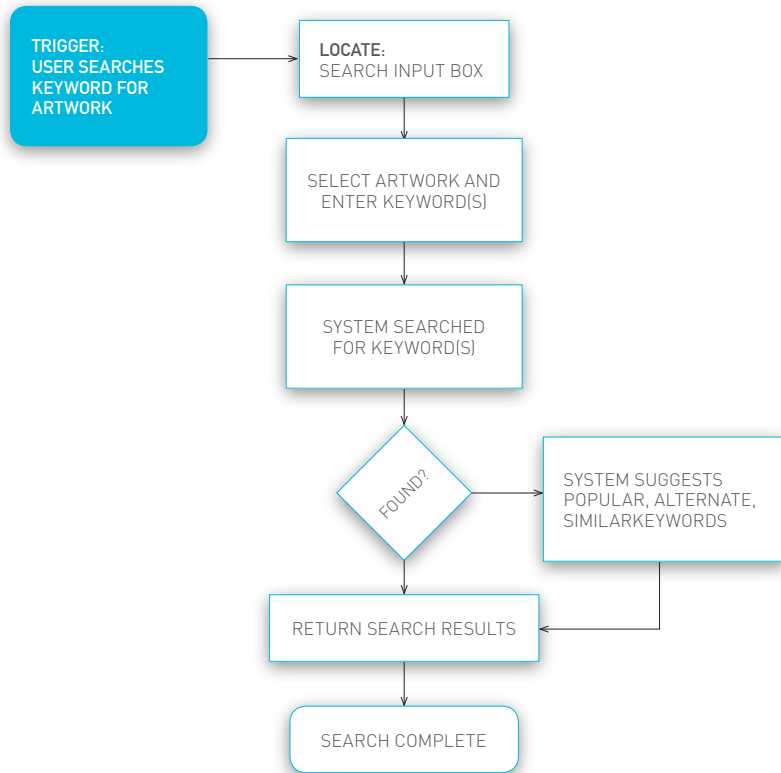
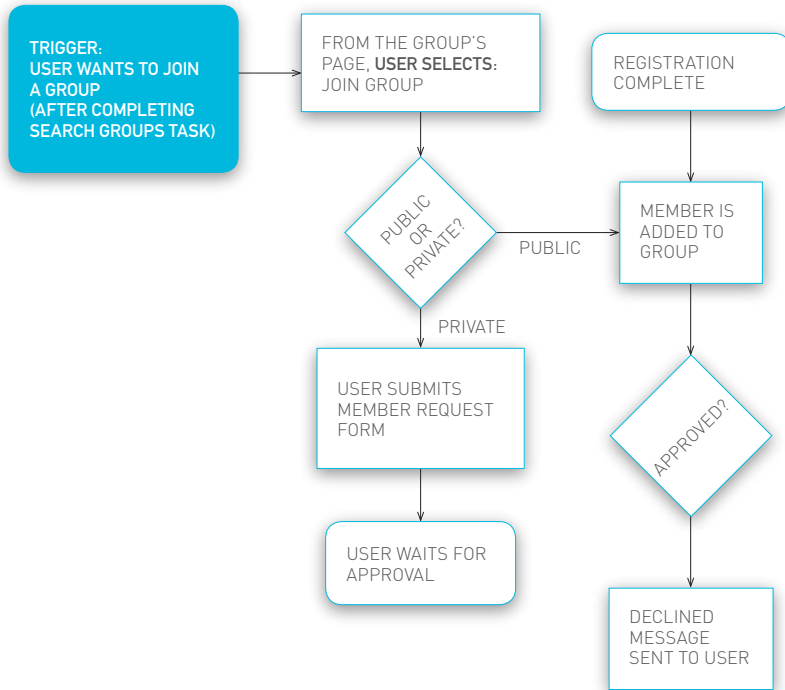
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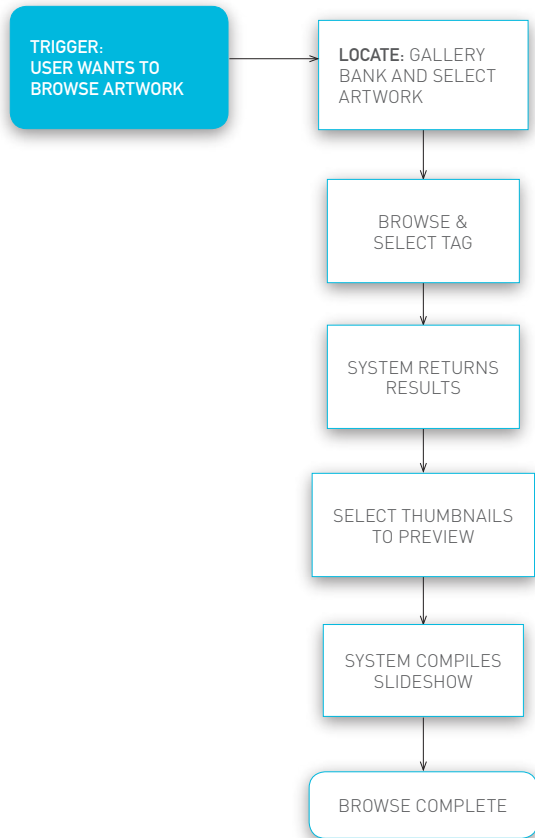
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Testing Early And Testing Often

Usability Testing is a major software development effort that is integral to the success of any application. We have allocated time throughout our development process to user test our concept as well as troubleshoot technical issues. Please refer to our time line to get a better view of how we have scheduled user testing. Below are some guidelines we have developed to base our testing on:

EASY TO IMPOSSIBLE

Starting the user off with simple tasks and ease into the difficult tasks (test the durability).

KNOWN ITEM TO EXHAUSTIVE

Have the user find a particular subject and then ask them to locate as many related subjects.

SCENARIO TO TASK

Providing brief scenarios to get the user acquainted with the task at hand.

OPEN TASK

The user will be asked to freely navigate to what interests them.

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Audience

There will be 3-4 persons a session from each group of our target audience. Our target audience has an average to above average computer skill set but we will be seeking to test within a range of skills from novice to expert.

Facilitators

For each test session, we will be alternating roles as facilitator and observer.

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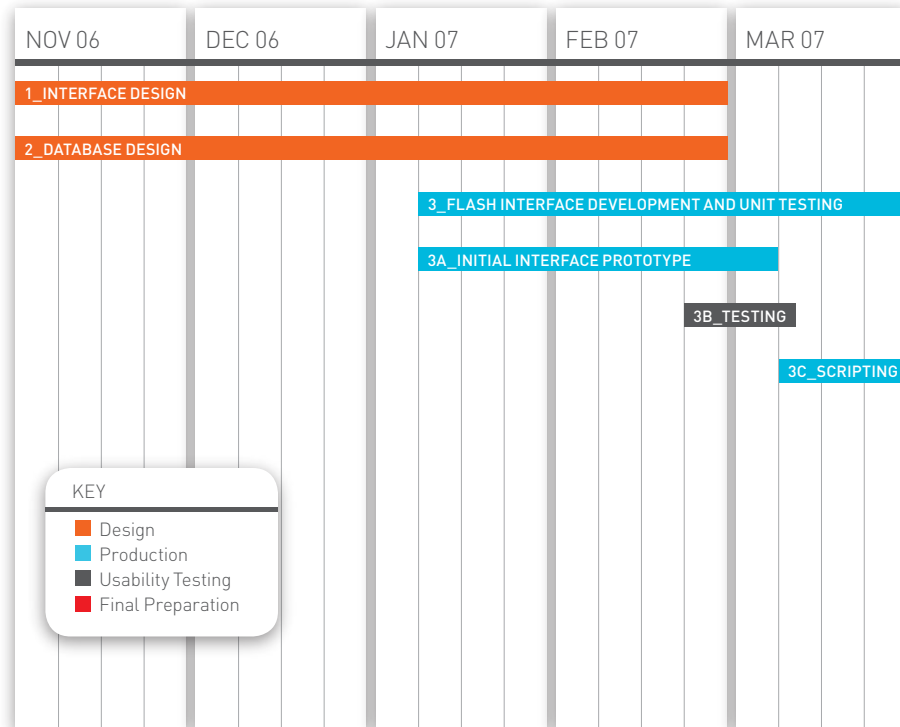
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TIMELINE

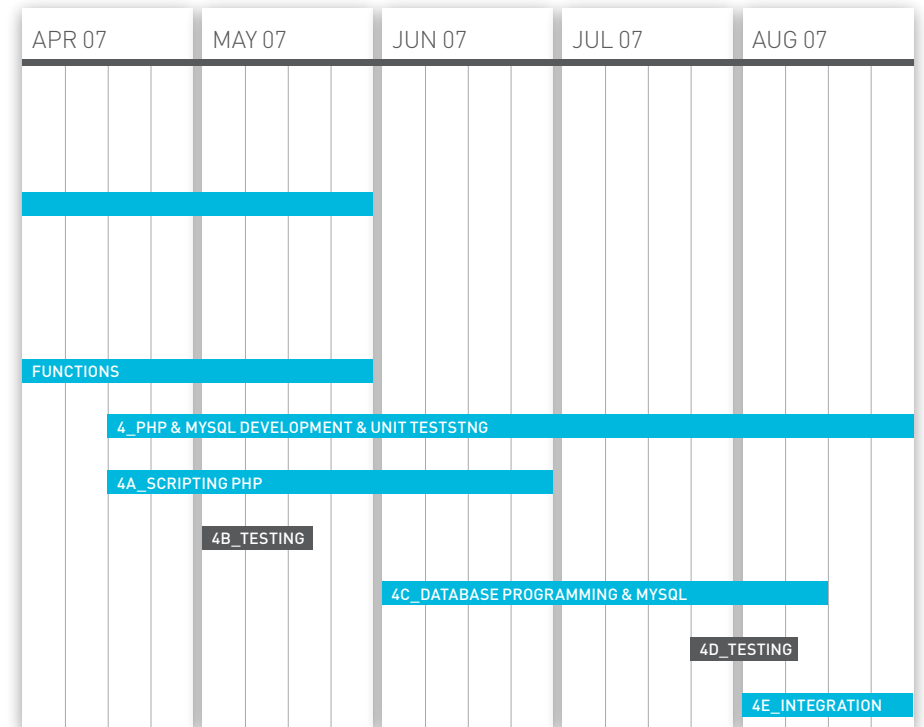
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KEY

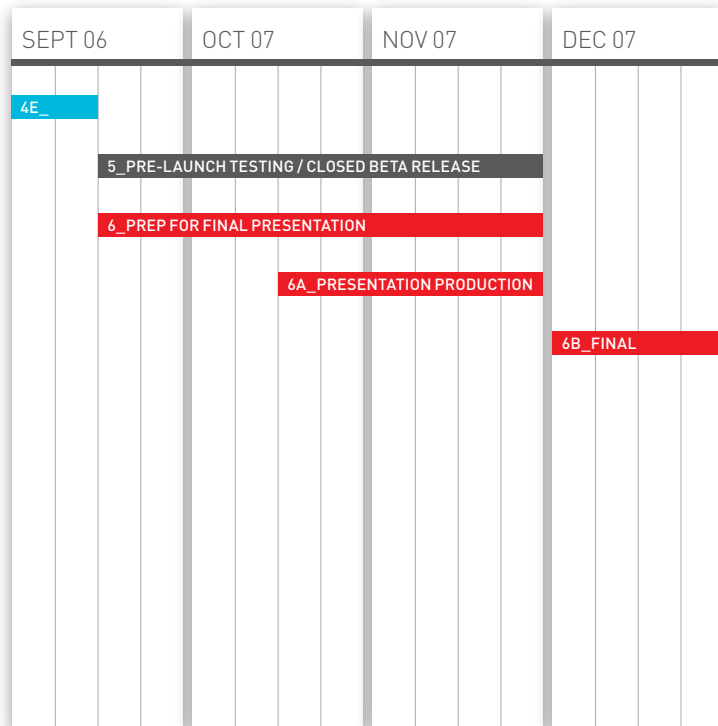
- Design
- Production
- Usability Testing
- Final Preparation

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INSPIRATION

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Yugo Nakamura

One of the first designers who pioneered design in the Flash 4 software. Nakamura had devised fluid, naturalistic images which proved how powerful a creative tool Flash could be.

Technically speaking, Nakamura's works are exceptionally complex. Yet to the user, his interactive applications are elegant and playful in their organic forms.

<http://www.yugop.com>



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Joshua Davis

The prima-pioneer of web design since the early 1990s. A master of the medium, his experimental projects and artistic style has won him international notoriety.

Davis is arguably one of today's most influential American artists.

<http://www.joshuadavis.com/>



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