

THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

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Web-based Book - Project 1
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Introduction & Research Background

Why Create a Web-Based Book?

In today's digital publishing environment, the traditional book format is being redefined. With the rise of interactive publications such as **The Pudding**, reading is no longer one-way, but more dynamic and interactive. With Web-Based Book, I hope to explore how text can be visualised and made interactive, making the reading experience more relevant to younger readers (17-25 years old).

Core Objective: Creating an Engaging Reading Experience

Modular & Interactive Reading – Break away from traditional linear formats, allowing readers to choose their own path.

Visually Engaging Design – Use collage, hand-drawn elements, and real images to make theoretical texts more accessible.

Immersive Interactions – Enable scrolling, clicking, and swiping to encourage active engagement with the text.

Key Research Questions

1. How can interactive design enhance the reader's understanding of Benjamin's theories?
2. What are the best ways to structure non-linear reading experiences?
3. How do young readers (17-25 years old) engage with digital publications differently from traditional books?

Reference Studies

FiveThirtyEight – Data-driven journalism with statistical analysis and visualization in politics, economics, and sports.

Information is Beautiful – Modular visual storytelling that simplifies complex data.

The Pudding – Interactive, data-driven narratives exploring cultural and social topics.

ness. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the notice of the reproduction of these two different modifications—the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film—have had on art as in traditional form.

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one respect: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence is the work of art determined, the history to which it is subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership. The means of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analysis which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the originator of the original.

The *genesis* of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of *technicality*. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The original is the *source* of the reproduction, and, of course, one only technical reproducibility? Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authenticity, not so in a technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, *process reproduction* is more independent of the original than *manual reproduction*. For example, in *platin* the original is not even touched. In *photography* the original is not only left alone but serves as the *model* for the reproduction. The original is not touched any further, and chooses its angle at will. An *etch* is a kind of certain processes, however, can *express* images *which* only, technical reproduction can *reproduce* which is *not* possible. *Abstractly*, it enables the original to

its chief importance is the concentration of an attention which is nearly as much a function of the muscle of a body, as it is of the mind. In its artistic value or in its identity of the artist, it is usually well understood that the functions of the

By close grip of the
fingers of forefoot of
under the inceptors of
hand, extends our co-
our being on the other
ment and acceptance
regulate stress, our
position and feel
leash. Then come the
by the dynamic of
make of us feeling
suddenly go traveling
also motion, motion
that does not simply
while, though we
more of the subject,
at quality of motion
area "solid, far from
give the effect of an
ness." • Evidently a
then comes to the na-

[illegible]

The distracted people, too, can feel badly. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that distraction has become a matter of habit. Distraction is provided as an excuse for a covert sort of the extent to which new media have become available. In the case of the Internet, for instance, users are tempted to scroll each page, and will notice the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the users. Today it does so in the film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is decreasing noticeably in all fields of art and in particular of profound changes in appreciation, finds in the film the most effective means. The film is not only a means to this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the fact value needs into the background not only by putting the picture in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that as the movie

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the musical production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The students argue which text provides for a distinctive interpretation of the *epistémè* as being a mere method, and which as being a way of seeing. This holds true for the *epistémè* as a way of seeing, but not for the *epistémè* as a method. This holds not only for the art work but also, for instance, for a handicraft which passes in review before the spectator as a novel. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive mood—namely, its aesthetic—*is* intertwined with a *being* no natural choice is vulnerable on that level. The vulnerability of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible in its language, ranging from an informative disclosure to its testimony to the history, the culture, the life of the thing. The thing itself is not the *epistémè* but the *epistémè* for the thing, as it is perceived by organisms when subjected to their own sense of matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical tradition is affected is the authority of the object.

One might substitute the aforementioned element in the term "sexual" and go on to say: that which subsists in the sex of mechanical reproduction is the sex of the work of art. This is a syntagmatic association between the signifier and the signified, a syntagmatic association between the signifier and the signified, a syntagmatic association between the signifier and the signified. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By detaching heavy reproductions is substituting a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to exist, the beholder of the latter in his own particular situation, reactivates the object reproduced. Thus two processes lead to the reproduction of the work of art: the first is the reproduction of the work of art, the second is the reproduction of the work of art.

portraits as on the stage, the actor's head itself once mysteriously precise even with the stage scene, are ready to analyze these circumstances derived to prevent the creation of a screened behavior certain situation, like a vision which is more fascinating. To demonstrate the art of photography which is one of the revolution-

[illegible]

this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property relations which the masses strive to destroy. Fascism will in its nature be giving those masses no rights, but instead a chance to express themselves.¹² The masses have a right to change property relations. Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of anarchy into political life. The violation of the masses, when Fascism, with its *Führer* cult, forces its theories, has in consequence the violation of an organism which is premised upon the production of moral values.

[illegible]

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

by met. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of teaching for a *figure* or a *space* is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the cutter intervenes with the resources of its knowings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its oscillations and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The cutter introduces us to an unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to an unconscious *épiphanie*.

One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only by art.¹ The history of every art form shows eternal epochs in which a certain art form appears to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form. The encouragement and creation of art which thus appears, particularly in the so-called classical epochs, usually arise from the nucleus of its richest historical complex, in modern years, with barbarisms were abundant in Dadaism. It is only now that its impulse becomes discernible. Dadaism attempted to create by pseudo-social and literary means the effects which the public today seeks in the film.

Every instantaneously new, blossoming creation of demands will carry beyond in goal. Dadaism did so to the extent that it sacrificed the matter values which are an characteristic of our film in favor of higher conditions—though of course it was not conscious of such intentions as here described. The Dadaists attached much less importance to the value value of their work than in its inclination for counterproductive intentions. The studied degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this endowment. Their poems are "word salad" consisting of obscure and every imaginable mass product of language. The poets, on whom they modeled themselves.

able to an examiner, but

modern man and the process of the same process. **He created proletarian states which the masses are bringing these masses upon themselves.** The religious, Fascist, social property, the logic of aesthetics into political Fascism, with its counterpart in the vision the production of

...institute in one thing:
mass movements on the
national property system.
...the co-ordinated
...order is possible to
...while maintaining the
...the Fascist spontane-
...ism. Still, Marzetti
...initial war: "For twenty-
...against the knowledge of
... . . . War is based
... on over the subjugated
... strong empires, these
... because it initiates the
... ly. War is essential be-
... the fiery whirls of
... earkens the perfid-
... es, and the search of
... useful because it creates

01- the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction

Reflection on the Essay's Core Theme

In this article, author Benjamin's central point is that mechanical reproduction has deprived works of art of their traditional 'aura'. This aura represents the uniqueness, history and authority of the work of art. With the development of reproduction technology, artworks are no longer confined to a specific time and space but can be reproduced and distributed on a large scale. This transformation not only changed the nature of the artwork, but also the human aesthetic experience and understanding of art.

Note-taking and Highlighting Key Elements

1. Loss of aura: Mechanical reproduction techniques destroy the unique link between a work of art and its original site.
2. The politicization of art: reproduction techniques enabled art to serve political ends, such as propaganda or mass education.
3. Emergence of new art forms: The rise of forms such as photography and film redefined the function of art.
4. The relationship between the audience and art: the audience changed from passive appreciators to more active participants.

Consideration of the Text's Premise

Benjamin's analysis is based on the following premises:

1. Technological advances have inevitably changed the way art is produced, distributed and consumed.
2. Mechanical reproduction is revolutionary because it removes the physical and emotional connection between the work of art and its original context.
3. The value system of art is changing from Ritual Value to Exhibition Value.

Identification and Highlighting of Adjectives

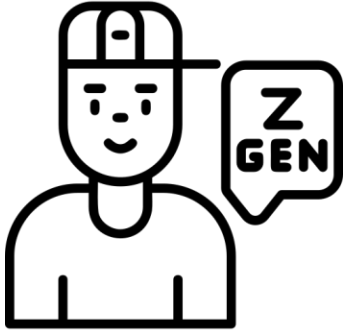
Unique
Historical
Original
Technical
Revolutionary
Political

Tone of voice

The essay is formal, philosophical and critical in tone, with dialectical analysis and social reflection, and the overall tone is serious and historically and culturally critical.

Benjamin's essay explores how mechanical reproduction changes the way people experience art. He argues that technology removes the "aura" of original works and shifts art from ritual to exhibition. This made me think about how digital books change the way we read. Unlike printed books, a web-based book can be interactive and non-linear. My goal is to present these ideas in a way that is clear and engaging for 17-25-year-olds. By breaking down complex theories and using visuals, I want to make the text more accessible and immersive for my audience.

User Analysis



Target audience

Young readers aged 17-25

Reading habits: They like visual and interactive content, and the way they receive information tends to be visual and fragmented.

Research method

- Interview 10 target users to understand their reading needs.
- Observe how users read theoretical text and record their puzzles and needs.
- Research data analysis to sort out the core reading preferences of users.

Pain point analysis:



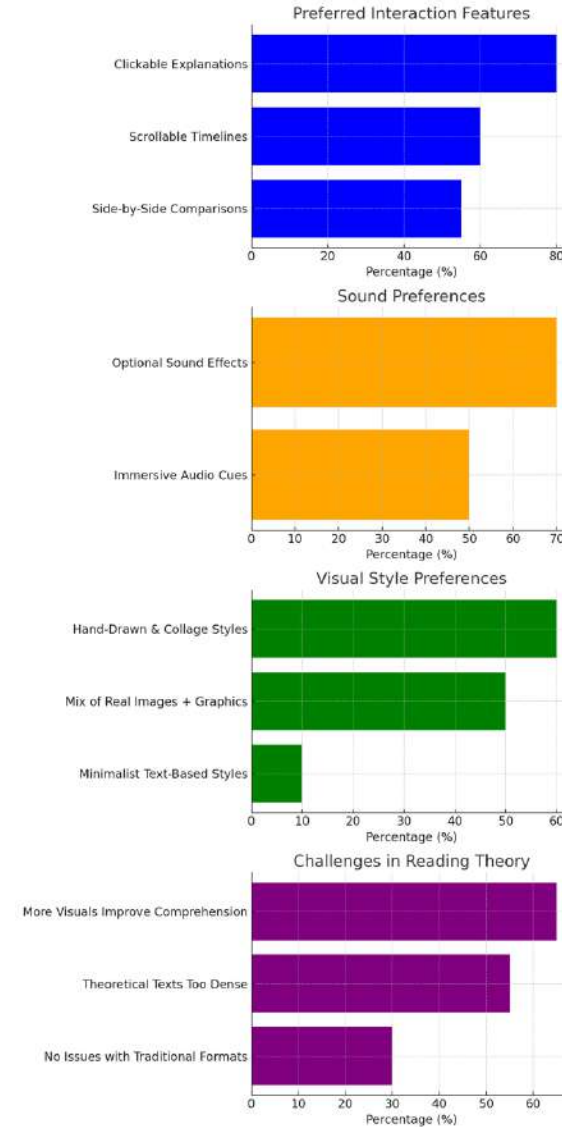
Traditional academic texts are too dense to concentrate.



The linear reading model is not flexible enough to explore freely according to interests.



The lack of interaction makes the reading experience more passive.



Young readers prefer **interactive and visually engaging digital content**, with a strong preference for **clickable explanations, scrollable timelines, and hand-drawn/collage visuals**, while **optional sound effects enhance immersion without being intrusive**.

Research conclusion

- Readers prefer the structure of modular vs. linear reading.
- Swipe and click interactions make it easier to access information and enhance immersion.
- Visual style (clip art + hand-drawn + real pictures) can enhance interest and make reading more enjoyable.

Personas



Emily | The Visual Learner

Age: 20

Background: Art & Design Student

"I love when books have a mix of text and visuals. If I have to read a super theoretical book, I prefer when it's broken up with images, animations, or interactive parts."

Reading Habits:
Prefers visually engaging content, enjoys graphic novels and digital storytelling

Pain Points:
Finds dense academic texts **boring & hard to engage with**

Ideal Features:
Interactive visuals, **collage-style storytelling, clickable definitions**

Reading Habits:
Reads a lot online, prefers **modular and non-linear** formats

Pain Points:
Easily distracted by long blocks of text, prefers digital-first content

Ideal Features:
Clickable explanations, **smooth scrolling experience, interactive comparisons**

Jason | The Digital Reader

Age: 24

Background: Computer Science Student

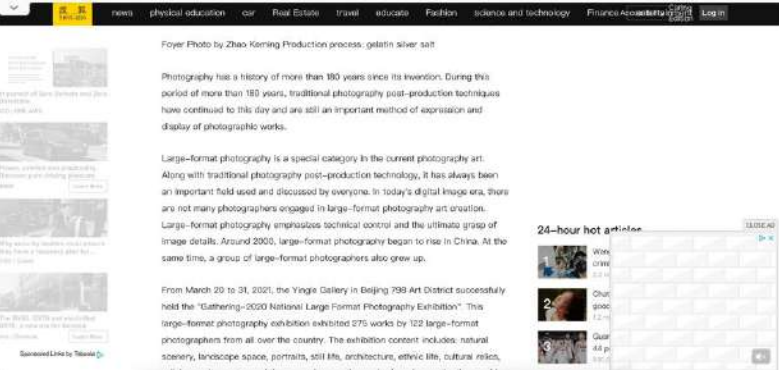
"I'm used to reading on screens, but I get lost in huge chunks of text. I like when I can click on things for quick explanations or jump between sections."



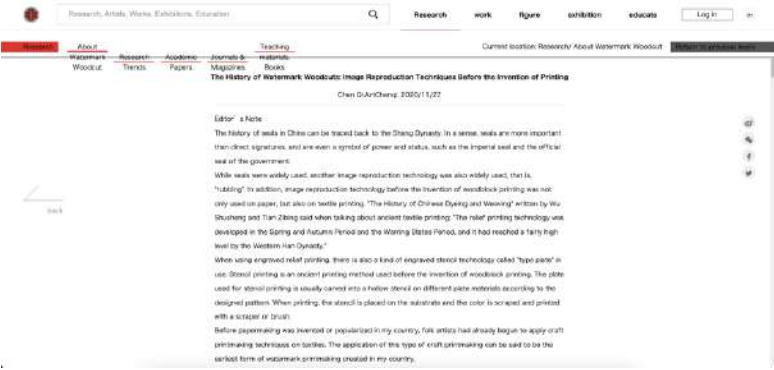
Extra Research



Screenshot 1, 3 photography positions with a "cinematic feel" - extreme close-up, extreme long shot and three-quarter shot



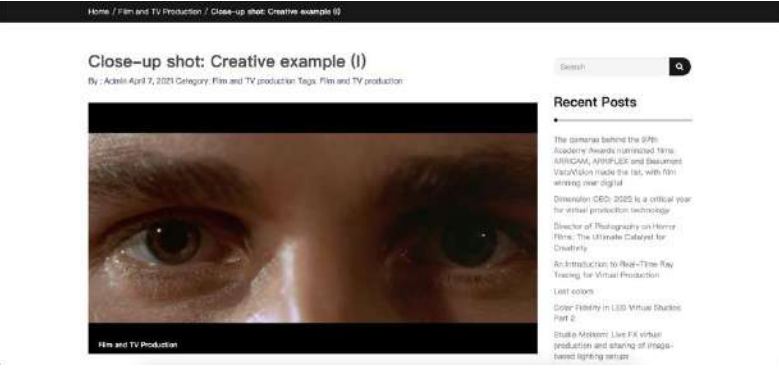
Screenshot 3, Photography production: from traditional handicraft to art micro-spray



Screenshot 5, The History of Watermark Woodcuts: Image Reproduction Techniques Before the Invention of Printing



Screenshot 2, A very short history of cinema

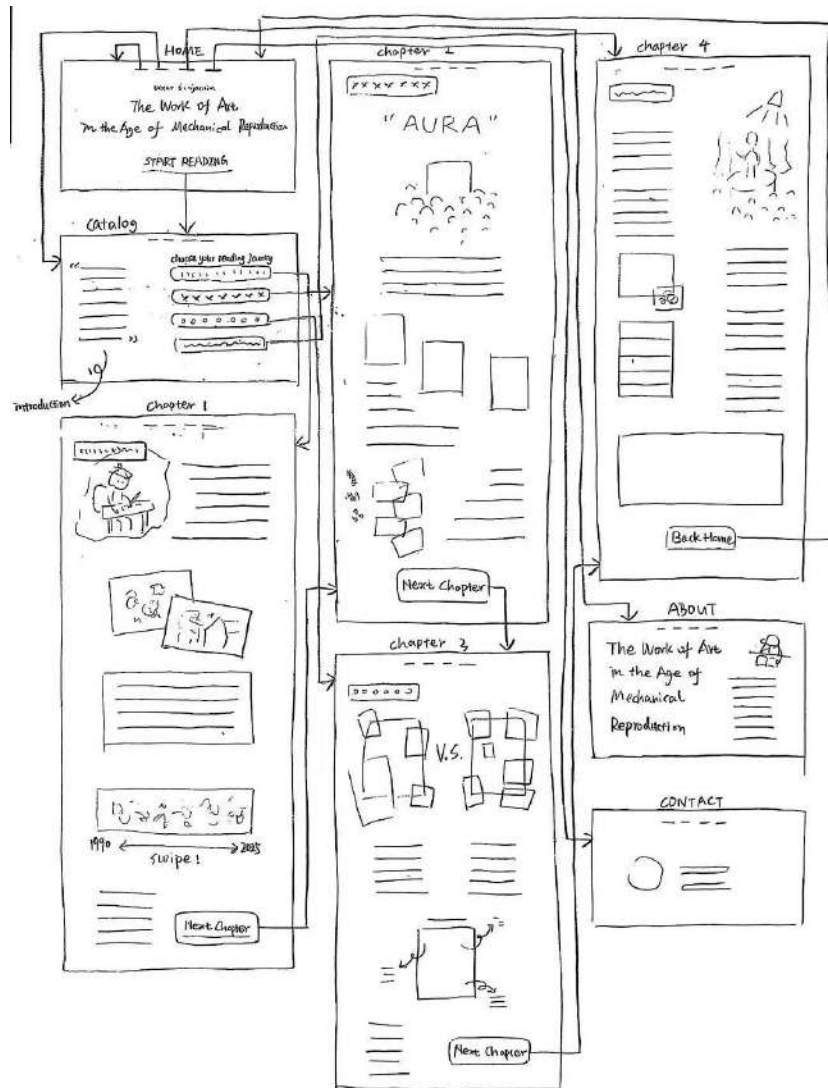


Screenshot 4, Close-up shot: Creative example (I)

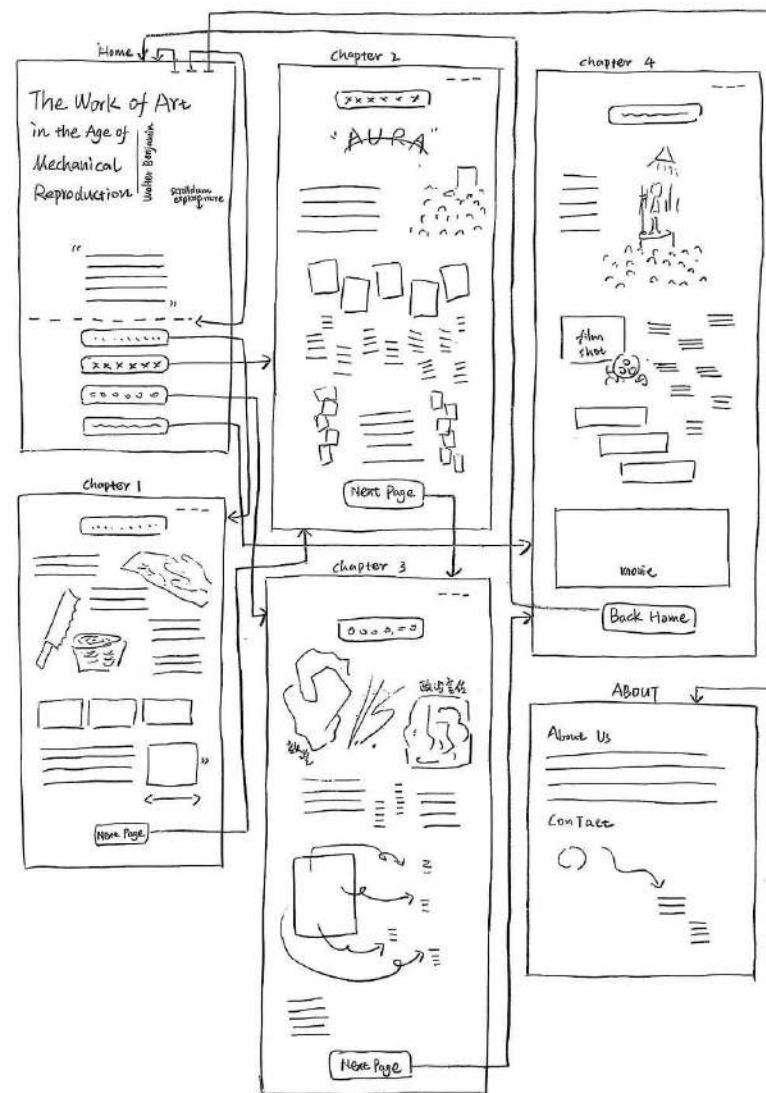
In order to make the content of the web book more easy to understand, I plan to add some pictures as annotations in the article, so that readers can more intuitively understand the core idea of the article. To this end, I not only conducted an in-depth study of the content of the article, but also carried out some related historical research to ensure that the selection of pictures has a broader background and reference value.

I am not limited to matching the text with direct illustrations, but I hope to expand the reader's understanding of the text through more malleable visual materials. For example, when the article deals with the history of reproduction art, I can add some relevant historical pictures or visual materials that reflect the background of the subject to further explain its development. This approach not only enhances the reading experience, but also leads readers to think about cultural and historical connections beyond the text, making the content richer and more layered.

Thumbnails



Version 1

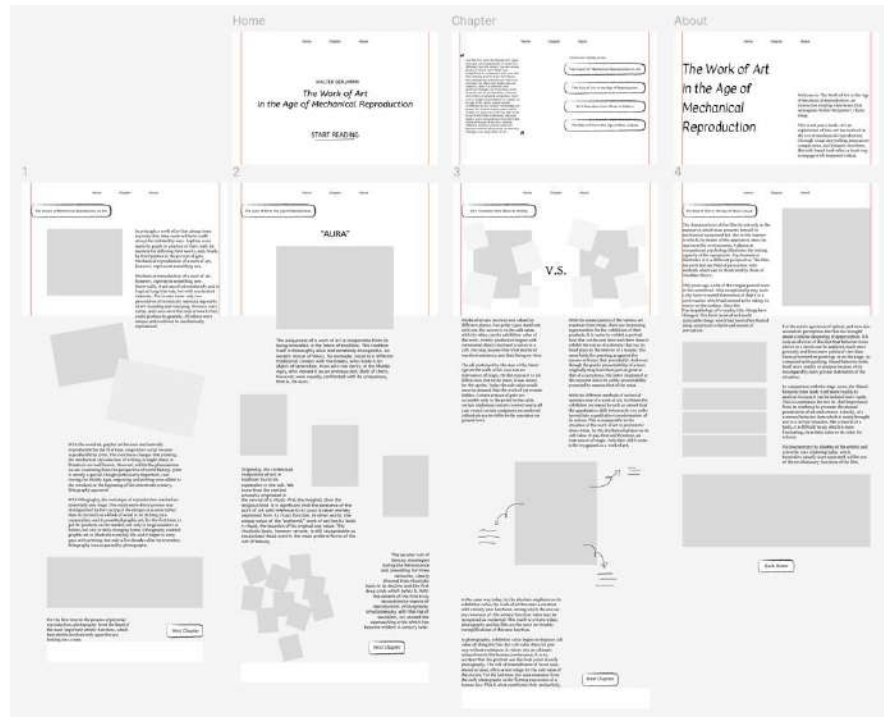


Version 2

I created two versions of thumbnails for my web-based book. The second version has a bolder and more playful typography layout, making the reading experience feel more dynamic. But after comparing both versions, I feel that the homepage in the first version works better. It is clearer and more structured, making it easier for users to navigate.

In the final framework design, I plan to combine the best parts of both. I will keep the playful text layout from the second version and bring back the stronger homepage structure from the first. This way the design stays engaging while remaining easy to use for my target audience.

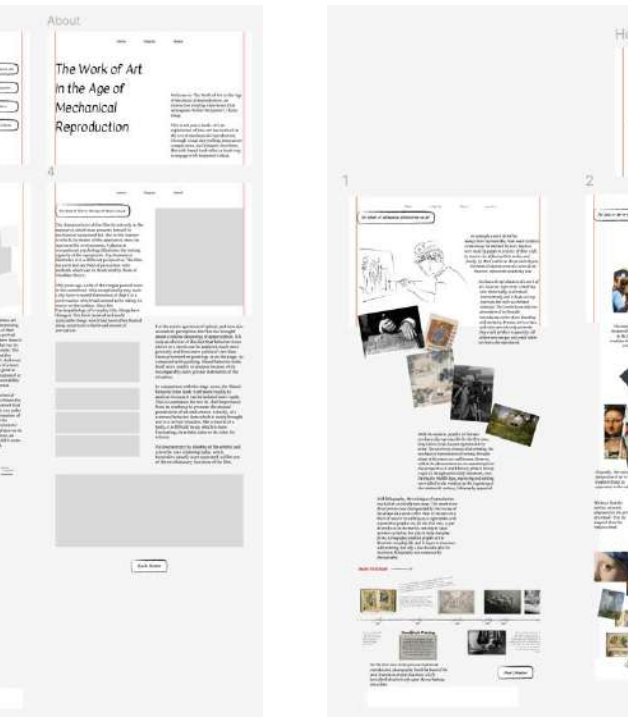
Wireframes



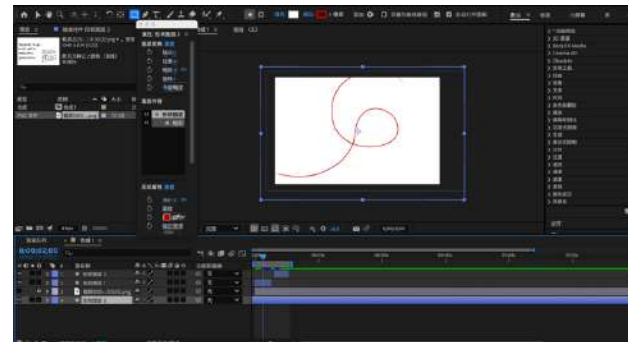
Low-fi version



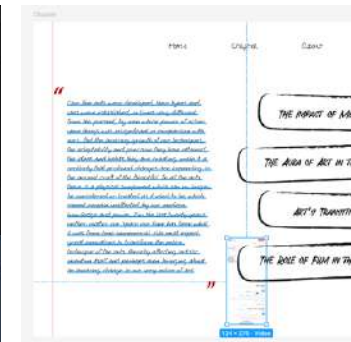
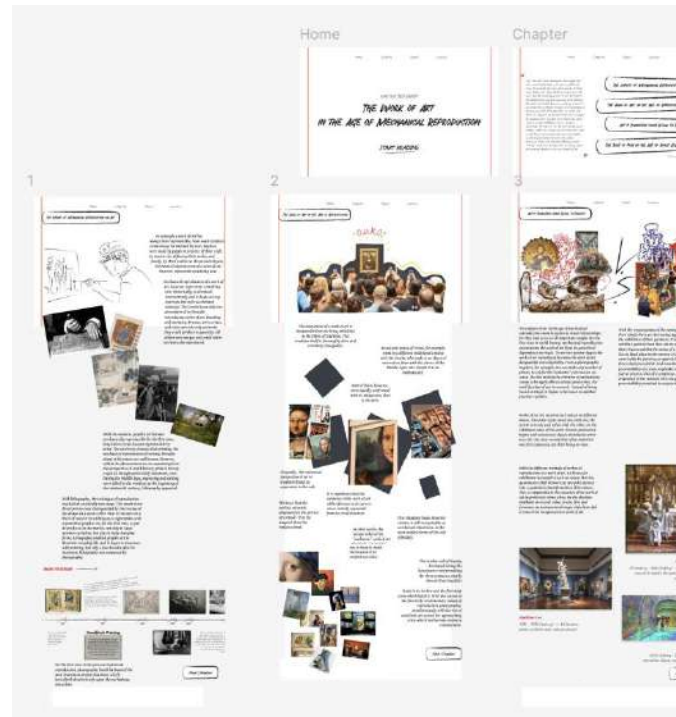
Cover animation making



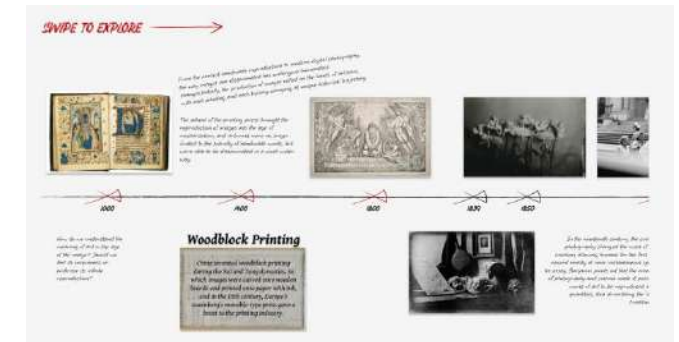
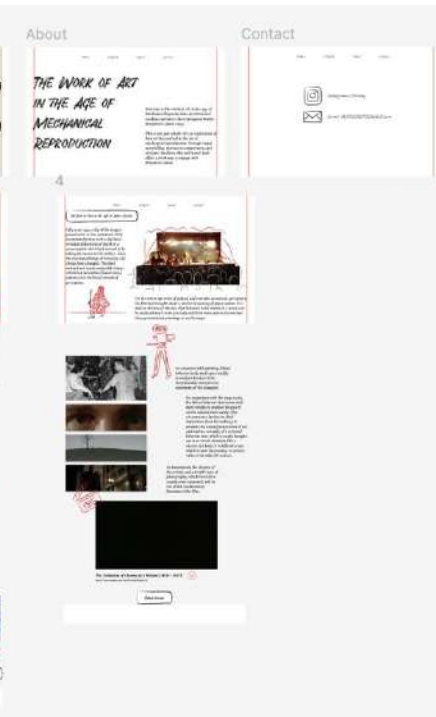
Hi-fi version, version 1



Line animation making



Add the sound of a turning book



Timeline interaction adding book

Visual Design Ideas



Users can hear the sound of red line drawing when they enter the home page. Click START READING to hear the sound of turning the pages. The audio design makes the reading more immersive.

Why the Red Line?

A Thread Through Time – The red line runs through this book, connecting different moments in the evolution of art, from ancient religious icons to political propaganda and modern film.

A Symbol of Transformation – Just as mechanical reproduction alters the essence of an artwork, the red line weaves through history, showing how art shifts between **ritual, politics, and mass culture**.

A Guiding Element –

The red line not only decorates the pages but also acts as a visual path, guiding you through different ideas, just as technological progress has guided the development of artistic media.



the uniqueness of a work of art is parable from its being imbedded in the fabric of modern life

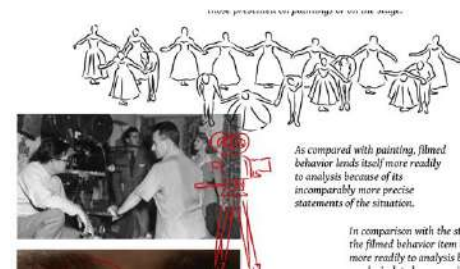


The page scrolling is aura as well as the golden halo will also scroll upwards, symbolising the disappearance of aura.

The rectangular frame design symbolizes the mass reproduction of art, representing the birth of countless replicas. As reproductions multiply, the aura of the original work gradually fades, echoing Benjamin's theory.



Combine clip art with hand-drawn style to enhance visual interest and create a relaxed reading experience. The content of the article is more academic, perhaps more serious, in this way to attract young readers and reduce the sense of boredom.

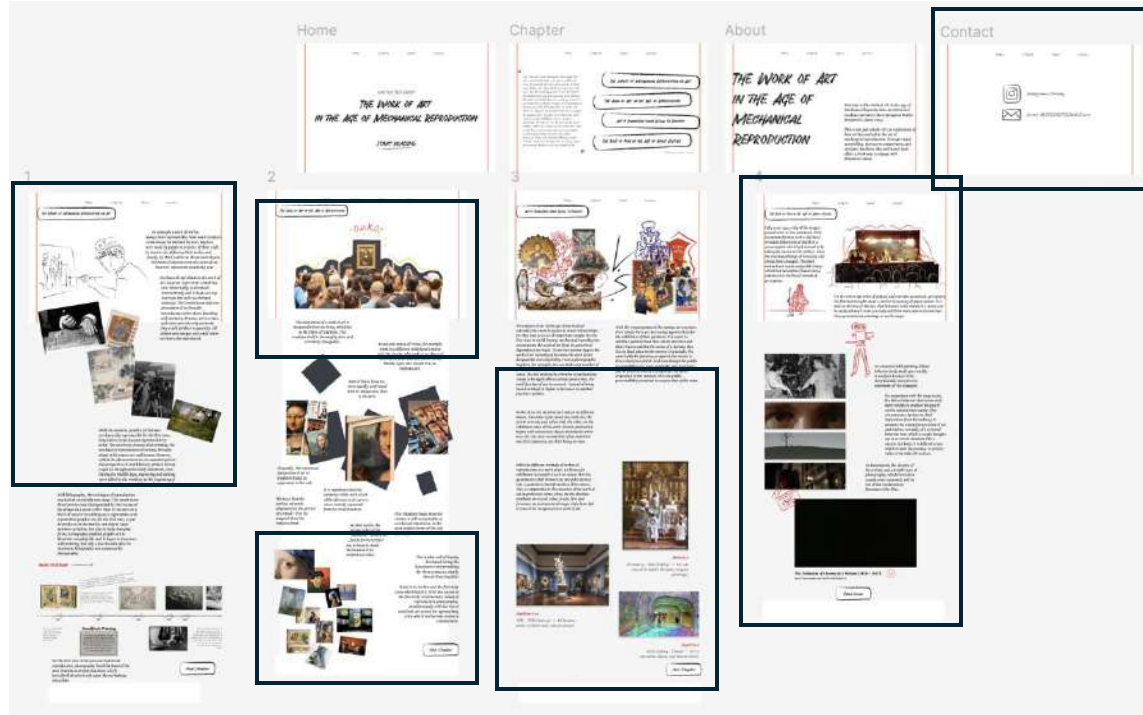


I combined the hand-painted way of the curtain call of the stage play with the scene of the film shooting to symbolize the evolution of the art industry to the development of the film, in response to the theme of the article.

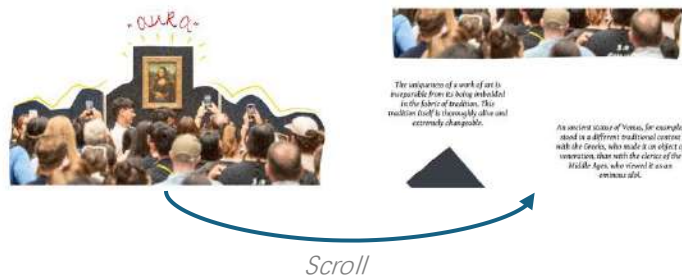


Add a video of the evolution of the film from 1878 to 2018 to enrich the content of the web-based book, enhance the science, while optimizing the reading experience and making the information easier to understand.

Iterations



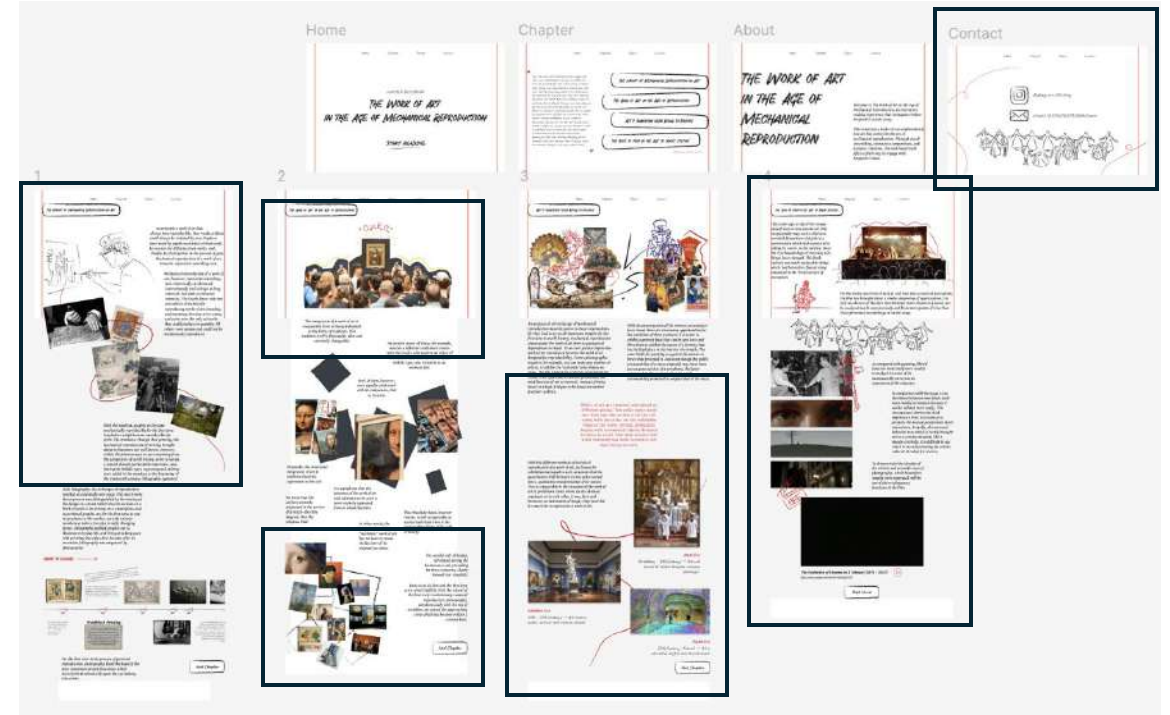
Version 1



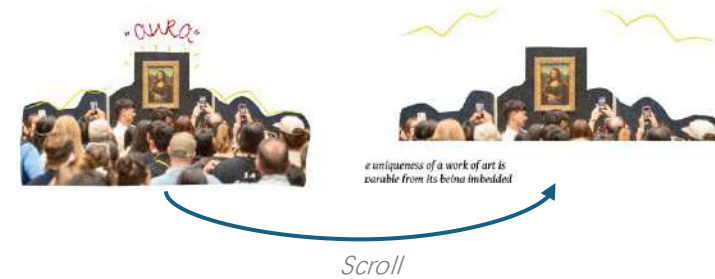
As the page scrolls, the whole thing goes up.



Different version of collage

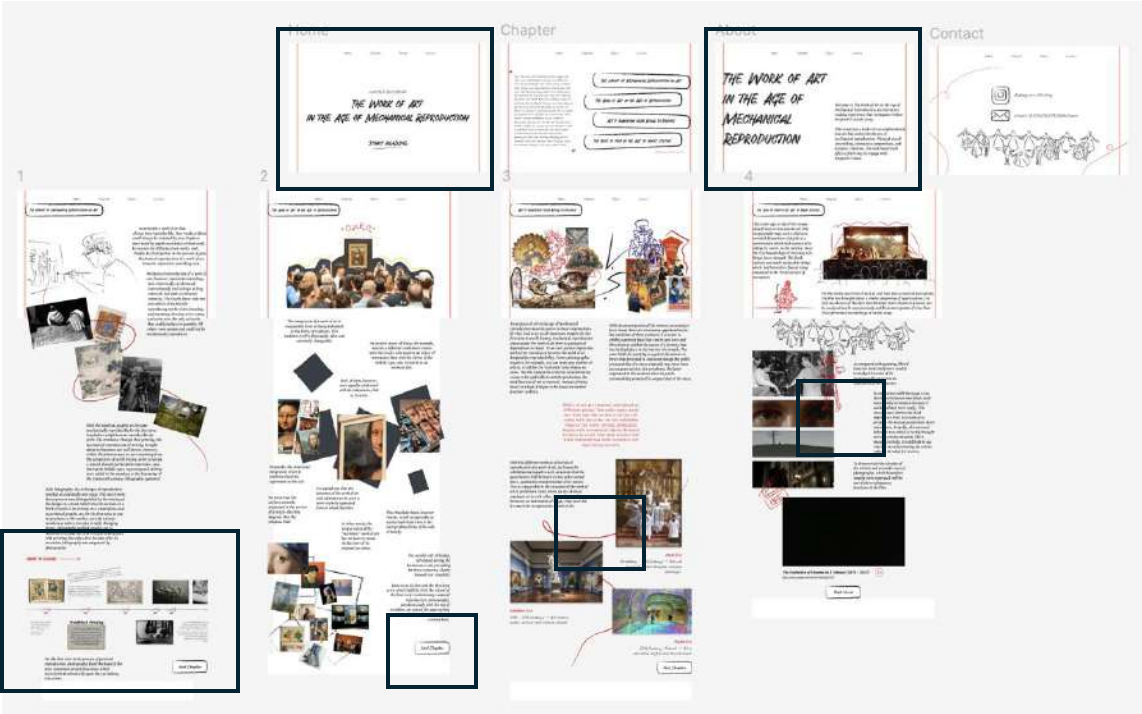


Version 2

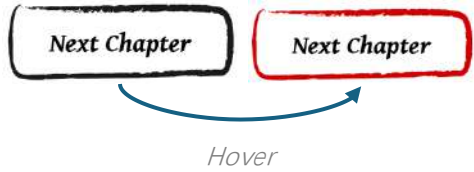


When the page scrolls, the background does not move, and the aura goes up.

Iterations



Version 2

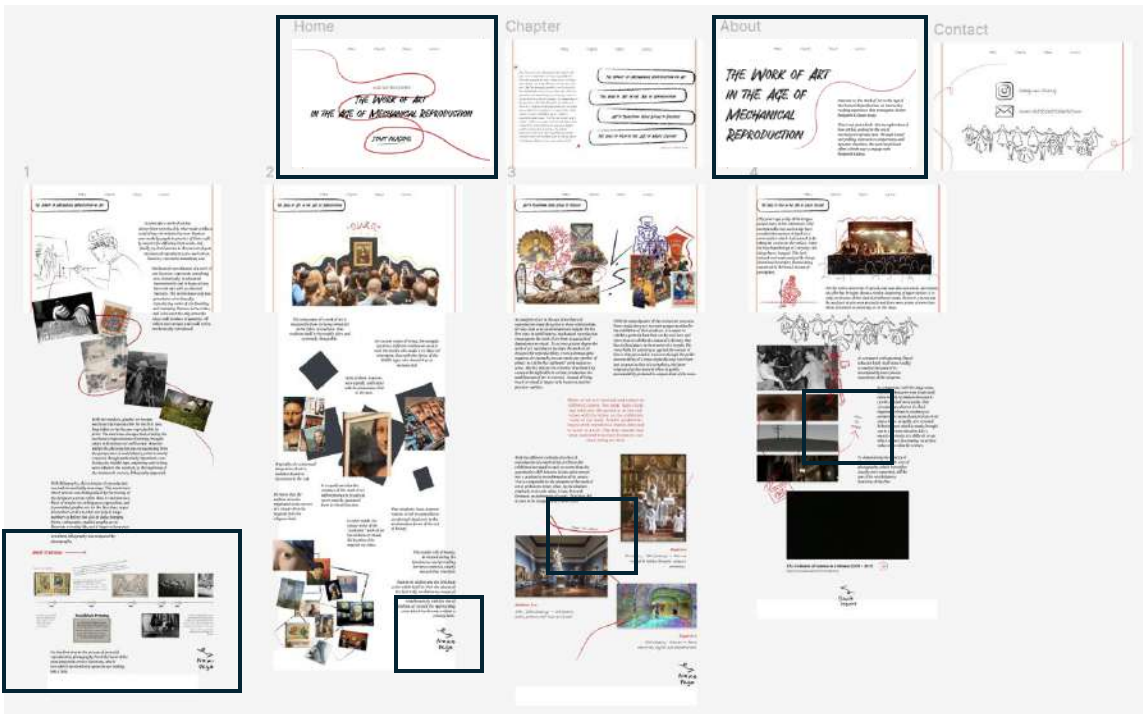


Hover



Pictures with hover function

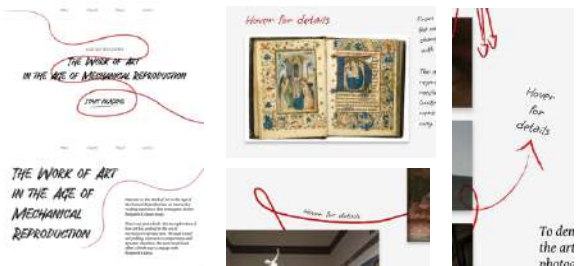
Buttons are a combination of hand-drawn rectangular boxes and text fonts. The whole thing looks a little less relaxed and interesting.



Version 3



Hover

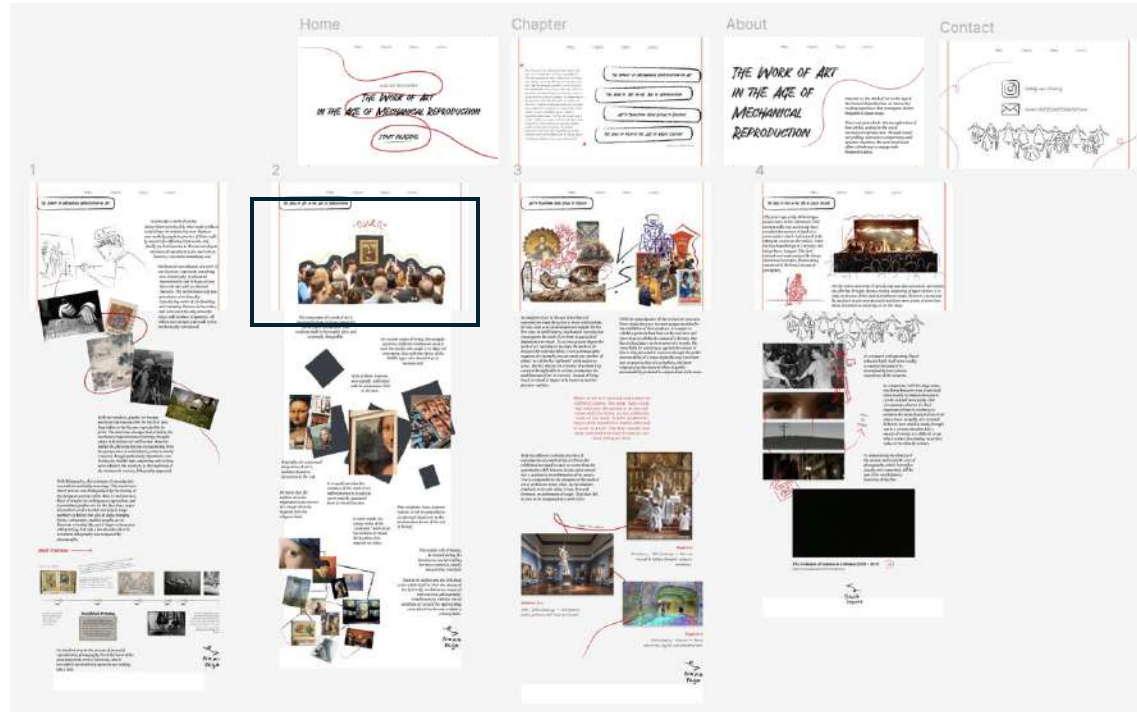


Red line animation added

Hover notice added

The replacement button is fully hand-painted, and new animations are added to the cover and About pages to show the red line drawing process. Add tips for pictures with hover function to guide user interaction.

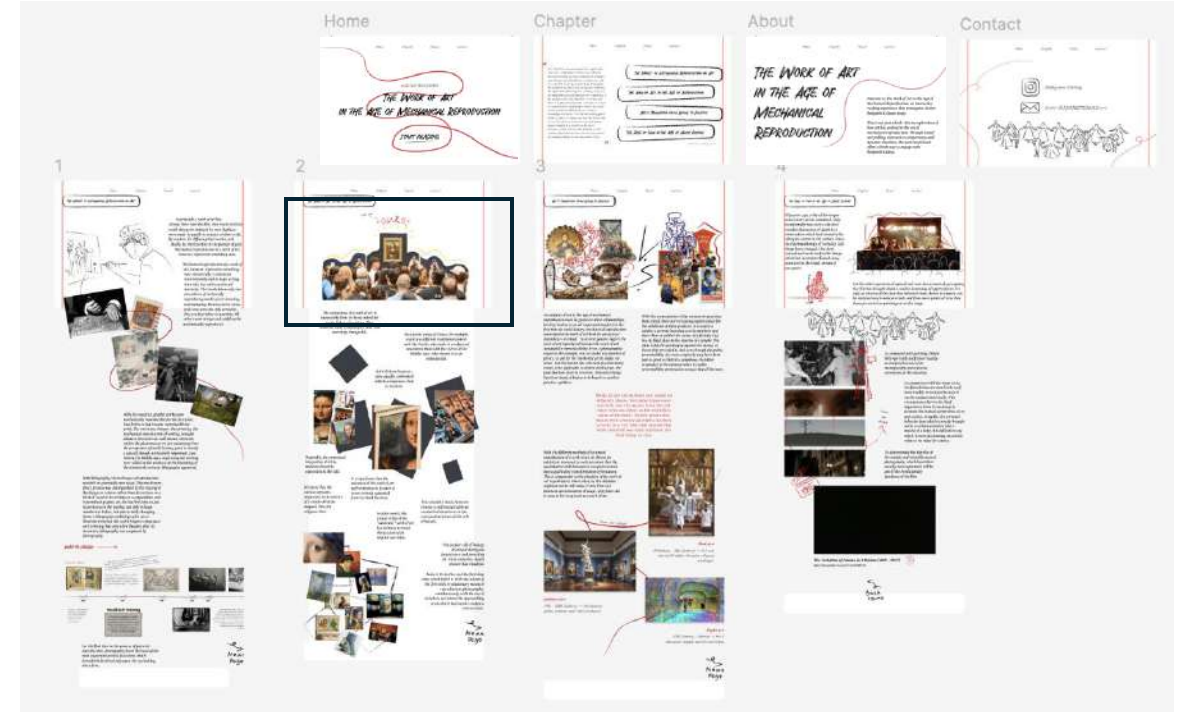
Iterations



Version 3



Version 3 of aura does not give the corresponding explanation, which may leave the reader wondering what aura means.



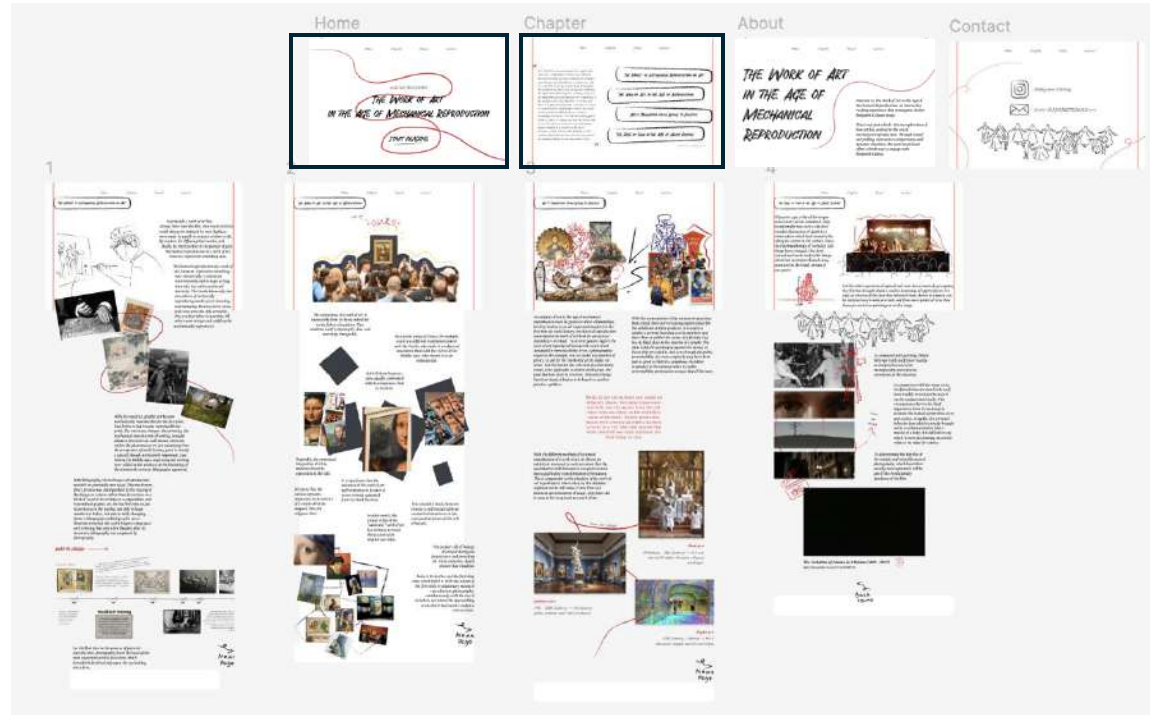
Version 4



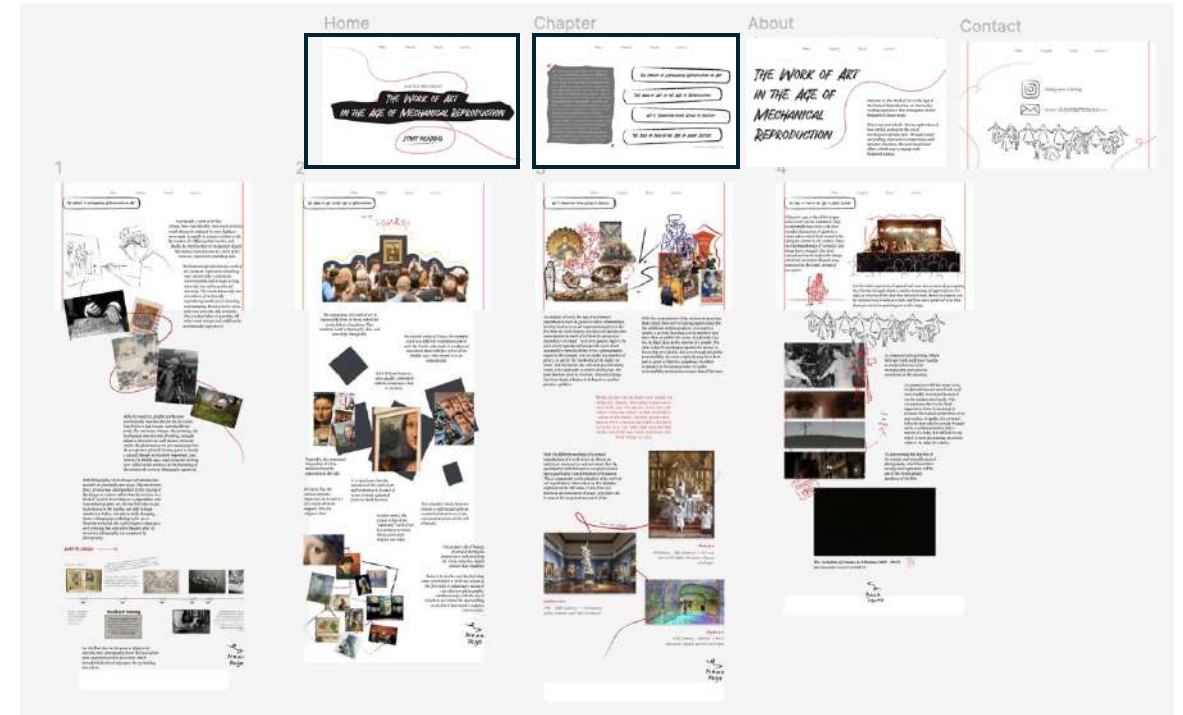
Click

Version 4 adds an interactive feature to aura that allows users to pop up an explanation after clicking on it, making its meaning more intuitive and improving the reading experience.

Iterations



Version 4



Version 5



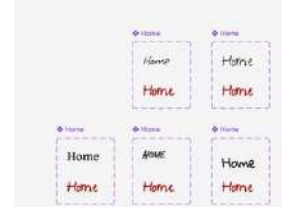
Home page 1



Home page 2



Home page 3



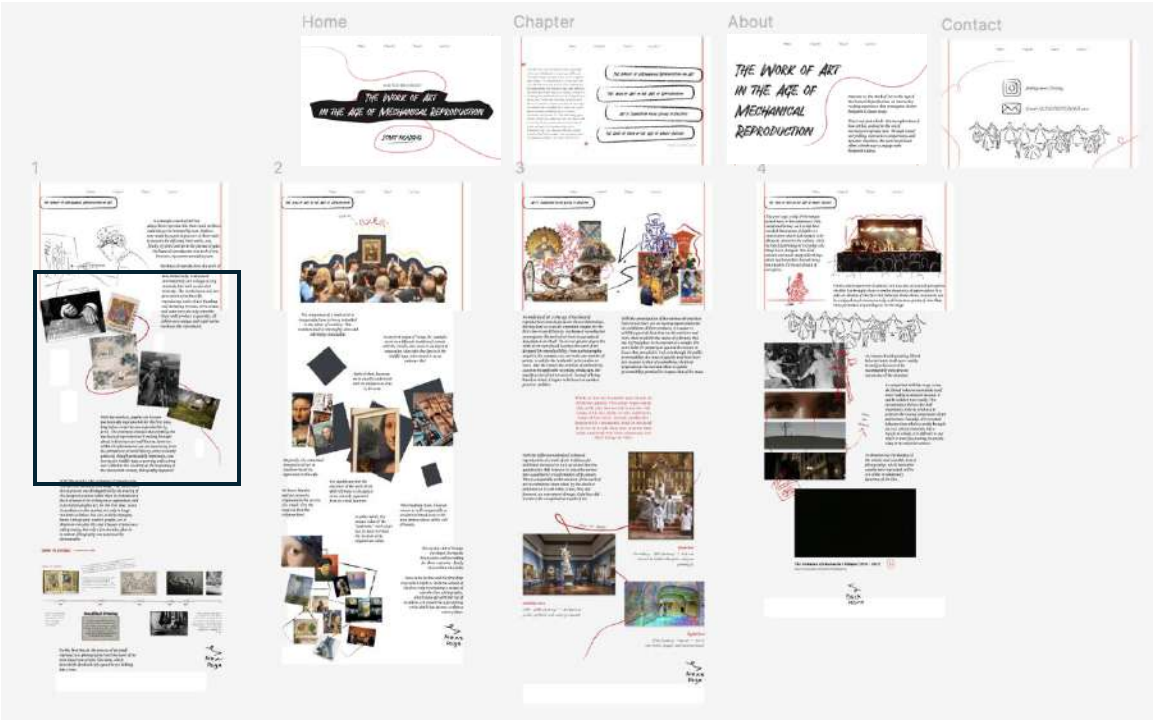
Different font



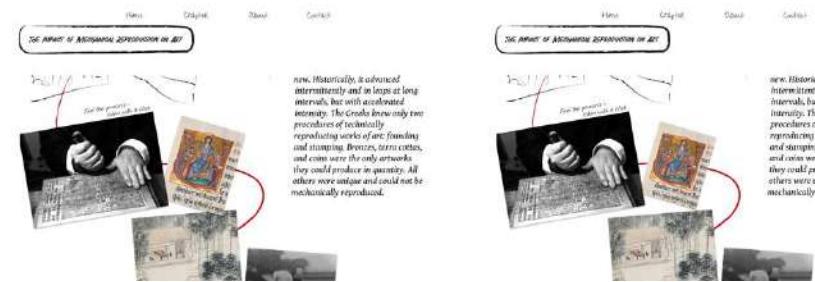
About page

The black background of the About page is similar to the front page, which can reduce the freshness of reading and cause aesthetic fatigue, while adding interface elements, making the overall lack of simplicity. The navigation bar font "Give You Glory" is chosen to distinguish it from the title and subtitle, but also to avoid interfering with visual guidance due to its slim character, ensuring that the visual center remains focused on the title.

Iterations



Version 6



Default statement

When hovering, the image shrinks.
Click on the image to hear audio



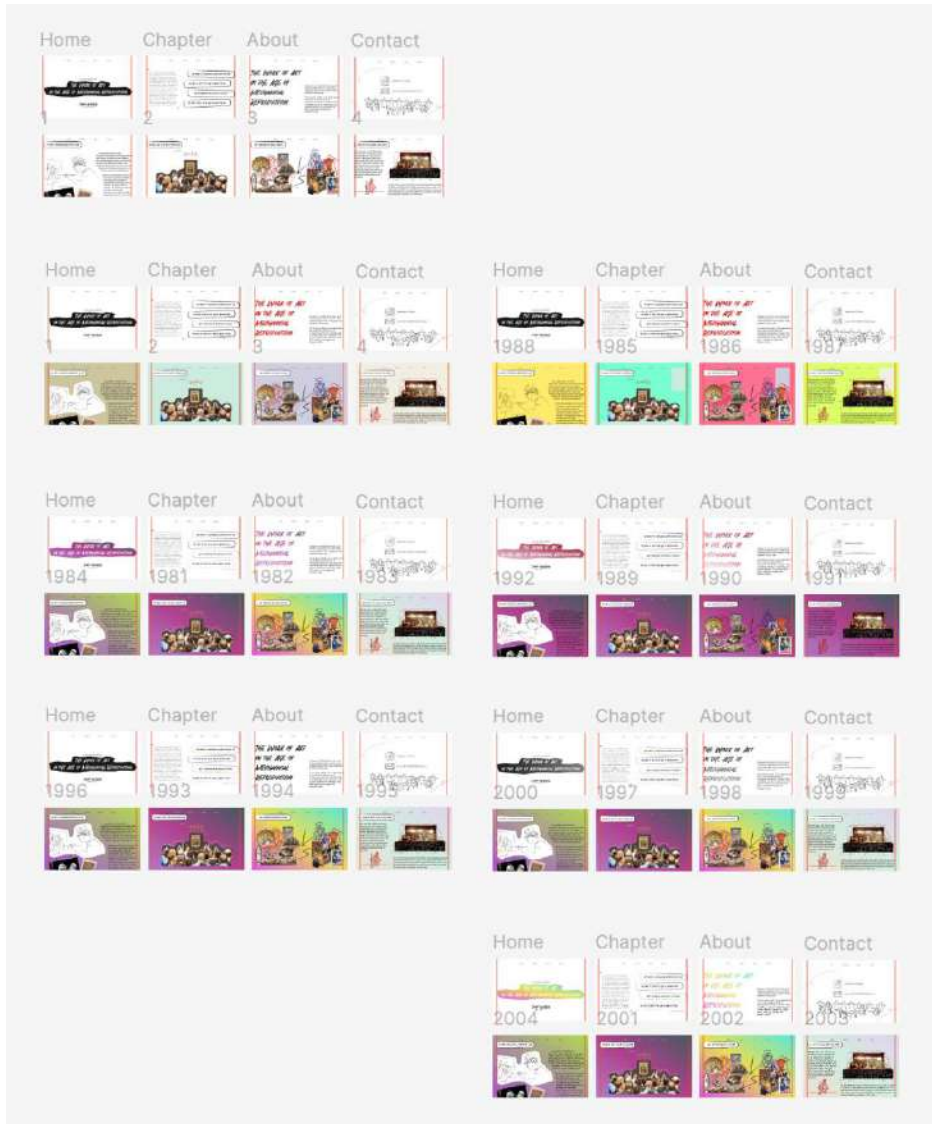
Audio adding



Assets

To make the reading more experiential, I added audio to the highlighted piece of photo. Each audio corresponds to the action process in the photo, allowing the reader to experience how the artistic reproduction develops step by step.

Iterations



Default statement



My Thought Process & Design Evolution

At the start of this project, I wanted to move beyond the traditional, static presentation of theoretical texts and create a more engaging, visually immersive experience for a digital-native audience (17-25 years old). I began experimenting with different color palettes, exploring how color could support both visual appeal and thematic depth.

- Muted tones were considered for a more academic feel, but they felt detached and unengaging.
- Bright, high-saturation colors initially seemed dynamic but often overpowered the content.
- After multiple refinements, I chose a gradient-based palette that harmonizes with the imagery used in the book and reflects the evolution of art through different eras.



Colour Palette

Color styles

-  purple+green
-  purple+dark blue
-  purple+yellow+green
-  purple+light blue
-  red line

✅ Why This Palette?

- The **gradient colors** are derived from the images used in the book, ensuring a **cohesive and integrated look**.
- The **subtle blending effect** reflects the **gradual transformation of art** as described in Benjamin's theory.
- The color choices maintain a balance between **playfulness and readability**, enhancing **collage and hand-drawn elements** without overpowering them.

❌ Why Not Other Colors?

- **Flat, muted tones** lacked engagement and didn't connect with the book's **historical transformation**.
- **Overly bright colors** competed with the text and illustrations, reducing legibility.
- A **purely monochrome palette** failed to differentiate the **shifts in art history**.

💡 Why Purple Gradient for Home & About Pages?

- **Purple** symbolizes **mysticism, transformation, and depth**, resonating with Benjamin's discussion on the **fading aura of art**.
- The **gradient effect creates continuity**, guiding users seamlessly into the reading experience.
- It provides **strong contrast** while maintaining an **inviting, immersive atmosphere**.

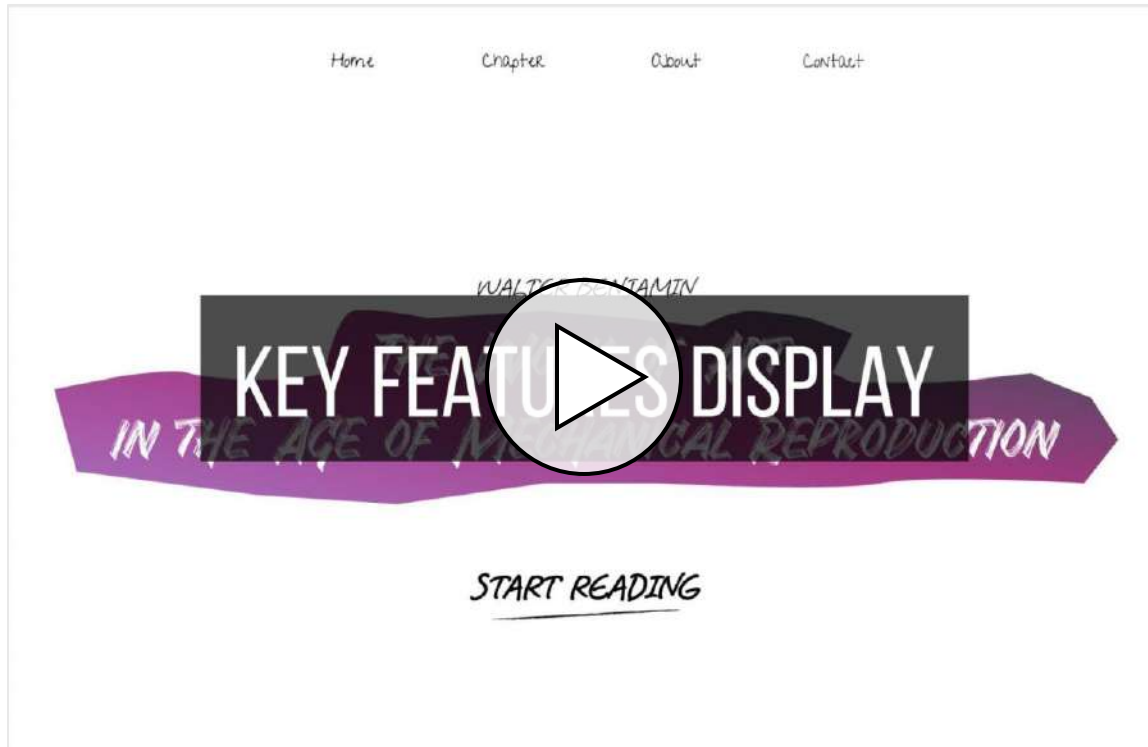
🌈 Why Different Colors for Each Chapter?

- Each gradient is inspired by key images within the **corresponding chapter**, creating a **visual link between content and design**.
- The **color transitions reflect different historical phases of art**, reinforcing its evolution over time.
- The variation prevents **visual monotony**, making each chapter feel **distinct yet cohesive**.

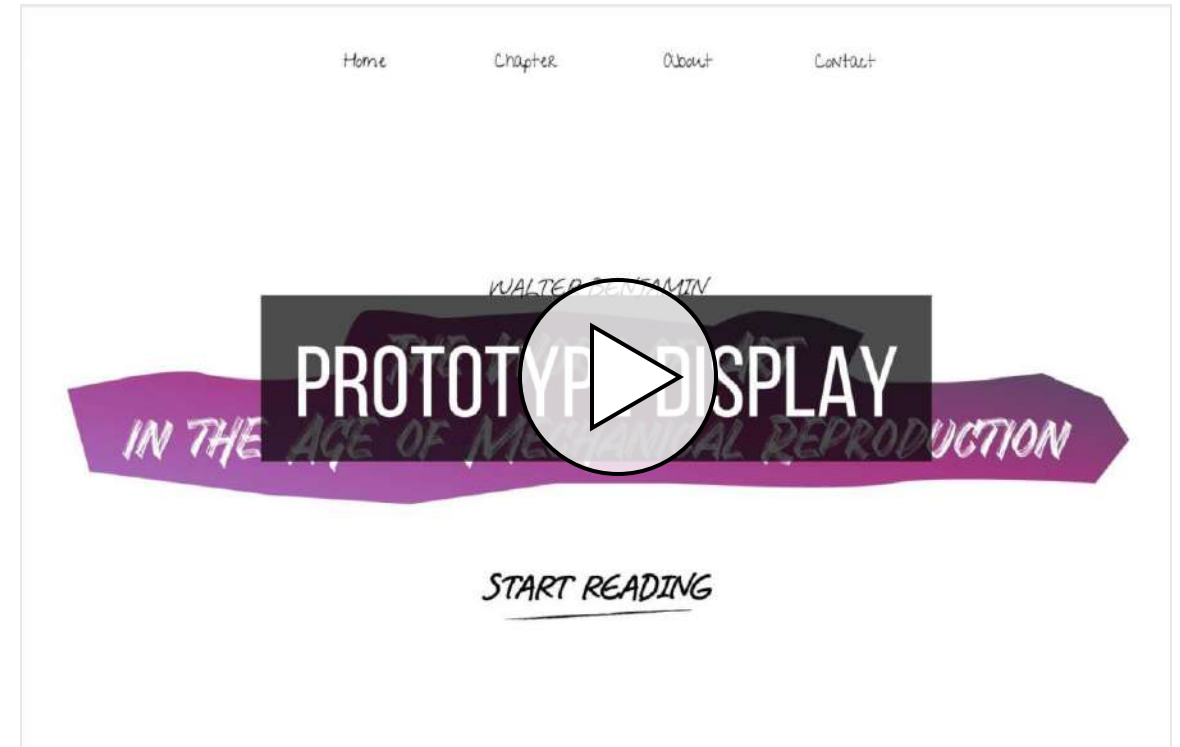
🧠 Maintaining Visual Consistency

- **Extracting colors directly from historical and contemporary images** in the book ensures a **harmonious integration** between text, visuals, and background.
- A **consistent red line element** runs throughout the book, tying all sections together despite varying background colors.
- The **gradients are carefully balanced** to ensure **text readability**, maintaining a smooth **hierarchy of information**.

Final Outcome



Video, Key features display



Video, Prototype display

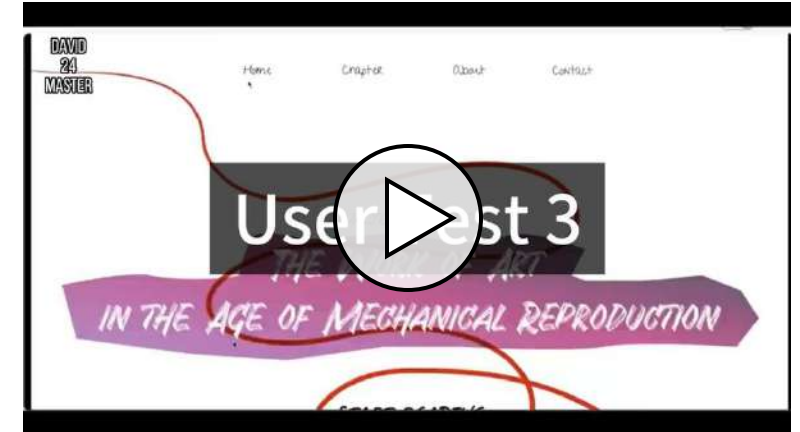
User Feedback & Improvement



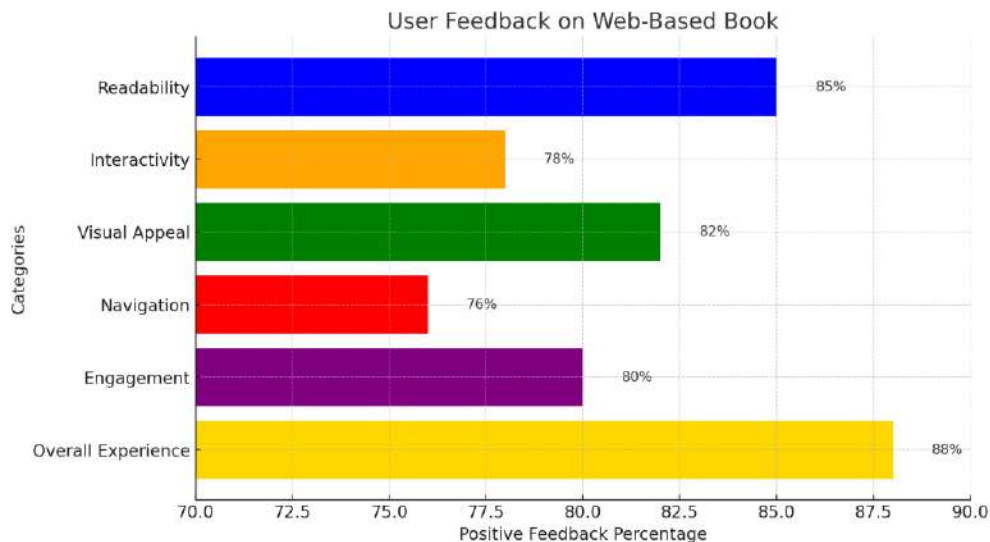
Video, User test 1_Gloria



Video, User test 2_Amy



Video, User test 3_David



- **Readability (85%)** – Clear text, good spacing & font. Some want larger text.
- **Interactivity (78%)** – Clickable elements & expandable content. Some find too many features distracting.
- **Visual Appeal (82%)** – Engaging colors & images. Some suggest better section consistency.
- **Navigation (76%)** – Modular, non-linear navigation. A progress indicator is requested.
- **Engagement (80%)** – Balanced text & visuals. More multimedia (videos/audio) wanted.
- **Overall Experience (88%)** – Refreshing way to read theory. Some request an offline version.

Key Takeaways for Improvement

- ✓ Keep interactive elements balanced (not overwhelming).
- ✓ Improve visual consistency across different sections.
- ✓ Add progress tracking features for better user experience.
- ✓ Explore multimedia elements to enhance engagement.
- ✓ Consider an offline reading option for accessibility.

A total of 10 users were invited to test the web book, with 3 giving video feedback and 7 giving text feedback.

Images Used in Web



Fig 1, woodblock printing



Fig 2, handwritten copy



Fig 3, painting



Fig 4, film pickup



Fig 5, photo



Fig 6, hand-coping



Fig 7, woodblock printing



Fig 8, lithography



Fig 9, daguerreotype photography



Fig 10, wet plate photography



Fig 11, film photography



Fig 12, film photography



Fig 13, Mona Lisa



Fig 14, Mona Lisa's relevant product



Fig 15, Mona Lisa's relevant product



Fig 16, Mona Lisa's relevant product



Fig 17, see the exhibition



Fig 18, Van Gogh



Fig 19, Monet



Fig 20, Monet

Images Used in Web



Fig 21, sunflower



Fig 22, bag



Fig 23, painting



Fig 24, gallery



Fig 25, magazine



Fig 26, modern gallery



Fig 27, Christ Pantocrator



Fig 28, wall painting



Fig 29, wall painting



Fig 30, Statue

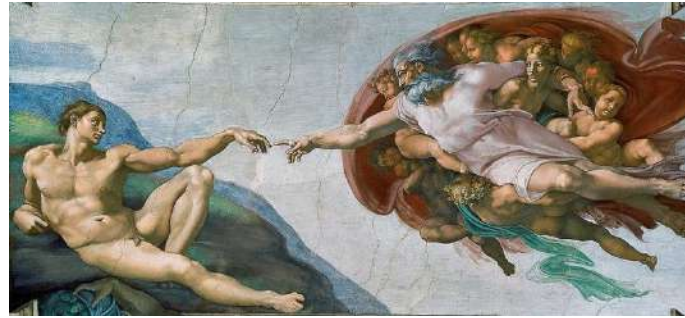


Fig 31, Creazione di Adamo



Fig 32, Creazione di Adamo



Fig 33, poster



Fig 34, poster



Fig 35, poster



Fig 36, poster



Fig 37, poster



Fig 38, poster



Fig 39, museum



Fig 41, digital museum

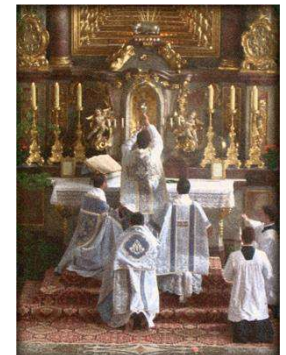


Fig 40, private art

Images Used in Web



Fig 42, stage



Fig 43, crowd



Fig 44, film



Fig 45, close-up shot



Fig 46, Establishing Shot



Fig 47, American Shot

List of Illustrations

- Screenshot 1**, source: https://www.sohu.com/a/491875803_121137452 (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Screenshot 2**, source: <https://www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/very-short-history-of-cinema> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Screenshot 3**, source: https://www.sohu.com/a/482021471_121124744 (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Screenshot 4**, source: <https://zunzheng.com/news/archives/21764> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Screenshot 5**, source: <https://i.cafa.edu.cn/waterprint/ch/chresc/?s=40723486> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 1**, source: <https://wapbaike.baidu.com/tashuo/browse/content?id=caaff993d7101b88ab7394f1> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 2**, source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/%E6%89%8B%E6%8A%84%E6%9C%AC> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 3**, source: <https://www.jiguzuo.com/guohua/shen-zhen-zhu-lu-shan-fang-tu.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 4**, source: <https://museum.xiangshenghang.com/story/200years.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 5**, source: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/flowery-yard-of-an-old-wooden-country-house-19128337/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 6**, source: <https://vibaike.com/241384/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 7**, source: <http://hk-dreamtrip.com/xinwenzhongxin/608.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 8**, source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/426771> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 9**, source: <https://museum.xiangshenghang.com/story/200years.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 10**, source: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/article/the-magical-alchemy-of-wet-plate-photography> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 11**, source: <https://free1810.wordpress.com/2015/11/06/depth-of-feld/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 12**, source: https://es.123rf.com/photo_30739213_los-ni%C3%B1os-est%C3%A1n-jugando-en-su-pueblo-en-rumpin-bogor-indonesia.html (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 13**, source: <https://www.epochtimes.com/b5/24/7/29/n14300524.htm> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 14**, source: <http://xhslink.com/a/nEUfwVhR3Hc7> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 15**, source: <http://xhslink.com/a/nEUfwVhR3Hc7> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 16**, source: <http://xhslink.com/a/Bv9U9zMwWlc7> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 17**, source: https://www.getyourguide.com/zh-cn/van-gogh-museum-l2695/van-gogh-museum-fast-blue-lane-timed-entry-ticket-t56969/?visitor-id=1EAP00K8AF8A6CJEMSJC4BW1HRFCMSMJ&locale_autoredirect_optout=true (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 18**, source: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_106.jpg (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 19**, source: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Claude-Monet> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 20**, source: <https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/exh-monet-and-london-views-of-the-thames/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 21**, source: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Vincent-Paintings-Sunflower-Painting-Bedroom/dp/B0BGBVYQ8H> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 22**, source: <https://www.dealmoon.co.uk/9-8-tote-national-gallery-tote/815288.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 23**, source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/%E6%88%B4%E7%8F%8D%E7%8F%A0%E8%80%B3%E7%92%B0%E7%9A%84%E5%B0%91%E5%A5%B3> (Accessed 10/02/25)

List of Illustrations

- Fig 24**, source: <https://www.aip-gz.com/newsshow-17-612-1.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 25**, source: <https://www.joom.com/en/products/64f2e5b9b8ce550124e4b4b1> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 26**, source: <https://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/culture/editorschoice/2307/6746-1.htm> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 27**, source: <https://www.instagram.com/orthodoxydaily/p/C5yTBSOrmkb/?api=1%2F&hl=zh-cn> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 28**, source: https://www.meisterdrucke.cn/kunstwerke/1260px/Filippino_Lippi_-_Frescoes_by_Filippino_Lippi_%281457-1504%29_on_the_dome_Strozzi_Chapel_Church_of_San_-_%28MeisterDrucke-1081779%29.jpg (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 29**, source: https://www.meisterdrucke.cn/kunstwerke/1260px/Tanzio_da_Varallo_-_Fresco_in_vault_of_Chapel_of_Guardian_Angel_by_Antonio_dEnrico_called_Tanzio_da_-_%28MeisterDrucke-1103954%29.jpg (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 30**, source: <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q88966619> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 31**, source: <https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/%E5%89%B5%E9%80%A0%E4%BA%9E%E7%95%B6> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 32**, source: <https://www.atelierlartetlautre.com/l-art-et-l-autre> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 33**, source: <https://www.mpweekly.com/culture/cu0002/propaganda-art-%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E6%B5%B7%E5%A0%B1-%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%BE%8E%E5%AD%B8%E5%8C%96-38655> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 34**, source: <https://www.mpweekly.com/culture/cu0002/propaganda-art-%e6%94%bf%e6%b2%bb%e6%b5%b7%e5%a0%b1-%e6%94%bf%e6%b2%bb%e7%be%8e%e5%ad%b8%e5%8c%96-38655> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 35**, source: <https://www.mpweekly.com/culture/cu0002/propaganda-art-%e6%94%bf%e6%b2%bb%e6%b5%b7%e5%a0%b1-%e6%94%bf%e6%b2%bb%e7%be%8e%e5%ad%b8%e5%8c%96-38655> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 36**, source: https://sunyue.blog.caixin.com/archives/63630?originReferrer=caixinsearch_wap (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 37**, source: <https://www.aboluowang.com/2024/0523/2057990.html> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 38**, source: <https://www.pinterest.com/1912ROCforever/%E7%94%BB%E5%83%8F%E5%85%B1%E5%8C%AA-posters-of-communist-thugs/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 39**, source: <https://www.headout.com/guided-tours/florence-accademia-gallery-and-duomo-guided-visit-with-direct-access-e-20743/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 40**, source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_Catholicism (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 41**, source: <https://www.dealmoon.co.uk/guide/3509> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 42**, source: <https://downbeach.com/news/2024/apr/19/travis-preston-of-calarts-collaborations-across-di/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 43**, source: <https://posts.careerengine.us/p/610f972b8b447e52b2453ad5> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 44**, source: <https://www.deepfocusreview.com/definitives/the-best-years-of-our-lives/> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 45**, source: <https://zunzheng.com/news/archives/21764> (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 46**, source: https://www.sohu.com/a/491875803_121137452 (Accessed 10/02/25)
- Fig 47**, source: <https://zunzheng.com/news/archives/21764> (Accessed 10/02/25)