

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?

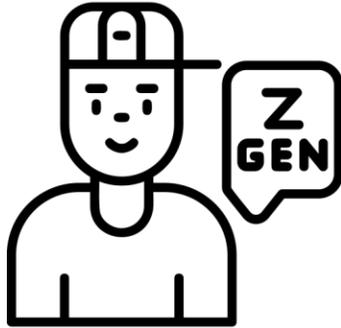
Reference Studies

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.

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.

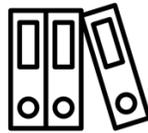
Research method

- 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:



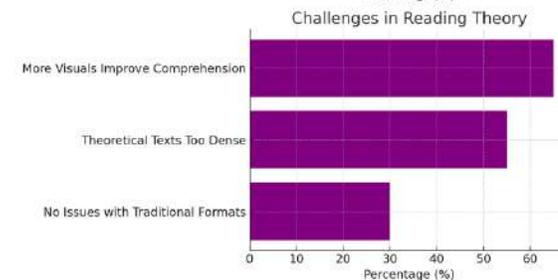
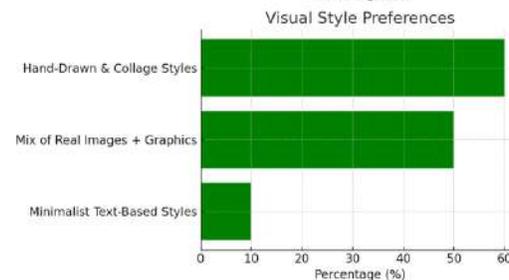
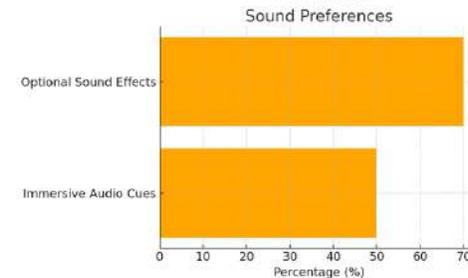
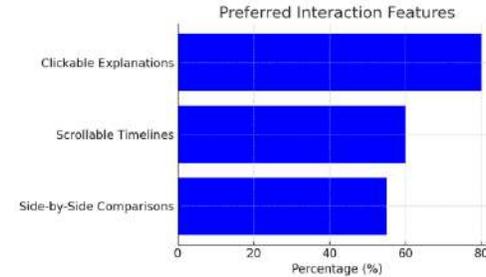
Traditional academic texts are too dense to concentrate.



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."



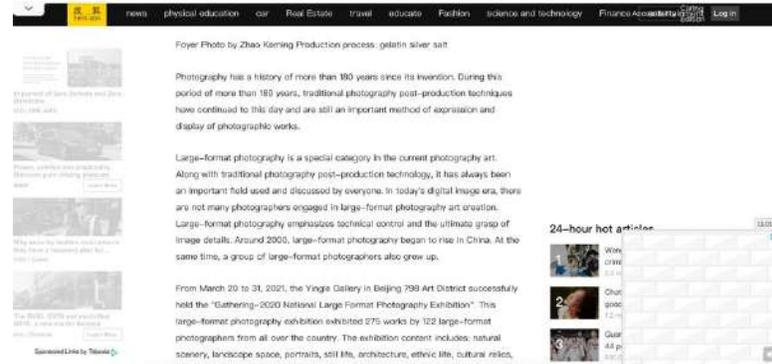
Extra Research



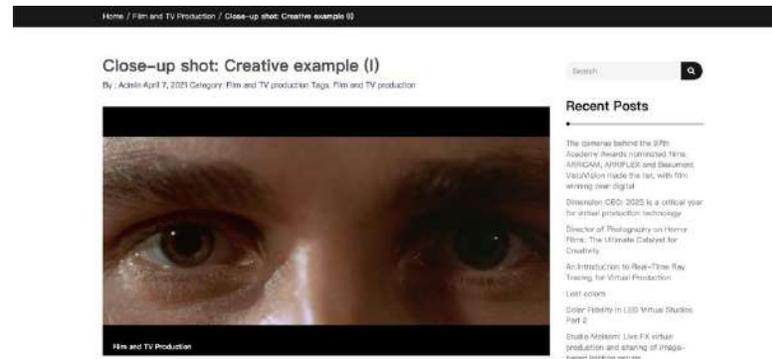
Screenshot 1, 3 photography positions with a "cinematic feel" - extreme close-up, extreme long shot and three-quarter shot



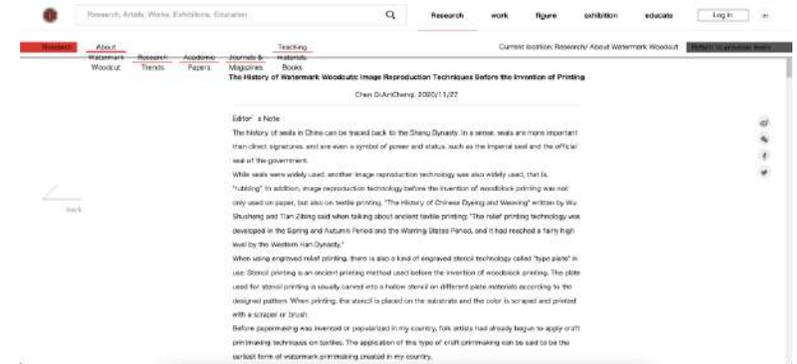
Screenshot 2, A very short history of cinema



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



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

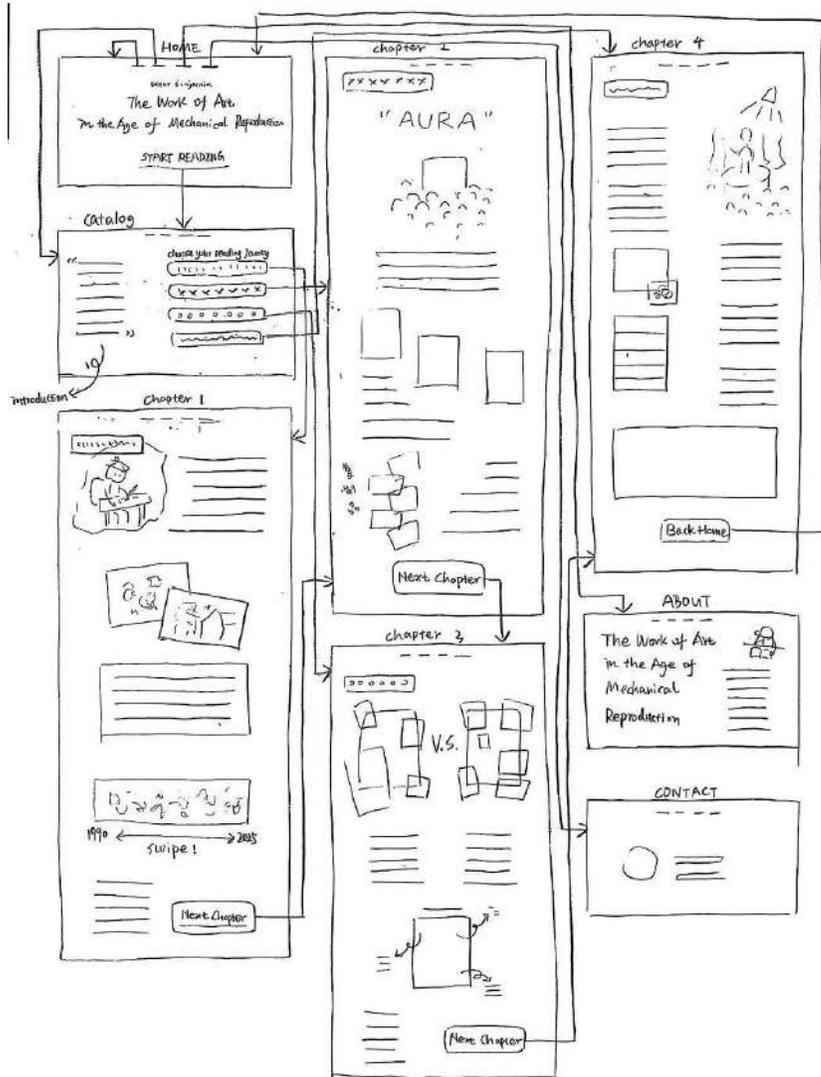


Screenshot 5, The History of Watermark Woodcuts: Image Reproduction Techniques Before the Invention of Printing

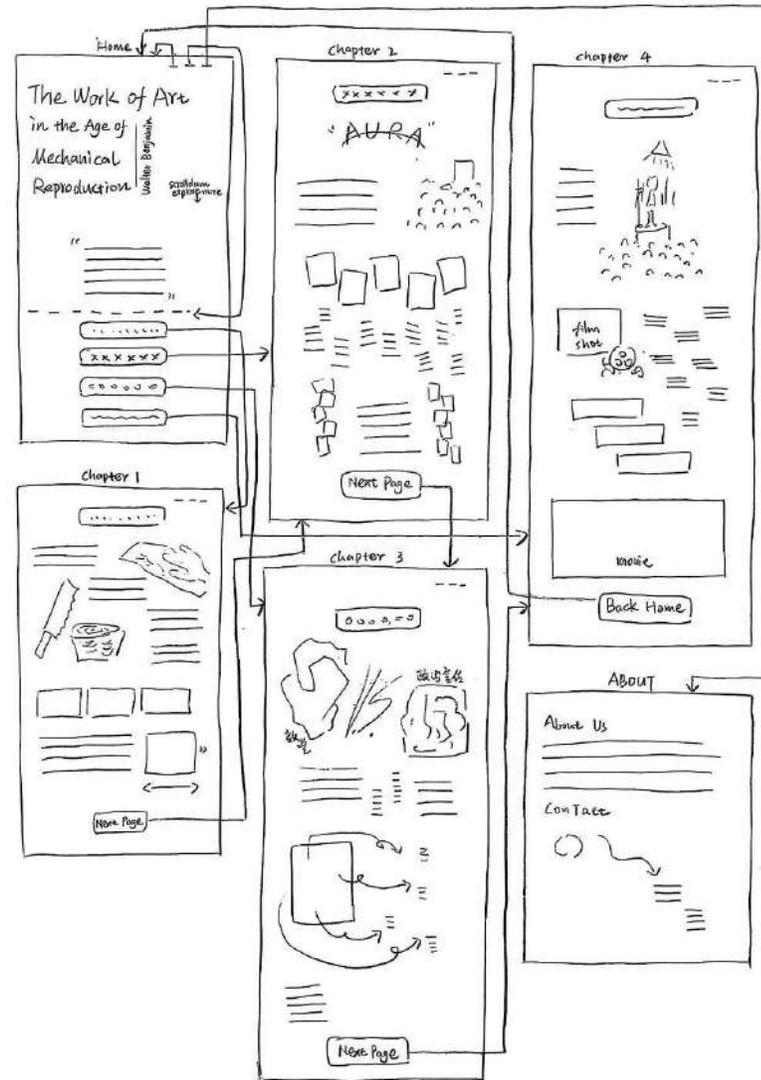
In order to make the content of the web book more easy to understand, I plan to add some pictures as annotations in the article, so that readers can more intuitively understand the core idea of the article. To this end, I not only conducted an in-depth study of the content of the article, but also carried 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

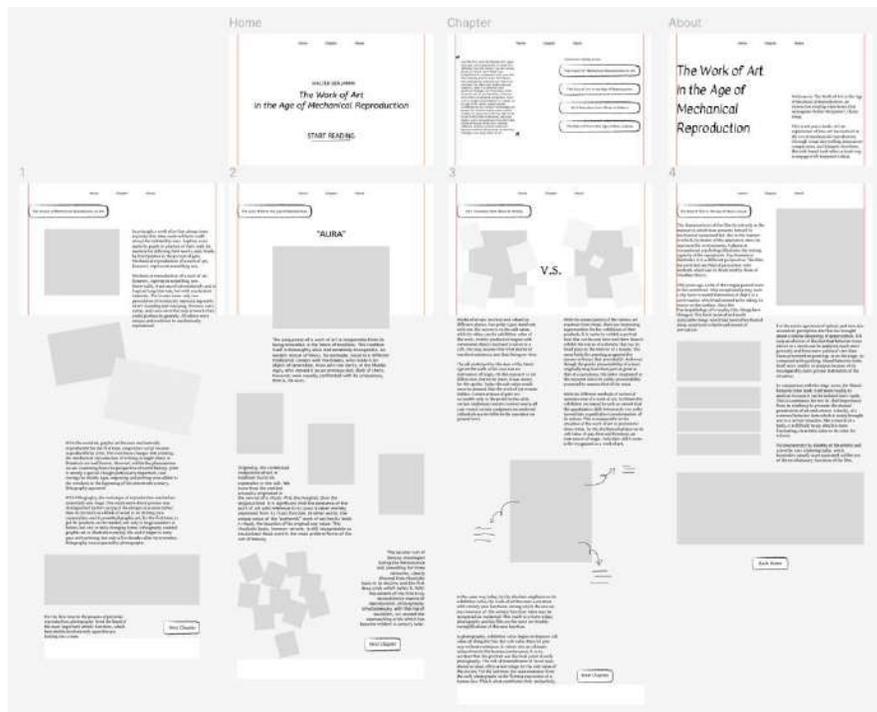


Version 2

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.

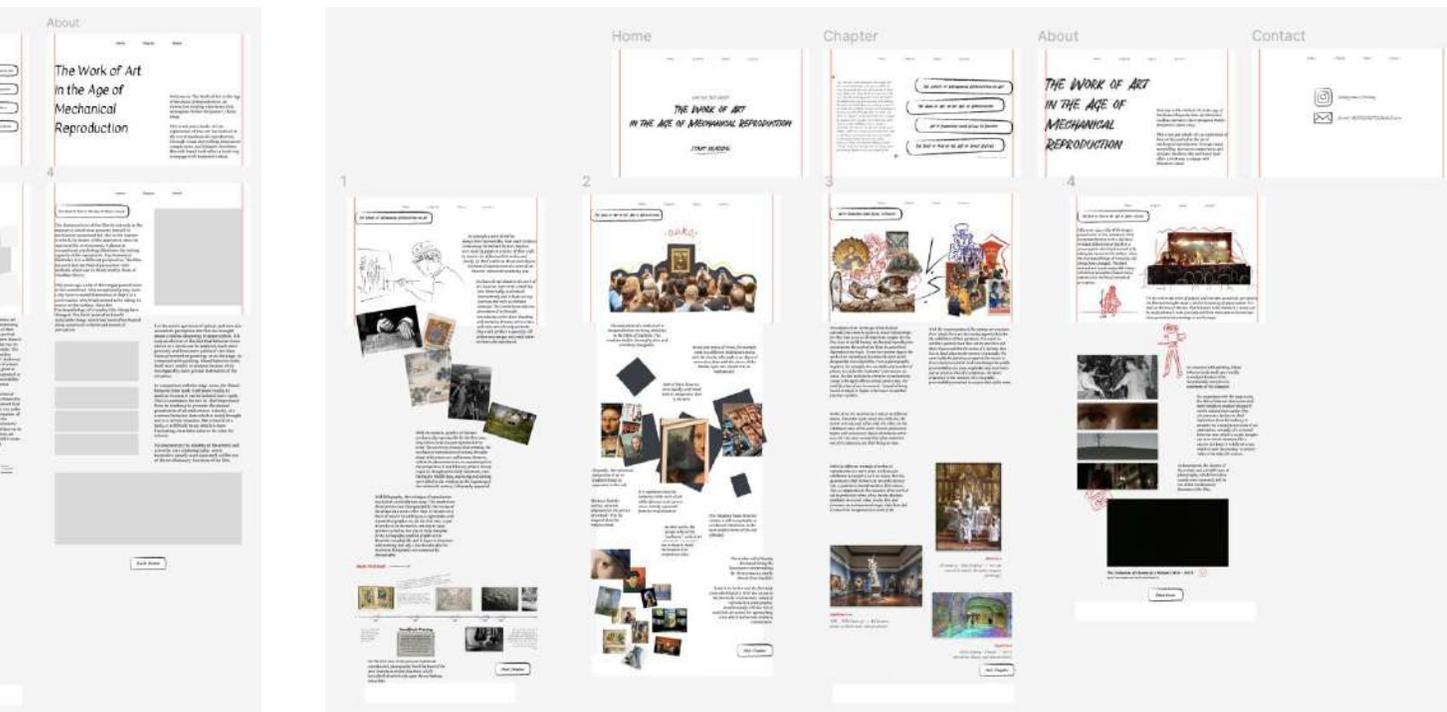
Wireframes



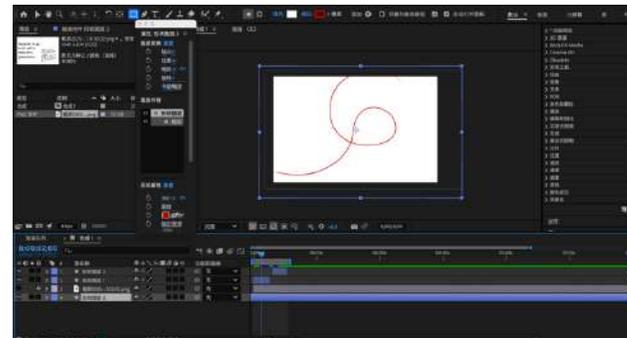
Low-fi version



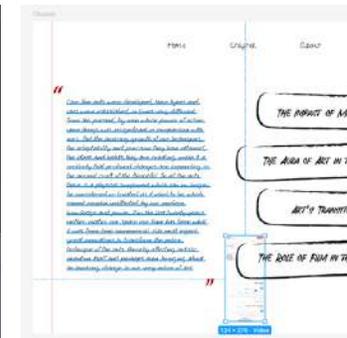
Cover animation making



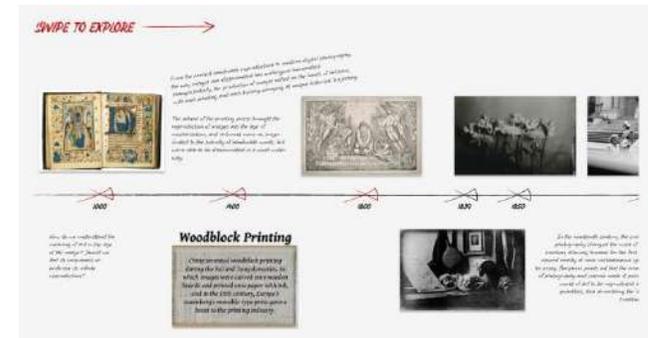
Hi-fi version, version 1



Line animation making

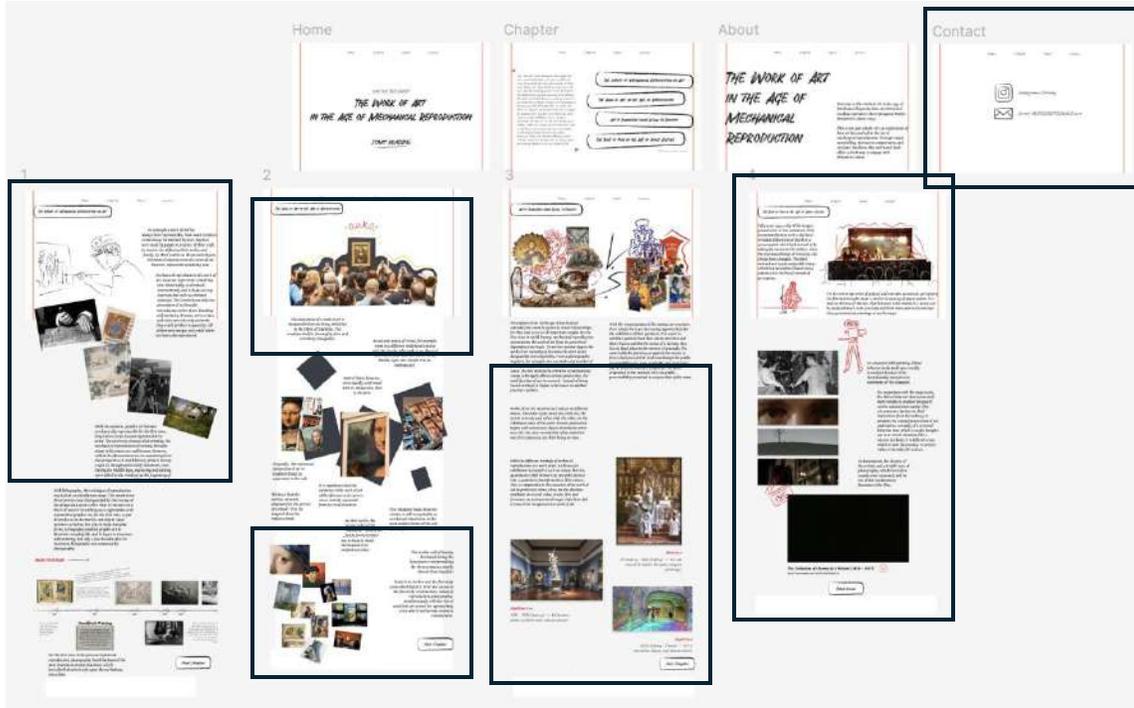


Add the sound of a turning book

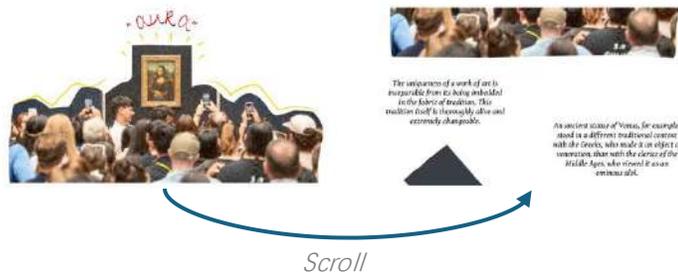


Timeline interaction adding book

Iterations



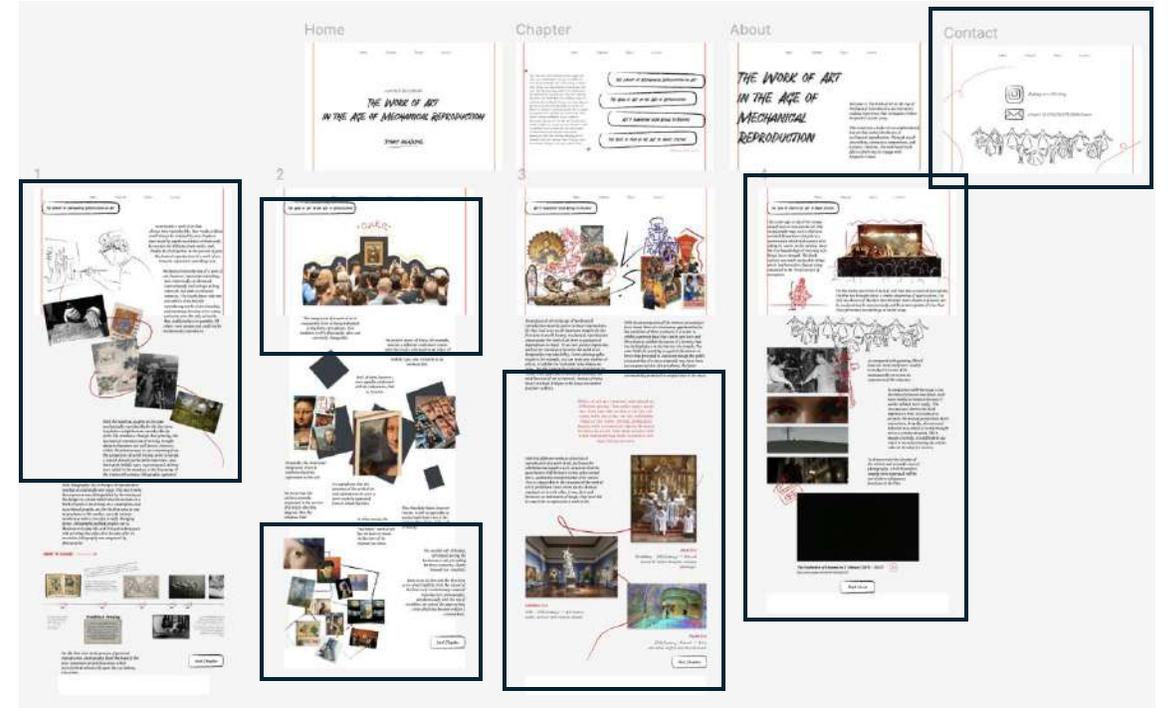
Version 1



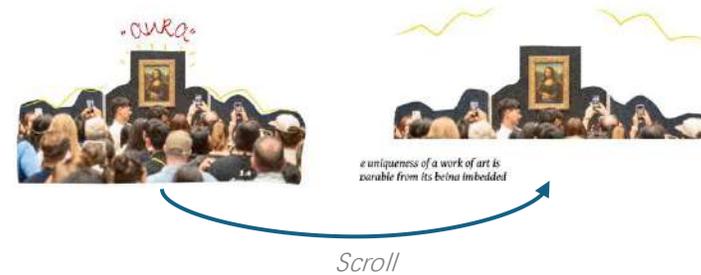
As the page scrolls, the whole thing goes up.



Different version of collage

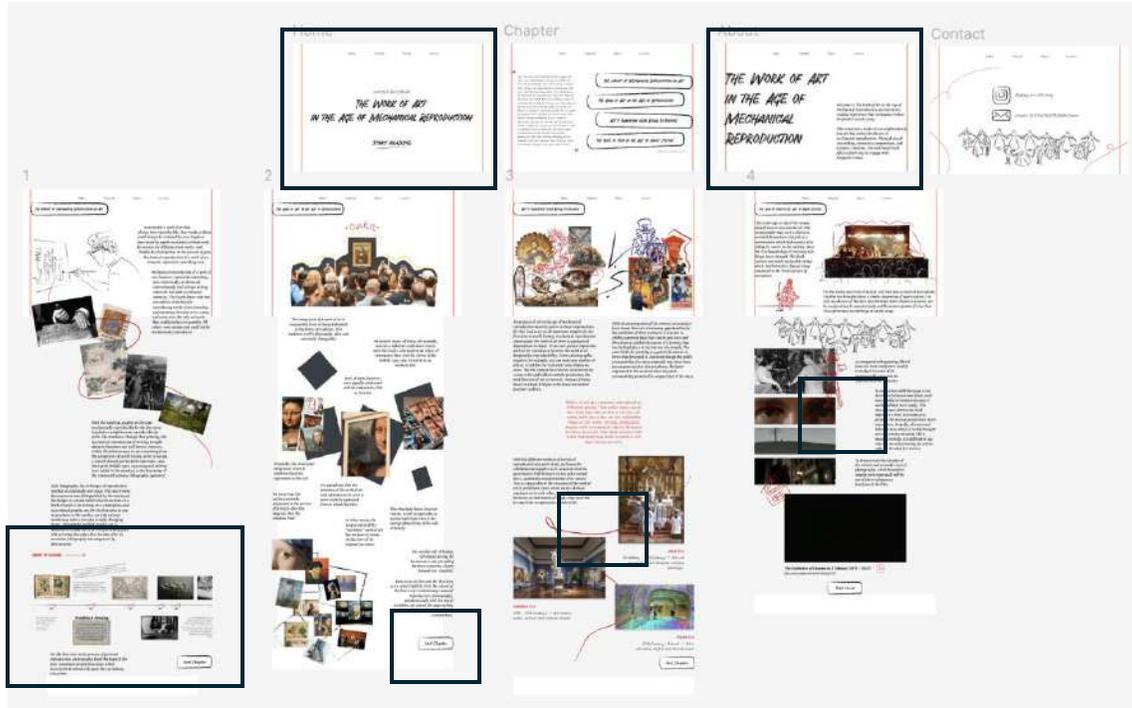


Version 2

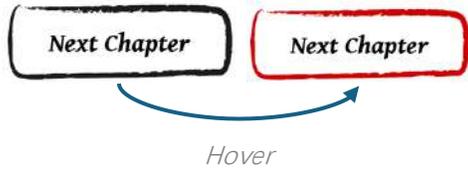


When the page scrolls, the background does not move, and the aura goes up.

Iterations



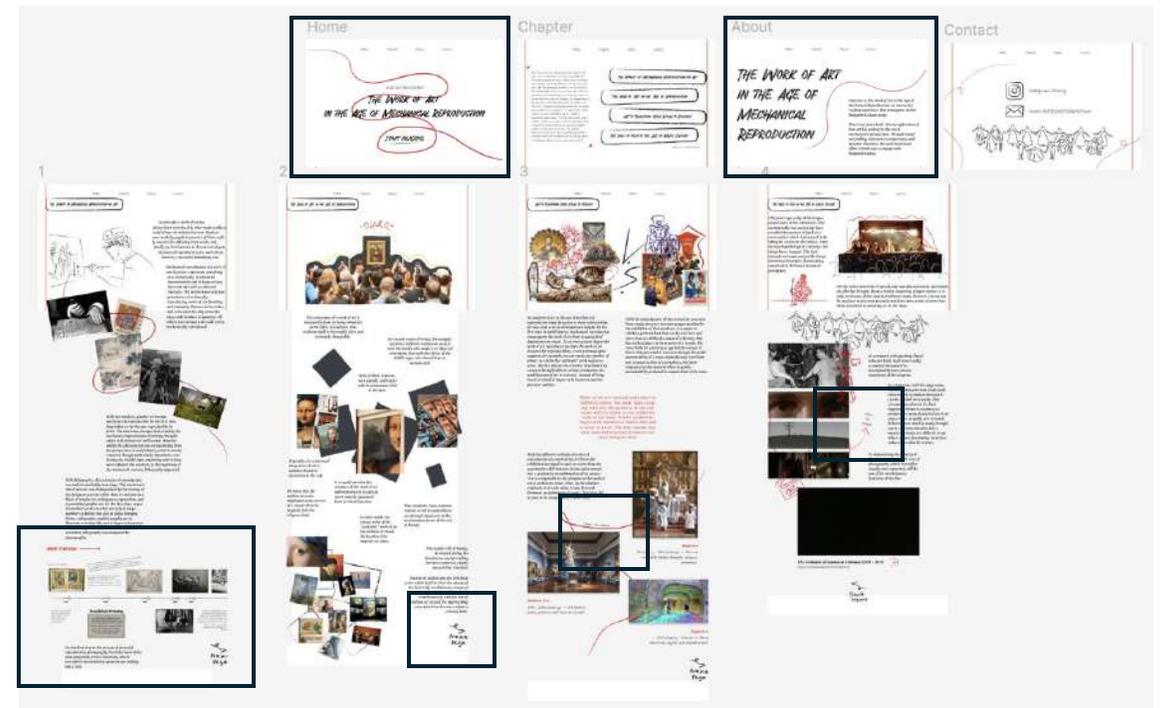
Version 2



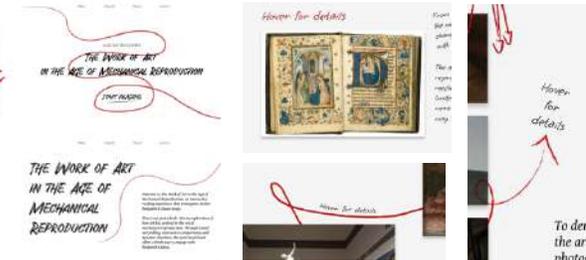
Buttons are a combination of hand-drawn rectangular boxes and text fonts. The whole thing looks a little less relaxed and interesting.



Pictures with hover function



Version 3

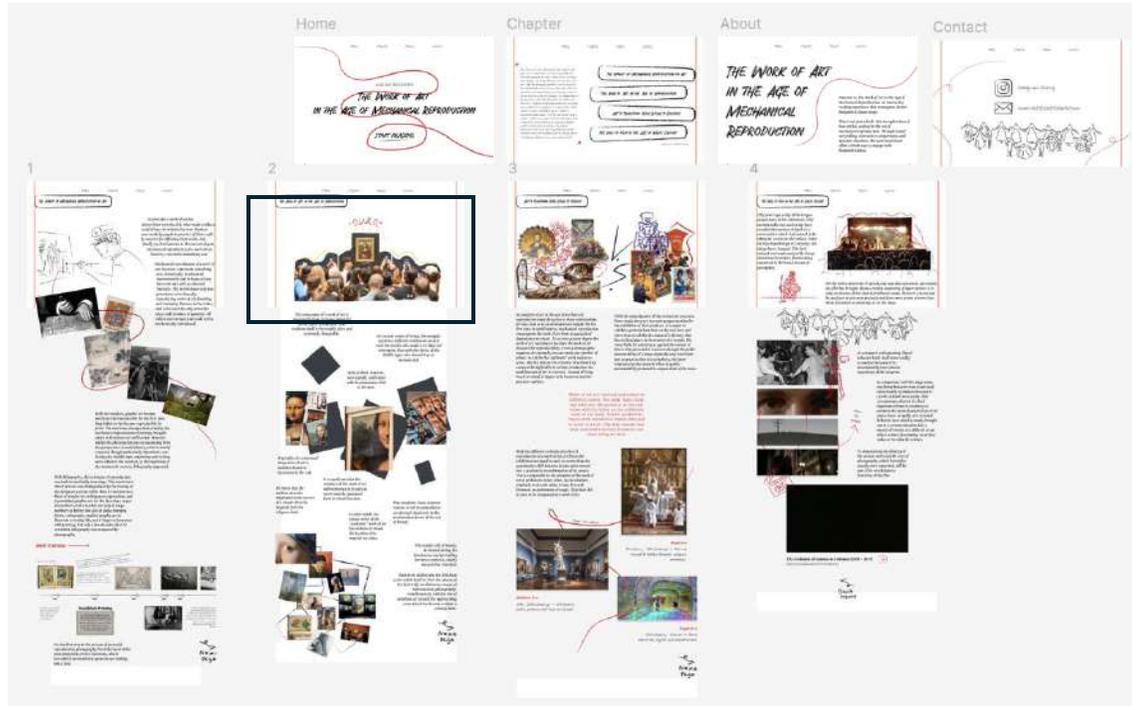


Red line animation added

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.

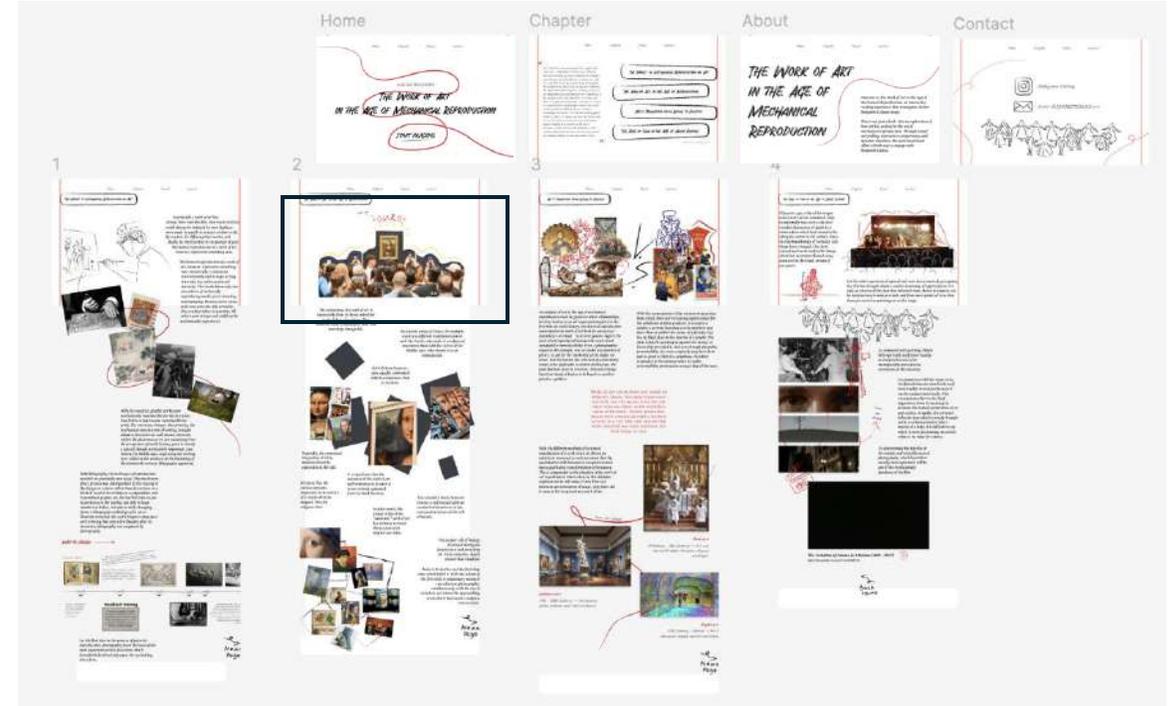
Iterations



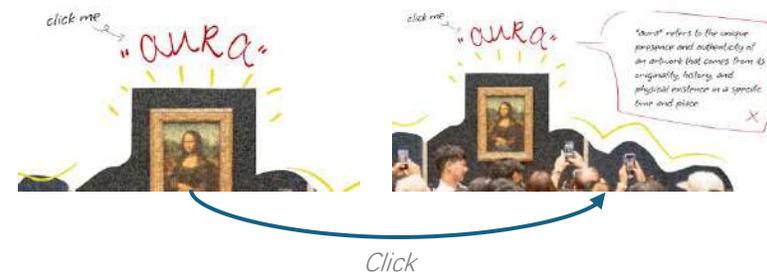
Version 3



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

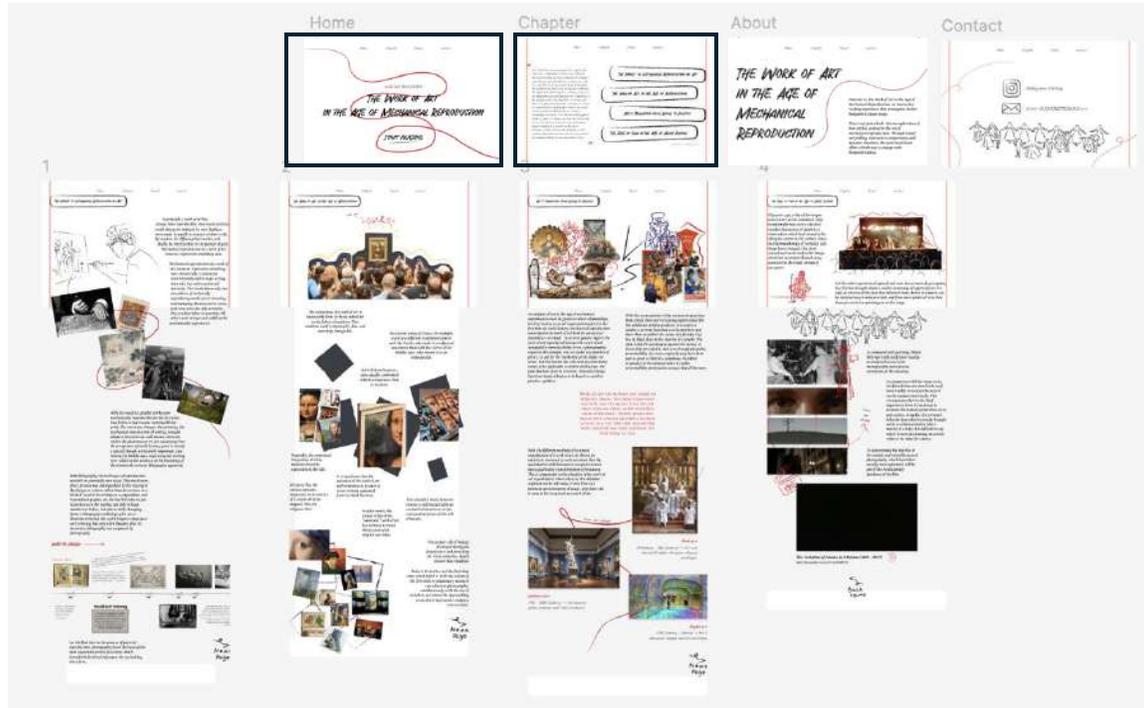


Version 4

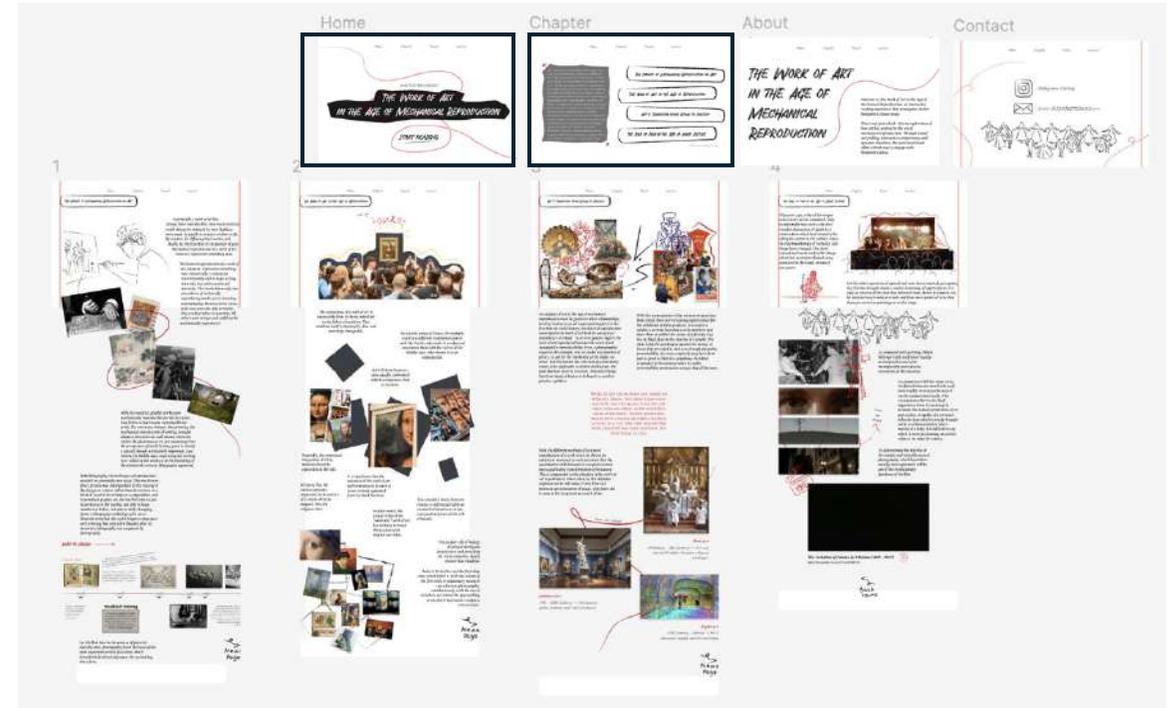


Version 4 adds an interactive feature to aura that allows users to pop up an explanation after clicking on it, making its meaning more intuitive and improving the reading experience.

Iterations



Version 4



Version 5



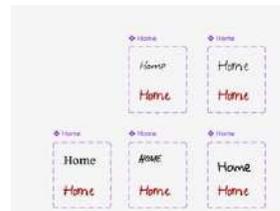
Home page 1



Home page 2



Home page 3



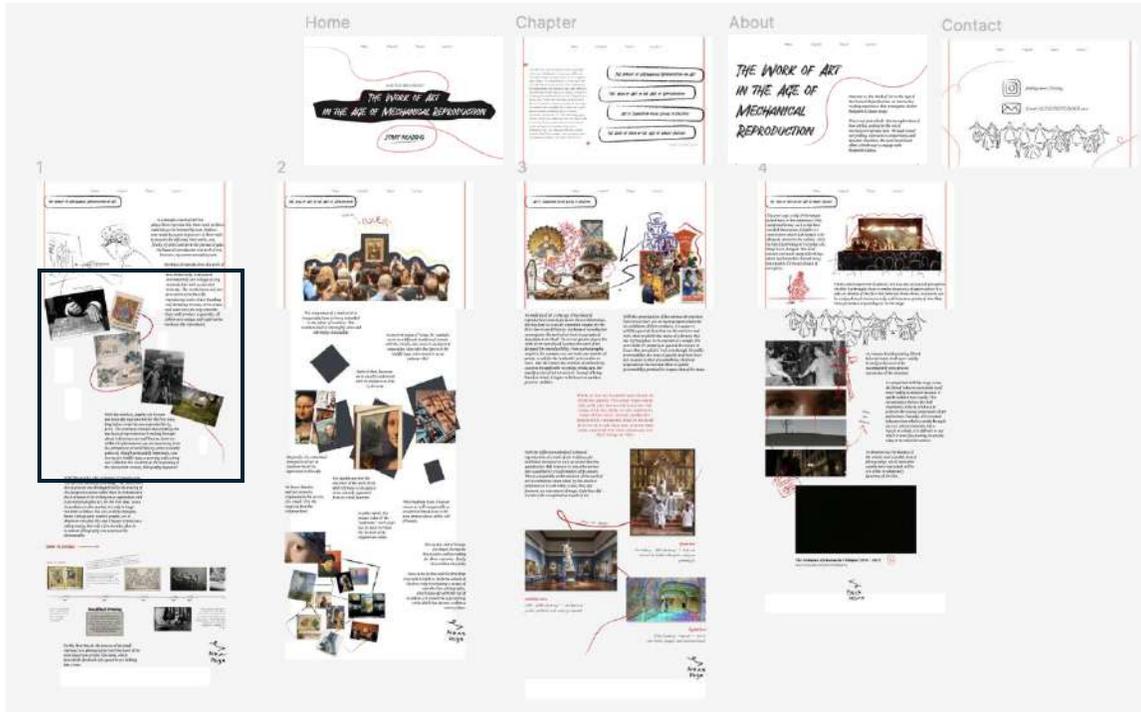
Different font



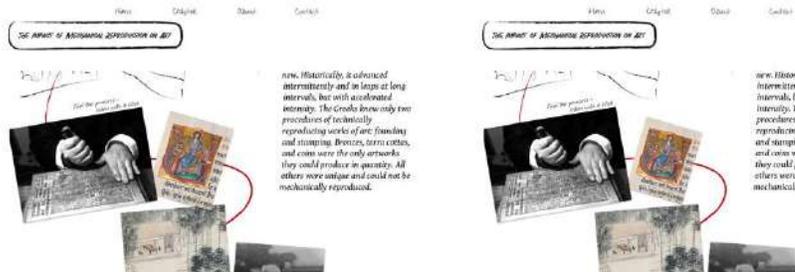
About page

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

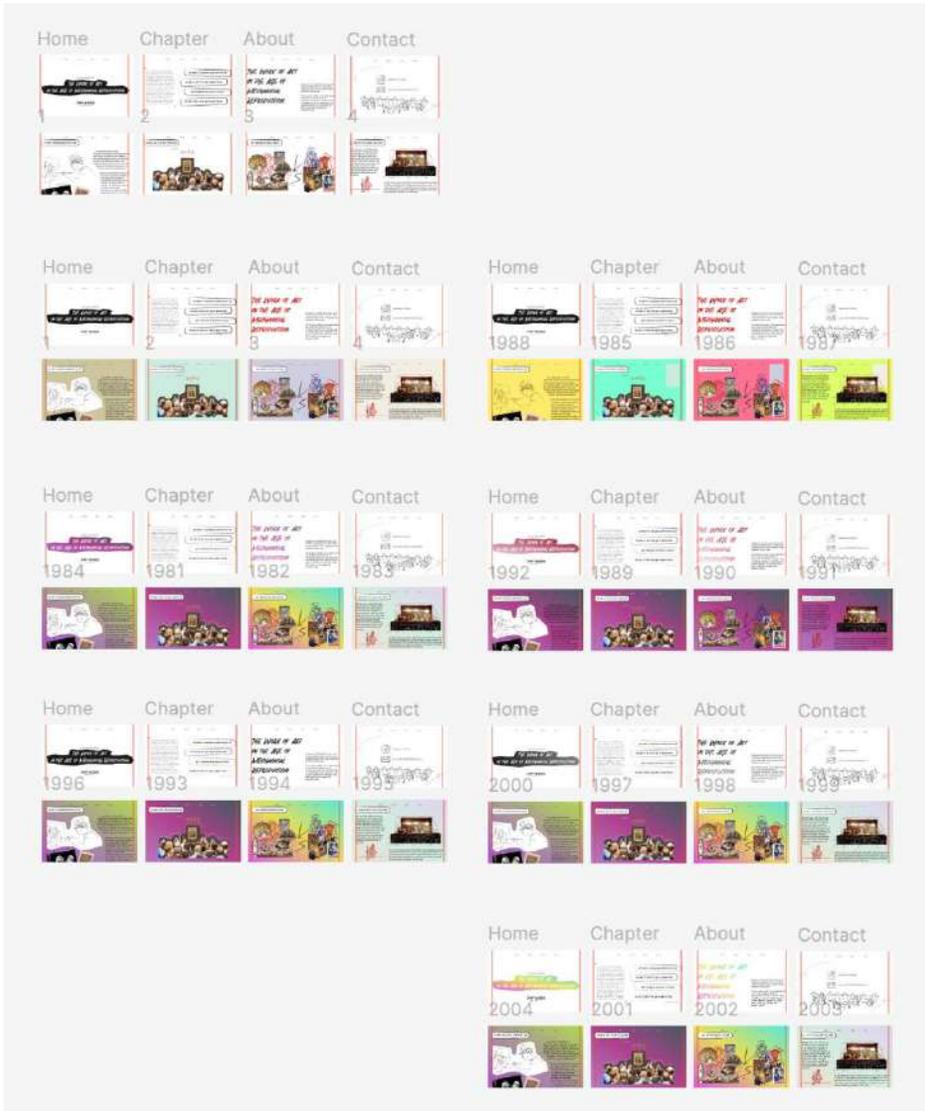
mechanically reproduced art, however, reproduced new. Historically, it was reproduced intermittently at irregular intervals, but with increased intensity. The Greek procedures of technical reproducing works of art: founding and stamping. Bronze, terra cotta, and coins were the only artworks they could produce in quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced.



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**.

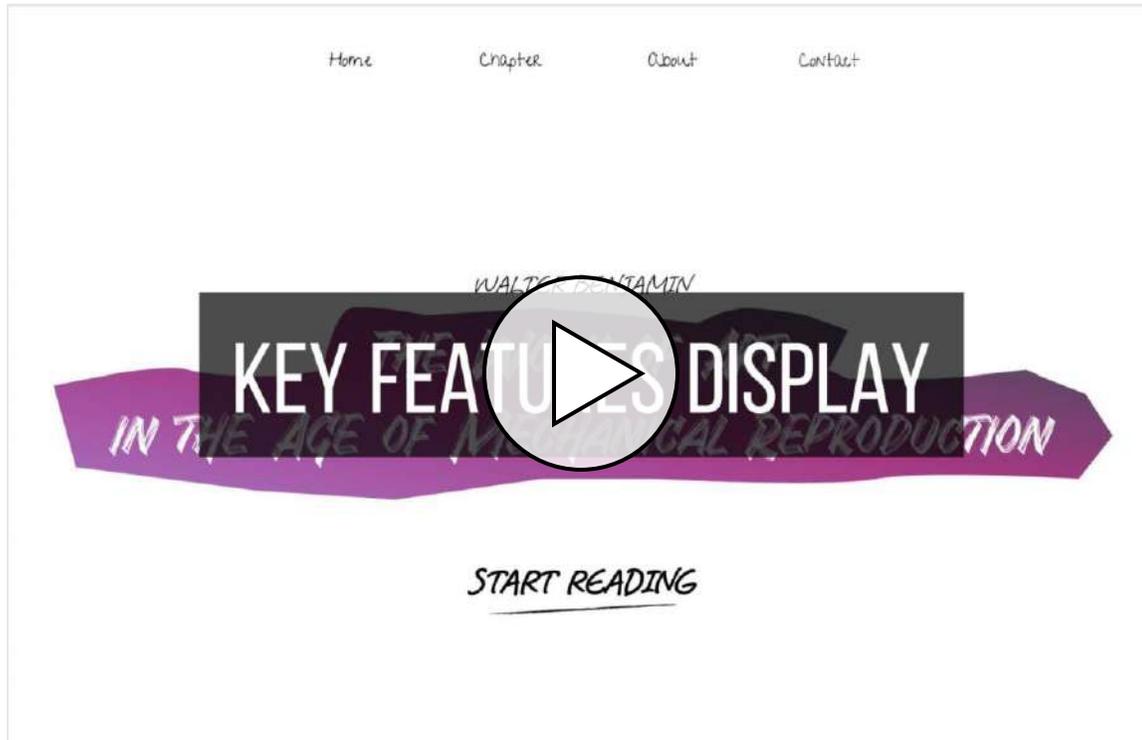
🌈 Why Different Colors for Each Chapter?

- 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**.

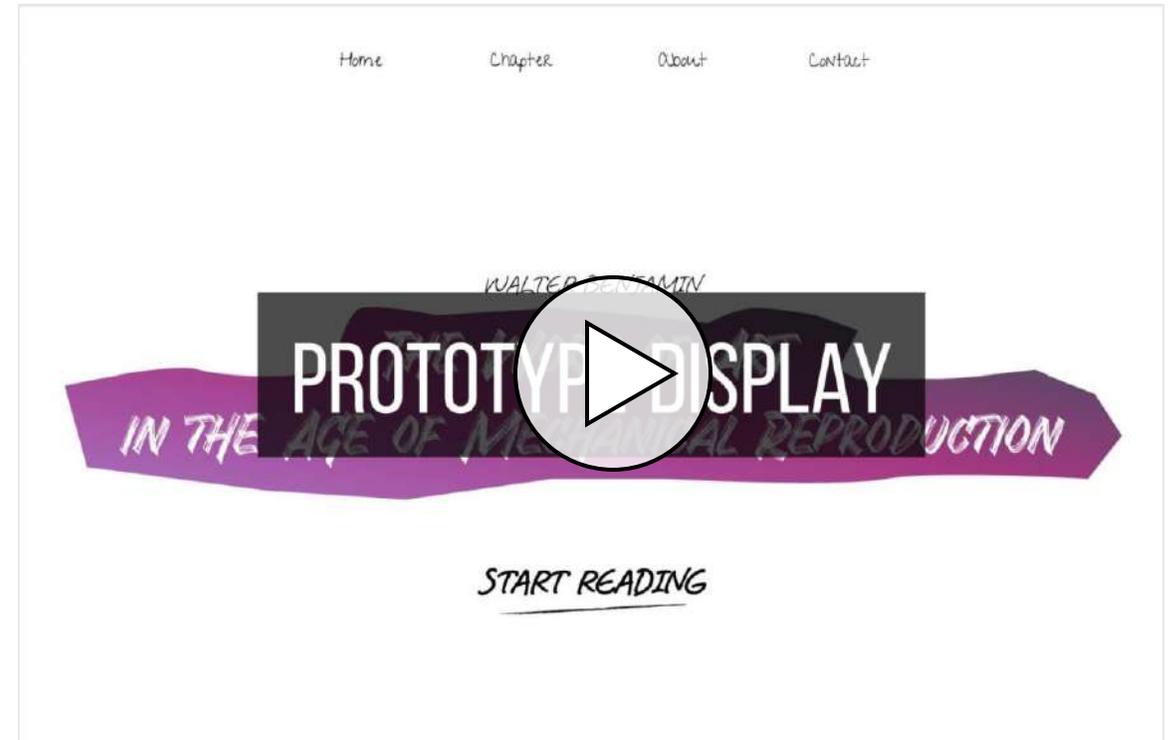
🧠 Maintaining Visual Consistency

- **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

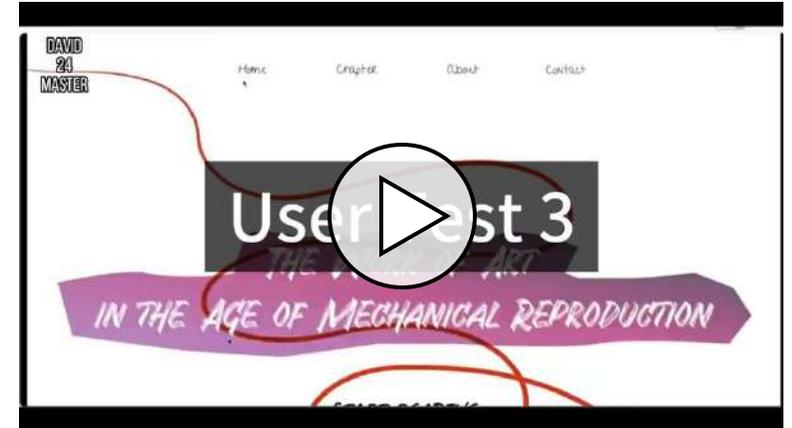
User Feedback & Improvement



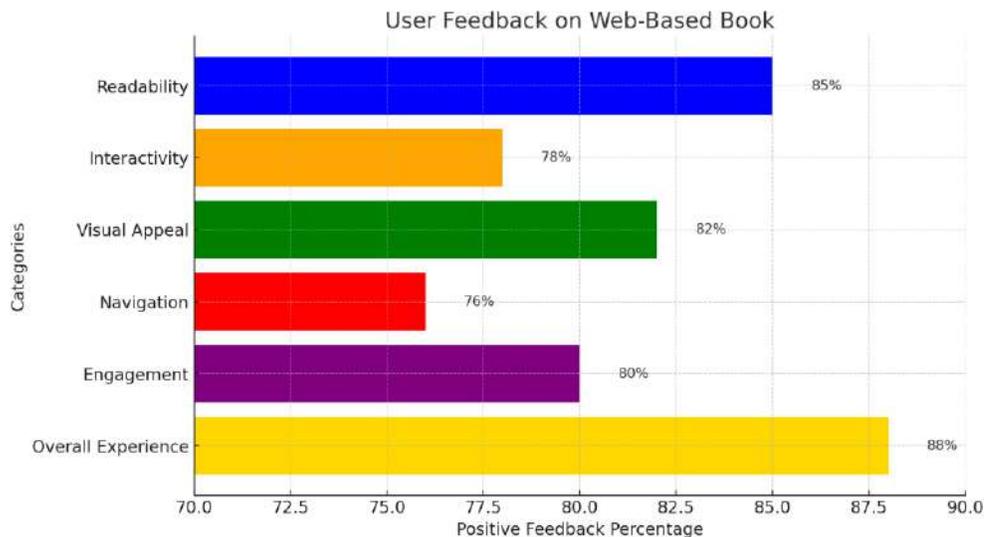
Video, User test 1_Gloria



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

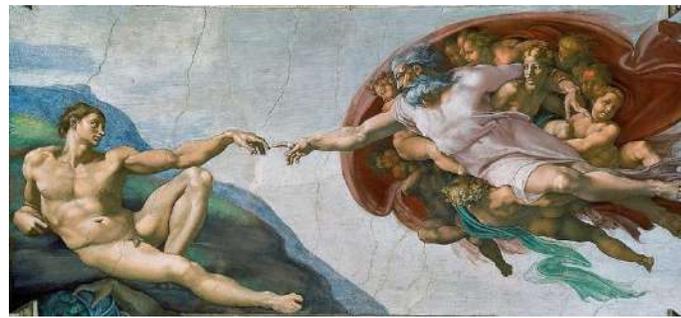


Fig 31, Creazione di Adamo



Fig 32, Creazione di Adamo



Fig 39, museum



Fig 40, private art



Fig 33, poster



Fig 34, poster



Fig 35, poster



Fig 36, poster



Fig 37, poster



Fig 38, poster



Fig 41, digital museum

Images Used in Web



Fig 42, stage



Fig 43, crowd



Fig 44, film



Fig 45, close-up shot

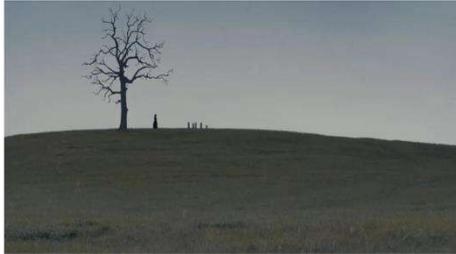


Fig 46, Establishing Shot



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)
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