ShowStop: Connecting Artists with Local Venues

Ryan O'Keefe

Project overview

The product:

ShowStop is an app that aims to connect artists of all backgrounds, styles, and abilities, with small businesses, venues and galleries in need of art decor.

Project duration:

June 2023 - October 2023

Project overview

The problem:

For any artist, finding a place to put their art on exhibit for the purpose of selling said artwork is a great challenge. Yet, the art business is a multi-billion dollar per year industry. After some research, it was learned that the industry in a broad spectrum, tends to exclude many artists who are non-white, non-male, artists experiencing various disablements, and those brand new to the business.

The goal:

The goal of the ShowStop App is to democratize the art exhibition industry by providing a user-friendly platform that connects artists of all backgrounds, abilities, and experience levels with local businesses and venues. This platform aims to break down barriers, foster inclusivity, and create equitable opportunities for artists while enhancing the ambiance and cultural richness of local establishments.

Google

Project overview

My role:

Lead UX designer, Lead UX researcher, Lead Graphic Designer, Animation Design

Responsibilities:

User Research, User Interview, Competitive Audit Research, Graphic Design, Design in Figma, AI Image Prompt, AI Text Content Prompt

Google

Understanding the user

- User research
- Personas
- Problem statements
- User journey maps

Google

User research: summary

For this project I first studied the subject of inclusivity within the art industry. After identifying a gap, I conducted user interviews to gain insight on pain points for both artists and venues alike. A competitive audit was conducted to learn about obstacles involved with finding opportunities online to show artwork.

Google

User research: pain points

1

Pain point

Artists get intimidated when dealing with art galleries because they can feel snobby and unwelcoming.

2

Pain point

Artists don't know who to talk to about getting their work shown at local business that could be potential locations for an exhibit.

3

Pain point

Supporting local artists buy purchasing their artwork can be expensive for new business owners.

4

Pain point

It can be overwhelming for businesses to seek out local artists on social media because the platforms can be distracting from the task at hand.

Google

User research: pain points

5

Pain point

There are a good
number of new artists
that don't know what
information to show to
present themselves
professionally to venue
management.

6

Pain point

Communication can get
scattered amongst
email, social message
platforms, phone calls,
and texts.

7

Pain point

For artists, The logistics
of "knocking on doors" to
get your foot in the door
at a business can be
time consuming, costly,
and can increase feelings
of rejection when
starting out.

Google

Persona: **Sunnie**

Problem statement:

Sunnie is a visual artist new to the business side of art. He has social anxiety, a physical disability, and he needs to get his work into the real word, because he wants to make some extra income and start a career based on his artistic talent.

Sunnie

Age: 29
Education: Associate Degree
Hometown: Denver, CO
Family: Single
Occupation: Customer Service

"Art knows no bounds, and neither should opportunities"!

Goals
- "I want my art in a public space that compliments my style"
- "I want my art shown in place that will help me gain some exposure".
- " I want a chance to make some extra cash by selling my original artwork".

Frustrations
- "I have no idea what venue would be best to have my work shown at'"
- "I don't know who to talk to about getting my artwork shown in a public space".
- "Some venues charge exhibition fees, art galleries can often feel snobby and exclusive".

Sunnie is a talented artist with a passion for creating abstract artwork. He is relatively new to the art scene and faces unique challenges due to his social anxiety and a physical disability, which makes it difficult for him to leave the house frequently. Despite these obstacles, Sunnie is determined to find ways to showcase his artwork in public spaces, as he believes it holds the key to making extra income and building a fulfilling career based on his talent.

Google

Persona: **Alex**

Problem statement:

Sunnie is a new cafe owner who leases business space located within an auto repair shop, who needs some wall art that fits her budget and represents local artists, because the cafe space needs to have it's own identity apart from the repair shop.

"Crafting a cozy corner for the community".

Goals

- "Create a pleasant environment for customers"
- "Give local artists a place to show and sell their artwork while earning a small commission on sales".

Frustrations

- "I'm spending too much time across multiple social media platforms trying to find artwork".
- "Artists can be inconsistent presenting their work and info".
- "Communication with artists has been challenging because there is no single channel of communication that multiple artists are using".
- "I want to support local artists, but can't afford to buy their art"

Alex

Age: 36
Education: High School
Hometown: Huntington Beach, CA
Family: Single Mother
Occupation: Cafe Owner

Alex, a passionate entrepreneur, recently opened a cozy cafe. She has a strong desire to create a unique atmosphere that distinguishes her cafe from a neighboring repair shop, Alex recognizes the importance of ambiance. Mindful of her budget, she seeks cost-effective yet artistically appealing solutions to decorate the cafe walls. Additionally, Alex wants to support local artists, aiming to showcase their talent within the community but does not know where to find these individuals.

Google

Competitive audit

The competitive audit revealed that there are options for artist to sell artwork online, however the only one of the websites that were researched provided options to physically get artwork shown. One of the websites had a nice way of displaying artists thumbnails and profile images. Match .com was included as an indirect competitor because of their matchmaking functionality which is being repurposed within the ShowStop project.

Click to view the full competitive audit and audit report

Google

Ideation

These are paper wireframes that show the core screens of the main user flow for my app. After the competitive audit and user interviews, I chose to design this app with the function as a dating app, but applied to the transaction of matching an artist to a venue.

Starting the design

- Digital wireframes
- Low-fidelity prototype
- Usability studies

Google
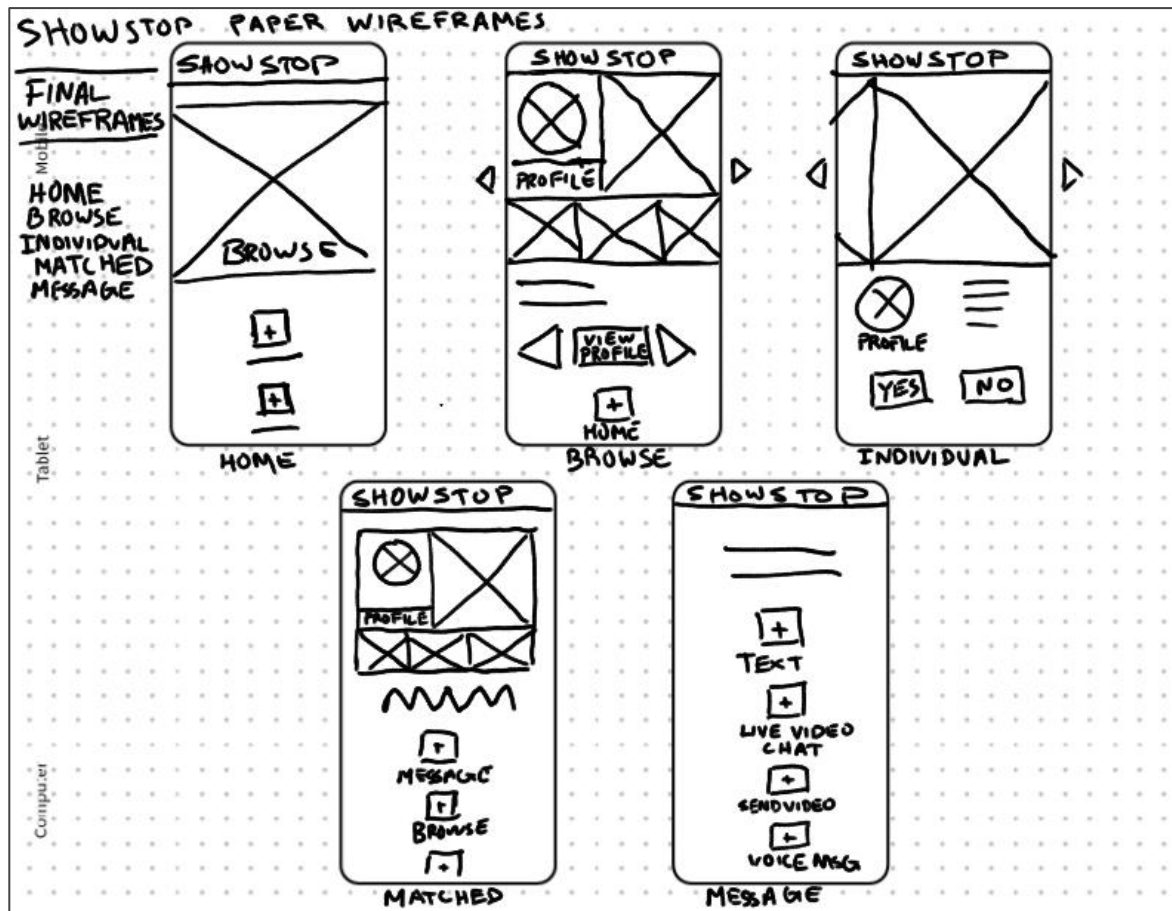
Digital wireframes

After the ideation process, I designed digital wireframes that would group artists' and venues' information in one place at the top of a profile page. An option to "view profile" was included on this page, with function of matching available on the next screen.

Here is where users have their profile image, thumbnail images, and relevant information shown, this helps artist and venue owners make a quick and informed decision about a possible partnership.
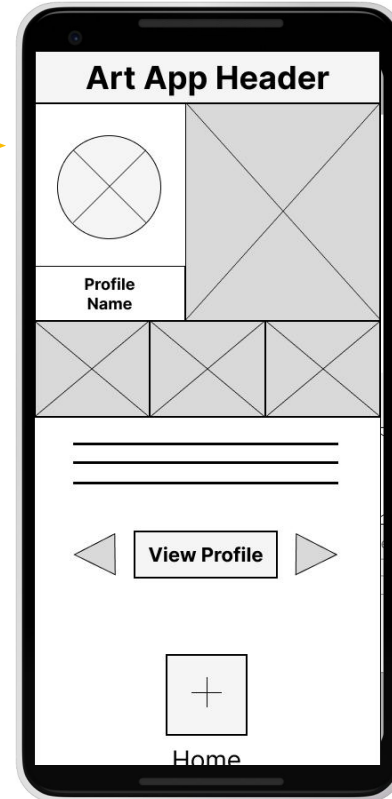
Arrows that move profiles forward and back quickly, as well as a way to view more information about an artist or venue.

Art App Header

Profile
Name

View Profile

+

Home

Low-fidelity prototype

This low-fidelity prototype shows the flow of what an artist would see when seeking to match with a potential venue to showcase their artwork. Three representations of venue profile were created to provide a sense of choice for the user.

View ShowStop wireframe prototype
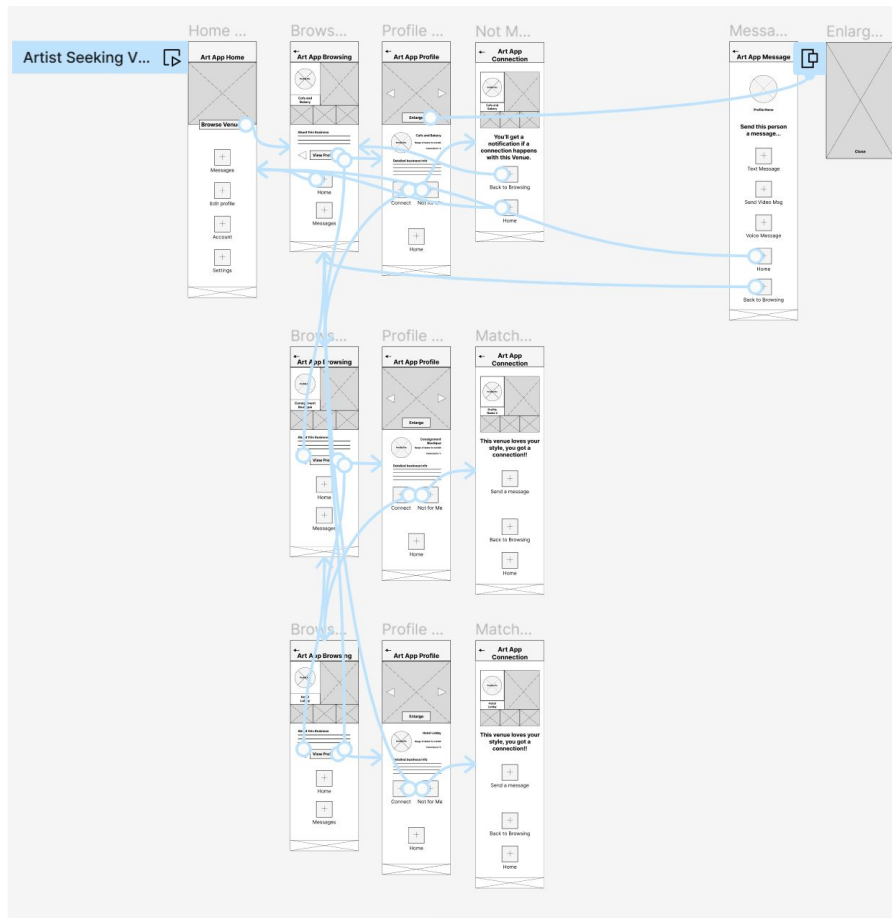
Usability study: parameters

Study type:

Moderated usability study

Location:

Olympia WA and Remotely

Participants:

7 participants

Length:

15 minutes

Google

Usability study: findings

These were the main findings uncovered by the usability study:

1

Profile Information

Users want to be able to see artists' information displayed on one screen instead of across more multiple screens.

2

Buttons

Users were confused with some button placement and functionality, sometimes buttons did not perform as expected.

3

Differentiate

Users did not get a sense of completion in the main flow because the end screen looked too similar to the previous screen.
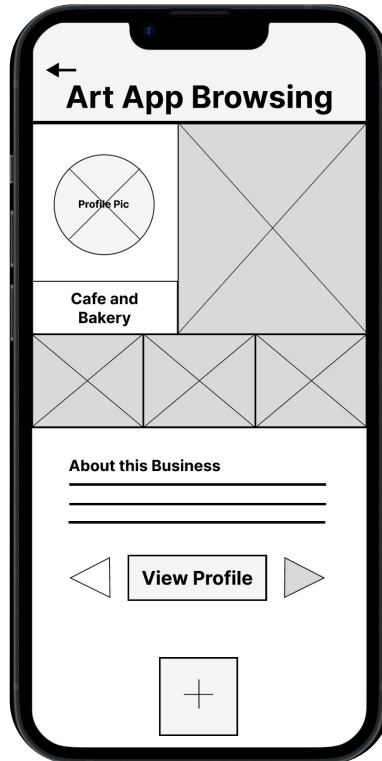
Google

Refining the design

- Mockups
- High-fidelity prototype
- Accessibility

Google

Mockups

Based on the insights from the usability studies, the ability to match or to move onto the next profile all on one screen made more sense for users. Additionally, all of the information that user found helpful is found on this same page.

Art App Browsing

Profile Pic

Cafe and Bakery

About this Business

View Profile

9:41

Show STOP

Cascadia Cafe & Pastries

Cafe & Bakery

Exhibit Space:
1 wall: 14 ft with 4 ft. vertical space

Commission 20%
Available October 2023
Located Seattle, WA

NO

Show

Rewind   Home   Inbox   Profile

Washington. At our cafe, we take pride in

Google
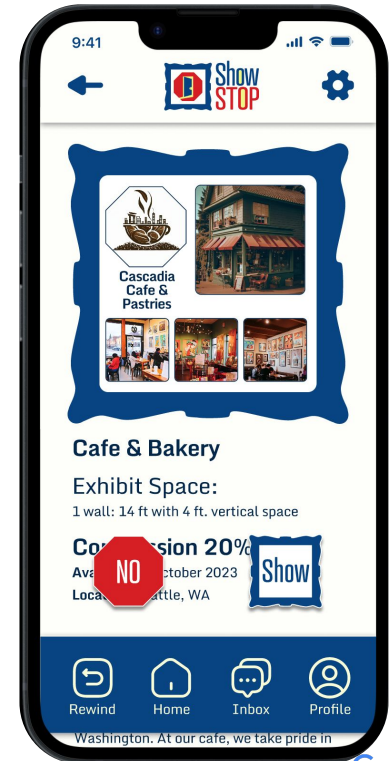
Mockups

After user feedback, button layout was simplified to an action bar located at the bottom of the screen, this bar stays fixed 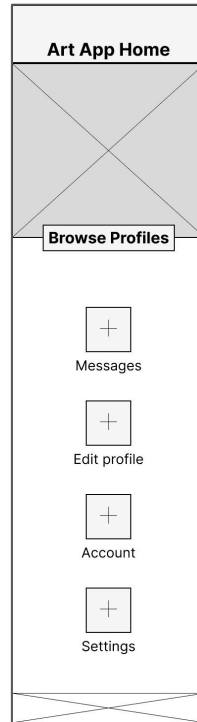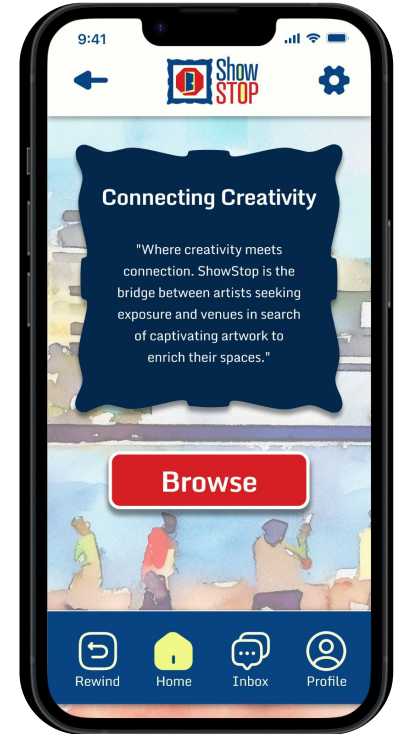in place when the user scrolls so that screens like home, settings, and profile are always accessible without confusing the flow.

Google
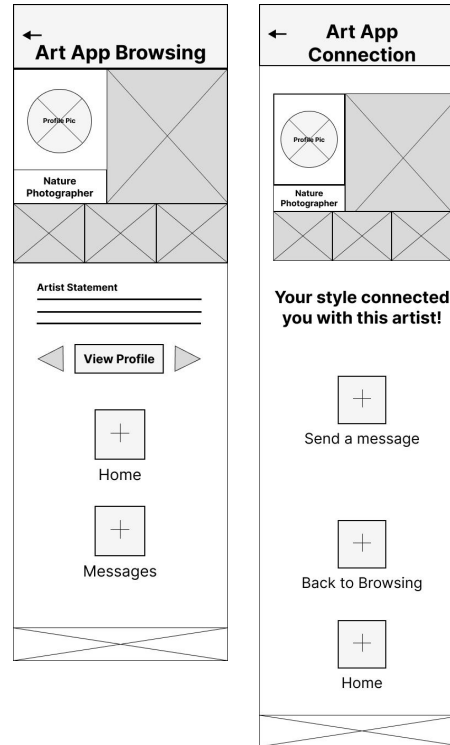
Mockups

The wireframe prototype screens shown were found to be too similar by some users. The layout was changed in the mockups to help distinguish the screens.

Art App Browsing

Profile Pic

Nature Photographer

Artist Statement

◄ View Profile ►

+
Home

+
Messages

Art App Connection

Profile Pic

Nature Photographer

Your style connected you with this artist!

+
Send a message

+
Back to Browsing

+
Home

9:41

Show STOP

It's a ShowStop with...

Hannah Ngyuen

Hannah Ngyuen

Rewind   Home   Inbox   Profile

show their work in your

Google

Mockups

Google
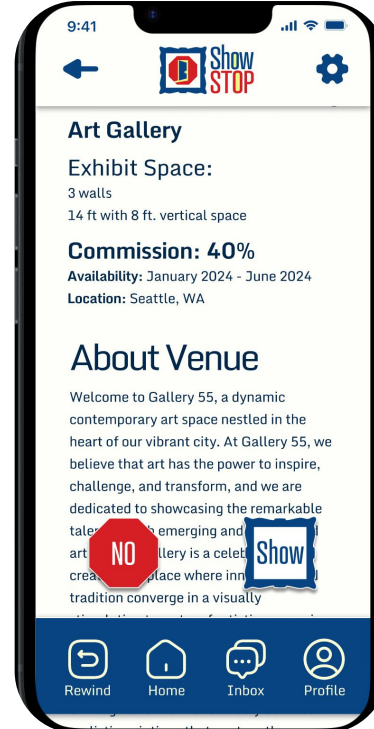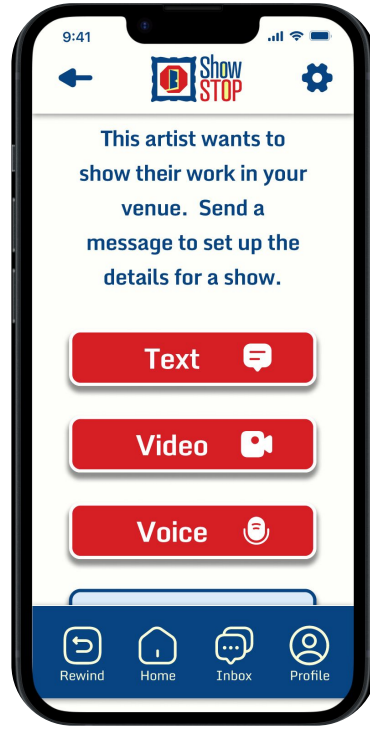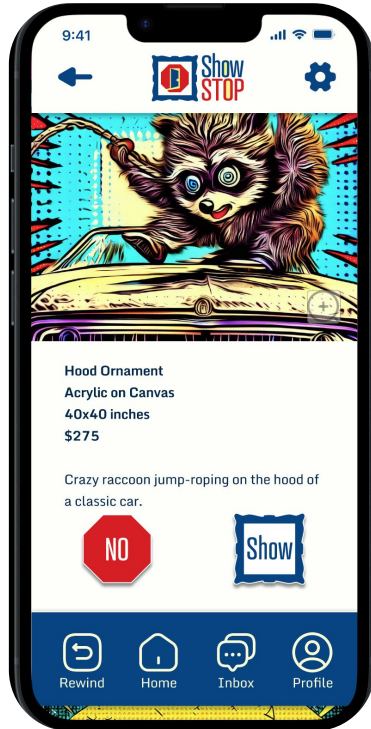
High-fidelity prototype

There are two distinct user groups that this app will serve, the one shown here is for artists seeking venues. The flow simulates the ability to "show" with a venue, or move to the next profile. An animation happens if there is a mutual match between artist and venue, with the option to send a message.
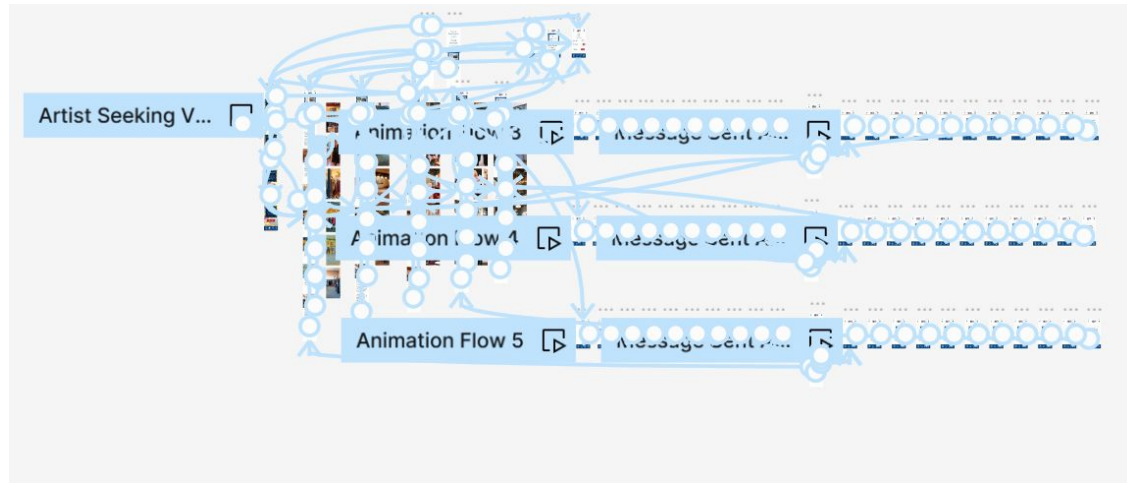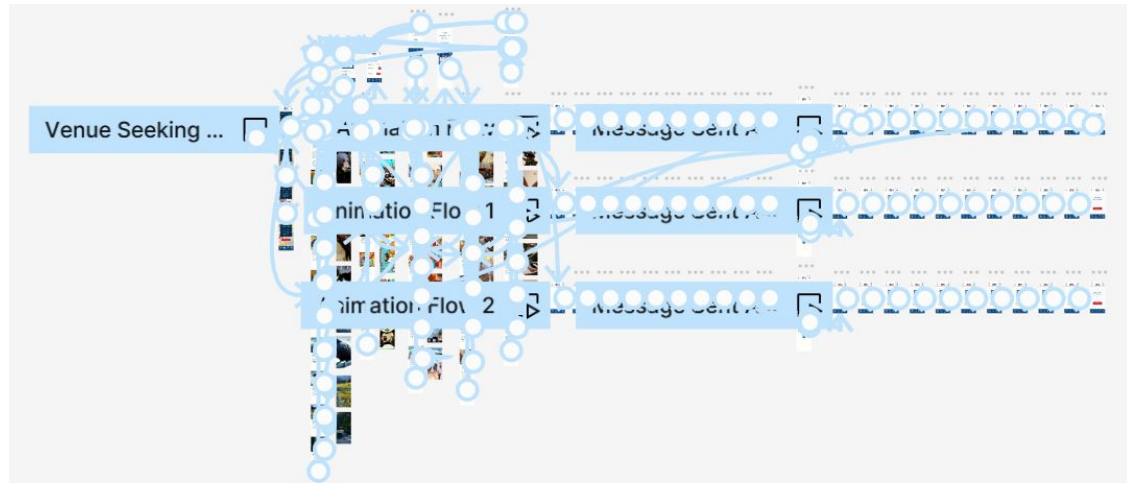

Click here to experience the prototype as if you were an artist seeking a venue to show your work at.

Google

High-fidelity prototype

Here is the flow that venue owner or venue manager would use to find an artist. It works the same as the last flow shown, with the goal of creating a mutual match.

Click here to experience the prototype as if you were a venue seeking an artist to exhibit.

Accessibility considerations

1

The smallest font size is 16pt for body content. Users will still have the option to increase the body font size in the settings menu.

2

In the settings menu, animations can be turned on or off for those sensitive to movement, or users with older devices.

3

A high contrast color scheme is used for text content.

Google

Responsive Design

- Information architecture
- Responsive design

Google

Sitemap

This shows the sitemap for ShowStop's responsive website. It has pages to connect users developer, as well as and "about us" which was not needed in the app. All other pages provide the same function as the app. When the site goes live, it will have as many profile pages as needed.
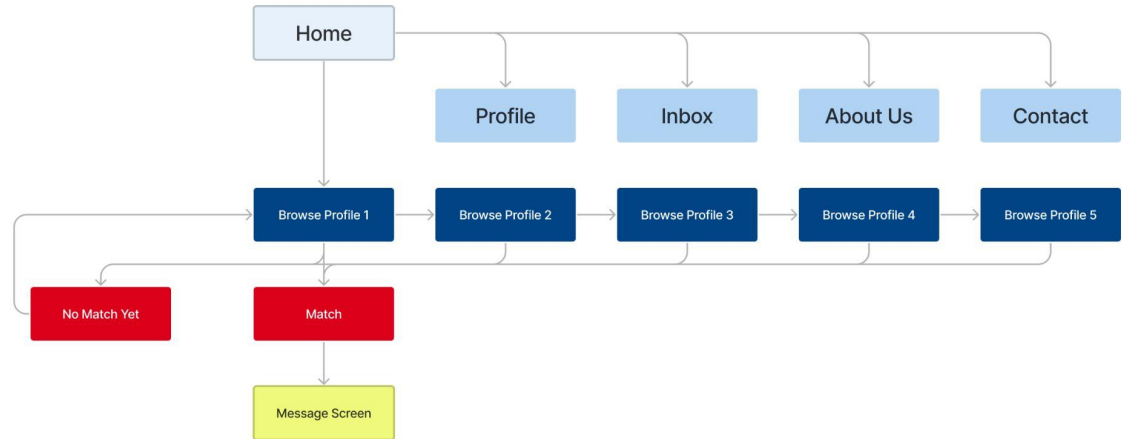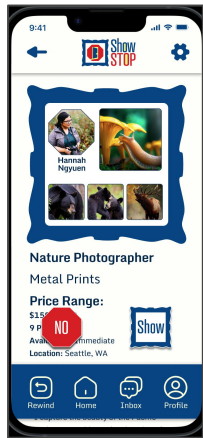
Responsive designs

The designs for screen size variation included mobile, tablet, and desktop. I made sure to keep the look and functionality of the different devices the same.
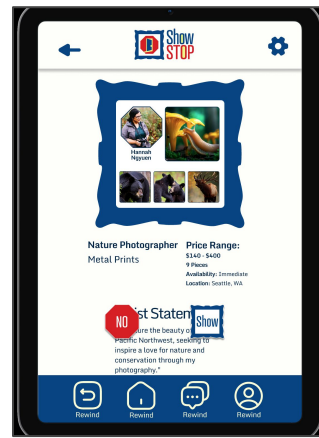
Mobile

Tablet

Google
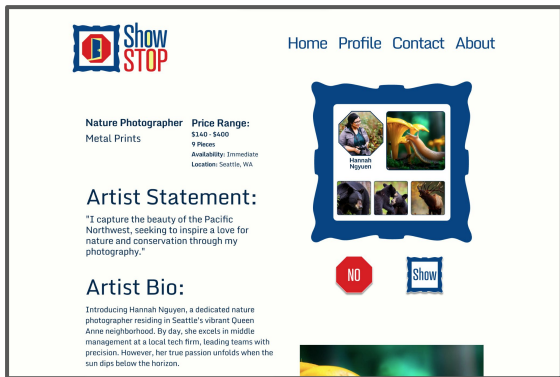
Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Google

Takeaways

Impact:

Artist shared that this app can help them gain exposure, opens doors for all abilities and experience levels, and help generate income. Venue owners shared that the app can help with business growth by adding a potential revenue source, increase community engagement, and enhance ambiance of their brick and mortar locations. One artist was quoted "I need this in my life" and a business owner was quoted that "This could change things for my walls"!

What I learned:

I learned that this is an app that I plan on making a reality. The more I did research and talked to the few who were willing to chat with me, the more I saw value in what I am trying to solve.

Google

Next steps

1

Conduct a second usability study on the high-fidelity mockups.

2

Perform additional user interviews to uncover pain points not yet discovered.

3

Further refine the user flow and experience.

Google

Let's connect!

Thank you for taking time to review my work on the ShowStop app.

Email: ryan@artworksbyokeefe.com

Google