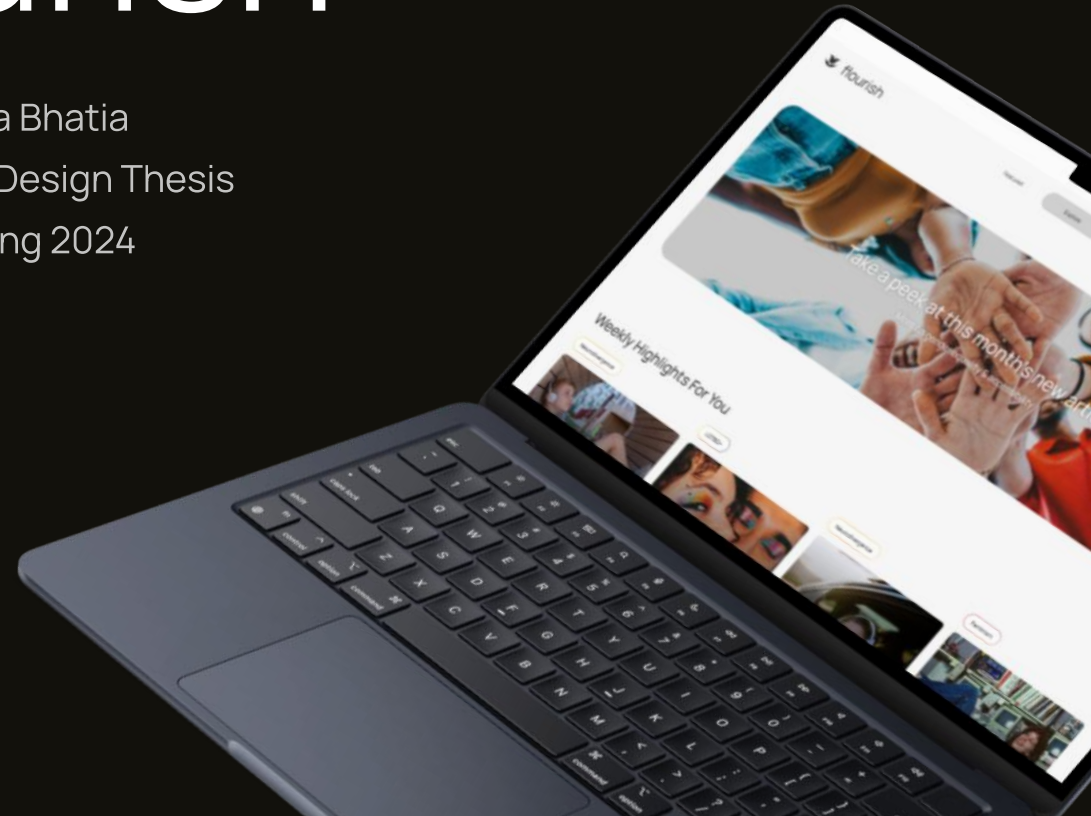




flourish

Diya Bhatia
Industrial Design Thesis
Spring 2024





My Role

Solo Project

- UX Researcher
- User Tester
- UI/UX Designer
- Visual Designer

Deliverables

- Market Analysis
- User Research
- User Testing
- Low-Fidelity Wireframes
- High-Fidelity Prototype

Specifics

Duration: 12 weeks

Tools:

- Figma
- Illustrator
- ChatGPT

Mentors

- Dr. Yoon Choi
- Dr. Isabel Prochner
- Abby Jetmundsen

Background

I began this project under the guidance of Dr. Isabel Prochner, whose research and practice focus on socially and community-engaged industrial design. Through her work, she has found that many people tend to consult only the world around them during the research stage, thereby excluding a large subset of potential users from using or experiencing their designs.

The Problem

The world is constantly shifting and changing, yet designers are hesitant to grow with it. As one of the initial developers on a project, designers have the opportunity to sway the project to encompass a wider set of users.

My Proposed Solution

Create a platform that encourages creatives to design with a more diverse set of users in mind.

Project Timeline: W1-6

RESEARCH

PROTOYPING

WEEK 1
29 Jan

WEEK 2
05 Feb

WEEK 3
12 Feb

WEEK 4
19 Feb

WEEK 5
26 Feb

WEEK 6
11 Mar

Primilinary Research

Background, Problem Statement, Design Principles



UX

Surveys, User Personas, Empathy Maps, Competitive Analysis, User Flows

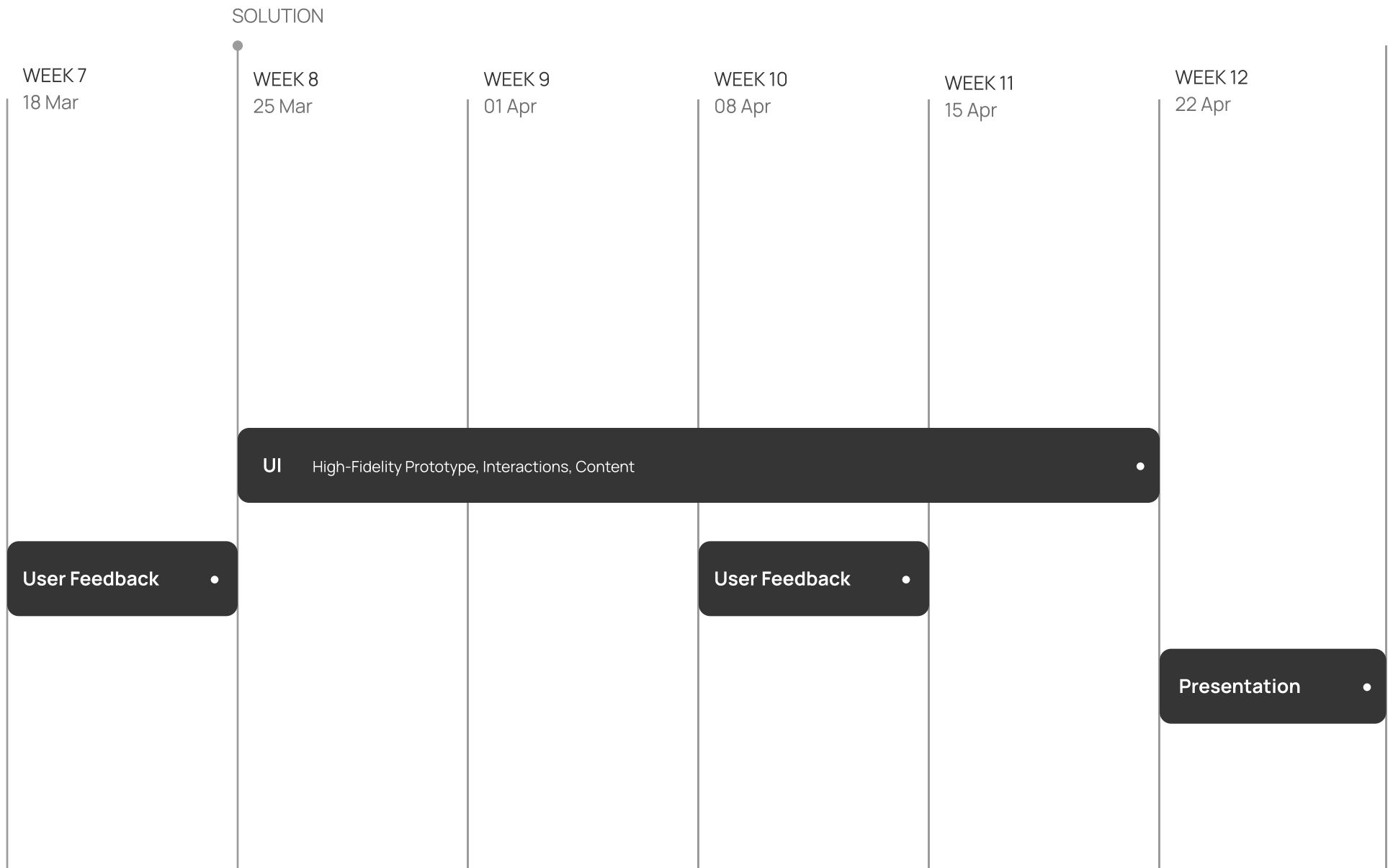


UI

Mood Boards, Wireframing, Low-Fidelity Prototype



Project Timeline: W7-12



01		RESEARCH
	Survey	07
	User Personas	09
	Empathy Maps	11
	Competitive Analysis	13
02		PROTOYPING
	Wireframes	16
	Low-Fidelity Prototype	17
	User Testing	18
	Design System	19
03		SOLUTION
	Final Prototype	22
	Features	26
	Reflection	28
	Citations	29

PART 01

Research

This stage was critical for understanding my user group and their needs. First, I conducted a survey to gather general feedback on how users currently perceive the product.

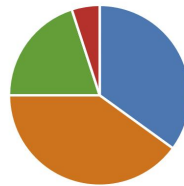
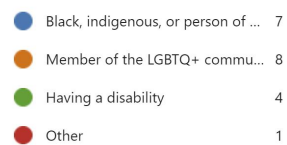
Next, I aimed to analyze the users' pain points, goals, and feelings. To achieve this, I created two user personas to gain a deeper understanding of the two user groups.

Finally, during the research stage of the project, I conducted a competitive analysis of current market solutions for designers.

I conducted a survey across Virginia Tech's School of Design* to gain some more insight about how designers think, what they need, and what they're looking for. These are some of the questions I asked:

5. Do you identify as any of the following? Select as many or few as you are comfortable with.

[More Details](#)



8. When I create design prompts or solutions:

[More Details](#)

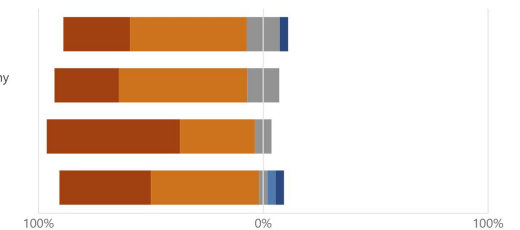
Always Sometimes 50/50 Rarely Never

I include gender neutrality

I make sure that people of all ages will understand my design

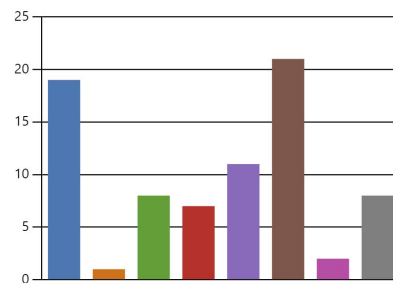
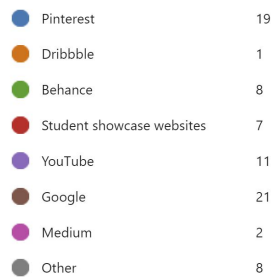
I think of how people with disabilities experience my design

I make sure that I create options for people of all races



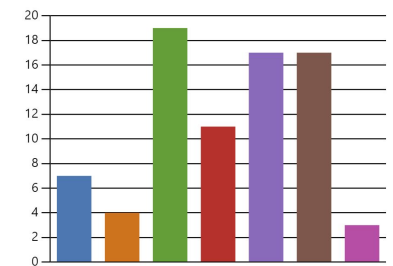
6. What resources do you typically use when looking for design inspiration in your work at Virginia Tech?

[More Details](#)



11. What kind of resources would you most like to see on this new platform?

[More Details](#)



*Survey was taken by 23 undergraduate students and 7 faculty members

50%

say, “I **only sometimes** consider how diverse users interact with my design.”

60%

use Youtube, Pinterest, or Behance during the research **over a data-driven approach**

The data I collected proves there’s a missing link in the system during the research stage. I took this as a **design opportunity to create a platform that encourages creatives to design with a more diverse set of users in mind.**



Meet Miguel R.

College student in Blacksburg, VA

BIO

Miguel is a first-generation Colombian-American and grew up in Houston, TX with his family. He is currently a freshman at Virginia Tech studying Industrial Design. He is excited to implement his heritage into his projects, but soon realizes that design tends to stick to certain trends. **He wants to find a way to break the norm and design to make a difference in more than just the typical sense.**

MOTIVATIONS

- **Reading articles** on designers who advocate for greater representation of diverse cultural perspectives in design
- **Attending virtual conferences** where speakers share unique or untold stories about their experiences as a minority
- **Viewing design as a way to express unique perspectives** and experiences in the world

PAIN POINTS

- Finds that typical resources like Pinterest **only cater to the larger population's demands and trends**
- **Feels alienated** as he struggles to find ways to integrate his cultural background into his projects
- **Difficult to access voices from minorities** while in remote city

EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Knowledge of Design Resources & Sites



Exposure to Diverse Design



Involvement in Design Organizations



BRANDS



Growing up surrounded by the energy of my Colombian roots, I've always seen design as a way to blend my heritage with the world around me. For me design isn't just about trends. It's an opportunity to make a difference and to shape a world that embraces diversity in every form. Yet, as I immerse myself in the design world, I can't help but notice the tendency for creativity to adhere to familiar trends. As a young designer, hearing and learning from other designers with diverse backgrounds can be empowering, especially in a setting where we're all taught the same style of design thinking year after year.



Meet Victoria K.

University professor in New York, NY

BIO

Victoria is a professor of Architecture and has been teaching for over ten years. While she was still practicing, she worked at a firm that designed office and commercial spaces. The university has given her an opportunity to assign a project to her students to redesign the LGBTQ+ student resource center at their university. **She wants to make sure that her students can feel comfortable to ask questions on the subject by learning more about this topic.**

MOTIVATIONS

- **Expanding knowledge** of LGBTQ+ issues, both for the benefit of her students and for her own personal development
- Ensuring that the **project meets the needs and expectations of the LGBTQ+ community** at the university

PAIN POINTS

- **Feels uncertain about her knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues**, which affects her ability to effectively guide students through the project
- **Struggles to find appropriate and credible resources** to educate herself on the topic
- **Afraid of accidentally saying something insensitive** concerning LGBTQ+ issues due to lack of knowledge

EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Knowledge of Design Resources & Sites



Exposure to Diverse Design



Involvement in Design Organizations



BRANDS



“

As educators, we are not only responsible to impart knowledge, but also to cultivate environments where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. In embracing diversity, we challenge our own perspectives and expand our understanding of the human experience. It's not just about creating inclusive spaces; it's about acknowledging the different identities within our communities and ensuring that our designs reflect and honor them. By embracing this responsibility, we not only empower our students but also contribute to the creation of a more equitable and compassionate world.

SAYS

- I struggle to **find data-driven information** about diversity
- I wish I could **read stories about other cultures'** design thinking and design process
- I want to **help other people feel more included in the world** through design

THINKS

- **How can I include people from different cultures** through design?
- **What resources are currently available** to learn about diverse design thinking?
- Where can I find **reliable research to back up my claims** to my professors?



DOES

- **Reads Medium articles** about designers with minority backgrounds
- **Practices inclusivity** by conducting multiple user interviews
- Keeps an open mindset about **implementing user feedback**

FEELS

- **Excluded** because of a different mindset and background
- **Disappointed** when designers don't account for multiple user groups
- **Hopeful** that the world is starting to create more inclusive solutions

SAYS

- I'm excited to learn more about the **LGBTQ+ community and its representation in design**
- I want to **support my students** in exploring and expressing unique perspectives in their projects
- I want to learn about **acknowledging and honoring different identities** within our communities

THINKS

- How can I **make sure my students feel comfortable** discussing LGBTQ+ topics?
- **What resources can I find** to better understand the experiences of minority groups?
- How can **design be used to express and honor unique identities**?

















DOES

- **Seeks ways to integrate diverse cultural backgrounds** into design projects
- **Encourages discussions and questions** about diverse topics in her class
- **Attends virtual conferences** on diverse perspectives in design

FEELS

- **Concerned** about how to effectively integrate minority voices into her teaching and projects
- **Motivated** to create inclusive learning environments for her students
- **Inspired** by stories of individuals advocating for representation in the design field

		INSPIRATIONAL	PERSONAL	INFORMATIVE	DATA-DRIVEN
	Dribbble	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Pinterest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Student Showcases	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Behance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	It's Nice That	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Medium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Core77	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	AIGA Eye on Design	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	UX Magazine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Dezeen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	ChatGPT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	News Sites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Published Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

PART 01

Key Takeaways

During the research stage, I realized that many users aspire to create more inclusive designs but feel uncomfortable or uninspired to do so.

I identified a design opportunity for a new resource in the market targeted at users seeking reliable, data-driven information that is also inspirational and captivating.

PART 02

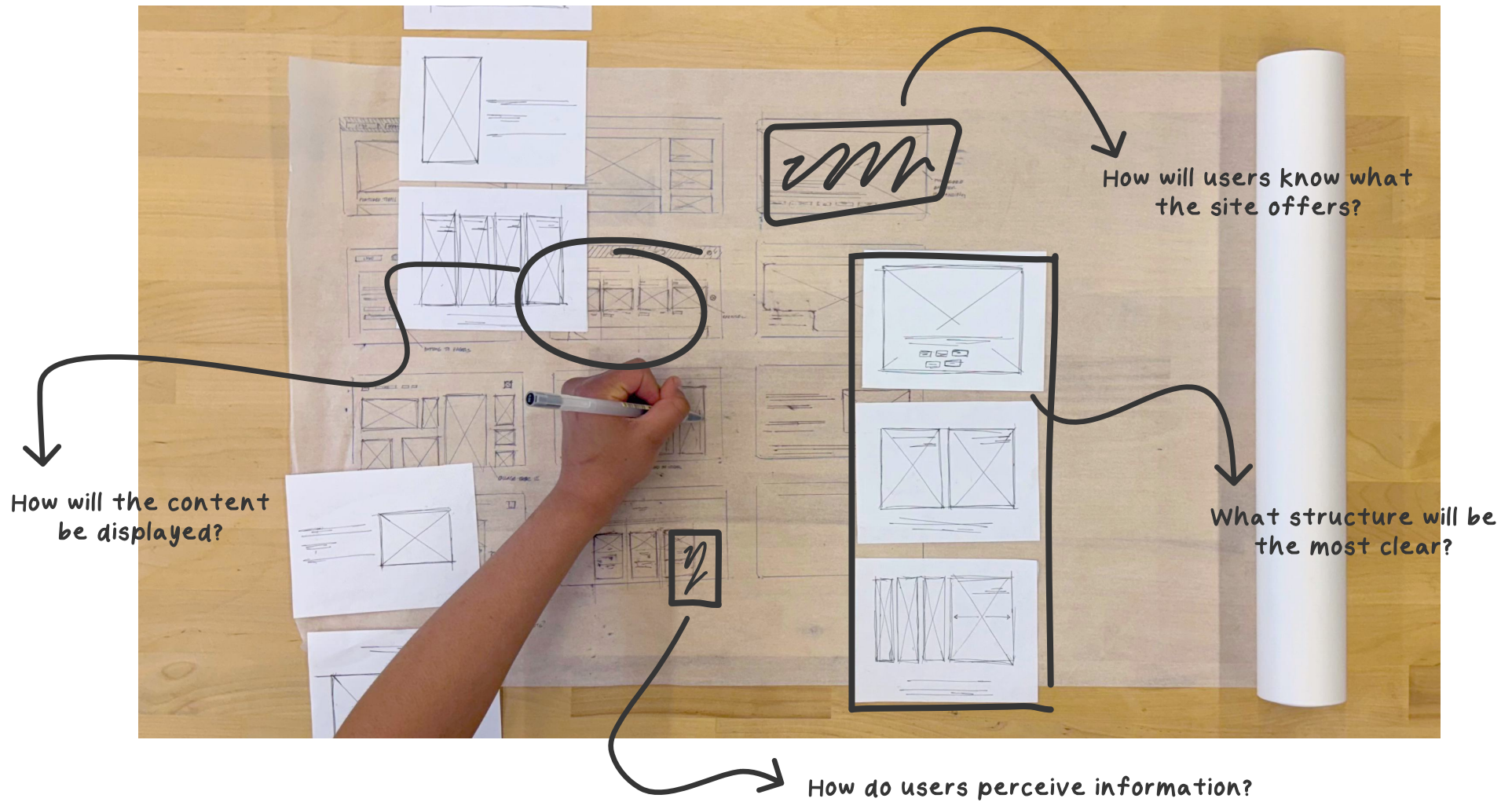
Prototyping

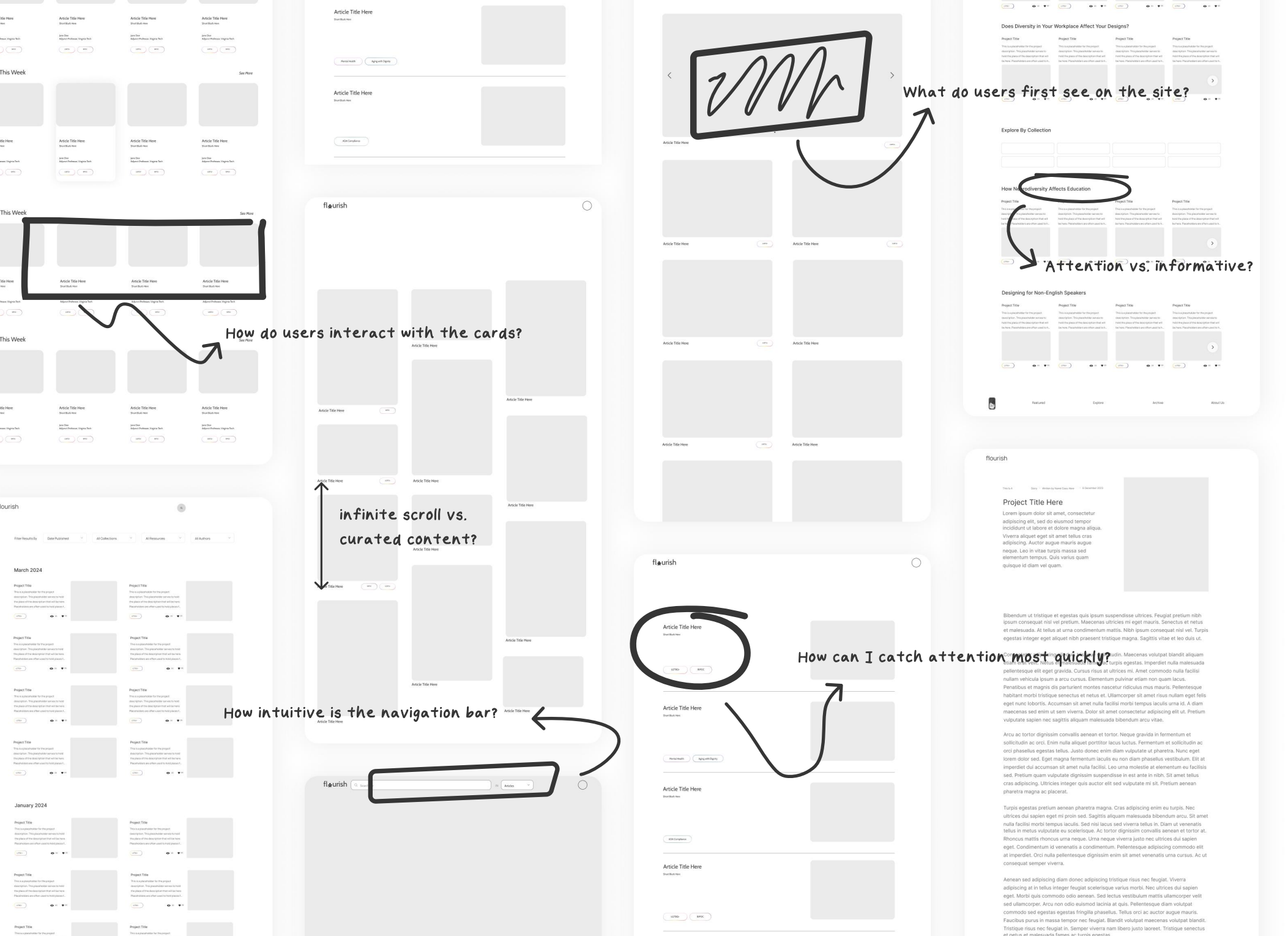
During this stage, I kept three design principles in mind: (1) intuitive navigation, (2) visual hierarchy, and (3) attention retention. This ensured that users would be able to navigate Flourish as easily as any other site they were accustomed to without feeling overwhelmed.

Using the information I gathered during the research stage, I began assembling the basic interface of the website. I started by sketching wireframes on paper, rapidly iterating through ideas before creating a low-fidelity digital prototype.

Throughout the prototyping process, I consulted my peers, posing questions and conducting tests to ensure the smoothest possible user experience.

Finally, I established the design system before creating the final prototype, resulting in a seamless and cohesive design.





After creating the low-fidelity prototype, I asked my peers for feedback and requested them to conduct a series of tasks to assess the intuitiveness of the interface. Here are the tasks I asked them to perform and the results:

Navigation Testing (9)

1	Navigate to the “Explore” page		
	Can't	Had Trouble	Easy
	0	0	9

2	On the “Explore” page, find the “Search By Collection” menu		
	Can't	Had Trouble	Easy
	0	3	6

3	Click the button		
	Can't	Had Trouble	Easy
	0	0	9

4	Open an article on the filtered results page		
	Can't	Had Trouble	Easy
	0	0	9

User Feedback (6)

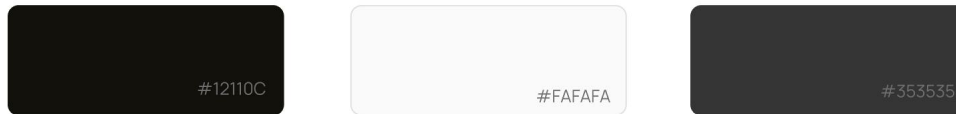
First Thoughts						
		No				Yes
└─	Can you tell what the site is meant to do at first?	1 0	2 1	3 0	4 4	5 1
└─	How easy is it to navigate through the site?	1 0	2 0	3 0	4 3	5 3

Accessibility						
└─	How easy is it to read the content on the page?	1 2	2 1	3 0	4 2	5 2
└─	How readable are the words/ descriptions?	1 1	2 2	3 0	4 2	5 2

Content						
└─	How likely are you to use these kinds of “diverse” resources during a project?	1 0	2 0	3 3	4 3	5 1
└─	How do you like how the content is arranged? (i.e. in cards and bubbles)	1 0	2 0	3 0	4 1	5 6

COLORS

Primary



Secondary



Gradients



TYPEFACE

Manrope

SemiBold

Medium

Regular

Display

font-size: 64px
line-height: 80px

Body

font-size: 20px
line-height: 40px

Heading 1

font-size: 48px
line-height: 64px

Heading 2

font-size: 32px
line-height: 40px

Subheading 1

font-size: 24px
line-height: 80px

Subheading 2

font-size: 20px
line-height: 24px

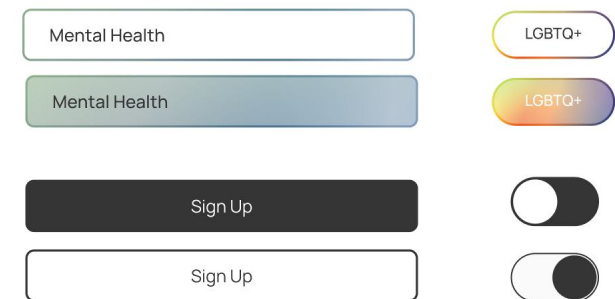
Button 1

font-size: 16px
line-height: 24px

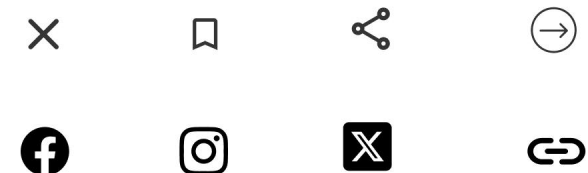
Button 2

font-size: 12px
line-height: 16px

BUTTONS & TOGGLES



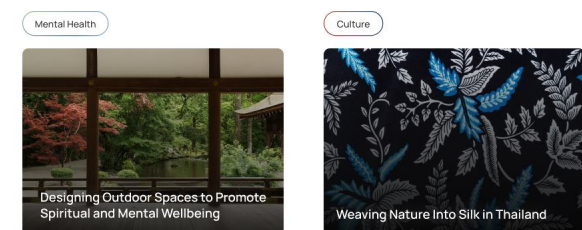
ICONS



INPUT FIELDS



CARDS



PART 02

Key Takeaways

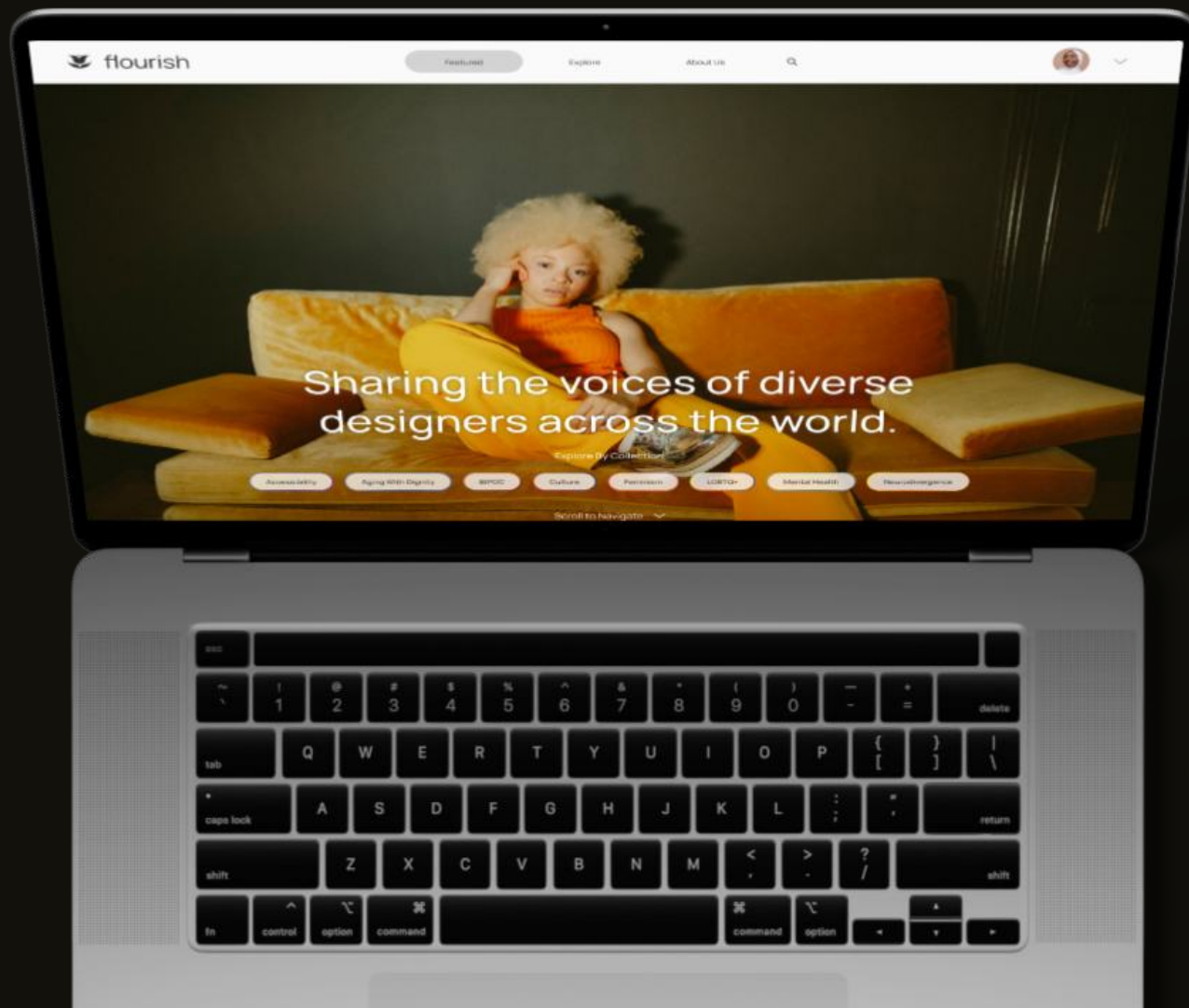
During the weeks I spent creating the website's UI, I realized the importance of incorporating user feedback into the process. It enabled me to develop an easily navigable and comprehensible user flow, ensuring the smoothest possible experience for users.

One of the most significant insights came from a peer who encouraged me to allow the stories to shine through over the interface. To achieve this, I maintained a monochromatic, minimalist design system, allowing the stories to provide color to the site.



A new platform to inform designers about diverse topics prevalent in the world today

[View the interactive prototype](#)

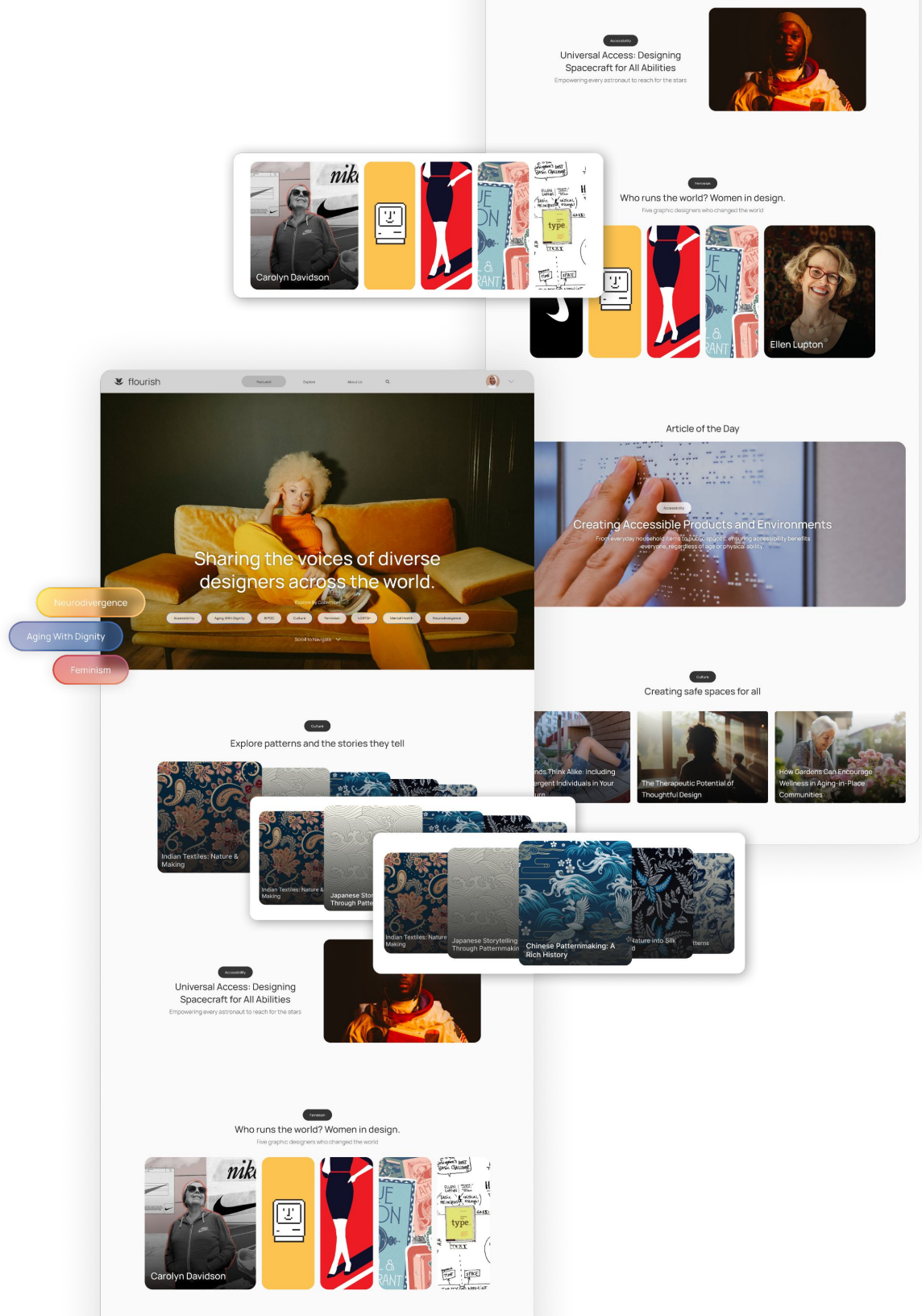


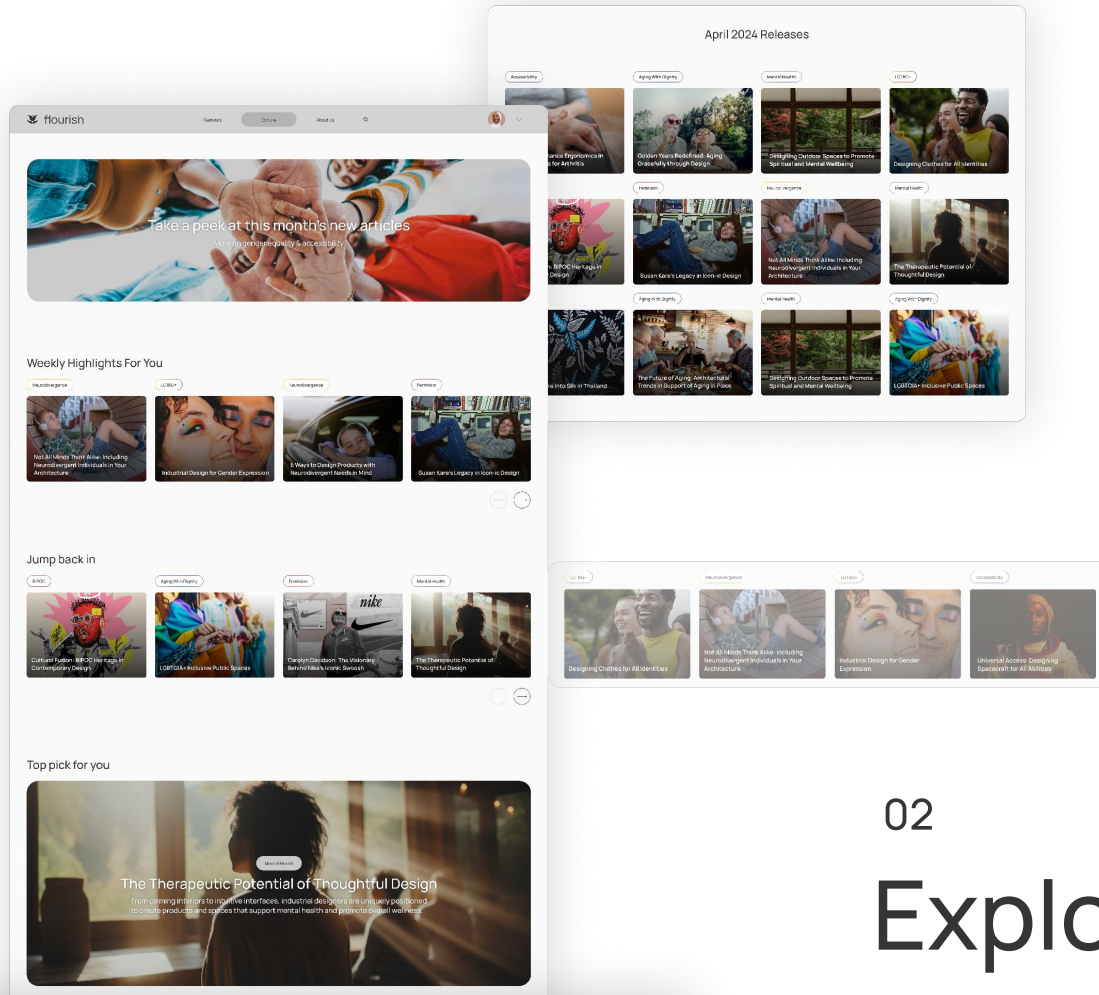
01

Featured

Designed to capture the user's attention using vibrant images, bold titles, and interactive elements.

The titles are selected by the website administrator to attract users to stories they may not usually pay attention to, but which are prevalent in the design world today.

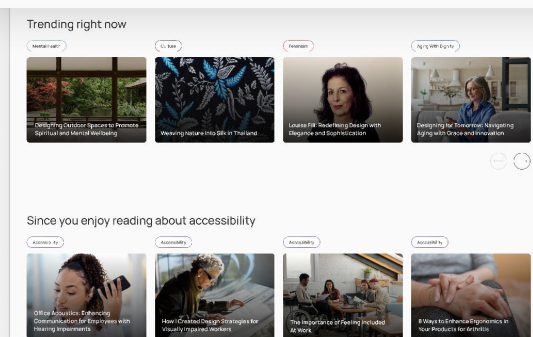




02 Explore

The Explore page is curated specifically for the user. Using generative AI, results will be filtered based on individual interests and activity.

By showing users similar articles to what they're looking for at that moment, users are more likely to come across stories that will help them diversify their designs.

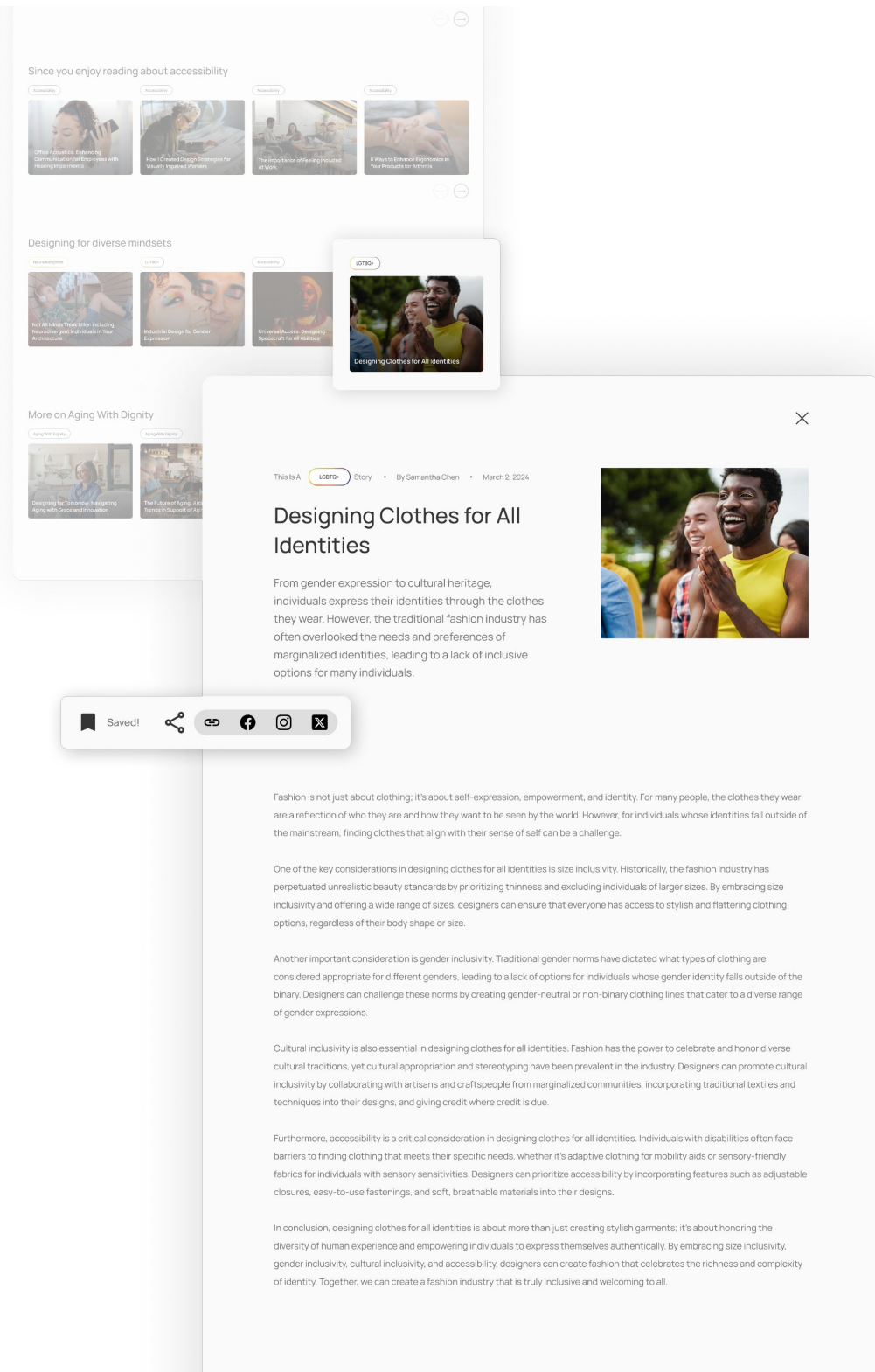


03

Content

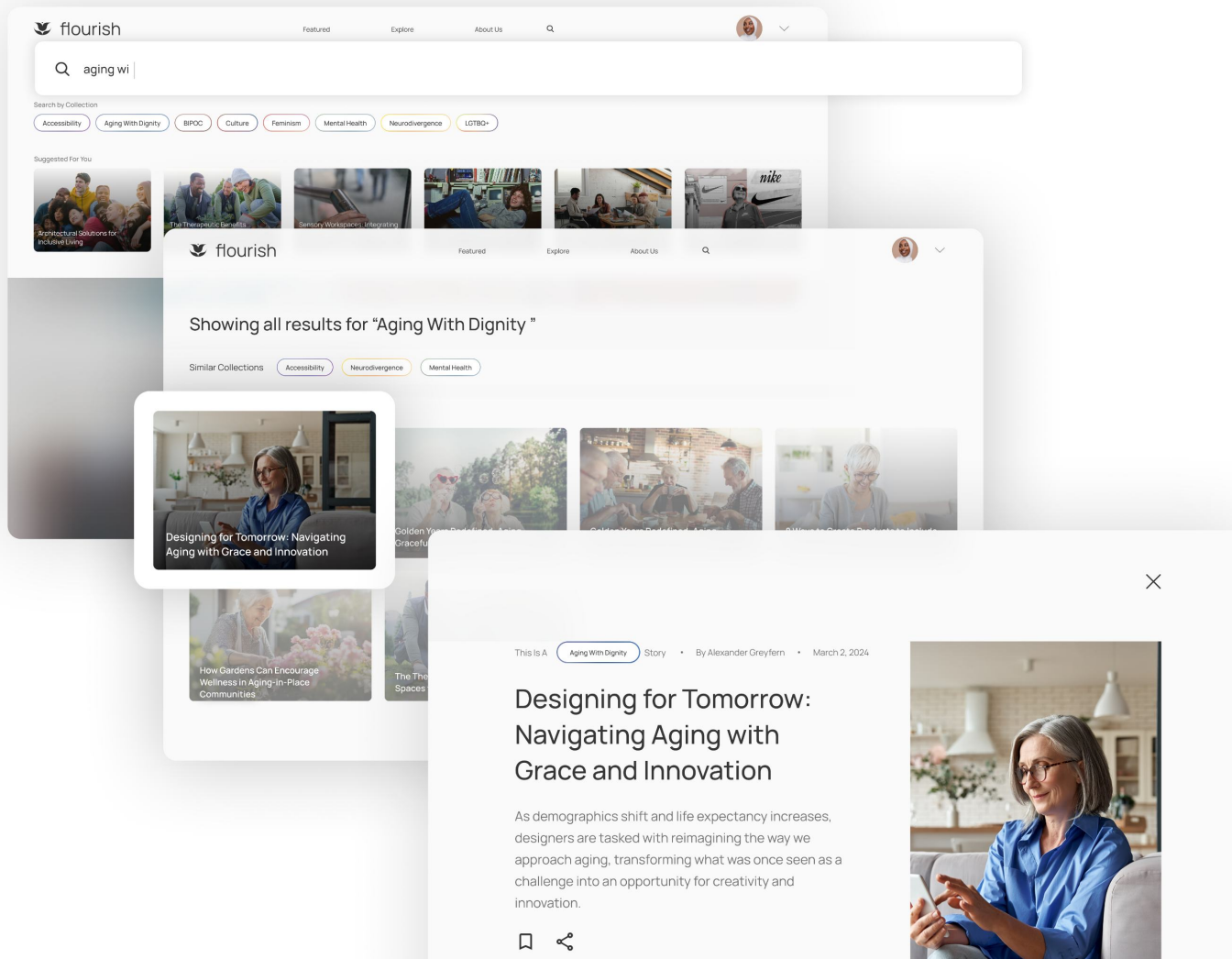
Each card features a tag, a title, and an image to provide users with a brief description of what the article will cover. Once clicked, the user will be directed to the respective article.

Authored by experienced UX researchers, the articles cover well-researched topics. Users can easily keep track of stories by saving them to their profile or sharing them with their peers.



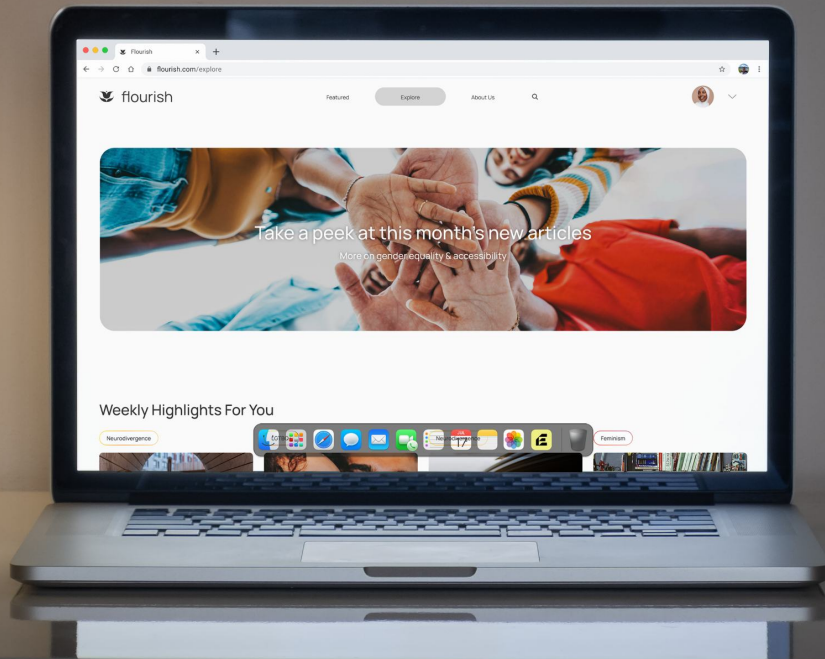
04 Search

Flourish helps user find what they need when they need it. By using the Search button in the navigation bar, users can find articles by collection or title.

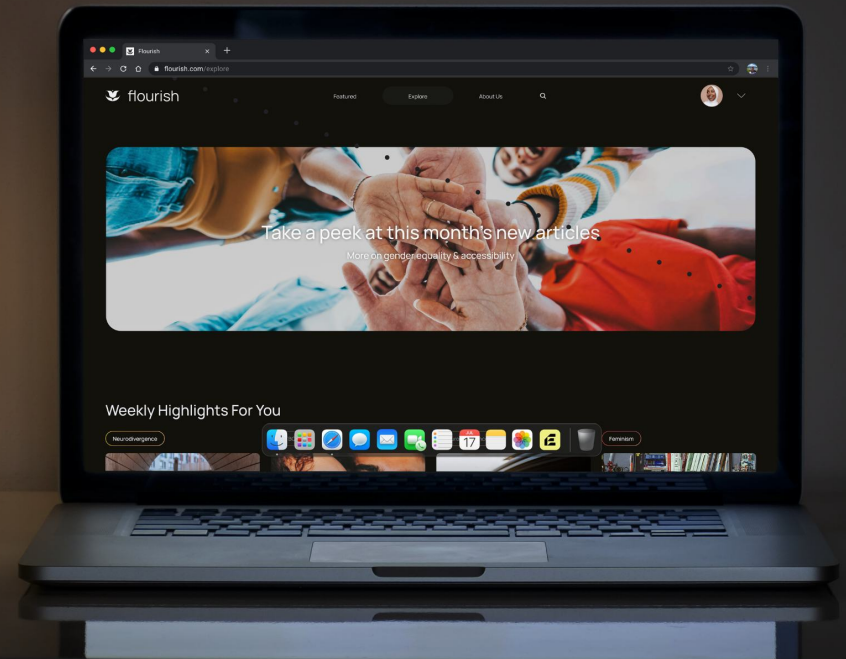


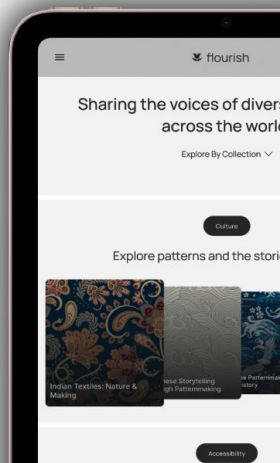
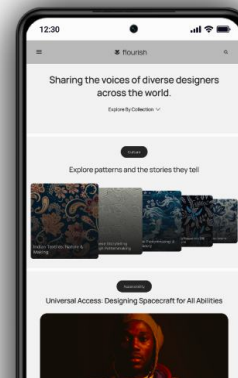
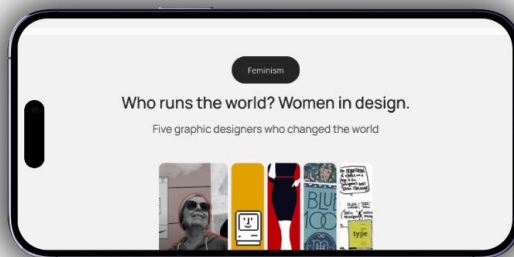
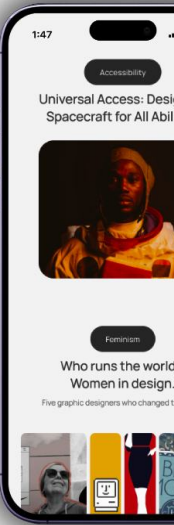
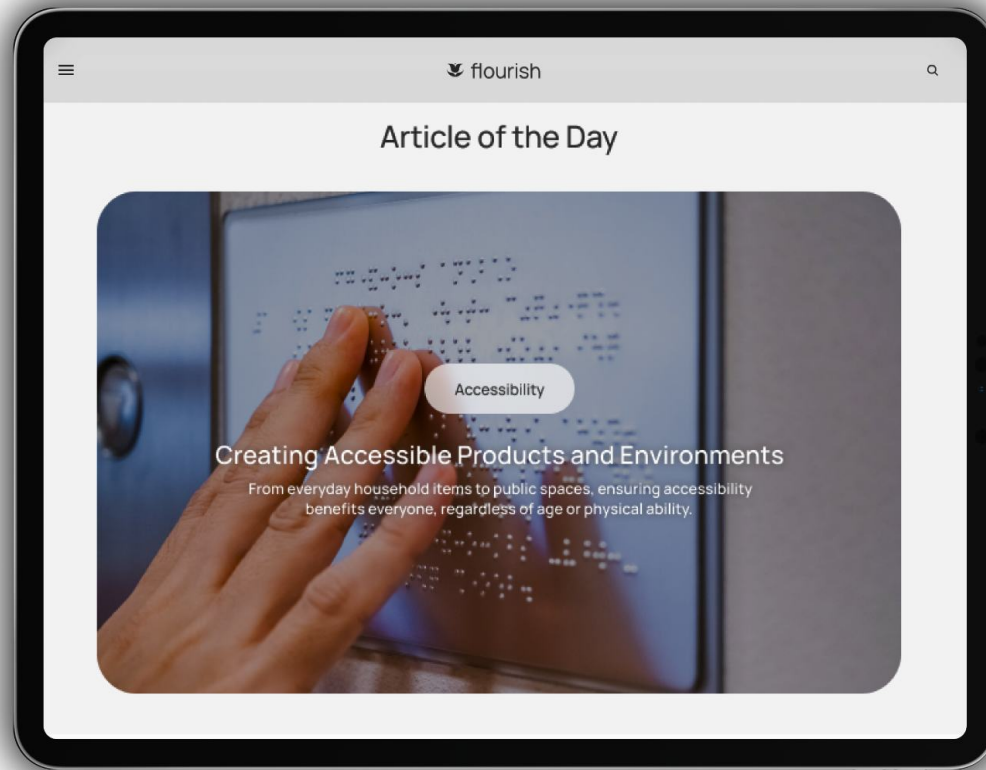


From Light



To Dark





What Comes Next?

I've learned so much as a solo UX designer over the last 12 weeks on this project. Condensing the design process into such a short period of time was not easy, but I'm excited to see what comes next!

In the upcoming months, I'll be collaborating with Dr. Isabel Prochner and the Flourish team to bring this project to life. We'll be rewriting articles, rethinking the interface, and conducting user testing to gather honest feedback and criticism from designers.

All articles were generated by ChatGPT

OpenAI. ChatGPT. Version 3.5, www.openai.com/chatgpt.

All images were downloaded under an educational license from Adobe Stock

Adobe Stock, 2024, <https://stock.adobe.com>.



flourish