

POVs and Experience Prototypes
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Studio theme: Creation

Problem domain:

How might we help artists with the creation process?

We thought that this “umbrella” question could go in many directions (for example: How do you help artists get more clients? Help them network more? Help them improve their art? Help them make better sales pitches for themselves?). We expected that needfinding interviews would help us identify a real need and give us a more specific direction.

Picking up from studio last week:

We met Emile..

We were amazed to realize that he relies primarily on his network for clients.

We think it would be game changing to help him reach outside of his network.

At studio last Friday, we came up with the above POV after reviewing our initial interview data. After receiving Stephany’s feedback on our needfinding from week 1, however, we decided we had to revisit our interview data, schedule some more interviews, and come up with some better POVs.

Follow up interviews:

Last week, we asked our interview subjects questions about branding, how they pitch their work, and how they build an audience. As Stephany pointed out to us, we focused too much on branding and should have asked some more big-picture questions about artists’ needs. For example, branding helps artists gain exposure and perhaps artists want exposure because they need recognition for their work. Thus, the underlying problem is not so much branding as it is the need for recognition.

Accordingly, we revised our interview questions for this week. In particular, we added the following questions to our basic interview framework:

1. What are your goals as an artist?
 - a. Where do you want your talent to take you?
2. What makes you unique as an artist? (How would you describe your style of work?)
3. Do you think it’s important to be unique? Why/why not?
4. Would you rather make art for yourself or for other people?
 - a. Do you make art to achieve recognition, or do you make art for the sake of art itself?
5. How do you attract people to your work?
6. How does a work of art begin begin? For example, does someone ask you for a piece of work or do you just feel inspired to do something?
7. What aspect of your art makes all the other struggles worth it? What is it about your art form that you enjoy so much?

This week, we re-interviewed Joyce from CCA, and also interviewed Ben-zhen, a digital art student at the Academy of Art and Computer Graphics Master Academy.

Highlights from Joyce:

We decided to do a follow up interview with Joyce because she had given us great insight into the product design process. One of the most interesting tidbits from this re-interview was a horror story about designing educational comics for her aunt, who was a teacher. "The first time, she said do whatever you want, because they didn't know what they want. Then you show them [your work], and they say, oh, you have to correct this, and this, and this." She lamented generally about "clients from hell" and talked about how painful it is when ideologies clash between designers and clients.

Highlights from Ben-zhen:

Ben-zhen is still an up and coming artist, so the big takeaway from our interview with her was the uncertainty aspiring artists face. She said that "I need to be better because i am not good enough that i can fully self-express yet," and that "I believe things will fall into place if I'm really good at what i do. It will be a lot easier attracting attention if you have something worth noticing." It seemed like she lacked confidence because she felt like she didn't have a strong enough art portfolio yet. The other interesting quote we got from this interview was about her attitude towards completed works of art. "A piece of art is pretty much dead to me after I share it. I'll admire something I've made for a little bit, but then I move on and don't really look back. I think the exhilaration is in the shaping, the process of the creation. I don't linger long after I'm done."

Point of views:

After gathering all our data points, we gathered together and looked at everything again. We came up with a long list of POVs, initially prioritizing quantity over quality. Here is a brief sample of some of the better POVs:

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to realize that miscommunication is so easy over email. It would be game-changing to change the communication medium so that artists can express their ideas clearly.

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to realize that she felt restricted by the needs of her clients. It would be game-changing to make it possible for artists to do whatever the hell they want.

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to realize that she had a lot of friction working with clients that didn't understand design. It would be game-changing to introduce more respect between artist and client.

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to find that communication between the artist and client is difficult. We think it would be game changing to find a common ground.

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to realize that she was incredibly frustrated by from middlemen (like her mom) between her and her clients. It would game-changing to connect her with her clients directly.

We met Joyce, a product design student at CCA. We were amazed to realize that clients who didn't understand design were always ready to provide useless feedback. It would be game-changing to help her get more useful feedback from other designers.

We met Nadine, an independent photographer in Palo Alto. We were amazed to realize that she was reluctant to use more new technologies because it was too much trouble to

learn new things. It would be game-changing to give new technologies an old-school appeal.

We met Ben-zhen, a digital art student at the Academy of Art. We were amazed to realize that she thought professional art is something valuable should always be paid for. It would be game-changing to incentivize professional artists to make more art for free.

We met Ben-zhen, a digital art student at the Academy of Art. We were amazed to realize that arts of work were dead to her after she finishes them. It would be game-changing to help her stay emotionally invested in completed art.

We met Ben-zhen, a digital art student at the Academy of Art. We were amazed to realize that she hasn't done a lot of art for other people because she can't invest herself in a project unless she has a personal stake in it. It would be game-changing to help her find clients looking for her kind of work.

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Eventually, we narrowed the list down to the following two POVs by common agreement. For each of these POVs, we generated about 15 HMVs ("How might we..." statements), and then identified the most promising one. Then we generated another 15 product ideas that could address the each of these HMVs, identified the most promising prototypes, and tried it out with other students.

We met Ben-zhen, a digital art student at the Academy of Art.
We were amazed to realize that she lacked confidence without an impressive portfolio.
It would be game-changing to help her realize that there are other ways to prove herself.

⇒ **How might we implement real-time skill demonstrations?**

⇒ **Idea 1: Creating a daily or weekly 30sec art challenge (what can you create in 30secs?)**

⇒ **How might we encourage artists to create spontaneously (without doubting themselves)?**

⇒ **Idea 2: A collaborative drawing game. Every participant can only draw 10 strokes per turn. There can be a "freestyle" mode where a picture evolves organically, and a "fixed reference" mode where participants try to recreate a reference picture.**

We met Emile, a filmmaker in San Francisco.
We were amazed to realize that he relies primarily on his network for clients.
It would be game changing to help him reach outside of his personal network.

⇒ **How might we help artists integrate business and art?**

⇒ **Idea 3: Build an art commission platform. Client: I want to make X and I'll give you \$\$ to get it done. Artists will get paid for trying and the one the client likes the most will get a bonus.**

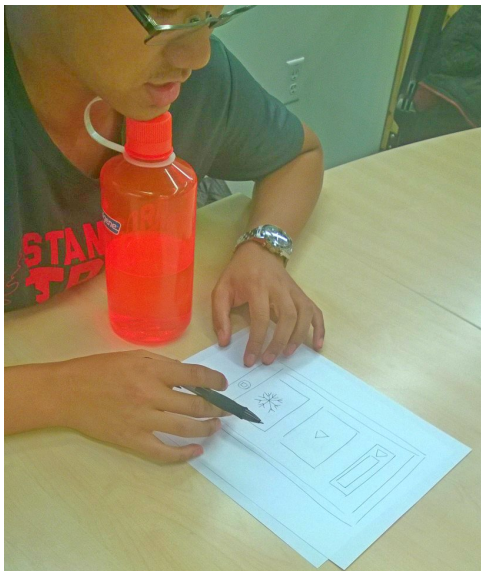
Prototypes!

For our three app ideas, we made pen-and-paper mockups and ran them by some test subjects. We haven't had time to iterate on our prototypes yet, so the section below only describes our initial idea, the initial feedback we received, and observations we made. Here's how it went:

Weekly Art Challenge:

This prototype grew out of the following hypothetical scenario: What if you were an art student at a career fair, and you didn't have an art portfolio? How might you demonstrate your skill to recruiters? We figured it might be game changing if recruiters could hold "drawing" interviews just like software companies have programming interviews. However, since our goal was to create an app rather than push for a big industry change, we pivoted a bit. We pulled "realtime skill demonstration" out of the interview context and decided to make an art contest platform with a daily or weekly challenge. To incentivize artists to participate, popular submissions would be featured and or win some kind of prize (to be determined).

We thought this idea was great because it also addressed one of the other HMs on our list. One was to motivate artists to integrate art a little more into their daily life. A 30-second art piece won't take much time. Like mobile games, it might be a little something they could do to fill up time here and there - while waiting for coffee at Starbucks, waiting for the bus, waiting for the class to begin, and so forth. Also, just as we were taught that quantity over quality will lead to great ideas, perhaps an artist who makes a lot of these 30-second shorts might hit upon something in a doodle and go back to turn it into a masterpiece later.

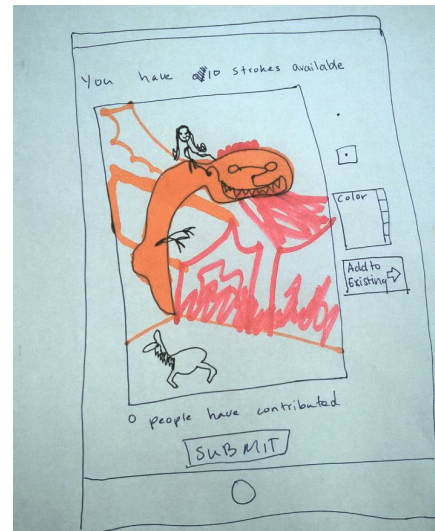
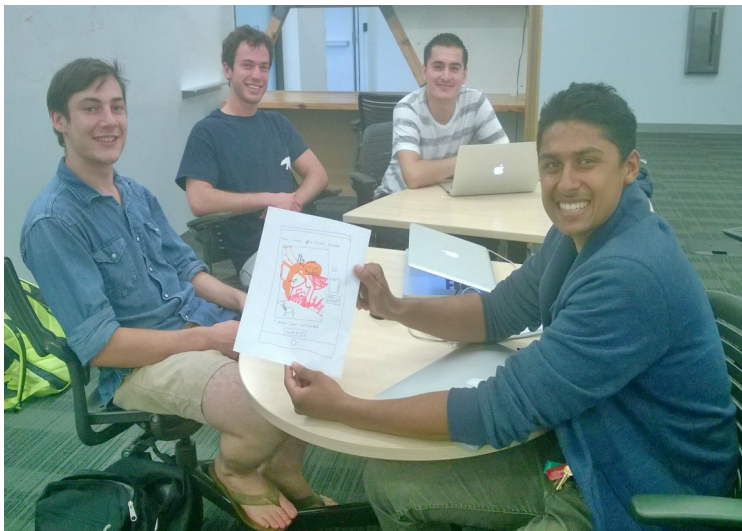
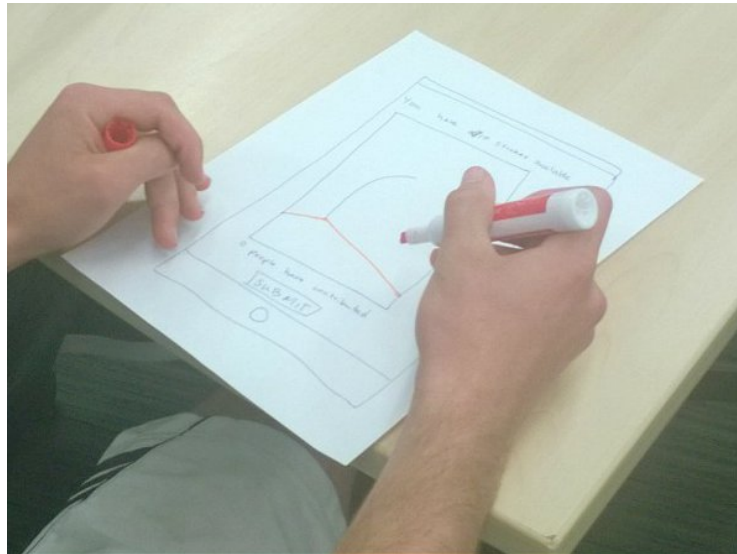
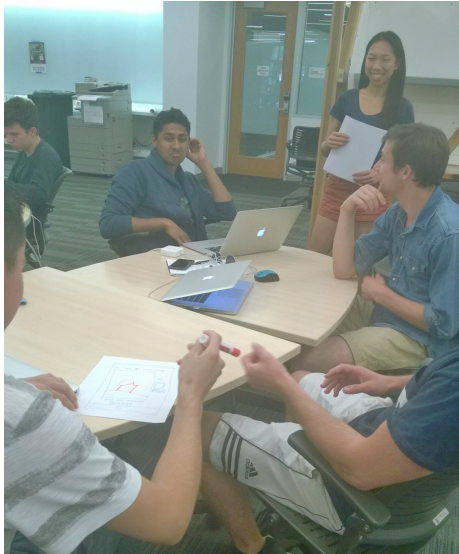


Our initial user thought our idea was "really cool," but then seemed a bit confused once we asked him to start playing with our lo-fi prototype. After seeing the feed that's supposed to display popular submissions, he asked, "oh, what do this do?" It looks like the idea has promise but we will have to tweak our interface so that actionable items are more obvious.

Collaborative Drawing:

The idea for this app was to remove the stress from art creation by gamifying the process and making it a collaborative endeavor. We thought that introducing some constraints might fuel user creativity. Users can draw a picture together, but they have to add strokes one at a time.

They can only add a limited number of strokes per turn and there will be no undo button. Of course, we'll have to refine exactly how many strokes provides the optimal experience, but the idea is that you must cede creative control to your friends after some amount of time. You'll have to continue with whatever they chose to do and deal with whatever mistakes they made.



After our initial run-through, it turned out 10 lines per turn might not be a good constraint - so that will need some tweaking. We also considered if it might be better to pivot so that instead of a collaborative drawing experience, our app is analogous to Twitter, except that you post pictures with limited lines instead of tweets with limited characters.

In any case, we tried it out with as a collaborative game, where users start off with a context "Imagine today is the CS Career Fair!") and then just started drawing and passing the picture around. It became a game of trying to guess what the other people were drawing, and then adapting to that if your guess was wrong. The rules were fairly easy to understand, and the guys actually got really into it, and there was no real fear about "I can't draw, I'm not an artist."

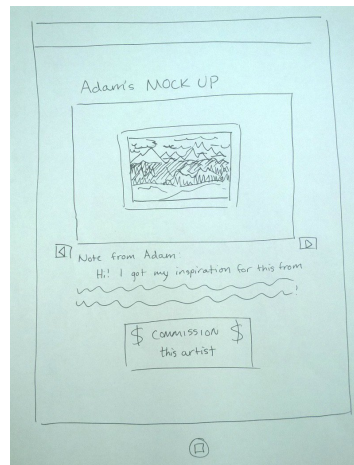
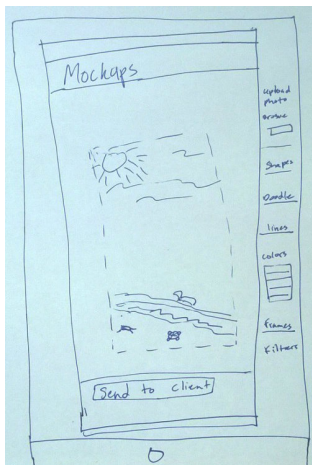
Eventually they ended up with a picture of a dragon spewing fire over what is presumably the career fair tent.

We think that the app/prototype let them have a safe space to try and communicate visually without having to worry about whether they were good at something. It looked like everyone really had fun, so this idea seems promising!

Art Commission Platform:

The art commission platform idea grew out of the need to facilitate an organic relationship between artists and client, while also helping the artist earn income. We thought it might be game changing to connect the artist directly to interested clients and help them make customized art pieces together. This was inspired by our interview with Nadine, where she pointed out to us what she loved most about her work as a photographer was the experience of working with clients. We also picked up some inspiration from studio last week, when another group said one of their subjects lamented that “patronage of the arts was dying out.” There are loads of people who need artwork - from event organizers to website designers or authors who need illustrators - and loads of artists who can surely find a cause they’re interested in.

The general idea is that people looking for artwork will post a request describing what they want and how much they’re willing to pay. Interested artists can then submit quick mockups and the client can commission the submission they like the best. Likewise, artists can also have a little digital “store” page advertising their works, so that clients will also be able to browse for artists they would like to work with. Again, we want to emphasize that this can be art in a broad sense - digital music, videos, photography, digital paintings - anything that can be delivered online.



Our test subject didn't have a strong reaction to the interface, perhaps because she couldn't see herself as an artist or someone seeking custom art. She had pointed out some things we overlooked mockup - in particular, clients should be able to tag their art requests what artistic medium they're looking for (ceramics? oil on canvas? music? performance art?). That way, artists can search for art requests that fit their domain. Another part that needed work was the interface for letting clients choose their favorite mockup in order to commission the artist. We presented each mockup on a separate screen, but it looks like showing all mockups together at once on the same screen could help with the comparison process. Our test subject was

shuffling papers representing different mockup screens back and forth and that seemed cumbersome.

Best prototype moving forward?

Although we did begin with the goal of helping professional artists, we decided to pivot and target non-artists instead. Our research showed that professional (or student) artists sometimes didn't have enough fun because they couldn't create art spontaneously. This then led us to the topic of making art more fun and spontaneous, and from there we started thinking about gamifying art. Then we thought, "why can't non-artists get in on the fun?", and considered how to channel the inner artists in everyone. Thus, we ended up with the collaborative art prototype, which turned out to have the most potential.

It looked like we had the most user enthusiasm with the collaborative art prototype - everyone had a smile on their face at the end. So we want to take this idea and keep going with it - see what pain points can be ironed out, and how to maximize the fun.