

Heuristic Evaluation of [Muse]

1. Problem

Muse is an app that allows users to create chains with a certain theme, and have other users contribute artwork and inspiration to these chains, so that everyone can either find or share inspiration.

2. Violations Found

1. [H2-2: Match Sys & World] [Found by A and B] 2
To me, the word “chain” is confusing because the word itself doesn’t make clear to me that it is a group of users sharing inspiration given a certain heading. It also evokes for me a game I used to play where people would draw parts of an eventual painting without seeing the whole picture, then pass it on to the next person, which is a feature your app does not offer. Some words you can use instead of “chain” are “board”, “pins” (though this is quite similar to Pinterest), maybe even “bulletin.”
2. [H2-10: Help and documentation] [Found by A] 1
Unclear that the “plus” button in the bottom right of the main screen will allow users to start a new chain. I would add a small bubble above the “plus” button saying something along the lines of “start a new chain” so users can clearly see the purpose of this button.
3. [H2-2: Match Sys & World] and [H2-6: Recognition not Recall] [Found by A and B] 2
In the “Start a New Chain” page, I do not know the purpose of the large “plus” button in the center of the screen. Like Ash, I also initially clicked on the large button because I thought it would allow me to insert an image I already had. I would actually get rid of that space initially when the user hasn’t added anything, and once they upload a paragraph or an attachment, you can use the space that once held the “plus” button to display what they have already uploaded. This will also be good because it is not easily visible to the user what they have already inputted and uploaded.
4. [H2-7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use] [Found by A] 2
Having the “Title Your Chain” pop up feels constraining because there is only one way to exit out of the pop up, which is to press enter on the keyboard. I would like it if there were buttons underneath the line where one enters the chain title to either click “enter”, which would do the same thing as pressing the enter key on the keyboard.
5. [H2-3: User control and freedom] [Found by A] 4
There is also no way for the user to stop the process of creating a new chain once they have clicked on “write”. In addition to adding an enter button under the line where one enters the chain title, you should also consider adding a “delete” or “discard”

button right next to the “enter” button, so users can halt their creation of a new chain if they so desire.

6. [H2-4: Consistency & Standards] [Found by A and B] 2

I am confused by the inclusion of the ability to enter words in the body in the “word” page once you have selected a title. I’m confused by where this potential extra input would go because I am under the assumption that you only enter the name of the chain. One way you can avoid having this problem is not to go to a separate page when you enter in the name of the chain, but instead to just have a text box you can input into on the main “Title Your Chain” page.

7. [H2-1: Visibility of system status] [Found by A] 2

The jump from clicking enter on the body of the “write” page to asking users to choose the number of links in their chain is quite jarring, because users are thrust back into the “Start Your Chain” page right from the “write” page. I don’t think that it is necessary that the users to complete the tasks in this order, so you can add an additional button on the “Start Your Chain” page where users can either write, attach, or specify the number of links.

8. [H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Found by A and B] 1

I don’t like that users can only enter the links through a drop down menu. This is more personal preference, but i would prefer if the entry method was via keyboard and you have a stipulation at the top when users enter the number that they can only enter up to six links. Another way that you could change the entry method for the number of links is to have basically a round rotating list that displays the numbers allowed - think setting an alarm on an iPhone.

9. [H2-1: Visibility of system status] [Found by A] 1

There is no confirmation that you have started a new chain once you create a new one. It would be nice if there was some pop up message that informs the user that they just created a pop up chain entitled blank, have already attached blank to the chain, and have blank number of links left for people to input to.

10. [H2-2: Match Sys & World] [Found by A and B] 3

On the main page, there is a “saved” button in the upper right hand corner whose purpose I don’t know. I am assuming that you can save chains somehow to your own page, but don’t know how to do this and where in the app you would be able to save anything. If it were a page for saved chains, you should probably title it “Saved Chains”, and also implement save buttons so that users can actually save chains.

11. [H2-1: Visibility of system status] [Found by A and B] 3

Once you click on the link you can explore on the main page, I am confused why there is a headline that says “Pablo Picasso’s Chain” and in the center of the page it

says Georgia O'Keefe and says the number of links underneath Georgia O'Keefe. This leads part of me to believe it is a Pablo Picasso Chain, and part of me to think it's actually a chain entitle Georgia O'Keefe.

12. [H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design] [Found by A] 1

When you click on the round Georgia O'Keefe painting to enlarge it, the screen gets cluttered because you have a "By Georgia O'Keefe" portion that gets bolded, but the user can still see the faded button "Collaborate" and "2 links left" on the screen, which makes it appear cluttered and confusing what words are actually meant to pop up once you click on the painting. One way to get rid of this is to completely blur out the background so it becomes clear to the user that the only words they should be looking at are "By Georgia O'Keefe."

13. [H2-7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use] [Found by A] 1

When exiting the screen that appears when you enlarge the Georgia O'Keefe painting, I would prefer it if there was also an exit button or an "x" on the upper-right corner so users can either click this button or tap anywhere on the screen to exit. I think this makes it more clear to the user (especially new user) the ways in which you can exit the screen.

14. [H2-2: Match Sys & World] [Found by A and B] 2

For the "Contribute to Chain" page that comes after you click contribute on the Georgia O'Keefe page, I think you should also get rid of the giant "plus" sign.

15. [H2-6: Recognition not Recall] [Found by A and B] 2

I think you should actually insert the name of the chain in the title. So, instead of the title being just "Contribute to Chain," it should be either "Contribute to the Pablo Picasso Chain" or "Contribute to the Georgia O'Keefe Chain." This heading should also be applied to the page that comes up when you click "write."

16. [H2-2: Match Sys & World] and [H2-3: User control and freedom] [Found by A] 4

For the "write" page that appears when you contribute, you should also have a button that users can click to finish their writing or discard their contribution. Right now, you can only finish when you press the enter button the keyboard, but I think there should be buttons in the upper right hand corner that are "finish"/ "save" and "discard."

17. [H2-1: Visibility of Status] and [H2-6: Recognition not Recall] [Found by A] 2

Again, the contribute page should have some way of displaying what the user has currently contributed, and once the user is done contributing, it should have a way of notifying the user that their contribution is finished and accepted. Only having an arrow to go back might make the user not feel satisfied that their work is saved.

18. [H2-1: Visibility of Status] [Found by A] 3

I am confused by the screen that immediately pops up once the user is done contributing to the initial chain. Is the user given the opportunity to contribute to another chain? If so, I think it would be better if after having a pop up confirming to the user that they have contributed, there should be another pop up asking the user if they want to contribute to another random chain. If they want to, they should be redirected to the John Lennon chain. If not, they should be directed back to the main page.

19. [H2-1: Visibility of Status] [Found by A] 3

I am also confused by what happens after I contribute to the John Lennon profile. First, I don't know what having a link saved to my profile actually means. Additionally, I don't get why contributing in the John Lennon chain saves something to my profile but contributing in the Pablo Picasso chain does not. I am also confused why, once I am done adding to the John Lennon page, I am redirected to the main page, but after I finished contributing to the Pablo Picasso chain, I was directed to the John Lennon chain.

20. [H2-10: Help and documentation] [Found by A] 2

I think it is not intuitive that the only way you can view the chains you have started is by first going to your own profile. One way you can make it more intuitive is to have a button at the top of the screen on the same level as "Explore", "Search" etc. that is "My Chains", so you can just click here to see your own chains.

21. [H2-1: Visibility of Status] [Found by A and B] 1

For the "Invitation Sent!" notification, I think it would be nice if it informed you who you sent the invitation to. Additionally, I think there should be some other way to exit out of the page besides clicking anywhere on the screen. I personally would like it if there was an "OK" button that users can click to exit out of this screen.

22. [H2-10. Help and documentation] [Found by B] 3

In general, there is no "help" or documentation about how to go about the app. A suggested fix would be to add a "help" screen accessible through the home menu at least.

23. [H2-2. Match between system and the real world] [Found by B] 2

When a user is first creating a new chain, there is no information as to what a "link" is. It would be helpful to either explain what a link is or possibly show an example so that users can make an informed decision about how many new links they want to choose.

24. [H2-4. Consistency and standard] [Found by B] 3

In general, the "write" or "attach" options seem vague and open as to whether the chains created are based off of original work or sharing someone else's work. In the display of a chain, there should be something that clarifies whether the link is the poster's original work or someone else's that they're sharing.

25. [H2-7. Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Found by B] 1

After adding a new link to a chain, the user's next move must be to X out of the screen. For someone adding links very frequently, it might be better to have the "new link has been saved" message appear in the same way the "invitation sent" message appears. The action has been done and the user can go about doing whatever they were doing before without having to click the X button every time.

26. [H2-3. User control and freedom] [Found by B] 4

Users don't have a way to edit their chains once created if they choose the wrong number of links or want to change something. When a user is looking at their chains, there could be an "edit" button next to the "view" button to give them control of the chain they created.

27. [H2-6. Recognition rather than recall] [Found by B] 1

The diagram of the chain at the top of the chain view is unclear. Bringing it closer to the "___ links left" message might help identify that it is displaying where the chain is at currently.

28. [H2-5. Error prevention] [Found by B] 2

A user might tap attach thinking they could attach a document when it's possible they could only attach a photo. Maybe indicate what options there are for things to attach. Maybe I could attach a document, but I would have to try it first and go back if it failed.

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
[H2-1: Visibility of Status]		2	2	3	0	7
[H2-2: Match Sys & World]		0	4	1	1	6
[H2-3: User Control]		0	0	0	3	3
[H2-4: Consistency]		0	1	1	0	2
[H2-5: Error Prevention]		0	1	0	0	1
[H2-6: Recognition not Recall]		1	3	0	0	4
[H2-7: Efficiency of Use]		2	1	0	0	3
[H2-8: Minimalist Design]		2	0	0	0	2
[H2-9: Help Users with Errors]		0	0	0	0	0
[H2-10: Documentation]		1	1	1	0	3
Total Violations by Severity		8	13	6	4	31
Note: check your answer for the green box by making sure the sum of the last column is equal to the sum of the last row (not including the green box)						

4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D	Evaluator E
sev. 0					
sev. 1	6	4			
sev. 2	9	7			
sev. 3	4	4			
sev. 4	2	1			
total (sev. 3 & 4)	6	5			
total (all severity levels)	31	16			

5. Summary Recommendations

Overall, it was difficult to seek out violations in this design. We thought you did a great job of making things very minimal. One simple area we noticed for improvement is clarification in certain terms. There are places when a user might not know what a term or action means, so making sure those terms are explained would be a great help. In addition, a “help” function could be useful for that as well. The other more general thing we came across was some uncertainty on whether or not contributions or chains would all be original work or shared work of others. Seeing as intellectual property was a concern in your prototype testing, that might be a piece of information you might want to make more explicit (i.e., making it clear when a work is the chain owner’s original or who the original author is). Another issue that was noticed was not accounting for users accidentally starting a chain or contributing and not being able to exit out of that. Additionally, there isn’t a way for users to delete chains or their contributions. Another big problem comes from notifying users that their contributions and such have been noted. Presently, there is not really a way for a user to get confirmation that their new chain has started or their contribution has been added to another chain. There is also sometimes a confusion of where users are in the app: there was a time when it was unclear whether the user was looking at a “Pablo Picasso Chain” or a “Georgia O’Keefe Chain.” Besides the terminology however, the taskflow was incredibly easy to follow. We could move around from screen to screen very intuitively not having much background information about how the app worked (especially due to your redesign). We agreed with many of Ash’s comments about the visual design - we didn’t really like the typography that was chosen, as it is too similar to the fonts Google uses in its product, such as “Google Calendar.” To some, the Google font does not connote creativity and inspiration, and it creates the feeling of an environment that is more sterile and formulaic instead of creative and inspiring. Overall, if the prototype does better naming and allows users more control, we think the prototype will be quite intuitive and easy to use. Good job guys!

Severity Ratings

- 0 - don't agree that this is a usability problem
- 1 - cosmetic problem
- 2 - minor usability problem
- 3 - major usability problem; important to fix
- 4 - usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

Heuristics

[H2-1: Visibility of System Status]

- keep users informed about what is going on

[H2-2: Match Between System & Real World]

- speak the users' language
- follow real world conventions

[H2-3: User Control & Freedom]

- "exits" for mistaken choices, undo, redo
- don't force down fixed paths

[H2-4: Consistency & Standards]

[H2-5: Error Prevention]

[H2-6: Recognition Rather Than Recall]

- make objects, actions, options, & directions visible or easily retrievable

[H2-7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use]

- accelerators for experts (e.g., gestures, kb shortcuts)
- allow users to tailor frequent actions (e.g., macros)

[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design]

- no irrelevant information in dialogues

[H2-9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors]

- error messages in plain language
- precisely indicate the problem
- constructively suggest a solution

[H2-10: Help & Documentation]

- easy to search
- focused on the user's task
- list concrete steps to carry out

- not too large