

# On the Shoulders of Giants

Building a brand new portfolio

**Internship Report**

By Mathijs Peerlings

@ Awwwards Online SL

Valencia (Spain)

27-8-2018 to 18-1-2019

# Internship Report Data

## Student data

**Name:**

Peerlings, M. J.

**Student number:**

363820

**Profile:**

ICT & Media Design

**Internship period:**

27/8/2018 t/m 18/1/2019 (90 days)

## Company data

**Name:**

Awwwards Online SL

**Department:**

Design

**Location:**

Valencia, Spain

**Company supervisor:**

Edwards, R.  
Community Manager  
& Event Co-ordinator

## Teacher supervisor data

**Name:**

Janssen, A. W.

## Document data

**Title:**

On the Shoulders of Giants

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**Date:**

(<)

**Signature:**

(<)

# Foreword

This internship report On the Shoulders of Giants is written about my internship at the design agency Awwwards in Valencia, Spain from late august 2018 to mid january 2019. During this internship I have been working on the project Portfolio in which I was challenged to create a new personal portfolio from zero while in an environment that is filled with experts, trends and high quality inspirational materials.

In this report I will document all parts of the creation process from planning and research to prototyping and coding. Based on my points of improvement from the last semester I will write more to-the-point and with softer transitions from chapter to chapter.

This was my first time living alone and in a foreign country, so during this internship I have experienced tremendous personal and professional growth. Luckily I was surrounded by great people that helped introduce me to the working life of media designers and developers.

I want to thank Alicia Janssen for her great communication during the internship, even going as far as travelling all the way to Spain to visit the Awwwards office. Because of her experience with me and my fellow classmates in the last semester she was able to give me suitable feedback, advice and critique to help me to bring the best out of myself.

I also want to thank Rachel Edwards, Mireia Ortega, Gus Tella Mugica and Jara van Herpt for mentoring me during my first experience of the working environment of a media designer. Thanks to their communication, feedback and patience I was able to grow from a green design student to a design student who knows what is expected of him after his studies.

Finally I want to thank the other great colleagues that I got the honors to work with during my internship. Whether it was feedback or helping me with Spanish, they were always ready to answer my questions and give me feedback.

Mathijs Peerlings  
Valencia, 2018

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# Brief

Awwwards Online SL is a design agency located in Valencia, Spain. The company has created and manages an online platform called Awwwards on which designers from all over the world can gather for recognition for their hard work and inspiration for their new projects. Users can access all the services for free but also have the option to pay to become a premium user.

Due to the amount of inspiration and knowledge they have available Awwwards offers all their interns the chance to create their own personal portfolio. Although there was already an old personal portfolio it's not on a professional level. A new portfolio is the project, solving the problem of an outdated one.

The whole project started from zero. With a planning in the project document and constant progress management the project stayed on track. The process was split into five phases, the first one being research. This extensive research resulted in a list of trends for the year 2018. These results helped with the direction of the following phases.

After the research the creative process started with concepting. Four initial concepts were created. These were later brought down to one definitive concept that merged the best of two original concepts. Based on this concept ideas were written down to decide how to execute the concept.

Based on the concept and ideas some design prototypes for the portfolio were made. Based on feedback and experimentation the best design was chosen and tested with users. Their feedback was then used to improve the prototype.

Besides the design of the portfolio a logo and some animations were designed. The logo was to be used on the portfolio while the animations were a side project to grow in new skills.

After finishing the portfolio design the final product was made in code. The concept consisted of two unique parts: a timeline and a quetzal bird. The timeline was made fully functional in the final product while the quetzal bird was animated in the side project.

Because the portfolio isn't 100% complete its success can't be determined yet, but based on the reactions from users the new website has a promising future. The recommendations based on the experienced process are as follows: take time to plan and prioritize, and feel free to experiment as much as possible design-wise as this is a rare commercial project where you are your own boss.

# Glossary/Word List

- **Adobe After Effects:**  
Software from Adobe that can be used for video editing, visual effects and animation.
- **Adobe Illustrator:**  
Software from Adobe that can be used to create illustrations and icons/logos.
- **Adobe Xd:**  
Software from Adobe that can be used to create prototypes for websites and apps.
- **Bounce rate:**  
The amount of time someone spends on a website before leaving it. The lower the time the higher the bounce rate.
- **Brandguide:**  
A document with rules and guidelines that explain how a brand works.
- **Brutalism:**  
Design movement that rebels against modern web design. It looks rugged and shows a lack of concern to look comfortable or easy.
- **Community Manager:**  
An employee that works as the ambassador of a company or brand on the web by building and maintaining communities on social media.
- **Concept:**  
An idea for a product. A rule or idea saying how something should be done.
- **CSS (Cascading Style Sheets):**  
A web-based coding language used to create and change layouts of web pages.
- **Design (prototyping):**  
Creating something based on a concept to demonstrate how it is supposed to look and work.
- **Design (graphic):**  
The process of visual communication and problem-solving through the use of typography, photography and illustration.
- **Design (web):**  
The process of creating a website through the use of layout, content production and graphic design.
- **Font:**  
A set of printable or displayable text characters in a specific style and size.
- **Footer:**  
A footer is the bottom portion of a webpage that often contains the contact details and social media icons.
- **HTML (HyperText Markup Language):**  
A web-based coding language used to create webpages.
- **Javascript:**  
A web-based coding language used to create dynamic elements for webpages. The code can run inside a browser after the page has already been loaded.
- **jQuery:**  
A Javascript library that streamlines Javascript and allows for more functionality.
- **Layout:**  
How design elements are placed on a (web)page.
- **Longlist:**  
Concepting technique that consists of creating a list of words related to a general idea.
- **MoSCoW method:**  
A prioritisation method used to decide which requirements to complete first, which must come later and which to exclude.
- **PR (Personal Relations):**  
Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.
- **Penultimate:**  
The second to last.
- **Responsive:**  
A usage of HTML and CSS so that a webpage adapts to look good on every screen size, from smartphone to desktop.
- **Quetzal:**  
A green- and red colored bird with a very long tail that can be found in Central America. It is the national bird of Guatemala and played a big role in Mesoamerican (Aztec and Maya) mythology.
- **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):**  
Search engine optimization is a set of strategies to increase the amount of visitors to a website by getting a better placement in search engines like Google, Bing and Yahoo.
- **SL (Sociedad Limitada):**  
As in Awwwards Online SL, SL is used to indicate small or medium sized companies in Spanish speaking countries.
- **UI (User Interface):**  
Everything designed in a device that the user can interact with like screens, buttons and digital contact forms.
- **UX (User Experience):**  
The art of planning and designing products so that the interactions with the product are as positive as possible.
- **Viewport:**  
The users' visible area of a webpage.
- **WordPress:**  
A popular platform that allows users to create their own websites.

# 1. Introduction

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Only ten seconds. That's how much time a website has to make a good impression. The company Awwwards knows all about this. They let their users democratically vote for the quality of a website submitted to their online platform.

With over 30.000 sites total and three big conferences a year the company has proven themselves to be a juggernaut in the field of web design. And on the shoulders of this giant their interns get the chance to make their very own portfolio.

A portfolio has to give a full impression of the creator within 10 seconds. The smallest mistakes can be a turnoff in these vital first seconds. So what can be done to make a good impression? In this report you will be guided through the creation of a new portfolio: from the conception of the first ideas to the development of the final product.

The journey starts with the requirements and continues with an extensive research. All the new knowledge from the research will be combined into ideas. Those ideas will be made into prototypes, and after testing with users like you the best prototype will be transformed into a fully fledged portfolio.



# 2. The Company.

## 2.1 The Office

Awwwards Online SL (Sociedad Limitada, so a small to medium sized company) is located in Valencia, Spain. They started out in 1999 as a rookie design agency under the name Tierra Virtual SL. Besides their projects for clients they also had several side projects, including the platform Awwwards which they created in 2011. Due to its success Tierra Virtual decided to focus solely on Awwwards in the same year, renaming themselves in the process.

Despite their big online presence Awwwards only has one office. As of now there are twelve people working in this office (including two interns) with a thirteenth long-distance employee. However, a quick search on LinkedIn will show you many more people that are associated with Awwwards as jury members. This will be explained in 2.2.

## 2.2 The Platform & Products

Awwwards connects digital creatives and developers from all over the world, and gives them a platform for inspiration and cooperation. By paying a fee users can submit their website (ranging from portfolios to corporate websites to web-based games) to the platform. The website will then be judged by jury members (industry professionals working at or with their own agency) and community members based on several criteria like Design, Usability and Creativity. The best websites make it to honorable mention, site of the day, site of the month, or even site of the year. The best sites also make it into the yearly book "365 best websites around the world" which is published yearly by Awwwards.

Besides the website Awwwards hosts yearly conferences. Currently they have three conferences a year. At these conferences influential designers talk about various design-related topics. The next conference will be in Amsterdam this february.

Finally, Awwwards allows users to collect websites and blog posts. These collections can be used as inspiration for future projects. Awwwards themselves also has public collections on general topics like portfolio websites, website footers, 404 error pages, animations and color schemes like black/white, retro or any main color.

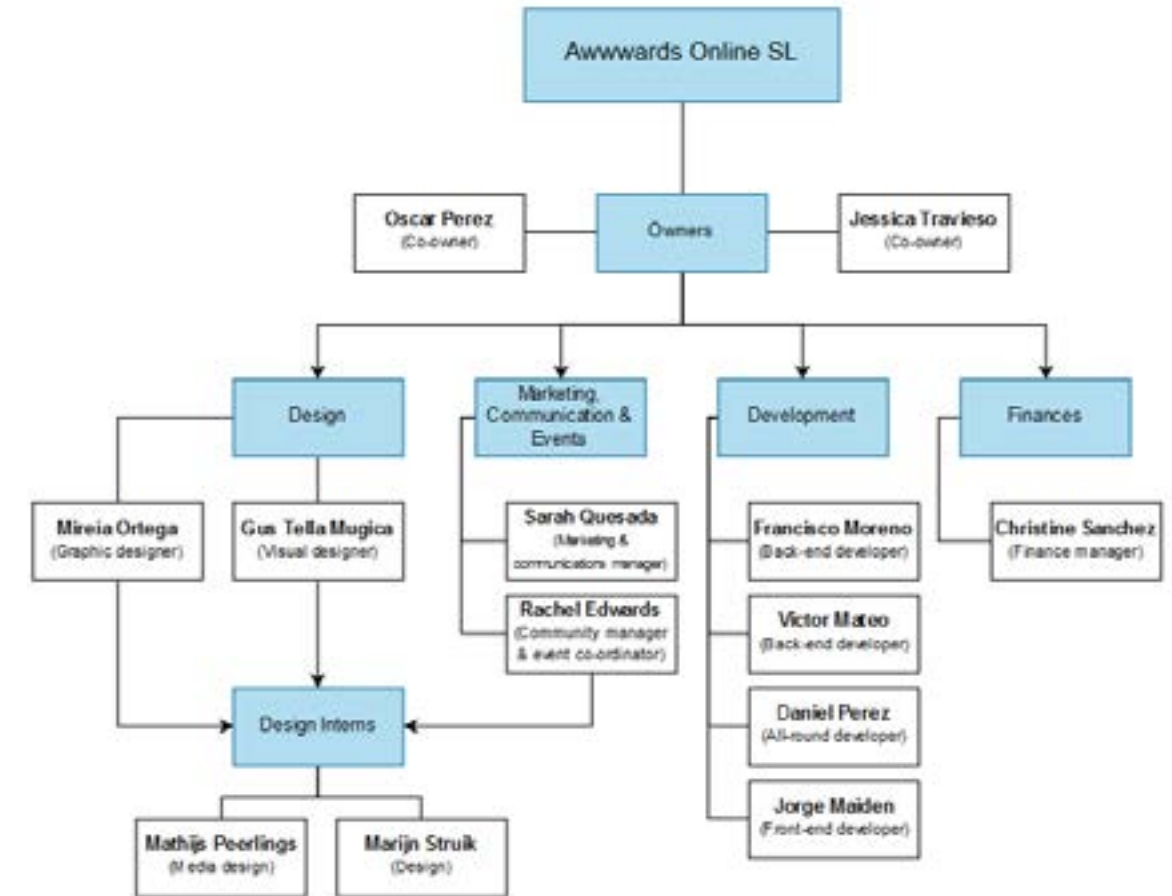


## 2.3 Competition & Market Position

In 2014 Awwwards was the most visited online awards platform in the world. The competitors of Awwwards are actually more like rivals/friends than competition. Platforms that form the "competition" are FWA, CSS Design Awards, Digital Design Days, Webbys and Smashing Magazine.

One thing that makes Awwwards unique when compared to the "competition" is their yearly conferences. Awwwards actually collaborated with some competitors like FWA and Smashing Magazine, with the owner of Smashing Magazine having been a speaker at one of Awwwards' conferences.

Strangely, there isn't really a fight for market share between platforms like Awwwards, FWA and the CSS Design Awards. It's very common for creators of websites to have an account at multiple platforms, therefore submitting their website on more than just one. This is actually the main reason for Awwwards and FWA to collaborate: they noticed how some websites became Site/FWA of the day on the same day on both platforms.



## 2.4 Organization Structure

Awwwards doesn't have a large office and therefore no big departments, but there is of course a separation between jobs. The main departments are design, development, marketing & communication/PR and finances. Interns at the company can either join for a design or a development internship, though thus far it has only been design interns. My internship is in design, meaning that I cooperate with the designers and fellow design intern, but also with the community managers, as they manage social media content and what should be made for the platforms.

The office doesn't have a strict atmosphere: there's no dress code, and as long as you deliver good work it doesn't matter much how or from where.

It's common that employees do work from home, from long distances (León) or even from other countries (After the conferences).

Communication is mainly done in person, via Google Hangouts or via e-mail. In the organogram above the departments are in blue and the people in white. Design interns answer directly to Rachel, Mireia and Gus.

A few important things to note that may not be obvious from the organogram: Oscar Perez and Jessica Travieso, the co-owners, are married. Daniel Perez the developer is the brother of Oscar. Both interns are Dutch, which is a common nationality for Awwwards' interns, but there have been interns of other nationalities as well.



# 3. The Project declassified

## 3.1 Starting Situation

As a beginning designer the personal portfolio is perhaps the most confronting project one can undertake. It demands of you to look critically at yourself and what you want to be, who you want your audience to be and how you want to show yourself on the internet.

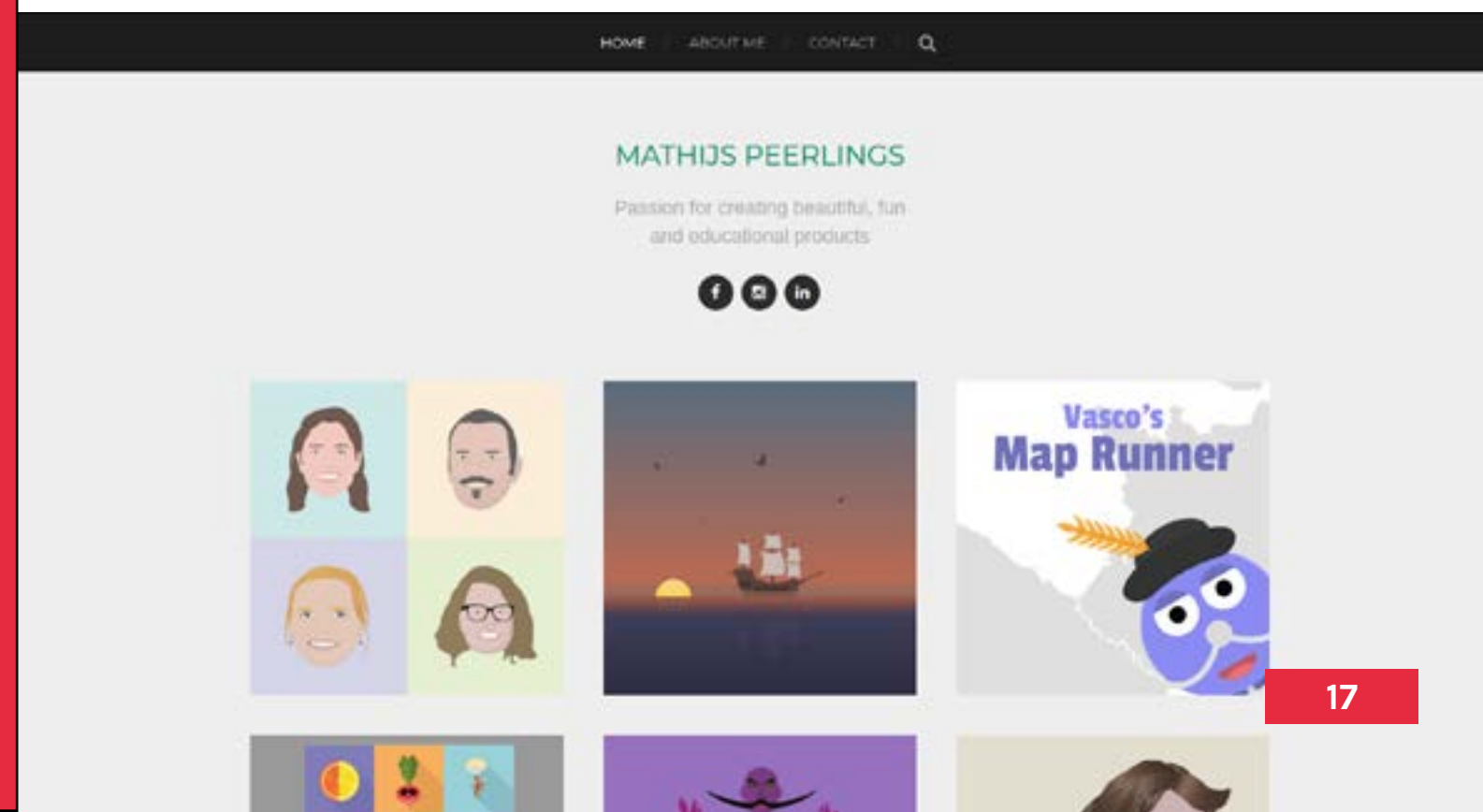
There is currently a personal portfolio online at [mathijspeerlings.com](http://mathijspeerlings.com). This portfolio was actually originally made for Awwwards. However, even as it was being made, it did not feel personal. The development was quite restricted because it was made in Wordpress and with time constraints. A logo is absent, the content is very in-the-face and a footer is missing. A footer is the bottom portion of a webpage that often contains the contact details and social media icons.

In this era of information and misinformation it's more important than ever to make a personal and truthful impression. Not just that, but it should also be done extremely effectively: most users stay on a website

for no more than 15 seconds, and this still is a generous number. This is also called the bounce rate: when a lot of users leave the website quickly the bounce rate is high. This is perhaps the best indicator of a poorly constructed website.

To put it simply: the current portfolio is not complete and therefore gives no real impression of the creator, which results in a high bounce rate. The goal of a portfolio is to attract and convince design agencies and other customers to get in contact. As of now, it fails at both. This brings us to the problem definition:

**Due to the huge amounts of new inspiration and knowledge that have been made available by Awwwards, the student has come to the realization that his current personal portfolio is not at a professional level.**



## 3.2 The Assignment

The goal of the project is to create a professional and personal portfolio. This portfolio is of sufficient quality to attract traffic of the target audience and to convince them to get in contact. It also displays the personality of the creator and the projects he has made.

Compared to other internships the position of the internship company is rather unique: Awwwards has expressed that there aren't any company projects that are fitting for their interns, and that in their environment the creation of a portfolio is a unique opportunity. This is because Awwwards loves the internet and all its possibilities. They connect digital creatives from all over the world and give them a platform for inspiration and cooperation.

That's why they offer all their interns the opportunity to create their own personal portfolio website to showcase their skills and creativity. With hundreds of high quality websites and lots of source material and expertise available, it's possible to create a brand-new and modernized portfolio by standing on the shoulders of giants.

This brings us to the project description:

**Create a professional design portfolio that is representative of the creator, justified by inspiration, research and views from experts.**

## 3.3 Requirements and planning

The requirements for this project were arranged by importance via the MoSCoW method. This method is used mostly by software developers to prioritize program features. The letters in this method stand for Must, Should, Could and Won't. By making a list of the most important requirements time can be saved in the development process. This method was used for this project because it was important to scope the final product. A complete portfolio has a lot of different parts that need to be considered, so to make the assignment realistic some things were made more important than others.

Based on this prioritizing the process was divided into five "sprints" of two to six weeks. All of these sprints form the different chapters of this report. They are Research, Concepting, Designing & Prototyping, Usertesting and Coding. In these five chapters you will be guided through the process of creating the portfolio. The following chapter is The Research.

### MUST

- Research on portfolios
- Concepts, prototypes and usertests
- Code files
- Website link

### SHOULD

- Logo & Design process
- Experimental prototype(s)

### COULD

- Brandguide
- SEO (Search Engine optimization)
- Launch the full website

# 4. The Research

## ~~The Search~~

## ~~Search~~

### 4.1 Introduction

Now that the assignment is set in stone a lot of questions arise: How does one make a good portfolio? What tools are available? How would a portfolio get a good grade on Awwwards? Many design students don't like to admit it, but the research is a vital part of the design process. A design can look great, but if it doesn't fit with the company it's still not good enough. A well-executed research serves as ammunition against all the uncertainties that may appear later down the line.

In order to gain as much information on the topic as possible a main question and sub questions were created. These can be seen on the right. The sub questions together should be able to answer the main question.

### 4.2 Process

The Research Document was structured to answer all the sub questions in separate chapters. The research methods varied per question. Some of them were library research: using existing sources to gather available information. These questions were answered to gather data from various sources to gain some perspective on priorities. The final question used field research in the form of interviews: using information from experts to learn more about the application context of the existing sources.

#### Main question:

Which design factors are decisive in setting up a professional portfolio in 2018 and 2019?

#### Sub questions:

- Why were Awwwards' criteria chosen, and what systems do similar agencies use?
- What are the trends for 2018 in design, UX/UI and web technology?
- How did some of the creators of Awwwards' successful sites go through the design process?
- How do design experts apply the Awwwards criteria and design trends to determine the quality of a website?

Besides the content itself there were two personal focuses in this phase of the project. First of, it was important to say more with less text. The document was written to-the-point so it remained appealing to read through. Another important contributor to this was the design. In order to improve design skills and personal style the document was made more visually appealing than documents from earlier semesters. A print design expert gave feedback along the way so the document could get more polished with every iteration.

## 4.3 Conclusions

The main revelations from the **first** question were about the reasoning behind Awwwards' voting system and those of competitors. Simply said, the voting system of Awwwards was chosen because to the founders it best represented the qualities of a well-made website. These qualities in order of importance are Design, Usability, Creativity and Content. Competitors chose for similar but other factors like a focus on usability and a subjective voting system. Awwwards' system is still being revised. The reason is an unfair system for websites where information access is more important than creativity like universities, government and corporate websites.

The **second** question was the biggest one: it was basically three smaller questions in one. In this trend hunt important trends in design, user experience/user interaction and development/coding were collected and sorted. There were a few trends that counted in multiple categories that therefore were the most important of 2018. First, simplicity in design and coding tools is important: reducing clutter saves everyone time. Second was the big increase in mobile usage: websites need to be mobile friendly now more than ever. Third and final was the reaction to the simplistic, structured and "the way it should be" attitude from big companies: the rise of small design changes like asymmetry and brighter colors to styles like retro and brutalism. Brutalism is a way of designing that looks rugged and with a lack of concern to look comfortable or easy. It still follows (some) traditional design rules but rejects limiting creative freedom.

The **third and fourth** question were both focused on the process of creative experts. Their way of working helped to form a practical mindset from the library research gathered data. The third question was about how some design agencies went through the design process for their clients. The information was from Awwwards case studies on some of the winning websites. The process was divided into the concept, the design choices, the programming tools and the application of those tools into the website.

The **fourth** question consisted of interviews with three design experts active at Awwwards. They were asked to rate three websites besides the regular interview questions. This way it was possible to see what experts value in a website. They attached the most value to a creative and attractive design with typography and/or visuals that was still user-friendly by using a clear layout. Of course many of these words are very subjective. That's also the conclusion of the research as a whole: there's lists of interesting trends, analyzed case studies and interviews with design experts, but really the trends, just like the people that apply them, will always be changing as the market demands.



# BRUTALISM



# 5. The Con...? cep...? ting!

## Attachments

III: Self Analysis Document

IV: Concepts Document

V: Final Concept & Process Document

VI: Concepting Feedback Document

## 5.1 Self Analysis

One of the most difficult parts of creating a personal portfolio is actually making it personal. In this kind of project you have to create a brand for yourself in order to create a fitting website. That's why a self analysis was made between the research and concepting phase before continuing with the creative process. This document served as a part preparation, part reflection and part research. It's informal and was meant to build a foundation for the personal branding. It organized the results from the research into a personal narrative to write down concrete goals for the concepting phase. Writing down your own interests and goals creates a peace of mind as you are better able to prioritize things to pursue.

That's why the document was laid out in an order that went deeper and deeper into personal reflection. It started with general content for the website, continued with taste and preference based on inspiration and research, followed up with personal expertise and ended with questions regarding personal growth.

The most important conclusion from the document was that my weaknesses are/were really my underdeveloped strengths. The three main strengths of my attitude/work were being unconventional, playful and out-of-the-box. The three main weaknesses were overthinking, stubbornness and looking for approval.

## 5.2 The Process

### 5.2.1 Inspiration

Compared to the other project phases concepting is very abstract. There's no designing, reading or coding involved: a large part takes place in your head. At its core it's the process of putting all the gathered information together and putting it into both a creative and a realistic form. An important part of this is inspiration. One difficult thing to me in the past was looking at and utilizing inspiration. In reality, it's vital to create a good product. The mind can only think of and use things it has already processed once with its senses. So the more you see the more information you can filter into fitting to you or not. If you know what you like and why you get a much more developed sense of taste and style.

Great sources of inspiration are Awwwards, Pinterest, Behance, Dribbble, Instagram and of course books. My personal favorites are Awwwards for web design, Behance for design projects and Pinterest for creative ideas. I always prefer looking at a lot of things and using what I remember to create an idea over directly taking and combining a few existing ideas, though this isn't always the best choice. This mindset is the reason why the portfolio inspiration collection items on my Awwwards account aren't easily recognizable in the final concepts.

## 5.2.2 Creative process

Before the actual concepting started five personal desires for the portfolio were written down in a separate document. They were based on the inspirational portfolios gathered in Awwwards. [My favorite personal collection on Awwwards](#) consisted of websites that only used illustrations and no photos, and I really liked this style. The crazy playfulness in the successful websites was a bit too daring and crazy to me for a first portfolio, but I did take the inspiration with me to be a bit more playful with the concepts.

The main method of generating ideas was creating a longlist. In this method you write down all the words you can think of with your goals and known information. As you write down more and more words new and more out-there words pop up. These leave the door open to connecting words and thereby generating ideas. It's a good method to warm up creatively and write down the projects' needs.

After the inspiration and the longlist the concepting could really begin. The phase itself wasn't actually that long: because of the good preparations and warming up the concepts came quite easily. After feedback the two best concepts were revised and combined into one final concept.

Finally I made a list with ideas for both parts of the final concept. These ideas explored the various executions of the concept. The best ones were used in an improved final description of the concept.



## 5.3 Concepts

The full concept descriptions can be read in the attachments. Below is a short version for each. The concepts on the right side were combined to create the final concept.

**Offbeat:** This concept wants to focus on standing out, or being a bit off. This could be small differences in execution, minor changes that give the portfolio a unique look. The design would be a bit unconventional, but not something like brutalism: it's off, but it also makes sense.

**Living characters:** This concept wants to put the content on the forefront in a unique way. Some of the pieces on the portfolio will not just be visible in a gallery, but also as separate, animated characters. This would also serve as a way to practice animation as an experimental prototype.

### Final Concept

**The timeline & The quetzal:** This concept combines the best parts of the quetzal & timeline concepts. The quetzal will appear as the element that connects the possible pages, while also serving to create a good first impression. The images will be turned into mockups as much as possible to put my work into a more practical context. By animating the quetzal and timeline I also used small bits of one of my other concepts: living characters.

**Quetzal:** I want to take some approaches that are more out-of-the-box and more simplistic, giving the content more attention by keeping the website itself uncomplicated. The first one of these is the quetzal. The quetzal is a beautiful bird that is also my favorite animal. With its unique looks there are some options to use it creatively on the website.

**Timeline:** As I said in my self analysis my strength is in my growth over the quality of my last post. I also wanted something that can be both formal and more personal. That's why the timeline is a good option. The idea is that the landing page is a vertical timeline that goes from newest to older. On this timeline I could attach pieces to the time they were created, showing both my growth and my best pieces.

So in short: a portfolio website that contains both a timeline and a quetzal. The quetzal serves as a connection between the pages while the timeline helps as a navigation between the different projects. The form of both is still not completely decided, though there is a good sense of direction now: the quetzal sits on the right side of the page while the timeline is attached to the bottom of the viewport (the visible part of the website within your browser. In this case attached to the bottom means the timeline moves along with your scrolling). It's time to start prototyping!



# 6. The Designing & Prototyping

## 6.1 Design Justification

Now the prototyping and designing phase of the project will be explained. If you want to read a more in-depth explanation of the design choices you can read the Design Justification document in the attachments.

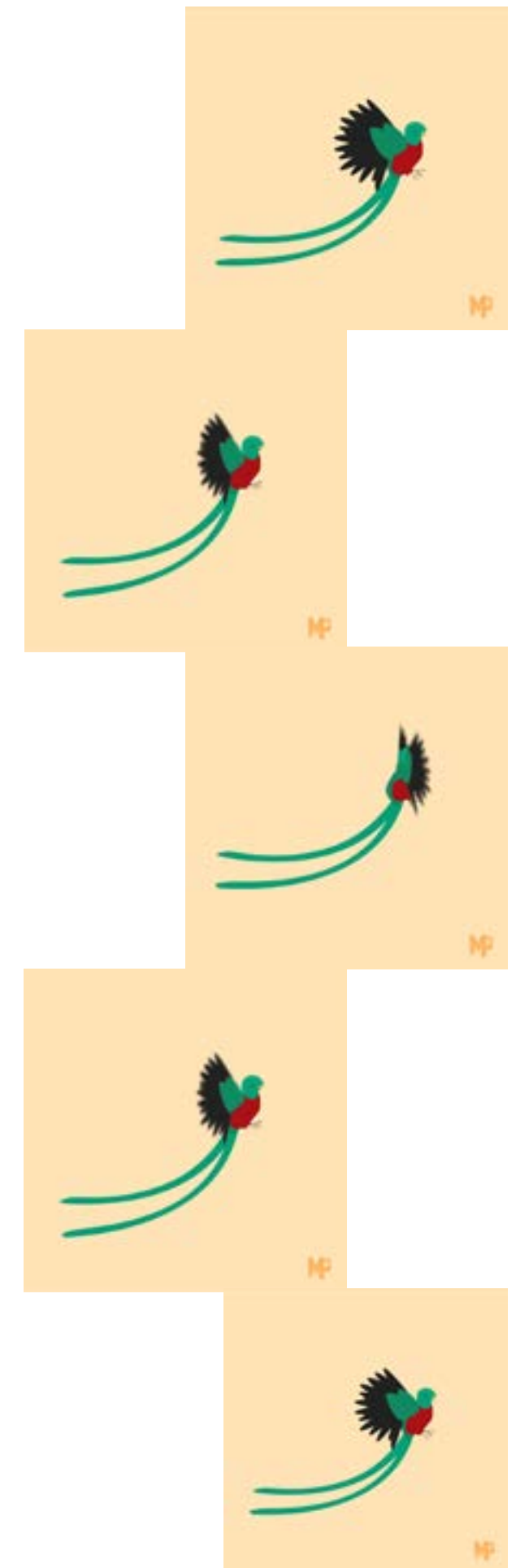
## 6.2 Animation

The final design related assignment was the creation of an animation. This assignment was chosen separately from the portfolio project to explore a new skill. The design assignments related to the portfolio itself can be found on the next pages.

The goal was to animate an older personal artwork of a quetzal bird. The used program was Adobe After Effects. This program is editing software that can be used for video editing, visual effects and animation.

Though four days were made available for animating it turned out to only take two. Thanks to prior knowledge of Adobe programs and an already available animatable character the creation was very fluent.

After the first version a second version was made with more fluent motion, and while still in the flow a second animation of another personal artwork was made. Though the animations weren't originally made with the aim of adding them to the portfolio their quality is high enough to do so anyways.



### Attachments

VII: Experimental Prototype Concept  
IX: Design Justification Document

# 6.3 Logo

## 6.3.1 Paper sketches

A logo has to represent the values and products of a company or individual. Your whole personality has to be condensed into one simple visual. The literal way you think while making a logo is expressed in the result. So it's important to think freely and creatively, to not feel restricted by what it should be.

I didn't get this immediately: my first page of sketches was full of boring and unoriginal logos. Only after almost the whole page was full did the inspiration kick in, though it still wasn't that great.

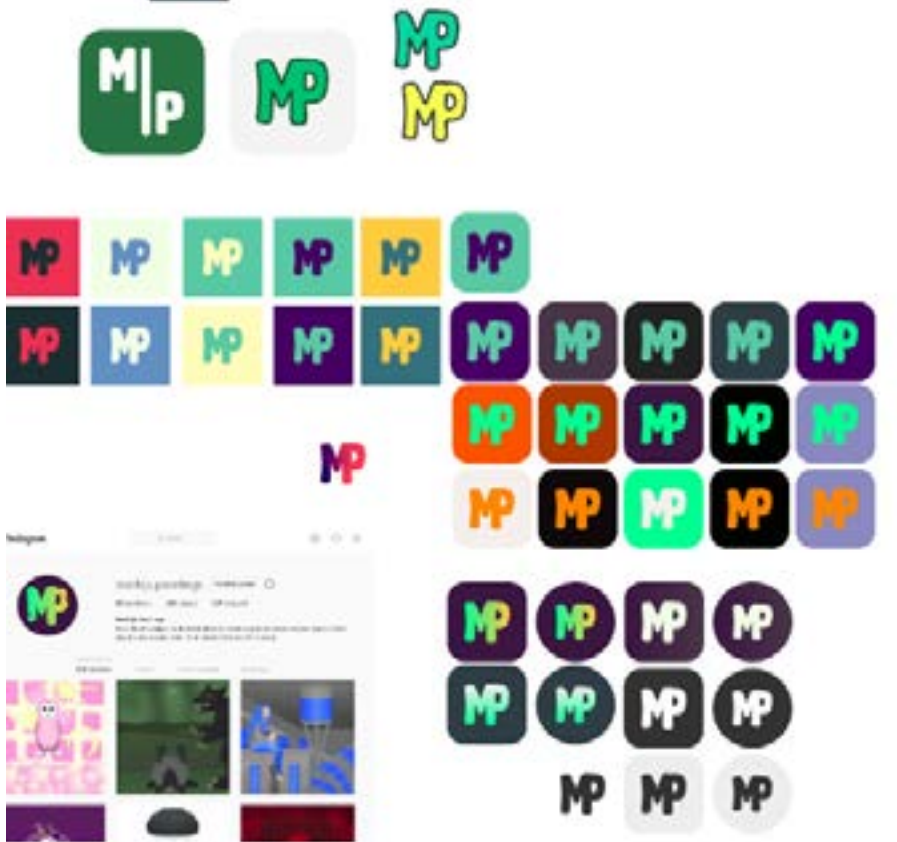
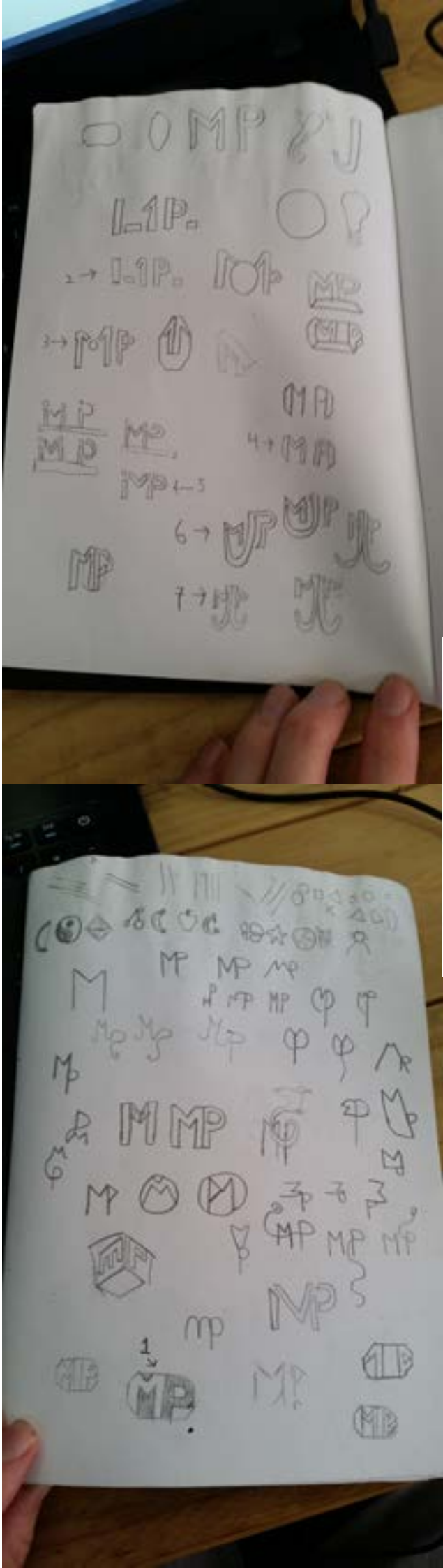
## 6.3.2 Digital logos

The digital logos were a major improvement over the sketches. It also took a while to get comfortable but once I did a few promising logos came up. On the right you can see how the interesting logo came up and was experimented upon until it reached a definitive color scheme.

The logo had an unexpected color scheme of dark gray and white. While experimenting the realization came that not using colors meant that all colors would fit, so it doesn't clash with what I make. The font (display style of the text) is also fitting with my style as it's visibly illustrative and playful.

The reason was that I hadn't done logos or drawing long enough to feel comfortable creating something on paper. My main tool has been Adobe Illustrator (software to create illustrations and icons/logos). That's why I decided to recreate a few of the best paper logos in the program, although I quickly realised that working from scratch would be much better.

After feedback I was challenged to do some more experiments with the logo to make it even more personal. So I made a bunch of varieties and finally got to the definitive logo that would be used. The small cut off pieces represent "never stop learning" and "always continue to grow as a person".



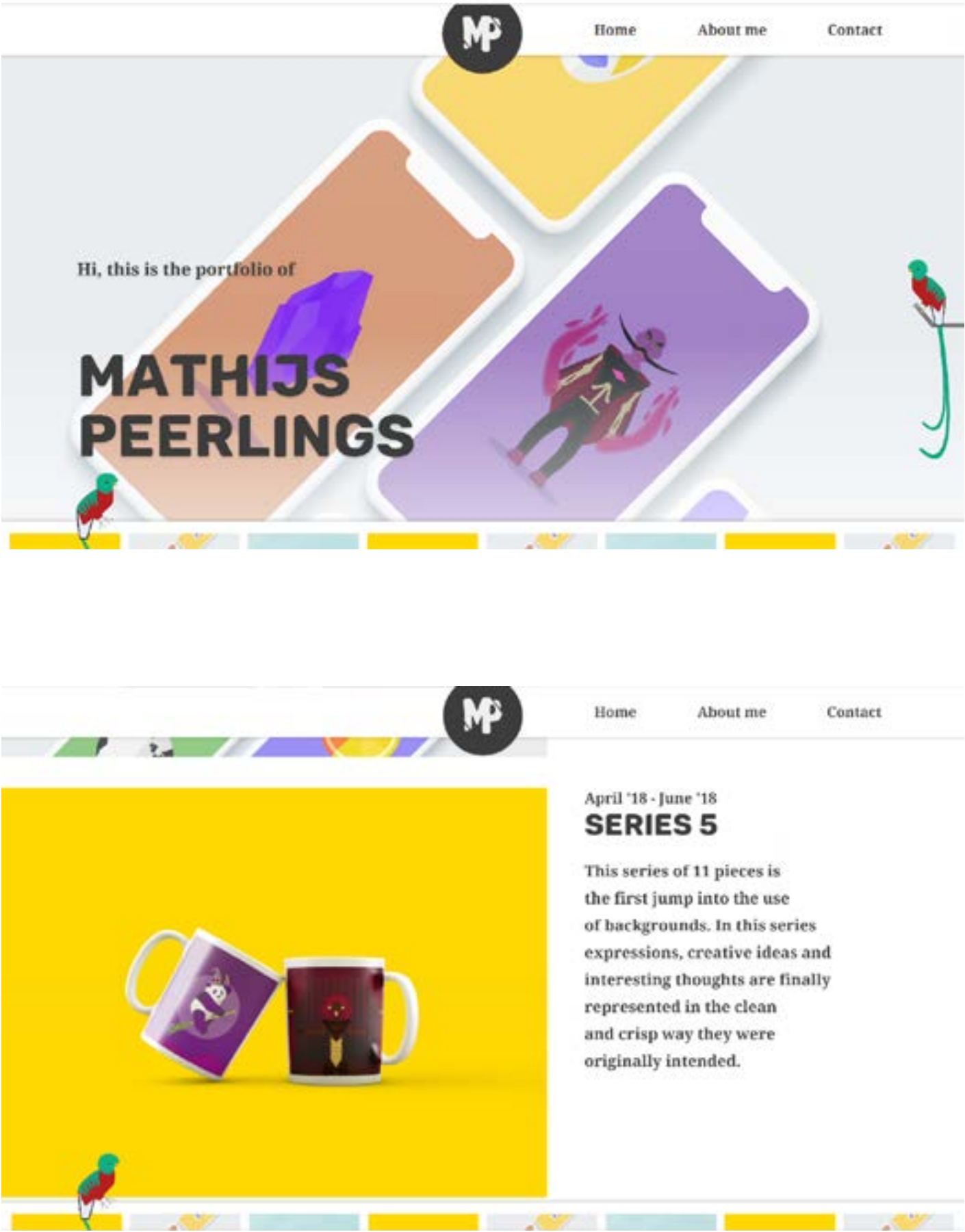
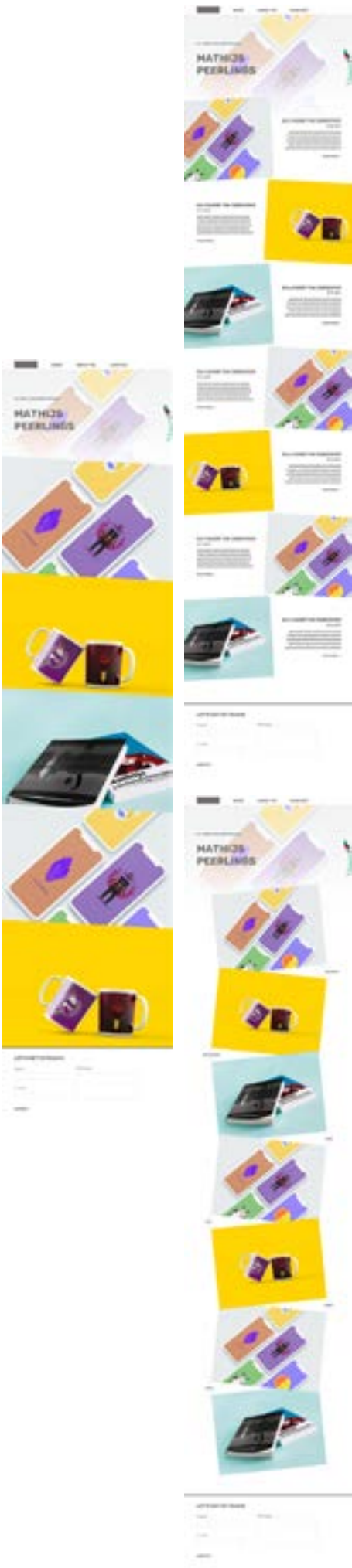


# 6.4 Portfolio

The design phases of the portfolio and logo were quite tough. I hadn't done both in a while so a warming up was definitely necessary. To warm up with the portfolio I made paper sketches with some crazy ideas. These sketches didn't contribute much to the final design besides a few minor choices like the structure of the navigation bar.

After the sketches Adobe Xd was used to make prototypes. Adobe Xd is a program from the creator of Photoshop and Illustrator to create prototypes for websites and apps. Exactly twenty experiments and a lot of feedback later the best portfolio design out of the bunch was chosen. On the page to the right you can see some screenshots from the chosen design. On the right of this page you can see some rejected designs.

Despite not being animated the concepts are recognizable in the prototype. You have the quetzal sitting on the side of the page, flying to the left. The timeline is officially sticky on the bottom with images and text for each project in order from newest to oldest. When making the later prototypes the realization from the logo process was carried over: using little color in the website itself meant that the actual works on the page were more prominent. This meant that everything on the website itself was either white or dark gray. Using this was quite revelational and gave a new perspective on color in design: when there's no colors in use every single color can be used for animations, images and the logo to attract attention. Now the design is settled, but what do the users think of it? We'll now go to the penultimate (second to last) phase of the project: usertesting.



# 7. You, You, sertesting

## Attachments

IX: Testplan Usertests

X: Usertests Results

## 7.1 Starting Situation

Though the design is not finished, the main parts are in place. Every page has been made and the layout (how elements are placed on a page) is almost solid. So next comes another important lesson in design: everyone (in the target audience) has to understand it. Some things may make sense to you as a designer, but they may still be strange for those not as involved in the design process.

That's where usertests come in: putting the design to the test with users to find weak spots and points of improvement. Before approaching users it's important to decide what kind of test you want to do. Will the test be with sketches or with digital designs, do you want to know the users' emotional reaction or the ease of finding pages? These decisions are written down in a test plan as the goals of the test.

## 7.2 Goals

The goal of the user tests is to determine the quality of the digital design. Or more specifically, if the design elements and layout are suited for the target audience. The website has to be attractive to and clear for both recruiters and designers. Based on this information the main question for the usertests is as follows:

**"In what ways does the prototype appeal to the target audience and how can more engagement be achieved?"**

The sub-questions to get to the main question are as follows:

1. What is your first impression of this website?
2. How would you describe the style of this website?
3. What do you like about the landing page?
4. What do you think could be done better on this page?
5. Find the social media links.
6. Find the contact form.
7. Find the creation date of a portfolio item.
8. What part or parts of the website do you find the most interesting?
9. For what kind of work would you hire the owner of this portfolio?
10. What would you do differently if this were your website?

## 7.3 Process and Results

### 7.3.1 The tests and feedback

The plan was executed with two participants. The first usertest gave some good insights, although the Spanish language barrier was a problem that broke the flow of the test. This misunderstanding lead to most questions being answered out of order, which wasn't really a bad thing because the user freely said what she thought. The second user test was with a Dutch person, so the language barrier wasn't an issue here. The second user analyzed the prototype more in-depth which gave many insights, with the total amount of feedback from both users together being 24 points.

These points were later separated into small fixes, changes and suggestions. All but two of them were applied to the prototype to get to the final design. These last two suggestions were not used because they were part of the timeline concept and therefore would make more sense in the coded version of the website.

Regrettably the conclusion in the test results document was based on the direct feedback points and not on the main question from the test plan. That's why the answer to this question will be put here after the fact.

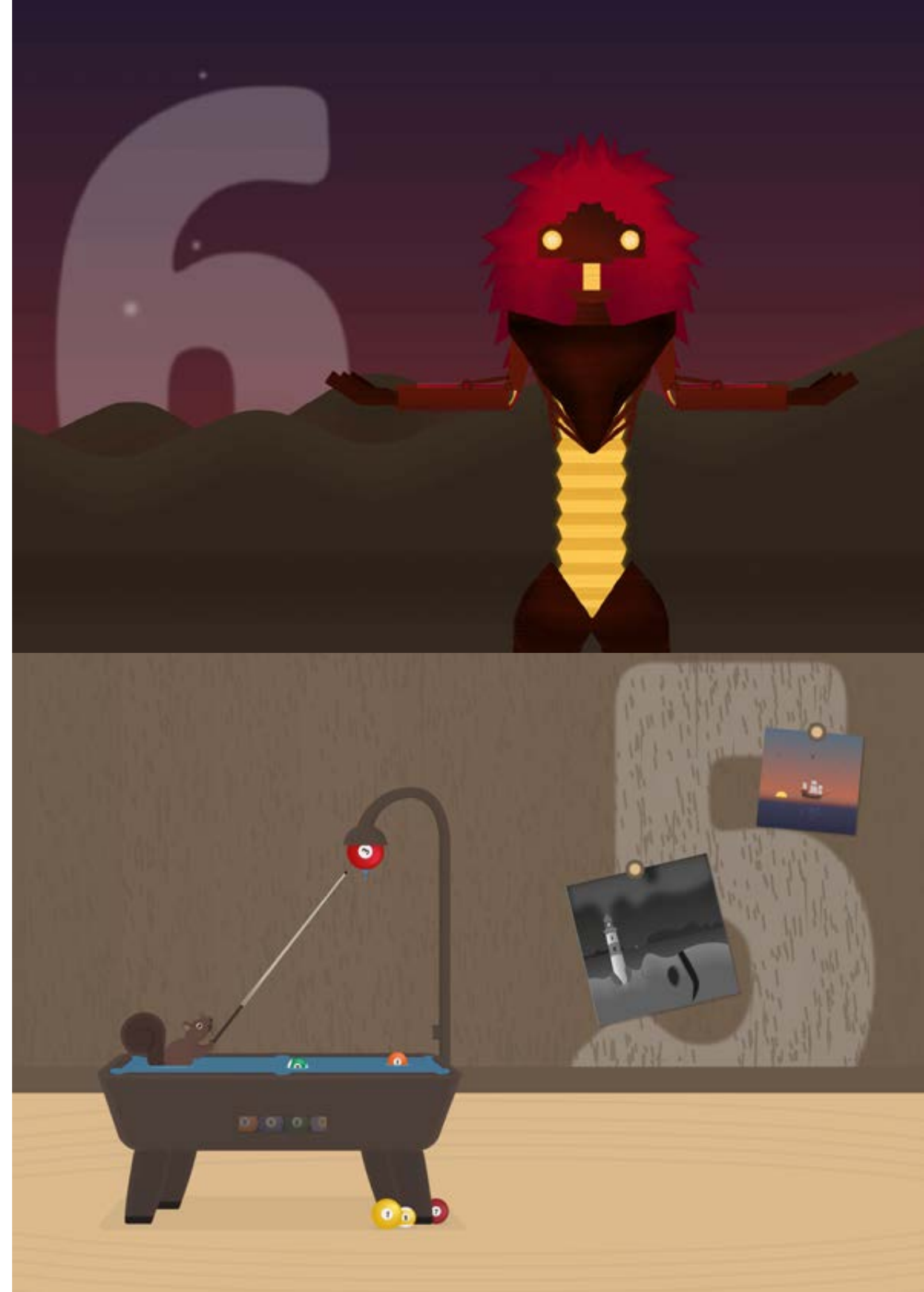
### 7.3.2 Conclusion

**"In what ways does the prototype appeal to the target audience and how can more engagement be achieved?"**

The biggest appeal of the prototype to the target audience is that the goal is clear. The portfolio is visibly a portfolio, colorful, playful and illustrative: the design is simple in a good way. The logo is a good representation of the brand. The way of achieving more engagement was mainly a better use of typography.

The fonts themselves fit with the style of the portfolio, but the readability of the prototype wasn't good enough to keep the user engaged with the content. The content itself was mostly good as it is clearly fitting with the owners' style. It was a point of improvement to pay more attention to composition with the definitive images: the placeholders weren't good enough with this. To the right are some of the definitive and improved images.

With the user tests finished and the prototype improved to a final version it's time to start creating the real thing. Dive into the process of the last phase of the project: the coding.





```
<div class="Coding">
```

```
<h1>
```

# 8. The Coding

```
</h1>
```

```
<p style="display:none;">
```

```
"Hello World" joke</p>
```

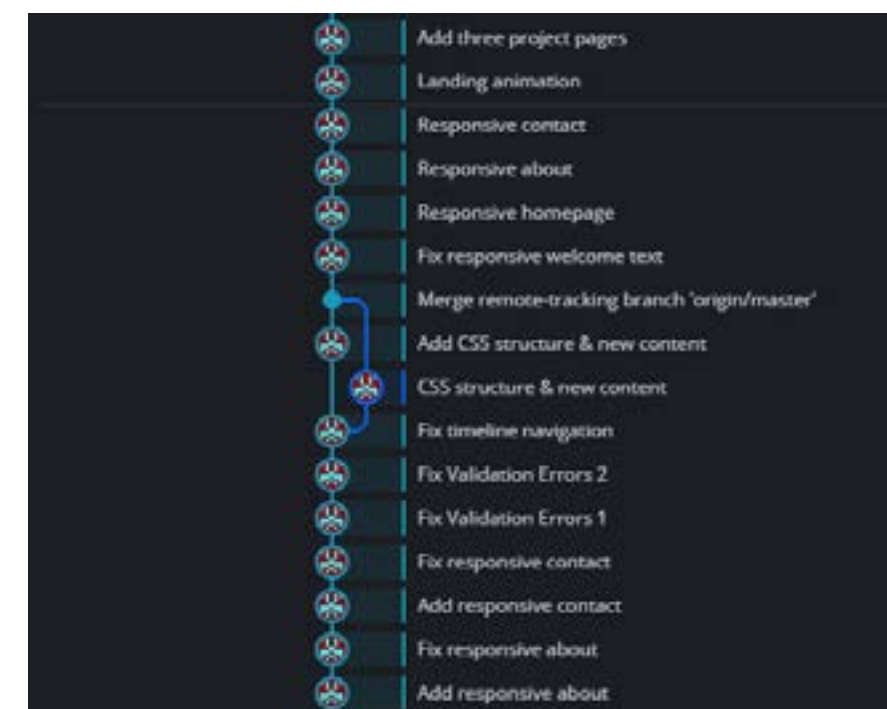
```
</div>
```

## 8.1 Setup and structure

When you start coding you may be tempted to just create a new document and start typing. While that's okay with a small project it will quickly get disorganized if you keep adding more and more code. To prevent this as far as possible the program Git was used.

On your computer you have folders with files in them. You open the folder, then the file. You edit the file and save it to make changes. If you want to make more versions or copies your folder will be full of documents with very similar names. Git works differently: every time you save your changes a new version is added to the "tree". This means that if you broke your code you can go back in time to a version that still worked. You can even see what you changed in your code since then. It's a vertical system instead of a horizontal one: you can still view and edit older layers. Below is a visual representation of this system. Git has many more options available, but for this project the basic functions were sufficient.

The used languages are HTML (HyperText Markup Language), CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) and jQuery. HTML is text put in a specific format that browsers can read and process. CSS is used to change the style of the HTML. You can define the sizes of "blocks" that form the website, change among others fonts and colors, and even create simple animations. jQuery is basically a streamlined version of a language called Javascript. With Javascript you can write programs that run inside the browser. It allows you to manipulate elements even after the page is already fully loaded. An example of this is clicking a button to change its color.





## 8.2 Process

As I have been coding more and more I've started to form a process. At the start blank files for all expected pages are created. Then all the building blocks of the front page are created. Each block gets its own color so the grid layout is clear while adding new parts. Placeholder images and text are used and the navigation bar is created. This process is repeated for the other pages, and if possible parts of previous pages are reused in new ones (like the navigation).

At this point the website should look like the prototype made in Designing & Prototyping. But on a lot of fronts it still falls flat: it's full of placeholders, there's no "energy" in it and the whole layout breaks apart when the screen is smaller (mobile).

With the foundation finished it was time to improve and polish. First the timeline was created. It moves up and back down from its original position with clicks, its images let you jump to a different part of the page and it even shows an animation when you enter the homepage.

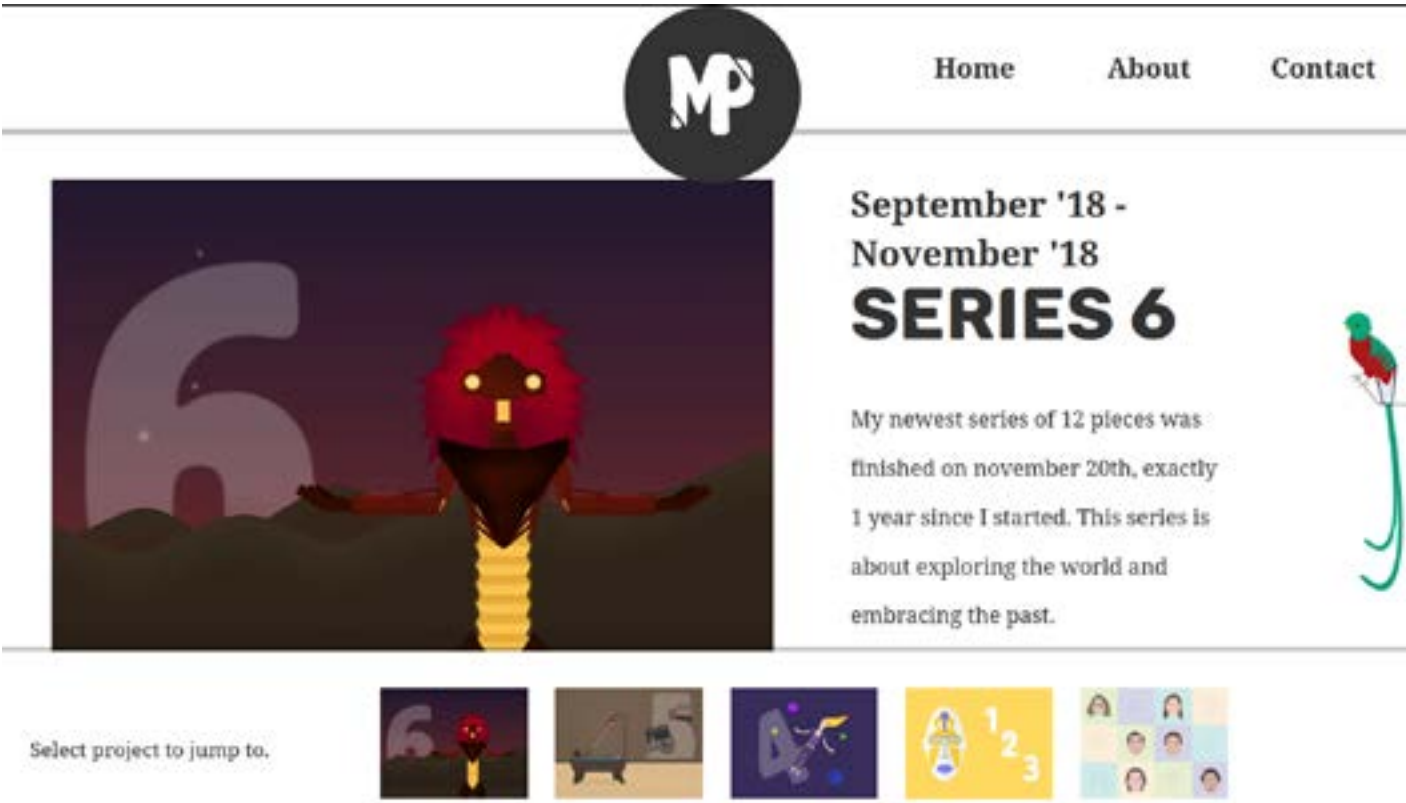
Then the website was made responsive. Responsive means that the website still looks good on different screen sizes. When you open the website on your mobile phone the images still fit on the website and the text is still readable. Even the layout changes based on the size of your screen: text below the images instead of next to them. Finally new images were made to replace the placeholders. The text too was changed to a presentable version.

At this point the website is functional. It could technically be put online, but it's still too early. The website will still need to be improved and tweaked for as long as possible. A website may be finished, but what differentiates a good site from a great site is the attention to detail. If there's something small that still looks weird in a final site it may be forgiven, but it does show that the website didn't get enough attention. Because in reality a website is never finished: whether it's major changes or simply the addition of new projects, there's always something to do.

## 8.3 Challenges

As per usual I ran into some problems while creating the website. Simply looking at the time that was spent the responsiveness of the website took the longest. To make everything look good three different varieties had to be made, but what I didn't realize was that sometimes changing something in one version carried it over to another as well. After a long time of solving and creating problems I reached a point that was sufficient. Even then there's still a lot that needs to happen on this front. Most major websites don't suffer from this problem because they already have a structure in place that does the heavy lifting for them. I purposely chose to start from zero because there's more to learn from it.

Starting from zero gave me the opportunity to find better ways to tackle basic tasks. Even though there's still space for improvement my workflow has been vastly improved. The usage of a grid made creating a layout a breeze. This system allowed me to quickly set the properties of different portfolio parts. With the portfolio coded the project is as good as finished. It was a long and very educational journey, which hopefully has been well reflected in the final product. The final chapter of this project will be the conclusion, starting on the next page.



# 9. Conclusion & Recommendations.

Now there's a fully fledged portfolio ready to be launched online. Complete with all pages and content. It has been coded from the ground up, but not before a prototype version was tested with users. Thanks to the experience of the users with the prototype valuable new information and feedback came up to improve upon the original. That prototype was based on an idea that formed after multiple rounds of feedback in the concept phase. All of that was based on a big research to gather as much information as possible. All of that was based on original requirements, a desire to create something that represents me.

So did the portfolio succeed? That's something we'll only discover later, but based on the user tests and reactions it's safe to say it did. It succeeded with some personal goals like illustrations only and a playful personal touch in the form of the quetzal bird. The coding may have been limited and rather safe, but that's okay because the focus of this internship was in design anyways. And for design a research document, a logo, animations and a website design have been made, all based on iterations and experiments.

For a project of this size the biggest recommendation is to take enough time beforehand to plan. What products are to be delivered, and how would you put these products into a logical order? If you have a good preparation with products and planning the only thing you need to do is follow it. Don't hesitate to cut out or push back less important parts: your time is limited. Do not go head over heels to create every single thing if some of them don't contribute much to the whole.

My second and final recommendation is to absorb as much information as possible when you can. Both by inspiration and making mistakes (not in the last few days before delivery of course). The portfolio is the one commercial project where you are your own boss, the one to decide what you need to have. So take that valuable opportunity to experiment. You are the one to ultimately approve of what you deliver, so there is a lot of extra time that would normally go into logistics. So try something crazy, make something strange. It may be far from good but at least you know. Especially as you are younger you have the freedom to create freely without time, stress and/or money holding you back, so use that opportunity while you can.

# Evaluation

This internship was the first time I lived away from home, the first time I travelled alone and the first time I went to a foreign country alone. Though it was challenging at first all the new discoveries waiting ahead kept me busy for the internship period. This semester I had a lot more responsibilities and I had to have much more independence. It was my responsibility to do both my own project and the tasks from Awwwards well. I felt like this went better than expected, probably because it's something that I really wanted to experience.

Overall the trajectory was quite smooth. The only big changes in the original planning were the merging of Design and Usertesting due to holidays and the extension of Coding due to having more time than planned. At the beginning there wasn't that much to do for Awwwards, but as more weekly requirements were created this was resolved.

One of the weekly tasks for Awwwards was to create 7 new elements per week, usually video's. At first I wasn't able to do video's because I didn't have the right program on my laptop or on Awwwards' Mac. After a few weeks I got to switch Mac's to one that did have the right program. Because I only made video's a few times before this I had a bad sense of how to create good quality videos, including what's important. This lead to many of my video's initially getting rejected for a different reason per video. As I got so much feedback I slowly started to adopt them into my mindset while making the video's, so the attitude shifted and the quality of the videos got better.

I also learned that planning can be quite nasty if I take it at face value. If I wrote down vague tasks I would blow them out of proportion and get stressed, if I wrote down every small step I would get stressed at the amount of things I had to do, not very helpful. I still struggle with this, so my solution was to just pick something small and get started. As I get into a flow the work quickly melts away.

The most valuable experiences from this whole internship period were the freedom and the diversity. On a regular day I needed to speak three languages and I heard at least a few more. I met people from all over the world and learned a lot from their lifestyles and traditions. All the new experiences have been very good for my creativity. I've been experimenting a lot more and didn't fear trying something new or dropping something that I spent a lot of time on.

I will confidently say that I learned more about myself this semester than the two years before. Though I was thrown into the deep two years ago this time I decided to jump in myself, and looking back it has been without much regret. All good things must come to an end, but there is more great experiences waiting for me in different places and times. We will see what the future holds. Thank you for reading.

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# I. Project Initiation Document (PID)

*PROJECT / DOCUMENTO  
DOCUMENT / DEL PROYECTO*

*MATHIJS PEERLINGS  
@ awwards.*

1.0	31-08-2018	Cover, Version control, About company, Communication
2.0	3-09-2018	Research, SMART-goals
3.0	4-09-2018	Planning, lay-out
4.0	10-09-2018	Minor edits
5.0	12-09-2018	Minor edits

## 4 *The company*

## 6 *The assignment*

## 12 *Execution*

## 14 *Planning*

## 16 *Communication*

# The Company

## About Awwwards

Awwwards started out as a design agency called Tierra Virtual. They are located in Valencia, Spain. Originally, Awwwards was one of their various side projects. However, after its success, they decided to change their name, and to focus almost solely on the Awwwards brand.

Awwwards connects digital creatives and developers from all over the world, and gives them a platform for inspiration and cooperation. By paying a fee, users can submit their website to the platform. The site will then be judged by industry professionals and community members based on several criteria like Design, Usability and Creativity.

The best websites make it to honorable mention, site of the day, site of the month, or even site of the year! The best sites also make it into the yearly book "365 best websites around the world" which is published yearly by Awwwards.

Besides the website, Awwwards also hosts yearly conferences. Currently they have three conferences a year. At these conferences influential designers talk about various design-related topics.

## Market and Competition

The competing companies of Awwwards are more like rivals/friends than competition. Companies that form the "competition" are FWA, CSS Design Awards, Digital Design Days, Webbys and Smashing Magazine.

One thing that makes Awwwards unique is the yearly conferences. Awwwards actually collaborated with some competitors like FWA and Smashing Magazine, with the owner of Smashing Magazine having been a speaker at a conference. Finally, there isn't really a fight for marketshare because most users that actually submit their site do so on multiple platforms.



# The Assignment

## Description

*Awwwards LOVES the internet and all its possibilities. They connect digital creatives from all over the world and give them a platform for inspiration and cooperation. That's why they offer all their interns the opportunity to create their own personal portfolio website to showcase their skills and creativity.*

So, the assignment is the creation of a personal portfolio. Why? Because Awwwards is THE place to work on it. With hundreds of high quality websites and lots of source material and expertise available, it's possible to create a brand-new and modernized portfolio by standing on the shoulders of giants.

## Problem definition

*The project is not in the Sage and does not directly address a problem of the company, but instead one of the student closely related to the activities of the company. This is because the company gives the professional and personal development of the student priority over anything. Awwwards' expertise in web-design is translated into the assignment of the intern creating a personal portfolio.*

*This brings us to the problem definition of the project: Due to the huge amounts of new inspiration and knowledge that have been made available by Awwwards, the student has come to the realization that his current personal portfolio is not at a professional level.*

# Tasks and products

During the project, various products will be delivered that demonstrate the progress. Below are the products with a description and scoping.

**MUST Research on portfolios:** The research will consist of what exactly makes a good portfolio. Awwwards judges websites by the criteria design, usability, creativity, content and sometimes mobile and development. These criteria will be the handles for the library research, which will consist of reading (design) theory and analyzing inspiration.

The field research will consist of interviews with employees of Awwwards, which will be voice recorded and also documented afterwards.

**MUST Website link:** A link to the live website will be delivered by the end of the internship.

**MUST Concepts, prototypes and usertests:** After the research, concepts for the website will be created and worked out in prototypes. These can be paper or digital. The preferred prototypes will be tested with the target audience (working designers) and improved based on the results of the usertests.

**MUST Code files:** After the prototypes and branding are finished, the portfolio itself will be made. A short process will be documented, and the code files themselves will be delivered after every major update. Back-end is optional.

**SHOULD Logo:** Because the project is a portfolio, it is also essential that the intern creates his own logo. Therefore, a logo (process) will be made. This product is NOT permanent. It is open to change whenever necessary during the whole duration of the project.

**SHOULD Experimental prototype(s):** During the process of creating the portfolio, at least one experimental prototype will be made. This could be animation, data visualization and/or gamification, but if something comes up during the project that's also fine.

**COULD SEO:** One product that is optional but recommended is a small SEO research. If it is researched, it will be based on the materials from semester 4.

**COULD Brandguide:** Because the project is a portfolio, it is also beneficial for the intern to create a Brandguide. Therefore, a brandguide could be made that consists of topics like mission, vision, color, tone of voice and typography. These products are NOT permanent. If made, they are open to change whenever necessary during the whole duration of the project.

## SMART Goals

- At the end of week 6, a research document will be delivered that contains a conclusion on how to make a portfolio, based on the criteria on the Awwwards website.
- In a separate process document, a justification will be included that explains the choices of the design elements within the portfolio with examples of inspiration.
- Before January 18th, a new portfolio website will be online and working on the domain mathijsp eerlings.com.

# Requirements

On the previous page the products were listed. Here, product parts will be named.

## MUST Research on portfolios:

- Library research with problem definition, main question, 2 to 5 research questions, conclusion and sources.
- Interview plan that builds upon library research.
- Audio from interviews.
- Interview results documented.

## MUST Concepts, prototypes and usertests:

- At least 4 concepts with a (paper) prototype.
- Usertest plan that builds upon prototypes and research.
- Design justification document.
- Audio from usertests.
- Usertest results documented.

## SHOULD Logo & Design process:

- At least 10 logo sketches.
- At least 3 digital logos.

## MUST Code files:

- Folder with code files.
- Use of HTML, CSS and at least one important use of JS/jQuery (more if it fits the experimental prototype).

## MUST Website link:

- Website link.

## SHOULD Experimental prototype(s):

- Prototype with process of at least one of animation, data visualization, gamification, digital publishing or another experimental technique (experimental for Mathijs specifically).

## COULD Brandguide:

- Brandguide with vision, mission, tone of voice, color, typography and imagery.

## COULD SEO:

- See semester 4.

# Progress tools and techniques

For this project Kanban, Drive and Git will be used for keeping track of progress. Kanban will be used as a one-man planning with different priorities set for every	task, with the tabs Backlog, Backlog Sprint, Backlog Week, Doing, Testing and Done.	Drive will be used to save all the files. Git will be used during the coding phase of the project.
--	---	--

# Execution

## Research

The following kinds of research will be done:

Library research to find out the best practices in regards to the criteria on Awwwards via design theory and inspiration. This will be the first research after the project document. [Library research to gather theoretical knowledge.](#)

Field research to find out the best practices in regards to the criteria on Awwwards via professional opinion and personal experiences. [Interviews to gather practical knowledge.](#)

Showroom research to position my personal branding next to other designer's portfolios. What makes me unique, how can I stand out? [Showroom research to find out how I personally can differentiate myself from other designers.](#)

These three researches will be the base for the concepting phase.

Workshop research after the initial concepting phase to mold the best concepts into a solid definitive concept. [Creative experimenting to choose a final concept.](#)

Workshop research while turning the concept into various workable prototypes. [Experimenting while creating prototypes to choose a definitive prototype.](#)

Showroom research during the workshop research to test the quality of the concept(s) and prototype(s) in the form of feedback. [Asking feedback to approach concepts and prototypes again in a critical way.](#)

Lab research to test the prototypes with the target audience. [Prototype user tests to find out if the design is suitable \(and attractive\) to the target audience.](#)

Workshop and showroom research during the logo - and coding process by iterating and asking feedback. [Iterating on and asking feedback for logos and website code to improve until the final products of the project are done.](#)



Sprint 1 (3 weeks)	Project document and orientation
Sprint 2 (3 weeks)	Research
Sprint 3 (2 weeks)	Concepting
Sprint 4 (4 weeks)	Logo, prototyping and usertesting
Sprint 5 (4 weeks)	Coding, experimental prototype
Sprint 6 (2 weeks)	Finishing up

	Tasks	Products
1	Introduction	Project Document draft
2	M: Project Document	Project Document
3	M: Project Document, M: Start research	Project Document
4	M: Library research	
5	M: Library research S: Field research	Research document
6	M: Field research M: Showroom research C: Library research	Research document

	Tasks	Products
7	M: Concepting C: Final Concept	Around 5 concepts
8	M: Final Concept C: Concepting	Final concept
9	M: Prototyping	Around 3 prototypes
10	M: Sketching logo's M: Prototyping	Testable prototype Logo sketches
11	M: Logo M: Usertests S: Prototyping	Logo At least 1 usertest with results Improved prototype

	Tasks	Products
12	M: Usertests M: Design	At least 1 usertest with results Final design
13	M: Coding and/or S: Experimental prototype	Website code files and/or prototype
14	M: Coding and/or S: Experimental prototype	Website code files and/or prototype
15	M: Coding and/or S: Experimental prototype	Website code files and/or prototype
16	M: Coding and/or S: Experimental prototype	Website code files and/or prototype
17	Finishing up	Website link/Video link

# Planning

# Communication

## Fontys

During the project, I will keep in contact with [Alicia Janssen](#). For regular questions regarding the project e-mail will be used, for urgent questions phonecalls will be made. A sprint consists of 2 or 3 weeks, dependent on the phase. After each sprint, there will be a Skypecall with Alicia to talk about the progress of the past sprint. Based on this feedback, the path of the project can be redirected to better fit with the expectations and requirements.

## Awwwards

The contact with Awwwards will be with [Gus Tella Mugica](#). He is part of the design team, and after every two weeks there will be a conversation to talk about the progress of the past weeks based on this feedback, the path of the project can be redirected to better fit with the expectations and requirements.

Another contact person is [Rachel Edwards](#). She will be contacted face-to-face or by e-mail for topics that span the entire internship instead of specific components.

## Other

Other contacts that are involved with the project to a lesser extent are listed below.

[Jessica Travieso](#) - The leader of the design team. She will be giving feedback, critique and tips on various topics.

[Jara van Herpt](#) - Member of the design team, she is an expert in InDesign and material design that will be giving feedback and tips on topics within her expertise.

## II. Research Document

# RESEARCH DOCUMENT

Mathijs Peerlings @ Awwwards

3

Problem definition & research goals

5

Why were Awwwards' criteria chosen, and what systems do similar agencies use?

9

What are the trends for 2018 in design, UX/UI and web technology?

18

How did some of the creators of Awwwards' successful sites go through the design process?

23

How do design experts apply the Awwwards criteria and design trends to determine the quality of a website?

35

Conclusion & Sources



# Problem definition & research goals

## Problem Definition

The problem definition for this research, based on the project document, is as follows:

*Due to the huge amounts of new inspiration and knowledge that have been made available by Awwwards, the student has come to the realization that his current personal portfolio is not at a professional level.*

## Research Goal

The goal of this research is to discover what makes a portfolio of professional quality, and what design factors come into play to achieve this goal. The criteria from the Awwwards website will be used as reference points during this research. Their weight in Awwwards' rating system in % is as follows:

Design (40%)  
Usability (30%)  
Creativity (20%)  
Content (10%)

# **Which design factors are decisive in setting up a professional portfolio in 2018 and 2019?**

Of course, the grades of the websites on Awwwards are subjective as every jury has different opinions. However, it is possible to measure the most important qualities that influence the jury votes for each criterion by looking at current trends in web design, web technology and UI/UX.

These trends will give insight in the most important design factors. There will also be interviews with design experts to get a better view of what information from the library research is the most important from a practical standpoint: what do more experienced designers prioritize?

## **Research Questions**

- Why were Awwwards' criteria chosen, and what systems do similar agencies use?
- What are the trends for 2018 in design, UX/UI and web technology?
- How did some of the creators of Awwwards' successful sites go through the design process?
- How do design experts apply the Awwwards criteria and design trends to determine the quality of a website?

Why were Awwwards' criteria chosen, and what systems do similar agencies use?

—

# Rating system

## Main

As stated before, Awwwards has four main criteria: Design (40%), Usability (30%), Creativity (20%) and Content (10%). Because rating the talent of designers and developers is such an enormous undertaking, an international jury of professionals has been selected that vote to create the final grade of a website.

When a website is submitted and approved by the pre-selection, it is sent to the twelve jury members. If a site receives a high rating from the jury and from at least 10 Pro and/or Chief users, it can become a site of the day (SOTD) before the original voting period of five days ends.

The jury votes are only shown to the winner of the SOTD. After all the jury's rated a website, the vote that is furthest from the average is replaced by the average from the vote of the Pro & Chief users. This means that "basic" Tribe users do NOT influence the final rating.

## Developer & Mobile

The final criteria are different: they are separate certificates that someone can apply for.

The Developer certificate is obtained by sending your website and having it rated by a single jury via a Developer Guideline document. There is no specific minimum rating for this certificate: if the site raises the bar of web development with innovations it is recognized with the DEV badge.

For Mobile Awwwards teamed up with Google. This certificate has different criteria: Friendliness, Performance, Usability and Best Practices. Sites with a score of 7 or higher get the Mobile Excellence badge.



# Other systems

*In the project document it was stated that some of the biggest similar agencies are FWA, CSS Design Awards and Webby Awards. Below are the descriptions of their voting systems.*

FWA uses a live voting display, but they don't have any description of voting criteria available. They use a 20 point system, but they also have more judges, with 300. With this amount of jury members strict criteria aren't as necessary, because with that many people a trend can be spotted that determines the final rating.

CSS Design Awards is more similar to Awwwards: they have three criteria, which are more focused on usability than Awwwards. Their criteria are UX design, UI design and Innovation. They too have a jury with a similar size to Awwwards.

Webby Awards are more of a "luxury" platform. Instead of daily submissions all websites are submitted in a certain time period. These thousands of websites get rated by a jury, and only the top ten become nominees. Because of this system there are no concrete criteria on the website.

To conclude this paragraph: CSS Design Awards has a system that is similar to Awwwards, but they are more specialized. FWA has more judges and a more subjective system, and finally Webby is stricter and more secretive.



# Behind the criteria

*“Our voting system was created with four criteria that from our point of view represent the backbone of a well developed website. At the moment we are working on a new system that allows a fairer vote, since the current system has problems with some sites that are unfairly unable to get a high score for creativity or content.*

*A site can be perfectly developed and meet all the objectives proposed for its development, but lack creativity, since they don't always need to have it: think of sites that are made for an institution or university. Maybe the objectives of these sites do not require creativity and innovation, because in those cases the most important part should be a good user experience. This goal is already achieved if the user can easily navigate through the abundance of information that is usually found on these kinds of sites. That's why we want our new voting system to also consider the success of reaching the proposed development objectives.”* [Text translated from Spanish]



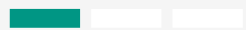
Oscar Perez

Co-founder of Awwwards Online SL

What are the trends  
for 2018 in design,  
UX/UI and web technology?



What design elements  
and -aspects are trending  
in 2018?





# General trends in Design

## Styles

- From flat design to Google's Material Design  
*Simplicity but with more design elements*
- Modern retro designs  
*Nostalgia as a direct answer to modern design*
- Brutalist design  
*Breaking the rules as a reaction to always having to follow them*

## Layout

- Asymmetrical grid layouts  
*A more natural experience, but it's very experimental*
- Tactile design  
*No borders or windows, everything is together*
- Simple homepages  
*A more modern and relaxed impression*

## Focus

- Design systems  
*Consistent design elements for the whole brand*
- Mobile focus  
*The use of mobile now surpasses desktops*

## Design elements

- Drop shadows & depth  
*Say bye to flat design elements*
- Dynamic gradients  
*Say bye to flat colors*
- Vibrant colors  
*Ultra violet is the Pantone color of the year*
- Backgrounds with particles using Javascript  
*Better technology = more immersive experiences*
- Custom illustrations & Integrated animations  
*Custom artwork for more personality*
- Big and bold typography & bold lines  
*Gaining attention in a rapidly growing market*
- Polygonal shapes and geometric layers  
*Basic shapes for great design sequences*

## Trends in Design

Design elements and -aspects have become more free and experimental in 2018, mainly due to the advancement of technology and the shift to mobile devices. Gradients, shadows and bold shapes & text appear more often as a reaction to the past trend of flatter and cleaner design. Extreme styles that are used more are retro design and brutalism. Shapes, lines and animations are also more popular as the usage of photography decreases.

**GRAB ATTENTION IN A  
WORLD OF INFORMATION  
OVERLOAD**

**NEW DESIGN  
IS MORE FREE**



What are the specific  
UX/UI best practices for  
websites in 2018 and 2019?



# Trends in UX and UI

## Styles

- Mobile usage keeps growing  
*That also means different UCD priorities*
- Voice services are becoming mainstream  
*Voice search, voice messages and products like Amazon's Alexa*
- Increase in mobile video content  
*And content creators adapt accordingly*
- Personal search queries are expanding rapidly, with more personalisation & personalized ads  
*This is the future, but it also brings a lot of discussion about ethics regarding safety & privacy*
- Growth of the Internet of Things  
*More and more devices can communicate with each other*
- More importance to good storytelling  
*No matter how advanced we get, a good story will always convince customers to buy your product/service*
- Complex desktop interactions + simple mobile interactions  
*Different screens require different priorities*

## Desktop and mobile

The usage of mobile phones is growing and has recently surpassed desktop usage. This has led to a growth in mobile video content and ads. Searching on both devices has become more personalized, although interactions on the desktop are more complex than on mobile.

The Internet of Things is also growing, connecting more devices with each other to speed up and innovate upon interaction and communication.

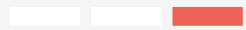
With the abundance of apps and websites, good storytelling around the content has become more important than ever.

## Trends

Though there are many trends, some of them are more practically applicable than others. The most important applicable ones are responsiveness, personalization and material design. Awwwards and Google worked together for a reason: material design slowly replaces flat, and with the quicker mobile interactions responsiveness and personalization are especially important. This makes Awwwards' certificates for Mobile and Developer ideal with current trends.



What are innovative and  
interesting web technologies  
to develop a website?



# Trends in Web Technology

## General trends

- Simplicity is key
- Javascript remains the most popular language  
*And all the libraries it brings with it*
- Motion UI  
*To escape the boringness of only minimalism*
- Single page sites and progressive web apps  
*Especially important for mobile users*
- Chatbots  
*90% of online customer service chats will soon be bots*
- Static websites  
*Better performance and security, also easier to make*

## Libraries

- Vue.js  
*A progressive JS framework for creating UI's*
- Storybook  
*Intuitive library to create UI's*
- Angular.js  
*"HTML if it would have been built for web-apps"*
- Next.js  
*JS framework for static and server-rendered applications*
- Gatsby  
*JS framework for quick data transmission*
- Pixi.js  
*Library for rendering 2D graphics*
- Three.js  
*For 3D animated graphics*

## Technologies

The biggest factor that decides the success of the libraries besides their applications and support is their simplicity. Vue is quickly growing in popularity as it is much easier to learn than other libraries like Angular (which has a steep learning curve).

Besides simplicity, the best library option is dependent on the intentions of the creator. The given libraries should give anyone developing a website in 2018 enough options for various different goals.

How did the creators of  
Awwwards' successful  
sites go through the  
design process?

—

# New Mobile Workforce

<https://www.thenewmobileworkforce.com/>



## Concept

*Create a super interactive story around the formula 1 event and how Redbull and Citrix collaborated together to get the best of both their areas of expertise.*

## Design

The focus was in conveying emotion with visual impact. The website has two different parts/styles. The first has impactful 3d visuals of various parts of the race. The user can move the mouse around to rotate the imagery, giving a much more immersive experience. The images themselves have purposefully been kept rough to make it feel more realistic.

The second part is “Behind the scenes” and focuses on the technological aspects of the cars that Citrix contributes to. The style is darker, and every slide gives access to a different way to interact with the information.

Due to the big target audience of Redbull the navigation has been kept simple, but every action has a big visual impact because of particles, parallax, 3D models and transitions.

## Technical

Libraries & Technologies:  
DOM with Vue.js, CSS with Stylus,  
Custom framework with Browserify,  
3D models with Blender,  
Real-time display with Three.js,  
Effects with direct Javascript.

## Effects

Original image in 2D, 3D Blender models added on top of the original image.  
Textures, effects and camera movements were directly added with Javascript.  
Shaders with five columns of equally distributed interpolated pixels create the speed effect, together with a gradient noise effect to make it more natural. A lot of optimization was necessary.

# Bersi Serlini

<https://festival.bersiserlini.it/en>

## Concept

*Translate Bersi's wine capsule, the bubbles from their signature Spumante and the willingness to provide an emotional and festive feel into a website that introduces the yearly regional wine festival.*

## Design

The website uses colourful glow-pastel illustrations. The home page has all the content centered in a circle in the middle of the screen, including the navigation: the "capsule" of the bottle keeps all the beauty inside. Illustrations appear when hovering over the various events in the circle.

A noise on the background creates a paper-like effect, and a displacement map with fluctuating light creates a sparkling effect for the illustrations. These have been added to convey emotion and to give more personality. Finally, a weather indicator has been added to the website because the events of the website are usually outside.

## Technical

Hosted on an Apache server,  
Data as JSON in Firetime Realtime Database,  
Webpack as a module blunder and to configure the framework,  
npm to run and manage packages,  
DOM with vue.js, CSS with Sass, Animations and transitions with GSAP,  
Illustrations managed and drawn on canvas with Pixi.js.

## Effects

Inner circle and bubble effect with GSAP and MorphSVG.  
Click and hold image transitions with Javascript, using opacity, z-index and image reset.  
Weather display with a weather API and custom messages.  
Magnetic icon effect with HTML and GSAP.



# Sons of Gallipoli

<http://sonsofgallipoli.com/>

## Concept

*Create an interactive documentary to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, and promote the message of peace it has come to symbolize, especially for Turkey, Australia and New Zealand.*

## Design

The interactive features of the website include a picture-in-picture mode, an illustrated map and an interactive chapters UI.

The learning curve for the navigation was kept low by using a simple structure with an all in one place archive for secondary content. The user can navigate through the chapters in two ways: the more basic form of using the menu, and the more interactive form of navigating the illustrated map with the chapters in highlights on a circular minimap. The map is unconventional, but it's still highly intuitive.

## Technical

Coded in HTML5, CSS3, Javascript (also with the library Pixi.js),  
Imagery organized with DOM/Canvas,  
CMS with Cockpit, WebGL,  
Personal self-optimization with geo-location, IP address, cookies and browser preferences.

# Personal observations

*First of all, the websites use a lot more technologies & libraries than expected. A good amount of thought went into the design choices, and so it was possible to spot a few patterns. Most noticeable are the focus on simplicity in the navigation and the need to convey emotion/personality in the style.*

*The articles mostly focused on the UX and the technologies over the visual choices. This is probably due to the existing styles of the companies the websites were made for. Also, despite the innovative experiments in 3d, illustration and interactivity, all of them were both out-of-the-box and logical and easy to understand.*

*Personally I find this a very important lesson because I tend to overcomplicate these kinds of things, although it is absolutely vital that user experience is always on the forefront.*

How do design experts  
apply the Awwwards  
criteria and design trends  
to determine the quality  
of a website?

—

# Interview Plan (1/2)

## Recap

The research questions have highlighted and analyzed the various criteria from Awwwards. They demonstrated that, even though the criteria from Awwwards aren't perfect, they do give the inspiration to delve deeper into the various corners of the world of web design and -development. A great user experience is the end goal of all design choices made for a website.

## Interview Goal

The previous research paid more attention to the theory and written sources. This field research will attempt to discover the thinking processes of experienced designers in relation to the results of the library research. How do they rate websites, what do they pay attention to? What information in the library research is more important than expected, and what is not so important? How do they choose grades for specific criteria? The eventual research goals are to get a better view of what information from the library research is more or less important, and to gain inspiration in regards to thought processes from more experienced designers.

## Participants

The test participants have to qualify for the following:

- Designer with working experience (freelance and/or corporate) for at least two years.
- Has an active account on Awwwards
- Has a personal portfolio website and/or an active professional Behance/Instagram account

## Requirements

Required materials for the interview:

- Laptop with tabs open of Awwwards, the Questions above and the three websites that it links to. Has an active account on Awwwards
- Smartphone with voice recorder.

## Data

Location: Office of Awwwards Online SL.

Times: Between 12:00 and 15:30.

Date: The interviews will take place between 26-9-2018 and 5-10-2018.

# Interview Plan (2/2)

## Recap

Below are the questions for this interview:

1. How long have you been working as a designer?
2. How did you find out about Awwwards?

Now, Design Canada is opened on the laptop.

<https://designcanada.com/>

3. What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?

Now, Part of a Bigger Plan is opened on the laptop.

<https://www.partofabiggerplan.com/>

4. What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?

Now, Bersi Serlini is opened on the laptop.

<https://festival.bersiserlini.it/en>

5. What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?
6. What are the first things you pay attention to when choosing a rating for Design?
7. What are the first things you pay attention to when choosing a rating for Usability?
8. What do you consider a creative website (based on the previous websites)?
9. What would you recommend to people building their first design portfolio?

## Responsibilities

The interviewer is responsible for:

- Taking the interview in a location with limited noise.
- Making sure the interviewee is comfortable and willing to elaborate on answers.
- Indirectly getting personal views from the interviewee on trends present in the library research.
- Making sure the electronics have sufficient battery.

## Process

1. An interviewee is recruited, they agree to voice recording.
2. Interviewee is brought to the location of the laptop or vice versa.
3. The interview questions are opened, the smartphone with voice recorder is prepared.
4. The interview goes through the questions, but stays relatively open during question 3, 4, 5.
5. After the interview the interviewee has time for non-answer information.
6. The interviewee is thanked for his/her time.
7. The voice recording is documented on paper by the interviewer.



# Interview 1 Results (1/3) - Jara van Herpt @ <https://www.behance.net/jaravh>

## Recap

### **How long have you been working as a designer?**

I have been working as a designer for two and a half years. I have worked at Awwwards for six months.

### **How did you find out about Awwwards?**

I was friends with the creative director, and because their graphic designer had to leave for six months, Gus asked me if I wanted to work with them for the six month period.

You were a freelancer before you worked at Awwwards?

I was a freelancer at the time, before I started here I worked at a product design studio, they made products for other brands.

*Now, Design Canada is opened on the laptop <https://designcanada.com/>*

### **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

*(Websites are not my main expertise, but I can do it)*

I like this website, I think it simple and that it works. I like the little interactions, it's not overwhelming. I did this SOTD, and I liked the graphics a lot because they are simple and powerful. I also like the slide animations. The transitions are also nice. It's really nice, but it doesn't make me want to click that, so I'm going to give Design a 7,5. I would give the Usability an 8.

### **What would you change if it was your website?**

In my humble opinion, I like it a lot and it's really visual, but I don't really get what it is about. I'm an editorial designer so this question is hard for me, but let's give this site an 8 overall.

*Now, Part of a Bigger Plan is opened on the laptop <https://www.partofabiggerplan.com/>*

### **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

It's about an agency, right? The website is quite simple, a plain layout. I think it's just okay. I like their work, but their website is just a grid, that's it. It's really pragmatic. I would give the Design a 6 (not much in it), and the Usability a 9 (because you have what you have).

*Now, Bersi Serlini is opened on the laptop <https://festival.bersiserlini.it/en>*

### **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

always have issues with understanding... this is a festival? I like the menu, it is appealing and kind of fun. It's not really complex, design... I like the typeface, there is rhythm, I'll give the Design a 7.5 as well. The Usability is a bit annoying... I'll give it a 7.5.

# Interview 1 Results (2/3) - Jara van Herpt @ <https://www.behance.net/jaravh>

## **What are the first things you pay attention to when choosing a rating for Design/Usability?**

I pay a lot of attention to typography and to what grabs my attention. I like interactions, but I don't really know a lot about motions, although I like them. Sometimes these things make the website less useful, so it's important that the interactions are helpful.

The website (Design Canada) is nice, but I can't see what it is about. I see that it's nice, but I have to click to understand why I'm clicking at it. I look at editorial design the most, so I have more of a feeling with print. For websites I prefer useful websites with an actual design. I think it's really sloppy when someone has a bad website, it's not professional. I base websites on an overall feeling, not on individual elements.

## **What do you consider a creative website (based on the previous websites)?**

I think a website is creative when they explore different languages of aesthetics, design and interaction, but still it's really practical. The balance is important. You can make something crazy, but if it doesn't make sense it's not good. For instance, with Design Canada, it lacks a bit of explanation about what it is.

*(Oscar Perez' information about the criteria)*

This website is more experimental design, exploring an aesthetic. I see a lot of issues with government websites in Spain, because there is a lack of design. It's also a problem in apps. Design is important, but it should be easy and intuitive. If I don't get it I will hop. For taste Design Canada is really beautiful, but if this is supposed to be a portfolio it's not obvious, if it's a showcase of things I'm not tempted to click on them. I have the feeling that sometimes web design is lost when it's too beautiful and not well thought out.

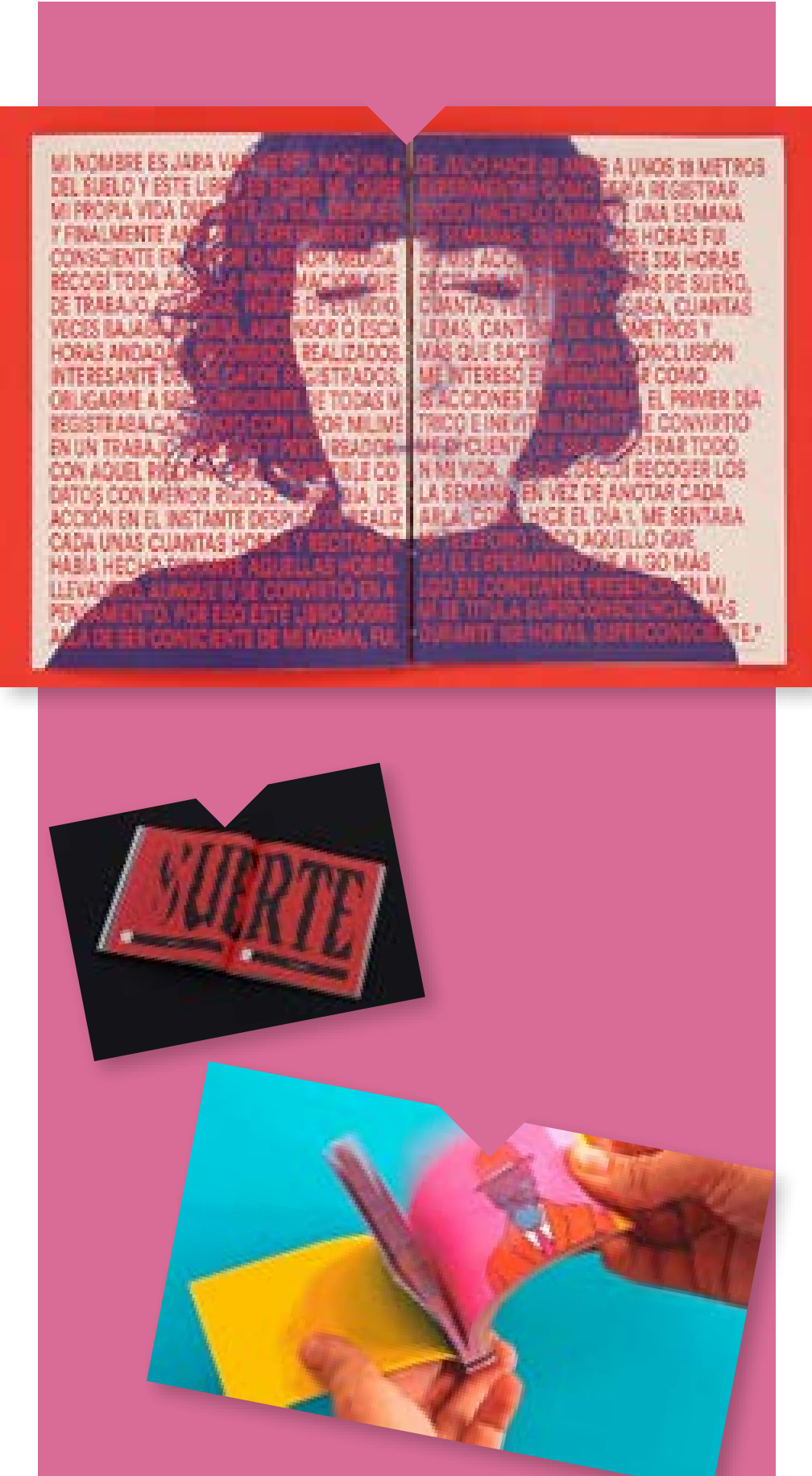
# Interview 1 Results (3/3) - Jara van Herpt @ <https://www.behance.net/jaravh>

## What would you recommend to people building their first design portfolio?

I think it's important to work a lot and have things to show. For me it was really important to print but I didn't have much money, so I saved money to print things and take pictures of them for my projects. You also have to be really critical with yourself for what you do and don't want to show. It's not about the quantity of the things you are showing but the quality. A person that is going to hire you will see the bad and the good, if you can't defend something you shouldn't show it. If you have a good reason like, it's ugly but it was a big client, then whatever, but be aware of what you show.

Put a lot of things in your portfolio that can show your style. If you want to be a more creative designer than your style is most of what you have. You can have experience, but if your work is not likeable/too generic then it's not very valuable. You have to develop your own style and show that. You can also have different portfolios for different profiles. You can do different things, but you have to consider who you show it to. Your style has to fit with the studio/agency/company you apply to.

The more clear your direction is, the more effort you can put in it instead of in twenty different things. You should know a little bit about everything to have your tools, but it's important to focus on something. Try a lot and try to achieve your style. It's important to have a profile, otherwise you are really generic and disposable. For example, your first version of your research document was correct, but it lacked personality. You have a characteristic way of seeing and doing things, so search for a lot of references and understand what you do and don't like and why. Focus on what you like and learn about it, and develop it. In the creative world you need to have a style, because it's all you have.



# Interview 2 Results (1/3) - Gus Tella Mugica @ <http://fausto.info/>

## **How long have you been working as a designer?**

I started as an intern in 2009, so about 10 years, but I have worked professionally for 5/6 years now.

## **How did you find out about Awwwards?**

The offer was actually anonymous at my previous company, so I didn't know it was for Awwwards. I knew about the company, but I didn't know they were Spanish. I moved to Valencia when I was looking for a job. I guess I've been working as a designer for quite a while. I've been at Awwwards for 4 years in december.

*Now, Design Canada is opened on the laptop <https://designcanada.com/>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

Part of this is heavily inspired by Swiss design, with the Helvetica and everything. It's also heavily graphic design inspired. The transitions and animations are great, and the website is well organized. It looks like some 12-column grid, or 6.

At the homepage you scroll down and you have a kind of storytelling style. The buy tickets part is super visible, and they have more information about the festival here. The menu is visible, and so is the social media. So this is a really nice website. The creators [Locomotive] actually work with Awwwards for the redesign, they are really good.

*Now, Part of a Bigger Plan is opened on the laptop <https://www.partofabiggerplan.com/>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

What is this, a portfolio? The thing here is that it isn't very easy to know what it is. Oh it's a studio, the name and website don't really indicate that.

This website is simpler, this could've been done with Wordpress. A template maybe. I like this kind of simpler website, it's easier to find the projects.

*(Gus adds /Admin to the link to see what CMS is used)*

This is not really a website for a design studio, it works but it looks kind of simple. The most important part of this website is the content.

*Now, Bersi Serlini is opened on the laptop <https://festival.bersiserlini.it/en>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

I like it, it's for a festival. The transitions are super nice. It's simple but I love the graphics. There's not much content needed, you have social media here, and it's easy to find the schedule (the reason why most people will visit the website). It's quite creative.

# Interview 2 Results (2/3) - Gus Tella Mugica @ <http://fausto.info/>

## **What are the first things you pay attention to when choosing a rating for Design/Usability?**

Because I'm a visual designer the graphics are the first thing I would pay attention to. It's the thing that I like most. Besides the visuals I value the user experience. Can I find all the information that I need?

For usability it depends mostly on the kind of website. It can be visual storytelling, or it can be a site where you need information.

*(Oscar Perez' information about the criteria)*

That happened because most of the jury members are visual designers, that's why sometimes they mostly pay attention to visual attractiveness.

## **What do you consider a creative website (based on the previous websites)?**

It depends on the kind of project, because sometimes you can and sometimes you can't do something creative. I think it's best to not do something super difficult in coding because it may get too complex. Some transitions are good, and a strong visual part with typography.



# Interview 3 Results (3/3) - Gus Tella Mugica @ <http://fausto.info/>

## What would you recommend to people building their first design portfolio?

The most important thing is to have good content, over having a good website, as I have told you before. It's better to have less great content than a lot of projects. Because when someone that wants to hire you looks at your portfolio, they will pay attention to the least good projects.

And if you aren't an experienced designer yet there's ways to keep it simple. Make it truly visual, show what kind of designer you are. Because what kind of work do you want to do, they will ask you about that. I do a lot of different things, but it's important that you do what you want to do in the future (after recalling Jara's answer). So it's important to try different things, because maybe you don't know what you like to use.

## Why did you get started as a designer?

Well, I used to do graffiti, and after starting to get a feeling for illustration and typography I went to art school. I studied fine arts, because I liked more things than just graphic design like photography, illustration and video editing. I always liked to draw, so with a great teacher when I was 16 I got adjusted to those kind of things.



# Interview 3 Results (1/3) - Mireia Ortega @ <https://www.mireiaortega.es/>

## **How long have you been working as a designer?**

I worked at Awwwards for about 5 years, but I was out for 5 months to travel the world. Before Awwwards I worked at two other companies, each for one year. So in total I've worked for 7 years as a designer.

## **How did you find out about Awwwards?**

I was looking for a job on the internet and I saw the application. In my previous year I had to make a website, and we had to use Awwwards for inspiration. I only knew Awwwards as an inspirational platform before I began here. When I started here Awwwards was smaller, the year I joined they had their first conference.

*(Mireia preferred to write down the answers to the website questions because she couldn't fully explain in English. These answers have been added AFTER the interview.)*

*Now, Design Canada is opened on the laptop <https://designcanada.com/>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

*I like the animation on the elements. When you hover over the elements they are animated in an easy and minimalistic way. I also like the composition and the use of the 3 sizes of typography. Right now big typography is a very common type of design. Furthermore I like the effect when you scroll at the end. This effect is similar in the transition effect when you click the Menu or a "featuring", so it's cool because it's coherent. I also specifically like this transition because it's very graphic (the red, black and white lines). Of the three websites this was my favorite.*

*Now, Part of a Bigger Plan is opened on the laptop <https://www.partofabiggerplan.com/>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

This website is good but more traditional. The portfolio gallery is very common, but also useful to show your projects in a direct way. In this site the focus is on the artworks, so it's important that they are presented very clearly.

*Now, Bersi Serlini is opened on the laptop <https://festival.bersiserlini.it/en>*

## **What ratings would you give this website? Can you elaborate?**

I think there's a nice hover with the object. There's the most hover interaction when you rollover the buttons with the drawings.

# Interview 3 Results (2/3) - Mireia Ortega @ <https://www.mireiaortega.es/>

## **What are the first things you pay attention to when choosing a rating for Design/Usability?**

I don't like it when a website is very slow. For me it's very important that, when I enter a website, it loads fast. And then the composition and typography welcome me the most. I like it when the website works very quickly so I don't have to wait for a long time to see the website.

For usability it's the same. The information has to be very clear. I would personally prefer something that is very clear and well done over something that is more crazy, although I like both I would prefer something practical.

A design is to help people make information clear. Something experimental is only really liked by designers, so to me it's important that people can understand everything and read properly and easily. You have to know that when you do something for many people you shouldn't make it too crazy, but if it's for designers you can do whatever you want.

## **What do you consider a creative website (based on the previous websites)?**

I like experimental and trendy visuals. I have learned about this in my fine arts study, so I really appreciate it when I see it. I think something is creative when it's different. We at Awwwards are used to seeing creative websites every day, and the creativity can be in the typography, images, transitions or any other visual part.

## **What would you recommend to people starting out as a designer?**

You can do two things. The first one is to take something that exists and to redesign it. It's like a "fake job". "This client asked me to redesign their brand". The second thing is to do your portfolio. If you don't have anything you can't do a portfolio because you don't have projects. You can get some projects by redesigning something for an existing brand.

When I was in university learning product design in my final year I redesigned merchandise for Biopark (Zoo-like location in Valencia where the animals live in more natural habitats).

It's easier to make something for a company that exists because then, you can investigate. For example I like to illustrate, I like animals and I like nature. So that was a good excuse to design something for Biopark.

# Interview 3 Results (3/3) - Mireia Ortega @ <https://www.mireiaortega.es/>

## Could you elaborate on your portfolio?

I don't like my website because it loads slow. Wix is a very easy platform that I used. I didn't want to pay much for designing my website, and I wanted to do everything myself. It helped me at the time but I wouldn't recommend it for designers!

I have things from Awwwards, but also some other things that I do with friends. With two friends I have a non-serious company. We meet on the weekend and we try to do something for us. One time we decided to make a card game to tell stories. We designed all the cards but the final product is not for professional purposes.

Also I have this material design piece where you can design monsters. With my two friends I also made this small publication. I am a designer and illustrator, but I'm a bit weird because I don't have social media. I work hard when I'm in the office, but I want to do other things outside. I like to play and enjoy life without always relating it to work.



# Personal Observations

The first thing I noticed across the interviews was that all of the designers have a background in art. It was also interesting that every one of them had a different specialization (print, digital 3d and material). This allowed for some varied answers and views on the questions.

An important thing in hindsight was that the questions didn't really lead the interview. The first introductory questions helped, then there was a hard transition to the websites (where they barely gave actual numbers as rating), and finally there were the questions that were the most interesting to me.

The interviews didn't actually flow like I expected. I did ask for a rating based on the criteria, but when they explained what they paid attention to while voting for a design the criteria already presented themselves. They attached the most value to a creative and attractive design with typography and/or visuals that was still user friendly by using a clear layout. Of course this also depended on the type of designer.

## The good

- Varied answers from design experts.
- Answers documented well despite language barrier.
- Design trends showed up in the interviews without having to name them myself.
- Interviewees showed extras like portfolios or web tricks.
- Accidental questions (extra elaboration or misunderstanding) with interesting answers.
- Some continuous threads of similar answers across the interviews.

## The bad points of improvement

- Interview flow after the introductory questions.
- Lack of number rating (I would prefer a different wording next time, because a number is less important than the explanation).
- Schedule/expertise of interviewee didn't always fit well with the interviews.



# Conclusion

## **Which design factors are decisive in setting up a professional portfolio in 2018 and 2019?**

In this research document all the important factors to make a professional portfolio have been laid out. There's lists of interesting trends, analyzed case studies of recognized projects and interviews with design experts to put all this to the test. But really the trends, just like the people that apply them, will always be changing as the market demands.



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# III. Self Analysis Document

## Preparing Self Analysis

This document serves as a part preparation, part reflection and part research between my research and concepting phase. It's informal and meant to build a foundation for my personal branding (and with that also development of my personality). It's not a result of gaining information; new things are discovered while writing the document. The questions were laid out so that it starts slowly and leads to important realizations about my style and opportunities as a designer.

## Content

### **What work (from my old portfolio) do I want to show?**

Teacher Cartoons (new selection)  
Teacher of the Year (new selection)  
Vasco's Map Runner (new selection)  
Digital Art (new selection)  
Flat Art (new selection)

### **What work on my old portfolio do I not want to show?**

Countryballs the Game - I absolutely love the game, but it's visual style and theme don't fit well with the other projects.  
Flat Art (poster) - Now that I have many more illustrations I want to use newer pieces. In the interviews Gus mentioned that recruiters will often look at the worst pieces, so I will have to be more critical of which I want to show.

### **What do I want to show that I don't have yet?**

I would like to have something animated in my portfolio. I don't really know what yet, but I will probably choose this for my experimental prototype.

## Taste and preference

### **What do I 90% want to have/use in my website (based on trends)?**

Animations, a vibrant palette that fits great with the style of my content, enough room for new additions, a single or few page site, most of the mentioned design elements (like drop shadow, gradient, shapes, typography etc.)

### **What do I 90% not want to have/use in my website (based on trends)?**

Photography (unless absolutely necessary), mobile focus (but responsive), static website

### **What are some websites that are similar to what I would like to convey/have?**

<https://algo.tv/>  
<https://frenchies.stereosuper.fr/cooking.html>  
<https://www.lopesce.com/>  
<https://teatrlalka.pl/en>  
<https://mutantcreative.com/>  
<https://www.campaignmonitor.com/publishing/donut/>  
<https://www.epicurrence.com/>  
<https://waaark.com/>

## Expertise and style

## What is my area of expertise?

Research, conceptualization and illustrative (web) design.

**What are related skills that I am interested in/want to make my expertise?**

Want to make my expertise: UX design, animation

Interested in: drawing, storytelling, game design, print, app design, front-end development

### What are related skills that I DON'T want to make my expertise?

I don't want to make back-end development, non-book print, photography and filming my expertise.

### What is my style (based on my personality)?

Unconventional and free design, sometimes ugly

(Even though I know the guidelines I don't feel restricted by them: I'm stubborn).

Playful and colorful design, sometimes childish

(I want to let others enjoy my work, I don't like feeling restricted in expression).

Out-of-the-box and abstract, sometimes overcomplicated

(I think a lot, am good at abstract thinking and connecting information).

## What do I want to convey with my style?

All my Instagram works had one or more of the following concepts:

- something funny/weird

(Like Showtime!, Love Behind a Mask and Flatboy)

- a pun/idea

(King of Vanity, Coat of Arms and Pool Table)

- a personal interest

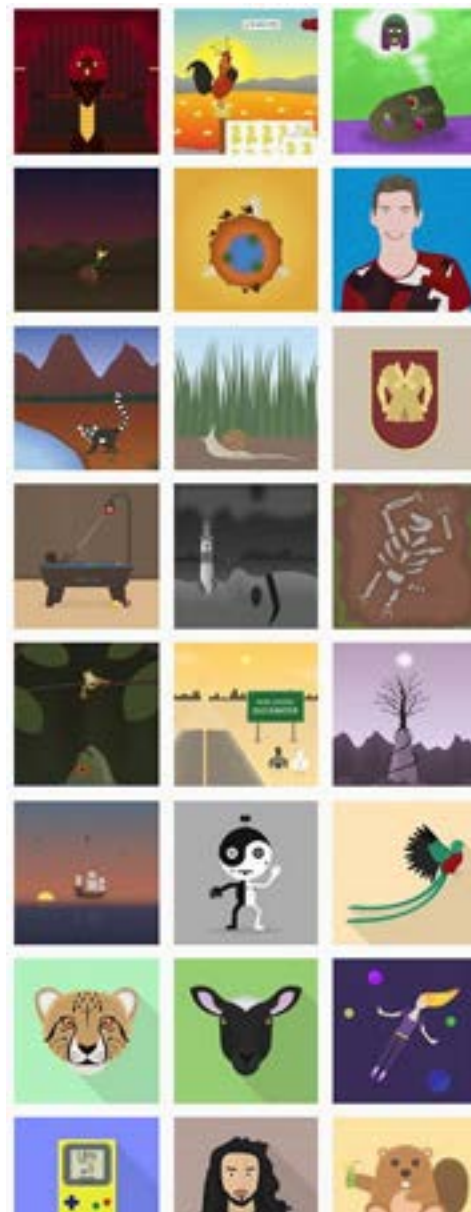
(Madagascar, Arabia and Ancestors) with a slight educational touch

- an expression of feelings

(Melancholia, Blossom and Love Behind a Mask).

As I'm coming out of my shell as a creator I feel more open to taking risks. As is visible on my profile I use brighter colors, more details and more style/theme experiments. My strength is not in the quality of my (last) posts, it's in the visible growth between every few posts.

I like to create a lot, experiment, explore various themes, be playful and to express myself in a fun way. I love variety and want to show that going for standard ideas and themes is a waste of potential.



## Growth

### What were my biggest Threats?

Overcomplicating everything/Excessive worrying

Being too stubborn with regards to inspiration and feedback

Being too dependent on (approval/appreciation from) others

### What are currently my biggest Threats?

Not thinking enough in money or business terms

### Making work too personal

### Underestimating own skills

**What are currently my biggest growth opportunities creatively?**

By creating this analysis I realized that all my threats are immature/underdeveloped versions of my strengths. By tackling them head-on (doing new things, "kill your darlings" and making things because I want to AKA maturing) I am much more capable of dealing with them.

**What are currently my biggest growth opportunities in professional attitude?**

This question is hard to answer because I've only been at a company for 6 weeks, but based on the previous questions I would conclude that merely getting out of my own way would give me sufficient skills to be successful in a professional environment.

### What do I find important in a work culture?

I attach the most value to (creative) freedom, variety and a positive environment. I would prefer a structured base environment in which I can concentrate and safely experiment.

**What do I want to personally achieve with my work (vision)?**

Even though I have a vision I don't feel ready to answer this question again with my level of experience. I feel like there's too much left to learn to get hung up on a single sentence.

**How could my personal interests be combined with my profession as projects?**

- Any educational platform/media product (like Cusco, Vasco's Map Runner or Mindfull)
- Something to promote internationalisation
- Something to protect nature by informing people
- Something to bring back valuable lessons from history to resolve modern day political issues.
- Something to visualize great amounts of information
- Something involving games/gamification with educational purposes

# IV. Concepts Document

## Concept 1: Offbeat

**Theme/Selling point:** Being different, thinking out-of-the-box

**Description:** This concept wants to focus on standing out, or being a bit “off”. This could be small differences in execution, minor changes that give the portfolio a unique look. The design would be a bit unconventional, but not something like brutalism: it’s off, but it also makes sense.

This concept would mostly change the lay-out, and change less to the actual content of the website. The tone of voice would be self aware and informal, but not off-beat as well.

This concept would fit well because it also somewhat describes the content: everything is very different from each other, and it’s a bit off from illustrations and digital pieces you usually see. This approach would therefore match my style pretty well.

The possible weakness of this concept is that the approach could be counterproductive: if it’s off and people don’t understand it, it will turn them off from the portfolio. That’s why it’s important to not overcomplicate it and keep it simple.

## Concept 2: Living characters

**Theme/Selling point:** Playfulness, user interaction and involvement

### Description:

This concept wants to put the content on the forefront in a unique way. Some of the pieces on the portfolio will not just be visible in a gallery, but also as separate, animated characters. This would also serve as a way to practice animation as an experimental prototype.

This can be compared to Vasco in my previous project, but with a far different target audience and therefore tone. The tone could be one of two: informal acknowledging and interacting with the characters, or informal talking via the characters. So they are either like other people separate from the writer of the regular texts, or like my text through a different medium. It’s also possible that they don’t talk at all and that they are just there to make the website more dynamic. Below are some good examples of characters that could speak.



The strengths of this concept are as follows: it’s creative, fits my style, is fun to look at/to make and it gives the individual pieces more personality.

The possible weaknesses are as follows: it’s hard to make (especially with older characters, since they don’t always use layers), it may seem too immature/childish, and the styles of some characters differ too much to go well together. This is especially the case as each has a different color theme, some of them would not fit the palette of the portfolio.



**Concept 3:** The quetzal

**Theme/Selling point:** Simplicity by focusing only on a few things

**Description:**

In the first few concepts and the “what do I want in my portfolio?” I mostly thought about more flashy websites. With this and the following concepts I want to take some approaches that are more out-of-the-box and more simplistic, giving the content more attention by keeping the website itself uncomplicated. The first one of these is the quetzal. The quetzal is a beautiful bird that is also my favorite animal. With its long tail there are some options to use it creatively on the website. The animal is emerald green with red, so using this with just black-gray-white for the rest of the website would make for some beautiful designs. The bird could be animated as well.

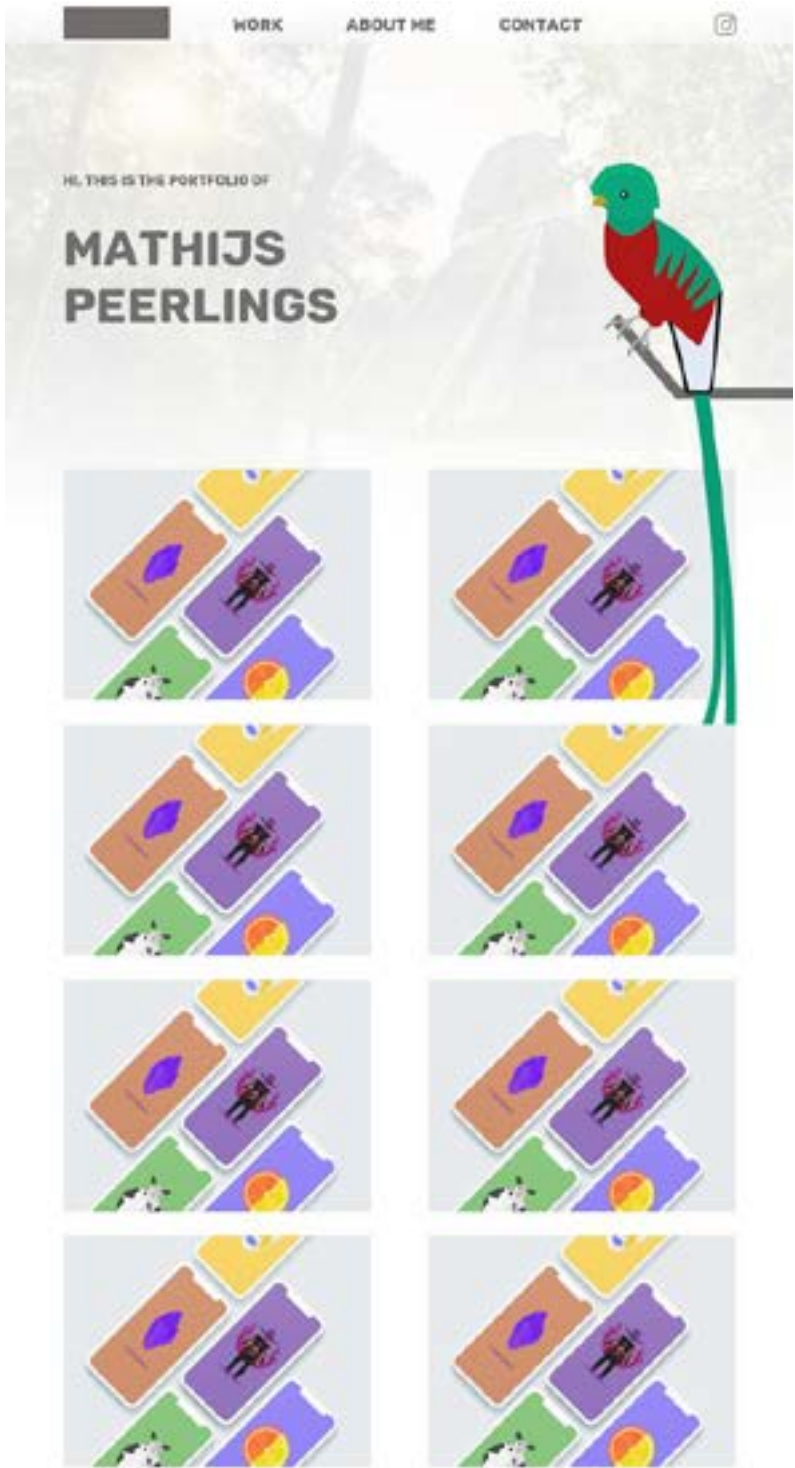


The tone of voice with this concept would be more formal. The previous concepts are more about who I am as a person, this concept would be more like how I am as a professional. This concept would also put more emphasis on the case studies of the pieces I show.

The benefits of this concept are: it's more formal, it is a toned down version of who I am, it uses my favorite colors without looking horrible (my s2 portfolio) and it shows some of my other interests in a controlled way.

The possible weaknesses are: The website is less playful, red and green don't go well together on a branding palette.

**Raw idea visualization**



**LET'S GET IN TOUCH!**

Name:

E-mail:

Message:

**SUBMIT**

#### Concept 4: Digital timeline

**Theme/Selling point:** Transparency, the history of the designer

#### Description:

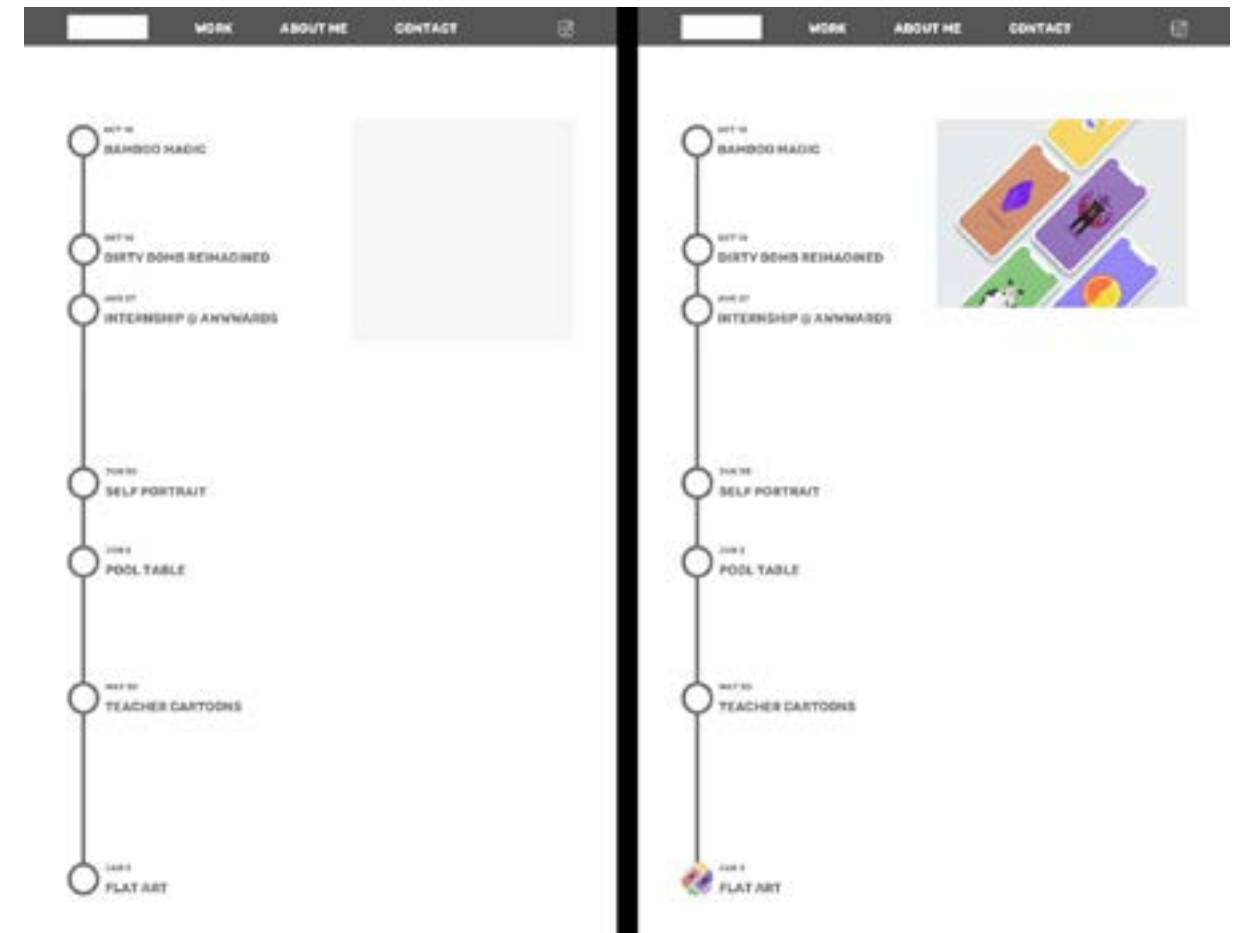
As I said in my self analysis my strength is in my growth over the quality of my last post. I also wanted something that can be both formal and more personal. That's why the timeline (which is also relevant with my other interests) is a good option. The idea is that the whole website is a vertical timeline that goes from newest to older. On this timeline I could attach pieces to the time they were created, showing both my growth and my best pieces. Then it's possible to either hover over the image for the case study, or to click on it to go to the case study on a new page. The timeline also allows for other implementations like a cv.

This concept would have a more formal and to-the-point tone at the timeline itself, but could allow for more informal writing in the case studies.

The benefits of this concept are: it's a nice balance of formal and personal, it doubles as a cv, it's a nice way to fill the page, it can be dynamically updated for multiple years, many options for color, theme and style.

The possible weaknesses are: People that don't like the most recent pieces will be turned off immediately (though I can think of solutions to this), it's easily visible which periods/weeks didn't have worthy pieces, it's not necessarily a Best Of like a portfolio should be.

## Raw idea visualization



There are plenty of ideas that can still be added to the actual prototype, like:

- **Featured items before the timeline**
- **Read case study button/link below the image**
- **Color markings for type of event**
- **Any style/color change that can be thought of**

# V. Final Concept & Process Document

**Theme/Selling point:** Simplicity by focusing only on a few things

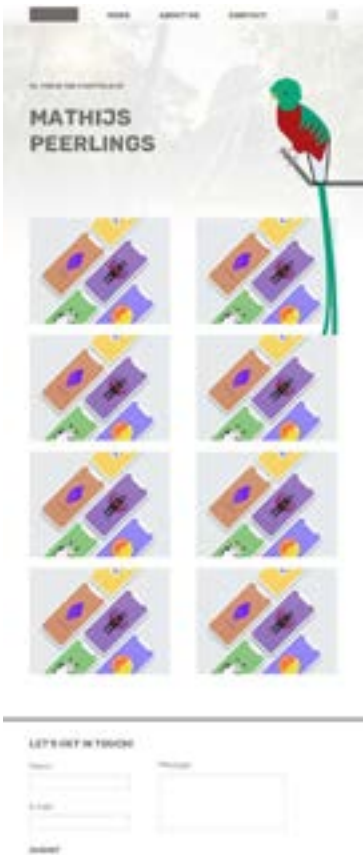
**Description:**

In the first few concepts and the “what do I want in my portfolio?” I mostly thought about more flashy websites. With this and the following concepts I want to take some approaches that are more out-of-the-box and more simplistic, giving the content more attention by keeping the website itself uncomplicated. The first one of these is the quetzal. The quetzal is a beautiful bird that is also my favorite animal. With its long tail there are some options to use it creatively on the website. The animal is emerald green with red, so using this with just black-gray-white for the rest of the website would make for some beautiful designs. The bird could be animated as well.

are more about who I am as a person, this concept would be more like how I am as a professional. This concept would also put more emphasis on the case studies of the pieces I show.

The benefits of this concept are: it’s more formal, it is a toned down version of who I am, it uses my favorite colors without looking horrible (my s2 portfolio) and it shows some of my other interests in a controlled way.

The possible weaknesses are: The website is less playful, red and green don’t go well together on a branding palette.



## Concept 2: Digital timeline

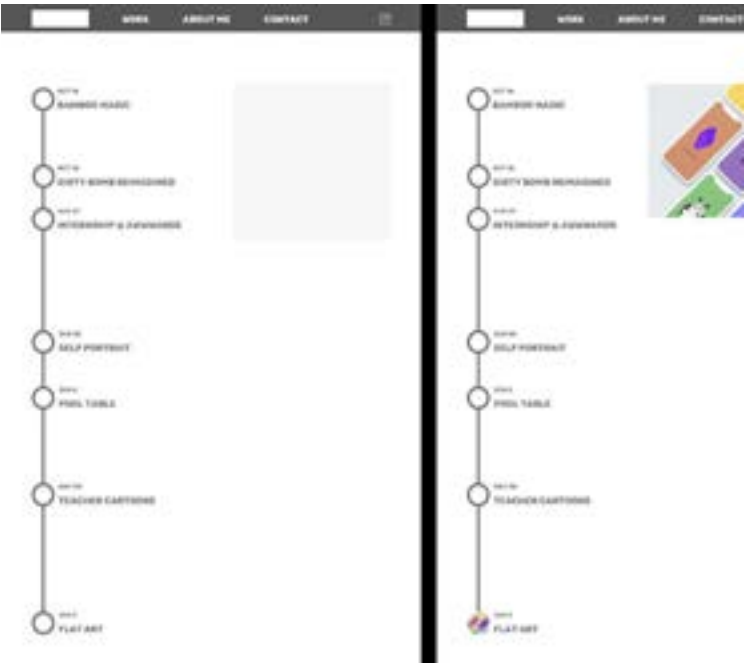
**Theme/Selling point:** Transparency, the history of the designer

**Description:** As I said in my self analysis my strength is in my growth over the quality of my last post. I also wanted something that can be both formal and more personal. That’s why the timeline (which is also relevant with my other interests) is a good option. The idea is that the whole website is a vertical timeline that goes from newest to older. On this timeline I could attach pieces to the time they were created, showing both my growth and my best pieces. Then it’s possible to either hover over the image for the case study, or to click on it to go to the case study on a new page. The timeline also allows for other implementations like a cv.

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The possible weaknesses are: People that don’t like the most recent pieces will be turned off immediately (though I can think of solutions to this), it’s easily visible which periods/weeks didn’t have worthy pieces, it’s not necessarily a Best Of like a portfolio should be.



There are plenty of ideas that can still be added to the actual prototype, like:

- Featured items before the timeline
- Read case study button/link below the image
- Color markings for type of event
- Any style/color change that can be thought of

## Concept: The timeline & the quetzal

(For process see pages below)

**Technical description:** Vertical timeline that moves with scroll (possibly without page moving). Quetzal flies in from the front page from the background. Quetzal's position is fixed, tail faces and moves towards cursor. Quetzal flies away when a different page is clicked. If necessary quetzal is in the loading animation.

**Description:** This concept combines the best parts of the quetzal & timeline concept while also using the essence of the other two concepts. The quetzal will appear as the element that connects the possible pages together, while also serving to create a good first impression. As read in the technical description it plays various roles. The timeline will be vertical, but the exact design for this is still open for experimenting. Right now a big idea is using a non-linear/asymmetric timeline, possibly by using (parts of) projects as timeline markers. This also allows for a more visual and appealing timeline, resolving the issue of it quickly becoming boring. The images will be turned into mockups as much as possible to put my work into a more practical context. In an experimental prototype this seemed to match well with the style of the quetzal. By animating the quetzal's tail and making the timeline asymmetrical I also used small bits of my other concepts: integrated characters and more playful design with offbeat timeline lay-out.

### Feedback processing:

- **Work on forefront:** The timeline is at the or very close to the front page, and by using the visuals in the timeline itself the work will be on the forefront of the website.
- **First impression:** As mentioned the timeline is at/close to the front page, but the first impression will be mainly the quetzal "flying inside the website" from the background, ending up on the side of the website, observing.
- **Style matching:** The styles of the quetzal and the images on the timeline should match, if this isn't the case then the images will be made more illustrative (so less realistic or without mock-ups).
- **Personality:** With the quetzal and the work presented in a visual way the website reflects my personality. Even though the lay-out with the combination of bird and timeline must still be thought out visually the components work together pretty well.

## Longlists

### Quetzal

Bird  
Feather  
Wing  
Egg  
Beak  
Green  
Red  
Emerald  
Guatemala  
Central America  
Tail  
Tailfeather  
Crest  
Maya  
Aztec  
Flying  
Nest  
Chicks  
Spiritual  
Divine  
Forest  
Highlands  
Large brilliant tail feather

### Timeline

History  
Data  
Data visualization  
Chronological  
Years  
Events  
Text  
Numbers  
Interactive  
Education



## Ideas

[1-5] [6-8] [9-10]

[6-8] Horizontal clickable timeline with the quetzal sitting on the image, flies away to the case study when the image is clicked.

[6-8] Timeline moves with scroll, tip of quetzal's tail faces towards cursor.

[6-8] On front page quetzal that flies in from the back, tail goes until the website footer.

[6-8] Quetzal is only visible as cursor/loading animation.

[6-8] Tree as timeline, scroll to go up/down, projects as fruit on the tree. Sometimes there's a quetzal on the branch.

[6-8] Small quetzal that's fixed with scroll, has navigation and link to Instagram. Tail could also point towards cursor.

[1-5] Quetzal sits on timeline circles. It flies up or down when scrolling to different project.

[1-5] Quetzal as cursor, sits on images.

[1-5] Project images create branch that quetzal sits on.

[1-5] Big MP with little quetzal, projects on the timeline in the shape of the letters.

## Ideas v2

1-2-3-4-5-6

[1] Timeline moves with scroll, tip of quetzal's tail faces towards cursor.

[2] On front page quetzal that flies in from the back, tail goes until the website footer.

[3] Quetzal is only visible as cursor/loading animation.

[4] Horizontal clickable timeline with the quetzal sitting on the image, flies away to the case study when the image is clicked.

[5] Small quetzal that's fixed with scroll, has navigation and link to Instagram. Tail could also point towards cursor.

[6] Tree as timeline, scroll to go up/down, projects as fruit on the tree. Sometimes there's a quetzal on the branch.

## Ideas v3

Timeline moves with scroll, tip of quetzal's tail faces towards cursor.

On front page quetzal that flies in from the back, tail goes until the website footer.

Quetzal is only visible as cursor/loading animation.

Horizontal clickable timeline with the quetzal sitting on the image, flies away to the case study when the image is clicked.

Small quetzal that's fixed with scroll, has navigation and link to Instagram. Tail could also point towards cursor.

### **Best parts combined:**

Vertical timeline that moves with scroll (without page moving). Quetzal flies in from the front page from the back. Quetzal's position is fixed, tail faces towards cursor. Quetzal flies away when a different page is clicked. If necessary quetzal is in the loading animation.

# VI. Concepting Feedback Document

## Concepts

### Gus

Timeline: It sounds like a nice idea, it would work best if you have a lot of work. It looks very basic, not that visually appealing. I guess you could try with colors and styles, experiment a little to make it more appealing.

Quetzal: It looks good. It's important that with your portfolio your work is on the forefront. People will only check your site really quickly before moving on, so it's important that your (first) impression is good. That's also why it must be obvious that it's a portfolio. Also, the styles of the works on your website should match if you use a specific style in the website itself with the bird. In my own portfolio I have my 3d art on the front page and the works in other styles on the More Works page.

Recommendations for now: I don't really know, I guess you should check with your designs what you want to show and how. Show some personality but not too much, show employers what you can, what you want to do and what you want to learn. The more specific you can be in your style/profession the better.

### Alicia

Mijn voorkeur ligt bij de laatste twee concepten. Het idee om een quetzal als uitgangspunt gebruiken vind ik interessant. Blijkbaar is dit een vogel die jou aanspreekt en dat maakt het persoonlijk. Het is daarnaast een mooie vogel waar je visueel veel mee kan doen.

Het tweede idee van de tijdlijn vind ik ook heel aardig, al ben ik bang dat het wel snel saai wordt en zo jou als persoon er weinig uit komt. Wellicht kunnen de twee op een of andere manier gemixt worden?

Werk de twee beste concepten verder uit en test ze uit bij de Awwwards mensen.

## Final concept

### Gus

I can't say exactly what I think because there are no visuals, but based on the way you used the

## Paper Prototype

### Gus

The third prototype is the best, it is more content focused and it looks better. I don't know how it will look in detail. (Luckily this was also my favorite, so this base will be used for digital prototypes tomorrow).

# VII. Experimental Prototype Concept

## Description

As noted in my project document I want to make something separately from the main project to expand my skill set. Besides work I already make digital art on my Instagram, so to me animation is a natural and great way to improve at both drawing and the creation of digital pieces.

I want to animate a flying quetzal for this project. This is my favorite bird, and if it goes well it can be used in my portfolio website.

## Scoping

Because I never animated before I want to keep the final product simple: a flying quetzal. No extras, just the bird flying. If the animation goes well and I want to and can add more I will, but this is not a requirement. The quetzal does not have to be suitable for the portfolio.

## Final product

The final product will be a video/gif with the source files.



# IIX. Design Justification Document

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Portfolio  
Design Justification

Mathijs Peerlings, 26-11-2018

# Introduction

At the final assessment of semester 4 it was stated that my focus of this internship should be on improving my design skills. That's why in this project I designed my project & research documents in InDesign, made my own logo, followed courses in Illustrator, made new pieces and made a portfolio prototype. The irony that this document is made in Google Docs is not lost on me.

Of course, the process says more about growth than the final product, so that's why in this document I want to go over everything design related that I did. This is also a nice way to wrap up this phase of the project before the coding starts.

# Project Document

This journey starts off with the Project Document. In the first few weeks I got a lot of inspirational sources and feedback from Jara, and her expertise helped me to grow my skills in InDesign. I decided to loosely base the cover (and document) style on that of Awwwards. Awwwards has both covers with wild typography and covers that are very sleek. Because this was a formal document I decided to go for something sleek. I'm personally not that fond of the colors, but the reason behind them is important to me: if I hadn't looked at other works I would have likely gone with green. I decided that in documents that I made green was overdone and that I also needed to use different colors. **So making this document in the first weeks was really the start of a mindset shift for me.**

Using more inspiration started to kick in when I decided that the classic table of contents could be something more. I looked up inspiration on table of contents and found one on Pinterest that really appealed to me.

	4	<i>The company</i>
	6	<i>The assignment</i>
	12	<i>Execution</i>
	14	<i>Planning</i>
	16	<i>Communication</i>

PROJECT / DOCUMENTO  
DOCUMENT / DEL PROYECTO

MATHIJIS PEERLINGS  
@ awwwards.



On this page my new grasps on document design are starting to show. It's still not quite a great design but it's light years better than what I used to make. I used to have some thinking patterns about how a document should look that formed because of using so much Microsoft Word. The title is no longer on the same page as the content, there are columns that continue right, there is a lot more whitespace and the first sentences are highlighted. I also made a lot of layout designs ranging from ugly to great in a separate document to practice, but I won't show them here. This extra document helped me to experiment a little before I went to the research document, and it was also a great way to get familiar with the features InDesign offers.

## Research Document

After the experiments and my extensive research I got to the research document. This was by far my best InDesign practice. The document has seen a lot of revisions, and it took a while to get settled on a style. However, after a long time of editing, it finally began to turn into something excellent.

At first, the document was too plain and boring for a designer. Jara encouraged me to give the document some more personal touch so I did. I made one great page (see below), and after improving the table of contents I decided to use the color codes from the page numbers in the page contents themselves. I went over all the pages that still had plain design and gave them a more colorful and playful touch without clustering the page.







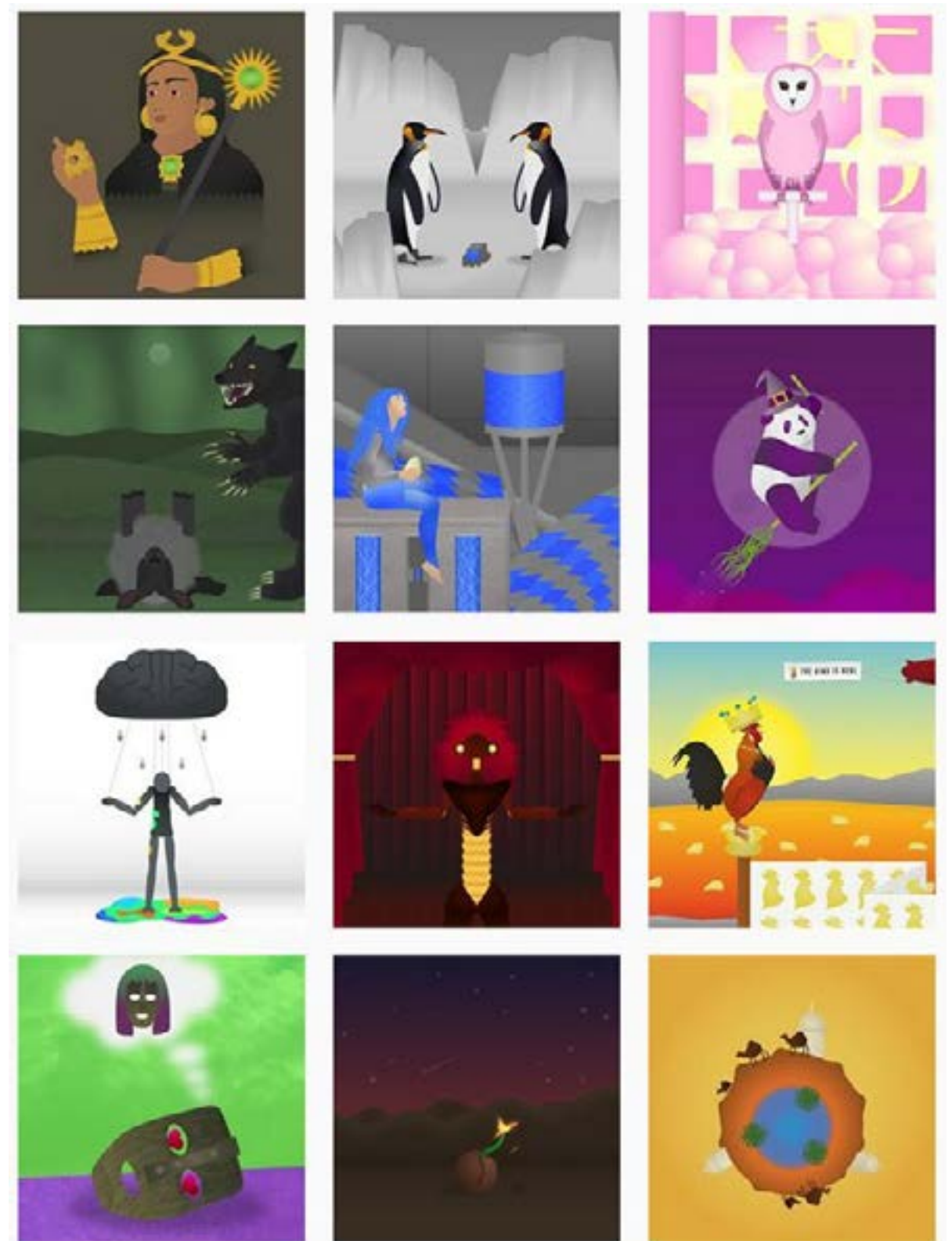
Above are some of my favorite pages. With the green page it was mostly hard to get everything to fit on one page, this took quite a while. One thing I added here that wasn't in the Docs version is the green subtext below the trends. It was a great way to make it more fun to read, more understandable and also a good place to put secondary information from the original version.

The best part of the red page to me is the 0 and 1 illustration in the corner. It was a fun way to play with and challenge the cliché ideas I had in my head to make something that fit the style of the document and the topic of the chapter better. **Actually, the whole theme of this document is challenging and playing with my own old methods. Most of the design choices are things that I would do, but by being more self-aware about it I was able to make it more appealing and fun.**

In the interview section of the document the “pin” idea was leading with the interview answers. With this idea it's not just written inspiration from experts, but also visuals to tell you more about the designer themselves and to inspire even more.

This document was very text heavy, so it was important to keep the document appealing. One thing I would do differently next time is the length of every line of text, because right now they are quite long. I personally think that the visuals are executed well. They are appealing but not too distracting, and they fit the theme of the document and my style as well.

## Illustrator

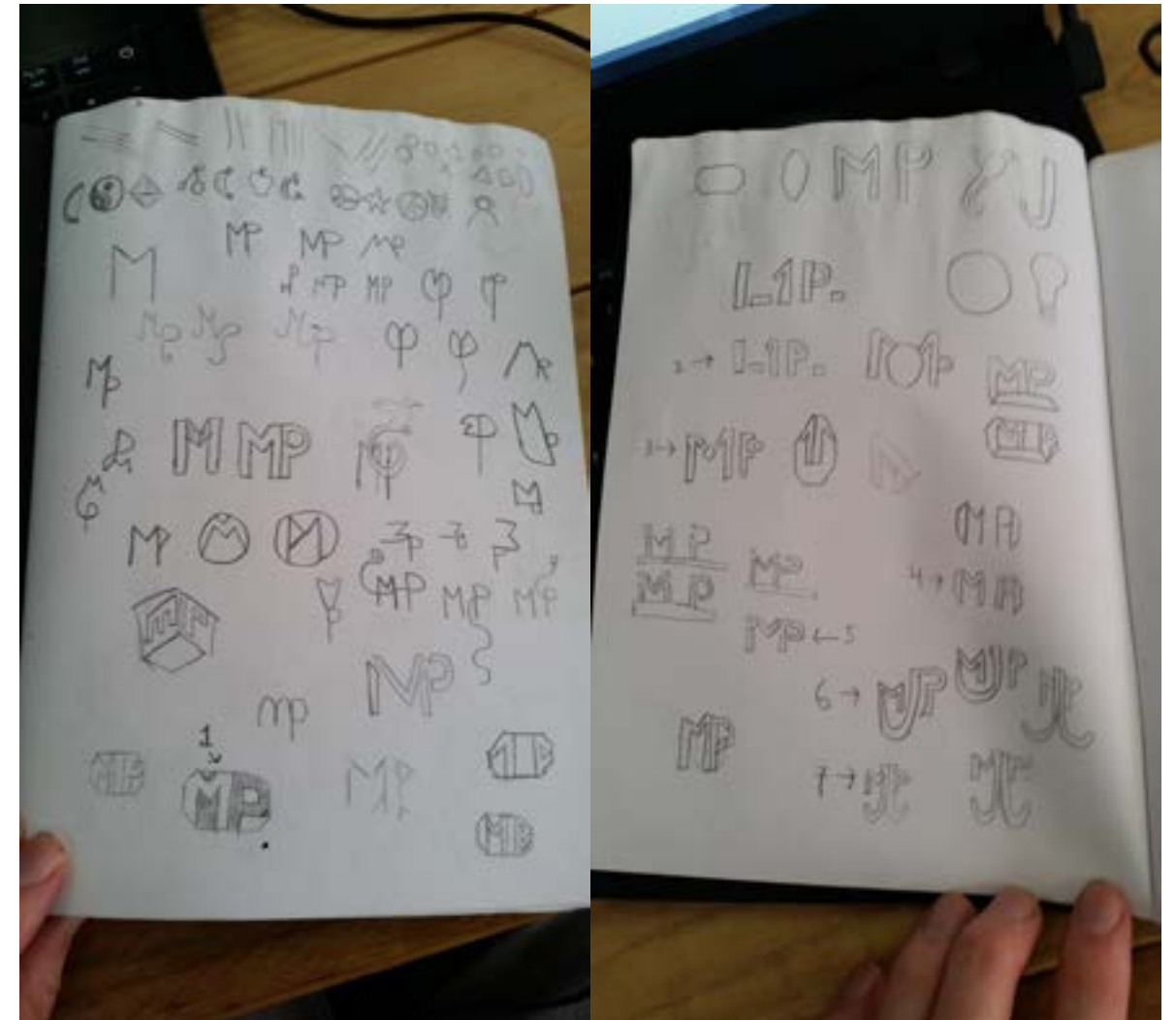


Somewhere during the creation of the wolf I decided to divide all my posts into “series”. I divided them not by week or month, but by major changes. Like how quality improved when I learned about the Pen Tool, or when I started to use more colors or backgrounds. The posts above are the ones I made as Series 6 in the internship period. **The mindset I obtained with the creation of the Research Document (during the bottom three posts) was carried over to Illustrator.** While the first two were relatively safe choices I went crazy with experimentation with the other ten. Weird topics, bright colors, textures, focusing on one color etc. are quite visible changes in this series.

The two most important changes in this series are in themes and expressions. I started using more inspiration for the posts, and by getting into a mindset with music related to that theme I became really immersed in the creation process. When I started with making these kinds of works I wasn’t really able to fully express myself with them, but I got to the point where I can. The Puppeteer for example was a great outlet to challenge and release my constant overthinking.

The original reason I started was to create no-limit stuff in Illustrator as a way to be creative outside of school. **The posts aren’t at all similar to each other this series, but that’s what makes it so great to me in a period that is all about challenging my own methods.**

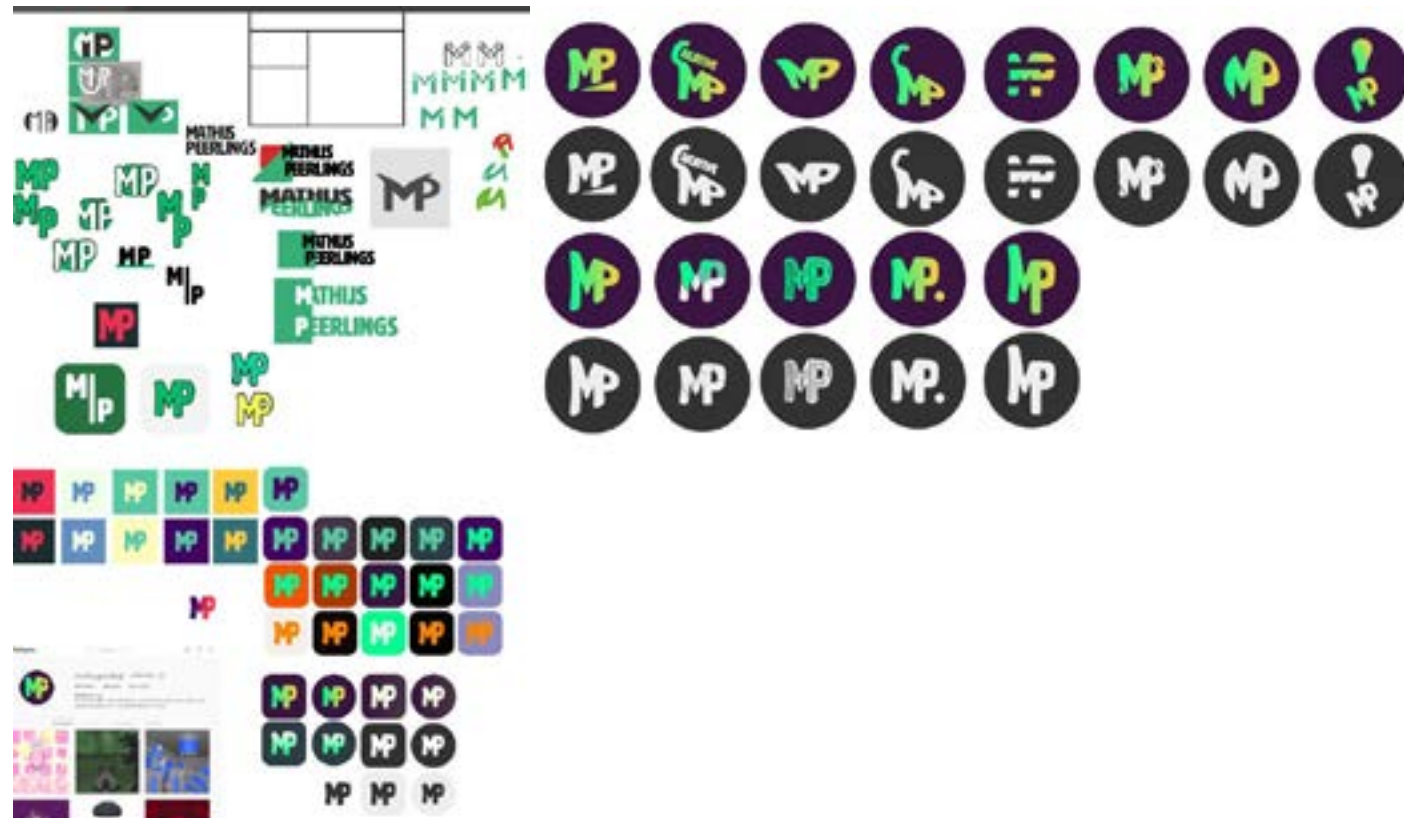
## Logo



Next on the design list was the logo. While it took less time than the documents it was definitely hard. Since my Syraforest logo in semester 2 (that the band chose) I haven’t really practiced much with logos. On top of that I basically had to think of something that represents my whole personality for every professional platform that I want to use, including my own portfolio.

My sketches grew from basic and stiff to more playful thanks to inspiration, but there wasn’t really one that appealed much to me. With logos I still find sketching hard because I strangely feel more creative freedom while working digitally. So I did recreate a few of the numbered sketches above in Illustrator, but I did not like them at all.





## Portfolio

Finally it was time to create the portfolio website itself. In the concepting phase I decided that the unique features of the website would be a quetzal bird (my favorite animal) and a timeline with dates per project. I started out with some sketches, but they were more like a creative warm up than actual realistic websites. The only things that the sketches brought to the digital versions were the execution of the bird and the navigation style.

I had some trouble with the first versions of the website, but this time I had Awwwards and research to back my process. I made a Collection on Awwwards with inspiration (<https://www.awwwards.com/mathijs-peerlings/collections/portfolio-inspiration/>) and settled on the illustrated style. The biggest shift was probably the decision to not use color in the (static) website. It was a bit hard to accept because I love color, but from a design standpoint it makes a lot of sense to not use it. It also looks appealing, the focus is on the work, it doesn't clash with the work and it fits with the logo. Based on the usertests and interviews it was also important info that for a beginning designer you should put more attention on your work, while it is better to do something more experimental with more experience.



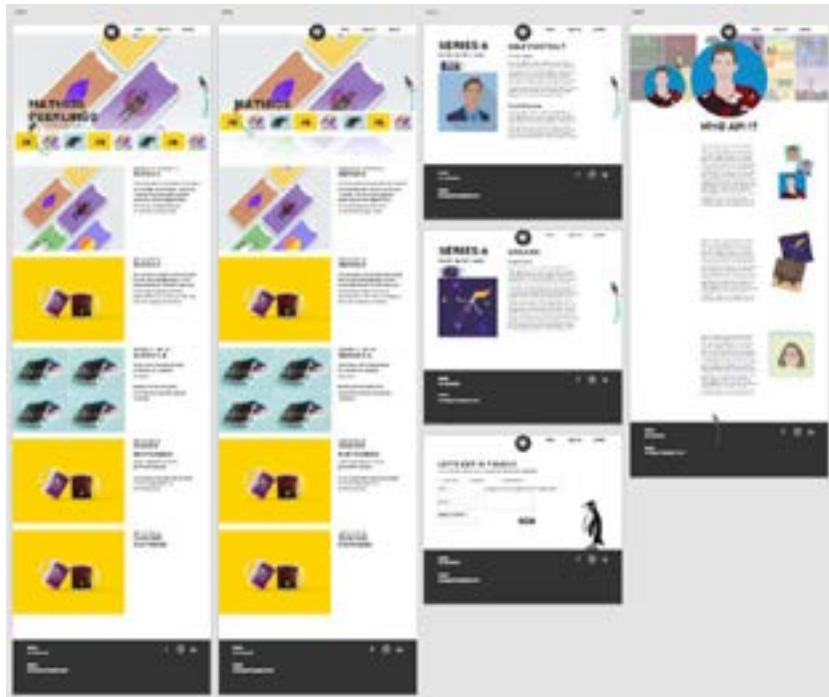
On the left you can see the shift from really ugly to decent to potential. The weird drawings on the right were used to loosen up a little with lines, as the first few were very serious and boring. As you can see again the executions of the sketches aren't that good.

Once I found a darling logo I iterated with colors. Once again, I forced myself not to use green until I found some decent combinations. The combinations looked either bad or okay, but nothing really clicked. I had more success with gradients, so I continued with those. I also used black-white to test if the logo looked good in grayscale too.

After feedback from Gus I realized I needed to make the logo more personal, so I made many different versions. I played with a lot of personal themes like growth, animals etc. until I found one that I really liked (the definitive logo). I did make five more after that to experiment some more, but I soon realized which one was the winner.

The choice for grayscale is actually something that only happened when I made the first version of my portfolio: my works themselves are already colorful and distinct. By keeping the logo itself neutral it never clashes with the pieces.





Sadly I no longer have the pre-usertest version of the portfolio, but I do still have the link to it (<https://xd.adobe.com/view/1e6d6127-4938-422c-6c5b-62e3c1963dbc-685c/screen/d52a747f-8829-43a7-9628-43e823b20c76/Web-1920-20/>).

After the user tests with the prototype I wrote down all the feedback and went by each of them to determine what I would do with it. In the end I used all but two points, these were not used because they were choices based on the timeline concept. The biggest changes were in the typography and footer. The text was very close to each other and the sentences were too long. The footer was also way too big and was too different in size for each page. I changed the footer to white on dark instead of vice versa because it had to stand out more from the rest of the page.

## Reflection

Now that the design stage has come to end I am better able to reflect on my growth. Thanks to the new environment, experts and inspiration I have been able to improve my design skills fast. While I was typing I wrote a few separate sentences that together describe the process really well:

*So making this document in the first weeks was really the start of a mindset shift for me. Actually, the whole theme of this document is challenging and playing with my own old methods. Most of the design choices are things that I would do, but by being more self-aware about it I was able to make it more appealing and fun. It was a bit hard to accept because I love color, but from a design standpoint it makes a lot of sense to not use it. It also looks appealing, the focus is on the work, it doesn't clash with the work and it fits with the logo.*

So the running theme in this semester is challenging my own thoughts by opening my mind to everything else. Even though my skills still need improvement I feel that I'm now heading towards/in the headspace of a professional designer and creative.

# IX. Testplan Usertests

## The usertests

Now that the hi-fi prototype of the portfolio has been made it's time to put the design and usability to the test. Between 19 and 23 november there will be 2 or 3 user tests to determine the quality of the design.

## Goal

The goal of these usertests will be to determine the quality of the design. Or more specifically, if the current design elements and layout are suited for the target audience. The website has to be attractive to and clear for both recruiters and designers. As learned from the interviews a clear layout is more important for recruiters while for designers the website can be more experimental. Because the focus has to be on the works in the portfolio the clear layout has been chosen. So in these tests the layout will be more important than the appeal of the design.

After these tests there should be enough feedback to improve the prototype so it can be a solid base for the experimental prototype and code.

## Research questions

**“In what ways does the prototype **appeal** to the target audience and how can more **engagement** be achieved?”**

1. What is your first impression of this website?
2. How would you describe the style of this website?
3. What do you like about the landing page?
4. What do you think could be done better on this page?
5. *Find the social media links.*
6. *Find the contact form.*
7. *Find the creation date of a portfolio item.*
8. What part or parts of the website do you find the most interesting?
9. For what kind of work would you hire the owner of this portfolio?
10. What would you do differently if this were your website?

## Participants

- Designer/Recruiter with working experience (freelance and/or corporate) for at least two years.
- Has an active account on Awwwards.
- In case of designer: has a personal portfolio website and/or an active

- In case of recruiter: has worked at least 1 year for a company with a design team and has hired at least 1.

## Materials

- Laptop with prototype open.
- Smartphone with voice recorder and research questions.

## Location and date

Location: Awwwards office, Valencia

Date: From November 19th to November 23rd.

## Responsibilities

- Taking the interview in a location with limited noise.
- Making sure the interviewee is comfortable and willing to elaborate on answers.
- Making sure the interviewee sees all the different parts of the website.
- Making sure the electronics have sufficient battery.

## Process

1. An interviewee is recruited, they agree to voice recording.
2. Interviewee is brought to the location of the laptop or vice versa.
3. The interview questions are opened, the smartphone with voice recorder is prepared.
4. The interview goes through the questions, and the interviewer makes sure all pages are visited at least once.
5. After the interview the interviewee has time for non-answer information.
6. The interviewee is thanked for his/her time.
7. The voice recording is documented on paper by the interviewer.

# X. Usertests Results

## Usertests results

Below are the research questions with the participants’ answers. The answers have been separated by person. Other feedback and comments can be found after the last question.

This time, one of the participants has answered the questions in Dutch. I have chosen to document them in Dutch as well because translation could change some answers. Mireia has limited English vocabulary, so that is the reason some words are repeated often.

Participants:

Mireia Ortega (in English)  
Designer at Awwwards.  
<https://www.mireiaortega.es/>

Marijn Struik (in Dutch)  
Intern at Awwwards, graphic design student.  
<https://www.instagram.com/msgraphicdesign/?hl=es>

Interviewer/Me

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## The usertests

1. What is your first impression of this website?

It’s simple, it’s good. You can see the work.

(The original answer was much longer, but it answered questions 1 to 4, so the answer is separated into parts and put where they are relevant).  
Het logo vind ik goed, iemand die speelt is zie ik erin terug. Het font van je naam lijkt op die van je logo. Er zit wel eenheid in de titel samen met de menu balk. Het vogeltje vind ik leuk gedaan, laat ook weer iets speels zien.

2. How would you describe the style of this website?

It’s simple, bright because the background is very light, and it’s clear.

Ik zou simpel zeggen, niet op een slechte manier. Simpel als in toegankelijk voor mensen, je weet waar je naar kijkt. De illustraties zijn kleurrijk en vrolijk. Het is een duidelijke portfolio website.

3. What do you like about the landing page?

You didn’t take risks with your layout, because this typography and the grid are very simple. It’s not something I can tell you I love, because everything is very simple. But I do really like the cover image because it’s beautiful, colorful and also the mockup with the mobile phone and the subtle shadow. For the cover it’s important that the image is very nice.

Je hebt een serif font gekozen, dat laat aan mij ook zien dat je een klassieke kant hebt van illustraties maken. Je werkt met bepaalde rondingen en toch scherpe lijnen wat laat zien dat je enigszins multi-inzetbaar bent, dat vind ik leuk om te zien.

#### 4. What do you think could be done better on this page?

I will have to see the other images because you only show three images, the rest is the same. But it's better if you also show me this project with the real information.

Persoonlijk had ik de indeling net iets anders gedaan, hier zijn de zinnen langer en hier korter zonder goede reden. Dit had je hierachter kunnen zetten en door kunnen laten lopen. Ik zou kopteksten boven subteksten neerzetten, of die plaatsen onder de afbeelding.

Je hebt "hi this portfolio" met je naam, en vervolgens heb je in de footer nog een verhaaltje staan. Ik zou dat bovenin plaatsen, want het is een stukje om je kort te leren kennen. Hier vertel je dus dat je digital art en webdesign bent, en dat zou voor mij terug moeten komen in de website. Ik had je welkomstekst dus daarboven geplaatst. Je gebruikt nu mockups van mokken en boeken, dat zou ik niet gedaan hebben. Illustraties kun je ook op een andere manier afbeelden, dat had ik je wel eens verteld, anders gaat het eruit zien als een webshop. Er is geen goede indicatie dat de illustraties op het scherm of op het hoesje staan omdat het amper zichtbaar is dat het de voorkant is. Deze lijn zou ook een deel van het hoesje geweest kunnen zijn. Van typografie kan ik verder niks zeggen.

#### 5. Find the social media links.

(She found them by scrolling down on the About page)

People will see the icons better if they are on the bottom right. Because here you have all this information and the illustration so it's a mix, but if you have the icons there people will see it better.

(He already found these while exploring)

Ik zou deze [social media] rechts plaatsen, en ik zou het een duidelijke footer maken. Als het verhaal boven staat is de footer makkelijker voor het oog. Social media rechts uitgelijnd in een duidelijke footer. Het is iets natuurlijks wat mensen doen om voor de navigatie naar rechts te kijken, want ook in je menubalk kom je terug op home, about me en contact. Het Facebook logo concurreert nu te veel met het vogeltje, het zit te nauw op elkaar. Ik zou het dus iets meer ademruimte geven.

#### 6. Find the contact form.

(She found the page before I asked the question)

I like this one, it is simple but useful. Maybe you can think of something for this page to show in an illustrative way. Not only with that, but maybe you can prepare an illustration for the background. If you remember the website from yesterday, they didn't show the form just like that. If you have a background or illustration it will be more interesting. If you are an illustrator you will have to show what you can do.

(He found it in a second after hearing the question)

Waar is deze lijn voor? scheiding voor de footer. Ik zou de footer kleiner maken, want deze is nu bijna even groot als de pagina zelf. De contact form zelf is duidelijk. Ik zou wel de submit een knopje maken, of het iets groter maken zodat het iets duidelijker is voor de mensen. Het staat er nu een beetje ver af. Ik zou het in het midden uitlijnen i.p.v. onder omdat dat er natuurlijker uitziet.

#### 7. Find the creation date of a portfolio item.

(She didn't see it was possible to click on the projects)

At first I thought I could only see the homepage. Here you can see the social media better because the bird is on the right. Maybe you could use a better text layout for the about and item pages. The typography is very close, and it's kind of annoying to read. There should be more space between lines.

(It wasn't obvious that he could click on the projects)

Ik zou het iets duidelijk maken dat je erop kunt klikken met een hover wellicht. Het gebruik van hoofdletters is niet helemaal consistent, data van de maand zou ik nooit met hoofdletters doen. Ik zou in de slideshow een pijltje toevoegen zodat mensen weten dat ze er doorheen kunnen scrollen. Ik zou hier drie blokjes van maken, dat ziet er cleaner uit. Misschien dat die er automatisch doorheen scrollt.

**8. What part or parts of the website do you find the most interesting?**

(This question wasn't directly asked, but she spent the most time with the homepage and the contact page, and less on the about page and the footer).

Ik vind dat de homepage het meest interessant is, daar wordt je portfolio direct tentoongesteld. Ik denk wel dat je een scheiding moet maken tussen homepage en portfolio. Niet dat je direct je portfolio zo op de homepage gooit. Dat moet wel een extra handeling zijn. Een homepage is om jou te promoten, en vervolgens moeten mensen naar het portfolio gaan. Ik denk dat dat mooier is. Nu scroll je er zo doorheen. Als je met meerdere pagina's werkt geef je jezelf meer creatieve ruimte.

**9. For what kind of work would you hire the owner of this portfolio?**

For illustrations in general, it could be on a website or a book. It depends on the project I have to offer you.

Ik denk dat je sterke kant dan ligt op illustratieve dingen. Want dat showcase je zelf ook op de website, zoals dat vogeltje. Je maakt een zelfportret in Illustrator, dus zo wil je je sterke kant uiten. Als ik je zou moeten inhuren zou ik je voor illustratieve doeleinden inhuren.

**10. What would you do differently if this were your website?**

I think you could do something more dynamic in the About page. The typography and the images, the composition.

I would do the typography differently. Some text is difficult to read. There is a lot of text, long sentences and it's very close to each other. It's not very comfortable to read. I can't say anything about the illustrations because it's your style. When you hire someone it's because you like their style, but as a designer I would say the typography could be done better. The rest of the website is great, it's clear, it's clean and simple. At first I thought the website was in a pdf, it's not bad because you can navigate.

Ik heb natuurlijk een compleet andere stijl, ik ben meer black en white grafisch design, meer van het realisme dan het illustratieve werk. Als het mijn portfolio was zou ik mezelf dus showcasen op de homepage met een foto in plaats van een illustratie van mezelf. Ik vind het logogebruik erin leuk, alleen ik heb het gevoel dat die wordt afgesneden, dat vind ik minder. De cirkel wordt afgesneden, ik zou graag willen dat mijn hele logo zichtbaar is op de homepage. Ik zou een aparte pagina maken voor mijn portfolio, en ik zou met veel dunnere tekst werken. Ik ben qua typografie meer van het strakke met dunnere lijnen, de footer zou ik veel kleiner maken, alles uitlijnen naar rechts. Ik vind de fonts wel fitting voor de illustratieve website die je hebt, daar moet je ook met bold text werken. Maar mijn werk zou hier niet bij passen. Ik zeg dus niet dat jij dit moet aanpassen, want dit past goed bij jouw stijl.

**11. Other feedback and comments**

When you use the images you have to pay attention to the composition. You can change the background to a color that looks good to the viewer.

Think about the continuity with the other projects. It's better to do something simple and clear and then show your projects than it is to try to do something with very strange compositions. That is good, but only if you have the level. If you are starting it's better to have something simple and clear with pictures about your project.

## Feedback collected

1. The website is simple in a good way.
2. Colorful illustrations.
3. It's clear that it's a portfolio website.
4. The cover image is good.
5. The placeholders aren't a good representation for the final website.
6. Text structure should be better.
7. Subtitles should be below titles.
8. Replace intro sentence with introduction from footer.
9. Rework the footer.
10. Place the social media on the right bottom corner.
11. Contact form itself looks clear and good for the most part.
12. Submit should draw more attention, perhaps in the form of a button?
13. The contact page should also have a background and/or illustration.
14. More space between lines in typography.
15. Also shorter sentences.
16. Capital letter usage more consistent.
17. Make it clearer that the project images are clickable.
18. Perhaps add a slideshow to the project piece page with less images visible at once.
19. Perhaps a new page for the portfolio items, homepage separated from the projects.
20. Goal of website is clear: illustrative design work (I should do more projects with web design).
21. Style of playful, colorful, multipurpose is clear.
22. More dynamic About page.
23. Logo is a bit cut off.
24. Final images composition.

## Conclusion

Thanks to the participants and their feedback all the strong and weak points of my portfolio prototype have been highlighted. With the new insights I should be able to rework where necessary and polish the overall design so I can start coding next week.

## The Final Sprint

With these user tests completed comes the fifth (and final) sprint. This sprint will be until the end of the semester, so about 6 weeks. The products below still need to be delivered. Besides my Trello I also made a generous and raw time estimation for how many days I need to spend on everything. Of course, if something is finished earlier, I will move things around. Except for the Internship Report on fridays things will be moved around between days depending on assignments from Awwwards. The coding scope will be determined next week, because a whole website may not be a realistic end product.

This week:

Finalizing prototype (1 day)

Internship report (1 day)

5-1:

Design Justification (1 day)

Coding preparation like first bits, Git, library choice etc. (2 days)

Experimental prototype preparation (1 day)

Internship report (1 day)

5-2:

Experimental prototype (3 days)

Coding (1 day)

Internship report (1 day)

5-3

Coding (3 days)

Internship report (2 days)

5-4

Coding (3 days)

Internship report 2 days)

5-5

Coding (3 days)

Internship report (2 days)

5-6

Finishing up (3 days)

Internship report (2 days)