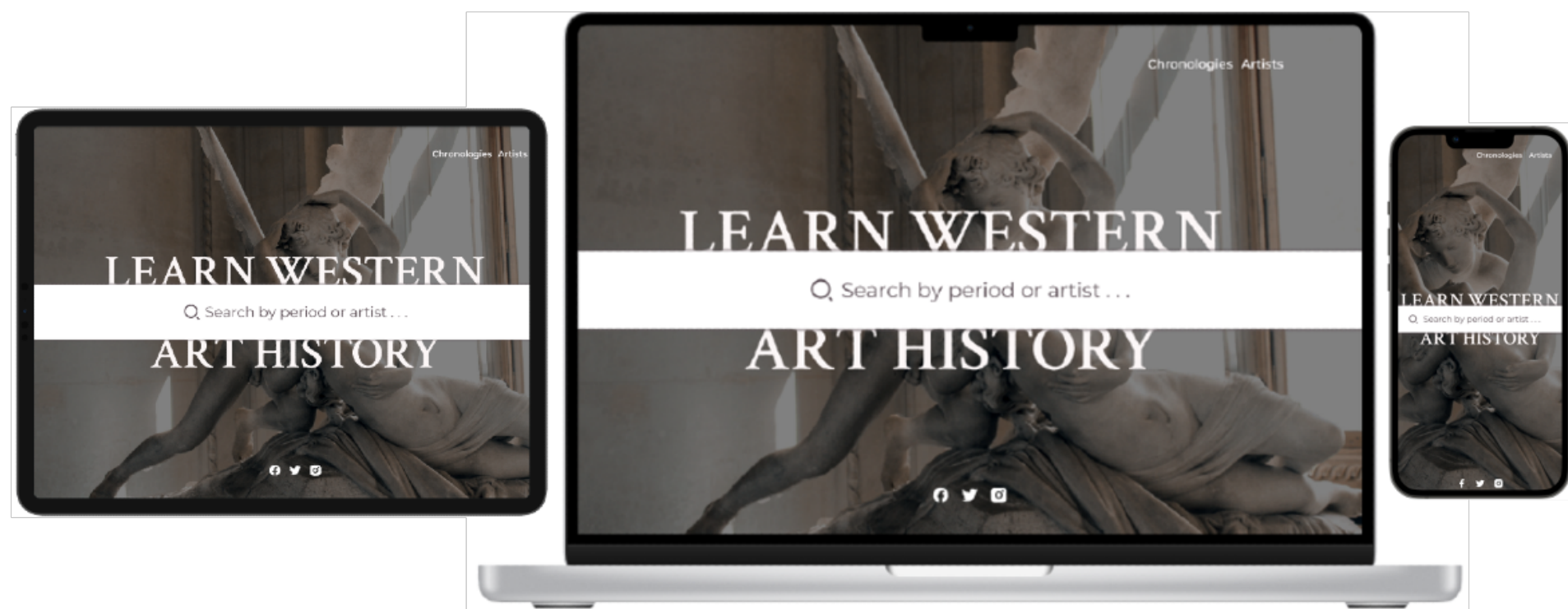


**Conceptual Case Study:** Art History Educational Website

**My role:** UX/UI Designer

**Duration:** April 2023

# It all started with an **IDEA**



no designs yet... no information architecture... not even a mockup or a wireframe

just the image of this neoclassical sculpture captured my imagination  
long enough to pursue the idea of designing a website about art

the UX thinking followed immediately

# Process // UX

I didn’t set out to follow any of the established streamlined design processes in the industry, but now that I think about it, the way I went about it ended up being a mix of Design Thinking and Google's Design Sprint.

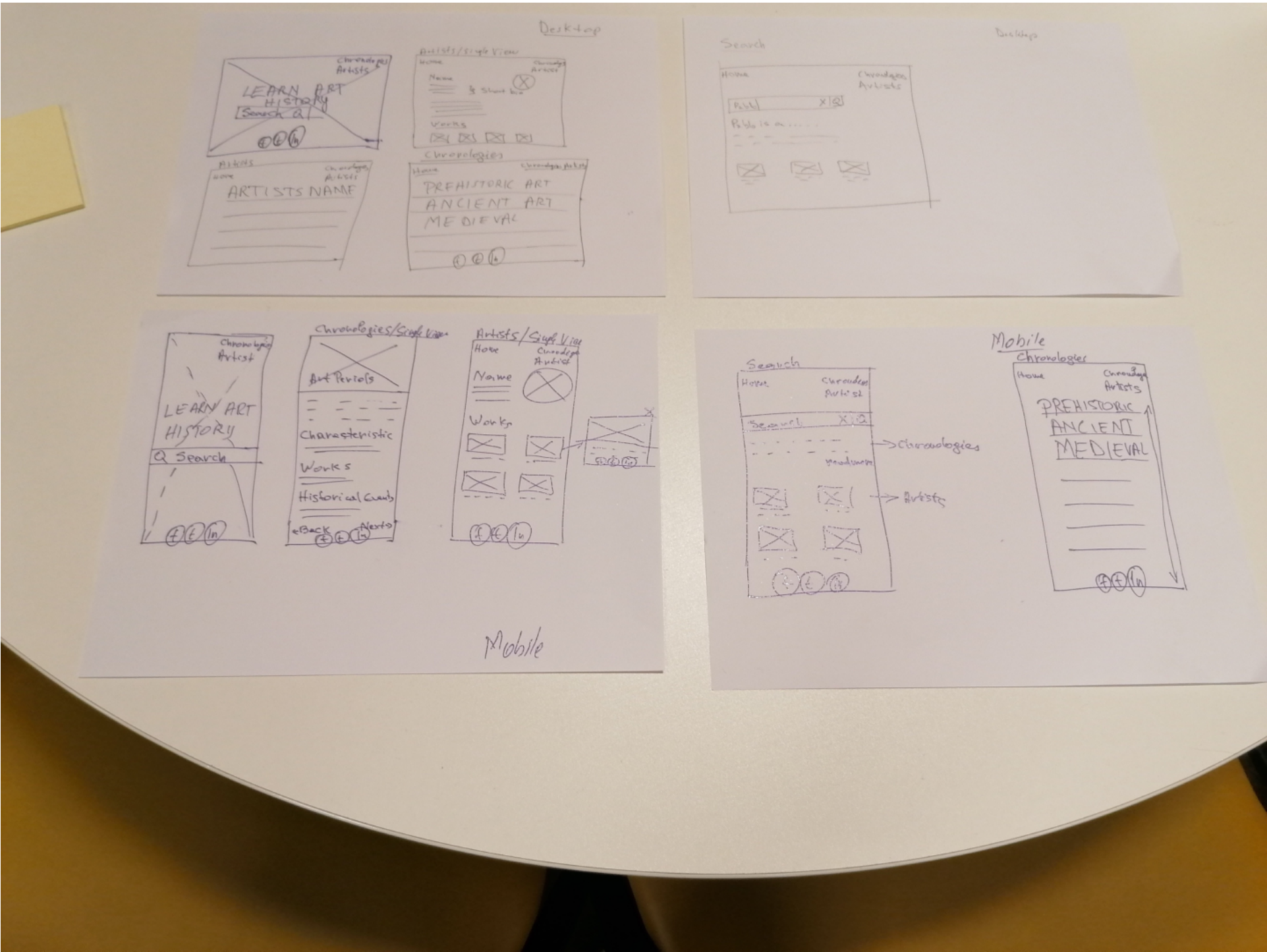
Almost automatically I started thinking of personas — nothing too formal:

- Art Enthusiast Emma  
Emma is a 25-year-old art enthusiast with a degree in fine arts. She loves exploring art history, visiting museums, and attending exhibitions. Emma seeks a user-friendly website that provides comprehensive information and inspires her creativity.
- Novice Learner Alex  
Alex is a 40-year-old professional developing an interest in art history. They want a beginner-friendly website that offers a structured learning path, clear explanations, visual aids, and interactive elements to simplify complex concepts.

Things were moving.

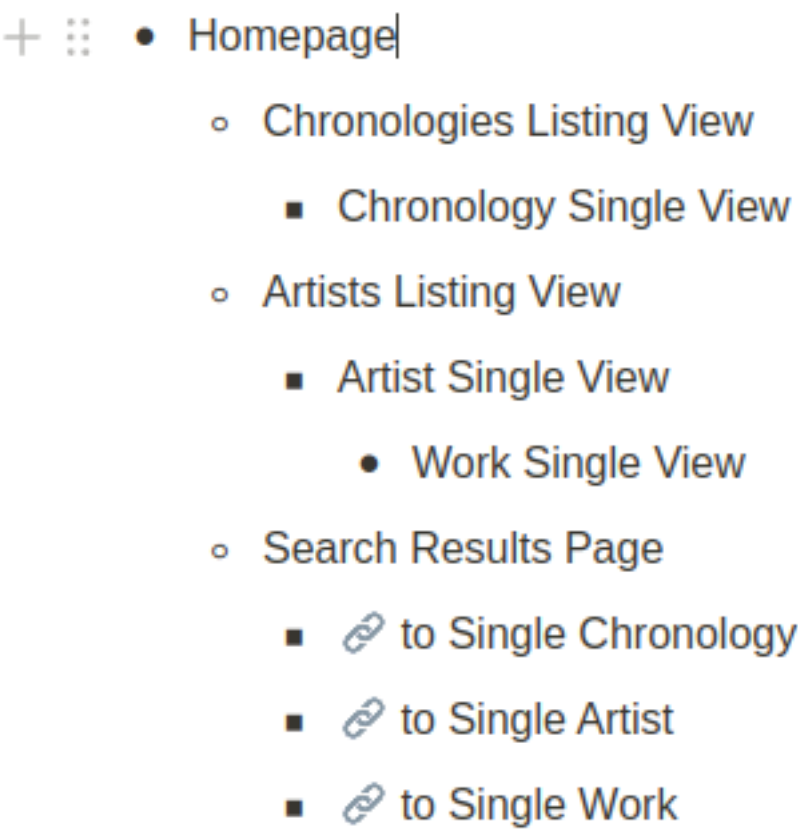
I knew what my personas **needed** to be on the website, what they **wanted** to be on it, and what they did **not want** to be on it.

I have to jot this all down... wireframes.



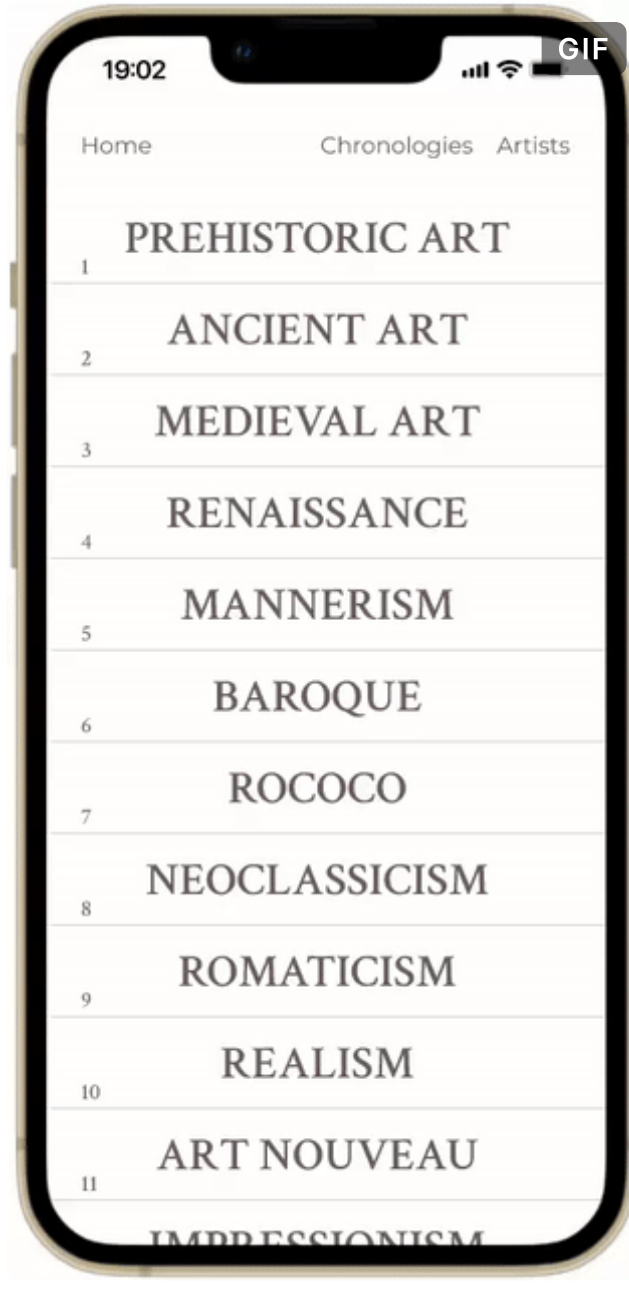
Much better. But wait. How do they go from search to search results page. How many pages total are there in the first place?

The humble sitemap you see here was all the IA I needed to answer those questions and move on to the fun stuff...





# Design Challenges // UI



**Challenge:** Decisions

**Solution:** Design Thinking

I admit it. Designing this big list of art periods and artists, on both mobile and desktop, was fun. And fun was the driving force behind why I did it this way. But not my fun, though, but rather the "fun" good mood that the visitors are in when they visit a website to learn about art.

When you're that intentional, my reasoning was that you don't need UX to guide you or reduce friction, but rather entice (delight?) you on a first visit and give that sense of familiarity on repeat visits.

Of course, in a real-world project, this idea would require testing and evaluation based on feedback. In a conceptual case study, all I could do was be reminded of the importance of making any decision, no matter how big or small, throughout the whole design process.

**Challenge:** Content-heavy site

**Solution:** Back to Basics

What wasn't that much fun was dealing with every designer's favorite kind of website: a content-heavy one. You may not think about it at first, but as it turns out, an educational website about ART is predominantly made up of TEXT.

There are a set of challenges that come with that, but I focused mainly on two: readability and visual engagement.

## Readability

The most important one for sure. No easy way out of this. I decided to keep it simple and tried to get the basics right:

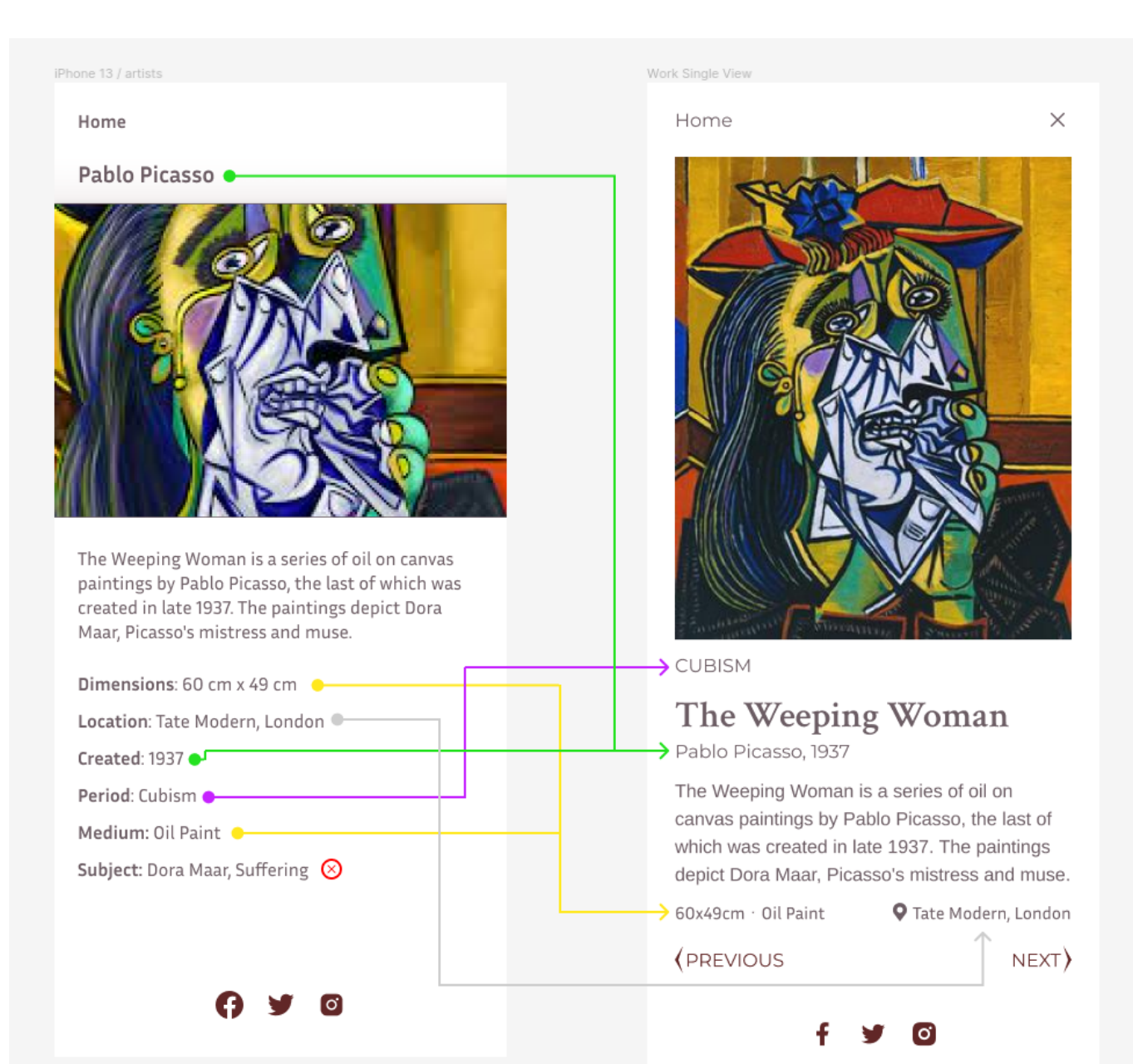
- line length: less than 80 characters
- contrast ratio: AAA for important text
- font choice: good old Verdana
- line height: customized line heights for each font size made a bigger difference than just sticking to the 4px base grid to create vertical rhythm

## Visual Engagement

To be honest, I'm not a big fan of full-height background hero sections. But in this case it created such a remarkable contrasting effect with the content-heavy section that immediately follows it that I couldn't ignore the trend any longer and decided to join it.

**Challenge:** Iteration

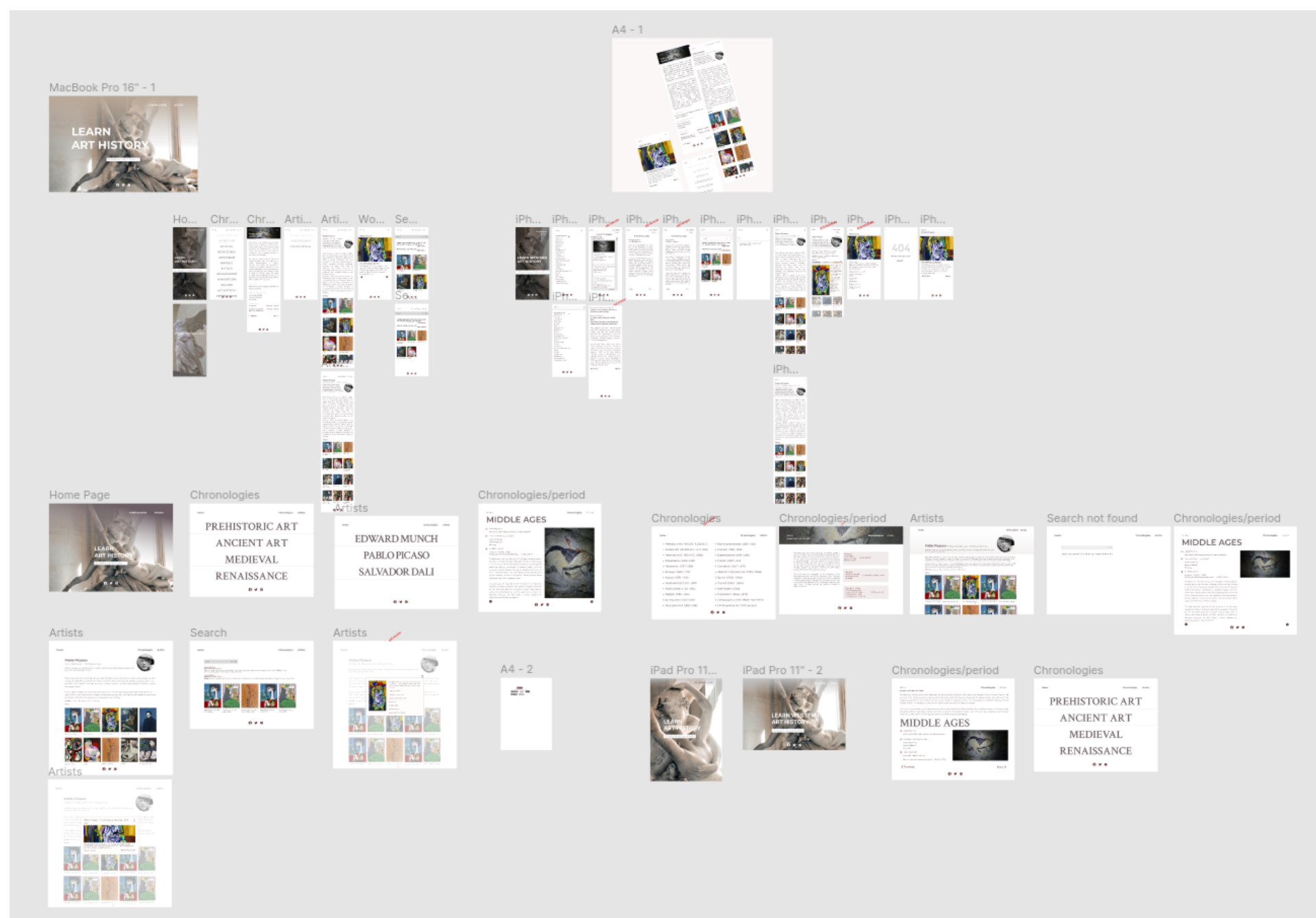
**Solution:** More Iteration



Is this Agile UX? I don't know, I wasn't collaborating with other designers, or getting feedback from users, but I was iterating every step of the way! From low to high fidelity prototypes, to even "final" designs. I know it's cliché, but truly there is no final design. Every layer added in figma seems to be an invitation for the mind to think how it can be improved.

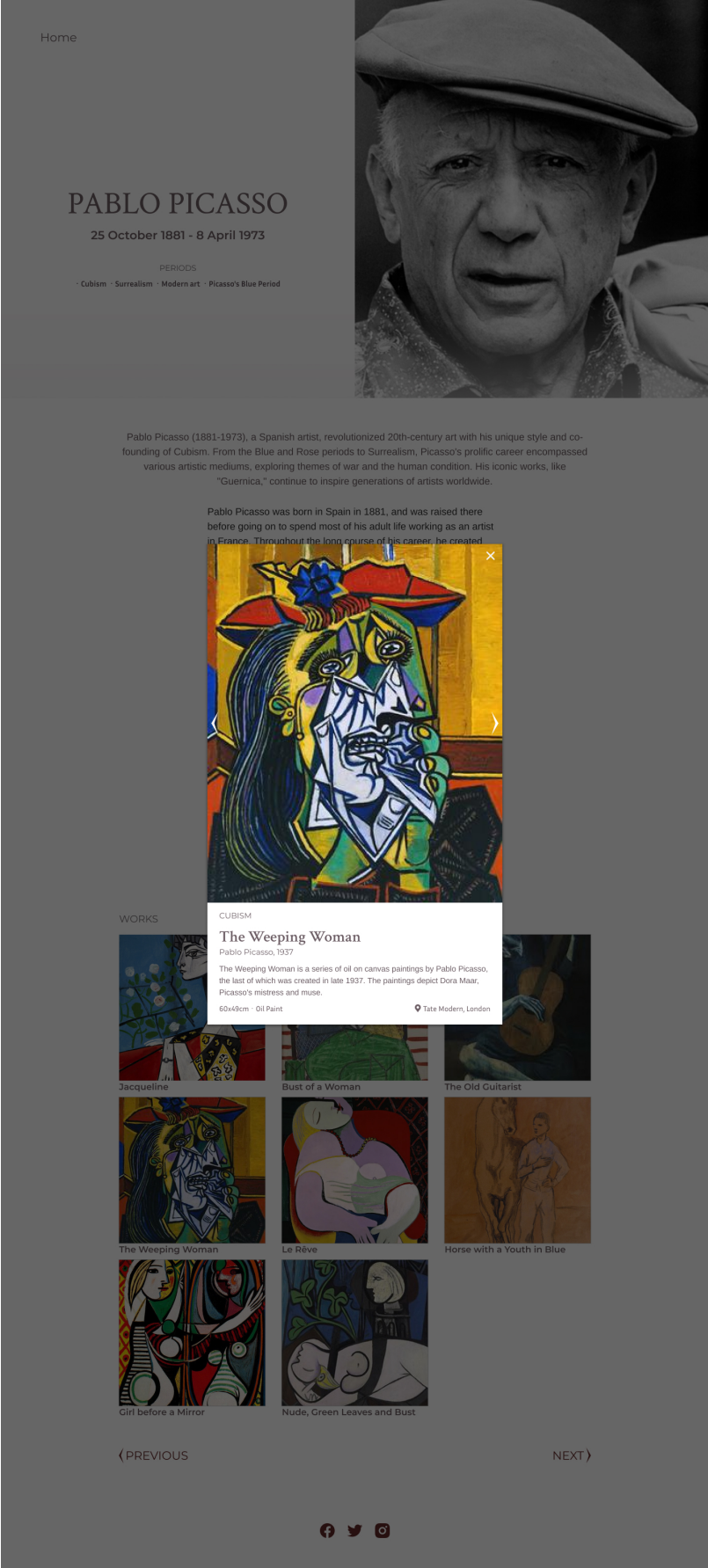
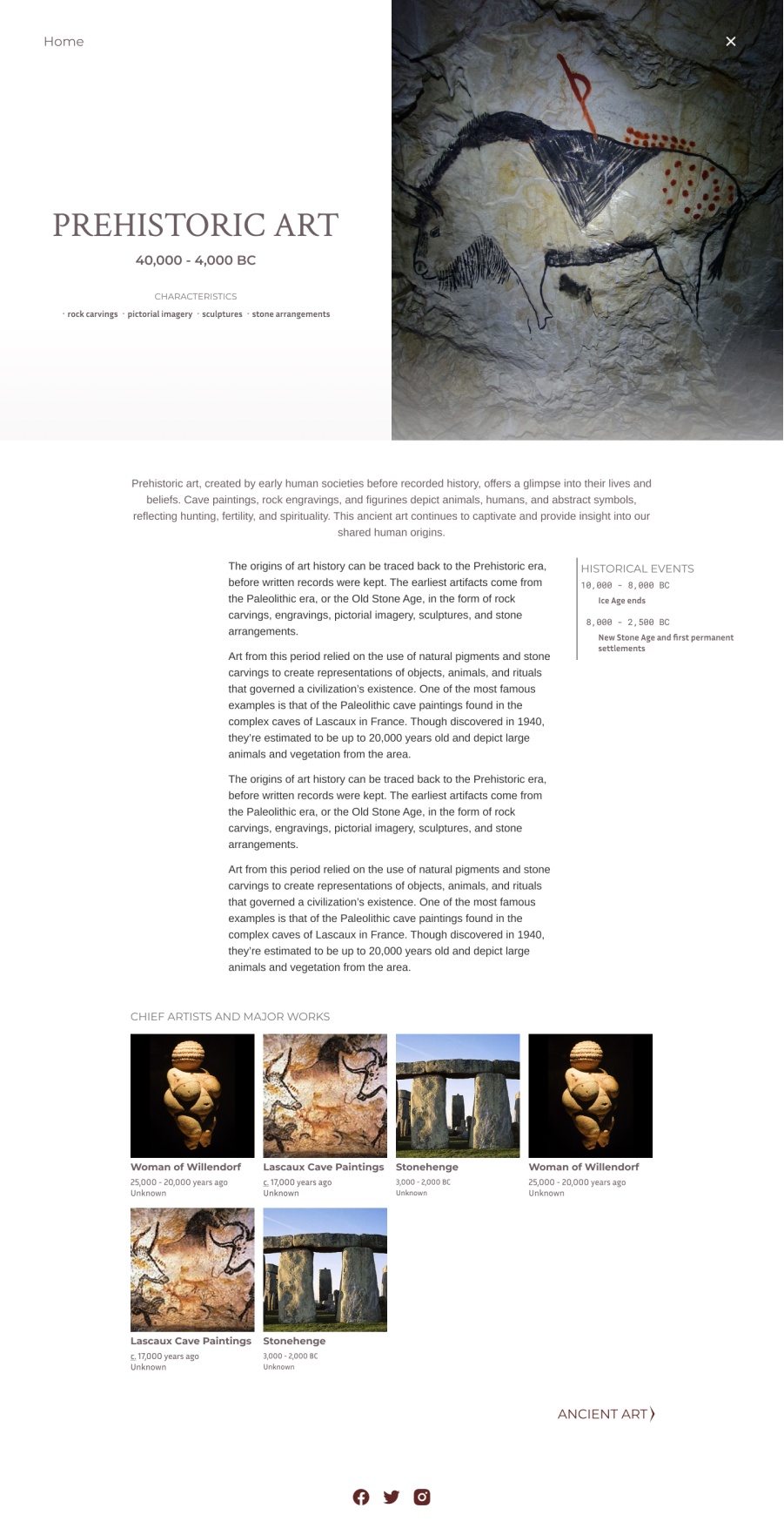
One such case where I'm happy with the result of this refactoring process is the "single work of art" view above. I went from listing the information like it would be stored in a database record, to a much more human friendly layout.

Other cases of this iterative approach are too much to count but you can get an idea from this screenshot here.





# Result // Deliverables







LEARN WESTERN  
ART HISTORY

Q Search by period or artist...

HomeChronologiesArtists

cubiQ

Cubism

Cubism, highly influential visual arts style of the 20th century that was created principally by the artists Pablo Picasso and Georges...

Pablo Picasso

... Periods: Cubism, Surrealism, Modern art, Picasso's Blue Period

The Weeping Woman

Pablo Picasso

Violin and Palette

Georges Braque

Show More

f t i

HomeChronologiesArtists

1 PREHISTORIC ART

2 ANCIENT ART

3 MEDIEVAL ART

4 RENAISSANCE

5 MANNERISM

6 BAROQUE

7 ROCOCO

8 NEOCLASSICISM

9 ROMATICISM

10 REALISM

11 ART NOUVEAU

12 IMPRESSIONISM

13 POST-IMPRESSIONISM

14 FAUVISM

15 EXPRESSIONISM

16 CUBISM

17 SURREALISM

18 POP ART

19 ARTE POVERA

20 MINIMALISM

21 CONCEPTUAL ART

22 CONTEMPORARY ART

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HomeX

Pablo Picasso

25 October 1881 - 8 April 1973

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), a Spanish artist, revolutionized 20th-century art with his unique style and co-founding of Cubism. From the Blue and Rose periods to Surrealism, Picasso's prolific career encompassed various artistic mediums, exploring themes of war and the human condition. His iconic works, like "Guernica," continue to inspire generations of artists worldwide.

Pablo Picasso was born in Spain in 1881, and was raised there before going on to spend most of his adult life working as an artist in France. Throughout the long course of his career, he created more than 20,000 paintings, drawings, sculptures, ceramics and other items such as costumes and theater sets. He is universally renowned as one of the most influential and celebrated artists of the twentieth century.

Picasso's ability to produce works in an astonishing range of styles made him well respected during his own lifetime. After his death in 1973 his value as an artist and inspiration to other artists has only grown. He is without a doubt destined to permanently etch himself into the fabric of humanity as one of the greatest artists of all time.

WORKS

Jacqueline

Bust of a Woman

The Old Guitarist

The Weeping Woman

Le Rêve

Horse with a Youth in Blue

Girl before a Mirror

Nude, Green Leaves and Bust

(PREVIOUSNEXT)

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HomeX

Prehistoric Art

40,000 - 4,000 BC

Prehistoric art, created by early human societies before recorded history, offers a glimpse into their lives and beliefs. Cave paintings, rock engravings, and figurines depict animals, humans, and abstract symbols, reflecting hunting, fertility, and spirituality. This ancient art continues to captivate and provide insight into our shared human origins.

The origins of art history can be traced back to the Prehistoric era, before written records were kept. The earliest artifacts come from the Paleolithic era, or the Old Stone Age, in the form of rock carvings, engravings, pictorial imagery, sculptures, and stone arrangements.

Art from this period relied on the use of natural pigments and stone carvings to create representations of objects, animals, and rituals that governed a civilization's existence. One of the most famous examples is that of the Paleolithic cave paintings found in the complex caves of Lascaux in France. Though discovered in 1940, they're estimated to be up to 20,000 years old and depict large animals and vegetation from the area.

CHARACTERISTICS

· rock carvings · pictorial imagery · sculptures · stone arrangements

HISTORICAL EVENTS

18,000 - 8,000 BC

Ice Age ends

8,000 - 2,500 BC

New Stone Age and first permanent settlements

CHIEF ARTISTS AND MAJOR WORKS

Woman of Willendorf

25,000 - 30,000 years ago

Unknown

Lascaux Cave Paintings

c. 17,000 years ago

Unknown

Stonehenge

3,000 - 2,000 BC

Unknown

(PREVIOUS PERIODNEXT PERIOD)

f t i

ANCIENT ART)

HomeX

CUBISM

The Weeping Woman is a series of oil on canvas paintings by Pablo Picasso, the last of which was created in late 1937. The paintings depict Dora Maar, Picasso's mistress and muse.

60x49cm · Oil Paint

Tate Modern, London

(PREVIOUSNEXT)

f t i

HomeX

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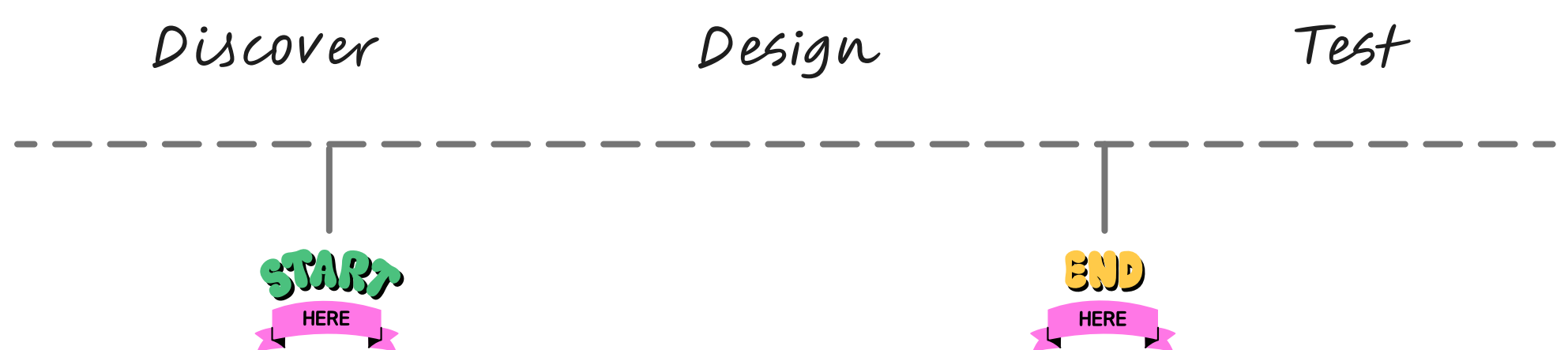
Whoops,  
that Page  
is Gone.

Q Try searching here...

or go  
BACK TO HOMEPAGE



# Conclusion // Subtitle



If we were to paint the whole UX process with very broad brushes as just Discover, Design, and Test, this project would roughly fall within the area illustrated above.

The assumption here is that the business decision has already been made, and the result, whether informed more by business strategy, pure UX research, competitive analysis, or all of the above and more, is in: we must build an educational website about art.

The challenge tackled here then was product design through and through: **how** do we best build that website?

My process could be simply summarized as: empathize with the user, prototype/design, iterate.

My biggest personal takeaway I would say was immersing myself in theory to gain a deeper understanding of visual design principles.

As for a future roadmap, any plans would have to start with usability testing before thinking of any potential features. Once confirmed by the user tests, with an industry as big as education, and the web as a time-proven medium, the possibilities are endless.