USER TEST REPORT

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CONTENT

Introduction

This report is based off of the website: Alexdecorte.com, which is a portfolio website that contains Mr De Corte's artwork. They have worked previously with Prada and have one of their installations displayed on the Prada website, therefore, the use of their online portfolio is important in order to reach wider audiences and get hired. The website has information on other projects he has worked on, Alex is a well-known artist.

Executive summary

The aim of the usability test is to determine the ease of navigation for users. I had three participants take part, all with varying interests and navigation abilities. To begin I conducted a briefing, then moved onto a pre-test questionnaire that allowed me to get a better understanding of the participants. At the end of the main user-test I conducted a post-test questionnaire and a debriefing. The user-test consisted of tasks and scenarios that would mean they would have to get familiar and explore the website.

Throughout the test, most participants were able to complete tasks as expected, with one exception. Only one participant mentioned they would be most likely to re-visit the webpage despite their struggle to navigate it; the other two would not. One out of three participants expressed their enjoyment in viewing the website, while the other two mentioned difficult navigation. In the end, the results proved that navigation was the main issue of the website, as well as consistency and aesthetics coming in second.

Expert Review (Heuristic Evaluation)

From my initial impression of the website, most of the issues came from the effort needed to recognize and remember the layout of this particular website. This is relevant to the sub-heading and scroll-down layout. According to the UX Heuristic principles, this website violates the "*Consistency, Recognition, Flexibility and efficiency of use, Visibility of system status, Aesthetic and minimalistic design.*", all to varying degrees, which will be touched on further on.

The initial pop-up, to begin, was challenging to exit from. This caused a sense of irritation as my expectations on where the exit button should have been (on or right next to the large image) were subverted, this layout had not taken into consideration the users' previous interactions with other websites and instead of using their ability to ***recognise*** common pop-up layouts, instead had the user learn a new layout. The learning time for this was too long to be considered user-friendly, as the background was too distracting and at a point had to be studied in order to find the exit button. It is clear that in the background of the pop-up is not ***aesthetic*** and the information that can be seen holds no relevance to the pop-up.

Also, the first time I went on this website, I completely missed the caption (on bottom left of pop-up), only noticing it after I had become familiar with the website.

Furthermore, minor details such as the cv link not working caused confusion as there was no *visibility of system status*. The 'download cv' caused a delay in error recovery, I expected the download to happen automatically similar to other websites. However, when I realized that it was not downloaded and had opened a new tab without my knowledge, it incited feelings of annoyance and irritation, especially since I had to guess due to no clear indication or alert letting me know the download was not successful. Additionally, guessing that most of the text under "Selected shows" were all hyperlinks when confronted with something not working caused more confusion.

When trying to find contact or social media links, the scrolling made it hard to stick with till the end of the section. The repetitive task of scrolling was not enjoyable. It was noticeable that the three scroll sections were *inconsistent* both in size and content. A small mention to the mobile layout containing only what can be assumed as the "About Me" paragraph and nothing else, the mobile view design does nothing for mobile users as no valuable information is displayed.

In conclusion, despite these negative findings, the website is fairly simple to understand. There are no overwhelming number of links that take you from one page to another. It is all nicely compact across two web pages, the main improvement needed is a different layout.

Usability Concerns and Goals

The **usability concerns**, as guided by the 'Expert Review', for Alex De Corte's website are as follows:

- Time taken to locate certain information.
- Identifying what information can be interacted with
- Ability to navigate out of the pop-up.
- The amount of scrolling with no quick way back to the top.

The participants may encounter these concerns, if they do, their reactions will help us get a better understanding as to what the user wants. Moreover, the overall goal is to increase the enjoyability of the website and overall likelihood of users re-visiting the website.

User test goals,

these will test the websites' ability to communicate with the users efficiently:

- Identifying the main elements of the pop-up bar (image, exit button and caption)
- The overall aesthetic of the website and its appeal
- Evaluating the website's flexibility to allow users to recover from errors quickly.

These goals will give me an in-depth understanding of the actions needed to take to improve the website.

Methodology

Personas:

Leonardo De La Vega is a 22-year-old fine-art student. Despite being a full-time student, he works at a local book shop. His income is not enough to be able to spoil himself but is enough to sustain his studio apartment in south-London, also, to fund his vices. His vice of buying sketchbook without finishing old ones is what will ruin him eventually. In the rare instance he may have free time, Mr De La Vega enjoys reading books he got at a discount from his workplace. Also, being a fine-art student, he loves working on paintings. Recently, having read "Installation Art", his interest has been focused to the contempory arts.

After working long hours at the bookstore, which is located on the bank of the Thames, Mr De La Vega often takes a stroll around the area. Taking in the scenery and clearing his head, this is to be inspired for his personal projects and class work. Leonardo tends to stop by the local artists at the Thames, to chat and watch how they draw; he enjoys finding out more about other artists and their work process.

Alfie Woods is a 31-year-old, Art Gallery manager. Alfie lives in a grand studio apartment in Notting Hill, despite his lavish lifestyle you'll often find him abroad, his favourite place to travel is Italy as he is of Italian descent. In Italy, he often ventures to galleries admiring the Italian culture and influence on the artist's art style. As manager of the Gallery, Alfie searches for smaller artists with talent to put exhibitions up, so far most of the current exhibitions come from artists he found abroad. Since Alfie spends a decent chunk of time in airports and aeroplanes, Alfie loves taking historical fine art books with him. However, he sometimes enjoys watching psychological thrillers while he waits.

When Alfie is not abroad or at work, Alfie attends spoken word nights at a local café. Alfie and his group of friends all enjoy this as a night out and will often drink a cup of wine or two. In fact, he has performed twice in the past 4 years of visiting there. On one of those locations, he was commended for his act and was invited to a private art installation at the Tate. He of course went with his friends.
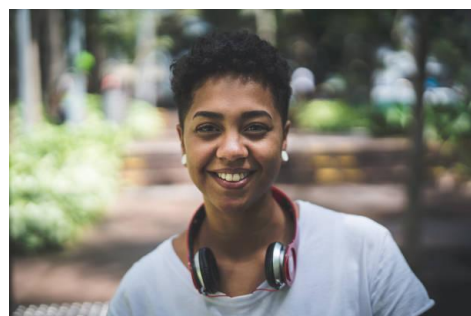
Sofia is a 25-year-old graphic design student. Sofia's dream is to become an Installation artist, dreaming of designing concert stages to maximise people's experiences. She enjoys reading poetry or graphic design books such as "Graphic Design, A history". They are never seen without their headphones, often listening to the Arctic Monkeys or Coldplay. If she is

not studying, Sofia often spends time drawing designs or practicing her art techniques. Already, she has come up with redesigns for major concert events such as The Weeknds performance for the 2020 MTV VMAs, building up her performance. She independently researches famous installation artists and tries to gain inspiration from their work.

When Sofia is not studying or working on her projects, she spends time with her family. Often planning picnics and days out, for these she uses the money she makes from commission drawings.

Methodology (Where/How the test was conducted)

Due to covid restrictions, the usability test could not be carried out in person. The way I got around this was by conducting the test via Zoom. I chose Zoom to be the platform through which the test would take place due to the ability to share screens and record and be able to video chat. I arranged meetings with each of the participants, ensuring that all the participants had zoom installed before the set date. On the day the usability test took place, the participants were in their homes, in a semi-controlled environment, free from distractions or interruptions.

Description of the sessions

The sessions themselves ran smoothly, the participants were engaged in the tasks and completed them to the best of their ability. One difficulty was the fact that it was online, participants were a little frustrated with zoom and how it is laid out. Before starting the user test, I briefed the participants of the contents of the user test as well as giving them the option to opt out, none did. After the test took place, I de-briefed them. This allowed the participants to get a well-rounded understanding as to why this test was taking place and their options to leave it if they wished to do so.

Findings

Participant Profiles

Jordan

Is a 20-year-old English student, who spends roughly 6-9 hours per day on the internet; she rates her ability to navigate the web an 8. She is interested in the arts and enjoys visiting galleries, such as the Tate. Since being in lockdown, she has not attended any sort of gallery though she has been invited to them(online). She is looking for artists to be involved in their university project.

Camilo

A 20-year-old Illustration student that often visits galleries and tries to be involved in the arts as much as possible. Camilo is a frequent internet user, spending an estimated 6hrs/ day and rates themselves as a 9/10 in terms of their ability to navigate the web. Since being in lockdown, they have attended two online art events, both a type of art fair.

Lucas

Lucas works as a bartender and is 19 years old. Lucas enjoys programming and plans to study computer science at university. He estimates that he uses the internet about 5hrs/day and has rated himself high on his ability to navigate the web, giving himself an 8/10. Lucas's hobbies are not so art related but does enjoy doing game design, he stated that he 'only occasionally' would visit art galleries. Not particularly interested in attending online art fairs.

Severity rating

Scenario	Rating	Description
Pop-up layout: Exit button. Caption Overall Aesthetic	Critical	- The exit sign is hard to locate and, at first, cannot be identified as being related to the pop-up but more so with the text behind it. - Participants found it hard to locate when asked, and confused it with text from the background. What helped some users identify eventually was the fact that the names changed.
Layout: Exhibitions Other Information	Serious	- Locating a sub-heading proved to be difficult as it took the longest 1min20s and shortest time 38s. - Exhibition links were not all clickable, and the participants struggled to identify which were interactive.
Error Recovery: Downloading CV Links (one participant)	Critical	- Participants expected the download link to work and, despite knowing the link did not work once, clicked on it an average of 2 more times to check. Participants were visibly confused when the link opened a new page. - Links were broken; there was confusion with 1 participant regarding the redirection of the webpage and being taken to invalid links.
Aesthetic: Logo	Minor	Logo: It may not necessarily suit the theme. It could look related if the user puts in the effort to search through exhibitions and relates the work and logo together as being a "Halloween theme".
Dark Mode	Minor	The one user that managed to get to the "dark mode" was visibly confused. They thought their "computer broke". It was sudden and left the user unsure if the images displayed were supposed to have the inverted effect. They thought it could get annoying if it keeps changing, especially at random intervals.

Mobile View	Critical	● Found that the mobile layout was not helpful. ● The information they expected to see was not displayed.

User Test Results

Camilo

Task:	Performance:
Blink test:	Identified the most memorable aspect of the website to be the image.
Identify names of exhibition on pop-up:	Immediate, found in 6 seconds. Would have wanted this to be located closer to the image as background was drawing his attention away from it.
Exit the pop-up:	It took the participant 15 seconds to find the exit button. Rated a 7/10 in terms of location. Suggested the button be put a box so it sticks out.
Opinion on Aesthetic:	Minimalistic Graphic needed on the side of selected show to stay consistent with design
Find "Awards and Publications"	It took 38 seconds to find, They also did 3 clicks, 1 scroll to try to find it
Broken Links	Was able to find these links immediately/ Error recovery took 23 seconds to get back to page: needed confirmation from the facilitator that link was not working. Initially they sounded confused.
Identify more than two exhibitions:	It took 34 seconds to realize some were not clickable
Download CV	Confused as to why the link opens new page, also, assumed that the main paragraph was the cv
Rate websites navigation:	8.5/10, important information is highlighted

Jordan

| Task:	Performance:
Blink test:	Picture is the most eye-catching. Too much information on "left or right" which was "not so nice"
Identify names of exhibition on pop-up:	Slow, it took this participant 1min 21seconds. She clicked off pop-up to look for the information she was asked to get. It took longer than she thought it was going to take as she did not realize the caption was linked to the image.

Exit the pop-up:	-
	       She did this in previous task. Asked about their opinion on their opinion of the exit button.
	
	       Did not realize it related the picture, thought it was relevant to the text the X is next to.

Opinion on Aesthetic:	Basic, 6/10 Apart from picture is not very appealing
Dark Mode questions:	Initially confused as to why the website changed, they believed their computer broke. Likes the change, wishes there were a toggle so you could play with it yourself.
Find "Public Collections"	It took 1min 29seconds to find, 3scrolls. She looked through each scroll-down section. She mentioned she would not think to scroll to the bottom to find this.
Find and have displayed his other work:	It took 53 seconds to identify which links were displayable and which were not. initially made the assumption they were all clickable. Remembered that it changed when she hovered over them previously, that is how she knew they were clickable.
Download CV	Confused as to why the link opens a newpage, also, assumed that the main paragraph was the cv. Can see participants looking around trying to locate where the file was.
Mobile View	They mentioned it being completely useless. The white space is big, the absence of whatever was supposed to be there is noticeable. Contains only the main paragraph

Lucas

Task:	Performance:
Blink test:	Picture is really engaging, the words behind the image seemed cluttered.
Identify names of exhibition on pop-up:	Unsuccessful
Exit the pop-up:	- He did this on his own. Did not realize it was related to the picture, thought it was relevant to the text the X is next to.
Opinion on Aesthetic:	Interesting layout, too black and white. Bland
Find "Public Collections"	He found it immediately by using 'ctrl + f, this proves his familiarity with the web. Thought that it was too much information to be displayed on one page.
Find and have displayed his other work (how long it takes to identify non interactive links):	It took 4mins 57s to identify the links that were not clickable. Mentioned the fact that the scroll did not keep his position so when he kept on clicking it would go back to the top of the menu.
Download CV	- Completed the previous task, was confused, and tried again.
Mobile View:	Initially, white space was an issue. However, when they reentered the link, they were able to get the exhibitions showing. Believes this is better as this controls the flow of information.

Finding (Summary)

The recommendations were based on the findings from the usability test and later from one participant agreeing to come back and give feedback on improvements. Despite receiving positive reviews on the pop-up and gallery designs, when going through the "About" page layout they stated that this layout could be improved by having sub-headings under awards and publications that could make titles stand out from general text and years. Also, it was suggested that the dark mode toggle should be implemented, as it adds a bit of character to the website.

Recommendations

Based on my findings, one of the things I would recommend changing would be the pop-up layout. This is due to all participants struggling either to identify the caption of the images or the exit button. This need to change is due to one participant not completing the "find the name of exhibitions task" and another taking 1 min 21seconds to identify it. The problem is that the background is *noisy*; therefore, the users expect any text to be related to the "unimportant" background. An improvement would be to change the form it is laid out, for example, having a background colour or overlay that will block out background text.
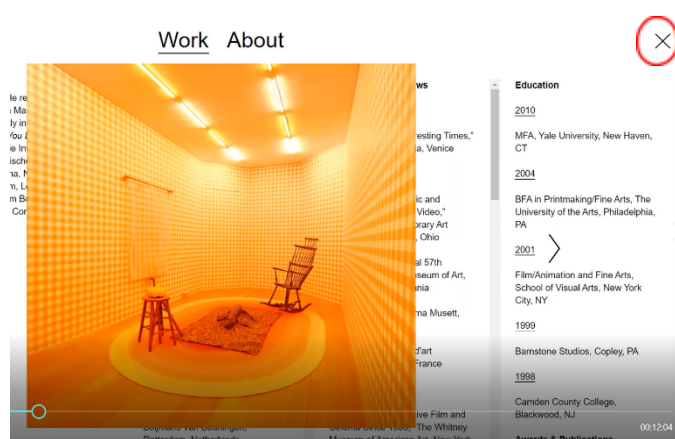
Furthermore, the exit button can be located closer to the image so the connection can be made quickly in relation to the pop-up.

The participant struggled to find the exit-button as it was on top of the education scroll-down section and was often related to that. Furthermore, it was only assumed that this was the exit-button. No participant confidently went to it to say this is the exit-button.

Another serious point that could be improved is the general layout of information, such as education, solo shows etc. When given the task to find a particular sub-heading, all participants expressed the desire to have the information displayed consistently. This is due to the layout of three rows (all with subheadings) expected to only contain the information the sub-headings described. The confusion mainly lay on the third row, where there were a total of four sub-headings. The longest time it took the participants to find the sub-heading was 1min 29seconds, often scrolling past their goal; this indicates that the layout incites a feeling of dissonance as they had to unlearn what they knew about sub-headings and sectioning to navigate this webpage.

(this image illustrates the point where one of the participants had just completed the find the sub-heading task)

Lastly, the broken "download CV" link caused confusion amongst the participants. To correct this, I would recommend applying a link to it and not allowing the link to open another page but to download on the same page. This is due to there being more straightforward communication between the website and the user. Additionally, the mobile layout needs a navigation menu. There needs to be a hierarchy of information; only necessary text should be displayed. Perhaps, education, artist residence etc., are not required for the mobile view; however, the exhibitions/work is a priority to showcase.

Finally, the two minor ratings are both to do with the enjoyability of the website. The dark mode adds an element of excitement. However, dark mode was only seen by one participant and therefore no feedback from the other two participants were taken. I would leave out the dark mode as it may be confusing for users, however, the idea of a toggle was suggested, I believe it may not be necessary.
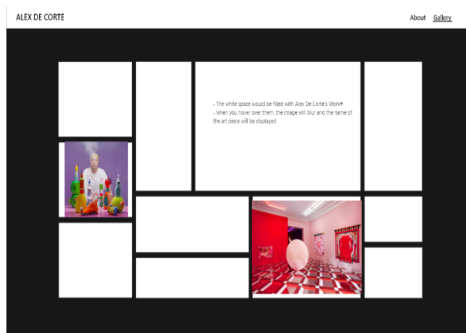
Redesign

Pop-up redesign:
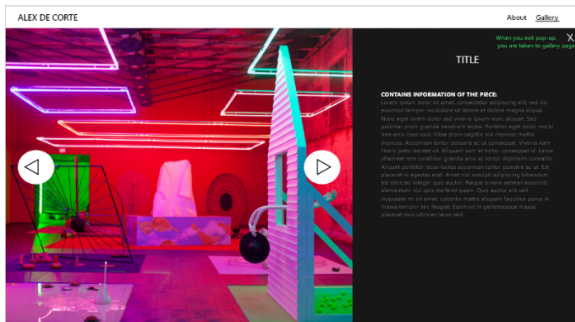
Above you will find a new layout that I designed for the pop-up. This layout would make the content of the pop-up easily identifiable. I believe this would solve the initial problems with the pop-up. It clearly displays the title and description, also, the exit-button is clearly located.

Click the link to see the design:
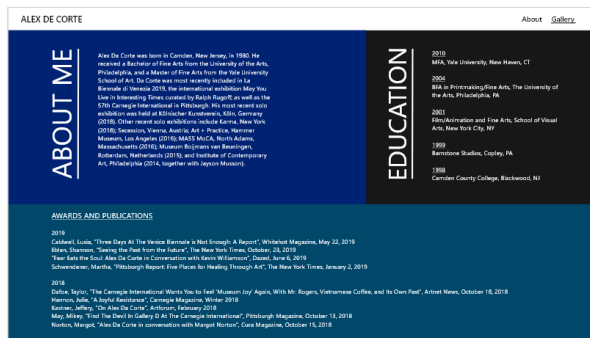https://xd.adobe.com/view/eee7978c-8a58-4ed0-a6a2-bb35d86120cd-bbb4/

Gallery:

Once you click off the pop-up you will be met by the gallery page that will more clearly display Alex's displayable work.

Click the link to see the design:
https://xd.adobe.com/view/90bc0dc7-3d63-4d83-b2e6-2a2a15c281d5-c5ef/

About:

In this layout, I have displayed the information clearly, all under big readable sub-headings.

Click the link to see the design:
https://xd.adobe.com/view/063f7f3d-df30-4498-bf65-16342a6a6ba7-536c/

Re-Design

Despite only one participant coming back to comment on the re-designs we were able to get a good base off where the website can be improved and where it should stay the same.

The participant Jordan gave feedback on the re-design. It was mostly positive, she highlighted how much easier it was to navigate between the webpages. Also, she mentioned the clarity of the information displayed, however, did suggest, under awards and publications, have a method to highlight titles and separate titles from description. This is because she felt it looked too cluttered and hard to process the information. In the gallery, she really like the fact that the images would have a blur on hover and the title would display.

Conclusion

Alex De Corte's website was praised for its ability to capture the user's attention and for maintaining a minimal design that seemed to accentuate his artwork. However, also being critiqued for its over simplicity, the navigation and layout of the website. As this website is a portfolio page, it is logical for the emphasis to be on the images. This will capture and hold the users, however, as the user test demonstrated, the frustrations of using the webpage may cause users to leave and never come back. It is my belief that this webpage could do with some re-designing based on the recommendations.

This re-design will allow the website to capture the attention of users and maintain them at the website. Furthermore, being a well-known artist, a website that can accurately represent you is important. In the re-design, we will keep elements such as the dark mode, but instead attach a toggle to it so users can play with it if they would like. This is keeping Alex's personal touch on the website but has now been made user-friendly.

Appendix A

Consent forms are attached.

Appendix B

Briefing:

Hello, I would like to welcome [participant name] to this user test.

Before we begin the user test, I will be briefing you on what this test will consist of.

In this test, we will be asking you to provide feedback on a website that will help us to improve the user experience and the overall enjoyability of the website. Throughout this test the facilitator (which will be me in this case) will be taking you through the questions and set tasks. If there are any questions you might have about the tasks, you can ask me to further elaborate. Lastly, this is a test on the website and not on you—any feedback on what was challenging to use or what was enjoyable would be helpful.

The test structure is as follows: pre-test Questionnaires, User test and post-test questionnaires. I will remind you that if you no longer want to participate in this test, we will stop the session immediately. Also, if you need any breaks, we can stop too.

I will restate that this is a test on the website and not on you.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Debriefing:

This concludes the user test. I would like to thank the participant for taking part.

Appendix C

User Test Questions:

1. (blink test) What are your first impressions of the website?
    a. What do you remember most of the website?
    b. What do you think this site is for?
2. In this pop-up, can you find the name of the exhibitions displayed?
    a. What are your thoughts on the layout?
3. Could you find the way to exit out of the first pop up that appears?
    a. What do you think of the placement of the exit button?
4. What is the first thing that draws your attention?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the appearance of this website?
    a. Why?

b. How easy is it to take in the information displayed and rate the layout that takes up the website's right side?

6. We have seen one of Alex De Corte exhibitions on the first pop-up. Can you please find any other exhibitions?
   a. How many do you think there are?
   b. On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very easy, how simple was it to identify where his other exhibitions were?
   c. Did you have to guess?

7. Find the section that has the "Public Collections" heading.
   a. Is it clear what work he has publicized?
   b. What do you think about how these headings have been laid out?

8. **Scenario:** I would like you to view this website in its mobile layout. How functional is this layout in its reach to people who may not have a laptop or computer?

9. **Scenario:** Finally, imagine you are looking to hire Alex De Corte. Can you locate his contact information (this can be social media, email, number etc.)?

10. Download the cv.

11. **IF AT DARK MODE:**
    a. What do you think of the sudden change?
    b. Does the theme make sense on this website?
    c. Do you think the logo is relevant to the theme?

Appendix D

Pre-Test Questionnaire:

- What is your occupation?
  o Can you briefly tell me about yourself?
  o What do you study?
- How often do you use the internet? A rough estimate In Hours/day
- On a scale of 1 – 10, how do you rate your ability to navigate the web?
- Do you visit art galleries or private exhibitions of artists?
  o Since being in lockdown, have you moved these interests to the online platform? Such as attending art events or art fairs on zoom etc.…

Post-test Questionnaire:

- **How likely are you to have gone on this website?**
- Can you tell me what you liked and disliked about the website?
- What were the most memorable parts that stayed with you?
- How likely are you to return to this website?