



ORIGINS

VISUAL ARTS STREAMING SERVICES

SIMON FONG

Thesis proposal

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ORIGINS

Traveling Light #1
by Madalyn Marcus

2011-2013
Egg Tempera on Arches 300 HP
22 x 30 inches
\$5,000

CONTEXT

In 2011, I joined International Arts & Artists (IA&A), a visual arts nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. with a mission to create cross-cultural communications through the arts. As the design studio director at IA&A, I had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of artists, curators and arts professionals. My love for the visual arts had a revival during my three short years at this organization. Because of that experience, I was motivated to explore ways to increase the exposure and appreciation of the arts.

One of the main issues I noticed while working in the arts was that it is a very insular community, slow to adopt innovative new technologies which would advance their advocacy. Whether it is to improve administrative functions or reaching out to a new generation of patrons, the arts world tends to lag many steps behind. Compared with the music industry, which has embraced new technologies to cultivate new listeners, the arts world still function like its stereotype: elitist, insular, guarded and distant.

The second issue I have noticed was that most independent artists have difficulties in earning a livable income from the sale of their art. Contrary to what many may believe, most artists do not practice art as a full-time job. This is simply financially impossible unless the artist has financial backing either from family members or supportive patrons. According to authors Heather Darcy Bandhari and Jonathan Melber in their book *ART/WORK*, "the average income of an artist at an emerging gallery, from sales of artwork is less than ten thousand dollars a year." And since artists derive income from sales of their work, it is common to find artists with large

inventory of unsold work simply because they will not underprice their work. I believe there can be a technological means for these artists to generate income from these unsold works while still maintaining the preferred valuation of their work.

For my thesis, I would like to respond to these issues.

CONCEPT

I propose to create a new service that will stream digital images of visual arts to any digital display at home or at work. Modeled after the wildly successful music streaming platforms Pandora and Spotify, the visual arts streaming service I am proposing will bring curated works of art to any smartphones, laptops, tablets and other digital displays that can access this service.

As streaming platforms have provided smaller, independent performers and bands an avenue to promote their music, I propose that this streaming art service will provide the same sort of exposure for the visual arts. As Spotify and Pandora has shown, these services are fiscally viable as well, with streaming services like Pandora has become successful and as at of May 2014, it 76 million subscribers and is valued at \$4.6 billion dollars.

Like Pandora and Spotify, subscribers to this service will be able to choose curated works to be projected on their digital display. Focusing on home consumers, this service will allow large flatscreen televisions to be turned into digital canvases. Imagine, home owners will now be able to hang a piece of digital art at home, not just a typical artwork that they purchase from a gallery. They can purchase customized frames to convincingly convert their televisions into framed artworks.

Understanding that critics of this service will warn that such a platform will ruin the livelihoods of visual artists, this service will do the following:

- Unlike Pandora and Spotify, works of art featured will be on a quarterly basis, and thus images will “expire” once the “exhibition period” has passed.
- The App will feature a purchase option for buyers who are interested in the actual work. If a work is purchased and delivered, the digital image will expire permanently in our database.
- Artists' whose work has been selected for display will be paid royalties for the rental of their works. This will ensure that artists can still make some income even though selected works are not sold. Royalties are calculated based on subscription income.
- The App will also feature important information such as artists' biographies, career highlights and links to their website and agents.

The preliminary name of this service is Origins. This name is easy to recall and it conveys the idea that the service will feature original works of art in a subscriber's home. The proposed prototype will feature a consumer-facing website with back-end subscribers and an artwork database, as well as an app to project and control artworks selected for consumers' flatscreen devices.

AUDIENCE

The primary audience for this service will be homeowners between the ages of 20-50 who most likely have never bought an original artwork, or are first-time or beginning art buyers. This service will allow novice art buyers develop confidence in selected the right artwork for their homes through their experience with Origins.

The secondary audience will be small- to medium-sized companies who are interested in adding visual arts to their offices but are weary of investing in original art. This service will allow business owners a cost effective way to display artwork on their walls without the big expense of investing in original artworks.

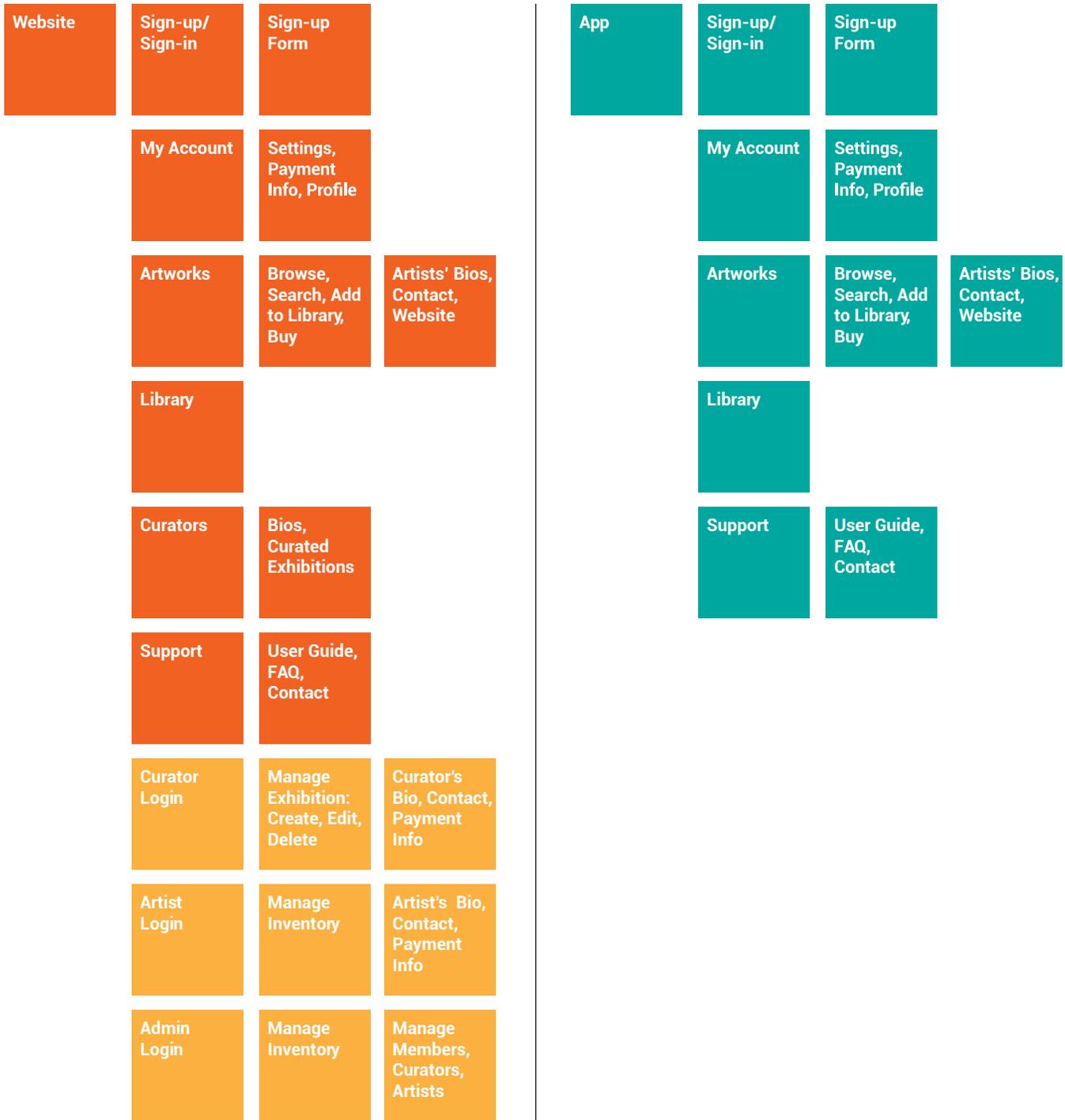
Other audiences could include interior designers who could install flatscreen televisions or projectors to trial artworks before making a decision on original artworks for their projects. It could also be an easy resource for designers as well as art consultants to discover new artists to add to their lists.

COMPONENTS

Origins will consist of the following:

Website

- to sign up for subscription to streaming service
- user profile and service settings
- backend allows for curators to create exhibitions
- backend allows for creation of each artwork's metadata



Sitemaps for Origins Website and App

- backend allows for creation of each artists's metadata
- online store to purchase various custom frames for flatscreen televisions
- online store to purchase compatible streaming devices (i.e. Chromecast, Roku stick, etc.)
- information on how to setup television as a canvas on in your home with a custom frame

App

- allow for streaming device to be plugged into flatscreen television (i.e. Chromecast, Roku stick, etc.)
- allow subscriber to select artwork to be displayed on flatscreen television
- on tablets and smartphones, subscribers can purchase artwork, read artists' bios, contact artists, read selected artwork information, etc.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of resources that will enable me to successfully complete this project:

- The Washington Project for the Arts is an arts nonprofit organization that serves as a catalyst for contemporary art. WPA supports artists at all stages of their careers and promotes contemporary art by presenting exhibitions, issues and ideas that stimulate public dialogue on art and culture. I have spoken to Lisa Gold, executive director of WPA who has agreed to help me in this project.

- International Arts & Artists is a nonprofit arts service organization that informs, educates and inspires the public through enriching experiences in the arts. IA&A fulfills its mission by providing programs and services to artists, arts institutions, cultural organizations and the public. As my former employer, IA&A will be a valuable resource in reaching out to artists, curators and arts institutions for help in my research, material and testing.
- Carol Lukitsch is a full-time artist based in the Washington, D.C., area. As a practicing artist and curator, as well as years of experience in arts academia and administration, Lukitsch will be the key adviser on the curation process.
- Marko Bajic is a computer and web application programmer based in Bethesda, MD. He has years of experience creating various security related applications and has agreed to help me with the programming aspect of this project.
- Madalyn Marcus, an abstract painter based in Washington, D.C., is a successful artist with 30 years of experience as a fulltime artist. Marcus will be the resource on insight into artists needs and concerns with regards to this project.
- Laila Jadallah, a fine art photographer based in Washington, D.C., is an emerging artist who has lived and exhibited her work in Paris, Washington and the Middle-East. She has an Masters in Studio Photography from the Speos Photographic Institute, Paris. Jadallah has agreed to give me advise and perspective from a young, emerging artist.

DISTRIBUTION

As a prototype for a possible new business, the finished thesis could be present to the following prospective investors:

- Venture Capitalists for IT:
 - 3i (London)
 - Advanced Technology Ventures (Waltham, MA)
 - Accel Partners (Palo Alto, CA)
 - Andreessen Horowitz (Menlo Park, CA)
 - Atlas Venture (Cambridge, MA)
 - Austin Ventures (Austin, TX)
 - Battery Ventures (Waltham, MA; Menlo Park, CA; Herzliya, Isreal)
 - BlueRun Ventures (Menlo Park, CA)
 - Clearstone Venture Partners (Santa Monica, CA; Mumbai, India)
 - ff Venture Capital (New York, NY)
 - First Round Capital (Philadelphia, PA)
 - The Founders Fund (San Francisco, CA)
 - Golden Gate Ventures (Singapore; Silicon Valley, CA)
 - Google Ventures (Mountain View, CA)
 - Grotech Ventures (McLean, VA)
 - H360 Capital (New York, NY)
 - IncuVest (Singapore)
 - Internet Capital Group (Wayne, PA)
 - JMI Equity (Baltimore, MD)
 - Nexit Ventures (Saratoga, CA; Helsinki, Finland;

Stockholm, Sweden)

- OpenView Venture Partners (Boston, MA)
- Revolution LLC (Washington, DC)
- Union Square Ventures (New York, NY)
- VantagePoint Venture Partners (San Bruno, CA)
- Wellington Partners Venture Capital (Munich, Germany)
- Institutes of Higher Education: where institution can co-own the patent and subsequently run it as a for-profit subsidiary:
 - University of Baltimore (Applied Information Technology department)
 - Maryland Institute College of Arts
 - University of Maryland, College Park (Fine Arts and IT departments)
 - American University (Fine Arts and IT departments)
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 - National University of Singapore
 - Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
 - California Institute of Technology
 - New York University
 - Rutgers University
- Arts organizations: where institution can co-own the patent and subsequently run it as a for-profit subsidiary:
 - Artsy (for profit). Artsy is a free online platform designed to connect users to art. Artsy's search engine and database draw connections and map relationships among works of art.