Nagy Gallery
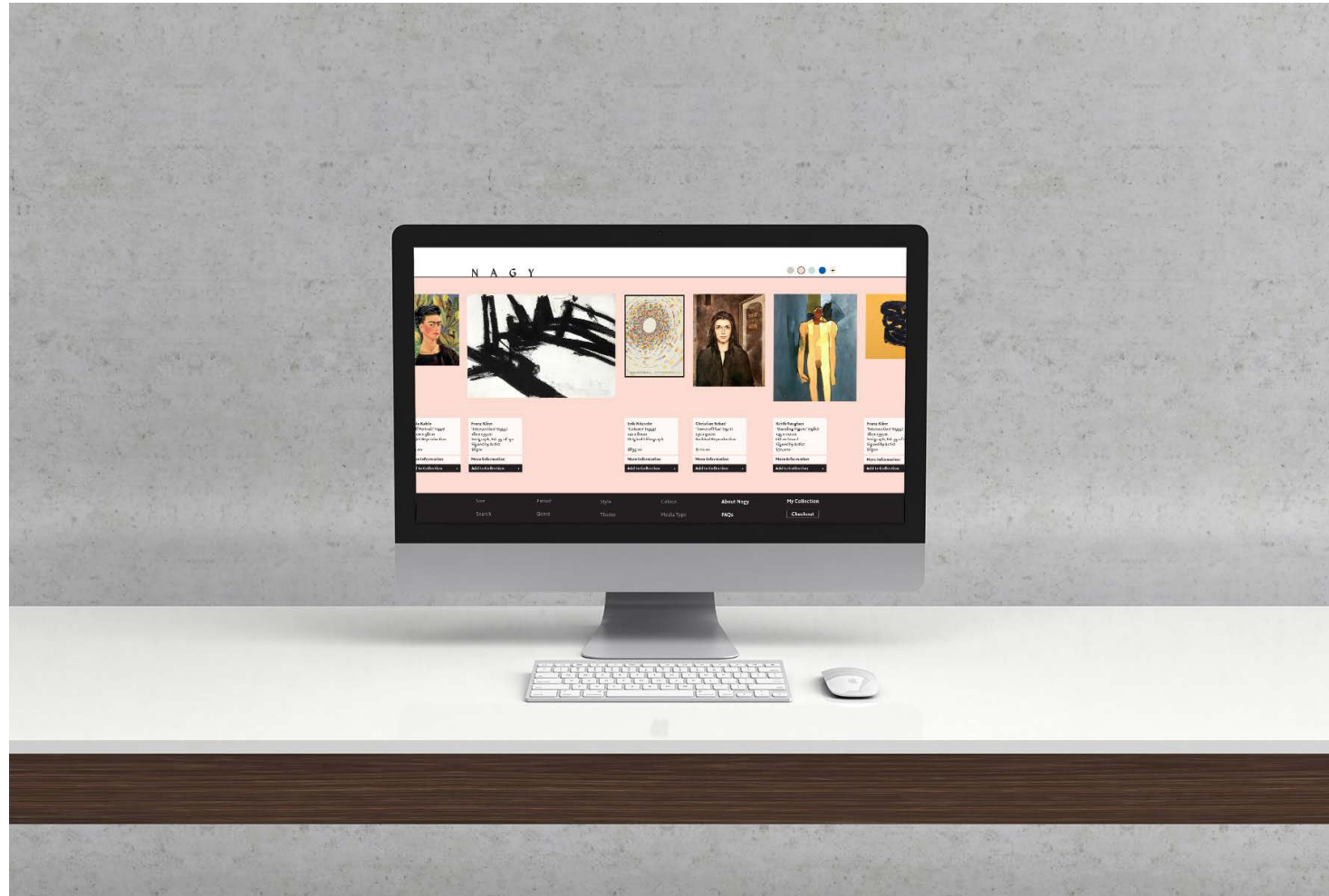UX/UI Case Study

Nagy Gallery: A richer online art buying experience

The retail of fine art online is a very difficult business: fine art objects by definition are visually, physically and texturally rich, highly-prized, highly individual. Not an ideal product for online retail.

For private buyers, buying fine art is a regarded either as a luxury experience (with all of the associated lifestyle expectations), or as an intimidating one (for aspiring or first-time buyers). For professionals (such as interior designers and decorators) buying fine art is often a costly experience: either in terms of the time needed to do it well, or in terms of the money spent subcontracting the work to professional art advisers.

Buying different types of art online also seems to be a highly divided experience: buying expensive originals from represented artists and galleries is done on a different site to buying direct from artists, and different again for buying reproductions. All of these items end up displayed on the same wall or in the same home, so why can't I see and buy them in one place?

This marketplace dominated by a few large players, all of which run—at least in terms of user experience—on standard e-commerce platforms, even when selling works for five and sometimes six-figure sums.

I was commissioned speculatively to create a new way of buying art online that addresses the above problems: an aesthetically rich, visually enjoyable experience that manages to be respectful and representative of the works for sale, whilst also being more effective for viewers and buyers.

This was a solo project completed in a two week 'sprint' format, in which I operated self-directed and responsible for all aspects of the project. The client demanded a UX-led outcome but with high-level concept and design direction, and an original approach.

Note: 'Nagy' was a working title only and is not representative of client.
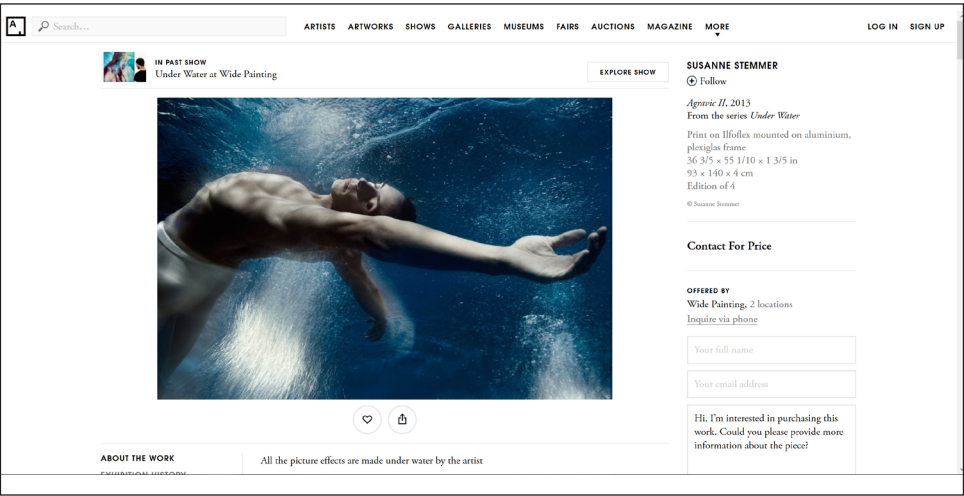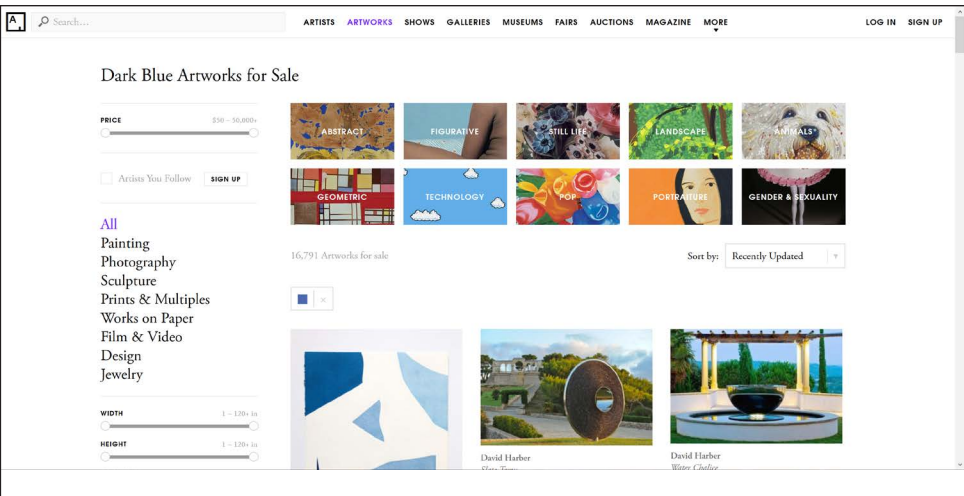
Competitive Analysis

Artsy.com

Artsy is currently talked about as the leading platform of the fine art industry. It purports to be an online hub for the art world as well as an online purchasing platform, featuring exhibition, gallery, auction and fair information alongside a magazine section.

As far as I can establish Artsy is a marketplace website only, and not a retailer itself. It makes money from taking a cut from sale prices for works offered by independent galleries and professional dealers.

Other revenue streams could include advertorial, marketing user data, trend analysis.

Screens shown here are 'show all paintings' landing page, followed by a page for an individual work (as shown at full size on 16:9 screen.
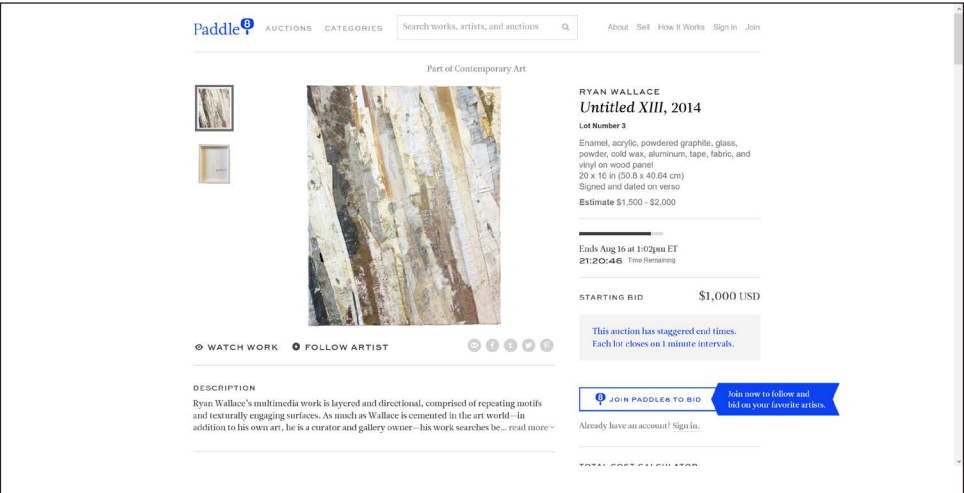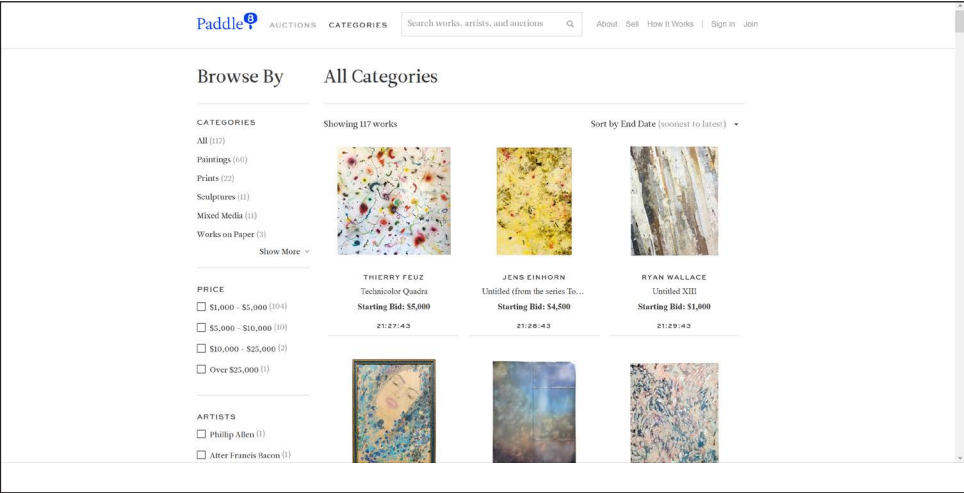
Competitive Analysis

Paddle8.com

Paddle8 is another big player in fine art retail. It is a highly focussed and straightforward auction-based marketplace site offering a low-cost (for sellers) alternative to traditional auction houses.

Paddle8 attempts to democratise the process of selling and buying, offering a first-timer friendly brand whilst maintaining high levels of professional service for the industry.

Revenue stream comprises of charging selling fees for successful auctions, for professional valuations, and for professional handling services (which I imagine are subcontracted to third party businesses).

Screens shown here are the 'all categories' landing page, followed by a page for an individual work.

Competitive Analysis

1stdibs.com

1stdibs is the go-to website for interior design professionals and collectors of decorative arts and design objects. They are a marketplace-only service, and have a comprehensive fine art category selling objects from industry and private sellers.

1stdibs purports to be a comprehensive portal for obtaining art and design objects online. They add value to their brand by offering edited selections, a blog and weekly magazine, and an 'inspiration' portal for design professionals.

Revenue stream comprises of charging selling fees.

Screens shown here are the 'abstract paintings' landing page, followed by a page for an individual work.
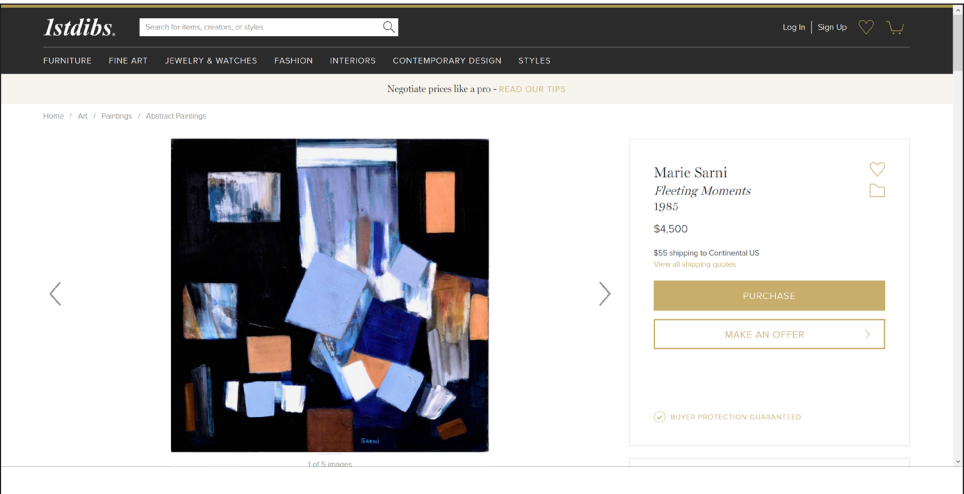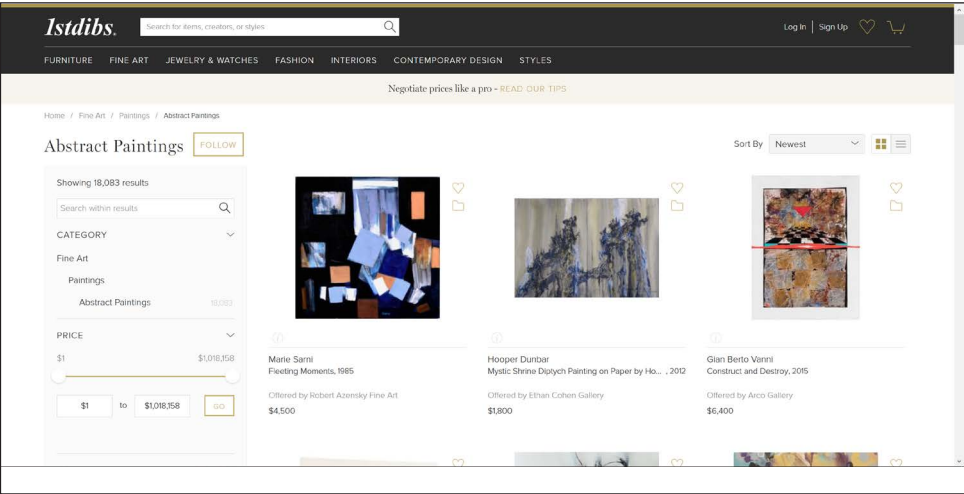
Competitive Analysis

Allposters.com

Allposters is an online retailer of posters and reproductions. There are few comprehensive retailers of quality art reproductions online, and the major fine art retailers above do not touch the sector.

Allposters operate a comprehensive retail operation, including in-house production and shipping of high quality archival inkjet reproductions. They do not specialise or advertise as a fine art supplier, but as a comprehensive supplier of all decorative printed matter.

Revenue stream is full retail, including production and shipping. I believe they also act as a reseller of prints from other producers.

Screens shown are the 'fine art' category landing page, plus a page for an individual work displaying their 'see in room' illustration feature.
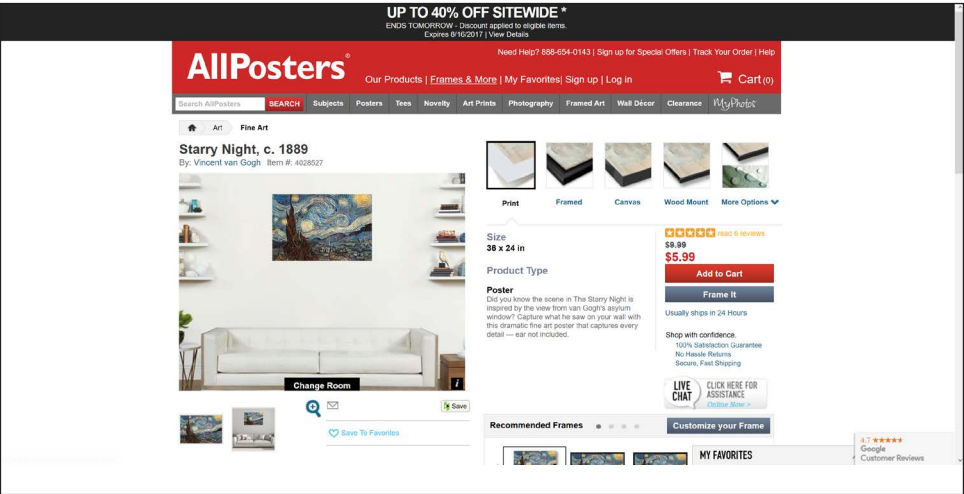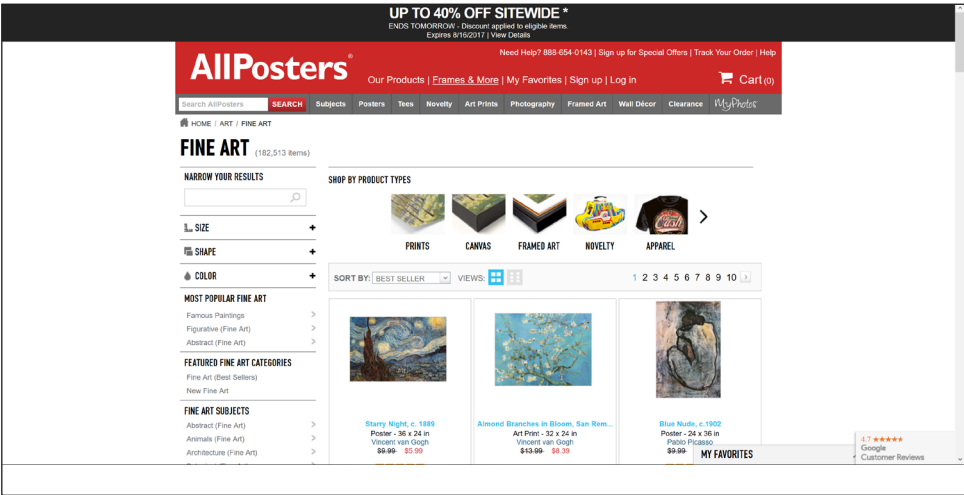
Competitive Analysis

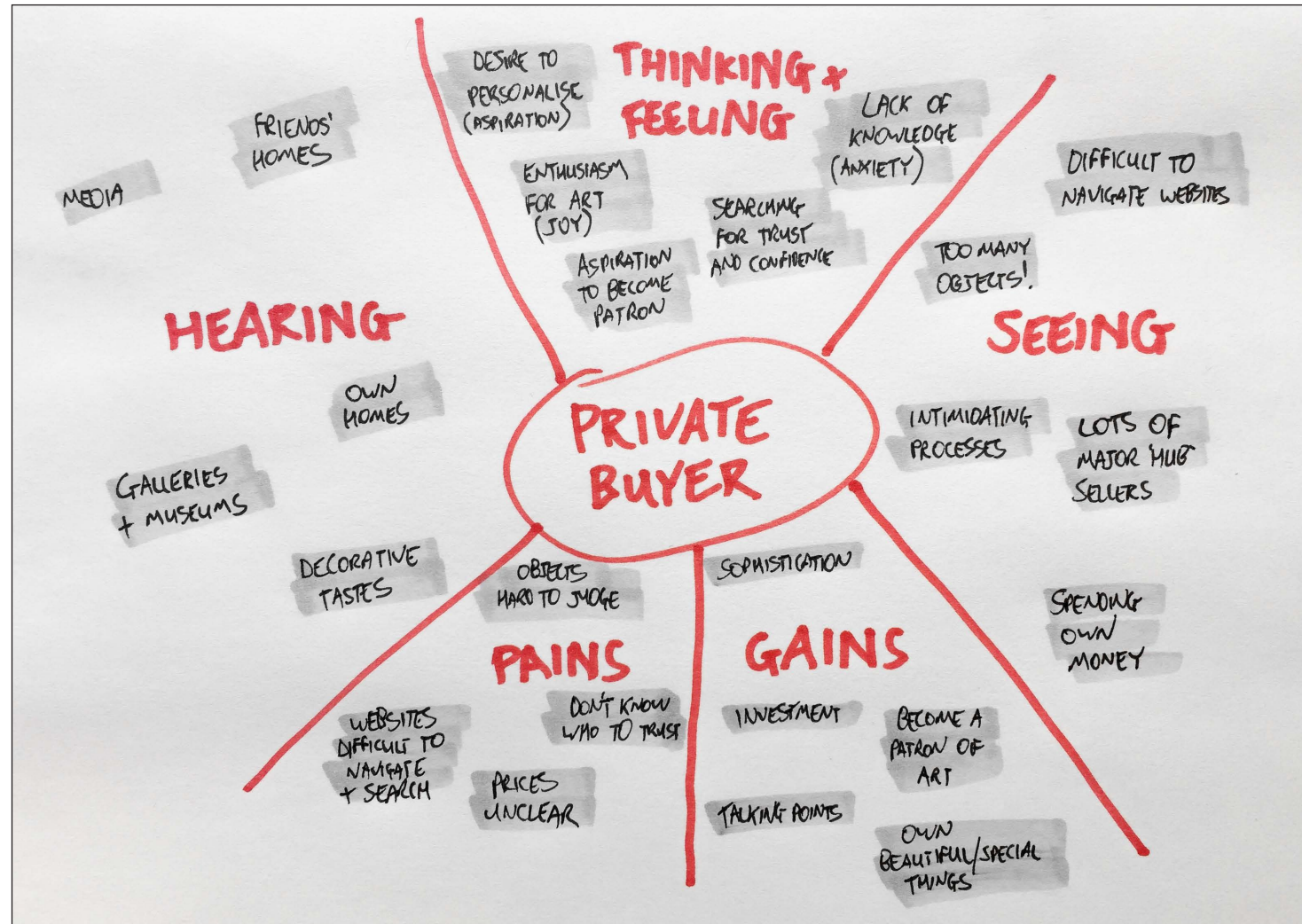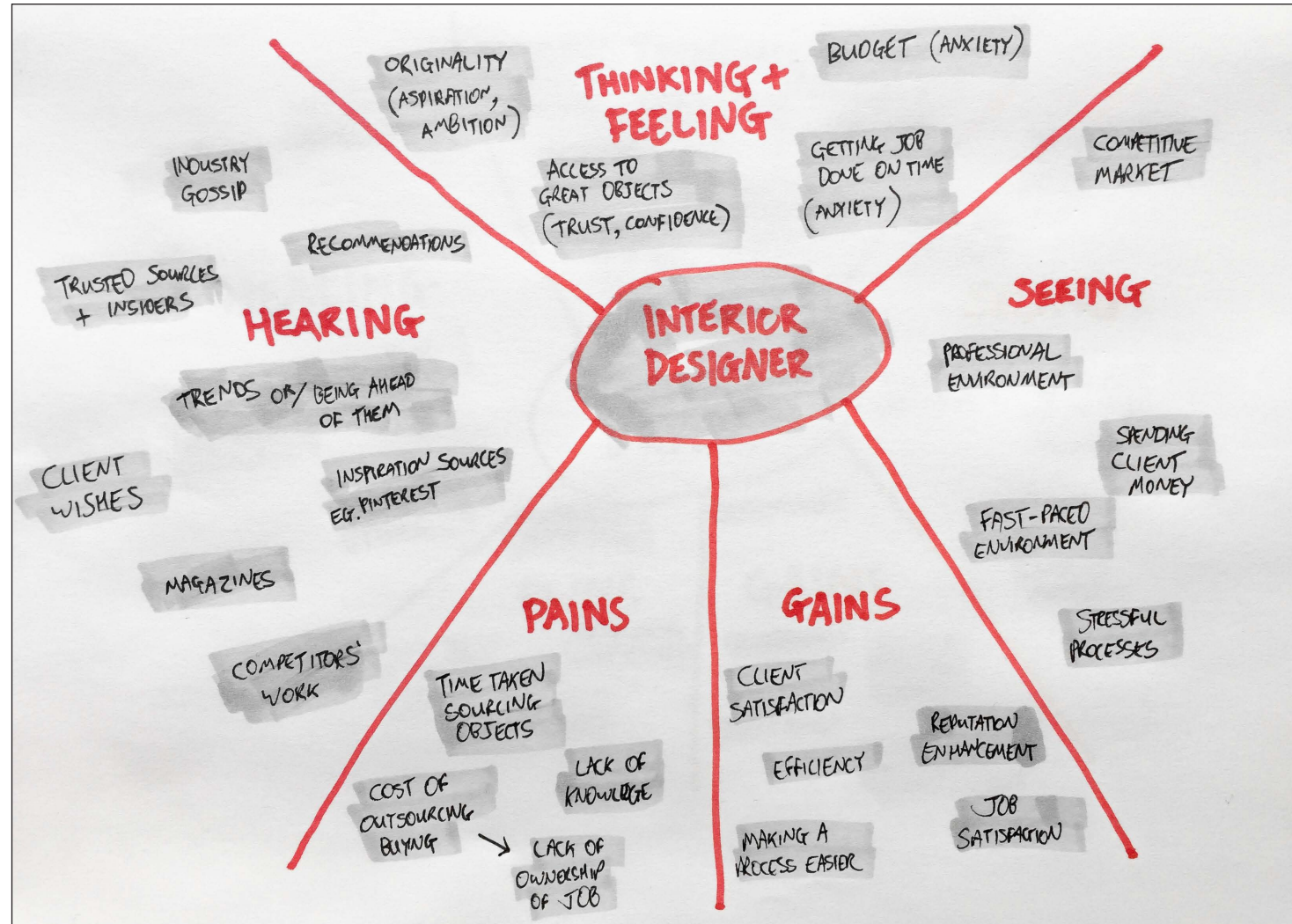|	Artsy	Paddle8	1stdibs	Allposters
Target Market: Sellers **Buyers**	professional only professional & private	professional & private professional & private	mainly professional mainly professional	n/a private only
Brand Feel	authoritative, 'touchpoint for industry'	democratised, disruptive, yet still very high quality	slick but friendly, absolutely confident	unrelated to art, 'bargain basement' superstore
Value Add	online magazine, notices for exhibitions, connections to galleries, museums, dealers	cheaper for sellers, good access point for first-time art buyers intimidated by other vendors	multiple editorial and user features tailored towards interior design professionals and pro art buyers	'view in room' interactive feature, listings by gallery collections
Total works for sale (fine art-related only)	127000	117	111600	182500
Search types (all have search box)	category / size / period / location / colour	category / price / artist / non-auction items	category / price / colour / dimensions / ships from / artist / style / medium / period / gallery	popular / featured / subjects / views / collections (museums or publishers) / speciality
Display type (all use long vertical grids)	large photo of single work	smaller image gallery of single work	large photo of single work with gallery option	Small image gallery with 'view in room' option

User Research:
Interviews

1. **Tell me about how and where you buy fine art online**

2. **If not, why not?**

3. **What kind of artwork do you buy or look at for sale online?**

4. **Who do you buy art for?**

5. **How do you go about researching artworks to buy?**

6. **Tell me what frustrates you about viewing art for sale online**

7. **Is there anything that puts you off making art purchases online and why?**

8. **Can you think of any feature that you use that helps you feel more confident in buying art online?**

9. **If no, can you think of a feature that might help you be more confident in making an online art purchase?**

For my user research I interviewed two people involved in the buying of art on a professional level, as well as a number of people who I identified as being actual or potential private buyers of artworks:

An interior designer suggested that she wanted to be able to buy art for her clients' properties, but usually found the process frustrating. She claims not to be an expert on art, but is aware enough of periods and movements that with the right search criteria and presentation she would be more confident in using her visual acuity to make decisions on artworks.

She pointed out that colour was enormously important in her work and that she was very confident in her use of it. She claimed she was often disappointed in her art-buyer's misunderstanding of her interpretation of colour.

A professional art buyer suggested that her clients (professional and private) were either very confident in what they wanted, or very intimidated in choosing. She suggested that a 'curated' experience would benefit the latter group.

She also suggested that online image viewing was 'usually terrible'.

A private buyer of mainly reproduction artworks complained that the sites he used were ugly and felt 'like Amazon'.

Another private buyer who did not tend to purchase online suggested she might be attracted to a site 'that she trusted more' and that she could build a relationship with.
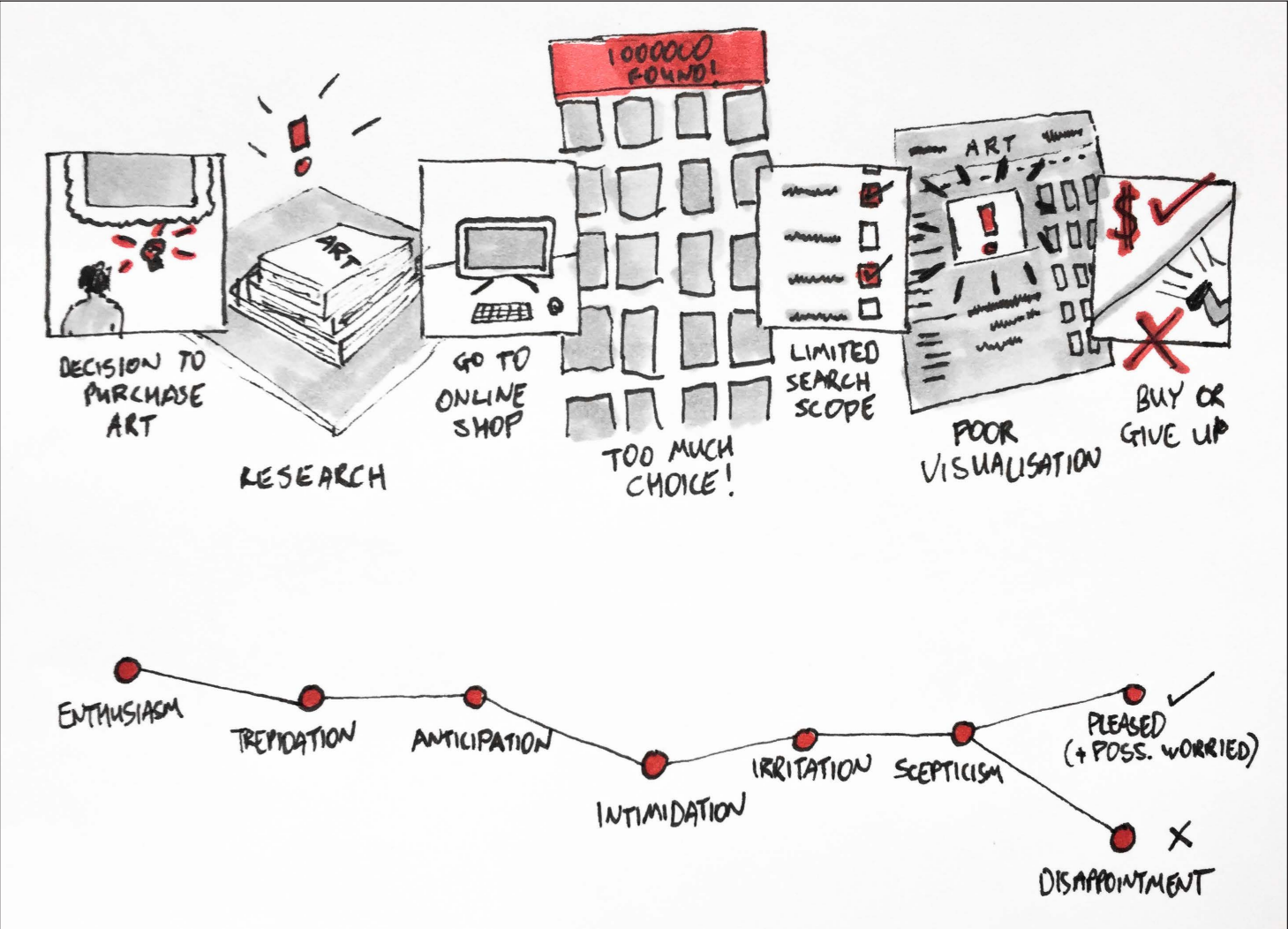
**Empathy Mapping**

Empathy Mapping

Storyboard & Emotional Journey

User Personas

	Stephanie	Chris & Fran
Age	36	38 / 43
Occupation	Interior design director	Entrepreneur / legal professional
Status	Professional buyer	Private buyers
Location	London, UK	San Francisco, USA
Tier	Secondary	Secondary
Archetype	*'Expert designer spending client money on a tight deadline'*	*'Successful couple who aspire to connoiseurship and supporting the arts'*
Motivations	Career aspiration, aesthetic perfection, originality, time effectiveness	Personal aspiration, enthusiasm, domestic comfort, being interested and engaged, self-education
Goals	To get the most interesting objects for my clients that work in my designs To choose them quickly and with confidence Very willing to form ongoing relationships with trusted sources and suppliers	To expand their knowledge and interest by acquiring interesting art objects Want to find a trustworthy way of purchasing art that is suited to new and non-professional buyers Looking for inspiration and advice
Frustrations	Didn't study art so limited knowledge, limited time. Often subcontracts work to art buyers as a result Current go-to sites (Artsy, 1stdibs) have massive amounts of items and limited search functions	Intimidated by large industry sale websites that seem to cater to experts only, struggle to relate Current go-to sites (art.com, Allposters) are too low-end, not selling original work, very basic experience
Personality	Smart and confident but stressed and impatient	Intelligent and successful but coy and careful

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough
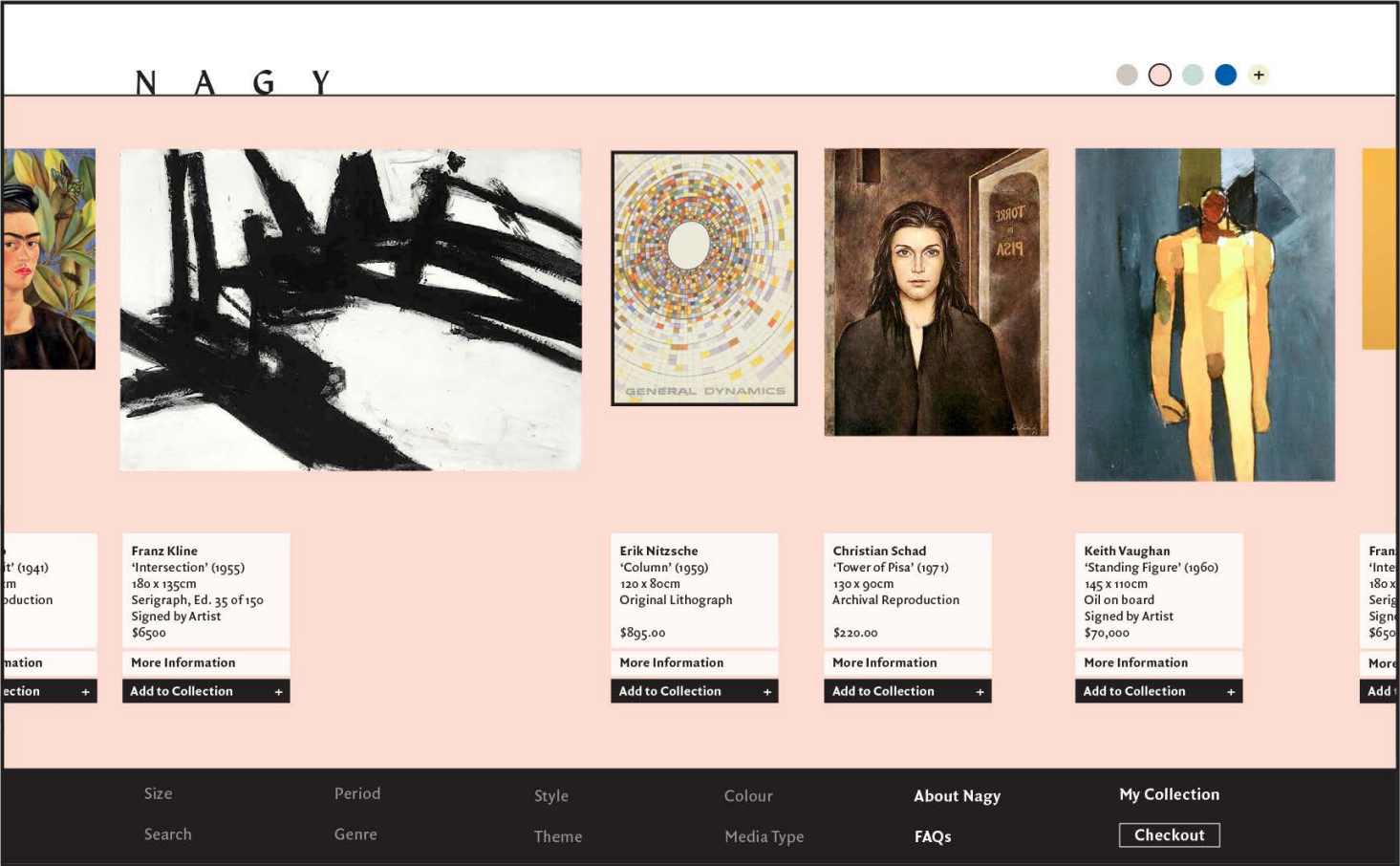
Nagy is a fine art reselling website. It acts as an 'edited marketplace', featuring carefully selected fine art (original and reproduction) supplied by galleries, museums and artists.

The site opens with an editor-selected collection of works (based on current trends and exhibitions) for first-time visitors, and a personalised selection for returning clients.

The site is designed for viewing on high definition and large monitors, reflecting the professional/discerning user-base and the requirements of buying expensive visual objects.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough
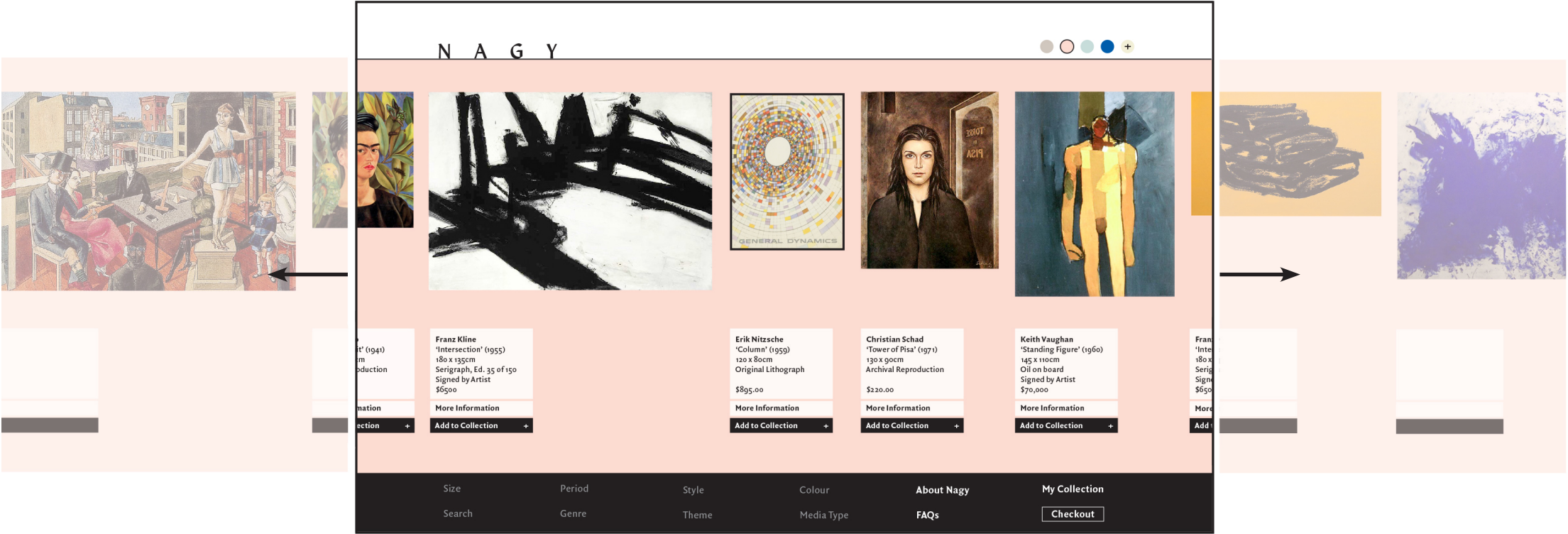
The site is a **horizontally-scrolling gallery**. All vertical-scrolling actions by the user instead move the gallery area across the screen.

Header and Footer are global and fixed. The **visual feel** of the site is interactive, 'luxe', and with a layered (rather than multi-page) architecture.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough
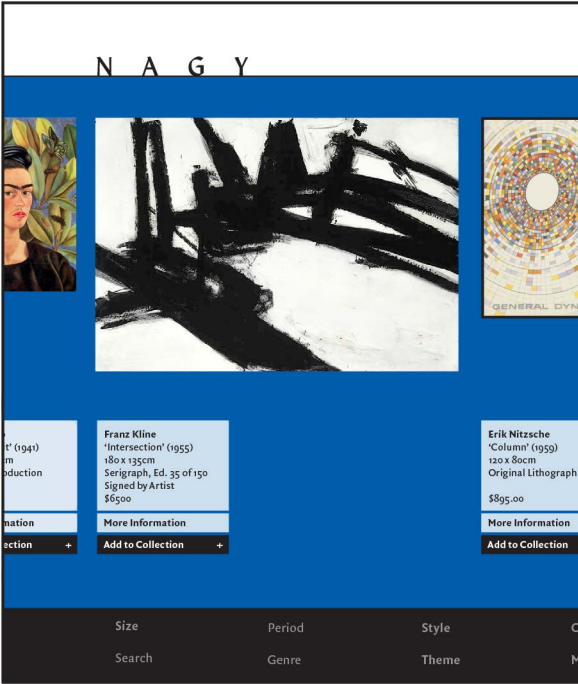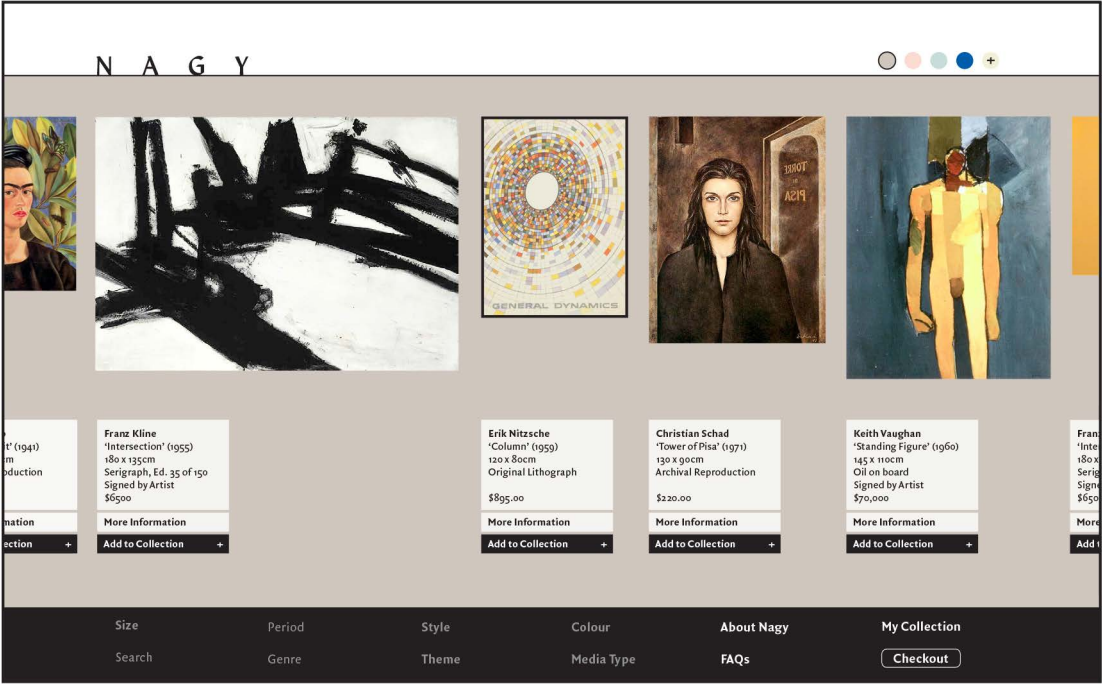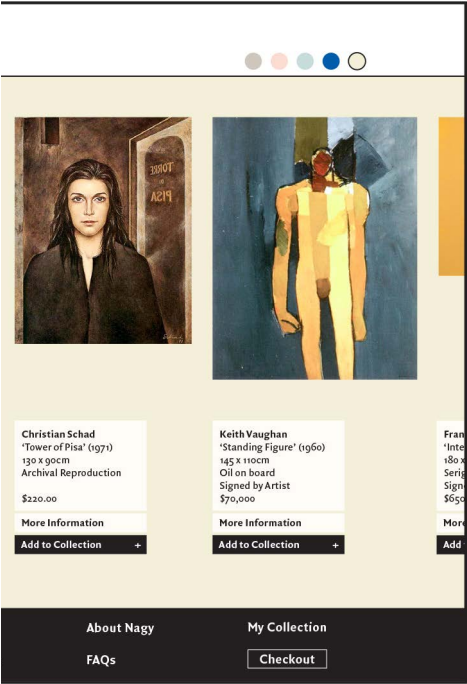
The **background colour** can be changed by the user via buttons on the header. Presented colours change with seasonal trends, and custom colours can be user-set.

This makes the site a useful **tool for composition** as well as a selling site. Artwork images are also scaled relative to each other for this purpose.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough

N A G Y

Updating...

Franz Kline
'Intersection' (1955)
180 x 135cm
Serigraph, Ed. 35 of 150
Signed by Artist
$6500

Period
☐ Pre-Renaissance
☐ Renaissance
☐ Baroque
☐ Rococo
☐ 19th Century
☐ Impressionist
▣ Post-Impressionist
▣ Modernist
☐ Postmodernist
☐ Contemporary

Erik Nitzsche
'Column' (1959)
120 x 80cm
Original Lithograph

$895.00

Christian Schad
'Tower of Pisa' (1971)
130 x 90cm
Archival Reproduction

$220.00

Keith Vaughan
'Standing Figure' (1960)
145 x 110cm
Oil on board
Signed by Artist
$70,000

More Information

More Information

More Information

More Information

Add to Collection

Add to Collection

Add to Collection

| Size | Period | Style | Colour | | About Nagy | My Collection |
| Search | Genre | Theme | Media Type | | FAQs | Checkout |

Search Area: Categories trigger
pop-up menus in order to refine
item list. Gallery area fades out
while selections are updated.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough

1

2

3

4

5
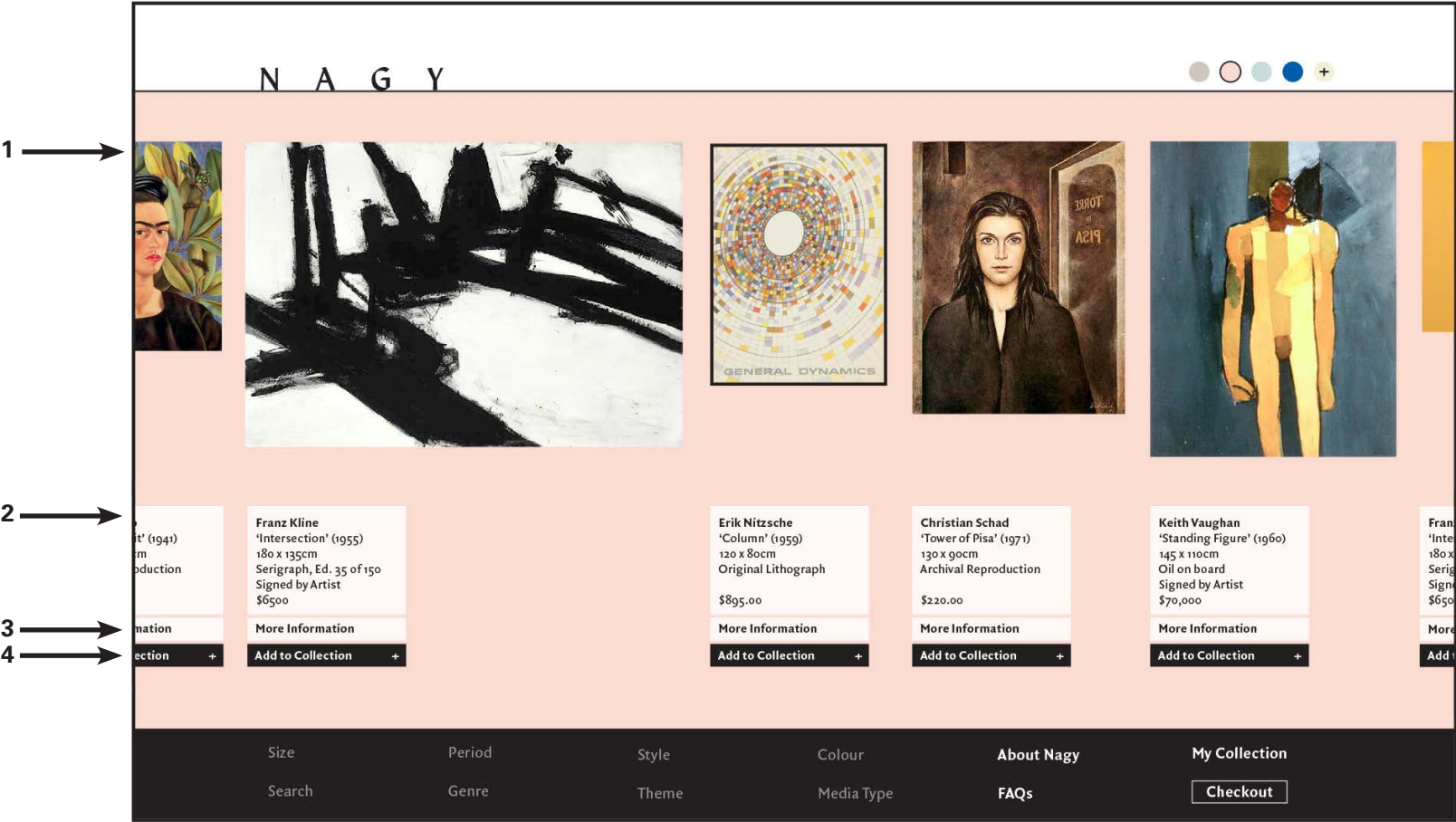
Images of artworks **(1)** all have information labels underneath **(2)**, along with 'More Information' **(3)** and 'Add to Collection' **(4)** buttons.

Building a collection involves adding artworks to 'My Collection', which refines the gallery selection to the user's choices and is accessed in the footer **(5)**.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough
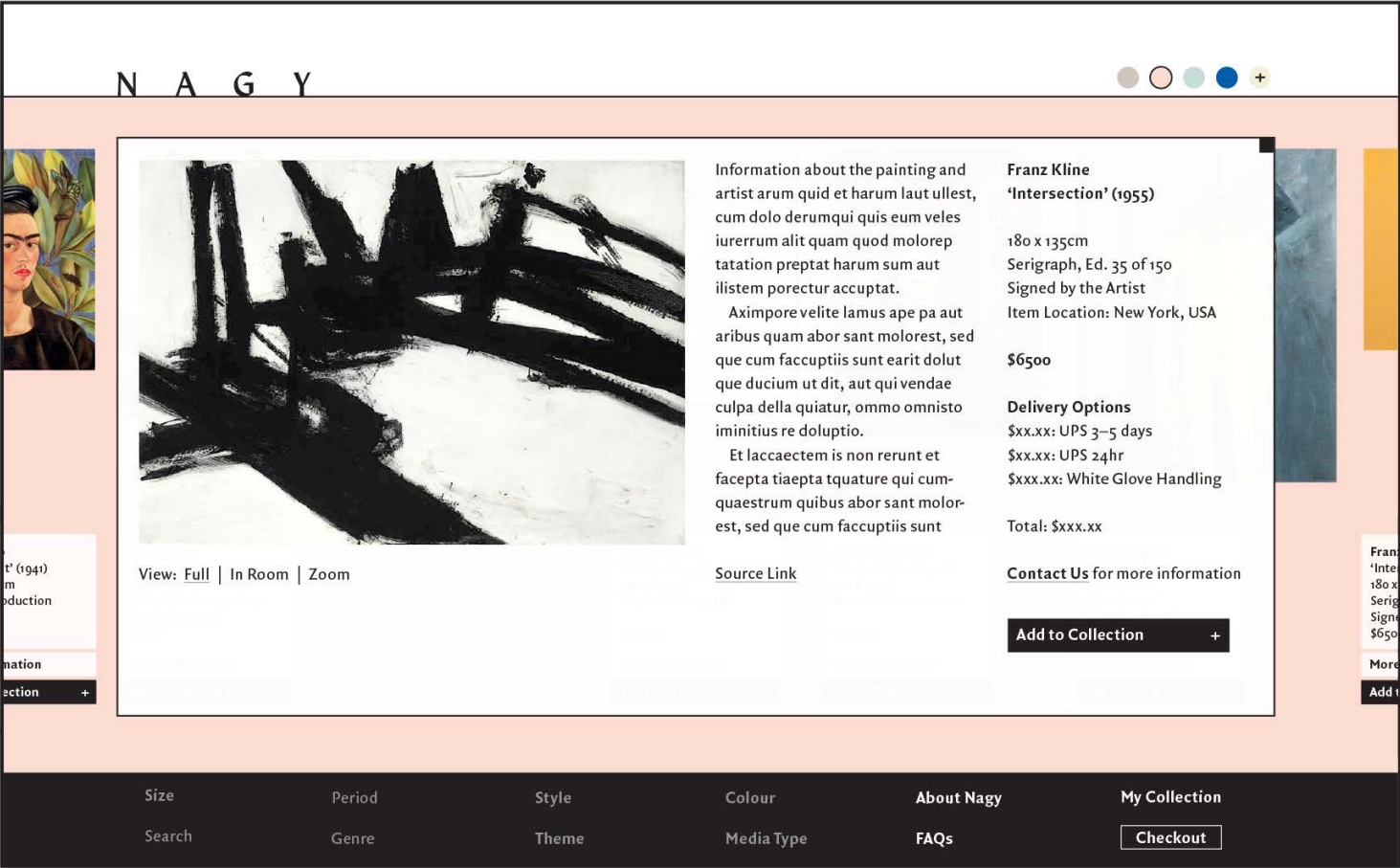
Single Products Pages layer over the gallery view in a semi-transparent window, toggled when the user clicks on an artwork image, label or 'More Information' button.

They include three image types of the artwork (full artwork, in-room view showing scale, zoom function) alongside detailed info on artist/work, delivery options, contact link

Layered pages can be exited by clicking exit button at top-right of window, adding item to 'My Collection', or by clicking anywhere on the gallery area.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough
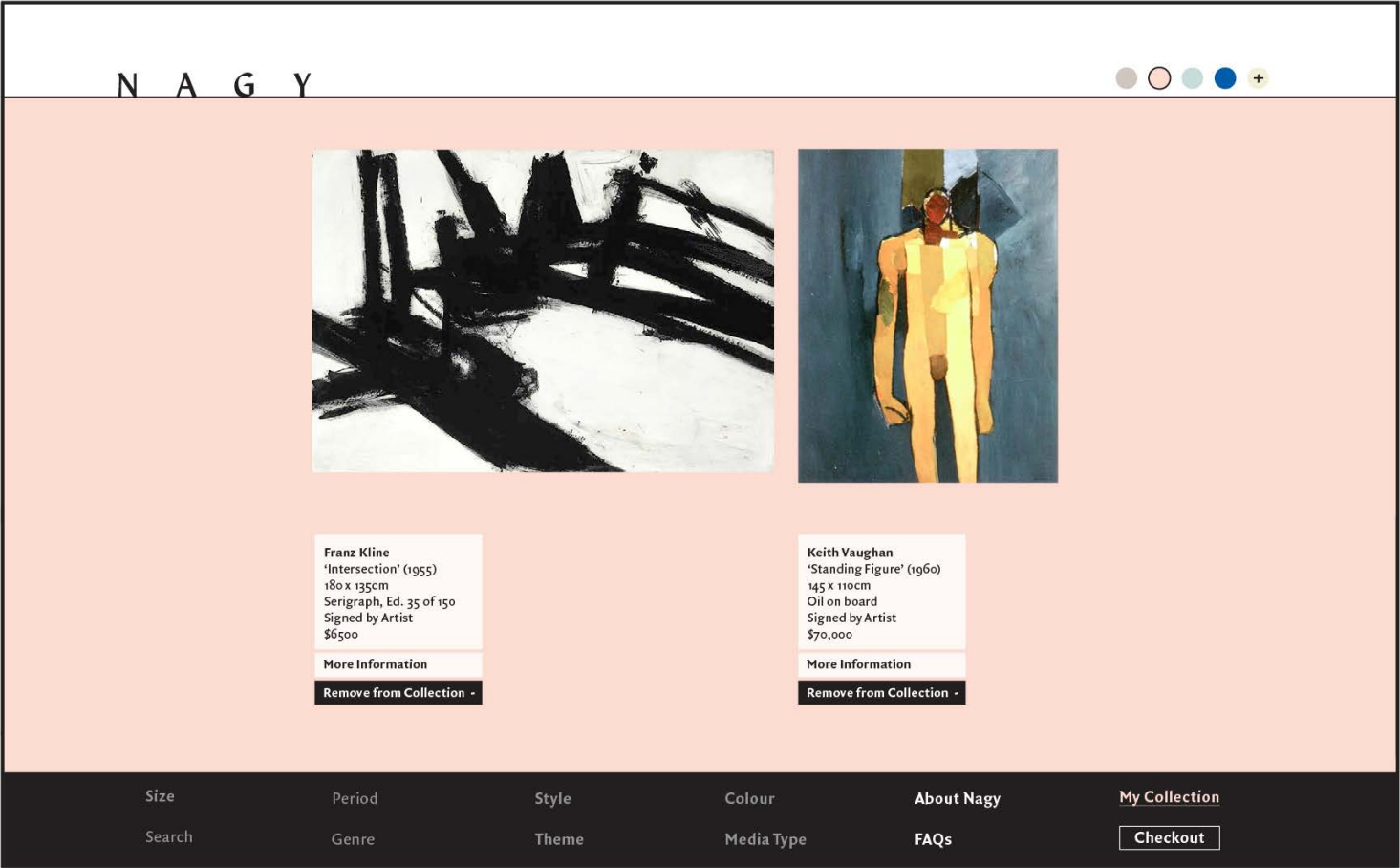
The 'My Collection' view is the equivalent of a shopping cart and shows the user-selected collection of artworks in the gallery. These can be removed to refine collection.

Solution
Hi-fidelity walkthrough

N A G Y

Billing Address

Name

Country

Apartment Number (if required)

Address Line 1

Address line 2

City

State

Same as Shipping Address?

Delivery Address

Contact Name

Country

Apartment Number (if required)

Address Line 1

Address line 2

City

State

Delivery Options

(all options are fully insured)

Item 1: Franz Klein
Location: New York, USA

$xx.xx: UPS 24hr
$xxx.xx: White Glove Handling

Item 2: Keith Vaughan
Location: London, UK

$xx.xx: UPS 3–5 days
$xx.xx: UPS 24hr

Total: $xxx.xx

Payment Details

Card Holder Name

Card Type

Card Number (16 digits, no spaces)

Expiry (mm/yy)

CVV

Questions, delivery queries or problems buying? **Contact Us**

Complete Purchase   >

Franz
'Inte
180 x
Serig
Signe
$650

More

Add t

Size   Period   Style   Colour   **About Nagy**   **My Collection**

Search   Genre   Theme   Media Type   **FAQs**   Checkout

The Checkout Page is a layered single page, taking advantage of both the screen size/resolution and the clarity offered by the layered architecture of the site.

The page is ordered to reflect the needs of professional/sophisticated buyers of expensive artworks, prioritising information flow and clarity over absolute simplicity.

The page also reflects the complex nature of the shipping/handling of multiple artworks that could be located across the globe and have differing delivery implications.

Iterations &
Next Steps

Iterations

User testing the site (using paper prototyping based on the high fidelity mockup images) revealed the following issues, to be corrected in the second iteration:

Navigation between the main products page and 'My Gallery' mode needs to be improved. A user suggested a toggle between the modes on the footer instead of just the 'My Gallery' text link. This is critical to the site functionality so multiple versions should be prototyped and user tested.

Clarity of the checkout overlay was criticised by one user. More space to be allowed between columns to improve clarity, alongside user testing of a page with visually lighter entry boxes to improve comprehension.

The two week 'Sprint' method followed for this project (and the need to include high-level designs within that time) did not allow for a **login / member area overlay** to be created. As the flows between this and the checkout overlay are critical this should be prototyped and user tested as a priority in the next iteration (a member page would allow the user to save collections, view order history, and receive enhanced service).

Next Steps

Overall, the site was very well-received by client and users alike. Professional users especially liked the ability to make image comparisons within a large and pleasing interface, and private users loved the interactive features. Next steps recommended to the client were:

Further development, user testing and iteration of key functions of site, including graphics for touch points and interaction animations for overlays, search results, horizontal scroll.

Design of product reproduction standards and display methods. Initial user research revealed that buyers were unhappy with competitors' display of products. The ability to see a quality reproduction of an item in size context is a key feature. First thoughts are an icon of a human placed at scale next to the product image.

Seller feasibility studies, to gauge interest in the site from the supply side of the art market.

High level concepts for potential **mobile or tablet version** of site, taking advantage of hands-on interface and display quality of modern mobile devices.

Documentation:

Site Map

```
┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐
│ Main     │ ───> │ Product  │ ───> │ My Gallery│ ───> │ Checkout │
│ Gallery  │      │ Overlays │      │ (optional)│      │ Overlay  │
└──────────┘      └──────────┘      └──────────┘      └──────────┘
      │
┌──────────┐
│ Login/Admin│
│ Overlay  │
└──────────┘
```
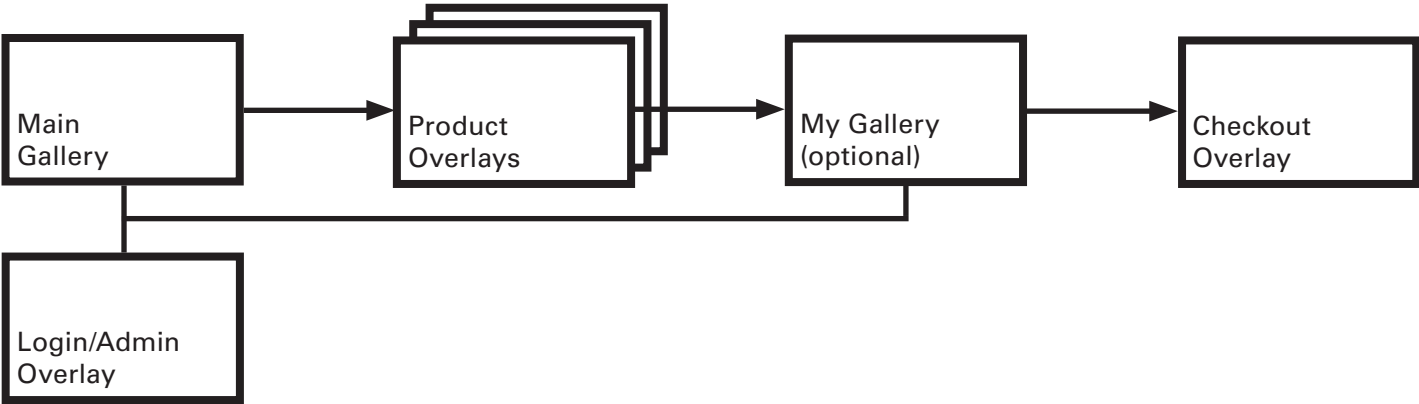
As the site is based on a single page that pulls in content via metatagging/searching, the site architecture is very simple when viewed in a traditional site map. Functionality for login/admin (in the second iteration) and checkout are all pop-up overlays on the Main Gallery page.

The My Gallery page is a user-selected list of items drawn from the main gallery, but functions on the same page as the main gallery, differentiated by an icon in the nav.

Documentation:
User Flows

Buy Only

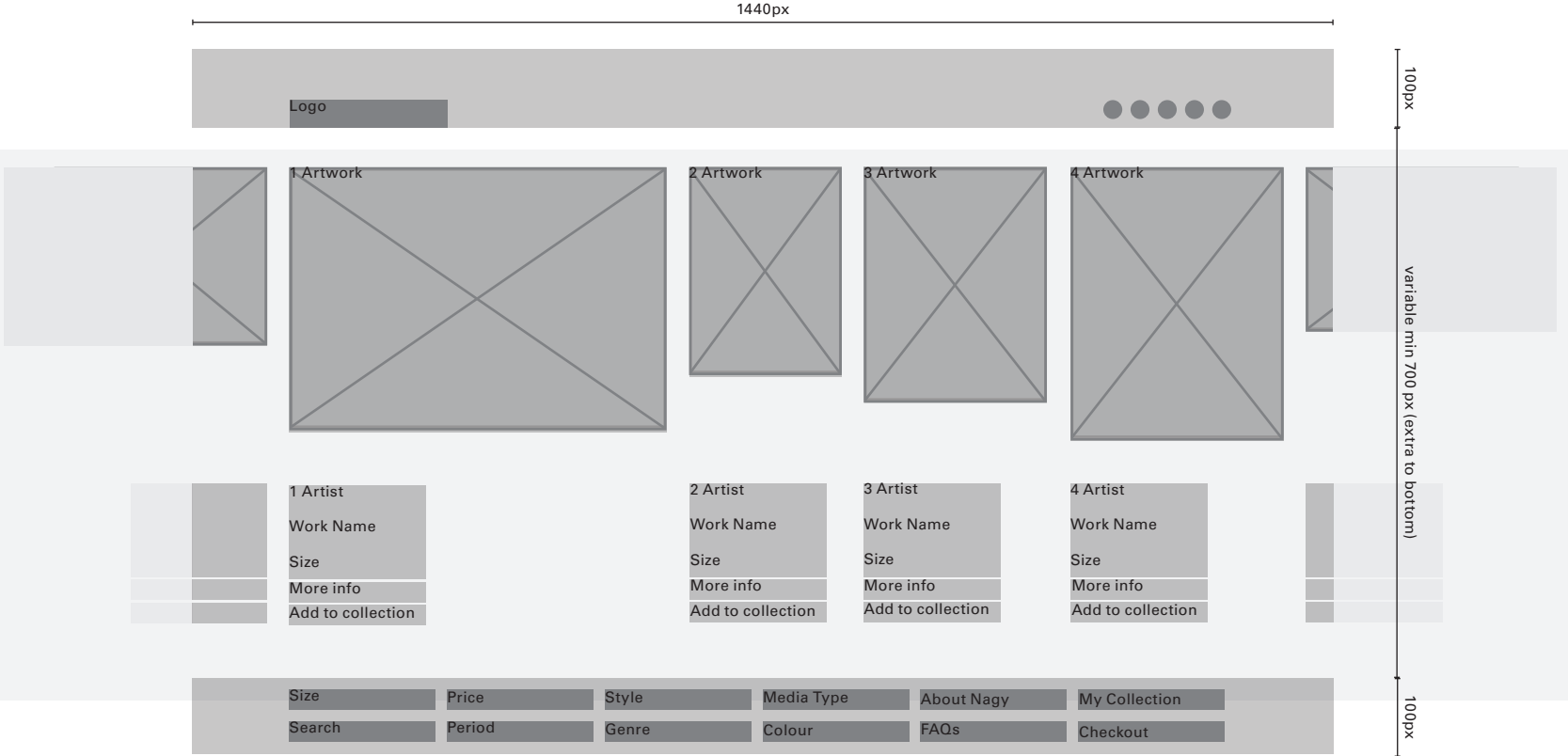| Front Page | → | select prefs | → | Customised Page | → | scroll or browse | → | Select Item | → | buy or info | → | Cart Flow |

Build Custom Collection

| Front Page | → | select prefs | → | Customised Page | → | scroll or browse | → | Select Item | → | add item | → | Customised Page | → | select buys | → | Cart Flow |

Cart Flow

| Cart Page | → | confirm order | → | delivery options | → | payment | → | Confirmation Notice |
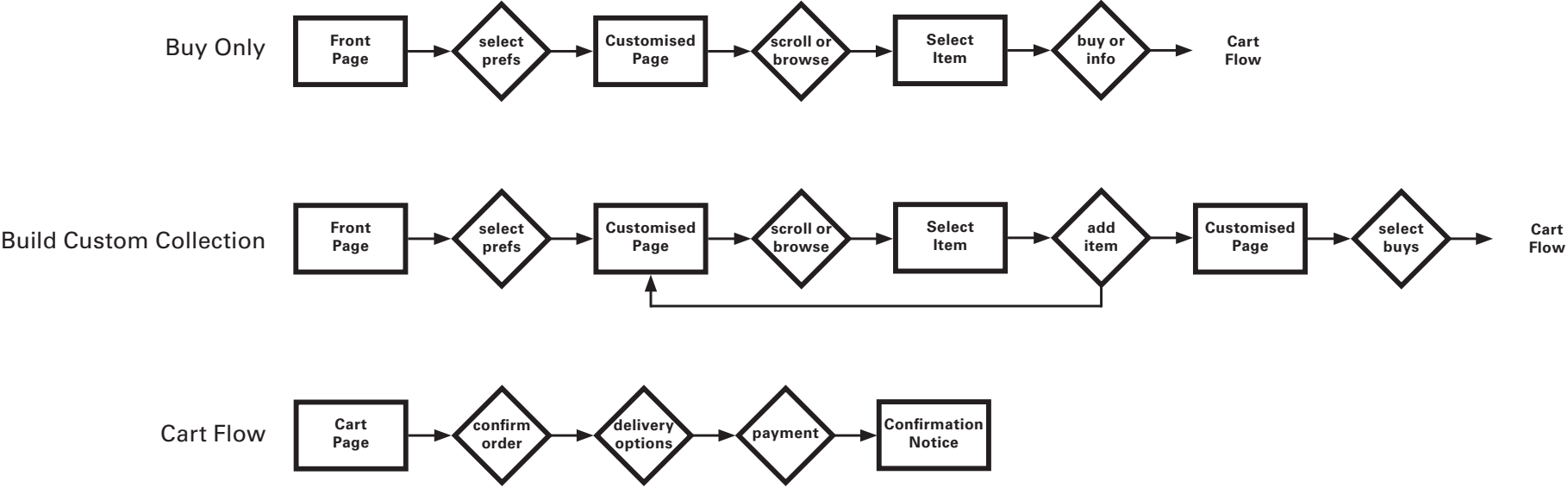
The user flows appear straightforward due to the fluid nature of the main page design. Most of the interactions occur within this page. All other 'pages' are actually popover modules overlaying the main page.

Documentation:

Wireframing

1440px

100px

Logo

● ● ● ● ●

1 Artwork

2 Artwork

3 Artwork

4 Artwork

variable min 700 px (extra to bottom)

1 Artist

Work Name

Size

More info

Add to collection

2 Artist

Work Name

Size

More info

Add to collection

3 Artist

Work Name

Size

More info

Add to collection

4 Artist

Work Name

Size

More info

Add to collection

| Size | Price | Style | Media Type | About Nagy | My Collection |
| Search | Period | Genre | Colour | FAQs | Checkout |

100px

Digital wireframing was started from extensive hand drawings, but the decision was made to prioritise higher fidelity prototypes for the purposes of this sprint.