EQUAL PLAY

2021

EQUAL PLAY

DISCOVER A WORLD OF GAMING, BUILT FOR EVERYONE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a significant disproportion of gender in the gaming industry. Hiring and work environments in science fields are still plagued by sexism, inequality, and discimination.

One of those fields affected is the gaming industry. While we see an almost equal distribution of gamers between men and women, the people that make the games are predominantly males.

As a result, a large percentage of the market is left underrepresented and is fed games that are entirely marketed towards males, leaving every person that doesn't identify as a male with limited choices and games that are often offensive.

There are not enough female and non-binary people that work in the gaming industry, nor enough exposure for those currently in it. People identifying as female or non-binary tend to feel discouraged and often unwelcomed due to the overwhelming majority of the industry consisting mostly of males.

Additionally, they are rarely given the opportunity of leading positions or given complete creative liberty to direct a game. Such actions send the message that it is either impossible or extremely difficult to make it, and, even so, it will be a lonely journey getting there.

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CONTRACT

The Problem. The game design industry is largely disproportionate between male and female designers. As a result, people that identify as female or non-binary are left underrepresented in video games; designers and marketers often treat them as an afterthought. Female and non-binary protagonists rarely exist and when they do, they are often oversexualized and given shallow personalities. However, in the US, nearly half the gaming market is women. Increasingly, people are relying on video games to connect with their peers, especially teens. The idea that video games are bought, played and enjoyed only by the young male audience, is no longer true.

Our Goal. We aim to promote inclusivity and diversity in video games by raising awareness of the current state of the industry and help impact the disproportion between male, female, and non-binary game designers. To promote female and non-binary-led game designers and studios, games with female or non-binary protagonists. And, finally, to help bridge the gap between game designers and their audience.

The Client. HealthyGamer, a coaching organization founded by Alok Kanojia, instructor in psychiatry at Harvard University. The organization uses livestreaming and videos to educate gamers on mental health. They often bring popular streamers/gamers and talk about specific mental health topics with an emphasis on their own personal experiences more often than not.

The Insights. 85% of female gamers think female characters in games are shown in unrealistic ways. 41% of the gaming population in the U.S. is female, yet a study on game covers revealed that from 485 characters, 78.6% were males. Both Millennials and Gen Z value their time gaming more than sex.

The Audience. Generation Z teens of all genders that have an interest in gaming or becoming part of the industry.

The Challenge. How might we create inclusivity and diversity within the game design industry to decrease the gap between female, non-binary, and male designers? How can we construct a healthier, more realistic dialogue between the game design industry and their audience?

The Approach. This design approach will reflect a modern, powerful, clean, and elegant atmosphere to captivate both gamers and game designers. The website should feel up-to-date with trending games and relevant news.

Primary Deliverable. A website that demonstrates the disproportionate state of the game design industry between genders. It's main purpose will be to function as a hub that features and promotes female and non-binary games and industry professionals through its diverse online gaming library.

It will contain infographics that illustrate the current state of the industry and its development over the years. A suggestion box/forum that allows users to suggest games, professionals, and ideas for the website. An online gaming library featuring games that are oriented towards everyone or specifically female and non-binary gamers; it will feature female and non-binary industry professionals that users can follow and discover their work. After the user fills a short survey, the website can suggest games and professionals based on their preferences. For gamers that enjoy education content, we will include interviews with female and non-binary lead game designers, popular/professional gamers, and streamers. And, finally, a timeline that showcases the evolution of character design, featuring a different character each month.

Secondary Deliverable. A motion graphic ad spot to promote the website across social media.

It will introduce, through infographics, statistics on the disproportion of genders in the game industry. Primarily, through a series of dramatized scenes from cinematic gameplay it will illustrate how, and in what areas, games affected from the current state of gender disproportion and its largely misrepresented market.



TARGET AUDIENCE

Primarily, we are targetting Generation Z teens between 13 to 18 years old. Even more specifically, people that are interested or already play video games, as well as people that are aspiring gaming industry professionals.

With technology becoming more and more embedded in people's lives, Gen Z are leading by example when it comes to playing video games. Studies report 77% of teens rely on gaming to build and maintain their social relationships with their peers, with a staggering 91% of male Gen Z being gamers.

PERSONA ONE

Lea is the life of the party. They spread warmth and positivity to everyone around them. Couch games with their partner and roommates is a regular thing, and even by themselves. Understanding human communication on a deeper level is a life-long dream that they believe can be found through gaming.

LEA BAKER | 18 YEARS OLD | UNITED STATES | THEY/THEM



Interests



Personality



Goals

Grow their online and offline gaming community while enjoying their first year of college. Develop solutions that combat bullying towards female and non-binary in online gaming.

Frustrations

Encountering constant oversexualization and shallow personalities in video games. Gamers that are toxic and spread hatred towards others. Feeling as an afterthought by studios that, once, made games they loved and enjoyed.

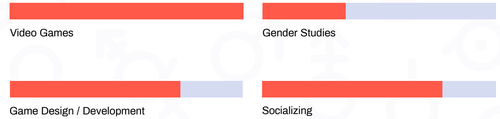


PERSONA TWO

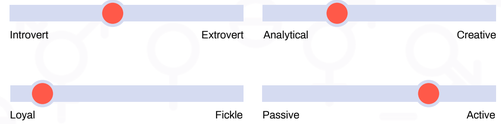
Natalie is a gamer and team-player at heart. Nothing ever breaks her mentality other than the occassional toxic player that tries to ruin the game. She values matching good players and people together while also sparking healthy competition between them.

NATALIE BYRNES | 16 YEARS OLD | CANADA | SHE/HER

Interests



Personality



Goals

Reach the top of the leaderboards worldwide in whichever game she focuses on, and also find a team that fits her personality and gamestyle. The long-term goal is to make a living through video games, ideally while competing in them.

Frustrations

Working a monotonous 9 to 5 job. Dealing with toxic people both online and offline. Any lack of improvement individually and/or as team.

CLIENT

Healthy Gamer is a coaching organization co-founded by **Kruti Kanojia** and instructor in psychiatry at Harvard University, **Alok Kanojia.**

He uses the popular gaming term ‘AoE’, meaning ‘Area of Effect’, referring to his online presence giving him the ability to educate gamers world-wide and build awareness about their mental health.



AOE HEALING

Alok Kanojia

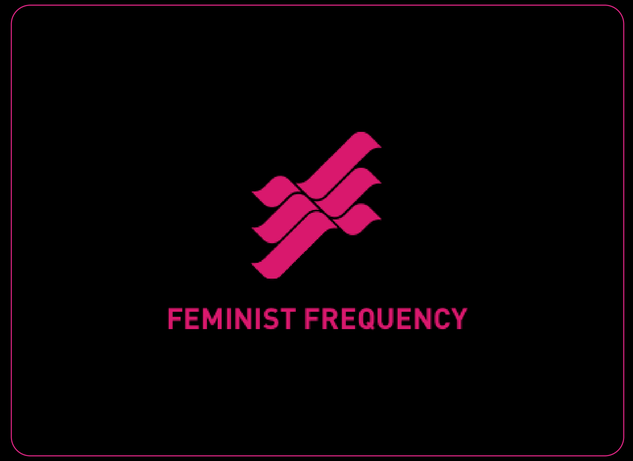
LIVESTREAMING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

for gamers by gamers

Our idea of collaboration is to form a livestream panel of diverse people and genders to share their thoughts and feelings on their experience with video games as a whole, while also discussing potential solutions to the issues addressed.

https://www.healthygamer.gg
https://www.twitch.tv/healthygamer_gg

HEALTHYGAMER.GG



COMPETITION?

Even though we don't have direct competitors, indirectly, gaming studios that continue to push shallow and oversexualized content are thwarting our efforts to transition into a healthier industry.

However, the good news is, the world is changing and inscreasingly more people are actively embracing feminism in the video game industry.

FIGHTING THE SAME BATTLES

feminist gamers

Through our research, we discovered 'Feminist Frequency', a website founded by Anita Sarkeesian. Their current goal is to end abuse in the game industry and they contribute to solving the problem by having a Games and Online Harassment hotline. They continue to thrive as a feministic website by also providing articles, data, recommended media, and educational content.

END THE ABUSE

Anita Sarkeesian

https://feministfrequency.com
https://gameshotline.org

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

In her journal, ‘Gender and Video Games’, Dietz analyzes how often in video games the female gender is portrayed as the ‘damsel in distress that needs a male hero to save her, and how they are regularly oversexualized. They are often design with little-to-none clothing, large breasts, slim long legs, and a tiny waist.

According to Dietz, who conducted an analysis of multiple Sega games, discovered that these games supported many stereotypical impressions of women. She stated in her research that misrepresenting the female gender could harm both sexes on their long-term view on women, which could potentially lead to an internalization of perceiving them as less powerful, less independent and more easily sexualized than the opposite sex.

On another note, sexual objectification of women in video games can lead to unrealistic perceptions of what the human body should look like, which could make women more prone to feeling insecure about their body structure. Finally, this could lead to females feeling less encouraged to be as active in the gaming world as they want to be since they feel like it is not a place that treats them with equality or wants to make them feel welcome regardless of how they look like.



GAMING IS BECOMING SOCIALLY VITAL

Online gaming is an important part of my social life

69%

Gaming is an important part of my identity.

67%

Playing video games help me to stay connected with my friends.

77%

13-34 Year Olds Who Agree

With staggering statistics like 77% of teens playing games, 91% of Gen Z males being gamers, 41% of the U.S. gaming market consisting of females, it is evident that our focus needs to further examine how we can better this environment that the youth invests much of their into, the world of gaming.

Ensuring the safety and inclusivity of gaming is vital in order for for the younger generations to feel comfortable to explore with their peers the social intricacies of human interactions and relationships.



NEARLY HALF THE U.S. MARKET IS FEMALE

female

41%

According to a qualitative study done by Lavinia McLean & Mark D. Griffiths, multiple females report constant attention from males in online gaming, and the attention is usually sexual. The study also showed that women together with low-performing online gamers are most likely to receive more cynical and nonpositive reactions from male players. She also states that previous research showcased that females tend to be more hesitant to communicate with other players because it could give rise to unpleasant experiences.

male

59%

Feeling supported by social interactions has shown to be one of the most beneficial aspects of being socially active, and it contributes to people's sense of wellbeing. Nowadays, 77% of Gen-Z socializes through gaming and nearly half of them are women.

During an online interview conducted by the HealthyGamer foundation, six female gamers that are livestreamers, mentioned they would feel more safe and welcomed into the online gaming community if others treated them equally regardless of gender, being understanding and respectful of their skill level whether it's high or low, and take ownership of their actions if they end up offending someone.

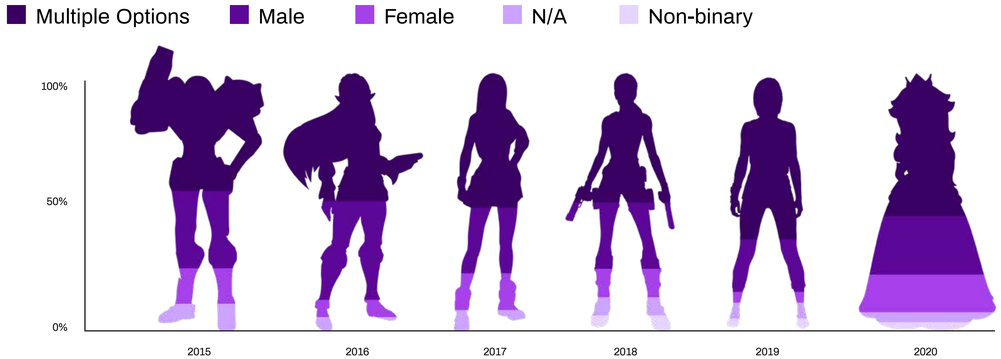


MALES OFTEN HARASS FEMALES IN ONLINE GAMES

VIDEO GAME PROTAGONISTS BY GENDER

Since ‘Feminist Frequency’ has been able to provide video game protagonist statistics by gender every year, we are able to take a deep dive into what gender disproportion looks like.

The lowest point of exclusively female protagonists in video games was in 2016, at only 2%. The multiple options jumped from 46% to 49%, and finally, the biggest rise was on exclusively male protagonists, from 32% to 41%.



Fortunately, the gender disproportion started improving through the years, even though in 2019 the exclusive female protagonists were still quite low at 5%, the multiple options for a protagonist reached 66%.

Ultimately, 2020 showed a much greater proportion of gender, having exclusive female protagonists as high as 18% for the first time in the last five years. Even though the gender Ambiguous/Non-Binary section is the 2nd lowest it has ever been, it is very possible that it will be an option on the multiple options games.





PROCESS

MOODBOARDS

CONCEPT ONE

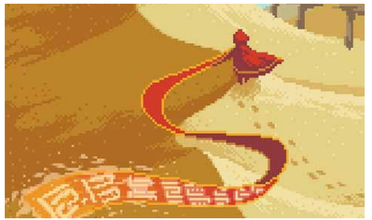
pixelated • vibrant • diverse

Bringing back the classics. Pixel art with a foundation of organic and vibrant colours.

Patterns that are minimal and used to add texture to simple, solid coloured pages.





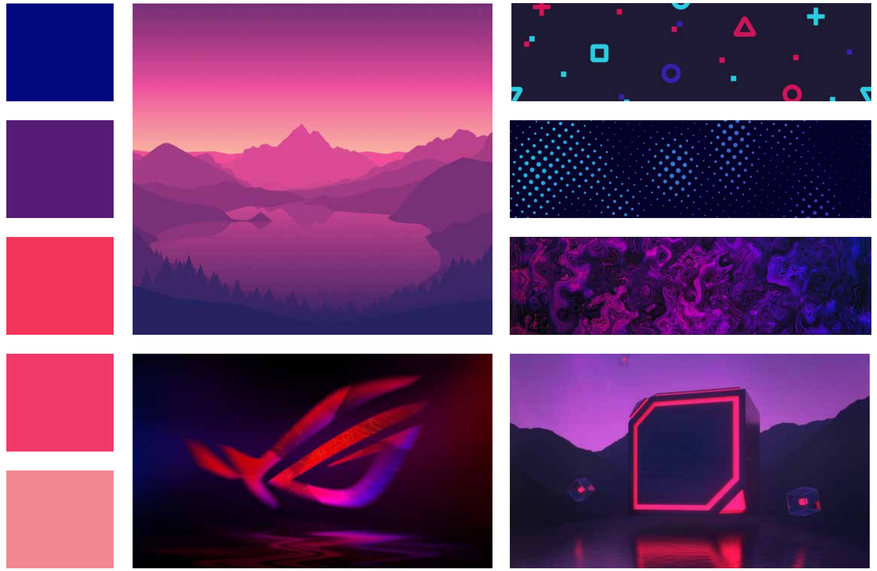


CONCEPT TWO

dark • clean • modern

For the daring youth, our approach to the aesthetic was darker and mystifying.

A combination of geometric and abstract shapes add a level of modernism and further enhance the direction of the theme.

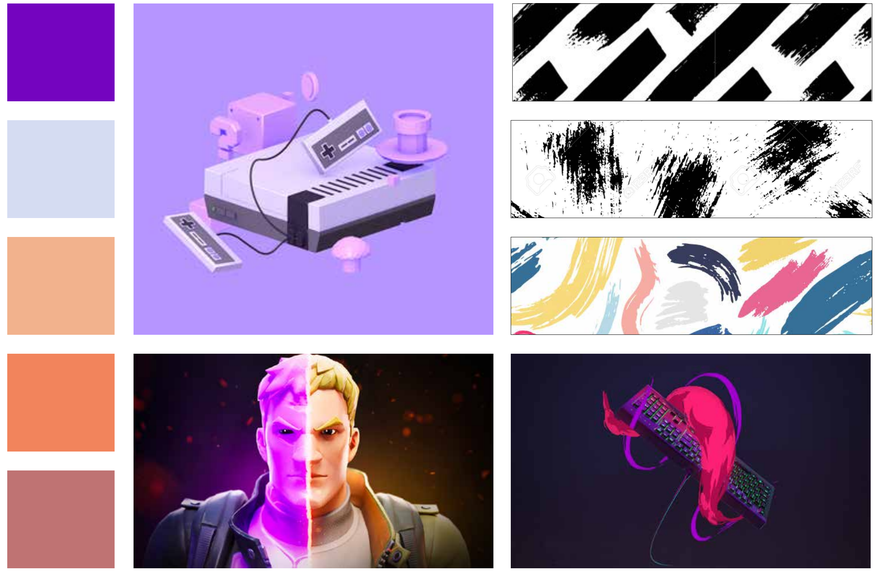


CONCEPT THREE

artistic • dreamy • powerful

Through artistic movement and magical colours, an environment designed for all.

Painting new directions with brush strokes that add visual flair to brand elements.



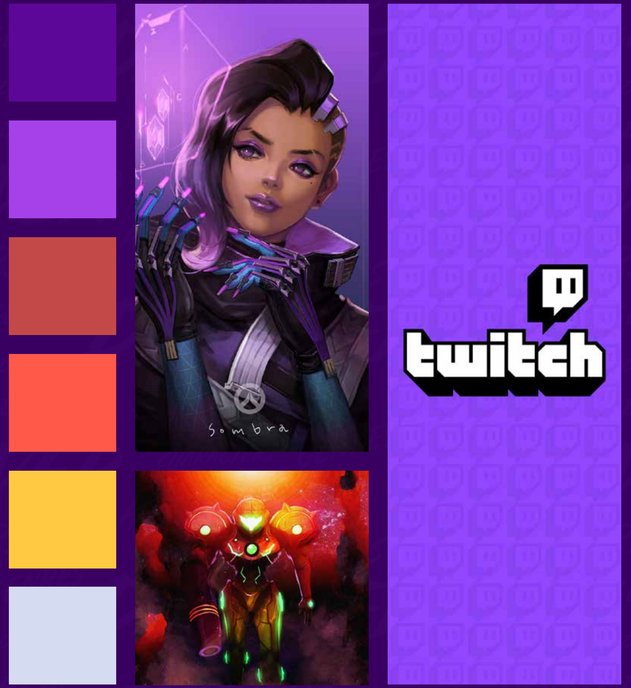
FINAL CONCEPT

powerful • clean • modern

To enhance our main purpose, equality in the gaming industry, we enriched our palette with a sixth colour while sticking true to the empowering purple hues.

Complimentary, vibrant tones will be used throughout the website to emphasize or de-emphasize certain elements.

Our pattern designs were created with a mix of both orderly and rebelious attitude. From graffiti covered walls that shout for change, to geometric symbols showing the vast world of gender.





We designed minimal icons that will be used as part of the filtering system for the library, as well as badges for user and game profiles.





TYPOGRAPHY

As it comes naturally in the world of gaming, a large display family was bound to be part of the type system. Tall, narrow, and bold, ‘Big Shoulders Display’ is responsible for communicating the essense of our headings.

The subtle quirkiness of ‘Archivo’ accompanied by its clean, round sans-serif style, makes it an ideal pair with big shoulders display.

Lastly, our monospace family, ‘Space Mono’, is used selectively in captions, links, and buttons to add a small touch of tech and development.

BIG SHOULDERS DISPLAY

archivo

space mono

Bas

Bold

BIG SHOULDERS DISPLAY
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

Black

BIG SHOULDERS DISPLAY
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

titles • headings

Regular

Archivo
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

SemiBold

Archivo
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

subheadings • body • captions

Regular

Space Mono
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

captions • links • buttons













LOGO DESIGN

The script font, 'Cortado', perfectly captures the energy our brand strives for.

The letters expand outside the confines of the equal sign, reflecting current female and non-binary gamers.









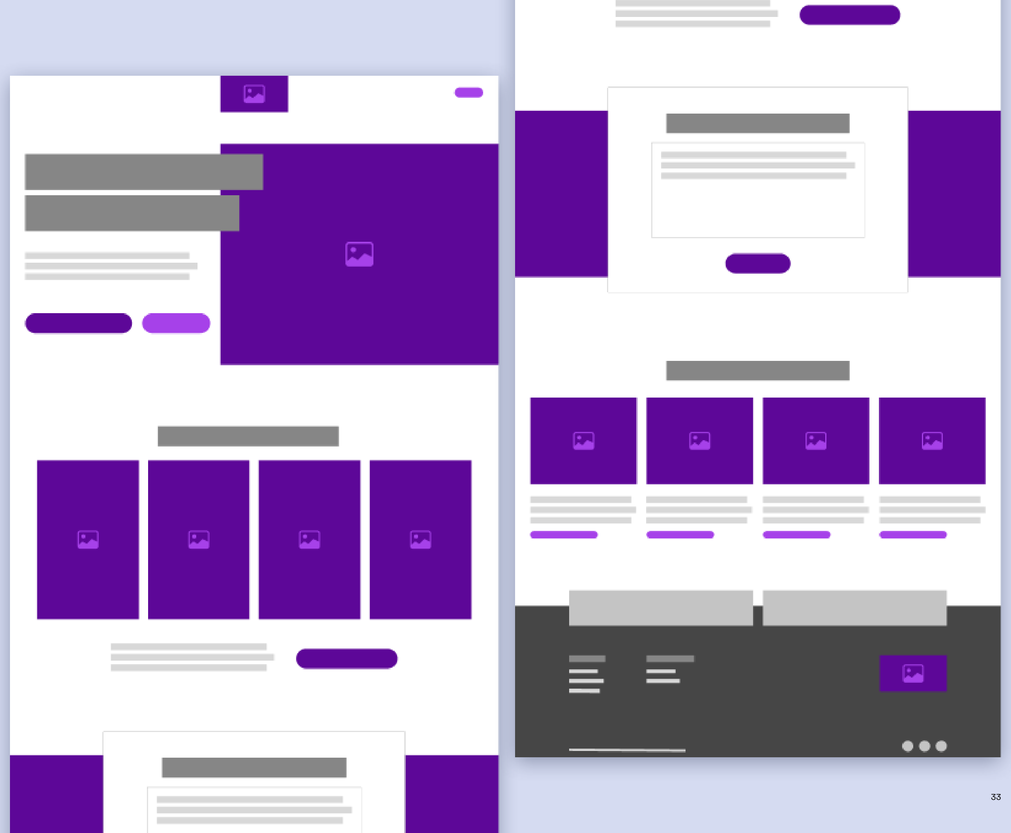
WIREFRAMES

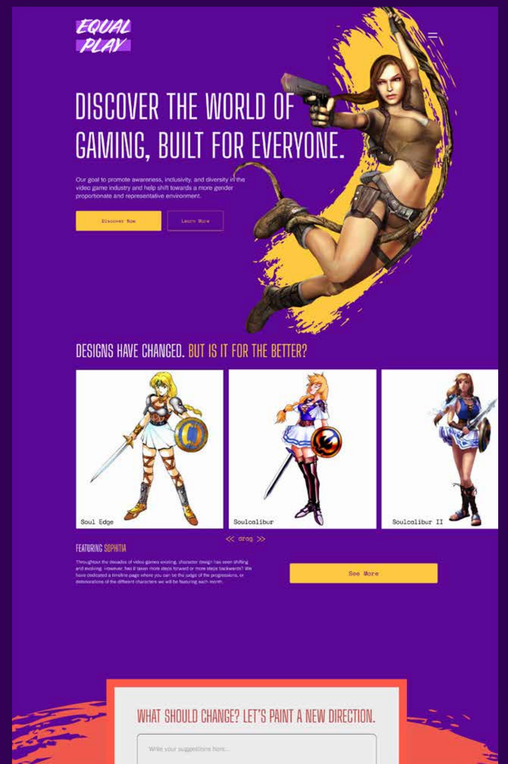
We approached the wireframes knowing well that we are aiming for something big and bold to follow along the brand's theme.

Since the majority of users on the web are browsing on mobile devices, we opted with inserting the navigation menu inside a sliding modal, which also gives tons of breathing room for the logo.

We split the homepage into five categories that our platform offers: discoverability, timelines, suggestions, interviews, miscelaneous.

The discover library, other than some unique features, follows along layouts from popular streaming platforms like Twitch and Netflix to retain user familiarity.





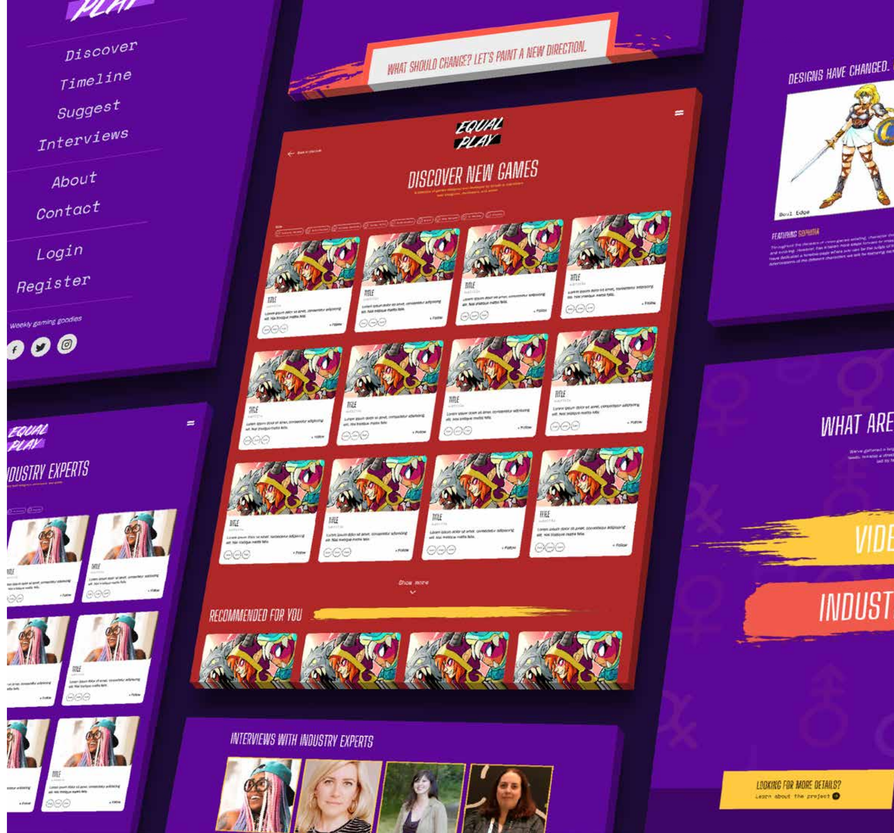
WEBSITE

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EQUAL PLAY

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF GAMING, BUILT FOR EVERYONE.

We have developed an accessible online library of female, trans, and non-binary game designers, developers, artists, and all of their work, to promote diversity and proper representation of its market.

Discover Now

Weekly Feature

CHARACTER DESIGNS. GETTING BETTER OR WORSE?

Sophitia is a character from the famous fighting game franchise, "Soulcalibur". Although Sophitia is a fighter, her armor seems to be slowly vanishing over the years.

Sexualization *can* exist in the gaming world, but it *should* come with effort and purpose.



Soul Edge (artwork)



























AD SPOT

The idea was to create an advertisment that would plead to the emotion of the viewer right of the bat. We achieved that through slow-paced movements, dramatic music, and a statement that declares a vital problem in the game design industry.

For the hook, to keep the viewer engaged, we decided to play a twist on the initial atmosphere that was being set. Graphics and text slowly dissipates and fades out, the dramatic music cuts off and we experience a slow buildup with a rock n roll beating faster and faster. We then introduce the logo mark and, while matching the speed of the music, shift through the brand values of the company and showing off the flexibility of our language identity simultaneously.

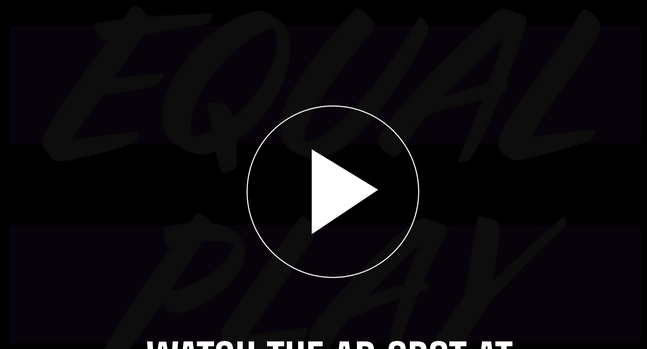
When the buildup finally hits its plateau, we re-introduce the brand mark with a bang. An extremely sudden movement of the ‘PLAY’ word in the brand mark slides in from under the scene and slams into ‘EQUAL’, making the entire scene to go dark like a lightswitch leaving the viewer curious to follow the link and visit our website.

WE ARE HERE TO MAKE A

CHANGE

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

DISCOVER



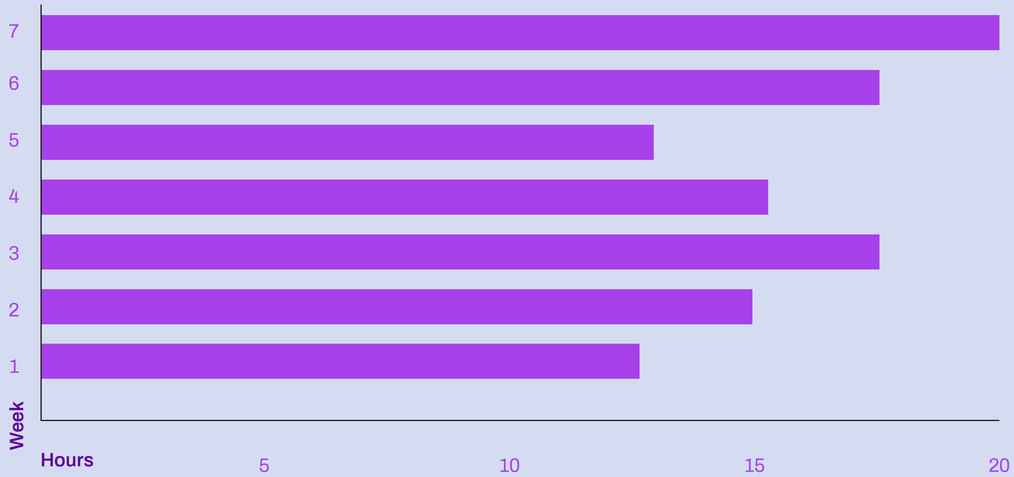
WATCH THE AD SPOT AT:

https://youtu.be/LitwgsW3yXk

A website to discover female, trans, and non-binary

game designers, developers, and artists

equalplay.ca



Weekly Average

14 hours

Current Total

98 hrs

FINAL REMARKS

This has been quite the ride. It's been bumpy and most definitely wasn't an easy challange, but, nonetheless, the work is now concluded and Equal Play has come to full fruition. I'm genuinely proud of the work that has been done, the hours invested, the creative blocks that needed to be crushed, and the endless days of trying my outmost best to keep persevering till the end.

I've learned a lot about myself, just as expected from a project of this magnitude. Mistakes; many, many mistakes. But again, we came on top, continuing to push through regardless.

Time management, by far, earns its well-deserved title of the most difficult task during this challenge.

This has been a trying year for everyone. A lethal virus, global pandemic, extreme isolation through quarintine, the pressure of graduating and developing a thesis, pushing productivity to its limits as preparation for a, hopefully, better and more fruitful year to follow.

If I could go back in time, I'd tell myself and others that in the end, things are going to be okay. I would do a better job focusing on what it's important and preclude myself from falling into the trap of overanalyzing and getting paralyzed by the tasks at hand and the state of the world outside the confines of home.

As a conclusion, this has been one of the most learning experiences and has pushed my boundaries beyond all my expectations.

Now, on to the next challenge...



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