Expand.io

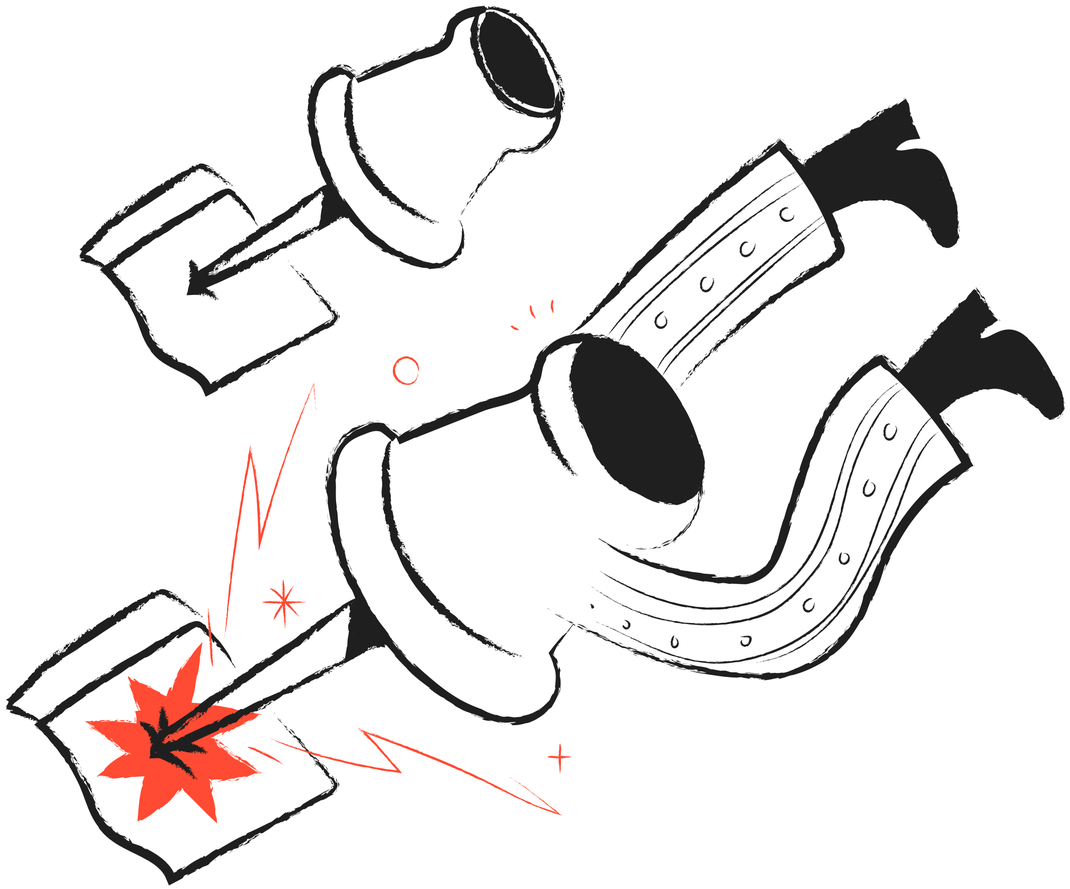
Discover Different.

The problem

Everything we digest is hyper-personalized.

Algorithms understand our tastes and preferences more than ever. However, this limits our ability to explore new genres of music, art, design, etc. How can we create a space that challenges this tendency to hyper-personalize users' content, yet still create a curated and thoughtful experience?

How can we do this without creating a chaotic space, but an inviting one. One that encourages us to explore new areas of interest (particularly art and design focused), identifies blind spots, and challenges us to break outside of our echo chamber?



Pinterest
Pinterest's combination of personalized recommendations and visual search tools creates a user-centric discovery experience. However, its focus on aligning content with user preferences may contribute to the formation of echo chambers, limiting exposure to diverse ideas and styles. While curated sections like the "Today" tab provide some variety, the platform primarily reinforces existing interests.

Key Features
Pins and Boards, Explore, Personalized Home Feed, Collage

Google Arts & Culture
This app is somewhat designed to explore new art forms with features like virtual tours, “Art Transfer,” and “Art Selfie,” which introduce new artists and styles through interactive elements. However, it lacks the personalization and algorithmic transparency that might better challenge a user’s usual preferences.

Key Features
Virtual Tours, Educational Content, Art Selfies

Dribble
Dribbble offers a platform rich in features that facilitate the sharing and discovery of design work. Its curated sections and promotional tools aim to surface diverse content. However, the emphasis on user-driven content and the ability to promote specific works may lead to a focus on popular or trending designs, potentially limiting exposure to a broader range of styles and ideas.

Features
New and Noteworthy, Categories,

Behance
Behance provides a robust platform for creatives to display their work and discover others' projects. Its curated galleries and search functionalities offer structured pathways for exploration. However, the emphasis on curated content and similarity-based search may lead to the reinforcement of existing preferences, potentially limiting exposure to a broader range of styles and ideas.

Features
Curated Sections, Search & Tags, More Like This Visual Research

Other Considerations TikTok

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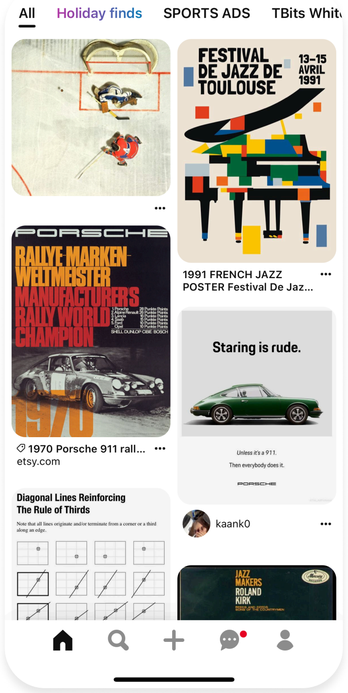
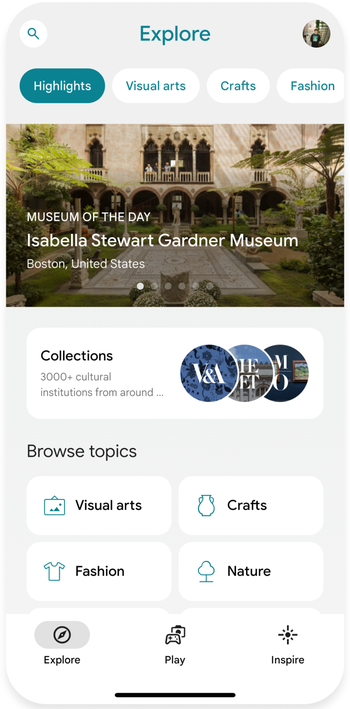
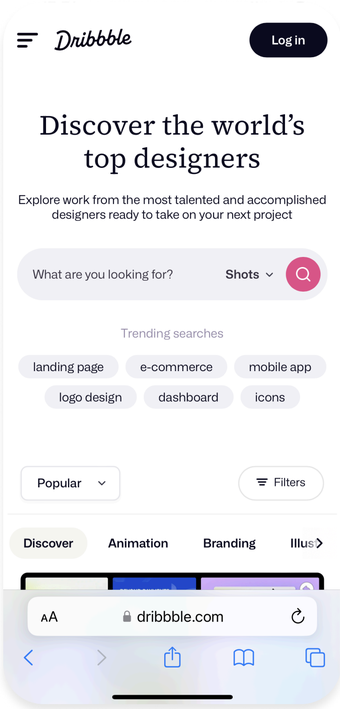
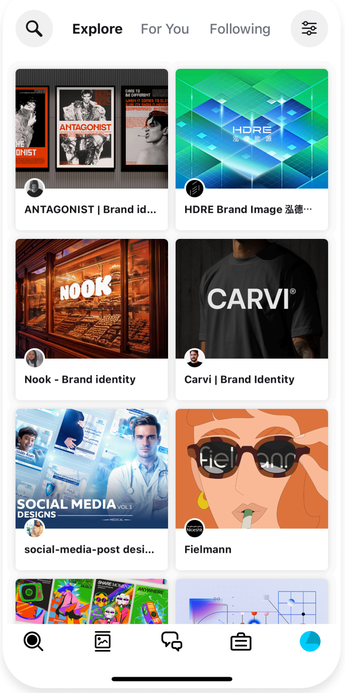




Dribbble

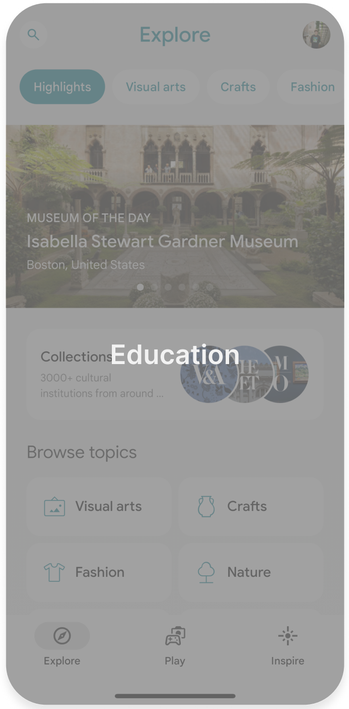


Behance



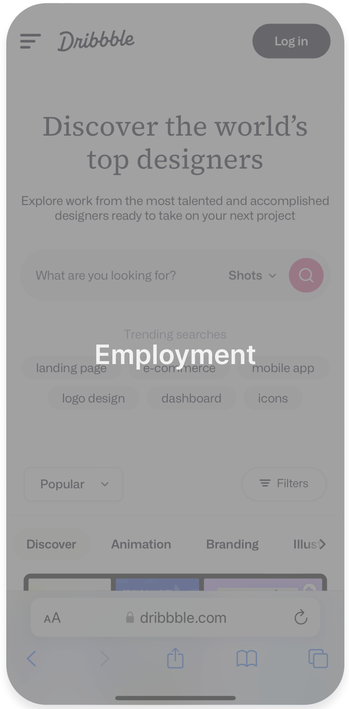
Pinterest

Inspo

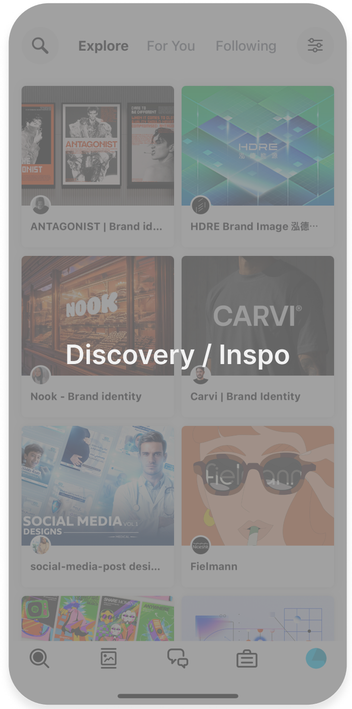


Education

Dribbble



Employment



Discovery / Inspo

Areas of Opportunity

Content Horizon

Instead of only presenting highly personalized content, the app could allow users to set a “horizon” preference that controls the degree of personalization (from hyper-personalized to fully random).

Contrast Mode

This feature could contrast user favorites with visually or conceptually opposite art pieces. For example, a user interested in minimalism could be shown works from maximalism or baroque styles, creating unexpected visual insights.

Guided Learning Journeys

Unique, thematic collections of artworks or designs that teach something new, such as lesser-known art movements, techniques, or genres.

Algorithmic Transparency

Allowing users to “see” and “adjust” their recommendation algorithms could give users control over how much they want to engage with content outside of their preferences.

Educational “Blindspots”

This feature would highlight potential gaps in users interests and help widen their content horizon with an educational and tailored approach.

The solution

An art and design Platform that challenges users tastes and encourages them to expand their knowledge and interests.

Similar to pins and boards, it also allows them to conduct meaningful visual research.

Expand.io

You don’t know what you don’t know (yet)

Who are our users?

User Needs

The primary need is broadening creative horizons in a structured, engaging, and approachable way.

1. **Breaking Out of the Echo Chamber**
2. **Serendipitous Inspiration**
3. **Educational and Contextual Learning**
4. **Personal Growth and Skill Development**
5. **Customization and Control**
6. **Engagement Without Overwhelm**
7. **Accessible Across Skill Levels**

Cody

"The Hobbyist"

"I like finding inspiration in unexpected places. I want to see something new every time I open the app."

About

Age: 26

Occupation: Software Developer

Tech Proficiency: High

Influences

- Friends
- Cultural
- Learning
- Hype
- Social Media
- Curiosity

Goals / Motivations

- Deepen his casual interest in art and learn about global artistic traditions.
- Discover inspiration for his photography and storytelling projects.
- Build a more meaningful connection to the arts without feeling overwhelmed.

Challenges

- Finds traditional platforms too saturated with content, making it hard to know where to start.
- Gets bored quickly if content feels repetitive or overly academic.

Mia

"The Professional"

"I want my work to be surprising – not just to others, but to myself. I need tools that'll nudge me into the unknown."

About

Age: 34

Occupation: Freelance Illustrator

Tech Proficiency: Medium

Influences

- Friends
- Cultural
- Learning
- Hype
- Social Media
- Curiosity

Goals / Motivations

- Break free from her reliance on current trends in her work.
- Expand her knowledge of less familiar art forms (e.g., kinetic art, textile design).
- Improve her artistic versatility to attract diverse clients.

Challenges

- Feels stuck in a creative rut, drawing inspiration primarily from similar sources on platforms like Pinterest and Instagram.
- Lacks a structured way to discover new art styles or movements.

User Testing

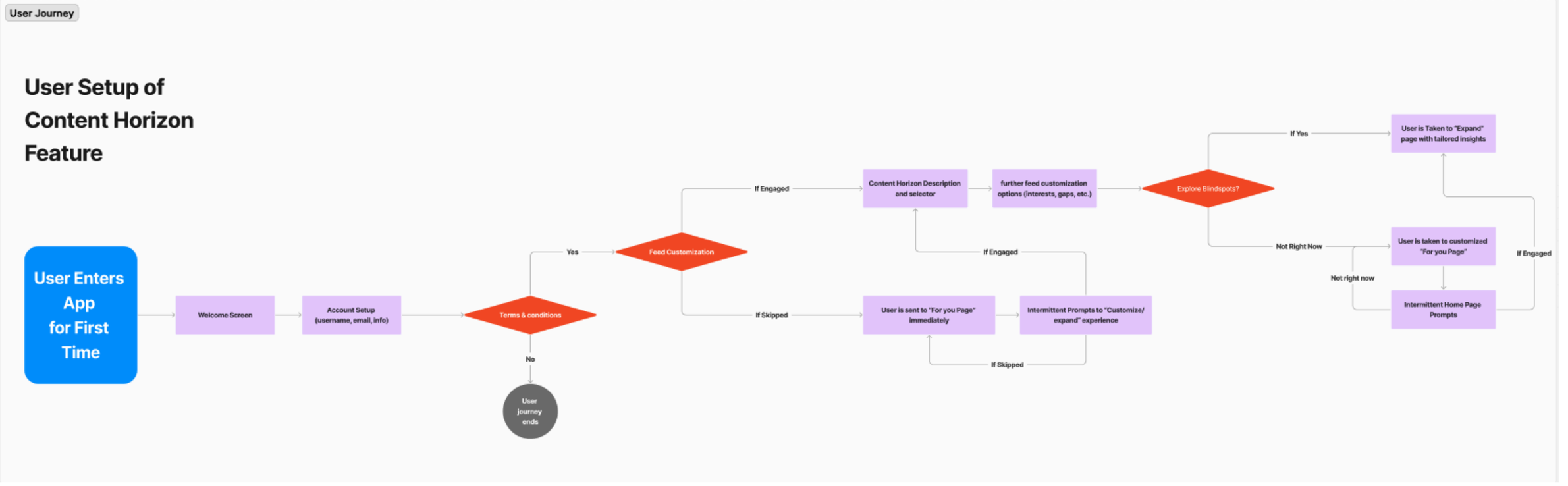
Assumptions

Home Feed	Expand	Search	Upload	Profile
“For You Page”	Outliers	Previous Searches	Create	Saves
Expand Prompts	Content Horizon Scale	Ideas for you	Upload	Search Saves
“Content Horizon” Prompts	Contrast Mode	Expand		Edit Profile
Ads	Movements	Trending		Notifications
Contrast Mode Prompts				Privacy & Data
Movements/ History Prompts				Tune Your Feed
Outlier Prompts				

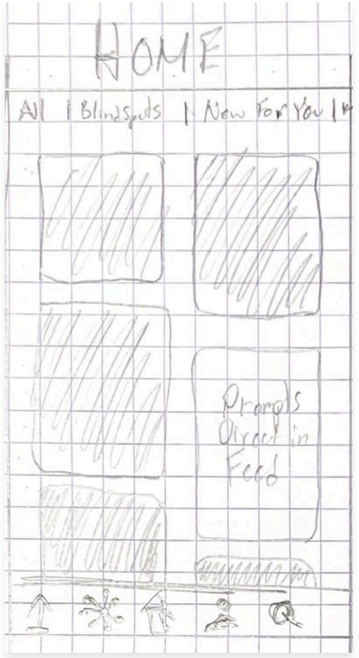
Card Sorting

Cards	Expand/Expl...	Upload/Post	Search	Profile	Home Feed	None of thes...
For You Feed	0	0	0	0	4	0
Content Horizon Scale - Adj...	0	0	0	3	1	0
Ads	0	0	0	1	1	2
Contrast Mode - Compare y...	4	0	0	0	0	0
Art History / Movements - e...	3	0	0	0	0	1
Interest Outliers - Determine...	0	0	0	2	2	0
Previous Searches	0	0	4	0	0	0
Ideas for you	1	0	1	0	2	0
Expand Your Interests	4	0	0	0	0	0
What's Trending	2	0	0	0	2	0
Create a Collage	0	3	0	0	1	0
Upload	0	4	0	0	0	0
Your Likes	0	0	0	4	0	0
Search Your Likes	0	0	2	2	0	0
Edit Profile	0	0	0	4	0	0
Notification Settings	0	0	0	4	0	0
Privacy & Data	0	0	0	4	0	0
Tune Your feed	0	0	0	0	4	0
Log Out	0	0	0	4	0	0

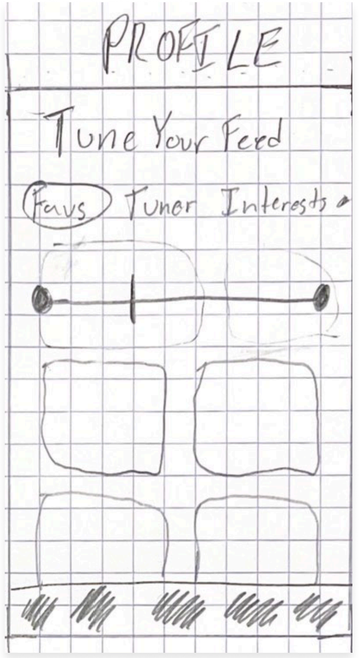
Ideation & Design


User Journey
User Setup of Content Horizon Feature
User Enters App for First Time
Welcome Screen
Account Setup (username, email, info)
Terms & conditions
Yes
No
User journey ends
Feed Customization
If Engaged
If Skipped
Content Horizon Description and selector
further feed customization options (interests, gaps, etc.)
Explore Blindspots?
If Yes
User is Taken to "Expand" page with tailored insights
Not Right Now
User is taken to customized "For you Page"
Not right now
Intermittent Home Page Prompts
If Engaged
If Engaged
User is sent to "For you Page" immediately
Intermittent Prompts to "Customize/ expand" experience
If Skipped

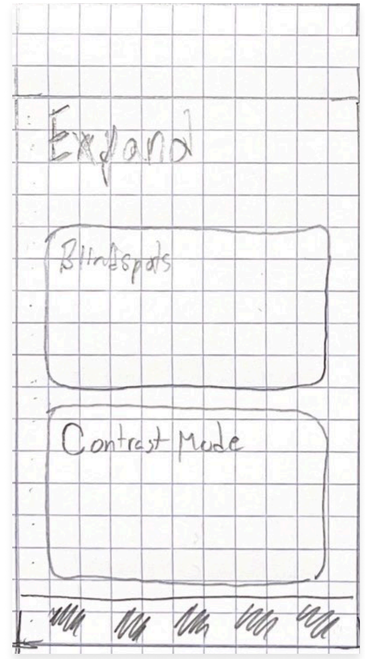
Low Fidelity



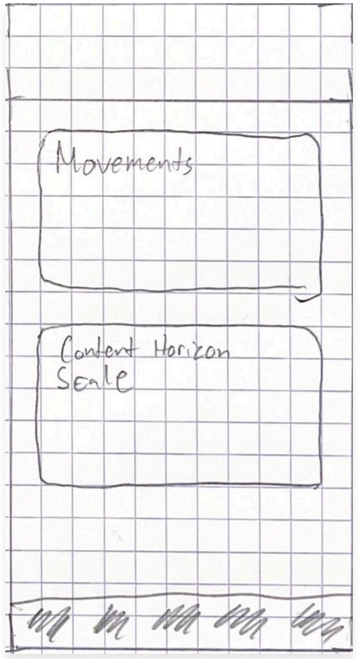
Homepage w/ Prompt



Tune Your Feed

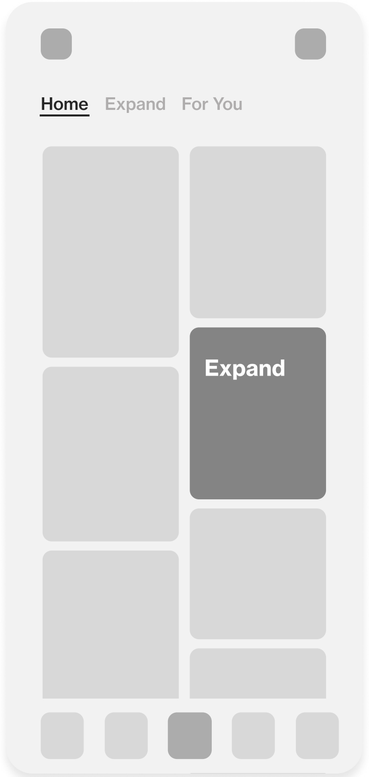


Expand Page



Expand Page Cont'd

Medium Fidelity



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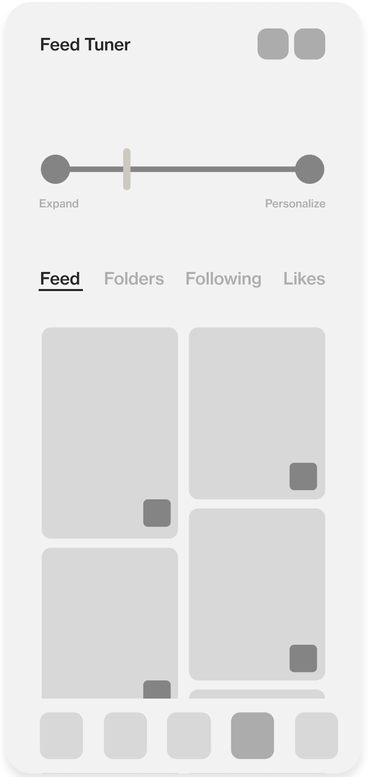

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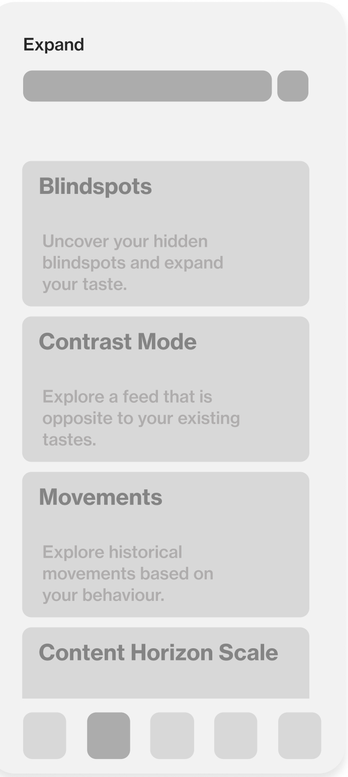
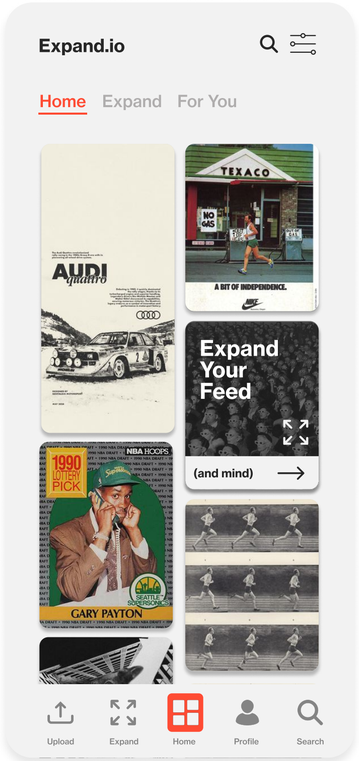
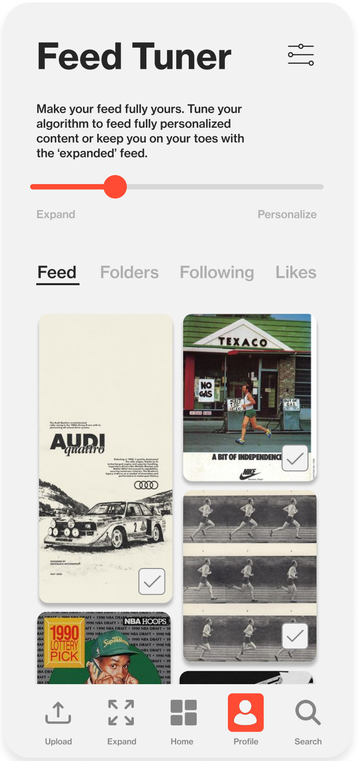


Expand Page

High Fidelity



Homepage w/ Prompt



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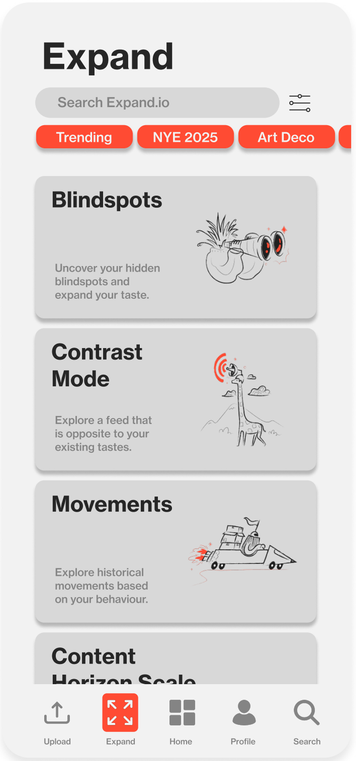
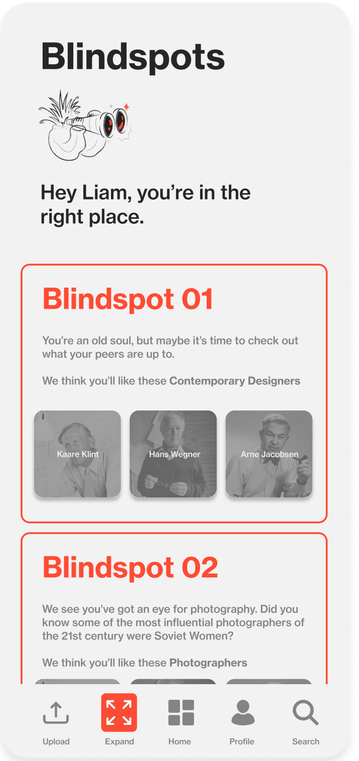


Expand Page



Blindspots

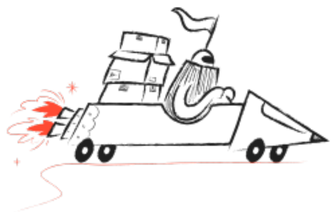
The Brand

Playful but clean.
Familiar but distinct.
Creative but to the point.

Deep Orange
#FF4B33

Off Black
#262626

Off White
#F3F3F3



Reflection