SELĀH.

Project overview

The product:

136-page fashion & lifestyle print publication aimed at 21-35-year-old creatives.

Project duration:

October 2017 – September 2018

Project overview (continued)

The problem:

Improving on previous print project created in 2015 and making sure the brand translates well onto an online platform.

The goal:

To have a completely rebranded, sale-ready print magazine ready and online platform.

Project overview (continued)

My role:

Editor-In-Chief, Writer, Commissioning Editor, Copy/Sub Editor, Art Director, Creative Director, Picture Editor, Stylist Assistant, Model Booker and Location Scout.

Responsibilities:

User research, interviewing, wireframing/content planning, prototyping/creating mock-ups, writing, keeping editorial schedule, liaising with printers and collaborators.

Understanding the user

- User research
- Personas

User research: summary

I chose to produce a print magazine because I am a lover of print and believe that although digital/online magazines are popular, independent print publications are still on a rise, proving that specially curated print projects are still popular with the right demographic. In addition to this, SELĀH is to be slowly digested and savoured and not to be quickly flipped through. So it could be viewed as a coffee table magazine.

This steered me to speak to several people who read independent style and culture magazines and are interested in fashion and either or both, faith and minimalism. Upon gaining this insight and looking into possible competitors such as Kinfolk, Cereal, Minimalissimo, Oh Comely, Magnify and Delayed Gratification, I found that my target market would be young creatives aged 21 – 35 years old. I decided that these people would be living and working in the world's most cosmopolitan and creative cities such as London, Seoul, Tokyo, Paris and New York. They would also be interested in aesthetics, style and culture and like to journal, blog or vlog.

They would also be a mix of graduates, professionals and freelancers (working in creative fields such as design, photography or writing etc., earning between £25,000 - £50,000 annually). They would be thinkers, learners and explorers and be ready to make and share memories, whilst sitting back and relishing life's moments. So after collating all this information, I decided that SELĀH had to be a magazine intended for those who want to take the time out of their day to read and reflect on life's lessons.

The main research methods I used, included: primary and secondary research (interviews/surveys/focus groups, competitor/magazine analysis, books and online research).

I already had a few assumptions going into this project as I had the previous research and feedback from the first project. The main assumption I had was that I already knew what content the target market would want to see in the magazine, since the ages were not strikingly different. However, this view did change after taking into account all the other characteristic and tastes of the new target audience and seeing that even those slight changes can make a difference.

User research: pain points

1

Personalisation

The previous magazine did not have a way for the users to connect with the writers and feel as though they were a part of the community. So I decided to include small, personal embellishments throughout the magazine to foster a solid company to user connection.

2

Aesthetics

The look of the previous publication was not in keeping with the user (e.g. some images were too small, cover image was not eye-catching etc.). So going forward, I decided to pay close attention to the overall aesthetic and always asked the question, 'can you see [ideal user's name] walking around with this?

3

Content offerings

Most of the content offered before would not be appropriate for the rebrand (e.g. too preachy and tone of voice was too young). So I had to make sure the new content (written and visual) would not lean anywhere towards the old concept.

4

Size

The size of a print publication can say a lot to the user. The previous magazine was large and gave off a message that was not intended. So I took some extra time analysing magazine sizes to make sure SELĀH was rightfully portraying what it was about.

Persona: **Nia Haughton**

"I love clean skincare and minimalist beauty. They play a big part in both my professional and personal life."

- Pronouns: **(she/her)**
- Age: **24**
- Residence: **London, UK.**
- Occupation: **Shoot assistant** for a beauty-based content production company.

Goals: She would become a reader of SELĀH because it **offers great insight into new minimalist beauty brands** and she would like to see the products she has shot featured.

Frustrations: The previous magazine did not feature a beauty section/brands.

Persona: **Ji Soo Park**

"Café culture in Korea is a big thing. Everyone spends a lot of time there and posts about it – whether it's an influencer, a couple on a coffee date or a regular person with their dog."

- Pronouns: **(she/her)**
- Age: **28**
- Residence: **Seoul, South Korea.**
- Occupation: **Social media manager** for an independent cafe.

Goals: She would become a reader of SELĀH because its **minimalist aesthetic and mindful content** fits with the **neutral décor and ambience of Korean cafes.** This would also allow it to be sold inside these cafes, as well as be used as a coffee table book.

Frustrations: The previous magazine did not fit the look of Korean café culture, provide enough content and have articles that customers would enjoy reading while they relax.

Persona: **Mikkel Larsen**

"Being a furniture designer in Japan – particularly in Kyoto – is an honour. Japanese and Scandinavian design both incorporate simplicity and functionality at its core. And that's how I try to live my life everyday."

- Pronouns: **(he/him)**
- Age: **33**
- From: **Copenhagen, Denmark**
- Residence: **Kyoto, Japan.**
- Occupation: **Furniture designer**

Goals: He would become a reader of SELĀH because the **written and visual stories are reflections on identity, purpose and life.** These are topics he feels represent him, his environment, his work and core beliefs.

Frustrations: The previous magazine's content was too preachy and not as reflective.

Persona: **Harlow Bridges**

"I believe it's a creatives purpose to be an example to the world on how important it is to break free from the status quo – to be unashamedly and unapologetically you."

- Pronouns: **(they/them)**
- Age: **21**
- Residence: **New York, USA.**
- Occupation: **Fashion design graduate** about to start grad job at a sustainable fashion brand.

Goals: They would become a reader of SELĀH because it **showcases sustainable brands** and they also feel represented as the **styling does not follow societal gender norms**.

Frustrations: The previous magazine did not take into consideration non-binary or gender fluid users.

Starting the design

- Wireframes
- Low-fidelity prototype
- Usability studies

Previous low-fidelity wireframes/flat plan (PRINT)

Cover (front & inside) and pages 1-17 of pervious publication.

The editorial flow for this magazine was very simple with a lot of full bleed images, blank inside cover pages and not any clear breaks (apart from pages dedicated to ads). In turn, this did not allow the magazine to have enough breathable space in the right places, (e.g. only one page given for contents page).
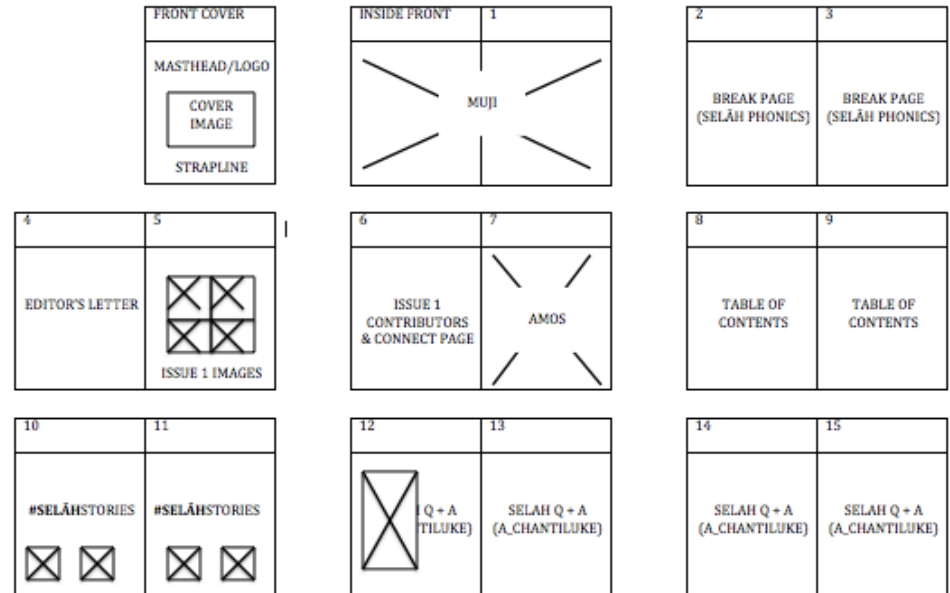
Proposed Content
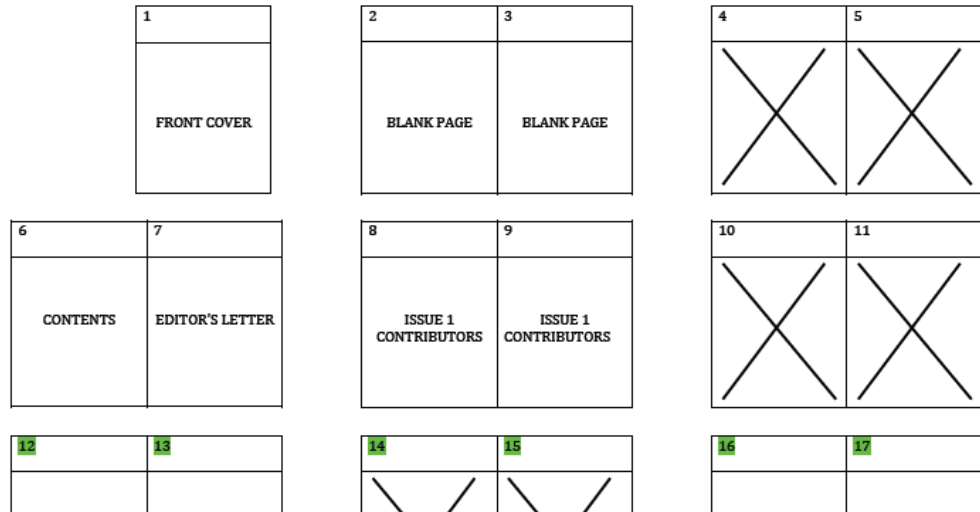
New low-fidelity wireframes/flat plan (PRINT)

Cover (front & inside) and pages 1-15 of SELĀH.

The editorial flow was created in order to lead the reader through each story by finding the content that could relate to one another. I designed several 'break pages,' for the layout, to help produce a clear and concise flow for the reader, to allow the reader time to sit, think and reflect on all they had read and to subliminally break the magazine into sections. The main break page is a white double page and has the SELĀH phonics added to it in black. These have been inserted on pages 2-3, 32-33, 86-87 and 132-133.

SELĀH 01 - Editorial Flat Plan

FRONT COVER / MASTHEAD/LOGO / COVER IMAGE / STRAPLINE	INSIDE FRONT / 1 — MUJI	2 — BREAK PAGE (SELĀH PHONICS)	3 — BREAK PAGE (SELĀH PHONICS)
4 EDITOR'S LETTER	5 — ISSUE 1 IMAGES	6 ISSUE 1 CONTRIBUTORS & CONNECT PAGE	7 — AMOS	8 — TABLE OF CONTENTS	9 — TABLE OF CONTENTS
10 — #SELĀHSTORIES	11 — #SELĀHSTORIES	12 — Q + A (TILUKE)	13 — SELAH Q + A (A_CHANTILUKE)	14 — SELAH Q + A (A_CHANTILUKE)	15 — SELAH Q + A (A_CHANTILUKE)

Low-fidelity prototype/mock-ups (PRINT)

Contributors page now condensed to one page without images.

Ad now moved to prime real estate area of inside cover.

White space added in the right areas to allow breathe in the design and allow user to read slowly and take everything in.
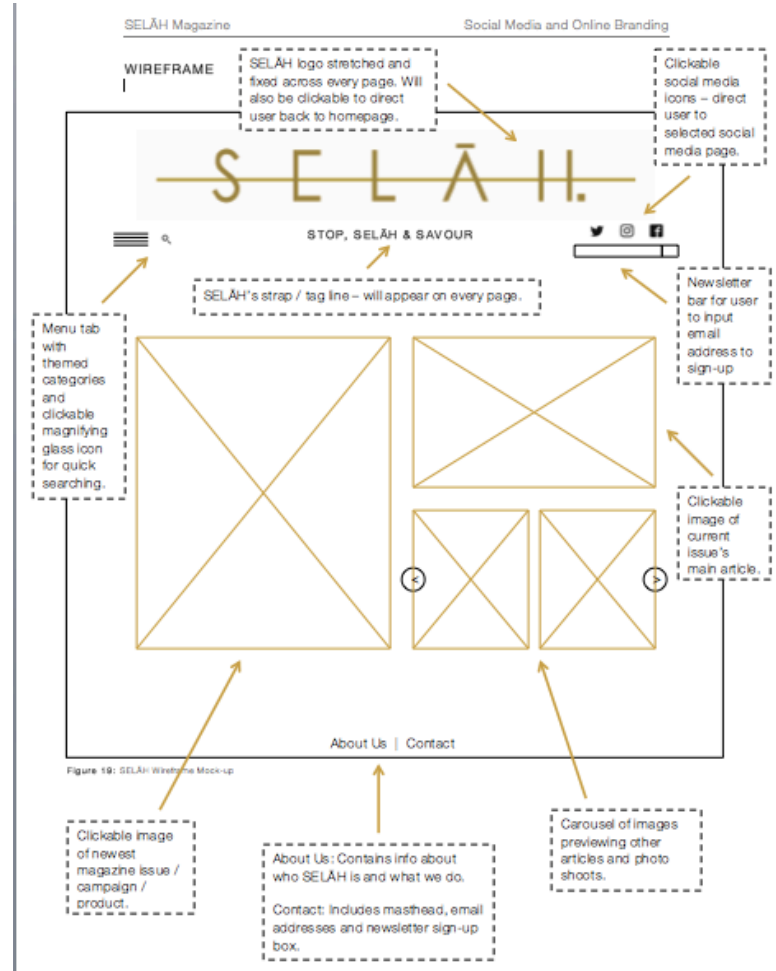
Editor's letter now has images on opposite page to give contrast and not overwhelm reader.

More pages given to contents so it does not look busy.

Low-fidelity wireframe (ONLINE)

This is a wireframe (for the homepage) of a potential online platform for SELĀH. This was not a part of my dissertation project but it was a part of a social media/online branding project I did.

If I were to make SELĀH an online publication this is the type of layout and content I would go for.

SELĀH Magazine   Social Media and Online Branding

WIREFRAME

SELĀH logo stretched and fixed across every page. Will also be clickable to direct user back to homepage.

Clickable social media icons – direct user to selected social media page.

STOP, SELĀH & SAVOUR

SELĀH's strap / tag line – will appear on every page.

Newsletter bar for user to input email address to sign-up

Menu tab with themed categories and clickable magnifying glass icon for quick searching.

Clickable image of current issue's main article.

About Us | Contact

Figure 19: SELĀH Wireframe Mock-up

Clickable image of newest magazine issue / campaign / product.

About Us: Contains info about who SELĀH is and what we do.

Contact: Includes masthead, email addresses and newsletter sign-up box.

Carousel of images previewing other articles and photo shoots.

Usability study: findings

These are some of the major points from my findings when users interacted with the previous magazine.

Round 1 findings

1. Front cover image not eye-catching

2. Title/logo is too small

3. Not enough content

Usability study: findings (continued)

These are some of the major points from my findings when users interacted with the mock-up designs for the new magazine.

Round 2 findings

1 Front cover image is more eye-catching than before but still not there yet.

2 Title/logo looks great and is large enough to see from afar.

3 The content is rich, diverse but at the same time more uniform/streamlined and speaks/caters to its audience on all levels.

Refining the design

- Logo
- Mock-ups
- High-fidelity prototype

Logo design

S E L Ā H.

I designed the SELĀH logo myself. The clean, sharp and simple lines within the logo, represents the minimalist-inspired ambiance we aim the publication to have.

The full stop/period at the end represents the pause or the stop in which we aim our readers to do – so they can reflect.

Furthermore, the horizontal gold line and colour used is the final element in the design thought process. The gold is used to represent the savour in which our writers and readers will feel from the written and visual stories shared, while the line signifies a 'silver lining' but instead using gold.

Cover design mock-ups

For any print publication, the cover is one of the most important elements. It has the power to draw or repel the reader and instantly sends a message to the reader about what they could find inside.

These were some of the first high-fidelity mock-ups I created for the cover design. However, after feedback, I realised that they were not as eye-catching as I thought and did not really showcase what SELĀH is.

So I set out to create a cover that would not only stand out on a shelf and incorporate an image from the main photo shoot but would also give a sense of ambiguity.

High-fidelity final cover design

As you can see, there is a very big difference and improvement from the previous magazine's cover to the new one.

The logo has changed and it much bigger, the image used is vibrant and draws you in and there is less text on the page to allow the image to do more of the communication.

Before
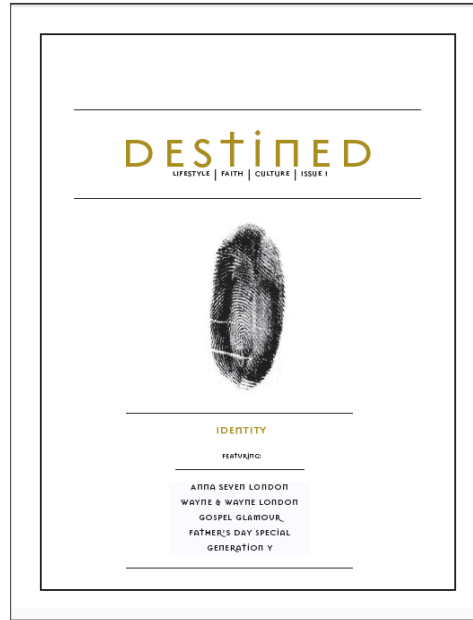
After

Design Process

The art direction was intended to keep to the magazine's minimalist core by keeping the design linear – with clean lines and shapes and white space. I chose to make the magazine 189mm in width and 246mm in height to give the magazine a personal feeling, as it is small enough to carry around but large enough to give it an artsy feel and to see the full beauty of its imagery. I also chose to print the magazine pages on 160gsm uncoated white paper and the cover on 250gsm. This type of paper was used to reiterate SELĀH's raw and stripped back aesthetic and to give the images a grainier look. Finally, the publication was finished with a perfect bind to make it feel like a book and to keep it a professional and classy.

However, to gather more insight into magazine layout and design, I dissected and analysed several magazines that I believed encompassed the design aesthetic I envisioned. These publications were: Cereal, Kinfolk, The Gentlewoman, Nang, Suitcase, Minimalissimo and COS lookbooks.

Design Process (continued)

When looking page to page at these publications, I studied how they used imagery and type together, how they effectively used colour without it being too overpowering, how they used titles, bylines and page tags, the use and amount of full bleed images, where their main article was positioned, how many pages each feature and their main photo editorial occupied, the spacing between and order of different segments, how they used columns and blocks of text and what they included on the spine and how they used advertising. All of these points helped me when it came to curating SELĀH's visuals DNA.

I began to use bold typefaces adjacent to regular text to highlight main elements within some content. I also decided to use a sans serif font, Century Gothic – changing the vertical and horizontal scales to make it less rounded. I believe this gave the font an elegant vibe rather than it's original gawky look. I also added grey printing marks throughout and grey scales onto some of the pages to highlight the black and white theme and added greater than symbols and a squared full stops, at the end of paragraphs, to signify the pauses and stops of the reader and to also link it with the logo design.

In terms of the table of contents (pages 8 and 9), I wanted to make it into a clear and simple guide, for the reader to follow, to find the type of content they wanted to read. So I carried it over onto a double-page spread and grouped the content into content types.

High-fidelity prototype

Here is a screenshot of pages 1-15 of the high-fidelity prototype.
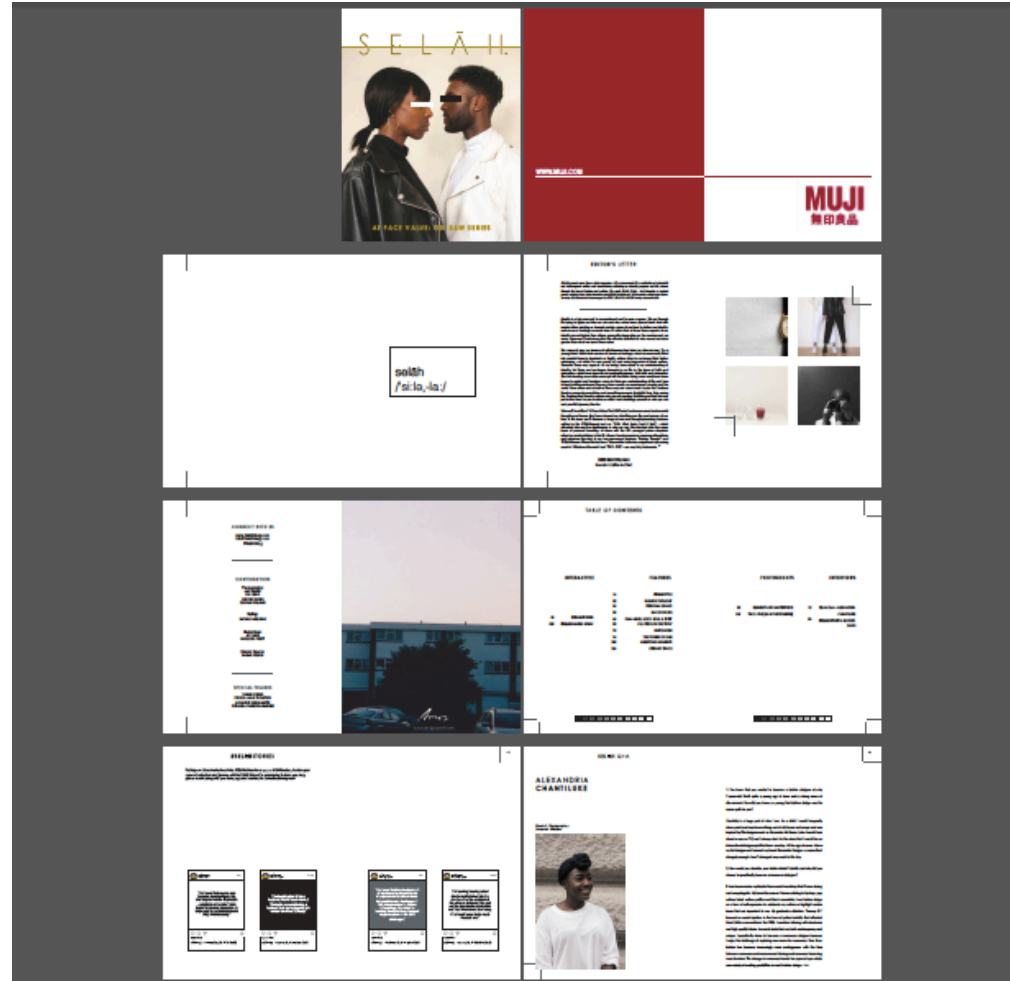
Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Takeaways

Impact:

To summarise the impact of my this project, taking into consideration that this was my university dissertation, I believe this magazine fits into a gap in the market because the feedback from my tutor said: "In an age where everything is fast-paced and on the go, we see now more than ever many people becoming more interested in slow-paced journalism and reconnecting with concepts such as mindfulness and minimalism. Young adults are now more inclined to read think-based articles that they can relate to in their everyday lives, sharing their thoughts and life experiences – just like blogging."

What I learned:

Throughout this project, I ultimately learned the unbiased design leads to good design and collaboration. The previous magazine had so many bad design elements that, at the time, I thought was good and allowed my bias to overrule. However, this time around, I was able to put this right. And everyone that worked on SELĀH, were the perfect collaborators to work with – adding so much depth and opinions to make sure it was a success. And, in the end, it was as I achieved the top grade.

Next steps

1

Accessibility

Although SELĀH is inclusive when it comes to race, gender etc., it was hard to implement accessibility considerations for end-users that are blind.

2

Body Copy

Firstly, I would change the body copy font from 9pt to 7.5pt. Although at the time of the test print run the font size seemed suitable but after seeing it printed in the magazine I would have preferred it to be a little smaller. I would also make many of the images smaller to create more white space, as I think there isn't enough.

3

Online

As this was a print project, I did not have time to develop the online aspect. So I the future, I would continue to develop SELĀH into an online publication, as I had already drawn up a wireframe for the home page.

Thank you!