

Heuristic Evaluations

Currently there are some apps and websites specifically feature this information both locally and internationally. I decide to use **CurateLA**, **Exhibitionary** and **ArtRabbit** as the subjects of my Heuristic Evaluations. These three apps are created by teams from different countries and have their own niche market.



Curate LA is an art discovery platform focusing on the comprehensive **Los Angeles art scene**. It was launched in 2015 and has more than 100k viewers according to its founder. The platform has a website and an app. It has a user-generated content and a membership program which differentiate posts based on membership type. One of its popular features is a colour-coded Google map that highlights events or activities around users' location.



Exhibitionary is an art guide covering exhibitions and art events in **major cities around the world**. It was launched in Berlin in 2017. It has an iso app and a mobile optimised website. In addition to basic features of an art oriented platform such as exhibition information, interactive maps and experts picks, it also has customisable maps allowing users to plan, save and share exhibition highlights. It is one of the most popular apps under the same category.



ArtRabbit is an open digital platform, user network and mobile app for the promotion, discovery and appreciation of contemporary art. It was founded as a site project in 2006 and relaunched in 2015 in Britain. In addition to user-generated content, interactive maps, search listings for exhibitions, venues, event types, it also has a feature of people, which allows users to have their own profile and to search for artists/curators.

Competitors Analysis

First of all, I will compare **audiences, similarities and differences** among the three platforms. Then, I will use 10 general principles from Nielson Norman Group’s principles for Users Interface Design to do the analysis (based on their app version). They are **Visibility of system status, Math between system and the real world, User Control and Freedom, Consistency and Standards, Error prevention, Recognition rather than recall, Flexibility and efficiency of use, Aesthetic and minimalist design, Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors, and Help and documentation.** I will use a 1 to 5 scale to evaluate these three products based on the principles. 1 means poor and 5 means good. I will give summery and suggestions according to my evaluation at the end.

Name	Target users	Most users (Geographic location)	Similar features	Special features	Main platform
Curate LA	Anyone who are interested in art in Los Angeles/Los Angeles art community	Los Angeles	▸ current and future exhibitions/events lists ▸ information with press release and limited images ▸ art maps	1. Local focused (Los Angeles) 2. User-generated content 3. A blog featuring special exhibitions on Medium 4. Membership that prioritises user type and their posts	website - app
Exhibitionary	Global art lovers and art community	European art lovers	▸ search for events/ exhibitions depending on time/place/themes	1. News 2. Editor’s pick 3. Selection of 8 cities around the world	app - website
ArtRabbit	Global Contemporary art lovers and art community	Top three users: UK, US and German	▸ social media community for users	1. User-generated content 2. Features (highlighted content) 3. People profile (users, artists, curators)	app - website

Emily Zhang

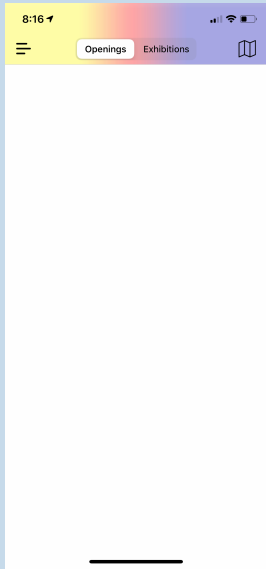


Website: <http://curate.la>

App: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/curate-la/id1031474729>

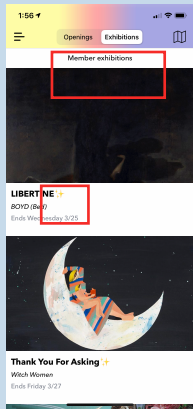
1. Visibility of system status: The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

Score: 4

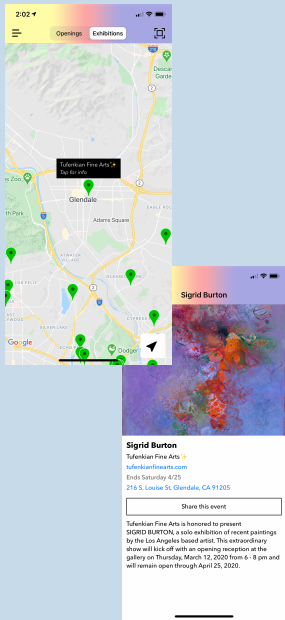


In general, this app gives prompt feedback to user's every move, but under special occasions (such as coronavirus influence), it doesn't have updated notice and leave an empty page.

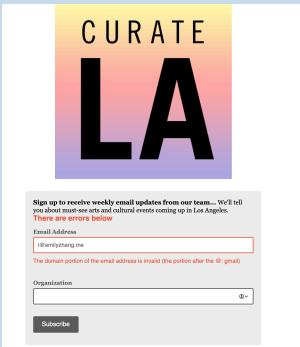
2. Math between system and the real world: The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.
Score: 2



First of all, in the app, there's a list named "Member exhibitions". It's not a familiar term for new users and there's no further note on what does "Member exhibitions" mean. Also, the icon of stars could also be strange for users



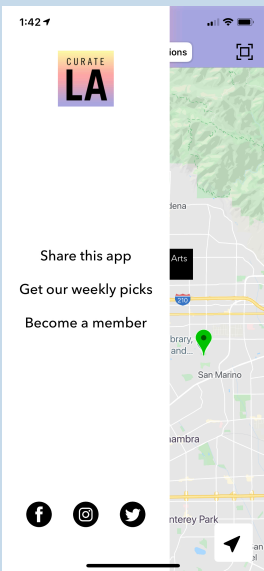
Secondly, when click into its "exhibition map", you are expecting to see exhibitions on the map. Instead, it's just galleries/space on the map, and you have to "tap" to get info on exhibitions.



Individual users who sign up for the weekly email might be confused about the term "Organization".

3. User control and freedom: Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

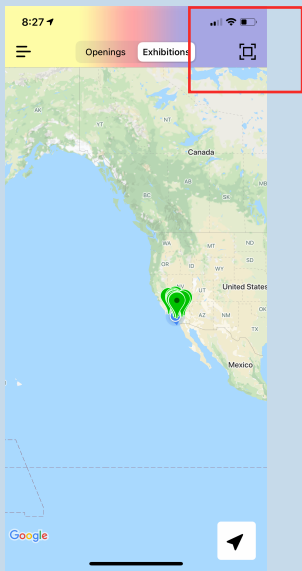
Score: 5



Since there are not many interactive function for users on both their websites and app, there's not much to say about their "User control and freedom" design

4. Consistency and standards: Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions

Score: 4



The app has very simple features but one icon looks very confusing. As in the screenshot on the left, it looks like a camera or QR code scanner. However, when you click it, it will list out exhibitions in texts. So they are not using concepts familiar to the users.

Emily Zhang

5. Error

preventions: Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

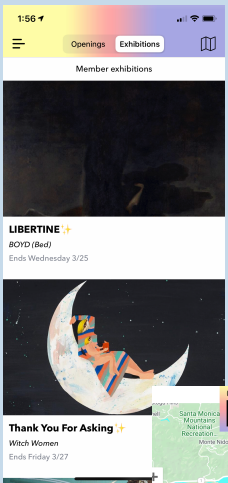
Score: 5

Since there are not many interactive function for users on both their websites and app, there's not much to say about "Error preventions"

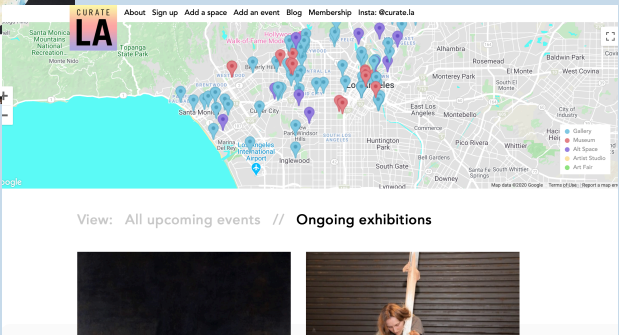
6. Recognition rather

than recall: Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Score: 1



Users have to do recall all the time when they use this platform as they don't have personalised feature for each user. There's no search bar to find any shows, no personal page or function for user to save any shows, no recommendation based on users' previous visiting history.



7. Flexibility and efficiency of use:

Accelerators — unseen by the novice user — may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

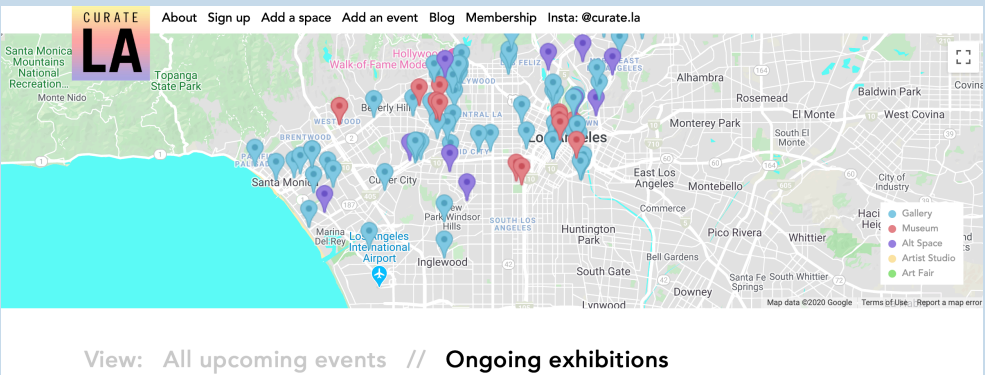
Score: 1

There's no design aims to increase flexibility and efficiency of use on both the website and its app.

8. Aesthetic and minimalist design:

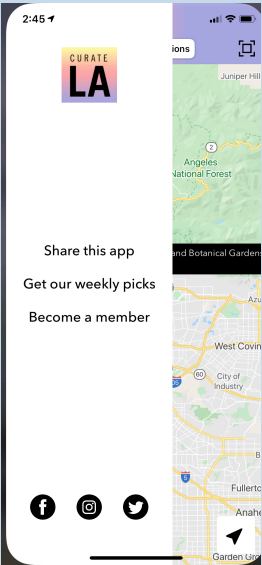
Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Score: 2



For the website, the "map" is the first thing users will see when they use the platform. However, there are some unrelated information. **First of all**, there are five categories on the map, marked in different colours. But as you can see from the screen shot above, there are only three categories marked on the map. In other words, it's no necessary to list all categories out when some of them do not exist on the map. **Secondly**, there are many unrelated icons shown on the map when you zoom in, such as restaurants, shops, etc.

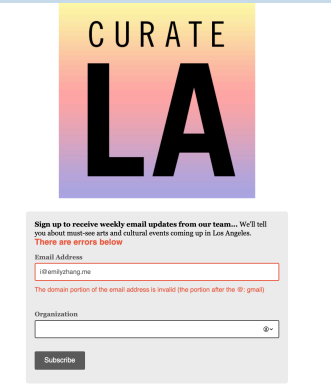
Emily Zhang



Thirdly, the design website menu is not precise and clear. For example, “sign up” actually means sign up for their weekly email updates on local art; “add a space” function is very confusing as the platform is exhibition and event oriented, why need to “add a space”? Another thing is there’s a specific highlight of their instagram account on website, but in the app, the platform has displayed all three of their social media account without any highlighting.

9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors: Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

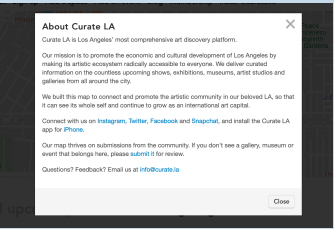
Score: 5



In the limited user interaction, the platform does give instructions when there’s errors.

10. Help and documentation: Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

Score: 2



You can only find limited help info in “About” which you have to send email to the team for details. There’s no concrete steps for additional help or documentation.

Summery

Curate LA has very good content source about art in Los Angeles. However, they don’t have much personalised function for users to use. While they are targeting the whole art community (audiences, curators, artists and gallery owners, etc), they are not differentiating these users based on their needs properly. Also, the design of their app and website doesn’t in alignment. If they can redesign some of their features, such as “art map”, and add more personalised function for users, such as links with google calendar, events save button, clear information on exhibitions, and of course, clear instruction and guideline to use the platform, there will be more active users and influence.

Emily Zhang

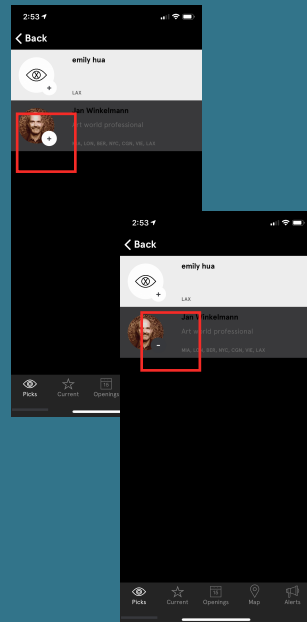


Website: <https://exhibitionary.com>

App: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/exhibitionary-art-guide/id1105802393>

1. Visibility of system status

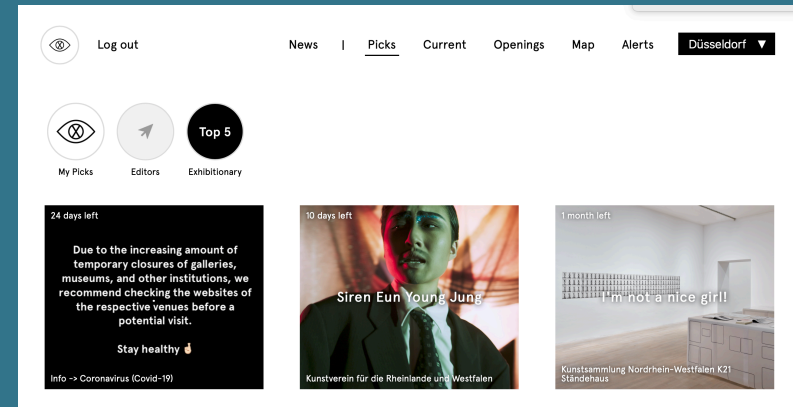
Score: 5



The platform (webstie and its app) basically work well in terms of responding to visitors' action, except for the “picks” function in its app. There’s no response when I click “+” button

2. Math between system and the real world

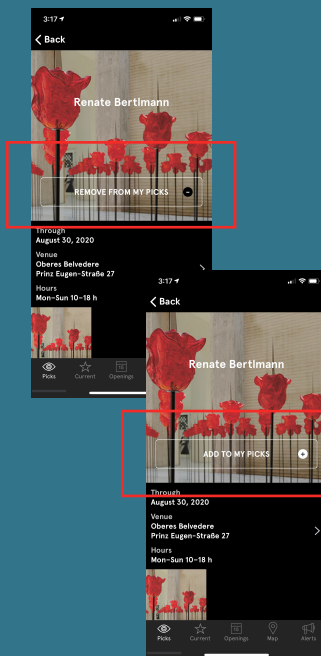
Score: 5



Both the website and app has a very good balance between system and real world. For example, at the top of each pick, there’s a notification of remaining days before its opening, which is like in your own calendar or to do list that you can clearly see how many days you have to prepare for that.

3. User control and freedom

Score: 5



It’s very easy for users to manage their “picks” on the platforms. For example, there’s a very clear “ADD” and “REMOVE” option on each exhibition/event (both website and app), which allow users to make changes any time.

4. Consistency and standards:

Score: 5

All the design of both the website and app follows platform convention. Everything looks very standardised and in alignment

5. Error preventions

Score: 5

There’s not much to say about “Error prevention”, as every step is clearly instructed.

Emily Zhang

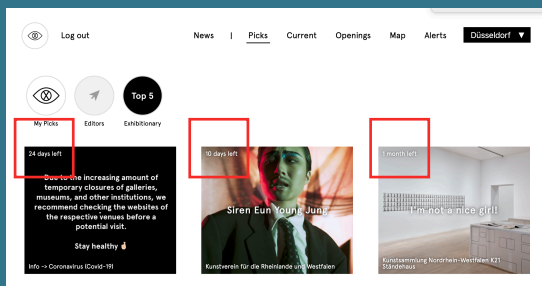


Website: <https://exhibitionary.com>

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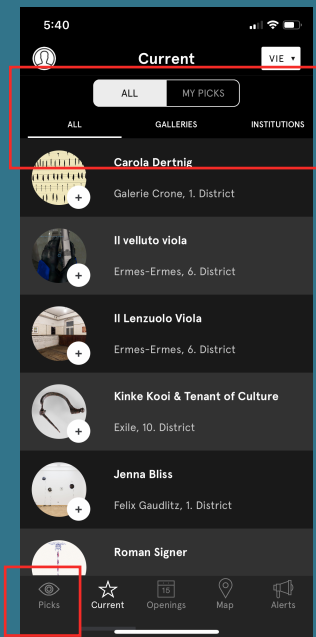
6. Recognition rather than recall

Score: 4



Though search history couldn't be saved by the platform, it doesn't influence the user experience for me. But their recognition of time is very creative. I don't have to recall what date is the event, which is super convenient.

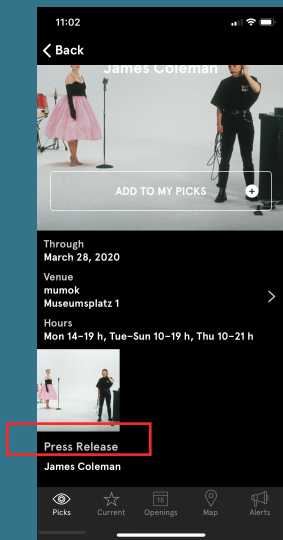
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use



In general, both the website and app is easy to use, so there's not much extra design to make it even more efficient. But in the app, users can access all events directly on the main page. If they

8. Aesthetic and minimalist design

Score:4



Features of this platform is very simple and there are no meaningless design on the website. As for the app, there's only one design, which is the description of the event/exhibition (press release). There's only author's name of the press release, instead of content, which should be more meaningful put here.

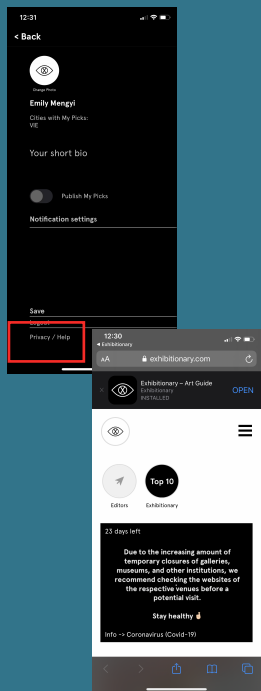
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Score: 5

In general, the platform uses plain language to instruct everything which allows users to deal with any situations

10. Help and documentation

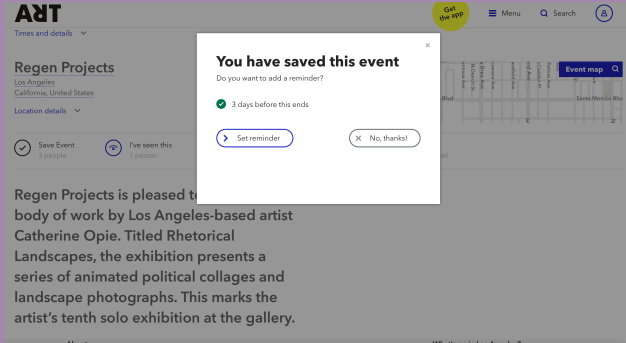
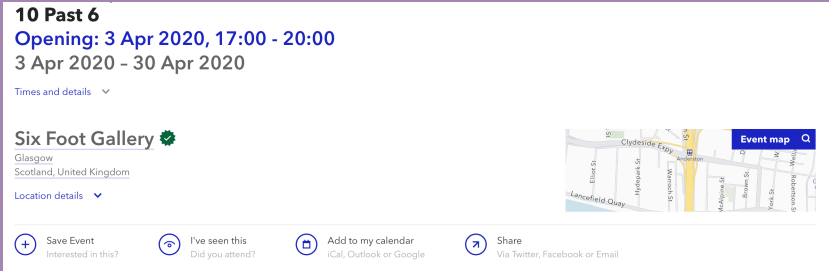
Score: 2



Surprisingly, such well designed platform doesn't pay much attention on "help and documentation". Though there's "Privacy/Help" in the app version, it just directs to the main website where you still couldn't find any related information.

Summery

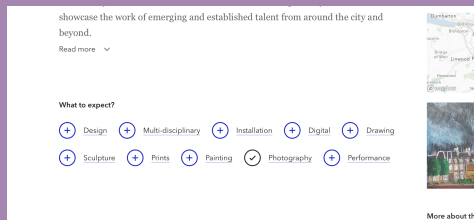
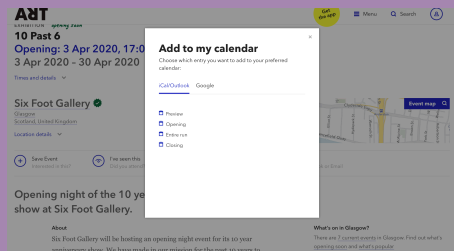
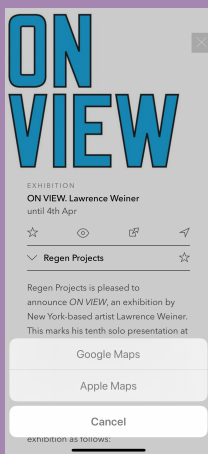
Exhibitionary is a very well-designed platform which understands what its users need and like. It’s easy to use and access. One of its problems might be its limited resources as it’s not user-generated content. Also, because of its non “user-generated” style, it can only provide information on several major cities. Despite of the fact that it covers all the feature such platform should have, I think it lacks characteristics or speciality. On one hand, the content is not as professional as that of any other art media’s. On the other hand, it’s not selected by users themselves. It seems that the platform has its own “News” section, but it’s more or less press release. It’s just one effort the platform does to make it lean to “art media” . So it needs to position itself more clearly what they are and provide matching content to their target.

ART	Website: https://www.artrabbit.com App: https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/artrabbit/id1144550147		
1. Visibility of system status Score: 5	 The platform reacts to users’ request promptly and users are always informed about the status of their action.	2. Math between system and the real world Score: 4	 In general, the website and app has good match between system and the real world. But their “Location details” and map information is not matching with the real world. As these two parts are separating with each other while in the real world they usually appear together.

Emily Zhang

3. User control and freedom

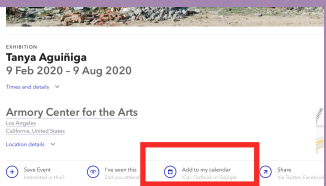
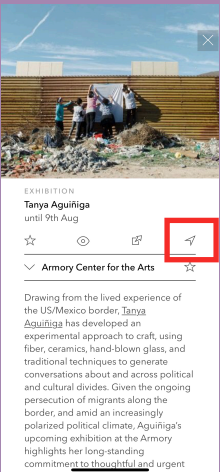
Score: 4



The platform gives users plenty of freedom and control over their features. For example, users can easily save or share the content just by clicking the right icons. They also have freedom to chose which map they want to use. Besides even for the expect categories, users can easily add or remove just by clicking the button at the begining.

4. Consistency and standards:

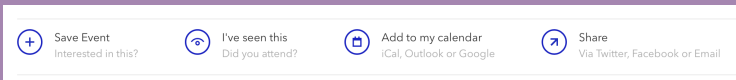
Score:4



Both the website and app are very consistent and standardised. They use the same style and users don't have to think about different use of certain symbols or icons. The only thing is some features in their website are different from

5. Error preventions

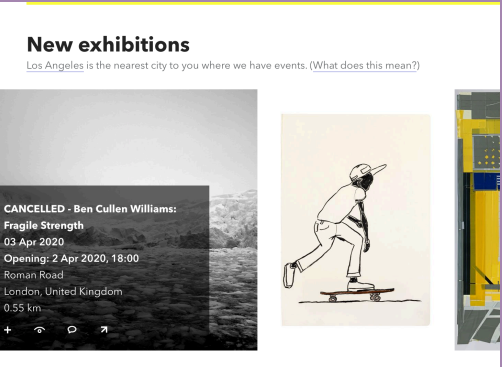
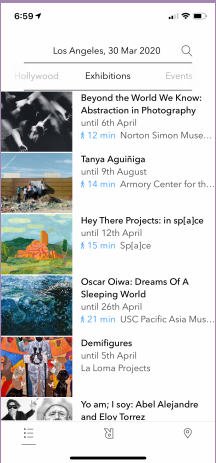
Score: 5



The app has very simple feature and design, so there's not much instructions or reminders to users. But the website has a very clear message for users. For example, there are clear description of each button to that users are aware of its function, which i think is a very good error preventions design.

6. Recognition rather than recall

Score: 4

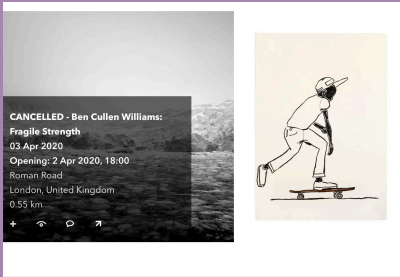


The app does a better job than website in terms of recognition rather than recall principle. One example is the information on the distance. The app provides information on time while website gives distance in number, which requires extra calculation.

Emily Zhang

7. Flexibility and efficiency of use

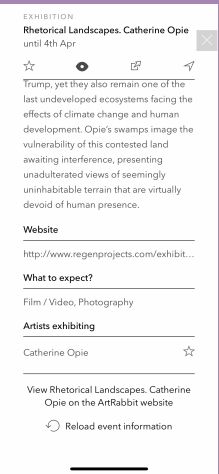
Score: 5



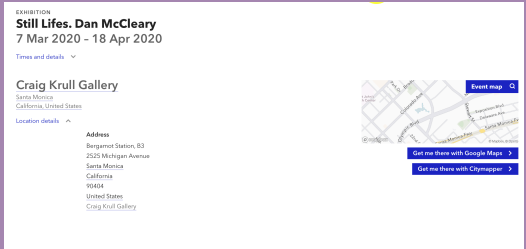
Just like Exhibitionary, the platform has clear and simple design, especially its app. But there are still some design aims at increasing the flexibility and efficiency of use. For example, in the homepage, users don't have to click into the content for further action. By pointing at the image, there will be basic information about the event/exhibition, and users can save, share or comment directly at this point.

8. Aesthetic and minimalist design

Score:4

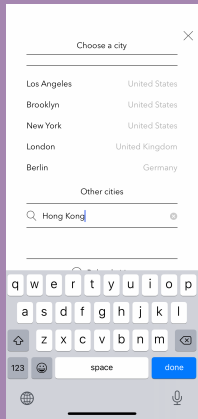


Though the platform is easy to use, it's not perfect in terms of aesthetic and minimalist design. For example, in its app, there's no need to list out the complete address of each gallery's website. It can be displayed by highlighting the name of gallery. Also, in its website, there's too much empty space between address info and map. There should be more information about the exhibition content instead of its location.

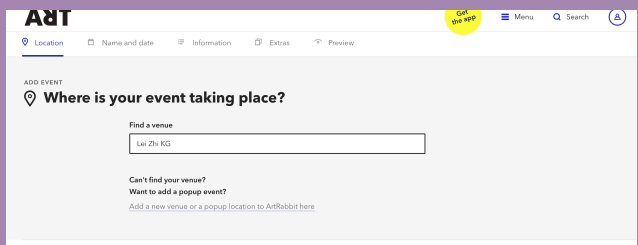


9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Score: 3

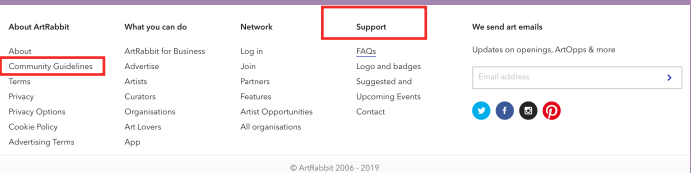
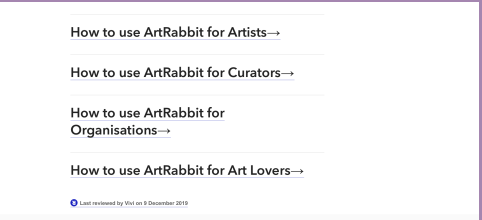
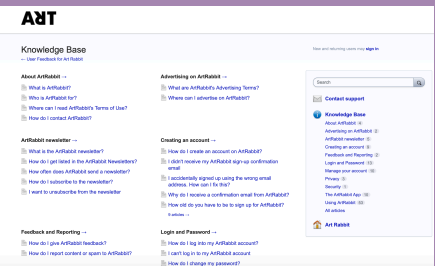


There's a major problem on both its app and website. When you type a location that don't have record or information on the website, there's no instruction on the error, or any guideline to help you recover from errors.



10. Help and documentation

Score: 5



The platform has a very strong and thorough help and documentation design. In its website, users can find all kinds of help information under the "Support" page and they can also learn how to use the platform in "Community Guidelines". Users can also find "Get help" in its app.

Emily Zhang

Summery

ArtRabbit is another well-developed platform with focus on major international cities, just like Exhibitionary. It has a lot of great features, and they are not only targeting people who are interested in art, but also curators, artists, etc. But the major challenge for them is though it provides user-generated content, their information is not very attractive, as some of them either don't have enough information or just one image. Also, as their main target is website, some of the great features, such as google calendar can't be linked to their app. Another thing is they are targeting the global art scene, but there are not enough users to create content in cities in Asia, which makes a rather weird page.
