CRD: CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ DATABASE

THE ROAD TO FACILITATING ART RESEARCH

A Project by Arielle Cohen

WHAT IS A CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ AND WHY DO WE NEED A DATABASE OF THEM?

- A Catalogue Raisonné (or CR) is a comprehensive, annotated listing of all the known works of an artist either in a particular medium or their entire oeuvre.

  - However, not all artists have catalogue raisonnés, and not all catalogue raisonnés are created equal in regards to quality of information and accuracy

- As an art librarian, I was constantly fielding questions about what resources were available in the library at which I work, specifically when it came to catalogue raisonnés. Thus I set out to determine the best way to help users find and retrieve this information.

INITIAL RESEARCH

- I was not the first to notice the need for easy access to CR information. In fact, others had made attempts to consolidate this information before

- However, as this feature inventory illustrates, none of the potential competitors had all of the hoped for features

Competitor	Free	Online	Mobile compatible	Browse Function	Includes publication information	Access points included	Regularly updated	Broad Scope	Limited Scope	Descriptive Records	Easy to Navigate
IFAR.org	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	
Local library OPAC	x	x	sometimes		x	x			x		sometimes
Google	x	x	x		sometimes	sometimes	x	x		sometimes	initially
ACI Art Catalogue Index (hardcopy source)					x				x	x	x
printcouncil.org	x	x	x		x	sometimes			x		x
LibGuides	x	x	sometimes		x	x			x	sometimes	

Legend:

X = competitor has this feature
Blank = competitor does not have this feature
Sometimes = competitor can sometimes have this feature
Initially = competitor has this feature during the initial point of contact

THE INTERVIEWS

- The next step in the research process was to conduct user interviews

- Interviewees were pulled from professional acquaintances, and while all three subjects had experience researching art and art related fields, they ranged from novice to expert in their research abilities. Interviews were conducted at public coffee shops, and participants were compensated with coffee and pie.

- The interviews helped me to define the specific problems art researchers face and how I might solve them…eventually allowing me to create the main user persona through the use of affinity mapping techniques

THE DEFINED PROBLEM:

Catalogue Raisonnés are a common place to begin the research process on a particular artist, as they are supposed to contain the entirety of an artist's oeuvre; however, as the user interviews revealed, researchers cannot always be assured that they are selecting the best resource for their project, or even that they have been shown all available catalogue raisonnés. Failure in either case means researchers run the risk of wasting valuable time on unhelpful resources.

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Create CRD: A Catalogue Raisonné Database.

CRD is to be an aggregate database of catalogue raisonnés. Designed with Art History graduate students in mind, as well as other semi-experienced art researchers, CRD's primary goal is to facilitate the quick discovery of all catalogue raisonnés for a particular artist.

Secondary goals include helping users track down copies of their selected catalogue raisonné and helping denote authoritative resources.

I will know that the solution is successful when users confirm that they are able to find the resources they need by clicking through to the find resource page and user feedback

THE PERSONA

Renée Recherche

Gender: Female

Occupation: Graduate student in Art History

Location: New York City

"My time is precious, I don't want to waste my time looking at things that really will have no bearing on what I'm trying to find information about."

Renée likes to do research from a laptop, and is often trying to find information quickly for a class project or paper. She knows a catalogue raisonné is a good starting point for research, as she is aware that they are supposed to hold the entirety of an artist's oeuvre and can provide her with a good overview. However, she was never formally taught about the intricacies of catalogue raisonnés, and has only just become aware that there can be multiple CRs for one artist, or, conversely, no CR at all.

She is also aware that some CRs can have inaccuracies, or even be considered unauthoritative, so she is worried that even if she finds a CR that is accessible to her, that she won't know if it's the right one for her research until after she has devoted a significant amount of time to researching her artist.

Renée's main goal is to quickly discover all catalogue raisonnés for the artist on which she is conducting research, but she always appreciates additional details regarding access points and level of accuracy of information.

With my persona in hand and my goals clearly defined, I crafted storyboards based on the type of tasks users would be expected to carry out (see top right image) and created a dream features list (see bottom right image) for my proposed solution - CRD: A Catalogue Raisonné Database
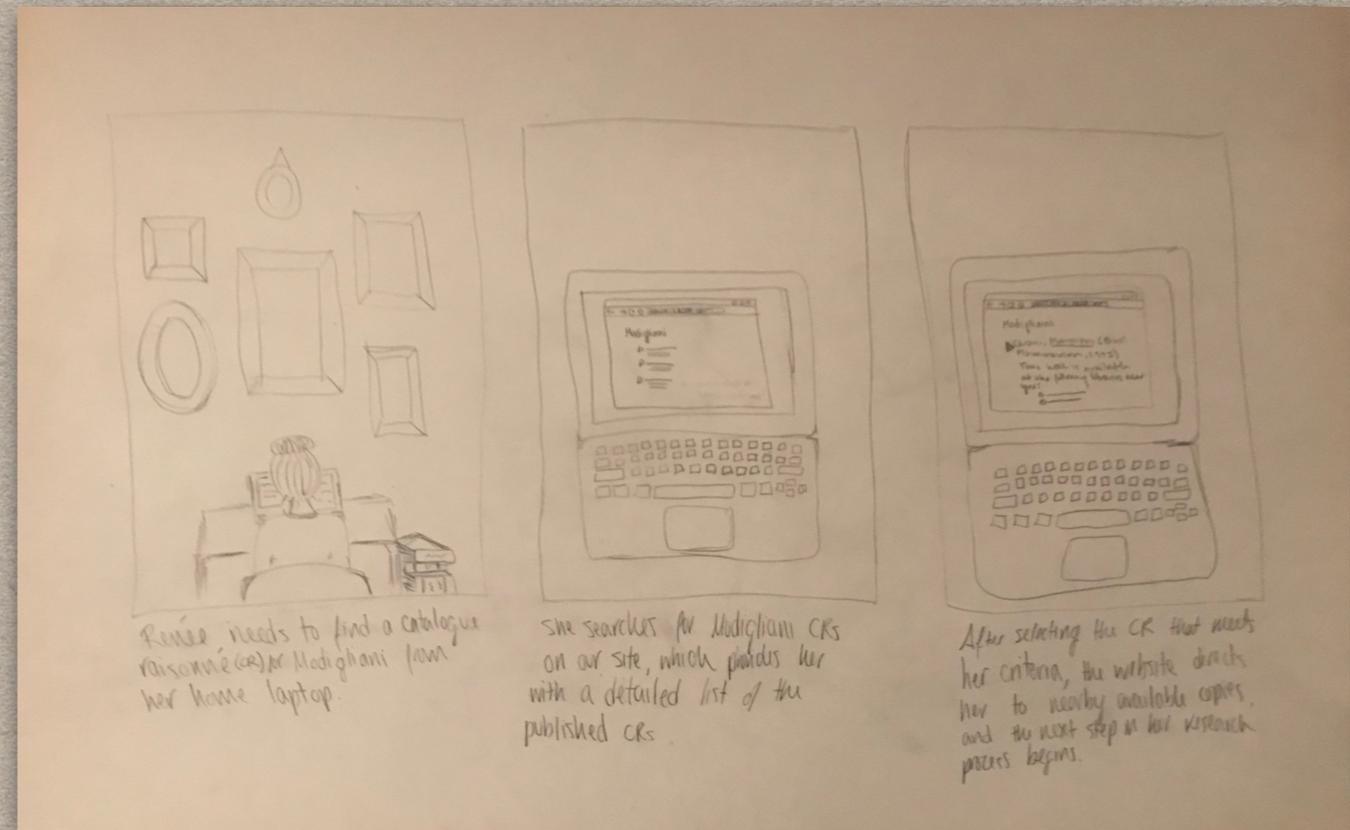

Dream Features!

- Keyword search
- Advanced search options
- Filtering of results by different fields
- Sorting of results by different fields
- Browsing capabilities
- Explanation of CR characteristics
- List or images of most popular searches
- Sign in to save results
- Individual resource page includes description of resource
- Individual resource page includes information pertaining to authoritativeness
- Individual resource page includes link to worldcat
- Individual resource page includes link to copies available at local libraries directly on our website
- Individual resource page includes link to available copies for purchase (abebooks, amazon etc.)
- Individual resource page tells user if work is out of print
- If there is no CR for an artist, the user will be told there is nothing in our database and be redirected back to search/browse
- results page for an artist includes known CRs in progress

FEATURE PRIORITIZATION AND THE CREATION OF OUR MVP

Of course, no product can have everything, so I conducted some feature prioritization (see image) to create a Minimum Viable Product (see next slide)
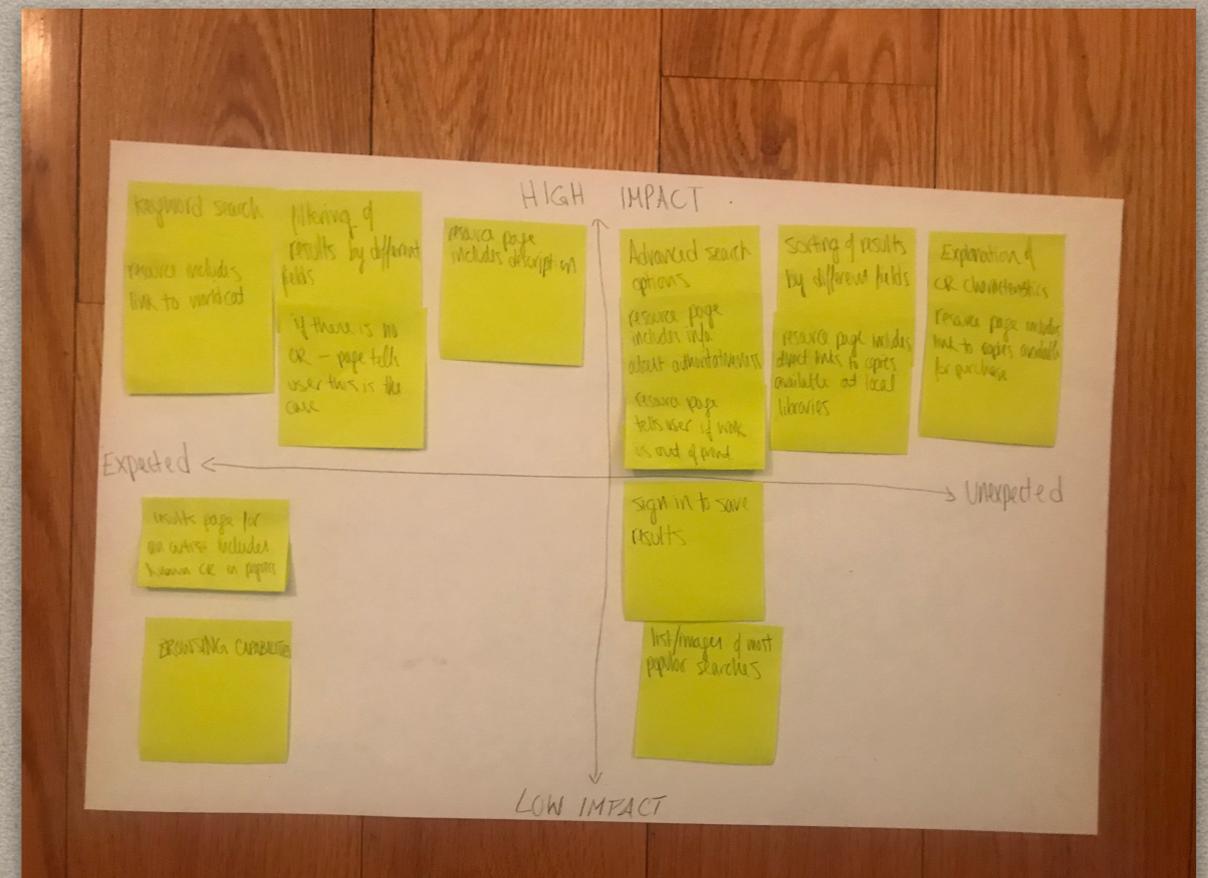
MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT

The MVP for the Catalogue Raisonné Database will contain the following features:

Keyword Search: This is the main way users (in their interviews) described searching for resources on databases. Our persona is looking for a specific artist's catalogue raisonné, so they will be able to input the name of the artist directly into this field to find results.

Filtering of Results by Different Fields: This is a typical feature for search engines and databases, but it is conspicuously absent from other catalogue raisonné databases. Inclusion of such a feature not only set us apart from competitors, but it will also facilitate resource discovery.

Resource Page Includes Description: This is a feature that can currently be found on only one of our competitors site. As the purpose of our database is to help users find the right resource for their research, a description of the resource is an integral part of the selection process.

Resource Page Includes Link to Worldcat: After resource discovery, users must be able to find their selected resource, or the research process stalls. This is most easily done through a link to the resource's record on Worldcat, a union catalogue of global library OPACs, which will list available copies at libraries in the user's geographical area.

If there is no CR, a page tells use this: The fact that not all artists have catalogue raisonnés is something users mentioned they only learned over time. Having a page that informs users that there is no catalogue raisonné on record for a given artist, will save the user time in their research process, and allow them to move on to other (non-catalogue raisonné) resources.

From this point on, I worked on creating user and screen flows, so as to inform the creation of prototypes for usability testing
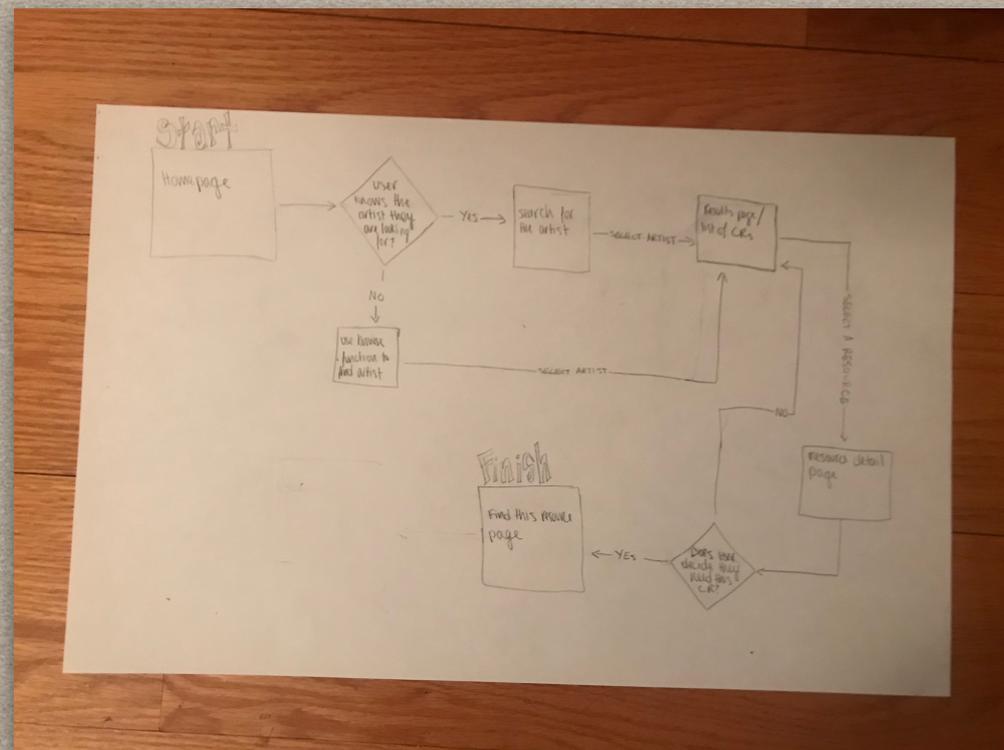

*Sample User Flow*
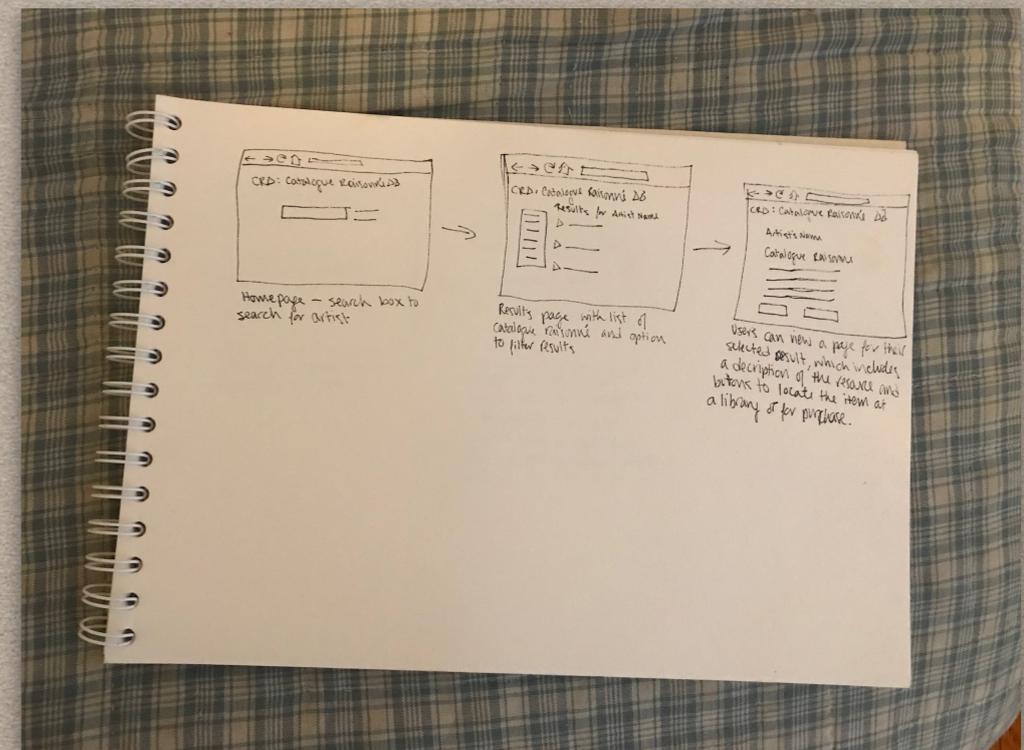
Sample Screen Flow

PROTOTYPING: FROM PAPER TO HI-FI WIREFRAMES

- Having defined the steps users would eventually take when using the CRD, I began the creation of low fidelity paper prototypes.

- From there, I created med-fi wireframes using the application, Sketch, and then finally created a hi-fi clickable prototype

- At each point during this process, usability testing was done to varying degrees, but it was with the clickable prototype where usability testing was conducted in earnest
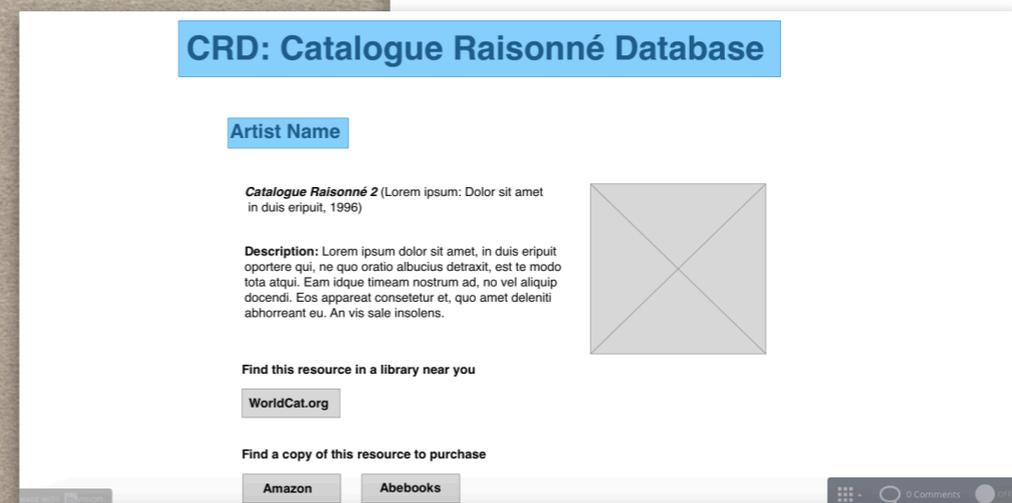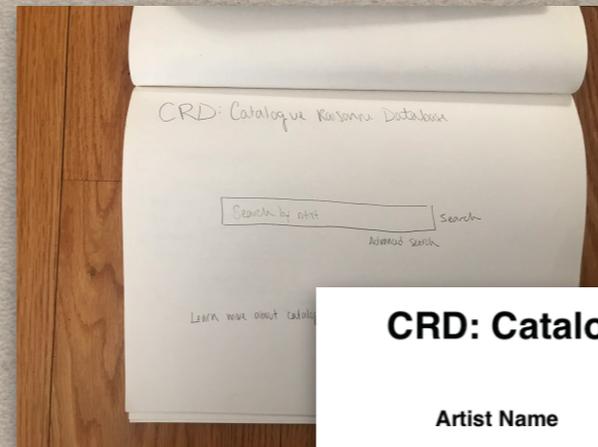
A CLICKABLE PROTOTYPE AND USABILITY TESTING

Using web application Invision, I created a high fidelity clickable prototype with which I conducted usability testing. Much like with the user interviews, participants were pulled from professional acquaintances, with one participant having also been a part of the aforementioned interviews. I also created a screener to ensure participants shared the characteristics of the ideal user
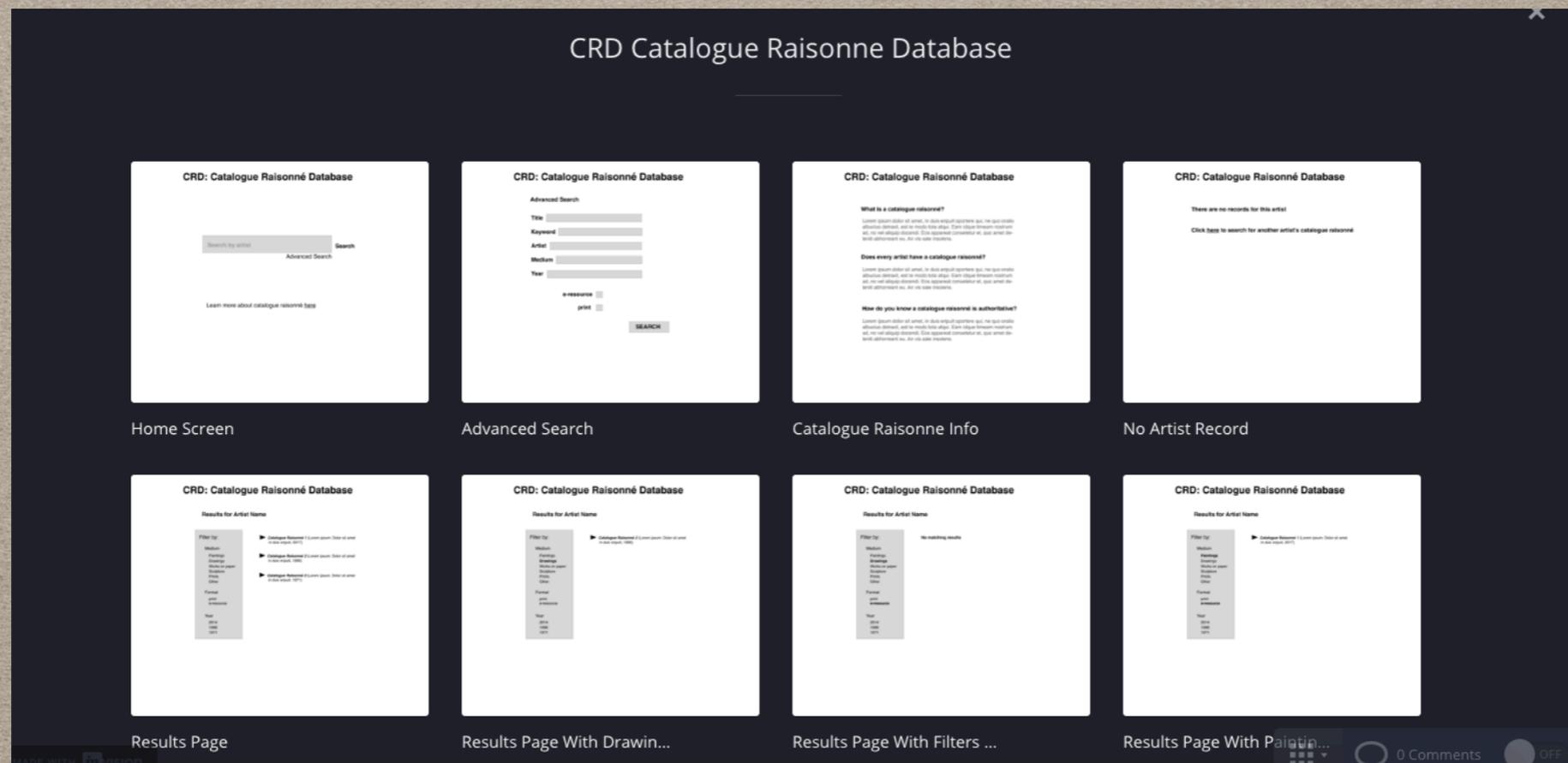
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Usability testing showed that every user knew exactly how to begin a search and how to locate copies of a given catalogue raisonné.

However, there were a few pain points, the most common of which were the expectation of the triangles/arrows to toggle down to reveal additional information and the request for more clearly labeled numbering of available resources.

As any good project is iterative in nature, these points have been noted, and amendments made.

Specific changes include:

- Replacing the triangles on the results pages with points

- The inclusion of"Showing X of XX results" at the top of the results page

- The addition of a rectangle around the header for clearer home navigation

While, additional usability testing is now called for, it is clear from the first iteration of this endeavor that the CRD is on the right track to fulfilling its intended goal: facilitating the quick discovery of all catalogue raisonnés for a particular artist

THANK YOU

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