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————— MILDA —————

SHIFTING THE PARADIGM OF A MALE-DOMINATED NARRATIVE REGARDING SEX

ABSTRACT

Since digital avenues, like Adobe Creative Suite, allows for a broader range of design abilities, I first sketched out ideas and possible veins for the concept by hand, then expanded on those concepts within programs like Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop that eventually translated to physical pieces like packaging, user interface, and printed materials. But Milda exists in many spaces, not just digital. It occupies print, writing, and speech, as well. Like many other advocacy movements, messaging can be expressed differently. But I used digital design techniques to create everything having to do with optics surrounding this project, utilizing photography and typography more than if I had used other methods. I also wanted to explore digital means to make the transition to print more seamless.

Milda is intended to reevaluate the current sexual message and create a place within the sexual experience for everyone, regardless of how they might identify or their sexual preferences. Milda aims to dissolve outdated sexual and gender expectations and pressures and promote a new wave of people being comfortable with expressing their needs, wants, and desires.

Milda, named after the Lithuanian goddess of love and freedom, performs as a multifaceted brand aiming to shift the narrative of sex

from a hypermasculine presentation to a more gender-neutral landscape, focusing on empowerment, education, and advocacy. Within Milda, the concept of the gendered paradigm of sex is morphed into an inclusive, accessible, and safe experience for everyone, regardless of gender or sexual identity.

This project is an abstract concept materialized into a brand identity and expression, a public awareness campaign, a line of package designs, and a social media presence, along with the final video.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Milda is a conceptual and theoretical idea that materializes in the physical world as many things. Milda presents itself in many planes within the user experience; much like people are not one dimensional, neither is Milda. This digital, yet human-centered, ideation is manifested in many different ways. Using printed materials, like posters, billboards, and postcards, physical outputs like packaging, and experiential abilities, like social media and digital interfaces, this lifestyle brand is a multifaceted entity. This interdisciplinary approach can live on a microcosmic level, focusing on the individual at hand, or reach mass audiences on a more macro-focused level. This project is not size specific, but includes typography, photography, graphics, and tangible items.

CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS

As previously mentioned, Milda is a versatile brand aiming to shift the narrative of sex from a hypermasculine presentation to a more gender-neutral landscape, focusing on rebranded products, like the *Milda Dream Journal* (Image #1), confidence, social and personal advocacy, and quality information. Especially within the United States, I have seen this representational imbalance. As a woman, I recognize an unequal narrative regarding sex. This lack of equilibrium branches into other aspects of daily life. The male-driven sex image leads to increase of violence and gender oppression. Women and non-binary people should feel comfortable and free of a gender-

dominant experience, more specifically during sex and regarding sexuality. Everyone has sex or thinks about having sex. Sex in itself is gendered. Sex as a product is gendered, and sex as an experience is gendered. 50.8% of the US population identifies as women (U.S. Census Bureau), while 1.2 million people living in the US identify as nonbinary (Asmelash), and 1.4 million people identify as transgender (Flores, et al). The sexual narrative, especially within the US continues to be presented as a hypermasculine concept. At the very base of sexuality, history has presented that there needs to be a phallic entity involved for sex to be legitimate. This shows people, especially women and non-binary individuals, that sex is completely a male activity and further pushes the idea that non-male people cannot assert



Image #1: *Milda Dream Journal* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

themselves, and be an active participant. Many different things influenced this project, like social media, The Women's Suffrage Movement, The Sexual Revolution, current inclusive brands like Parade, Cake, and August, and typographic and photographic-centered design work. Typographically speaking, I wanted to create something strong, while showing form and movement, mirroring the human form. And I wanted the imagery to be bold and free of objectification, like with *Concrete Posters* (Image #2) and *Valley Billboard* (Image #3). Looking at the work of Zoe Mendelson and her work with the book and virtual interactive platform *Pussypedia*, was also a major inspiration to me and this project. Looking at how Zoe and her team wanted to exhibit quality information,

while still being inclusive with imagery and terminology was something groundbreaking for me, and ultimately lead to the ideation of Milda.



Image #2: *Concrete Posters* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design



Image #3: *Valley Billboard* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

PROJECT INFLUENCES

Taking well-rounded inspiration and doing trusted, unbiased research when approaching a societal problem, like sex and sexuality is always crucial. I looked into past historical movements that revolved around women, gender, and sex, and how the world reacted to it and what the disruption catalysts were. One movement in particular that inspired this project was the Sexual Revolution of the 1960's. Stemming from the mass production and increased accessibility to the birth control pill, women were given a new platform to speak on, and this platform came from the pharmacy. It gave women a newfound freedom to be in control of their sexual health and choices. This

deviation from the cultural norms of religion and gender archetypes, lead to a discussion on morality and ignited a shift in widespread social behavior; and not to mention "For social conservatives, the sexual revolution was an invitation for promiscuity and an attack on the very foundation of American society — the family" (American Experience). But it all boils down to what we are still fighting for today, with protests, which printed materials like *Colorful Billboard* (Image #4) were inspired by protest signs), marches, nonprofit organizations, social media, and public figures: this hyper masculine double standard of men being able to feel comfortable and empowered within a sexual space, while women and non-binary individuals are not.



Image #4: Colorful Billboard by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

RESEARCH

Pre-production steps for my thesis project include academic research, mostly looking at scholarly essays and journals, podcasts, internet research, product comparisons, and interviews.

Before sketching even began, I wanted to take a step back and get organized with where I wanted this project to go and how I wanted it to materialize. I created *Moodboards* (Image #5), *Mindmaps* (Image #6), personas and demographics, and storyboards to get the direction of Milda set in stone, before aesthetics and design decision entered the game. As I was researching the topic, I found

how little academic and scientific research was done on the topic of sex. But as related topics began to emerge, women-centered issues seem to never be at the forefront of academic research. But I found that in the US, 450 million condoms are sold annually in the United States (Planned Parenthood), while 98% of sexually active women have used birth control at some point in time, and 62% of those of reproductive age are currently using birth control (Planned Parenthood). I also found male birth control is becoming more and more available too like the new non-hormonal male contraceptive pill (American Chemical Society). I made Milda's key demographic women and non-binary individuals ages 18 to 29 because those

between ages 18-29 have the most sex, at 112 times a year (Rahmanan). But this male-dominated thinking pattern unfortunately resonates deeply for people and comes out through widespread actions. For example, women ages 18-24, who are college students, are 3x more likely than women in general to experience sexual violence. Females of the same age, who are not enrolled in college, are 4x more likely (RAINN). And speaking about the gendered sexual narrative specifically with the United States, 57% of Americans think the U.S. has not gone far enough with granting women equal rights (Connley) and 28% of men say that women's gains toward equality have come at their expense (Connley).

AESTHETIC POINT OF VIEW

My aesthetic point of view for Milda, draws directly from protest signs, jewel tones, and Greek typography and architecture, and space, specifically Venus. Looking at how past social and political movements operated was a big aesthetic foundational cornerstone for the creation of Milda. I drew immense inspiration from The Sexual Revolution of the 1960's with the introduction of the birth control pill, The Women's Suffrage Movement of the early 1900's, The Women's March on Washington of 2017, The Sex Worker's Movement of the 1970's, and past and present PRIDE celebrations and parades. I also wanted Milda to feel strong and powerful. I

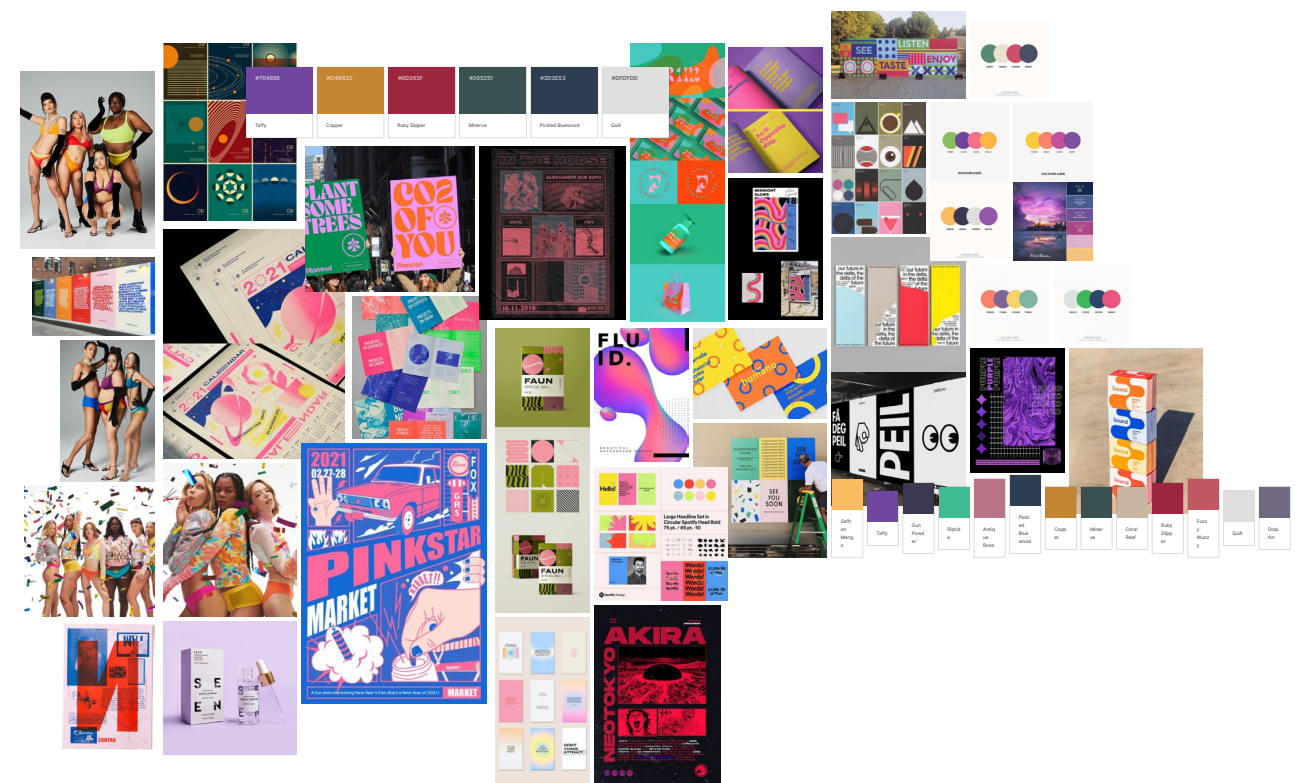


Image #5: Moodboard by Taylor Glenn, Digital Image

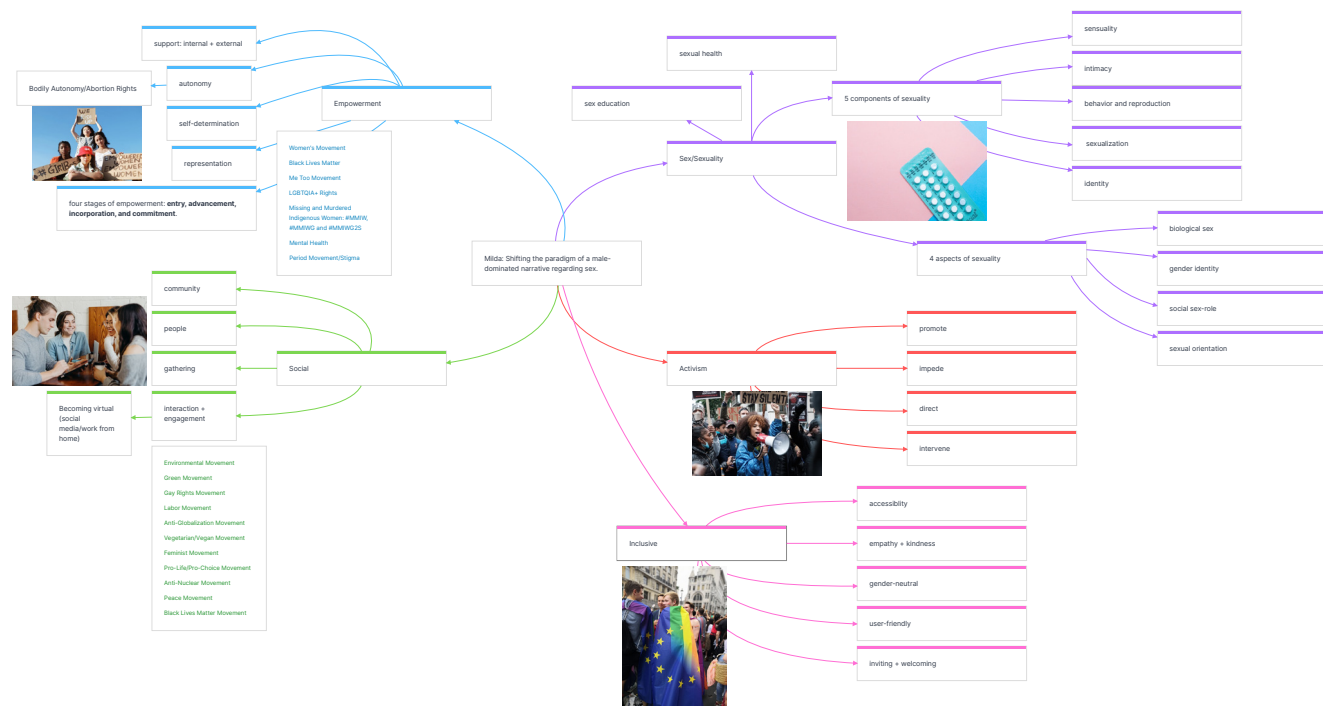


Image #6: Mindmap by Taylor Glenn, Digital Image

chose to model a lot of the typography and layouts on Greek and Roman architecture, specifically Corinthian and Ionic columns. This symbolizes strength, independence, and multifaceted beauty, but explaining the need for a community, that unrivaled strength exists in numbers. I also wanted to use jewel tones to represent political and personal autonomy, knowledge, and confidence. This jewel-toned colors story and ornate typography will be found throughout Milda, specifically in printed materials like postcards, merchandise, and Stationery (Image #7). The concept of space comes into play more specifically within *Milda's Symbol* (Image #8). It is based off of the orbital pattern of Venus, which is home to Milda Mons, a terrestrial landmark mountain.

But it can also draws similarities to a heart, to symbolize love, a butterfly to symbolize freedom, and a lateral view of a figure laying down with their legs up.

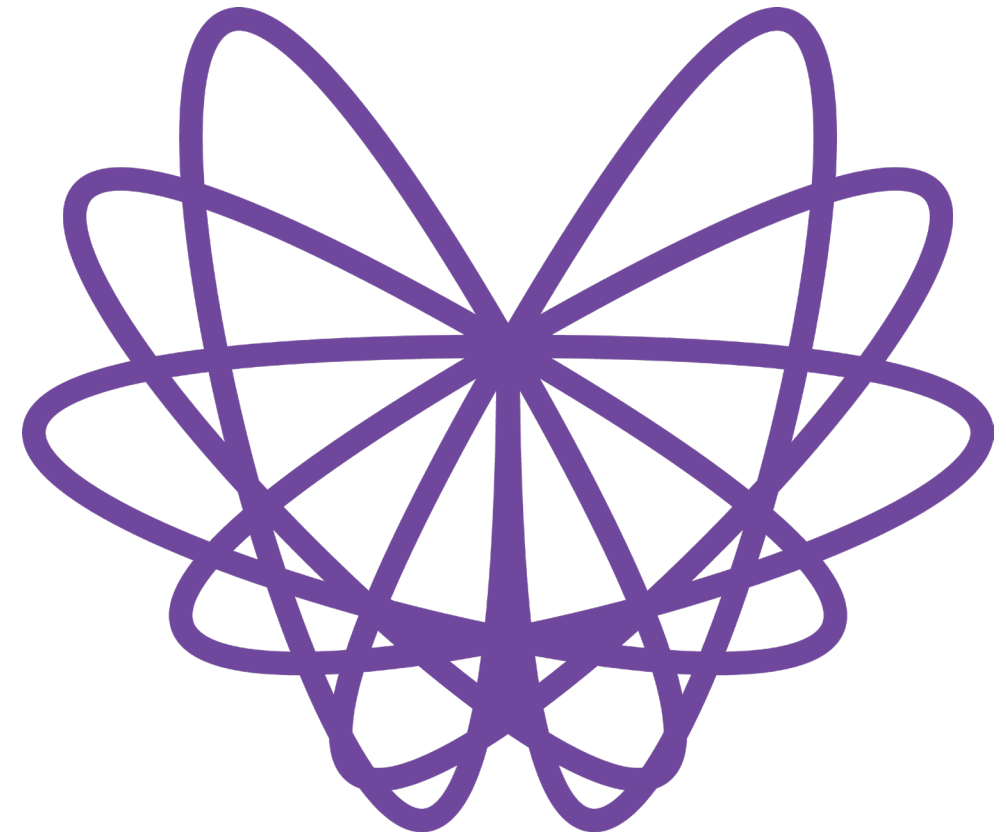


Image #8: Milda's Symbol by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design



Image #7: Stationery by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

TECHNIQUES + METHODOLOGIES

To begin working on this project, I first sketched out ideas, like the *Publication Layout Sketches* (Image #9) and logo ideations, and possible veins for the concept by hand, then expanded on those concepts within programs like Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop that will eventually translate to physical pieces like packaging and printed materials. This interdisciplinary approach established a more tactile interaction with Milda, and my project as a whole. It allowed for a broader range of artistic options, and helped me to give a more compelling concept. With this cross-conceptual mindset, I am able to have motion, digital aspects, and

physical pieces all executing the same vision. Utilizing my more multi-genre experience at Laguna College of Art + Design, I knew that my project would be no different. That is how I work as an artist and designer and that is how most of my work exists. I researched a lot on how brands using different touchpoints to included a wider audience, and how a brand cannot just be something on the shelf anymore, it has to be a living being, a customer experience, and a lifestyle. I knew that if I wanted to create a brand, or rebrand for that matter, with any sort of societal pull, I would need to approach this idea from a direction of a campaign, and how to sell an experience before a product. My techniques and influences echoed these design directives by showing how inspiration can be drawn from

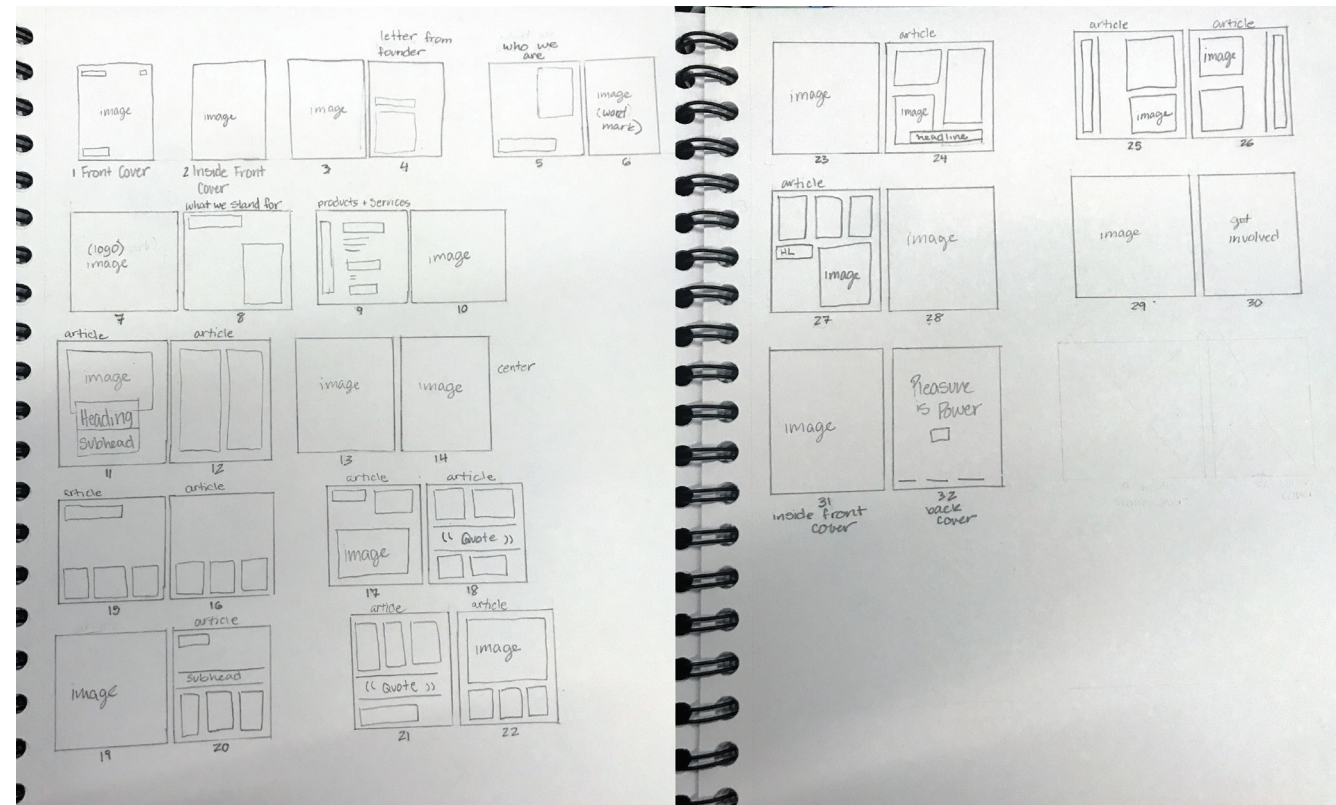


Image #9: *Publication Layout Sketches* by Taylor Glenn, Pencil, Paper

everything, not just other designs. I wanted to look at political campaigns, architecture, astronomy, marketing strategies, publications and journals, inspiring the *Milda Magazine* (Image #10), social media, etc., and how all of those things attract viewers and followers. By integrating a more well-rounded approach into Milda, it gives this project a life force. It's not just something hoping to end up in someone's shopping cart, it's something with strength and power, and is able to make a change for the better. Within this project, I ran into limitations that I did not initially think I would. The biggest limitation I ran into was time and how to balance the time allotted for creation versus the time allotted for presentation, in my opinion. I organized in my mental calendar that presentation

and making would work in synergy, not both fighting for equal care. I did not think those concepts would clash, but they most certainly did. But as I am learning more about social movements and the key entities that go along with them, that you can only make so much and you can only present so much, along with that fact that only a certain amount of people will see your work. No matter how hard you try, not everyone will agree with your movement or not everyone will even see it, plain and simple. Another big limitation I ran into was skill set. Not everything I want to do for this project, I know how to create fully, nor do I have time to learn it fully. There are software limitations, aesthetic limitations, and skill limitations, as I came to find out.



Image #10: *Milda Magazine* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations that appeared as I built this project were time, cost, and available space. As I have journeyed through the graphic design, illustration, and creative writing programs at Laguna College of Art + Design, I have learned that artistic work is never really finished or entirely complete, just timelines end and deadlines appear at an alarming rate. Now, I'm not quite sure if this thinking is pessimistic or not, but it proves that there are limitations to every project and a good designer is willing to work around those roadblocks. Within the creation of Milda, I believe that time will be my biggest demon to slay, like wanting to create and print the

entire *Milda Magazine*. Wanting to make Milda as well-rounded as possible, while still being able to stay on track with scheduling has been a balancing act I am still trying to master. Another big hurdle is space. Since available space is an issue, digital mockups and context imagery has been an incredibly useful tool. For things like billboards, like *Historic City Billboard* (Image #11), and large posters, I am able to present the deliverable sequestered to my computer screen. With many design projects with physical outputs, another big limitation will be cost. Since I am planning on doing a good portion of my own filming, many of my deliverables will need to be physical created, like packaging, *Thank You Postcards* (Image #12), and magazines. The creation of these items is not so much



Image #11: *Historic City Billboard* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design



Image #12: *Thank You Postcards* by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design, Printed

the design, it is the cost, and again, time. Whether I print many of these items myself or take them to a professional printer, cost and high prices will always be something to consider with any type of project, especially this one.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

There is an immense social responsibility of a designer, now more than ever, to create accessible and inclusive design, to approach work with kindness and empathy, to listen to the needs and wants of the intended audience, and to solve problems with creative solutions

backed by research and thoughtfulness. Within human nature, we have a tendency to search for things, creations, people, etc., in which we see ourselves. This creates a one-sided narrative. Designers, artists, writers, and creatives have a certain intrinsic responsibility to broaden that range of inspiration, look to peoples or things that speak a different truth, that may come from a different place, and that present a different viewpoint than the one you may be used to. Milda is a conglomeration of narratives from many different experiences, like women and non-binary people, transgender people, disabled people, and individuals of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities. Milda is a way to build community while maintaining



Image #13: Cityscape Poster by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

empowerment through individuality and through uplifting a new sexual narrative for people to feel safe and confident, whatever that may look like and with whoever that may be. Tackling a topic as controversial and taboo as sex and pleasure, one can approach it from one of two ways. It can either be diluted down and mild or it can be bold and in your face, Milda is the latter, evident in *Cityscape Poster* (Image #13).

INTENT OF THE PROJECT

Milda aims to shift the male-dominated narrative regarding sex within multiple areas of the human experience, especially within the United States. Milda will remove the hypermasculine version of sex. This new normal for sex and the sexual message will become an inclusive place, free of masculine ideals, and an approachable landscape for everyone regardless of gender identity or sexuality. . The current message within the United States, while it is beginning to change, especially women and non-binary individuals, that sex is completely a male activity and further pushes the idea that non-male people cannot assert their needs, wants, desires, and

be an active participant. Even little things, like the phrase on a *Canvas Tote* (Image #14), can make someone feel empowered. As an identifying women in the United States, I have continuously seen the patriarchal mindset be the norm, specifically when regarding sex or sexuality. Yes, there has been incredible strides forward, mostly with the growing influence of social media, but there is still so much left to be done. Everyone needs to evaluate how the male gaze infiltrates their life, and how it can be positively changed by a shift to a more gender-neutral approach. Milda's users are able to interact with the brand on many different ways. They can learn and access quality information through Milda Educate, volunteer and get involved through Milda Advocate, and buy goods through

Milda Pleasure and Milda Protect. Users can also scan any logo on any of the Milda printed materials and be taken to the *Virtual Resource Hub* (Image #15) directly on their mobile device. But regardless of where we are in the path to progress, Milda's sole intent is to shift the narrative of sex from a male-dominated one to a landscape free of gender norms and expectations.



Image #14: Canvas Tote by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

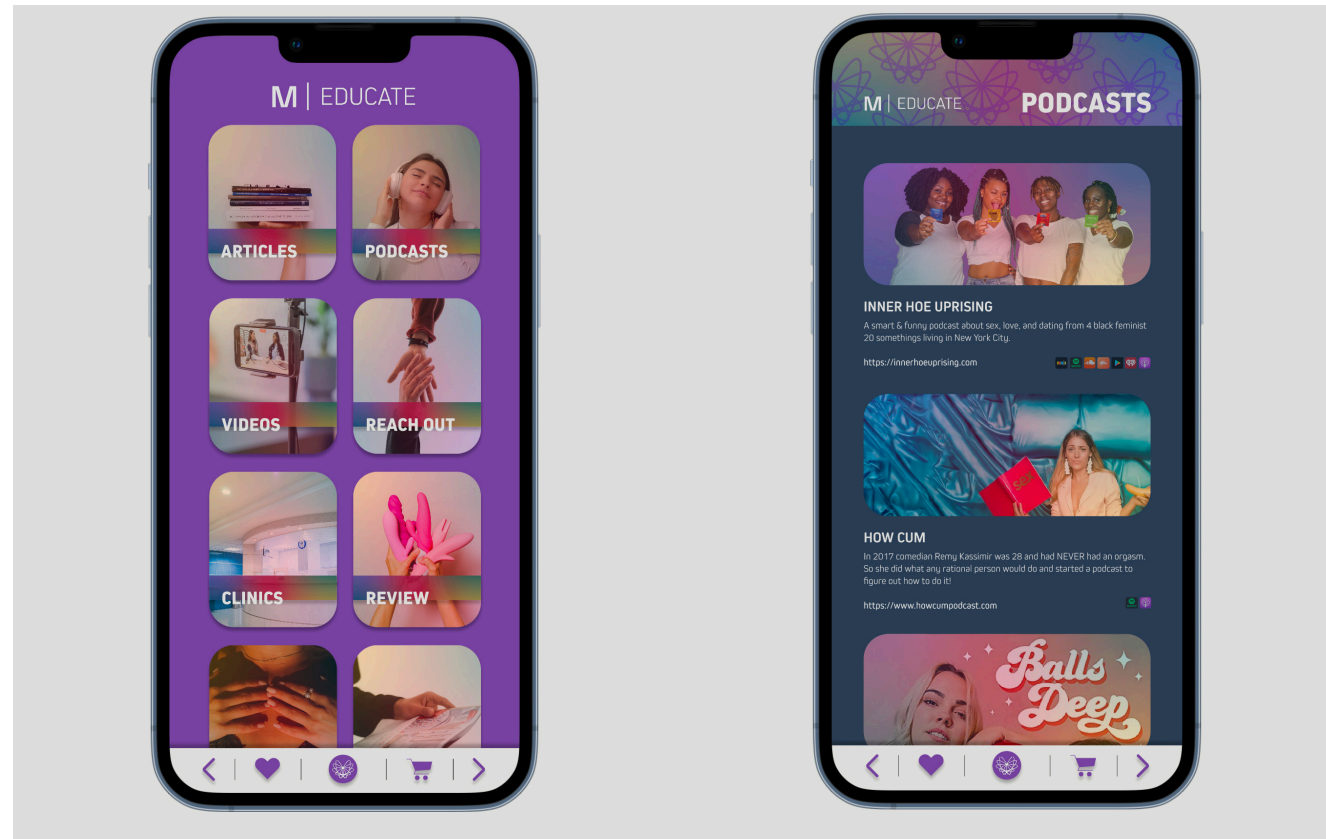


Image #15: Virtual Resource Hub by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

SYNTHESIS

There were so many key moments within my education that lead me to create this project, not just as an artist and designer but as a human and critical thinker. Having classes, like UI/UX, Brand Design, and Communication Design that emphasized inclusive and human-centered design were really eye-opening to me and showed me the difference design can make in people's lives, as well as my liberal arts, classes like The Voyeuristic Gaze, World Literature, Art History, Poetry, and Directed Research + Writing courses taught me how to be a critical thinker and to question everything. I do not know where my design career will be in five to ten years. I know I want to pursue

art education in some form, whether that be in a collegiate academic setting or a museum setting. But I do know for sure, I want to be a lifelong learner. As for lifetime achievements go, I do know I want to make someone's life easier through my design or my research. Even though I don't know how that will look yet, I know the world is such a hard place already so if my creative problem solving can make someone's life a little less of a struggle, then that would be the ultimate achievement in my design journey and will feed the empathetic piece in my artistic soul.



Image #16: Milda Packaging by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

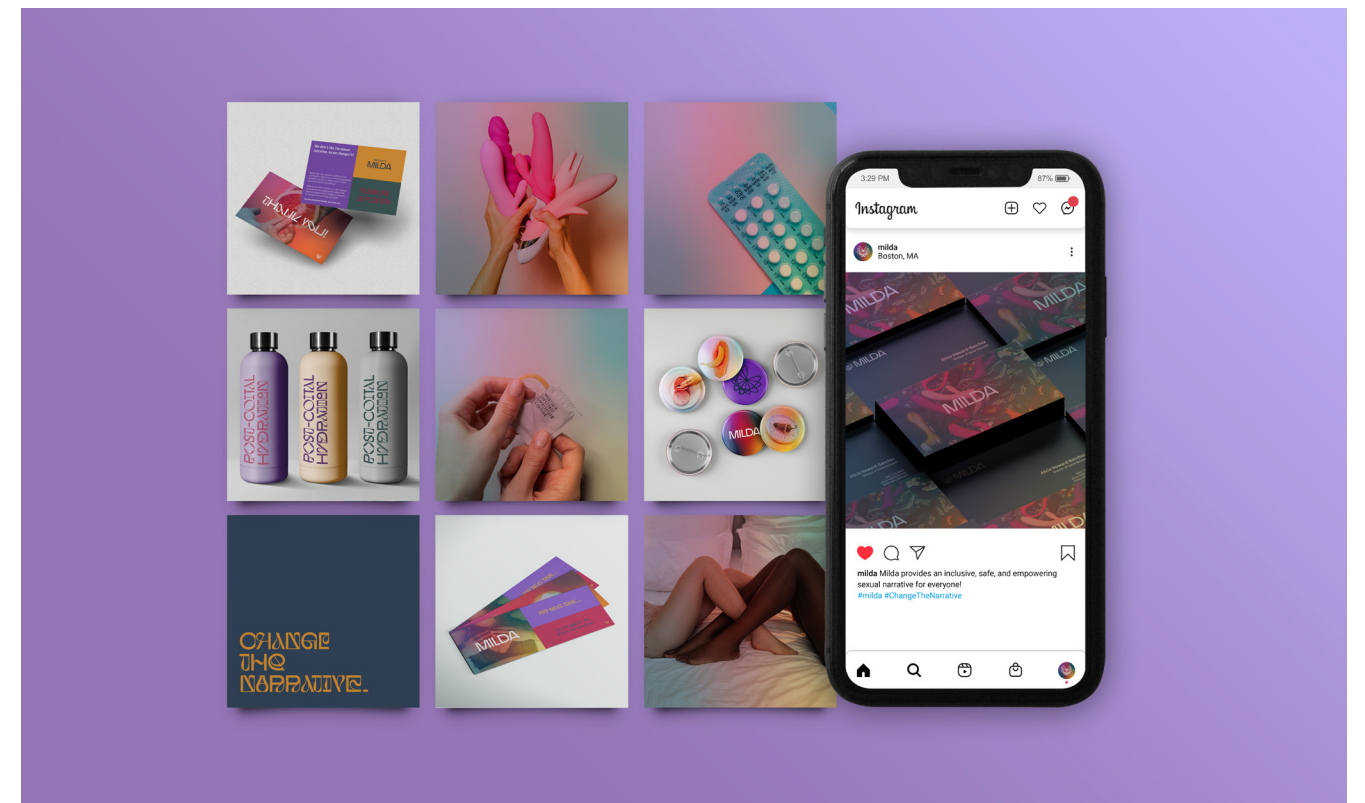


Image #17: Social Media by Taylor Glenn, Digital Design

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Image #1: Taylor Glenn. "Milda Dream Journal." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

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Image #2: Taylor Glenn. "Concrete Posters." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #3: Taylor Glenn. "Valley Billboard." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #4: Taylor Glenn. "Colorful Billboard." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

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Image #6: Taylor Glenn. "Mindmap." Digital Image by Glenn. 2022.

Image #7: Taylor Glenn. "Stationery." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #8: Taylor Glenn. "Milda's Symbol." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #9: Taylor Glenn. "Publication Layout Sketches." Pencil, Paper by Glenn. 2022.

Image #10: Taylor Glenn. "Milda Magazine." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #11: Taylor Glenn. "Historic City Billboard." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #12: Taylor Glenn. "Thank You Postcards." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #13: Taylor Glenn. "Cityscape Poster." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #14: Taylor Glenn. "Canvas Tote." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #15: Taylor Glenn. "Virtual Resource Hub." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #16: Taylor Glenn. "Milda Packaging." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

Image #17: Taylor Glenn. "Social Media." Digital Design by Glenn. 2022.

10 SENTENCES + KEY IDEAS

1. Description of the Senior Portfolio 2 project or Senior Film project (e.g., media, sizes, length of film, content of portfolio, the physical or digital artifact)

This project is an abstracted concept but materialized into a brand identity and expression, a public awareness campaign, a line of package designs, and a social media presence.

2. Explanation of the concept or conceptual aspects of the project (e.g., themes, ideas)

This is Milda, a multifaceted brand aiming to shift the narrative of sex from a hypermasculine presentation to a more gender-neutral landscape, focusing on empowerment, education, and advocacy.

3. Explanation of the intent of the project (e.g., purpose, goals, intended usage, audience)

Milda is intended to reevaluate the current sexual message and create a more inclusive, approachable, and accessible place for everyone, regardless of gender identity or sexuality.

4. Explanation of the research already done or to come (e.g., photography, museum visits, discussions, interviews, films watched, Internet searches, color swatches, product comparisons)

Pre-production steps for my thesis project include academic research, mostly looking at scholarly essays and journals, podcasts, internet research, product comparisons, and interviews.

5. Explanation of the influences on this project (e.g., philosophies, trends, fashion, technologies, activities, artworks, artists, designs, designers)

Many different things influenced this project, like social media, The Women's Suffrage Movement, The Sexual Revolution, current inclusive brands like Parade, Cake, and August, and typographic and photographic-centered design work.

6. Explanation of your Aesthetic Point of View as it directly relates to this project (e.g., minimalist web design, Disney-school, organic nature-inspired environments, superflat Murakami satire, narrative Nerdrum)

My aesthetic point of view for Milda, draws directly from protest signs, jewels tones, and Greek typography and architecture.

7. Explanation of the key techniques and methodologies employed—and why—at each step of your project's creation (e.g., custom-made digital brushes to echo the shape of leaves; white conté/charcoal chiaroscuro to emphasize, alla prima application with palette knives to build and layer, After Effects for flying text; indirect skinning for intentional double transformation warping) This requirement extends across the other required content areas. Provide visual examples of your techniques and methodologies, and refer to them directly in your essay. Be very specific. What techniques did you employ? On what part of your project? And why? Go beyond just listing tools and programs. Explain how you did each key thing—and why.

Since digital avenues, like Adobe Creative Suite, allows for greater design abilities, I first sketched out ideas and possible veins for the concept by hand, then expanded on those concepts within programs like Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop that will eventually translate to physical pieces like packaging and printed materials.

8. Limitations

Some limitations that might appear as I build this project, like time and available space.

9. Social Responsibility

There is an immense social responsibility of a designer, now more than ever, to create accessible and inclusive design, to approach work with kindness and empathy, to listen to the needs and wants of the intended audience, and to solve problems with creative solutions backed by research and thought.

10. Synthesis

Having classes that emphasized inclusive and human-centered design were really eye-opening to me and showed me the difference design can make in people's lives, as well as my liberal arts courses teaching me how to be a critical thinker and to question everything.