Artifact

Mockup

A static, high-fidelity picture of a screen or product, with its final color, type, images and content, that shows how it will look before it is built.



Origin

A widespread practice with no single author; fidelity is discussed in Rudd, Stern and Isensee (1996) and Buxton (2007)

What it's for

It lets you see and agree on the final look before coding, while changing a color or an image still costs little.

Key elements

Looks, not structure

It starts from a structure already agreed on, for example in a wireframe, and focuses on how it looks.

High visual fidelity, no interaction

It looks finished, but you can't use it; to test use, you need a prototype.

Built from the system's parts

If there is a design system, it is assembled from its components and styles instead of inventing new ones.

How it's done

1 

Start from the structure already agreed on in the wireframe.

2 

Apply color, type and images with real or very realistic text and images.

3 

Review it with the team and, if use needs testing, link it into a prototype.

Applications in design

When to use it

When the structure is already agreed on and you need to decide and present the visual look.

Avoid

Making the mockup before the structure is settled; the conversation will drift to colors.

Don't fall for it

Looking finished doesn't mean it works; test it with people before calling it done.

Connections

Used by

- UI design

Related to

- Prototyping
- AI prototyping
- Design system
- Wireframe

Authors and works

1996	**Jim Rudd, Ken Stern and Scott Isensee**	Compared low- and high-fidelity representations, with their advantages and limits.
2002	**Jesse James Garrett**	Placed visual design on the surface plane, above the skeleton where screens are defined.
2007	**Bill Buxton**	Distinguished the sketch, which suggests and explores, from the prototype, which makes things concrete and is put to the test.

Sources

Original sources

- Rudd, J., Stern, K., & Isensee, S. (1996). Low vs. high-fidelity prototyping debate. interactions, 3(1), 76–85.
- Garrett, J. J. (2002). The elements of user experience: User-centered design for the web. New Riders.
- Buxton, B. (2007). Sketching user experiences: Getting the design right and the right design. Morgan Kaufmann.

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