SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS
MASTERS IN BRANDING

Brand Development Showcase

FUTURES OF NEARNESS
INTIMACY

Uber

FUTURES OF NEARNESS

INTIMACY

Graduate Thesis: Repositioning Intimacy

The Brief:

Reimagine the role of intimacy in a post–COVID-19 world and define
how brands can foster meaningful connection, heal cultural divisiveness,
and participate responsibly in emerging futures of nearness.

The Insight

The pandemic exposed a global crisis of connection. While intimacy is often framed as emotional closeness, research revealed it is built on three core elements: **space, time, and exchange**.

Of these, **mutual exchange** emerged as the defining factor. Without reciprocal give-and-take intimacy collapses into performative or parasocial relationships.

elements
of intimacy

time   space   exchange

the element
of exchange

Exchange is the reciprocal act of giving, beginning with an exploration of our own identity in relation to others and culture. There exist different kinds of exchange in society, and how we share ourselves with others initiates a sense of understanding and being understood.
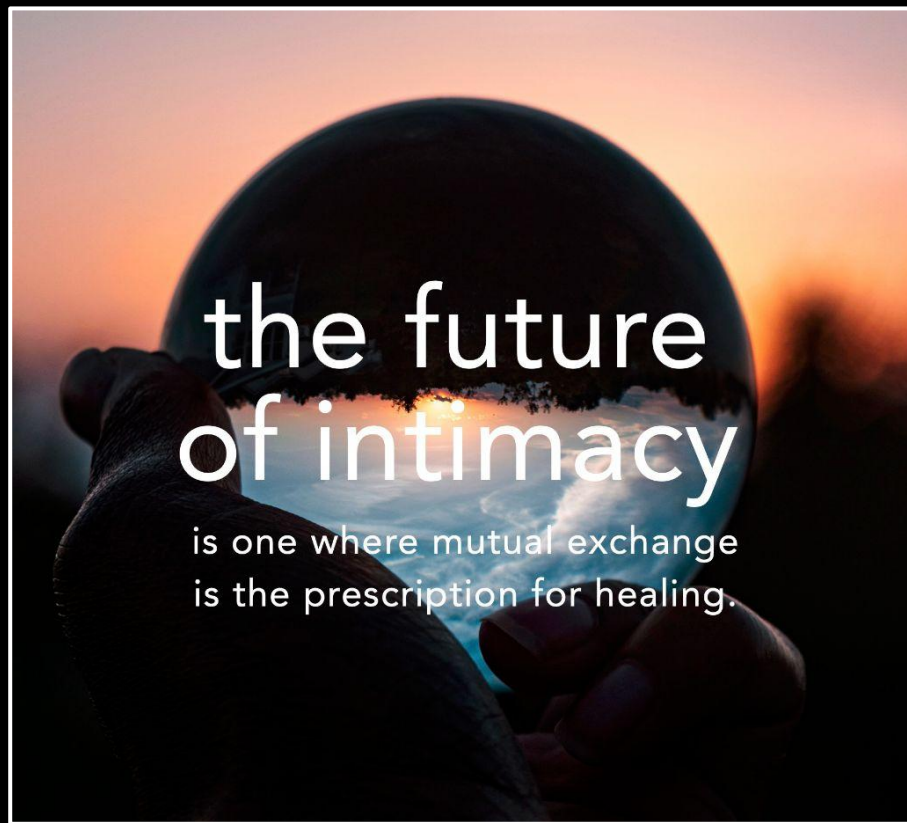
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The Strategy

Position intimacy as a practice rather than a feeling.

In response to a culture shaped by extractive capitalism and one-sided brand relationships, we developed **Undivisive**: a strategic framework guiding brands toward intimacy rooted in equity, vulnerability, and mutual benefit. The framework challenges brands to dismantle divisiveness by designing fairer exchanges, particularly for communities historically excluded or marginalized.

the future
of intimacy
is one where mutual exchange
is the prescription for healing.

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The Execution

Undivisive was articulated through a comprehensive set of brand guidelines informed by months of research, interviews, and cultural analysis. The system deconstructed intimacy into space, time, and exchange, then translated those principles into **Ten Mandates for the Future of Intimacy**:

pay attention	employ diverse talent	design for the outliers	market responsibly	empower individuals
tailor offerings	serve equally	take a stand	amplify informed voices	engage genuinely

Each mandate was supported by real-world case studies highlighting brands that successfully practiced mutual exchange, alongside those that failed to meet the vulnerability intimacy requires.

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Un
divisive

a guideline for brands to
DISMANTLE & MEND

Undivisive was released as a publicly available brand guideline as part of SVA's 2020 thesis exhibition. The project reframed intimacy as a strategic lever for cultural healing and positioned brands not as broadcasters, but as participants in shared, equitable futures of connection.

DOWNLOAD UNDIVISIVE

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Uber

Strategic Framework: Positioning Uber as a Leader of Inclusivity & Safety

The Brief

Define how Uber can lead the conversation around women's
safety through meaningful, category-defining actions that
help prevent sexual assault, on and off the platform.

16-28%

Longer waits for people of color than white riders

Women often were taken on **longer,** more expensive routes

+3%

Increased cancel rate for females with an African American sounding name

The Insight

People feel safer when there is a clear social contract, something ridesharing currently lacks.

Interviews with drivers and riders revealed that women of color face the highest risk when using rideshare services.

" It puts my mind at ease to know you're going to be in a close space with someone and that they know what is appropriate to talk about. **Let's define the space!**"

— Earnestiena, Queens (Age 26)

The Strategy

Build safety for everyone by centering and empowering women of color in both the solution and the conversation.

Uber

The Execution

The Uber *Safety Contract* and *Guardian Angels* initiatives introduced six actions spanning immediate solutions to long-term commitments. Together, they created a cohesive visual and narrative system addressing both physical safety and emotional security.

The **"That's Why I Drive"** campaign spotlighted female drivers supporting their communities, supported by an inclusive illustration system representing diverse identities and body types.

Uber **Safety Contract**

Uber Safety Contract
KPI: Majority of active users accepting the contract on their mobile applications

Safety Contract Video
KPI: View count meets agreement numbers of safety contract

Illustration Refresh
KPI: Increased perception of diversity for the Uber brand post illustration launch

Uber **Guardian Angels**

Guardian Driver Campaign
KPI: Increased amount of female drivers, higher ROI for female drivers

Halo Booth
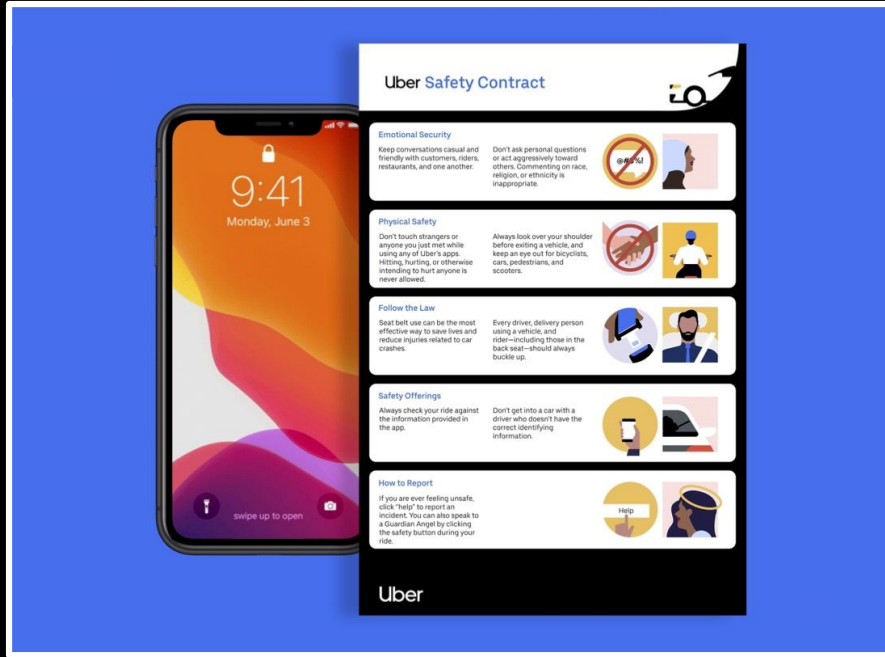*KPI: Increased rider conversion with decreased rate of entering wrong vehicle*

Guardian Angel Feature
KPI: Increased click-through to safety contract, decrease reports of harassment

Uber

The work was presented to Uber's brand and communications teams as a framework for establishing Uber as a leader in safety, inclusion, and representation, on and beyond the platform.