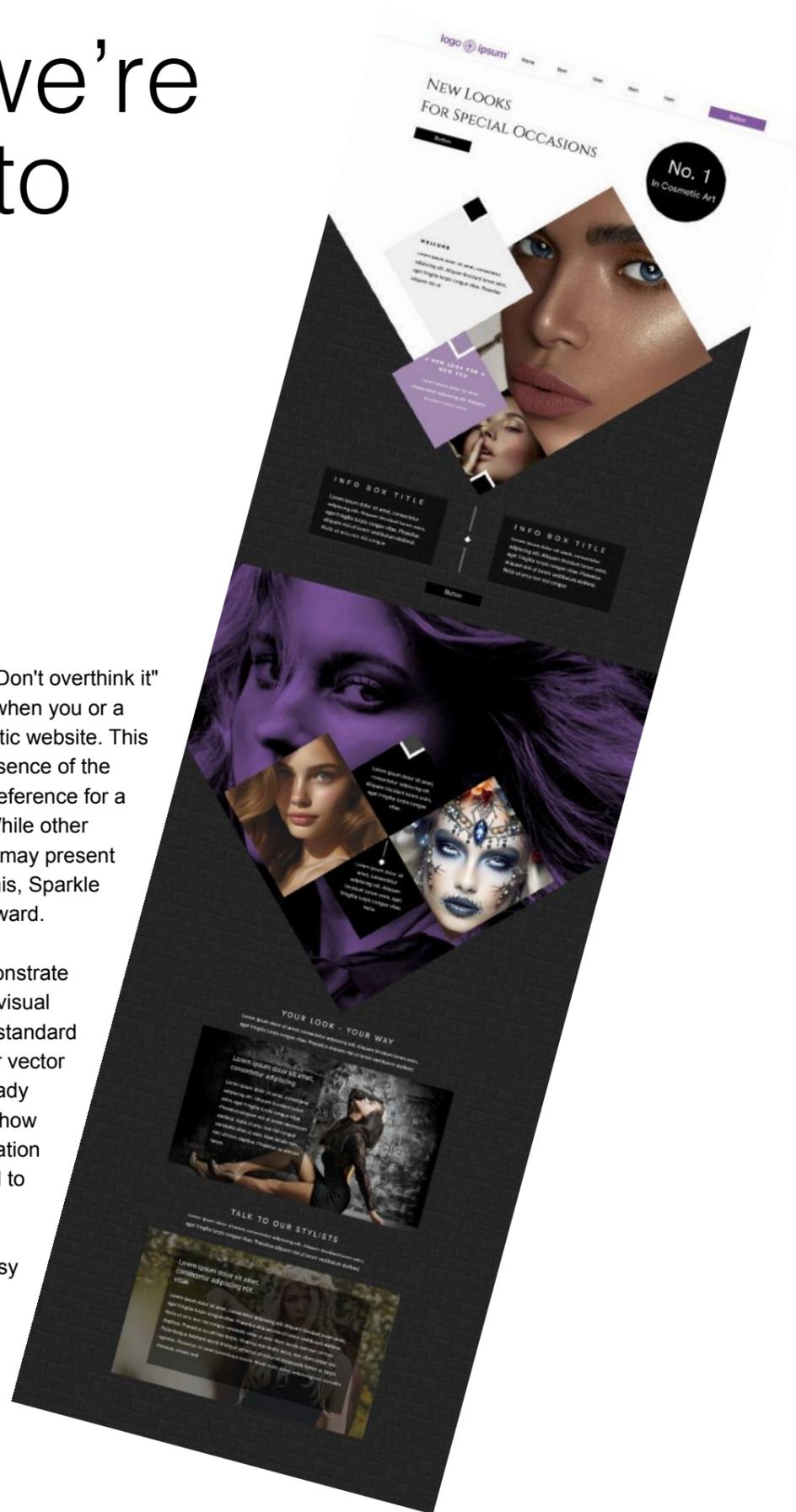# Artistic Websites

How to do it

The easy way

A Creative Guide For SparkleApp

What we're going to create

While SparkleApp promotes a "Don't overthink it" approach, there are occasions when you or a client may desire a visually artistic website. This could stem from the creative essence of the website's content or simply a preference for a modern, minimalist aesthetic. While other website development platforms may present technical hurdles in achieving this, Sparkle makes it surprisingly straightforward.
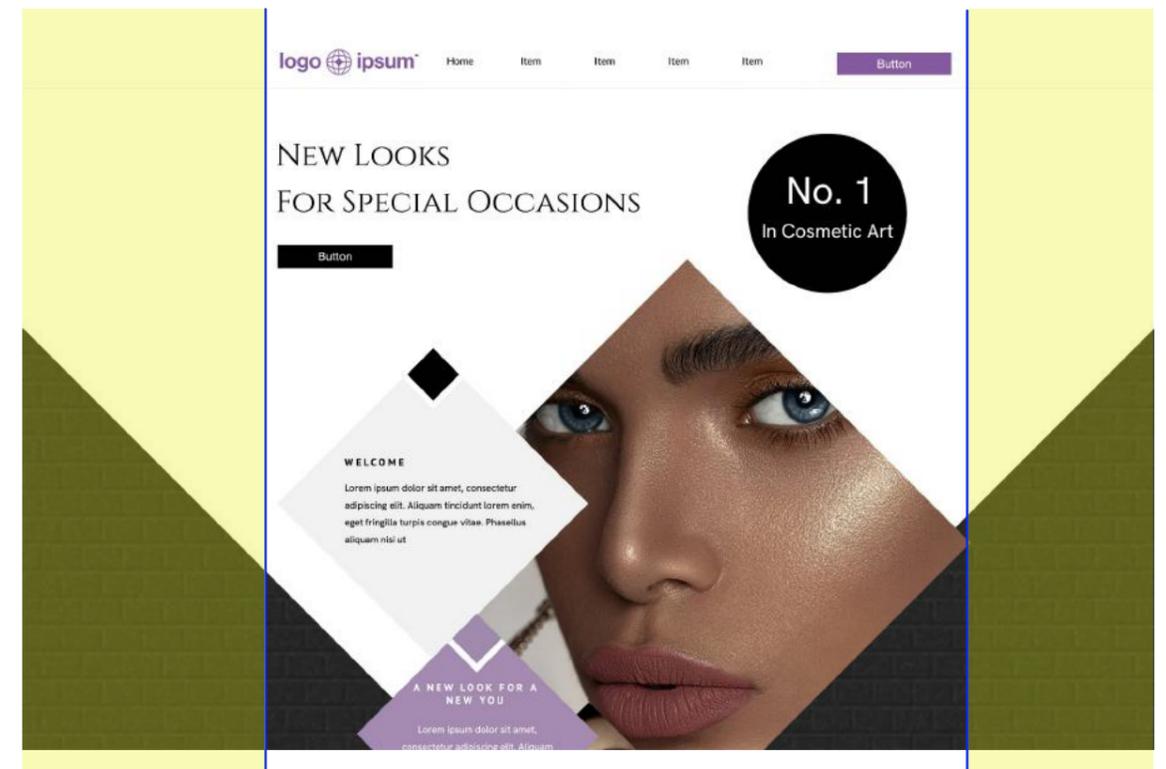
In this concise guide, we'll demonstrate how to enhance your website's visual appeal by leveraging Sparkle's standard tools in conjunction with popular vector graphics software you may already have. Additionally, we'll explore how Apple Pages, a standard application on Mac systems, can be utilized to create uniquely shaped images.

With a touch of creativity, it's easy to craft distinctive designs that better reflect the aesthetic essence of the subject matter.

Before we start

Before diving into laying out the design on the Sparkle canvas, it's important to grasp certain design features. Firstly, the design presented is tailored for desktop viewing and can adapt to various browser widths. Particularly, when viewed on wide browser windows, we aim for certain elements of the page design to extend beyond the page width into the additional space outside the page boundaries. To illustrate this concept, refer to the illustration below where we've delineated the page boundaries with blue lines and highlighted the extra browser space in yellow.
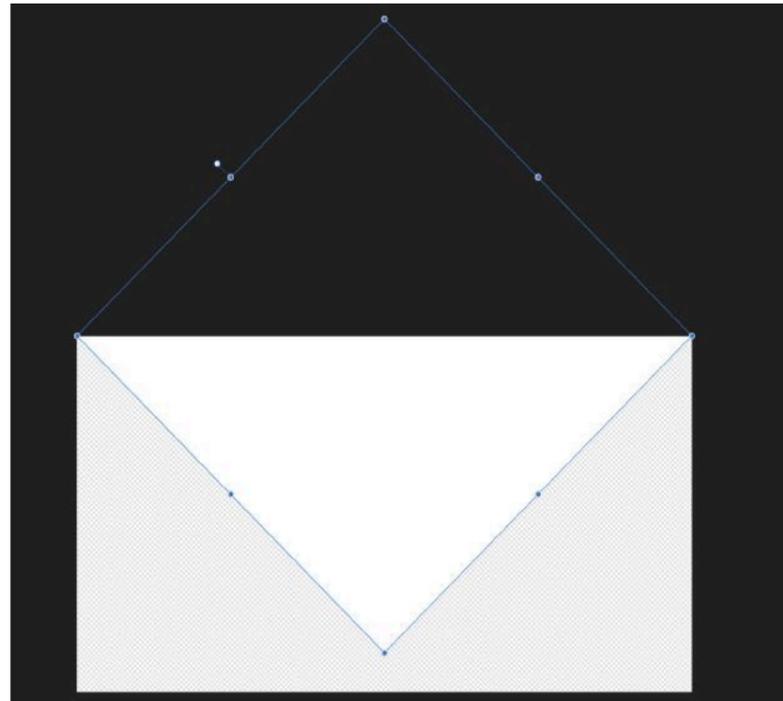

The good news is that when designing for smartphone and tablet devices: you're relieved from considering surplus browser real estate since these devices display content edge to edge, fitting the screen perfectly.

In our depicted design, two elements illustrate where browser width must be considered. The first is the white triangle that forms the header area, and the second is the triangular purple image further down the page. Despite their visual similarity, they're made slightly differently but serve the same purpose. The header triangle can be created as an SVG graphic because it has a single flat fill color, ensuring a small file size. Conversely, the image triangle would be saved as a larger PNG graphic due to its pixel-based content. In both cases, the lower portion of the graphics remains transparent to allow the page background to show through.

Creating the Background Graphics.

Header Image

In your preferred vector graphic application, start by creating a canvas sized 2560 pixels wide and approximately 1440 pixels high. On this canvas, draw a standard square and rotate it 45 degrees. Next, adjust the size of the square proportionately so that its center axis extends across the entire width, and aligns with the top edge of the canvas. Refer to the visual guide below for the desired outcome. **Note:** that while you can choose any fill color for the shape (our example uses white), ensure that the area below the shape remains transparent.
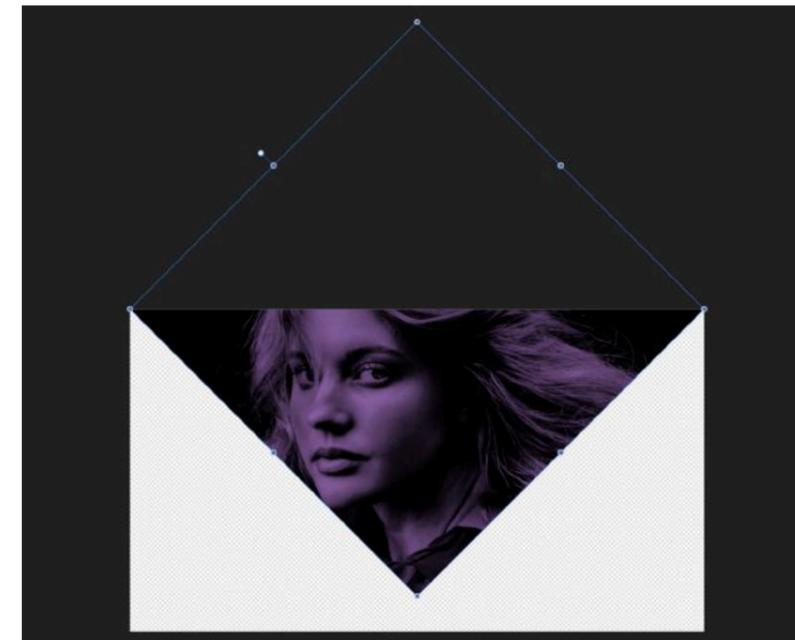

You can proceed to export the image as an SVG file, which should result in a relatively small file size, ideally less than 1 kilobyte. The choice of a canvas width of 2560 pixels is based on the assumption that this represents the widest browser window users might deploy. As for the height, it's set to ensure the complete triangle can be displayed without any portion of its bottom corner being cut off.

Mid-Page Image

Once you've exported the header SVG graphic, continue using the same canvas to generate the background image used further down the page. Instead of a solid color, fill the square with an image of your preference. This will produce an effect similar to the example shown below.

As this graphic includes a bitmap image, it's best to save it as a transparent PNG, even though this will result in a larger file size. However, running the final exported image through an image optimization tool like ImageOptim can help reduce the file size to a suitable level for website use.
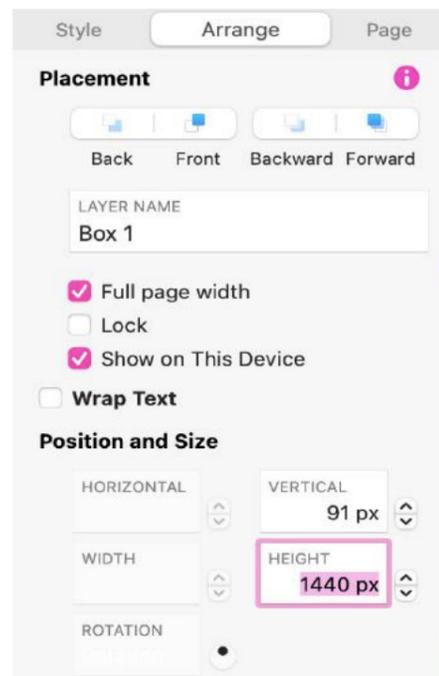
An important detail to remember about these two graphics is that the downward point of the triangle will be positioned at the middle of the image. This is important due to how the images will be utilized in Sparkle. They will serve as background images for wide boxes, and in Sparkle, they will automatically center on the canvas. This allows for the expansion or reduction of browser windows, revealing more or less of the image width as the window size changes. However, the position of the graphic itself remains fixed on the canvas, enabling you to design around the background elements without concern that the center point will shift at different browser sizes.

Over to Sparkle

Begin by creating a new project file tailored for a 1200 pixel wide desktop view. Next, place your navigation group at the top of the canvas. This group should consist of a logo, a menu, and a call-to-action button, all paced over a white background box. Ensure these elements are aligned appropriately, then group them together to form a single navigation block. This block can then be easily repositioned anywhere on the page as needed without disturbing the placement of the individual elements.

Now, let's move on to adding the initial header background element. To achieve this, insert a wide box onto the canvas. Adjust its height to 1440 pixels; there's no requirement to specify the width, as it automatically extends to the full browser width. You can adjust the height using Sparkle's Arrange inspector. Simply select the wide box on the canvas and modify the settings in the Arrange inspector, as highlighted in the illustration below.
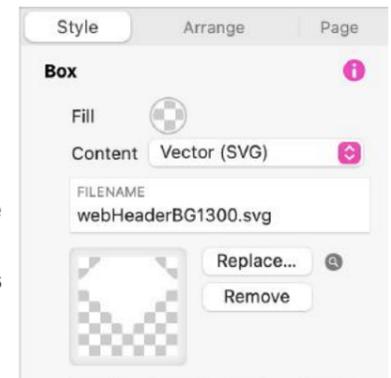

Adding the Background Images

The Header Background

Now, switch to the Style inspector and choose the option to fill the wide box with a Vector (SVG). Import the background SVG file by dragging it into the thumbnail box. Next, position the wide box on the canvas so that it aligns just below your navigation group.

Once done, proceed to preview in a browser. You'll observe that the background is centrally aligned on the page. When you expand the browser window's width, you'll notice that the background maintains its central alignment while revealing more of itself as the browser width increases.
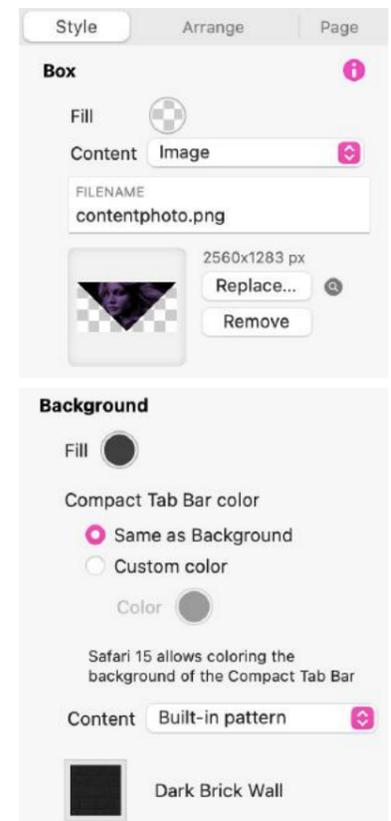

The Mid-Page Background

To provide ample space for further additions, expand your canvas accordingly. Once again, add another wide box and set its height to 1440 pixels and utilize the Style inspector to incorporate your PNG image as the background element. Adjust the position of the wide box as necessary.
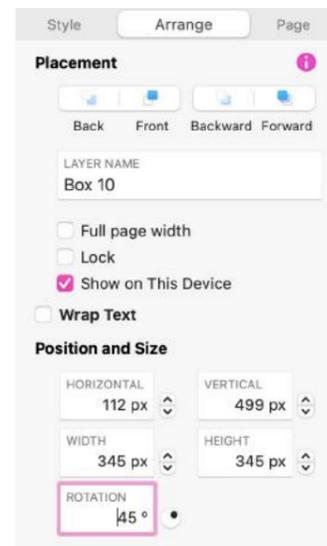
To gain a comprehensive view of your page's appearance, introduce a background fill to your page. This fill will appear in all transparent regions of your page, including those within the SVG and PNG background images. Simply navigate to the Page inspector and apply a fill or color of your preference. In our example, we added one of Sparkle's Built-in patterns (Dark Brick Wall) as the fill for the page background.

You're now all set to begin incorporating your page content. As you do so, you might find it necessary to reposition the mid-page background box to accommodate the content. Simply grab the mid-page wide box and move it up or down the page as required.
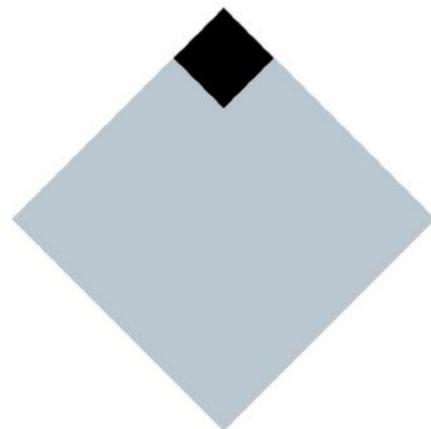
The Page Content

Creating much of the page content is straightforward within Sparkle using the standard toolset. The shapes on the page are essentially standard boxes filled with either solid colors or images. Many of these boxes have been rotated by 45 degrees to visually align with the background shapes. To incorporate these shapes, start by adding a square standard box onto the page, ensuring that its width and height are identical. You can adjust these parameters from the Arrange inspector. Additionally, you can select the rotation angle from this inspector, as shown in the illustration below.
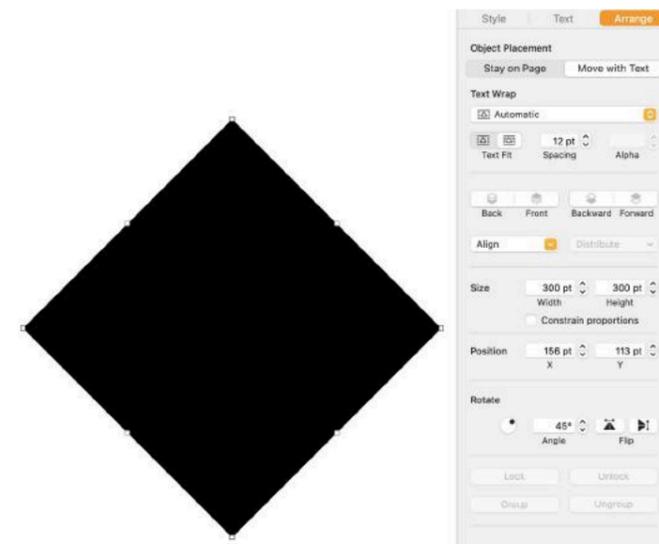

After you've made your initial box, duplicating it several times is a simple way to create additional boxes. Then, to resize each box proportionally, hold down the shift key while dragging one of the corner handles. You have the flexibility to position the boxes anywhere on the page, even overlapping them to produce a notched effect, as shown in this example.
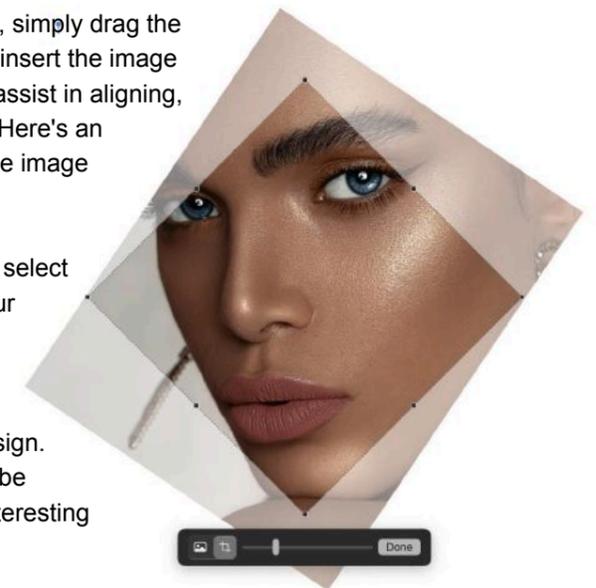

Image Boxes

You can also create image boxes in Sparkle, but there's a catch. When you add an image to a box and rotate it, the image itself will also rotate, potentially resulting in an unintended effect. To avoid this, it's advisable to craft your image boxes in Apple Pages, which is typically pre-installed on most Macs.

To begin, launch the Pages app and start a new blank document. Insert a standard square shape onto the page and rotate it 45 degrees. You can accomplish this by accessing the Arrange tab within the Pages app. Here's a visual representation of the process.

To incorporate an image into the selected shape, simply drag the image onto the shape in Pages. Pages will then insert the image within the shape and provide additional tools to assist in aligning, zooming and cropping the image for a better fit. Here's an example of image placement in Pages, where the image was rotated to enhance its fit within the shape.
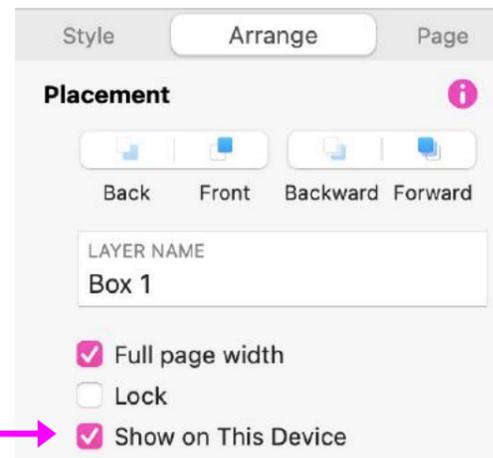
Once you're satisfied with the image placement, select the shaped image on the page and copy it to your clipboard (Command+C). Then, within your Sparkle document, paste it onto the canvas (Command+V). After pasting, you can freely move and resize the image to suit your page design. Similar to solid fill boxes, your image boxes can be overlapped onto other objects to create some interesting layouts.

Adapting the Layout For Other Devices

As we mentioned earlier. Adapting the layout for tablets and smartphones is a breeze in Sparkle. All you have to do is make the wide background boxes to **not be visible** on those device layouts. Here's the option.

Uncheck this box on smartphone and tablet layouts

Usually, you'd swap out the wide background boxes with full device-width images made in Pages, as demonstrated earlier. These images can be easily inserted onto the page and sent to the back, allowing other page design elements to overlay them. When adding these images to your other device layouts, ensure they're set not to display on the desktop device, as shown in the option above.

There you have it - a simple yet effective method to enhance the design aesthetic of your web page layouts. Feel free to experiment with various shapes and consider adapting the layouts for smaller device screens. For instance, instead of centering a 'V' background design, try offsetting the triangular shape to one side of the screen. This allows for rearranging the page content to better suit the screen's orientation and width.

In angular designs like this, consistency is key. Ensure that the chosen angles remain uniform to maintain visual alignment throughout. Happy designing!

Want to learn more about the many 'freeform' design Features in Sparkle? Check out the definitive guide To using Sparkle

The Freedom to Design

https://sparkleapp.com/sparkle/book.html