Artistic expression, permanence and change in a f*cked up world: Coping with the "sounds of silence"

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ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, PERMANENCE AND CHANGE IN A F*CKED UP WORLD:
COPING WITH THE “SOUNDS OF SILENCE”

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors

Brianna L. Pruitt
University of Northern Iowa
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This Study by: **Brianna L. Pruitt**


has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University Honors.

__________________________  
Date  
Instructor Dan Perry, Honors Thesis Advisor, Art Department: Sculpture  

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Date  
Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program
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Statement of the Artist

Brianna L. Pruitt

2021

YouTube link to action painting performance:

In tandem with the body of work:

Words Cannot Speak
Proposed by thesis titled:
Artistic Expression, Permanence and Change in a F*cked Up World:
Coping With “The Sounds of Silence”

I have returned to where I started to begin anew. To those that view my work, how are you today? What is on your mind? There are endless ways to answer such questions. One may be able to describe their thoughts through word, song even, but some days things are so complex up there that one word or one song just can’t encompass the breadth of the mind or state of being. For me, that’s where my artwork is rooted. Those ideas that words can never quite encapsulate, but somehow make sense to me and move me. The tumultuous waves of thoughts that somehow are able to weave together and make a moment in time.

A lot of the time when we are asked such questions we revert to a default answer. “Good, not much, how about you?” It keeps the conversation moving but glances over a moment of self-reflection. What would happen if we started unweaving the complex answers to such questions? The answer would then be different for everybody, no?

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, the climate change “debate,” basic human rights, greed, and the modern plague, all a part of the journey towards equality, acceptance, unity and love.

Here I explore the innards of my mind in hope of finding a way into yours. Let me listen to you! The roots of a forest run deep and are connected through endless highways, exchanging information, providing mutual support, and defending the weak through each season. Even the most rotten of logs contribute. I want to be a tree. What if we were more like trees, in this way?
I believe my role as an artist is to process the world around me and articulate my analysis in visual forms that are aesthetically interesting. My proposed project will manifest as sculptures, painting, performance, sound, video and installation art combined to create a visual representation of my mind and emotions in the present. The central element of this work, which happens to be my car “Kevin,” will set the stage for three humanoid sculptures to be displayed. Each figurative sculpture represents a different type of motion: permanence, change, and coping. I will be creating performances with the sculptures separately where I interact with the sculptures physically as a way of portraying this range of emotions. I will create video documentations of these performances that will be a part of the culminating installation and can be accessed via QR codes built into the final artwork.

The purpose behind the creation of this work is a personal artistic exploration, and an attempt to relate and infuse inspiration of the world around me into physical forms for others to experience and potentially connect with.

Purpose/Intro

There is no such thing, in art, as a completely unique idea. The sooner an artist can accept this undeniable fact, the sooner they will experience personal growth. The sense of pride that comes with individualism can be both empowering and crippling. The component of art unique to each creator is their touch, their expression, and how they cope. When using the word “cope,” one may think of a tragedy or death that has befallen a person, a period of grieving, but coping is a day to day process of adaptation to change. That change could be as simple as your beloved backpack’s strap breaking. Adapting is slinging the weight of the bag to one shoulder for the rest of the day. Coping is how you mentally process the breaking down, the change, occurring to this object you deem precious.

The purpose of this Thesis is to explore my personal artistic method of coping by examining philosophies of permanence, change, and motivations of other artists, while incorporating broader societal happenings that are affecting and inspiring in the present. Several forms of media will be used in an attempt to encompass this breadth of ideas: sculpture, painting, installation, and performance are all on the agenda that will come together as a creative form of this Thesis. The foundation of these elements will be a 1994 Plymouth Duster (“Kevin” is his name) that has been a breeding ground for my artistic expression and exploration for years, a manifestation of my soul. Aesthetic philosophy dabbles in this seemingly intangible nature an artistic experience can entail. Picasso’s Guernica comes to mind how even through the decades its grim warning to the viewer of what war can bring persists and continues to survive change as an idea, a vision, and expression for those to experience and learn about such chaos on a spiritual level.

Source Review
The first step taken in search of formal external inspiration began with reading. Ideas of permanence, change and aesthetics all fall into the philosophy tree branches. In Pursuit of Wisdom: The Scope of Philosophy by Abraham Kaplan gave an overview of all of these areas of interest from multiple perspectives, from the East and the West. It is written in such a way that it made a potentially intense reading quite enjoyable, and I found many quotes to add to my fire. Focusing on the aesthetic branch of philosophy, Aesthetic Theories gave insight into the ponderings of imitation in the art world, connecting to topics covered in a course directed by esteemed artist Tom Stancliffe on public art conservation taken in the Spring 2020 semester. In the Fall 2020 semester a course taught by Nathan Arndt, Director and Chief Curator of the UNI Museum covered a museum’s perspective on conservation in his course on collections care and management. Having a philosopher’s, conservator’s and my own artistic perspective on metaphysical topics, the next stage of research began online.

Continuing with a global approach, research was conducted to include both Eastern and Western perspectives in aesthetic theory and conservation. An article published in the Frontiers of Psychology journal titled Aesthetic Preferences for Eastern and Western Traditional Visual Art: Identity Matters discusses a qualitative experiment conducted to examine Chinese and Western patterns in preferred art forms. Another article titled Western and Eastern Building Conservation Philosophies: Perspectives on Permanence and Impermanence examines the interesting similarities and differences between the two perspectives. While both cultures value preservation of the past and acknowledge the unattainability of absolute permanence, they “find Western bias towards ‘tangibility’, and greater appreciation of ‘intangibility’ in Eastern approaches that are culturally enriching and go beyond mere retention of fabric and architectural form, linking building memory with territory.” These two articles stood out the most over the handful looked into, but academic articles of this nature can only encompass so much of the topic at hand due to the qualitative, global, and creative nature of this thesis. Starting research in this manner brings a more formal academic sense of credibility to this type of work, and can often lead to a more thorough understanding of other artists' potential thought processes.

An artist having other artists to look to for inspiration is only natural. Personally, I noticed I knew more about the products and processes of my favorite artists than their actual driving forces, their reason to speak in a physical art. Master woodworker and artist George Nakashima held a deep relationship with each tree and each board he would choose to craft a piece of furniture. The natural curves in the grain, defects the tree healed over, the struggles this being lived through counted in its rings made each piece of wood that he saw the work of art it

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already was to him, and it was his way as an artist to draw out this spirit within the wood and bring it to new life in a beautiful, masterful furniture piece. The trees Nakashima encountered had lived a life full of change he sought to preserve for a new life, to be appreciated by people other than him in the way he saw their beauty, translating his aesthetic spiritual experience for a new viewer. I picture Nakashima as the “Michelangelo of the trees” seeing his works of art already existing within a mass and using his skills to bring this art into new light. Through a biography of his, appropriately titled The Soul of a Tree⁶ I learned about his journey becoming a master craftsman and his philosophical development. This biography was another major inspiration for this Thesis, before the Fall 2020 semester even started.

Other individual artists greatly admired that influenced pieces of this Thesis include Frida Kahlo and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Kahlo’s use of visual metaphor and symbolism create emotional narratives within her very personal, expressive works, such as Las dos Fridas. Her direct form of communication with the viewer gets straight to the point. The debilitating pain from her bus crash, miscarriages, relationship with Diego Rivera, all of it needed to be expressed, needed to be coped with, resulting in art. Smith takes pride in her Native heritage, making it a major theme in her artwork, exploring her modern culture and environmentalism through a slightly more abstract avenue of collaged mixed media, contrasting with Kahlo’s methods. Smith also incorporates elements of commercialism’s relationship to indigenous culture, such as sports teams that use Native iconography for mascots. These two women have their own way of expressing their realities through their artwork, transferring their voice to a visual field.

Combining static visual art and performance is a major component of this Thesis. Collaborative artist team “The Art Guys,” (Micheal Galbreth and Jack Massing) who came to life in the 1990’s, take an almost comedic approach in translating contemporary life into art. They became a face of the more “unconventional arts” similar to Dada. Works of theirs not only aesthetically communicate, but physically communicate with experiencers. The sense of coping is not on a personal level for the duo, but societal level. How is the world meeting the demands of commercialism, and vice versa, commercialism meeting the demands of the world? These questions come to mind when viewing works of theirs, such as their infamous SUITS: The Clothes Make the Man experience. Through conceptualization, business, and wits, The Art Guys created both a performance and physical artistic product, being the suits.

When an everyday person thinks of Andy Warhol, a can of soup may come to mind, Marilyn Monroe, and maybe the term of pop art. When he was asked to contribute to a project called the “BMW Art Car Project,” instead of designing on a scale model of a BMW to be translated to the actual car, he elected to just paint directly onto the canvas, in this case the BMW M1 sports car. The visual aesthetic of this particular piece is something I admired and felt a relationship with thinking of my own art car. I didn’t need to go to a professional automotive painter to get what I needed done. I had my paint, I had my canvas, and I had a vision; what more did I need? Warhol’s process behind this piece speaks to his known commentary on

advertising and celebrity culture. The idea of taking such a precious, untouchable symbol of status and “ruining” it with a personal touch is a big idea incorporated into my “Kevin.” The 1970’s van art trend comes to mind with a similar essence. While one may see the “shaggin’ wagons” as trashy, the owner knowingly did this to their property and drove it around, advertising their ideology in a sense. The attitudes of the East Jesus Art Community in California shares this sense of ownership, but within a community setting. Their use of recycled materials and a “bohemian junk yard” aesthetic shed a quiet dystopian light on present culture.

Music can be just as inspirational as visual art, and both can communicate with each other into a stunning aesthetic experience. Since my teen years, my grandparents introduced me to a couple musicians that I have grown to admire and investigate. Simon and Garfunkel, primarily Paul Simon, is a favorite artist of my grandfather’s that we bonded over. Simon addressed racial issues in some of his lesser known works like Adios Hermanos, but The Sound of Silence, with Garfunkel, I interpret as talking about a society wide issue of apathy, the bystander effect, the feeling of helplessness, and hopelessness found in my generation. Specifically, it may even be a way of talking about the voter turnout of the younger people, or a 22-year-old’s nights laying in the dark just trying to cry or make any sound to drown out the quiet. This song could be applied to so many personal and global issues, it's almost staggering.

My grandparents also liked to compare me to Janis Joplin, in terms of her aesthetic and free spirit. When I began working on my Duster, they commented on how they have noticed as I have grown parallels between her and I (minus her illicit drug use), including her iconic, psychedelic, painted ‘64 Porsche. The countercultures of the 1960’s and 1970’s have always been of interest to me, the bohemian side of the tracks in general, which is not uncommon for those immersed into the art world.

This element of musical inspiration will mostly be seen through my performance piece. Music from a few different musicals will be incorporated into the audio of the performance. Les Miserables sound bites will mainly be used, but tracks from RENT and West Side Story have been running through my mind as well. The music that gave me the “eureka” moment needed to fully visualize the performance was actually audio meant as relaxing background or meditation music. Titled Tobari, the piece was created by a Japanese based group “3x4xS” (SA-SHI-SU) that combines the sounds of a traditional Japanese instrument, the shamisen, and a traditionally Western instrument, the violoncello, thrown in with some modern electronic beats to manifest a beautiful blend of cultural globalism. Thinking of such an emotionally charged, cultural, and visual performance in the midst of peaceful meditation music seems to be the epitome of the inner workings of my mind.

Central Themes to be Addressed:

Threads weaving into this thesis include, what may seem like, a wide breadth of topics, but the threads all come down to one common variable; me. This is what is being forced into my brain through the news, social media, word of mouth, or by the mind’s own creation, to cope with all of these happenings as an educated young person in the 21st century. Webs of entropy encapsulating thoughts include most hot topics of today, racism, politics, the modern plague, and
resistance to change as a whole. The repeating events of the past have part of the human race stuck in a facade of permanence, while another part is shouting into deaf ears lifting the burdens of the past upon their shoulders. The people lost in the facade fight any type of change they see, stomping down on the voices of change once they feel their perfect reality is threatened. Human compassion appears nowhere to be found on the battlefront. Most people are right smack dab in the middle of the two groups. Their hearts may lie on one side, but their actions speak to the other. Everyone has their own way of coping with change. Some choose to express it, some do not.

If I had to choose one phrase to describe this thesis it would be “coping with change.” That phrase is but a closed flood gate to such a broad, emotionally charged web of entropy. Some may say this topic is too broad for a Thesis. Is it too broad to fit in my skull then? Are my feelings invalid, impossible, then, because they can’t conform to an academic formula placed upon a creative, spiritual process? The overstimulating, exhausting, numbing energy is too much for me too, so I cope with art. Artistic expression is the only religion I subscribe to, as it is my bridge between the unknown and reality.

**Timeline:**
Working out a concise set of due dates is difficult for this type of project. Parts of the installation may be dependent on weather, my physical stamina, and my physical location for my other studies. Detail work on Kevin may be done anywhere he is, the sculptures may need to exclusively be done in the sculpture lab, and the performance will be set up and recorded in my off campus residence. As I do not know the entirety of my workload outside of this Thesis, committing to specific dates is not realistic, so I have come to the following general schedule:

*Pre-Spring 2021 semester*
- Finish a more thorough plan for the set of sculptures
- Create audio file for performance
- Gather materials
- Verify availability of desired space of installation

*Have done by the end of February (4-5 weeks)*
- Three sculpture forms created (mixed media, constructed in lab)
- Performance materials ready to go
- Sculptures transported to my residence

*Have done by mid-March (1-2 weeks)*
- Performance done and recorded
- Sculptures returned to studio to finish

*Work done late March up to the week of April 17th*
- Cleaning, touching up Kevin
- Test run

**Week of April 17th (Monday-Friday as weather and my class schedule permits)**

- This I would call my “week of exposure.” It is my desired method to present my Thesis.

- As long as my desired area is approved, (in front and to one side, on the grass, of the “Porta Largo” sculpture to the south of Kamerick Art Building and Strayer-Wood Theatre) I will install my work (i.e. get my car over the curb, using a form of curb ramp, and onto the grass without damaging my car or the grass, hence the dependency on weather).

- While I am able to supervise the installation, the vehicle and sculptures will be present. If I need to step away for class or any reason, the sculptures will be put away and just the car will remain present until the day is done. A more finalized schedule will be produced once this week draws closer.

- The outdoor location is ideal per the COVID-19 situation, and allows people to view at their leisure between classes or people just driving by can glance over and see what's there. This location also has two primary viewpoints ideal to my desired format of the artwork.

- Photographs will be taken during the duration of the installation.

**By the beginning of Finals Week**

- Have reflection/artist statement completed

- Have all forms of a “permanent record” of this project put together to turn in with reflection

**Anticipated Form of Thesis:**

As mentioned above, all elements will come together in a form of installation art to be displayed outside to the public. Pictures of Kevin’s previous layers and the sculptures will be included with the reflection paper (digitally), and photographs taken during the exposure week will be included as well (all digitally). A recording of the performance will be available on YouTube, but I will provide a .mp4 file of it as well. The concluding reflection will have a succinct artist’s statement attached as well. A list of sources and quotes will be provided in the following pages, after the bibliography.

I realize this may be a rather unconventional Thesis but the amount of work that is going into this process I find equivalent to that of a more conventional research paper setup. This project will be the embodiment of my growth here at UNI, artistically and personally. I want to show everyone what I have done and what I can do.
Addendums in Response to Request for Revisions 11/16/2020

I wish to clarify the frame of mind I am coming from and how one should interpret this type of creative Thesis. It really should not be called a Thesis, but a personal exploration accompanied by a final product in the form of art. I made the mistake of attempting to conform to the expectations of this Thesis proposal when it does not do anyone much good in better understanding someone within my field, my college. It is better to read this as a “lingual sketch book.”

1.1 Why Kevin

Why not? Is being a manifestation of my soul not enough? Does it bother you because it goes outside of the compass of root academia?

I could do this project in any other amount of media, it’s not a matter of why this or why that, it is of why not. I love painting, I could have made a few boring ass oil paintings to suit your fancy, but with a big emotional project like this breaching my conscience, breaking past the second dimension seemed appropriate.

Kevin is important to me. I have put a lot of love and work into him. I have been wanting to dance with him like this for a long time but haven’t found the right moment to do so, until now. He is a lifetime project, one that will change, evolve, and erode with time and I want to be there to appreciate his lifetime, embracing Mother Nature’s handiwork on the works of Man. He is my personal lesson in accepting change. I could make an argument that just this car is my “Thesis,” but thought that was just too easy; I wanted to connect him to current events, current feelings, mark these stages in our lives that have come together at this moment in time.

That being said, while he is a foundation for this project, Kevin is only one of the forms of media in the piece. It would be like asking a painter why they chose Alizarin Crimson over Cadmium Red; completely ignoring the content of the work and nit-picking compositional formalities before the piece is completed. First, ask yourself that question. Then ask again, answer yourself again. These are the beginnings of an artistic experience. If you go directly to the artist everytime you don’t quite fully grasp something, it is diluting the spiritual essence of your own personal relationship to the art.

This is where this Thesis process really does not suit my major, my position within higher education. We studio kids don’t typically write 10 page papers prior to a project. Part of the art is the process, and I cannot talk about the process if I haven’t even started besides research and thought. I could lie and make up stuff to fluff out a paper, like I did here and am doing now, but my sketchbooks, to-do lists, and photo gallery in my phone are much more accurate in explaining what a proposal cannot in regards to creative work. At least, for me.

Disruption with these formalities of academic process just ruins the fluid creative experience of the artist, and the viewer.

1.2 Rewording of Purpose

Rewording 1: I am doing this to get “with Honors” printed on my Diploma and get these three credits.
Rewording 2: The purpose of this project is for me and me alone. The visual product of this process is what is meant to be shared, you just get a lucky inside look at an artist's process and inner workings.

Rewording 3: The purpose of this “Thesis” is to create a work of art that communicates with my fellow humans. Doesn’t need to be direct or life changing, just provoke thought and hopefully emotion.

Rewording 4: The purpose of this “Thesis” is to mark my time here at UNI, reflecting on events, feelings, and what I have learned.

All of these rewordings are true in addition to my proposal’s explanation. Again, the whole “a picture is worth a thousand words thing.” I am being forced to articulate a visual piece of stimuli into another form of stimuli to be treated as language to then be interpreted into thought, potentially understanding. All these different pathways being activated in the brain when viewing a work of art cannot possibly be typed into a concise academic Thesis. This filtration is what I believe is making it hard for others to understand my proposal, and why I keep writing for hours and hours but unable to fully encompass this creative product.

1.3 “Importance” of This Work

Here I will get into some of my personal ideology as an artist and a human being that connects to this project. In short, this work is important because I find it to be so. I don’t need to cure cancer to be deemed important in this world. Cog wheels need lubricant.

I am not aspiring to be the next Picasso. I am aspiring to be a surviving human being, exploring and striving for a purpose, learning every step of the way, and loving. Every extension of effort from a being should be seen as important to varying degrees. Yeah being a neuro-surgeon is cool, but hey that person working in the McDonalds drive-thru, I see you too. That McDonald’s worker could very well be the next Picasso; one’s profession, or major, absolutely does NOT determine your whole life’s importance. With how much formal education and careers are shoved into us from grade school, people are losing themselves; there is so much more to life that words cannot grasp.

Your reality is what you make it.

1.4 Inspiration/ Additional Literature

I am not going to lie and create inspiration where there is not. Art does not work like a research paper; you eventually get to a point where research can’t take you any further and you just need to work to figure out where you are going next.

Wood carving may be a good way to explain this; a carver can plan and plan and sketch all they want but more often than not what you want to carve and what you end up with are drastically different.

My inspiration and literature is observing, experiencing, listening everyday. Like actually reading assignments from other classes; you never know when you can run across your next inspirational quote.
From one of the readings assigned in my Museum Collections course: “The desire to ‘freshen up’ colours, Baldinucci saw, is a function of vulgarity and ignorance and, when implemented, robs paintings of beauty and historical authenticity. Degas concurred: ‘Time has to take its course with paintings as with everything else, that’s the beauty of it.’ Goya warned, ‘The more one retouches paintings on the pretext of preserving them, the more they are destroyed.’”

1.5 “Trying to Do Too Much”- Complexity and Connection to Others

Please reread the last paragraph in the “Central Themes to be Address.” I know how broad this may seem from an academic standpoint but this is where I implore you to be human for a second. Think about what you have to haul around with you everyday. Don’t read this like a normal Thesis, because it’s not and I am not going to continue to frame it like it is but the workload is equivalent if not greater than what is normally expected of a student in my position, which is the essence of an honors student, no?
Select Bibliography


https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5071313

https://figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/Western_and_Eastern_building_conservation PHILOsophies_perspectives_on_permanence_and_impermanence/9459479


Other Links

*Tobari* by 3x4xS
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ny9SAmV9vzk

1970s Van Art culture
https://youtu.be/_QhZmKtD1og
Quotes

From In Pursuit of Wisdom

“The aphorisms of Heraclitus are of universal application: ‘All is in flux; nothing endures but change; you cannot step into the same river twice, for fresh waters are forever flowing in upon you.’”

p. 250 Permanence & Change

“Spinoza distinguishes between natura naturans, nature in process, and natura naturata, the nature produced in that process.”

p. 251 Permanence and Change

“This wish-fulfilling fantasy is expressed in art. Art can be seen as a striving of the will, a mastery of materials by which they are transformed in order to impose meaning and value upon them. The aesthetics of romanticism, presented by Friedrich Schelling and Samuel Taylor Coleridge gives another version of the metaphysics of will. Nature is felt to be a manifestation of a creative urge which is full self-conscious only in the poetic genius. Nature is a poem whose secret is revealed by art; it is visible spirit, while spirit is invisible nature.”

p. 253 Permanence and Change

“In Clemenceau’s sneer at America-- that she is the only nation in history to have gone directly from barbarism to decadence without ever being civilized-- there is just enough truth for it to be painful.”

p. 254 Permanence and Change

“The will which the voluntarists saw as the foundation of all being is blind-- an unpurposed energy of existence; or, if it has a purpose, that purpose is only to maintain and enhance its own energy-- like a protest movement with no other aim than to secure amnesty for the protestors. Spinoza declared that nature does nothing for the sake of an end; it could not do so, for nature, being all-inclusive, lacks nothing so has nothing to strive for. Many metaphysical systems view nature as purposeless, and account for such purposiveness as undeniably does exist by invoking some guiding agency outside nature.”

p. 255 Permanence and Change

“Many shortcomings of aesthetic theories can be traced to the narrowness of their concern; it is as though we tried to base chemistry only on the properties of metals or organic compounds, important though these substances may be.”

p. 488 The Form of Aesthetics
“There are ephemeral art forms, like ikebana, whose flowers fade, and Navajo sand paintings, destroyed before sunset on the day of the ceremony in which they figure. By and large, however, art is meant to endure. Matter makes it possible for art to be both public and permanent.”

p. 493 The Substance of Art

“The creation of art consists in the transformation of matter—so shaping matter as to bring about the emergence of form. Matter goes its own way and does not yield to our wishes just for the asking. The artist must, first of all, be a craftsman, skilled in bending matter to its own will; the root sense of the term ‘art’ is skill or craft.”

p. 495 The Substance of Art

“Nietzsche sees in art another expression of what he takes to be a pervasive will to power. A superlative work of art is properly identified as a ‘masterpiece,’ something worthy of having been created by a master as contrasted with the work of an apprentice, and even more as the sense of having been created by an artist who has mastered his craft.”

Hegel speaks of beauty as ‘the shining of the Idea through matter’; Coleridge characterizes painting as the ‘intermediate somewhat between a thought and a thing.’

p. 497 The Substance of Art

“A basic Buddhist doctrine is the principle of anitya—impermanence, universal change, no enduring substantial reality.”

Permanence and Change

“[Art] is the exemplar of what makes life worth living and what man can point in justification of human existence.”

The Meaning of Art

Referencing Tao Te Ching “Reversal is the movement of the Tao. All things in the world come from being, and being comes from nonbeing.”

p. 254 Permanence and Change

Other Quote

“Change is never painful. Only the resistance to change is painful.”

-unknown, attributed to Buddha
A Lengthy Reflection

Here will be presented a series of reflections made in tandem with my creative research (thesis) “Artistic Expression, Permanence and Change in a F*cked Up World: Coping With “The Sounds of Silence” and resulting body of work *Words Cannot Speak*. The purpose of this explorative project was to create an installation of multiple forms of art to culminate into a single performative event that looks into the modern connectivity of humanity from a personal, emotional perspective. Painting, sculpture, performance, and provisional art as a whole come together for this multimedia creative presentation. The uniqueness of this work comes from it’s reliance on serendipitous moments and community participation that in no way may be exactly replicated in the creative, performative world.

Reasons behind going through with this project come from deep frustration and confusion about the divide, or silencing of topics such as but not limited to: racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, climate change and so much more. This frustration came from emotions and guilt about my own place within these realms, and my place in activism. Throughout my college experience, I have become aware of what the real problems of society are and how distracted many people seem to be from the big picture. To me, the answers are all around us and we, collectively as humanity, know what needs to be done already, as shown by the stories told in books, movies, song and all cultural history. I strive to demonstrate this in my performance, investigating what pulls people into my installation, what level of realization and awareness they are at, while also providing a creative experience to be enjoyed.

To execute this project, content of both 2D and 3D nature are displayed, all inspired by my drive to activism as an artist. My car (Kevin) is painted with graphic, psychedelic themes with undertones of a connection to reality through the colors red, black, and white. Red, black, and white themes are present across the whole installation, grounding the lighthearted hippy vibes so they don’t completely escape into fantasy. My use of everyday, identifiable materials also works to this effect. The color scheme also feels representative of the extremes of racism, but the use in art makes them beautiful with all of their differences as they come together for one piece of art.

Coming out of the car will be the sculptural humanoid figures amongst waves of plastic grocery bags, strung together to move in the wind. A central figure wears a mass of these plastic bags as a veil as she holds open the hatch for the other figures to escape. All three figures are made of different types of scrap fabric, with black being prominent in all three, to mute the loudness of color a bit. All of this creates a grunge feeling with the recycled materials which combats the hippie dippy overtones, while being complimentary in terms of environmentalism. The music being played in the installation will be extremely diverse, but all will have personal connection to me or those around me, deep or shallow. Janis Joplin to Britney Spears.

So much personal growth has occurred for me during the course of this project. This is me putting my foot down as an artist and asserting my place and identity. The value of giving
myself a space in the world, where I have so long felt lost, is unmeasurable. This is me, and this is what I have to give to the world for my lifetime of contribution to the whole of humanity, my thoughts, my ideas, my art. Whoever is drawn to my work I will be inclined to get to know better through conversation and the exchange of culture, since we must hold some common interest. This will not be the last of me.

These reflections are presented in chronological order in which they were formed, separated by “------” when a reflection comes to an end. Dates don’t really matter, but the order in which these thoughts form is important.

Reflections Leading Up to Presentation

Over the course of this project, it has been revealed to me the true mechanisms behind my drive to present this body of work. While the initial proposal was rocky and confused, it was a genuine platform for inspiration, and led down a path to find some pieces of myself. I kept going back to my proposal, looking at the sources I reviewed and while I feel connected to all of them, and in some way they were communicated through my work, something was missing; a deeper truth. The shadow of the cloud looming over my entire time here at UNI finally passed over me and, in disguise, the real essence of my work, and how I relate to the world of art.

My proposal felt awkward as it does not fit with the molds I am used to in art development. It felt backwards. It didn’t seem to matter how much research or planning I could do, to really get to know my thesis, I needed to get to work. Permanence, change, and coping were important words in my proposal, but their necessity towards the final product drifted away as I began to realize those words describe my artistic process, not the product I was trying to achieve. I hold an anxiety about permanence and change as most people do, and this project became a method to cope and analyze where that fear was coming from.

Compulsion. That is what is making me do this. I have obsessions in my mind that have no other beneficial output than to create. The results of these circular patterns can often be dense and confusing because my day-to-day life leaves no output for many of my obsessions to form into a tangible compulsion. The obsessions pile up and pile up until I can’t hold on anymore and somehow manage to find a release in some form of art or fluid writing. I confuse myself with everything I start spewing out. I don’t even realize until the work is created everything that is smashed into the obsession circle. How much issues with racism really weigh on me, climate change, societal stratification, mental health crises, animal welfare, and much more cannot be expressed in any other compulsion than for me then to create. While in a way, art is coping with my anxiety and other mental health issues, it also can be a manifestation of the most painful sides to my identity.

My diagnosis of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) accompanied by pre-existing anxiety and depressive disorders is what finally made everything make sense about my college experience and the roots of this creative thesis. It was really the first step into truly enveloping myself into this project. The diagnosis and subsequent therapy gave me the tools I needed and lenses to see through my thought processes and explain the real underlying reasoning for this project, and my lingering confusion and pain through the past 4 years. I didn’t really intend for
this project to be of an autobiographical nature, but it is the underlying theme that ties all the dense concepts together. Honestly, it is the underlying concept through each piece of work I make. Some obsession, some compulsion, resulted in the creation of art. Nobody’s obsessive thought patterns are the same, nor compulsions, and we all have them regardless of a disorder or not. My obsessive compulsive thought patterns get just bad enough to be considered a disorder and can have major impacts on my well-being.

This is why permanence and change made their way into my proposal; so much anxiety and thought revolves around these concepts in one form or another, and one thought I use to comfort myself in times of agony is, “everything is going to change, there is no way this present state of mind can continue forever, it is simply impossible.”

My obsession with worldly problems is a way my mind distracts it from itself. I have been avoiding and feeding into it throughout college, leaving out an integral piece of the puzzle to my own existence: me. If I want to make a difference in the world, small or large, I have to take care of myself at the same time. I can educate myself and study hard all I want, but if I don’t keep myself healthy in most parts of the wellness spectrum, then I am creating my own roadblocks to true “success.”

A second step into infusing myself into this body of work was a lovely mental breakdown where I fully came to these realizations. A few screws came loose that day, that were also damming up a whole lot of creative thought, and parts of me that were screaming to come out and play and be a part of the show. Me and my hella rad art project/clown car. I love the picture, I love being ridiculously unique and true to myself, I only hate when others impede on these fluid complex processes of expression. That’s part of my OCD too, but my OCD is a part of me AND I AM VALID. I can question my existence, therefore I EXIST and I AM VALID.

...Yes this project is mostly based off of an existential/quarter life crisis, not exactly the dream groundbreaking academic thesis that it was hoped to be but goddamn I am happy about it, and excited to see it through. I haven’t felt this way about anything in a long time, and no one is going to stop me from enjoying this.

As I am writing this part of the reflection out (2/26/2021) I have completed the performance component of my project. It is about a 20-minute video, where I am conducting some action painting in front of 2 cameras. Along with this visual substance, an audio track of song snippets from Les Miserables and works of Paul Simon (and Garfunkel) are present. Occasional breaks of silence and bits of the audio taken from the action painting recording occur. The moments where the audio and video meet at just the right moments were pieces of serendipitous creation that I could not let go of. Everything fell into place and feels just right; a phrase often important to those who are afflicted with OCD. There may be little to no underlying logic or reasoning to it, but this is what I wanted to come of this experience.

The video is posted as an unlisted video on YouTube, so it may only be accessed by those with the link or the QR code, which will be incorporated into my installation. The paintings resulting from the performance will also be used as part of the presentation, being displayed in the windows and trunk of my art car, Kevin. Though the humanoid sculptures are still playing a
role in the piece, only two will be featured, and the third sculpture replaced by myself. I am the third sculpture. Who is who, “permanence,” “change,” and “coping,” will be up to the viewer to decide. During my “week of exposure,” I will be accompanying my installation as long as weather permits, and the sun is in the sky. I will be initiating different levels of contact with passers-by and visitors, ultimately asking them for a song to add to my “UNI playlist.” I hope to meet a diverse range of people from all corners of the university to create a playlist that represents the essence of those I meet in those moments, how each of our lives have been connected by this place and time to lead them to give me that one song. I will ask those that communicate with me to tell people about my installation and have more people give me songs. I want this to spread faster than the coronavirus spread under Trump’s administration. If it doesn’t “go viral” that’s okay too. If I just meet one new person through the experience that will be a win in my book.

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The Dada art movement, mentioned very briefly in my proposal, has also become a larger presence in this work; the breakdown of the meaning of art, what functions art can play or the total lack of function. Non-conformist, irrational, complete nonsense. Art is a world where there are no limits. The mind can be free. It is a place where both chaos and order can coexist. There doesn’t have to be any rules. Everything can be questioned. This is Dada. Life really sucks sometimes. Why does art need so many rules? Let’s break all of them. I am kind of an extremist in this idea, as it has started to flow into more than just my art mind. I used to not care for Dada or not think much of it. Now it is my very being. I consider myself to be of the more “romantic” side of art. I just can’t take day to day life so seriously anymore. I am living my world amongst an entire universe of other worlds that I could meet. Why not throw on some rose-tinted glasses every once and awhile? Be thankful and humble for your own privilege while at the same time acknowledging and communicating about the grimness of the larger world and those with different kinds of worlds. This is where I see my art placed in the larger realm of the art universe, amongst those works that are so nonsensical that they make sense. To be taken seriously, but also lightly. A genuinely unique moment in the time space continuum.

Some more artists have been running through my mind as this Thesis evolves. Marcel Duchamp and his complex yet simple communication (the dude who wrote R. Mutt on a urinal and called it art, which it indeed is, without question) I was drawn to very early in the college ride and realize I share much of the same attitude in my own processes. Good ol’ Rothko and his fantastic swatches of color, it is simply brilliant yet disappointing at the same time, and I mean this in the best way possible. While there is this feeling of embarrassing “cringe” at such minimalistic works in the larger society, there is always at least a trace of appreciation or acknowledgment and understanding of works like those of Rothko and Mondrian and all those square guys (Albers, you too, I see you). I compare this to my attitude towards religion, while not being onboard with the whole thing, I also appreciate and acknowledge each religion and how it gives meaning to life for some people. Gives them their sense of purpose and power to benefit society, whatever that may mean to you, big or small.

Minimalistic works give a sense of contextual common ground. You don’t need to know what part of the world it’s talking about or what one race is doing to another race or any history whatsoever. It gives so many people a starting point in communication because of its neutrality,
breaking art down into its most basic components, shape and color for those of us gifted with the senses of sight and touch (talking about the physical arts like those of a 2D or 3D nature, auditory sense would come in for those works of sound). It is these concepts I am striving to investigate in the larger sphere of reality; what gives people a platform to begin to communicate with one another? So those silly icebreaker activities we always do at the beginning of a semester or meeting a new group of people you will be spending time around, is really what it is all about, in my mind. Gives people a place to join in the conversation with one another. Those of us gifted with the auditory sense have most likely enjoyed some form of music, be it a lullaby from childhood or the new EP dropped by your favorite local punk band-that-most-likely-won’t-last-very-long. This is my place of common ground to lead people into this piece of my work, music, a primary form of auditory art. Even if their experience stops there, they have contributed to the meaning of the entire piece/performance. Music has led me to meet some amazing people, even so briefly, and gave me a foot in the door to start a conversation that would have never happened without that common interest.

Which is the entire reason for this thesis; to meet people, to connect, to “network” for those that need a more tangible word alluding to a sense of higher productivity. I regret not meeting more people during my college experience, and I am thankful for those I have. Now I definitely do not mean networking in the traditional sense of a connection to financially or physically gain something in the future from. I mean it in the sense that I am consciously grateful to have allowed them into my circle and share some mutual experience and trade information of whatever content, be it just an emotion or grandma’s banana bread recipe. Even if seeing my crazy clown car, Kevin, makes you smile or scoff, I feel fulfilled in my duty to communicate.

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Alright, so, I have reconfigured my humanoid sculptures a bit. Instead of wire, I am going to be creating fabric human forms, interwoven with plastic grocery bags and maybe newsprint. Wire just wasn’t working for me the way I had hoped it would, but I think this is a suitable alternative and will be a nice blend between the more serious elements of my work and the lighthearted. These forms will be kinda ghostly, mummified looking with strips of fabric hanging to be blown in the wind along with some plastic bag weavings. The fabric will be of all sorts, as I have been hoarding fabric in my mom’s basement ever since the beginning of high school. I hope to contrast the bright patchwork look with maybe dumping black paint over the head and shoulders of the finished forms, to connect back to my action paintings.

I will be bringing a third figure back into play. This figure will be the central figure situated in the hatchback, working as both a pillar and player. She will have a head of hair cascading down in the form of a plastic bag weaving, flowing out of the trunk and onto the ground. While also just recycling/reusing these materials for these new figures, they throw an element of modern commercialism there. The bags are of all kinds, but with most of them primarily being white, with only a few hints of other colors. A few solid black bags are in there as well. I see this figure holding the trunk open for the other figures to escape. This comes from feelings of guilt I hold about racism, and a desire to use my privileges as a “white enough” person to help others of all colors. This has been another theme on my mind since the beginning that never had a clear foot in the door, but seems to be wiggling its way in.
The sculptures will be erupting from the same splatter painted logs I had planned to use for the wire ones. These logs were in the tub with me while I was splatter painting the canvases. They can’t be seen on camera, but towards the end you can see me pressing my foot on them off camera. These logs have been around since the beginning as well. They originate from my home town where the 2020 “derecho” hit southeastern Iowa, so it was another resource that was plenty available to me. Like when I was talking about George Nakashima and his way about woodworking in my proposal, I believe each log holds a potential within its grains. Trees and soils are elements that connect the world. Forests interconnect their members through roots and fungi just under the soil. They support each other through the different seasons through these communication highways. It comes so naturally to trees to connect to each other… What if humans were more the same way?

Trees can live without us, but we can’t live without trees.

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The sculptures have now taken form. In the midst of wrapping the bodies I began to identify each figure. I see myself as the central figure, with her hair/veil of plastic grocery bags, head bent down, holding up the hatch of my car. She is wrapped in fabric of all kinds, of all colors. Only her torso is emerging from her stump, arms barely there. I stayed away from using black in her figure to differentiate her identity with the other two figures. A QR code hangs in the veil for those to scan and view my performance involving the action paintings.

One figure will be looking as if he is crawling on the ground. I couldn’t help but think of George Floyd and Eric Garner. I don’t believe I need to say much more here. Black Lives Matter. As I am not black, I cannot begin to completely understand the atrocities the people of color have been through, but I want to listen, because I can feel their pain and hear their voices and want to know, why can’t other people do the same? Where is the love for our fellow humans blessed with melanin rich skin? How can I as a white-enough person do my part?

The other figure will appear to be rising up and out of the hatch, looking towards the sky. I was thinking of Breonna Taylor and all the beautiful, colorful women who can and will make this world a better place if we allow them to be heard and fight for the equality of all mankind following love.

With all the intertwining colors and shards of fabric, I have woven these people. That is who we are, the cloth of the present, past and future that makes each of us a unique individual.

To walk through this installation with words I will start from the perspective of a potential viewer and a possibility of their journey into the artwork. First, music will be heard picking up auditory interest. For visual interest, the bright colors of my installation and movement of the fabric sculptures will catch an eye. Maybe someone’s journey could stop right there, but for those who take the bait, they come closer and see the signs detailing my contact information and asking them to send me a song. They see a crazy lady (me) sitting on top of a car, jamming out or doing whatever the moment calls for, and maybe we make eye contact. I say something along the lines of “Hello! I would like to meet you; can you share a song with me that is meaningful to you?” That is how our conversation will start, but where it goes nobody knows.
I will be keeping track of how many people I meet and what songs they say so I can add them to the playlist playing throughout the event. Maybe some people won’t come meet me directly but feel able to text or email me their song. I am hoping to meet a variety of people who will share a wide range of music with me. I hope some may enjoy the environment I have created and decide to hang out with me in the green space, just enjoying the day and the company, but we will see.

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The more I work with this piece the more sorted my thoughts are becoming. This body of work is me exploring my personal relationship with modern racism, on all fronts. As a white-enough person, I have a curse of privilege I want to use to help others. I feel so much guilt and confusion, wanting to help all people of color and other intersectionalities, and wanting to scream at all the other white-enough people around me that don’t seem to get the issue, because the messages are all around us. Through media, songs, art, movies, each other in plain words. The most fundamental morals in modern children’s movies and books seem to be glanced over or acknowledged but not internalized to the viewer. Is this a skill to be learned?

I want everyone to feel safe to express themselves in my presence. I am here to listen and talk things through. I won’t try to convince anyone they are wrong, but I will give them alternative food for thought to challenge their beliefs. Discussion, communication, connection, building bridges. If I could open the floodgates for all voices to become heard, I would. So much progress could be made.

I am excited to see what songs I will collect. I am excited to build new bridges to people. This installation, though the products may seem crude, the thoughts and reasoning behind every piece of fabric are formed. Composition of the installation is proving to be a challenge; finding a balance between aesthetics, function, and symbolism to match the thought patterns married to the art will be crucial in these upcoming weeks. I am hoping the different aesthetics between my car and the figures will support each other.

I keep running into the anxiety of my work coming off as “cringey.” I want to own that cringe and use it as an element of filtration, or a “test” for the viewer. Can they get past the hippie dippie part, or the music being played? I hope they realize I am fully aware of and purposely trying to use the stereotypical hippie vibe to see if it stops people from seeing the deeper meaning within the work, just like how people may not take movies or songs seriously and end up losing the messages beneath. The whole “don’t judge a book by its cover” thing but more complex.

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I am now just learning about provisional art. It’s the art that sometimes feels unfinished or haphazard, but in reality is the most accurate reflection of the artist’s ideas. While I don’t feel most of my work goes into the provisional art category in terms of the entire product, the complex meaning woven into the art is identical in process. The art may be seen as absurd, muddy or amateur, but it is eye catching, and that visual interest, to the right people, will be enough for them to dive into the piece and search for a foothold within. One may do this by talking to the artist, if they want a shortcut or really don’t get it, or, preferably, finding a part
within the work they do in fact can grasp to begin their journey, to create their own meaning within the piece. This is the essence of modern art; it is not just the artist’s intention that really matters, it's the viewer, and the personal, even spiritual, relationship that can develop.

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One week before my performance. Work has slowed down and now it is just blending everything together to see what the world thinks. I used one of the classes I am taking right now to ask people for “a song that resonates with their soul” just to get a taste of what sort of music is on people’s minds. I was pleasantly surprised about the diversity of the songs and how each one was unique but complimenting other songs that have nothing to do with each other. I only recognized a couple of the 15 or so songs I recorded down.

Just about showtime!

Reflection for Monday, April 12th 2021: Day 1 of Public Installation

I am very pleased with how the first day turned out. It started out rough during setup, a few things not really turning out as planned. A couple elements of the work broke at some point during transport, and one of the figures was not able to stand up like I wanted it to, despite prior testing. It was also very cold and windy, which I had planned for, but it still became a strong element in the installation both for me personally and the work physically. The sun became a focal point for me in terms of time keeping and as a source of warmth between the clouds. This first day became more of a test of endurance and social experimentation, especially in the beginnings of the day. Once it felt like my presence became accepted in the public space, more people began to come by and talk with me, one person even staying for over four hours, just to sit and chat with me, no filters, all love, the purest form of unbiased communication between two strangers. I made a new doggo friend too! He is a very good boi. Much floof, much handsome. In total I met between 15 and 20 new people to varying degrees. Some just came by to check out what the heck this “trash car” was doing there, others genuinely wanted to know the deeper meaning behind the piece and gave me very personal songs to listen to. I had one little boy walking through campus with his family who saw my car from a distance and told his mom they had to go see the “cool race car over there.”

I plan on listening to all the songs I gathered today (4/13) and adding them to my playlist. I am so excited by the variety I am getting. I have one song in French, a classic Taylor Swift song, and many that I am not sure I quite know what they are going to be. I had one person say this song helped them give life to an original character for their Dungeons and Dragons group, and the way they described it, you could tell they were super passionate about their character and the game. People just get this special look to them when they feel comfortable to talk about their passions and it makes me happy to see them happy. As far as the music I was playing, I realized the sound from my speakers would often get drowned out by the wind or get lost in the big open space I was in, so that became more for me than anything. It also aided in creating a friendly inviting atmosphere that I wished to present so people felt the installation to be accessible. I remained calm and aloof until someone drew close, then I would wave and further initiate contact if they weren’t busy. When I was by myself, I would be paying close attention to my surroundings and look for serendipitous moments where the music and physical happenings would align just right. When I felt moments of bliss wash over me, I would turn my face to the
sun, and even sing if I felt the moment was right. The day went by so fast, and I was not bored for even a second. The presence and grounding sensations combatted the anxiety and embarrassment and gave me the strength to enjoy the day.

Communication was not limited to between me and the viewer either. I witnessed people who haven’t seen each other in years somehow manage to meet up again by my silly car. I finally began to feel the sense of community within the UNI space. Three or four marching band students just suddenly ran into each other because they had the common interest of interacting with my installation. I saw people having good days, some not so good days but I felt so much fulfillment for being able to have a unique experience in these people’s lives. Friends around campus were messaging me saying “people are talking about the ‘chick on top of the car.’” People were sending snaps and taking pictures, both with and without permission (not that they needed permission, it was just very obvious they were trying not to be seen; I would just wave at them regardless). For an artist, at least for me, this brings a sense of external validation that my work has been deemed photo worthy.

The deeper ideas of varying forms of xenophobia became more of a side note for conversation than being a direct visual element. The density of my work allowed the conversation to be steered into so many different directions. I found people to be very open talking about topics that normally are avoided. This makes me feel successful in creating a safe space for productive communication, by using art. That is my thesis, figuring out what I can do to create such a loving, accepting space that anyone can be a part of, no pressure whatsoever. All I did was present an eye-catching, calm disruption to a normally empty space. My thesis is exploring the dynamics of communication and its relationship to art.

**Reflection for Wednesday, April 14th 2021: Day 2 of Public Installation**

Another good day. I have collected maybe 50 songs total. That is a lot of people for me! I feel so empowered and supported by these people. All of them accepted me for who I am enough to come and talk to me, even just acknowledging my existence. It seems the more and more I talk to other people about my work, the better I am at getting to understand how everything woven into the installation relates to each other and what they represent, to myself and others. The kindness I have been shown throughout this experiment is extremely moving: strangers but now friends, or friends that went out of their way to encourage others to come visit my artwork, the dude who helped me when I locked my keys in my car and needed to jumpstart Kevin (had I not met them through the course of this project, I may have had a meltdown that night). And all of the people who allowed me to be in their space as my true self. Shoot, even the police had my back on this one. I really felt some love, the best kind of love.

At sunup, I would arrive on campus before most people came to work or class, so I got to see the waves of people come in to start the day. I loved being able to be a surprise to a morning routine and waving at all who drove by and made eye contact. For both pedestrians and people in vehicles, most would wave back, with varying levels of enthusiasm. Only a few either didn’t realize I was waving at them or decided not to wave back. I never realized how much driving around facilities employees have to do, and I primarily saw them in the morning hours. Campus police seemed to be more present in the morning and evening and come by pretty regularly. I only saw a couple go by the meters and give tickets once or twice between Monday and
Wednesday. A few firetrucks, a couple ambulances, and a cop car with sirens on, sped through the intersection to the West of where I was planted. They were either traffic stops, or they continued driving West. Once it was just past seven PM, the sun went down fast, peeking through a perfect gap in the clouds. I was able to visibly see the sunset through the branches of trees facing the Dome, and just behind the Porta Largo sculpture.

Anyway, I switched the set up a bit this day because I think I wanted to steer in the direction of what other people are most drawn to, which was mostly the plastic bags and my car. The sculptures were described by a visitor as being my friends. I think I am gonna run with that a bit for Friday, too.

**Reflection for Friday, April 16th 2021: Day 3 of Public Installation**

This day was the most beautiful of all. No strong winds, and mild temperatures were present throughout the day, with plenty of sunshine through the morning and afternoon hours. The evening got cloudy, and I couldn’t see the sunset, but the clouds were nice to watch too. In the morning on my way over to set up, there were lovely cotton candy clouds in the sky to greet me on my last day inhabiting the space. It became another wonderful time, full of surprises.

I ended up with over 100 new songs to listen to over the course of these three days. Some people insisted on giving multiple songs, so I didn’t quite meet 100 new people but pretty darn close! It seemed to be a perfect amount because I never felt overwhelmed, and I never felt bored. Sometimes I would be chatting with multiple groups at the same time, going back and forth between personal topics, getting to know each other and larger concepts pertaining to a form of xenophobia.

Towards the end of the project, I began to introduce the overall meaning of the project in a way that demonstrated the flow of changes of the information behind the content. I started with the concepts of change and permanence, and how I cope with change through art, then this made me think of the bigger picture of humans in general resisting change through examples of persisting xenophobic trends, primarily focusing on racism but talking about all forms of this fear of someone considered different. The result of this research and reflection became the end product being the installation as a form of performative social experimentation, where I see who I can attract into my space and make a connection. While being a disturbance to a normally empty space, I wanted to be vulnerable, approachable and inviting while maintaining my own personality and a unique artistic experience.

**Concluding Thoughts**

I am curious to see how I will look back on this project in the further future. Right now I am on cloud nine, in a state of bliss that makes it really hard to detach from the personal growth that has just occurred and look at this project with more practicality. This experience truly was spiritual for me, as close to spiritual as a skeptic can get. I find myself still drawn to the space I occupied for those three days. I might have to come back to this place every once and awhile.

I consider this project to have been a resounding success. I feel much better able to communicate with strangers with relatively low anxiety. I have been a part of a great exchange
of local culture through music, art and conversation. I became comfortable speaking to a group of people with my own personal speaking style. This was such a grounding experience for me and a very healthy challenge. People would tell me “This is probably one of the weirdest things I have ever seen.” I had a UNI employee in facilities tell me he had seen quite few crazy things in the “crazy kid corner” (studio and theatre kids are just a special breed, and we are proud of it) but nothing quite like this. Had I not met one of the janitors who works in the Strayer-Wood Theatre building at the butt crack of dawn on my second day, I would never have met either her or the other facilities employee. With the songs I took from all these new people I have met, I may not know their whole life story, but everytime I hear one of their songs I will think of them. Some people would scamper off before I could get a name from them, but their faces and presences are grounded in my memory through song and experience.

There will be one face in particular that will hold a special place in my heart, for they reminded me of what it feels like to fall in love, yes romantically, yes I have a full blown crush on someone just as bad as any high school girl would. How crazy would it be if I have met a soulmate through this project? Even if this interest dies out in a week, it sparked something inside of me that reminded me of some very dear feelings that have been hiding for a while. I want to find my person for this lifetime. Hell yeah, I am going there!

As far as where my art career goes from here, I will continue to paint and wood carve as I work my steady job back home. I just wanna live for a little bit to come up with future goals and where the next stop will be. Maybe this is it, maybe working at a doggy daycare and doing art on the side is all I want or need. Doing a bit of traveling with Kevin is on the agenda for my near future. I want him to bring as much joy to others as he does to me. We have the prime of our lives to live together. May our time together be full of laughter, awesome tunes and new friends in the passenger seat. A modern clown and her loyal steed, acting as a wormhole through time and space to connect realities. Hella meta, yo!
Photo Documentation: Day 1
Photo Documentation: Day 2
When complete strangers come bring you tea 😲😭
Photo Documentation: Day 3