

Concordia University

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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CONCEPT

My project consists of an installation that is meant to be placed in an interior space in the dark. It will be a small water tank the bottom of which has some lights. The lights shining upwards through the water could create patterns on the ceiling of the room. The sides of the water tank have paddles that push the water to generate waves in the same fashion as found in wave pools. The rate of those paddles can be controlled by a user through their breathing: a device will be put on the user's face and measure whether they're breathing in or out. The paddle will move synchronously to the breathing rhythm. There is a possibility to make multiple people involved in this activity, each wearing their device and each controlling one paddle of the tank. The participants can thus collaborate to create different wave patterns in the water. The installation is thus made to be amidst people since it asks for their interaction. It does not target a certain group. Participants are those who are willing to try the experience. It is an opportunity to be curious and to be allowed to play. However, it is preferable that the installation is in a setting that has low amounts of noise, as to allow the participants to hear the water moving around and, perhaps, hear their own breathing too.

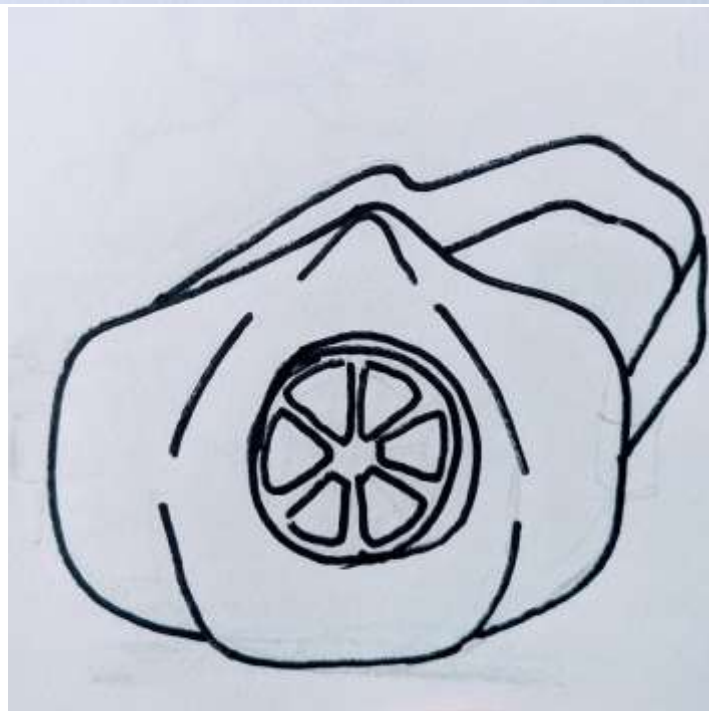
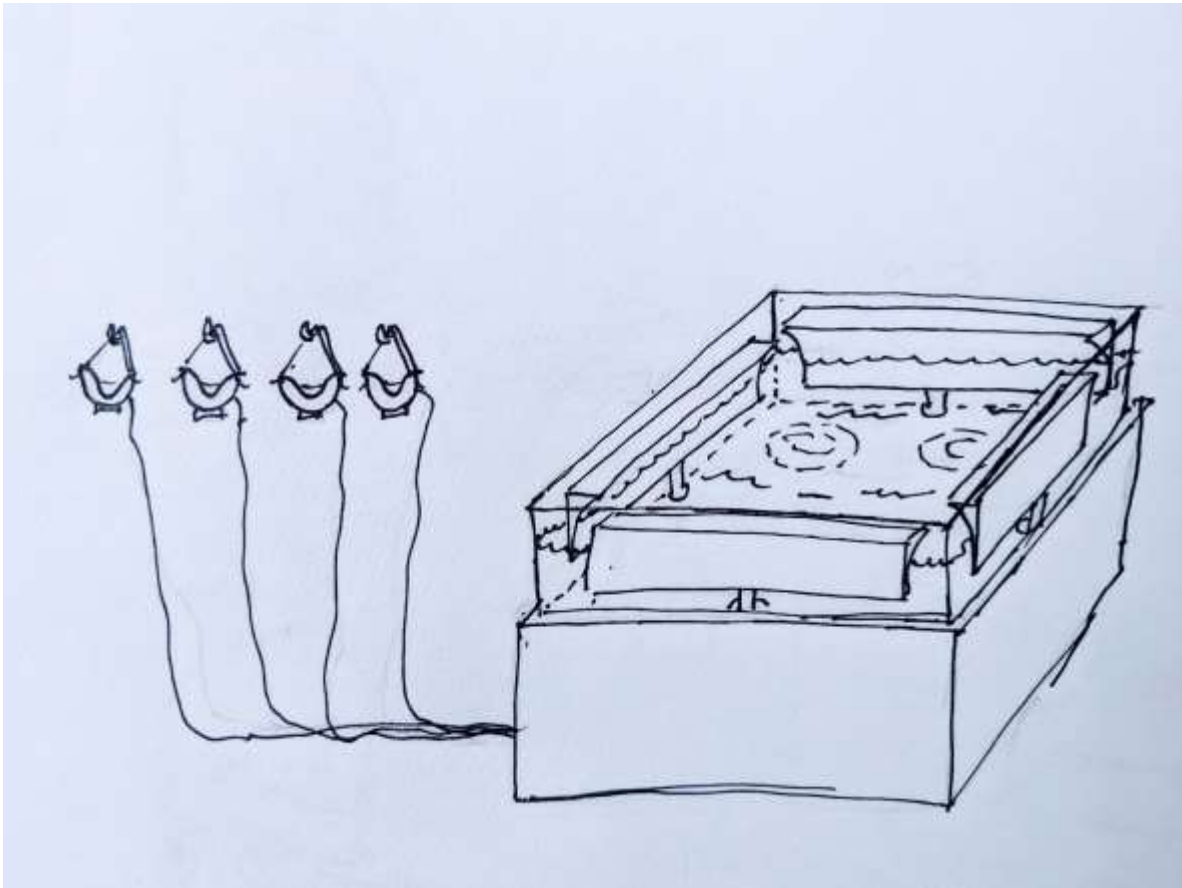
The installation is meant to be a reflection of a user's own liveliness. It is meant to imitate the user and show how their body has an impact of what is outside of it. This relationship could be achieved by utilizing concepts that are conducive to life. First, a person's breathing is often used as an indication that they are alive. By letting the user utilize their breath and by making them aware of their breathing for the purposes of interacting with this installation, I am hoping to make their liveliness explicit. Second, the installation uses water, an element that is primordial to living organisms. Water has been often used as a symbol of life and this installation makes no exception. Not only water is reflective, i.e. acting like a mirror that allows the user to see themselves in it, it also makes up the vast majority of our bodies. The water tank is thus meant to reflect the user in this two-fold way. Third, the installation is in motion. Motion is also a defining characteristic of life. Additionally, the undulating motion of a wave is organic rather than robotic. This motion is difficult to manipulate precisely. It is influenced by innumerable external forces which makes its movement chaotic. There might be a possibility to create vibrations in the water by using a speaker placed at the bottom of the tank. Those vibrations can also be controlled by the user or users. It can be done either by capturing their voices or a specific breathing pattern. The vibrations will create another level of interaction. Additionally, they might be able to make the wave patterns more complex and detailed, which may lead to a wider variety of movement.

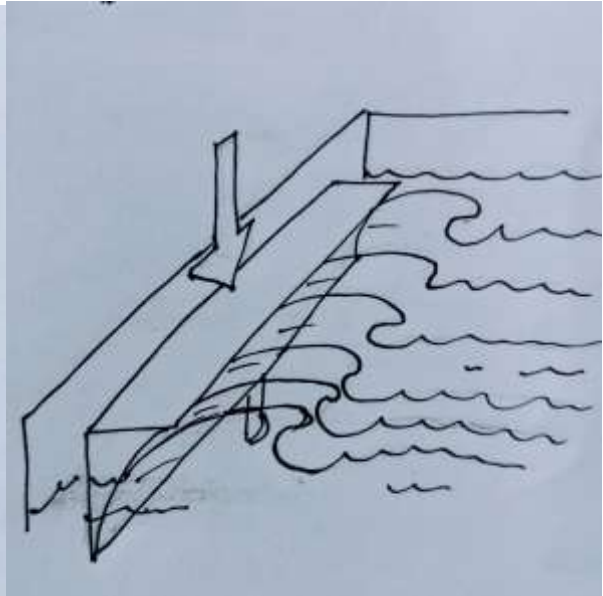
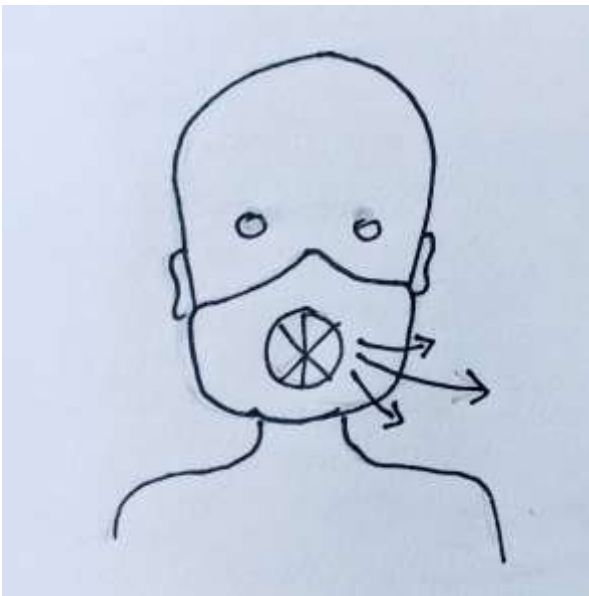
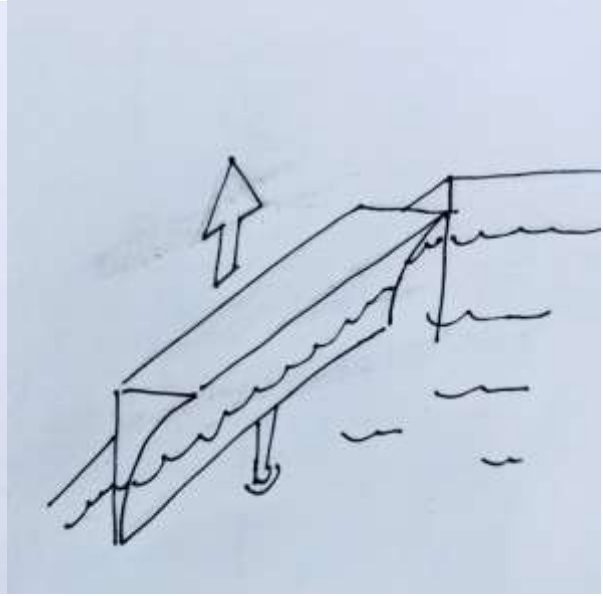
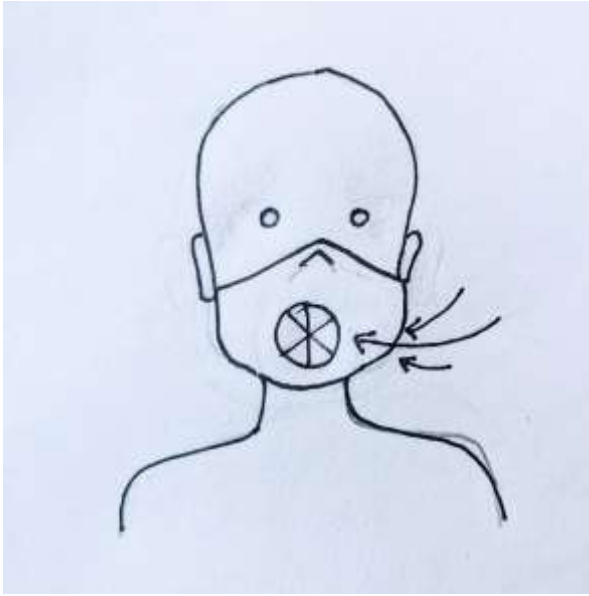
This chaotic movement is not meant to intimidate the user, though. On the contrary, the user is led to observe how their action influences the water and ripples of their action through time. Without their input, the water tank will be immobile. The interaction with the user is what gives it energy and life. It is a way to portray how the user has power to impact their environment, even though that power is not absolute. If multiple people are participating, one might observe how the wave pattern that they have created interacts with those of other participants and vice versa. Those interactions highlight how one's liveliness not only affects the environment they live in but can also affect other people. It is a way to also perceive how one's actions can also be affected or modified by life around us. This element of play might let users to either collaborate with each other and create constructive wave patterns, or go against each other and create destructive ones. The perception of those ripples is not only permitted visually, i.e. by looking at the water. Participants will also be able to hear the water move around. Those sounds are another form of movement over which participants have an impact on, though not absolute power over. Participants will also be allowed to touch the water. It can be said this tactile sensation of

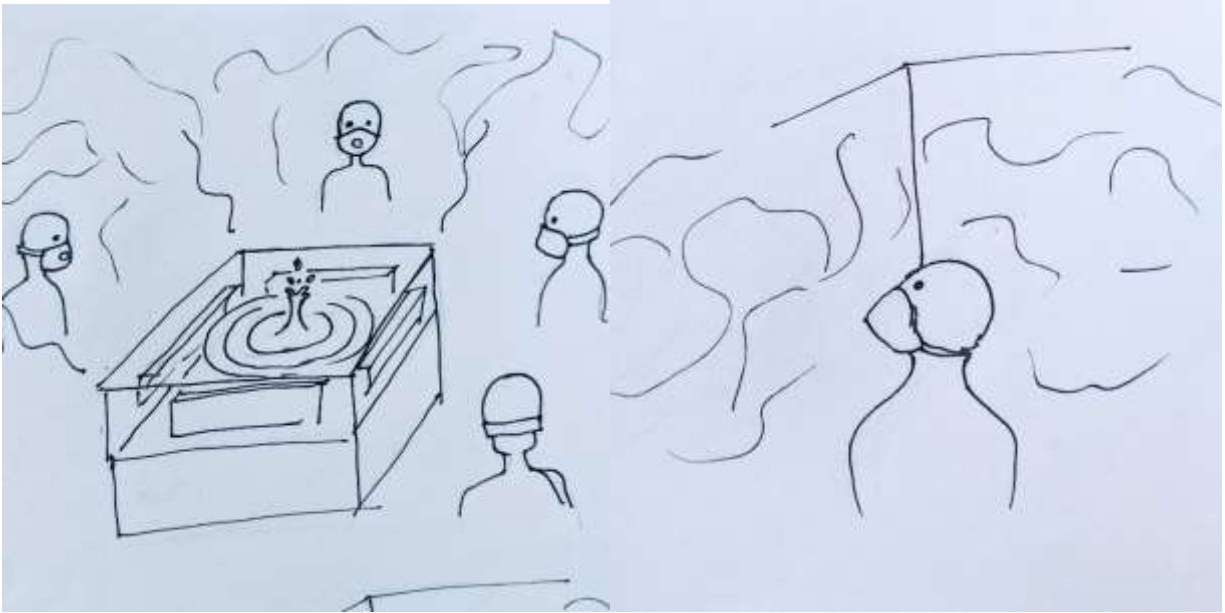
the consequences of one's actions can have a grounding effect on them. Another vestige of one's interaction with the installation arises from the light shining from below the water, since it will hopefully create caustic patterns on the walls and ceiling of the dark room. This gives participants an opportunity to focus their attention on what's around them, rather than just on the tank. This might also have a grounding effect.

In conclusion, this project's main purpose is to raise awareness of one's liveliness. In my opinion, daily life leads one to focus on what one is doing, and attention slips away from the fact that they are the one doing those things. The dark room in which the installation will be in creates a microcosm where one can perceive how their own presence ripples through their environment. Perception of their liveliness can be perceived through visual and tactile feedback from the focal point of the project, the water tank, since participants can look at and touch the water. Moreover, liveliness can also be perceived all around the room through auditory information, i.e. the sound of water, and visual information, i.e. the light reflection on the walls. Finally, liveliness can also be perceived acoustically and tangibly through one's own body by becoming more aware of the sound and sensation of one's breathing or talking.

STORYBOARD







SIMILAR PROJECTS

The first project that has similarities with mine is a music video called “CYMATICS” by Nigel Stanford. The video depicts visualizations of certain frequencies of sounds through different scientific experiments. Those include the Chladni plate, a metal plate with sand particles in it that, due to sound, starts vibrating in a manner that arranges the sand particles in ornate patterns. They also include reverberating sound frequencies through various liquids which makes them take specific wave patterns. Another example is the Ruben’s tube, a wide horizontal pipe with a line of holes at the top from which fire comes out. Playing specific frequencies through that tube makes the line of fire take various sinusoidal shapes. The video is thus a study of the visible effects of sound, which defined cymatics. The video makes it seem as if those reactive frequencies of sound were used to make the music of the video, although they were not. The use of cymatics has been associated with different meanings. Although Stanford included in his musical piece the words “Everything owes its existence, solely and completely, to sound”, suggesting sound is at the origin of life, the primary reason for the creation of this video was to replicate synesthesia, a disorder that closely associates the perception from one sense to the triggering of another. Just like a person with synesthesia might associate specific colors with specific pitches of sound, Stanford wanted to associate a specific visual effect with every sound in his musical composition.

Another project to which mine has similarities with is the wearable piece “last breath” by Dimitri Morozov. This wearable could be described as a mask that one wears on one’s nose and mouth. It is connected to a series of thin metal pipes of about half a meter long that are supported on the back of the head and are arranged to look like organ pipe division. Air expelled from the user’s breathing is sent through a plastic tube from the mask to those pipes, which in turn seem to produce a dissonant sound of an organ keyboard instrument. The sounds produced depend on the pressure and the flow rate of the breathing. This allows the user to have an impact, premeditated or not, on what sound is produced. Morozov made this wearable tool as part of his “passive instruments”. He describes those as being tools

that do not require supervision and co-exist with the user. “Last breath” is made to be a mask worn and by the dying when they have practically no strength left, and do so until they truly have been exhausted of all of their energy. The organ becoming silent is an indication that the bodily organs have started to shut down. Herein lies a symbiosis between the wearer and the wearable.

The third project with similarities to mine is Bill Viola’s “The Sleepers”. It consists of seven white barrels filled with water. At the bottom of each one there is a small black and white television placed on its back. Each television plays a looped video of a different person sleeping. The barrels are placed in a dark room, illuminated solely by the light coming off of the televisions. Visitors of the installation are free to roam around and look at it from different perspectives. Water is used to isolate the sleepers from their onlookers. It is a way to physically represent the barrier created between the sleepers and their environment due to their loss of consciousness. Water has also often been used as a symbol of a gateway between two worlds. In this case, it would be the physical world and the dream world. The visitors thus become voyeurs, peering through the portal that is the barrel of water into a different dimension. They have the opportunity to touch and disturb the water, though such gesture could be seen as ill-mannered since it will both disturb the sleepers and disturb the artwork. The potential of such action remains an element to consider significant to the experience. As the visitors’ gaze peers into the portal, light from the other side comes out. This strengthens the idea that the barrel is a gateway since parts of one world cross into the other.

Although my project has many similarities with the aforementioned ones, some differences stand out. “CYMATICS” and my project are similar in the way they use the concept of perceptible waves to visualize energy. Although “CYMATICS” focused more on the question of perception and how information from one sense can be transferred from another, I would wish for my project to be more about the transfer of energy from one’s own liveliness into the world. With “Last breath”, the similarity with my project stems from the use of a breathing apparatus to convey the state of one’s vitality. However, “Last breath” is a wearable that is used in the conditions where one’s inevitable cessation of action is awaited. I would wish for my project to be an incentive for action or for play. It is meant to bring into awareness that one is alive, rather than one will eventually be not (though the latter can lead to the former). Finally, comparing my project to “The Sleepers” shows that both make use of water containers and similar lighting. However, in “The Sleepers”, water is used as a symbol of a gateway from one world to another. Even if I would wish for my installation to be a microcosm of its own, water is used as a mirror to the visitor. It not only reflects one’s energy, but, combined with the emanating lights, reflects how one’s liveliness chaotically marks the world and the other people in it.

Sources:

1. CYMATICS: <https://nigelstanford.com/Cymatics/default.aspx?s=youtube&p=Cytext>
2. Last breath: <http://vtol.cc/last-breath>
3. The sleepers: <https://www.jamescohan.com/artists/bill-viola?view=slider#2>