Through the development of this project, I feel I have grown a lot in many aspects as a designer.

Firstly, in the expertise area of technology and realization, I have experienced the biggest growth in coding. I got hands on the task of using programming languages to instruct computers to complete specific tasks. Often, we need to adapt our code to fit the way computers work, essentially thinking from a computer’s perspective. For example, in one part of the project, users input data into two text boxes on a web page. I wanted to print the inputs from these two boxes separately using two printers. The program had client-side, server-side, and hardware (Arduino) components. However, when transmitting data to the Arduino, it could only be sent as a single string because the Arduino board has only one port. The solution involved sending the input from the first box first. Once the first printer finished printing, the Arduino sent a piece of trim data back to the server, prompting it to send the input from the second box, which the Arduino then delivered to the second printer. While not perfect, this solution resolved a persistent problem. Coding might not always captivate me, but solving these challenges has given me a sense of achievement and motivated me to design more projects involving coding, thus improving my skills.

In the expertise area of math, data, and computing, this project has employed a large language model(ChatGPT-4o) to generate the text. I gained a deeper understanding of the large language model and experience of using it as a generative tool.

In the expertise area of user and society, for this project, which focuses on psychology and art therapy, understanding people's perceptions of the therapeutic effect was crucial. I have engaged in meaningful conversations about their feelings towards it. Observing the diversity of feedback was insightful, and it was gratifying to know that some users were touched. The varied opinions and feedback offered plenty of inspiration on how to improve the design, achieve my goals differently, and generate more ideas for related themes.

In the expertise area of creativity and aesthetics, I learned a great deal about self-portrait art during this process. I thoroughly enjoyed exploring numerous artworks and drawing inspiration from them. This process felt natural, as the artworks were intriguing, evocative, and joyful. I realized the importance of having a sentimental heart in creating a project. This sentimentality gave me a sense of connection with others in realizing the design and making design decisions, allowing me to engage in a dialogue with the audience rather than merely telling them what to do. While I believe the appearance of the installation, the final layout of the self-portrait, and the overall art style can still be improved, I am confident that I will get better with practice.

In the expertise area of business and entrepreneurship, I believe this design, with some interface improvements to enhance interaction, could be well suited for the interactive art exhibitions in art museums.

I feel I have been more mature as a designer. With every project, I have learned new things and gained more experience, but this project feels special because it is the final project of my master's program. The pressure was intense, and I tried many new things, such as working with APIs and creating a large prototype. I can sense that I am rapidly gaining experience in different expertise areas. For instance, I am confident that if I code in JavaScript again, I will be able to solve basic problems or avoid issues from the very beginning. I aspire to be a confident, bold, and happy designer. However, I don't yet feel more confident in my design process or output.

There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, my time management needs improvement. I often feel lost or less motivated in the early phases of project development, leading to spending too much time on less relevant tasks or making slow progress. Secondly, I didn't receive enough input from user evaluations. To better understand users, I wish I could have conducted deeper, more open interviews about their childhoods and vulnerabilities, rather than just discussing their perceptions of my design. Additionally, I would have benefited from expert evaluations of my design. I collaborated with experts in the early stages to gain insights into dealing with social psychology, and I believe their feedback on the final design would have been valuable, too.

This project has motivated me to delve deeper into interactive installations. Although I mentioned in my vision that I am interested in interactive installations, I am not very experienced. This was the first time I had a clear plan to build an interactive installation because it was a good way to achieve my design goals and it interested me. Through researching related installation works, I saw great potential in their powerful expressiveness and strong interactivity. It feels rewarding to have created this self-portrait-making installation in the end. While there is much room for improvement, I see this as the beginning of my exploration of installations, and I look forward to further opportunities to develop in this area.