

## CART 211 – Final Project Proposal

Submitted by: Alana DeVito

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Title of Project:

### The Sonic Shop Virtual Gallery presents: Project Trajectory and the Living Composition II

#### Summary

The Sonic Shop Virtual Gallery is an interactive, web-based gallery space for the presentation and curation of audiovisual artwork. For the opening exhibition, the creative collective, *Project Trajectory* will be showcasing the piece titled, *The Living Composition II* which is a trio of interactive audiovisual artwork based on the collective cultural and societal experiences during times of quarantine. However, behind the curtain of this outer web-identity, is a hidden agenda.

My hidden ‘queer agenda’ is to expose guests to the reality of daily interactions and microaggressions that trans and non-binary people face. This ‘lesson’ will be tucked into the hyperlink narrative interaction and character dialogue as a guest explores the virtual gallery space.

#### Background and Core Vision

*Project Trajectory* is a creative collective that I am a part of that includes my electroacoustic studies classmates, Charles Harding, Connor Cook, Malte Leander and our Prof. Michael Pinsonneault. Since May of this year we have been having regular meetings via ZOOM where we have been composing an iterative experimental sound composition that blends tonal and electroacoustic aspects which embody our collective experiences over the year. In July, I created *The Living Composition I*, which took the state of the composition (at that time) and separated it into 12 ‘stems’ that were then uploaded into an interactive MaxMsp patch. The user had the opportunity to interact and transform the expression of the composition in a range of different ways, using either buttons and knobs or by activating the unique Webcam Control that I created for sensorial manipulation. The piece could also be played in a non-interactive, generative manner with the program algorithm doing the arranging. The Webcam Control allowed the user to change the direction and/or speed playback of a consciously chosen or randomly chosen track along with the stereo presence (panning) of that track by

moving their hands in front of their webcam. Spheres mapped with abstract videos modulated in a centre space, visualizing the sonic changes of the composition.

While this initial piece was 'exhibited' at the 2020 virtual rendition of the *Visionas Sonores AV Festival* in Mexico, there were some serious limitations to my vision.

The biggest limitation to the Living Composition 1 (seen here: [www.amdevito.com](http://www.amdevito.com)) was the fact that I could not actually share the interactive Max patch with the public for general interaction. The concept for a 'virtual sound installation' was there, but the application was stunted. After hours and hours of research, I could not find a clear (let alone easy) way to broadcast the Max patch for public interaction – a websocket utilizing JSON seemed to be the closest concept that I found that may translate my vision for the application.

This project proposal has the new solution, and an ulterior motive...

First, the new solution. Using my original Max patch as an introductory prototype I will translate the interactivity used in my patch to the p5.js environment and present each interface (3 in total) as 'canvases' that are displayed in a virtual gallery space that I call *The Sonic Shop Virtual Gallery*. The initial social engagement aspect of this project is a voluntary option that a guest has to engage with the project. If they wish, they can email their chosen name, a 3 sentence 'story' that represents their unique quarantine experience and a 15-30 second sound file. The sound file may be a raw field recording, a short song clip (must be under 20 seconds), a spoken word piece or other type of experimental music composition (electroacoustic, noise, etc). There will also be an option to activate your microphone and record something on the spot. These 3 objects will be sent to a database or array and used in one of the installations in the virtual gallery exhibition.

Finally, the main, 'hidden' social engagement (aka the ulterior motive) aspect will be introduced to the visitor upon entering the gallery entrance. The visitor will be advised that part of the curator's request is that the visitor takes on the identity of a non-binary person as they navigate the gallery space, in order to understand some of the issues that 'enbies' face in common, daily interactions – more particularly, the microaggressions that people deal with on a regular basis. As a non-binary person, myself, I find the most common issue is that people just don't understand what it is like

or what it means to be misgendered, what microaggressions towards us are and, and how harmful these things can be.<sup>1</sup>

As cis-heteronormativity is ingrained in society since many of us were children, growing, accepting and learning about our own identities that exist outside of this binary is not a one-sided challenge<sup>2</sup>. This project will not only help other people understand the trans-non-binary identity and the harm that mis-gendering and microaggressions cause, but will help me connect deeper with who I am and how to empower myself. Without the understanding of one's own identity, how can we get others to understand us? As Ben Vincent says in his book, *Non-Binary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities and Healthcare*, '...considering how hegemonic gendered expectations affect not only the ability to socially exert, but to internally formulate a non-binary gender identity.'<sup>3</sup>.

This is important as I and others like me suffer from many of the mental health challenges due to our experiences in society, as outlined on the ZenCare website (ZenCare is a website connecting people to LGBTQA+ people to experienced therapists): '51.4% of transgender women and 48.3% of transgender men experience depression (vs. 16.6% in the total US population)'. On the same site, the ZenCare Team highlights some specific microaggressions and how they, 'contribute to a culture of violence against trans and nonbinary people.'<sup>4</sup> Some microaggressions include,

'Misgendering through use of a "dead" name or incorrect pronoun usage.'

Lack of access to appropriate bathroom facilities.

Intrusive questions or assumptions regarding body parts and transition.

Backhanded compliments, ("Oh, you look so good, I'd have never known you're trans!")

Presumptions about sexuality.'

Gender-affirming therapist from the ZenCare, Benjamin Davis, points out a number of consequences that come from these microaggressions:

'Misgendering signals a clear unseeing or disbelief of a person's authentic identity or communicates that the effort necessary to relearn those parts of a

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<sup>1</sup> Mamone, Trav. "9 Things Not to Say to a Non-Binary Person." *Everyday Feminism*, 15 Feb. 2017, [everydayfeminism.com/2017/02/things-not-to-say-non-binary-ppl/](http://everydayfeminism.com/2017/02/things-not-to-say-non-binary-ppl/).

<sup>2</sup> Faucette, Avory. "CHAPTER FOUR: Fucking the Binary for Social Change: Our Radically Queer Agenda." *Counterpoints*, vol. 437, 2014, pp. 73–88., [www.jstor.org/stable/42981932](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981932). Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> "Doing and Being: My Relationship with This Work, and How It Was Done." *Non-Binary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities, and Healthcare*, by Ben Vincent, 1st ed., Bristol University Press, Bristol, 2020, pp. 45–72. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv138wrbg.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv138wrbg.8). Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Zencare Team "8 Things to Know About Trans and Nonbinary Mental Health Now: Zencare." *The Couch: A Therapy & Mental Wellness Blog*, The Couch: A Therapy & Mental Wellness Blog, 2 July 2020, [blog.zencare.co/trans-non-binary-mental-health/](http://blog.zencare.co/trans-non-binary-mental-health/).

person's identity isn't worth the time or effort to do so. When internalized, these messages can feel a lot like, "I'm not worth it," furthering hopeless and isolative narratives that can impact depressive symptoms."

To illustrate how these struggles effect the larger way we interact with the world, I will limit the timer allotted in the interactive installation 'canvas' as your virtual self navigates compounded microaggressions with other virtual guests in the space. The reason being, is that this is essentially what happens in life – these struggles hinder your ability to create and interact with the world with the same ease that cis-heteronormative people are privileged.

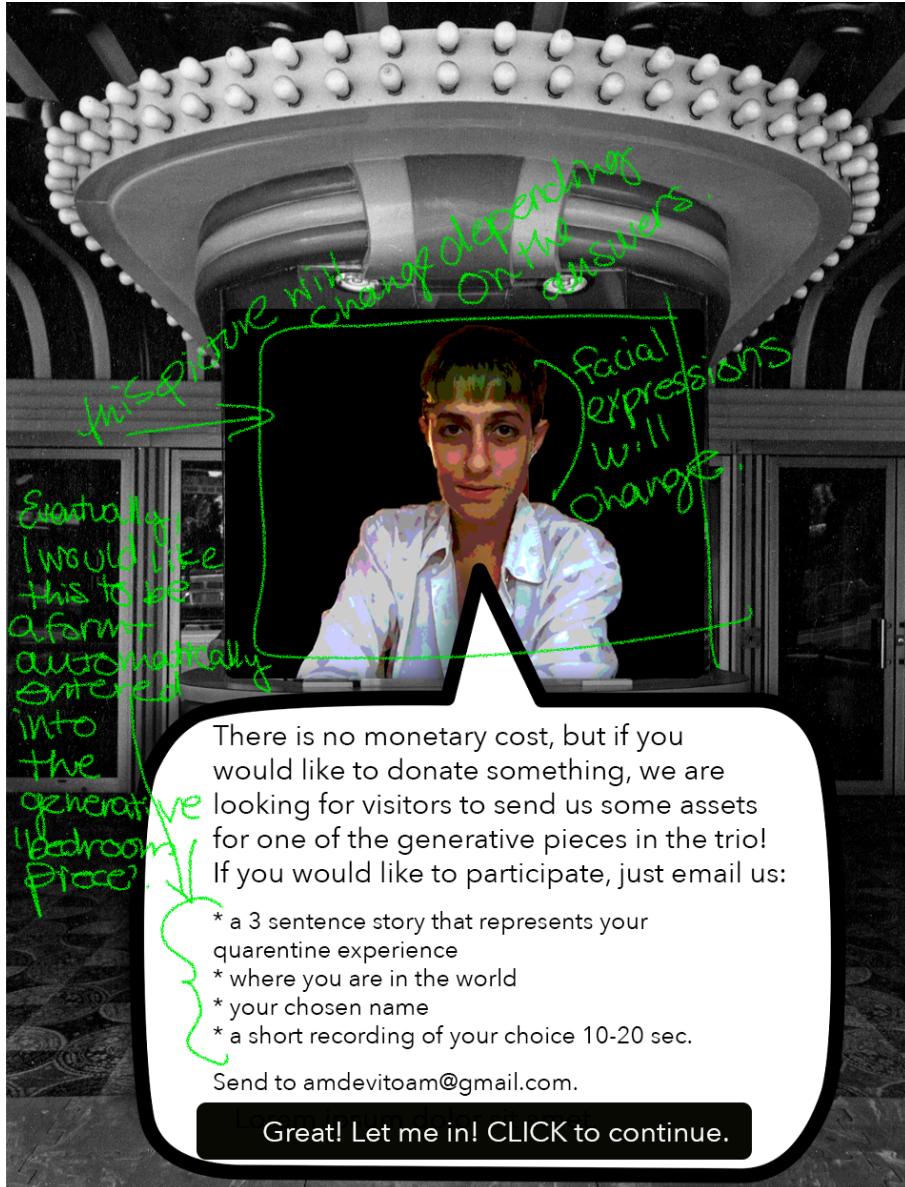
### The Virtual Gallery Space

A 3D model built in Blender will be the 'structure' of the virtual gallery space, exported as a .obj file and then loaded into p5.js using the loadModel(); function as outlined in the tutorial [18.7: Loading OBJ Model – WebGL and p5.js](#) by the Coding Train. You will move through the space using your mouse and the arrow keys and to 'enter' an installation experience, you click on one of the 3 canvases you see on the walls of the gallery - which will then 'zoom' into the piece where you then can interact with the installation interface. I would like to utilize similar movement logic as the past student work piece [Melansuko The Decades Day Album](#) for the movement around the 3d modeled gallery space.

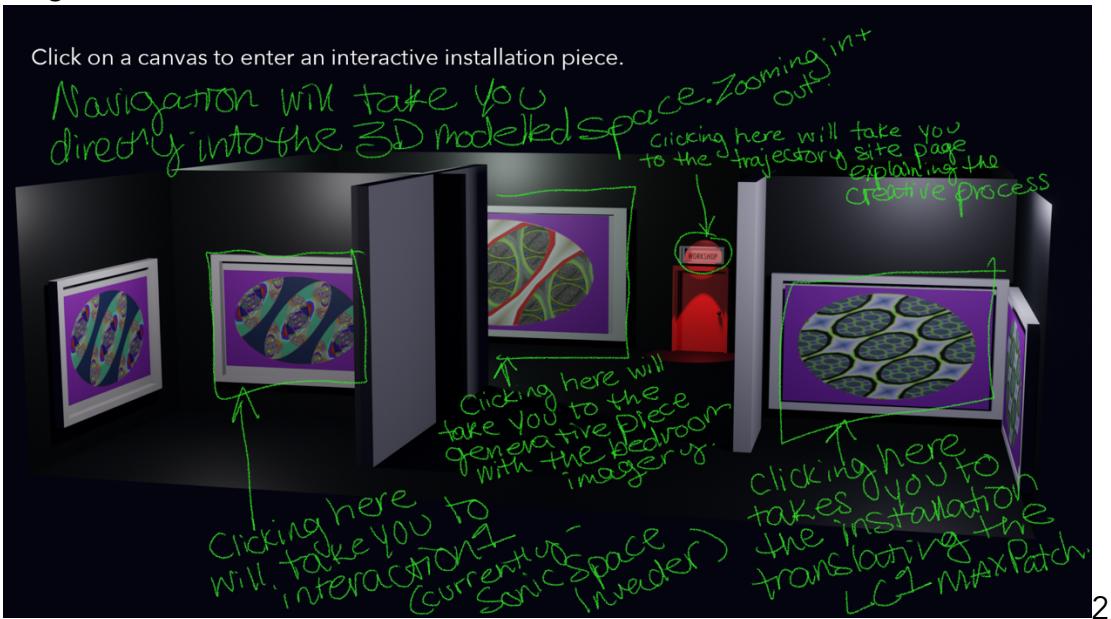
One of the installations will be a similar but expanded version of [The Sonic Shape Invader](#), the second will be more similar to the original [Living Composition 1](#) MaxMsp patch, but 'translated' from the MaxMsp language and into the p5.js language. The third piece will be a brand-new, generative piece that will use the guests' submissions in the composition. The interface will be a picture of a bedroom with different pieces of furniture acting as the interface for the composition – I would like to artistically design this installation similar to the style that I used in my piece, [The Great White Squirrel Caper of 2020](#). A computer on a desk will 'type' out different stories from all the guests that visit the site in a random order and the soundscape will be composed of the randomly selected sound pieces that are also uploaded from all of the guests. The sound pieces will be filtered through different effects to make the soundscape more cohesive and the guest will modulate the piece by interacting with the furniture pieces in the picture. I would like to keep this as an on-going project and change the room on a monthly basis. A door at the 'back' of the space will be the workshop door where you can hear static compositions and watch videos or read about the collective composition processes.

## Annotated Mock-Up Images:

Main ticket booth image for gallery entrance and some changes I intend to make for the full version (img.1).



Scene from the rendered image of the gallery model and the goals for the full version (img. 2).



Scene from the gallery space with the characters to interact with (img.3)



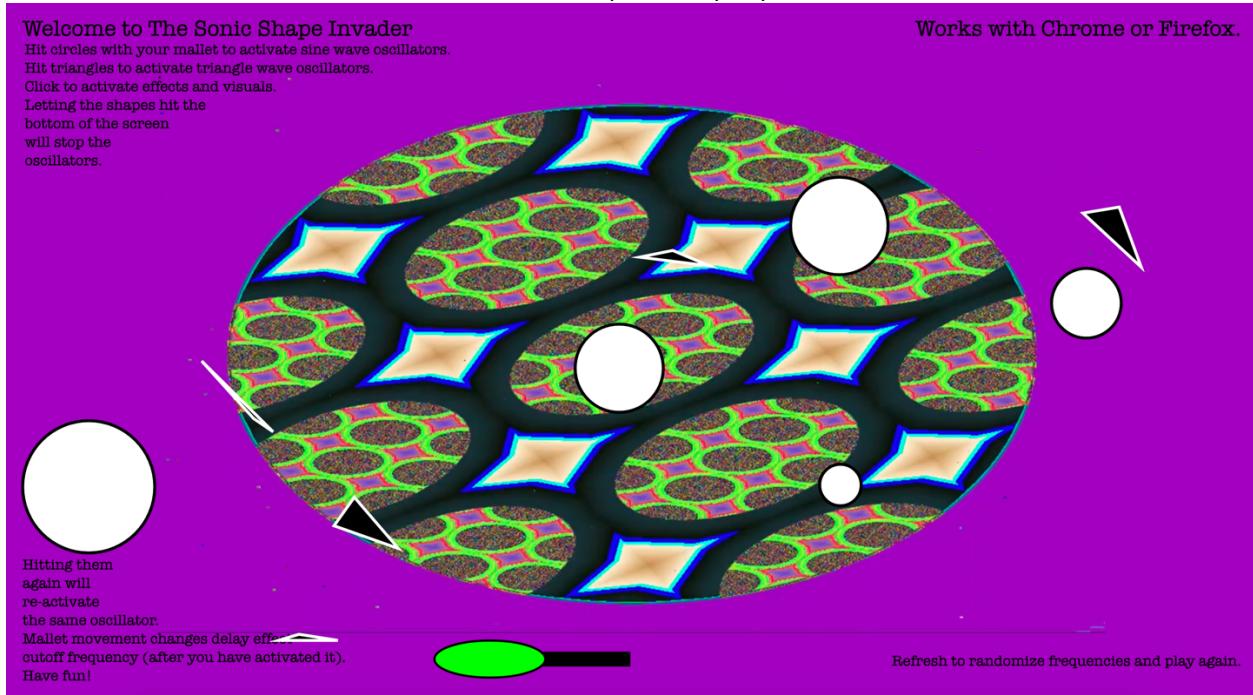
3<sup>rd</sup>, generative and explorative installation piece. I think that I would like there to be a limited amount of direction to the user and have them use explore on their own. Maybe I will have a 'secret' help key stroke, to suggest interactivity (img.4).



4

### Reference images:

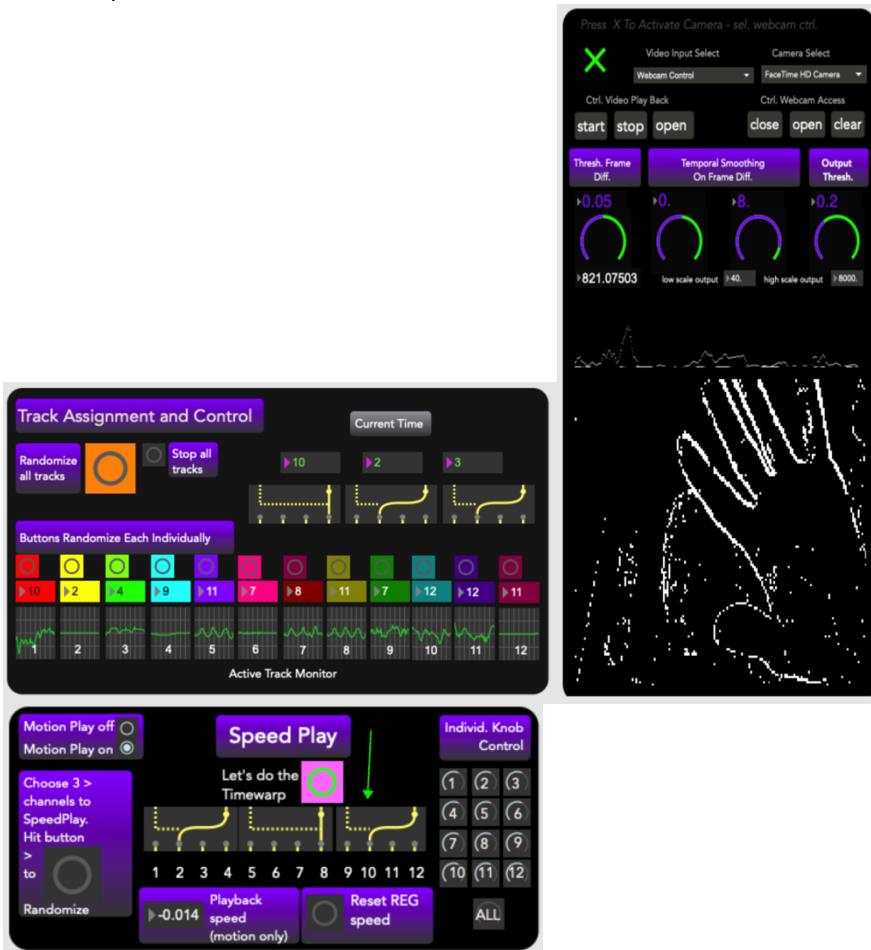
Interaction1 – Clickable canvas on current prototype program.



## The Living Composition 1 – Main Interface



Close up of detailed sections of LC1.



## References:

Faucette, Avory. "CHAPTER FOUR: Fucking the Binary for Social Change: Our Radically Queer Agenda." *Counterpoints*, vol. 437, 2014, pp. 73–88., [www.jstor.org/stable/42981932](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981932). Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

"Doing and Being: My Relationship with This Work, and How It Was Done." *Non-Binary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities, and Healthcare*, by Ben Vincent, 1st ed., Bristol University Press, Bristol, 2020, pp. 45–72. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv138wrbg.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv138wrbg.8). Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

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Zencare Team "8 Things to Know About Trans and Nonbinary Mental Health Now: Zencare." *The Couch: A Therapy & Mental Wellness Blog*, The Couch: A Therapy & Mental Wellness Blog, 2 July 2020, [blog.zencare.co/trans-non-binary-mental-health/](http://blog.zencare.co/trans-non-binary-mental-health/).