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I struggled a lot with this project which wasn't something I expected when I initially proposed the concept I wanted to cover. I think this is because I wanted to try and address my relationship with the internet and how I see that relationship, which is something I'm still working to define.

As someone who didn't spend any time on the internet through most of middle school I generally took the same stance as most of the teachers and adults in my life who thought people who spent time on social media (and by association the internet in general) were less intelligent and more superficial than people who didn't. I still held this opinion for a decently long period of time after I got my first computer and was enjoying the benefits of unlimited music through YouTube, homework help through Wikipedia and Khan Academy and image reference through Google search. I started challenging this belief after I realized listening to youTubers, reading blog posts and scrolling through memes filled certain needs for social interaction and reassurance which I probably could have found from actual people, but which I prefered to find from online sources which I could curate to my specific needs at any time of the day and which didn't need any emotional support from me in return.

I have times where I feel guilty or flawed as a human for wanting to spend so much time alone and working on my own interests and choosing not to seek out social connections besides the support of my family, partially because it is strange enough by "normal" standards that people have felt comfortable using this part of my character to call me "heartless" and "cold", or even going so far as to try and diagnose me as being socially anxious or clinically depressed, despite not being medical professionals.

I do not bring this up to try and secure sympathy, but to try and express how there are simple daily social interactions that start to require energy when you need to try and convince your audience to accept your "oddities", whatever they may be, or to convince them that you don't need pity for those differences. It takes time and effort to build connections, and to build a wider real life social network it generally seems to mandate you cutting pieces of yourself down to try and fit the standard human model. Besides the energy it takes to manage this, you are also now responsible for taking on their worries, which requires more time and energy. This is also (for me at least) the same energy pool I need to pursue my academic interests, take care of my family and close friends and make creative works.

This is the part where I am called a "misanthrope", so I want to express how forming close connections where you can confess your difficulties and daily concerns is really rewarding and enriching. But I think you should do this out of choice and let these relationships form because you want to, not because you think you have some friend quota to fill. I also cannot always turn to my family and close friends for all my immediate emotional needs because they have their own concerns, tasks and need for support that may be more important than my own in the moment, and part of a fulfilling close relationship is being able to push aside your less important worries to comfort the person who really needs it.

After considering darker, more specific and more technical concepts and forms for this project I decided to focus on this simple feeling of needing support (even if that support is superficial and temporary) in a situation or place where it feels like everyone wants you to be something or do something for them. While we learned a lot of technical information about how the internet functions, I felt that in the end the main point of the class was to acquire the skills

and information we could use to create artwork that lets us express our actual ideas about the internet instead of the ideas society has trained us to associate with it. The easy artwork to make stems from the concept I have grown up with, that social media and the internet corrupts intelligence, happiness and originality that is better found "in real life". This artwork would maybe take the form of someone staring blankly at a gray screen while a rainbow forms and fades outside their window. The more difficult idea to address is the one that makes me think about my experiences and the feelings I explore online because I'm not ready to have them critiqued. In my work I tried to maintain the superficial element of feeling good from scrolling through posts or looking at other online media with the comic style bubble with a simple heart, allowing it to remain open to interpretation as a superficial source of immediate pleasure. At the same time I want you to notice how without that bubble there would just be a small figure fully dwarfed by a darkness forming the shapes of reaching hands that are open and grasping so as to look like they want to take something from the much smaller figure. Without the comic bubble generated from the phone in the figures hand this scene would seem ominous and dangerous, but with it there it no longer seems like the darkness indicates an actual threat.

My hope is that this idea and presentation is simple enough to evoke the memories I think everyone with some internet browsing capability has, of a situation where some feeling of loneliness or pressure caused by physical surroundings was soothed at least momentarily by the internet.