

ETUDE #1: Stranger Things
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I. Discover

1) Reversible Sequin Slap Bracelet

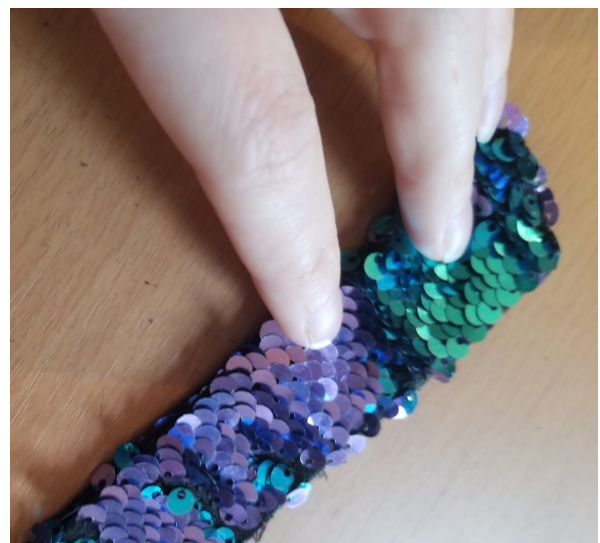
I don't care that they're tacky or that they're made mostly for children. Reversible sequin stuff is fun to look at and also has a satisfying texture, which is why I've had to physically grab my reversible sequin slap bracelet back from people who'd gotten



mesmerized by it. Items with reversible sequins on them make great fidget toys, and the fact that this one is a bracelet (rather than a backpack or a pencil case) gives it additional subtlety and portability. Flipping the sequins from one side to the other changes the colour, and it's possible to flip some sequins and not the others to give the bracelet multicoloured patterns. The sequins are smooth when flattened out, but feel coarse and almost prickly while they're being flipped. They make a quiet crunching sound while being flipped, and this sound is louder if you drag your fingernail along the smoothed out

sequins. Even though flipping the sequins has a satisfying texture, they are scratchy and uncomfortable when pressed against the bare skin of your wrist. This is why the underside of the bracelet is made of a soft, minky-like fabric.

As mentioned before, I've had to physically remove my bracelet from the grip of others. Interacting with the reversible sequin bracelet is close to addicting, from both a tactile and visual perspective. The sequins can be flipped at varying speeds, giving the user a great amount of control over its appearance and texture at all times. Because it is satisfying to touch and look at, people may feel possessive of it and wish to keep it to themselves. However, it is also cheaply made and therefore somewhat fragile, and if handled too roughly, the sequins may get stuck in a certain position or break off entirely.



Because of this, users understand that it has to be handled gently. Additionally, people who feel nostalgic of the 1990s will appreciate that this is a slap bracelet, which were huge fads at the time.



Overall, the reversible sequin slap bracelet brings about satisfaction through its appearance and texture, assists the user in calming down or letting out excess or nervous energy by offering itself as a fidget toy, and in some cases, may even evoke childhood or teenage nostalgia. Interacting with it hits three out of five senses (touch, sight, and sound) for a very engaging experience.

2) Pins in a corkboard

Corkboards have been used in my apartment for tons of things: we have a chart indicating when the cat was last fed, one that shows which roommate last purchased a shared necessity, and yet another that keeps track of which roommate is home. All of these charts rely on the specific placement of thumbtacks to relay this information.



There's something sort of satisfying about the "**crunch**" sound that a thumbtack makes when it's pushed into the cork. It's also a much more tactile experience than pressing a button or tapping a screen: the sensation of the pointy end puncturing the cork is a lot more tangible, and generally more force is required on the part of the user for an interaction like this.

I think it's a lot more fun to stab a sharp object into a board than, say, it is to flip a switch or turn a dial. There's a sort of finality to putting a hole in the cork board that can never be repaired. This can be considered a drawback, however, as excessive damage to the board will eventually cause its structural integrity to collapse, leaving thumbtacks loose and more likely to fall off the board entirely. Still, cork boards are relatively cheap, so it might be worth suffering through the inevitable wear-and-tear for the sake of a more involved user experience.

Depending on the purpose decided upon by the owner, cork boards and their contents can vary with regards to the feelings they draw out.



For instance, artwork from the children I work with can be displayed, causing a feeling of fondness when I look at it. Alternatively, it can be a place to put things like receipts, reminders, or schedules, causing the user to feel organized and in control.



In terms of emotional connection with the action of *using* the cork board, I think it's a bit of an exaggeration to call it "aggressive", but I suppose if someone's having a bad day, it can be cathartic to stab a board. It can definitely be a visually appealing experience though, what with the variety of colours and shapes that thumbtacks can be. It also makes colour-coding a possibility, giving users a sense of order and clarity, and perhaps even fostering a (potentially false?) sense of security that one has their life together. It evokes a similar feeling of productivity that one might experience when buying office supplies, which an interaction such as putting a magnet on the fridge or hanging a poster with sticky tack cannot provide, at least not to the same extent.

3) **Bucket of Perler Beads**

It may be a little abstract, but there's something to be said for the sensation of submerging one's entire hand into a bucket of perler beads. Of the three things I've explored, this is the one that relies the most heavily on tactile sensation.



Perler beads are round, plastic, hollowed-out cylinders with hard, sharp edges. They're tiny, at around half a centimeter in height and even less than that in width. Just one or two, or even a handful of them, is nothing special. Fill a bucket with them, and you've got an experience. Shoving your entire arm into a bucket of perler beads can be summed up as "satisfying". I can confirm that I am not some weirdo who enjoys getting my germmy hands all over arts and crafts supplies: every time I've done an activity

involving perler beads at summer camp or at afterschool programs, year after year after year, *without fail and entirely unprompted*, at least three or four kids plunge their hands into the bucket of perler beads, if not more. And then they tell their friends to do the same.

The sensation of this action is not unlike a massage. The bucket containing the beads restricts them from moving too far when you place your arm inside, forcing the sharp edges of the beads to dig into your skin. It's a lot like submerging your hand into a bag of uncooked rice or beans, but the hard edges of the beads make the feeling a lot more prickly, though not painful. Even closing your fist around a handful of beads doesn't hurt, it just adds more pressure against your palm in a way that feels soothing.

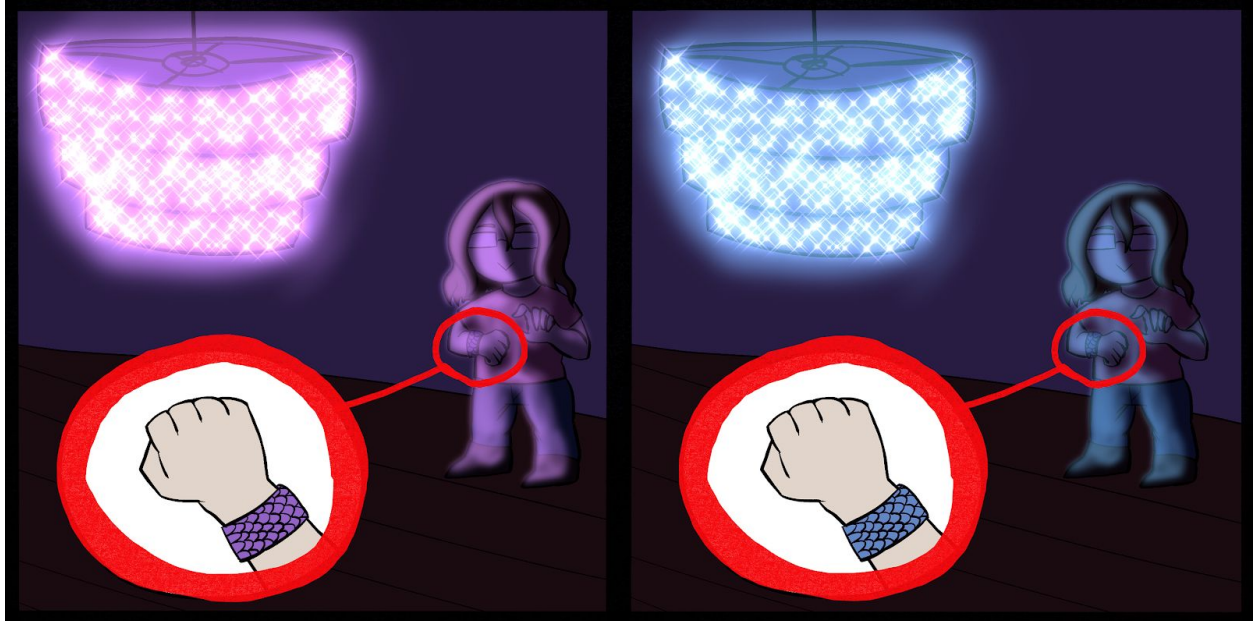




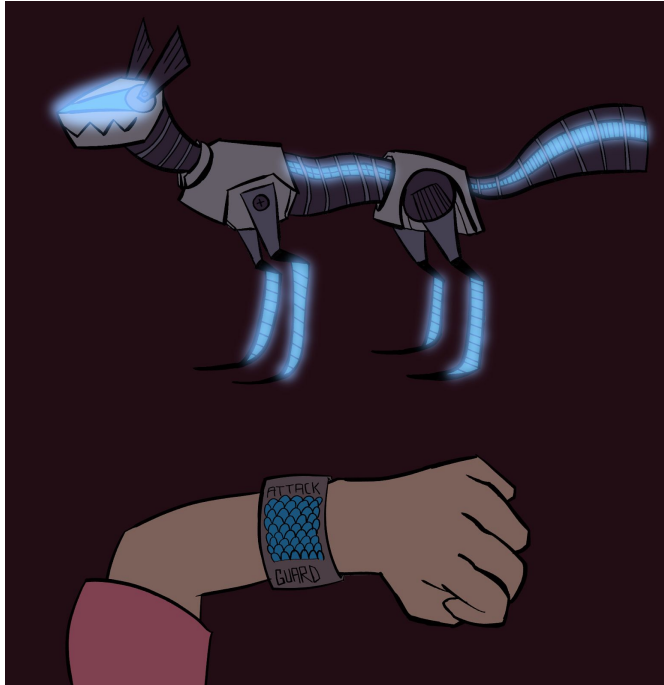
In terms of emotional response, sticking your hand into a bucket of perler beads both looks and feels silly, but not in a negative way. It's almost ritualistic when participating in an arts-and-crafts activity that calls for perler beads: it's inevitable, regardless of if participants were told to do it or not. It's a bizarrely specific but easily recognizable example of collective human experience, and can evoke nostalgia as well, reminding adults of when they'd done this same thing when they were children. It's also fun to watch someone, particularly a kid, experience this for the first time and watch their skepticism or indifference melt into baffled joy.

II. Design

Interactive Artifact #1: Controls Colours of Lights



The directions of reversible sequins control the colour of the lights. Doing this by flipping the sequins feels a lot more involved than hitting a switch or sliding a dimmer. Not a terribly exciting or memorable experience, but ideally a short and soothing one.

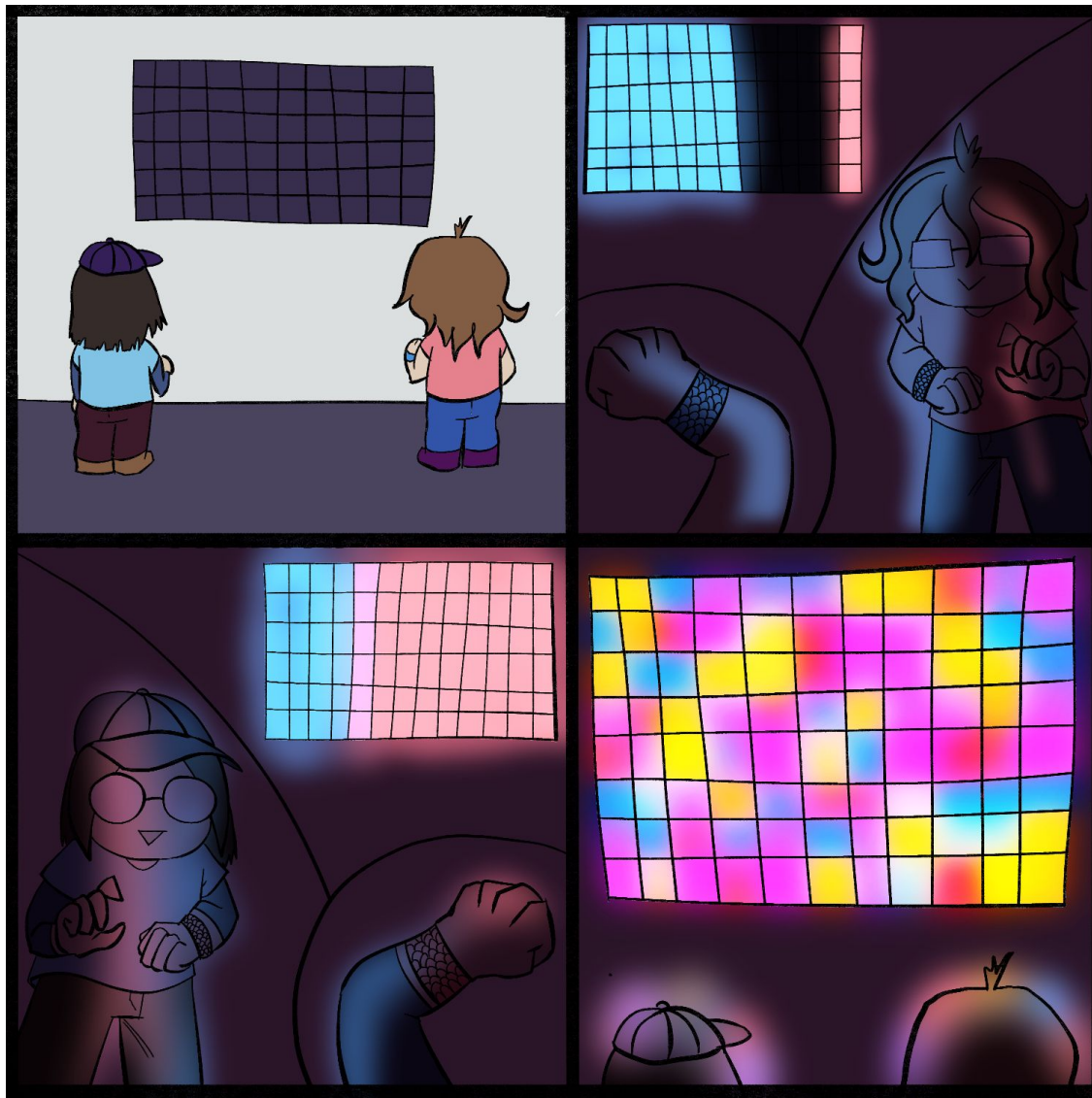


Interactive Artifact #2: A Fun, Friendly, Sequin Bot

Flipping of the sequins could be used to change the mode of a robot, from being in a more aggressive stance, a more defensive one, or a mixed one that uses the robot equivalent of its best judgment.



Interactive Artifact #3: Abstract Art with a Friend



This contraption is once again a light show, but this time it is one of a more collaborative nature. One sequin bracelet has two colours, like blue and purple, and the other has different ones, like pink and yellow. Both bracelets are mapped to the same panel of lights, so one sequin per bracelet is linked to each light on the panel. The colours of the lights can overlap and create a new colour when the corresponding sequins on both bracelets are flipped at once, creating unique patterns that depend on the choices of the users.