

## Etude 1: StrangerThings (CART 360)

By: Xavier Touikan

First thing, Philodendron Plant:

When I moved from my parents house to my first apartment, I took a small stem of this philodendron plant they have. I didn't had a lot of light in my room, but the philodendron grows well in dark areas. I think it's a great plant to have in Montreal, since it's the case for a lot of apartments out here to not have so much light. I believe the reason for this would be that the winters are cold and windows allows for the heat inside to escape easily. I also like this plant because it is very easy to take care of. Basically you cannot overwater this plant so I always keep the soil very moisty. I'm usually very bad at taking care of things and myself, I have some friends who now have a kid and I don't believe that I could even handle a small animal. Still I am slowly growing up which I may or may not like, but this plant is a small and cute reminder that I can take care of something.

When I was a kid I've always thought that it was a bit absurd for us to grow plants inside our homes and waste tons of water, soil and time to grow them inside while they can just grow themselves outside. I still feel that way when I think deeply about it, but giving them some love simply makes me happier than the contrary. It is very selfish feeling and that brings me to my other point, plants don't think and are stupid and I like them that way. I'm sure that I'm not the only one to think that way, but I have this impression that having children or animals or plants are very selfish things. It is very arguable, but in a lot of cases people don't get living things in their homes to help them. I just feel weird about putting a child in this world or getting an animal who didn't ask for it, but for a plant I can just love it and don't care about that. Obviously it is not the same as an animal or a kid, the plant won't give any sign of affection and doesn't give much love in return. It's more like a teddy bear for "adults".



The philodendron plant has a lot of different branches and conduct electricity very well. It could allow a wide variety of different parallel circuits that flows through the plant. Since I keep the soil at a good level of moisture, the plant carry even more water which gives it an even better conductivity potential. It is not a very strong plant and I wouldn't attach anything to it unless it's weight can sit on something. I love how it goes out of the pot and down, kind of like some vines.

Second thing, Classical Guitar:

This one is quite simple and cliché, but I just love my acoustic guitar. It is a very cheap classical guitar (I believe it costed 130\$) but I have been playing it a ton for maybe twelve years. It doesn't sound that great, but it is very easy to play on. I've never recorded anything with that guitar and I don't think I ever will, but it's my main source of expression and creativity when I create music. I feel so comfortable playing that guitar that I feel like I can express any idea that I could generate with my brain. It is also a sort of comfort in everyday life. There are some songs that I must have played a thousand times like some movie that you could watch over and over again. It's probably the only object that I use everyday that is not my phone or my computer or my bed etc... Latelly,

I have started to use it a bit less. I am deeply in love most of the time I spend home I try to spend it with my girlfriend. Also playing on that guitar has always been some kind of procrastination thing that I used to do when I wasn't motivated in school, but not that I enjoy what I study I am sad to see that I don't spend hours on it like I used to. Writing this etude makes me realise that I really want to use more of my lifetime to create pure expression on that thing. One other reason why I might use it a bit less nowadays is because I have reach some kind of plateau in how I play and create on that instrument. This etude might be a good opportunity to think about my level of interaction with this object and come with new ideas that are outside the box I used to work in.

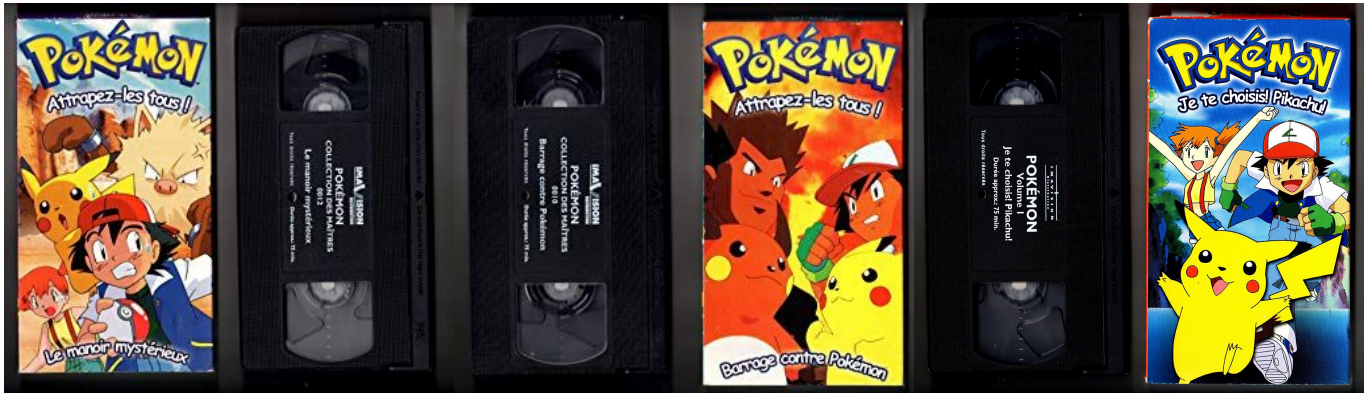


The Yamaha C40 classical guitar is a very popular model widely used in schools. It is very light and has nylon strings which makes it easier to play. The design is just simple and effective with only some patterns around the hole that allows the sound to go in and out of the wood box. It is not a beautiful instrument but at the same time it is not pretentious. Since it's made out of wood and plastic, the object is not conductive at all and resists pretty well electricity. Maybe the nylon strings could be replaced with metal strings and I could achieve interesting results by playing music with conductive strings. The only thing that can move on that object except for the strings are the six string keys on the head of the instrument.

Third thing, Pokémon VHS tapes:

I found these pokémon vhs tapes on the street and I decided to pick them up because I love pokémon and old school analog technologies. It's also been in my head for a while to try to make some glitch effects by messing up the tape. Even if I don't have a vhs player at home, they are for now a great piece of decoration and could become something else afterwards. They are definitely the type of old school technology that looks the most like it came out of a cartoon. Nowadays we don't really have specific items for specific technologies, most of the things can be controlled by softwares and computers and all of the datas are stored in hard drives. All of these console specific video game cassettes or vhs/dvd/blu-ray players are meant to disappear since it can be all converted hard drive datas. This makes those pokémon vhs tapes items of the past. They could have some value if somehow they have not been converted to digital datas and the only way to watch them is with these tapes (Since it's translated in Canadian French it's a possibility) or maybe a collector might see some value in those but otherwise it has no value at all. Most of them are going to be used as decoration like I did or thrown away.

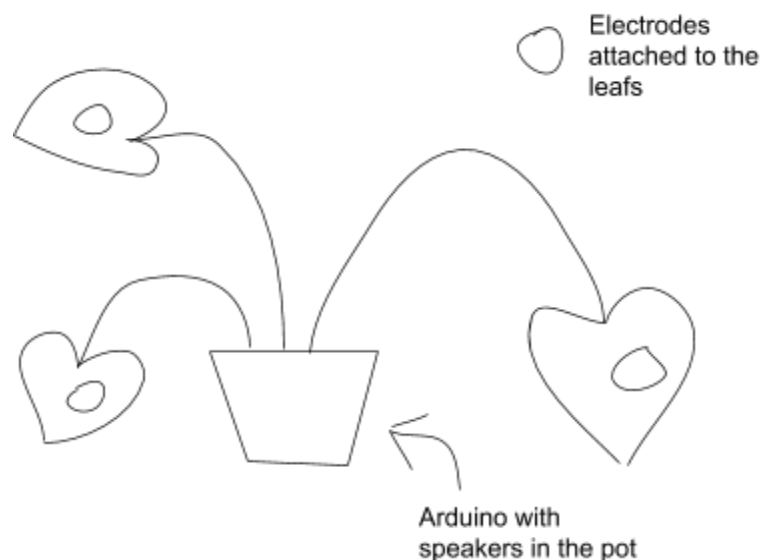
Vhs tapes were also for a lot of people their first contact with some sort of hacking. Since you are able to record anything that goes on the television, a lot of people would record movies or shows on tape to rewatch them later. I still see the vhs tape as a an item full of possibility. It is something right now but can be something else later on if you want it to. Having the ability to change is a sort of basic interaction that increase the value of an object. It could be a platform for creative people to do creative things. I am quite interested in the tape technology and I might try to find ways to use them in cool installations or experiments.



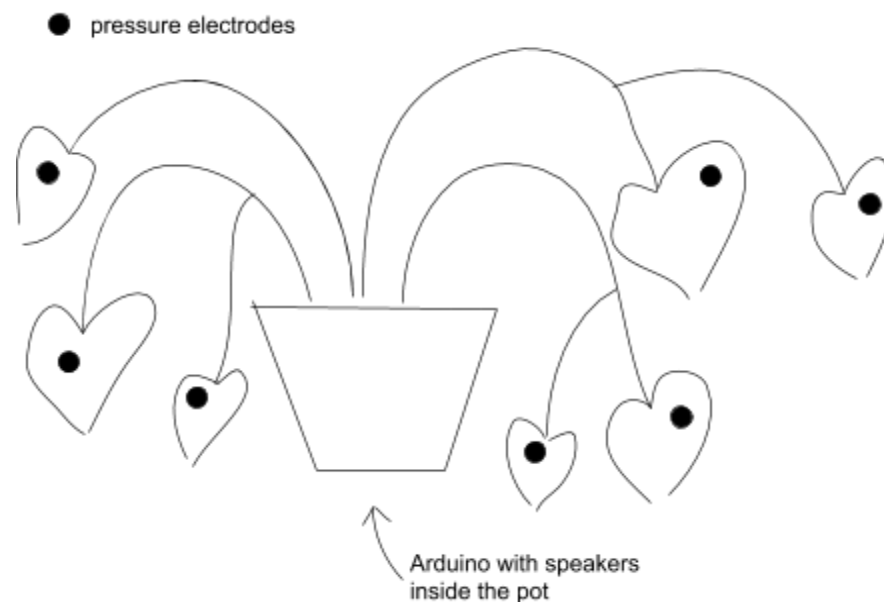
The classic vhs tapes are made of plastic which makes the box of the cassette not conductive but the magnetic tape inside is very conductive. The boxes have a very nice retro anime look full of colours that were appealing to me when I was a kid. There is something that I love about these colours and the pokémon universe will always be appealing to me. It is quite sad that all of the cassettes were classic black with only the name of the movie on it. Using these cassettes for something else than reading them through a vhs player will have nothing to do with pokémon unless I somehow use the carton box too.

Favorite thing, the philodendron plant:

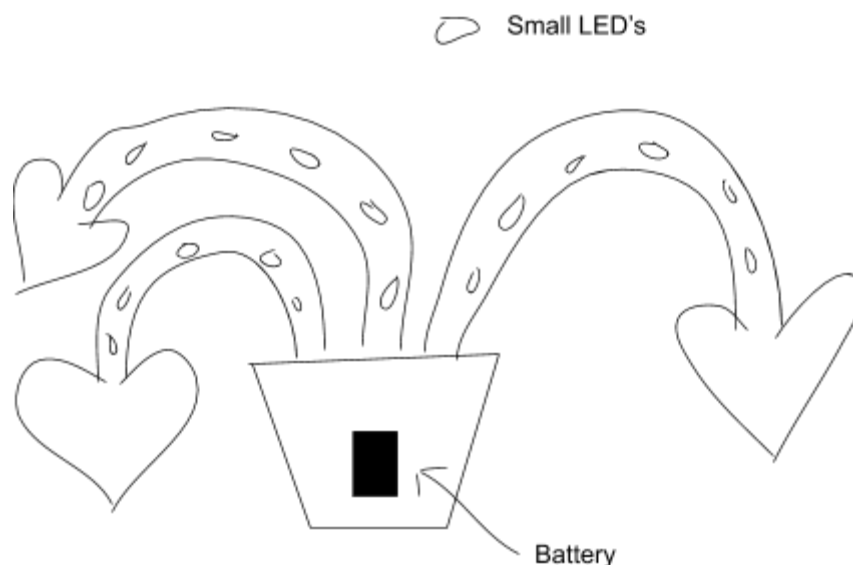
My favorite thing is for sure the philodendron plant. It can be used in many different ways but I am interested in it's conductive properties. One idea would be to make a soundscape that would represent the flow of liquids that travels the plant. Using electrical datas and small speakers, I'd love to try a permanent plant soundtrack or something in this idea. It is not very interactive, but I enjoy permanent installations.



Another idea is to use the leaves as controllers for a midi instrument. Basically every leaf would be a note and by touching them you could play an instrument of your choice. This has been made before, but it is interesting to use new things to create music with and in terms of actual music playing these kind of instruments can help creators think outside their safe zone and come up with new melodies.



My last idea would be to use the plant as artificial night light, something that could glow by itself. This could be very ambitious and I have no idea if it is possible to realise, but I imagine a plant that glows during the night using super small LED's inside of it and using only the plant's own conductivity. It could be battery powered, but without the use of wires. Since LED's are polarized I have no idea if it can work, but if it does I'd put a light sensor with it so it can be a beautiful piece during the night.



My favorite idea is the third one, the glowing plant idea. Since it has no interaction element to it, I'll mix it up with a toy that I have at home. It's a star wars force trainer that uses an EEG headset to scan brainwaves and make a small ball levitate with you concentrate. I've heard that I can analyze the datas from the EEG headset with an arduino so with those datas I could make the LED's have different colors depending on the level of concentration of the user.

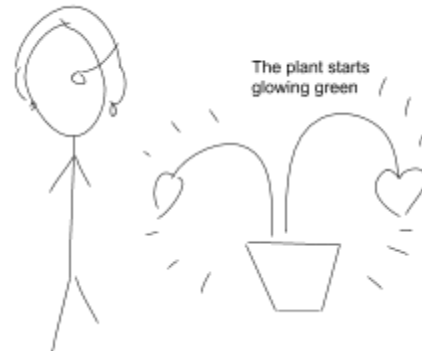
#1



EEG headset with electrodes behind ears and on forehead

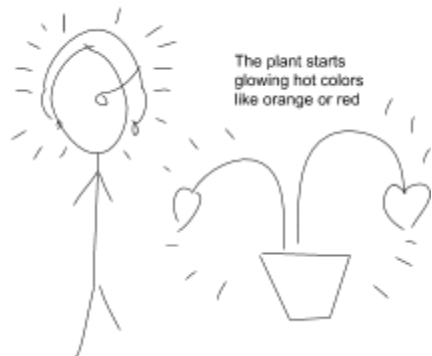
#2

User puts on the headset and turns it on



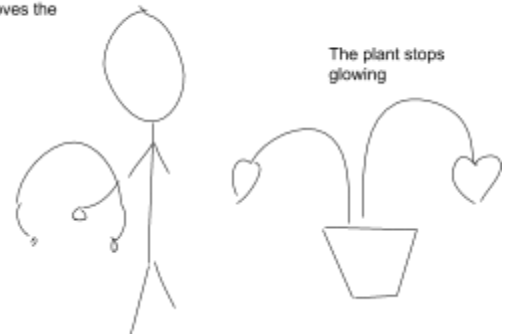
#3

The user concentrates harder to change the plant's color



#4

The user removes the headset



It is a very basic type of interaction, basically a 0-0 (reacting) where sensors become the inputs for another system. If the user can control his thoughts and the output of the EEG headset data's, then he can use the plant as an input for his own interaction with the headset and we have a feedback loop. We can now have a 1-1 (Balancing) system where the plant adjusts it's color while the user do the same with his brain waves.