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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

JOYGRIEF: A Collaged Interview

A thesis paper submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

DIGITAL ARTS AND NEW MEDIA

by

Chelsea Jones

December 2019

The Thesis of Chelsea Jones
is approved:

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Acting Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ABSTRACT

Chelsea Jones *JOYGRIEF*

JOYGRIEF is a multiple-channel sound installation. It is an 8-channel interview collage involving field recorded samples of interviews conducted by the artist. The main focus of the interviews are death, mortality, and joy, and go into more specific topics such as the deaths of loved ones, war, suicide, feelings regarding one's own mortality, cultural practices surrounding death, and more. The clips are played randomly from random speakers interspersed with silence in order to create a confrontational and uneasy environment that is at the same time immersive, reflective, and minimalist. Within this sound collage common and divergent themes emerge, connecting visitors to the human experience and leaving them to meditate on some of life's most difficult feelings.

Speakers are arranged in an evenly-distributed circle (or, octagon) within a plain white-walled space. People can stand in the middle of the speakers or walk around and between them. The speakers are placed on stands to be nearer to ear-height. The speakers are connected to an 8-channel interface and interview clips are randomized and distributed by a Max patch.

This piece is an exercise in exorcising my own personal experiences with and feelings toward death and mortality as well as tackling the Zeitgeist of this era. This Zeitgeist is metaphorical and actual death and destructive change that is happening

politically, socially, economically, ecologically, religiously, intellectually, etc. all over

the world and which can be seen plainly even within our own UCSC microcosm.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the beings and places and things we have lost, to our collective grief, and to whatever it is that makes us hold on.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Jumpo the Rejected Kitty for being the best fluffy security blanket a grad student could have. Thank you Biscuit, Roosevelt, Barnabus, YoYo, and Yin-Yang. RIP Onslo. Thank you to the UCSC forest for being such a beautiful place to exist. Long live the Trailer Park.

When I wish as now to tell of critical incidents, persons, and events that have influenced my life and work, the true answer is all of the incidents were critical, all of the people influenced me, everything that happened and that is still happening influences me.

John Cage

TOUCH POEM VI

Ask people to come.
Invite only dead people.

1964 spring, Yoko Ono

Last week my best friend and I drove to Safeway to buy a pineapple. Like most people who buy pineapples, who are looking for that little extra zip in their fruit salad, or mixed beverage, or tropical summer cookout, we bought the pineapple with a very specific goal in mind. Our goal was to take it to a cliff at the edge of the Pacific Ocean and toss it into the sea.

You might now be asking yourself, why the hell did they want to throw a pineapple into the sea? For a prank? For fun? To be law-defying hoodlums? Is this what those Tide pod-eating young people have moved on to now?

Well, sort of. We did want to have fun. We would also probably be considered law-defying hoodlums by a lot of people. However, we did have a greater purpose in mind. Or, beyond purpose—a ritual.

When most people think gravestones, they think flowers. People get some flowers, and they put them on a gravestone. This is a common ritual. People put the flowers as an offering, or to show respect for the departed, to show the departed that they have not been forgotten, to do *something* because they don't know what else to do when visiting the piece of dirt that their loved one lies underneath.

When my 18-year-old brother died in 2013, my father didn't put flowers on his grave. It didn't feel right to him. It didn't feel like a token that represented my brother's spirit, or the way he was in life.

So, my dad went to the grocery store, and he bought a pineapple. Ever since then, our family has had the tradition of putting a pineapple on top of my brother's grave whenever we visit him.

But back to the ocean. The anniversary of my brother's death had just passed. Living in Santa Cruz, I was unable to join my family in the pilgrimage to his gravesite this year. I was sad and lonely and felt the need to do something. So, I recruited my best friend who happened to be visiting me, and we went off to buy a pineapple.

We bought the pineapple without a hitch. It was the very last pineapple in the store, so it must have been a sign. We jumped back into the car and were heading to Westcliff when we drove past. . .

. . . a loose dog.

Now, this dog was obviously a loose dog, and not a stray dog. He had a collar (but strangely, no license). He was incredibly friendly. He was sniffing around houses and fences in that wonderful loose dog kind of way that both says "I feel totally comfortable and ok with this situation right now" and "I have no idea what I'm doing".

The dog started following us around and long story short this pineapple-throwing mission turned into thirty minutes of driving around the neighborhood asking people if they had lost a dog until we finally gave up and drove the happy but

slightly confused German Shepard to the doggie shelter for a night of R&R before his owner (thank goodness) picked him up the next day.

Needless to say, by the time we dropped the dog off at the shelter, my friend and I were tired, it was past midnight, and we had run out of hooliganizing energy. We went back to my house and immediately fell asleep. The pineapple is still sitting on a table in my room.

I'll use it in a brother/death ritual + hooliganizing sesh some other day.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis paper explores the thesis project entitled "*JOYGRIEF*" that I created in UC Santa Cruz's Digital Art and New Media MFA program. It was an eight-channel sound installation examining the connection between and experiences of grief and joy. I pursued these subjects artistically in order to deal with my own trauma surrounding mortality, as well as to learn about other people's experiences with grief and joy. I used the sound installation format to share that information with others in a creative, emotional, and thought-provoking way. My goal was to open the audience to thinking and talking about these often difficult subjects. My research explores the subjects of grief and joy through ethnographic interviews with different people from different backgrounds and with different life experiences. This paper covers the artistic, literary, and theoretical foundation of my piece, a summary of related projects I made that proceeded this piece, the process of conceiving, constructing, and exhibiting the thesis project itself, as well as the piece's reception, limitations, and second version.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review discusses the historical, conceptual, and artistic groundwork of *JOYGRIEF*, as well as the research methodology used in its creation.

Sound Installations, Spatial Music, and Octophony

American artist Max Neuhaus coined the term "sound installation" in 1971. In discussing the concept of sound installation, Neuhaus said, "Traditionally, composers have located the elements of a composition in time. One idea which I am interested in is locating them, instead, in space, and letting the listener place them in his own time" (Neuhaus 1974).

However, composers had the idea of arranging sound in space long before the term "sound installation" existed. Enda Bates says in his book *The Composition and Performance of Spatial Music* (2009), "Spatial music is often closely associated with technological developments in the twentieth century, yet the use of space as a musical parameter is much older. Call-and-response patterns can be found throughout history in many different cultures and musical traditions" (Bates 114). Space began to be considered in western art music as early as the Renaissance. Italian composers Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Alessandro Striggio, and British composer Thomas Tallis are examples. Their choral music took advantage of the fact that members of the choir were divided into different choir lofts within the cathedral. In

Tallis's piece *Spem In Alum* (1573), forty vocal parts were arranged into eight separate choirs (Bates 116). In the early 20th century American composer Charles Ives implemented spatialization in several of his pieces. One example is the piece *The Unanswered Question*, written in 1908 and edited from 1930-35. It involved three different groups of instruments placed in different areas, arranged so that they weren't able to see each other. The woodwinds were placed onstage, the strings offstage, and the single trumpet was placed somewhere far off, often a balcony. "In much of Ives' music, space is used to clarify and define the various overlapping yet independent musical layers, and other composers at the time were also beginning to experiment with the layering of disparate musical material" (Bates 119). Like *The Unanswered Question*, *JOYGRIEF* used space between sonic parts, in its case audio speakers, to clarify and define different voices, and to increase emotional and aesthetic impact.

Octophony is a type of spatialization. Octophonic electronic music involves sound derived from eight distinct sources, compared to the usual pair of left and right stereophonic speakers used in amplified music. Over the years there have been many electronic music composers and sound installation artists who have worked in the eight-channel format. The earliest known octophonic piece was *William's Mix* (1951-53) by John Cage. It featured eight simultaneously playing quarter-inch tape reels (Collins, 2010). Another famous composer to work in this medium was Karlheinz Stockhausen. His eight-channel pieces *Sirius* (1977), "Invisible Choirs" from *Thursday from Light* (1980), and "Choir Tape with Tone Scenes" from *Monday from Light* (1988) all involved eight speakers or eight pairs of speakers arranged in a circle.

Another piece he made, *Tuesday from Light*, featured eight speakers arranged in a cube shape (Stockhausen & Kohl 1993). Similarly, *JOYGRIEF* was a spatialized octophonic piece and alluded to its predecessors in its physical setup of eight speakers placed in a circle.

Stockhausen believed that the most important considerations in spatialized work were direction of the sound source(s) and its distance(s) (Bates 136). Like Stockhausen, J*OYGRIEF* considered directionality and distance. It was arranged in an inward-facing circle, with all speakers equidistant from each other and the circle's center. This configuration allowed audience members to stand in the middle of the installation and experience all sounds from all speakers equally, or, to choose to walk amongst the speakers to better locate certain sounds and have different sonic experiences.

John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, and Randomization

There are many examples throughout time and cultures of the use of randomization and chance operations within music, from the Indian raga to classical-era Musikalisches Würfelspiel to jazz improvisation. However, because I find their methods and conceptual reasoning most relevant to my research, I will be focusing on John Cage and Iannis Xenakis within this section.

John Cage famously used the *I Ching* to make decisions on different particular aspects of his compositions, from note choice to rhythms. However, his choices were not completely random. Cage once clarified that "my choices consist in choosing

what questions to ask" (Bernstein & Hatch 2001 235). He set parameters, and then would let the *I Ching* reveal the rest. I similarly set parameters in *JOYGRIEF* by deciding which elements of the piece I wanted randomized, and to what extent.

Cage tried to remove his personal influence in audience takeaway as well as his process. Cage did not assign meaning or goals to his pieces. He wanted his audiences to come up with their own meanings and interpretations. Composer Ulrich Krieger said that "it is the listener's emotion/association and not what the composer wants or intends the listener to feel! Cage felt that telling the listener how to hear and what to feel would deprive the listener of the right to have their own response— emotional or any other way…" (Haskins). This is the outcome I wanted for *JOYGRIEF's* audience.

One example of Cage's propensity toward indeterminacy was the use of time brackets in his series known as the *Number Pieces*. "In Cage's time brackets, the note or notes are placed inside a bracket, and are to be performed within a range of time given in seconds by the composer, and up to the performer's discretion within that time frame. This allows for multiple overlapping harmonies amongst players and a great deal of flexibility for the performer to shape the melody of the piece" (Wooley). This indeterminate duration and overlapping of parts was similar to the effect created between the eight randomized audio speakers used in *JOYGRIEF*.

Iannis Xenakis was one of the earliest composers to experiment with using computers to write compositions. He was also the father of stochastic music. "Stochastic" means a "sequence which combines random components with a selective

process so that only certain outcomes of the random are allowed to endure"
(Brenneman 1994). Xenakis went on to say that "stochastics makes a study of the
laws of large numbers as well as of infrequent occurrences, and the various aleatory
processes" (Xenakis 1966 12). Xenakis was also known to tailor his stochastic
methods depending on the problem he was trying to solve, or the artistic liberty he
wanted to take within the piece (Xenakis 1992 144). *JOYGRIEF* used stochastic
methods programmed into a computer to produce randomized yet curated results. I
chose different elements of the patch to be randomized to various degrees, such as
how often a new speaker would start playing, which specific speaker would start
playing, and which sound clip would play. Some compositional choices were made
using pure randomization, and others employed mathematical functions and statistics
to create a more controlled outcome. Like Xenakis, I would also "instill [my] own
personality in the sonic result" (Xenakis 1992 144) when deemed appropriate.

Forty-Part Motet **by Janet Cardiff**

Sound artist Janet Cardiff's 2013 installation *Forty-Part Motet* was another
influential piece. This installation involved individual raised audio speakers on
speaker stands which each played a recording of a different individual singer in a
particular Renaissance-era choral piece (Kramer 2018). Her minimalist approach of
simply using one speaker to represent each individual voice/person was influential to
me. *JOYGRIEF* also used separate audio speakers to represent different individual
voices that joined with the rest of the voices in order to create a sonic whole. While
each speaker did not represent the same specific individual throughout the duration of

my thesis piece, one clip was played from one individual person at a time per speaker. Visually, the setups of both pieces allowed the audience to focus on the audio rather than be distracted by what they were seeing. The spare setup also helped evoke a sense of respect or reverence for the sound. The actual audio of both pieces also added to this effect: *Forty-Part Motet* "performed" Thomas Tallis' grand liturgical piece *Spem in aluim*, and *JOYGRIEF* presented intimate real-life conversations about grief and joy. The words of both pieces spoke to the highs and lows of the human experience as well as evoked the divine, or the nature of existence. Physically, the setup of both pieces helped the listener locate different voices in the context of physical space. This arrangement in space added to the illusion of being in the presence of real living people rather than an unliving installation.

Question Bridge

Question Bridge (2012) is described on its website as "an innovative transmedia project that facilitates a dialogue between Black men from diverse backgrounds and creates a platform for them to represent and redefine Black male identity in America." ("Question Bridge"). It was created by a group of artists led by Chris Johnson, Hank Willis Thomas, Bayette Ross Smith, and Kamal Sinclair. It uses five screens arranged side by side in a darkened room. It displays curated video clips from interviews of one hundred and forty black American men. The piece alternates between interviewees asking questions directed towards black men as a general population, and other interviewees answering the given question. They speak on a variety of subjects, from masculinity to education to stereotyping. Different screens

turn on and off at different times as different people ask and answer questions. Sometimes only one screen is playing, sometimes two or three, and sometimes all five. This makes it feel like a group conversation, even though all of the interviews are taking place in different places at different times. The entire piece lasts for a total of three hours and is played on a loop.

Question Bridge and *JOYGRIEF* are both multimedia sound installations that use interwoven clips from various interviews with various people to create a larger story. They include interviewees from assorted backgrounds to highlight variety of experience and to draw connections. This also helps engage a sense of community. Both pieces use different numbers of simultaneous voices/interviews at different times in order to illicit reactions from the audience. While *Question Bridge* is presented as a conversation that the audience watches, *JOYGRIEF* is presented as a story being told to the audience. Both hope to spur the audience into thought and conversation about their respective subject matters.

Viewing Platform

Viewing Platform (2001-2002) was an architectural work that was constructed at Ground Zero in New York City shortly after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. DS+R design studio's website says "the temporary Viewing Platform was built at Fulton Street several weeks after 9/11 to address the public's desire for a dignified place to view Ground Zero without impinging on the urgent recovery effort. Elevated 13' above the ground and over three hundred feet in length, the viewing

platform provided a 180-degree view of the site. The primary materials are metal

scaffolding, plywood and rough decking. The platform was conceived and executed

in collaboration with David Rockwell and Kevin Kennon" ("Viewing Platform").

Viewing Platform and *JOYGRIEF* had many similar goals. Both created a

space that invited reflection on grief and the human experience. Both were

aesthetically simple to bring the subject matter to the forefront and show respect and

humbleness towards it. In an interview, architect David Rockwell said "it led us to

using design solutions that created as few filters between the viewer… and the

experience as possible. It's all incredibly humble material. It's scaffolding and

plywood." ("A memorial at Ground Zero"). This unassumingness allowed the

audience to feel their own feelings and get what they wanted out of the experience.

Both pieces were seen as a dialogue between the artist(s) and others. Rockwell said,

"I think what we were most interested in was promoting a kind of dialogue that we

felt may not have been happening enough in this city, about what's really happening

there" ("A memorial at Ground Zero"). Similarly, one goal of *JOYGRIEF* was to

promote dialogue on difficult subjects that are not happening often enough.

Ethnography

In preparation of collecting interviews for my thesis piece, I engaged the

subject of ethnography and read books by two anthropologists. Bruce Jackson's

Fieldwork (1987) provided many helpful tips and tricks on conducting interviews. He

also had a lot of examples of what -not- to do during an ethnographic interview that

were both enlightening and entertaining. These cautionary tales helped me remember to do things like always double-check that my recording device was running, and to ask questions that helped guide the interviewee into storytelling rather than one-word responses. Kirin Narayan's book *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov* (2012) gave helpful examples of hers and other peoples' experiences in ethnographic writing. Her book helped me better understand the ethnographic process. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by psychologist and lecturer Marshall Rosenberg (2015) was another key text that informed my approach to interviewing. It contained a lot of great tools to help effectively communicate with others, especially on delicate subjects. Key elements of his approach included letting people tell you what they think or feel without judgement or butting in with your own opinions, and clarifying what a person was saying by repeating it back to them in different words.

Another important work I read on the subject of narrative studies was the article "Taking A Narrative Approach To Grief Research: Finding Meaning In Stories" by professor emerita, psychologist, and grief expert Kathleen R. Gilbert (2002). She encouraged creative expansion of the word "narrative". Gilbert said, "Rather than thinking in terms of writing a research report, narrative scholars might consider ways of performing their finished document--which might then become another narrative text, worthy of further analysis" (Gilbert 228). She then went on to give examples of different plays based on real life grief narratives, leaving a blank space where creators of other art forms may jump in and try the same approach. As an

ethnographic and autoethnographic study that has been made into a sound installation, *JOYGRIEF* was an embodiment of this idea.

Gilbert had many thought-provoking quotes on approaching storytelling in research, in the ways that we listen to, analyze, interpret, and reconstruct stories. She said:

> "Story telling is integral to research. We may ask others to tell us stories, and we construct meta-stories to explain what we have found that transcends and yet binds together individual stories. As has been alluded to before, a narrative is not "the" truth, there may be multiple views on the same event and each one has an element of truth to it. As one moves from the story told by the participant to the final representation, in whatever form the research report may take, the "truth" moves through and is altered by a number of filters, and with each filter, something is gained and something is lost. So, it is important to remember that the researchers filter the information they receive. They do not act as a conduit of information, but as co-constructors of a finished narrative. They must always be aware that the finished report is a narrative created by the writer/researcher, that has come from the narratives of others" (Gilbert 228).

This was an important idea that I took into consideration while deciding how to present and showcase the interviews I took. However, this quote also shows that

once you filter a story, it starts becoming your own story. As Gilbert continued, "The telling of the story creates a new story, as well as new interpretation and understanding of the story. The researcher cannot not influence the story" (228).

Autoethnography

Autoethnography, as the word suggests, is an ethnography of the self. It is defined as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience...A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner 273). Ethnomusicologist Tanya Merchant says that "through autoethnographic method, it is possible to analyze and discuss oneself as a research subject, as well as the person engaged in the act of research" (Merchant 129). In *JOYGRIEF* I studied myself as a subject within the context of the interviews I conducted. During my interviews with others I inevitably would make comments on and tell stories about my own life and experiences in the subject matter. I did this in order to connect with the interviewee in our similar experiences and to make them feel more comfortable sharing their own. Including my own voice and stories in the sound clips used in the finished sound installation was an intentional decision that added more voices and experiences to the piece and made it more inherently self-reflexive.

An article entitled "Diving into Autoethnographic Narrative Inquiry: Uncovering Hidden Tensions Below the Surface" by academic Brooke B. Eisenbach (2016) especially resonated with me. Using the apt metaphor of jumping into a swimming pool rather than slowly getting used to the water, she spoke about the challenges she experienced with the balance of being vulnerable as well as accurate in her self-research. This is an area I had to navigate in several ways. Firstly, I had to come to terms with the fact that I was including myself in the research and the piece at all. Eisenbach says, "Why should my story remain hidden? Why not share my reality and, in doing so, provide opportunity to further our discussion and understanding of this shared experience? ... After all, why ask others to extend their vulnerability if I am not willing to do so myself?" (604). I agreed with this sentiment and applied it to my thesis piece and my interactions with others while I conducted research. I also had to think about the balance of my own opinions and experiences to those of the people I interviewed. After all, I wanted the piece to be about many people's experiences, and not just my own. Even if I wanted to use my research on grief and joy in part to learn about myself, I wanted the piece I created from that research to be about a universal experience.

Other Readings

Dance choreographer Twyla Tharp's book *The Creative Habit: Learn It And Use It For Life: A Practical Guide* (2006) was inspiring to my approach to writing and research. When creating new dance pieces, her approach to research was incredibly thorough. She went beyond the necessary, researching things that were

related to her subject matter as support material in order to make sure that she represented stories, time periods, characters, and more as accurately as possible. She employed rigorous methods to stay on track and had an unwavering routine. In her book, she also included exercises to expand one's creative practice. Her approach to life demonstrates the payoff of hard work. Inspired by Tharp, I expanded my research, delving into sources that would not necessarily be useable for my thesis paper, but which gave me a more well-rounded appreciation of the subject matter I pursued, and which might very well aid me in future studies.

PREVIOUS WORKS SYNOPSIS

WHAT HAVE I TO DREAD

My thesis project is the second sound collage project I have made. My first, entitled *WHAT HAVE I TO DREAD*, was made while I was an undergraduate at UCSC. I was awarded a Porter College Undergraduate Fellowship grant and used it to make an audio-video collage installation on the subject of Ferguson, MI and the police brutality and anti-black violence happening there. It was made in collaboration with DANM '16 graduate Andrea Steves and was shown in the Dark Lab at DANM during the 2015 "MFA Rejects" show on June 8th. It involved three televisions of various sizes with four audio speakers and a loudspeaker interspersed between them, all arranged in an inward-facing arc shape. Each audio speaker played a different two or three hour-long looping audio track and each tv played different looping two or three hour-long video recordings of newscasts, podcasts, and interviews about the police brutality, anti-black violence, and protests in Ferguson, Missouri. Every three minutes the loudspeaker played a lofi recording I made of the old hymn "Leaning On The Everlasting Arms". It was supposed to be ironic, sad, pained, and angry. The purpose of the piece was both to give exposure to the things happening in Ferguson, and to express how I felt when I heard the news that Darren Wilson, the policeman who murdered innocent black teenager Michael Brown, would not be indicted.

I never showed this project again after this show or made new iterations of it

because I realized that it focused on my feelings rather than displayed a helpful

message or worked towards positive change. Especially as a white person, this

approach was not helpful or appropriate. While this project has since been scrapped,

the experience making it helped me get to know multimedia and sound installations in

practice, and gave me some novice experience in multimedia art showcasing.

In many ways *JOYGRIEF* grew out of *WHAT HAVE I TO DREAD*. It was an

installation using randomized sound collage to showcase difficult subject matter. It

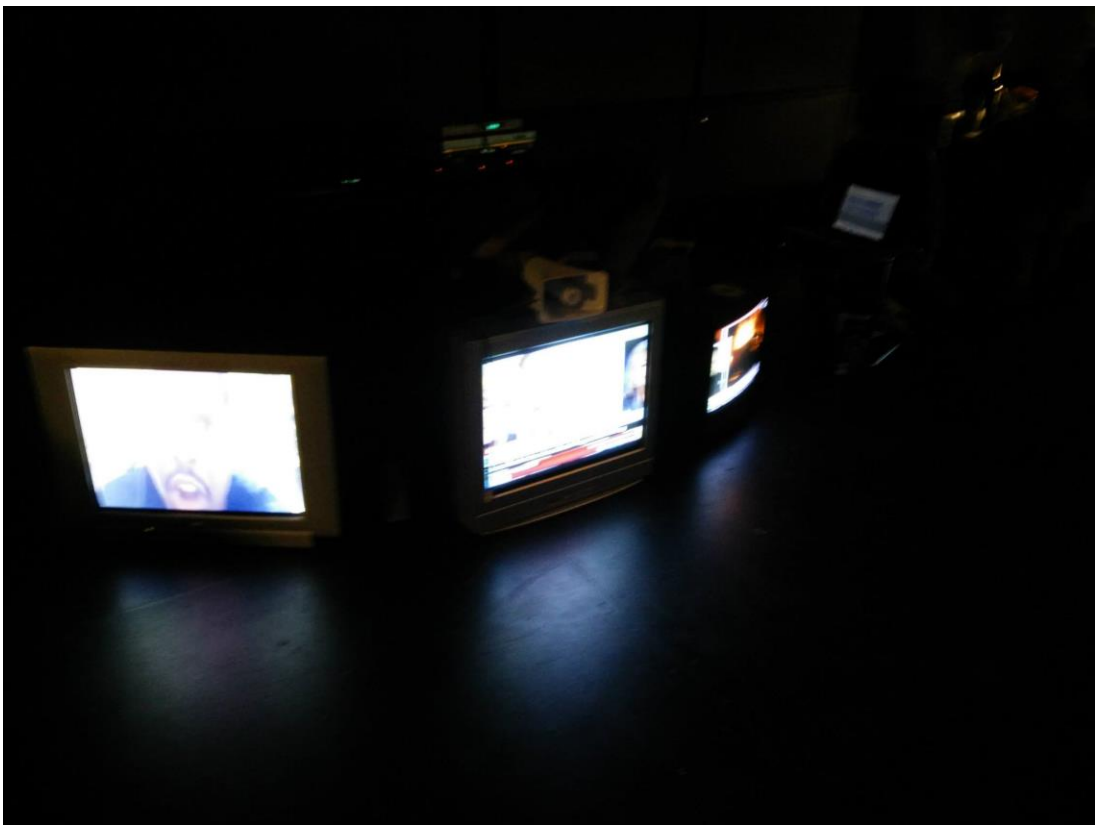also featured the concept of over-stimulation and information overload.

Figure 1

Living Memorial

　　When first envisioning my thesis project I had a huge grand scheme. I considered staging a wake, an interactive installation, and a live performance. I decided to focus instead on an interview collage installation. With this idea in motion, I created a "practice" piece for Fall Quarter 2018 Open Studios, in order to begin diving into the research of grief and the act of combining many different grief stories from outside sources.

　　At the end of Fall Quarter 2018 I created *Living Memorial*. It was set up in a makeshift space in the Light Lab in the DARC Building. The Light Lab is lined with slim closet spaces on two walls. I propped open two doors on opposite corners in the room to create 90-degree angles. These doors became the "walls" of a small "room" about 3'x3' wide. I draped a large black cloth over the "doorway" and participants would enter the room by pushing aside the curtain. They would see a wall in front of them with a taped-up arrow pointing to the left. They would then walk left down a short hallway that led to a small white table lit up from below by white circular push-on lights. On the table were strips of white paper, scotch tape, and several black sharpies. To their left, participants would then come across another small chamber, where the memorial itself was located. On the ground in the corners of the room were push-on lights that lit everything from below, creating a dramatic, eerie, and memorial-like effect. On the left wall of that small chamber was a printed sign that said in black lettering "This is a living memorial. Feel free to just observe or add your own." To seed the project, some volunteers and I taped strips of white paper were

taped that had relationships written on them to the front-facing wall (for example, mother, grandmother, friend, uncle, etc). On the wall to the right we taped up strips of white paper with causes of death written on them (cancer, old age, car accident, etc). My goal was to get people to write their own personal relations and causes of death of those relations, and add them to the wall as well.

This piece was inspired by two things: the general concept of memorial, and the desire to have people (including myself) connect to one another in the universal experiences of grief and death. While making the project I ruminated on memorials that were created for many people. I was especially thinking about the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C. ("The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall" 2019). To me, the Vietnam Memorial represented the most perfectly executed example of a minimalist desolate, oppressive, depressive, stark monument. It was straightforward: no frills, no nonsense, no sugarcoating the great tragedy of the Vietnam War and the American lives lost there. I was similarly inspired by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin ("Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: The Holocaust Memorial"). Like the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, it was a stark reminder of needless violent death. *Living Memorial* also attempted to evoke burial chambers such as the dark compact halls inside the pyramids of Egypt's Old Kingdom (Frankfort 1941).

one person at a time
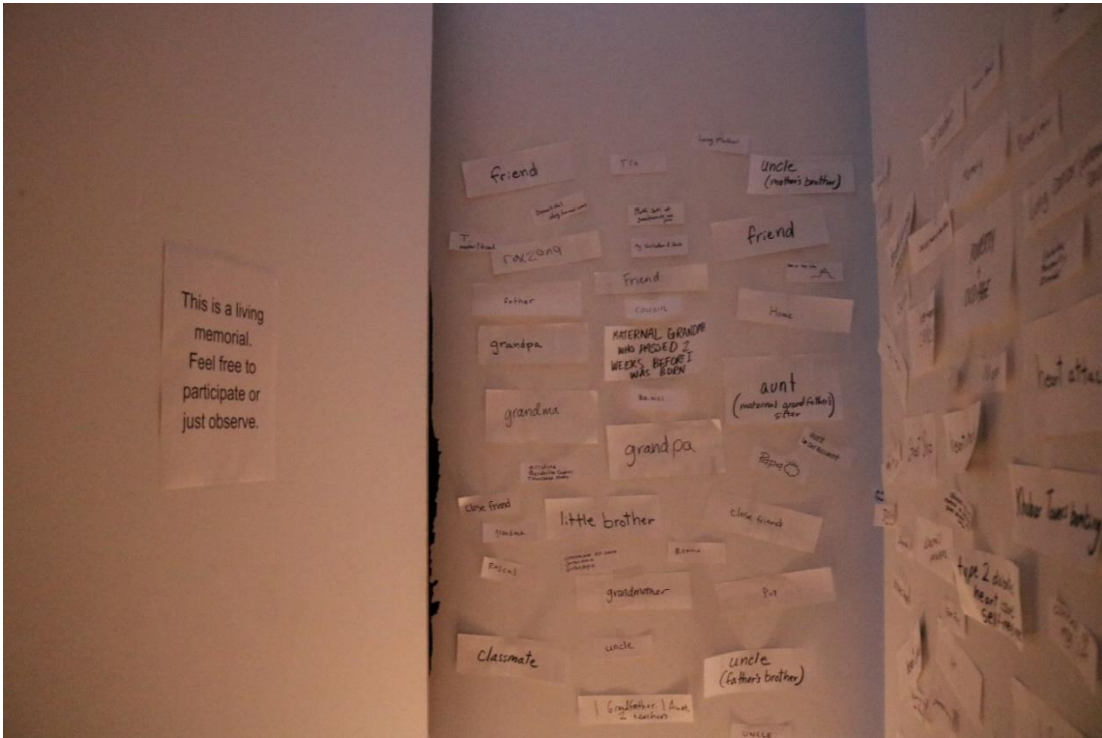
Figure 2 (pg 23), Figure 3 (above), Figure 4 (below), Figure 5 (pg 25)

friend

uncle
(mother's brother)

I

roxana

friend

Friend

father

cousin

Home

grandpa

MATERNAL GRANDMA
WHO PASSED 2
WEEKS BEFORE I
WAS BORN

aunt
(maternal grandfather)
sister

grandma

grandpa

close friend

little brother

close friend

Rascal

grandmother

Pet

classmate

uncle

uncle
(father's brother)

1 Grandfather, 1 Aunt,
2 teachers

UNCLE

drunk driving
car accident

career

Ghost Ship

heart

DOVE

heart attack

Figure 6

Yoko Ono and the ethos behind her pieces especially influenced this piece---

her interactive pieces are made in great part to connect people, bring people together,

and work towards greater societal goals like world peace and love. Her famous Wish

Tree piece, in which viewers are asked to make a wish, write it down on a piece of

paper, fold the paper in half, and tie it to a "wish tree", especially *inspired Living*

Memorial (Ono "WISH TREES"). Just like my piece, the audience is given a prompt

or instruction, and then they take strips of paper, write on them, and add them to the

piece. Like my piece, viewers are welcome to participate, or just view and appreciate

the piece. One also thinks of other collaborative and participatory Fluxus pieces such

as Marina Abramović's 1975 participatory piece *Rhythm o* in which she provides

objects and allows the audience to use them to do whatever they like to her body

(Abramović & Iles 1998). These pieces also involve a time element: The pieces are very different at the beginning than they are at the end (Lushetich 2011).

Living Memorial was shown in the same room as an installation that used projected light and images, so the room was dimly lit. In order to help people find the entrance, I placed a music stand to the right of the curtain "door" with a printed out paper sign on it that simply said "one person at a time". I decided to limit the amount of people who could come in at a in order to keep the tight-quartered piece from getting too crowded and claustrophobic, to give people time alone with the content, and to prime people for a private, reflectiv**e** experience. In case the piece was overwhelming, emotional, or triggering for people, I wanted them to have the ability to collect themselves privately, and feel comfortable to add anonymous contributions to the walls without having the watchful eyes of others, or without feeling any sort of pressure to add something, or not to add something.

A lot of comparisons can be drawn between *Living Memorial* and *JOYGRIEF*. With both pieces I wanted to learn something from other people in regards to grief and the human experience. I also wanted others to participate in the pieces' creation. This was partially to help me personally feel closer to other people and less isolated. It was also to signify the universality of experiences with grief and death, and hopefully, to help others feel uplifted, supported, and less alone in those experiences.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS PROJECT

Interviewing

With a universal experience such as death, I wanted my thesis project to have as many perspectives and experiences represented as possible. I interviewed people of different ages, ethnicities, religions, experiences with grief, etc. Interviews were solicited in different ways: I reached out to friends and family who I thought would have good stories to contribute; I posted on different social media about seeking out interviews; when I was chatting with someone about my thesis project, I'd often add that I was looking for interviews, or the person who I was talking to would volunteer before I could ask. In this way, I got dozens of volunteers.

Many people weren't just willing to be interviewed—they *wanted* to be interviewed. Some people I didn't even contact somehow heard about the project and asked me to interview them. A lot of people had been wanting to talk about the things they talked about during out interview for a long time, but just hadn't had the outlet for it. This project made people feel like they had permission to talk about things that are often so hard to bring up. For example, in my interview with my Aunt Sandie, who was grieving the loss of her mother (my grandmother), she said:

> "You know, I haven't thought about any of these things so I
> really appreciate you asking me these questions, because it's not
> something that I've, you know, intentionally reflected on although I've

caught myself thinking, 'oh, you know, I'm not sad about this

anymore' so-and l absolutely I miss my mom and like sometimes

things would happen at work or with a friend or with family I would

always call her and now it's like 'oh, I can't call her'. So I'm sad about

little things like that but it's not like this sadness I carry around"

(Woods).

It was a cathartic experience for both of us.

Many people treated the project as a form of therapy---my fellow DANM

cohort member Kathleen even said jokingly during our interview "I thought you were

supposed to be my therapist. Like isn't that what we're doing here? Like. . . come on

Chelsea give me the answers to life!" (Deck). I was a bit taken aback by this assertion

in the moment, but I now think it completely makes sense that someone would

interpret my project that way, especially considering the types of questions I was

asking, and the interview-bordering-on-'armchair psychologist' format.

Doing these interviews made me feel much closer to the family, friends, and

acquaintances I interviewed for this project. It gave me a chance to open up to them

as well. For example, my interview with Sean was more like a dialogue than an

interview. We would discuss a topic conversationally rather than structure the

conversation as a Q&A. Below is an example of a dialogue we had about recovering

from traumatic grief:

Sean: "[My doctor said], 'All of those things you thought you had, you have. It's valid, and it's really unhealthy.' Getting help with grief and loss is important so you don't get consumed."

Me: "I think I got so used to it that I was like this is who I am and what my life is. . . and I have to deal with it and I have to deal with it by myself."

Sean: "Grinning and bearing with it. . . choking it down til it eats you from the inside. Very Catholic."

Me: "[In Swedish Lutheranism] you deal with your problems by yourself. . . 'Just don't talk about it'. . ." (Draper)

Talking about all of these intense and very real feelings and experiences was something that we had all been needing. It gave us a chance to connect in our grief and sadness, rather than keeping it to ourselves, which humans sadly so often do.

This project wasn't originally meant to be autobiographical, or about my family in any sense of the word, in fact I had wanted the opposite of that. I wanted the piece to be universal and very separate from myself and my own experience. I purposely set up my piece in such a way that I thought would accomplish this. I was surprised when one of my fellow DANM students told me that they felt the piece was autobiographical, and about my family. They told me that after experiencing *JOYGRIEF* they now knew my family better. Similarly to when I originally tried to do a thesis project *not* on the subject of grief, when I tried to make my project *not* about me, my own experiences just kept creeping back up. As many artists know, the best muse is often yourself, and the story you can tell best is often your own. I guess it just took me a whole two years of graduate school to realize this in the context of grief and joy. I ended up with a sound installation that told my story through the filter

of other people's voices. My ethnographic foray unwittingly also became an autoethnographic one.

This autobiographical journey also manifested in other ways. I found that if I talked about my own experiences with the subject matter during interviews, my interviewees felt more comfortable talking about their own experiences. They felt a connection with me and knew I could empathize with them. I also found that many of my interviewees actually sought out dialogue with me about my experiences. We traded stories, encouragement, and advice. My aunt, currently grieving her mother, asked how I got through dealing with my brother's death (Woods). When I asked an interviewee about her dead best friend, she switched the conversation around and asked me the same exact question about my deceased brother (Draper).

I had a set format for the process of interviewing, which I then customized depending on the interviewee. Before beginning an interview, I gave potential interviewees a consent form describing the project and how their interview would be involved in it (see Appendix 1). It gave them choices such as in what contexts would they allow me to use their interviews, how they wanted to be identified, and if they wanted to remain anonymous. They would then sign the consent form. After this paperwork was taken care of, I would explain my process for conducting interviews and clarify the types of questions I would ask, make sure they were comfortable, and reassure them that they could end or redirect the conversation at any time. I would start the conversation with set jump-off questions, or ease into it by starting somewhere I knew the interviewee was comfortable. Some people wanted to jump

into the harder material surrounding grief right away. For the ones who needed easing

in or who seemed a little unsure, I first asked them questions about joy. This helped

them get comfortable within the interview process, and made it easier for them to talk

about their experiences as the conversation and topics progressed. The following is

the list of prepared questions I made as jump-off points to structure my interviews

when needed:

> What is your definition of joy?
>
> What does joy feel like?
>
> Tell me about a time where you experienced joy.
>
> What is your relationship to religion?
>
> How has death affected your relationship to religion? Why?
>
> How has religion affected your relationship to death? Why?
>
> What is your view on agnosticism?
>
> What is your view on atheism?
>
> How do you feel about the death of animals?
>
> What is the biggest impact that death has had on your life? How did you get through it?
>
> Have you ever had a near-death experience?
>
> Have you ever considered suicide? Why or why not?
>
> Have you ever attempted suicide? Why or why not?
>
> How do you process grief?
>
> What is grief?
>
> Are you afraid of death?
>
> Why or why not?

During the interviews I would occasionally jot down notes, but for the most part I tried to concentrate on the interview and the person in front of me, trusting the field recorder to pick up the information I would need later. When I ran out of questions, felt the conversation winding down, or noticed that the interviewee seemed to be losing interest or losing steam, I would wrap up the interview. I would do this by asking them if they had anything more they wanted to say, and if not, I would let them know that the interview was over. Then I would thank them for being willing to do the interview with me. Often before we went our separate ways, we would chat a little about the content of the interview. Some would enthusiastically ask to do a second interview where they could talk even more on the subject, or just in general request that we have more conversations like this in the future. Many would recommend that I talk to certain people who they thought would be good interview candidates. Everyone seemed satisfied and happy after the interview, which made me feel good too.

Setup and Technical Description

"*JOYGRIEF*" was installed at the Sesnon Porter Gallery at UCSC's Porter
College for the 2019 DANM MFA Thesis Exhibition. I installed it with the help of
friends Kaya Zekioglu and Chris Harbster from April 23rd to April 26th. It was
available for public viewing from April 26th through May 12th. The Sesnon Gallery is
divided into three different chambers--an entry room, a smaller back room, and the
larger main room which is located to the right, behind an archway. My project was
located in this larger room, along with Shimul Chowdry's *Stitching Solidarity*. Our
pieces were diagonal to each other, hers in the front left of the room and mine in the
back right, each taking up about an equal amount of space.

Here is the full materials list used in the *JOYGRIEF* installation:

Tascam DR-40X field recorder
Audacity DAW (software)
Max 8 (software)
Lenovo Ideapad 330 15 Touchscreen laptop
8 xlr cables
8 M-AUDIO BX5-D3 5" speakers
8 speaker stands
8 3-pronged speaker power cords
2 power strips
1 small wooden cupboard/stand to put the laptop on top of + to hide extra
supplies in
black gaffer's tape
scissors (to cut tape)

The physical aspects of the installation involved eight audio speakers arranged in an evenly distributed circle. The speakers were all 3' apart. The space was designed so that people could stand in the middle of the speakers or walk around and between them. The speakers were placed on stands, about ear-height for me, and a bit below that for anyone taller than 5' 2". The speakers were connected by a system of cables taped to the ground with black gaffer's tape in order to create a streamlined appearance and to stop anyone from tripping over the cords. The eight power cables were all connected from the speakers to an eight-outlet extension cord, and the eight xlr cables were plugged into a TASCAM US-16x08 (an 8-channel sound interface). This was attached by a USB cord to a Lenovo Ideapad 330 15 Touchscreen laptop which was playing a Max 8 patch that I wrote.

To start the Max patch, I first had to drop the folder of interview clips from my laptop desktop into a playlist box within the patch. I then had to press the start button. This sent a bang to a random timer loop. The random timer loop worked by picking a random number between 1 and 90. The timer loop would then wait that number of seconds to bang a randomly picked output channel out of the available eight. This affected only how often an individual speaker would be "asked" to start playing something. It could only pick an out (or, speaker) that was not currently playing. This triggered the chosen out to start playing either a randomly chosen interview clip or a randomly chosen amount of silence. It had a 3:1 chance of playing a sound clip to silence. That particular output channel would then be marked as "currently playing something" so that it would not be affected by the original timer

loop until the clip finished playing all the way through. If the channel chose to 'play' silence, the amount of silence played would be chosen by playing a random amount of silence between zero seconds and two and a half minutes. I used an exponential function to make the patch much more likely to choose a smaller chunk of silence rather than a larger amount of time. This would allow for some longer periods of silence in the installation so that there was variation in how often many speakers would be playing at once, rather than it being a constant cacophony. This allowed the piece to have some chaotic moments, and some peaceful and contemplative moments. Once the sound clip or silence ended, that channel would then again be un-marked as "currently playing something" so it could be re-added to the choices of channels currently available for a random clip or silence to be played out of. This process looped unendingly unless someone pressed the "PAUSE" or "RESET" button at the top of the patch.

This is the function I mentioned above used in the code:

$0 <= x <= 65$
$0 <= y <= 60$
total $= x^{1.1} + y$

Figure 7

I created a folder of almost one hundred sound clips from the various

interviews. Each interview had different amounts of clips made from its original

recording, depending on the quality of the interview and its length. I chose clips and

the lengths of those clips in different ways. If an interview contained a relevant

complete story, that whole story would be one clip. If the interview contained a lot of

good individual quotes, each of those quotes would be their own individual sound

clip. The clips ranged in length from a two and a half seconds to nineteen minutes

long to the longest clip size of an hour and five minutes. Most of the clips were

between about thirty seconds to ten minutes long.

The interviews were organized this way because of how I wanted to effect the

audience—there would be a mixture of complete narratives for people to grab onto,

random sound bites here and there, and full yet jagged stories, divided into multiple

clips, coming through different randomized speakers at different random times, not

necessarily in order. This would create familiarity mixed with surprising moments as

well as a confusion and feeling of lack of grounding that would resolve itself more

and more the longer an audience member listened. The idea was that people should

linger to absorb and listen.

GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The ideal audience for *JOYGRIEF* would be the general public in a gallery setting. The installation would probably be better suited for adolescents and adults, rather than small children, who may have a more difficult time grasping the subject matter.

The audience would interact with the piece by spending time listening to it. They would ideally listen for several minutes or more in order to better grasp the stories and feelings presented. It would also be ideal for an audience member to return to the gallery some other time to listen to the randomized installation again, and gain new insights. They could stand in the middle of the piece with all eight speakers facing them, or they could move around, listening closely to different individual speakers.

The goal of *JOYGRIEF* was to create a space where the audience could meditate on the subject matter, compare and contrast joy and grief, and open up to considering subjects which are often taboo and hard to talk and think about. I hoped to open a window of understanding to those who may not have experienced the situations and emotions talked about in the piece. I also hoped that the piece would help those who have experienced grief and similar difficult emotions to feel less alone. However, my biggest hope was for the audience members to come to their own conclusions, rather than have a specific message or moral shoved at them.

This is one of the reasons randomization was used within the piece. Randomization of processes allows the artist to separate themselves from the artwork to some extent. In an audio piece, this makes any number of outcomes possible. I also wanted to use randomization because joy and grief can often be unexpected, shocking, serendipitous, fleeting, overwhelming and any number of mixed emotions. I felt that randomization of the audio best represented this idea. This is also why I wanted the random elements to happen live in real time: I wanted the metaphor of life via dynamic processes.

This concept of connecting the programming of the installation to its subject matter also applied to its physical form. My visual aesthetic goal for the piece was stripped-down minimalism. I wanted an installation that was intriguing but did not distract from the audio content. The installation was to be bare and exposed, like the audio presented in the piece.

I also had personal goals in creating this piece which were technical, conceptual, emotional, and educational. My technical goals for the piece were to learn more about coding in Max MSP, to become more proficient with music software and hardware, and to create a physical installation. The conceptual goals were to continue working with the collage form as I had in previous work, to include the experiences of others in the creation of the piece, and to work within the confines of curated randomization. I wanted the randomization to be curated just enough to make sure the audience had the experiences that I desired, but not so curated that I, too, could not be affected, moved, and surprised by experiencing the piece. I wanted to gain insight on

how other people experienced joy and grief and how they dealt with those emotions and the experiences that created them. I wanted to learn more about grief, joy, death, life, and myself through the process of making the piece. This was just as if not more important to me then showing the piece to an audience.

REACTIONS

I received a strong positive reaction about my piece from most visitors at the exhibition. Many people were sincerely engrossed by the stories and lingered with their ear to a speaker for a good while before moving on to another speaker to hear more stories. Several people I didn't know came up to me and told me how they were touched by my piece. One person told me how he appreciated me making a piece on that subject and sharing those stories. He thought it was an important thing to be talking about. Other comments included that "[the] piece was really thoughtful and interesting. Sitting with it for a while made me reflect on a lot of stuff….I hope you're proud of the piece" (Magnuson, 2019) and that it "affected people" (Meshi, 2019). I received negative feedback from only a couple people, who felt they didn't get as strong of a feeling out of the installation as they had wished. I was curious about what these people had expected and what they were looking for. Different people have different relationships to and experiences with grief and joy. It would therefore make sense for them to have different reactions to an art piece about it. Something that strongly affects one person, might not affect another person at all. Just as I showed a whole range of human experiences within my piece, I wanted people to experience a whole range of emotions about it. I was happy that people were intrigued by the installation and got something meaningful out of it.

There were different reactions to the sound levels of the piece. Many people enjoyed the sound differences and didn't realize it was not intentional. They thought it added to the emotional intensity of other variations within the collage that I had purposefully included. One of my fellow DANM cohort members said "I honestly kind of liked how the volume for the different speakers had a big range, because it gave the piece a kind of uncertain (almost dangerous) feel that I think was appropriate to your theme" (Magnuson, 2019). During an art critique walkthrough, one faculty member said that she "didn't trust" my piece because she wanted to come up close to each speaker to listen because of the intimacy of the subject matter, but she was afraid to because she didn't want to hurt her ears if a particularly loud clip started playing immediately after a soft one. I thought it was interesting that these two people had similar experiences, but their reaction to it produced different emotions. This is exactly what I wanted out of my piece—a variety of emotional reactions, a sense of discomfort, and revelation into others' experiences with the subject matter. However, I also did not want to hurt people's ears, and if I were to redo this piece, would work to lessen sound differences between clips. While not a planned feature of the piece, this happy accident intensified the experiences of many audience members and helped me gain insight into how I might change the piece in future iterations.

LIMITATIONS

One of my limitations in the creation of *JOYGRIEF* was time. The DANM program is structured with four quarters focused on study, and two quarters focused on the thesis project and thesis paper. I conducted fourteen interviews, but only had time to retrieve quotes and include clips from eleven of them. This resulted in twelve voices in the piece, including my own. This caused the piece to have less variety and seem to be much more focused on the specific stories of a select group of people. Three voices, or one fourth of the total interviewees represented, (my dad, my grandma, and I) even talked about the same source of grief (the death of my brother). This meant that the included audio ended up giving the piece an inadvertent focus on my family, and therefore my own life and experience. This caused a different outcome than I expected, but gave me unexpected insights into my own life experiences and goals with the research. This wasn't a bad thing. As John Cage said, "Ideas are one thing and what happens is another" ("Focus Day 2012").

Almost thirty people volunteered to be interviewed. However, when I tried to coordinate some didn't respond, and some I could never find a date or time that worked for both of us. My ideal minimum number of interviews would have been twenty or thirty. This would have allowed a large variety of perspectives, voice timbres, and stories while still allowing the audience to pick up threads of connection and continuation within the randomly played clips.

My second limitation was the pool of people I decided to interview. I interviewed friends, family, classmates, teachers, and friends of friends. While I told myself that my main goal was to have a large variety of experiences and types of people represented, I also had other reasons for choosing my interviewees. I picked some specific people because I already knew they had poignant stories about their experiences with joy and grief. These people tended to be closer to me, such as my two best friends, Sean and Vanessa. Sean had experiences with the suicide of a close friend (Draper 2018). Vanessa's longtime partner had died in the Oakland Ghost Ship fire (Stevens 2019). They are also two of the most sincere people I know and work hard to incorporate joy and the fullness of living into their daily lives. This latter reason also applied to my parents. I chose other people because I knew they were very articulate and could provide high quality quotes. My grandmother and Sean fit this category. I chose some people because I knew they had applicable experiences I had not had. For example, my classmate Avital related stories of Jewish mourning customs (Meshi 2019). My classmate Shimul told me about ritualistically washing her recently diseased grandmother's body in Bangladesh (Chowdry 2019). I chose others because I wanted to use the interview to get to know them better. These people included my parents, my aunt Sandie, and my friend Davida. My choice of interviewees often relied on my previous knowledge of the individual. If I were to do this project or a similar project again, I would take more time to think about what I was trying to accomplish with the piece, and if it would be better realized with a more curated or more randomized group of participants.

The third limitation was the spaces I was able to interview people in. The interviewees lived in many different cities across California: I conducted interviews in Santa Cruz, Clovis, Kingsburg, Woodland Hills, and Sherman Oaks. One of my interviews was conducted over the phone, with me in Santa Cruz, and the interviewee in Marina. All of the interviews were recorded on a Tascam DR-40X field recorder in different locations. Examples of recording conditions include outdoors during high winds, in a car, walking down a path, indoors in a classroom with a lot of echo, and more. This meant that different levels had to be used for different locations, different voice volumes, different physical distances between me and the interviewee or the recorder and the interviewee, etc. For example, sometimes the recorder was set on a conference table in front of us, sometimes it was sitting on a bed between us, and sometimes it was held in my hand while we were walking or sitting in a car. These variations were not able to be resolved, as there was no practical way to have every volunteer interviewee recorded in the same location.

Technical ability was another limitation. This thesis project included the first Max patch I have ever made. I learned how to use and code in Max specifically for this project. While I have some beginner experience in some programming languages, I am not a programmer. The Max patch I made for this piece was complex and advanced in the context of programming in Max. For example, it involved a subpatch and multiple layers and types of randomization, all on different timers. The audio element involved eight separately defined and programmed outs instead of the typical one stereo out. The patch also included some high-level math that I hadn't used since

almost a decade ago in high school, as well as some types of math I had never used

before at all. My lack of fluency in the language made it difficult to solve some

problems in creating the experience I wanted out of the installation. This limitation in

technical ability meant that the patch did everything I had wanted it to do, but not as

well as originally idealized.

This limitation also applied to my sound production skills. While I can do

simple sound editing, I did not have the skills to equalize the volume of the sound

clips well. This also relates to the time limitation: I spent a lot of time on this issue,

but one two-year MFA program is not enough time to learn how to be a professional-

level sound designer or music producer.

The gallery space that I was displaying my piece in was another limiting

factor. My original ideal situation was for my piece to be in a room with white walls.

However, the Sesnon Gallery was painted a gray-green color because of a display that

had been in the room before setting up the DANM MFA Exhibition. In the end I

realized that the lack of white walls was nice in its own way, partially because it

removed the "empty white room" context of a gallery space to some extent

(O'Doherty 1986), and also just because it was a nice color.

Because I was sharing the room with another artist, I also had to consider her

piece when configuring mine. Because of this, *JOYGRIEF* wasn't in as wide of a

circle, or as far away from the walls as I would have liked (to be able to walk in a full

circle around and between each of the speakers, allowing consideration for those in

wheelchairs). I also had to make sure there was enough space between the two of our separate projects to leave enough room for people to move about in the gallery space, and to make sure people could obviously tell that our two separate projects were two separate projects. As experienced sound art curator Carsten Seiffarth said, "sound art does not tend to be about finished works of art, that only have to be brought from a studio and staged in a museal space. The on-site realization then shows how well the exhibition has been researched and prepared" (Seiffarth 2012). My piece came into the Sesnon Gallery unfinished, and was only able to be completed in experiencing and working within the confines of the space itself.

During the exhibition, one issue I experienced was that spectators talked a great deal while walking through the gallery and looking at the art. This made it hard to hear my piece unless observers went right up to it and put their ear near a speaker. This took away from the respectful, quiet, contemplative environment I wanted to create. It also made it harder to step back and listen to multiple speakers at once, which was kind of the point.

My piece was the only one in the Sesnon Gallery that involved sound. Because of this, I had to be aware of gallery visitors, and considerate of the other two pieces in the space, making sure my audio was not overpowering. However, it was still very present—I could hear some of the clips from my piece clearly even from the entrance of the gallery space. My piece affected the space around it and if I were to redo it, I would have it in a room or space by itself.

Audience members didn't stick around as long as I would have liked. In my ideal situation, people would have spent time with my piece for at least five or ten minutes. They would then have had time to hear multiple quotes, unravel different voices and stories, and more fully experience the overall effect. Many people did stay for at least a few minutes, which I appreciated. It appeared that only a few people glanced at the piece quickly, then walked away.

The final limitation I experienced during the showcasing of my project was technical difficulties. After I initially turned on the piece, the following days the curatorial staff inserted the wrong clips folder into the patch. This caused many people to experience the piece with only four interviews, rather than eleven. The piece ran for almost a week before I realized this mistake and corrected it. A few people told me that when they went into the gallery space, no sound was playing from the speakers. One friend told me that when he came to see my piece, he had to help the curator re-start it. I'm not sure if the piece was actually turned off or paused when he did this, or if the piece was just in one of its moments of randomized silence. One person told me that they stood around the gallery for a little bit in silence, confused, then the piece started playing. Another told me that the piece wasn't playing, so then the curator pressed the 'refresh' button and it started playing again. This feedback made me wonder how many other people had similar experiences, and how many people walked into my silent piece confused, and then left without actually experiencing it or knowing what it was. Apparently these sorts of experiences are not uncommon. Carsten Seiffarth, who has been a sound art curator for over 16 years,

said in an article on the subject of sound installations, "In the everyday life of an exhibition, a common occurrence is that the sound installations do not work properly due to missing instructions or operating procedures. I can recall many exhibition visits where I had to ask the exhibition staff to turn on amplifiers or press auto-reverse buttons. By the way, not sounding sound installations are often «overseen» or turned on or off according to the subjective sensitivities of the security staff" (Seiffarth 2012). To fix *JOYGRIEF*'s technical difficulties in the future, I would make instructions and usability for my piece clearer and more straightforward for curatorial staff. I would also check on the piece more often to make sure everything was running smoothly. I would leave a note alerting staff of the potential for randomized silences so they were aware that that was supposed to happen. I would also change the randomness settings on the Max patch so that clips would be triggered to play more often, and lessen the frequency of randomized silences.

JOYGRIEF 2.0

I was asked to make a second iteration of *JOYGRIEF*, or *JOYGRIEF 2.0*, by my thesis committee. *JOYGRIEF 2.0* is a 12-minute audio track that is an audio representation of an ideal version of the original *JOYGRIEF* installation. I created the audio track with an edited version of the original Max patch. While there were still eight individual independent parts, the piece was changed from having eight outputs to two. Half of the parts were on the left stereo track, and half on the right. I made and included clips from the three interviews I was unable to include in the original piece. This led to a total of one hundred and forty-four clips. I also edited all of the clips so their sound levels were all about the same. Finally, I changed the patch's maximum wait time to choose a new random channel to play out of from ninety to thirty seconds, which added greatly to the variety of textures, sounds, stories, and emotional impact of the audio track.

CONCLUSION

I created an interview-based sound installation in order to discover things about others, the human experience, and myself. I used the lens of grief and joy as a catalyst for human connection. Making this thesis project taught me many useful things about ethnography, interviewing, installation building, software coding, show curating, grief, joy, and connecting with others. If I had the chance, I would definitely show *JOYGRIEF* again. I would also like to try different configurations, such as different arrangements of speakers, or perhaps including different types of audio clip sources instead of only personal interviews. In any case, the process of creating this piece has been incredibly valuable to me. As I said during the student speeches portion of the opening day event of DANM's class of 2019 MFA Exhibition, "I may not have gained any more sense of meaning from this piece, or figured out what really happens after we die, but the act of creating this has brought me a sense of connection towards so many other people and real human stories that has been so precious and special to me."

*   *   *

      The pineapple was now rotting on the front porch. It had begun deflating

before I had the time to do anything with it post dog adventure. I didn't think it was

in good enough shape anymore to be an acceptable offering to my brother, and it was

a bit too squishy for me to want to put it in my car for the drive to the ocean anyway.

The idea of throwing it away made me feel guilty; it felt disrespectful to my brother. I

decided to strategically prop it up by some bushes near a friend's residence so that

whoever found a rotting pineapple sitting on the ground in the middle of Silicon

Valley suburbia would be confused and surprised. Sometimes things don't turn out

the way we expect, or the way we plan, but they are still good. They still teach you

something, they still give you insight, and they still add to your story. They might

even end up better than you ever expected. I thought about the dog that my friend and

I saved, and how he might have gotten hit by a car, or stolen, or worse if we hadn't

been driving towards the coast with that pineapple. Maybe my brother's spirit guided

us there. Maybe he had had a different plan than the one I started out with. I would

never know. I thought of the tech bros and well-off Bay Area retirees who would

come across the mysterious, hidden, squishy pineapple. I thought of their reactions. I

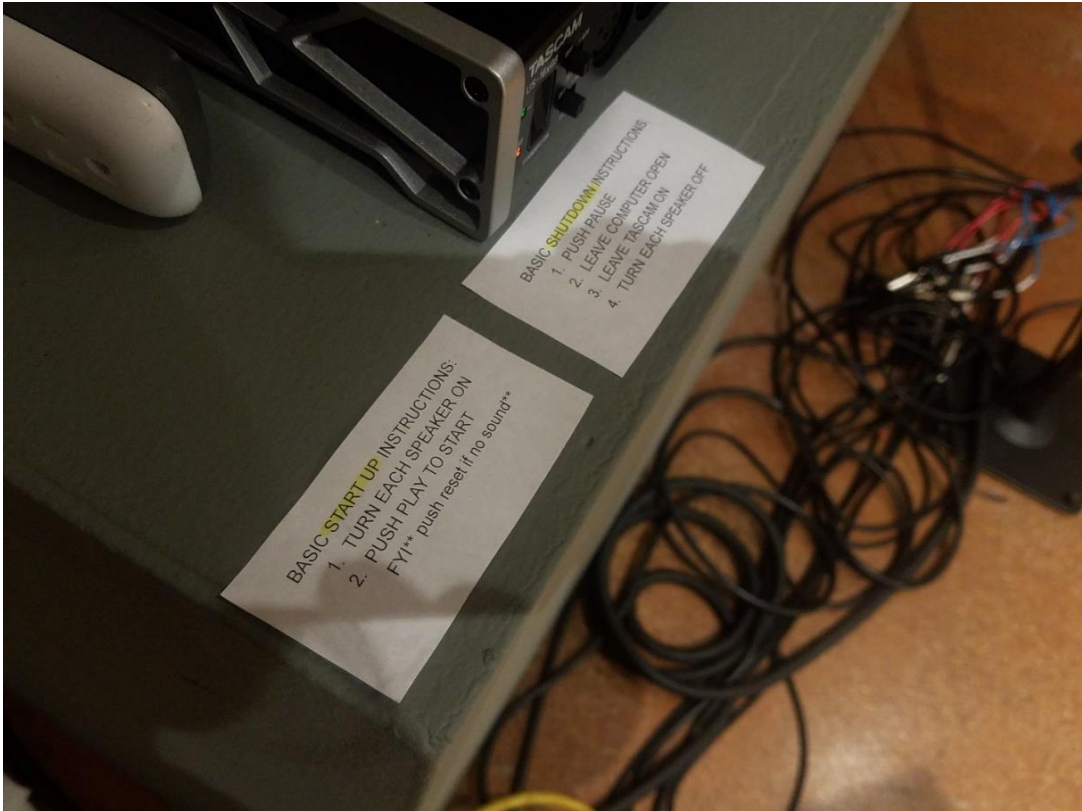think my brother would have liked that, too.

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Chelsea Jones Project Description

I am collecting recorded audio interviews on interviewees' experiences with death and joy and the interconnectedness of those two experiences. Specifically, I am interested in how the concept of fun has connected their experiences with both, or acted as a catalyst between both. I will be using these recordings for research and quotation purposes in my MFA thesis paper I am completing at University of California, Santa Cruz, as well as a sound installation I am completing as a connected thesis project. The sound installation will involve select sound clips taken from the aforementioned interviews. All of these clips will be played randomly from eight separate speakers to create an emerging immersive story and experience. Depending on the level of comfort from interviewees, the interviewees have the choice of having their recorded interview used only as research material for my MFA thesis paper, having quotes from their interviews used in the installation but having someone else read it in order to preserve their anonymity, or to have clips from the original interview used in the installation piece.

If you have more questions about the piece or the involvement requested, please contact Chelsea Jones at the email address cejones@ucsc.edu

Publication Consent Form

I hereby grant permission to Chelsea Jones to use the following item(s) for artistic/academic/educational use in her subsequent art works, presentations, and publications (check all applicable options) and to hold on to these items for future creative and academic works of similar nature:

Quotations from our interviews ☐

Sound recordings of my/our interviews ☐

Recordings of someone else reading quotations from my/our interviews ☐

Chelsea has permission to use these recordings/quotes in subsequent artistic and academic pursuits of the same theme ☐

Chelsea has permission to use these recordings/quotes **only** in this specific project ☐

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

Date: _____

Name for publication (or anonymous): _____

Pronouns: _____

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