
HON 499 Honors Thesis or Creative Project

Honors

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Art, Artist and Audience: an Interdisciplinary Investigation

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Art, Artist and Audience: an Interdisciplinary Investigation

A Thesis

Presented to

The Honors Program

University of Maine at Farmington

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Bachelor of Arts

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to explore relationships among artists, works of art, and the artistic audience. I had originally planned to use a selection of famous paintings, differentiated by genre (e.g., abstract vs. representational) and ask people to write about these paintings. I imagined that the colors, shapes and textures in these famous paintings would elicit a range of reactions in viewers. Their reactions could then be compared to how the artists had conceived of their own artwork. This felt like an utterly academic exercise. It was safe, structured, in accordance with existing literature, while also indulging my longtime fascination with art, which hadn't yet been integrated into my studies as a psychology major.

Yet, after months of laboring to design a relevant study, outlining procedures in sufficient detail for submission to the UMF Institutional Review Board, I wasn't satisfied. It felt like a project that didn't truly belong to me. I was invested in the subject matter, but haunted by an insistent echo – *this isn't yours. Make it your own.*

I'd been told many times by teachers and fellow students to "stop spiraling" in reference to my tendency to make my assignments more complicated than necessary. But for this project, I was willing to spiral. I wanted to achieve, in form and spirit, a spiral, around which myself and others could turn, corkscrewing and flowing together, multidirectional movement yet all revolving around an origin point. I wanted to engage with how other people engaged with artwork. But I didn't know how to access this space, or even how to create it. I lacked a centerpiece. I lacked a center. So, where to anchor myself in the midst of this investigation?

My interest in diverse perceptions of artwork stems back in high school. In a college application essay over six years ago, I highlighted my interest in the process whereby people process artistic imagery: *“I’m intrigued by how people identify different beings in these images. Where one sees an eye, another might view the fangs of a beast, or the incandescent swirl of a sunset... delving into myself and others as we view these pictures together, yet separately venturing into these iridescent realms. This corresponds with psychology; the mind’s layers.”*

How to get closer to the core of this phenomenon? Somehow, I had forgotten that I, myself, was an artist. An artist that had created layered artwork in past years, albeit not recently. The “images” in the above paragraph were in reference to my own artworks. For example, as a senior in high school, I’d created a piece of artwork for a Directed Studies class, entitled *Genesis Ellipsis*, that drew the following reaction from a wayward middle school student:

“Oh, I get it! It’s a puzzle, and you have to put the pieces together to see what’s in there to unlock the whole picture! Right?”

I was positively stunned by this response. And it was stunning to reread my account of this event nearly seven years later, while searching through my Google Drive for any documents that contained references to painting, or art more generally, seeking solutions for how to harmonize myself with this scholarly work. And there it was. My answer. *Genesis Ellipsis*. I had found the artwork to use in my Honors Thesis. My own artwork. My own art was the genesis, and this project overall would become the ellipsis – the continuation of a sentence that began before I had any conception of inviting

dozens of people to offer their thoughts on my art, so that I could then systematically and creatively analyze their responses.

This rediscovery of my original reason for attending college – unifying psychology with art – had activated a profound shift in my identity as a student, propelling me to further pursue this Thesis. Naturally, anxieties arose from the notion of positioning myself at the center of the study and this project overall. These thoughts were initially distressing. However, this tension proved to be intellectually stimulating and creatively fruitful as the investigation unfolded.

Firstly, though, I knew that I would need some parameters in place in order for this project to be manageable in scope and execution. To systematically examine audience response to this piece of artwork, I needed to gather data that could be objectively analyzed and interpreted. As such, my research includes several Likert scale surveys that tap various aspects of viewer engagement – cognitive, emotional, perceptual, etc. It also included open-ended questions that tapped themes difficult to examine via quantitative methods (e.g., “What do you think the intentions of the artists were in creating this piece?”). These latter questions necessarily involved greater subjectivity in analysis and interpretation.

Indeed, a “meta-narrative” emerged, in which the artist (myself) contemplated how personally impactful it was to process these data. For example, I learned how highly, or lowly, participants rated the quality of my artwork. I learned whether the participants would be willing to display my artwork in their residence. Fifty-two questions in total along a Likert scale, plus six open-ended writing prompts, gave participants space to provide some critical reactions. I named this meta-narrative “Portrait of the

Artist” drawing from the famous title of James Joyce. Specifically, I documented how my perceptions and impressions of my own artwork shifted as I interacted with the numbers and text generated by participants.

As I transcribed their written responses onto a Google Doc, I utilized the “comment” feature to respond to particular sections of their text. This format enabled me to engage in direct dialogue with my audience. Initially, the purpose for using Google Docs was to color and highlight phrases corresponding to thematic categories (e.g., a belief that the artist intended to disorient the viewer). As such, I was engaged in a sort of “content analysis” – identifying themes, trends and patterns in qualitative data. This process of assimilating their reactions contributed to the organic growth of poems that I composed in the margins of the Google Doc.

These poems were primarily narrative in form and content. They featured characters that were, predictably, engaging with artwork. Some, purely as viewers, while others, as artists themselves. An overarching objective for the poems was to blend and blur the points of view of characters and the artwork. This, after all, is what I had done by experiencing myself as the object of audience response, while also empathizing with their reactions.

As such, my thesis includes three distinct, yet interrelated, phases. The first phase is a conventional psychological study that includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of an audiences’ response to a work of art – my work of art. The second phase reconsiders this study from the perspective of the artist – myself. Specifically, I will examine how my empirical study of audience response transformed my perspective on my own creative work, positioning me in dialogue with my audience. The final phase of

this project is the presentation of a collection of poetry that emerged from my gradual processing of the data, poems that channel what I've learned about how people engage(d) with visual art.

It was our goal to cultivate an engaging experience for people so that they would feel comfortable sharing their authentic and organic responses to the artwork. This goal is in tune with my original artistic intentions in creating the piece – inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the image and make their own meanings. I developed some questions in tandem with faculty advisors, while enlisting others from existing surveys. I gave participants the option to draw on a blank piece of paper, emphasizing that there were no correct answers. *Additionally, I decided not to inform the participants about the identity of the artist*, so that they could have a pure encounter with the artwork. This key decision underpins the entirety of our investigation.

PHASE I: THE STUDY

Students at the University of Maine at Farmington and members of the surrounding community were recruited to participate in this study. A graphic poster was created and posted on UMF's virtual student portal that advertised a \$25 gift card raffle. Emails were distributed via student listservs containing information about the study and a sign-up link through a Google Form. Word of mouth also proved to be an effective source of recruitment. In these announcements, all prospective participants were informed that I was conducting "a study that examines your reactions to a specific work of art as well as your artistic attitudes and orientation. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a few questionnaires and write about your engagement with a work of art. Participation will require approximately forty-five minutes." Additionally, an arrangement was made through several professors in the Psychology and Art departments that extra credit in their classes would be offered as an incentive, provided that participants took photographic evidence of their participation (selfies taken with the principal investigator was a popular choice).

Ultimately, a total of 46 people participated in this in-person study across three sessions. Nine sessions were on Monday, January 29th; nine were on Wednesday, January 31st; and twenty-eight were on Friday, February 2. Each session was conducted in the same open space typically reserved for University-sanctioned social events. The study consisted of a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions, which will be documented in more detail below. Those questions were enclosed inside manila folders and spread across several circular and rectangular tables, with four chairs stationed per table. Participants, upon signing in at the door and claiming empty seats,

were instructed to open the folder. An informed consent form was placed above the other materials. See Appendix A for the full informed consent form.

Then, once everyone had completed the informed consent form, each participant was provided a copy of the visual artwork, which was handed to them manually. Once everyone had received a copy of the artwork, they were instructed to complete the materials in the order described below. Participants were provided two packets with a blank piece of paper placed between the two packets. The first packet contained five-short answer questions, the Art Reception Survey, and a page for an open-ended choice of prompt, stapled together. The second packet contained the Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire, the Part A of the Vienna Art Interest and Art Knowledge Questionnaire (just Art Interest), and a demographic survey, stapled together. A blank piece of paper was inserted between the first and second packets.

These questions will be presented, but first, here is the artwork that the participants viewed throughout the whole duration of the study. The prose poem *Genesis Ellipsis*, featured in Phase III, will give more contextual information on the creation of this artwork.

Figure 1: Artwork used for the study



Demographic Survey

Although the demographic survey was completed after all of the art-related questions, I decided to present the overall composition of the sample population here, in terms of a few demographic variables – their age, how they identified (female, male, non-binary, prefer to self-describe, prefer not to answer), their level of education (Less than a high school diploma; High school diploma or GED; Some college, but not presently enrolled; Some college, and presently enrolled; Associate's Degree; Bachelor's Degree; Master's Degree; Professional Degree; Doctorate); and their major(s) and minor(s) in college, if applicable. It is also standard practice in psychological studies to gather demographic information from participants for an overview composition of the sample population.

The age range of the participant pool spanned from 18 to 63, with a mean age of 23.543 years. The number of participants per age, or age range, is presented below:

Table 1: Ages of participants

Age	Number of participants <i>(in parentheses: age of participant in specified interval)</i>
18	2
19	3
20	8
21	16
22	9
23	2
24	1
25–29	1 (28)
30–39	1 (33)

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40–49	1 (47)
50–59	1 (55)
60–69	1 (63)

Participants were given five options to answer the question – how do you identify? Table 2 below displays participant responses, in terms of relative frequency.

Table 2: How did participants identify?

Gender Identity	Number of participants
Female	21
Male	13
Non-binary	10
Preferred to self-describe	2
Preferred not to answer	0

Thirty-eight out of forty-six participants (~82.6%) shared that they had attended some college and were presently enrolled, a statistic that is reflective of the environment in which the study was conducted (a relatively small liberal arts college).

Table 3: Highest education level among participants

Highest education level	Number of participants
Less than high school diploma	0
High school diploma or GED	0
Some college but not presently enrolled	1
Attended some college, presently enrolled	38
Associate’s Degree	3
Bachelor’s Degree	2

Master's Degree	0
Professional Degree	0
Doctorate	2

I decided not to include a list of majors and minors in this section since analyses were not conducted to differentiate participants by their academic programs. Relatedly, formal hypotheses were not constructed on the basis of demographic variables.

Short answer questions

First, participants were given five short-answer questions, with a blank space beneath each prompt. They were told that a couple of sentences in response to each would suffice:

1. What are a few words or phrases that came to you when you first looked at this artwork?
2. What name or title would you give to this artwork?
3. Would you display this artwork in your residence?
4. What do you think the intentions of the artist were in creating this piece?
5. If you were to show this artwork to a friend, what feature of it would you draw their attention to?

These questions were generated through discussions with professors from multiple academic programs at UMF (Psychology, Creative Writing, English, Art, and Music). The content of the questions was also influenced by a literature review process that examined contemporary studies involving participant engagement with visual artwork (see page 51 for Works Consulted page). The five prompts were referred to as “warm-ups”. The rationale was to reduce pressure on participants, while also activating aspects of their engagement. The responses to these questions contributed to an

inductive content analysis. Their words were carefully read over a period of weeks to identify themes. Words, phrases and sentences were subsequently schematized into categories that were accordingly marked by colors and highlights.

After carrying out such an analysis across responses to all five of the questions, I decided to primarily concentrate on their answers to the fourth question – the intentions of the artist in creating this piece – because this question was most closely aligned with the relationship between the artist’s art and the audience’s responses to that artwork, thus most directly tapping into the space of art, artist and audience.

Participant responses to the four other questions are included as Appendices C (words and phrases), D (names and titles), E (display in residence), and G (feature they’d draw a friend’s attention to). The original color codes developed for these four questions were removed from the responses before transfer to this document to enhance legibility, while still preserving the transcripts.

Two graphics were created to display (1) the coding key corresponding to the identified themes, and (2) a list of transcribed participant responses to the artist’s intentions question that are accordingly color-highlighted. The second of these is included in a longer table as Appendix F. Refer to Appendix F to see the table associated with the coding key below, presented as Figure 2:

Figure 2: *What do you think the artist intended with creating this piece?* (Coding key)

- Yellow highlight: The longer you look, the more you see
- Green highlight: to present nature or natural elements
- Cyan highlight: to render the point of view of a different life form
- Magenta highlight: to disorient viewer
- Orange highlight: unsure about intentions
- Blue highlight: to elicit a positive affect
- Red highlight: to create a psychedelic aesthetic
- Olive highlight: use of artistic elements for certain effects (color, line, shape, form)
- Purple highlight: to explore human perception
- Golden highlight: narrative identity (personal history or life story)
- Light cyan highlight: emphasis on beauty
- Light magenta highlight: to make a sociocultural argument

- Gray highlight: to emphasize on the figure in the foreground
- Light red highlight: to convey complexity
- **Bolded text:** reference to layers

The third question, whether they'd display the artwork in their residence, is nuanced into Phase II in the context of the inward challenge of processing critical reactions. The first two questions (words/phrases and name/title) generated a range of words that were then nuanced into Phase III, the poetry, albeit at a more subliminal, rather than conscious, level. The fifth question, which also resulted in generating terms that suffused the poetry, was included so as to orient the viewer, to ensure that they were anchored to the piece in preparation for the Art Reception Survey, but not explicitly for data analysis purposes.

Questionnaire #1 — Art Reception Survey (Hager et al., 2012)

The original Art Reception Survey contained twenty-nine items across six subscales. (A thirtieth item was added for our adapted version.) Originally, these items were written in the present tense, and each was phrased in reference to a painting. The survey was adapted such that the term “painting” was replaced with the more general term “artwork” since the artwork employed for the study is a fusion of painterly and photographic techniques. All six subscales had five items each, except for Self-Reference (which had four items) and Positive Attraction (which had six items). The six subscales are as listed below, with a sample item from each subscale included. See Appendix H for the full survey as it appeared to participants.

1. Cognitive Stimulation (e.g., “this artwork makes me curious”): items 1–5
2. Negative emotionality (e.g., “this artwork makes me feel sad”): items 6–10
3. Expertise (e.g., “I can relate this painting to an art historical context”): items 11–15
4. Self-Reference (e.g., “This painting makes me think about my own life history”): items 16–19

5. Artistic Quality (e.g., “The composition of this artwork is of high quality”): items 20–24
6. Positive Attraction (e.g., “This artwork is beautiful”): items 26–30

A 7-point Likert scale was applied to each of the items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants were given the following instruction: “Please circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7) that best applies to you for each statement.” The thirtieth item added was “I like this artwork” – although it is arguable that ‘liking’ may reside in its own category because it was not included in the original instrument, the logic of Scottish philosopher David Hume, as cited by Carroll (2016) was invoked to justify the choice. Hume concluded that the judgment of taste, alternatively the appreciation of art, is primarily concerned with our liking or not liking an object that is at our attention. I deemed it appropriate to place this question last on the ARS, since the continuous experience of responding to over thirty qualitative and quantitative questions could then culminate into their overall assessment of liking.

We have included a table below that contains descriptive statistics; that is, the means and standard deviations for each of the subscales.

Table 4: *Art Reception Survey*

Subscale / Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cognitive Stimulation	5.661	0.756
Negative emotionality	2.217	1.070
Expertise	3.113	0.817
Self-Reference	3.690	1.452
Artistic Quality	5.287	0.973
Positive Attraction	4.482	1.212

This structure anticipates Phase II, in which some of the individual items are examined and discussed by the artist in more depth.

Open-ended choice of prompt

After answering the liking question, the final page of the first packet was reserved for an open-ended choice of prompt. Participants were instructed to choose one of the three prompts, while circling the letter of the prompt they chose:

- a) Write a story about the artwork, with 100 words as a maximum; OR
- b) Give your opinion about the artwork, with 100 words as a maximum; OR
- c) Describe what you see in the artwork, with 100 words as maximum.

An earlier version of the study invited participants to choose one, two or all three of the prompts, while another earlier version requested that participants write a story AND their opinion. I determined that this would be too cumbersome for participants, particularly within the time boundary of forty-five minutes. The third option, a description, was eventually included because there was concern that compelling someone to write a story or give their opinion would force them to articulate their engagement with the artwork in a manner that wasn't natural for them. Indeed, more participants opted for the description (twenty-six) than the story (seven) or opinion (thirteen) combined. The word maximum was a suggestion meant to deter participants from spending the rest of their allotted forty-five minutes writing the equivalent of an essay, when they still had questions to answer in the second packet.

Initially, as with the short answers, a content analysis was carried out, examining all of the responses at once and developing categories as I progressed through the text, while also allowing for multiple rereadings so as to dynamically reshape the categories

and corresponding colors, fonts and highlights. Notably, there are some overlaps with the codes for the artist's intentions question (e.g. the identification of layers in the artwork) but in contrast to that question's categorical scheme, the coding key for the open-ended choice of prompt involved the use of different fonts and font colors, as well as highlights. This was because there were higher word counts for these prompts, and thus, it was more challenging to encompass all the themes within that tighter conceptual frame. For this same reason, I decided only to include the coding key into this document, as it could have been unwieldy to present all of their written responses here, especially since some of them stretched considerably beyond 100 words. If these data were to be revisited, it may be more sensible to separate the stories, opinions and descriptions into separate documents, so that they can receive their own customized codes.

However, I decided to include these as they were, so as to honestly document the method that was undertaken, while also recognizing the aesthetic potential in handling and displaying data in this polychromatically graphic manner. Furthermore, the themes identified through the coding key, as well as particular elements of some of the stories, opinions and descriptions, are synthesized into Phase II, which by extension, influenced the poetry composed in Phase III. For now, though, the coding key directly derived from a more formal data analysis will be shown below:

Blank piece of paper

Participants were told that they could "draw, sketch or write anything that comes to mind" upon completion of both packets. The blank piece of paper was placed

between the two packets – not corresponding to the order of steps taken to complete the study, but rather, to more clearly delineate between the first and second packets. The drawings were not incorporated into a formal pictorial analysis since participants had not been informed during the recruitment process that their drawings would also be used for data analysis, as this was a relatively late addition to the study. Intriguingly, over half of the participants voluntarily opted to draw (~56.5%). A replication of this study could emphasize drawing as a key component, incorporating a drawing exercise as a fundamental feature to their guided encounter with the artwork.

Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire (Wanzer et al., 2020)

The Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire contained twenty-two items across six subscales. The original phrasing of the items across the subscales was modified. Rather than in the present tense, asking about *when they view art in general*, the past tense was applied and in specific reference to the artwork, to indicate to participants that they were to reflect on the experience of viewing the artwork. See Appendix M for the full questionnaire as it appeared to participants. The questionnaire was originally chosen because it features the aesthetic experience, which was of theoretical interest in this investigation. However, the aesthetic experience was not expanded on in this particular section because the aesthetic experience, which is perceptual in nature, a state of cognitive-emotional unity with an object at one's attention often associated with immersion. This concept was more influential on the poetry than it was our data analyses, as will be covered in Phase III. The subscales of the Aesthetic Experience

Questionnaire have been listed below, with a sample item from each subscale included to illustrate the different aspects of engagement:

While I viewed this artwork...

1. Emotional (e.g., “I felt moved.”): items 1–4
2. Cultural (e.g., “I related it to other works of art.”): items 5–7
3. Perceptual (e.g., “The colors of the work of art were important to me.”): items 8–10
4. Understanding (e.g., “I tried to understand the work completely.”): items 11–14
5. Flow—Proximal Conditions (e.g., “I had a clear idea of what to look for when viewing the work of art.”): items 15–18
6. Flow—Experience (e.g., “I got lost in thought when I viewed the work of art.”): items 19–22

A 7-point Likert scale was applied to each of the items, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The following instruction was given: “(please circle the number – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 – that best applies to you for each statement)”. The below table features some descriptive statistics for each of the subscales; that is, their means and standard deviations.

Table 5: *Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire* (subscales)

Subscales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional	4.332	1.259
Cultural	3.500	1.346
Perceptual	5.355	1.069
Understanding	4.745	1.207
Flow—Proximal Conditions	3.598	1.213
Flow—Experience	4.804	1.328

Note: item #17 (“I feel that if I were to share my thoughts on the artwork, the artist would agree with them”) was added as a complementary question to #16 (“I felt that my thoughts on the work of art were correct”). Both items measure the participant’s degree of belief that their thoughts on the artwork is correct, while the added item delves into their potential attunement with the artist themselves, which aligns with the overall art–artist–audience orientation of the Thesis.

Vienna Art Interest (Part A) (Specker et al., 2018)

The original Vienna Art Interest and Art Knowledge Questionnaire (VAIAKQ) consisted of three parts. Part A contained items in the domain of art interest, Parts B and C contained items in the domain of art knowledge (e.g., iconography, production method, style, artist). The art knowledge items were all dropped because it was not central to this investigation to measure levels of previous knowledge in art, nor to differentiate between the knowledge exhibited by lay people, art history students and art professionals. Art interest, encompassing tendencies to engage with art in various contexts and settings, was overwhelmingly relevant to this investigation. The original Part A was composed of fifteen items, with four of the items intended to measure artistic attitudes, rather than art interest. Additionally, a sixteenth item, “How often do you create artwork?” was added. Thus, three categories emerged, with the first two functioning as subscales, while the third is considered a non-composite cluster of items. See Appendix N for the full questionnaire as it appeared to participants.

- Subjective Interest (e.g., “I like to talk about art with others”): Items 2–4, 7, 9, and 10
- Concrete Behaviors (e.g., frequency of visits to art museums): Items 11–16
 - V16: “How often do you create artwork?” – added for this study

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- *Artistic attitudes*: Items 1, 5, 6, and 8
 - V1: “An artwork has to primarily be beautiful for me to like it.”
 - V5: “I cannot stand ugly artworks.”
 - V6: “Art has to be about an exact representation of the world.”
 - V8: “Art should first and foremost be decorative.”

As was done for the Art Reception Survey and the Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire, a table that presents descriptive statistics, specifically, the mean scores and standard deviations for each of its subscales, will be provided. Individual items in the cluster of artistic attitudes will also be included in the table, since they didn’t fit into a subscale.

Table 6: Vienna Art Interest Questionnaire (subscales and items)

Subscales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Subjective Interest	5.524	0.711
Concrete Behaviors	3.640	0.922
V1: “An artwork has to primarily be beautiful for me to like it.”	2.882	1.709
V5: “I cannot stand ugly artworks.”	2.289	1.424
V6: “Art has to be about an exact representation of the world.”	1.400	0.688
V8: “Art should first and foremost be decorative.”	2.044	1.205
V16: “How often do you create artwork?”	5.089	1.743

Final analyses

Many hours of the late winter and early spring months were spent in the Psychology Building’s data lab, conducting Pearson correlations, One-Way analysis of variance, Two-Sample t-Tests and two-tay tabulations between multiple variables,

amongst other statistical methods. However, it was determined after that the large majority of these measures did not align with the overarching narrative, and thus were not incorporated into the Thesis, with the exception of three relationships found on the SYSTAT statistical software program. Still, it should be noted that the experience in the data lab was exhausting as well as fortifying, staring at spreadsheets from noon until dusk, eyes swimming over correlation coefficients, p-values and scatter plots.

The first relationship that will be addressed is between the participants' choice of prompt and the Self-Reference subscale of the Art Reception Survey. Participants who elected to write a story about the artwork tended to relate the artwork to themselves (e.g. to their life history, to a personal memory, to their personal biography) to a greater extent than those who elected to simply evaluate or describe what they saw; $F(2,43)=4.584$, $p = 0.016$. This was found by conducting a one-way ANOVA with the factor of choice of prompt (1,2,3), corresponding to story, opinion and description, on the dependent variable of the Self-Reference subscale.

The second relationship is between the Emotional Engagement subscale of the Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire and the subscales of the Art Reception Survey. Participants who were more emotionally attuned with the artwork experienced higher levels of engagement, as assessed by various subscales of the Art Reception Survey (Cognitive Stimulation, Negative emotionality, Expertise, Positive Attraction and perceived Artistic Quality). The criterion for determining the relative strength of relationships was that r-values between 0.3 and 0.49 indicated a moderately strong relationship, while r-values exceeding 0.5 indicated a strong relationship. A segment of the corresponding Pearson correlation matrix, between the ARS and AEQ subscales, is

listed below, while only including the Emotional dimension of the AEQ. Moderately strong relationships are italicized, strongly significant relationships are bolded:

Table 7: Pearson correlation matrix between Emotional dimension of AEQ and ARS subscales

	<u>Cognitive Stimulation</u>	<u>Negative emotionality</u>	<u>Expertise</u>	<u>Self-Reference</u>	<u>Artistic Quality</u>	<u>Positive Attraction</u>
Emotional	0.551	<i>0.345</i>	<i>0.367</i>	0.536	0.640	<i>0.492</i>

Third, and last, there was a nonsignificant tendency for participants who chose to write a story about the artwork to report more subjective interest in art than those who opted to simply evaluate or describe what they saw; $F(2,43) = 2.809$, $p = 0.072$. This was found by conducting a one-way ANOVA with the factor of choice of prompt (1,2,3), corresponding to story, opinion and description, on the dependent variable of the Subjective Interest.

I recognized the value of univariate and bivariate analyses. The means, correlations and tendencies documented above were informative. However, statistically significant relationships proved not to be as personally significant. There was inward phenomena that the numbers had tapped, which could not be articulated in the conventional language of a social science report. These digits generated adjectives and verbs, and could not be impassively delivered as flat nouns. I had expected that the experience of viewing the artwork would impact participants. This was the overarching hypothesis. What I hadn't expected was how deeply I would be impacted by their engagement. I found that I could express this finding in other terms – my own terms.

PHASE II: Portrait of the Artist (a meta-narrative)

Naïvely, I had not accounted for a certain human variable – my feelings – in either (a) conducting the study, or (b) in analyzing the data in the weeks following the study. I was tense and pensive in my seat after having delivered the instructions to the participants, perspiring and vibrating, leaping from the chair to attend to anyone who raised their hand with an emphatic eagerness. I was worried that they could somehow interpret the following message from my body language, my tone of voice or even an illusory thought bubble floating above my head – *the art they are viewing is mine*. Was there precedent for experimental psychologists to proctor their own mood assessments, measuring their state of mind and wellbeing throughout, or immediately after, conducting a study? The idea was, and remains, appealing. Maybe I should have implemented such a self-survey as a facet of my study design!

I also considered taking notes so that I wouldn't hyperfixate on the spawning sprawl of metacognitions barely contained in my skull (*I'm the object... I'm the subject... this study is studying me... is this a self-indulgent exercise?*) but I worried that the act of writing in a notebook would activate a sense of surveillance among the groups, and thus inhibit the quality of their engagement, or contribute to behaviors that wouldn't have otherwise surfaced (such as dirty looks cast at me). I managed to restrain myself to my chair through each of the three sessions, not seeming to draw any suspicion. There was a surge of bliss that coursed through me upon participants trickling out of the room from our third group, which was by far the largest of the three cohorts, with twenty-eight people in total, exceeding the nine and nine from the first and second sessions.

However, the anxiety about my role and position in the study hadn't completely subsided, and would only swell again upon actually mining through the data itself.

Indeed, feelings arose as I scanned the rows of Likert scales, circles revolving around 1's, 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's and 7's. I began to see the phrases "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" imprinted onto the monochrome walls of the library and across all surfaces – sidewalks, roads, even in the bark of trees and embedded into the crystalline textures of snowbanks. p-values lurked on every textured surface. Generally, and perhaps predictably, it was more pleasant to cognitively and emotionally register the higher numbers. I was disappointed in myself for feeling disappointment when recording consecutive responses that rated the artwork unfavorably, scolding myself. This was not the point of the study. I had not set out to design an activity to validate myself as an artist. I had to be patient with myself during those data lab sessions.

However, gradually, I began to develop a tolerance for assimilating the data. My perspective also shifted. The fact that people were willing to be honest in their verdicts on whether to display the artwork in their residence, and in the content of their opinions, was actually a confirmation that I had succeeded in creating and holding a space for people to genuinely engage with the artwork. Plus, responses varied, they weren't all negative.

This was valuable information. According to mean scores, people were noticeably more perceptually engaged (attention to color, composition and subtler aspects) than emotionally engaged (felt moved, experienced a wide range of emotions). Evidently, my usage of a vibrant palette and a dense visual field had intrigued participants, but hadn't necessarily been as emotionally evocative. Another example,

again stemming back to one of the earlier tables of subscales and their corresponding means – people scored relatively high on Cognitive Stimulation, and rated the Artistic Quality relatively high, but didn't experience Positive Attraction to as high a degree, nor did they generally relate the artwork as much to themselves. What elements could I have added to the piece to activate one's narrative identity? They scored low on Negative emotionality. *Good*, I thought, relatively fewer negative reactions, but those who expressed negative reactions, were emphatic about being overstimulated and overwhelmed by the noise and blurriness. This was, for the sake of my future artworks, instrumental data.

The more negatively-toned responses were cogent. I could receive them as constructive feedback, albeit for later, not for the sake of data analysis. Ultimately, what grounded me was conducting the content analysis – systematically examining their written responses for themes. This is what reeled me from the introspective chasm.

I began to dialogue directly with my audience.

I didn't do this by phoning participants from the study to follow up with them via semi-structured interviews, or proposing pretend interrogations. I copy-pasted their written responses onto one joint Google Document and posted "comments" in the right margin, highlighting resonant sections of their text and reacting to their thoughts with my own thoughts. In this virtual space, my audience and I conversed, while I also grappled with some of the previously described thoughts and metacognitions. Concrete categories for certain themes evolved into streams-of-consciousness in which concepts for poems, and even future works of art, blossomed. I made meanings from their meanings. My perceptions blended with their perceptions, which in itself was a

multi-layered, reflexive process. Indeed, my impressions and interpretations of my own artwork transformed over the weeks from initially sporadic, but then increasingly sustained, data analysis. Here is an example:

Figure 3: *"If you were to show this artwork to a friend, what feature of it would you draw their attention to?" (Illustrative example response from participant)*

If you were to show this artwork to a friend, what feature of it would you draw their attention to?

The moth (or perhaps it is a butterfly^[ae]).

I then downloaded the Google Doc as an .html file to convert my comment, which was derived from the parenthetical, into a footnote, as follows:

Figure 4: My response to the previous participant's response

[ae]Although this participant was relatively less engaged with the artwork, their speculation about whether it is a butterfly or moth was evidently important enough to them to mention. **POEM: if I'm to paint a natural scene, I ought to know if it's a butterfly or a moth. Which one? And what kind? Might be a similarly themed comment on another of these documents, but even if I'm repeating myself, the desire to be "correct" is a theme elsewhere in adjacent poems -- the desire for an Imagist's precision, scientific accuracy.

The participant's acknowledgement of uncertainty about whether the depicted figure was a moth or a butterfly elicited my own deliberation. Wait, which was it? *I'm the artist! I ought to know my own subject matter!* The above comment echoed other themes of mine – the need to be accurate in rendering nature, which actually thematically features in the poem "Lady, canvassed in purple" (see page 41). A not-yet-germinated seed of a poem had manifested. I could not predict when these seeds would bloom, nor where precisely inside me they'd taken root. I could not yet envision a garden replete with flowers. But I was enlivened by the potential of stems and petals, invigorated that my audience and I had dug and nourished the soil together. This mutual cultivation anticipates the transition into Phase III, the poetry.

PHASE III: Artist's statement and a collection of poems

The phenomenological process described in Phase II planted, watered and harvested the poems that will feature in this section of the Thesis. This phase will be molded as follows:

(1) I will present a prose poem, entitled *Genesis Ellipsis* (which was the original title of the artwork) that autobiographically documents the creation of the artwork, while also harnessing how the piece, and myself by extension, were transformed upon its controlled release to the audience.

(2) I will then present a series of eight more poems that are all thematically related to how people engage with visual artwork, containing elements of their written responses and my subsequent analyses (e.g., certain word usage, such as 'kaleidoscope').

Lastly, (3) an "Afterword" will be conceived as the tenth poem, prosaic like *Genesis Ellipsis*, positioned after the Works Consulted and Works Cited pages. All ten poems comprise a collection that will be called *Portals* – loosely linked in format and spirit to Modest Mussorgsky's ten movement piano suite, called *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Coincidentally, a past UMF student had completed a series of watercolor paintings that corresponded to the movements in *Pictures at an Exhibition*. This chance conversation proved to be pivotal in mobilizing this project from a nebulous notion.

Additionally, these poems intend to channel what is called the aesthetic experience – which I will operationally define as a state of cognitive-emotional unity with an object at one's attention, which in this context, would be the visual artwork. The artwork acts as an artifact that facilitates the mental processes of the viewer, who may

be smitten by the image's beautiful features, and thus, the viewer may temporarily undergo changes in their self-relation, potentially feeling "immersed" (Mäcklin, 2021; Marković, 2010). The Works Consulted page that appears after this section will include a selection of articles, websites, essays, poems, books, songs and other mediums that variously explored the space of the aesthetic experience and art engagement more generally, such as through historically recorded anecdotes of events that perceptually resemble the variously conceived features of the aesthetic experience.

The following piece, the aforementioned *Genesis Ellipsis*, could have its own Works Consulted page. I acknowledge that several dozen people, through our conversations and readings of texts, have their voices infused into each sentence. I could hear them as I edited. I could hear them as I reread the piece in constructing this overall document.

I present the following piece as a tribute to my audience, as this has not just been a psychological study, nor just a "Portrait of the Artist" – this became a co-created space in which further poems and visual artworks can be generated. Cognitions, emotions, perceptions, understandings, all mixing together, tones on a paint palette that has swept our brushes together to compose this portrait-landscape of a project, stemming from a static image that, itself, contained layers, and thus, became dynamic, made animate by us.

Genesis Ellipsis (alt title: A butterfly piece, in pieces)

17-year-old Seán called this piece *Genesis Ellipsis*. I once showed it to a friend in art class. She tells me that it was what one would see in a dream. She suggests wings, rainbows, kaleidoscopes. An LSD scene. Fluttering. Iridescence, even paradise. “There’s so much to see in here.” She loved the colors. “You must’ve been at peace making this”. I replied that I hoped people felt happy looking at it, that it could help them somehow.

She showed it to a friend of hers. He sees faces and feels a breeze. “It’s glowing.” A middle schooler passes by. He stops, gawks. “Oh, I get it! It’s a puzzle, and you gotta put the pieces together to see the whole picture!” I nod. He walks away. He gets it.

The photos that formed the layers of this piece were all taken with a janky Canon camera, held in a shaky grip. Each photo: I was in the passenger’s seat of a car, lens peering through the bleary window, a single eye squinted into the viewfinder. Floating through, that was what I did and how I lived. Click, click, click. Tumbleweed. My dad, at the wheel, often asked if I wanted him to stop, so that we could get a clearer shot. “No, I’m fine in here.” I could review the film later. Safer afar than up close. Don’t wanna be captured.

Six and a half years later — I’ve realized that maybe *I* was the butterfly in this image, flattened and trapped in this landscape frame. Or the moth, the insect, the bug, the dragonfly, the grasshopper, the cricket... whatever you think it is. Submerged.

All forty six of you saw me, but didn’t know it was me. And I didn’t know this was me, either. Blended into the scenery with a hazy paintbrush. The Impressionists’ touch. Visible, but not quite in the foreground. Pixelated. Distorted. Bright screen, shaky signal. Loud, headache. Outlines of petals and grass blades and graffiti stains, dissolved. Abstracted. Indistinct.

I was in genesis, piecing myself together in the process of piecing together this piece. *Genesis Ellipsis*. And I guess this project was the ellipsis, the continuation of a sentence that began before I had the language, or any vision of inviting dozens of people to offer their

thoughts on my art as a form of creative cooperation. Cultivating a painterly poetic mode and generating concepts for future artworks. Ellipsis – not the dreaded triple dot, but a perpetual sequence of brushstrokes, ever-expanding palette. Watercolors, spreading. Along the corners, across the center, contrast and texture, backdrop and focal point. Artists, we all were.

You saw birds. Spider web strands. Thorns. Microorganisms. Plant cell walls. Inkblots. A garden. Bees? Underwater rapids. Humans vs. nature. Canopies. Serenity & complexity. The electromagnetic spectrum. An insect's vision. Grid pattern. Thermal imaging. Tye-dye. 3D glasses. Fabric. Light and shadow. Saturated. Hues – yellows, blues, greens, reds. Ultraviolet. Spring and summer, winter, fall. Meaningless and transcendent. These, those – it's all of them.

You're all correct. As much as I did: you created this piece.

I originally made this when I was a kid, afraid to live, clinging to the leaf, yearning for flight, encased in a translucent container of my own creation. I'd drawn myself inside and closed the blinds, hidden behind vague shapes and vague lines.

But you've drawn me out. You helped me escape this rectangular prism-prison-print.

You've shattered the glass and opened the window.

Here we are, playing outside, looking at art.

A Poet in Painter's Clothes (by Seán Tenney)

Paintings were my companions.

They were still, yet infinite. Trips into other dimensions,
without the strain of leaving my bedroom.

The same spatial rules for the pages of a book don't apply here.

You don't have to start at the top left, scanning side-to-side, finishing at the bottom right.

You can wander.

Movies were finite and noisy

and evoked too much jealousy of adventuresome characters.

Video games gave me too much agency,

yet too little, scripted dialogue and formulaic side quests.

In a painting, I could look anywhere inside its square or rectangular frame
and stay as long as I wished, to drift and sift through its brushstrokes,
stroll through a village or soar through a sunset.

And so, for years, I wrote, enclosed in these canvases,

entering and exiting these portals,

cobbling together stories, autobiographical and fantastical,

sending them to myself as emails to imitate social correspondence.

Now, I've arrived at a place

where I can reconfigure my relationship with paintings.

Not as alternatives to reality, or alternate realities,

but as spaces I can occasionally visit, while still living in the world with the rest of us.

*This very poem, composed in a "painterly mode"
was born yesterday, and maybe it learned how to walk today,
although my hands still hover over its shoulders.*

Interspersed with fragments from my monstrous free-writes,

anchored by lines written long ago,

a reintegration of selves — raw and cathartic,

drawing from previous poems,

like blotches of oil on a wood palette,

mixing tones with the brushing of my wavery fingertips

across a keyboard. Donning a smock,

I take a shot of water. Coughing, choking,

nope, that cup was for my brushes...

TAKE THE DIVE (by Seán Tenney)

Above the gentleman's fireplace, a painting is displayed, tenderly preserved in a gilded frame. Someone, clad in black, stands at a precipice.

"This one is called *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. What do you think?" asks the gentleman.

Well, the guy's back is turned to me. I can't see where he's looking.

I wonder what this wanderer is thinking. I try to picture it.

Flight. My spindly body, is it possible? A valley beneath, teeming.

The wanderer imagines his breath dictates whether the leaves will remain green, or turn gold, ambery. He harbors the pigments in his chest.

Maybe if he holds his breath, it'll stay summer.

Inevitably, he's light-headed, photosynthetic particles in his lungs, he's high on altitude and radiance. He can't quite stave off the fall.

And as he stands at the edge of this overhang, he's not sure whether the fall can be resisted.

Let me flounder, swim with the fishes, flap my arms, kick my legs, stay afloat, head above water, choke on the sea, man overboard. Leave me there, let me struggle, let the salt dissolve my bones, let the waves carry me away.

I know: I'll drift onto an island someplace,

and restart my life. Kindle a fire.

!~Distress signal~*!*

No one's here to scold me for thinking these thoughts.

The clouds above are preoccupied with blending another sunset.

He smiles, satisfied by this private knowledge,

resigned to this task of responsibility for the changing of the seasons.

In his own head. His own tides, his own lunar & water cycles,

precipitate-evaporate-condensate, transpire,

somehow he conjures yet another sunrise, up for the next day.

His friends don't know about his walks in the woods, his visits to the edge.

Returned from his brush with the wilderness, his answers to the question "where have you been?" are abridged. There's a novel in a nod, a poem in a blink. Giggles are met with grimaces.

He must be a shaman atop this mountainous cliff,

tracing the constellations with an outstretched hand,

dangling his toe,

pretending to touch the waves below from his precarious perch,

he can feel the spray. The waters look rough and rocky

and he's got no map or compass.

He demands more from the oceanic expanse beneath him,

but the ripples distort his reflection — he'd need to get closer to see.

But he won't leap.

The view is enough.

He can survey the landscape. A cartographer, a circumnavigator, a lighthouse operator.

He's a captain with no crew, marooned, no mortars or lifeboats,

although he's perched in a bird's nest of his own creation.

He can hold his face, jaws in palms, before he's overtaken by a Munchian scream.

Suddenly, I'm tapped from behind. "You're in the way!" says the gentleman. I grin. *Sorry. Enjoy.* I hope the gentleman has gotten as much out of the painting as I just did.

"I'm kidding, kid. I've seen this painting plenty of times.

Here, stand by my side, we'll look at it together."

I return my gaze to the painting. *If the wanderer does fall, I hope it's a cannon ball, and that he'll swim right back up to the surface.* The gentleman nods. "I've never thought about the possibility of water." *What will happen if he jumps?* "I don't know. Let's see where he goes."

Eyes slowly landing on the water,

as though following a flight path from where the solitudinous figure stood,

to the undulations of blue. Where is he?

Wait, did he just plunge from that cliff face?

Were there judges to grade his dive — messy on entry, advanced degree of difficulty?

He's content to be carried by the current,
splashing, sunlit submersion, his arms tiring...

but I know I won't sink.

I'm not drowning. I'm not treading.

Sink, or swim?

No, I'm floating.

Sure, his body must be cold,

but the sun is warm,

and after so much looking down,

looking up must be an act of hearty defiance.

"Come on in, the water's fine!"

PLEASE DON'T INHALE THE ARTWORK (by Seán Tenney)

"What is this?" Yet she insists on not reading the placard,
which lists the artist, their technique, their intentions, the historical context.
No, her impressions will be her own. She'll create her own lore.

She doesn't want to be asked what it's supposed to mean.
Her husband stands alongside, grumbling about the artist's skill.
"A baby could've made this shit."
His interpretations will affect hers, she thinks,
and then her ideas won't be her own anymore. So she ignores his commentary.

She frowns, stirred by the dissonant shapes. *I wish I hadn't looked at this tangle of circles.
Great, now the circles are in me, and none of them are closed loops.
They'll spiral in my head. I can't let them stretch across my face.*

A dutiful model for portraiture.
Maybe someone with a shutter or brush would appreciate.
She holds still. She'll be damned if she lets him read any feelings in her eyes.
She'll be spared the questions, spared the brush and chisel.
In the artificial light, though, a melting begins.

Someone must have cracked a kaleidoscope and spilled the mosaic bits,
mashed the prismatic beams with a mortar and pestle.
She wonders if she could snort the polychrome dust.
Iridescent shards. Opalescent facets.
Intersecting crystalline walls, cellular membranes, bloodstreams,
Protruding, interlaced, multiplying, shrinking.

No one told her the painting would do this. No one told her the painting could do this
to her.

It's moving. But it's not a movie. It's still. Still life? It's literally in the name.
Yet, undoubtedly, it's kinetic. *Breathe in. Feel something.*
A voice, incantatory, commands her to lean in close and sniff.
No, I won't, she counters, much to the bewilderment of her husband.

Yet, here she is, pressed against the glass barrier, compelled.
A kid nearby whispers, *"the big dumb idiot is really gonna lick it"*
No, her lips are tightened into a crimson sliver wisp.
Not at liberty to form words, magnetized, soundlessly drawn into the painting's orbit.

Out of the picture (by Seán Tenney)

There's no flesh, no blood vessels, no pores.
The sight of her skin, under a rusty chandelier...
it's more than an artistic decision
that smears of purple are there to adorn her cheeks.
She doesn't want you to know when she's blushing. Flustered...

Once, he thought he loved her.

He sees a face, shaped like a thumbprint, in blurry watercolors.
A scarcely etched jawline, eye shadow that missed the lids.
He searches for her eyes, but they're tucked behind mascara curtains.

He doesn't remember the color of her eyes. Hazel?
He hopes he's incorrect. He doesn't want to accurately recall those details.
He doesn't know who to consult to fact-check his memory:
only she would know, and no, he doesn't trust her.

It's doubtful that she's preserved those memories,
and maybe that pains him,
and maybe he can't have this conversation with anyone...

I don't miss those bleary, delirious nights.
I don't miss her. *Who am I trying to convince? Me?*
Since I'm typing the words,
doesn't this suggest that there's there more than
"so, it's over," as I once wrote?
I promise this isn't wistfulness.
Missing the simplicity, maybe. But not the yearning for her... case closed?
No leads, no further investigation. No clues... just a cue.

In this moment, seeing her illuminated in side-profile,
she becomes a model. I pick up the brush.
But it won't be a glorification of her form.
No, I'm not employing a sculptor's generous chisel in rendering curves, here —
she's a mannequin, stiff and shifting warily at the joints,
waxy and metallic. Rigid ligaments from years of tightly holding her body,
shielding, reluctant towards the act of movement.
An act, to move. A branch,
siphoned downstream by the current.
Acceptance of the rapids,

why fight the waves?

Riptides, whirlpools, rogue winds:
out at sea, and there's no stillness,
rippling collisions of indigo droplets,
stained by the starry dusk,
someone slathered the backdrop black,
dappled with pockets of purple.

Purple. The purple from earlier!

She drew it from the sky and drew it on her face.

With what? A felt tip marker. No, fingertips.

Dripping, muddled with other colors,
a faint, hushed, dusted gray.

Missed a spot. Well, several.

Done with a wobbling precision,

an artist whose arms have been held aloft for too long,

holding a pose that accentuates her complexion — mucus and alabaster.

Had she tilted another way,

I wouldn't have seen these textures.

Milliseconds later, the light would've shifted,

revealing more of what's hidden

and surfacing more of my projections.

Hold still (by Seán Tenney)

There she is, perfectly framed.
Her complexion is speckled. Freckles,
somehow both verdant and autumnal.
Someone must've pressed their palms against either side of her jaw,
smudges casting a peachy fringe around her outlines.
Her limbs are jagged scratches of a graphite slab.
Her lips have retreated into a timid swirl,
three circular strokes supplying a soundless mouth.
I suppose her voice seeps from her, a vapor.

Inhale. Safer than to exhale.
Taking it in, in, in, in. Swallowing. Hold that pose.
At least it's safe in here, inside this frame.
She's in full view, but I can't quite see her lips anymore.
An optical trick? Why should she have a voice
only if someone else grants her the shape of a mouth?
I guess that's what I'm doing here. But I've run out of red.
Out comes the notepad:

- Blue, I don't want her to seem hypothermic.
- Green, blades of grass, that's too easy.
- Pink, that'll blend with her skin.

What colors make other colors? Color theory, color wheels...
Straining to remember kindergarten lessons from Mrs. Barnum. *Sorry, Sarah.*
(We were not on a first-name basis.)

But my arms are inert.
I'm trying to activate the tendons with my words,
but I can only lift my eyes, not my hands.
There she is. With a minnow mouth.
I'm dumbstruck by what I've done.
It isn't fair that I, only, have a brush.
Why shouldn't she get one?

All she needs is a speck of warmth to change her expression.
Make it red, please.
But all I've got is my own blood. And must we suffer for our art?

A guy confronts Abstract Expressionism (by Seán Tenney)

His wife bought him a print of a painting for his birthday.

Honey, your walls are blank. You need some color. The beige is depressing.

Now, the painting is taped to the headboard behind his bed.

As he gazes at it, transfixed...

... lines intersect. They form angles, perpendicular and parallel. They vary in length and width.

Some are straight, others curve. Some touch, most don't.

Geometric mating ritual, he scoffs. Birthing rectangles, spawning watercolors.

Laughing at the lattices, puzzled by the planes.

There's no center from which the lines emerge or revolve.

He wishes he'd paid more attention in high school math classes. *Wassily Kandinsky*, that's all he remembers. His art teacher, Mr. Morgan, saw faces and heard jazz music in Kandinsky's pictures. *But this isn't art, this is a headache. A bad trip.* He wonders if Wassily would care about his thoughts. He wants to like it, but feels like he can't. He wants to see smiles and hear saxophones, but he's left with frowns and white noise, polychromatic stereo static.

What am I supposed to see? What am I supposed to hear?

He wants to imagine the algebra or calculus involved to calculate the shapes of these scribbles, the notebooks of formulas and proofs. They must've been sketched with some precision. These lines, do they exist merely because they can? Are they meant to embrace infinity? *Does Wassily want me to grab a pen and make some marks of my own?*

Chicken-scratch, he guesses. It's not a language — at least not one he recognizes, not one he could speak or read. *Do I need to understand?* Maybe they're initials, or hearts, or the faded phone numbers of girls Wassily was too shy to call back. He wants to ask someone about what the lines are saying, but he'd be met with bewilderment.

The painting is speaking to you? — seek help!

No, he thinks, *I'm more sane here, than cramped in a cubicle.* Yes, he has fears and frustrations. And somehow, this 8" x 11" is a more sympathetic listener than most folks he's encountered. *It's like a translation of the dreams that are trapped in my pillow having seeped from my temples*, he thinks, *those sunk into the mattress beneath my back, ones wrapped around me that don't leave the sheets.*

He admires its silence. Its bursting inertia. He envies it. The painting's only task is to occupy space. It doesn't have to breathe or blink. *Like trees and their photosynthesis, rooted.* He's rooted to the floor, though no sunlight to absorb nutrients, stupefied.

His wife materializes behind him, stroking his back. Coming to bed, honey?

Five more minutes, he pleads, *there's more to see here.*

Lady, canvassed in purple (by Seán Tenney)

She's plucking petals from the violets that form the perimeter of her shed.
They're all purple. She grieves the absence of other colors.
Her studio is situated on an elevated patio,
glass window poised above the yard.

How can she paint a real garden if all the flowers are purple?

She could use her other paints, but then, it's not faithful to nature.
You gotta be authentic, she thinks.
She's flung some zinnia seeds across the yard,
but none have seemingly taken root,
and she doesn't know enough about mud to tell if those will bloom.

She stole a piece of paper from the road. Looseleaf.
Now she's taking notes like a disgruntled scientist,
bellyaching about the lack of progress.
There's no sign of life on this petri dish,
no matter how far we zoom in the microscope.
Though this is no laboratory, she doesn't have a pair of safety goggles.
She could certainly use some, with all this cursed pollen.

She visits her studio in intervals.

When she's not pecking at a typewriter,
churning manuscripts to novels that she'll never let anyone read,
she's examining this same sliver of landscape,
and with each painted version
she's stretching the bounds farther horizontal in either direction.

She bathes in this same scene.
With each repetition, her synchronicity with the planet will deepen.
She'll unlock more of the Earth.
If she just perfects this backyard,
maybe it'll let her explore the forest beyond the bounds of her property.
But she won't leave until she's done it.
And no one's there to confirm whether she has.

She doesn't have any more canvases to mount to her easel.
She ran out, so she's using scraps of cardboard and curtains.
And she's certainly not running out for a shopping trip.

Here, she'll remain,
committed to this singular craft.

She wants to know the paths of the ants, the labyrinths in their hills.
She wants to know the trajectory of every dandelion seed,
the currents of the breeze,
where the dewdrops land on the grass blades,
whether they slide or stay suspended.

She wants to be inside one of those droplets.
She wonders if it'd be like a pearly orb,
or a kaleidoscope, or an iridescent puddle.

The worm burrows. The pollinating bees.
The paws and hooves and meandering ribbon-imprints of snakes.
She frets about where their nests are.

*And maybe if I was a better painter,
I'd know that.*

Blue period (by Seán Tenney)

“Here.” She hands me a brush. “Let’s create something together.”

I’m unclear on the instructions. “What? A picture?”

“Let’s make... us.”

“What will be our canvas?”

“... us.”

She flings some droplets from the end of her brush with a fluid sweep of her hand. A constellation of watercolors, dotted across my chest. Indigo.

“These are awfully dark for stars.”

“Maybe they’re blotches of dusk. Not meant to be light, but shadow.”

I accept this explanation. Pockets of the night. Negative space.

Now, we’re fingerpainting.

Waistlines like skylines, horizons wrapped around hips, panoramas slipping through rib cages.

Times of day, seasons, weather patterns – all blurred.

It’s a moment, it’s a time lapse of a century distilled into a single snapshot.

It’s morning. Birds, you can faintly hear them.

“That’s what those slashes are, right?”

“They kinda look like eyebrows, are they crows? Are they flying in formation?”

Roots spreading, leaves scattering, sleepless streams,
she knew just how to blend her blues to make waves from the blankness.

Its currents carry me.

The acrylics are drying quick. The oils still glisten.

I can’t hear the rush of the river, but I can feel the slumber of the forest-dwellers –
somnia, a fog. Wind. Stillness and gusts.

We don’t know the temperature. We assume it’s warm,
look at those bright tones in the corners.

“Surely, it’s heating up, it’s gotta be summer.”

The shadows, where they splay across the pine needles.

“The sun, that’s mid-summer height in this bursting sky.”

“Where’d the clouds go?” Evaporated. They’re a mist,
hence the tiny specks in the foreground.

The clouds surrounded us, their particles dispersed,
a dim glow illuminating our outlines, humming.

“How are our figures fitting between all these trees?”

“We got the ambience just right.”

“There’s no way our bodies could intersect with the branches here, at these angles. Also, you didn’t give me feet.”

“Well, you’re not walking anywhere.”

“But you gave yourself feet.”

“Yeah, because I’m floating above the mud. Unrealistic for me to have just propelled myself into the air, without legs.”

“You can lift yourself. You’re lifting both of us, right now.”

“Your feet are planted. They’re tucked in the dirt. You’re growing.”

“Great, maybe someday I can grow up to be a tree.”

“You’ve got the stiff joints and rough skin already. You just need more limbs.”

“Well, you’ve got the brush, give them to me.”

“No, so do you, you dropped yours. Pick it up.”

“And do what with it? Poke the air?”

“Dip it in the stream. It’s blue, remember?”

“My body’s gonna be blue? Why?”

“You won’t be alone. Picasso’s *Old Guitarist* is also blue.”

“But I don’t have a guitar. How will I relate? Communicate?”

“He has chords.”

“What, will there be stories in the notes?”

“Lean in. Hear the chords. How he plays them.”

“He’s leaning into them. Straining each measure. Episodes from his boyhood.”

“There, there, you’re listening. What’s he saying? What’s he playing?”

“A song. It’s gotta be a requiem. For some memory.”

“What happened?”

“Seems like it was either the guitar, or a girl.”

“Why did he have to choose?”

“It wasn’t his decision. He had his muse.”

“The muse? Who?”

“He couldn’t tell you. That’s why he plays.”

“Devoted himself to his craft?”

“Yeah. I wish I could ask him if it was worthwhile.”

“Well, he’s famous. I’d say it worked out for him.”

“Hey, maybe it’ll work out for us, too.”

“I don’t know. Who’s gonna paint us?”

“Well, we just painted each other.”

Afterword: Where it ended, where it all began, and where it's headed



This drawing is mine. I sketched it while in the data lab, desperately straining to weave together threads from bivariate statistical analyses, recognizing the relationships between variables. I realized that the relationships between subscales of the questionnaires we enlisted weren't central to the overarching narrative. There were many charts that were cut from this document, but had they been included, this Thesis may have been indecipherably dense, resembling the drawing above, which participants may have found even more disorienting than the artwork they viewed!

I grieved what I couldn't achieve before the submission deadline. Indeed, this was actually the only piece of visual artwork that I created after conducting the study. I had planned to create a portfolio of artworks inspired by audience response to one of my oldest artworks. The visceral physical act of drawing, which I have rarely ever done, also led me to contemplate the fact that I hadn't incorporated the drawings that participants did into a formal pictorial analysis, choosing instead to concentrate on the numbers and the words. Even then, I felt there was depth and texture and luminescence

within the written responses that I hadn't reached as a researcher or via my introspective narrative self-portrait and poetic expressions.

Follow the lines. Find your signature. In cursive, bottom right corner. These words cast a trance over me. Thousands of mechanical movements coordinated between my wrists and fingers, littering the negative space with red lines – swoops, swirls, spirals. I was visually rendering what I couldn't then articulate in words: this insatiable urgency to fully explore the space, linking together ideas in an inky web, but with each swipe of the pen, this became less possible, less possible to follow where the tip of the pen had been, with rapidly decreasing surface area in which to saturate with chaotic red marks. A maze? Was I trying to trip or trap myself? Why the sudden compulsion to create, when the muse had deserted me for months?

This pulsing labyrinth, this crackling tangle of neuron-esque shapes, evoked the memory of my first exposure to Rorschach inkblot tests. Not in a clinical setting, but from a random picture book stored in a doctor's office reception area. Since then, I've been riveted by the Rorschach inkblots, and other projective tests in which people are invited to describe what they see in an ambiguous picture. How can people have such vastly different reactions to the same image, composed of the same lines, shapes, colors, textures, forms, light and shadow, contrast and value? What had the artist intended in arranging these elements as they did? Could they have imagined what emotions they would evoke in those who viewed their pieces?

Were their pieces, indeed, pieces of them? I wonder about what I see in the above drawing. When I follow the lines, I'm not sure I can find my signature, it's not a conventional self-portrait, nor a legal document, but I can find traces of me. Sine waves.

Triangles, overalls. Petals of flowers, parabolas, strings and knots and loops uneasily twisting around each other. Eyes. Arms, frog legs. Stars. Bloodstreams. Bowties. Stick figures. Ribbons. Confetti.

Confetti... celebratory confetti, minus the whacking of a piñata. In my melancholy, in my neurotic transfer of my angst onto a page of a forlorn notepad, I had rediscovered my purpose in doing all of this. I had rediscovered my passion.

I had rediscovered my project.

Why had I done all this? I was fascinated by the self-reported accounts of artists about their own art, to be found in their “About me” and “Biography” sections. Artists idiosyncratically described their aesthetic, their technique, their creative philosophy, their intentions, even the narrative context for certain pieces. I read these voraciously, having discovered them on Facebook, rinsing my timeline so as to leave behind only art, which plasters my virtual wall.

Why had I done all this? I was inspired by the thousands of paintings and pictures that I’ve absorbed from artists, varying in palette and subject matter, all these images having burrowed and accumulated into my unconscious, those lesser known and those more famous – Wassily Kandinsky, Gustav Klimt, Estelle Asmodelle, Dimitri Sirenko, Alexander Asenov, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Claude Monet, Aziz Sulaymanov, Julie Dumbarton, Erin Hansen, Vincent van Gogh, James Coleman, Adrian Cox, Peder Mork Monsted, Alberto Giacometti, Leonid Afremov, Mher Chatinyan, Miroslav Spadrna, Childe Hassam, Moriah Faith, Hartini Gibson, Damian Elwes, Annette Malerei, Ngwe Phyo, Katarina Vidmar, Izumi Kogahara, Edvard Munch, Salvador Dalí, Maxfield Parrish, Andrew Wyeth, and way too many more to name.

I was inspired by the writings of John Berger, an art critic who also painted and composed poems himself. His essays were particularly impactful on the development of this painterly aesthetic mode of poetry. I was inspired by the poetry collection *Spokes of Venus* by Rebecca Thomas Frank contained several poems that were sacred to me. The titles of the poems themselves also thematically resonate with the nature of this work. “How to Look at Pictures”; “How to Judge a Picture”; “Conversations with the Artist (1)”; and “Conversations with the Artist (2)”. Marianne Boruch has written prolifically about art and her poem “Still Life” is especially resonant. Siri Hustvedt, novelist and essayist, is known for her close attention to the psychological features of art and artists in her books, lectures and interviews.

I was inspired by academic journal articles. Specifically, from the field of psychology, which reported results from art-related studies that examined eye-tracking movements and gaze patterns, activations of certain brain regions, perspiration in particular areas of the body, the sociocultural dimensions to how people perceive artwork, and the contextual inputs that contribute to how a person neurologically processes and schematizes artwork. Some of those articles have been incorporated into the Works Consulted page.

Innumerable aspects of art engagement are influenced by visible and confounding variables, ones that can and can't be measured and accounted for in the setting of a psychological study, or an art museum, or a painter's studio. We've endeavored to elucidate some of those aspects and variables in the course of these fifty pages. This Afterword could be considered the finishing touches to this project.

Yet, I'm not viewing this as an ending. I'm not splashing a layer of varnish over the oil paint and calling this a complete composition, to be hung and framed on a wall and forgotten. I admit, it is unfinished. There are many more layers to add here. By me, the researcher, poet and artist. And, suspended in time, their data, the participants, contained in the manila folders that I carried around with me in my backpack for the weeks and months following the study, the weight of this material quite literally carried on my shoulders. I want to honor their engagement on those winter afternoons by extending the lifespan of their thoughts. I may store those folders in a filing cabinet for a brief period, but soon, they'll be removed and reopened, their numbers and words and drawings to be revisited, their circles and periods and exclamation points to be explored, as far as they can take me, as far as we can take ourselves, blending in text and image, sentences stretching beyond the welcoming, not dreaded, triple dot...

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APPENDIX A: Copy of Informed Consent Form

I, _____, have carefully listened to and fully understand the purpose of this research and the procedures to be followed. I understand that my records will be kept confidential, my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I also recognize that I may skip any questions I don't wish to respond to. The study will require approximately one hour to complete. Results of this research may be shared in the form of one or more publications and verbal presentations. If I have any concerns or inquiries about my rights as a subject or the manner in which this research is conducted, I understand that I can contact Donna Karno, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, University of Maine, Farmington [donna.karno@maine.edu]. I am 18 years or older. By signing below, I assert that I fully understand the above and give my consent to serve as a subject in this research.

(Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX B: Procedure Script

Hi everyone, I'm Seán! I'm working with Dr. Quackenbush on a research project. Today, we're conducting a study that examines your reactions to a specific work of art, as well as your artistic attitudes and orientations. This study will last about forty-five minutes.

Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a few questionnaires and write about your engagement with a work of art. You do not have to respond to any questions that you do not wish to answer, and you may leave at any time without penalty. Also, we ask that you not write your name on any of the materials given, so that your name will not be associated with your responses.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

[DIRECT THEIR ATTENTION TO INFORMED CONSENT FORM]

Before we begin the study, we'll need you to complete an informed consent form, which is placed below the manila folder.

Thank you everyone. You'll notice that there are two packets, separated by a blank piece of paper. We ask that you complete the first packet before completing the second. The blank piece of paper is there for you to draw whatever comes to mind, whether it be as you answer questions, and/or after you feel you're finished both packets. We will proceed with a debriefing, the final phase of the study, once everyone is finished.

I propose a trade – you'll give me your informed consent forms, and in return, you'll get a copy of the artwork!

[DISTRIBUTE A COPY OF THE VISUAL ARTWORK]

Alright everyone, you're welcome to begin! I'll be seated over there by the doors.

...

Okay, we have reached the forty-five minutes mark. Some of you may have finished already, in which case, if you're not already, you're invited to write or draw anything that comes to mind on the blank piece of paper. Take your time, we've got a few more minutes here.

Okay, it seems everyone is done! Please put all your materials back in the folder.

Appendix C – Words or phrases that came to them

Blobs... color blobs... but then... a butterfly
I interpret this piece as being very layered - there's an amalgamation of a lot of different parts and its very bright/colorful and crowded
Distortion, perceptions of reality, visually impaired, nature / bugs / flowers / leaves / green, colorful, trapped / frozen
60s / 70s psychedelia. Nature-based Acid Trip. hard to discern any image in particular. Bug wings & butterfly patterns. Poppies → heroin
Vibrant, insects, nature, flower.
Fish, fabric, colorful
Butterfly Colorfull Inkblot Spring stained glass
Vibrant and colorful A wide variety of shapes Butterfly? Looks like a butterfly! Flowers
Hazy, jumbled, garden
Flowery, pretty, butterfly, leaf
The first word that comes to mind is blindness. This artwork is sort of what I imagine someone who is starting to go blind see the world. Another word I think of is green. There are many colors, but the green is the most prevalent one. I also feel like I'm underwater while looking at it.
Color, Color, Color! Is there any up (which way should it be oriented)? Depth.
tissue paper permeating blossoms tie-dye heatmap moth nature cell walls?
Crazy Psychedelic Nature Blurry Wild Strange
Butterfly, wings, leaves, thorns, flower field, sunflower, mother nature, spider web
Butterfly, becoming, jungle, textured, variegated, elusive, multilayered, fading, wavering, kaleidoscope
Bright, dizzy, disoriented
Nature, blending in, colorful, floral
Wings 2000s Flower Moth Rainbow Layers Saturated Shine
dragonfly jelly beans saturation moth 2006 blood tie-dye kaleidoscope daisy
- Spring - flowers - Butterflies - vibrant - verdant - peaceful
Moth, grass, trippy, AI?, tie-dye, dizzy
flowers, tie-dye, memory, colors, butterfly

ART, ARTIST AND AUDIENCE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

composite saturation layers emergent
Vibrant Colorful Pretty Exotic Bright This is a very vibrant piece of artwork. I like the color scheme as well.
My very first thought was that it had a lot of natural looking greens and elements. I'm seeing wings and petals and light coming through different angles.
Colorful bright overwhelming beautiful
This is colorful, graphic, it looks like there are butterflies and it reminds me of a pixelated image, though upon closer inspection, I don't think it is pixelated, it just gives me those vibes. Looks like it has a kaleidoscopic effect as well.
Spring butterfly green
- Butterfly - Distortion of Image - Initially abstract, but much clearer the longer I look at it
Pretty colors Movement Collision flowers Warmth Life Spiritualism Nostalgic
Vibrant, erratic, muddled, strong textured composited, psychedelic
Butterfly discoloration interesting plant almost 3D glasses vibe thought provoking flower colorful
Colorful Hypnotic Vibrant
Vibrant Nature Green
Color, over-stimulating, saturating, nature, butterfly
very colorful busy

ART, ARTIST AND AUDIENCE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

Floral, Colorful, a world of flowers

Feathers, petals, kaleidoscope, disintegration

dragonfly? what? Is this what LSD is like?

butter

grasshopper face

Pretty colors, oh look a butterfly, is it sitting on a leaf?

colorful, abstract, spring vibes

if you look closer, looks like a floral print

looks like a butterfly in background

-Orientation

-Nature

-Rustic

Complex "is that a butterfly?"

Beautiful

What is this? Interesting but not my cup of tea.

a mess of colours,

which way is it meant to be orientated / is there a way

Moth

APPENDIX D – Names or titles they gave to the piece

Camelion butterfly - but with correct spelling
Wall of Wings
Can you still see me? or Evolution
"Wings"
Insect (fruinel?) collage
Technicolor?
(I'm so sorry for spelling) "Glass Crystalis"
"The Looking Glass"
<i>*this participant did not write name or title*</i>
Buried in beauty
I would call it Pond Above Water, because I can see things that would be above a pond, like a flower, butterfly, and lily pads, but the colors and distortion make me feel like I'm underwater
"Flowers (I know, it's boring) in the garden"
undergrowth
"Through the Eyes of Madness"
The Garden
Kaleidoscope Butterfly on the Cusp of Realness
Disorganized Moth.
The calm within the storm.
Kaleidoscope garden
"Color glass blinders" is what I would call it
- Verdant Spring - New Life
<i>Bug Eyes</i>
a memory of flowers
composite eye
<i>A Bug's Life</i>
"One with Nature"
"The Real World"
"Colors and Beauty"
<i>A Butterflies World</i>

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Kaleidoscope World.
Stagnant Growth
- Camouflage - Through the Lens of Springtime - Summer Haze
DragonFly
Machine Learning Butterfly
Nature without 3D glasses
Hypnoses
unfocused
Nature without 3D glasses
Spring
<i>A butterfly's world</i>
Formative Haze
"When the photo corrupts"
Through Different Eyes
Butterfly
-Between the Cracks
Colors of Nature
"Nameless" or "Wings & Flowers"
honestly I suck at names, but a smattering of colors bleed into each other as if water spilled onto a print, but there are also many layers of overlapping images, so something about a kaleidoscope of life or similar

APPENDIX E: Would they have displayed the artwork in their residence?

Nah, not my style + not much personal meaning.
I most likely would not – it's not aligned with my personal style.
Not in my house but maybe in my place of work like an office.
Probably not. It makes my vision fuzzy, but I do like it.
Probably not.
Probably not as a canvas but I'd probably use it as a blanket.
Yes
I personally would not display this peace [sic], the amount going on inside the photo is overstimulating and giving me a headache.
yes
maybe not, it feels more appropriate for a therapy waiting room though.
If I had a bigger residence and this was gifted to me, then yes. I don't see myself seeking this art and purchasing it by myself, though.
Yes, vibrant colors are central to my spaces.
no
No
It's pretty, but not really my style. If I needed a more appropriate and alluring piece for an office, I maybe would, but for personal use, no.
Probably not - I can appreciate it, but it's not quite my style (I usually like things that are either very abstract or not at all). It's cool, though!
No.
I think, depending on how the colors aligned with my other decor, that I would.
No
no, it's not my style.
No (it's not my style, but it is beautiful)
Maybe... it would depend on the frame
probably not
maybe!
This would be a nice portrait to display in a home or office. The bright colors are appealing. The insect also allows me to recall nature's beauties.
Yes. I see it being good in a kitchen, bathroom or hallway
No I probably wouldn't. It isn't necessarily my style, but it is beautiful and interesting to

ART, ARTIST AND AUDIENCE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

look at.
Maybe. It would depend on the room I would like to display it in as opposed to the actual artwork itself. But while it is bright and interesting to look at, it might be too busy and distracting for me to look at everyday.
No, I think the greens clash a little too much
- Personally, no. But I could imagine someone else doing so.
Yes, I feel like it could bring conversation. There seems to be life within a frame, movement, although still.
Probably not. Definitely a bathroom piece.
Yes
No
Yes
No
I probably would not display it because it doesn't match the vibe and had a bit too much happening for me.
Yes
No
Yes
Absolutely
yes
No
it's not my personal style but I think it would be lovely at a place of work
Maybe, as I am looking at it, it is growing on me.
eh? I would if I had other colourful things in my dorm room, but I need time to earn money for decore

APPENDIX F:

What do you think the artist intended with creating this piece? (Coded responses)

Like those two picture illusions. An optical illusion to see what you notice first.
It feels like it is supposed to be overwhelming in appearance, but you are meant to gradually take in more detail.
To confuse the viewer initially in such a way that they can't look away - the longer you study the painting the more you notice / see, it has layers
I think the artist may have intended to provoke confusion while composing this piece. It's difficult to make out any clear images, though there is a consistent floral nature motif. I think the artist also intended to provoke ideas related to an acid trip because of the colors & fuzziness of the images.
To play with color, distortion, and... nature
I have no idea. Maybe it's commentary on seeing the world through bright screens, or maybe it's an imagining of a butterfly's sight into the ultraviolet spectrum.
A sense of change, a new stage of life, Freedom from the past
I think the artist was trying to show nature through a different point of view. The artist maybe wanted to contrast playful colors with nature. The picture reminds me of looking through a kaleidoscope.
Potentially showing a garden through the point of view of a bug. With the blurry, sorta puzzled together look.
I think maybe an overwhelming sense of beauty
I think they wanted the viewer to see the world from the perspective of a different life form. Everything in this photo is so zoomed in and large, even though to a human these are very small. And the colors are not colors a human is used to seeing. This makes me feel the artist wanted me to see this particular spot through the eyes of a bug or small animal.
I always struggle w/ this question... Integrating / amplifying color to natural form. It may be an attempt to share the world/vision of the butterfly thru an impressionistic lense.
layers of texture -- the more you look at it, the more that is revealed
A visual representation of how a person with a psychological disorder may perceive the world around him or her.
I believe they intended for the viewer to envision what they believed the piece to be. It consists of vague lines and shapes that can be transformed into anything in the human mind.

To make something familiar seem different and more intriguing.

I am not sure.

I think the artist wanted to display as much of nature as possible in one piece, showcasing both the serenity that many people associated with nature as well as its complexity.

A sense of nostalgia, attunement with nature

To evoke emotions about the creature, they showcased it. perhaps to call attention to color.

- To create a feeling of peace / serenity.
- To remind one of the beauty of new life

To defamiliarize the viewer; to stimulate the eye. I expect the artist wanted me to spend time exploring the layers of the image.

to invoke nostalgia

this work feels like an exploration of vision and perspectives. The elements that make up the image are not initially clear -- at first I was looking at the image on its side. But the longer one looks the more the various layers emerge. I assume the artist is interested in the processes of perception, as well as, perhaps, the beauty of the natural world.

The artist was aiming to create a piece reminding them of nature. Perhaps the artist was drawn to the insect nestled on the leaf and wanted to display the details of it.

I think it was mainly immersion (?). I don't think they intended a particular scene but rather to get us to feel or let me be one with the painting

I think the artist intended to bring light into the world. To show all the colors at once and how beautiful both the light and the dark places can be.

Possibly to create something that is interesting to look at due to the multiple uses of colors, texture, and design.

To force people to look deeper. Not everything is shallow/face value. There are so many aspects to the piece, that even taking a single part could hold so much detail + reason.

- Technical works of playing with the overlaying of different images & how it affects the brain's ability to process the image.
- Recreating a psychedelic aesthetic through pre-existing imagery.

To bring a sense of complexity. It feels very human, something many can resonate w/.

I can't discern intention, as I do not know the artist, and the image is too muddled to make a judgment. Lacking context.

I think they wanted to take a normal photo of nature and turn it into something fun and colorful. Almost disorienting away from the nature aspect

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I think they wanted to almost over stimulate the person viewing it

To make us think about all the colors of nature.

Possibly chaos

I think the artist intended to say something about the way things interact

I imagine this might be an artist's rendition of the way an animal with a butterfly's visual spectrum would see

I think the artist attempted to obscure familiar objects underneath a disorderly layer of color. The bright primary colors evoke nostalgia, and the vague shapes underneath suggest the distortion of memories with time.

Maybe to bring color into a new space and use it to blur the original image so you have to examine it further

It looks like a butterfly being looked at by another insect. Maybe going to show a difference in perspective?

I think the artist intended to create a piece that is abstract but has distinct item in it to draw the viewers attention.

The overwhelming amount of colors makes it hard to see the small intricacies of the artwork. I believe the artist wanted to make the viewer spend more time with the piece

To have the viewer take a longer look at the work, really analyzing all details. Looking through the colors to what is behind.

I have absolutely no idea.

not much on meaning I can guess w/out context, but I believe the meaning of multiple looks/consideration to decipher is intentional

APPENDIX G: What feature of the artwork would they have drawn a friend's attention to?

I'd say, "what do you see first?"
I'd mention the wings and the almost kaleidoscopic nature of the piece.
The bug/moth, and then the "brick wall"
I would want to see a friend's opinion of the piece in general. I would direct their attention to the moth / butterfly / winged creature in the middle of the page. I would also want to know if they saw the splotches in the top right corner as flowers, butterflies, or nothing...
the katydid/grasshopper/mantis(?)
Probably the colors. The butterfly I think they would see first.
The features of stained glass
I would draw their attention to what looks to me like a butterfly sitting on a leaf in natural surroundings outdoor. It looks like there is flowers all around as well.
I think I'd draw attention to the way everything sort of blends together but the longer you look at it, the more details you can make out.
What looks like a butterfly to me in the middle
I would draw their attention to either the butterfly, or the way that the leaf goes over the white flower
The butterfly and the wall.
the layers of nature and overlapping texture (overlapping images have different perspectives)
Flowers in the background
The white part. It's a standout to me because it's not colorful. It's almost ethereal and translucent. It gives as an almost omnipresent feature in the artwork.
How the leaf the butterfly appears to be sitting on is blocking the white flower - since the butterfly and flower are the only white parts of the piece, they stand out and draw one's attention, suggesting they're the forms of the piece - so having the flower partially blocked by something similarly hued to the background is unusual and therefore interesting! Perhaps it's intended to convey depth, since the rest of it is so abstract?
The moth (or perhaps it is a butterfly).
First I would draw their attention to the butterfly, as it feels like the centerpiece in this artwork. I would then point out the vagueness of the background.
the wings in the center
I would say the top left corner, the saturated red. That part is curious to me. I would say it reminds me of frutiger metro, but is different.
The shadow of the butterfly and the subtle hints of blue.

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I am fixated on the exact center where it seems like the bug's legs are. I would begin there and expand outward.

the butterfly

The brick pattern - it took me a while to see it! More generally the way the parallel lines, (?) from more mechanical / industrial, underlie the more organic/natural elements.

I would point out the vibrant colors and the positioning of the insect.

I would point out the wings and petals, then flow about the colors themselves.

The center of the artwork where there appears to be a butterfly. I would want to know what they saw there.

The left-hand side looks like a kaleidoscope of butterflies which I like, and the white color too as it looks like a wing. I would ask if they could see the butterflies and point them out.

The dark reds that have one prominent area, but are still spread throughout.

- The images within the artwork (i.e. the flowers or the (block pattern / wall?))

I think it would be difficult to draw someone's attention to one particular thing. Although it's busy, it's calm. I guess I'd invite someone to look at it whole, embrace all of it.

I'd point out how there is still a strong and balanced range of values despite the chromatic appearance. And the composition remains despite visual noise.

I think the pops of color would get their attention at first glance. Then probably the shapes.

How bright the colors are

The bug in the center

The butterfly or moth, the blade of grass and flower.

I think I would draw their attention to the colors in general, but especially the whitish sections. This is what I noticed first and it is different from the rest of the work.

The butterfly/moth's left wing. the blobs that look like flowers.

The shapes hidden underneath the layer of color.

the orange stick-figure dude under the tip of the grass(?)

The butterfly

I would draw their attention to the butterfly

The brick wall in the background.

What looks to be a flower + butterfly behind the array of colors.

I wouldn't speak at all, I would just watch & listen to their reaction

Moth

APPENDIX H: Art Reception Survey

Please circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7) that best applies to you for each statement.

1. This artwork makes me curious.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. This artwork is thought-provoking.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. It is exciting to think about this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. It is fun to look at this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I would like to learn more about the background of this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. This artwork makes me feel afraid.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. This artwork makes me sad.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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8. This artwork makes me feel troubled.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. This artwork makes me feel lonesome.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. This artwork disgusts me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. I can relate this artwork to a historical context.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. This artwork reminds me of a particular artist.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I know this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I have an idea what the artist is trying to convey in this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. The content of this artwork feels inaccessible to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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16. This artwork makes me think about my own life history.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. I can associate this artwork with my own personal biography.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

18. This artwork propelled me to think about a personal memory.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

19. This artwork mirrors my own emotional state.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

20. This artwork is unique.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. This artwork features a high level of creativity.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

22. The composition of this artwork is of a high quality.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. The artist's style is fascinating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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24. This artwork is innovative.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

25. This artwork is pleasant.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

26. This artwork is beautiful.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

27. I would consider investing a large amount of money to buy this piece of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

28. This artwork thrills me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

29. I feel inspired by this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. I like this artwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX I: *Open-ended choice of prompt – story, opinion, description* (Coding Key)

Yellow highlight: evoked negative emotions

Green highlight: evoked positive emotions

Blue text: identification of layers

Purple text: multiplicity of elements

Orange highlight: emphasis on colors / hues

Gray highlight: emphasis on other artistic elements (shape, shade, line)

Red text: curiosity / confusion about artist's intentions (*not inference of intent*)

Cyan highlight: personal memory

Gold text: identification of natural elements (butterfly / moth / bug, wings, insects, etc.)

Magenta highlight: positive appraisal / favorable evaluation.

Red highlight: narrative theme (resilience)

Light red berry highlight: temporal progression (e.g., "at first... but then...")

Blue highlight: shades of transcendence ⇒ for instance, the kaleidoscopic vision

Orange text: spatial positioning (left, right, up, down)

Italics: POV of different life form

Light magenta: emphasis on beauty

Cyan text: negative appraisal or evaluation.

Pink text: blurry resolution in the image

Rethink Sans: Cognitive Stimulation (e.g., intrigued, interested)

Indie Flower: simile / metaphor

Dark cyan text, Be Vietnam font: narrative element in non-story response type

APPENDIX J: Open-ended choice of prompt (participants' stories)

Story One (Participant #3) –

I point out the bug to mom. It has huge wings and eyes like television screens. Static. 'She can't see him, even as he sits right in front of us, rubbing his spindly legs together. She is trapped by her visions like butterflies in glass jars so I change the subject and the bug flits away on eager breeze. The colors are so loud to me I want to scream and shake her – "Look!" but instead she tells some joke and I laugh and we keep walking through the garden. (90 words)

Story Two (Participant #7) –

There is something beautiful about imperfections and the pain of growth. This story shows the resilience of a fragile butterfly breaking free of its glass crystalis. The container was supposed to protect the butterfly by not letting it go, not suffocating. It hurt the butterfly by not letting it go, not letting it grow. Finally, the butterfly gained enough strength to break free of the glass crystalis. It got cut, hurt more by the thing that was supposed to protect it, but now it was free and stronger. The butterfly was ready to take flight.

Story Three (Participant #10) –

A butterfly buried in beauty. Fluttering deep within a pile of smaller butterflies and flowers. Its magic fades and stops shimmering. It is drowning in beautiful things, desperate to escape and fly free with vast space.

Story Four (Participant #16) –

The girl with the kaleidoscope eyes,' wasn't it? Lovely piece of songwriting. Now, it's the kind of thing I'd analyze the magic right out of at the behest of a professor, but when I was younger, the idea fascinated me. What would the world look like, if my eyes had shifting glass and bits of color nestled in my retinas, shifting gently every time I blinked, swirling dizzily when I shook my head?

Well, I think now, tilting my head as I examine the image. Celia has projected onto her bedroom ceiling, it would probably look a lot like this.

Story Five (Participant #20) –

This is what you see when you are looking at a butterfly and you've just been punched, so there's blood, but you want to see things are you beautiful line nature, so you are still watching that butterfly, your kaleidoscopic vision making all that you see beautiful. (47) :)

Story Six (Participant #21) –

Ari didn't like going to galleries or museums. She hated the glass that permeated the space, protecting old bones of fading civilizations and the last works of dead artists. Even the air inside felt cold.

Besides she had already seen the ancient tools and peeling oil paints. She had seen everything before. She had been everywhere, tasted everything, exhausted every experience.

Thanks to a fool's hope and a devil's bargain, Ari had lived. And lived. She had gotten what she wanted.

But now all she wanted was to die.

Yet she always found herself coming back to this stupid gallery. Her traitorous feet walked the same path of insanity again and again.

And yet -

This time was different.

This time, there was a new painting, one that she never thought she would see again.

Story Seven (Participant #41):

The artist is sitting in the garden watch the butterflies and the ladybugs flying around. They begin to wonder what they look like to each other. So, they begin by taking a picture of a butterfly and then begin to watercolor over it to show the butterfly from the ladybug's point of view.

APPENDIX K: Open-ended choice of prompt (participants' opinions)

Opinion One (Participant #2) –

In my opinion, I just do not understand this artwork. I have encountered layered media like this before, but it doesn't excite me because I don't feel like there's a clear way for me to interpret this. It largely left me confused and didn't bring up anything meaningful for me because there is so much going on. The use of color is just not something I would usually look for in artwork.

Opinion Two (Participant #5) –

I like the artwork because it is bright, creative, and involves insects. I dislike how very saturated it is, I think that makes it harder to look at for an extended period of time.

Opinion Three (Participant #8) –

My personal opinion of this artwork has 2 different notions. One side of my opinion, I hate it. I don't hate the art piece itself, just the way it makes me feel. I feel overwhelmed, anxious, angry, confused all at once. I can't see the image clearly through all the different colors which causes me frustration. The art piece has too much going on for me to be able to focus. I just don't like looking at it. On the other side of my opinion, I like the idea. As a kid, I loved kaleidoscopes and this photo kind of brought me to childhood. I kept seeing a butterfly and that intrigued me as well. The use of color and shapes makes a good creative piece, I overall was just overwhelmed.

Opinion Four (Participant #9) –

I really enjoy this piece of art. I think it is very visually appealing and thought provoking and I enjoy that the longer I look at it the more I get out of it. It feels very peaceful and serene. It almost feels as though I am viewing the image through someone else's eyes.

Opinion Five (Participant #13) –

I feel conflicted about this piece, since the layers of imagery are thematically complementary but the heatmap color palette makes the colors highly contrast. I like that I am able to see more layers of this piece the longer that I look at it, but perhaps using layers in confined spaces would give each layer more impact.

Opinion Six (Participant #17) –

In my opinion it looks like a moth or butterfly with a bunch of color filters over it. Feels like a headache rather than art.

Opinion Seven (Participant #19) –

This art is very soothing for me to look at. the vibrant colors contrast the layered imagery well. It reminds me of a cover of the song "colors" by Sun June performed by Runnner. It also reminds me of the flowers that used to grow in front of my parent's house. these familiar and nostalgic feelings lend themselves to my positive opinion towards the piece.

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Opinion Eight (Participant #25) –

This piece of artwork is incredibly vibrant. The rich and vibrant colors put me in a pleasant, comforting mood. The inclusion of the insect reminds me of being out in the forest gazing upon the flora and fauna which surround me living in Maine. I am intrigued by the shading and lighting of the artwork as well.

Opinion Nine (Participant #28) –

Overall, I like this piece of art. It is creative and unique. I would say I don't love it, but that's just because I personally prefer classical and portrait-style artwork. I am left wondering it was created digitally or not, and how it was created. It certainly is different and has many different features and colors to look at.

Opinion Ten (Participant #30) –

I find that I like the artwork presented. Though it's not anything particularly groundbreaking I find that I enjoy the finer details which the artist has played with in overlaying different images and what personal meaning could be driven from that. The wall is certainly an interesting choice in imagery in contrast to the more organic / natural-looking elements, and I would want to know more regarding what it represents both in general + to the artist personally. Is it an actual brick wall or a plant cell wall?

Opinion Eleven (Participant #32) –

This seems to be more of an exercise in style than of presenting a narrative. When there is no readily delineable message of subject, the viewer becomes the subject, which I find a little lazy. Looks cool though.

Opinion Twelve (Participant #43) –

I'm not sure whether the art itself is blurry or if it's the printing, but I feel as if the full effect was not there due to it. I feel as if the art had a lot of potential, but printing it hurt the effect. The amount of color is most certainly eye-catching, but some of the meaning has been lost on me.

Opinion Thirteen (Participant #45) –

My first reaction as "Huh?" It did not provoke negative feelings, except slight confusion. As I looked more closely, I became happy therefore I began to have a positive feeling/opinion. I think it is fun to look at + interesting. I enjoy trying to "read things into "it" like wings, flowers. (sorry I wrote a little about c") Opinion: I like it and think it is very creative.

APPENDIX L: Open-ended choice of prompt (participants' descriptions)

Description 1 (Participant #1) –

What I see: Blobs of color, Butterfly, Leaf, Flowers, Texture, Lots of color

Description 2 (Participant #4) –

In the very background of this piece, I am seeing a brick wall with images of nature overlaid on top of it. The images are of low opacity so you can just vaguely make out the blades of grass (top middle right ish) & leaves (bottom left). There is a floral petal motif overlaid on top of those images, with what seems to be poppies & other flowers. On top of this, there is a color inverted butterfly perched on a leaf, almost looking out @ the audience. Different colors & textures have been placed overtop of the entire piece which work to make the entire piece trippy & unidentifiable.

Description 3 (Participant #6) –

This artwork (I think) is a photo of a butterfly (cabbage moth?) on a blade of grass over a photo of a daisy under something else, tie-dyed fabric or something else, which provides the color of the work, mixing red, green, yellow and blue in various spots. There are also horizontal and vertical lines running through the artwork, but are cut off before they reach any side but the top. Some of the color spots show lightness as if it were dripped on by water.

Description 4 (Participant #11) –

I see a little bee, flying through the air, looking for its next flower to pollinate. But, as it finds its next flower, it sees a big mean butterfly guarding it.

Description 5 (Participant #12) –

At first glance, I struggled to make sense but after more time the natural themes emerged. The butterfly is feeding (?) and/or flying amid a riot of flowers. It is made of layers of leaves/flowers suggesting the way an insect "sees".

Description 6 (Participant #14) –

This artwork looks like two photographs merged into each other. One photo is a butterfly resting atop a leaf with wings outstretched. Behind the butterfly is a dragonfly passing by it and the leaf. What appears to be a pond is in the background, flower petals floating atop the water's surface. The other photo is a close-up

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shot of colorful flowers. It is predominantly a bunch of red flowers with some yellow ones, too. The way the two photos are merged, the flowers can be seen through the butterfly's wing and the leaf's body. Some stultlike(?) faces can be discerned through this overlay.

Description 7 (Participant #15) –

I see in this artwork a butterfly that's escaped a spider web, the web string still slightly stuck to her. She rests on a leaf in a field of flowers. She is as pure and ethereal as the single sunflower that stands beside her and the leaf. She's a survivor, the thorns still linger danger under her, but she rises above, transcending the earth and vibrating with the colors around her, taking on their hues.

Description 8 (Participant #18) –

This artwork includes a vast number of things to focus on, and I find myself noticing something new each time I look at it. The butterfly on the blade of grass in the middle of the piece feels like the main focal point. I can also see layers of different types of flowers, with animals blending in with them – for instance, I just noticed a bird's eye within one of the flowers. The piece seems to be composed of many layers.

Description 9 (Participant #22) –

I feel certain there is more to this artwork than I am currently able to access. I see the moth, but this recognition is not reassuring. My eye picks up fragments of the world beneath, or perhaps above, the plane of the moth – but nothing coheres. I feel paranoid that there is perhaps nothing else there – it is a trick I wish I could get some information from the artist that would help unlock more of the image. I also want to know if this was made by a human. That would help me determine how much to study the patterns for meaning. (60)

Description 10 (Participant #23) –

This artwork seems to be made out of numerous photos overlaid on top of each other as well as a very large picture of a butterfly.

Description 11 (Participant #24) –

I am extremely interested in the layered quality of this work, (?) appears to be several photographs overlaid onto one another. The most obvious layers here are the natural images: flowers, leaves, and a butterfly. However, beneath these layers, is the image of a brick wall. I am interested in what this suggests about the relationship between the man-made and the natural, or the built environment and the natural environment. It's especially interesting to me that the natural elements appear to be on top of the natural layers – this seems like an inversion of the idea that "culture" is built on a foundation of "nature."

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Description 12 (Participant #26) –

I see a collage of natural and fantastical elements. It looks like as if I were to look through a fairy-tale forest through a kaleidoscope. I can see wings or a (sc----?) and of a bird. I see sunlight glowing through the back, a butterfly, flower petals, and a forest canopy. I also see a little blood splatter, as though the bird just got its meal. Overall it takes me to a serene, natural place.

Description 13 (Participant #27) –

In this artwork I see a butterfly landed on a flower in a field full of flowers. I see a vast contrast between the colors, the dark and the light all mixed together. I like to think that I am seeing the world in colors as a butterfly does.

Description 14 (Participant #29) –

The artwork has a variety of colors, all mixed together and layered on top of one another. There are deep reds in one corner but it seeps minimally into the rest of the artwork. There is a butterfly on a leaf, but it has no color. All the color has been taken away from the butterfly and pasted all over the page. The area of and around the butterfly is white. It seems as if someone took a picture of a butterfly in nature, and inverted the colors onto a new realm of work. There are a lot of greens and blues, but the majority of it is distorted, many layers.

Description 15 (Participant #31) –

I see a distant memory from childhood. Nothing specific but rather, my young and imaginative mind. Colors used to be brighter then. The green reminds me of my great grandmother's lawn. The flower backdrop reminds me of the wildflowers that would grow around her trailer. A part of the artwork reminds me of an insect. There's curiosity that lies there. The art seems still but it moves. It reminds me of light. I am young, I am old. I am her, the same person I was at 9, but also, I grow to be who I am and will become. I feel like that insect, growing, flying...

Description 16 (Participant #33) –

I see a butterfly landing on a leaf next to a flower. The butterfly I'm guessing is going to drink from the flower but the contrast of the artwork makes it seem inaccessible. It's almost as if we will never know if the butterfly got to drink from the flower.

Description 17 (Participant #34) –

What I see in this artwork is a lot of overlapping images almost fighting for a spot in the art. And also see a rainbow of color enveloping the images washing them out

Description 18 (Participant #35) –

I see a bug on a leaf but it's out of focus.

Description 19 (Participant #36) –

What I see in the artwork is a natural landscape of a moth resting on a blade of grass. The saturation of colors reminds me of the seasons.

Red = fall

Black/blue = winter

green = summer

yellow = spring

Overall, the artwork reminds me of the cycles of nature (seasons and the process that butterflies/moths go through).

Description 20 (Participant #37) –

In this artwork, I see many different things. It looks like there might be some feathers around the bottom third. They are lighter in color, almost white, compared to the rest. Other parts look like things you would see under a microscope. They have organic and unique shapes and some even look like a repeating pattern. I see these most in the bottom right corner and on the left side of the top third. Lastly, the colors remind of those used in thermal imaging.

Description 21 (Participant #38) –

This artwork looks like the perspective of a bug or insect who lives among the grass and the flowers. There is what is either a butterfly or a moth, and the strange visuals look like a rendition of an insect's extended visual range in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Description 22 (Participant #39) –

I see a loosely-defined grid of splattered, translucent colors overlapping a scene of a dead bird's wing laying atop a daisy in the grass. There are bright hues of red, blue, yellow and green layered on top of the scene. Turning the artwork counterclockwise reveals another scene: a butterfly resting on a leaf, with flowers and bricks loosely visible atop the image.

Description 23 (Participant #40) –

I see a Butterfly with a grasshopper's face. It's sitting on a leaf (or grass) with a flower behind. Maybe a daisy. The bits of blue look like puddles to me, and there is a little orange man with a bow in the bottom left

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section. I can vaguely see the shape of leaves around the top and right edges, and small flowers or leaves in the top right section

Is there a brick wall overlay?

Description 24 (Participant #42) –

When you first look at the artwork you see lots of colors but then your attention is drawn to the white space. Looking at the white space you see a butterfly. It almost looks like the butterfly is sitting on a leaf or blade of grass. It also looks like there is a flower of some sort under the butterfly.

Description 25 (Participant #44) –

Starting with the background, it looks to be a photograph of a garden (maybe wild flowers.) The main focal point looks to be a larger white flower, mostly covered by a long green leaf. Sitting on the leaf is a moth or butterfly. The scene described above is then covered with an array of colors. Mostly greens, with some red + yellow. At first glance, it is hard to tell what the art work is showing, however the longer you look at it, the more you find.

Description 26 (Participant #46) –

Flowers are overlain on the backdrop of a wall half obscuring the moth which rests upon a blade of grass, the colours blend and bleed inked paper having been wet.

APPENDIX M: Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire (Wanzer et al., 2020)

While I viewed this artwork... (please circle the number – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 – that best applies to you for each statement)

1. I experienced a wide range of emotions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. My emotions changed as I continued to view the work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I felt moved.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I experienced a physical reaction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I saw the work of art as a reflection of a time period.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I tried to place the work of art in a historical context.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I related it to other works of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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8. The composition of the work of art was important to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. The colors of the work of art were important to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. I focused on the subtle aspects of the work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. I tried to understand the work completely.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I tried to understand what the artist was trying to communicate.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I gained new insights about the work of art itself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I saw the work of art as an extension of the artist.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I had a clear idea of what to look for while I viewed this work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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16. I feel that my thoughts on this work of art are correct.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. I feel that if I were to share my thoughts on the artwork, the artist would agree with them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

18. I felt that I was able to understand this work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

19. I lost track of time while I viewed this work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

20. I got lost in thought while I viewed the work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. I was completely focused on viewing the work of art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

22. The experience of viewing the work of art was rewarding to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX N: Vienna Art Interest Questionnaire (Specker et al., 2020)

Please circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7) that best applies to you for each statement.

1. An artwork has to primarily be beautiful for me to like it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I enjoyed art classes in school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I like to talk about art with others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I have many friends/acquaintances that are interested in art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I cannot stand ugly artworks.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Art has to be about an exact representation of the world.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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7. I'm interested in art.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Art should first and foremost be decorative.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I'm always looking for new artistic impressions and experiences.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. In everyday life I routinely see art objects that fascinate me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. I come from an art-interested family.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. How often do you visit art museums and/or galleries?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Less than once a year	once per year	once every six months	once every three months	once a month	every other week	once a week or more

13. How often do you read books, magazines or catalogs about art?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Less than once a year	once per year	once every six months	once every three months	once a month	every other week	once a week or more

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14. How often do you look at images of artworks (picture books, catalogs, internet, etc.)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Less than once a year once per year once every six months once every three months once a month every other week once a week or more

15. How often do you visit events about art or art history (seminars, projects, festivals, etc.)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Less than once a year once per year once every six months once every three months once a month every other week once a week or more

16. How often do you create artwork?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Less than once a year once per year once every six months once every three months once a month every other week once a week or more