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The Meta Kibun Project: Exploring Interactivity, Audience, and Affective Experience in Digital Interactive Art Exhibitions

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Bachelor of Media and communication (Honours).

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ABSTRACT

This research is a creative practice-based investigation examining the interrelationship between artwork, audience, and emotional experience within digital interactive exhibition settings. Existing studies in interactive art often overlook the cultural and subjective complexity of audience emotions, treating them as universal or oversimplified. This research addresses that gap through The Meta Kibun-기분 Project (“mood” in Korean), an audio-visual interactive installation that employs tactile elements such as roses and water to explore how haptic interactivity influences affective responses. Participants trigger layered audio-visual and colour effects that prompt reflection on and articulation of their feelings. Informed by the artist’s Korean heritage, the project draws on Korean cultural concepts of emotional nuance conveyed through colour (Yoon, 2018). Within interactive artworks, audiences are positioned not merely as viewers but as active participants and performers who co-create meaning alongside the artist through unique, unrepeatable outputs (Edmonds et al., 2014; Saltz, 1997). Their affective experiences are considered integral to the design of interactive artworks (Edmonds et al., 2014). Yet evaluating feeling presents challenges, as affect is inherently subjective and complex. This research draws on Donna Haraway’s (1988) theory of situated knowledge, which argues that knowledge is shaped by cultural and social positioning rather than existing as objective truth, positioning audiences as “situated knowers” whose feelings are informed by personal and cultural contexts.

Drawing on theories of affect, digital interactive art and human–computer interaction (Candy & Edmonds), and situated knowledge, this research proposes strategies for designing interactive art that deepen affective engagement and acknowledge cultural diversity. It asks: How does interactivity in The Meta Kibun Project, centred on Korean emotive colour terms and tactile elements, influence audiences’ affective experiences? The project employs

exhibition as an experimental site, along with interviews and surveys, to analyse affective experiences as narrative evidence—focusing on subjective responses. Findings indicate that touch, colour, and culturally situated emotional frameworks foster heightened affective engagement, prompting audiences to recognise and articulate complex, layered feelings they had not previously identified. This research contributes to discourse in digital interactive art and HCI by demonstrating how tactile interactivity incorporating cultural affective frameworks can inform the design of exhibitions that cultivate situated affective experiences.

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2025

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Ethics

This research used interviews and surveys to gather data and therefore ethics was required and approved from the relevant ethics review body. The RMIT University DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN) approved the application (2025-28917-29057) The Meta Kibun: Interactive Digital Art and the Affective Experience of Audience Engagement through Touch and Colour. Research participants were required to read and understand the Participant Information Consent Form (PICF) which outlined the project, benefits and risks involved and the conduction of the research. Signing the PICF form participants agreed to engage in the interview while also maintaining the right to withdraw from the interview and the research completely at any time. The questions sheet was also provided to the participant for complete transparency and PICF forms were signed for both parties.

Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to acknowledge the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations, on whose unceded lands I have spent this year creating, writing and learning.

I pay my respect to these people, cultures and Elders, past and present.

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and for believing in me even more than I believe in myself.

You mean the world to me.

늘 보고 싶고, 사랑합니다.

Without all of you, this project would never have come to life.

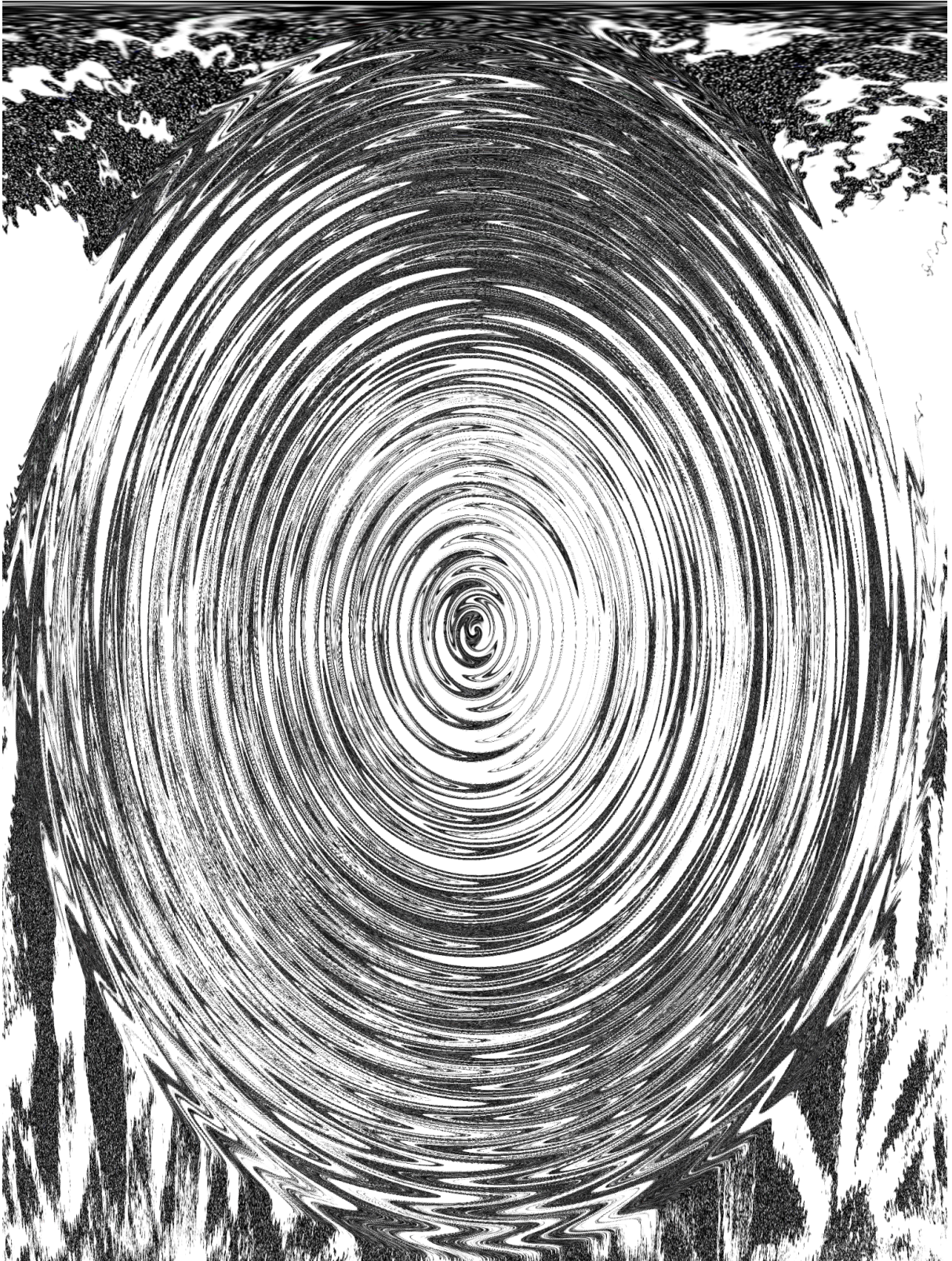
Thank you.

From the bottom of my heart.

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SEED - INTRODUCTION



The rapid proliferation of technologies such as 3D environments, immersive audio-visual systems, multisensory and haptic interfaces, generative art, full-colour spectrum displays, and human body tracking has significantly expanded the creative scope for artists, enabling the experimentation and production of complex interactive works across diverse forms. These technological advancements have intensified critical discourse surrounding the concept and significance of interactivity, particularly within the converging fields of digital art and human–computer interaction (Edmonds, Muller, & Connell, 2006; Wright & McCarthy, 2008). As interactivity inherently necessitates audience engagement, questions regarding the role and influence of the audience’s affective experience have become central to these discussions, positioning audiences not merely as spectators but as active participants whose responses fundamentally contribute to the realisation of the artwork (Edmonds et al., 2004; Edmonds et al., 2014).

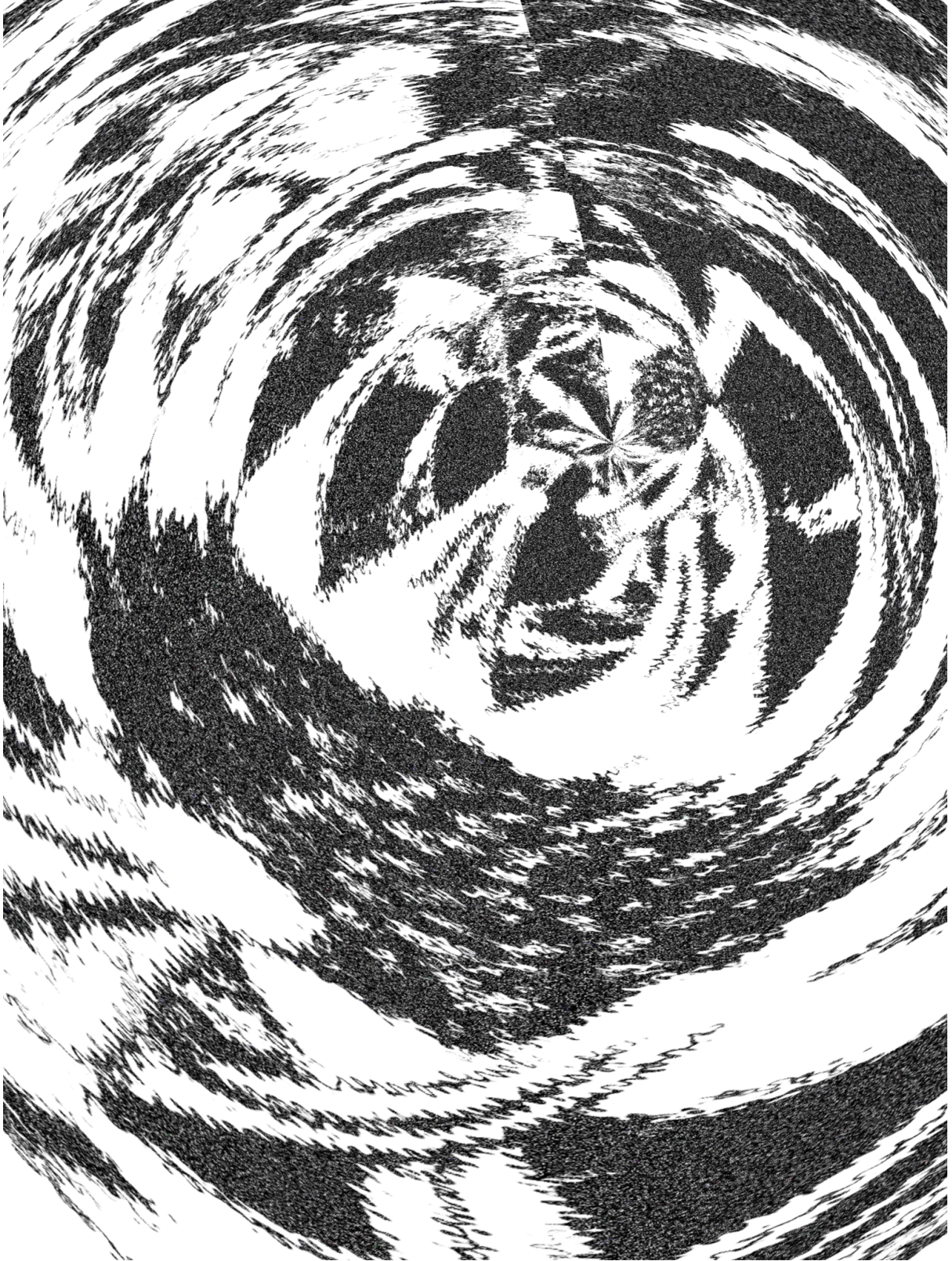
The emotional responses of audiences after engaging with artworks are inherently subjective, unpredictable, and unique to each individual, shaped by their social and cultural contexts, which makes them challenging to measure (Wilson-Mendenhall, Barrett, & Barsalou, 2013; Wright & McCarthy, 2010). Despite this, existing discussions often approach audience affective responses from universal and generalised perspectives, drawing on foundational theories such as the valence–arousal model and Basic Emotion Theory (Russell, 1980; Ekman, 1992). However, such frameworks risk oversimplifying affective experience, which is complex, contextual, and culturally situated—shaped by personal histories, social positioning, and lived experience (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012).

This research aims to address this gap by investigating how interactivity—particularly through the use of touch and colour—shapes the affective experiences of audiences. Interactive art manifests across diverse environments, including virtual spaces, physical galleries, exhibitions, and hybrid formats that merge digital and physical dimensions. However, this research focuses specifically on audience experiences within exhibition

settings, where direct physical interaction with the artwork takes place. By focusing on tactile interactivity, the research examines how audio, visual, and tactile multisensory experiences influence the depth and quality of affective engagement. It also explores how culturally specific emotional frameworks inform these interactions and proposes alternative approaches to designing interactive systems that recognise emotional subtlety and complexity rather than relying on fixed categorical definitions of feeling.

The research adopts a creative practice-based methodology alongside a data analysis framework, with The Meta Kibun (기분—a Korean term translated as “mood” or “feeling”) as the central creative artefact. The project integrates Korean cultural concepts of emotional nuance with interactive design, utilising tactile elements such as real rose flowers and water as core aesthetics within immersive 3D visual and audio environments. Audience emotional responses are collected through interviews and surveys conducted at the exhibition, following participants’ engagement with the artwork, and are analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to emphasise each individual’s unique and nuanced affective experience.

SPROUT - Chapter 1



RESEARCH DESIGN

This research aims to investigate how interactivity, particularly through tactile interfaces as primary input media, influences the affective experiences of audiences within audio-visual digital interactive exhibition settings. Additionally, it seeks to examine how culturally grounded emotional frameworks can be recognised and integrated into the design of interactive systems that foster meaningful and affectively resonant experiences. To address these aims, the research first defines key concepts such as interactivity in digital art, the role of audiences as active performers in interactive exhibitions, and the nature of affect and emotion in digital media. It then examines the layered dynamics of audience interaction in public exhibition contexts, focusing on the correlations and interplay between audiences, artworks, environments, and the artist. This investigation is grounded in a literature review that draws from the fields of digital art and human–computer interaction, engages with interaction design and audience participation theories, and incorporates affect theory, Korean emotional concepts, and culturally situated knowledge.

The research draws upon creative practice through The Meta Kibun (기분) Project, an immersive, multi-sensory installation grounded in Korean cultural concepts of emotional nuance, with which research participants engage during the research period. The term kibun (기분) is a Korean word often translated as “mood,” “emotional state,” or “atmosphere,” and reflects a culturally specific understanding of affect that underpins the project’s conceptual framework. In Korean contexts, colour is closely associated with subtle emotional nuances that may be difficult to articulate verbally (Yoon, 2018). The Meta Kibun Project seeks to evoke these nuanced affective states through touch and colour as core interactive elements, integrated with 3D visual aesthetics and sound. Participants are interviewed and surveyed shortly after engaging with the work, and their responses are analysed to form the basis of the research findings.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Building on discussions of interactivity, audience engagement, affective experience, and cultural frameworks within digital interactive artworks, the central question of this research is:

How does the interactivity in The Meta Kibun 기분 Project, centred on Korean emotive colour terms and tactile elements, influence the affective experiences of audiences?

The following sub-questions, derived from this core inquiry, guide the analysis. The first asks: In what ways, and to what extent, do tactile elements influence audience engagement and foster more personal and authentic experiences? This invites consideration of how interactive systems might be designed to utilise tactile elements in ways that deepen affective engagement for audiences. The second question asks: How can digital artists acknowledge and incorporate culturally specific frameworks in the design of interactive installations for exhibitions? This question proposes an alternative approach to understanding the affective experiences of culturally situated audiences, which are often subtle and nuanced.

Together, these questions extend the discussion of interactivity in digital art by foregrounding the affective dimensions of audience experience and their performative roles within exhibition contexts. This approach contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how interactivity enables audiences to participate in meaning-making processes that are simultaneously emotional and culturally situated.

METHODOLOGIES

Examining the affective experiences of audiences in digital interactive installation exhibitions presents a challenge, as emotions are inherently subjective and personal, making them difficult to capture and analyse. To address this, the research employs a mixed methodological approach that integrates creative practice, exhibition, interviews, and surveys as its primary methods.

Creative Practice-based Research

This research is situated within a creative practice-based inquiry, in which the artefact—The Meta Kibun Project—together with the processes of creation, exploration, reflection, and evaluation, forms the pivotal basis of the investigation, with the exegesis informed by the artefact itself (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). Although Candy and Edmonds (2018) discuss practice-based research in the creative arts primarily in the context of doctoral study, this research adopts their definition that practice-based research seeks to generate new knowledge through the creation of artefacts and the outcomes of practice. While creative works may embody new insights, they cannot be regarded as research outcomes in themselves; they require contextualisation through written documentation that communicates the knowledge in accessible and unambiguous forms, such as textual, numerical, or analytical data (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). However, this research investigates human feelings, which are abstract and subjective experiences that are difficult to articulate through objective measurement. Therefore, it adopts alternative and complementary strategies for evidencing and communicating the outcomes of practice through exhibition, interviews, and surveys.

Exhibition as an Experimental Site

The Meta Kibun Project invites audiences into the exhibition space to actively engage with the audio-visual digital interactive artwork through touch, sight, and sound, evoking emotional responses through sensory participation. The exhibition environment is composed of complex dynamics, with multiple layers of interaction between the artwork, audience, environment, and artist. Each layer and its individual correlation with the others function as an active process of meaning-making, occurring simultaneously in ways that are often subtle and nuanced. Every participating factor within the exhibition system affects the others and, in turn, is affected by them. It is as if each element forms part of a live ensemble performing together in the exhibition space, which becomes their shared stage. The audience's interaction with the artwork also resembles a live performance—transient and unrepeatable. As a result of this performance, each participant is left with lingering emotional impressions; the audience, observers, and artist all carry feelings that resonate beyond the moment of experience.

Haseman (2006) argues that there is a third type of research, beyond the first two—qualitative and quantitative—called “performative research,” in which “the researcher creates new artistic forms for performance and exhibition” (p. 4). Whereas quantitative research aims to measure and demonstrate findings through numerical data and statistical analysis, and qualitative research focuses on interpreting meaning and experience through methods such as observation, language, or text, performative research produces knowledge through creative practice itself. In this context, exhibition, particularly in digital interactive art, acts as a platform for experimentation and simultaneously becomes both the research process and its outcome. He further contends that “findings are expressed in non-numeric data; they present as symbolic forms other than in the words of discursive text,” taking the form of images, videos, music, or performance (Haseman, 2006, p. 5). Although Haseman's

discussion of performative research is primarily situated within practice-led research, his argument that the artefact itself constitutes research—where meaning is communicated not only through written components but also performed, embodied, and enacted through material forms such as images, sound, interaction, installation, or movement—can also be applied to practice-based research. In this sense, practice-based research can likewise be performative, particularly within digital and interactive media. The exhibition, then, becomes the site where the artefact engages with audiences and where performance occurs as a result, embodying the relationships and affective experiences among each element within the system.

Audience Interview and Surveys as Narrative Evidence

In traditional research approaches, interviews and surveys are often positioned as measurement tools designed to collect quantifiable or categorical data, typically translated into numerical values. Even within qualitative research, they are frequently treated as data-extraction instruments that emphasise validity through consistency and measurable units. By contrast, this research adopts interviews and surveys as methods for foregrounding individual audiences' affective experiences and personal narratives. Each participant's experience is unique, shaped by diverse cultural backgrounds and life histories that influence their emotional state on the day of the exhibition.

Accordingly, this research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches within its questionnaires to focus on the lived experiences and narratives of participants engaging with the artwork, rather than reducing responses to numbers, percentages, or other statistical categories. The survey employs a combination of open-ended and rating-scale questions to balance depth of reflection with time efficiency and to minimise participant pressure. The interviews are conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing conversations

to flow naturally and adapt to each participant's narrative, rather than being strictly constrained by predetermined questions or order.

Through this approach, when examining affect shaped by cultural experience and emotion, participants' stories expressed in their own words are regarded as the most rigorous form of evidence. Interviews and surveys are thus reframed as meaning-making methods, positioning lived experience and narrative as valid forms of knowledge within the context of digital interactive exhibitions. In doing so, this research challenges traditional methodological assumptions that privilege numerical or unambiguous data as the primary benchmark of validity. This perspective aligns with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2015) argument in *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* that interviews are neither scientific nor objective but inherently subjective, and therefore require alternative perspectives beyond conventional methodological assumptions.

STEM - Chapter 2



Community of Practice

According to Wenger (2015), a community of practice refers to a group of people who share a common interest in a field they are passionate about and who collectively deepen their understanding through knowledge sharing, dialogue, and shared activity. Lave and Wenger (1991) further describe a community of practice as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98), highlighting its relational and evolving nature. Hara (2009) emphasises that such communities thrive through mutual engagement and the joint negotiation of meaning, and are rarely sustained in isolation. Similarly, Wilson and Van Ruiten (2013) argue that artists and researchers whose practices involve technology tend to circulate knowledge through collaborative engagement with peers, colleagues, and networks. In the context of digital interactive art and media, this circulation of knowledge is fostered through ongoing exchanges of inspiration, technical skills, discussions of emerging technologies, and shared experiences of engaging with one another’s work in showcases, gigs, and exhibitions.

This research, based on The Meta Kibun Project, is situated within several communities of practice, including TouchCollective, the RMIT Digital Media and Honours in Media and Communication cohorts, and broader creative technology communities and networks in Melbourne and Seoul. Each of these communities plays a significant role in shaping the conceptual, methodological, and technological approaches of the project.

TouchCollective is a Naarm-based creative technology collective for digital media artists, co-founded by the researcher. The collective offers workshops and creative jam sessions for artists working with TouchDesigner, a versatile node-based visual programming tool for audio-visual practice. The software is widely recognised as a powerful platform for real-time simulation, particularly in live performance and installation contexts, and serves as

a core foundation for the collective's work. The collective aims to create a safe space for experimentation and collaboration, where artists can engage in peer-to-peer learning. TouchCollective also serves as a testing ground for both technical and conceptual experimentation with various creative technologies, shaping this research by enabling the exploration of different approaches to interactivity design.

The RMIT Digital Media and Honours cohorts provide platforms for peer review, presentation, and critical dialogue, fostering the exchange of conceptual and technical knowledge. The Digital Media cohort focuses on digital artworks at the intersection of human–computer interaction, while the Media and Communication Honours cohort situates this research within broader academic discourse, refining its connections between theory and practice.

Within broader digital art and technology communities in both Melbourne and Seoul, collective activities such as interactive installation exhibitions, showcases, gigs, and collaborative projects facilitate the circulation of knowledge and ideas. These contexts also provide exposure to emerging technologies and aesthetics, which in turn inform the conceptual and design development of this research project.

In this way, The Meta Kibun Project is situated within overlapping communities of practice that shape not only its technical approaches but also its conceptual and academic perspectives within the field of digital interactive media, particularly at the intersection of human–computer interaction. Beyond positioning the research within these fields, this active engagement contributes to the circulation of knowledge within these communities of practice by demonstrating how the project offers alternative approaches to designing audio-visual interactive systems for exhibition and to the affective experiences of audiences. In this way, the project is embedded within communities that both inform its development

and receive its contributions, offering the foundation for defining the key terms and theoretical frameworks that support this research.

KEY TERMS

This research aims to advance the understanding of interactive design elements and audience affective experience in audio-visual digital interactive artworks, particularly within the fields of digital interactive art and human–computer interaction, by clarifying and refining these concepts. It further seeks to extend existing definitions of interactivity by proposing a more nuanced framework that incorporates subjective affective engagement and cultural specificity.

The Definition of Interactivity

The definition of interactivity in digital interactive art remains a contested terrain, reflecting ongoing scholarly attempts to clarify its meaning and frameworks. Saltz (1997) identifies three core conditions for interactivity: audiences must provide an input that is digitally translated by the computer; this input must influence the computer's output; and the resulting effects must be perceivable to the audience (p. 118). While this provides an essential technical foundation, such a categorisation risks oversimplifying interactive systems. To account for interactivity within exhibition contexts, it is necessary to acknowledge the complex relational dynamics among the various elements that constitute the exhibition system.

Edmonds et al. (2004) extend this discussion by introducing four types of interactive artworks—*static*, *dynamic-passive*, *dynamic-interactive*, and *dynamic-interactive (varying)*—each defined by the degree of audience participation. *Static* artworks remain

unchanged, with audiences positioned as spectators rather than participants. No interaction occurs between the artwork and the audience, and the work does not respond to any inputs. Such forms are often found in traditional art galleries or museums, where audiences observe paintings or sculptures from a distance and are discouraged from physical engagement. *Dynamic-passive* artworks, by contrast, change in response to environmental factors such as light, sound, or temperature, yet audiences remain limited to the role of observers. *Dynamic-interactive* works incorporate human input in addition to environmental factors, allowing audiences to engage more actively with the artwork. Participants' movements influence the process of the artwork, yet its responses remain within pre-defined parameters and are therefore predictable. The most complex category, *dynamic-interactive (varying)*, describes artworks that evolve over time through the combined influence of environmental conditions and human actions. With the addition of a modifying agent—such as a participant or adaptive software—the original structure or behavioural rules of the artwork can change, rendering its performance unpredictable and shaped by the history of interactions.

While this framework usefully distinguishes different levels of interaction between artwork and audience, including environmental factors, it does not adequately address the lived affective experiences of audiences during engagement. Responding to these limitations, Smut (2009) argues that interactivity should not be restricted to the artwork merely responding to audience input but should involve a “concreate” process in which the artwork is completed by positioning the artist and the audience as co-producers (p.70). His approach expands the concept of interactivity from a one-way process into a reciprocal and dialogical exchange that invites audiences as active participants in the co-creation of meaning alongside the artwork and the artist.

With technological advancements that have expanded the possibilities for creating increasingly diverse, complex, and immersive interactive artworks, Saltz (1997) raises concerns that such technical freedom comes at a cost, describing it as “a devil’s bargain...

[against] the establishment of authentic human contact and a renewed sense of community” (p. 126). However, these advancements do not necessarily undermine human experience; rather, they can reinforce personal engagement and foster a renewed sense of community. Emerging technologies have enabled interactivity to reach audiences in more versatile ways, making the interactive encounter increasingly engaging and immersive. Digital interactive art has evolved from audiences simply clicking or typing text into computers in the 1960s to contemporary works that capture complex body-tracking data, transmitting it to virtual characters in 3D environments where other participants can simultaneously interact and influence the shared digital space (Saltz, 1997; Bodycrisis, 2023).

As computing technologies have developed, interactivity has become progressively more complex and dynamic. In the 1950s and 1960s, during the early stages of computing, interaction was highly constrained, and a clear boundary existed between computers and humans, as well as between the virtual and the real (Goodchild, 2021). Today, however, these boundaries between artwork and the audience, and between the virtual and real, have become blurred. The so-called fourth wall—a theatrical term referring to the invisible barrier that separates performers from the audience—collapses in interactive art, dissolving distinctions between the artwork, the artist, and the audience. Interactive art thus provides a site in which each member of the system experiences belonging and co-presence. This perspective challenges Saltz’s (1997) assertion that technical freedom diminishes human experience, instead proposing that technological interactivity enhances and strengthens human engagement by breaking down the walls that once separated audience, artwork, and artist within the system.

Another approach to enhancing human experience in interactive art involves designing interactivity that utilises tactile and haptic elements, where audiences are invited to touch, press, or squeeze physical objects or materials. These actions may serve as outcomes in themselves or as triggers that prompt changes in the artwork’s audio or visual

components. According to Vi et al. (2017), tactile interactivity fosters a sense of real feeling, allowing participants to feel more grounded and present as they physically engage with materials, thereby enhancing overall affective engagement. More recently, He (2024) discusses frameworks such as affective haptics—a term originally defined by Tsetserukou et al. (2009)—to describe systems and devices designed to elicit emotional responses through tactile interaction, demonstrating how touch facilitates deeper emotional communication. By incorporating tactile interactivity, sensations are delivered physically and instantaneously, reinforcing the immediacy of experience and offering audiences a more direct, embodied connection to the artwork.

However, while these approaches provide valuable insight into how touch can enhance affective engagement, they remain limited in that they often overlook the complexity, variability, and cultural specificity of individual emotional experiences. To understand affective experience more fully, it is necessary to consider the roles and positions audiences occupy within interactive art systems, and how their participation shapes meaning. Audiences can no longer be treated as passive receivers of an artist's intention but must be recognised as active co-producers whose embodied engagement not only influences but fundamentally reshapes the artwork. Their presence and participation are therefore integral to both the design of interactive systems for digital art exhibitions and to the meaning and outcomes of digital interactive art itself.

Audience in Digital Interactive Artworks

Traditionally, audiences in media have been regarded as mere numbers or “eyeballs” at concerts or events, often conceptualised as passive and even vulnerable recipients of content who are easily manipulated (Stokes, 2019). Such an approach privileges consumption over participation and overlooks the active presence of audiences in creating meaning through engagement with artworks. With the emergence of interactivity in digital art, however, this framing has shifted towards recognising the significance of audience participation. Edmonds et al. (2004) observe that “interactive artworks... could transform viewers into participants,” signalling a shift in how the audience’s role is understood within the art system (p. 113). Candy et al. (2014) extend this perspective by positioning audiences—particularly in digital interactive public settings—as participants who actively engage with the artwork and who “find themselves part of the art itself” (p. 2).

Ahmed (2018) further argues that what distinguishes digital interactive artworks from other artistic forms is precisely the way audience participation and engagement become integral to the work, such that “the activity of engagement becomes part of the artwork,” rendering it inseparable from the art itself (p. 244). This perspective foregrounds the audience’s role within the system, yet its emphasis lies in differentiating interactive art from other artistic forms rather than critically examining the significance of audiences’ roles and the quality of their lived experiences. More recently, Jiang et al. (2023) propose that audiences act as co-creators who complete the artwork through their participation. As co-creators, they not only contribute to the visual presentation of the work but also shape its interpretive meaning, influencing how it is perceived and experienced. Similarly, Stokes (2019) highlights audiences as “a meaning-creating community” (p. 225), underscoring their collaborative role in the process of meaning-making within interactive art.

Among these discussions, Saltz's (1997) definition of the audience as "performers" is particularly significant. In this view, the interactive artwork functions as a stage that invites audiences to perform through their engagement with the work. The audience completes the artwork through participation that is inherently performative, unique to each individual, transient, and experienced only once—essentially, a live performance. Audiences thus become performers who co-create meaning with the artist, producing unrepeatable experiences. However, while Saltz acknowledges the performative qualities of participation, he does not examine the audience's affective experiences. A more nuanced approach is therefore required to account for the complexity and variability of audiences in order to more fully understand their experiences and to design effective interactive systems within exhibition contexts.

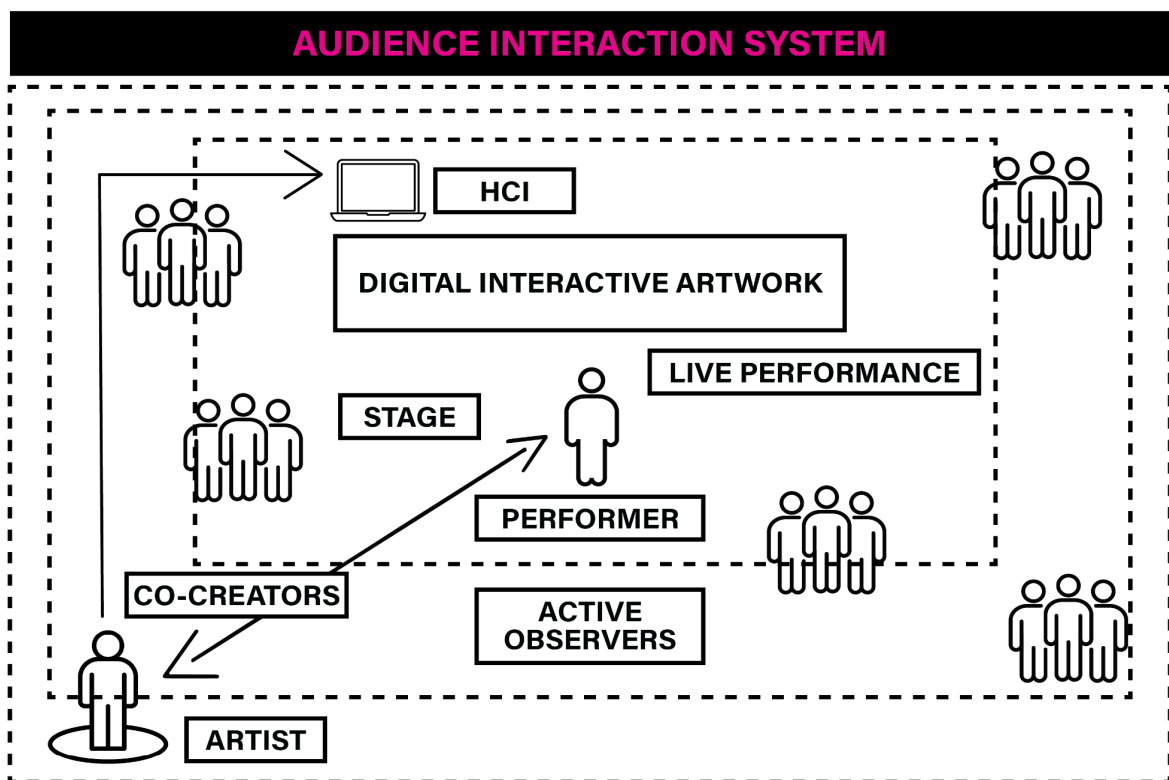


Figure 1

Interactive system of audience engagement in digital art.

This diagram was created to illustrate the layered relationships between different types of audience, artist, and artwork in exhibition contexts.

Particularly in public exhibition contexts, as audiences become active performers, they also interact with one another. This dynamic introduces a distinction between active performers and active observers within the audience, complicating the layers of their experience (see Figure 1). Yet these observers are not passive; as Stokes (2019) suggests, they actively engage by anticipating how the work might unfold as they watch others interact with it. While observing these interactions, they simultaneously form their own interpretations by watching how the artwork responds to the performers. The performer, in turn, engages with the artwork to explore their emotions through interaction, while also remaining aware of being observed—a condition that can, in return, shape how they perform. This process influences how active observers subsequently interact with the artwork, as their engagement is informed by having witnessed others' performances and having developed expectations or preferences about how to interact. These layered relationships among audience members collectively shape individual affective experiences. This perspective foregrounds the complex dynamics produced through the relationships between performers and observers, addressing a gap in existing discussions that often treat audiences as a homogeneous whole rather than examining the distinctions within their roles.

The audience's affective experience has gained increasing recognition across digital media art and human–computer interaction (HCI), where how audiences feel is now considered pivotal to the design and interpretation of digital interactive works. Edmonds et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of evaluating audience interaction and emotion through an HCI perspective. Similarly, Croissant et al. (2023) propose theoretical and practical models for designing emotionally engaging experiences, drawing on insights from psychology, design research, and HCI. While these approaches provide valuable foundations, they are often grounded in universalist assumptions that overlook cultural differences and individual variability—both of which fundamentally shape affective experience. A more critical perspective is therefore required, one that recognises the layered, relational, and

culturally situated ways audiences co-create meaning through both performance and observation.

Affective Experiences

While recognising the importance of how audiences feel in exhibitions is essential to interaction design for digital artworks, investigating and evaluating these feelings presents challenges, as affective experiences are intrinsically subjective and abstract, and not easily captured through measurable data. Such experiences are closely tied to context, including personal, social, cultural, environmental, and lived histories. Affect is therefore not universal but contextual and situational, always embedded within social, cultural, and lived experience (Wetherell, 2012). This research thus examines how culturally specific frameworks shape the affective experiences of audiences in digital interactive exhibition settings.

Existing psychological models of emotion have often approached affect as something that can be quantified and categorised. These frameworks—the valence–arousal model and Basic Emotion Theory—reflect universalist perspectives that overlook cultural and individual variability. The valence–arousal model, introduced by James A. Russell (1980), simplifies the complexity of affective experience into two contrasting dimensions: valence, which evaluates pleasant versus unpleasant, and arousal, which distinguishes activation from deactivation. Basic Emotion Theory, developed by Paul Ekman (1992), categorises emotions into a limited set of labels happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise—that are assumed to be universally expressed and identifiable through facial expressions. While basic emotions such as happiness or sadness are often identifiable across cultures, more complex or nuanced emotions are neither consistently understood nor universally experienced (Fang et al., 2022). Thus, although these universalist approaches have provided essential foundational frameworks for designing affective experiences in

digital interactive art, they risk reducing emotions to fixed categories and overlooking cultural specificity and nuance.

Moving beyond such universalist models, Massumi (2002) defines affect as a bodily, embodied, pre-personal intensity—a non-processed sensation representing the rawest form of body experiences occurring at a pre-conscious level before it is recognised or labelled. Feelings, by contrast, are regarded as the conscious recognition of affect, personal and biographically registered; for instance, when an affective sensation is induced, this intensity might be registered as “I feel intrigued.” Emotions are similar to feelings in that they are also qualified intensities, but they are understood, categorised, and labelled through cultural and social contexts and conventions. For example, an affective sensation within the body may be socially or culturally named as excitement or disappointment. This definition provides an essential foundation for distinguishing affect from emotion, yet it raises concerns about the oversimplification that occurs when affect is translated into emotion. Often, the raw form of affect is richer and implies greater complexity than the categories of emotion that are defined and can be verbally articulated. Berrios et al. (2015) also state that “emotions are sometimes more complex than the notions we possess to communicate how we feel” (p. 1). When emotions such as joy, sadness, or anger are labelled into conventional categories, they are simplified and reduced, failing to account for other nuances and entangled feelings. In this research, which utilises tactile interactivity as a primary medium, the focus is on affect—an experience that is nuanced, complex, and often difficult to articulate in words. Through touch, the artwork invites audiences to engage with their bodily sensations and to remain present within the unfolding experience, allowing them to process the affective state, or *kibun*, that emerges through interaction.

The audience’s affective experiences, which are nuanced and complex, are not only difficult to articulate through simple categories but are also layered, contextual, and situational, informed by cultural background and lived experience. Wetherell (2012) explains

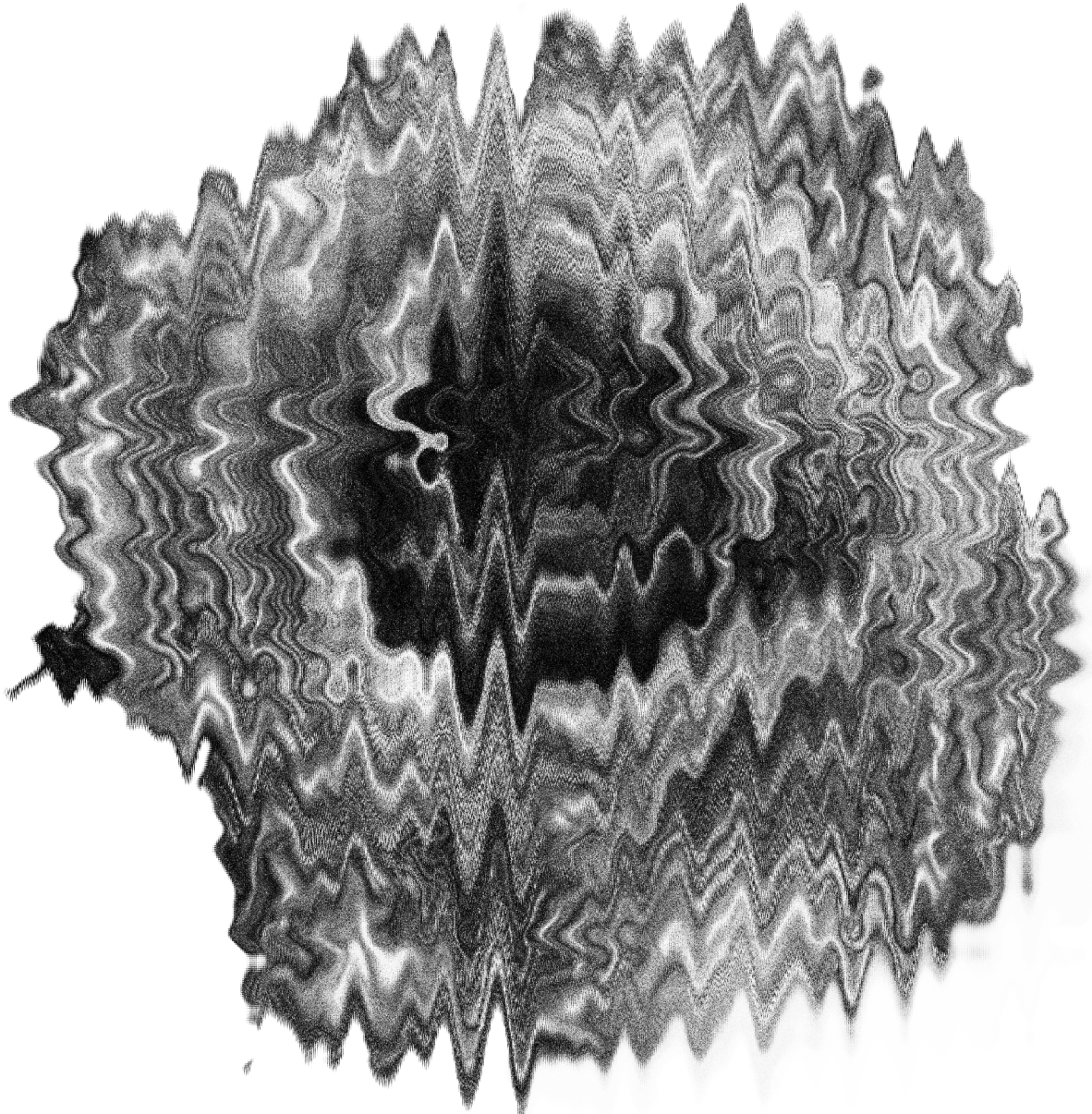
that “affective meaning-making in the present will be a mix of past personal and cultural meanings carried forward and meshed with the present relational circumstances” (p. 153). Ahmed (2004) further extends this argument by asserting that “emotions are not ‘in’ the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects,” emphasising that emotions are not purely personal but situated within cultural, social, and material contexts (p. 10). Adopting Ahmed’s perspective, emotions are not merely private feelings but actively inform and shape the relationships among all members of the exhibition system—artwork, artist, and audiences as both performers and observers. This perspective highlights how cultural diversity informs affective experience by demonstrating that emotions are not neutral or universal but deeply dependent on cultural, social, and relational positions.

To investigate the complexity of audiences’ affective experiences, which are inherently subjective and resistant to reduction, this research draws on Donna Haraway’s (1988) theory of situated knowledge, which argues that all knowledge is shaped by cultural and social positioning rather than existing as objective or universal truth. While Haraway’s framework emerges from a feminist critique of science, her challenge to scientific dichotomies, often dominated by Western universalism, is particularly relevant to the framing of affective experience. This perspective contests the assumption that emotional responses can be understood as fixed or universal, instead suggesting that they are embodied and culturally situated. Accordingly, this research positions audiences, understood as performers in the exhibition, as “situated knowers” whose understandings of the world are shaped by their cultural positions, personal histories, and contextual interactions. Consequently, audiences of digital interactive artworks should not be treated as neutral or homogeneous groups, nor should they be defined by universal emotional labels or simplified cultural associations, such as those between colour and emotion. Instead, interactive artworks

should recognise and respond to the complexity and specificity of how emotions are felt and experienced in ways that are unique to each individual and context.

Despite growing discourse in digital interactive art, a gap remains in research concerning the role of interactivity, particularly tactile elements, in shaping the affective experiences of audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds within exhibition contexts. This is the gap in the field of digital interactive art that this research seeks to address through the development of The Meta Kibun Project, an audio-visual digital interactive artwork grounded in Korean emotive frameworks. By foregrounding culturally specific approaches, the research challenges prevailing assumptions of universality and proposes alternative strategies for designing interactive systems that integrate cultural specificity. Through this approach, it demonstrates that meaningful affective engagement in digital interactive exhibitions depends not on universalising emotion but on recognising and incorporating its situated, complex, and culturally embedded nature for diverse audiences in public exhibition settings.

FLOWER AND THORN - Chapter 3



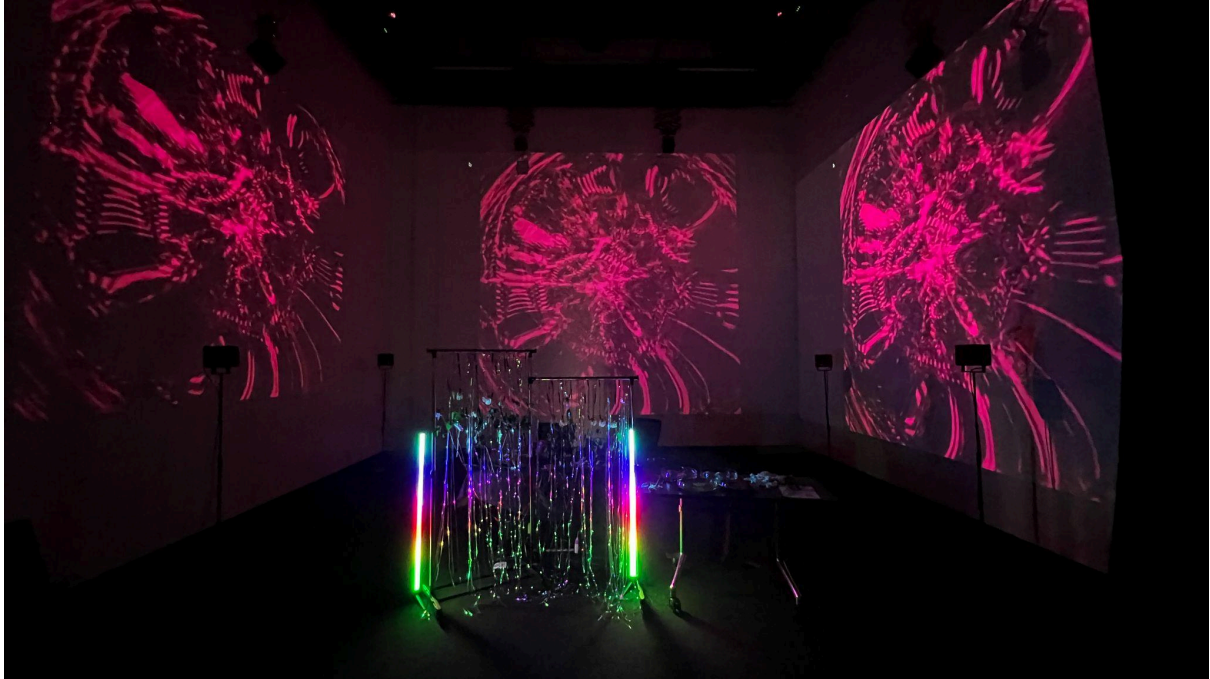


Figure 2

The Meta Kibun Project exhibition installation, 2025. Photograph by the researcher.

The Meta Kibun 기분 Project

The Meta Kibun 기분 Project is an interactive installation that extends the artist's earlier work, The Meta Rose Project, which explored emotional dualities through the symbolic use of rose flowers and the colour pink. The Meta Kibun Project, by contrast, advances this inquiry by integrating cultural specificity into its design, drawing on Korean cultural concepts of emotional nuance, particularly the notion of kibun (기분, mood or atmosphere). It invites audiences to engage with the interactive system as a means of reflecting on the nuances and complexities of feelings, rather than imposing fixed categories of emotion.

This research practice is fundamentally informed by the communication of emotion to audiences through the creative artefact. Its approach is shaped by the artist's Korean

heritage, where nuance in feeling and emotion is central to everyday communication and deeply embedded in the language itself. In Korean, there is a rich vocabulary of colour terms closely tied to affective meaning, with specific prefixes and suffixes used to convey subtle emotional nuances (Yoon, 2018). For instance, the suffix -chwng, which implies a sense of gloominess, when combined with the word for black (kemwu), forms kemwu-chwungchwung-ha-ta. This does not simply denote the colour black but extends its meaning by evoking a sense of heaviness or emotional gloom associated with the colour. By drawing on this heritage of Korean emotive colour concepts, The Meta Kibun Project resists reductive approaches to understanding audiences' feelings and instead invites them to participate in emotional nuance as a culturally situated affective experience.

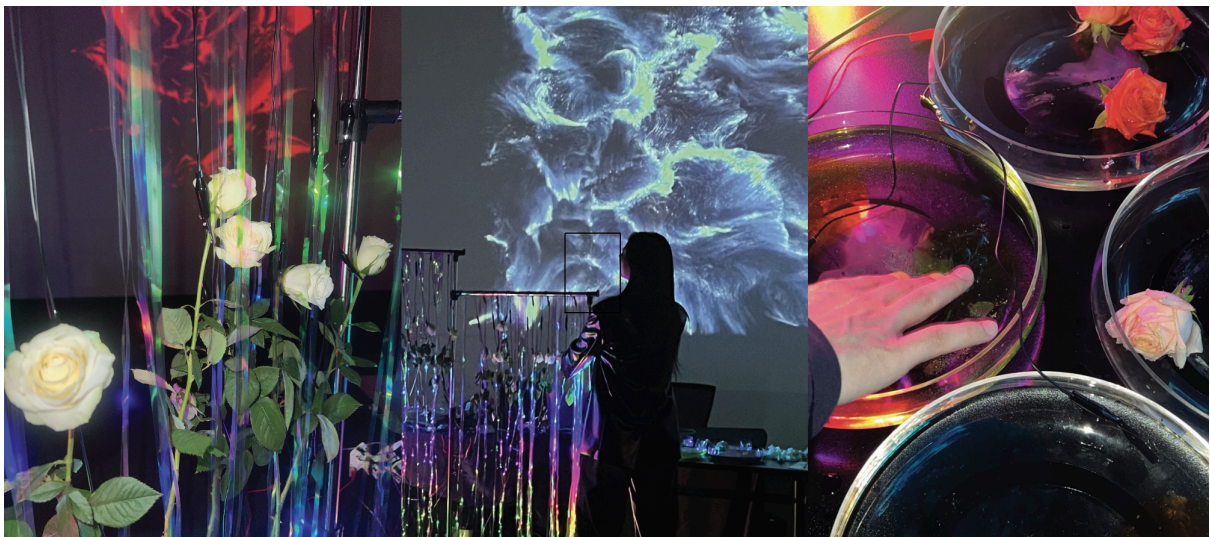


Figure 3

The Meta Kibun Project exhibition installation, 2025. Photograph by the researcher.

The installation incorporates real rose flowers and water as tactile elements, with colour serving as a visual anchor and supported by 3D visual aesthetics and sound. Roses serve as a central symbolic motif for this project, reflecting the layered and dynamic nature of human emotion. Their petals and thorns symbolise the dualities of feeling, where contrasting emotions often coexist. The audio and visual effects are designed to embody

these dualities, representing both positive and negative affective tones. When audiences touch a specific rose, sound and visual effects are triggered simultaneously, producing projected 3D imagery on the screen. Importantly, the work foregrounds audience agency by allowing participants to determine which aspect of these dualities they wish to engage with. Through their choice of which rose to touch, audiences activate either glitch-based audio-visual effects or softer, more uplifting responses. When participants dip their fingers into the bowls of water or touch the surface, they alter the colour and visuals displayed on the screen. This integration of tactile, visual, and auditory stimuli positions interactivity not as a purely technical mechanism but as a multisensory strategy designed to encourage audiences to engage with the work both affectively and reflectively.

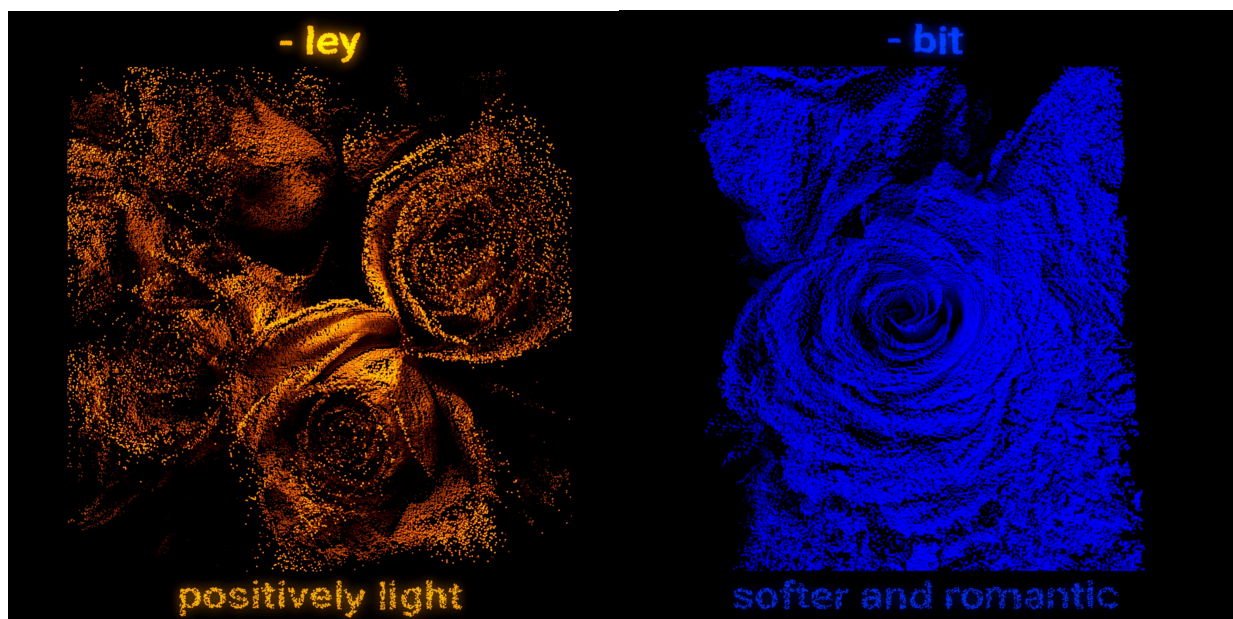


Figure 4

Screenshot from *The Meta Kibun Project* interactive installation by M. Park (2025a).

Installation at the Exhibition

The exhibition forms a central component of this research, inviting audiences to engage directly with the audio-visual interactive installation as performers and co-creators of meaning through embodied participation. The exhibition site functions as a live stage for the audience, transforming the space into a communal and immersive experience.

The project invited participants to explore their *kibun* (feeling) in response to the prompt, “How is your *kibun* today?” Upon entering the exhibition, participants were first invited to view a non-interactive video version of the artwork, which presented the same audio and visuals in a pre-recorded and rendered format. This comparative method was employed to examine the influence of interactivity on participants’ experiences by using identical audio-visual material that differed only in its level of interactivity. They were then encouraged to engage with the interactive version of the work, given agency to select a colour and combine it with a Korean emotional suffix that resonated with their feeling of the day. For example, choosing yellow and pairing it with the suffix *-chwung* produced “yellow-*chwung*,” which conveyed a shade of yellow nuanced with gloominess (see Figure 4 for examples of colour and suffix combinations). Participants also had the option to invent their own suffix in their preferred language, generating a personalised colour expression unique to their lived experience. Once their colour term was created, participants engaged with the artwork by touching rose flowers, which altered the visuals and activated sixteen layered audio-visual effects. These interactions produced dynamic responses in sound, light, and 3D imagery, creating an immersive environment shaped by audience choice. The project not only invited participants to reflect on the complexity of what they felt but also encouraged them to articulate these emotions in their own words and languages. This approach actively resisted reducing affect to simplified categories such as “joy” or

“sadness,” instead enabling participants to express nuanced, culturally situated, and personalised emotions through their own narratives.

Interview Questions:

Choice of Colour and Feeling

1. What colour and Korean prefix did you choose? Why did you feel it suited your current emotional state?
2. Did the act of naming your feeling (rather than choosing from set options) affect how you engaged with the work?

Affective Experience

3. How did the experience make you feel overall?
4. Did anything shift emotionally for you while interacting with the work?
5. Was there a moment that stood out to you emotionally during the interaction?

Interactivity

6. Did being asked to interact, to choose colour, label a feeling, and touch the object, change how focused or emotionally invested you felt?
7. How did the tactile interaction, the physical act of touching the artwork, influence your engagement? Make the experience feel more immersive?

Would the experience have felt different without the interactive elements? Which interactive element felt the strongest, audio, visual, touch, or something else specifically?

8. Compared to just watching a video, how did interacting with the work change your overall emotional response?

Audience

9. Did you feel like a participant or performer in the work, rather than just a viewer? Why or why not?

Reflection

10. Did this experience prompt any personal reflection?
11. What part of the experience felt most personally meaningful to you, and why?
12. Is there anything you think could make the emotional connection even stronger?
13. Any other feedback, comments, or questions?

Ethics Application _ Additional Document

List of Questions

Survey Questions:

Short Answer

1. What colour did you choose, and why?
2. How did you label your feelings today, and why? (It doesn't have to be a standard emotion like happiness, sadness, or anger. You can describe it in any language, form, or words.)

Rating (1 = Strongly Disagree / 5 = Strongly Agree)

3. I felt emotionally connected to the experience.
4. Choosing my own colour made the experience feel more personal.
5. Adding a Korean prefix was conceptually effective in expressing subtle emotional nuances.
6. The tactile interaction (touching the object) enhanced my emotional engagement.
7. I felt like I had agency or control in shaping the experience.
8. The structure and design of the experience helped me connect emotionally.

9. The experience helped me name or notice a feeling I hadn't identified before.
10. The experience felt authentic, even though it was carefully scripted and designed.
11. I would describe my role as more of a "participant" than a "viewer."
12. I was able to relate the experience to my own personal or cultural context.
13. I appreciated being asked to create my own emotional label rather than choosing from fixed options.
14. I appreciated being asked to create my own emotional label rather than choosing from fixed options.
15. The experience would have been less impactful without the interactive elements.
16. I was surprised by how my emotional response changed as I interacted with the work.
17. I felt that the choices I made genuinely shaped my overall experience.

Short Answer

18. How would you describe your overall affective experience?
19. Any other feedback, comments, or questions?

Figure 5

Screenshots of the Interview and survey questions created by M. Park, 2025b.

Interview & Survey

Following their interaction with the artwork, audiences were invited to share their affective experiences and reflections through either a survey or an interview. This methodological approach reinforces the central argument of the research, which prioritises individual, situated feelings rather than relying on overgeneralised or homogenised data to understand affective experience. The research aims to conduct surveys and interviews with particular attention to how interactivity, specifically touch and cultural frameworks, informs participants' overall affective experiences (See Figure 5). Importantly, this research is designed in opposition to establish universal or culturally fixed associations between colours and emotions, nor to generalise such relationships. Instead, its focus lies in eliciting participants' personal affective reflections and recognising how these are informed by their cultural positioning. In doing so, the project positions the audience not as data points for quantification but as situated knowers, whose narratives reveal the contextual, layered, complex, and culturally shaped nature of affective experience in digital interactive art.

Uncertainties and Implications

As this research depends on audiences' affective responses to the digital interactive artwork, several uncertainties must be addressed in designing the project. There is no guarantee that participants will experience any feelings, nor what kinds of feelings they may encounter. This uncertainty, rather than diminishing the research, is central to its argument. It reflects Massumi's (2002) notion of affect as an unpredictable intensity, which resists codification and conscious labelling. In this sense, the impossibility of anticipating responses exposes the risks of assuming fixed or universal outcomes and underscores the complex dynamics of affective experience. Accordingly, this uncertainty should not be

regarded as a methodological weakness but as a critical condition of the project and a defining feature of affective experience, highlighting that affective engagement in interactive art exhibitions is always situated, contingent, and resistant to generalisation.

BLOOM - Chapter 4



Participants were invited to either complete a survey or take part in a one-on-one interview immediately after engaging with The Meta Kibun Project at the exhibition. A total of fifteen interviews and sixteen surveys were collected over the two-day exhibition period. This mixed yet qualitatively oriented approach was designed to investigate audiences' affective experiences as situated and unique individual narratives rather than as data reducible to quantitative measurement. Grounded in Haraway's (1988) concept of situated knowledge and Haseman's (2006) framework of performative research, this methodology acknowledges participants' responses as contextually embodied and co-produced through their interaction with the artwork. In doing so, the collected responses support this research's focus on each participant's nuanced and layered accounts of situated affect, revealing how touch, colour, and cultural nuance influenced audiences' lived experiences of The Meta Kibun Project exhibition.

Interview Findings

Tactile Engagement and Heightened Experience

The interview findings can be analysed through three key aspects. The first is that tactile interactivity, particularly through the use of rose flowers and water, emerged as the primary factor contributing to participants' heightened affective engagement. This observation aligns with He's (2009) affective haptics theory, which argues that tactile interaction, through direct physical sensation, facilitates deeper emotional responses.

The tactile element added so much to it... that never happens normally. I was like, oh my God, I feel like a kid again... Yeah, the whole culmination of the senses being engaged with was very immersive. (Interview #4, p. 54)

To enhance the sensory depth of the experience, colour slimes were incorporated into the water bowls, introducing additional layers of texture and tactility. Many participants described these textures as intensifying their emotional engagement, noting that the interplay of water, slime, and flowers created a playful yet meditative experience. Interacting with water was consistently cited as the most enjoyable and resonant element of the exhibition. Interestingly, several participants commented specifically on the temperature of the water, describing the sensation of coolness as stimulating and evocative.

And I really enjoyed some of the sort of textural elements, like there was kind of that slimy goo or whatever in the water. It felt much better than using, you know, a keyboard or something to like control the visuals. (Interview #10, p. 114)

I enjoyed, like it was just something about the coolness of the water and just like the feeling is a lot more visceral. (Interview #13, p. 181)

I love that as I was exploring the different elements of it with the roses and the slime, the water, everything. (Interview #14, p. 196)

Most participants noted that touching the roses and water made them feel more personally connected to the work. Words such as immersive, connected, and deep were frequently mentioned, reflecting a heightened sense of embodied participation.

You've allowed your audience to feel with their fingers... It's very personal...you're just really connected into it. (Interview #14, p. 198)

Several participants described the tactile experience as meditative, often associating it with feelings of calmness and relaxation. This interaction was also perceived as highly personal, allowing participants to feel more connected to the artwork and encouraging them to feel rather than simply observe. Many reflected that their engagement with the responsive audio-visual effects across the three screens gave them the impression of becoming part of

the work itself. This observation aligns with Ahmed's (2018) assertion that in digital interactive art, audience participation becomes integral to the artwork's constitution, interaction becomes inseparable from the artwork itself.

I think the water for me was just really relaxing and I loved that sort of sensory elements. (Interview #10, p. 122)

Like the magic was in the water...I felt like it was, I was becoming part of it, the magic going through me. My emotional response was like feeling like I was kind of merging into something. I feel like I was joining it. The artwork. (Interview #15, p. 215)

Overall, these findings indicate that tactile interactivity invited participants to engage deeply with the artwork. The physical sensations of touch facilitated intensified affective experiences, offering a reflective space in which participants could explore their *kibun* (mood or feeling) on the day. This supports Vi et al.'s (2017) argument that designing interactive artworks incorporating tactile elements fosters profound and qualitatively rich affective engagement.

Colour, Korean Cultural Framework, and Affective Reflection

The second major finding is that incorporating colour and Korean cultural emotional frameworks was highly effective in helping participants explore and reflect on their layered and complex feelings. Participants rarely reported singular or simple emotional responses. As they experimented with different colours to find those that resonated most, their moods often shifted, revealing that feelings were neither fixed nor easily defined. Several participants expressed surprise at the complexity and layered nature of their emotions, noting the difficulty of articulating what they felt. This finding aligns with Haraway's (1988) concept of *situated knowledge*, which understands affect as contextual, embodied, and

shaped by lived experience. Within The Meta Kibun Project, participants became *situated knowers*, actively interpreting their emotional states through the process of interaction and reflection.

I went in, as I said, feeling a bit unrefreshed, and kind of thinking about that, and I would say it's more of a complex thing...the work itself kind of brought to how I'm feeling in my mood. (Interview #9, p.101)

Rather than feeling sure of something and selecting a colour, I felt the colour select was a tool for reflection rather than expression. (Interview #9, p. 104)

I find emotions difficult to describe at the best of times. (Interview #12, p. 165)

I don't really think I have any feeling today but it let me feel something by your activity in some way. (Interview #2, p. 25)

Engaging with Korean emotive suffixes and colour combinations encouraged participants to explore emotions in unfamiliar, culturally nuanced ways. Many described this aspect of the work as *open, subtle, and deeply nuanced*, revealing an expanded awareness of how emotions are conceptualised differently across cultures. The experience of constructing their own emotional labels using Korean linguistic frameworks allowed them to transcend conventional binary categories, such as happiness versus sadness, by situating their experiences within a more fluid and expansive spectrum of feeling.

But then I was thinking about...how emotions might be conceptualized differently in different countries, even though we have very similar physiologies. (Interview #10, p. 124)

I was sort of saying before how it made me visually express what I was feeling beyond words. The Korean suffix was like an emotion beyond the vocabulary that I had. (Interview #5, p. 63)

I think that was a really key part of like, thinking, I've got these new different ways of thinking or ways that I hadn't considered before about thinking about these emotions. And then using that as a kind of like, that reflective tool to check in with how I was feeling. (Interview #9, p. 107)

They're deeply nuanced and yeah, I didn't expect the feelings to be so subtle and refined... So you were open for more choices. And it was kind of insightful into Korean culture as well. (Interview #1, p. 10)

Inviting participants to select both colour and Korean emotional suffix through tactile interaction enhanced their sense of agency and personal connection to the artwork.

I felt empowered by choosing the emotions instead of letting the emotions choose me. So I was like able to see where I was at emotionally first. And then I was able to process that, okay, so this is how I'm feeling. And then I was able to choose my own adventure next by being in the driver's seat of my own emotions. (Interview #1, p. 7)

I was kind of just being invited to try and express my own headspace in kind of an abstract, interesting way. And that definitely made it engaging. And I think incorporating the flowers, the nature, gives it this kind of almost spiritual vibe, which kind of makes it a lot more engaging as well. (Interview #12, p. 167)

It reminds me of like, I don't know if you play games, but like in games where you create your own character, I think it's just fun to explore and create your own. It's like even that act is like really engaging in itself. (Interview #13, p. 186)

The integration of colour and Korean cultural emotional frameworks facilitated a process of self-reflection on participants' complex and nuanced feelings, accompanied by a heightened sense of cultural awareness. These findings reaffirm that feelings are layered, contextual,

and versatile, an understanding that should inform the design of interactive artworks aimed at fostering deep affective engagement.

Comparison Between Non-Interactive and Interactive Versions

The last major finding is that, when comparing the non-interactive (video) version with the interactive installation, participants consistently described the interactive version as more engaging and personally meaningful. The non-interactive version was often perceived as visually appealing but emotionally distant, whereas direct interaction with the installation was described as personal, alive, and transformative.

Although it does look really nice on the video, that's also kind of like a passive experience, like looking at someone else's interpretation of your work. I think the active one, interactive one is more emotionally engaging for me. (Interview #4, p. 95)

Yeah, I think when you're interacting with it live, you're sort of creating your own experience of it. (Interview #10, p. 116)

So when I was looking at it, I felt like I was watching someone else's story and someone else's emotions were in there. And then moving towards the exhibit where I actually interacted with the space, that was, it's a whole different experience... I felt like I was creating my own story. (Interview #14, p. 195)

Compared with the non-interactive video, which maintained a clear separation between the audience and the artwork, positioning them as observers, the interactive installation, by contrast, blurred this boundary through tactile, visual, and auditory interactivity, inviting audiences to become active participants. This finding reinforces Edmonds et al. (2004) and Saltz's (1997) argument that interactivity transforms audiences from passive viewers into

active co-creators and performers. Through touch, choice, and affective response, participants produced their own unique narratives, transforming the artwork and the exhibition into a shared performative space of meaning-making. Thus, this comparative analysis highlights that interactivity not only deepens affective engagement but also redefines the audience's role, demonstrating that in digital interactive art, meaning is not observed but co-created through participation.

Survey Findings

Short Answer Questions

The post-exhibition survey employed both quantitative and qualitative questions to investigate participants' experiences. Participants responded to four short-answer questions and ten rating questions using a 0–10 Likert scale, where 0 indicated not at all likely and 10 indicated extremely likely. The questionnaire combined rating scales with open-ended responses to capture participants' experiences efficiently while still providing space for them to express their feelings freely. This design offered a more time-efficient and less pressured alternative to interviews while still capturing qualitative insights into their affective experiences.

Across responses, most participants indicated that the experience brought their attention to a feeling they had not previously noticed. The installation prompted reflection and emotional awareness, often shifting participants from surface-level distraction to deeper self-recognition.

The experience definitely made me more aware of the moment I was in, and that I will probably remember this for a very long time. I was quite preoccupied by work and

schedules, and the experience made me feel grounded. It removed the surface level things I was feeling, and made me think about what this moment actually felt like.

(Anonymous survey participant, p. 4)

It made me realize just how many complex feelings are running through me. And that they aren't good or bad, just neutral. And this project allowed me to step out of the reactivity of emotions and look at them with interest and curiosity. (Anonymous survey participant, p. 5)

Most participants reported a clear distinction between the non-interactive video and the interactive installation, identifying the latter as fostering deeper affective engagement and a stronger sense of personal connection.

As the video was not immersive/ interactive, I didn't resonate with the colours or feelings as much as the interactive version. When directly interacting, I really connected with the work and self reflected on my own mood, whereas the video I felt as if I was just watching an external expression of mood (not mine nor self reflective). (Anonymous survey participant, p. 5)

Very different. The tactile nature of the interactive version made me feel like I had control over how I processed my emotions. (Anonymous survey participant, p. 5)

Emotionally, the interactive was far more in depth, & made me consider more what I was feeling. The active choice compelled me to think deeply. (Anonymous survey participant, p. 6)

Rating Questions

For the rating-scale questions, both the mean (the sum of all responses divided by the number of participants, representing the overall tendency) and the range (the distance between the highest and lowest values, representing the spread of responses) were used in the analysis.

The mean rating for how emotionally connected participants felt to the experience was 7.38 (range = 4–10), indicating that most participants engaged strongly and affectively with the project. The question assessing whether choosing their own colour made the experience feel more personal averaged 8.31 (range = 4–10), suggesting that agency over audio-visual elements through interactivity fostered a stronger personal connection to the artwork. As one participant noted, “Having more autonomy over what was displayed, the emotional experience was far more conducive to me getting a distinct feeling out of it” (Anonymous survey participant, p. 6). The mean rating of 7.50 (range = 0–10) for the inclusion of Korean prefixes indicated that this cultural framework was conceptually effective in expressing subtle emotional nuance. The question regarding whether tactile interaction enhanced emotional engagement with the work averaged 8.44 (range = 5–10), reflecting strong agreement among participants. The mean rating of 7.94 (range = 0–10) showed that participants felt a sense of agency or control in shaping the overall exhibition experience. A mean score of 6.88 (range = 0–10) was reported for whether the experience helped participants name or notice a feeling they had not previously identified. Meanwhile, the mean rating of 7.13 (range = 0–10) for relating the experience to their own personal or cultural context was the lowest among the items. This suggests that while participants were affectively engaged, it remains challenging to connect deeply with an artwork on a personal and cultural level, as situated knowers whose experiences are informed by context and background. The question assessing whether participants appreciated creating their own

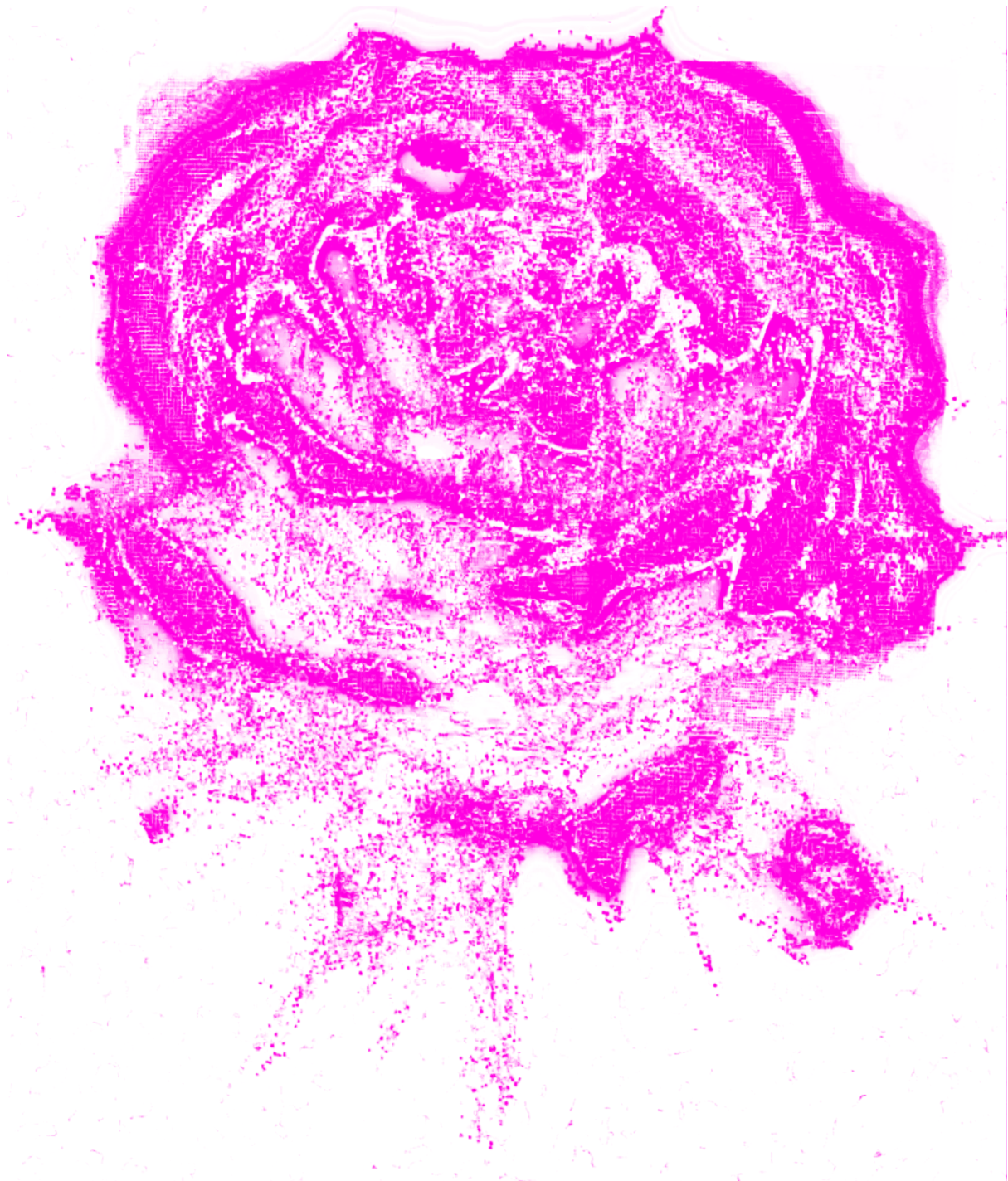
emotional label, rather than choosing from fixed options, averaged 7.56 (range = 3–10). The item evaluating whether the experience would have been less impactful without interactive elements received the highest average score, 8.63 (range = 2–10), strongly supporting the research inquiry into the influence of interactivity within exhibition contexts. Finally, the mean rating of 7.63 (range = 4–10) for whether participants were surprised by how their emotional responses changed during interaction aligns with the understanding that affective experience is transient, complex, and contextually situated.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings from both interviews and surveys highlight that interactivity profoundly fosters audiences' affective engagement, transforming them from passive observers into active performers within the artwork. In particular, the tactile interactive elements cultivated intimate and deeply personal connections, inviting participants to reflect on their emotional states through direct multisensory experience. In parallel, the integration of colour choice and Korean emotive frameworks expanded this reflection, allowing participants to explore feelings that emerged as layered, contextual, and relational. These findings support the theories of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) and performative research (Haseman, 2006), demonstrating that affective experiences in interactive art are not merely represented but co-produced through participatory engagement between audience and artwork. They further align with Edmonds et al. (2004) and Saltz (1997), who contend that interactivity redefines authorship by positioning audiences as co-creators in meaning-making processes. Collectively, these results address the central research question—How does interactivity in The Meta Kibun 기분 Project, centred on Korean emotive colour terms and tactile elements, influence the affective experiences of audiences as

performers?—by evidencing that interactivity not only amplifies affective experience but also enables deeper, situated self-reflection. In doing so, The Meta Kibun Project contributes to digital art research by demonstrating how interactivity can operate as a methodological tool for investigating affective experience and nuanced emotional expression within participatory art contexts.

Rose Bouquet - CONCLUSION



This research investigated how interactivity, particularly through touch, colour, and Korean cultural frameworks, influences the affective experiences of audiences within interactive art exhibition settings. Emotional responses are inherently complex, nuanced, and deeply subjective; yet they are often simplified or overlooked in the design of interactive systems within both digital art and human–computer interaction. This research addressed this gap through The Meta Kibun 기분 Project, which invited audiences to actively engage with the artwork through multisensory and tactile participation.

The findings demonstrated that interactivity, especially the tactile component, intensified affective engagement while fostering moments of self-reflection and emotional awareness. Participants described experiences of recognising, processing, and naming emotions they had not previously identified, revealing the potential of interactive systems to cultivate deeper affective responses. The integration of colour selection and Korean emotive suffixes further enabled audiences to experience emotion as culturally situated and relational rather than universal or fixed. Comparative analysis between the interactive installation and the non-interactive video version underscored the significance of interactivity in designing emotionally resonant and participatory art experiences, transforming the audience's role from observer to co-creator and performer, collaboratively producing meaning alongside the artist.

On a personal level, the project reaffirms why emotion remains central to the artist's practice, as both the subject and method of inquiry. The sustained interest in exploring human emotion through art is inherently rooted in the artist's Korean cultural heritage, where emotional nuance is continually communicated through language. This perspective has informed the development of the research and the artwork, clarifying that the focus on affect is not incidental but culturally grounded. This framework will continue to inform future iterations of the work, particularly in exploring cultural diversity in affective design and audience experience. While the scope of this research did not allow for a comprehensive

examination of cultural diversity among audiences, the project provides a concrete foundation for future studies that will further investigate this dimension. Future developments of The Meta Kibun Project will also consider expanding the tactile vocabulary of the installation by incorporating additional natural materials, such as sand, stones, or other plants, and potentially integrating scent as another layer of sensory engagement. Moreover, future iterations will explore specific Korean emotional frameworks such as han (a deep layered feeling of unresolved sorrow or longing), jeong (emotional bond or warmth formed through sustained connection and care), or nunchi (intuitive awareness of others' emotions and unspoken social dynamics), each examined in depth through new interactive contexts. These developments will build upon the current findings, deepening the exploration of how interactivity shapes affective experience while recognising the cultural diversity and nuanced emotional landscapes of audiences.

For artists and designers, these insights offer a foundation for creating interactive systems that acknowledge emotional complexity and cultural specificity rather than relying on universal affective categories. For researchers, the research demonstrates how practice-based inquiry can generate knowledge about the relational and contextual nature of audiences' emotional responses in interactive art environments. Ultimately, The Meta Kibun Project establishes that interactivity is not only a medium of engagement or a methodological approach, but also a critical process of knowledge-making in interactive art, transforming digital media into a performative, affective, and culturally responsive space for the deep exploration of nuanced emotion and self-reflection within exhibition settings.

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