

Fue Yang
Project Proposal

My project proposal for Artists on the Verge 8, tentatively titled *Synchronous*, is an interactive, collaborative, public work that explores connection by encouraging participants to breath together in tandem. *Synchronous* will consist of two desk-structures, situated out of sight from one another. Each structure consists of a chair, a screen, a camera, and a wind sensor. When the participant sits in the chair, the screen will prompt them to breath slowly and deliberately, inhaling and exhaling in intervals of five seconds. When another user sits in the opposite structure and both the rate of the users' breathing patterns align, the screen will then reveal the image of the opposite user, presenting their image as a reflection.

An element that is employed that is present in many of my other works is a designed, serendipitous response. As the participant enters the space, they are denied any arching context, and may choose to reject prompts to breathe. If they choose to embrace the prompts, they are greeted by a stranger and a connection emerges.

Synchronous uses the broader language of client server protocols as a stand in for networking systems and the reflections evoke the aesthetic of web cams. It is informed by anonymous chat rooms such as chatroulette and omegle, but removes the element of language, and the most accessible communicative gesture is simply the image of the other participant breathing. This reflection mirrors their own with the rise and lull of the chests. If either participants' rhythm drastically fluxuates, the connection is broken and the screens will once again attempt to mediate the flow of participants' breaths. Thus, in breathing synchronously, the two participants are inextricably linked in a temporary union.

My goal for this project is to allow strangers to connect in a way that is much more intimate and visceral, while remaining anonymous. The act of breathing simultaneously calms the participants, while allowing them to meet in similar mental spaces, reinforcing the notion of union. Historically, the breath was often seen as analogous to an individual's soul, lending a spiritual aspect to the piece overall. My hope for *Synchronous* is that strangers will maintain these connections and breath together in a sustained silence that is peaceful, poetic, and honest.

The central concept of *Synchronous* is inspired by David Wojnarowicz's, *No Alternative*, in which he writes, "...If I could open up your body and slip inside your skin and look out your eyes and forever have my lips fused with yours I would. It makes me weep to feel the history of your flesh beneath my hands in a time of so much loss." It is also informed by Marina Abramović and Ulay's *Breathing In/Breathing Out*. The simplicity of the gesture in *Breathing In/Breathing Out* doesn't undermine its impact or poetry, while *No Alternative's* imagery of two orbiting bodies joining forms the foundation of *Synchronous*.

As it stands, *Synchronous* will be written using Processing's Arduino Firmata library, utilizing a workflow similar to my previous projects, *Breath*, and *Eulogy*. Additional hardware will include Modern Device's wind sensors, a mac mini, as well as two Samsung LCD monitors. Desks and chairs will be refurbished and additional plywood may be required to complete the freestanding structures. The most pressing conversations I want to have about *Synchronous* involve the

presentation, placement, and passive states. How will the work alert audiences when the other structure is in use and in search of a partner? How far should the two structures be from each other? What are the formal, aesthetic, qualities of *Synchronous* that encourage instinctive user participation?

Fue Yang
Artist Statement
January 19, 2016

Before all else, the foundation of who I am, of all my identities (artist, son, citizen), refers back to my status as first-generation immigrant, child of diaspora, and target of western, imperialist notions. How I read the world and how it reads me is embedded in this history. Although my work may not make explicit mention of these issues, my practice can be understood to exist within this context.

As an artist working primarily in installation, performance, and digital media, my work is an extension of my thoughts and interactions with the world, and addresses my reality as a Hmong-American living in a society where the Internet, a tool with the potential to increase empathy and interrogate politics, has become a banality.

As my practice begins exploring and embracing the web as a platform, I am forced to confront new questions: ‘Where is the presence of the hand of the artist,’ ‘How is my web identity curated,’ and perhaps most pressing, ‘What are our relationships with screens and what are the implications that arise from this?’ By recognizing the screen as innately artificial, I am able to open up discourses through my work.

Many of these conversations involve my preconceptions of how technology enables detachment. Computers are logical. Computers are impartial. Computers are callous, “A screen doesn’t care what it shows any more than a sheet of paper cares what’s printed on it.”¹ This precision produces a system that is cold, unsympathetic, and inhuman. To redress this anxiety, I imbue my work with oversentimentality, drawing inspiration from the language and pathos of David Wojnarowicz’s art, “...If I could open up your body and slip inside your skin and look out your eyes and forever have my lips fused with yours I would. It makes me weep to feel the history of your flesh beneath my hands in a time of so much loss.”² This empathy and desire to connect two orbiting bodies is a central theme in my practice.

Although formal critiques and evaluations of my presented work are vital, I place greater value in the conversations generated during the conception and process of my work. In the past these conversations have allowed me to fully formulate my projects, change them radically, as well as provide new artists and ideas that contextualize my work. As a relatively young artist, I actively pursue these conversations as well as the fellow artists and mentors that share them. I have also realized that my creative process benefits greatly from structure and external motivations. It is in this spirit that I believe an intensive fellowship program will help me achieve my goals as an emerging artist.

¹ Chimero, Frank. “What Screens Want—.” *What Screens Want* by Frank Chimero. N.p., Nov. 13. Web. 25 Oct. 2014.

² Wojnarowicz, David. *When I put my hands on your body*. 1990. Gelatin-silverprint and silk-screened text on museum board. P.P.O.W. Pilkington-Olsoff Fine Arts, inc., New York City.

- I. ***Eulogy***
Winter, 2015, Mixed Media Installation (Processing, Arduino, Animation)
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Eulogy/>
Eulogy (For those whom exist within the Margins), seeks to explore a state of statelessness, of in-betweens, as a result of diaspora, through the metaphor of ghosts. *Eulogy* draws upon the concept of ghosts both literal and metaphorical. Ghosts whose spectral forms fluxuates between two states, and the ghosts who haunt our memories of loved ones passed.
- II. ***Breath***
Spring, 2015, Mixed Media Installation (Processing, Arduino, Animation)
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Breath/>
In its passive, static state, *Breath* is a black, polyester fabric suspended from the ceiling. In the dark, the object comes to represent absence. However, only in the presence of a participant, does the work come alive. A projector summons a specter and a fan animates it to life. The specter takes a single breath and retreats once more into the darkness.
- III. ***Crying Performance***
Autumn, 2015, Digital Video Performance
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Crying-Performance/>
Crying Performance is a 20 minute digital performance exploring how the Internet blurs delineations between public and private spaces, and how these dissipating lines facilitates connection and isolation. Using audiences via the website chatroulette.com, the artist passively cries in the privacy of his room. *Crying Performance* subverts audience expectations through a refusal to acknowledge the presence of the opposite user, rejecting their jeers and consolations, and enduring in a sustained sob.
- IV. ***Microaggression***
Autumn, 2014, Interactive Installation
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Microaggression/>
Microaggression serves as a metaphor for the social political act of committing a microagresion. The interaction is formed on the principle of insidious play. As the user speaks into the microphone, the animation encourages them to push the limits of the form. As the volume increases however, the body distorts, eventually disintegrating into nothingness.
- V. ***Marks***
Autumn, 2014, Ink, Paint, Projection on Fabric
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Marks/>
Although painting and new media are often framed as being distinct, independent bodies of thought, *Marks* is an attempt at marrying the two schools. Informed by the work of contemporary abstract artists such as Julie Mehretu and Cy Twombly, the randomly generated forms made through Processing reflect the sweeping expressive marks of ink on fabric. By examining the forms of sweeping lines and bold dots, *Marks* experiments with creating a cohesive drawing with both the artist's and the computer's hands.
- VI. ***Khidki***
Spring, 2014, Video Installation
<http://fueyang.com/?/projects/Khidki/>
Khidki is an installation comparing the intimacy of the mobile user-experience to a public gallery setting. The installation decontextualizes imagery of Pune and Mumbai, by inserting them into a traditional gallery space. *Khidki*, meaning “window”, allows viewers to experience a personal portrait of these cities, by forcing them to look at the content through a small, square format.
- VII. ***liveforever(dot)com***
Autumn, 2014, Website
<http://fueyang.com/liveforever/>
liveforever(dot)com explores temporal relationships in a post-internet context. As websites continually prompt users to scroll for content, this website measures time both vertically and horizontally. *liveforever* uses the innate medium of the web to comment on both the permanence and impermanence of the Internet. Represented as data and strings of code, *liveforever* can be infinitely reproduced; However, with the speed at which technologies are updated, it will one day be rendered obsolete, preserved as a fossil of bygone lines of css and jquery. Interact by scrolling.

Fue Yang is a first generation Hmong immigrant and artist born in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand and raised in Minneapolis. Yang earned his BFA in Web and Multimedia Environments from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2015. His work includes drawings, paintings, mixed media, and digital media and draws upon his experiences as an Asian American. Through his explorations in mark making, line-weight and delineation of forms, his work touches upon the central idea of narrative and the significance of stories. His web work uses Internet not as a window, but as a vehicle to tell his stories, and the stories of his people. Yang spends much of his free time looking up at the sky in his home state of Minnesota.

fue yang

Artist + Designer

Education

2012 - 2015

Minneapolis College of Art and Design
BFA, Web and Multimedia Environments

Experience

9/2015 - Present

Designer
Uake Design, St Paul, MN

Logo / Branding design and implementation
Communication Strategies

9/2013 - 12/2015

Student Ambassador
Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), Minneapolis, MN

Provided tours for persepective students
Practice my public speaking skills
Act as a representative for my MCAD
Entrusted with confidential student information.

6/2014 - 12/2014

Graphic Design Intern
Minnesota Historical Center Press, St Paul, MN

Design and concept two final book covers
Generated and designed Ad Materials
Scanned and edited assets for book materials upon request

Galleries and Recognition*

2015

MCAD Senior Commencement Exhibition*

2015

MCAD Senior Media Arts Merit

2014

Made at MCAD*

2013

MCAD Foundation Studies Merit

2014

Lagrant Fellow

References availible upon request

Proposed Budget

2 ASUS VK248H-CSM – 24” LCD Monitor	\$400
Apple MGEM2LL/A Mac Mini Desktop	\$450
2 Modern Device Wind Sensor	\$40
2 Winsome Wood Ladder Back Chairs	\$180
2 Parsons Desks, Black Finish	\$110
8 Sheets Pine Plywood 4ft x 8ft	\$240
Contingencies (Screws, Bolts, Miscellaneous studio funds)	\$280
Artist Fee	\$3300
TOTAL	\$5000

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Proposed Timeline

Early April 2016

Begin initial conversations discussing central idea with mentors and peers.

May 2016

Begin writing and prototyping in Processing and Arduino with Wind Sensors

July 2016

Finish and clean code in Processing and Arduino

August 2016

Finalize Space

September 2016

Build Structure

October 2016

Finish Structure

Late November 2016

Ensure finalized prototype with hardware and software functioning

First and Second week of January 2017

Install and test project in finalized installation space

Early February 2017

Troubleshoot and correct any errors and inconsistencies after testing

Week before exhibition

Begin Installation

March 2017

Gather good documentation of working piece, reflect and write copy for project