

**Unsettling Spaces:
Sensing the Affect of Un-calm**

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Abstract

This major research paper explores the sensory and spatial characteristics of installation art that contribute to the manifestation and dominant presence of the un-calm. The “un-calm” challenges the traditional perception that art viewing is a calm experience. The term is used in this paper with reference to feelings of unease and discomfort that emerge in the process of viewing installations that incorporate difficult and unexpected content. Two case studies will be analyzed based on their spatial and sensory properties to show how they enact un-calm. The first, Rebecca Belmore’s *Fountain* (2005/2018), confronts viewers with a dark interior and noisy waterfall, facilitating a confrontation with symbols of conquest. The second, Sarah Anne Johnson’s *Hospital Hallway* (2015), takes place inside an octagonal enclosure replicating a 1950s psychiatric hospital to convey the trauma of medical mistreatment. Both case studies will be guided by an examination of the development of affect, and the role it plays in making installation art distinctive. These case studies will also reveal the causes of the affect of the un-calm, and where the un-calm is situated within current social and cultural norms. By examining the sensory and spatial causes of the un-calm, this MRP uncovers how specific environments can affect the emotional state of audiences, and positions the un-calm in a broader context.

Keywords: Installation art; Un-calm; Sarah Anne Johnson; Rebecca Belmore; Senses in art; Affect in art

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This paper is for those who are moved by art in some way.

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UNSETTLING SPACES: SENSING THE AFFECT OF UN-CALM

Alessia Rose Pignotti

Introduction: Becoming Conscious of Unsettling Installation Art

Installation art envelops audiences in a space of creative expression and contemplation. In contrast to traditional fine art, installation art requires audiences to use more than just their sense of sight. Installations are immersive experiences that stimulate the senses and prompt spatial awareness. These artworks present a situation that allows audiences to develop a physical relationship to the carefully selected elements that surround them. In these spaces, senses such as smell, sound and touch are heightened to break down a visitor's perceptual habits, while spatial characteristics such as the brightness of light, colour and the configuration of space become noticeable features. These multisensory spaces possess the ability to stir complex and uneasy emotions. A visitor who enters an installation will respond to surroundings in various states ranging from calm and excitement to discomfort and un-calm. The spectrum of emotions experienced inside installation art represents how the medium directly addresses the bodies of audiences, impacting their emotions.

This major research paper argues that installations by contemporary artists Rebecca Belmore and Sarah Anne Johnson manifest the affect of un-calm. *Fountain* (2005/18) by Belmore and *Hospital Hallway* (2015) by Johnson serve as case studies to represent how specific installations engage the senses of audiences and, in doing so,

activate the particular affect of un-calm. Guided by three research questions, this paper investigates:

- How is affect generated and what role does it play in making installation art distinctive?
- What are the causes of the affect of un-calm?
- Where is the un-calm situated within current social and cultural norms?

Although not all installation artworks facilitate the affect of un-calm, I argue that the sensory and spatial characteristics of Belmore's and Johnson's possess the ability to evoke this particular emotional response. Investigations of sound, smell, tactility, light, colour and movement will be conducted to determine the emergence of un-calm.

In this paper, the affect of “un-calm” challenges the traditional notion that art viewing is always a *calm* experience. A state of calm signifies a relaxed mind and body, void of emotions such as agitation and nervousness. The term “un-calm” will be applied throughout this paper in reference to feelings of uneasiness and discomfort that arise in visitors as a direct response to experiencing unsettling spatial and sensory characteristics of installation art.

The un-calm emerges as a result of total immersion in installations that incorporate unnerving features. Un-calm feelings can be triggered by darkness in public spaces, hearing loud, unidentifiable and/or disorienting sounds, smelling unexpected scents and so on. Art theorist Carol Becker believes anxiety and memory are linked by the psyche and can be activated in a certain setting: “The memory of past anxieties rests in the collective psyche and can easily be triggered by events in the present that touch this

archaic emotion.”¹ Classifying anxiety as an “archaic emotion” is problematic today, as it implies that anxiety only exists in the past. However, I do agree with Becker’s assertion that certain aesthetic and environmental circumstances possess the power to activate un-calm memories and emotions and project them into the present moment. In a greater context, un-calm responses can be applied to social issues relative to institutions, power imbalances and unequal social norms. There is much anxiety today around politics, equality, human rights and environmental devastation (to name a few). Therefore, focusing on how the un-calm is generated has become a relevant consideration.

Installation art reveals the vastness of artistic practice. The term “art” is no longer reserved for painting and sculpture. Today, art can occupy entire rooms, landscapes or public spaces. Conventional fine art viewing practices encourage distance between the viewer and artwork. Typically, audiences tend to stand apart from the artwork as if it were an autonomous object. Art institutions today even incorporate a visible barrier inside the gallery space, prompting visitors to mind their proximity to the artwork on display. In contrast, installation art *encompasses* audiences.

In the current state of high-speed technology and media consumption, audiences are conditioned to anticipate immediacy. However, installation art requires slowness. It tempts audiences to use not just their sense of sight but also a range of other senses including smell and sound. Affect and the senses are prominent to installation art more so than visual art because audiences are immersed in them. Art historian Claire Bishop addresses how installation art diverges from fine art: “Installation art therefore differs

¹ Carol Becker, *Zones of Contention: Essays on Art, Institutions, Gender, and Anxiety* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 214.

from traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography, video) in that it addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space.”² As oppose to simply viewing, visitors of installation art experience it through the body. Curator Sofia Borges reflects on the shift between a spectator of art to a presence within it by tracking how the process of art viewing has adapted over time:

Over the last half century, the role of the observer has shifted from passive to active. Initially, visitors would merely stand in front of an artwork, absorbing said piece from a distance. This same audience was gradually beckoned further and further into the work to the point where they now play a critical part in shaping the experience. By building in an interactive component, visitors directly influence the work as they elevate it from the static to the dynamic.³

The active presence of visitors in spaces of art emphasizes the progression of art from traditional painting and sculpture techniques to entire spaces that move audiences. Bishop adds, “Today, installation art is a staple of biennials and triennials worldwide, capable of creating grand visual impact by addressing the whole space and generating striking photographic opportunities.”⁴ The popularity of installation art verifies its ability to impact audiences. Installations are a site of creativity, but also a site of sensitivity. Sensory researchers Francesca Bacci and David Melcher recognize the impact of the senses on a visitor’s absorption of their surroundings: “The senses are our source for vital knowledge about the objects and events in the world, as well as for insights into our

² Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

³ Sofia Borges, “Spectacular Spectacles: The Role of the Happening in Contemporary Space,” in *Liquid Spaces: Scenography, Installations and Spatial Experiences*, ed. Sven Ehmann, Sofia Borges, Robert Klanten, and Michelle Galindo (Berlin: Die Gestalten Verlag, 2015), 4.

⁴ Bishop, 37.

private sensations and feelings.”⁵ As a result of their multisensory characteristics, installations provide a designated space for affect to occur.

Affect can emerge anywhere, and touches several disciplines in addition to art and visual studies. Affect theory is key to distinguishing the factors that facilitate an experience of installation art. For affect researchers Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, “[a]ffect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon.”⁶ In my understanding, affect is a term used to describe emotions beyond consciousness that influence how an individual navigates situations. The mere titles of an artwork, such as *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway*, possess connotations that can produce affect. Upon learning of their titles, audiences of Belmore's and Johnson's installations begin considering their relationship to fountains and hospital hallways prior to entering the space. This inherently impacts how visitors experience the artwork. Affect scholar Erin Manning articulates the importance of recognizing affect: “Affect is a way to account for experience in its in-forming.”⁷ This paper refers to affect for how it influences the interpretation of installation art and manifests through the sensory and spatial profiles of *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway*. Gregg and Seigworth refer to affect as neither an ephemeral nor tangible idea, but rather residing in an “in-between” state:

Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative *beside-ness*. Affect can be understood then as a gradient of bodily capacity - a supple incrementalism of ever-modulating force-relations - that rises and falls not only along various rhythms

⁵ Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, *Art and the Senses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

⁶ Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1. Italics in the original.

⁷ Erin Manning, “Immediation,” in *Politics of Affect*, ed. Brian Massumi (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 148.

and modalities of encounter but also through the troughs and sieves of sensation and sensibility [...].⁸

Gregg and Seigworth's definition of affect references its enigmatic qualities. They also allude to the impact of affect on the physical body and senses, which are fundamental to experiencing installation art.

The senses are tools. They expose the curiosities, surprises and astonishments of environments and spaces. Although sight is an important aspect of viewing art, installation art engages more than this one particular sense. Sculptor Rosalyn Driscoll believes that “[k]nowing artworks only through a visual lens can distort or limit their meanings.”⁹ Installation art utilizes the complexity of the human senses to facilitate an experience of art that addresses the entire body of audiences. *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway* incorporate elements that activate senses such as sight, sound, smell and touch. As a practicing artist, Driscoll creates artwork that she encourages audiences to touch and interact with:

The participation of the body in exploring art expands the possible sources of meaning. Bodily motions in themselves, in addition to their ability to convey shape, texture, spaces, and weight, carry aesthetic and emotional meaning, associations, and memories.¹⁰

Although viewing installation art is not always participatory in the literal sense of the term, audiences of installations become part of the space. In the context of *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway*, it is imperative to contemplate the role of the senses in generating the affect of un-calm. A visitor's experience of these installations depends upon their

⁸ Gregg and Seigworth, 2.

⁹ Rosalyn Driscoll, “Aesthetic Touch,” in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 110.

¹⁰ Driscoll, 111.

gathered sense of them. Sensory scholar Jim Drobnick articulates the influence of the senses on space, “Besides their heterogeneity of materials, installations utilize the senses through their use of real space and physical context.”¹¹ Although intangible, affect and the senses are a large part of a visitor’s spatial awareness and comprehension of installation art.

Vivid and compelling artwork is the signature of Rebecca Belmore, an Indigenous artist practicing in Canada. Throughout her extensive career, Belmore is renowned for many works, including *Fountain*. Although originally produced in 2005, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) exhibited numerous artworks by the artist in a solo exhibition, titled “Facing the Monumental,” in 2018. This exhibition highlighted Belmore’s multimedia practice and influence as a female Indigenous artist, and this is where I encountered the installation. Upon entering the general space of the exhibition, sounds of rushing water vibrated throughout. Inside *Fountain*, a torrent of water cascaded from the height of the installation, functioning as both a stunning sensory moment and a literal screen for a video projection. The 2018 rendition of *Fountain* engaged the senses through its inclusion of intense sounds, scents and uses of space. Audiences who entered *Fountain* were confronted with un-calm features such as darkness and intense noises from the simultaneous ring of the waterfall and video. My analysis of the sensory and spatial characteristics of *Fountain* at the AGO will demonstrate how the affect of un-calm is generated and the types of meanings that arise.

¹¹ Jim Drobnick, “Installation Art: The Predicament of the Senses,” ed. Bernard Lamarche (Quebec: Installations: At the Crossroads, Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, 2016), 196-205, 197.

Winnipeg artist Sarah Anne Johnson created a performance and video-based installation titled *Hospital Hallway*, where she performed a rendition of a traumatic incident her maternal grandmother endured in the 1950s. Johnson's grandmother was involuntarily subjected to experimental therapy as a patient.¹² To address such a deeply emotional story, Johnson designed *Hospital Hallway* as an installation with an interior that mimicked a sterile, clinical hallway. The octagonal walls accommodated multiple television screens, each depicting video recordings of Johnson straining her body into uncomfortable, tortured positions.

At the opening, Johnson invited audiences to view the performance from a raised platform hovering above the installation. Inside, she performed bodily contortions continuously, which were later presented digitally in the space. The aesthetic design of *Hospital Hallway* was (fittingly) bleak. The interior walls were painted pale white, a stark contrast to the grey floor. The bareness of the installation signalled isolation and emptiness, while the clinical design emphasizes the disturbing story that inspired *Hospital Hallway*. The most dominant sensory feature of Johnson's performance was loud and aggressive sounds that she created using her body and the installation structure. The absence of colour and strange orientation of space became noticeable aspects of the installation. By examining the sensory and spatial qualities of *Hospital Hallway*, I will identify how these characteristics facilitate the affect of un-calm.

The intensely spirited and dynamic nature of *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway* are captivating. Although Belmore and Johnson may not have specifically intended for their

¹² Sarah Anne Johnson, "House on Fire," 2019. Accessed February 2019. <https://sarahannejohnson.ca/works/house-on-fire>.

work to stimulate discomfort in audiences, the affect of un-calm arose through the intersection of the space and the senses. By focusing on the spatial and sensory aspects of both installations, this paper provides a new perspective on how affect, specifically that of the un-calm, impacts the comprehension of installation art.

Dark and Damp: Rebecca Belmore's *Fountain*

Anishinaabe multimedia artist Rebecca Belmore produces profound and confrontational artworks that reflect Indigenous history and presence on the land called Canada. Her artistic practice includes sculpture, photography, performance and installation art. Using these mediums as a platform, Belmore facilitates a dialogue between Indigenous groups in Canada, settlers and individuals from various cultural backgrounds who call Canada home. Anishinaabe curator Wanda Nanibush discusses how Belmore's practice addresses current events, which inherently impacts audiences: "Rebecca Belmore's art practice faces the monumental issues of our time by inviting us to be witnesses and to engage in caring about what we see. Her deeply intuitive process guides us towards our own poetic and beautiful responses."¹³ Demonstrating both the past and existing injustices that Indigenous people, especially women, face, Belmore's work situates crucial Indigenous and settler conversations in the context of contemporary art.

Belmore's poignant approach to storytelling taps into the sensory repository of audiences. Her choice of site, medium, performance and constructed environments engage multiple senses. Belmore uses performance and installation art to accentuate the

¹³ Rebecca Belmore, *Facing the Monumental*, ed. Wanda Nanibush (Art Gallery of Ontario: Goose Lane, 2018), 11.

human body in motion and highlight its form as a site of complexity. Nanibush discusses Belmore's intuitive artistic practice: "She often responds to a context from a place beyond language, a place that visual art is especially able to reach."¹⁴ The idea of a "place beyond language" connects to this paper's discussion on how the convergence of the senses and affect introduce an expanded method for comprehending artwork. On the influence of Belmore's practice Nanibush notes, "The openness of Belmore's images allows us to explore our affective responses on our own terms."¹⁵ The unrestrained qualities of Belmore's art provide audiences the agency to experience individual emotions in response to their visual and sensorial observations.

My analysis of *Fountain* will be articulated through an examination of the sensory and spatial components within the installation to illuminate how the affect of un-calm is generated. Examining both the visual and imperceptible aspects of Belmore's installation provides an innovative approach to understanding *Fountain's* total complexity and emotional power.

At the 2005 Venice Biennale, Belmore represented Canada with an installation titled *Fountain* for the Canadian pavilion.¹⁶ *Fountain* is a video installation reflecting ideas that range from globalization to the importance of protecting water in its many forms. In an article recounting *Fountain's* debut in 2005, critic Lee-Ann Martin provides

¹⁴ Nanibush, *Facing the Monumental*, 14.

¹⁵ Nanibush, *Facing the Monumental*, 13.

¹⁶ Lee-Ann Martin, "From the Archives: Rebecca Belmore," *Canadian Art*, May 9, 2013. Accessed February 2019.
<https://canadianart.ca/features/from-the-archives-rebecca-belmore/>.

insight on the installation in Venice and the significance of fountains in the context of European history:

Fountains originated historically as simple basins for the distribution and consumption of water. Through the ages, they have been important focal points where people gathered to socialize. In city states throughout Italy during the Renaissance, the nobility and the papacy commissioned elaborate fountains as monuments to their own strength, power and prosperity. More recently, and especially in the context of globalization, fountains commissioned by banks, corporations and government are designed to convey the promise of prosperity. These fountains dramatically and effectively equate nature with the economic stability that such institutions promise to provide to communities.¹⁷

Martin's account of the historic function of fountains provides context for the installation in the setting of Venice. Upon learning of the historic use for fountains and the location of the 2005 biennale, the concept for the installation becomes clear. Belmore directly challenges the traditional use of fountains and their reference to conquest.

The 2018 rendition of *Fountain* incorporated an identical structure and video projection, but resided at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The installation was constructed as a square space with one doorway serving as both the entry and exit. The focal point of the installation was a short video featuring Belmore amid a vast landscape. Throughout the video, Belmore interacted with elements such as water, fire, land and liquid resembling blood. To affirm the presence of a fountain and the water that animates it, the video was projected onto a waterfall, which simultaneously acted as a projection screen for the video. The video depicted Belmore's clothed body submerged in water amid a vast landscape. She shifted frantically, using a pail to distribute water in several directions. Toward the end of the video, Belmore emerged from the water carrying a full pail at her

¹⁷ Martin, "From the Archives: Rebecca Belmore."

side. In one sweeping motion she hurled the contents of the pail at the camera, drenching it in a bright red liquid resembling blood. Curators Jann LM Bailey and Scott Watson contemplate the significance of including both water and blood in the video as a potential metaphor for ideas such as industrialization and damage to the resource of water:

Fountain deals with elementals or essences: fire + water = blood. The time is both now, in the industrialized landscape of North America, and in another zone, a time of creation, myth and prophecy. The element of water is represented both as a body of water in the projection and literally as a wall of falling water. Water turns to blood. As befits our times, we do not know whether this is a metaphor for creation or an apocalyptic vision.¹⁸

Belmore utilizes site-specificity to convey a message. Her immersion into the landscape and interaction with elements such as water signal the environment. Belmore's use of site appears in three areas: the landscape where the video took place, the Venice Biennale, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Belmore invites audiences to physically engage with site by placing the video in an installation. Situating the body in a constructed space awakens the senses and compels visitors to engage with their immediate environment.

Sound: Noise, Vibration and the Three-Dimensionality of an Echo

Fountain assumed a robust presence in the exhibition in terms of its striking sound.

Besides the visual aspect of viewing Belmore's installation, sound played an important role in informing audiences of their surroundings while immersed in the unfamiliar space the artwork presents. Art historian Simon Shaw-Miller deliberates how perception and sound are intertwined: "To listen and to see is also to think, and our thinking structures

¹⁸ Jann LM Bailey and Scott Watson, "Introduction," in *Rebecca Belmore: Fountain*, ed. Cindy Richmond and Scott Watson (Kamloops, BC: Kamloops Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 2005), 11.

our listening and seeing.”¹⁹ Sound reveals both recognizable and unrecognizable tones, orienting visitors by indicating the elements that reside in their current environment.

Three distinct amplifications of sound emerged in *Fountain*. The first originated from the waterfall inside the installation. The sound of rushing water beat against the confines of the installation and thundered throughout the entire exhibition space. The pulse of the waterfall, a familiar sound associated with the outdoors, was disorienting to experience in an interior space. The waterfall expressed force, hitting the ground with immense pressure.

The second level of sound was audio from the video projection. Some of the most prominent sounds in the space originated from the video. In addition to the waterfall, Belmore’s forceful interaction with water and laboured breath in the video animated the entire installation. In particular scenes throughout the video, Belmore appears to be sinking into the water. The sounds of her struggle and physical exertion were intensely un-calm. Similar to the waterfall, Belmore’s shrieks and grunts in the video could be heard from outside the installation. As a result of sound extending beyond the parameters of the installation, the act of stepping into the space becomes uncertain for audiences. Exposure to these un-calm sounds in advance of entering the installation might have made visitors hesitant to enter the room and perceive the subject matter.

The third level of sound involved audiences, and depended on the ratio of visitors to space in the installation. When I entered the installation, I was alone. Being unaccompanied in the space facilitated a powerful echo from the video and waterfall. The

¹⁹ Simon Shaw-Miller, “Sighting Sound: Listening With Eyes Open,” in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 252.

intensity of both sounds reverberated across the walls of the installation, amplifying the pulse of the artwork. Echoes are a distinct aspect of installation art that visual aesthetics cannot account for. The oscillating sounds inside *Fountain* created a compelling counterpoint to beholding the visual content. Had the video existed in silence, the intensity and disorienting power of *Fountain* would have been lost. Absorbing the sound of rushing water, as opposed to a slow stream, activates a sense of urgency and panic.

Smell: Breathing Visually

Smell is a visceral sense. Breathing in a particular scent has the capacity to bring memories to the immediate forefront. Senses scholar Tim Jacob discusses the relationship between smell and memories: “Smell and memory are intimately linked. The primary smell area in the brain (pyriform cortex) and the memory area (hippocampus) are next door to each other and are interconnected by many nerve fibers.”²⁰ Installations that possess distinct aromas, like the unmistakable smell of a large body of water in *Fountain*, provide audiences with a distinct memory of the artwork. In addition, installations that incorporate fragrant characteristics provide a visitor living with visual impairments an awareness of the content of the installation. Jacob discusses the convergence of taste and smell as being capable of altering an individual’s emotional state: “Both senses have access to more primitive and subconscious regions of the brain where they influence mood and emotion, and can evoke feelings of *déjà vu* - have you ever encountered that

²⁰ Tim Jacob, “The Science of Taste and Smell,” in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 199-200.

smell that takes you right back to childhood?”²¹ With the power of scent to invoke an emotional response, smell and affect are intertwined. Smell and affect both inform and influence the experience an individual has in a given setting.

The aroma of water and atmosphere of dampness in *Fountain* was immediate upon entering the installation. The moisture of the waterfall, which radiated a cool dampness into the air, generated a moist, sticky atmosphere in the installation. The scent of water effectively became a large part of *Fountain*. Atmosphere scholar Mark Dorrian contemplates the relationship between museum atmospheres and affect by looking to theory-based ideas:

The affiliation between, and even identity of, aura and atmosphere is clear. Benjamin himself articulated it in his writing on Baudelaire, while Böhme has noted that “aura is something which flows forth spatially, almost something like a breath or haze - precisely an atmosphere.”²²

Dorrian refers to atmospheres and auras as identifiable properties of space. The misty atmosphere in *Fountain* contributed to transforming the space into a literal rendition of a fountain. Jacob refers to the sense of smell as having the capacity to signal an unsafe situation to individuals: “In simple terms our sense of smell is a hazard warning system, protecting us from danger, although as we will see there is much more to it than that.”²³ In the overwhelmingly fragrant installation, the sense of smell can be used as a tool to both identify and inform audiences of the potential risks of being in installations that incorporate certain elements.

²¹ Jacob, “The Science of Taste and Smell,” 183.

²² Mark Dorrian, “Museum Atmospheres: Notes on Aura, Distance and Affect,” *Journal of Architecture* 19, no. 2 (2014), 187-201, 193.

²³ Jacob, “The Science of Taste and Smell,” 183.

Touch: The Tangibility of the Intangible

The texture of an artwork captivates audiences. Texture is not the first aesthetic property one might consider in a discussion of installation art. Before making physical contact, identifying texture is a visual act. Texture informs audiences of the tactile properties of a surface, deciphering whether a substance is sharp, smooth, flat or damp and so on. Three-dimensional patterns and surfaces spark an awareness of texture. Art Historian Francesca Bacci refers to this idea and considers the tangibility of texture void of the literal action of touching:

Unless otherwise indicated by the artist or by the placement and context for which the artwork has been conceived, it could be reasonably assumed that a sculpture's texture and surface treatment, but also temperature, hardness, and weight - all of which to be ascertained haptically - are rich sources of sensory stimuli and are vehicles for information that is important for the sculpture's aesthetic apperception.²⁴

Much like all the senses, the sense of touch informs. Touch differs from senses such as sight and smell as it signifies a relationship between the body and a physical object. Traditionally, touching art is prohibited. However, *Fountain* raised the question: do audiences need to physically touch an artwork to *feel* it? Artist Rosalynn Driscoll's practice has emphasized the importance of interacting with artwork through the body, "The moving hand or body experiences itself moving, generating kinesthetic sensations even if there is no contact with a surface."²⁵ The falling water in *Fountain* was exceptionally textural, especially upon impact with the floor.

²⁴ Francesca Bacci, "Sculpture and Touch," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 136.

²⁵ Rosalynn Driscoll, "Aesthetic Touch," in *Art and the Senses* ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 112.

The rate at which the water cascaded appeared aggressive and hard, changing form upon hitting the floor. As previously mentioned, vibration was a large part of the sensations in *Fountain* as a result of the water screen. The sound of rushing water created an almost palpable pulse in the space. Driscoll deliberates how the body responds to artworks that cannot be physically touched: “The unconscious aspect of haptics is operating when we encounter the vast number of artworks that are not touchable.”²⁶ Audiences are familiar with the texture of water, therefore when viewing Belmore’s installation they are able to imagine how the water feels. Similar to smell, touch can conjure an emotional response. Touch and texture can facilitate un-calm emotions because they require audiences to engage with the artwork as opposed to viewing it optically.

Light and Shadow: Presence and Absence

The dark interior of *Fountain* obscured visibility. Darkness made practical sense in the installation in order to project the video, however restraining light signifies additional concepts at play. Considering light informs audiences of objects in space, the absence of it in *Fountain* became noticeable. The sole source of light emanated from the video projection. In the absence of light, the installation suppressed the possibility of identifying any additional visual elements in the installation.

Darkness also eliminates visual distractions. Removing the possibility of viewing the entire space inside the installation created an environment for contemplation. By

²⁶ Driscoll, “Aesthetic Touch,” 113.

ensuring the video and waterfall were the sole visible aspects of the installation, Belmore controlled the focus of audiences and invited them to view, hear and smell the most immediate observable content. Belmore's manipulation of light and shadow also contributed to creating a reflection of the water screen on the floor in front of the projection. In combination with the rush of falling water, the reflection of water destabilized the floor of the installation. What has always been considered a surface of balance and stability was illusively rendered unstable. Being submerged in darkness is an unnerving experience in a public setting today. Not having the ability to completely see and recognize other visitors in the space made the process of viewing the video projection isolating and discomfoting.

Space: Negative vs. Cramped

Installation art is in a constant collaboration with space. This discussion of space refers to the structural parameters inside the installation. Identifying how space is negotiated becomes crucial to this discussion of how space impacts a visitor's experience of the installation. Architectural theorist Alberto Pérez Gómez reflects on the role of space in informing individuals of their immediate environment:

Our spatiality is constructed with an up and a down, a left and a right, an in front and a behind, a near and a far. When nothing arrests our gaze, it carries a very long way. But if it meets with nothing, it sees nothing. Space therefore arrests our gaze, it is also the substance, the obstacle, whether bricks or a "vanishing point."²⁷

²⁷ Alberto Pérez Gómez, "Architecture and the Body," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 571.

Pérez-Gomez's articulation of the principles of space references how an individual orients their body in a given setting. Both empty and/or crowded spaces can be un-calming. Upon entering, my isolation in the darkness of *Fountain* was unsettling. The obscurity of the entire installation concealed the actual size of the space. Discomfort emerged in the removal of the opportunity for visitors to perceive the parameters of their surrounding environment.

The organization of space impacts how audiences move within it. The structural orientation of an installation controls how audiences experience and move throughout the artwork. *Fountain* incorporated a large open area to view the video, which provided visitors the choice to either stand in close proximity to the video projection and waterfall or further back. The configuration of space allowed individuals to either experience a sense of community or alienation. These various dimensions of space including negative, enclosed, crowded and invisible each reveal how the affect of un-calm can arise.

The significance of engaging with the sensory and spatial profiles of *Fountain* such as sound, space, light, smell and touch reveal the various methods through which the installation can be understood. It also reveals how their presence contributes to the affect of un-calm. The senses and affect impact audiences because they provide a deeply intimate experience of the installation. The intersection of affect and the senses also allow visitors to perceive the complexity of the installation. In an interview with Robert Enright, Belmore discusses the conceptual meaning of *Fountain* and the artistic objective behind creating the installation:

I live in Vancouver, a fountain-obsessed city in which fountains are used as decoration and architectural enhancement. But at the same time, I know that

fountains are from this [Europe] part of the world. So for me as an Aboriginal person, to bring the fountain back to Europe is very meaningful. It's saying, you've gone out and conquered, but now what are you going to do? What are we going to do? And it's interesting because water is a resource in Canada. We're wealthy with water. Maybe it's more valuable than the oil we're pulling out of the ground.²⁸

Belmore makes it clear that this installation addresses the pressing questions of our time. It raises the issue of power and the exploitation of water. Belmore's act of bringing the fountain "back to Europe" is also evocative of a decolonizing objective. The sensory properties of Belmore's installation allow visitors to immerse themselves in these concepts while in the space.

In addition to the sensory and spatial characteristics of the installation, *Fountain* stimulates the affect of un-calm for audiences because it references power relations - both historic and contemporary - and decolonization. Belmore's installation responds to these ideas and the current state of society:

We've always been violent and we still are violent. If you look at current politics, brutality and colonization continue to go on. So my idea is that between water and blood, we repeat all these acts against one another. It's endless. I question how civilized we are. I question our civility.²⁹

The topics Belmore undertakes in the installation are un-calm and compelling, as they hold the visitor accountable. As an artist, Belmore poses difficult questions and brings to the forefront un-calm ideas in an attempt to continue productive discussions. The re-creation of *Fountain* in 2018 supports Belmore's previous comments on how violence and misconduct continue to exist in society. By creating un-calm spatial characteristics

²⁸ Robert Enright, "The Poetics of History: An Interview with Rebecca Belmore," *Border Crossings*, Issue 95, 2005.

<https://bordercrossingsmag.com/article/the-poetics-of-history-an-interview-with-rebecca-belmore>.

²⁹ Enright, "The Poetics of History."

with un-calm visual imagery, Belmore's artwork unsettles the senses of audiences. In the context of Venice during the 2005 biennale, the installation's inclusion of water is a particularly noteworthy aspect, as Venice has long been considered a city built upon water. Performance studies scholar Lilian Mengesha addresses this idea and the anxieties surrounding water's historic and contemporary presence:

In the video installation of *Fountain*, made specifically for the Biennale, Belmore brings the waters of Vancouver to the floating/sinking city of Venice. [...] She grips a thirty-seven-litre bucket, and it seems to pull her down, intensifying her wrestle with its weight. She struggles with the bucket's load, carrying not only water, but also the weight of water's history.³⁰

Characteristics such as darkness, an overwhelming presence of water and loud audio from the video deepen the un-calm effectiveness of *Fountain*. Had the surrounding environment been comfortable for audiences by including seating, low volume and clear visibility, the video and waterfall may not have triggered the un-calm. Placing audiences in the context of a dark space confronted by a mass amount of water achieved the same gripping affect as the video. The affect of un-calm is generated from the intersection of space and the senses, but also from the conversation Belmore engages with power, decolonization and the current state of political and societal circumstances.

Octagon of Trauma: Sarah Anne Johnson's *Hospital Hallway*

Utopias, glitter-filled landscapes, human connection and her maternal ancestry are themes Canadian Sarah Anne Johnson engages with through a multimedia practice. Born in

³⁰ Lilian Mengesha, "Where Water Meets Land: Water's Time and Place's Thought in Rebecca Belmore's *Fountain*," *Canadian Theatre Review* 174 (Spring, 2018), 9-12, 10. Accessed March 2019. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ocadu.idm.oclc.org/article/693701/pdf>.

Winnipeg, Johnson works interchangeably in photography, sculpture, painting, illustration, installation and performance.³¹ Recognized for the innovative treatment of two-dimensional photographs, Johnson applies paint, illustrations and sculptural materials across the surface of images to create three-dimensional artworks. Over the last decade, Johnson has produced deeply intimate ancestry-based installation art that communicates traumatic experiences in her family's past. Using her body, Johnson personifies her relatives, especially her maternal grandmother, to represent her personal history.

Roughly sixty years after Johnson's maternal grandmother became an unknowing patient of experimental therapy, Johnson conceived *Hospital Hallway* (2015). In addition to Johnson's performance inside the installation, the primarily video-based artwork represented the institutional mistreatment of Johnson's grandmother in the 1950s.

Hospital Hallway is an extension of a previous series from 2009, where Johnson created small figurines and houses, as well as manipulated family photographs, to demonstrate how trauma can penetrate the everyday life of the individual affected. Inspired by her story, Johnson represented her maternal grandmother's journey for psychiatric support in *Hospital Hallway*. Following her entrance into a treatment facility for postpartum depression, Johnson's grandmother became an unwitting subject of CIA-funded intrusive treatments, which included shock therapy and induced sleep.³²

In a performance at the opening of the installation, Johnson embodied her grandmother by confining herself within a clinical, sterile installation to convey this

³¹ Sarah Anne Johnson, "About," 2019. Accessed February 2019. <https://sarahannejohnson.ca/about/>.

³² Sarah Anne Johnson, "House on Fire," 2019. Accessed February 2019. <https://sarahannejohnson.ca/works/house-on-fire>.

experience. The performance and installation were evocative of how trauma can transcend generations. Although it was her grandmother who encountered the abuse, two generations later Johnson utilizes art to grapple with the magnitude of this disturbing experience. Johnson details the significance of the installation, “Here, I tried to imagine what it must be like placing your complete trust in an institution whose hidden objective is to break your body, mind and spirit.”³³ In the performance, Johnson moved her body in distressed motions to convey trauma of the mind and body. The surrounding space of the installation echoed sentiments of the un-calm. Johnson discusses the deliberate configuration of the installation, detailing her selection of objects inside the space:

Hospital Hallway exists in two parts, consisting of a video installation as well as a live, approximately 30 minute-long performance. [...] The video, in which I enact various moments from the live performance, plays on thirteen flat screen TVs within the hallway. Viewers are free to circulate within the claustrophobic hallway, confronted by a looped video of my performance at every turn.³⁴

Configured in the shape of an octagon, the installation structure mimics an endless hospital hallway. At the opening, Johnson invited audiences to behold a performance where she enacted intense full body movements inside the installation. Throughout the duration of her performance and in the video footage later presented, Johnson wore a mask of a black-and-white photograph of her grandmother. This concealed Johnson’s identity as the artist, emphasizing the embodiment of her ancestor.

³³ Sarah Anne Johnson, “Hospital Hallway,” 2019. Accessed February 7, 2019. <https://sarahannejohnson.ca/works/hospital-hallway>.

³⁴ Sarah Anne Johnson, “Hospital Hallway,” 2019. Accessed February 7, 2019. <https://sarahannejohnson.ca/works/hospital-hallway>.

In *Hospital Hallway*, Johnson performs her grandmother's painful experience as a mistreated patient, while simultaneously questioning institutional power, deceit, and the permanent emotional impact of medical mistreatment. Like *Fountain*, Johnson utilizes videography as a prominent component of *Hospital Hallway*, and as a vehicle to situate her body in the space following the conclusion of her performance. Even through the use of digital components, *Hospital Hallway* emphasizes bodies in space and how the body can be impacted by space. My analysis of the affect of un-calm in Johnson's installation will examine her performance followed by an examination of how audiences moved through the meticulously configured space.³⁵

Sound: Presence and Absence

Hospital Hallway employed both the presence and absence of sound. According to cognitive scholars David Melcher and Massimiliano Zampini, visual and auditory elements are connected: "Many explanations for the ventriloquist effect have assumed that vision dominates sound, and somehow captures it. In other cases, however, what we hear can change what we see."³⁶ This idea is especially relevant to Johnson's installation considering there are several systems of sound operating throughout. Aggression, fatigue and a physical and mental struggle were prominent tones emerging from the installation. During her performance, the audible sensation of Johnson's body sliding across the floor

³⁵ I was not able to visit Johnson's installation. However, video documentation and online content from the artist's website allowed me to experience the affect of un-calm and the spatial and sensory profiles that would have been predominant in the installation.

³⁶ David Melcher and Massimiliano Zampini, "The Sight and Sound of Music: Audiovisual Interactions in Science and the Arts," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 267.

of the installation became eerily noticeable in the stillness of all other components. Johnson would sporadically bang her hands and feet against the installation walls, signifying the stress of confinement. As a result of exerting herself unforgivingly, Johnson's heavy breath became another audible component. The sound of exhaustion was most apparent when Johnson paused to rest on the floor in a flat position. At this point, silence became distinct.

The absence of sound alludes to ideas of mental and physical exhaustion, both of which her grandmother must have experienced as a patient of experimental therapy. During her performance, Johnson's inactivity inside the installation after prolonged periods of physical exertion evoked her grandmother's physical and cognitive debilitation. Silence fosters a space for contemplation. In Johnson's silence, the affect of un-calm emerges because visitors are left to imagine what this experience must have been like for the artist's grandmother. Although not the most apparent of sounds, silence delivers information to audiences on the space that surrounds them.

In the context of Johnson's installation and family history, sounds of distress and desperation, which Johnson created by thumping and dragging her body throughout the installation, play a crucial role in informing visitors of her grandmother's emotional state in treatment. In *Hospital Hallway*, sound and space are interconnected. Sound artist and theorist Brandon LaBelle deliberates the capability of sound to animate, exceed and rattle against the boundaries of space:

Sound thus *performs* with and through space: it navigates geographically, reverberates acoustically, and structures socially, for sound amplifies and silences, contorts, distorts, and pushes against architecture; it escapes rooms,

vibrates walls, disrupts conversation [...]. It is boundless on the one hand, and site-specific on the other.³⁷

The auditory elements inside *Hospital Hallway* are part of the many powerful components that form this installation's distinctiveness. The sounds are unpredictable and painful. LaBelle's analysis of the relationship between sound and space adds to this conversation on the relevancy of the senses in identifying the affect of un-calm. Emotionally charged sounds are a gripping yet un-calm encounter. Un-calm sounds in the context of *Hospital Hallway* heighten the terror of the narrative Johnson shares. Aside from the opening, visitors who did not personally watch Johnson perform and instead passed through the installation are still affected by a confrontation with video footage.³⁸

Space: Reoccurring Visual Imagery and Movements

Reappearing images, sounds and objects can be an un-calm encounter inside installations. Upon total immersion in *Hospital Hallway*, hearing, witnessing and moving throughout a space that embodies disorientation can manifest the affect of un-calm. Johnson's performance incorporated an extensive amount of repetitive visual and sensory elements. During her performance, Johnson enacted the same bodily movements for minutes at a time. She tumbled, spun, crawled, collided and dragged her body across the installation floor and walls. Each television and the height at which they were mounted in the installation were identical.

³⁷ Brandon LaBelle, "Introduction: Auditory Relations," in *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York and London: Continuum, 2006), xi.

³⁸ Television screens depicting recordings of Johnson were not mounted in the space until after her performance. During her performance, the walls of the installation were blank. Following the performance, Johnson opted to insert television screens throughout the space, each depicting recordings similar to the performance.

The televisions and video footage inside the installation alludes to ideas of surveillance and examination. In the installation, the audience assumes a voyeuristic position as they view Johnson's visible struggle. Incorporating video in installation art affects audiences on an intimate level. Aside from witnessing the performance, recordings display a visible body in motion. Moving image scholar Jennifer M. Barker illuminates her perspective on the reception of moving images by audiences:

When we say we are moved by a film, that it touches us, or that we respond to it viscerally, we mean it in a more than metaphorical sense. These claims imply a distinctly tactile relationship between film and viewer that is a key factor in our attraction and response to the movies.³⁹

In Barker's statement she references cinema, however her assessment of the impact video has on audiences can be applied to Johnson's short and repeating recordings. The affect of un-calm can arise in audiences even when situated in a position of dominance. Witnessing the struggle Johnson bares to audiences through reoccurring gestures in performance and video has the capacity to impact a viewer's emotional state. The action of visitors circling the interior emphasizes the shape of the installation.

Space: Noticing Shape

Art installations often provide undefined pathways for audiences to shuffle and reorient themselves. However, in the case of Johnson's installation, space was deliberately limited. The installation had no ceiling (instead, there was an elevated platform where audiences viewed Johnson perform). By constructing an octagon, audiences were forced to pass through the installation in a circular motion. Circular movements are associated

³⁹ Jennifer M. Barker, "Touch and the Cinematic Experience," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 149.

with spiraling and being unable to break free of a cycle. In the installation, discomfort emerges from being stuck in the same pattern of movement, viewing the same disturbing imagery in a confined space. Sculptor Robert Morris discusses how space is experienced and what occurs when the physical body enters space:

Real space is not experienced except in real time. The body is in motion, the eyes make endless movements at varying focal distances fixing on innumerable static or moving images. Location and point of view are constantly shifting at the apex of time's flow. Language, memory, reflection and fantasy may or may not accompany the experience.⁴⁰

Morris refers to space as a platform where memories and reflections manifest. His evaluation of how space impacts the body supports the idea that the body and space are continuously engaged in the practice of viewing installation art.

The body in motion is a crucial aspect of experiencing *Hospital Hallway*. In her performance, Johnson moves her body to convey a devastating experience. Inside *Hospital Hallway* visitor bodies rotate throughout the space, animating the peculiarity of the installation's shape. The idea of a body in motion extends beyond the artist to the audience. Sofia Borges reflects on how space is impacted by the presence of the human body within it, "We only relate to our environment when we perceive it. No longer passive observers, we as viewers can influence our environment as much as it influences us."⁴¹ The body and the space inside installations are entangled. Disorientation is a strategic aspect of Johnson's installation. In *Hospital Hallway*, Johnson's configuration of the installation provides the illusion that visitors are not moving at all as they walk in a

⁴⁰ Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space (1978)," in *Situation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Claire Doherty (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2009), 27.

⁴¹ Borges, "Geometric Spaces," 7.

circular motion. Borges discusses the impact of geometry upon space: “Geometry in any form has the power to craft an experiential space.”⁴² The geometry of *Hospital Hallway* confuses visitors of their position in space. Placing the audience in a hamster wheel of emotional trauma facilitates an un-calm affect. Architect Juhani Pallasmaa reviews the intersection of architecture, space and the body in relation to the senses:

It is evident that experiences and qualities of architecture cannot be fully described by our five sense modalities. In addition to the five senses, experiences of architecture involve, for example, the sensations of gravity and lightness, the counterpoint of horizontality and verticality, movement and balance, sense of centre and focus, tension and ease, time and duration, not to speak of the role of memory and projection of intentional meanings.⁴³

Pallasmaa argues that the five senses are not the sole method through which architecture is comprehended, for space is in a constant dialogue with other senses and the body’s subtler systems. The intersection of both space and the senses provide clarity on how the structure of an installation is comprehended.

Colour: The Intensity of a Muted Palette

Colour is vital to installation art. The colours that compose installations are especially significant considering they encompass audiences. A vibrant or neutral palette of a painting may be remembered optically, however the vivacity of an installation is felt in the body. In contrast to installations that incorporate the use of vivid colour, *Hospital Hallway* is composed of few colours.

⁴² Borges, “Geometric Spaces,” 9.

⁴³ Juhani Pallasmaa, “Architecture and the Existential Sense: Space, Body, and the Senses,” in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 590.

The pale white walls of the installation contrast the flatness of the grey floor. Fluorescent bulbs reminiscent of generic hospitals dangle from the height of the installation, aggressively illuminating all aspects of the space. Had the lighting of the installation been muted or dim, the affect might differ. The intrusive brightness of fluorescent lights signifies the need to see clearly and *examine* the contents of the space. In her performance, Johnson matched her clothing to the palette in the installation. She opted for light-grey suit pants paired with an off-white blouse and shoes reminiscent of 1950's fashion. Sterile and cool, the palette of *Hospital Hallway* mimicked the sickly composition of an institution that mistreated one of its patients.

The absence of vibrant colours not only signifies the sterility of a hospital hallway, but also a lack of liveliness. How might audience perception change if the installation was yellow or red? Colour and context collaborate to inform audiences of the tone of the artwork. The bleached colour palette of *Hospital Hallway* resembles that of a 1950's institution, but also the emotional state of her grandmother. In this circumstance, a muted palette becomes louder than the brightest of colours.

Highlighting the sensory and spatial components of *Hospital Hallway* illuminates the various modes through which the affect of un-calm arises. The title *Hospital Hallway* itself carries connotations. Before stepping into the installation, audiences approach the space with a perspective dependent upon their previous experience of institutional spaces. Examining the sound, shape, orientation and colour of the architecture of *Hospital Hallway* reveals the emergence of affect and unease. Two primary components of the installation facilitate the affect of un-calm: the difficulty of the experience Johnson shares

through manipulating her body, and the spatial selections and sensory components present in the installation.

The un-calm is generated through the sensory properties, themes and story Johnson displays. The installation reflects issues of institutional power over bodies, the invasion of mental and physical privacy, and the difficulty of living with generational trauma. These topics, particularly those dealing with a loss of personal agency, occur in varying degrees within current society. Johnson's installation is an example of the artwork that, although difficult to perceive and digest, questions the structures that control bodies and supposedly help people in need of care.

Conclusion: Reflecting on the Affect of Un-calm in Art and Life

“We are moved by things.”
- Sara Ahmed⁴⁴

My experience visiting *Fountain* at the AGO sparked questions as the water screen thundered before me and mist touched my skin. I stood alone in the dark room and wondered if the sensory and spatial characteristics of installation art could alter a visitor's emotional state. This paper attempted to reveal how audiences un-calmly respond to the space inside specific installations. Although not all installation artworks evoke the affect of un-calm, *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway* served as case studies to represent those that do. Inside the detailed spaces of installations, the senses are instruments that

⁴⁴ Sara Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” in *The Affect Theory Reader* ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 33.

compartmentalize entire environments. As this research paper closes, I would like to return to the questions that guided it forward.

One of the primary focuses of this paper was to determine how affect is generated and the role it plays in making installation art distinctive. Investigating this idea began first with an evaluation of the spaces within which affect arises. Visitors who enter installations for the first time encounter a new setting, atmosphere and situation. Affect theorist Sara Ahmed reviews how affect reaches consciousness and impacts emotions, “We can be happily affected in the present of an encounter; you are affected positively by something, even if that something does not present itself as an object of consciousness.”⁴⁵ Although Ahmed refers specifically to the affect of happiness, her rationalization for affective encounters can be applied to the un-calm. Though a visitor of installations may not perceive the affect of un-calm as a tangible object in the space, un-calm is felt in the meeting of the body and an environment that contains uncomfortable features. Ahmed continues, deliberating the affect of an atmosphere on the body, “Having read the atmosphere, one can become tense, which in turn affects what happens, how things move along.”⁴⁶ By closely examining the spatial characteristics of *Fountain*, an atmosphere emerged. The damp, cool atmosphere of *Fountain* as well as the sensory and spatial characteristics within both artworks generate a specific affect.

In addition to deciphering how affect is generated and renders installation art distinct, this paper identified the causes of the affect of un-calm. Through utilizing Belmore and Johnson’s installations as case studies, this paper establishes that

⁴⁵ Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 31.

⁴⁶ Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 37.

characteristics such as darkness in public, unsettling sounds, disorienting configurations of space and unexpected scents contribute to the manifestation of the affect of un-calm. On the atmosphere of space Ahmed opines that “we may walk into the room and ‘feel the atmosphere’, but what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival.”⁴⁷ As Ahmed phrases it, the “angle of our arrival” is an idea that refers to the emotional state of audiences before entering installations.

Sound dominated both *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway*. The noises, tones and vibrations in *Fountain* and Johnson’s performance were unsettling. In *Fountain*, the audible sensation of the pounding water screen and Belmore’s exhausted struggle with water in the video made the process of stepping into the installation unnerving and uncertain. Johnson’s performance in *Hospital Hallway* focused primarily on sound, as she used her body to create noises evocative of a mental and physical collapse. The rattling and thumping of her limbs across the installation wall and floor echoed an intense and emotionally tortured state of mind.

Light conditions such as darkness in *Fountain* and fluorescent brightness in *Hospital Hallway* affect the general mood of the space. While the fluorescent lights in *Hospital Hallway* emphasized a clear range of visibility, the darkness in *Fountain* obscured vision. Obscurity created a space of contemplation, where Belmore ensured the only visible content was the video and waterfall. However, this same obscurity rendered parts of the installation invisible, which is unnerving in a public space today.

⁴⁷ Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 37.

In the (typically) small spaces of installations, colour assumes a predominant presence. Similar to light, colour affects the mood of beholding an artwork, particularly one that envelopes its audience. As this paper has demonstrated, Johnson's use of a limited colour palette in *Hospital Hallway* achieved aesthetic similarities to clinics and hospitals, while also representing an overall inhumanity. Had the installation incorporated vibrant colours, the energy of the installation would have shifted, along with the audience's comprehension of it. Music psychologist Carol L. Krumhansl and composer Fred Lerdahl discuss the capacity of art to attune audiences to their environment:

From a psychological point of view, the arts can extend our understanding of the physical, sensory, and perceptual processes that enable us to apprehend the world around us. Art works are special cases that, at a somewhat higher level, can yield insights into processes such as memory and attention, and show how knowledge shapes our interactions with, and interpretations of, artistic objects.⁴⁸

Although their article refers primarily to music, Krumhansl and Lerdahl touch upon how art stimulates a general yet meaningful awareness of space.

The overall shape and configuration of space inside installation artworks controls how visitors move within them. Belmore and Johnson's installations assume particular shapes to regulate how audiences pass through and position their bodies inside each piece. The octagonal shape of *Hospital Hallway* was uncommon, and facilitated a theme of repetition. The octagonal installation forced visitors to move in agitating circular motions.

Smell triggers memory. As this paper demonstrated through the use of sensory research, the sense of smell and memory are linked. Smell possesses the capacity to stir

⁴⁸ Carol L. Krumhansl and Fred Lerdahl, "Musical Tension," in *Art and the Senses* ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 311.

memories associated with a particular scent, projecting those recollections into the present. In *Fountain*, the scent of moisture in the air not only referenced the environment, but also heightened the impact of the water screen. The predominant scent of water activated a visitor's memory of the substance and its existence in the world.

The tactility of *Hospital Hallway* was minimal and sterile as a result of its smooth and seemingly glazed texture. The textural properties of the space contributed largely to achieving a clinical design inside the installation. On the contrary, the vivid and rough texture of the water screen inside *Fountain* was palpable. The rough texture of the waterfall signified haste and urgency. The textural characteristics, whether eerily slick or high-pressured, contribute to the affect of un-calm.

The un-calm exists within society. To locate the un-calm in the context of today, this paper also examined where the un-calm is situated within current social and cultural norms. The un-calm inhabits social media, news broadcasts, protest movements, environmental devastation and toxic pollution, corrupt politics, inequality and discrimination. It even exists in art institutions. Galleries and museums possess particular histories that include censorship and the exclusion or misrepresentation of artists and cultures. The un-calm extends beyond installation art to society. The affect of un-calm refers in part to the anxieties that are faced on personal and cultural levels. Focusing on the affect of un-calm in installation art reflects its presence in the broader world outside.

This research paper exposes where and how the un-calm emerges by deciphering the characteristics of installation art that manifest this particular affect. By focusing on the sensory and spatial traits of *Fountain* and *Hospital Hallway*, this paper demonstrates the

potential of installation art to alter the emotional state of audiences. The un-calm should be recognized for its presence in installation art, but also across disciplines, organizations, communities and situations that society faces collectively. Examining these case studies through the lens of the affect of un-calm and the senses contribute to identifying the compelling nature of both installations. By focusing on affect and the senses, this paper exemplifies how installation art can be contemplated without a primary focus on what is seen, but rather on what is felt.

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