REMATERIALIZING MEMORY:

CO-CONSTRUCTING THE MULTISENSORY MEMORIES OF ASIAN THIRD CULTURE KIDS (TCKS)

by
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Abstract

Rematerializing Memory is a research project that explores themes of memory, identity, loss and belonging within Third Culture Kids (TCKs) in Toronto's Asian Diaspora. Having been identified as *global nomads* or *cultural chameleons*, the lived experiences of these individuals are often characterised by their constant mobility and transiency. As an inevitable by-product of these experiences, feelings of unresolved grief and loss begin to arise as their insider-outsider relationship with culture continues to challenge their sense of belonging and connections to their cultural identity. Using miniature models to recreate the memories of its participants in conjunction with a multisensory approach, this immersive installation seeks to answer the project's research question on whether the co-construction of memories can be used to bring healing and reconciliation when addressing feelings of unresolved loss and grief towards the notions of fragmented self-identity. This project aims to demonstrate cultural preservation and reconnection through the creation of space for these voices and stories that are often unheard. Highlighting that these memories—however mundane—are valuable pieces of an individual's culture and identity. Through this, the project invites others to share in these experiences, creating nodes of connection and empathy with those who share the land that we live on.

Keywords:

Third Culture Kids (TCKs), Co-design, Community, Culture, Digital Fabrication, Immigration, Installation, Memory, Narrative, Asian Diaspora, Spatial Design, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Deculturation.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge the ancestral territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, who are the original custodians of the land on which we live, work, and create. This project explores the experiences of individuals who have lived their lives as visitors in other countries, and now, having embarked on this thesis as both immigrant and guest to T'karonto, I would like to express my gratitude towards this land that has welcomed and fostered my understanding of land and culture, of my position as a TCK immigrant woman in Canada, and my work. And, I am committed to a continual growth and reflection of my positioning, and my connections to the land that we inhabit.

To my advisors Professor Jay Irizawa and Dr. Cindy Poremba, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude for your continued support, insight, and guidance throughout the development of this project. I have learnt so much from our conversations, and I could not have asked for a better committee!

Dedication

To my family and friends: my parents, Dr. Jomon John, and Dr. Sarah Philip, who have blessed me with endless support and encouragement; and my Chechi and Chettai, Grace John Olasubulumi and Toni Olasubulumi, who have indulged me in my long rants about nothing whilst engaging in equally enlightening conversation, it's always a blast to hang out with you two!! And to Candy Fung He, thank you for being a wonderful friend and sounding board throughout this process, your existence in my life is thoroughly appreciated!

To my participants, Tiffany Wu, Unnikrishnan Kalidas and Esther, it has been a pleasure working with you to delve into your memories as we explored every little detail. I hope that our conversations were as enriching for you as it was for me, and I

am so grateful that I could have developed this project alongside you. And of course, this research project, being focused primarily on those within the TCK community, could not exist without the active participation of its members—especially in the examination and understanding of themes and topics that are significant to the community as a whole. And so, to my workshop participants: Justine Magbitang, Rain Chan, and others who wished to remain anonymous, thank you for the informative discourse that we engaged in during our sessions.

Finally, to my Digital Futures faculty and cohort, I could not be more grateful to have been able to go on this journey together with you all! :)

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Keywords & Terminology

In the section, I will briefly define some of the key terminologies that are regularly referenced within this thesis document.

1.1. Third Culture Kids (TCKs): *Third Culture Kids (TCKs)* refer to individuals who have accompanied their parents to live most, if not all, of their childhoods and developmental years outside of the country from which they hold a passport. Often existing between cultures, they build relationships with both or all cultures they are immersed within without necessarily having full ownership of any[1]. The *third culture* in this case, as often misinterpreted, doesn't refer to the third country that they reside in. Instead, it refers to a *third, separate culture* that is created by the individual who amalgamates the cultural practices and characteristics they have acquired throughout their childhood experiences. In the context of my research, TCKs refer to adults who have grown up and identify as TCKs as opposed to children who are currently experiencing this way of living. Other terms for this demographic are *Third Culture Individuals (TCIs)* or *Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs)*.

1.2. Rootlessness: This refers to the effects of social mobility on an individual, wherein they may feel as though they have no ties or connection to any particular place or community group. This can be accompanied with a reduced sense of belonging, or feelings of dissonance between oneself and their culture(s).

1.3. Multisensory Methods: In the context of this thesis, I refer to multisensory methods as a general term to describe approaches or techniques that are used to activate the senses. These could be through digital means like sound mixing recorded audio to create the atmosphere of the shared memory, or through analogue, handmade methods like mixing and formulating an oil blend to represent the scents of the memory. This could also be a mix of both digital

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[1] Kathleen R. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," *Illness, Crisis & Loss* 16, no. 2 (2008): pp. 93-109, https://doi.org/10.2190/il.16.2.a.

and analogue, in which hardware like light or sound sensors are built into the installation and are controlled through code. When the term is used in the body of this thesis, specific details on which types of tools and techniques will be indicated to and referenced within the context of the text.

1.4. Memory: The concept of memory is one of the core themes within this project. In the most traditional sense, memory can be perceived as static—a shared experience that can be corroborated through facts and the testimony of others with whom the memory was shared. As described by Dr. Cindy Poremba, it is often thought to be like "a tape recording that plays in your head", your eyes capturing the experience in complete, immutable fact. In this project, however, I am exploring how this perception of memory is far more rigid than how we actually experience it. Referencing Jamie Ward in his essay "Multisensory Memories", memory instead consists of a "constellation of different attributes…that are distributed throughout the brain but bound together in different hubs that represent objects, concepts, and event."[2] Its many facets including environmental triggers, its sociality, and its relationship with time. Thus, it is not only something that lives contained within our heads, but one that continues to exist in the world around us, engaging in our ways of living, being, and with our senses. An example of this is encountering a smell randomly during your day that triggers a specific memory that has long since passed and of which you may not have even thought about recently; another could be when you are confronted with a sense of familiarity having eaten something that you've never had before. In addition, the sociality of memory fosters the act of remembering within communal and social frameworks—often allowing for a single event to be experienced and interpreted in a myriad of ways by the people who share in it with you. Furthermore, as referenced later in my document, time is a key component that can both alter or enhance memory. I refer to one of the limitations of this project, wherein my participants are only given a shortened timespan to fully explore their memories. I compare

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[2] Jamie Ward, "Multisensory Memories: How Richer Experiences Facilitate Remembering," in *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 229-237.

this with my own experience, working with a specific memory since the beginning of this thesis project, and how the extended timeframe allowed me to continually revisit and uncover aspects that I had initially forgotten. I was given the privilege of time to make clear(er) what was originally so hazy. And so, it is through all these facets that I explore the framework of memory within my project. Finally, I'm also acknowledging that while collective memory can often be perceived as a unifier amongst communities (for example, a tv show or pop cultural event that is specific to a certain geographical location) a TCK may find it difficult to adhere to this notion specifically because they have not encountered a similar set of cultural and societal touch points. Thus, this memory that is presumed to be shared by all within this social context now becomes a point of exclusion as they are unable to share and connect with these cultural reference points. Therefore, memory cannot be contained as an element that lives within our headspace. Instead, it breaches past that into the world—being created by and embodied within the relationships we build, the objects we preserve, and the surroundings within which we live. Thus, because of this framework, it is harder to address the multiplicity of the concept of memory every time that it is referenced. Therefore, I have opted to use the general term of *memory* throughout the document that encompasses its various meanings and contexts.

1.5. **Co-Authorship, Co-Creation and Co-Construction:** Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been identified as an important methodology in this project and with that, my participants become partners in this work as opposed to subjects. Thus, to aid in the language of partnership throughout this document, I have often alternated between the terms: co-author, co-create and co-construct. I can acknowledge that in other frameworks these would be seen as completely separate terms with individual expectations, however, in the context of my project, I recognize that these terms share a common purpose and intention, hence the fluidity in how they have been applied in this document.

Chapter One:
Introduction

1.1 About the Research & How It Came to Be

This project was inspired by a singular conversation that I had had with a friend of mine. It was Christmas Day of 2020, and with the rising COVID-19 cases, it was impossible to travel back home to family for the holidays. My friend and I, both away from our families, decided to celebrate with a casual dinner and cake at home. Having grown up together, she remains one of the few people I still keep in contact with 17 years later. Yet, having not seen each other in several months, this seemed like the perfect time to catch up. As the night went on and we filled each other in on what was going on in our lives, we eventually began talking about the people we used to know, the places we've been, and the things of our past. And that's when I casually shared this memory:

> The memory revolves around a daily routine that my family and I used to partake in when I was a child. It took place in my Ammachy's (grandmother) house in Koothattukulam—a town in the Southern Indian state of Kerala. Around ten to twelve years ago, prior to any renovations that we had done to this house—for example, adding a water heater in the washrooms—we had a wood fire stove in the kitchen. Every night, usually before dinner time, we would try to get everyone washed and clean so that we could have our meal, and so my mom or Ammachy would call out to the house asking who the next person taking a bath was going to be. As they called out, they would be preparing the water for our bath. To do this, they needed to get some water, pour it into (what I remember as) a cast-iron pot, and place it on the wood stove. As the fire burned and the water boiled, in the washrooms on the other side of the house, we would start filling up a bucket—the main apparatus for taking a bath—with cold water. Once the water in the pot was fully boiled, they would use two *thorthus* (cotton towels), one for each hand, to hold the sides of the pot all the way to the washroom, where it would then be poured into the cool water—the two mixing to create the perfect bath temperature.

This memory is of a routine that was such a mundane and ordinary part of a significant chunk of our lives, and yet, it was one that I was on the cusp of forgetting. In having this conversation though, it suddenly sprung to mind, and not only was I

able to share it with her, but it has also become one of my most shared memories as I have developed this project. For the next week or so, I found myself constantly going back to this conversation, and thinking about how it felt to not only be able to share this memory, but also have her reciprocate with her own similar memories. I also thought about how, in my six years of living in Canada so far, it was the first time that I felt like I had had the space to share a memory of that sort. And that is where this project started taking shape.

When I began proposing this research, I wanted to explore themes of *memory* within the broader context of immigration and deculturation. It became increasingly evident, based on my own experiences as well as the ones of others with whom I had conferred, that the process of immigrating could often leave an individual feeling isolated—from both their own communities, as well as those within the new host country. In part, it is due to the need to assimilate with the cultures and values of the new host country, wherein the individual is required to absorb and reflect their new identity.[3] And whilst this is not necessarily unusual, it can further contribute to the feeling of isolation, as they may not feel like they have the space to respond to this experience with their own stories—being left with a sense of hesitation to share for the fear of being rejected or demeaned. It was because of this that I felt it was important for this project to exist, for it to carve out this space for these voices to be heard.

As my research developed, and I began to explore it through the lens of my own personal experience, the capacity for this project narrowed down to follow the experiences of a much more niche immigrant group: Asians who identify as Third Culture Kids (TCKs). The strategy behind this was two-fold: first, it is representative of the intersection of communities that I am a part of; and second, while these themes in reference to the greater immigrant experience is fairly recognized within a multicultural and diverse country like Canada, the specificities of the TCK experience (which is similar but different) is one that is still largely unknown to broader society.

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[3] Bhugra Dinesh and Matthew A Becker, "Migration, Cultural Bereavement and Cultural Identity," *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* 4, no. 1 (February 2005): pp. 18-24, 21.

And so, this project presents itself as an opportunity to bring to the forefront these life experiences and ways of being, both to make aware the mainstream public of these experiences, as well as for the purpose of connecting those within the community to each other.

Another aspect of developing this project was the realisation that the spaces and stories that I had shared now existed solely within my memory. Since my Ammachy's house has since been renovated and the elements that were crucial to this specific memory no longer physically exist, it is something that I can access only through remembering. This feeling of loss and change is one that is prevalent amongst the TCK experience, wherein, TCKs are often left with feelings of unresolved grief towards the constant mobility and transiency within which they are situated[4]. Thus, many may be unable to go back to the places from which they hold memories, or even if they can, those spaces may not exist in the ways that they remember. And so, it felt like the natural next step was to bring together these lived experiences that I myself have gone through, with my background in interior and spatial architecture, to begin recreating and reconstructing these memories—to bring these memories into physical, tangible space.

Finally, in exploring themes of memory, something that is of importance to me is the implementation of sensorial techniques. Our memories are enriched by our senses[5]—the whiff of a certain scent taking us back to a particular event from our childhoods, or a specific sound evoking an array of emotions. Thus, as an integral aspect of my project I explored how multi-sensory methods could be employed— either using handmade approaches (like candle or soap-making for the implementation of smell) or digital tools (like audio recordings for the layering of sounds)—to augment the final installation experience. And while the exact tool or technique for how these senses are realized isn't as crucial to the project, the

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[4] Kathleen R. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief between and among Cultures: The Experience of Third Culture Kids," Illness, Crisis & Loss 16, no. 2 (2008): pp. 93-109, https://doi.org/10.2190/il.16.2.a.

[5] Jamie Ward, "Multisensory Memories: How Richer Experiences Facilitate Remembering," in *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 229-237.

implementation itself is essential in being able to provide a deeper, fuller representation of the memories that are being shared.

1.2 Exploring My Position & Context in this Research

Before we delve deeper into the context and background of this project, I think it would be helpful to introduce myself and where I come from. My introductions are usually as follows: "Hi, my name is Joanne. I'm *originally* from India, but I grew up in Qatar (pre-Fifa 2022, this would be followed by a "it's a small country right next to Dubai"), and now I'm in Canada." And depending on how the conversation would flow, I would go into further detail as to which part of India I was from, or how long I lived in Doha, or respond to the plethora of questions that would follow. This felt like a necessary detail—as if my existence in either India or Qatar required an additional caveat to explain why I didn't quite fit either mould.[6] I've come to appreciate this elongated introduction, though, because it feels much more accurate to my experience of living in and between both worlds (especially since I have yet to formulate a term that can effectively describe this third world that I *actually* live in).

And so, as I reflected on my experience growing up as a TCK, I realised how often the people, places, and things around me were in constant motion. Coming in and out of my life as they pleased. This, in part, is what has been driving the development of this project where I can recognize the impact that this continued sense of loss has had throughout my life. Therefore, in the context of my thesis, when I think of these spaces that no longer exist in the ways that I remember, I do grieve for the loss of access to these parts of my past that I hold precious. As a brief and perhaps trivial (though equally painful) example, I think back on my childhood bedroom. Planted beside the Doha Corniche[7], our home has witnessed dramatic shifts in

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[6] In Gilbert's "Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures", she refers to this notion of feeling like a "cultural chameleon", stating that "TCKs exist in what can be described as a perpetual liminal state, on the threshold of the culture of their parent's home country (or countries) and that of the country in which they grow and learn to live life," and as such their descriptions of identity and belonging, though often questioned or challenged, comes from a personal repositioning of culture and belonging that is moulded by the TCK individual themselves instead of by broader society. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures," 94.

[7] A promenade that spans the length of Doha's waterfront.

skylines and ambiance as the city has developed around it over the past two or more decades. In the earlier years of the cityscape, when high-rises had yet to make much of an appearance, my bedroom window was the optimal vantage point from which to watch the fireworks that were lit during the country's celebratory moments [Image 1.1-2].

Image 1. 1: View to the left from the bedroom window towards Corniche (around 2001)

Image 1. 2: Frontwards view from the bedroom window towards the city (around 2001)

Image 1. 3: View to the left from the bedroom window towards Corniche (daytime, 2023)

Image 1. 4: Frontwards view from the bedroom window towards the city (daytime, 2023)

Image 1. 5: View to the left from the bedroom window towards Corniche (nighttime, 2023)

Image 1. 6: Frontwards view from the bedroom window towards the city (nighttime, 2023)

And so, during every large event or national holiday, when an abundance of fireworks had been set off at the Corniche, my family and I would congregate around my bedroom window to witness the beautiful, sparkling display (I also remember this including my mom feeding us biryani[8], which makes the memory especially wonderful). Having gone back to Doha in the last year though, I faced a view that was quite unlike what I had been accustomed to growing up [Image 1.3-6]. I was conflicted. On one hand, I was overjoyed by the recognition and development that Doha had achieved, and yet I was simultaneously saddened by the fact that the spaces that I found comfort in had changed. Now, hiding behind a wall of condos and office buildings, I was left with just an echo of the fireworks display that were quickly drowned out by the sounds of a bustling and active city. The memory that I cherished could no longer exist in the real world, despite the structure within which it took place remaining intact.

Though this particular memory is not one that is especially grandiose (and can perhaps be relatable to a much broader community outside of TCKs), it describes a small portion of the type of loss that I am exploring in my thesis. Throughout the process of development, I frequently debated with myself on the value of this project—at times, feeling like it was neither important nor unique enough to warrant spending such an extended period of time, research, and effort on. Yet, the more I conversed with those who have had similar experiences, the more I could see how much this project resonated with them, and how significant it could become.

Having expressed my personal context and stake in this project, I sought to then connect with the wider community of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) in Toronto's Asian diaspora. Often identified as *global nomads* or *cultural chameleons*, the lived experiences of TCKs have often been characterised by mobility and transiency.[9]

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[8] To those who have yet to experience the joy that is *Biryani*, it is a South Asian mixed rice dish using an assortment of spices and meat. The meat (usually chicken, lamb or fish) is cooked in the rice with ghee, a combination of spices, browned onions and other optional additions like cashew nuts or raisins. The combination brings about the most rich, spicy and flavourful dish. In our family, it was typically served with *boondi raita* (yogurt with fried gram flour balls) which brings a cooling sweet and slightly acidic flavour to the meal, *mango achar* (pickle) which is so sweet, tangy and juicy, and *pappadum* which rounds off the whole experience with a light and crunchy texture. It is truly a gift to our senses.

[9] Gilbert, "Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures," 94.

Inevitably, feelings of unresolved grief and loss begin to arise as their *insider-outsider* relationship with culture continues to challenge their sense of belonging and cultural connections. Consequently, memories can then become important tethers to their pasts, and their cultural identities and heritages. Yet, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1.1, within an experience that can feel singular and isolating, individuals may feel hesitant to share these memories in fear of being ostracised. Thus, relocating my own experience into one that is a part of the collective whole, this project bridges the gap between the immaterial and the tangible, physical as it explores themes of memory, identity, loss, and belonging within the larger Asian TCK community.

1.3 Project Goals & Expected Results

When proposing this research, my approach was two-fold. The first projected deliverable was an interview-style documentary that would be filmed during the one-on-one interviews that I would be conducting with participants who identified as Asian TCKs. The objective of this deliverable was to not only act as the foundation of the project, but to also create a definitive medium for the participants' stories to be told first-hand. Given that the duration of the exhibited installation would be limited to a few minutes, the longer documentary video would allow for these memories to be shared organically and would create space for the participants to present a fuller representation of their memory (this could include photographs, objects, or environments that are deemed important to the participant).

From the stories and memories that were collected during the one-on-one interviews, the main expected exhibit was an immersive installation where users would be able to engage with the memories of the project's participants. Working with 3D modelling software, the spatial memories of the participants would be digitally reconstructed and would utilise projections in conjunction with a *multi-sensory approach* to account for aspects of their memory like sounds, smells and touch as a means to access these recollections through design and technology. One final projected piece for this installation was the creation of physical objects, either 3D printed or fabricated by hand, that could act as markers for each participant's memory

within the installation experience, as well as to represent a tangible connection to an otherwise incorporeal and visual experience.

Thus, approaching the project from a position of cultural preservation, through these digital reconstructions, the intention and goal of this project is to address these feelings of loss and unresolved grief that was referenced earlier, and to create space for these voices and stories that are often unheard. The project hopes to give the TCKs who participate in my research the opportunity to re-experience these spaces— memories that are typically confusing because they are simultaneously mundane yet precious—that may otherwise have felt so distant and inaccessible. Through this, the project also invites those outside of this demographic and within broader society to share in these experiences, creating nodes of connection and empathy with those who share the land that we live on.

1.4. Research Questions

Primary Research Question: Can the collaborative reconstruction of memory bring healing and reconciliation to address feelings of loss and grief over the fragmented self-identity of Third Culture Kids' (TCKs)?

Given that the crux of this thesis is dependent on participation, this project employed co-authorship as the primary research methodology. The process included working closely with the participants to develop and design how their memory was represented in physical space—co-constructing through interviews, sketching, iterative 3D modelling, and reviews. Additionally, while I think it would be arrogant (and perhaps too ambitious) to assume that this project can bring healing for its participants during this process, given that the interviews may be one of the first times that they have ever had the opportunity to explore these experiences and their past in this way, the project hopes to support them as they identify these spaces of loss, as well as in their journey towards healing and reconciliation. In the context of this project, reconciliation refers to TCKs first acknowledging their experience and coming to terms with both the positive and negative effects it has had on their upbringing

and lives. It explores how addressing these moments of loss and unresolved grief can be viewed under a different lens in which a TCK doesn't have to remain tied down by these feelings but can instead reconcile them in the hopes of a better future.

Secondary Research Question: How can collaborative creative processes amplify the voices of its authors and facilitate respectful storytelling practices?

Since this project requires constant collaboration between myself and my participants, this question is crucial in exploring how the methods of co-creation can be utilised to ensure that the final installation properly reflects the experiences and memories that are shared by the participants. Using co-creative methods, space is created for the participants to have direct and continued input in the way that the project develops, and the design decisions that are made. In this way, whilst the researcher may often use their own creative liberties in the interpretation or depiction of certain aspects of the memory's representation, engaging in these regular collaborative sessions ensures that the project doesn't deviate away from the participants' own ties and ownership over the memory but instead invites them to share in this process of creation. And while, the success of employing co-creative methods for the purpose of amplifying the voices of its participants and to be respectful of their story can be subjective, one way to measure this would be for the researcher and participant to engage in conversation once the project has been completed to inquire on what the process was like for the participant, whether they felt like their input (be it detail, criticism or praise) was valued and received, as well as whether they thought the final product was effective in representing the intention and preciousness of the shared story. In having this dialogue to round out this collaborative process, it can also keep the researcher on track on how to continue this form of research in later projects and to be cognizant of the participant at every stage of the design and creative process.

1.5 Outline of Methodology, Research Scope & Limitations

1.5.1. Research Methodology

The primary research methodology that is utilised in this project is Participatory Action Research (PAR), through which a sharing of power between the researcher and the participants are encouraged.[10] In implementing this methodology, participants are invited to join in this research as co-authors, having a personal stake and voice in the direction that this project takes. This is especially important given that the subject of this work is based on the participants' personal memories, and so if such a methodology was not employed, it could risk false or distorted representations of their own experiences in ways that do not respect their ownership of the memory being shared or in ways that could harmfully misrepresent an experience that they have had. In conjunction with this methodology, focus groups, qualitative surveys, and interviews are conducted to ensure that the data that is collected and researched can effectively represent the broader TCK community, as well as to make sure that space is created for those who identify as part of the community to engage in constructive dialogue and discourse.

1.5.2. Project Scope & Limitations

This thesis project explores themes of grief, loss, and fragmented self-identity within Asian TCKs. Much of my initial understanding on this demographic was based on my own lived experiences, and so to delve deeper into the experiences and issues that were prevalent within the community outside of myself, my research plan included the following processes described.

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[10] Fran Baum, Colin MacDougall, and Danielle Smith, "Participatory Action Research," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 60, no. 10 (January 2006): pp. 854-857, https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2004.028662, 854.
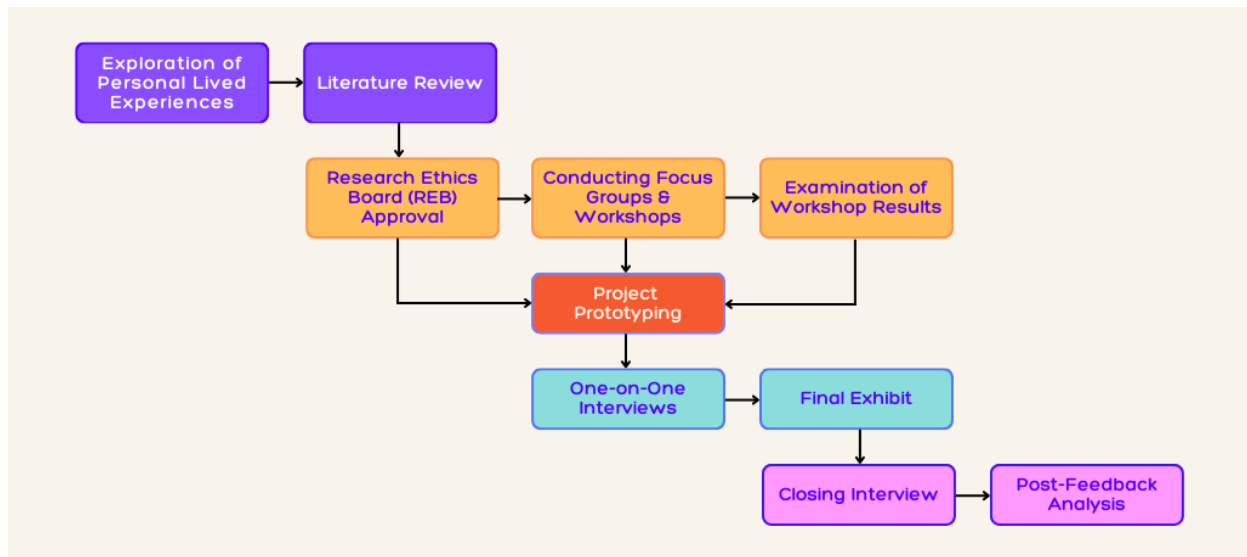
Image 1. 7: Overall Research Process Diagram

The process began with identifying my own positionality[11] within this project, as well as the lived experiences that have influenced the ways in which I regard the TCK experience. Next, I started the research process of secondary sourcing—reviewing peer-reviewed articles, studies and books like Van Reken and Pollock's *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (2017), Gilbert's *Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures* (2008), and Fail, Thompson and Walker's *Belonging, Identity, and Third Culture Kids* (2004) that have all extensively researched this topic (looking at not only the TCK experience, but also the impacts it can have on memory and community building). From there, I submitted the plans for my research and how I intended to conduct this research to OCAD's Research Ethics Board (REB). Once I received the REB approval, I began to reach out to my network with the intention of building my own group of participants, through whom I could collect first-hand data on their

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[11] Bourke in his text, "Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process," describes the concept of positionality as the "space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet," in that while there is a certain distance that is created between the subject of research and the researcher themselves that allow for objective analysis of the research being conducted, there is also an intersection in which the researcher's personal experiences, biases, perspectives, and subjective understanding of the topic can begin to mould how the research is being conducted and the conclusions that are drawn from it. In the context of my thesis, in choosing to work with those who identified as both Asian and TCKs, I begin this research with a subjective presumption that we would have similar experiences and perspectives that could be discussed and analysed, and in doing so eliminate the possibility that those who are outside of this bubble can resonate with the same themes. Thus, I have positioned myself as an insider to this demographic, and whilst technically, I do fit within the required characteristics, in many ways I would also be the outsider within these focus group or interview sessions given that I would take on the "authority" or researcher role. Brian Bourke, "Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process," *The Qualitative Report*, 2014, https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1026.

experiences, in the hopes that they would either validate and prove the information that I had compiled thus far, or if they disprove it, to understand what its implications were on both my project and the larger study on the community. From the results of the workshop, select questions were developed for the one-on-one interviews, from which the personal experiences of those who participated were gathered. Thus, informing the creation of the final exhibit. During the exhibition, closing conversations were conducted with the participants to unpack their experience and reactions to their models. The reflection and analysis of this is later presented in Chapter 6.3.

Given that the latter half of this process took place within the final months of the thesis, certain limitations had to be placed in terms of the overall project scope and expectations. For one, it seemed implausible for the first projected deliverable to be produced—aiming to instead focus on the immersive experience that could exhibit the memories of its participants. In doing so, given the time constraints, working on an additional documentary would have to be temporarily forgone in favour of this final installation experience.

Additionally, for the purpose of this research, the scope of expected participant attributes became increasingly narrowed. Though there were no restrictions in terms of specific identifiers like age (aside from being 18 years or older), gender, or religious practice, participants were expected to be of Asian descent and reside within Toronto, or in the GTA. As the project developed, it was clear that attempting to address the broader TCK community would be too large to tackle within this project alone, and so further conditions would need to be set. The Asian population (including East, South-East, South, West, Central Asia and Pacific Islander) is a largely underrepresented demographic within research on the TCK community[12]. And given that my position as the researcher, as well as facilitator, is as a South Asian TCK, my position within this community allowed for an introductory connection to be made between myself and the participants of this study. Furthermore, in narrowing down the scope of the

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[12] Long, Daniel T., and Brown Corliss Thompson. "Asian Third Culture Kids: A Phenomenological Study of the Cross-Cultural Identity of Chinese Students Educated in a Western-Curriculum International School." Northeastern University , 2016. http://hdl.handle.net/2047/D20208595.

project, it allowed us to delve deeper into the participants' meaningful personal experiences, as opposed to wading through the broader, more generalised stories that may be shared.

Finally, given that memory is often hazy, malleable, or easily manipulated—as in, a memory could be deeply valuable and still be comprised of multiple various memories, as opposed to its factual experience—there may be limitations in the visual representations that are employed. If memories are unclear, then their representations would have to reflect their abstract and blurry nature, which could result in complicated processes and visual tools that I may not yet have experience with. Thus, it is crucial to explore the various methods of representation that can most effectively express the participants' memories.

1.6. Chapter Overview

In addition to this introductory chapter, the document is succeeded by the following chapters:

Chapter Two explores a review of relevant theory, literature and contextual works that shaped the direction and scope of this project. It primarily explores the TCK experience, what it is, and how TCKs are impacted from their way of life. Following that, methods of building narratives of memory through space, objects, and nostalgia are examined. And finally, this chapter delves deeper into the significance of our senses in memory-making and memory-retention, including precedent works that were influential in the development of this project.

Chapter Three examines the research methods and methodologies that are implemented within this project and starts with identifying *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* as the key methodology that is adopted in this research. Specific methods like Community Workshops, Personal Interviews and Methods of Interaction, and the processes of applying them are also established.

Chapter Four presents initial project prototypes that have occurred for the development of this thesis project. Further explorations into the evolution of the prototype into the final installation are also introduced.

Chapter Five outlines the process of research and analyses the research that has been collected thus far—discussing its significance in the context of this project.

Chapter Six also explores the creation of the final installation, including data that was collected during the interview process, and the ways that it has been interpreted into physical forms.

Chapter Seven concludes the project thus far and presents possible futures of development.

Chapter Two:
Literature & Contextual Review

In this past year, as I began researching for this thesis, I found myself often reminiscing on aspects of my past—exploring the importance of memory and the sense of comfort they can bring. Frustratingly, I found that many times I drew a blank, unable to remember things past a certain age, or specific details, names, or faces. Realising that in those moments, I clung harder to the ones that I do remember, the ones that are able to situate myself within my current context, my understanding of culture, and identity. As I researched further, however, I came to understand that this was not an experience that was unique only to me. It was something that many people face, yet the inability or lack of opportunity to share these feelings with their peers or broader TCK community increased the sense of distance between these individuals and their cultural identity. Thus, this project aimed to create a space where people within the community were open to engage with their own and others' memories and cultural identities. To do this, through my contextual and literature review, I explored how themes of storytelling, nostalgia, space, and objecthood in memory can be used in conjunction with the senses to aid in the creation of, and connection with one's identity and self.

2.1. The Search for Oneself, for Cultural Identity, and for Community

The development of self is a process that one typically undergoes as an adolescent—moulded by the norms, values, and principles of the people and cultures within which one is situated.[13] These remain the foundation from which one matures into an adult, and from which much of their understanding of self-identity and personhood is established. Within the experience of a TCK, however, this formation of identity is hindered by the frequent encountering of major transitions (notably, constant mobility of either themselves or those around them) throughout their

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[13] Chloé Donohue, "Growing up as a Third Culture Kid and Its Impact on Identity and Belonging," *Counselling Psychology Review* 37, no. 2 (December 2022): pp. 47-58, 48.

developmental years[14]. In these scenarios, it is the amalgamation of cultures (of their passport country, and the ones in which they have lived) that join together to create this third form of culture, one that presents itself as a unique mix of experiences and perspectives within each individual. And it is also through this that confusions on personal identity and belonging become apparent, as they either "have a multiple sense of belonging or no sense of belonging at all"[15]. This is not to say that the experience is entirely confusing or detrimental: many TCKs, typically being competent in intercultural communication, are able to simultaneously perform in several cultures—altering their behaviours for the cultural context at hand; are able to maintain a broader worldview and are predominately more open minded[16].

This is where the primary conflict arises within the literature on the TCK experience, in that one perspective describes the *rootlessness* and social or cultural marginality as being of greater detriment to the individual[17] than the experience in its entirety, whilst the other debates that the cross-cultural and interpersonal skills that are cultivated outweigh the negatives[18]. And whilst both arguments are situated in some level of truth, lived reality is often an ever-evolving blend of the two—with individuals simultaneously gaining and losing from the very same experience. It is because of this continual and dynamic shift within one's understanding of self that an individual may find it difficult to establish a sense of belonging in either their home or their host countries, and sometimes both. As a result, many TCKs experience unresolved grief and loss as a response to the fragile relationships they hold with their own identities, cultures, and communities[19].

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[14] Kate A. Walters and Faith P. Auton-Cuff, "A Story to Tell: The Identity Development of Women Growing Up as Third Culture Kids," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12, no. 7 (2009): pp. 755-772, https://doi.org/10.1080/13674670903029153, 756.

[15] Helen Fail, Jeff Thompson, and George Walker, "Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids," *Journal of Research in International Education* 3, no. 3 (2004): pp. 319-338, https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240904047358.

[16] Andrea M. Moore and Gina G. Barker, "Confused or Multicultural: Third Culture Individuals' Cultural Identity," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36, no. 4 (2012): pp. 553-562, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.11.002, 558-559.

[17] Long, Daniel T., and Brown Corliss Thompson. "Asian Third Culture Kids.", 30.

[18] Moore & Barker, "Confused or Multicultural", 558

[19] Kathleen R. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures", 95.

Thus, when examining the experiences of TCKs, the notion of rootlessness is important to consider. What can be construed as a commonplace and ordinary question such as "where are you from?" is able to bring about a myriad of questions and emotions to a TCK. These questions could have several different responses based on the context in which it was asked, in that it can be answered based on whether the TCK defines the idea of home geographically, ethnically, or relationally[20]. In any case, the notion of being home and belonging, to either their home countries or to the ones in which they have grown up in, is one that is in constant flux. In a study that was done with Adult TCKs (ATCKs) who ranged between 45-65 years of age, every participant expressed a certain feeling of marginality, in which they each "claim[ed] to have no real sense of belonging"[21]. What this effectively demonstrates is the continued impacts of rootlessness amongst TCKs even as they mature and achieve some level of stability well into their adulthood.

As a final counterpoint towards what can be perceived as the negative effects of rootlessness and the TCK experience, it is important to address the positives. As mentioned previously, the experience has great benefit in the sense of adaptability and cultural consciousness that it offers its members, and it is valuable to consider that the notions of belonging will perhaps take on different meanings for those within the community as compared to those in the mainstream public. Pollock and Van Reken, in their key text titled *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (2017), reference this when they wrote: "Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience."[22] From this, it becomes increasingly clear that there is great significance in being in community with other TCKs. In an experience that can feel so isolating and alienating—especially when an individual feels foreign in their own home country—a new sense of belonging can be fostered when TCKs are given the opportunity to

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[20] David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, "Adult TCKs: There's Always Time," in *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017), pp. 300-322.

[21] Helen Fail, Jeff Thompson, and George Walker, "Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids," *Journal of Research in International Education* 3, no. 3 (2004), 333.

[22] David C. Pollock, Van Reken Ruth E., and Michael V. Pollock, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017).

connect and commune with others who have shared in similar life experiences and upbringings.

2.2. Storytelling: Nostalgia, Space, and Objecthood

The act of oral storytelling is one that is prevalent amongst most, if not all, cultures. And in this project, where the crux of this research relies on the narration of stories and memories, it is important to explore the significance of storytelling as a medium for knowledge-sharing and meaning-making.

In Tonya K. Davidson's paper titled *Nostalgia and Postmemories of a Lost Place* (2011), she references the notion of a "virtual homeland"[23] that is created by descendants of holocaust survivors through the collection of objects, memory texts, and the sharing of stories. Her work, often citing Marianne Hirsch's *The Generation of Postmemory* (2008)[24], explores the idea of a home (or homeland) that doesn't physically exist, and yet becomes an actualised (virtual or envisioned) space through the constant retelling of stories and other memory practices from family members who have had first-hand experience of such places. Though Davidson's context of *postmemory* doesn't necessarily transfer into the scope of this project, many TCKs experience similar feelings of loss and inaccessibility to place that make the concept of a created virtual homeland quite relevant in the context of this project.

And so, within the framework of memory, the project examines the role of space and nostalgia as key players in the shaping and remembering of memory. Svetlana Boym explores the "centrality of space"[25] to memory through the definition of the word *nostalgia* (nostos - meaning return home, and algial - meaning longing)— nostalgia being a "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed"[26]. It

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[23] Tonya K. Davidson, "Nostalgia and Postmemories of a Lost Place: Actualizing 'My Virtual Homeland,'" in *Ecologies of Affect Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 43.

[24] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (January 2008): pp. 103-128, https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019.

[25] Stephen Legg, "Memory and Nostalgia," *Cultural Geographies* 11, no. 1 (2004): pp. 99-107, https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474004eu296ed, 100.

[26] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

is interesting to delve into this within the context of this project, wherein the spaces that are offered up for physical and/or virtual reconstruction are ones that participants can no longer access and may experience feelings of loss towards. Thus, guided by their emotions of loss and their longing for *home* or the spaces from their pasts that brought them comfort, the project explores methods of recreating and actualising these spaces through the virtual. These reconstructions, as described by Rob Shields as being "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract"[27] allow the virtual regeneration of a past, non-existent space to now exist in the present as something that is separate from the actual, but which is real in its own right.

As Davidson continues her investigations on spatial postmemory, she references the term "object survivors"[28]. This refers to the importance that is placed on the objects which, through deliberate decision, are chosen to be packed during exile. They become *survivors* in that they become "poignant signifiers of further loss through their association with happier times and their ultimate destruction"[29]. These objects become tools for remembering and exist beyond their initial use value. When exploring the TCK experience, loss through places, people, and things are frequently mentioned[30]. It is when an individual undergoes this constant cycle of loss—in which, only certain possessions are deemed worthy to be packed and travelled with—that objects begin to hold deeper meanings and are imbued with a sense of intimacy and affection to certain memories and spaces. And so, it is these perspectives that are fundamental in the shaping of this project, and the importance that is placed on aspects of nostalgia, space and objecthood in the context of memory.

Finally, as this research developed, a key contextual work that was reviewed was Do Ho Suh's *Seoul Home/L.A. Home* (2003)[31] and *Almost Home* (2018)[32]. Exploring themes of migration and displacement through the recreation of existing spaces

[27] Rob Shields, *The Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2003), 23.
[28] Tonya K. Davidson, "Nostalgia and Postmemories of a Lost Place", 43.
[29] Tonya K. Davidson, "Nostalgia and Postmemories of a Lost Place", 52.
[30] Kathleen R. Gilbert, "Loss and Grief Between and Among Cultures", 102.
[31] ART21, "'Seoul Home/L.A. Home'-Korea and Displacement," Art21, 2003, https://art21.org/read/do-ho-suh-seoul-home-la-home-korea-and-displacement/.
[32] "Do Ho Suh: Almost Home," Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2018, https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/suh.

using fabrics, his project addressed his longing or desire for home—the homesickness he felt when thinking of his home spaces. To recreate a place, though, requires the extensive examination of these existing spaces, and in having to thoroughly inspect these spaces for measurements, he was allowed deeper connections to be forged between himself and his home. In his project *Seoul Home/L.A. Home,* he describes that the process of discovering or re-discovering his childhood home, the finding of nooks or marks that were made as children, allowed for the space to almost become a part of him—a part that he could carry with him as he continues his travels. In addressing these feelings of longing or homesickness through the recreation of home in this current context, he can make real again a space that had become distant to him—it allowed for a reviving of space and memory, as well as a persisting connection to his memories by making these inaccessible spaces accessible. It is through a similar lens, that this research approaches notions of reconstruction and recreation. As participants uncover aspects of their memory to be rebuilt within this research project, they too will be asked to undergo this process of rediscovery. Much like Suh's re-experiencing of home through deliberate measuring and inspection, the participants can re-examine these spaces (though without the privilege of direct access) through memory that can reveal details that they had long forgotten, and that can further contribute to the beauty and preciousness that these spaces hold to them. In going through this process, it not only allows for a fuller, more holistic physical representation through the physical project, but also allows for them to carry this memory forward with them beyond the duration of this research.
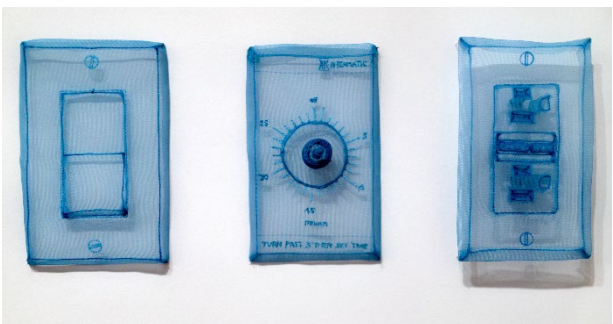
Image 2. 1: Specimens, Do Ho Suh: Almost Home (Lorie Shaull, (CC BY-SA 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons)

Image 2. 2: My Homes, Do Ho Suh: Almost Home (Lorie Shaull, (CC BY-SA 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons)

2.3. (Re)Experiencing Memory: Using Our Senses to Remember

The experiencing or remembering of memory can often be provoked through an encountering of a non-visual sense. Our brains participate as a whole in the remembering and collecting of events, but it is the ways in which we encounter our surroundings that impact how we respond to this collected memory in the future. Through the phenomenon termed "associative priming,"[33] our brain creates associations between various forms of stimuli (for e.g., a sound and an object), and when one of the stimuli has been experienced, the brain responds by bringing up the event as a whole to the conscious mind. Memories are stored and distributed amongst "specialised systems of the brain but [are] bound together in "hubs" that enable particular kinds of information to be combined…Within this framework, memory retrieval involves reactivating this pattern of features."[34] Thus, when an individual triggers a specific stimulus by encountering one of the elements that the memory is comprised of, the brain retrieves the memory as a whole through its associations. So, for example, if someone encountered the smell of a specific spice mix, they may be transported to a particular memory that revolves around eating the food that contained the spices, the people that they were with, the general atmosphere, or several other factors that make up the memory at hand. These associations highlight the importance of our other (often lesser appreciated) senses that play a crucial role in our ability to make and retain memories. Thus, this project explores the multisensory methods of experiencing memories that exist beyond visual cues, and instead stimulate a range of senses that can better activate our memories to produce a richer, fuller understanding of the memories shared.

In exploring the ways that our senses can be utilised to evoke memories, a fascinating precedent that was studied was Anicka Yi's *In Love with the World* (2021)[35]. Situated in the Turbine Hall within the Tate Modern, previously the Bankside Power

[33] Jamie Ward, "Multisensory Memories", 229.
[34] Jamie Ward, "Multisensory Memories", 231.
[35] "In Love With The World," Anicka Yi Studio, 2021, https://www.anickayistudio.biz/artworks/in-love-with-the-world.

Station, her work takes the form of floating machines called *aerobes*[36]. Constructed to mimic ocean life forms, these AI machines inhabit the air, interacting with those around them. In conjunction with these airborne machines, are the scent-scapes that depict the odours that would have been present at specific moments of Bankside's history—ranging from the Black Death to the booming coal industries of the 20th century, as well as the smells of vegetation from the Cretaceous period[37]. Through this, her work allows the users to connect deeper with the history of the land that they are situated on, using their sense of smell.
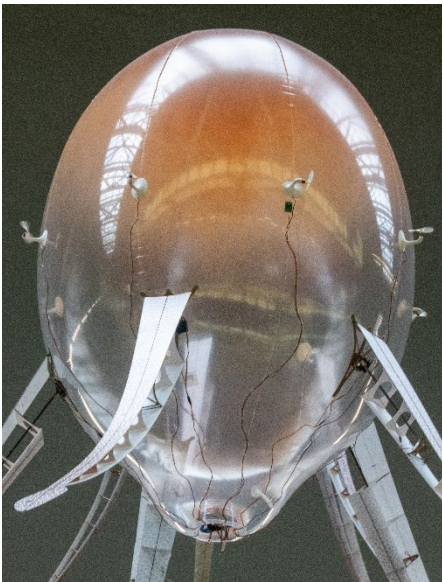
Image 2. 3: Airborne Aerobes (Maureen Barlin, (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0), via Flickr)
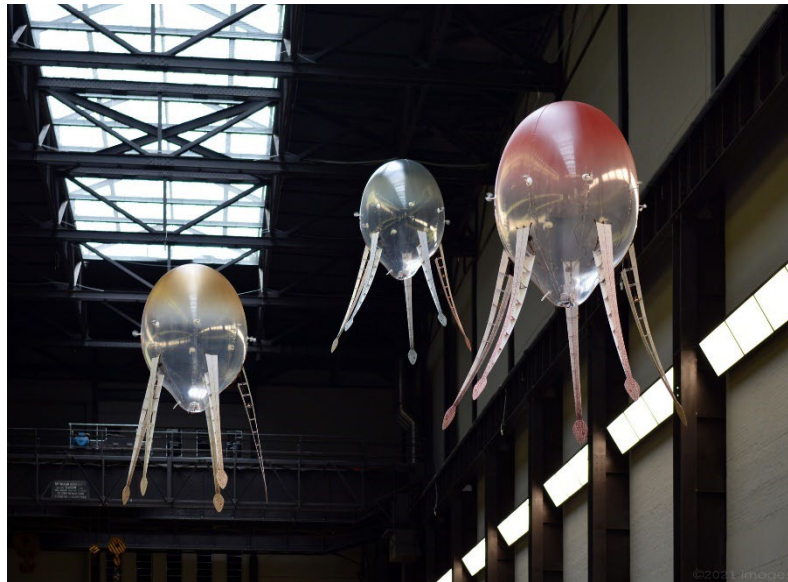
Image 2. 4: Airborne Aerobes (Images George Rex, (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0), via Flickr)

This project explores invokes the senses through fairly subtle means yet is an interesting case study in the ways that people are able to react to events that have long passed them when these senses have been activated. And so, it is through similar methods that this research explores methods of multisensory activation, in that the prompting of memory-making and sharing can be facilitated through our senses—allowing a user to build a connection with the narrative regardless of whether they have experienced the exact same story that is being shared. In implementing these

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[36] TATE, "Anicka Yi: Tate Modern," TATE , 2021, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/hyundai-commission-anicka-yi.

[37] Nicholas Stephens, "Anicka Yi at Tate Modern: Why the Turbine Hall Is in Love with the World," COBO Social, December 14, 2021, https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/art/anicka-yi-at-tate-modern-why-the-turbine-hall-is-in-love-with-the-world/.

techniques within this research project, it can not only reconnect the participant with their own pasts—highlighting the sensorial details of their memories but can also spark connections between those who don't share in the same memory as they make associations that can link the senses they experienced in the installation with similar scents or sounds that they've encountered in their own lives.

In a similar vein, Shilpa Gupta's *For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit (*2017)[38], explores the impact of sound and voice in the sharing of stories, and history. Spanning across time and language—from the 8th century to contemporary society, and in English, Spanish, Russian, Hindi, Arabic and Azeri—this piece creates space to hear the voices that had been rendered voiceless. The recited poetry belonging to a hundred poets who were detained, imprisoned, and executed by the regimes that they spoke up against.[39] Consisting of two key components, the microphones, and the metal rods, each poet is accounted for through one of the hundred suspended microphones, and over their corresponding metal rod. Each rod piercing a verse of poetry.

Image 2. 5: View of 100 Microphones and Rods (Fabio Omero, (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0), via Flickr)
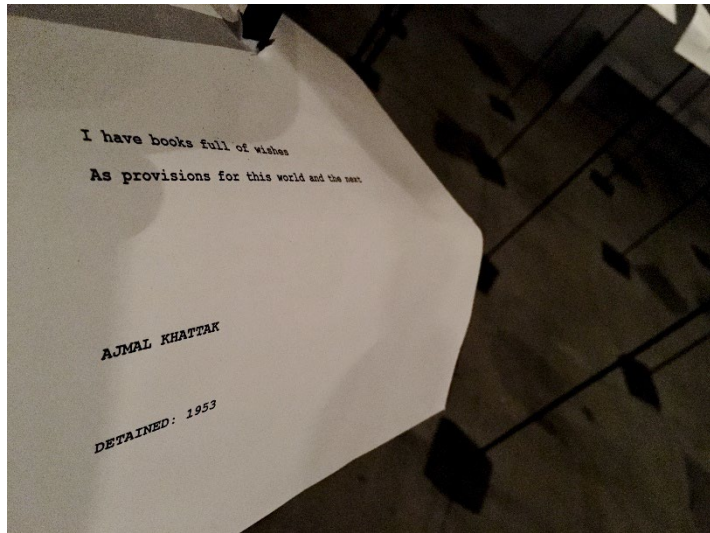
Image 2. 6: View of poetry (Maja Kuzmanovic, (CC BY-SA 2.0), via Flickr)

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[38] Shilpa Gupta, "For, in Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit (Audio)," Shilpa Gupta, 2017, http://shilpagupta.com/for-in-your-tongue-i-cannot-fit-audio/.

[39] Dallas Contemporary, "Shilpa Gupta: For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit," Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, 2021, https://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/exhibitions/615-shilpa-gupta-for-in-your-tongue-i-cannot-dallas-contemporary/.

The microphones were reverse-wired into speakers, from which a verse was recited. First as a singular voice, and then as a collective chorus. Through this, voices that have been suppressed, are given the freedom to be heard. This project exemplifies the power of voice. The minimal physical space allowing for the sounds to take centre stage, to bear impact. This was an important precedent to study because of the ways that it utilizes voice and sound to convey its message, as well as how it uses the visual, physical components of the installation to support the sound, as opposed to take charge of it. In the context of this research project, it is important to examine the role of the participant's voice within the final installation—creating space not only for the physical, visual representations of their memory but also for their voice to be heard, for their story to be told through their own voice.

In exploring methods of activating memory through visual textures, sounds, and scents, this thesis project leans on and learns from these precedents that have successfully invoked memories and told stories through the stimulation of these lesser utilized senses.

Chapter Three:
Research Methods & Methodologies

3.1. Methods

This project is dependent on participation and the sharing of stories. Thus, individuals were invited into participating in this project using a snowball and word-of-mouth recruitment strategy that used my personal social media as its initial source. The participation process was two-fold: *Community Workshops* and *Personal Interviews*. Those who applied to participate were not mandated to engage in both phases but could choose to do so if they preferred. The overall number of participants required for this project was between 10-12, with the intake form being capped at 40 submissions to ensure that additional participants could be contacted if others dropped out or if more were required in the second phase.

The REB[40] was approved on November 21st, 2022, and so the recruitment strategy was initiated on November 28th, 2022. In addition to posting the recruitment materials (see *Appendix A*) on my own social media, it was also posted on the social platforms of an OCAD-based student group called *Shoes Off Collective*[41], as well as the OCAD U Grad Studies social media accounts[42]. Those who had viewed my post were also encouraged to repost and share the material if they saw fit. The recruitment poster was accompanied by an intake form that provided key information regarding the project, including project goals and deliverables, as well as screening potential participants for the following information: being in Toronto, being above the age of consent, identifying as a TCK, if they have any accessibility needs, as well as denoting their preferred modes of communication.

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[40] REB File #: 2022-82.

[41] Shoes off collective (@shoesoffcollective). Instagram. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/shoesoffcollective/

[42] OCAD U Graduate Studies. Instagram. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://instagram.com/ocadugrad/

3.1.1. Community Workshops

Once the intake form received around 12 submissions, participants were contacted to attend either one of two different workshop sessions. This was done to ensure that there would be enough data that could be observed and compared, whilst also allowing for a more intimate setting that could foster organic discussions without participants feeling overwhelmed or their voices being lost in the crowd. Prior to these sessions, they were required to review and submit a workshop consent form (see *Appendix B*) that outlined their rights as participants, as well as establishing certain guidelines to promote discretion given that some of the topics and themes brought up could be extremely personal. Each session was conducted within 1.5 hours with a wellness break in between, and included introductions from myself, my project, as well as from each individual participant.

The remainder of the workshop sessions invited participants to engage with a series of conversational-style questions (see *Appendix C*) that were prepared beforehand. These questions guided the participants in the initial stages of conversation, creating the space for participants to steer the discussion organically as they began bouncing off of each other and sharing their stories. These sessions were audio recorded, as well as electronically transcribed. Once the session concluded, they were prompted to respond to a Likert-style survey (see *Appendix D)*. These recordings allowed me to analyse and observe the participants' reactions and responses, whilst the surveys were able to quantify the importance of certain topics or themes to the participants. The transcriptions provided to the participants recorded their own contributions (and no one else's but included the context of the question or conversation that was taking place) for their review, from which they could request edits, redactions, or to be fully removed from the project.

3.1.2 Personal Interviews

In the second phase, the interviews required 2-3 participants, who could engage in two (maximum three) 1-hour sessions over the course of two months. Prior

to the first session, participants were also required to sign and submit a *Personal Interview* consent form (see *Appendix E*).

This phase of the project invited participants to become co-authors and co-constructors of their memories. They were asked to share a chosen memory (whether it be a singular memory or one that is interwoven with several), and to fully describe to the best of their abilities every material and immaterial characteristic that they could remember (see *Appendix F)*. The goal of these questions, and the discourse that came from it, was for the participant and I to fully understand the scope of the memory so as to effectively reconstruct it through digital or analogue means. The memories were not required to be fully intact or (objectively) accurate, in that the intention was to construct the memory in a way that feels familiar and reminiscent of what the participant envisions, as opposed to it being true to reality. These sessions were also audio recorded. This allowed myself an additional reference from which I could build and model the digital or physical components for the final installation from.

Transcriptions of the sessions were provided to the participants to review, after which they could request edits or additional changes. This was done to ensure that the participants were comfortable with all the information that was shared in the public installation, as well as to allow them further time to think of new details or characteristics that may have been sparked from reviewing our conversations. In these sessions, a specific focus was also kept on identifying the senses that were deemed most important to this memory, so that further steps of incorporating them within the installation could take place.

3.2. Co-Authorship & Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The primary research methodology that was implemented within this project is *Participatory Action Research* (*PAR*). PAR is a "collective, self-reflective" process that is "directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local

context and embedded in social relationships"[43]. It encourages the sharing of power between the researcher and the researched— advocating for the researched to not solely exist as the subject of research, but to be present as partners or co-authors within the entire research process[44]. Furthermore, through the empowerment of "ordinary people in and through research", it intends to shift the traditional understanding of academic research into one that is more "flexible and socially owned"[45] with the purpose of driving social change.

Describing the experimental nature of PAR, Gatenby and Humphries recognized that "dialogue with people is central" to the approach so that both researchers and participants are able to "identify issues...as a community, reflect on the research process, make sense of 'data', seek opportunity for liberation and develop the community and the research further."[46] Through the process of dialogue and open communication, participants are given more agency in how themes important within the community are discussed and interpreted. This allows for a greater understanding on the realities and inner workings of the community, as opposed to how an outsider (the researcher) may view and construe the data that has been collected.

Additionally, given that the crux of this project works with the reconstruction of the participants' memories, it is important that the participants retain a certain level of ownership over these aspects of their lives that are evidently quite precious to them. The main objective of this project is to honour the memories of our participants, and it would be remiss if their contributions were clinically disassociated from them, as could potentially be the case if the project moved forward under the hierarchy of traditional academia. In the study conducted by Gatenby and Humphries, they identified a feminist PAR method that includes "research by correspondence"[47] in

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[43] Fran Baum, Colin MacDougall, and Danielle Smith, "Participatory Action Research," *Journal of Epidemiology &Amp; Community Health* 60, no. 10 (January 2006): pp. 854-857, https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2004.028662, 854.

[44] Baum, MacDougall & Smith, Participatory Action Research, 854.

[45] Sara Kindon, Rachel Pain, and Mike Kesby, *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

[46] Bev Gatenby and Maria Humphries, "Feminist Participatory Action Research: Methodological and Ethical Issues," *Women's Studies International Forum* 23, no. 1 (2000): pp. 89-105, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-5395(99)00095-3, 89-90.

[47] Bev Gatenby and Maria Humphries, "Feminist Participatory Action Research", 93.

which the participants and researchers share a reciprocal relationship. And so, at every 6-month interval, when their participants were required to submit their questionnaire, many would typically include letters that went into detail on the current standings of their lives—their careers, families, relationships, and so on—and when letters expressed specific moments of celebration and joy (a wedding or a birth) or pain and loss (a funeral or separation), the researchers would respond back with their own letter. Through this, under the umbrella of a formal research project, relationships were forged. And as these details were shared (voluntarily) amongst the researchers and participants, it only added increased insight and perspective in the ways that the collected *formal* data was interpreted and analysed.[48] Additionally, given that research, regardless of its intention, is still "ultimately about the researcher's agenda, rather than that of the subjects,"[49] it is crucial that throughout the course this project's data collection, a deliberate method of correspondence is emulated to ensure that this process is both reciprocal and mutually beneficial.

As referenced earlier in the background and context for this research, the TCK experience can often feel extremely isolating, and so it is within this context that these methods of reciprocal relationships are important—not only for the sake of this research but as a starting point for creating a sense of community and belonging with those who identify as a TCK. To take this relational approach expects a certain level of friendship, trust, empathy, and solidarity between the researcher and the participant. And with this give and take, there is an intention to create a space of equality between us. Yet, this can be quite difficult to navigate as the researcher as I am still aware of my own position in this relationship (i.e., wanting to foster camaraderie between us, but also needing to obtain the materials that I would require for my research). This could cause a conflict with the intention of employing a PAR approach that encourages equal standing between the researcher and the researched, in comparison to the realities of conducting research and having to lean on your position as researcher to prompt for certain information or details from the participants. This,

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[48] Bev Gatenby and Maria Humphries, "Feminist Participatory Action Research", 94.
[49] Diane Reay, "The Fallacy of Easy Access," *Women's Studies International Forum* 18, no. 2 (1995): pp. 205-213, https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(95)80056-u, 212.

in part, has been a limitation as I implemented this approach, in that whilst I could strive for continued collaboration and constant input from my participants to ensure that their voices are being heard during this process and throughout the project, I was also often struck with the frustration of having to approach them from a place not of relationship and friendship but from that of a researcher (which can sometimes feel much more distancing) to make sure that at the end of this, the research project can still be completed. It was in this internal struggle that the Gatenby and Humphries case study was highly beneficial as it not only extensively demonstrated their process of forging these deep, meaningful relationships with their participants, but also being able to take a step back to objectively explore their role as researchers within this context, as well as how they utilised the information that they collected on a personal level to help interpret data that was gathered in a more formal setting. It also exhibited the profound impact that these initial relationships had had on their participants, and how those relationships developed and expanded into larger community groups way beyond just the few that took part in their study. Therefore, as members of the TCK community are asked to share their personal memories and stories (ones that may elicit both joy and pain), adopting the PAR methodology, as well as the feminist reciprocal approach, is imperative to ensure that the project is able to fulfil its initial intention of not only being a benefit to its participants, but also to the larger community as a whole.

3.3. Methods of Interaction & Making

One final method that is worth exploring in the context of this thesis is the process of interaction. Extending solely beyond the interactions between myself and the participants and their stories, I am interested in examining how interactions themselves have become a pivotal aspect to this project. In its initial stages, incorporating some form of physical and immersive interaction between the user and the installation felt necessary as it seemed like it would be a tangible means to ensure some form of connection between the viewer and the stories being shared. As in, if the user has had to exert effort and choose to engage with the installation, then this project would be successful in being able to actualize the nodes of connections that

it sought out to create. This perspective, however, has shifted throughout the development of this thesis. First, since a physical interaction between a user and the installation (for e.g., stepping on a surface that acts as a button that initiates the installation experience) doesn't guarantee that an actual connection be forged between the user and the memories, it seems futile to spend so much time trying to force this form of interaction into the project. Secondly, given the ways that the storytelling and memory-sharing has developed, it makes less sense for there to be direct action or participation from the public, as opposed to being allowed to be a passive observer. This also grants for more emphasis to be put on less tangible and physical forms of interaction, like the stimulating of the viewer's various senses as they watch the memory unfold before them.

As mentioned in the earlier parts of this document, the project investigates the use of multisensory methods which could include both digital and analogue tools—hoping to use some variation of both in the ideation, creation, and fabrication of the final installation. Materials play an "active role in the artifact and its relation to people,"[50] and in this work, they are crucial in being able to convey the emotion and atmosphere in a way that honours the memory being shared. And so, as part of the project's development, it was important to understand how these material decisions impacted the installation as a whole. In working with both digital and analogue tools and methods, I was allowed to reflect on my interactions with the material—consciously choosing to work with clay to create a more rudimentary and imperfect form that was sculpted by hand, or to approach working my hands differently as I manipulated digital clay to bend and ply into the forms that I required. Within both of these distinctive tools and technologies, my hands feel its effects, either by my palms getting soiled with red clay residue, or my joints aching due to prolonged use of a mouse—in both cases, it is an embodied process. In exploring how I have interacted with these tools and materials, I can begin to explain my material choices—why I chose a specific material, why I worked with a specific tool, why that material is

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[50] Nithikul Nimkulrat, "Experiential Craft: Knowing through Analog and Digital Materials Experience," in *Materials Experience 2: Expanding Territories of Materials and Design* (San Diego: Elsevier, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2021), pp. 33-52, 34.

significant, what the implications are of engaging with a specific technique, and so on. Thus, as the project has evolved, so too have the forms of interaction, each playing an important role in the production and creative expression of the final installation.

Chapter Four:
Project Development & Prototype

4.1. Audio Prototype & Lo-Fi Storyboarding

Image 4. 1: Snapshot of Paper Prototype

Using the anecdote that was shared in the introduction as the foundation of this prototype, the lo-fi storyboards presented a step-by-step portrayal of this memory in a visual format. This not only allowed to make tangible the images that had been floating around in my head, but also made it easier to better understand the progression of the story and the point of view. The image above [Image 4.1] presents the snapshot of the physical storyboard that was sketched on note paper, and the

following images [Images 4.2-4.6] depict the online Miro board[51] that hosts the sketches alongside additional notes and feedback that were provided during the critiques.
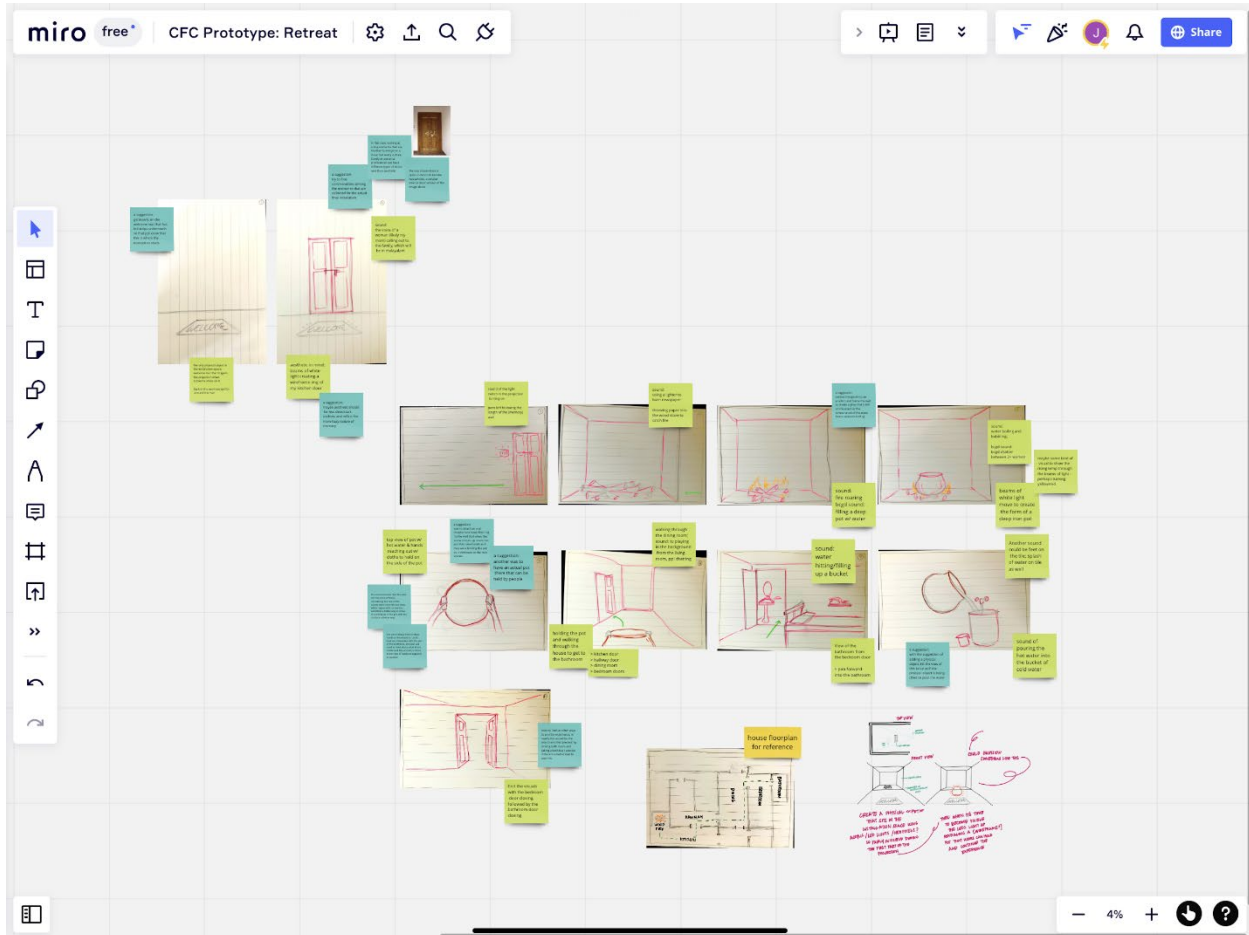
Image 4. 2: Snapshot of Miro Board Prototype

The main intention of this prototype was to explore potential interactions as well as to understand how to present the *point-of-view*. Given that the memories that I would be working with in the final installation are not my own, I wanted to keep the interactions minimal, introducing it through a welcome mat that a user could step on to start the projections. This allows for the interaction to be symbolic of the user being welcomed into sharing in this personal memory, without necessarily expecting much from the user themselves except to stand and be immersed within the narrative being

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shared. This led to an interesting conversation surrounding the desire for more interactions—shifting the user from a passive observer to an active participant. Aspects of these suggestions work in conjunction with the POV that is employed within the prototype, wherein the flow of this memory seems to take place through the eyes of the user—almost making them a part of the memory. And while this was intriguing, it was important to consider what the interactions would contribute to the project, and whether their inclusion would enhance or take away from the memory that is being depicted. Essentially, given that the memory is more important than the technology being employed, the interaction shouldn't be added for interactivity's sake especially if it would diminish the emphasis that should be placed on the memory itself.

In addition to the storyboard, another prototype produced in this phase was an audio file[52]. As mentioned previously, an important factor to this project is the inclusion of the senses to help enrich the story-building and narration. Whilst each participant's memory may require a different sense to focus on, the anecdote that I had shared relied heavily on sound. Thus, for this prototype, I explored telling a portion of this memory solely through sound. The prototype itself is only 30 seconds and is a compilation of sounds that were recorded by my parents (my mom asking us who was going to take a bath, sounds of a bucket filling up with water, etc.) and ones that would augment the storytelling that were sourced online (the sound of the tv, sounds of boiling water). The reception of this prototype was generally positive, with a few responding that they could hear their own parents yelling at them through the voices of my own, as well as resonating with some of the other sounds that were played. The main takeaway from this was better understanding how much people rely on their senses (other than sight) as a form of memory-making and retention, and how a simple sound can spark a myriad of other memories. Through this, I could better explore how to implement sound (or other senses) effectively as an alternative to purely visual storytelling.

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[52] Link to Audio Prototype: https://tinyurl.com/mts5saus

4.2. Tabletop Model Prototype I
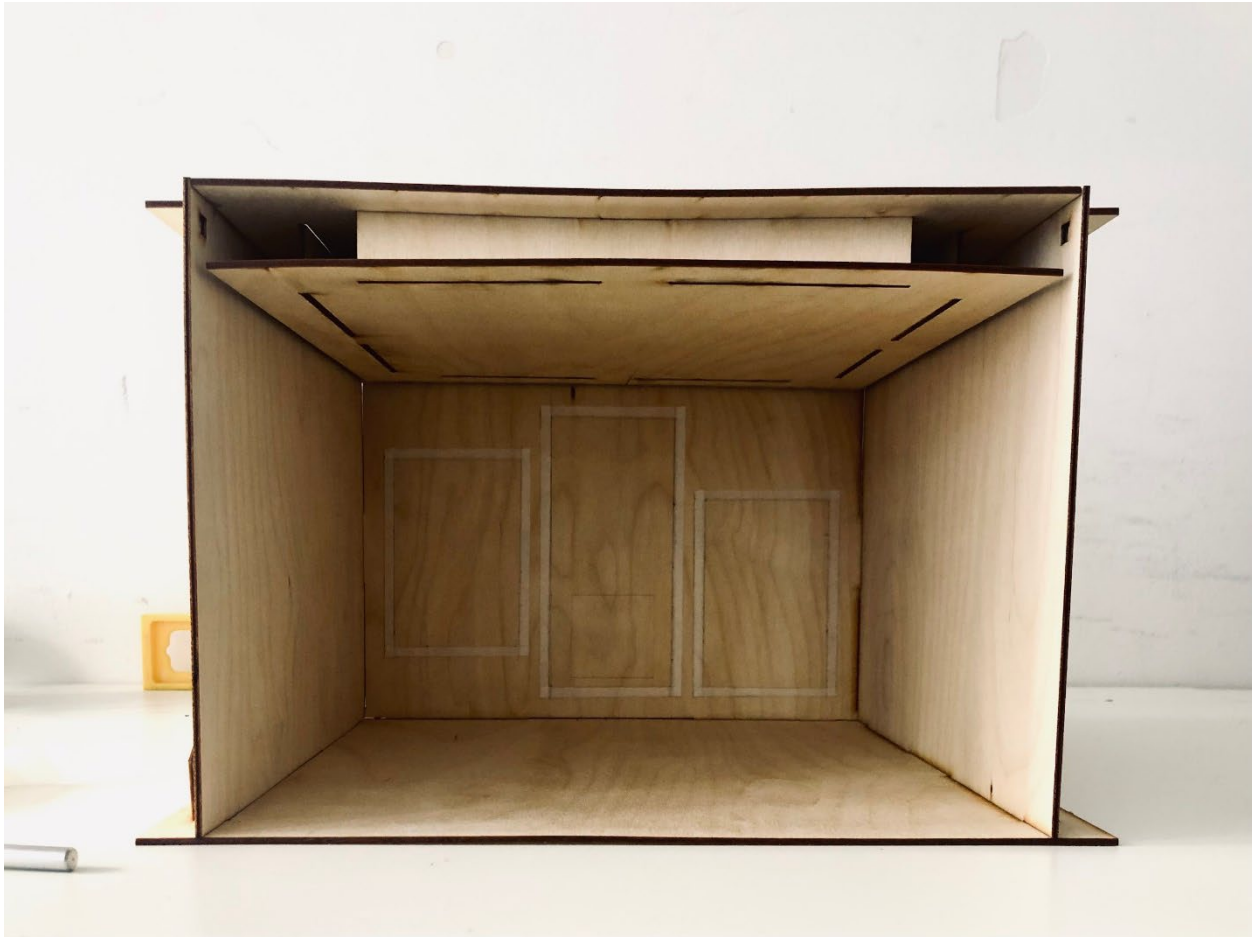
Image 4. 3: Tabletop Model Set

In this next phase, I created a tabletop miniature of the larger installation space. Primarily, this allowed for additional flexibility when attempting different visual ideas or physical interventions without the restrictions of a large space (i.e., if a new wall was needed, a miniature would be simpler to model as opposed to having to construct a life-size fake wall). Parts of the model were modular to allow for additional adaptability, for example, the lowered ceiling could be removed to make space for horizontal beams if things needed to be hung.

In this prototype, three frames were created in the centre of the wall that would allow for certain elements to be emphasised. The visuals were created using short gifs that were illustrated on Procreate and Adobe Photoshop, and was edited together with the sound files on Adobe Premiere Pro. The goal of this prototype was to

highlight the use of sound, with the story being narrated through my own voice. Having explored *stream of consciousness*[53] as a literary tool, I employed it verbally as I recorded myself telling the story how I might to a friend, going on small tangents or adding details that I may have just remembered. To this, aspects of the story were augmented with the textures of specific sounds, like the crickets chirping, or the sound of the house at that time of the night, or the cooking of food. All these characteristics that can help paint the picture without the need for visual intervention.
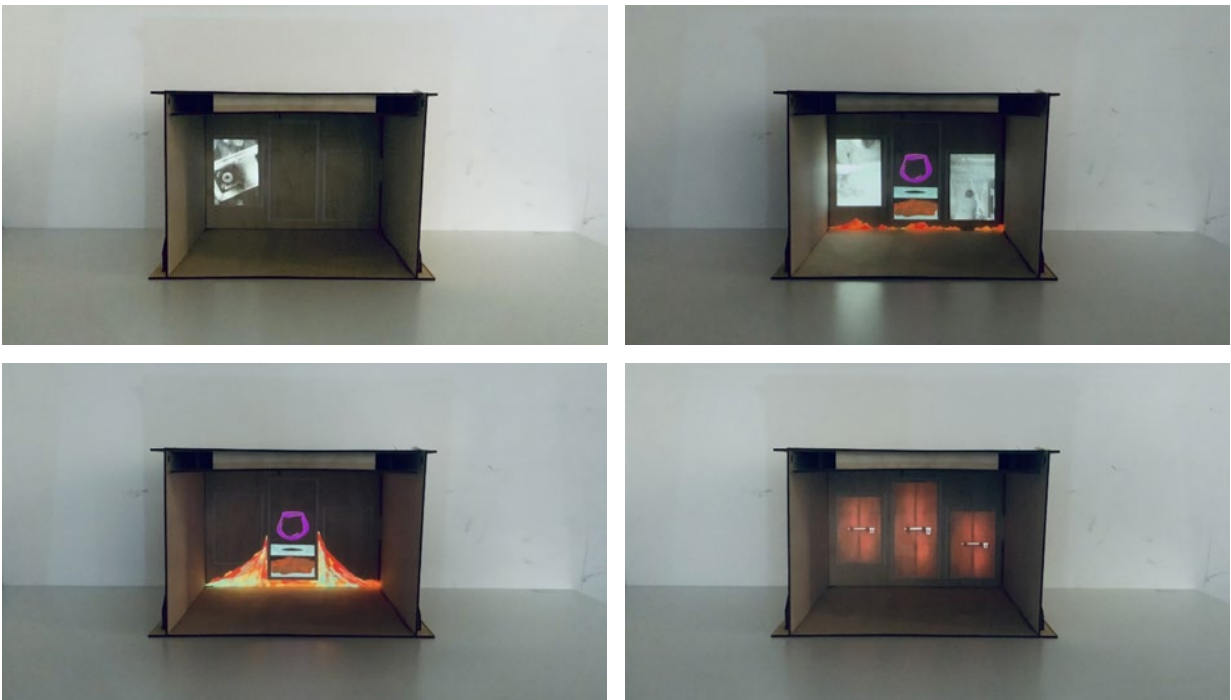
Image 4. 4: Images of the Projection Mapping done onto the tabletop set

The installation begins with pure audio, and once the story has been introduced, the graphics begin popping up on the wall. Parts of the introduction were from my own photography, and others were clips from the 2021 Malayalam Film *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021)[54]. As the story unfolded, it was accompanied with the stylised graphic gifs to help move the narrative along.

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[53] "Stream of Consciousness," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d.), https://www.britannica.com/art/stream-of-consciousness.
[54] *The Great Indian Kitchen*, *Amazon Prime*, 2021.

There were a few important pieces of feedback from this prototype. The list being: the introductory narration, the stylised graphics, the duration, and the set itself. First, as the introductory narration took place with no visuals, there was some confusion as users may feel that the projections were not working. Thus, a suggestion was to add a small visual component to indicate that the installation was running smoothly (e.g., a butterfly fluttering around the wall, or something similar). Secondly, one piece of feedback was how the stylised graphics were an interesting indication of the role of real vs., unreal in the portrayal of memory—in that, the reconstruction of memory in this installation is not required to be objectively accurate, thus, the visual style demonstrated the distinction between *real* and recreation. Thirdly, the duration of this prototype was around 8 minutes long and given that the intention for the installation is to include multiple stories, it would be important to consider that users might not be interested in sticking around for a 25 minute or longer projection. Thus, it would be unfair to the participants who have spent so much time working alongside me to present their memories to be overlooked solely due to the duration of their piece. Therefore, I explored cutting down each memory into 3–4-minute pieces. Finally, it was suggested that these *sets* be implemented within the final installation itself. Each set could then be specifically designed to better represent the memory at hand—for example, a story that narrates a long journey could be translated in a longer, deeper, more linear box, as opposed to the more standardised set that I had created. Additionally, it allows for further customisability in the types of objects and elements that are included within each set, like a recreation of the cast-iron pot or the red bucket from my memory. Through this, I would be able to create more personalised experiences and interactions for each individual memory, allowing each one to be highlighted in its own unique way.

4.3. Tabletop Model Prototype II

In this iteration, moving away from a rectilinear form, the model consists of three individual nooks—each representing a significant space in this memory: the house as a whole, the kitchen, and the washroom. Placed at angles to each other and constructed with sanded acrylic, the translucent pieces allow for projections to be

mapped onto these main spaces with minimal obscurity or overlap.[55] Each space is highlighted as the story unfolds. In addition to the acrylic pieces is the use of etched plywood and plastic foliage that were used to set the scene. Wrapping the surface of the model was images related to Kerala (banana trees, houseboats, etc.) printed on sheets of acetate. On this piece, the memory was projected and shared, with the primary focus being placed on the textures of layered sounds to aid in the telling of this story.[56]
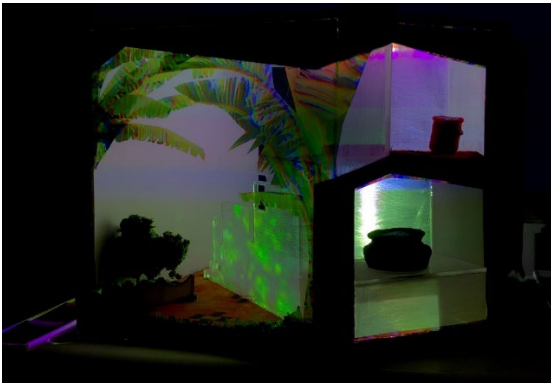

Image 4. 5: Tabletop Model Prototype II
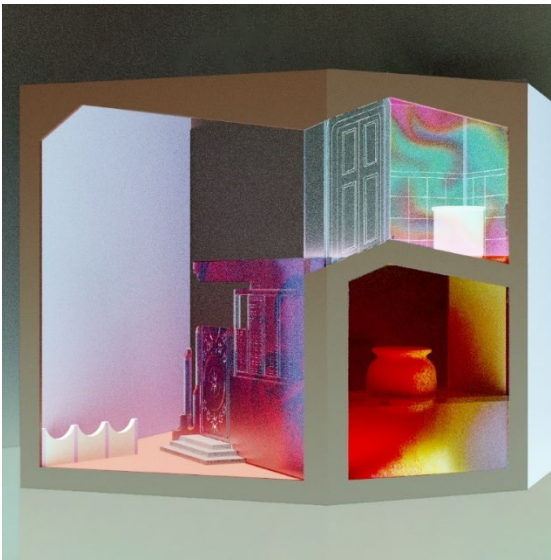
Image 4. 6: Digitally rendered 3D model of prototype

Image 4. 7: View of acetate prints on model surface

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[55] Projected videos were all collected on Pexels (royalty-free and attribution not required): https://www.pexels.com/
[56] Video recording of this prototype model: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElhZK5XzF4I

The main piece of feedback was on the hierarchy of materials. In having to project on acrylic sheets, they faded away in the background unless they were being projected on. This was helpful when trying to focus on a specific space, but in the overall visual language, the acrylic pieces were lost to the solidity of the painted etched plywood, and the printed acetate sheets. Thus, exploring additional methods of creating the ambiance without adding onto the structure would be beneficial (for e.g., through AV tools like the sound of wind blowing through the trees instead of a tree cut-out, or through projections beyond the model onto the walls or floors). In exploring these alternative methods, more emphasis is put on how the story is being told on the model itself.
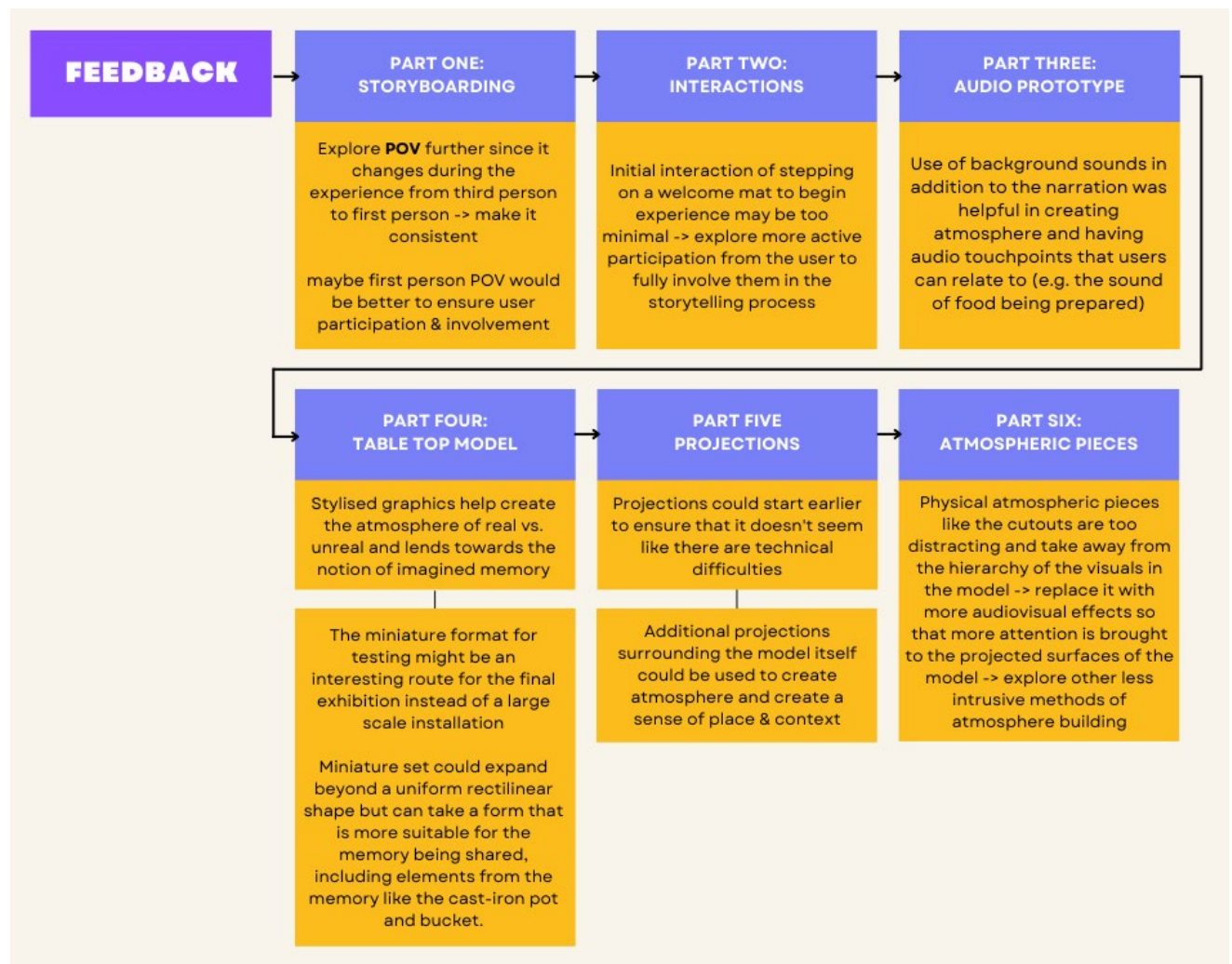
Image 4. 8: Summary chart of the overall feedback received for my prototypes

Chapter Five:
Project Analysis & Discussion

5.1. The Process of Research
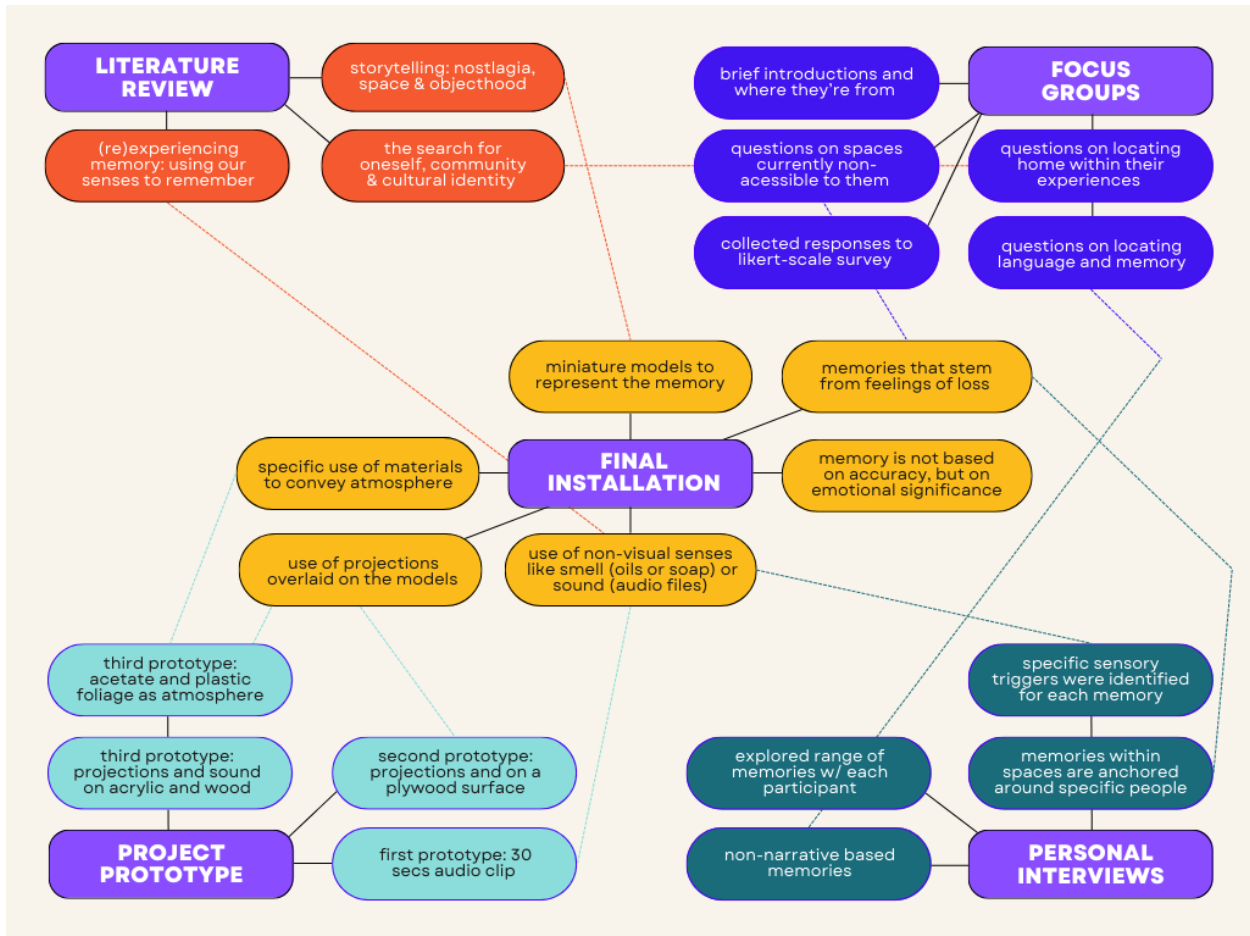
Image 5. 1: Mapping diagram connecting the various phases of research

The process of research for this project followed a similar pattern as the diagram above, with the various phases of this project influencing and interlinking with each other. As previously stated, this project stemmed from my own experience growing up as a TCK, but it was important to be able to validate the claims that I had been making based on empirical research and study. Thus, through the literature review, I sought to find case studies and research that I could build from as the foundation of this project. From here, I was also able to identify three key themes in my work, which was working with TCKs, exploring storytelling methods using space

and objects, and the utilisation of tools or techniques that could stimulate the senses. It was through the literature review that I was able to recognize that my experiences, though unique to myself, had several overlaps and similarities to others within my community.

Taking what I had learnt from the literature and contextual review, I worked with two simultaneous tasks. The first was to recruit participants for the workshops, and the second was to prototype what the final installation could look like. The workshops were crucial in being able to get firsthand knowledge on the themes and topics that were important to the community. It was not enough to work from the literature review, because I wanted to make sure that the statements that I was making (though now based in research) were actually symbolic of the community's lived experiences. Wherein feelings of unresolved grief and loss, which was essentially the basis of my research, were emotions that were commonly felt within those who identified as TCK.

Concurrently, I was exploring ways to implement methods that I had studied in my contextual review in my project prototypes. Realising that in my prototypes, sound was the primary sense that was activated, I was able to collect audio files to bring to the forefront the specific sounds I would have heard as I went through that daily ritual—the crickets as it turned to night, the boiling of the water, and the hollow beating of the water in the plastic bucket. As I layered these sounds with the projections, I was playing with the balance of realism (in setting the scene as well as I could remember) and imagined memory (through stylistic art forms and materiality).

Compiling what I had learned through prototyping, and from the workshop sessions, I began reaching out to participants for the personal interviews. It was imperative to conduct the workshop sessions prior to this phase partly because I was interested to see how the information that was collected during these sessions may impact the questions that were asked in the personal interviews. For one, it became clear that narrative-based memories were uncommon, with participants typically retaining short bursts of memory that focused on the atmosphere and the emotions

that they were feeling, with little bits of dialogue interspersed, but never as a fully whole memory. I began contemplating on my own shared memory, and despite it having some level of connectedness, I realised how disjointed it had been when I first recalled it. I am now, after several months of remembering, able to somewhat put the pieces of the puzzle together, yet when I had just begun, the memory was fairly incoherent and jumbled. In being able to hear how the participants view their memories, I was able to reconfigure the types of questions that I asked in the personal interviews so that I could probe deeper into their memories to fish out the details that may have been buried for so long. This was also interesting to consider because I had directed the project thus far with a clear narrative-structure in mind, and so moving forward, I had to explore whether I would completely forfeit that structure to instead fully embrace the memories within the installation as the short bursts it had been expressed as. In the end, I chose to blend aspects of the short snippets and a longer narrative together, its significance highlighted later in the document. Additionally, I was able to recognize the privilege of time. And even though it isn't possible for the participants to have the same amount of time to ponder over their memories as I have, I made sure to give them a few days notice prior to the first meeting to allow for them to begin thinking about some of these events, spaces, and memories in the back of their heads.

Finally, linking all that I had learnt throughout this entire process, I was able to begin designing and fabricating the final installation.

5.2. The Analysis of Data Collected

From the workshop sessions, it became clear that themes of memory, cultural connections, identity, and language played important roles in the participants' lives. This was expressed both through the Likert-scale survey [Table. 5.1], and through the conversations that were had during the workshop sessions. For example, in one of the sessions, in speaking on their connections to their country of origin, they state:

> Where I grew up, it's kind of like where my values end up being planted and grown, right. And so, when it comes to building relationships and community,

I do require people that share certain values with me and that's unfortunately not always of the place where I originated from, right. And that's kind of like the fragmentation of the self that occurs where I may have certain folks in the place of the land that I was born in with whom I can't connect with.

During this point in the conversation, they delved further into this notion of disconnection and loss between their identity and how it had been moulded by the cultures of their origin, and the ones that they grew up in. Stating not only about the "fragmentation of the self" that is mentioned in the quote above but how this desire for connections with their cultural identity can often feel complicated, and in their case opting instead to forge long-term connections and relationships with those outside of their country of origin. I think this was a great example of how TCKs often seek out and long for this sense of belonging and finding a place within their culture, yet feeling as though this space is not actually available to them and so, are required to carve out their own new spaces within which they can experience community and acceptance.

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Low Importance	N/A
	To feel connected to your country of origin (passport country)?				
	-	66.7%	16.7%	-	16.7%
	To feel connected to the country(ies) you grew up in?				
	16.7%	50%	16.7%	16.7%	-
Culture & Identity	To associate with people of your cultural communities?				
	50%	16.7%	16.7%	-	16.7%
	For your culture to be a part of your self-identity?				
	50%	33.3%	16.7%	-	-
	To feel like you belonged in your country of origin?				
	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	-	-
	To find a sense of stability when immigrating to another country (Canada)?				
	66.7%	33.3%	-	-	-

	Memories of your country of origin?				
Memory & Identity	33.3%	66.7%	-	-	-
	Memories related to your culture and cultural identity?				
	66.7%	33.3%	-	-	-
	Memories related to familial routines or ritual practices?				
	50%	33.3%	-	-	16.7%
Language & Culture	Being able to understand and speak in your mother tongue				
	16.7%	66.7%	-	16.7%	-
	The role of language in your memories				
	-	50%	16.7%	33.3%	-
	The role of language as a connector to your culture and cultural community				
	33.3%	66.7%	-	-	-

Table 5. 1: A table of findings from the workshop. Participants were required to respond with the importance of the following questions and statements

Additionally, it was quite informative to examine the results of the Likert survey [Table. 5.1]. For example, under the theme of *Culture & Identity* where participants were asked about the importance of finding stability when immigrating, there were only 2 choices selected of the 5 that were offered, namely *important* and *very important*. To me, it's interesting that while they are both individual selections, it ultimately presents a TCK's innate desire for creating a sense of stability through the establishment of roots. The technicalities of choice don't matter as much as how impactful stability in general is in their lives. This is further reiterated with participants who echoed similar sentiments of having that "desire to settle down in one place" during the sessions as well. I think what was interesting was that these sentiments were often followed up with a certain sense of restlessness, and so, many participants had these conflicting yearnings for both some form of stability, whilst also having the freedom to uproot when they so desired.

To expand further on the workshop responses and the Likert-scale survey, it was interesting to note the similarities between what a participant had said during one of the sessions, and what I had been studying (despite, to my understanding, the participants having no prior knowledge of the existing TCK literature). For example, a participant, when asked about how she describes where she's from, replied with:

> For the most part, I just say I'm from Dubai...then I say I'm ethnically Indian. Actually, when I'm outside of Canada...I said I was from Canada because that is easier for people to understand. So, it really depends on who's asking me and where I'm geographically located when they're asking me.

I was taken aback when I had heard her say that because of how it almost felt like it had came straight out of the paper that I was reading, in which it describes how many TCKs define their home or sense of belonging "geographically, ethnically, or relationally."[57] In some ways, I suppose it was to be expected, given that that was a formal study on a similar group of participants, yet to hear it being said from a participant created a sense of validation in the research that I had done thus far. This also speaks further to the fluid identity strategies that are often undertaken by TCKs. As mentioned in the introductory chapter where I outline how I would typically introduce myself, this participant corroborates on both the earlier referenced "fragmentation of self", as well as this constant shifting of identity and the code-switching tendencies that almost expect a TCK to mould their language to fit the context of the conversation—in this participant's case, expressing her Canadian identity when outside of Canada, but going deeper into her Dubai and Indian roots in other contexts.

Another aspect that was worth analysing was the types of information that was collected during the workshop process. When recruiting for this project, participants were not required to know me, but many did since the snowball recruitment strategy originated from my personal social media platform. As a result, in the two workshops that I conducted, the first consisted of three participants with whom I have known for

[57] This was earlier referred to in the literature review, when exploring the effects of rootlessness on TCKs who have reached the later stages of adulthood. These questions of "where are you from?" can elicit these complex feelings of needing to locate themselves within a culture or place, yet not being able to properly articulate the realities of their experiences. Pollock and Van Reken, "Adult TCKs: There's Always Time, pp. 300-322.

several years, and second with those I had met for the purpose of this study. As a researcher, it was thought-provoking to notice the difference in attitude, general atmosphere, and eagerness to share between both sessions. This is not to say that one was better than the other, both workshops were incredibly enlightening, and I gleaned a lot from them. That being said, much like Gatenby and Humphries' method of "research by correspondence"[58], it was clear the impact that having sustained relationships with one group had in the nature of our conversation. We were able to converse about topics that we had not yet been able to as a group (perhaps because of opportunity) as well as to delve deeper into some experiences that may have been difficult to share if I had been a stranger. Given that this project revolves around community, from this experience, I think it would be valuable to explore how more word-of-mouth strategies can be further implemented during the recruitment process. Perhaps this type of project would benefit from several researchers who can bring their own social circles to the table, through which similar studies can take place within the comfort and security of an existing relationship.

Overall, these sessions were crucial in understanding the themes that were more prevalent within the community—for example, of the questions that I asked, there was more discourse regarding cultural identity and how disconnections with their cultural heritages have impacted how they view their place within general society, moreso than say questions on language. I recognise that prior to this study, much of my knowledge on the TCK experience was based on my own life or the experiences of people that I know. And in exploring my own positionality, I am aware that that may have caused biases in terms of themes that I thought were relevant to the whole community but were in fact more relevant to my own experience. So, these workshops were important to help distinguish between themes that were significant to my own life and the ones to the broader community.

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[58] Gatenby and Humphries, "Feminist Participatory Action Research", 93.

Chapter Six:
Project Results and Final Exhibition

Bachelard in his book *Poetics of Space* (1957), speaks on the role of miniatures in the expression and representation of reality (and the imagined space). He says:

> Thus the miniscule, a narrow gate, opens up an entire world. The details of a thing can be the sign of a new world which, like all worlds, contains the attributes of greatness. Miniature is one of the refuges of greatness.[59]

The notion that through miniature, a new world can be created, is one that I greatly enjoyed exploring through my project. In creating these vignettes of memory in a much smaller scale to what exists (or doesn't anymore) in reality, these miniatures become sites of reflection, exploration, and imagination—amalgamating what is *real* with what is imagined. And in doing so, these miniatures become altogether new spaces, opening up new worlds as Bachelard puts it. It's interesting to note that the process of both planning and building miniatures requires an "unflagging attention...to integrate all the detail."[60] And when doing this, particular focus is put on all the aspects of this memory that may have long been forgotten, urging them to resurface in order to build a more fulsome representation of memory. It is through this process, that the interplay of real and imagined is fascinating, as we uncover details that feel extremely central to the memory (e.g., the textures of the carpets or the smells of the spaces) yet later realise was entirely fabricated by the participants' minds. It is under this context that this project builds these memories, in that the focus is not on the *real* or *accurate* but instead on the atmosphere and narrative that this memory revolves around. The constructed environment comprising of a plethora of details that make the memory precious to the participant, whether that is factual, imaginary, or some combination of the two.

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[59] Gaston Bachelard, "Miniature," in *The Poetics of Space* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 167-200, 174.
[60] Bachelard, "Miniature," 178.

6.1. Project Results

Findings from the research process and analysis stages were consolidated for the creation of the final installation experience. Meeting with each of the three participants, we began with a similar set of questions (see Appendix F) that evolved and shifted as the conversation flowed. At the end of the first interview, a plan was set for which memory I would be building for each participant, and what specific elements would be included in them. Each participant was also made aware of any additional pieces of media that they could supplement into the installation, like photographs or audio files.

6.1.1. Tiffany

The first participant that I met was Tiffany. Moving often between Hong Kong and Canada, she connected with the lived experiences of being a TCK. Even as a student in Hong Kong, attending an international school, she reflected on how different she felt and was perceived by those outside of her school community. There was a divide that was created between those from the local and international schools, and having to navigate that was a frustrating and difficult process. In the end, attending an international school helped her transition better when she moved back permanently to Canada. In unpacking this experience, we conversed on her feelings towards both Canada and Hong Kong, in which she articulated how much she felt like Hong Kong was home to her, despite having a dual citizenship and having later settled down in Canada.

When asked about the types of memories that she goes back to or finds comfort in, she reflected on her time in Hong Kong and the proximity to her large family. Her memories ranged from the marble floors of her apartment building, to spending time with her cousins. But the memory that we decided to work with for this project is one that has less of a narrative structure to it and is more the atmosphere of a family communing together.

The memory takes place in what she remembers as a now-demolished restaurant (though we later found out that it actually does still exist) called Ho Choi (meaning Good Luck in Cantonese), in which her family would reserve an entire section of the upstairs restaurant for family dinners and celebrations. This was a tradition that had long been practiced over the past thirty years at that restaurant, and will likely continue despite her inability to attend. She spoke on how in moving to Canada, and losing frequent access to that side of her family, she was unable to experience the rambunctious family gatherings that she had grown up in, and loved. Even still, she was able to remember the fish tanks at the entrance, the red carpet that lay on the stairs, the circular tables on which glass serving daises sat atop, and the smells of cigarette smoke and soy sauce mingling together. It is an amalgamation of strong smells, sounds, and material textures that is so evocative of her memories with her family.
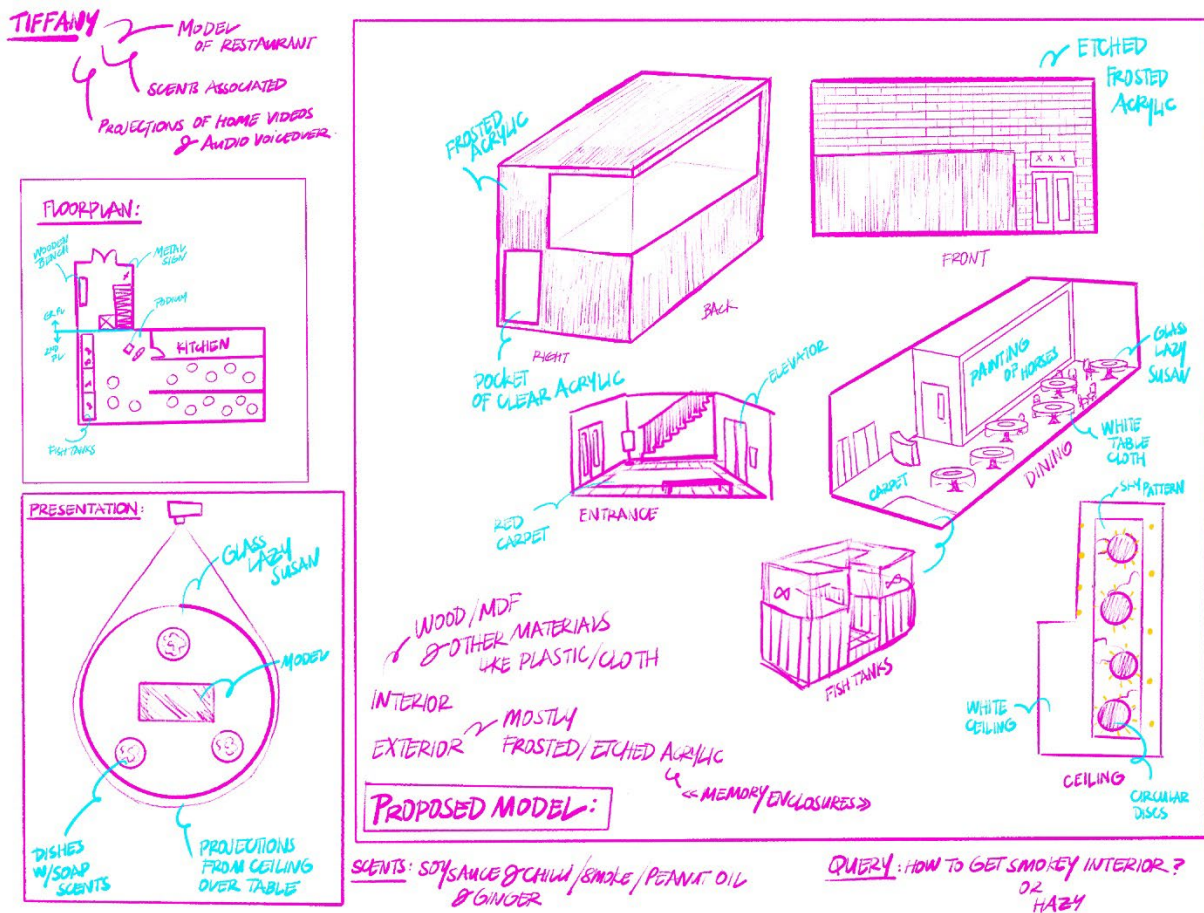

Image 6. 1: Sketch of the installation plan for Tiffany's memory.

In this memory, I recreated her experience of being in these family dinners. The model itself was built using initial sketches that we had created together during our first interview, where we looked at how the building was laid out, as well as the key textures that she could identify within those spaces (some of which included the red carpet along the staircase, the ochre patterned carpet within the dining space, and the linen-textured walls of the interiors). This is accompanied by three custom-made soaps, each laid on a plate, that represented the scents that were tied to this memory: the mixture of soy sauce, ginger, and chilli, the perfume of jasmine tea, and the strong smells of sesame oil that lingered in the air. Placed on a circular plywood piece that represents the serving daises of her memory on top of a plinth, the model also includes home videos that are projected onto these surfaces that help transport the audience back to her memory. Finally, there is also an audio clip that is incorporated into the experience, in which she narrates why this memory was so meaningful to her, and the aspects of it that she particularly found precious.

Thus, using materials and tools like personalised soaps that contain the several scents that she identified, and audio recording of her narration, her memory is recreated to fully express the feelings of longing and nostalgia that are invoked as she recollects this time in her life that she can no longer experience.

6.1.2. Unni

The second participant that I met was Unni. Originally from Kerala, India, and having grown up in Oman, Unni has experienced what it is like to grow up as a TCK. And when asked to describe the memories that were most precious to him, he reflects on his home back in Oman. He describes the landscape within which it was located, his unusual neighbours (a graveyard), and the unique architectural structures of his home. He also reflected on his relationship with his live-in nanny who used to take care of him while his parents were away at work until he turned four, after which she returned to Kerala. In this memory, he remembers her handing him a *Technics* microphone to let him sing or talk into—often recording over the music that was originally in the cassettes. This became somewhat of a routine, these recorded over

cassettes later being played in the car as his family drove around the city. Initially, we had hoped to work with this memory, wanting to explore the impact that she had on him as a child while highlighting this individual with whom a relationship was fostered, but with whom he was unable to later access. Given that a large portion of this memory revolves around the cassettes though, we decided to move away from this memory as we were unable to locate any working cassettes that could be implemented within the project.[61]

Thus, we conducted a second interview from which he recollected some of his experiences back in Kerala, exploring the temples which he would visit with his family whenever they would go back. He described the cold shale tiles that were typically slick with dew or rain, the damp, heavy air, and the thick smell of sesame oil within the temple itself. It is a space that he finds comfort within.

This memory is specifically referencing a place called Ayyappa Temple in Perumbavoor, Kerala. Located beyond a large waterbody that temple-goers would cleanse themselves in prior to visiting the temple, the architecture of this space follows several customs that are specific to both the construction of Hindu temples in general, as well as ones that are specifically for temples built for the Ayyappan deity. The main custom including an innermost sanctorum within which the deity sits, surrounded by a halo of mirrors and lights, and which require the traversing of several layers of interior hallways and spaces to reach. Representing the journey from the worldly environment into one that is sacred, temple-goers walk through multiple doors and on several steps to finally reach this innermost sanctum sanctorum.

The form of this model is recreated through plywood and painted into the colours of the existing temple, with the roof structure being constructed using frosted acrylic. This was mainly done so that we would be able to see these interior layers that would be harder to gauge solely through the exterior.

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[61] As a side note, this is an interesting example of the variations of loss that are explored in the literature review. In that not only does this particular memory include the painful loss of a person and older sister-figure as a young child, but also the loss of the artifacts that could have been used to continue this connection despite not having physical access to her.
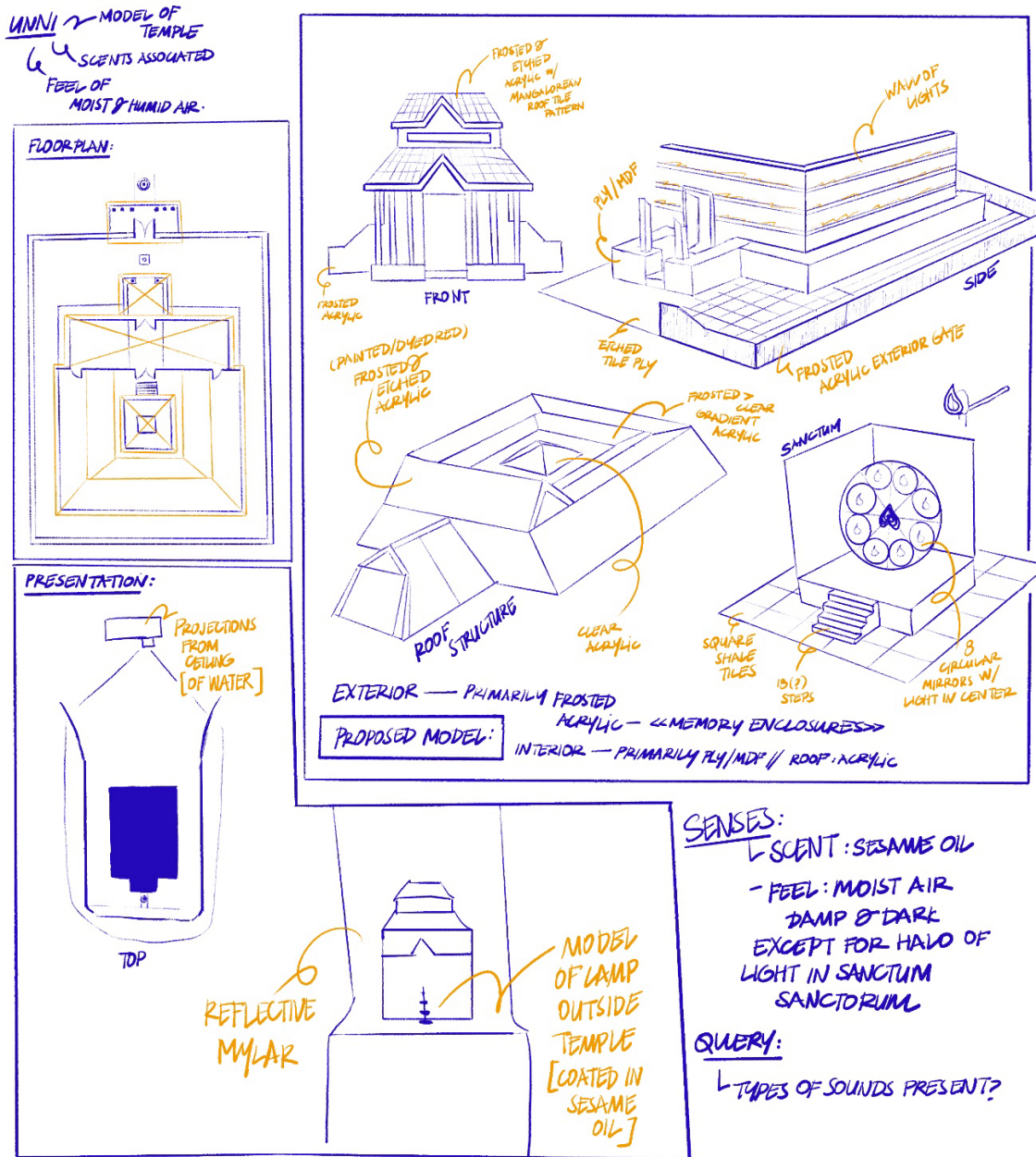
Image 6. 2: Sketch of the installation plan for Unni's memory.

This model is placed on a plinth covered in reflective mylar. Since it was not possible to include the waterbody into the model, the projected reflections on the mylar create the fluid and moist environment that Unni had earlier described. In addition to the model, a 3D printed sculpture of the lamp that sits outside the temple was created. Unni had mentioned during the interview, that the Ayyappan temples were unique in that they used sesame oil to burn lamps, giving off a very specific scent within these spaces, and consequently turning all their lamps a deep, black colour as

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the sesame oil mixed with the ashes. Thus, the 3D printed lamp that was created was also coated in this oil, so that as the viewer leans in to peer into the model, they will simultaneously be hit with the scent of the sesame oil as well. Finally, the audio file that was created includes Unni's narration of his experience in the space, and its significance to him.

6.1.3. Esther

The last participant that I met with was Esther. Brought up across Dubai and Canada, and having originally been from India, in our first interview, Esther reflected on her experiences as a TCK, and the memories that she held on to from each country that she lived in.

The memories that she brought up were around visiting these shawarma restaurants in Dubai and being able to see them make the food in front of you. She recalled the excitement of watching the food being prepared, as well as the delicious scents that emanated. Other memories included her time in school, her breaktimes that she'd spend with her friends that included a very specific table that they'd rush to claim every recess, and other events that she would participate in at school.

Ultimately, we decided to work with her memories of visiting Kerala during her summer holidays. Kerala, being a tropical state, is quite humid during the summers, and as a result, one of the most popular drinks that is consumed and sold at almost every streetside stall is a combination of soda water, lime juice and coarse sugar called *naranga vellam* (literally meaning lime water or lime soda). This drink, being one of Esther's favourites, was something she would ensure she drank plenty of while there— urging her mom to stop the car every time they saw a roadside stall that would sell naranga vellam. Whilst, unfortunately, she wasn't successful every single time, they would make it a point to stop at least once during their car journey. The process would include stopping at any given store, her mom or the driver making the order with the gentlemen who prepared the drinks, watching them furiously whip the lime and sugar mixture together before quickly pouring it out in the glasses filled with cold

soda water. This process would take only around ten minutes maximum, oftentimes with Esther and her siblings remaining in the car as they drank the soda before returning the glasses and continuing with their journey. When asked about what made this experience feel special enough to continuously remember and go back to, she spoke on not only the memories and emotions that were associated with this but also the feelings of being that carefree child in that moment. It was also interesting to note the social aspects of this memory, in that stopping for naranga vellam became something that she became known for. It was something she was associated with, to the point that when visiting her relatives, they would ask and make sure that she had received her share during their journey over. To me, this is especially fascinating because it speaks towards the relational aspects of this memory, and being able to acknowledge that there is a preciousness to having been known and identified through the experience that the memory describes.
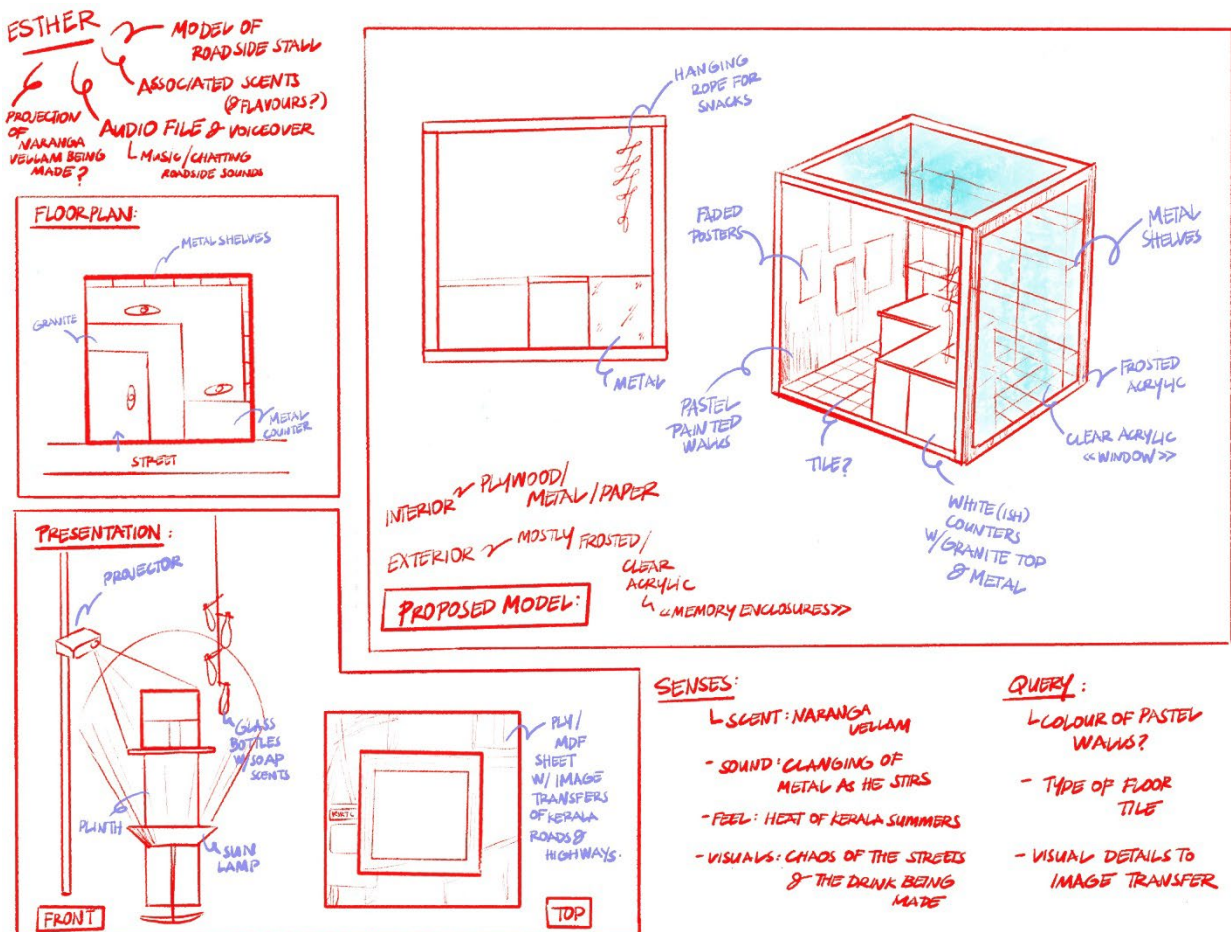

Image 6. 3: Sketch of the installation plan for Esther's memory.

For her model, we worked with building out one of these roadside stalls. Though the memory isn't exactly anchored to any one specific place, within our first interview, we explored the common elements that were found in these spaces that could be constructed for this project. Some of these included the metal counter over which the naranga vellam and other drinks were created, the remaining L-shaped granite countertops behind which the shopkeepers would sell additional snacks and treats, and the utilitarian metal shelving behind them that would hold the plethora of snacks. This model was placed atop a plinth with a large wooden surface that had been image transferred suspended behind it. The images on these transfers depict the typical roadside and highway views that one would see in Kerala, including the public buses, the stalls that sold the drinks mentioned in this memory, as well as the greenery that was found throughout the state. The intention of the images was to provide the atmosphere around which this memory would typically take place. Hanging from the ceiling are glass bottles that represent the glass soda bottles that are used to make the naranga vellam, and in one of them, a sample of naranga vellam was made to depict the sweet and sour scents of the lime drink. Finally, projected to the side of this model were videos of naranga vellam being made, as well as an audio clip of Esther reflecting on this memory and its importance to her.

6.2. Final Exhibition

Having met all three participants, I was able to then plan out what the installation would look like. My initial sketch [Image. 6.4] depicts how these three pieces would work together in one space, each being presented on their own individual plinth with their additional features like the hanging glass bottles, the reflective mylar, and the serving dais.
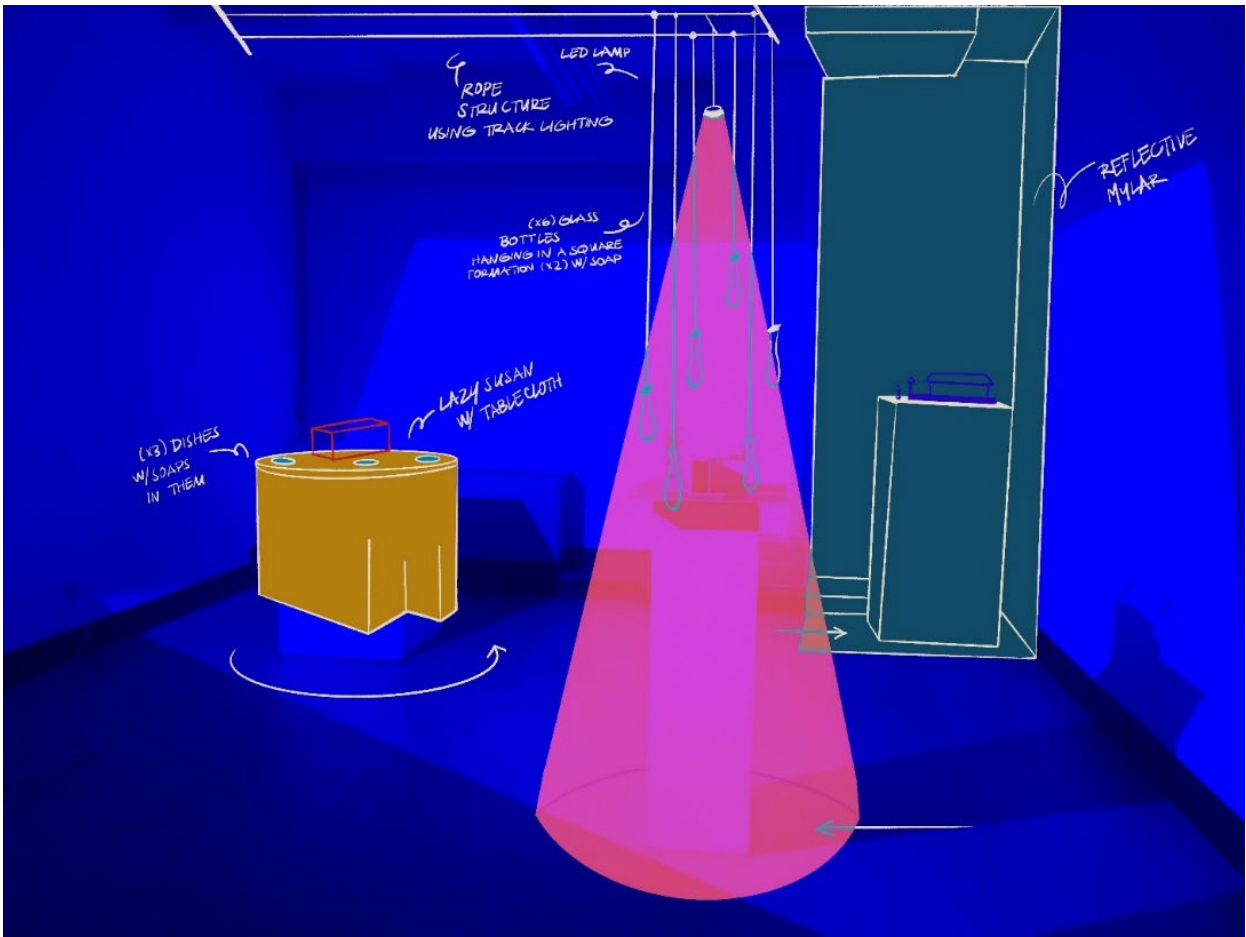

Image 6. 4: Initial sketch of installation plan

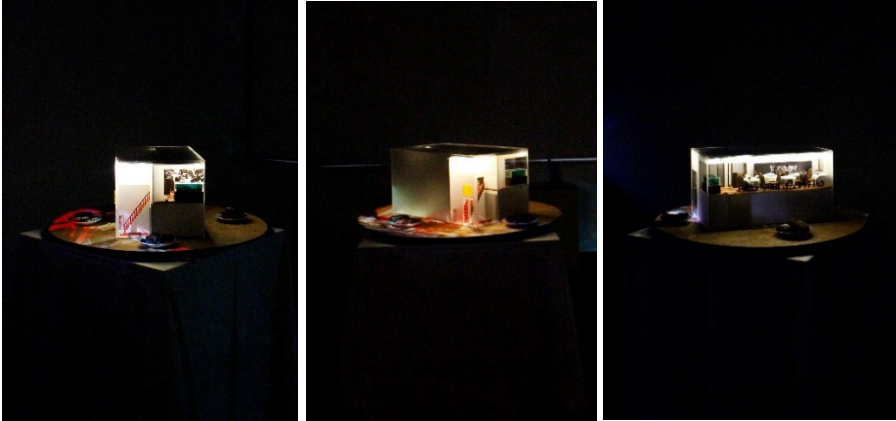Image 6. 5: photograph of final installation

Image 6. 6: Front views of Tiffany's model
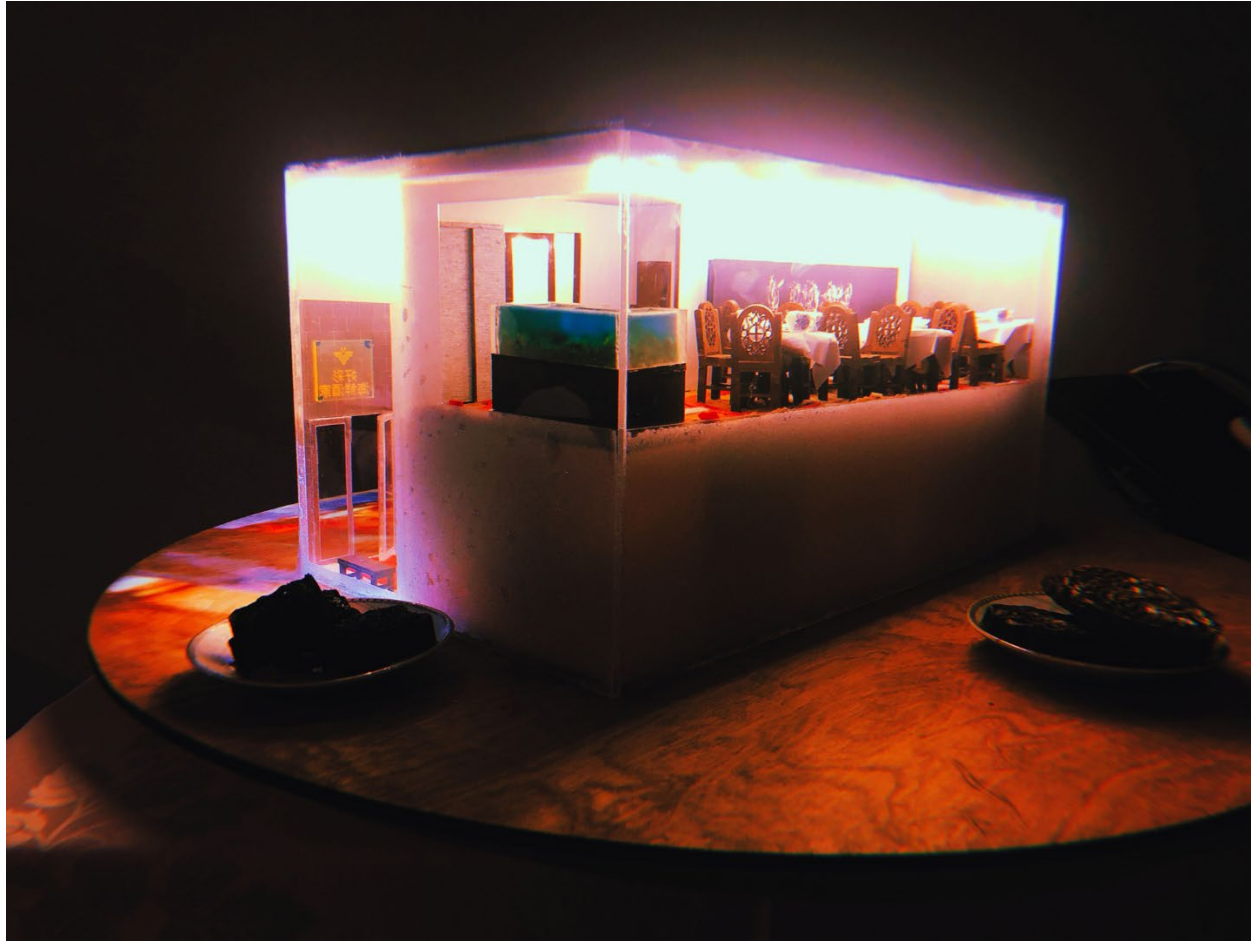
Image 6. 7: Close-up of entry lobby

Image 6. 8: Angled view of restaurant area
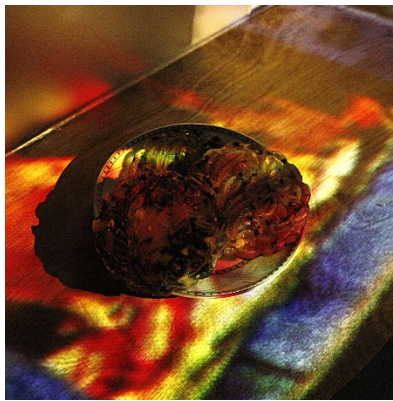

Image 6. 9: View of soy sauce & ginger soap

Image 6. 10: View of sesame oil soap

Image 6. 11: View of jasmine tea soap

Image 6. 12: Front view of Unni's temple

Image 6. 13: Angled view of the temple

Image 6. 14: Detailed shot of "rainwater" on the temple's roof

Image 6. 15: Closeup of oil lamp lathered with sesame oil
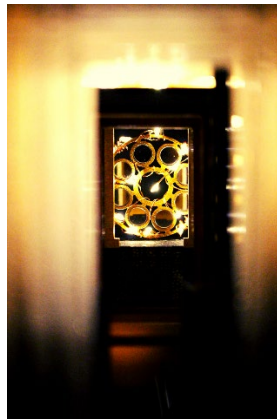

Image 6. 16: Closeup of deity's "halo" in sanctum sanctorum
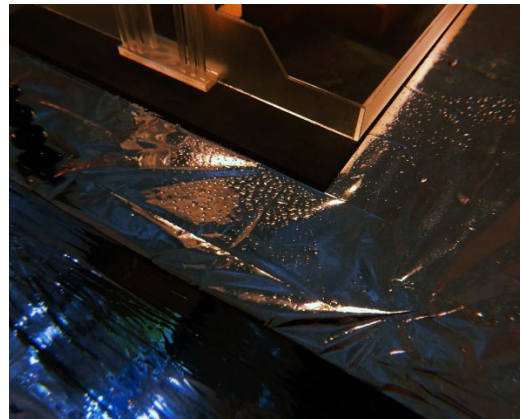

Image 6. 17: Closeup of "rainwater" on reflective mylar

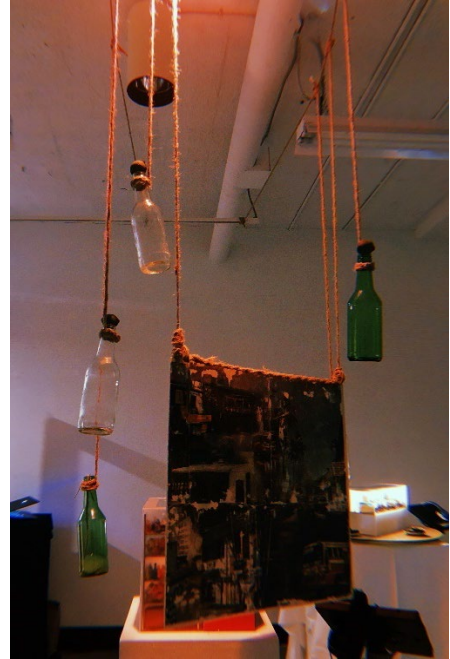Image 6. 18: Front view of Esther's model   Image 6. 19: Angled view of snack stall   Image 6. 20: Back view of install

Image 6. 21: Closeup of snack stall

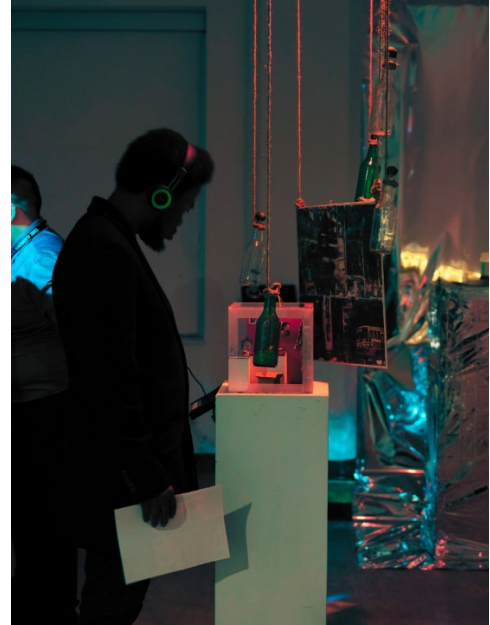Image 6. 22: View of soda projection   Image 6. 23: Closeup of glass bottle   Image 6. 24: User listening to the narration

My final meetings with the three participants were incredibly heartwarming. It was a delight to be able to watch them take in and respond to their models—with Unni taking pictures that he could share with his mom and Tiffany appreciating the lobby space that felt familiar to how she remembered it. These interactions were so important in being able to articulate the place and need for this project, in which, they expressed both the joy in being able to set time aside to speak on these memories that they hadn't been able to before, but also to be able to see the memory materialize before them, through the familiar textures, colours, scents, and sounds. The preceding images are of the models that were created and presented for each participant during the exhibition.

6.3. Project Reflections

6.3.1. Co-Creation and PAR

The process of working closely with my participants was quite an interesting experience for me, as I navigated between my position as a friend and one that was as a researcher. Two of the three participants were people that I had known prior to

this project, with one being a friend for over four years, and the other over the past year. So, as I engaged in this project with them, there were moments when our relationship made it much easier to communicate since we were already familiar with each other, and at other times, I felt awkward or uncomfortable to talk or interview them on certain things because I felt like I had to take on a more formal, research-based tone. I had gone into this experience somewhat aware of this dynamic due to my REB application and the ethical compliance that was essential as part of it, but it definitely was different to actually go through it in practice compared to what my expectation of it was in theory. What I appreciated, though, about having this established relationship, was that as discussed in *Chapter Three, Co-Authorship & Participatory Action Research (PAR),* I was able to emulate the feminist reciprocal approaches much more naturally with them, as some of these conversations that we were having just became a part of our regular chats, allowing for this cycle of reciprocity to continue. In addition, seeing as though PAR was a crucial methodology in conducting the research for this project, being able to engage in these conversations in much more casual settings allowed for smoother collaboration as I was able to quickly chat with them about certain details of the installation at any point and we would be able to then discuss the direction that the project was taking through continued check-ins and dialogue.   And so, despite having reservations on how to position myself within this project so that a more equitable partnership between myself and my participants were fostered, I think overall, the communication that was reciprocated back to me (and vice versa) allowed for the gap between our roles to be lessened.

That being said, I can still recognize the power relations that I held as the researcher, in terms of being able to make certain design decisions and lead the vision for the installation. For example, an interesting part of my conversations with my participants was when they would follow up after the initial interview with news that much of what they thought they remembered wasn't actually true. In the case of Tiffany, after our first interview, she found a video walk-through and some photographs of the restaurant. And while, she was not only under the impression that the restaurant had already been demolished, it was also interesting to note that much

of the textural and material aspects that she had so clearly remembered and associated to that space was proven factually wrong in the walkthrough. So as co-author, she was able to express the aspects of this memory that were most precious and significant to her, but as the researcher and the designer of the installation, I was able to take my own creative liberties in choosing which aspects of the built model would be factually accurate versus which parts would be based on how she remembers it. For the most part, I wanted to respect her memory, and the accuracy of the space was not as important to this project, but there were certain moments in each of these models where I decided to defer to reality when it would make the construction or concept flow a bit clearer. For example, in Unni's memory, he remembered the sanctum sanctorum including eighteen steps, as was the custom for most Ayyappan temples, however, in a video that he found, he realised that it only had five. As I had been struggling to figure out how to place this model with the innermost space being eighteen steps taller than ground level, choosing to go with reality for this specific decision helped ensure that the building of this model would be feasible. Thus, through these decisions that were made, some in collaboration with my participants, and others taken as the lead on this project, the result is a miniature that is very much of another world as Bachelard puts it, in that it neither conforms to reality nor their memory, but becomes this third imagined space. This, I thought, was quite fitting with the general experience of being a TCK, and the need to create their own individual space.

6.3.2. The Sensory Elements Incorporated within the Final Exhibition

Another aspect of this project was the inclusion of narratives. As mentioned earlier in *Chapter Five, the Process of Research*, clear narrative structures were uncommon within the memories that were shared during the interview phases. Instead, most participants shared shorter bursts of spaces, atmospheres, and emotions that were impactful to them. For this project, I decided that it was important for me to include some form of narrative to the installation, because it felt like a distinct method of ensuring the voices of my participants be heard as they express the significance of this memory to the public. And so, the project combines the

narrative structure and the short bursts through the installation—with the bursts being represented by the tangible, physical models that depict only one space that they feel close to, whilst the audio recordings communicate their story, that is heard in their voice. Creating these audio files was an interesting experience because I began by producing two versions for each participant: the first included their narration with background sounds to help amplify aspects of their story, and the second was purely their narration with no other additions. When playing it back, however, I realised that the power of this story was it being told in their voice. Adding in the background audio was taking reference from my initial prototypes and while I think it worked for those ones which were based more on a sound-heavy memory, these ones didn't require the background sounds to build the story out. There was something so beautiful for me to just listen to their voice as they told their story, with their own pauses, interruptions and occasional chuckles setting the scene and atmosphere of the memory. Much like how this project stemmed from a conversation between a friend of mine and myself, these audio narrations felt like it was building off of that where you were engaged in a conversation with a friend who was sharing their story, and ultimately, I decided that this was more in line with the purpose of this project. Through this, a specific space and time is carved out into the installation to stop and listen to their voice being heard, with no distractions.

To add to this, an unexpected outcome was how people responded to listening to the audio with the model itself. Since there was only one mp3 player per model, users would usually look at the whole model and smell the scents and only after that get a chance to listen to the narration. So, it was interesting to hear how the narration amplified that experience, where without it, the model was typically observed from a sort of objective lens. Yet, once the user began listening to the participant narrate it, they were suddenly invited in to see how the participant viewed the aspects of the model that were important to them. For example, when listening to Unni's narration, your eyes are guided through the interior layers of the temple as he himself narrates the experience of walking through all those spaces until he finally enters the sanctum sanctorum. Similarly, in Tiffany's, many visitors thought that the two chairs that were facing each other was a mistake, and only after listening to her story did it click for

them that it was a makeshift bed for the kids. While the audio was a crucial part of the experience, the guidance that the audio had with the model was unexpected as I hadn't foreseen it impacting the users in that way. In the future, I would love to explore methods of spatially triggering the sound so that the audio isn't necessarily restricted to only one individual at a time.

Another aspect of the exhibition was the incorporation of artifacts and visual elements. One example is the suspended soda bottles as part of Esther's model. These were specifically identified by her during our first interview, describing the shape, the cool texture of the glass on a hot, sunny day, and the small lime that would sit atop its opening. During the exhibition, one of these bottles contained the lime soda scent for the users to smell as part of the memory, while the remaining four hung with painted clay limes on them. And while these bottles typically wouldn't be hung the way that it was in the project, it references the ways that other snacks like chips or chocolates would be hung as display in these snack stalls. This in part, adds to my role as co-creator as well as my involvement with the notions of *real* vs. *imagined* that was mentioned earlier, in that, myself being from Kerala and having frequented these kinds of stalls, I have the context within which these drinks and other snacks are sold. Thus, I am able to play on those memories to create this new type of artifact that is unique, surreal but which is based on the existing, real. This was also demonstrated by the inclusion of the pink and yellow tinted spotlight that shone above Esther's model which was intentioned to mimic a hot, summer's day. In actuality, users likened it more towards the halogen tube lights that are typically found in these kinds of stalls as opposed to its initial concept. And so, this was interesting to reflect on because while I technically was unable to fulfill the aesthetic I had initially planned for, there was a different lens through which this was perceived that resonated far more with the guests who experienced the model.

In addition to the sensorial aspects of the exhibition, another intangible element that was included to create a sense of atmosphere and context to each model was the projections. For example, for Tiffany, I had initially wanted to incorporate home videos of her family celebrating together at Ho Choi, but since she

wasn't able to get access to any of them in time for the exhibit, she instead shared videos that she had taken from her own POV traversing through Hong Kong. Consequently, the footage that was utilised as part of her model (as well as with Esther's) worked more towards creating the atmosphere that they would be familiar with and associate to during their visits to the restaurant and snack stalls respectively, creating a more *real* POV for those who experience their memories. In Unni's, however, he had expressed in the first interview about the water body located in front of the temple that devotees would cleanse themselves in before entering the temple. Since the scale of the model didn't allow for an inclusion of a water body, reflective mylar and water projections were used together to create that atmosphere— specifically since he would often talk about the moist and damp feeling of being in that temple with the cold shale floor tiles that were wet with rain. For Unni, I had created another video to be projected using videos that he had taken during festival celebrations at the temple, but after testing it, I decided that it didn't quite work with the overall concept of this project. These memories are really precious to the participants but they're of mundane, ordinary life. To put in videos of large elephants that are draped with ornate gold accessories and rows of men playing instruments would have shifted focus from the ordinary-ness of his experience to one that is much more grandiose and extravagant. Thus, instead of requiring all the projected footage to either be more *real* or *surreal*, I instead wanted to look at which videos would more effectively represent the overall atmosphere of the individual maquette it was associated to.

6.3.3. Digital and Analogue Making Techniques

Finally, since I didn't want to be tied down to solely either digital or analogue tools and techniques, I worked closely with my participants to explore methods of representation that would more effectively speak towards the intention and preciousness of the shared story. And so, a hand-painted wood piece was able to better reflect the stucco texture of an actual wall, whilst the laser-cut table and chair pieces better represented the form and structure of mass-manufactured furniture. In addition, when working with analogue methods of creation like image transferring,

and painting, I was often met with frustration when something that I had worked for so long on turned out looking terrible. And so, this constant process of doing, redoing, making, remaking, whilst discouraging at times, also allowed me to have a deeper connection and understanding of the detail and technicalities that exist within each and every piece of the models and installation. Another aspect was the intersection of analogue and digital tools in that whilst I built out the models physically, and by hand, I had first created digital 3D models on a 3D modelling software called Rhino 3D, which allowed me to have a reference point from which I could build. This way, there was less chance of me making a mistake, since I had already done it once in digital space. I enjoyed working with these tools together, because it felt like I had so many more options for how to get things done. If I was unable to make it by hand, I could then explore ways of getting it manufactured through technological means, and in working with these together, I was then able to identify my strengths and weaknesses within each method or technique, and in doing so, lean on the other when one would not work.

Chapter Seven:
Conclusions & Next Steps

7.1. Conclusion

The process of this study has shown me how important it is to create space for conversations on culture, identity, memory, and belonging to take place. As the researcher, it was an incredibly valuable experience to be able to hear the various perspectives of the participants as they described their own positionality as TCKs who also identify within other several intersectionalities (i.e., PoC, LGBTQIA+, woman-identifying, etc.). Through this project, I have explored how memories can be co-constructed through conversation, ideation, sketching, and fabrication, and how our memories can be enhanced through these intersectionalities in conjunction with our senses.

A key takeaway from this research was how many TCKs regularly feel unable to share these experiences openly with their network, and in asking them questions on certain aspects of their pasts that could uncover details of their memories, I was met with a sense of excitement from them. Several participants stated that they had never been able to talk through these experiences before, even with other TCKs and so it was the first time for them to take the time and space they needed to process some of the memories that weighed heavy on their minds. Their excitement to contribute in turn doubled my own, and from a relational standpoint, it was wonderful to be able to engage in these conversations with them—at times bringing each other out of our comfort zones as we approached topics that were more sensitive, and at others extending emotions of empathy and understanding as we resonated with similar experiences.

It was because of this relational approach I believe, that eased participants into addressing the more difficult feelings of unresolved grief, loss, and rootlessness that I wanted to study through my research. It is difficult to give a definite answer to my

primary research question which asks whether the co-construction of memory is able to bring healing and reconciliation when addressing these feelings of loss, because of its entirely subjective nature. That said, from the perspective of the researcher, who had an outsider role as the participants outlined the details of their memories, there is a certain beauty that comes from watching the participants light up and get animated as they delve into the different textures, and sounds, and smells that they can envision when they remember these memory spaces. Though, this is perhaps more a subjective, emotional observation rather than one based in quantitative analysis. From the first and second interviews with my participants, however, during which we first walked through several memories before picking the one that felt the most significant to them and then later showing them the final outcome of our interviews and informal conversations, each participant stated their joy in being able to see the space that they had been remembering in their heads now brought to life, within close proximity and in physical space. Esther remarked on how the layout she had envisioned with the L-shaped counters, and the stucco walls were exactly how she had pictured them, while Tiffany expressed that the soap scents that were created smelled exactly how she remembered (also stating that she would have loved to take a bite into it!). And so, despite being unable to provide a concrete objective answer to a question that can be interpreted as subjective, based on the final conversations with my participants, it was clear that they appreciated that first a space was created where they could explore these memories safely and without judgement, and second that the models that did come out of these interviews were able to represent well the physical and sensorial aspects of their memories.

Finally, in addressing the secondary question, the research has shown that a collaborative creation process can indeed be successful in amplifying the voices and stories of its participants with the intention of facilitating respectful storytelling practices. This experience has demonstrated that solely initiating a collaborative process does not automatically foster an open and equitable environment that is required for co-creation, but instead requires intentional thought and action to continually ensure that these spaces remain collaborative. There were times when it would have been much easier if I were able to just take over and do things my own

way, especially given the time crunch, but ultimately, if that had been the route I had taken, this research would have been greatly deprived—the final product would have not only been disingenuous, but furthermore would have lost out on the power of the participants' voices who had shared their personal memories with us.

To conclude, through this research, I believe that in creating the opportunity for these memories to be heard by the public, it can not only be beneficial to both the individual who shares the memory as they are able to delve deeper into moments that they hold dear and regard as precious, but also to the broader collective community of TCKs who are able to share in these memories and experiences together.

7.2. Next Steps

For the future development of this project, I will be exploring how to implement the initially proposed documentary-style video. Since, it became implausible to complete within the timeframe of this thesis project, it is something that I hope to carry forward after. I think it's an important aspect of this project, that allows the participants to expand further and delve deeper into the memories that they have shared. Understanding the material, space, and time limitations that we had set for the final exhibition, engaging in this longer documentary-style video gives the participants the due time to bring out their stories in its entirety. In some cases, like Tiffany, whose memory is less narratively structured, this could also be an opportunity to further investigate the impact and effects of this research study. I would also be able to ask more questions regarding this process, that could aid in answering my research questions. I would also be interested in expanding this project to include more memory vignettes to develop further the notion that co-constructing these memories within physical space can create a positive impact on a TCK's memory of lost space as well as towards the healing of their sense of fragmented self-identity.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Materials and Intake Form

Empathetic Spaces: Recruitment Form

Hello :)

I'm Joanne, a current Digital Futures Masters student at OCAD University.

Thesis Introduction: Empathetic Spaces explores themes of memory, identity, loss and belonging within Third Culture Kids (TCKs)* in Toronto's Asian Diaspora. The experience of growing up as a TCK can impact one's relationship with their own culture and identity - often challenging their sense of belonging and cultural connections. In these moments, memories become important tethers to their pasts, and their cultural identities and heritages. Therefore, approaching the project from a position of cultural preservation, through the digital reconstruction of the participants' spatial memories, the project aims to create space for these voices and stories that are often unheard, and to highlight these memories, that however mundane, are valuable pieces of an individual's culture and identity. The project hopes that in recreating these memories, participants will get another chance to experience these memories that are so precious to them, as well as to invite others to share in these experiences, creating nodes of connection and empathy with those with whom we share the land we live on.

Primary Research Question: Can the memories of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) be spatially co-constructed to bring healing and reconciliation to address feelings of loss and grief towards self-identity?

Secondary Research Question: How can the intangible qualities afforded by sound, light and scent be utilized to depict the spectral, and often hazy, nature of memory?

———————

Participation: To participate, you must identify as a TCK in the Asian diaspora. The project includes participation in 2 phases:
(1) *Workshops* (around 1.5 hours including a wellness break) where questions around memories, your experiences as TCKs, and the sharing of stories will be encouraged. These could be held in-person or online depending on participant preferences.
(2) *Personal Interviews* where we will have 1-on-1 discussions on a specific memory that you would like me to digitally reconstruct. This will take place over the span of a larger period of time (2 (or maximum 3) 1hr meetings over the course of 2 months), and will allow us to go in-depth into the details of your memory and how to effectively represent it in digital and analogue form.

In signing up to this form, you are not obligated to participate in both phases. Please note that within the workshop phase, *complete anonymity/confidentiality is not possible* as the meetings will take place within a group setting, however participants will be advised not to divulge any information shared in these sessions outside of the group, or on social media. As a participant, you would also have the freedom to leave the project within an indicated period of time. More details will be shared with chosen participants.

———————

Thank you for considering joining this project! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at: joannejohn@ocadu.ca

* Third Culture Kids (or Third Culture Individuals) refer to individuals who accompanied their parents to live all or most of their childhoods and developmental years outside of the country from which they hold a passport.
**This form will be capped at 40 submissions.
***REB Approval #: 2022-82

...

1. Preferred Name (Pronouns) *

Enter your answer

2. Email address *

Enter your answer

3. Are you above the age of 18? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

4. Preferred mode of communication? (Besides email addresses, please indicate your social media handle/account name that you'd prefer me to contact you by in 'Other') *

☐ Email

☐ Instagram DM

☐ WhatsApp

☐ Discord

☐ Other

5. Do you identify as a Third Culture Kid* *

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Maybe (Needs Clarification)

6. Do you identify as part of the Asian diaspora (Central/East/Southeast/South/West/Pacific Islander)? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

7. Would you be open to engaging in a workshop session that explores themes of memory, cultural identity, and belonging? *

○ Yes

○ No

8. Would you be interested in joining the second phase of this project: Personal Interviews? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

9. How would you prefer to meet? *

☐ In person

☐ Online

☐ Either is fine

10. Would you like to bring in a support worker to the workshop session? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

You can print a copy of your answer after you submit

Submit

Appendix B: Community Workshop Consent Form

Empathetic Spaces: Exploring the Spatial Memories of Third Culture Kids in Toronto
Workshop Consent Form

Graduate Thesis Advisor:
Jay Irizawa
Interdisciplinary Art Media Design, Interim Graduate Program Director & Assistant Professor
School of Graduate Studies, OCAD University
jirizawa@ocadu.ca

Graduate Student Researcher:
Joanne John
Digital Futures, Graduate Student
School of Graduate Studies, OCAD University
joannejohn@ocadu.ca

PURPOSE

This is an invitation to participate in a workshop session for the *Empathetic Spaces: Exploring the Spatial Memories of Third Culture Kids in Toronto* project at OCAD University. Participants will be encouraged to engage in conversational-style interviews that reflect on the participant's experiences as a Third Culture Kid (TCK), their memories, and themes of cultural identity and belonging. The purpose of this workshop is to understand and explore the themes that are deemed relevant and important to this demographic, which can then be used to delineate the scope and theme of the final project. The workshops are a part of working towards a Master of Design (MDes) Thesis at OCAD University.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The workshop session will be 1.5 hrs (including a wellness break) and will begin with an introduction to the project, confidentiality, and discretionary disclosures, as well as their rights as participants in this project. They will be asked several closed-question prompts, followed by more open-ended questions to create space for the participants to steer the discussion organically as they listen to each other, and share their own experiences. The workshop will be audio recorded and transcribed. Participants will receive a transcript of their own contributions once the session has been completed, from which they may review and request the omission of content partially or in its entirety. Any data that is collected is for the project's internal use, and any quotes or content that may be used in the public thesis document will only do so once further consent has been received.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity to share their stories and experiences that they may have been hesitant to express otherwise within a safe space. The workshop could also potentially foster a greater sense of understanding between community groups since the stories that are shared may shed light on similar lived experiences and values. This project aims to benefit society in that it supports increased public awareness of the lives and experiences of those who live around us, as well as dedicating space to honour these memories. It could also encourage those who encounter the project to share their own experiences and feel more connected with their communities.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Potential risks in participating in this workshop are the emotional and psychological distress that may be caused by sharing personal experiences, as well as by hearing about the stories that are shared by others as sensitive topics and memories could arise. Participants are not required to contribute to the discussions if they do not feel comfortable doing so, and are welcome to pause the conversation or ask that the topic be changed if negative emotions are triggered. Resources to free and accessible mental health and counselling services like Distress Centers of Greater Toronto (DCOGT), Good2Talk Helpline for Post-Secondary Students and Stella's Place will be shared.

Since participants are sharing their personal stories, they may speak on the negative experiences they have faced, including unfavourable encounters with those from other community groups. Whilst participants will not be required to censor themselves, they will be asked to remain respectful of other community members as it will be established that the discussion groups are safe and respectful sharing spaces.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that is collected within the workshop period will be shared amongst participants, and so will not be confidential to those present – although they may choose to use pseudonyms. Participants will be advised not to divulge details discussed within the groups publicly through their own social media platforms or outside of the group discussion space. Participants should be aware that there is a risk of identification regardless of pseudonyms through the details that are shared within their personal memories and experiences. In the transcript provided post-session, participants will only receive their own contribution and no one else's so as to protect each individual's confidentiality as much as possible.

ANONYMITY

Participants will be advised that although aspects of anonymity may be desired, it cannot be guaranteed as they may divulge in details of identity when sharing their experiences. However, participants will be provided with a transcript of the workshop within a week of the session. Up to two weeks after the session has been completed, they may request to edit or redact any information after reviewing the transcript, or may choose to completely withdraw from the project. Participants may also state whether they would prefer to be credited or not.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not be paid to participate in this study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants may choose to withdraw from the workshop at any point prior to the session. During the workshop, if discussions trigger negative emotions, participants are free to leave the session, pause the conversation, or ask for the topic of discussion be changed. There will be no consequences to their withdrawal.

Participants also have the option to join the session with a support worker, and if one is required, please contact *Joanne John* through the contact information provided on this form to help facilitate their inclusion.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The study will culminate in the form of a documentary multi-media exhibition. All participants will be invited to view the exhibition, and will be credited for their participation if consent is provided. All participants will have access to the publicly published content

through the project website (TBC), through the installation experience, as well as through the thesis documentation and results accessible through OCAD U's Open Research Repository.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact *Joanne John (Graduate Student Researcher) or Jay Irizawa (Graduate Thesis Advisor)* through the contact information provided on this form. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University [REB approval #: 2022-82].

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact:
Research Ethics Board c/o Office of the Vice President, Research, and Innovation
OCAD University
100 McCaul Street, Toronto, M5T1W1
416 977 6000 x4368
research@ocadu.ca

AGREEMENT

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the *Workshop Consent Form*. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent in accordance with the details listed above.

☐ I am 18 years of age or older

Do you wish to be credited?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Name of Participant:_____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix C: Community Workshop Questions

Empathetic Spaces
Workshop Questions

[Introduction]
1. Introduce yourself
2. What was your passport country? Where did you grow up?
3. When someone asks you where you're from, how do you usually try to answer them?

[Cultural Identity]
1. How do you define your country of origin?
   a. *(For example)* Is it the place you spent the most time at, your passport country, or the first country you grew up in?
2. Do you have any memories linked specifically to your passport country?
3. What is your relationship with your cultural heritage, do you feel connected or disconnected from it?
4. How do you express your cultural identity(ies)?
   a. *(For example)* through language, music, film, food, social circles etc?
5. Has being a minority affected your experience as a TCK?
6. If you are comfortable sharing, did you/do you fully intend to immigrate to Canada (or on study/work visa etc)?
   a. If so, what are your thoughts/experiences in situating yourself in one place long-term? (Is there a sense of restlessness to continue living abroad, or does it feel peaceful/comfortable to settle down in one place)

[Language]
1. What are your ties to your cultural languages?
2. Does language affect the memories that you have; are they remembered in English or the language it was originally in?

[Memories]
1. Was there a particular place/space/room you would typically go to to find comfort/peace/to get away?
2. Do you have any spatial memories tied to your country of origin?
3. Do you have any spatial memories tied to your experiences abroad?
4. Did you or your family have rituals/routines that you would partake in growing up? (E.g. eating at a certain time, or certain habits your family would do when you wake up)
5. What are moments in your pasts that you like to think back to that bring you comfort or joy?

Appendix D: Community Workshop Likert Scale Survey

Empathetic Spaces: Likert Scale Survey

This survey can be anonymous, as I am trying to gauge the general feeling around these certain topics.

...

* Required

1. Please rate how important these following statements are to you: *
   Culture & Identity- How important is it (was it):

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Low Importance	Not at All Important
1. To feel connected to your country of origin (passport country)?	○	○	○	○	○
2. To feel connected to the country(ies) you grew up in?	○	○	○	○	○
4. For your culture to be a part of your self-identity?	○	○	○	○	○
5. To feel like you belonged in your country of origin?	○	○	○	○	○
3. To associate with people of your cultural communities?	○	○	○	○	○

2. Please rate how important these following statements are to you: *
   Memory - How important is (are):

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Low Importance	Not at All Important
1. Memories of your country of origin?	○	○	○	○	○
2. Memories related to your culture and cultural identity?	○	○	○	○	○

3. Please rate how important these following statements are to you:
*

Language - How important is:

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Low Importance	Not at All Important
1. Being able to understand and speak in your mother tongue	○	○	○	○	○
2. The role of language in your memories	○	○	○	○	○
3. The role of language as a connector to your culture and cultural community	○	○	○	○	○

Submit

Appendix E: Personal Interviews Consent Form

Empathetic Spaces: Exploring the Spatial Memories of Third Culture Kids in Toronto
Personal Interviews Consent Form

Graduate Thesis Advisor:

Jay Irizawa

Interdisciplinary Art Media Design, Interim Graduate Program Director & Assistant Professor

School of Graduate Studies, OCAD University

jirizawa@ocadu.ca

Graduate Student Researcher:

Joanne John

Digital Futures, Graduate Student

School of Graduate Studies, OCAD University

joannejohn@ocadu.ca

PURPOSE

This is an invitation to participate in the personal interviews phase for the *Empathetic Spaces: Exploring the Spatial Memories of Third Culture Kids in Toronto* project at OCAD University. The project intends to digitally reconstruct the spatial memories of Third Culture Kids in the form of a public installation. Participants will be encouraged to engage in conversational-style interviews where they will be asked to share the memories that they would like to be digitally reconstructed. The purpose of these interviews is to delve deep into the memories that are important to the participant, including all the details like the specific sights, sounds, textures, and smells that are fully representative of the memory. The interviews are a part of working towards a Master of Design (MDes) Thesis at OCAD University.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The interview process will include two (or maximum 3) 1-hour sessions (including a wellness break), over the course of 2 months. These sessions will be audio and video recorded, as well as transcribed. The first session will be conducted in person, with subsequent sessions taking place either online or in person based on the participant's preferences. Participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions to fully flesh out the details of the memory that will be digitally reconstructed. Recordings from the interviews may be used in the documentary-style deliverable of the project, or in the final thesis installation, though participants may opt-out from video recording if they prefer. Audio recordings will also be used as references to help build the digital components of the final installation. After each session, participants will receive a transcript of their contributions, which after reviewing, they may request the omission of all or some of their contributions.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity to share their stories and experiences that they may have been hesitant to express otherwise within a safe space. A benefit is also for participants to be able to access and re-experience these precious memories that they may not be able to physically access otherwise. This project aims to benefit society in that it supports increased public awareness of the lives and experiences of those who live around us, as well as dedicating space to honour these memories. It could also encourage those who encounter the project to share their own experiences, and feel more connected with their communities.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Potential risks in participating in the interviews are the emotional and psychological distress that may be caused by sharing personal experiences as sensitive topics and memories could arise. Participants are welcome to pause the conversation or ask that the topic be changed if negative emotions are triggered. Resources to free and accessible mental health and counselling services like Distress Centers of Greater Toronto (DCOGT), Good2Talk Helpline for Post-Secondary Students and Stella's Place will be shared.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that is collected in the personal interviews will be done so through audio & visual recording, and may be used as content for the documentary or final installation, and so cannot be confidential– although they may choose to use pseudonyms if they prefer. Interviewees will be provided a transcript of the session, and reserve the ability to determine whether some or all parts of the collected or presented data be edited to protect their identities. Within any publicly posted material, their content can be posted under their chosen pseudonyms or remain nameless, and whilst anonymity may be desired, it cannot be fully guaranteed. Participants should be aware that there is a risk of identification regardless of pseudonyms through the details that are shared within their personal memories and experiences. All raw data that is collected will only be accessible to the Graduate Thesis Advisor and the Graduate Student.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not be paid to participate in this study. This phase of the project is one that focuses on co-creation and co-authorship, which allows the participant partial ownership of this project, as well as a hand in the look and feel of how their stories and experiences are being shared to the public.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants may choose to withdraw from the interviews at any point prior to the sessions. During the interviews, if discussions trigger negative emotions, participants are free to leave the session, pause the conversation, or ask for the topic of discussion be changed. Participants will be able to withdraw from their contribution up to two weeks after the first interview and after reviewing the transcription. After this period, they may not be able to withdraw completely, but may request the removal of specific information, up to February 28th. Once the project has launched, they will no longer be able to withdraw fully or partially.

Participants also have the option to join the session with a support worker, and if one is required, please contact *Joanne John* through the contact information provided on this form to help facilitate their inclusion.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The study will culminate in the form of a documentary multi-media exhibition featuring those who have consented to participate in the personal interviews. Select content collected during the personal interviews will be featured in the documentary and installation with the participant's consent after a review process. All participants will be invited to view the exhibition, and will be credited for their participation with their consent. All participants will have access to the publicly published content through the project website (TBC), through the installation experience, as well as through the thesis documentation and results accessible through OCAD U's Open Research Repository.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact *Joanne John (Graduate Student Researcher) or Jay Irizawa (Graduate Thesis Advisor)* through the contact information provided on this form. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University [REB approval #: 2022-82].

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact:

Research Ethics Board c/o Office of the Vice President, Research, and Innovation

OCAD University

100 McCaul Street, Toronto, M5T1W1

416 977 6000 x4368

research@ocadu.ca

AGREEMENT

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the *Personal Interviews Consent Form*. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent in accordance with the details listed above.

☐ I am 18 years of age or older

Do you wish to be credited?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Do you wish to participate in the video recordings?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Name of Participant:_____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix F: Personal Interviews Questions

Empathetic Spaces
Interview Questions
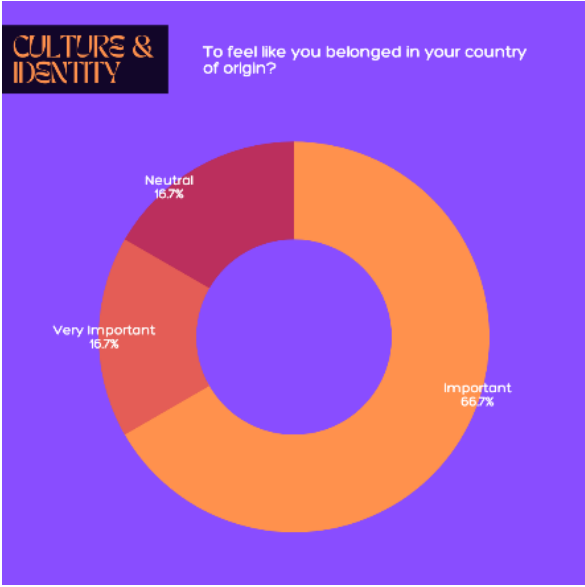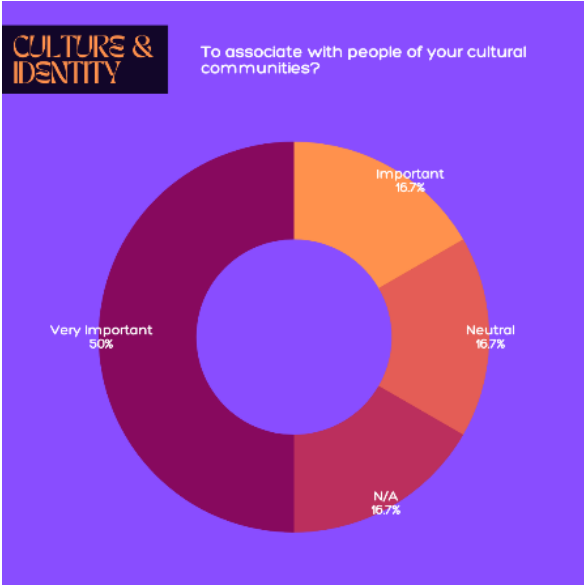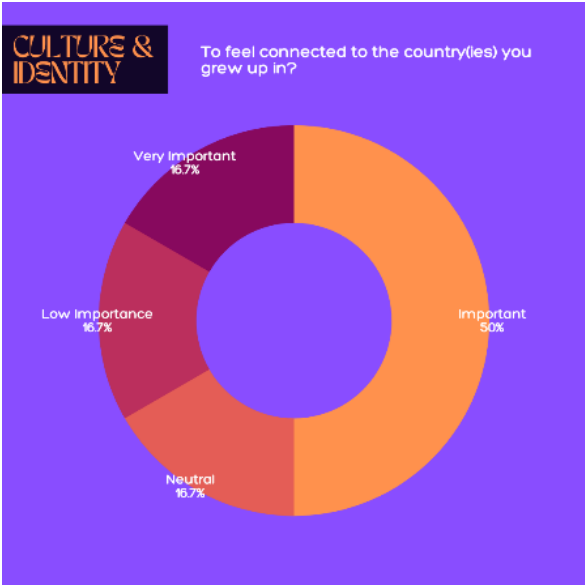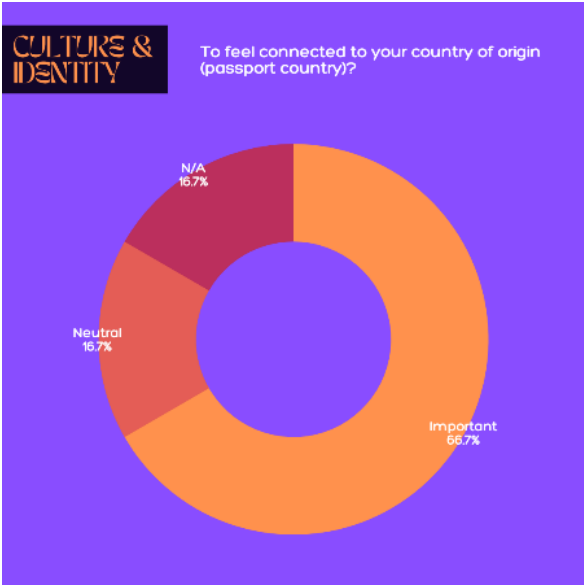(May be subject to change based on the conclusions derived from the workshops)

[General Questions]
1. What was your favourite space from your childhood?
   a. Do you still have access to that space?
2. Are there specific memories that remind you of your home?
3. Are there specific objects that you still hold on to that remind you of home?
4. Does remembering certain spaces or objects from your past help you connect with your cultural identity and/or communities?
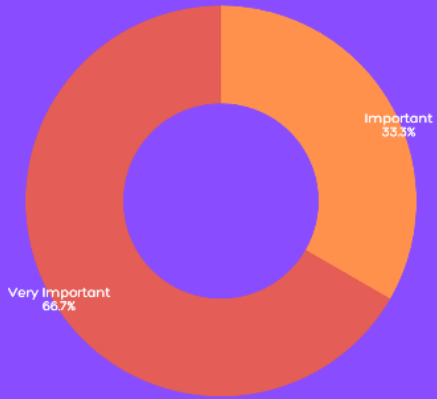
[Specific Questions About a Chosen Memory]
1. Can you describe, to the best of your ability, why you find this memory so important and precious to you?
2. Are there any sensory characteristics that are tied to this memory?
   a. Are they smells that you often recreated around you, or you haven't smelled them in a while?
   b. Do you remember any specific sounds tied to this memory? To the best of your ability, can you describe the texture of the sounds that you hear when you think of this memory?
   c. Do you remember any specific flavours tied to this memory?
   d. Do you remember any specific physical or material textures tied to this memory?
3. Have the spaces in this memory changed in any way since this particular memory, or have they remained the same (aside from aging)?
4. How would you describe the atmosphere of this space, e.g. the way it makes you feel, the lighting, the general energy?
5. If I had to digitally model just one object to represent this space/memory, what would you want me to build?
   a. Can you describe its characteristics (form, texture, colour, sound, and weight)?
6. Are there any specific languages that are tied to this memory?
7. Is this a standalone memory, or one that is woven with several different ones?
8. Are there any other social associations that you make with this memory, like with your family or community?
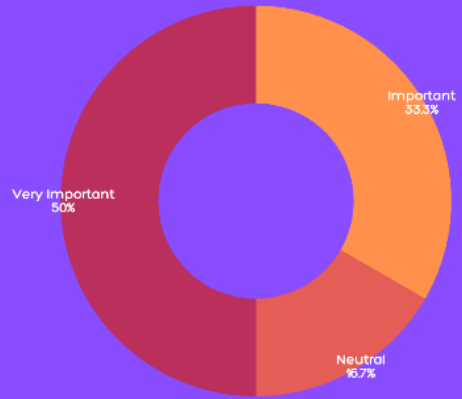
Appendix G: Pie Charts of Workshop Findings

CULTURE & IDENTITY — To feel connected to your country of origin (passport country)?
- Important 66.7%
- N/A 16.7%
- Neutral 16.7%

CULTURE & IDENTITY — To feel connected to the country(ies) you grew up in?
- Important 50%
- Very Important 16.7%
- Low Importance 16.7%
- Neutral 16.7%

CULTURE & IDENTITY — To associate with people of your cultural communities?
- Very Important 50%
- Important 16.7%
- Neutral 16.7%
- N/A 16.7%

CULTURE & IDENTITY — To feel like you belonged in your country of origin?
- Important 66.7%
- Neutral 16.7%
- Very Important 16.7%

CULTURE & IDENTITY

To find a sense of stability when immigrating to another country (Canada)?

Important 33.3%
Very Important 66.7%

CULTURE & IDENTITY

For your culture to be a part of your self-identity?

Important 33.3%
Very Important 50%
Neutral 16.7%

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

The role of language in your memories

Neutral 16.7%
Important 50%
Low Importance 33.3%

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Being able to understand and speak in your mother tongue

Very Important 16.7%
Low Importance 16.7%
Important 66.7%

LANGUAGE & CULTURE
The role of language as a connector to your culture and cultural community

Very Important
33.3%

Important
66.7%

MEMORY & IDENTITY
Memories related to your culture and cultural identity?

Important
33.3%

Very Important
66.7%

MEMORY & IDENTITY
Memories related to familial routines or ritual practices

Important
33.3%

Very Important
50%

N/A
16.7%
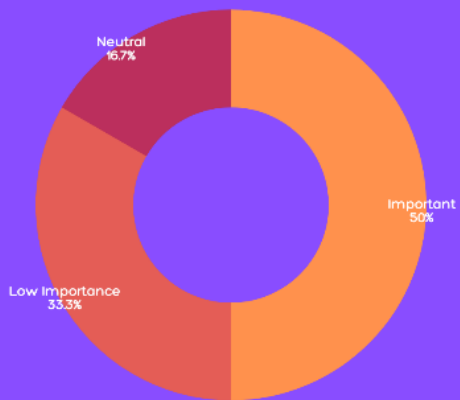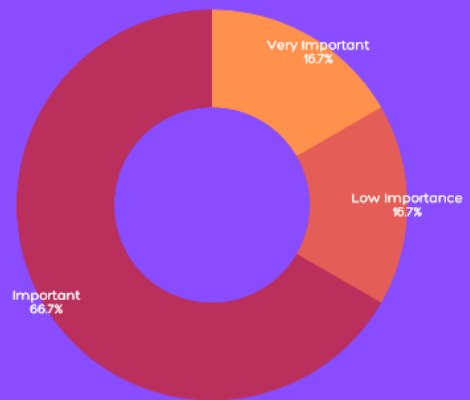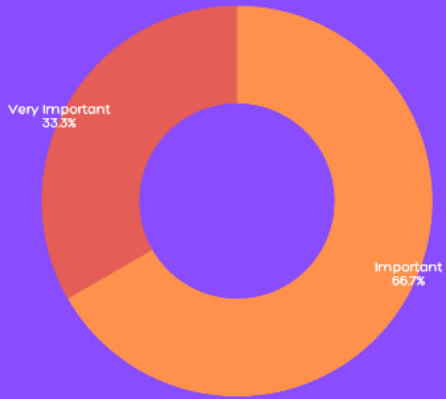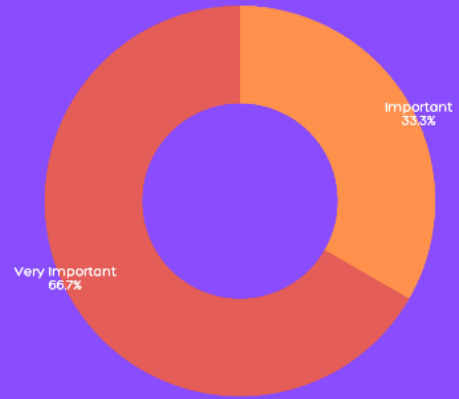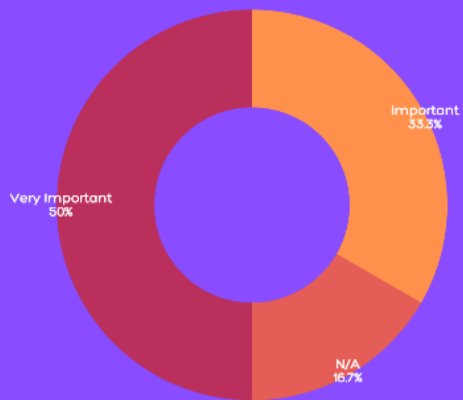
MEMORY & IDENTITY
Memories of your country of origin?

Very Important
33.3%

Important
66.7%
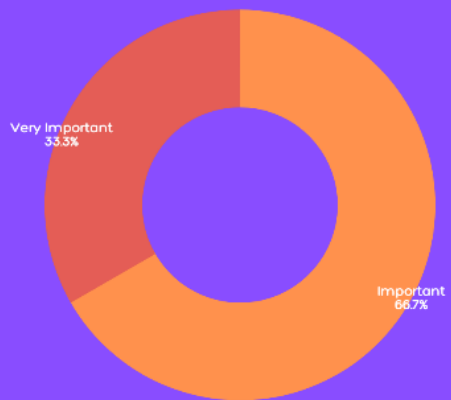
Appendix H: Written Transcript of Tiffany's Audio Narration

00:00:12

One of my most memorable spaces growing up in Hong Kong is going to this restaurant around 20 minutes away from where my family lived, called 好彩海鮮酒家 (Ho Choi Seafood Restaurant). It directly translates to lucky restaurant. In my memory, it's this really small opening from the street level and then you go up the escalator or go up these red carpets that's really unassuming from the outside and it opens up to this super grand, bright and vibrant space with a lot of fish and a lot of bustling chefs and waitresses.

00:01:00

And you know, a lot of regulars, a lot of big family dinners, a lot of older folks, grandpas and grandmas who all knew the manager there and would kind of be slipping them, playing our bills at the end of the meal, all the time.

00:01:17

Some of the smells that I can remember is the steamed fish with all the scallions and soy sauce.

00:01:29

All of the chefs coming in and out of the kitchen, all of the waiters and waitresses smelling like peanut oil and cigarettes. Back then, there was still a really big smoking culture. It's a really stressful job, so I just remember those scents kind of mixing in with the food, the sesame oil, the fried rice, the sweet and sour pork.

00:01:56

And my mom would always set up a little bed, a makeshift bed, out of two chairs for me and my siblings to nap on. When I was younger, I would always be playing with my older cousins, but when I got older I kind of got like my puberty emo phase, so I would kind of use that little napping spot as like my drawing corner or my reading corner for no one to bother me.

00:02:31

But looking back, that's one of the most memorable times for me, just because the family was always together and it didn't have to be anything profound. I think there's just such a deep sense of joy for everyone to gather and eat together. And on my mom's side of the family, everyone's like a really loud laughter. So everyone is just they're silly selves and everyone is kind of moving around the space and like kind of carousel-ing around the space to catch up with each other and there was always more to catch up on just because there would be like 30 or 40 of us every time we would have these dinners once a month.

00:03:25

So even if you were there every month, you might only be able to chat with like 10 or 15 people at that dinner. So it just felt like a big party.

00:03:38

That experience makes me feel really safe around big crowds.

Appendix I: Written Transcript of Unni's Audio Narration

00:00:01

Growing up in Oman, I used to visit my grandparents in Kerala once every year and a very strong memory for me associated with these visits to Kerala was visiting the Ayyappa temple that was like a 10 to 15 minute walk from my maternal grandparents house in Perumbavoor.

00:00:20

And this particular temple had clay lamps lined up on the external walls of the temple, and the devotees who visited the temple through the day would take part in lighting the lamps with sesame oil. So when I used to visit the temple, later in the day at say around 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, once it was a little dark, the entire temple would be lit using these sesame oil lamps and the environment of the temple itself would have the smell of this sesame oil that was lit in these clay lamps.

00:01:02

And Kerala is a tropical state, so it used to receive a lot of rainfall through the year. And this particular temple had granite stones and as a temple required you to be within it, like barefoot standing on the wet granite stone during the rainy seasons that was usually when we used to visit Kerala as well, the feeling of standing on that wet rock in amidst all these sesame oil lit lamps and the fumes that came from it just created this kind of surreal experience for me.

00:01:46

Every time I used to visit this temple and when you look up to the deity, as the deity is sitting at a higher pedestal within the sanctum sanctorum in the temple, you basically stand outside the entrance and there are multiple entrances to keep going to access the innermost sanctum, like you don't access the innermost sanctum, but till the outside of the innermost sanctum.

00:02:08

If you stand in a straight line outside the entrance, you can see the multiple levels through which you need to pass through in order to see the deity which was a very strong memory for me associated with that temple.

00:02:23

As a child, while growing up in Oman, I never used to get to visit Kerala that frequently, but whenever I went to India, to Kerala.

00:02:35

This memory of visiting the Ayyappa temple is something that stayed that that has stayed with me for a very long time.

Appendix J: Written Transcript of Esther's Audio Narration

00:00:00

Growing up in Dubai, I was able to visit Kerala a lot more frequently than I'm able to now and one of the core memories that I hold on to really dearly is having naranga (lime) soda on the road trips that we would take between my maternal grandparents' home and my paternal grandparents' home which was about a three hour long road trip.

00:00:26

I used to try and get as many stops in a single road trip as possible and I would ask my mom to make the stop, and then she would go out and ask for the lime sodas from the vendors and my siblings.

00:00:41

And I would enjoy those sometimes more than one in a certain stop, and we would also try and buy some Indian snacks from the stall as well.

00:00:51

I was so well known for loving naranga soda so much that my aunt would ask my mom whether I got my naranga soda yet and she would also go out of her way to make sure that I got my naranga soda along with my mom.

00:01:07

So it's really a cherished memory for me on many fronts. The fact there was a really delicious drink that I don't have access to anymore, the family associations with it, the fun and the excitement I felt as a child.

00:01:25

I think looking forward to that and drinking it and buying the snacks and being around my siblings, it's really something that I look forward to in the future at some point and it's something I look back on as well with a lot of fondness.