

**Pause Button Café**

By

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**Abstract**

I have always been fascinated by how space influences our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. In cafés, I observed a paradox of privacy within public spaces, where one feels both seen and anonymous. This experience inspired my exploration of the fluidity of self and hybrid identity, challenging Cartesian notions of singular identity based on the rational mind. Using Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the Third Space as a framework, my thesis examines identity as fluid and continually reshaped through interactions and space. I am creating an immersive interactive exhibition that resembles a café—a metaphor and a tangible context for the negotiation of identity. I use projections, interactive media, and objects to invite audiences to engage with the space and reflect on the multiplicity of identity. This project seeks to guide audiences toward seeing everyday spaces as liminal and fluid, encouraging them to notice the subtleties of transitional moments and inspiring new insights and identities.

Key Words: Immersive Exhibition, Interactive Installation, Experiential Space, Third Space, Hybrid Identity.

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## Introduction

I have always been fascinated by how space influences our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. As someone who frequents cafés to study and work, I find that the space can feel both social yet solitary. I often slip between visibility and concealment, exhibiting my public self while unconsciously revealing glimpses of my private self. These continuously shifting states of presence, absence, and self-awareness prompt me to question the stability of selfhood. If my sense of self differs depending on my surroundings, spatial perception, or proximity to others, then identity is not purely internal and rational but also shaped through external conditions.

Cartesian philosophy—a dominant Western framework—posits that identity is singular, rational, and self-contained (*cogito, ergo sum*), yet my fluctuating self-awareness in cafés challenges this notion of a stable, autonomous identity. Identity is continuously negotiated through spatial context and embodied interactions. Building on the fluid nature of identity, I further explore Homi K. Bhabha's writings on the Third Space as a site of identity negotiation and hybridity. I also present Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, which informs how bodily presence in space shapes identity.

To materialize these theories, I am designing an immersive interactive exhibition that uses the familiar and tangible space of a café as a metaphor. Through projection, interactive media, and textual elements, the exhibition alters spatial cues to elicit changes in space and, consequently, self-perception, encouraging audiences to reflect on

their presence within the environment. This project enables visitors to experience identity's fluidity through embodied engagement.

Interdisciplinary in nature, this thesis is positioned at the intersection of identity discourse, visual art, interactive media, and poetry. While concepts of identity fluidity, hybridity, and performativity are well-explored in theoretical contexts, my work situates these ideas within the practical framework of a café, a familiar and tangible space. By engaging audiences in an immersive experience, this work prompts viewers to recognize how spatial conditions subtly shape self-presentation and identity negotiation.

This thesis unfolds in four chapters. **Chapter 1 - Background and Research Questions** contextualizes my work by introducing the personal observations and lived experiences that shaped my interest in cafés as sites of identity negotiation. I present the research questions, including how public spaces mediate selfhood and how interactivity can reveal these transitions.

**Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework** establishes the theoretical context of this work and how they shape my creative approach. I present the Cartesian notion of a fixed, rational self and its limitations. I introduce Merleau-Ponty's idea on how identity is shaped through embodied spatial encounters, and I use Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space as a framework for understanding hybridity and negotiation. I also incorporate a case study of *Diamond Grill* by Fred Wah to contextualize and exemplify the ideas I explore in this thesis.

**Chapter 3 - Studio inspiration, Components, and Process** shifts from theory to creative practice, detailing the research-creation process and artistic strategies behind the exhibition design. I introduce Giuliana Bruno's concept of the atmosphere of projection and affective space, positioning projection and interactivity as central components of the installation. I outline the use of projection media, spatial design, and textual prompts, explaining how these elements contribute to the experience and offer viewer agency.

**Chapter 4 - Exhibition and Conclusion** documents and reflects on the exhibition, recording my experiences, observations, anecdotal accounts of audience engagement. I will conclude how this exhibition answers my research questions and potential for future development and next steps.

## **Chapter 1. Background and Research Questions**

### **1.1 Childhood Fascination**

I have always been intrigued by the relationship between my emotional experience and the spaces I inhabit. I've long been acutely aware of how different environments shape the way I feel, behave, and even think. One of my earliest memories of this connection is from when I was five years old. I would look forward to coming home from preschool and retreat into my grandparents' large closet to play. This enclosed space was perhaps my first experience of true "immersion." I was in a private space, designed and filled with dolls the way I liked. It felt completely different from running around with friends in an open playground, where I experienced a different kind of excitement. I now realize that this was the beginning of my fascination with how spaces can evoke specific feelings in me.

### **1.2 Café Experiences**

This awareness of my environment has followed me as I grew up. I remember frequently spending weekends during high school in China studying in different cafés. I would order a coffee, find a quiet corner, and do my work in silence. Yet, despite the solitude, I was constantly aware of my surroundings—of being in a public space, surrounded by others who were lost in their own thoughts, each person inhabiting their private world within the shared space of the café. This duality, of being both together and alone, public and private, fascinated me. The coffee shop was a public space filled with private people; it is a "public-private space."

Something else that stood out to me in these Chinese cafés is the shared journal, something I rarely see in Western cafés. There was always a blank journal or notebook and some colored pencils sitting on the table. People could come in and doodle, write down their thoughts and feelings, or just randomly go through the pages and see what other people had written there. Some even left comments to previous anonymous writers. I remember going through the pages of such journals and seeing so many different handwritings and content. A lot of them were for fun and seemed to be written without intentions. But occasionally, I saw very personal or sentimental writings—short, heartfelt paragraphs about stress, breakups, and sadness. Everyone who walked into the coffee shop carried themselves with a quiet confidence and composed demeanor, but the things they shared in the journal were very personal, or even vulnerable. I'm intrigued by this contrast.

### **1.3 Reflections**

In a coffee shop, I am in a public space, but I also inhabit a private emotional and mental space. This duality creates a paradox where I feel both connected and isolated, visible yet invisible, intimate yet exposed. I am intrigued by this ambiguous juxtaposition. Was I subconsciously adhering to the belief that certain spaces only necessitate a certain presentation of the self? Was I intrinsically clinging to the idea that if I am one thing, I cannot also be another simultaneously, in the same space?

Therefore, I kept returning to this notion of “Just be you.” What an empowering phrase. It gives one permission to stay authentic regardless of circumstances. But this phrase also implies that there is a singular self, that the authentic self is something to be

found, to be reached, or to be articulated in a paragraph. However, identity is not a destination, it is a process that is always in motion.

The formation of identity in Western philosophy can be traced back to Descartes' first principle, *-Cogito, ergo sum* – "I think, therefore I am". It argues a singular, rational self-rooted in the mind. This idea became prevalent in contemporary thought and was widely treated as a philosophical truth. However, other critical philosophers have shown that identity is not merely connected to the mind but deeply influenced by the body in space. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty critiques Cartesian thinking, and argues that perception is not a purely absolute intellectual process but is shaped by our bodily engagement with environment.

Building onto the fluid nature of identity, I continued to explore Homi K. Bhabha's writing on identities as he challenges the notion of fixed identity by emphasizing hybridity and fluid negotiation of self within cultural and spatial contexts. His concept is that the third space is liminal site where different cultures intersect, overlap and evolve into something new, which could serve as a theoretical foundation for my café experience of different ambiguous selves and expand my thinking to reflect over the "mix" of identities.

Through these reflections and preliminary research, it has become clear that I am wrestling with the complexity of identity's fluidity and hybridity. The paradox I observed in cafes was not actually a contradiction but rather the shifting of perception and therefore switching of identities in action in relation to the surroundings. My posture,

movements, voice, internal thoughts are shaped by my surroundings and my perception of the café's level of "exposure" versus "concealment". This perspective allowed me to observe and study my own self as it shifts across spaces and interactions, freeing me from the need to cling to a notion of an absolute, integral self, and therefore giving me more grace to accept and to become.

From here, I became deeply interested in how the fluid, hybrid, and relational nature of identity could be made tangible and accessible through artistic methods. I have noticed that many artworks that explore the relationship between this fluidity and space are abstract and conceptual, and those that specifically concretize hybridity are rare. Therefore, I decided to contextualize this phenomenon within a relatable everyday space — a café — to externalize the internal process of identity in motion in this space. I decided to use an embodied exhibition as a medium to guide introspection and to encourage reflections on the invisible and often ambiguous relationship between space, the body, and identity as they often lead to new understanding of self. Ambiguity, rather than a limitation, becomes a starting point for dialogue. This exhibition acts as a "pause button," offering a moment to reflect on relationships with the environment, others, and identity, carrying these insights into daily life. Based on these reflections, I developed the following research questions to guide my exploration.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How does the public-private space of a café embody the concept of the Third Space, and how does this reflect the negotiation of hybrid identity?



2. How can I make the internal process of shifting or remixing between different selves explicit through creative practice?

3. How can I encourage reflections in this exhibition?

## Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework for my work. I start with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's critique of Descartes' *Meditations* and introduce how identity is rooted in bodily awareness and shaped by spatial contexts. I then introduce Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space, which explains hybridity and the negotiation of self in cultural and spatial interactions. These theoretical perspectives provide context for how I frame the café and my exhibition as a site for experiencing fluid identities.

### 2.1 Descartes

In Western philosophy, Descartes' *Cogito* deciphers identity as a singular, timeless essence rooted in rational thought, disconnected from the body and environment. In Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the Second Meditation, he argues that the only thing he can be certain of is his own existence because even if he doubts that everything is an illusion, the act of doubting itself proves that he is a thinking being. He believes that while his senses and the physical world could be deceptive, his ability to think cannot be doubted. This leads him to conclude that the mind is more certain than the body and that the two are distinct:

For since I have now learned that bodies themselves are perceived not, strictly speaking, by the senses or by the imaginative faculty, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived because they are touched or seen, but only because they are understood, I clearly realize [cognosco] that nothing can be perceived by me more easily or more clearly than my own mind (Descartes 24).

In the Sixth Meditation, Descartes expands on the distinction between mind and body, asserting that they differ fundamentally in nature.

I observe here that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, in this respect, that the body of its nature is endlessly divisible, but the mind completely indivisible: for certainly, when I consider the mind, or myself in so far as I am purely a thinking thing, I can distinguish no parts in myself but understand myself to be a thing that is entirely one and complete (Descartes 61).

He is also skeptical of sensory experience, believing that perception is unreliable: "I have grown accustomed to perverting the order of nature, because I use sensory perceptions ... as if they were reliable criteria for immediately discerning the essence of bodies existing outside us. Of this, however, they signify nothing, except in very obscure and confused fashion (Descartes 59).

The distinction between mind and body reinforces Descartes' claim that selfhood is rooted in rational thought rather than bodily existence.

## **2.2 Merleau-Ponty**

As Merleau-Ponty writes, "The Cartesian doctrine of the Cogito... leads logically to the assertion of the timelessness of mind, and to the acceptance of a consciousness of the eternal" (433). This view implies that identity is self-contained. The framework constrains identity formation, framing it as absolute and detached from other lived experience. Merleau-Ponty argues a perspective in return and states that "Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action... must itself be apprehended at the

very moment at which it is carried out” (432), suggesting that self-consciousness is active and relational, constructed in the moment of engagement rather than an eternal entity as positioned by Descartes.

Perception is an embodied experience. “Our body... is inseparable from a view of the world and is that view itself brought into existence” (Merleau-Ponty 451). Rather than the rational mind existing independently of the world, embodied interactions also influence consciousness and identity. The selfhood formation is fluid and open-ended; its formation could not be formulated with a single source. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on bodily interaction with physical space shows how identity could form through our engagement with the tangible world. This idea of relationality could expand beyond the specificity of a physical location to abstract sites or states that are difficult to define.

### **2.3 Homi K. Bhabha**

Homi K. Bhabha is known for his concepts of hybridity and the Third Space within postcolonial contexts. While his theories are focused on culture and race, their foundational principles provide a framework for understanding the fluid and relational nature of identity in everyday experiences. My thesis adopts these theories to frame and understand selfhood in daily shared spaces.

#### **2.3.1 Liminal Spaces**

In the beginning of my café experience reflection, the public and private state of a space is a paradox. But Bhabha highlights that boundaries can be generative rather than restrictive and elaborates on the idea of liminality. Instead of still and fixed boundaries, liminal spaces allow for fluidity, hybridity, and growth:

a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white ... this interstitial passage ... opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha 5).

Liminal spaces are transitional zones where elements interact to produce something new that is neither one nor the other. In my thesis, the café serves as a metaphorical liminal space, where public and private, visible and invisible, introspective and social states overlap. Bhabha's notion of unhomeliness refers to a state of being that feels both familiar and unfamiliar, disrupting clear distinctions between private and public spheres and creating ambiguity. "To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (13). This ambiguity disrupts the absolute of invisibility and visibility, creating an experience where "the private and the public become part of each other" (13). In this sense, like the liminal stairwell, the café could be viewed as a generative space for selfhood.

### **2.3.2 Identity and Performativity**

Bhabha's work "has a lot to do with a kind of fluidity, a movement back and forth, not making a claim to any specific or essential way of being" (Bhabha 4). And by rejecting the fixed, one welcomes new possibilities for self-creation. "In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom" (Bhabha 12).

Bhabha also mentions the iterative “performativity” of identity: “there is a return to the performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration.” (Bhabha 12)

Performativity provides a lens to understand how individuals adapt and re-negotiate their identities in shared spaces. The café is a site where public and private selves are performed and adapted in response to spatial and social situations.

#### **2.4 Café as the Third Space**

Bhabha conceptualizes the Third Space as an abstract, in-between zone where cultural identities come together and create transformation. “It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (55). In the Third Space, cultural symbols and identities are “reinterpreted, hybridized, and rehistoricized” (Bhabha 55). The third space frees one from the need to adhere to an integral self and embrace multiplicity. “By exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves” (56).

For my exhibition, I frame the café as a metaphorical Third Space. “Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy” (Bhabha 19). I often feel caught in between the hyper – self-aware public performance and focused private introspection. This constant movement of selves overlaps and reshapes them in relation to one another. My creative objective is to make the relational and ambiguous nature of identity formation visible. By doing so, I aim to offer discourse

and reflection on fluid identities in daily contexts, freeing individuals from the pressure to conform to an ultimate self.

### **2.5 *Diamond Grill* by Fred Wah as a Case Study**

I use *Diamond Grill* by Fred Wah to exemplify how a café, or a regular site, can be viewed from the perspective of the third space. *Diamond Grill* is a bio-text that talks about themes surrounding identity and cultural hybridity through the lens of Wah's experience and family life. The stories told surround the Diamond Grill – Wah's family's Chinese Café in Nelson, British Columbia. Wah writes about his family life and his daily interactions experienced inside and outside of the Diamond Grill, and these stories reflect his ChineseHYPHENCanadian identity. Diamond Grill is an "in between" space where Wah observes the blending, conflicting, and overlapping of identities. The mixing of food, space, compounded language, and fragmented storytelling inspires my creative output. This book provides a contextual foundation and narrative inspiration for my work.

The café Diamond Grill can be viewed as an embodiment of the Third Space. The café is a physical manifestation of Wah's Chinese-Canadian heritage, blending Chinese food, culture with the Canadian small town. "Diamond Grill is a rich banquet where Salisbury Sandwich shares a menu with chicken fried rice, bird's nest soup sets the stage for Christmas plum pudding." (Back Cover of *Diamond Grill*) Apart from the apparent blending of food and culture, the café is also a site that blends the shared and the personal. The café is a shared space where Wah observes and interacts with customers

and performs roles as a public facing waiter. At the same time, Diamond Grill is also a personal space of family memory and cultural reflection:

Whenever I open up for him (so he can sleep in) early morning's dark eternal neon Wurlitzer shadowing the empty booths detonates with kicking the kitchen door a starting-pistol crack all through the café I know I'm both only me and all of me at full stride up the aisle with clean cotton coffee-filter sacks and an arm-load of saucers echoed ache of brass plate in my leg eternal, ready Freddy, open up with a good swift toe to the wooden slab that swings between the Occident and Orient to break the hush of the whole café before first light the rolling gait with which I ride this silence that is a hyphen and the hyphen is the door. (Wah, 16)

"I know I'm both only me and all of me" reflects Wah's awareness of both his individuality and his interconnectedness with family and culture. The metaphor of the swinging door as a "hyphen" between different spaces -- the kitchen and dining area, the Occident and Orient, symbolizes that he finds meaning in the movement between two worlds rather than accepting fixed cultural definitions.

Wah's identity also shifts when he is inside a Chinese café and outside of it.

The food, the names, the geography, the family history—the filated dendritia of myself displayed before me. I can't escape, and don't want to, for a moment.

Being there, in Lawrence's kitchen, seems one of the surest places I know. But then after we've exchanged our mutual family news and I've eaten a wonderful dish of tofu and vegetables, back outside, on the street, all my ambivalence gets



covered over, camouflaged by a safety net of class and colourlessness—the racism within me that makes and consumes that neutral (white) version of myself, that allows me the sad privilege of being, in this white world, not the target but the gun (Wah 138)

Lawrence's kitchen represents a private, personal, safe and comfortable space where Wah feels momentary belonging, it is "one of the surest places" he knows. But when he goes outside this place, his internal view on himself transitioned and gets camouflaged.

"The door clangs and rattles a noisy hyphen between the muffled winter outside and the silence of the warm and waiting kitchen inside". (Wah, 176) The hyphen is noisy. It is not static or neutral; instead, it is active and full of forces. "It's noisy—sometimes transparent, sometimes opaque—space feels nurturing. Its collational and mediating potentiality offers real engagement, not as a centre but as a provocateur of flux, floating, fleeting." (Wah, 179) The complexity of the hyphen's space, sometimes transparent, straightforward while other times opaque and obscured, makes it nurturing. It is a force that disrupts stability and encourages possibilities for negotiation and growth. The hyphen leads to the understanding that identity is not about resolving tensions but about existing within them, allowing Wah to accept the hard-to-define forms of his cultural identity.

## **Chapter 3 Studio Inspiration, Components, and Process**

### **3.1 Immersive Experiential Space – A Café as a Metaphor**

The idea of creating an embodied immersive experiential space for this project followed naturally. Merleau-Ponty's framework of body and perception reaffirms my choice of creating an embodied experience. Back to those café experiences, I was enveloped and influenced by the air, the ambiance, the wholeness - the atmosphere of those cafés. The embodiment within a space affects and transforms my internal being. I knew that it would make the most sense for me to recreate a space and its atmosphere for my audience. As Giuliana Bruno's writing on Wong Kar-Wai's cinematic atmosphere states: "Atmosphere, that is, is an affect. It is a subtle psychic environment that also engages the formation and transformation of mood. Here it is a fleeting state of becoming" (30). Hence, I am creating an experiential space — a metaphorical café. A café that is a liminal, third space. I will explain in this chapter all the elements I use to create this café, including projection, interactivity, graphic design, prompts, etc. and how I provide viewer agency.

### **3.2 Projection**

Projection is a major element in my exhibition. Immersive projection is an embodied experience; I use this medium to highlight Merleau-Ponty's concept of relational perception by engaging the body with the space. This choice of artistic medium is reaffirmed by visual art scholar Giuliana Bruno's idea of projection as a medium of connection, weaving together space, objects, body, and affect. According to Bruno, projection is relational, it is a passageway and a transformative site. Projection

has the potential to visualize the subtle interplay between the exterior and the interior. I use this quality to facilitate the understanding of the identity transition in my café.

“Projection investigate how relational dynamics come into being, and especially come to be mediated, thus enacting potential transformation.” (Bruno, 21) Projection here is conceptualized as an active relational process, not an isolated visual component. “Mediation is a process that intermingles and integrates screens, technology, and bodies... creating planes of connection and surfaces of communication” (Bruno 24). Projection mediates relationships between subjects, objects, and spaces, acting as a medium for discovering connections and transformations.

Beyond the physical, projection bridges affective and sensory connections. Bruno emphasizes that affect, or emotion, is experienced through the body in interaction with space. “Rather than locating affect within the body or originating in it, I emphasize the processual relation between motion and emotion in space. Psychic projection here is rethought in terms of the movement and circulation of affects between and through bodies and the body of things.” (63). Projection is an ongoing process that strengthens relationships. In my café, I use projection not only for visual display but also as a mediating medium that is closely connected to the overall space and visually reinforces the connections between space and perception.

Bruno further proposes that the projection screen creates, and is, a milieu. “an atmosphere of transformative energies inhabited by the intermixture of persons and things. The art of projection thus unfolds as a real space: the hybrid and fluid matter of

connections between subjects and technical objects that creates an environment.” (27)

In my project, this relational quality echoes the responsive negotiation between different elements within the café. Projection brings the internal to the surface by mediating these transitions. “Such basic mediation between subjects, objects, and spaces...produces a field of imaginative relations that are “infrasensible realities.” (Bruno 24) The term “infrasensible” resonates with me because it is what I am attempting to draw attention to. “Infrasensible” implies to be below the threshold of sensory perception- something that is not overtly perceptible but could deeply influence how we perceive and imagine the world.

Projection is an artistic medium that helps me externalize the abstract and ambiguous aura of internal transition. In my exhibition, projection creates a dynamic environment where the projection itself and the bodies within its reach form silent “planes of connection and surfaces of communication” (Bruno 24).

### **3.3 Atmosphere and Ambiance**

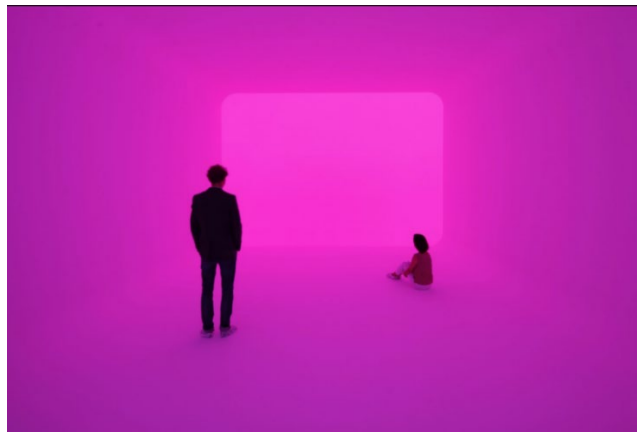
The atmosphere is the sensory and emotional manifestation of projection’s relationality. Projection “involves a subtle process of movement, transmitting material relations between bodies and the bodies of things in an ambiance that is itself a receptive environment” (Bruno 64). This motion connects people to the space and to one another. Furthermore, one’s interaction with the space may also influence the atmosphere. Atmosphere “results not simply from the co-presence of the subject with the material world but also from his or her interaction with that world” (Bruno 30).

Affect plays an important role in exploring interior and exterior perceptions and consequently, identities. It is “a pervasive mood, an atmosphere,” which “can reciprocally connect the subject to the environment in receptive ways” (Bruno 64). Through different ambiances, the café shifts in mood and perception, providing viewers with an experiential opportunity to observe the changing state of self.

Light is a vital force in shaping the atmosphere. Projected light is a modulator of mood, perception, and space. Bruno states that “the light of projection does not simply coexist with the image but rather produces it, forging a plane of moving images and modulating the sensible world in its own rhythm” (39). Considerations of projected visuals need to extend beyond the content to include the light they emit and how that could shape the ambiance. “Projected light creates moving, tangible experiences of ambient transformation” (Bruno 41).

James Turrell’s works exemplify how light can shape perception and evoke contemplative emotion. Turrell is a globally recognized master of light art. His installations often “investigate the intersections of light, space, and human perception” (Gimmy 102). His installations, such as *Ganzfeld*, use light as a medium of experience rather than a tool to reveal objects. Turrell “defies the modern obsession with the direct or focused light that illuminated an otherwise darkened space so that we can see objects clearly and distinctly.” (Kosky “Contemplative Recovery” 44) His work demonstrates how light and color alone can shape perception and evoke emotions, turning spaces into experiences. For example, his use of color fields and spacious immersive environments

creates a specific contemplative mood, encouraging viewers to reflect on their relationship with the environment. “The aesthetic vision can be understood as the heir to contemplation.” (Kosky “Contemplative Recovery” 44) His artistic philosophy, describing light as “not so much something that reveals as it is itself the revelation” (Kosky “Contemplative Recovery” 48) inspires my approach to use light and color to create contemplative atmospheres that cultivate reflection.



**Figure 1.** James Turrell, *Passage of Light*, 2019, Museo Jumex, Mexico City.

Photo by Florian Holzherr.



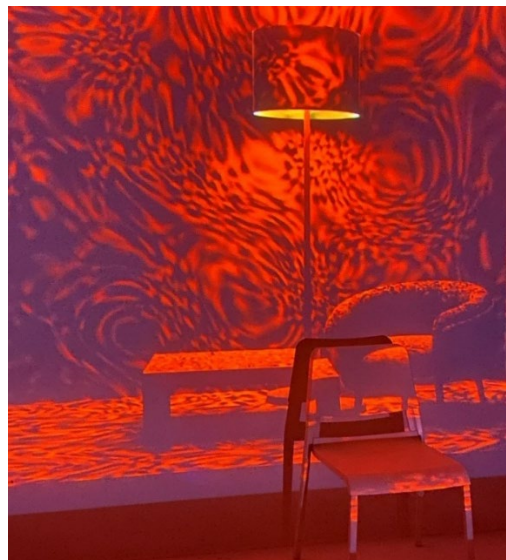
**Figure 2.** James Turrell, *Passage of Light*, 2019, Museo Jumex, Mexico City.

Photo by Florian Holzherr.

Since my primary focus is on externalizing the transition between perceptions of public and private zones, I am creating an ambiance that elicits these associations by modulating the projected light. In my experimentation, I modified the colors, patterns, movement, and brightness of the same visual — a room — to observe and experience the different ambiance it creates when projected.



**Figure 3.** Projection test of ambiance — blue atmosphere.



**Figure 4.** Projection test of ambiance — red atmosphere.



**Figure 5.** Projection test of ambiance — white atmosphere.

Each atmospheric version of my projection varies in colors, brightness, and intensity of patterns, to influence how the space is perceived and experienced. Bright colors and subtle textures evoke exposure and a sense of public, collective association, encouraging awareness of others. In contrast, dim tones and more intense patterns create a feeling of intimacy and isolation. The visuals impacted my own posture and sense of privacy while being in the projected space. The atmospheric shifts externalize and evoke internal transitions, creating opportunities for various perceptions of the same space. Bruno writes that “a change of atmosphere can not only affect people, marking their views, imaginations, and memories, but also produce different outlooks and projective regimes as well as forms of representation.” (29) Atmosphere has the power to shape outlooks and representations, marking transitions. To communicate these transitions, I designed three versions of atmospheric visuals for projection: one representing the private, one for the public, and one for the ambiguous in-between state. This design is an accessible visualization that conveys the message, avoiding unnecessary complexity.



While researching James Turrell's use of color, I came across *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity*. A passage titled *Cherishing the Blue* inspired my color choices. Rebecca Solnit's description of blue in *The Blue of Distance* portrays it as light that "does not travel the whole distance from the sun to us... the light that does not touch us," (Kosky "Arts of Wonder" 136) evoking a sense of internal longing and untouchable beauty. Leonardo in his teaching says, "make the first building . . . of its own color; the next most distant make less outlined and more blue; that which you wish to show at yet another distance make bluer yet again." (Kosky "Arts of Wonder" 138), symbolizing distance and mystery. Turrell expresses that his use of blue brings the viewers closer to the ungraspable. (Kosky "Arts of Wonder" 138) Blue is distant from the clear and certain external world and instead absorbs attention inward. Through my experimentation, I have come to view blue as a profound and mysterious color, one that evokes intimacy and interiority. By using a very dark shade of blue with reduced brightness, I create an atmosphere of isolation and introspection, reflecting a private state.

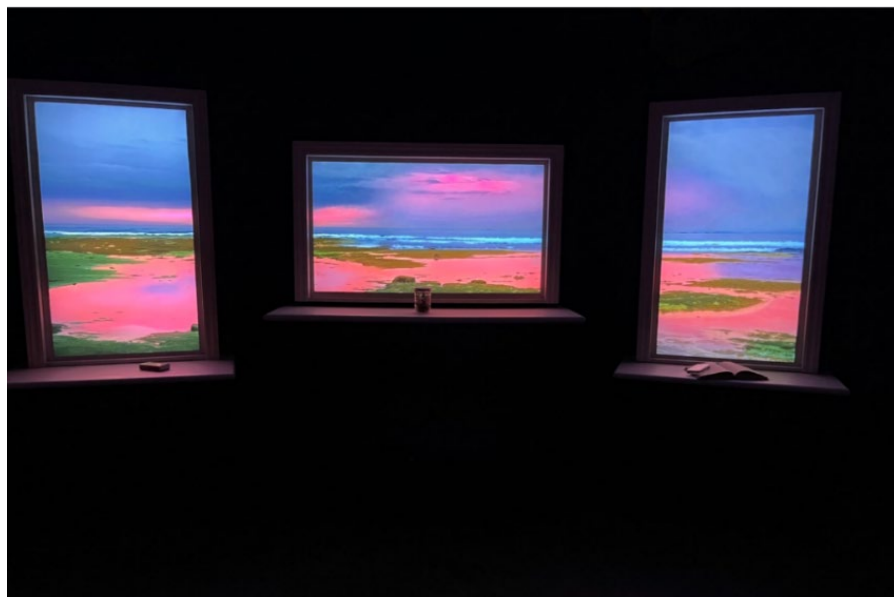
In contrast, the passage critiques white light as "not very beautiful" due to its neglect of the "lost blue," but it acknowledges white as "full or direct illumination," (Kosky "Arts of Wonder" 136) bringing clarity, solidity, and definition. White light makes objects appear "solid and stable", "clear and distinct". I decided to use white for the public association in projection. White's stability and clarity imply a sense of certainty and connection to reality, symbolizing visibility and engagement with the external world. Referencing these symbolic associations, I used the distant, intimate blue for the "private atmosphere" and the clear and stable white for the "public atmosphere".

### 3.4 Interactivity

I decided to add interactive elements in my exhibition. It is important to incorporate direct interaction between people and the atmospheres to highlight the immediacy of relationality, and to bring more autonomy to viewers. The immersive interactive installation - *Bell Orchestre Sound House*, is an example and inspiration for viewer-atmosphere interactivity. Sound House is a multi-participant, interactive audiovisual installation that connects visitors to music pieces created by the Montreal band *Bell Orchestre*. The house is designed to resemble a country chalet where the band members lived and recorded their music. The space is created by placing furniture and sentimental artifacts around the room, such as wooden tables and chairs, flowers and vases, candles and candle holders, telephone, mini-sculptures, cassette tapes, etc. In addition, there were three screens that were made to look like windows and so their displays look like window views. Visitors interact with the space by rearranging the placement of objects to set off music sequences and screen displays. By manipulating the placement of objects, the participants are remixing and composing in real time and thus alter the mood of the space. The interaction also results in changes in the window screen, displaying weather changes or season shifts etc. The installation recontextualize the band's music by connecting it with a physical and emotional space. The viewers play an active role as co-composers and directly react and shape the unique audiovisual output.



**Figure 6.** *Bell Orchestre Sound House*. Envision Management and Production, 2024, Société des arts technologiques, Montréal.



**Figure 7.** *Bell Orchestre Sound House*. Envision Management and Production, 2024, Société des arts technologiques, Montréal.

I find common elements between this embodied installation and my intent. Sound House situates the experience within a familiar and specific environment — a country chalet, creating a personal and relatable atmosphere. The changes of

atmosphere are closely tied to the visitor's interactions. The cues that trigger transitions are subtle. The affective space encourages organic viewer agency, encouraging ever-changing experiences and interpretations.

How can participants influence my café's atmosphere and therefore change the affect or experience? I started to think about some cues in a café that indicates transition from a public space to a private space and vice versa. My first thought is our voices. The volume of voice, the duration of voice. Voice is an intimate element of a person. Most often, when a person decides to make a sound, the voice breaks the silence and instantly turns a solitary zone into a shared zone. When a person is ready to use their voice, they are triggering a subtle shift in themselves. Hearing someone else's voice, whether distinct or faint, serves as a reminder of the context they are in. I chose to use the sound of viewers to trigger my projection, activating different versions and influencing the atmosphere.

Using Touch Designer, I programmed the volume capture into three levels—low, medium, and high, to trigger different versions of animation. Low volume triggers the private version, medium volume triggers the in-between version, and high volume triggers the public version. The higher the volume, the brighter the space. The lower the volume, the darker the space. The ambiance of the room is directly affected by what is happening in the café, externalizing the relational dynamics.

Another cue associated with the body is our motion. Our body's movements reflect internal states. Physical gestures like sitting down, getting up, staying still,

walking, waving, etc. might signify the breaking out of a zone. I use motion capture as a trigger in the café to visualize the breaking of internal zones. I drew images of café cups and projected them at life size onto the wall, with the camera placed discreetly. The interaction was programmed to change the images' transparency based on movement detected. When no movement is detected, the visuals would be completely transparent, meaning nothing would show up on the wall. When movement is detected near the camera, the visuals would softly appear briefly or become clearer depending on the duration and intensity of the motion. This serves as a metaphor for the transition between zones — when the coffee images appear, it is a reminder that one is in a café; when the images disappear, the space could mean something else for different people. When the motion is subtle or unclear, the image appears opaque or flickering, showing the unclear boundaries of this space, signifying an inbetweenness.

At this stage, the sound and motion triggers react directly to viewers and therefore the atmosphere shift is solely dependent on the viewers. I decided to subtly facilitate the interaction as a creator by embedding ambient café sounds that play periodically into the experience. The sound mix consists of coffee machine sounds, casual chatter, typing etc. that plays every five minutes as a “forced” and unexpected reminder, disrupting the immersion and “snapping” viewers back into the public reality of the café. The recurring audio also serves as an indicator of the passage of time. Time is central to identity recognition. We are able to recognize and experience our shifting

roles as time passes. This periodic “sound clock” may also create a sense of closure for viewers, marking the exhibition experience’s conclusion after a few cycles.

### 3.5 The Door

Giuliana Bruno conceptualizes projection as a doorway that mediates between inside and outside, creating a connection between the two and enabling a passage that changes ambiance (Bruno 28). The projective screen acts as an in-between place, creates a passageway between interior and exterior, and between physical site and sensory affective space. Projection is “a vehicle for crossing border walls between self and other, subject and object” (Bruno 63).

The door is a recurring symbol in liminal spaces, linking and separating — symbolizing thresholds and transitions. The door metaphor resonates with common sentiments as a graspable element regarding the inbetweenness. It is a central metaphor in *Diamond Grill*, where “the hyphen is the door.”

To further enhance the symbolism of the door and the passageway that it creates, I made the content of the projection as a café’s “window view”. Like doors, windows embody liminality, offering both connection and separation. The café’s large transparent windows both connect and divide the public and private. Ambiance changes in the window-view projection visualize the blending of the internal and external, the real and imagined, the private and public. The window-view projection creates visual passages between these zones, providing viewers with the opportunity to interpret the inbetweenness.

### 3.6 Visual Identity

All the previous ideas need to be supported by a compelling visual identity. Although my café is a metaphorical, non-commercial space, it still requires a relatable and appealing visual identity to attract my audience and convey the positioning and atmosphere before entry. What kind of “branding” is appropriate for this café and the messages it aims to elicit?

I come back to one of my first inspirations: the Chinese cafés I visited. Most of these cafés are very quiet, non-corporate spaces, with interiors that are simple and cozy, resembling a corner of a living room. The shared journals on the tables were often accompanied by ink pens, colored pencils, or crayons. These journals serve as tools to break down the barriers of the public persona, quietly inviting participation.

The atmosphere keywords I’ve chosen are casual, cozy, warmth, playful, chill, and nostalgia. I’ve decided to feature handwritten typefaces, loose illustrations, imperfect lines, and casual names, mimicking the vibe from those journals. This café is a fantasy place that inspires introspection, a corner for reflection, and a place to share. The sense of playfulness and lightheartedness evokes ease without overly specifying the intention.

I named the café the *Pause Button Café*. Pause suggests pausing to observe and reflect, while button conveys a sense of action-taking, a conscious effort to savor this pause. Pause Button captures the idea of stepping out of life’s busyness and entering a liminal space to rest, experience, and reflect. It also symbolizes the pause and ponder we need in this café and other spaces, to notice the subtle shifts in ourselves. The Pause

Button metaphor is familiar and memorable. The name conveys the general vibes of the space upon entering and reflecting the purpose of this café.

I've chosen a hand-drawn illustration style, supported by handwritten typefaces. The style mimics crayon doodles and messages left in journals. I also included a modern font for the logo and headlines for balance, preventing the overall theme from feeling too casual and disconnected from a contemporary urban context. The overall color palette and style evoke a sense of retro nostalgia while remaining relevant to a contemporary context for my visitors.



**Figure 8.** Illustrations for *Pause Button café*.

The logo design features a hand-drawn coffee cup, where the latte art forms a pause button. Additionally, I've incorporated a start button into the letter "o" of the word "button." While the "pause button" suggests rest and reflection, the "play button" implies renewal and progress. This reflects the philosophy of the space — to invite



viewers to pause and become aware of shifting identities, leaving with a new understanding of the self, creating possibilities for new perspectives.



**Figure 9.** Logo design for *Pause Button Café*.

### 3.7 Prompts

Regarding my third research question, how can I encourage more reflections, or provide more guides to my audience without being overly apparent? Through prompts. Prompts introduce a sense of intention, offering subtle hints and a textual element to the exhibition.

What kind of prompt should I write? How can I maintain the aura of the subtlety and ambiguity that I am exploring? I started to look for inspiration from my inner dialogue — moments of heightened self-awareness and reflection while transitioning between different selves in cafés. I've written short passages describing these inner moments.

/

*I've come to the café to study again. I'm sitting in a solo seat facing the wall by the large storefront window overlooking the street. I can faintly hear people chatting and typing*

*next to me. I started reading at 2:00pm and it was 3:19pm when I stopped to check the time. It feels like I can only achieve focused reading outside in a public space — with other people. There are so many distractions at home, my body is overly relaxed, and my mind likes to roam just a little too freely. I seem to need extra willpower to achieve the same efficiency. An open environment somehow provides constraints for my attention and my body. Or maybe it's the limits on my body first that lead to a focused mind. Perhaps it's other people that constrain me, or perhaps it's the atmosphere. Or maybe it's everything! Anyway, the afternoon sunlight is beautiful, time to keep reading...*

*II*

*I used to think that introspection was a highly independent and private act, focused on an awareness of one's inner self. But it seems that seemingly insignificant strangers and shared spaces can inspire self-exploration. There are interactions between us even when there aren't interactions—through shared spaces, eye contact, or simply physical proximity. Introspection could gain strength within a group. We understand ourselves more deeply through the collective.*

Building on this kind of inner dialogue, once again I reference *Diamond Grill*.

Many passages in Wah's writing demonstrate the subtle, interior action of reflection. The book reveals how everyday activities and environments prompt reflections on identity.

"The book favours the symbiosis of the serial poem over the narrativity of the novel"

(Wah 185). Its fragmented storytelling reflects the organic, sporadic, and situational

aspect of introspection. Wah uses compounded language to form short, often one-page chapters, to provide anecdotal snapshots of his memories and reflections on the “inbetweenness” and the complexities of being Chinese and Scandinavian. Each of these chapters tell a fraction of the bigger picture without following a timeline or settled plot.

For me, the inner voices are not linear, plotted narratives but fragmented ones as well. Each fragment contributes to a more developed understanding of self. To imitate this, I chose to hide prompts within posters and menus. From afar, they appear to be ordinary posters or menus, revealing themselves upon closer reading. Encountering the hidden prompts offers the viewers a chance to transition from casual engagement with a familiar object to a different theme.



**Figure 10.** Poster design sketch with prompts.

I am also inspired by Wah’s writing style — compounding words, run-on sentences, and unconventional sentence structures.

The voices from up there or behind the curtain are hot-tempered, powerful, challenging, aggressive, bickering, accusatory, demeaning, bravado, superstitious, bluffing, gossipy, serious, goading, letting off steam, ticked off, fed up, hot under the collar, hungry for company, hungry for language, hungry for luck, edgy. (Wah 111)

Thus: a kind of heterocellular recovery reverberates through the busy body, from the foot against that kitchen door on up the leg into the torso and hands, eyes thinking straight ahead, looking through doors and languages, skin recalling its own reconnaissance, cooked into the steamy food, replayed in the folds of elsewhere, always far away, tunneling through the centre of the earth, mouth saying can't forget, mouth saying what I want to know can feed me, what I don't can bleed me (Wah 1).

Wah's style dislodges the privilege of the complete sentence (Wah 185), and in doing so, creates a sense of openness and fluidity. Since perception is highly personal, I decided to reference Wah's flowing styles and incorporate sensory and associative language into my prompts to invite readers to fill in the gaps. Writing in continuous motion also imitates the immediacy of the thought process. Here I view the text as a flowing animation of the mind. Externalization can be not only visual and sensory, but also textual.

My prompts for *Pause Button Café* include short inquisitive questions, inner dialogue passages, and reflective excerpts from the book and readings. These prompts offer a sense of intention to viewers and set a mood for introspection.

I

*The bubbles of the latte milk froth pop up sporadically, rhythmically, the foam and coffee twirl and swirl until finally settling still. The cup touches the table and turns from the center of attention to the background of the keyboard that is now the hero. Fingers moving smoothly, continuously, aggressively, with determination borrowed from the room of people and machines, until suddenly the fingers stuck, caught between the bedside table and the window stool. The latte starts bubbling again, the machine starts humming again, the people's voices start rising again, and the urge to sit up straight comes back haunting again.*

II

*Eyes just opened.*

*Between the warmth of comfort and the cold winter air is one hand lifting up the cover.*

*Between a relaxed body and a motor in action is one sit-up of the torso and two feet landing on the slippers.*

*Today's two-minute auto-toothbrush cycle is longer than yesterday's two-minute auto-toothbrush cycle.*

*Today's door is heavier than yesterday's door.*

*Cold wind hits the face, it's time to start the day.*

*Between the cold wind and the steam wand's heat is the heavy wooden door with an  
OPEN sign.*

*So many black coats in one room, I should have worn black.*

*But a white coat is good. I stand out.*

*Clearing my throat a little before ordering because people are going to hear my voice.*

*Also, because I have to raise my voice, to compete with the espresso machine.*

*It's uncomfortable to raise my voice,*

*in the early mornings or on any other occasions.*

*So many eyes on me yet no eyes are on me.*

*I see so many black coats but only up to the collars.*

*But if I'm with my friends I would only see above the collars.*

*Let me challenge myself and look above one of the collars.*

*And smile.*



Figure 11. Printed and framed poster design.

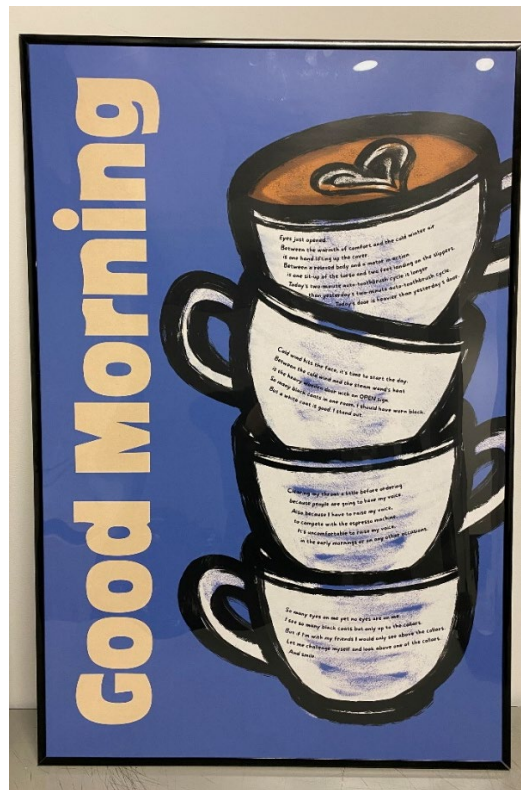


Figure 12. Printed and framed poster design.

### 3.8 Projected Journal

Since the shared journals in those Chinese cafés serve as one of my biggest inspirations of this thesis and embodies the theme, I am including them in the *Pause Button Café*. However, instead of providing a notebook in the space for the audience to leave comments, I decided to make it part of the visual output. I decided to make a projected journal —a journal whose content was emphasized through light. Projection makes this daily element the center of attention. The light, apparent in the darker environment, draws special focus to this piece. Projected writings grow in size, becoming more exposed, becoming a slide show of countless stories. This projected journal conveys a sense of anonymous yet shared existence. It is a manifestation of the viewer's input, making them co-creators of their exhibition experience.

At first, I had this vision of making this journal a digital input, so the inputs could be programmed and displayed together or be animated to form a floating word cloud that is the visual representation of “mixing”. But as my work progressed, as the tone and mood were set, and after all the elements started to come together, I find it more suitable to return to the low-tech, original form of writing-by hand. Handwritten notes retain the personal and unique individual characteristics, unlike digital input which erases unique personal traces. The act of picking up a pen and writing letter by letter slows down the process of expression and allows for a more deliberate engagement, which is a literal moment of pause.

I referenced my previous work where I made a slideshow presentation for my nightmare themes illustration series. I printed my drawings on transparent film paper



and connected them together to form a lamp cover. By placing a single light source in the center, I was able to project those drawings on the wall. The paper lamp rotates and thus each piece of drawing is playing like a film frame. The entire structure created an ambiance and where the light reaches were all part of this atmospheric space. The viewers were able to view the drawings while being submerged in the ambiance. This approach suits my intent of “exposing” the content of journal writing while also visualizing the internal subtle energy these contents produce through the ambiance of projection and through the encounter of space and people.



**Figure 13.** *Nightmare Journal Slide Show.* 2022.

For *Pause Button Café*, I decide to leave small pieces of transparent film paper and sharpies in the space to leave notes. I set up a projection structure — a document camera connected to a projector, so participants could place written paper underneath

the document camera and have their writings projected onto the wall. The use of transparent film paper allows the writings to overlay and compound, creating a 2D word cloud. The small pieces of notes can be piled up and rearranged freely to be projected together, erasing direct ownership, offering potential for new narratives. The design physically represents the act of “mixing” narratives and reflecting hybridity. The “exposed” and overlaying notes highlight the relational qualities where each previous note has the potential to subtly influence other participants’ output. This projection journal emphasizes immediacy and visibility, turning individual contributions into part of a collective display. The audience are co-creators of the narratives and experiences.

## Chapter 4 Exhibition and Conclusion

### 4.1 Exhibition

*Pause Button Café* exhibition took place from April 3rd to April 7th, 2025, at the Experimental Media Space at OCAD University's Graduate Building. The space was an enclosed cubic room with white walls and was transformed into a dimly lit, intimate environment resembling a small café. The projected window view controlled the ambiance of the café. There were tables, chairs, and floor cushions to provide seating. The interior was decorated with ten large coffee posters and jars filled with ground coffee to provide the smell of coffee. The room created a sense of enclosure, briefly separating itself from the outside and offering a moment to pause.



**Figure 14.** View of installation showing projected window view and visitor seating.



**Figure 15.** View of installation showing projected window view and visitor seating.

Over the course of five days, the space invited visitors to relax and linger, exploring and experiencing the room at their own pace. They were welcomed to sit, to zone out, to talk, to feel at ease, to read through posters, to explore the interactive triggers, to leave traces at the journal corner and play around with journal projections, and to simply immerse themselves in the ambiance. As the creator, I also sat and roamed in the café occasionally, becoming an “observer” and part of the experience.

This immersive interactive exhibition was experiential, and therefore the experience was unique to each person. As viewers moved through the atmosphere, their interactions became a reflection of their own self-awareness in relation to the space. Though we may not have seen or heard these internal processes, they manifested through choices, movements, and interactions. What emerged was a pattern of slowed-

down behavior and layered contributions that embodied the ideas of hybridity and identity negotiation.

#### 4.1.1 Interactive Projection

The window view projection was observed to be an immediate site of impact upon entering—weaving together space, body, and affect, and drawing in attention. The microphone used to capture sound in real time was hidden under a table, so the interactive trigger was not immediately noticed and became a surprise element once discovered. The projection showed a blue-toned atmosphere when the room was quiet. As soon as sound was detected, such as casual conversations or ambient café noise, the projection changed to a blend of blue and white. When the volume became very loud, the screen turned bright and almost completely white, constantly shifting between concealment and visibility.



**Figure 16.** View of the installation showing the Blue of Distance atmosphere.





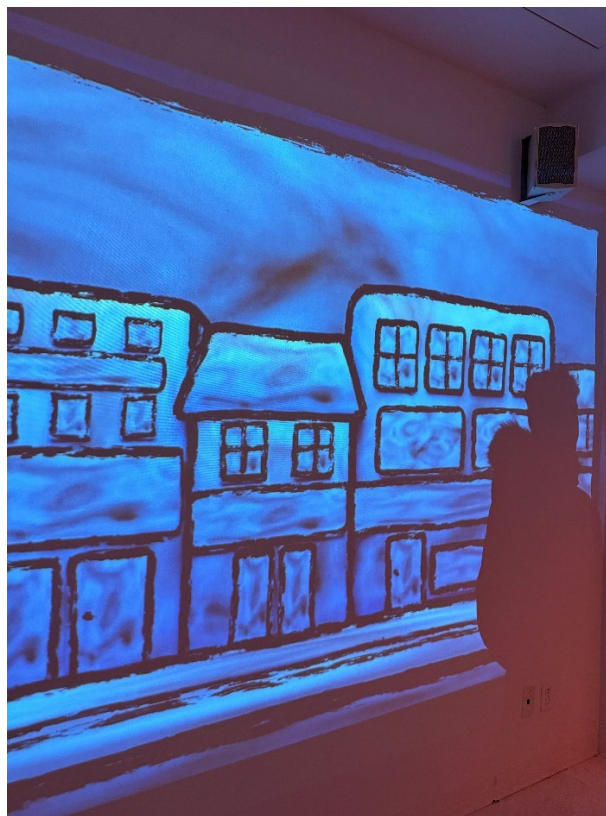
**Figure 17.** View of the installation showing the inbetween atmosphere.



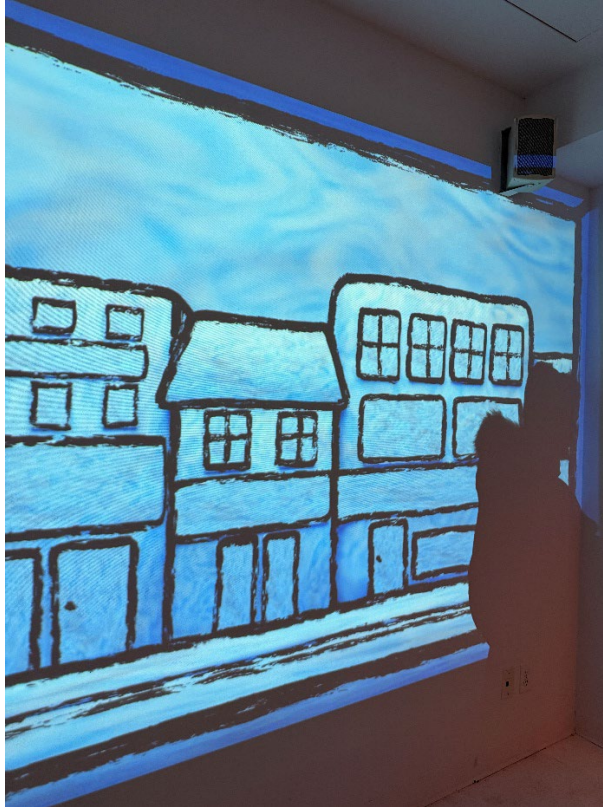
**Figure 18.** View of the installation showing the Clear and Stable White atmosphere.

Without direction, some visitors began to notice that their voices altered the color and brightness of the projection. This ambiguity was intentional — it allowed discovery to slowly unfold through embodied awareness. One person remarked, “I think something’s changing when I talk, but I’m not sure what.” Kids were especially quick to figure it out. They yelled “HELLO” repeatedly and had fun playing with how their voices

changed the room. Some people observed the trigger but were still reluctant to speak loudly. Another person discovered the voice trigger during the background coffee grinder sound. They said they liked how voices lit up the room—how human actions visibly affected the space. They shared a story about their belief in people’s auras and how these subtle energies influenced environments. Many of these connections between the “unseen” and the physical world were often overlooked. Their reflection raised the possibility that there may be many more cues waiting to be discovered and considered.



**Figure 19.** Projection responding to low volume levels.



**Figure 20.** Projection responding to medium volume levels.



**Figure 21.** Projection responding to high volume levels.

Another moment of interaction occurred around the motion-activated projection. The webcam that captured movement was hidden underneath the table—



taped to a table leg. When people sat down at this table, their movement triggered the image to “appear,” becoming very bright and clear. As people sat still and began to write on sticky notes, the image slowly faded and became hard to see. Some participants were not initially aware of this change but later reported a vague sensation that the space had shifted around them. A couple of people sat down without looking at the projection, but they said they felt something had changed as they sat down, although they didn’t know what it was. They realized the change once they stood up and saw the “flashy” image again. This served as an externalization of the transitional cues from one zone to another. The simple action of standing up altered the tone of the space.



**Figure 22.** Table with motion-activated projection.



**Figure 23.** Table with motion-activated projection and sticky notes.



**Figure 24.** Coffee cups drawings for motion-activated projection.



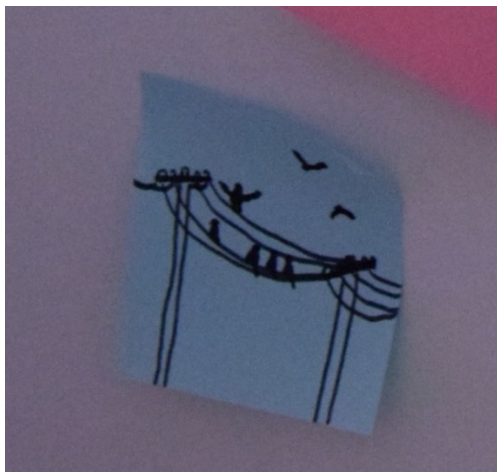
**Figure 25.** Overview of motion-activated projection table in exhibition space.



**Figure 26.** Overview of motion-activated projection table in exhibition space.



**Figure 27.** Selected sticky note



**Figure 28.** Selected sticky note

It was interesting to note that a few Chinese friends mentioned the setup reminded them of cafés in China during the early 2000s. They recalled tables with blank notebooks and doodles on the walls, and each of them referred to that period as “when they were young.” One person also recalled other popular trends from that time, such as old-fashioned photo booths with early 2000s-style “kawaii filters,” often found in small boutiques. These cafés in China hold a special place in our hearts because they were never really about coffee. Those spaces were less about function and more about



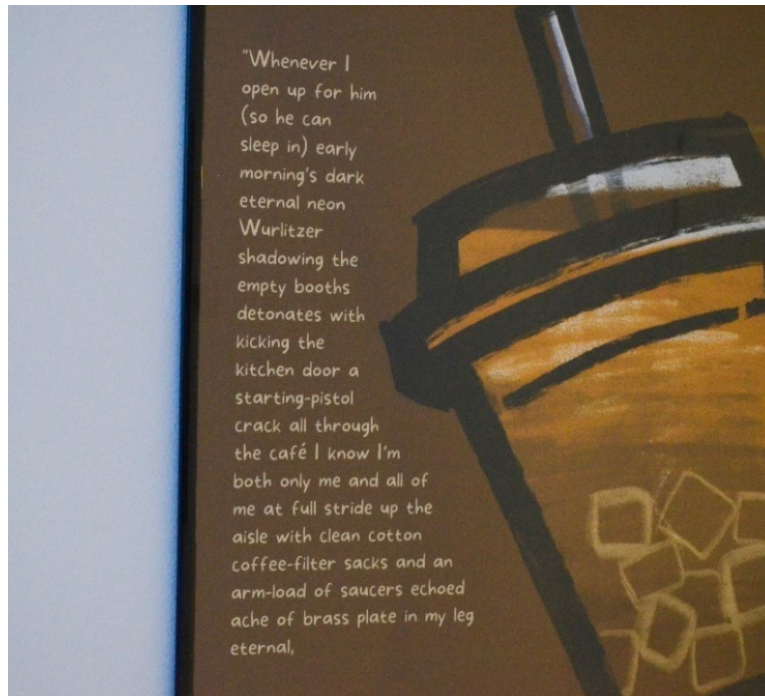
experience. The messy notebooks and walls invited not only a silent escape, but also silent communication. There is a certain sentimentality embedded in those spaces.

#### 4.1.2 Prompts

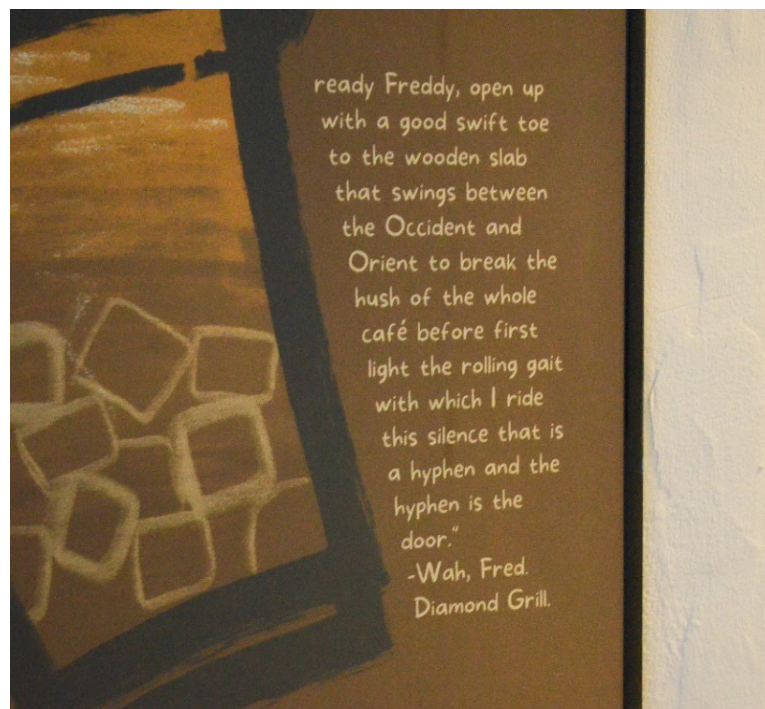
Prompts that appeared slightly out of place drew people out of the familiar café context and into a more curious, reflective mode. One visitor commented, “It’s not what you would expect to read on a coffee shop poster. It made me wonder why they were there.” These prompts slowed down the pace at which viewers moved through the space. Several people later told me they hadn’t noticed the text at first, but once they did, they began retracing their steps to re-read the other posters with new attention. I believe the success lay not in whether people fully understood the message I intended, but in how their behavior shifted—how they paused, reconsidered, and became curious when something disrupted their expectations. The subtle misalignment between visual familiarity and unexpected textual content created a gentle rupture in the experience, transforming passive viewing into engaged contemplation.



**Figure 29.** Overview of poster wall



**Figure 30.** Close-up of poster text featuring an excerpt from *Diamond Grill*.



**Figure 31.** Close-up of poster text featuring an excerpt from *Diamond Grill*.

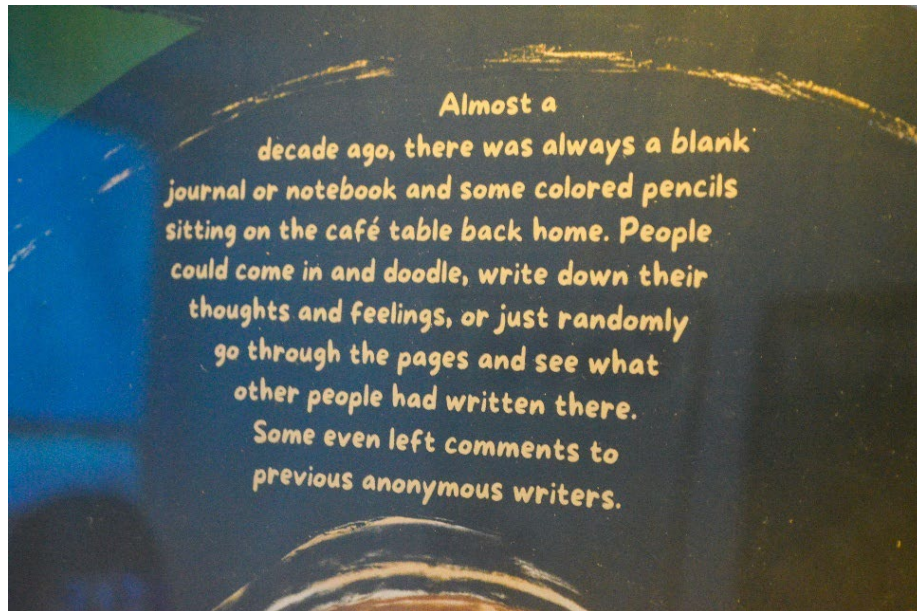


Figure 32. Close-up of poster text

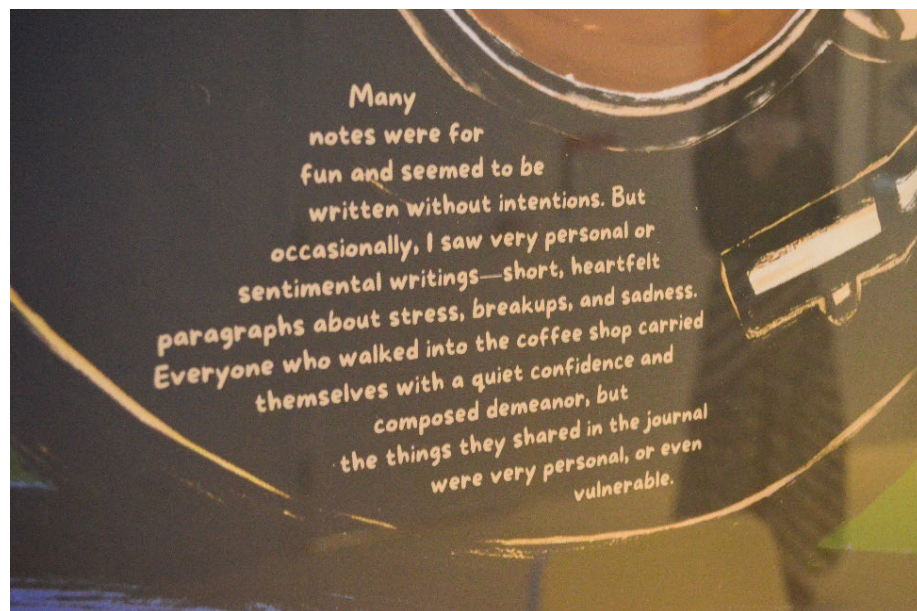


Figure 33. Close-up of poster text





Figure 34. Overview of poster wall

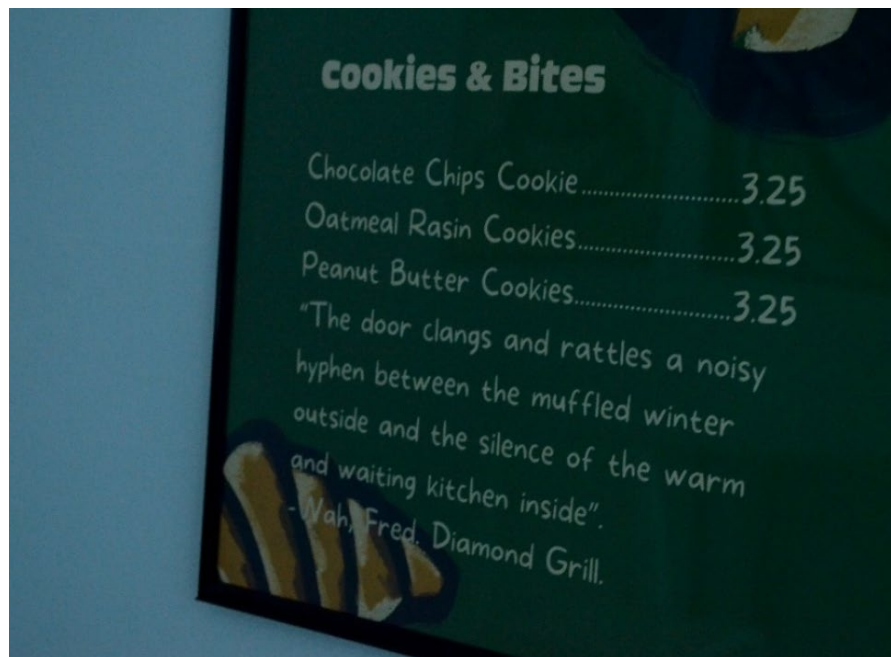


Figure 35. Close-up of poster text featuring an excerpt from *Diamond Grill*.



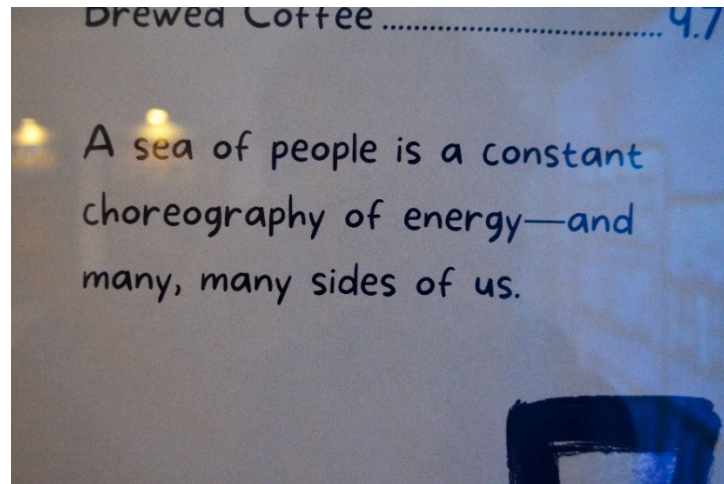


Figure 36. Close-up of poster text

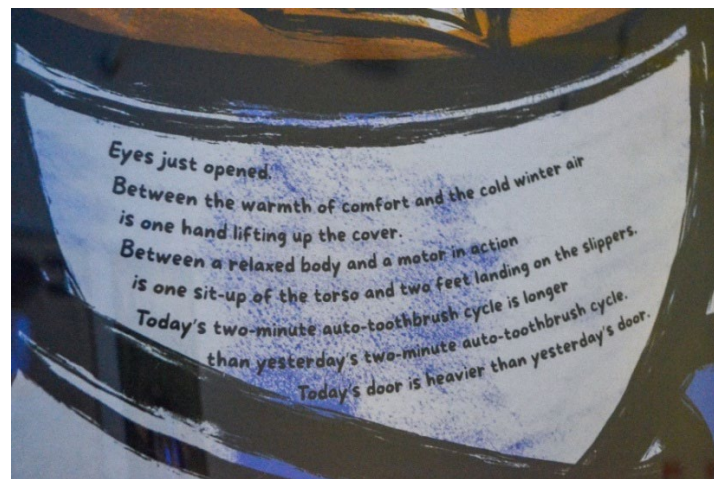


Figure 37. Close-up of poster text

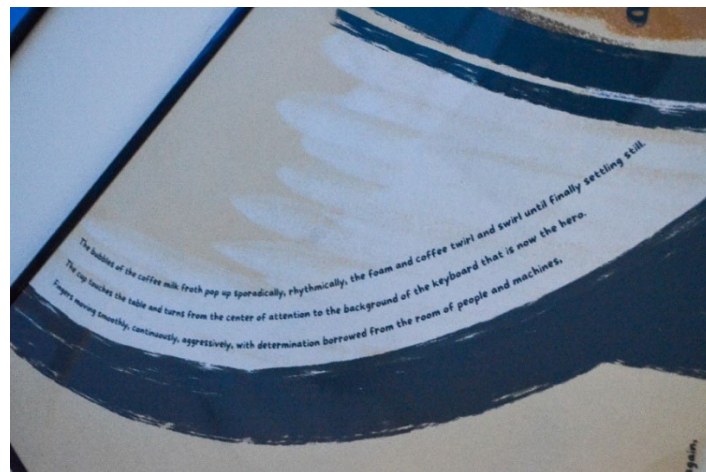


Figure 38. Close-up of poster text

### 4.1.3 Unexpected Beauty

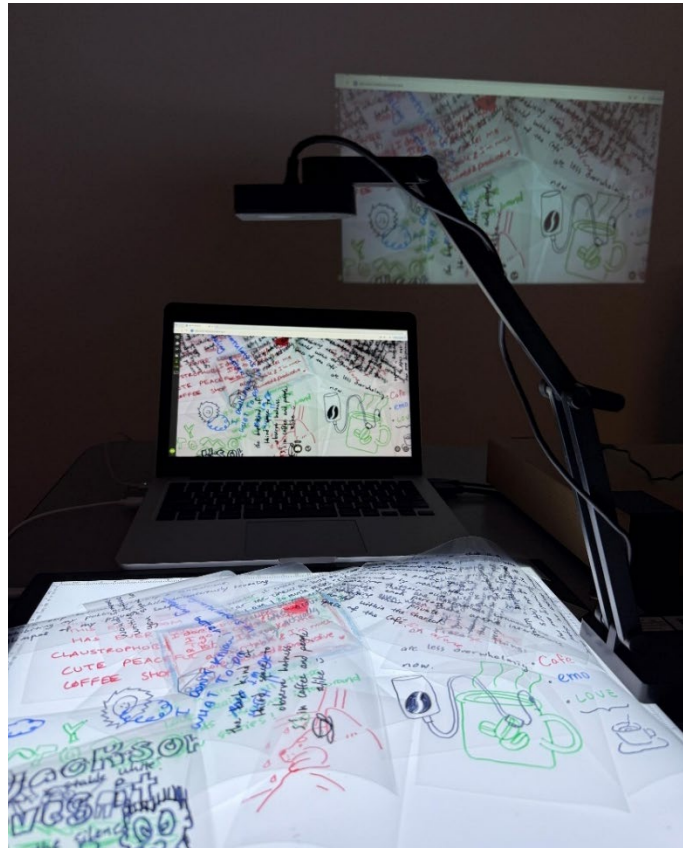
Throughout the exhibition, a sense of emotional layering began to accumulate in the projected journal corner. I began the journal with a few of my own notes to lure people into writing and then gradually people began adding their own notes and drawings. By the end of the exhibition, the lightbox was full.



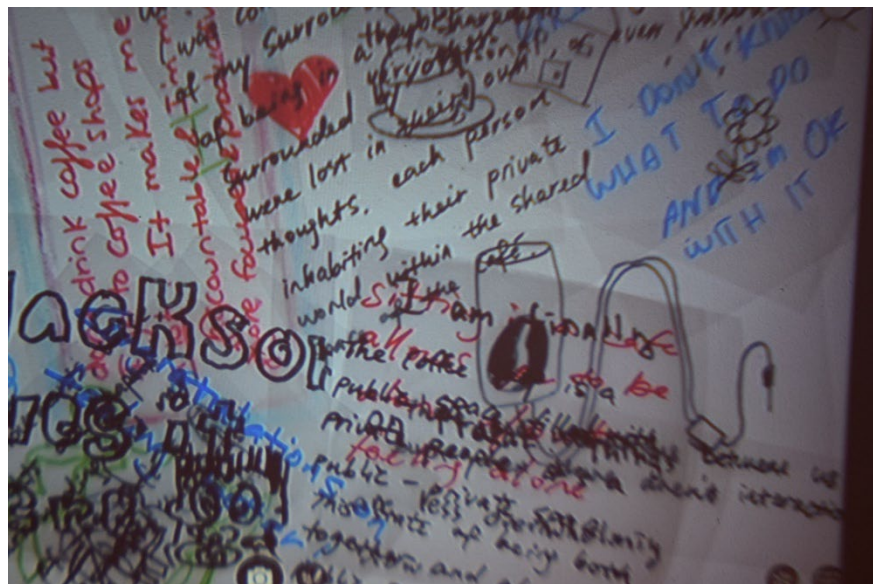
**Figure 39.** Overview of Journal Corner Posters



**Figure 40.** Overview of Journal Corner

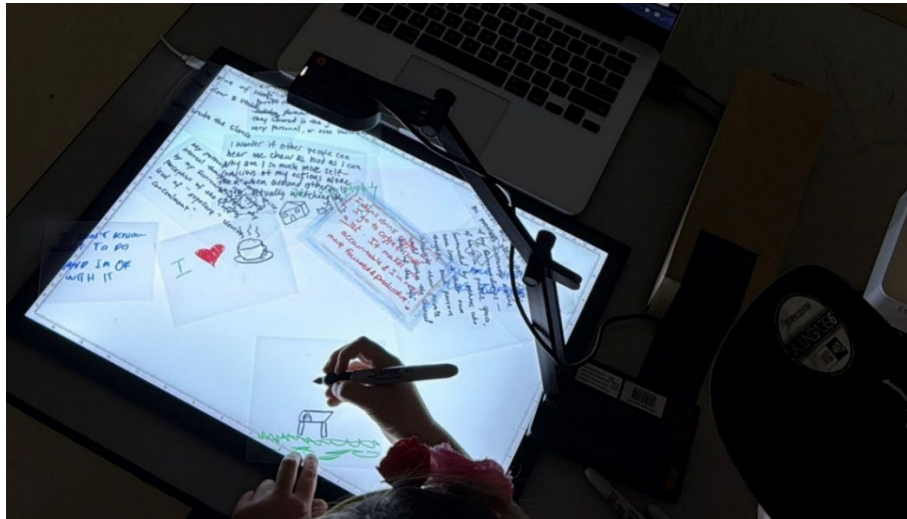


**Figure 41.** Close up view of journal corner



**Figure 42.** Close up view of journal projection





**Figure 43.** Close up view of participants drawing in journal corner

There were many coffee and exhibition related notes in the first few days, but toward the end, when the space was less busy — more “inner voices” started to appear between the lines. I found that during quieter hours, when there was no pressure to leave, people seemed more naturally inclined to share something personal. As the table filled with entries, the presence of others’ words appeared to soften the sense of exposure—making inner thoughts feel less vulnerable. On a few occasions, I served bottled cold brew to visitors, and we ended up talking and doodling together over coffee.

This unexpected layering revealed a kind of accidental poetics. The combination of content, handwriting styles, and line breaks created compositions that were unintentional, yet shared emotional rhythm. As more emotionally resonant entries appeared, the journal became more active and a site that shows negotiation. As one “inner voice” note appeared, others began adding their own. The layered poetry was also a representation of hybridity. Each note maintained its individuality while

contributing to a larger shared surface. Together, they carried each person's voice and became something new.

This section includes a selection of photographs that capture the layering process as it unfolded. These images serve as visual evidence of how meaning, identity, and reflection were generated collectively through quiet, embodied participation.

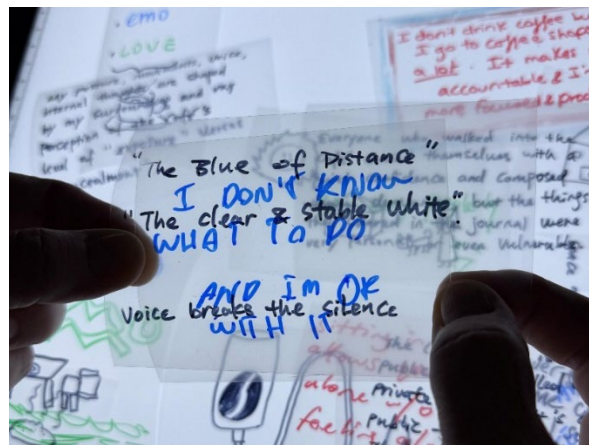


Figure 44. Layered transparent notes.

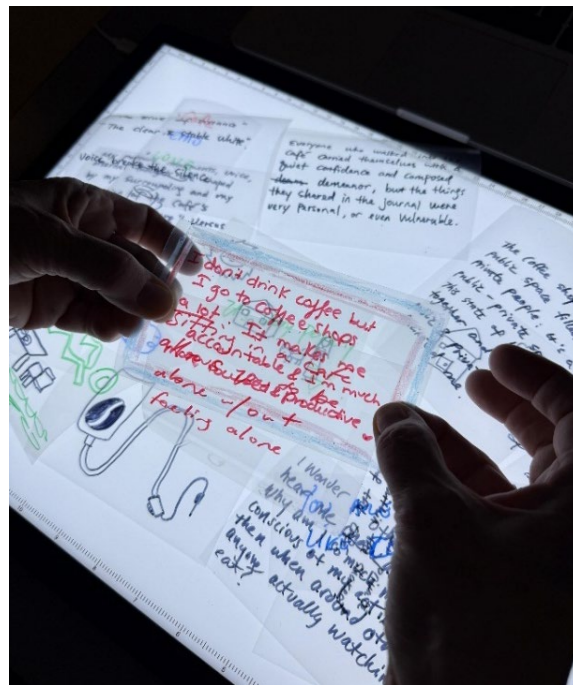


Figure 45. Layered transparent notes.

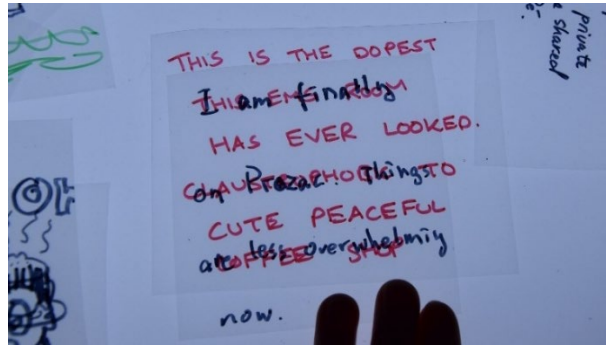


Figure 46. Layered transparent notes.

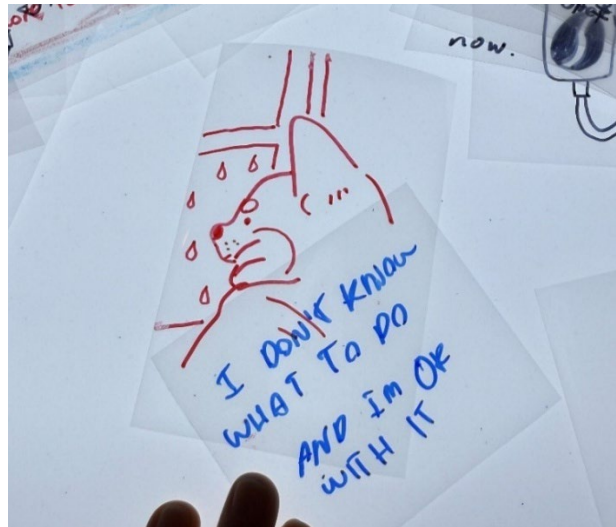


Figure 47. Layered transparent notes.

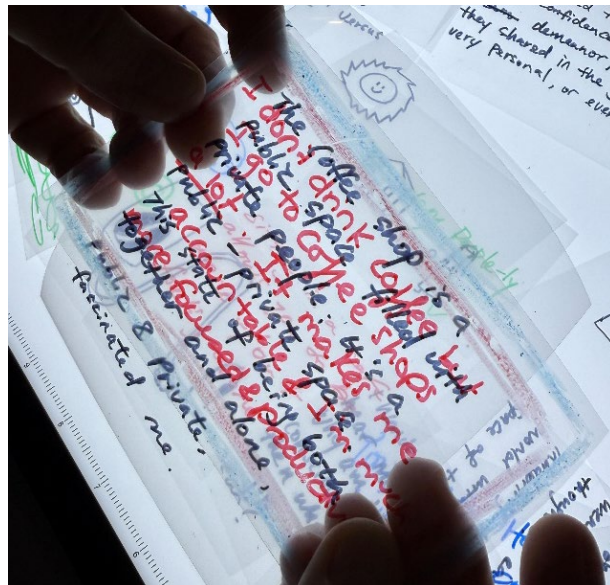


Figure 48. Layered transparent notes.

## 4.2 Conclusion

This thesis reflected on the ways in which the public–private space of a café embodied the concept of the Third Space and how this informed the negotiation of hybrid identity. By designing an immersive interactive experience, I created a doorway for audiences to glimpse into the internal process of identity negotiation. *Pause Button Café* began as a deeply personal, introspective project and evolved into the broader theme of identity and the exploration of media interactions, serving as a point of departure for my creative journey.

This process prompted me to think about the impact of writing, audience input, and individual narratives in shaping meaning and telling stories surrounding identity. My future work will aim to integrate more voices, further explore the Asian diaspora, and consider how this project might extend beyond the gallery setting into everyday, casual encounters in public, accessible spaces.

I envision the elements from *Pause Button Café* being applied in real café settings. Prompts, reflective menus, ambient projection, and the shared journal could be integrated into functional cafés, creating spaces that blend hospitality with introspection and invite ongoing anonymous contributions from visitors. I also became interested in the possibility of translating some of the layered text and emotional overlaps into product design—such as tableware, coasters, mugs, or fabric used for seating—that carry fragments of text or poetry. These objects would become both functional and emotional carriers, embedding traces of human experience into everyday items. This

evolution allowed for continued exploration of how design can hold space for reflection, hybridity, and public intimacy in subtle, lived ways.



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