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Blissful (Dis)Comfort

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RIT

Blissful (Dis)Comfort

By

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Abstract

From personal anecdotes and past experiences, "Blissful (Dis)comfort" confronts, celebrates, and humorizes my Thai culture and family dynamics through light, sound, and the subversion of everyday objects. This thesis explores the personal, intimate, and even vulnerable sides of my childhood and personal relationships, as well as their reflections on technical challenges and solutions to everyday electronic devices. The body of work rejects the expectations of cause and effect, logical consequences, and reactions, blending in the child-like sense of wonder, discovery, and play with more complex themes of nostalgia and family.

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Introduction

When I was six, we visited my Uncle Chad in the US. It was our first time outside of Asia as a family. I had met my Uncle Chad many times before when he would visit Thailand to be with the rest of our family, but this was the first time I truly got to know him. I can still smell his house in LA: warm like the sunlight from the big windows, woody like the piano in his living room, and musky like the leather furniture and carpeted basement. Under the back balcony was a small downhill lawn of long, wispy grasses that I always remember to be covered with dew. My brothers and I wanted to slide down the hill, because, of course, we were four, six, and eight.

There were so many little things quintessentially American that I had first experienced at the age of six. I did not know soup and salad were a common meal combination. We liked it because of how vegetable-heavy it was. Or at least my parents liked it. We had sandwiches with mustard for the first time and hated it. "Mustard pool" was what we called the terrible little pockets of mustard that filled air bubble crevices in the bread.

My parents must have bought a whole other suitcase for all the shopping we did there. We got Monopoly for the first time, along with a Star Wars card game and, of course, Pokemon movies on DVD. To this day, my American experience still involves a lot of soup, sandwiches, and video games.

Culture, family dynamics, and upbringing are formative factors that contribute to our personalities and tendencies. From personal anecdotes and past experiences, "Blissful (Dis)comfort" confronts, celebrates, and humorizes my home culture and longing for it through light, sound, and the subversion of everyday objects. By reliving and highlighting my own experiences through modifications of phones, doorbells, fire alarms, and other mundane and infrastructural electronic devices, this body of work rejects the expectations of cause-and-effect,

logical consequences and reactions, blending in the child-like sense of wonder, discovery, and

play with more complex themes of nostalgia and family.

Context

Systems

Despite being an artist, my thought process has always been quite scientific. Ever since I was young, the concept of a controlled experiment made the most sense to me. Independent, dependent, and controlled variables gave me a mental structure for observing the world around me. Changing one variable at a time allows me to isolate factors and manipulate outcomes according to previous findings and background information. Cause and effect are easy relationships to observe. By-products and independent correlations, while possible, are slightly more difficult to comprehend.

In his book *Kinetic Art*, author Guy Brett discusses the concept of movement in art, with the preface that "Movement in a literal sense is no guide to a work's quality or even its modernity." He expands, "The result may be more 'dynamic' than a static structure, but only in a very superficial sense." Instead, the most important outcome of kinetic art "is something simpler and more fundamental" such as extending art into time and space, or in other words, the fourth dimension. He supports this idea by exploring works of different "kinetic" artists, including Takis (b. Panayiotis Vassilakis) and his piece *Magnetic Ballet* (1961). The terms "naked energy" and "live force" are used to describe how the artist thinks of the core of the work, utilizing invisible energy – electromagnetism – as the main medium, rather than the visible objects – the magnets. In this way, Takis surpasses the dependence on materialistic media or artistic conventions such as scale or proximity to create a bodily awareness for the viewer (Brett, 28-33).

Continuing with his exploration of kinetic art, Brett discusses Jean Tinguely's works in contrast to Takis. Whereas Takis demonstrates the life-like qualities of machines and systems, Tinguely

reveals their imperfections. As Brett strongly points out, "Tinguely has made an aesthetic out of 'mal'function. He has set mechanical parts free from the precise hierarchy of function." This suspension of expectations of recognizable elements through "incorporating motors in his chaotic framework with joyous carelessness" results in naive and blunt movements and encounters, which fill the work with "explicit humour and anxiety" (Brett, 35-38). With these two sides of the same coin as my fundamental outlook, systems have been my preferred way of understanding the world.

That said, not every system, experiment, and relationship works as it should. To create tension in my work, corresponding to the tension of the concept for each piece, I subvert the intended function and utility of each electronic device. This is not to say that my circuits do not work, but that they work differently. The hand sanitizer still sprays. The fire alarm still alerts. But it is through this unexpected shift in how they work, rather than whether they work or not, that new meanings are created.

Zillenial

I was born in 1999, so my childhood memories were mostly in the 2000s before I became a teenager (by strict definition) in 2012. This places me in a sub-generation widely known as Zillenial, a combination of "Millenial" and "Gen Z". By definition, Gen Z children were born between 1997 and 2012, but children born between 1997 and 2001 still share a lot of similarities with younger millennials. The other notable difference between Zillenials and younger Gen Zs is that there is a part of our childhood that did not involve the internet, and we got our first mobile phones later in our elementary or middle school years, rather than from the start. And while we grew up with technology, they were spotty, low quality/resolution, and often relied on older mechanics such as radio signals, due to the still-developing nature of the objects at the time.

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Toys running out of batteries, choppy and static audio, and phones with long, tangled cords were what we grew up with, not smartphones and TikTok.

In Thomas McEvilley's essay "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" from the book *Art & Discontent: Theory at the Millennium*, the author lists and discusses thirteen sources of content. In his analysis, "genre or medium" and "material of which the artwork is made" are two different sources of content. The former dictates the general format of the work – painting, sculpture, perhaps kinetic art – which comes with historical and social contexts as well as expectations and/or expected limitations. The latter refers to the more specific and often sensorial qualities of the "ingredients" that make up the final outcome (McEvilley, 72-74). While genre or medium might provide preconceptions of a work, it is the juxtaposition of materiality that provides tension, resolution, or simply a narrative. In my body of work, I present each piece as "interactive art" with electronic components that produce sound and light. The juxtaposition comes from the specific visual aesthetic of certain devices, which implies a time and spatial context from which my concepts derive. For example, instead of a 2024-appropriate smartphone, I opted for an off-white corded home phone which sets the context back to the late 1990s.

Thai-Chinese

Many people mistake me as Chinese because of how I look. I have been confronted with this assumption from friends, coworkers, and strangers alike, regardless of whether they intended to be malicious or not. However, they are not completely wrong. They mistake me for being Chinese because I look Chinese. After all, most of my ancestors were from China. While I do not identify as Chinese, I studied Mandarin for six years in grade school, and my family always celebrated a mixture of both Thai and Chinese traditions and holidays. Even now that I am on my own in the US, Chinese New Year is my biggest event to host every year, rather than Thai

New Year, despite my celebrating both. So while I know precisely my relationship to Chinese culture, heritage, and lineage, having to recontextualize myself in the US has been unfortunately regular yet also revealing of both the nature of people around me as well as how I have evolved my reaction to the assumption over time.

Georg Simmel wrote in one of his "Two Essays" a section titled "The Handle", discussing the conceptual and philosophical significance of a vessel or tool's handle as a midpoint between the hand and the object. His description of a vessel struck me. "Thus the vessel stands in two worlds at one and the same time: whereas reality is completely irrelevant to the "pure" work of art and, as it were, is consumed in it, reality does make claims upon the vase as an object that is handled, filled and emptied, proffered, and set down here and there" (Simmel, 371-372). In this definition, a vessel is a stagnant shell within which the contents are ever-changing, thus making the vessel less important than the contents. In the most basic terms, this equates to one of the most common quotes ever, "It's what's inside that matters." In the same way, I view my electronic devices as vessels that can convey many other meanings and hold many other functions than the intended ones, much like the ever-changing ways of how I react to my surroundings as well as people's assumptions about me.

Sentimentality

In the introduction of his book *Art Encounters*, Simon O'Sullivan discusses the artistic and creative benefits of exposing oneself to "encounters" which he defines as both reaffirming previous dispositions and at the same time challenging them. "Rupture and affirmation are then two moments of the same encounter, two moments that only seem opposed if considered in the abstract, outside of actual experience" (O'Sullivan, 1). This tension between the familiar and the new is what makes a new "encounter" worth remembering, pondering, and reflecting on. While O'Sullivan's primary interest lies in encounters, the same concept can be applied to

sentimentality. Rather than an encounter being a significant new experience, sentimentality is developed by significant memories. The duality of rupture and affirmation which makes up an encounter might directly apply to memories. However, in many cases, that might just make an event more memorable than others, but not more sentimental. I believe that sentimentality comes from a similar duality: bittersweetness. This can take the form of nostalgia for home or a "simpler" time, or longing for something not necessarily nice, but which was routine for a long time. For example, my grandfather, who lived next door for 17 years of my life but I was never close to, passed away, and only then did I start to appreciate him and my memories of him. This bittersweetness of feeling so much love and care for him but not being able to see or talk to him intensifies the sentimentality that I feel toward him.

This past summer I started writing about each year of my life, starting from when I was born. Each day that I sit down to write, I try to recall as much as I can about what I experienced, but also what else went on around me, within my family, school, extracurricular activities, etc. To say that I was able to remember so many experiences from so far back into my past because they were noteworthy encounters with both rupture and affirmation is only half the truth. The other half is because I was, and still am, genuinely fond of those memories because they led me to where I stand now. If I had any less sentimentality toward my upbringing and family, I would allow myself to make work about anything else. As it happens, this is not the case.

I consistently try to blend in some degree of humor or satire into the unexpected subversions of electronic devices and their intended functions. This child-like wonder paired with witty quips is directly related to each piece's concept, as they are derived from having encountered these events, traditions, and expectations as a child while reacting to them in retrospect as an adult. While some might view humor as a defense mechanism or a crutch, I view my use of it as part of the medium itself. Much like Tinguely's explosive and destructive machines, my devices utilize technology while also highlighting its imperfections – demonstrating functionality through

intended dysfunction and technical obstacles. Above all else, for a body of work that is based on my childhood, which despite its imperfections, was mostly filled with laughter, humor was not a goal to strive for, but rather a natural and half-expected by-product of this combination of concept and medium.

Evolution

In choosing my materials, I think back to objects that hold power in terms of sentimental and nostalgic connections, as well as systematic intrigue. It is the specificities of each object that collectively help imply a particular kind of space and time. It is also the specific physical attributes that dictate how much I can manipulate a manufactured product and therefore inform the decision of whether I have to design my own components for each piece. A home phone is recognizable because of its receiver and coiled cord. The nature of it being hung alone on a wall with the gallery light shining on it invites the audience to pick the receiver up, knowing that the label next to it means that the phone is an artwork.

As part of the "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts" book series, Graham Harman wrote in his book *The Third Table* (No. 085 of the series) about three philosophical frameworks. He references Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington who was the first to demonstrate this concept of looking at tables, similar to C. P. Snow's "two cultures". The first table or culture is a scientific one, concerning matter and energy. To look analytically at the first table is to objectively dissect it down to the smallest elements. The second and opposing table is an anthropological one, concerned with how it serves the human who owns it (Harman, 10-13).

Harman continues by rejecting both extremes to claim that neither table is realistic. "The first table and first culture would thereby be opposed to the second, and the result would be the usual trench war between science and the humanities. My contrary view is that both groups are

equally wrong about the table, and for precisely the same reason." Harman views both frameworks as reductionistic: the first table into tiny invisible particles, the second into effects on people. Neither of these tables take into account the context surrounding them, nor the material makeup that changes their values as much as their physical attributes. "The real table is in fact a third table lying between these two others…. This is not to say that the third culture is a completely new one: perhaps it is the culture of the arts, which do not seem to reduce tables either to quarks and electrons or to table-effects on humans" (Harman, 10-13).

This third table is the combination of meaning derived from material, context, and purpose. It is important to note the difference between function and purpose. Function in this context is the objective way to use or operate things. Purpose on the other hand is the intended goal that something hopes to achieve, often in the form of a lasting thought or question. Additionally, whereas the first table is reduced to particles, the third table is concerned with the materials' attributes such as tactility, weight, temperature, source, as well as meaning from historical contexts, rather than the more objective atomic weights or number of electrons.

This body of work relies on electronic devices for pre-established recognition of intended purposes and uses. By applying the concept of the three tables to my method of editing some pre-existing devices as well as creating new ones, the third table's priorities helped me decide when to modify and when to custom-build. This decision depends on the relationship between the chosen device (form and material), conceptual framework (purpose), and intended final result (the "third table" as a gestaltist whole). In สวัสดี *(Hello. Goodbye.)*, I built the box to custom-fit the circuit that I assembled by combining commercially sold electronic components, including LED tube lights, a relay module that toggles the lights on and off, a Seeed Studio Xiao microcontroller (instead of a traditional Arduino Uno board) which programs the timing of the light flickering, and a power supply schematic that powers all components with various voltages depending on the part. Because of the specific needs of this piece and the lack of necessary

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preconceived expectations of a light sign, I custom-built the box to be minimal and subdued, letting the light and the flickering pattern carry the purpose of the piece.

For *Speed Dial*, I was able to replace the circuit board of a coil-cord home phone with my own, by remaking the number pad with individual buttons. I chose to leave the exterior of the phone completely untouched. In fact, the speaker inside the receiver is an original part of the phone as it came to me. This is because the priority of this piece was to visually set the context to the time of my childhood in the 2000s when home phones of similar aesthetics were commonly used. As for the coil cord, I only replaced it with a longer one for conceptual purposes, rather than a technical one, conveying the geographical distance between me and my family, as well as the time and effort it takes to constantly switch between two languages spoken on the phone.

A preconceived understanding of how each device *should* work allows the subversion to be unexpected but obvious. At the same time, the literal plastic nature of most devices is important both as a metaphor and for the modification process. Being able to edit the physical structure and mechanisms of each object to better fit its new purpose and function relies heavily on the ability to drill, cut, and heat-bend the outer shells of the devices. Hard plastics – HDPE, ABS, polyethylene, etc. – are much easier materials to modify with the above methods than, for instance, wood or metal. Metaphorically, the plasticity and manipulability of the materials also refer to the ever-changing, biased, and socially constructed cultural expectations. Soldering is also a way to make literal, physical connections between components, making things function and "fixing" relationships, systems, dynamics, and the resulting functionality. Together in one complete package, the modified electronic devices subvert both their technical and anthropological functions.

Similar to the process of manipulating the plastic nature of the physical devices, rewiring and redesigning circuits have been a way for me to also rewire how I view myself and my past.

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Designing and prototyping are two steps in this closed-circuit, controlled-environment experimentation. I rely heavily on trial-and-error experiments, isolating factors and only modifying one variable at a time to ultimately get to the solution. Some experiments are straightforward and quick. Some lead to changes in the concept of the piece, possibly leading to even more changes in the physical attributes or function of the device. Others challenge my knowledge in the medium, leading to more research or a change in concept to better accommodate what I can accomplish without compromising on the piece's conceptual strength or narrative, ultimately leading to growing my knowledge base as well as the work.

In *Emergency Dance*, I purchased a fire alarm system to be modified, much like I did with *Speed Dial*. I intended for the system to be constantly powered on, with the fire alarm's pull triggering the switch, digitally signaling the circuit to output the audio and light. However, I faced the challenge of not being able to get the digital trigger to operate. As a result, I rewired the system multiple times before concluding that the pull trigger would turn on the power for the entire system, which is otherwise constantly outputting light and audio by having the triggering pin wired directly to the board's ground and therefore always completing the circuit. This simplified the code for the control board: it now only controls the timed flickering of the LED in the siren piece – on for 1 second (1000 milliseconds), off for 1/10 of a second (100 milliseconds).

```
fire_alarm.ino
  1   int lights = 7;
  2   void setup() {
  3     // initialize digital pin LED_BUILTIN as an output.
  4     pinMode(lights, OUTPUT);
  5   }
  6
  7   // the loop function runs over and over again forever
  8   void loop() {
  9     digitalWrite(lights , HIGH);  // turn the LED on (HIGH is the voltage level)
 10     delay(1000);
 11     digitalWrite(lights , LOW);
 12     delay(100);
 13   }
```

Code for *Emergency Dance*, Mei Kiengsiri 2024

On the contrary, the circuit for สวัสดี *(Hello. Goodbye.)* uses two different voltages of electricity.

120 volts directly from the wall outlet power the LED lights. Five volts power the controller board

and relay module, which takes information from the controller board and switches the light on

and off according to the coded pattern. While the resulting installation features white plastic wire

covers for every piece, at the time when I constructed the light box, I was concerned about

hiding these two voltage differences within the box itself. The solution I landed on is to have a

three-outlet extension cord as the only visible cord coming out of the box. Inside the box, two

plugs can be attached to the extension cord: a regular one for the LEDs and a 5-volt USB block

for the controller board, which then powers the relay module. The tangle of excess wire lengths,

albeit hidden inside the box, is simply taped to the side mainly to prevent it from casting

shadows on the resulting glow of light on the front panel. This way, I easily bypassed the voltage

issue completely without having to find a technical solution involving power converters,

transistors, capacitors, or resistors.

I grew up with some internet-age electronic devices from the 2000s. While these devices were

starting to get exponentially more complex, their physical designs were visually specific to the

decade. The off-white color of the coil-cord home phone, the clear plastic paired with bright

white doorbells, and the neon-inspired calligraphic typeface are just some examples directly

related to this body of work. Many of these visual attributes cross the line between corporate

and personal home settings, being general enough to appropriately exist in both, but not enough

to exist so commonly in other decades. If I were to make finished *products*, there are ways to

polish each device instead of leaving them as they are at the end of the prototyping and

experimenting process. Custom-designed housings, properly combined power supply cords for

different voltages, sanding, recoloring, etc. These are all options to make the work appear as a

real and marketable product. However, while these subversions of familiar devices can be a fun

gag or semi-functional decorations, I prefer and intend to leave clear evidence of my hand in the

final outcome, opting to instead resolve the overall conceptual framework rather than physically

polishing the objects. To balance out the resulting installation as a whole, I chose to organize

and hide all of my power cords in corporate-style white plastic wire covers. Much like how I view

electronic systems similarly to family dynamics, rewiring myself to view things differently and

constantly flipping expectations of both culture and technology is a way to resolve conflicts, not

sugar-coat, polish, or embellish them.

Body of Work

Earworm (2:09-2:16)

Earworm (2:09-2:16), Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

Entering the mostly closed-off area of the exhibition, a short excerpt of NSYNC's song "It's Gonna Be Me" suddenly plays from the right-side wall. Turning to the direction of the sound, the only thing visible is a small electronic component hiding at the lower corner of the doorway, with a pair of black circles acting as a pair of eyes, ever staring, ever observing. While the volume of the sound is not loud enough to be alarming, the motion trigger, hardly even inside the room, already makes entering it full of surprises. On the contrary, the nostalgic tune of the iconic song keeps it strangely light-hearted and humorous, setting an introductory tone for the rest of the exhibition to be full of discovery and an expectation for interaction. Even if one viewer has already moved on to look at other works, others triggering the system upon their entry will replay

the soundbite, causing an *Earworm* for everyone, mimicking the constant state of having the brief part of a song stuck in one's head, no matter if caused by neurodivergence, being raised in a particularly musical family, or other factors.

AH-Hoei!

AH-Hoei!, Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

On the other side of the entryway is an automatic hand sanitizer spray hung up on the wall. Whether the viewer chooses to sanitize their hands upon entering or before leaving the space, the tactility nature of the exhibition raises the question of health and safety, with the COVID pandemic barely having passed. Providing a precautionary sanitation tool is both sensible and considerate. However, when the automatic spray gets triggered by a hand reaching out towards it, the sound of a man sneezing plays while the sanitizer sprays, causing both humor and disgust. With the liquid being a fragrance-free hand sanitizer solution, the audience is left wondering what the liquid could be, even if it is genuinely a cleansing product.

As children, my brothers and I had our ways of bonding: inside jokes, quarrels with friends at school, fights between parents and siblings – the list goes on. One of the easiest things that we bonded over and laughed about was our parents' strange habits, including our father's sneeze. While there is already a stereotype for Asian men to have extremely loud, scream-like sneezes, my father's sneeze is particularly unique and different from other Asian men's because of the intonation toward the end of his sneeze. Generally, mammal babies tend to be attached to their mothers' calls and scents. For us, however, if we hear that sneeze, we know he's there.

On Being Late

On Being Late, Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

A tangled mess of wires comes out of two acrylic boxes on a wall, each containing a doorbell system and a guitar effects pedal, with a bundle of wires connecting to the doorbell button out on the side of each box next to each other like a diptych. Upon pressing one of the buttons on the side, a woman's voice yells out "Hurry up, we're leaving in two minutes!" However, with the effects pedal, the voice gets delayed and repeats the sound waves in a distorted suspension of

time. After a while, the repetition gets more and more abstract and obscure, eventually becoming a noisy jumble of virtually meaningless sounds. As the knobs on the pedal get turned and changed, the output sound also changes, leaving the duration and quality of the sound entirely up to how the piece is interacted with. The other doorbell system contains the same woman's shout but in a foreign language. Otherwise, the rest of the system works in the same way, introducing a comparison of the two languages, both speaking *On Being Late* and leading to similar outcomes of perception, reaction, interaction, and sometimes, abrupt ending by shutting the pedal off completely.

## *Speed Dial*

Speed Dial, Mei Kiengsiri, 2023-24

As a celebration of the simple technology of voicemails as an alternative to physical keepsakes of loved ones, *Speed Dial* utilizes the sense of sound as well as sight to provoke memories and sentimentality. The specific style of the phone as a vessel also situates the audience in the late 1990s-early 2000s era that I grew up in. The voicemails are from various people. Some are more urgent or woeful than others. Some in English, some in Thai, some in both. The long cord alludes to the difference between the two languages as well as the physical distance between the two countries. It is heavy with

emotion, sentimentality, and care, some might even call it worry. In its simplest form, this work demonstrates how modern technology has allowed immigrants and foreigners to keep in touch with their families, regardless of everyone's immediate availability. In its most accessed form, the voicemails provide context about my family dynamics through what we talk about and how we talk, both in terms of tone and language.

Mom, I'm Hungry

Mom, I'm Hungry, Mei Kiengsiri, 2023-24
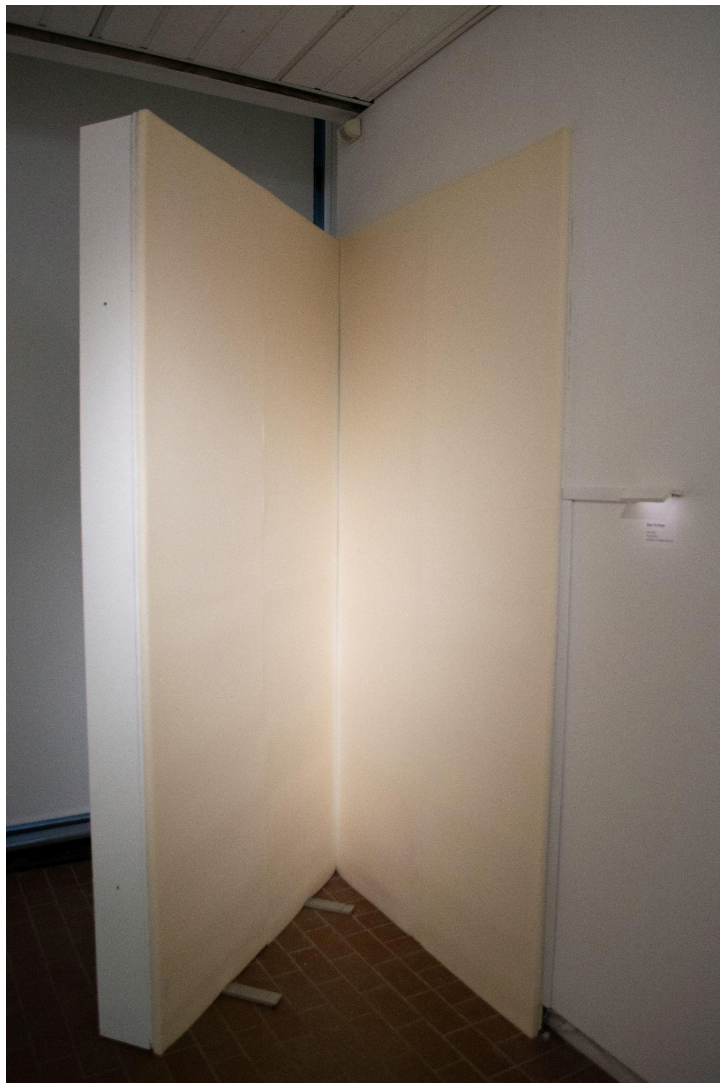
In the opposite corner of the space from the entrance is a tall constructed wall corner, padded with plush but flat white foam sheets. Standing inside the corner, the atmospheric noise from the gallery is slightly muted by the acoustic nature of the foam padding, quieting the disturbances from outside, as well as providing room for breath and peace in the middle of the exhibition that otherwise mostly contains intrusive sounds. After a moment of peace, however, another sound starts to play from lower spots on both sides of the wall corner. The sound is of a gurgling, growling stomach: empty, hungry, and

visceral. The heat from the window behind the corner and the softness of the foam intensify the bodily and fleshy nature of the piece in its tactility, rather than visual representation. As physiologically sympathetic beings, human bodies often mimic and respond to patterns and cues from our surroundings. After spending a short amount of time in the corner, one might start to wonder if the sound is actually from their stomach rather than the installation.

Emergency Dance

Emergency Dance, Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

Turning back to the last wall of the show, an emergency fire alarm system is hung on a regular, solid wall, rather than one of the gallery's movable walls. While the system looks official and embedded on the wall, the wire management system and the flickering label next to it assure the audience that this is yet another piece in the same show, hiding in everyday objects much like the phone and hand sanitizer. I have always had the same intrusive dream of activating a fire alarm, knowing what chaos and disruption it will cause to an entire building or

institution. With this deep, instinctive desire in mind, this fire alarm celebrates and rewards the courage of the audience when they finally decide to activate the piece, playing the iconic start of Rick Astley's song "Never Gonna Give You Up" instead of a normal fire alarm siren. However, as the song continues, the audio quality starts to decay from the impending heat of the imagined fire until it finally glitches out to a stop, reflecting the age-old multi-generational joke of catching someone off-guard with the song.

สวัสดี *(Hello. Goodbye.)*

สวัสดี *(Hello. Goodbye.)*, Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

As a visual conclusion to the space, facing inward and flickering in an irregular pattern, a white box flashes a blurry yellow sentence, Welcome to my Asian home. The clean white box is minimal and quiet, despite its large size, high position on the wall, and glossy front. The first sensorial perception of the work is the clicking sound of the relay module turning the light on and off. The blurry light from the box completely disappears when turned off, hiding behind the

glossy white facade, much like an Asian home or market that hides in a mostly-white town, serving as oases for international students and expatriates who miss their home culture. The last hidden element of the piece is the flicker pattern, flashing in Thai Morse code, spelling the word for both *hello* and *goodbye*.

Label Prankers

Label Prankers, Mei Kiengsiri, 2024

The final element that brings this cohesive body of work together is the series of *Label Prankers* that light up the labels for each work. Each label has a small awning protruding from the wall above the label. On the inside of each awning is a strip of LED lights, flickering to a pattern at the labels, calling attention to both the writing as an assistive tool for the works as well as the thematic dysfunctionality of electronics throughout the exhibition. Even though all of the flickering patterns are technically identical, the varied starting times mean that each one flickers at a different time from the next, creating the illusion of randomness and sporadicity.

Conclusion

This body of work began as an expansion and advancement of my BFA capstone exhibition "Home Away From Home" which explored the Thai visual culture that I missed because of the isolation and diaspora I experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic that happened around the same time. As I shift from focusing on current mental health issues and surrounding factors to exploring why I respond to them the way that I do – as I confront, celebrate, rewire, and recount my upbringing repeatedly – I get to see my own personality, relationships, and family dynamics in a new light. This new perspective on myself as a person, clarity on who I am, and understanding of why I am this way allow me to appreciate both myself and the work that I do on a deeper level. Paired with a deeper understanding and vast knowledge of electronic arts and sound-based installations, I am evermore prepared and excited to continue exploring similar themes of culture and human relationships.

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