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Project Proposal
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Abstract

How subjective experience occurs? What does it mean to think, to feel or to know? These questions seem to have an unequivocal answer, however, it is only when one genuinely examines these questions that the answers are unfathomable. To have the audience reflect on such questions, the characteristics of this project include objects as a collection of mental action or process of acquiring knowledge, alongside sculptures that will enhance the perception of space in relationship to the viewer and sound that will add to the contemplative experience.

During the Enlightenment, developing scientific concepts contributed to existing, pre-scientific definitions of consciousness; most recently, neuroscience added to the interpretation of consciousness. This has inspired thinkers to generate new inquiries in the fields of philosophy, and technology. However, thinkers are still pondering over what is consciousness or what are the means to experience consciousness, without a plausible solution. One clarification could be to experience them through the power of art. The installation will present two characteristics of consciousness. The cognitive one which are processes within the brain that create knowledge, therefore meaning. And awareness which is experience that arises from such cognitive processes. When one thinks about consciousness it seems to evaporate. Consciousness is somewhat elusive; when you try to focus on it, you think about something else and your consciousness turns off. One approach to understand consciousness is to quietly pay attention to the content of our experience then the only fact left is the contemplation of breathing as sound and forms.

Drawing theories from different fields, disciplines such as psychology and philosophy could be simultaneously committed to thinking about thinking, cognitive neuroscience pursues directly to put the mind within the brain. The main purpose of cognitive neuroscience is to physically comprehend thinking—ideas— using techniques that interpret it visually. Conceptualists used abstract ideas—thinking— to understand visually the nature of art's objecthood. Both disciplines serve as connectors between theory (ideas) and data (objecthood). Neuroscience and conceptual art render thought visible.

Project Description

The installation will take place in Lime gallery at California Institute of the arts. A comprehensive understanding of consciousness requires different approaches to create an immersive experience. I will build a 6ft x 3ft monolith like sculpture where I will rewrite on its surface the content of a collection of essays and books about philosophy of mind while an Electroencephalography (EEG) device will record my brain waves as I perform this activity. The EEG device measures six different metrics of cognitive states excitement (arousal), interest (valence), stress (frustration), engagement/boredom, attention (focus) and meditation (relaxation). Once the the raw data is collected and analyzed they will be presented on the gallery's walls in the form of linear graphs. The purpose of this exercise is to draw attention to my cognitive abilities as I put my mind and body under tension. Another aspect of this installation is sound. Using different music software I will create a soundtrack influenced by what La Monte Young called " a sustained tone branch of minimalism, also known as drone music", we learn sound as a powerful tool for reaching and activating specific brain circuits. Furthermore, with the same brain wave data collected before I will generate an audio track. TwoTone is a free website that uses a technique called signification, in other words it turns data into sound. The two tracks will be mixed together and played through four speakers on each corner of the gallery. Finally, to add the experiential characteristic, the entirety of the gallery will be painted glossy white along with four 5000K (Crystal White Glow) LED lights tubes. The LED lights measure 4 feet tall and will be located on each corner of the gallery. All these elements help the viewer to put themselves in the same space as the objects and gets the opportunity to create their own relation with the work. Thus as the viewer moves around, the content of the installation produces an aspect where new perceptions can flourish.

This project's significance lies on the understanding of our current culture. The speed information is fast and destabilizing our world's view, also advancements in artificial intelligence have made us inquire into the nature of human existence with hesitation. But first, we must ask ourselves what is it like to be a conscious being?

Materials

- 6ft x 3ft plexiglas panels and wood for the construction of the monolith
- Electroencephalography (EEG) device.
- Acrylic pens
- 4 LED lights.
- 4 speakers (I will be working with a sound composer for technical assistance for the installation and the sound production)
- Softwares:

- Emotiv Pro (data acquisition software for brain activity)
- Emotiv Activity Map (a real-time map of mental activity).
- Reaktor 6 (modular software music studio)
- Wotja (generative music lab)
- Garageband
- Numbers and Illustrator
- TwoTone (website that transform data into sound. <https://twotone.io>)





