Feminine/ Feminist Expressions in Textile Arts:

An Overview of Research and Art Practice

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Abstract

This paper explores the inseparable relationship between women and textiles from historical, social, mythological, psychological, and artistic perspectives. With advancements in technology and shifts in women's societal roles, textiles have evolved from domestic crafts into powerful mediums of artistic expression, imbued with symbolic and therapeutic significance. Artists such as Louise Bourgeois have transformed textile art into a profound platform for exploring identity, memory, and psychological depth, bringing new dimensions to feminism and art history.

Building on these foundations, this paper introduces an immersive interactive installation as followed art practice that integrates traditional textile techniques with emerging technologies and interaction design. By addressing themes of transformation, familial connection, and emotional healing, it exemplifies the potential of textile art to merge personal narratives with universal experiences, creating spaces for introspection, dialogue, and innovation.

Keywords: textile art, fabric, craft, feminism, feminine identity, transformation, interactive installation, artistic practice

1   Introduction

In contemporary art, textile work has evolved beyond its historical associations with femininity and domesticity, emerging as a powerful medium for creative exploration and personal expression (Nimkulrat, 2009). Traditionally tied to familial roles and seen as symbols of femininity, textiles have been reclaimed by women as a means of asserting identity and agency (Resor, 2023). Artists like Louise Bourgeois have harnessed this medium to delve into profound cultural and psychological themes, elevating its potential for storytelling and healing. Inspired by this transformation, my research merges traditional textile practices with emerging technologies to explore concepts of growth, maternal relationships, the balance within domestic feminine energy, and emotional well-being through the medium of interactive and immersive installation.

2   Research - Literature and Artistic Work Review

2.1 Historical Evolution: The Role and Symbolism of Textiles with Women's Lives

For thousands of years, textiles have been central to women's lives. In ancient China, the saying "Men till, women weave" encapsulated the gendered division of labor in primitive society, reflecting the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy and the small-scale peasant economy based on agriculture and household handicrafts (Bray, 2023; Parker, 1996). Similarly, in medieval England, the adage "When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?" highlighted socio-economic injustice during the Peasants' Revolt. The farmworkers, burdened by unfair taxes from privileged landowners, resonated with this saying, which spoke to the exploitation of their labor (Postrel, 2021).

Textile techniques and their origins are often credited to women in cultural narratives. For instance, Luo Zu, the wife of the Yellow Emperor[1] in Chinese mythology, is revered as the inventor of sericulture and silk reeling, earning her the title "mother of silk". In Greek mythology, the three Fates spin, measure, and cut the thread of life to control human destiny. In Norse myths, Valkyria, the legendary goddesses of war in Iceland, use human intestines as the thread to weave the story of war with a blood-red loom. In Mayan mythology, the daughter of the god of Earth weaves rain clouds with cotton (Bunting, 2021).

Despite the significant role of men in the wool trade from the Middle Ages to the modern invention of synthetic fibers, textile-making has often been relegated to women's work. The softness, warmth, and flexibility of fabrics have long been associated with maternal qualities (Resor, 2023). Patriarchal societies have historically emphasized textile production as a means of instilling virtues like diligence, thrift, and morality in women, teaching young girls to to spin and weave as part of

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[1] The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), traditionally reigning from 2717 to 2599 BC, led China's ancient tribal alliance and is revered as the "first ancestor of humanity."

their ethical development. Additionally, because fabrics primarily serve practical purposes, their artistic and creative value has frequently been overlooked or dismissed as unoriginal, old-fashioned, and lifeless (Ecoist, 2022).

The Industrial Revolution brought both challenges and opportunities to textile-making. Innovations like the sewing machine liberated women from one of their traditionally oppressive domestic roles but also led to a decline in individual craftsmanship as faster, more uniform production methods became the norm (Goggin, 2017). Textiles were increasingly marginalized as mundane crafts rather than recognized as fine art. Nonetheless, the 20th century saw a resurgence of interest in textile-based art, driven by technological advances, the globalization of the garment industry, and changing perceptions of craftspeople (Adamson, 2010). The Internet further fostered connections among textile artists, reshaping the image of textile-making from a traditional domestic chore to a medium of popular creative process.

Fabrics' intrinsic qualities in malleability, decorative potential, and adaptability have made them increasingly popular among contemporary artists. Their ability to symbolize complex social, psychological, and philosophical themes has further expanded their appeal, offering new modes of creative expression (Nimkulrat, 2009; Parker, 1996). Textile techniques and materials now serve as powerful metaphors in art, symbolizing connections between personal and collective identities.

Textiles are also an excellent medium for therapeutic potential, particularly among female patients. Research indicates that textile crafting enhances self-esteem, fosters social connection, and provides a coping mechanism for managing negative emotions such as depression or anxiety (Collier, 2011). For many, working with textiles offers a spiritual or psychological outlet, facilitating self-expression and recovery from illness or trauma (Talwar, 2018).

2.2 Contemporary Feminist Textile Expressions by Fabric Types

While it may not always be politically correct or entirely accurate to classify fabric as a "feminine" material, it undeniably serves as a powerful medium for expressing women's identities and feminism. Different types of fabric can be seen as distinct languages, each articulating unique emotions and characteristics linked to feminine energy (Pérez-Bustos et al., 2019).

Stretch fabrics, for example, are favored by many fabric artists for their elasticity and adaptability. These qualities allow them to create explicit visual effects and integrate seamlessly with other materials. For feminist expression, stretch fabrics vividly convey symbolic metaphors, such as the inherent resilience and adaptability of women's bodies. Their capacity to stretch over rigid structures highlights the shape beneath, while their ability to droop under weight while maintaining integrity represents conceptual expansiveness.

African American visual artist and curator Senga Nengudi (b. 1943), deeply inspired by her experience of pregnancy after giving birth to two sons, explored these qualities through her use of spandex. In her *R.S.V.P.* series, pantyhose were stretched across walls and floors, sometimes filled with sand, embodying the elasticity and resilience of the psyche and the pregnant body (**Fig. 1**). These works were often "activated" by collaborators, whose performances invoked themes such as bondage, birth, jazz, and death, reflecting profound connections to the female body (Gyarkye, 2020; *Nengudi*, n.d.).

Fig. 1: *Senga Nengudi, R.S.V.P, first realized in 1975.* Courtesy of the artist.

Threads and yarns, by contrast, embody profound metaphorical significance, often associated with themes of life and death rooted in mythology. As the building blocks of fabric, they adapt to both two- and three-dimensional forms, making them versatile in weaving, knitting, and crocheting. In large volumes, threads can create immersive sensory experiences.

Japanese performance and installation artist Chiharu Shiota (b. 1972) has mastered the use of thread to create dense, intricate networks that envelop gallery spaces. By interweaving thread with objects like books, keys, or dresses, Shiota's works explore profound themes of connection, separation, life, and death (**Fig. 2**). Audiences walking beneath her thread installations often report feelings of unease or introspection, accompanied by a spiritual awakening (Carensia et al., 2024; *Shiota*, n.d.).
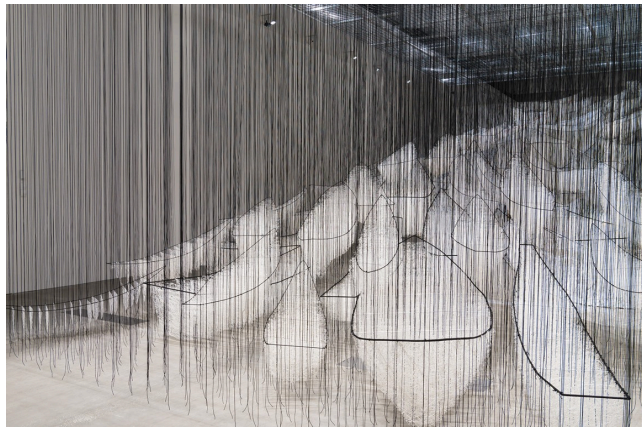
Fig. 2: *Chiharu Shiota, Where Are We Going? (2017/2019), white wool, wire, and rope.* Photography by Natasha Harth/QAGOMA.

When threads and fabric are combined, the interplay between line, surface, and form yields stunning artistic expressions. Fabric, animated by the tension of thread, can embody philosophical ideas, such as the Zen concept of balance. New York-based artist E.V. Day (b. 1967) explores this dynamic in her installation *Bride Fight* (**Fig. 3**). By tearing apart two bridal gowns and suspending them with monofilaments, Day creates an explosive, storm-like visual metaphor for the tension between traditional female stereotypes and inner feminine strength (*Day*, n.d.).

Fig. 3: *E.V. Day, Bride Fight (2001), two vintage white silk bridal gowns, two tiaras, two veils, two pairs of shoes, two pairs of gloves, hairpiece, garters, panties, faux-pearl necklace, monofilament, fishing tackle, and turnbuckles. Approx. 11 1/2 x 18 x 16 feet.* Collection of The Lever House, NYC.

Silk and velvet, with their softness and reflective qualities, evoke water's fluidity and skin's texture, often symbolizing femininity. In *The Birth Project*, Judy Chicago collaborated with over 150 needleworkers to celebrate women's fertility and creativity. Using silk as the primary medium, her piece *Birth Tear E 2* (**Fig. 4**) employs red silk embroidery to depict the visceral pain of childbirth. The lifelike imagery immerses viewers in the maternal experience, enabling them to connect emotionally with the intensity of labor and creation (*Judy Chicago Research Portal*, n.d.).

Fig. 4: *Judy Chicago, Birth Tear E 2 from The Birth Project (1982), DMC floss on silk.* Dimensions: 15 x 22 in.

2.3 Cultural and Healing Narratives in Contemporary Textile Art

Many renowned artists have infused their life experiences into textile works, challenging perceptions and reshaping how fabrics are regarded in the art world. They have elevated textile into a cultural and psychological medium, transforming it into a tool for storytelling, healing, and reclaiming identity while inspiring future explorations (Garlock, 2016; Karanovic, 2022).

2.3.1 Judith Scott

Judith Scott (1943–2005), an internationally acclaimed sculptor, defied societal expectations by creating extraordinary fiber art despite being born with Down syndrome and later losing her hearing. For over three decades, she was confined to a private care institution where she received no artistic education due to misconceptions about her abilities. Rescued by her twin sister in 1986, Scott was enrolled in the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, California, where she discovered her passion for textiles (Edwards, 2016). Her creations consisted of large-scale fabric sculptures, made by wrapping yarn, twine, and fabric around found objects such as keys, bicycle wheels, and even shopping carts. Her organic, abstract pieces often resemble totem poles or cocoons (**Fig. 5**). Over 18 years, she produced over 200 works, redefining what it means to have access to artistic expression and leaving a profound legacy in the art world. (Atoyebi, 2023)

Fig. 5: *Judith Scott, Untitled 2002, Museum of Modern Art, New York.*

2.3.2 Aminah Robinson

African American artist Aminah Robinson (1940–2015) drew inspiration from her family's history and cultural heritage to develop a distinctive artistic style. Born in Columbus, Ohio, she grew up in Poindexter Village, one of the first urban housing projects in the U.S., where her parents nurtured her creativity. Her father encouraged her to draw and make books, while her mother taught her weaving and sewing. These early influences, coupled with her exploration of African roots, deeply shaped her art. Robinson's works combine painting, fabric collages, and soft sculptures to narrate family stories, cultural identity, and ancestral memory. One notable piece, *Dad's Journey* (1972–2006), uses beads, shells, and colorful cloth to memorialize her father's life and the struggles of African American ancestors (**Fig. 6**). The work exemplifies her ability to turn textiles into narrative "books" that evoke both personal and collective histories. (Chhaya, 2023; Talbert, 2021)

Fig. 6: *Aminah Robinson, Dad's Journey (1972–2006), Button Beaded RagGonNon Music Box Pop-Up Book. 28 1/2 in. x 172 in.* Columbus Museum of Art.

2.3.3 Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), a seminal figure in 20th-century art, used textiles to process her complex childhood experiences. Growing up in her parents' tapestry repair business, she developed an early connection to fabrics. Her works reflect themes of family, motherhood, and psychological tension, often rooted in her early feelings of abandonment and betrayal. She frequently used textiles in her sculptures, drawing on the emotional resonance of fabric to explore the critical sides of nurturing and vulnerability (Nixon & Bourgeois, 2005). In *Spider* (1997), a massive spider looms over glass eggs, symbolizing both protection and entrapment, while incorporating antique tapestries reminiscent of her childhood (**Fig. 7**).

Bourgeois also addressed the duality of connection and separation raises questions about dependency and maternal bond, presenting complexities of human relationships. In *The Good Mother* (2003), a pink towel sculpture with threads emerging from the figure's nipples reflects her experiences with her mother and four siblings (**Fig. 8**) (Souter, 2022). For her, sewing and cutting fabric became metaphors for psychological repair and reconciliation. She once remarked, "The needle is used to repair the damage. It's a claim to forgiveness".

Fig. 8: *Louise Bourgeois, The Good Mother (2003).* The Easton

Foundation/VAGA at ARS, NY, and DACS, London. Photography by

Christopher Burke.

Fig. 7: *Louise Bourgeois, Spider (Cell) (1997). Steel, tapestry, wood, glass,*

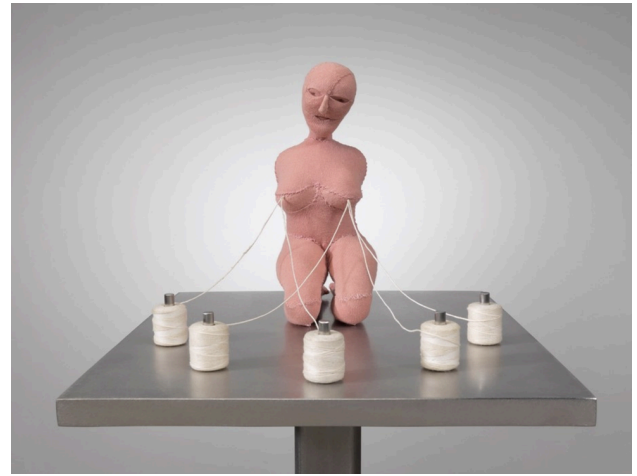*fabric, rubber, silver, gold, and bone.* Collection of The Easton Foundation, NY.

2.4   Textile Art at the Intersection of Technology and Design

The fusion of textile art, technology, and design has expanded the boundaries of textiles. Artists and designers use advanced

tools to explore interactivity, sustainability, and storytelling. Tony Oursler integrates projections and digital elements with soft

sculptures to create multimedia works addressing human identity and technology (**Fig. 9**) . Meanwhile, fashion designer Iris

van Herpen, a pioneer of experimental haute couture, combines 3D printing and laser cutting to create biomimetic designs. Her

Between the Lines collection (**Fig. 10**) integrates materials such as silicone and natural elements like water and rocks,

symbolizing women's movements and strength and feminist philosophy (Sharp, 2016).

Fig. 10: *Iris Van Herpen, 'Between the Lines' collection (2017), garments*

using unusual materials such as silicone.

Fig. 9: *Tony Ousler, Installation view (2003),* Lisson Gallery, London.

Computational tools and digital fabrication redefine textile art by integrating architecture and technology. Artists like Jenny Sabin use parametric modeling and CNC machines to create adaptive installations, such as *Lumen* (2017), which responds to light and heat (**Fig. 11**) (*Jenny Sabin Studio*, 2017). Projects like MIT's Mediated Matter Group's *Silk Pavilion* combine computational design with natural processes, utilizing silkworms to build biodegradable structures (**Fig. 12**) (Oxman et al., 2014). These innovations embed interactivity and eco-consciousness, transforming textile art into a functional medium that addresses modern challenges while retaining its creative essence.

Fig. 11: *Jenny Sabin, Lumen (2017),* Jenny Sabin studio.

Fig. 12: *Mediated Matter group, Silk Pavilion (2018)*, MIT Media Lab.

3   Methodology and Thesis Project Design

3.1   Study Selection

A comprehensive electronic search was conducted to identify relevant literature on feminist textile art published between 1990 and 2024, as well as textile artworks incorporating feminist or cultural narratives produced after 1970 (the onset of the contemporary art era). The search strategy employed keywords such as *textile art*, *textile artists*, *feminism*, *motherhood*, *fabric*, *craft*, and *art therapy*. Databases such as ProQuest and Web of Science, supplemented by library resources and visits to museums and exhibitions. The review encompassed art historical analyses, case studies of individual artists, and meta-analyses of textile art practices and crafts.

3.2   Thesis Project Design Procedure

This thesis project investigates the intersection of traditional textile art, interaction design, and digital technologies through the conceptualization and construction of an immersive installation. By drawing inspiration from the cocoon as both a biological structure and a metaphorical symbol, the project integrates advanced fabrication techniques and interactive media to explore themes of familial dynamics, transformation, and healing.

3.2.1 Conceptual Framework and Critical Reflections

The cocoon serves as a central metaphor for protection, confinement, and growth. Morphologically, it conveys a dual experience: externally soft and nurturing, yet internally reflecting complexity and struggle (Chen et al., 2012). This duality parallels familial dynamics, particularly for women balancing roles as caregivers and individuals. Symbolically, the cocoon represents the transmission of intergenerational feminine energy, critiquing traditional family narratives and addressing the tension women face in domestic contexts.

As Louise Bourgeois remarked, "If a creature doesn't break through its cocoon, it will eventually die and decay inside." By integrating traditional textile techniques with contemporary digital fabrication, the installation bridges craft, technology, and critical art practice. It creates an immersive, multi-sensory space for participants to reflect on familial relationships, navigating the tension between protection and liberation, growth and constraint.

3.2.2 Design Methodology

1. **Structure and Materiality**

The project is designed in the shape of a cocoon, large enough to accommodate 1–2 people at a time, and emphasizes an immersive, multisensory experience:

- **Dimensions:** 8.5 ft x 4.75 ft x 4.7 ft.
- **Frame:** CNC-cut birch plywood serves as the structural backbone, chosen for its durability, ease of fabrication, and organic aesthetic.
- **Fabric Covering:** Beige boiled wool, resembling raw silk in texture, is selected for its stretchability and compatibility with projection mapping. The fabric's neutral tone enhances its adaptability for visual effects.

2. **Prototypes of the Frame Design**

The cocoon's shell and frame were prototyped using Cinema 4D and refined in Slicer for Fusion 360. Three structural designs were tested through laser cutting (**Fig. 13**) to evaluate feasibility and functionality.
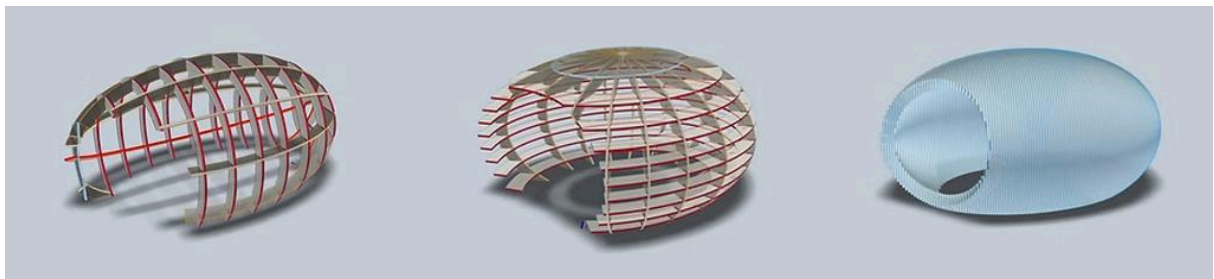

Fig. 13: *Three Prototypes made in Cinema 4D and Slicer for Fusion 360 and cut by laser (2022).*

To address potential time constraints, two contingency plans were developed:

- Splitting the cocoon in half and positioning it against a wall to create a semi-enclosed structure.

- A smaller, ceiling-mounted version that allows visitors to interact by placing their heads inside.

3. **Morphological Aesthetics**

   The external surface of the cocoon adopts a soft and inviting appearance, projecting patterns inspired by bioluminescence and organic forms. Internally, the design contrasts sharply, simulating visceral, organ-like textures with soft sculptures crafted from mixed materials. This internal space confronts viewers with themes of vulnerability and raw emotion, offering a striking juxtaposition to the soothing exterior.

3.2.3 Media and Interaction Design

The project integrates diverse media and digital techniques to create an immersive and interactive experience, utilizing cutting-edge technologies to bridge the physical and digital realms:

1. **External Media**
   - **Projection Mapping:** Organic patterns such as *Physarum*[2], or those inspired by bioluminescence, are dynamically projected onto the cocoon's surface, creating an ethereal and visually immersive effect.
   - **Fabric Integration:** UV mapping techniques are employed to pre-visualize the fabric layout, enabling hand cutting, sewing, and assembly.

2. **Internal Media**
   - **Digital Installations:** Holographic projections or digital screens narrate stories of generational energy transmission and familial balance, embodying the cyclical and evolving nature of these relationships.
   - **Soft Sculptures:** Organic forms within the cocoon simulate biological processes and textures, symbolizing internal struggles and growth.

3. **Interactive Components**
   - **Touch or Light Triggers:** Arduino microcontrollers enable visitors to interact with sculptures through touch or flashlight, triggering narrative films that alternate between interactive responses and a default loop.

3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

3.3.1 Target Audience

This installation is designed for exhibitions or public spaces as a relaxing and quiet experience. Positioned against a wall with the entrance hidden from the front, it encourages a sense of exploration and discovery for visitors. The target audience includes art enthusiasts, academics, and the general public, inviting diverse participants to engage.

3.3.2 Data Collection Methods

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[2] *Physarum* refers to a genus of slime molds, particularly *Physarum polycephalum*, known for its ability to form intricate vein-like networks when foraging for nutrients, often used as a model in biological and computational research due to its efficiency in pattern formation and problem-solving.

A qualitative research approach was employed to collect feedback and analyze audience experiences:

1. **Observational Study:** During the exhibition, visitor behaviors and interactions with the installation were observed, focusing on how they engaged with its interactive elements and spatial dynamics.
2. **Post-Experience Surveys:** Participants were invited to complete short surveys, consisting of open-ended questions about their emotional responses, thoughts on the installation's themes, and their engagement with the interactive features.
3. **In-Depth Interviews:** A smaller group of visitors participated in one-on-one interviews, providing more detailed insights into their personal reflections and connections to the themes of familial dynamics and transformation.
4. **Visitor Feedback Forms:** Anonymous feedback forms were placed at the exhibition exits to collect spontaneous, written impressions from participants.

3.3.3 Exhibition Context and Setup

The installation was exhibited in two spaces:

- **SVA Chelsea Gallery:** A contemporary art gallery in New York, offering a professional setting for showcasing immersive and conceptual works.
- **Romanian Culture Institute:** A cultural venue in New York that attracted an international audience, providing diverse perspectives on the installation.

These venues allowed the collection of data in environments conducive to engagement and introspection, ensuring the feedback reflected authentic audience experiences. The data was analyzed to identify recurring themes and insights, forming the basis for the discussion of audience feedback in the results section.

4   Art Practice - Thesis Project Execution

The execution phase involved translating the conceptual framework into a tangible, immersive installation, utilizing advanced fabrication techniques, projection mapping, and interactive media to bring the cocoon's symbolic qualities to life.

4.1 Fabrication

4.1.1 Structure and Surface

The cocoon's structure was designed and cut from three 8'×4' birch plywood sheets using a CNC routing machine. Interface design incorporated circular notches at joint connections, reducing resistance during assembly and enhancing structural stability. The entire framework was divided into 47 pieces, which were organized and able to be assembled in 3 hours, resulting in a completed sculpture measuring 8.5 ft × 4.75 ft × 4.7 ft (**Fig. 14**).

Fig. 14: *The cocoon's shell by CNC (2022), material is birch plywood.*

The cocoon's surface was constructed in multiple layers:

- **External Layer:** The cocoon's fabric covering was developed using a UV mapping process to translate its complex 3D geometry into precise 2D templates. The initial design was modeled in Cinema 4D, with surface unwrapping conducted in Marvelous Designer to simulate fabric behavior and test fit accuracy. This simulation allowed for adjustments to ensure the fabric panels would align seamlessly when sewn together, considering stretch and tension. The finalized UV templates were exported to Adobe Illustrator for refining seam allowances and alignment marks. The external layer utilized solid boiled wool for its stretchability and silk-like texture (**Fig. 15**).
- **Internal Layer:** Quilted fabric was used to conceal the frame and provide a base for hanging interior decorations.

Fig. 15: *The cocoon's fabric cover (2023), material is solid boiled wool.*

4.1.2 Interior Soft Sculptures

The interior soft sculptures were handcrafted to resemble organic forms such as internal organs and biological structures. Using varied stretchable fabrics and padding, I manually cut and stitched the fabric into fluid, irregular shapes that evoke visceral textures. Layers of fabric and detailed hand-stitching added depth and complexity, creating a raw, organic aesthetic.

4.2 Interactive Media and Visual Design

4.2.1 External Projection Mapping: Organic Textures and Interaction

The cocoon's outer surface features organic, moving textures inspired by *Physarum* and *Voronoi* patterns. These patterns were generated in TouchDesigner using visual scripting and Python algorithms, which mapped dynamic textures across the cocoon. A Kinect sensor was integrated to capture the silhouettes of participants standing before the structure, adding an electronic ripple effect that interacted with their movements (**Fig. 16**). The workflows involved iterative experimentation with noise parameters, feedback systems, and edge detection techniques to produce visually compelling results:

1. ***Voronoi* Pattern Generation with Kinect in TouchDesigner**

   - **Noise Configuration:** Adjusted parameters like resolution, pixel format, and animation speed to generate dynamic noise textures for Voronoi cell foundations.
   - **Feedback Systems:** Combined Feedback with edge detection nodes (e.g., Slope and Blur TOPs) to create pseudo-Voronoi textures through an iterative feedback loop, simulating natural self-organizing patterns.
   - **UV Mapping and Instancing:** Applied Ramp TOP for UV mapping, scattered Voronoi points with 3D instancing, and randomized noise for variation.
   - **Kinect Interaction:** Captured depth data and participant silhouettes to create ripple effects, dynamically responding to movement with noise and displacement tools.

2. **Dynamic Textures with GLSL for *Physarum* Simulation**

   - **Dynamic Growth Simulation:** The Physarum algorithm simulated the behavior of slime mold, generating branching and self-organizing patterns across the surface.
   - **Shader Code Application:** While exact shader coding was not included, GLSL enabled efficient rendering of the Physarum simulation by leveraging GPU parallelism to map dynamic textures on the cocoon's exterior.
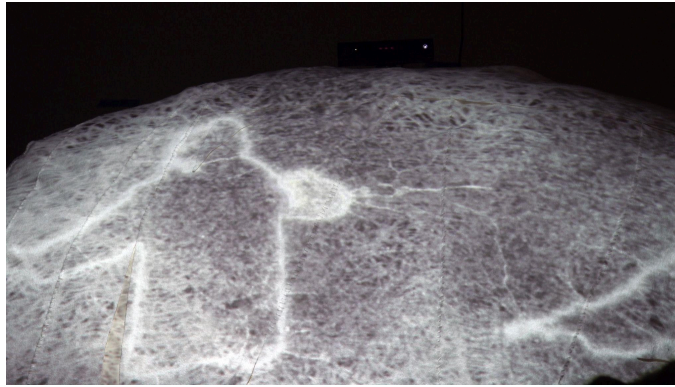
Fig. 16: *The cocoon's projection mapping result (2022), material is birch plywood.*

4.2.2 Internal Interactive Design

The internal space uses digital screens and interactive lighting to evoke the themes of familial transformation. A looped video created in Cinema 4D depicts an avatar embodying the maternal lineage across three generations. The avatar symbolizes the transmission and balance of energy within this bloodline, reflecting themes of resilience and reconciliation.

Participants interact with the video through three Arduino-connected light sensors positioned at specific points in the space. When illuminated with a flashlight, each sensor triggers a unique video sequence corresponding to one of the three generations, creating a personalized and dynamic engagement.

Arduino Code for Light Interaction:

```
int light = A0;
int lightVal = 0;

void setup() {
  pinMode(light, INPUT);
  Serial.begin(9600);
}

void loop() {
  lightVal = analogRead(light);
  Serial.println(lightVal);
  delay(20);
}
```

4.2.3 Audio Design

The internal environment incorporates heartbeat sounds to enhance the immersive experience. The soundscape mirrors the metaphor of familial connection and the pulse of life, amplifying the emotional depth of the installation.

5 Outcomes and Discussion

The thesis project, initially named *Chrysalis*, evolved from a personal exploration into an interactive public installation that connected with audiences on both individual and collective levels (Fig. 17, 18).

Fig. 17, 18: *The exterior (left) and interior (right) view of the project Chrysalis (2023).*

5.1 Audience Feedback

There were around 200 visitors, and they reacted strongly to *Chrysalis*, emphasizing its capacity to create a deeply introspective experience while maintaining a broad appeal. Feedback highlighted several aspects:

- **Emotional Resonance:** Over 85% of surveyed participants described the installation as "emotionally moving" or "thought-provoking." Many reflected on how the themes resonated with their own personal family narratives.

- **Interactive Engagement:** Visitors expressed appreciation for the light-triggered videos and projection mapping, noting how these features enhanced their sense of agency within the installation.

- **Transformative Space:** Many described the cocoon as a "sanctuary," transforming the installation into a shared public space for introspection and dialogue, rather than merely an art piece.

5.2 Insights and Future Directions

The success of *Chrysalis* lies in its ability to connect personal stories with universal themes, allowing participants to reflect on their own relationships while engaging with the interactive design. Audience feedback highlighted how the installation's immersive elements made the experience feel both personal and shared. Moving forward, *Chrysalis* could explore ways to deepen these connections by optimizing the integration of various media, lowering cost, creating more tailored interactions, and developing a more accessible and portable design. These improvements would allow the installation to reach a wider range of audiences, including those with different sensory needs, while maintaining its immersive and emotionally resonant experience.

For the documentation and more details, please go to: www.yangjintong.com/chrysalis

6 Conclusion

Chrysalis builds upon the symbolic and functional roles of textiles in women's lives, as discussed in the literature review, by transforming these historical and cultural narratives into a contemporary artistic practice. The installation reinterprets textiles' association with feminine and familial bonds through an immersive and interactive experience, encouraging participants to reflect on themes of transformation and emotional healing.

The process of integrating traditional textile techniques with digital innovation provided a platform to explore how textiles can act as metaphors for connection and struggle. The tactile and visual elements of the installation echo the dualities highlighted in the literature, offering a nuanced understanding of the medium's significance. Through this project, textiles were not only reclaimed as tools for artistic expression but also as vehicles for fostering introspection and dialogue, bridging historical contexts with modern experiential storytelling.

By combining theoretical research with practical application, *Chrysalis* demonstrates how textiles can transcend their traditional roles to carry profound human experiences, enriching both feminist art discourse and contemporary artistic practice.

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