THE HUMAN INTERFACE

A FIELD GUIDE TO A WORDLESS EXPERIMENT

Research Meets Art. Ten symbolic worlds invite a visitor to encounter perception, attachment, identity, memory, time, desire, agency, self-image, uncertainty, and meaning through action rather than exposition. The website uses images, movement and consequences as its primary language. This guide uses words to examine what those metaphors can - and cannot - reasonably communicate.

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Epistemic key. EVIDENCE refers to findings or established conceptual frameworks in published scholarship. INTERPRETATION refers to how the interactive artwork expresses an idea. SPECULATION refers to a question or possibility, not a demonstrated causal rule. A beautiful metaphor is not a diagnostic instrument.

How to use the installation

Begin at the centre and choose any of ten icons. Inside every environment, three large icon-only buttons modify the scene. You can return to the centre, visit another environment, disable sound, reduce motion or reset the entire experience. After visiting four environments a new symbol becomes available; it creates an abstract synthesis of your choices. This image is an artwork, not a psychological reading.

The website intentionally supplies no visible essays inside its interactive scenes. Screen-reader names and descriptions are provided for icon controls, and this guide offers a readable verbal companion. No drag gesture is required. No external account, microphone, webcam, or server is involved. Your exploration settings are stored locally in the browser; clearing local storage or selecting Reset erases them.

Important design tension

To make a mechanism perceptible, the artwork simplifies human experience into a handful of parameters. That simplification is useful for thinking and hazardous for claiming knowledge. Real people are situated in cultures, bodies, histories, relationships and unequal circumstances; none of the ten worlds captures all of that.

01 / Perception

Interaction. Three controls change the lens, viewing position and focus used to see a scene of forms. Some properties remain while others become newly salient.

What the artwork makes observable. The very same world can supply different perceptual inputs. Changing an observer position changes what is accessible; changing an interpretation does not necessarily change the underlying object.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: visual perception involves selection and interpretation; attention is limited. Classic work on inattentional blindness demonstrates that even conspicuous information may be missed under particular attentional demands (Simons and Chabris, 1999).

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the geometric lenses stand for selective attention, not for interchangeable truths. Two views can differ in detail and still be evaluated against shared evidence.

On a return visit. Change the focus before shifting position. Ask what became visible and what was simply assumed.

02 / Attachment

Interaction. Two linked entities can move closer or farther apart; an additional control changes the flexibility of their connection. The image changes the shape of the bond without awarding a score.

What the artwork makes observable. Closeness and independence may be valued simultaneously. Different arrangements can become workable depending on what each participant needs.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: attachment research explores patterns of security and regulation in relationships, while self-determination theory treats relatedness and autonomy as distinguishable human needs (Bowlby, 1969; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the elastic thread is only a visual analogy, not a model of relationship quality, distress, or an ideal distance.

On a return visit. Find two visually different arrangements you would hesitate to classify as good or bad.

03 / Identity

Interaction. You can change a presented mask, modify a surrounding social context, and expose a consistent inner geometric form.

What the artwork makes observable. Presentation can adapt to circumstance while some sense of continuity remains. The environment also responds, suggesting that identity is not expressed in a vacuum.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: the social presentation of self has a rich sociological tradition, including Goffman (1959); modern identity scholarship distinguishes multiple facets of self-concept.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the centre is drawn as stable because that contrast is graphically legible. Actual identities can change meaningfully across a lifetime.

On a return visit. Alter the social context first. Does it change the meaning you assign to the same form?

04 / Memory

Interaction. Each action adds an echo to a timeline. A second control revisits prior echoes; a third increases or decreases how strongly earlier echoes affect a present wave.

What the artwork makes observable. Past information may shape present experience, but remembered material is not simply a lossless replay. Salience changes.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: memory research examines reconstructive retrieval and interference; Bartlett (1932) is a foundational account of reconstruction. Contemporary work emphasizes that retrieval is an active process.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the timeline is an invented illustration. It does not simulate neural memory, trauma or clinical recollection.

On a return visit. Add several echoes, then change which one dominates the display. Notice the difference between an event and its current salience.

05 / Time

Interaction. Plant seeds, grow structures and advance the seasons. Some plants flourish, age and decline. A new seed can still be planted after earlier growth has disappeared.

What the artwork makes observable. An irreversible change can coexist with new possibility. Neither loss nor renewal erases the other.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: human development and aging are real biological processes; the artwork also draws on philosophical accounts of temporality and change. No specific lifespan schedule is encoded.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: seasonal cycles are a poetic device, not a prediction of personal growth, grief, biological change or eventual outcomes.

On a return visit. Allow a garden to change before planting a new seed. Consider how change alters possibilities rather than merely subtracting them.

06 / Desire

Interaction. Advance toward an object of pursuit; shift attention toward surrounding fragments; or change the object's visual character. Pursuit can move the object as well as the observer.

What the artwork makes observable. The experience of wanting can change as attention, effort and goals change. Desire need not be represented as an endlessly escalating drive.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: psychological research distinguishes motivational wanting, liking, expectation and goal-directed behavior (Berridge and Robinson, 1998, among others).

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the receding object is not a claim that achievements inevitably disappoint. Sometimes attaining what one wants is deeply satisfying.

On a return visit. Pause pursuit and attend to the existing field. What changes in the scene without any change in distance?

07 / Agency

Interaction. Build levels of a structure, carry out maintenance and simplify when needed. As the stack grows, the image introduces visible strain and repair.

What the artwork makes observable. Construction creates additional opportunities and obligations. Maintenance can be understood as part of making, not as a failure to make more.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: the broad concept of human agency concerns intentional action and efficacy; Bandura (1997) explores self-efficacy. Maintenance costs are especially familiar in engineering and organizations.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the artwork does not claim an exact mathematical law relating ambition to burden, nor that smaller systems are universally better.

On a return visit. Build until strain becomes visible, then compare maintaining with simplifying.

08 / Self-image

Interaction. Adjust a reflection filter, change the apparent proportions and reveal a common underlying geometric shape.

What the artwork makes observable. A reflection is generated through a medium. Its properties are not identical to those of the thing reflected.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: self-concept and self-perception are studied in psychology, but the mirror is chiefly a philosophical and artistic metaphor.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the underlying form should not be read as a pure authentic self that the artwork can reveal. A person is not reducible to a polygon.

On a return visit. Change the filter repeatedly before revealing the source shape. Which judgments were about the object, and which were about the medium?

09 / Uncertainty

Interaction. Choose left or right routes through an incomplete labyrinth, or reveal selected fragments of missing information.

What the artwork makes observable. Decisions occur with partial knowledge. Sometimes additional information helps, while sometimes movement changes which information becomes relevant.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: decision research documents reasoning under uncertainty and heuristics (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). These are descriptions of tendencies, not instructions to distrust all intuition.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the generated maze is not a measurement of risk tolerance, decision quality or cognitive ability.

On a return visit. Explore different directions before revealing hidden fragments. Did new information change what seemed possible?

10 / Meaning

Interaction. Add stars to a personal constellation, rearrange their relationships or release a star. No combination is rewarded or ranked.

What the artwork makes observable. The same fragments can support different coherent patterns depending on how they are connected.

Research connection. EVIDENCE: work in meaning-making distinguishes dimensions such as coherence, purpose and significance (Martela and Steger, 2016). This scene is not a validated measure of any of them.

Boundary. INTERPRETATION: the constellation is a compositional analogy. Its beauty is not evidence of an objectively meaningful life.

On a return visit. Create two different constellations from a similar set of stars. Notice how connection changes apparent significance.

The synthesis: a record, not a reading

After exploring at least four environments, a new centre symbol appears. It composes a constellation from domains visited and some interaction counts. This is a visualization of actions made in one browser session or saved locally - it is not a profile of character, mental health, intelligence, attachment style or future potential.

The system does not infer a psychological construct. A highly active interaction does not mean a visitor possesses more of a trait. A sparse composition does not mean the opposite. Reordering the same elements creates a different image without changing who the visitor is. This distinction is essential to the integrity of the artwork.

Questions worth carrying beyond the screen

• Which change transformed the scene without changing the underlying structure?

• Did any world contain more than one workable state?

• What did the interface leave out that matters in the actual human situation?

• When did repetition produce greater control, and when did it produce a new obligation?

• Can a visual metaphor be useful without being scientifically predictive?

• When a different composition feels more beautiful, is that a judgment about the artwork or about the person?

Limitations and accessibility

This is a symbolic interactive work with simplified rules. There are no participants, randomized experiments, pre-registered hypotheses, validated scales or clinical tests. It should not be used to assess psychological health, prescribe relationship behavior or make decisions about other people. Complex social realities, disability, historical conditions, culture and context cannot be represented adequately by small geometric scenes.

All major interactions use focusable buttons rather than drag-only gestures. Sound is optional and off initially. A motion-reduction control is provided, along with support for operating-system motion preferences. Canvas art has an accessible description; the specific changing geometry is better understood through this companion guide. Reading the PDF provides a more detailed textual alternative.

Selected research and conceptual references

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