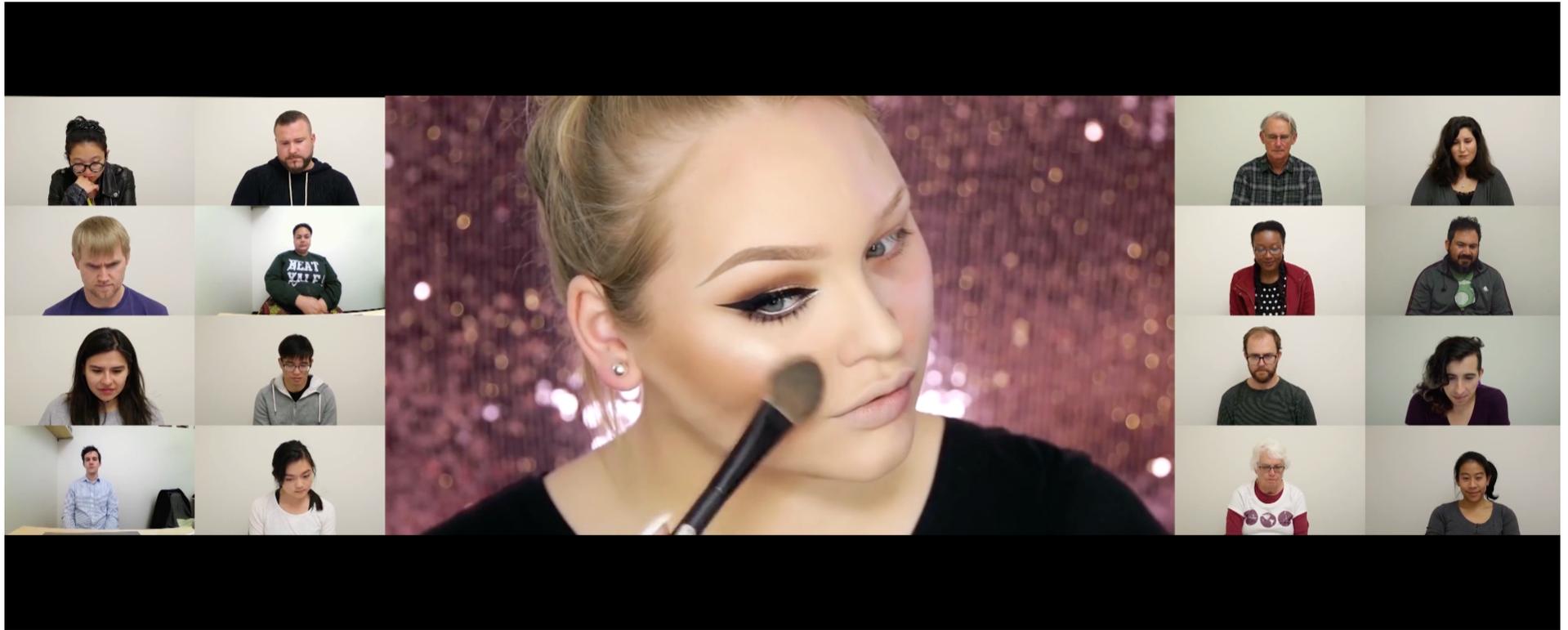


# STEFANI BYRD

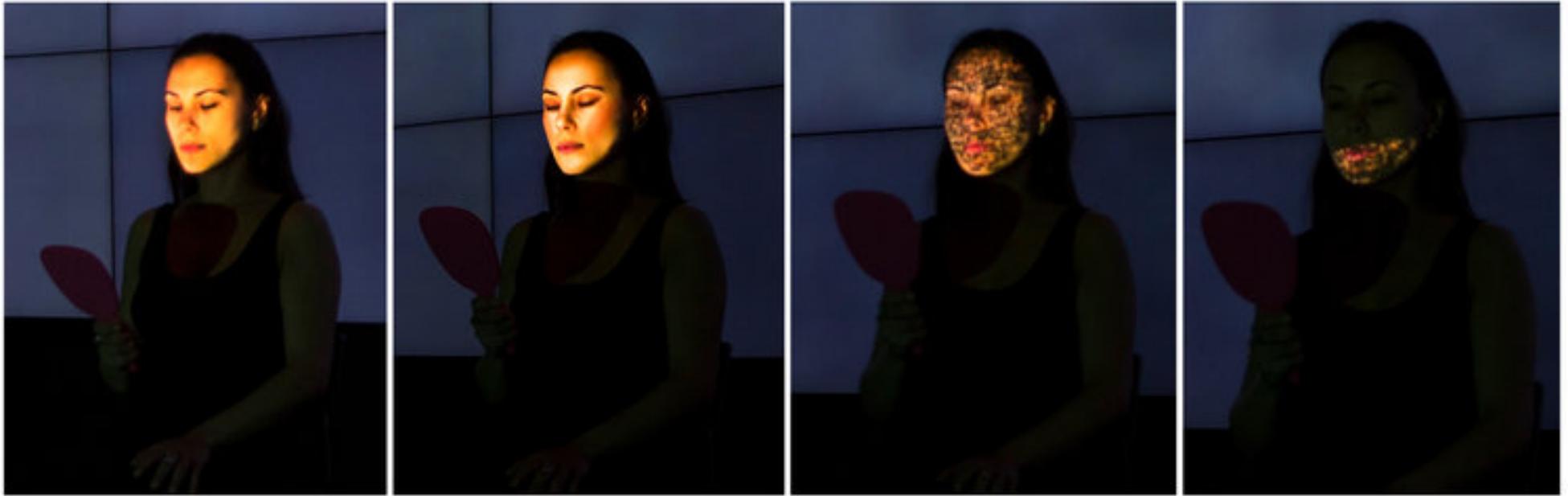
Digital Media + Interactive Public Art + Immersive Media Installations





***The Burden of Selfhood* (2017)**. Stefani Byrd, Fernanda Navarro, Sarah Ciston, Amy Fox, and Heidi Kayser. RT: 38:40  
<https://vimeo.com/216775415> Password: burden

*The Burden of Selfhood* is a short experimental documentary film which explores the intersection of feminism, identity, and technology. By connecting research from the humanities and cognitive science, this film investigates the experience of viewing and being viewed as a gendered body. This piece uses data visualization, eye tracking technologies to visualize the “gaze”, and original interviews with research participants to analyze user generated makeup tutorial videos from YouTube. These videos illustrate the drastic lengths employed to alter the face to meet unattainable standards of beauty, the analog answer to a world of Photoshopped bodies. This video takes a deep dive into the world of beauty, makeup trends, notions of self, while employing methods from cognitive science to study the connections between “Photoshop” culture and the boom in makeup trends over the last decade in order to make explicit both the collective gaze and the implicit impact of being seen.

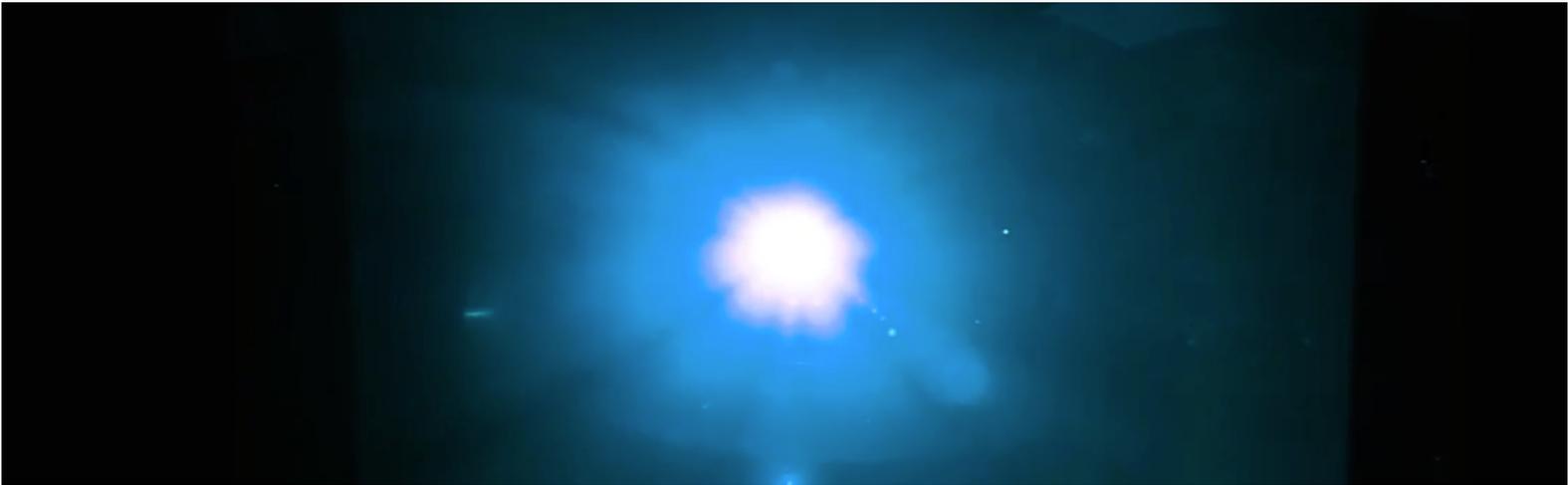
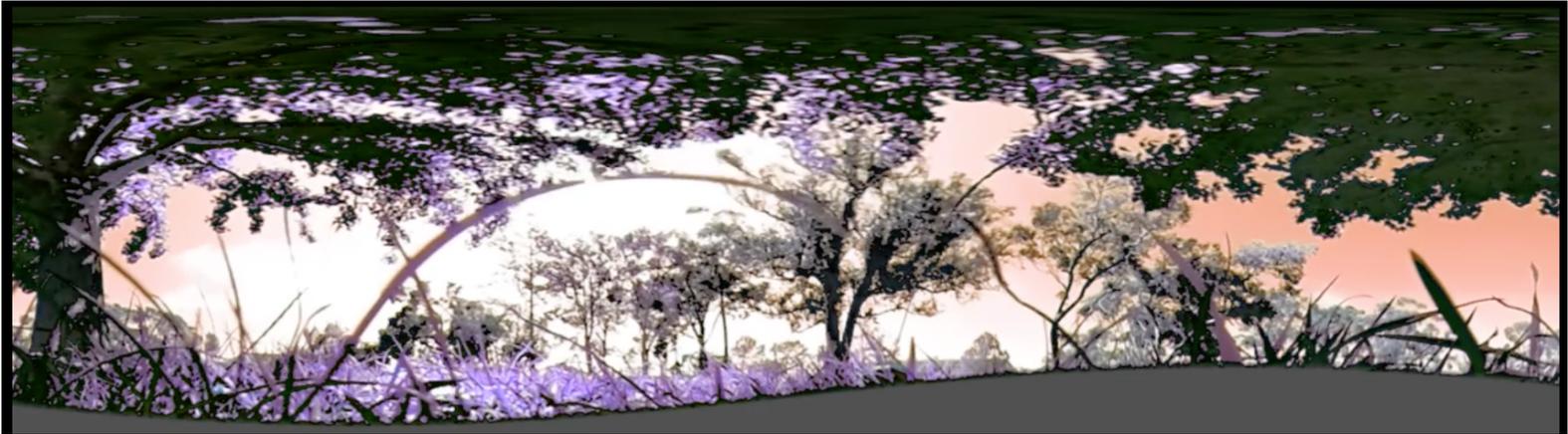


***The Burden of Selfhood (Live Performance Finale) (2017).*** Projection Mapping: Stefani Byrd, Performance: Fernanda Navarro, RT: 14min

The finale of *The Burden of Selfhood* is an unannounced live performance. At the closing of the film, a hidden performer in the audience rises and takes a seat in front of the stage facing the audience. The performer raises and holds a mirror gazing at the reflection of their face. The mask of the face is illuminated and in real-time “digital makeup” is applied as they are digitally retouched and contoured with projection mapped makeup. After the “makeup” is applied, it is then obscured by the accumulation of text pulled from the comments sections of the sourced makeup tutorial YouTube videos. The face of the performer is eventually consumed by blackness, ending the performance.



***Angels in America: Perestroika* (2016).** Projection Design: Stefani Byrd. Directed by Jon Reimer.  
Original video content creation and projection design for a March 2016 production of Tony Kushner's epic *Angels in America: Perestroika*



**Bardo States (2016-Present, Work in Progress)** Stefani Byrd, Johannes Regnier, Lily Padilla, and Joel Britt. 180 degree VR Film.

**Viewing Instruction:** Intended to be viewed using a Google Cardboard / Gear VR device with headphones, laying prone on the floor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIB5diPQ2HQ>

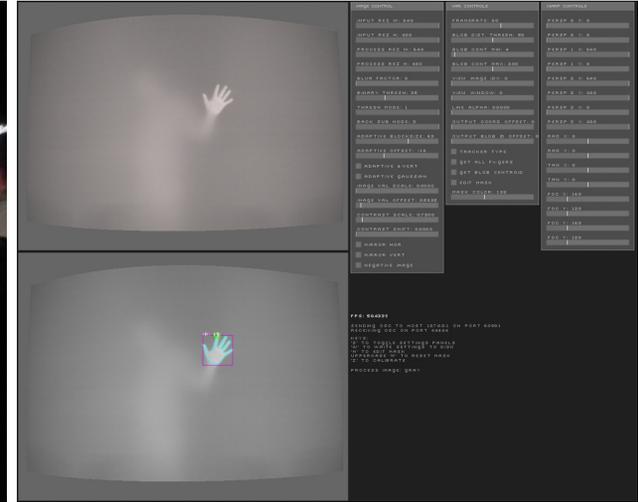
Currently in progress. A VR film exploring the states of consciousness experienced after the physical death of the body as described by the Tibetan Book of the Dead. These meticulously described layers of consciousness are referred to as the bardo states and are distinct realms that the soul must traverse in order to die successful and escape rebirth in the karmic cycle. To experience the piece, viewers are asked to lay flat on their back while wearing a VR headset. Audio cues are used to prompt the viewer to turn their head left and right as they navigate deeper through the bardo states and are eventually returned to their physical body.



*The Razor's Edge* (2016). Stefani Byrd. HD Video Portraits Shown on Vertically Mounted Monitors, Video Sample: <https://vimeo.com/147421737>

The breath is a constant reminder of our physicality and an anchor to our embodied experience. In these video portraits performers exhale slowly against an unseen piece of glass, fogging and obscuring their faces in fleeting moments between breaths. When shown on individual vertical video monitors, it creates the illusion that the performers are breathing against the glass of the screen. This work references the use of the “breath test” in the era before modern medicine where a mirror would be placed under the nose of the dying to test for respiration.

The illusion in the video is uncanny and the screen itself becomes the edge of the razor that separates both past from present, performer from viewer, and the living presence of the viewer from the illusion of life on the screen. An exploration in impermanence, embodiment, and the mediating presence of the screen, the work captures the breath - making it visible just long enough to be confronted by both performer and viewer.



*The Unattainable / The Intimate* (2015). Stefani Byrd, Fernanda Navarro, Juan David Rubio R., Touch Responsive Screen Surface, Projected Video, Spatialized Audio, and Custom Software. Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/187136547>

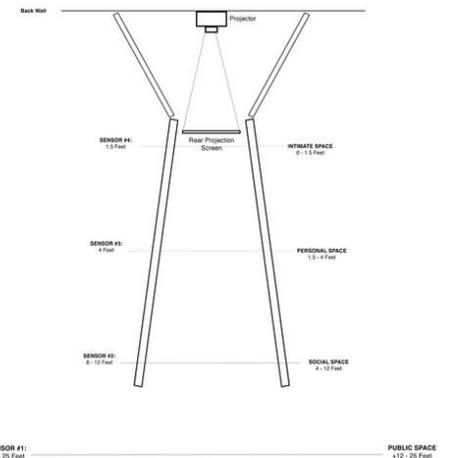
This interactive installation was a collaborative creation dealing with issues surrounding embodiment, intimacy in physical and digital spaces, haptic interaction, and mediated images. When entering the installation the viewer sees what appears to be a room behind the semi-transparent membrane of the screen. Characters in the room occupy themselves with tasks such as reading, meditating, or resting against the screen. Some peer out from behind the glass and invite interaction while others seem less interested in the audience. When the audience touches their digital bodies, the installation responds by either the characters turning to investigate the intrusion. Some points of interaction are designed to break the illusion of the second world behind the screen and cause the video to dissolve revealing the operating MAX patch. A playful interaction designed to both exploit our credulity and to then break down any sense of illusion.

This work was created for the Immersive Lab, an artistic and technological research project of the Institute of Computer Music and Sound Technology at the Zurich University of the Arts. It is a media space that integrates panoramic video, surround audio with full touch interaction on the entire screen surface. The installation was created using infrared touch detection, Processing, MAX/MSP/Jitter, and four separate projections to create the 360 degree panoramic image.



*(i want to be private)* (2014-15). Stefani Byrd and David Shere. Projected Video, Sensors, and Custom Software. Video: <https://vimeo.com/116371947>

Personal space is not a physical thing, but rather psychological. As humans we have a “space bubble” that represents what we feel comfortable with in terms of the space between ourselves and others. This installation is an interactive experience that integrates video and physical computing elements to create a real-time dynamic interaction between a human and a “digital surrogate”. As the viewer approaches the surrogate, they begin to elicit negative responses such as annoyance, anger, and eventually a fight or flight response if the surrogate’s final boundary, representing intimate space, is violated. The piece is a synthetic experience designed to exploit our credulity and to put the viewer in an awkward and psychologically charged situation. Each individual’s engagement behavior is recorded via the custom software that controls the installation in order to see how the audience chooses to react to the simulated emotions their presence elicits from the digital surrogate.





*Cacophony (24Hr News Cycle)* (2014-15). Stefani Byrd. Six Channel Audio Installation, Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/152903483>

This installation consists of six head height speakers arranged in a 12 foot radius in a darkened room. The viewer must enter the beam of the overhead spotlight to be fully immersed in the sounds emitted from the speakers. The soundscape was created by editing the audio from network news coverage of mass shootings in schools and public spaces from the last 15 years, starting from the Columbine shooting in 1999. All of the words from the reportage were removed, leaving only the in-between moments when the reporters, commentators, or interviewees pause to catch their breath. In the removal of the speculative and sensationalized language common in contemporary tv news coverage, the spaces in between that are the pauses and the breath become more revealing and representative of the emotional gravity of the aftermath of unfathomable acts of violence. In this installation, years of reportage on tragedy and violence are edited into one concise abstraction.





*TROLL* (2012). Stefani Byrd + Wes Eastin, Live Interactive Installation. (Digital Traffic Message Board with built in Modem, Web Camera, Live Video Feed, and Hidden Performers). Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/51184171>

(Tits or GTFO (get the fuck out) is a common phrase on internet chat boards which is a demand for less talk and more nude pictures of women)

This installation comments on the psychological concept of the online dis-inhibition effect that allows everyday people to express otherwise inhibited behaviors in cyberspace. The sign was remotely controlled by hidden performers who had a view of the street and could update the sign in real time to respond to the audience. The performers were acting as "trolls", which are internet pranksters who say offensive or false statements in order to provoke an emotional response from others. These bad online behaviors were brought into a public space as the actors remotely control the sign in real time to respond rudely and provocatively to the audience. What does it say about us, that given the opportunity the web provides of a perceived audience and anonymity that we can so easily transform into altered and ill-mannered versions of ourselves?



***Feelings Are Overrat'd (2012).*** Stefani Byrd. Photographic Print on Fabric with Custom Steel Tension Frame. 4ft x 6ft x 8in.



*I Go Humble...* (2011). Stefani Byrd + Wes Eastin, Interactive Storefront Installation. (Hidden Performers, Live Video Feed, Monitors, and Microphones).

Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/36030874>

This interactive video installation uses humor to address the serious subject of street harassment. Live on-screen heads—two women and two gay men— observe the passing crowd and catcall the men, thus reversing the typically heterosexual male behavior. The work focuses on "empathy training," where audiences are put on the receiving end of playfully staged inappropriate behavior such as teasing and cat calling. The seriousness of the subject matter is masked by the humor that the situation is intended to create.

This piece was installed in an intersection across from a popular park in downtown Atlanta where wide ranges of people cross paths, from students to business professionals. There is a culture that developed where women were routinely verbally harassed as they crossed through the park. This posed an interesting situation for the artists who were inspired to respond to this public space in a way that uses humor to confront this behavior.



*DIVA* (2010) Stefani Byrd + Wes Eastin, Projected Video on Oval Shaped Screen (screen: 12ft x 10ft). Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/36044706>

Utilizing the voice of an operatic singer, *DIVA* showcases the considerable power of music as the most universal form of communication as it pertains to emotion. For the installation the songs performed are liberated from the plot of the operas they originate from and exist as individual pieces. The songs used were selected as the best examples of expressing grand emotions such as love, sorrow, grief, and joy. The scale and close up of the face, the most expressive part of the body, is meant to better connect the viewer to the emotions expressed by the music and the performer.

The face of the singer has been digitally altered and turned a brilliant blue. This along with the suspension of the face high in the air is meant to create a feeling of magic and otherworldliness. The outdoor setting is also a way to re-contextualize the music by placing it in locations that are unexpected and democratized. The songs and video performance are original recordings of operatic soprano Andrea Green.



*You Sound Funny (When You Smile)* (2009). Stefani Byrd + Wes Eastin, Interactive Storefront Installation. Live Video Feed, Hidden Performers, Monitors, Microphones, Rear Projection Screens and Projected Video. Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/36044318>

This interactive installation reverses the roles of majority and minority to create a simulated immigrant experience for the audience. Two giant digitally projected heads of two hidden performers heckle and mock the audience in the Hmong language. The audience is unaware of the precise meaning of the taunts being directed at them but is made to feel “othered” and uncomfortable.

The two featured actors are second generation Hmong refugees who are historically a people without a country and are a minority among minorities. Microphones were placed on the street where the audience could engage with the performers. Attempts to communicate in any way other than the Hmong language were met with escalated taunts. The onus was placed on the audience to assimilate to the performers decided standards and rules for communication. By upsetting our common perception of communication in public space, this piece attempts to playfully expose our own ingrained ethnocentrism.



*Silent Echoes* (2008). Stefani Byrd + Wes Eastin. Synchronized Silent Video Projections. Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/56958207>

The video depicts a chance meeting between two people, one hearing and one deaf. They accidentally discover their shared knowledge of American Sign Language, the version of sign used in the United States. The two subjects are able to make a connection through the language and their shared experiences of being seen as “different”, one because of their deafness and the other because of their multi-racial ethnicity.

The video installation puts the audience on the opposite end of the equation. The audience becomes the one who must struggle to understand. The piece is meant to challenge the audience to re-evaluate their assumptions about others and to see the possibilities of other ways of being in the world.