

Thoughtcarcer

Re-Critique of the Culture Industry

As the culture industry grows, standardization stifles creativity, turning cultural products into tools of ideological control. This project uses an art installation to critique this control and explore the paradoxical role individuals play in perpetuating the industry, encouraging reflection on its impact.

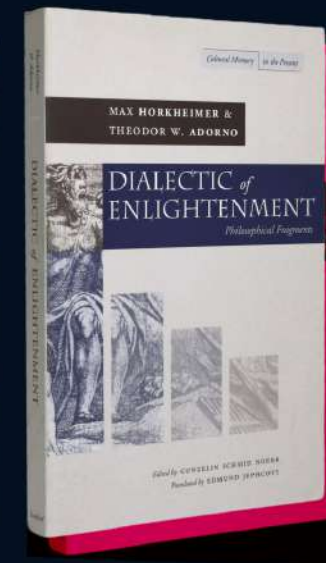


INSPIRATION

During my studies in popular culture at university, I had the privilege of being introduced to Theodor Adorno's Critique of the Culture Industry and engaging in in-depth discussions with my professor. In Adorno's era, his critique focused on the standardization, commodification, and deception inherent in the culture industry, as well as its role in ideological manipulation. Over time, cultural consumers have developed greater discernment and refined their appreciation of cultural products. This prompts the question of whether Adorno's critique remains relevant in today's context and whether the culture industry still poses detrimental effects in contemporary society.

Dialectic of Enlightenment

Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), co-authored by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, examines the evolution of Western Enlightenment thought and its impact on modern society.



It critiques the Enlightenment by highlighting the alienation of reason and its resulting civilizational crisis. The book links German fascism to the self-destruction of Enlightenment ideals, attributing totalitarianism to scientific logic, and offers a radical critique of Western society and thought. It also introduces the theory of the culture industry, revealing its underlying mechanisms.



Digital Detox Store



Numerous "digital detox" stores are opening in South Korea to combat the impact of new media and smart devices on daily life, driven by the rise of smart cultural products.

Insight

The Enlightenment sought to liberate humanity through reason and science, but Adorno argued it became a tool for control and oppression. The culture industry exemplifies this alienation of reason. Thus, I explored the regression of the Enlightenment.



Mythology is humanity's earliest and simplest explanation for nature, reflecting a time when people lacked scientific knowledge and could not control natural forces.



The Enlightenment brought a shift to rational understanding, leading to industrialization, urbanization, and modernization.

The Enlightenment reduced everything to measurable quantities, dismissing the unquantifiable as meaningless. This led to a focus on standardization and scientific progress, abandoning value and meaning for instrumental rationality. The culture industry, born from this, commodified and mass-produced culture, spreading reason. Driven by capital, it led to cultural standardization and vulgarization, creating mythical commodities and overturning Enlightenment ideals.



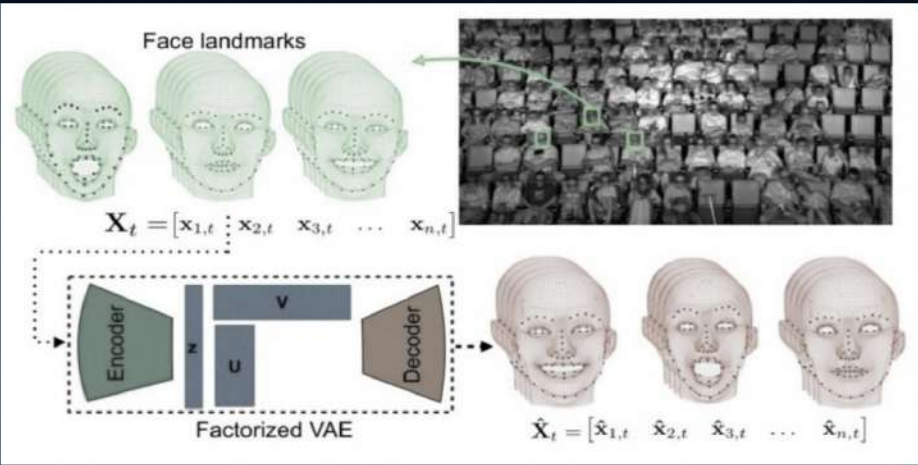
CASES

Hollywood Movie



Hollywood films create idyllic, free mythical worlds that soothe viewers, masking real conflicts between races and groups, and becoming tools of ideological control.

For example, Disney analyzes viewers' facial expressions to tailor its content and control the creative direction, making its products more effective at soothing and numbing the audience, thereby suppressing critical thinking.



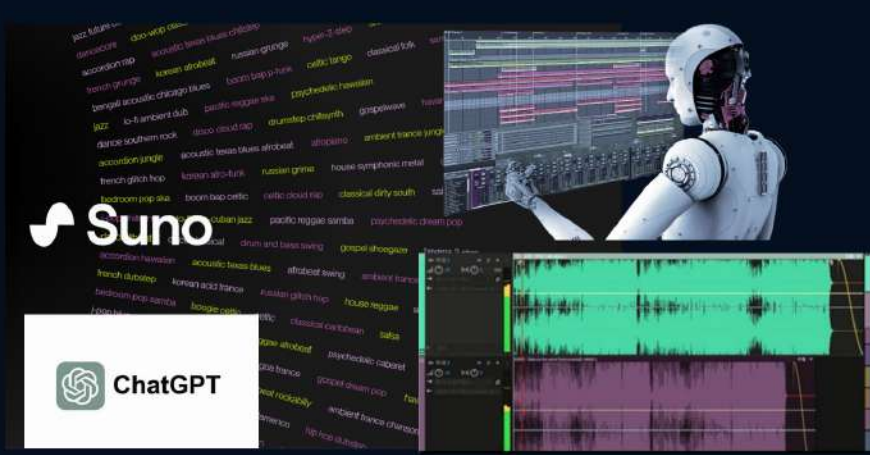
neural network diagram used by Disney (from Disney Research Lab)

Short Drama & Short Video



Creators of short dramas and videos tap into desires like wealth and revenge, while platforms use algorithms to keep users engaged, leading to numbing effects. Under capital influence, content becomes increasingly commodified.

Music Production

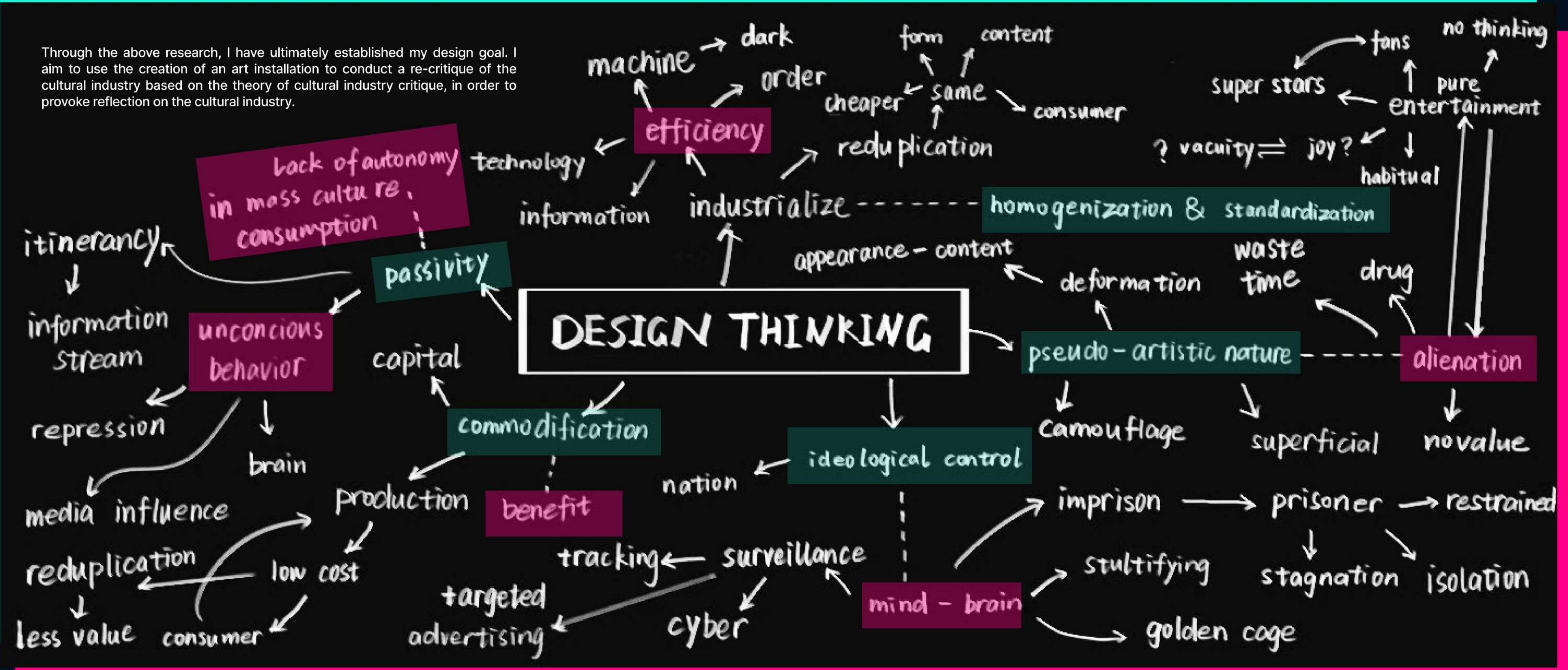


More music creators are using AI for music production, leading to increasingly homogenized music in the market. Under AI's influence, audience gradually become accustomed to poorly made cultural products, losing their ability to appreciate art.

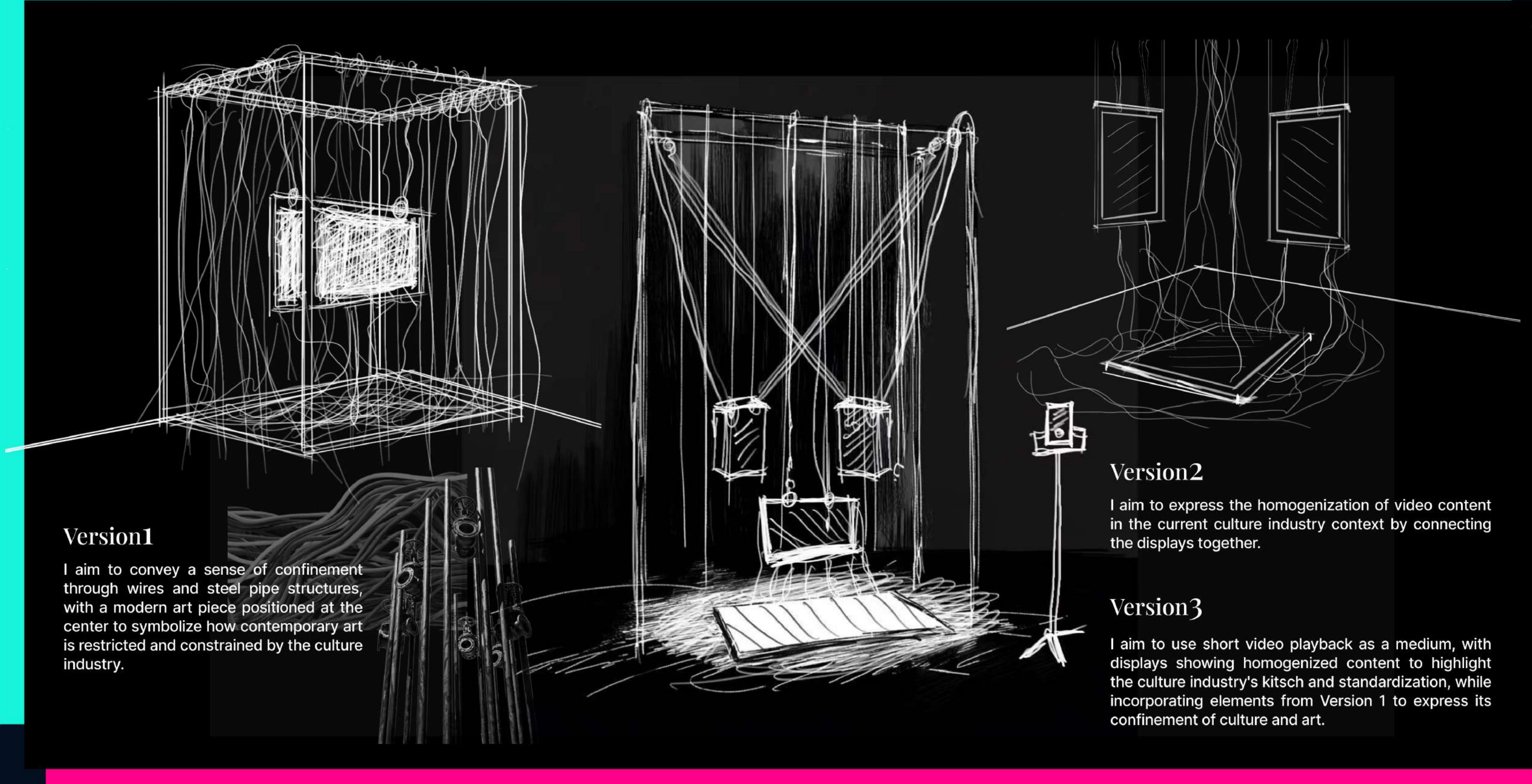
SUMMARY

Even today, the culture industry's **homogenization, commodification, ideological control, and lack of autonomy** in popular culture persist. Breaking free from these constraints is crucial.

IDEATION

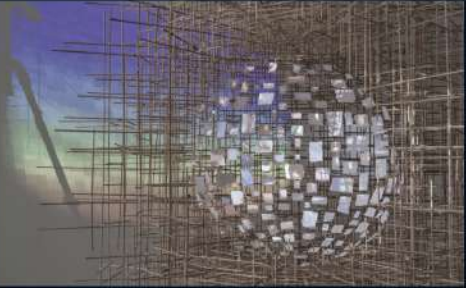


SKETCH



Design Points

1 To highlight the cultural industry's confinement of culture and art, I plan to use materials that evoke a sense of "closure" and "industrialism." Inspired by the works of Sarah Sze and Michael A. Robinson, I've chosen electrical wires and galvanized pipes as the main materials to create a feeling of enclosure and constraint.



Sarah Sze: *Timelapse*



Michael A. Robinson: *The Origin of Ideas*



the process of information transmission



To demonstrate the homogenization and standardization of the culture industry, I aim to replicate its homogenization process. I believe that the homogenization of cultural products is akin to the copying and pasting of information—similar to how viral short videos are often subject to plagiarism and imitation. It's like a "blood transfusion," where the essence of one product is transferred into different exteriors. This led me to think of using an Arduino light strip in a "chase" pattern to represent the "copying process" of information.

3 In today's world, more and more people are becoming trapped in the realm of short videos. I aim to critically address this cultural product while highlighting the mental confinement people experience while watching them. My goal is to express "the ideological control of the culture industry over individuals and the lack of autonomy in mass culture" by portraying the mindset of people immersed in the world of short videos.



people addicted to short videos



holographic projection



I believe that artistic cultural works are full of life and vitality, while cultural products under the culture industry are gradually erasing this life and energy. Therefore, I aim to use holographic projection to give cultural products a tangible form, thereby showcasing their false artistry and the process of alienation.

5 In fact, while people consume cultural products, they inadvertently accelerate the homogenization and standardization of the culture industry. As cultural products become trends, capital speeds up their replication and production. Therefore, I plan to use TouchDesigner to generate moving images to represent this process.



consumer behavior unconsciously drives the growth of the culture industry

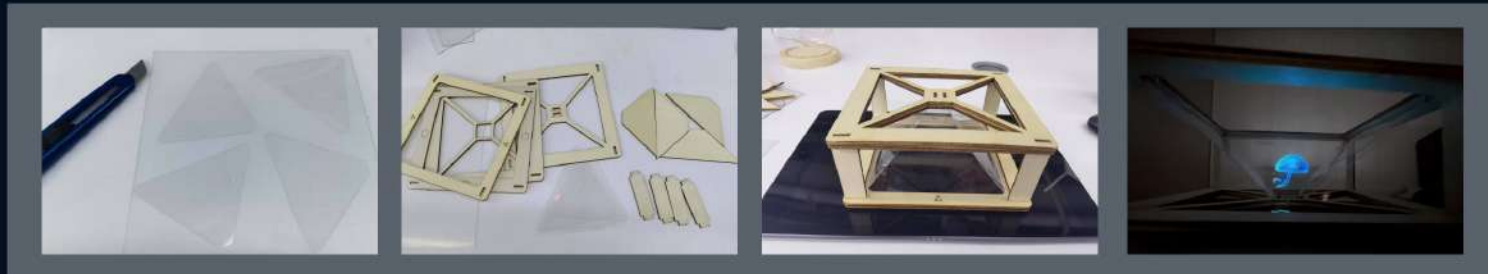


DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Holographic Projection

In attempting to use simulated holographic projection to express the "life" of cultural products, I conducted three version tests and ultimately selected the third version, which offers superior 3D effects and realism.

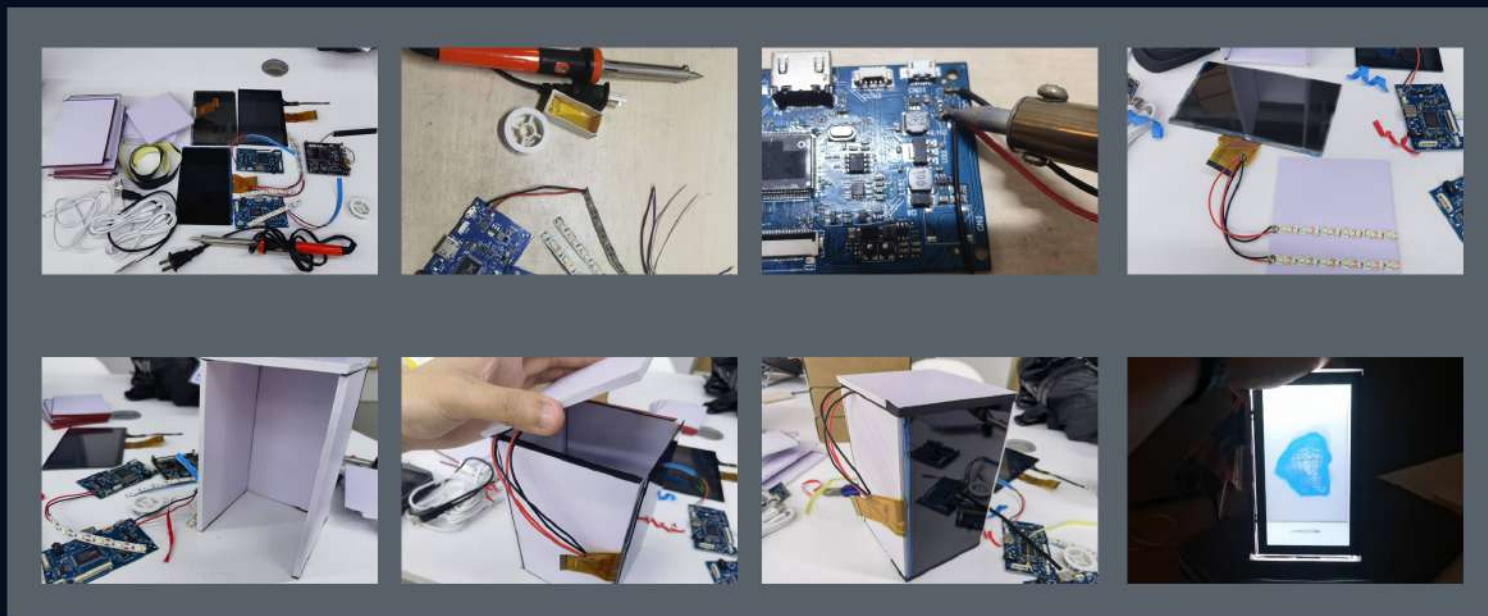
Version1



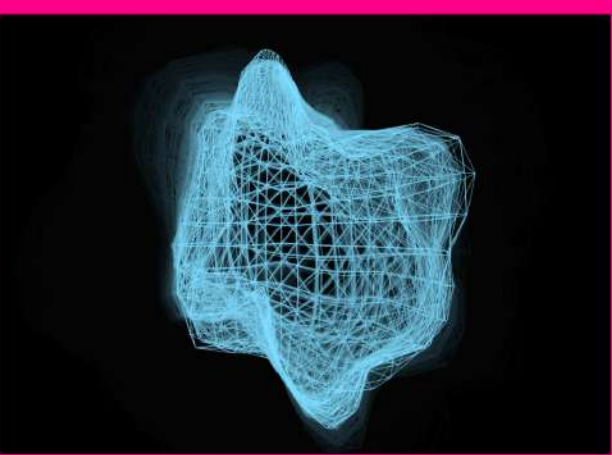
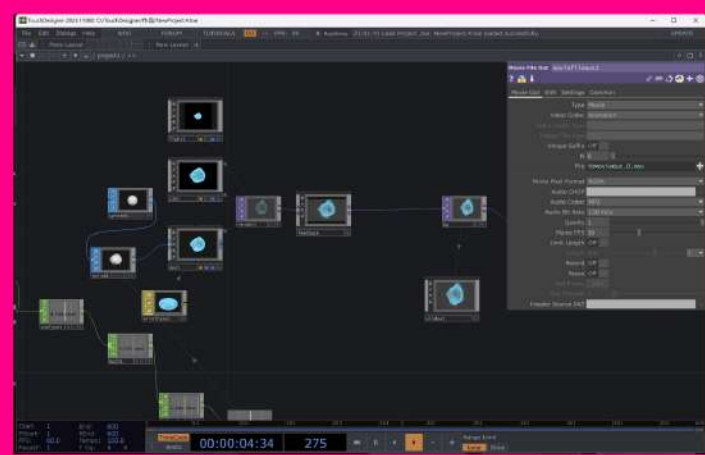
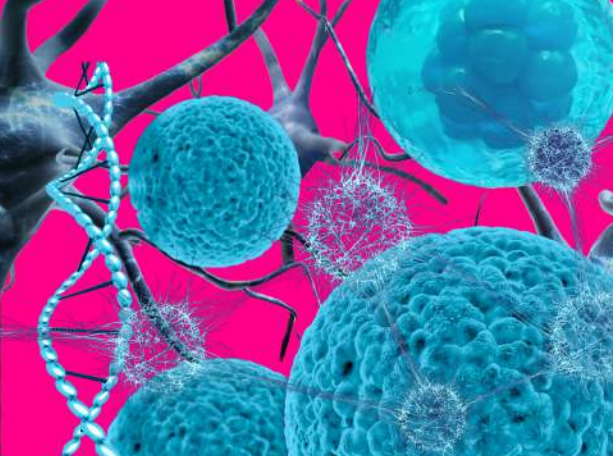
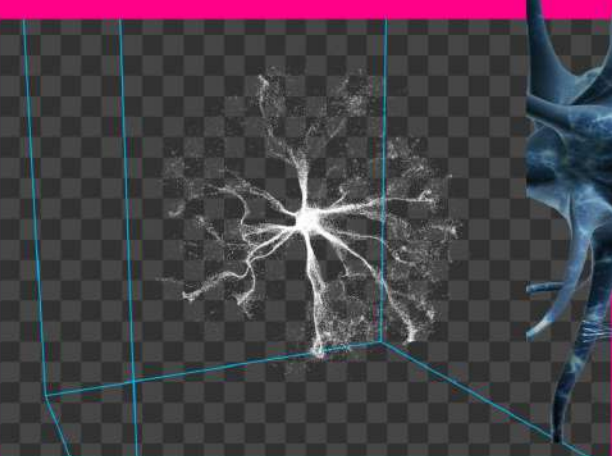
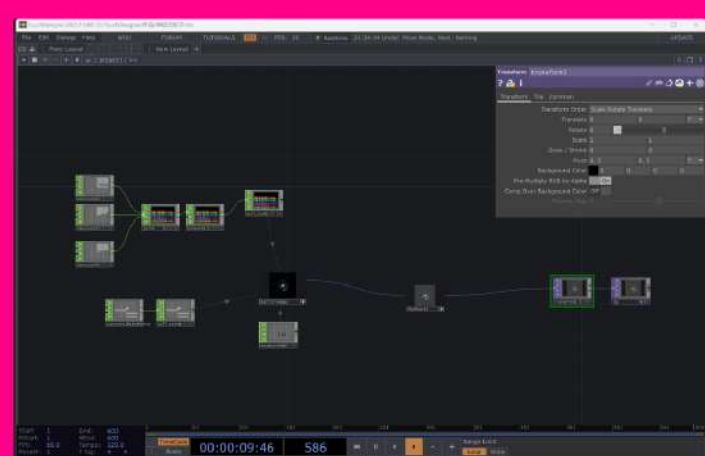
Version2



Version3

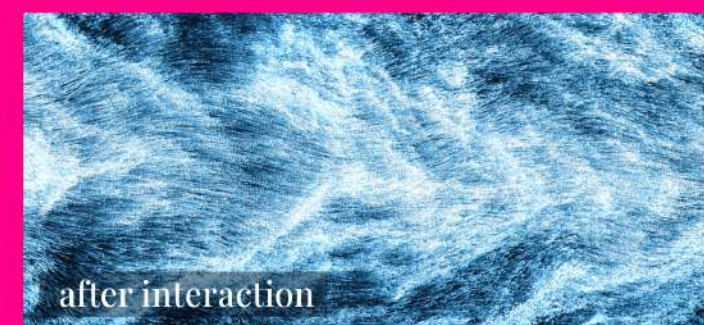
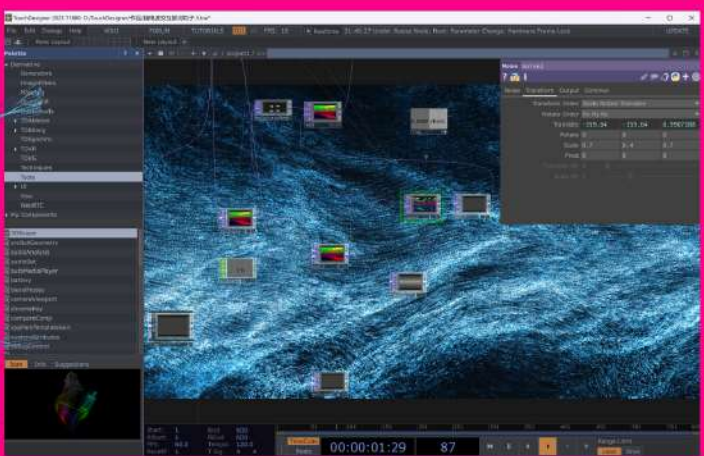


Interactive Image Design



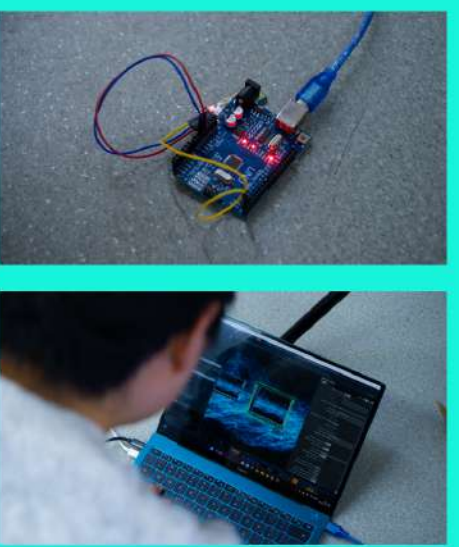
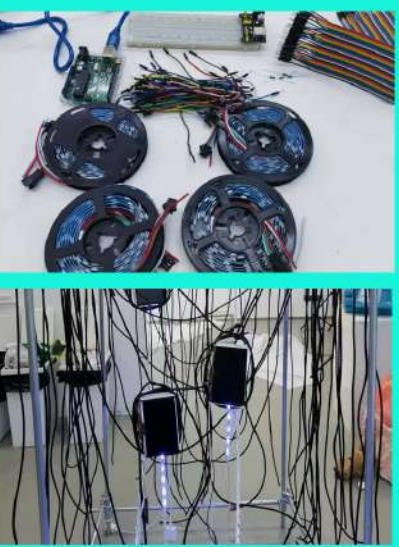
Inspired by biological images such as neurons and cells, I aimed to express the life characteristics of cultural products by simulating these shapes. Using TouchDesigner, I created two dynamic visuals and ultimately chose the cell form for construction.

Interactive Image Design



By combining EEG technology with dynamic visuals in TD, I created an interactive image of information flow, highlighting the continuous data stream driving the culture industry and exploring its relationship with the individual.

Installation Setup



Final Design

User Flow



1
The "cells" representing the life of cultural products are bound by wires, while each holographic pod and screen is connected by a conveyor belt, symbolizing the flow of homogenized expression.



2
The player approaches the installation, removes the sensor, and wears the EEG sensor. The sensor will monitor two metrics: attention and meditation levels.

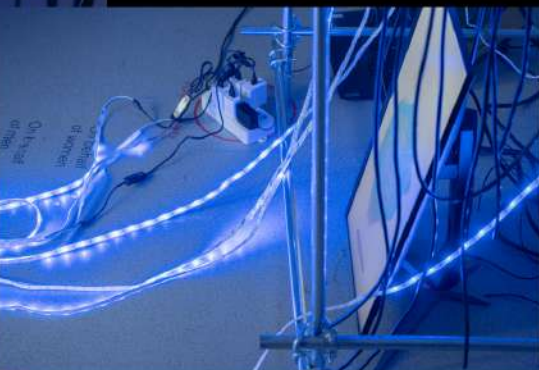


3
As players watch short videos, they connect to the "cells" behind them, symbolizing the homogenized replicas beneath the attention-grabbing content. Flashy effects and kitschy themes quickly capture their attention.

5
As players' attention intensifies, the flow of information on the wall accelerates, suggesting that human consumption of cultural products drives the growth of the culture industry.



4
As time passes, the "cells" begin to pulse faster, the flow of information quickens, and the gears of the culture industry start turning, enabling new products to be easily replicated and devalued.



Device Display

