Brandon W. Ables Portfolio

Artist (MFA, MS), Educator (MAT), Researcher (PhD Student)
Baltimore, MD
www.bwables.com

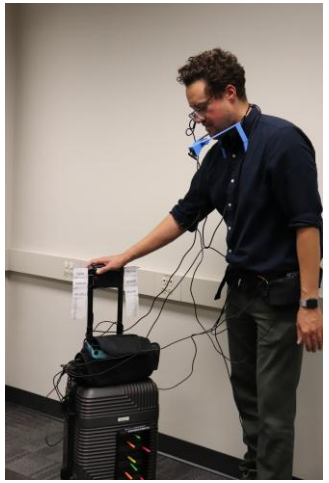
Title: Carry-on for Consciousness (2025) *for TEI '25 Arts and Performance*

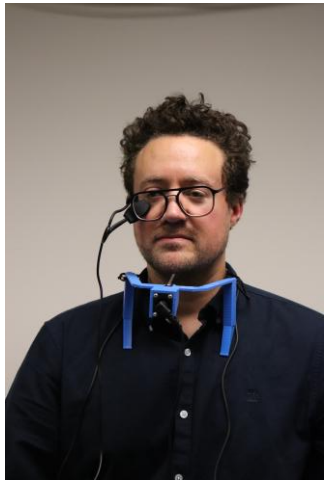
Medium: 20" hardshell carryon luggage bag with a 5" x 9" rectangular section cut from the front, a Behringer X-Touch Compact for the eight motorized faders, an Arduino micro, ten microswitches in a 3D printed frame attached to the carryon handle, a Windows laptop running Max for Live, Ableton Live 12, Bome Midi Translator Pro, and the Dymo Label software, a USB Dymo machine, three 100 watt portable batteries to power the X-Touch, laptop, and Dymo, and two Roland TM-1s to receive the signals from the sensors.

Description: The Carry-on for Consciousness is a hard shell wheeled carry-on luggage bag with embedded electronics to allow for embodied travel writing during the most mundane aspects of a flying vacation. A traveler can wheel the carry-on around the airport and look down at the luggage to see eight motorized faders moving left and right toggling through each letter of the alphabet. The faders' movements are powered by sensors mounted on the glasses, chin, wrist, and ankle of the traveler. As the traveler blinks, chews gum, swings their arm by their belt in a natural motion, or walks and moves their ankle past their opposite ankle the accompanying faders will move. The traveler can type an up to eight letter word as an intentionality or goal statement to help them remain centered at the airport and reflect on their journey once they return from their destination.

Video Link

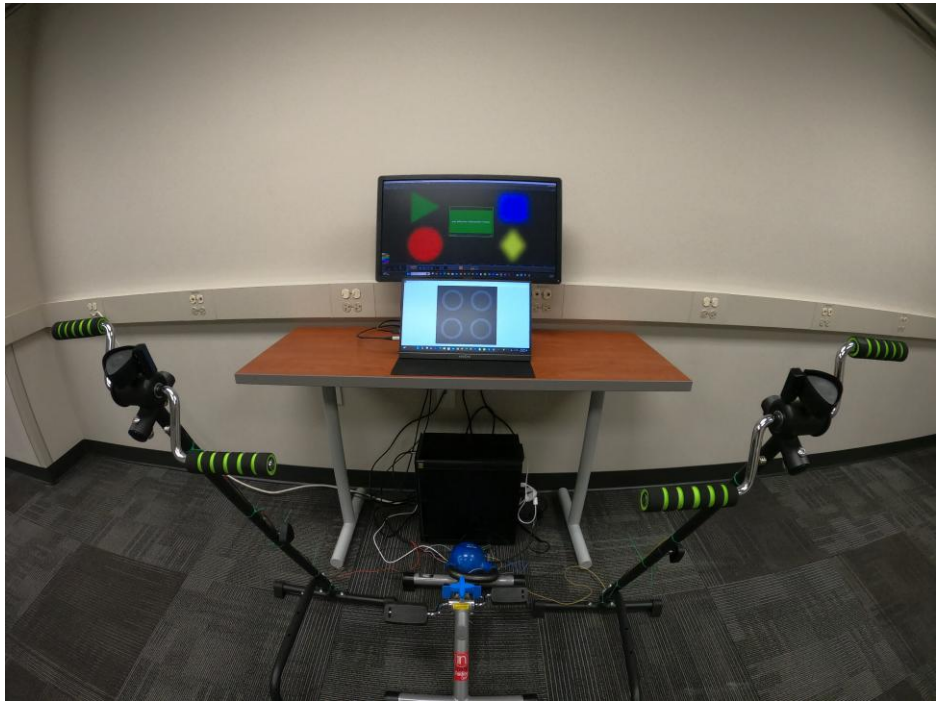
Published Paper Link





Artist: Brandon Ables / bwables.com / bwables@gmail.com

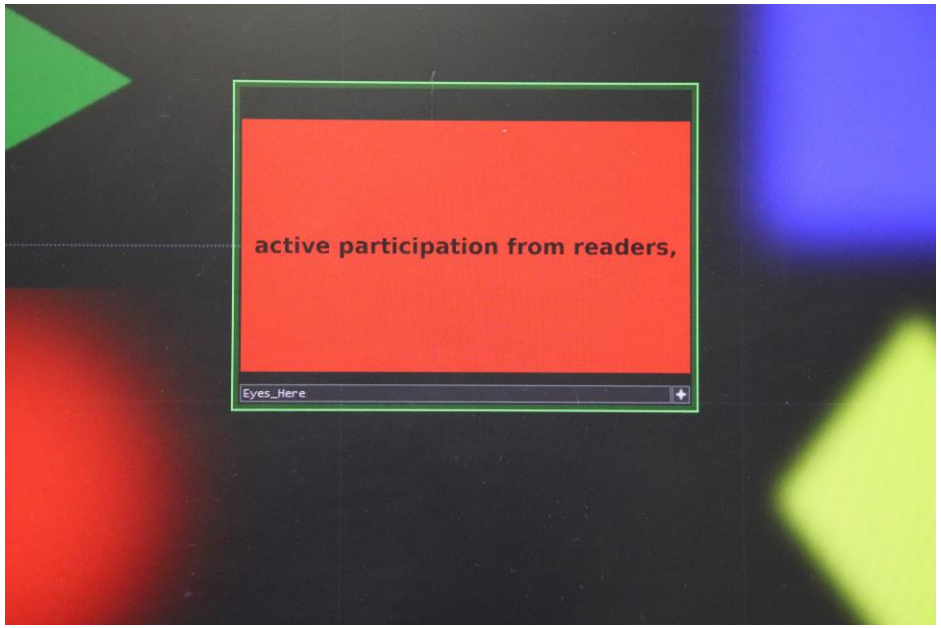
Title: The Embodied Saccadic Reader (2025)



Medium: Two monitors, foldable foot pedal exerciser, 15-pound kettlebell weight, two hand pedal exercisers, reed switches mounted on the tension knobs of the hand pedal exercisers, Velcro, 3D printed tension knob on the foot pedal exerciser, Arduino Micro, Max, Touchdesigner.

Description: The Embodied Saccadic Reader introduces an innovative approach to reading by engaging both the body and mind. Readers pedal their arms and legs while focusing on a monitor displaying 3-4 words of text at a time. Four distinct texts are accessible via four pedaling patterns, each linked to a color. Text slides progress based on the pedaling speed, and dynamic shapes surrounding the text window visually correspond to the reader's progress in each section. This method allows readers to navigate texts non-linearly, fostering unique connections and deeper engagement with notes, research, or literature. By integrating physical activity with reading, the Embodied Saccadic Reader offers a novel, immersive experience that enhances interaction with text.

Video Link

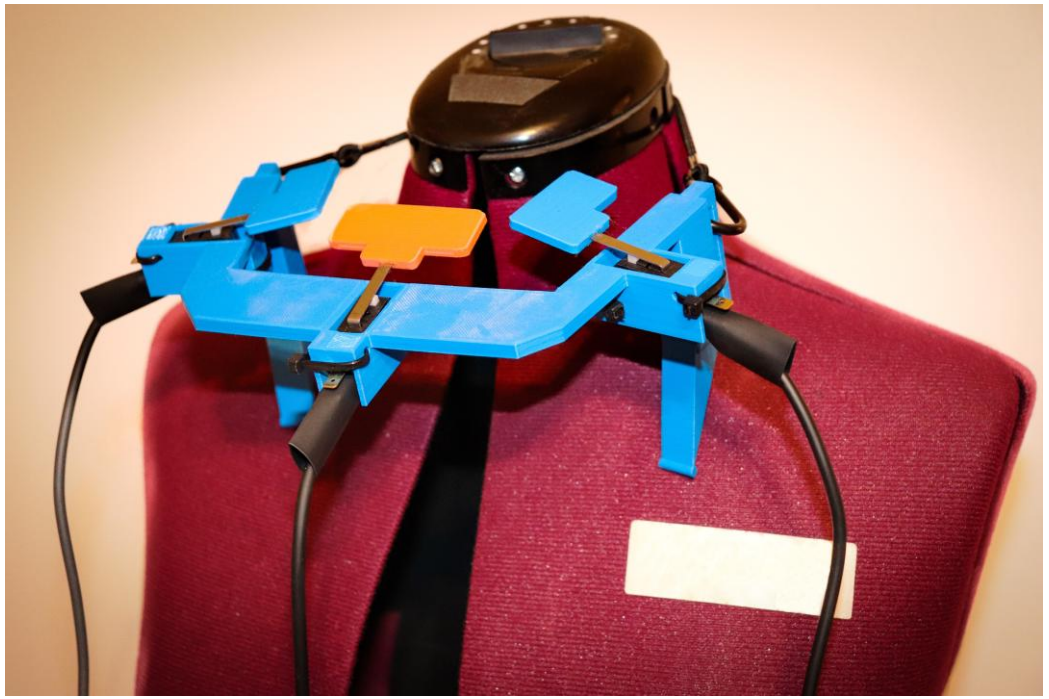


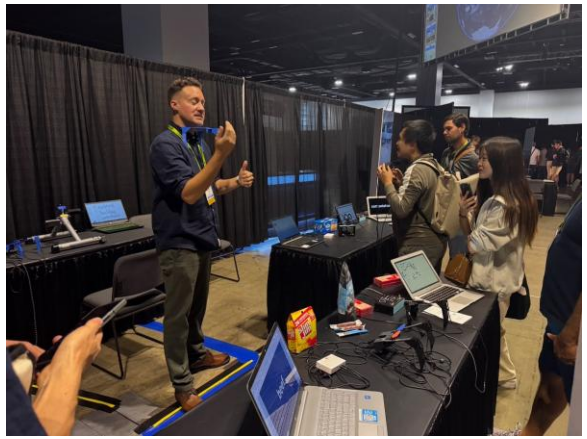
Artist: Brandon Ables / bwables.com / bwables@gmail.com

Title: Chin Interfaces for Peripheral Interaction (2024)
presented at Siggraph 2024

Medium: Custom 3D printed mounted, microswitches connected to the Switch 2.0 Accessibility Switch from Ablenet, Roland TM1 Drum Trigger Module to turn chin interactions into signals my laptops could recognize, additional programming done using Max and Bome Midi Translator Pro, elastic drawstring neck straps, zip ties, ¼" audio output jack.

Description: The chin interface is a wearable device that allows for peripheral interaction during everyday activities. Simple sensors and software use steady and unsteady movement data generated from everyday activities like eating, exercising, practicing guitar, or using the computer to interact with peripheral screens directed through the chin. One, two, and three button iterations of the chin interface require different levels of attention for distinct peripheral interaction experiences. Different experiences with peripheral screens can include playing back text one word at a time, slowly coloring in the letters of large words, or patiently typing out statements by selecting keys on an onscreen keyboard.





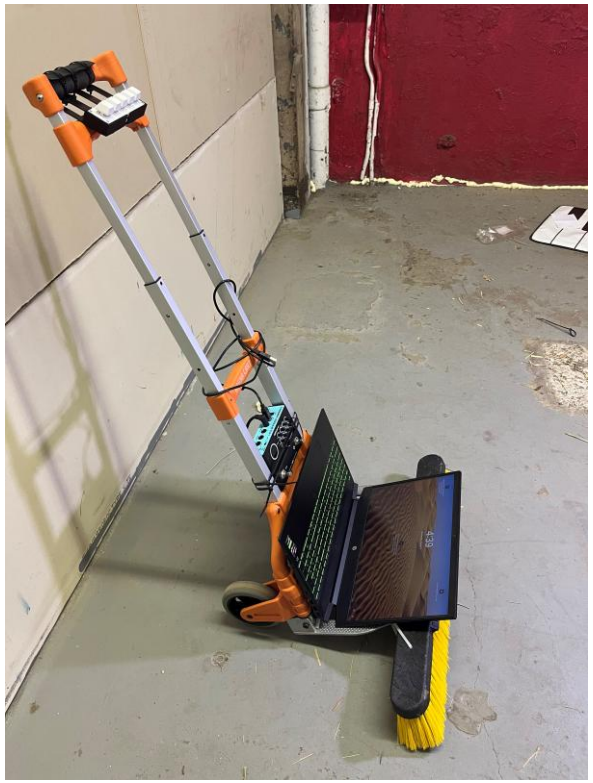
[Performance Series Video Link]

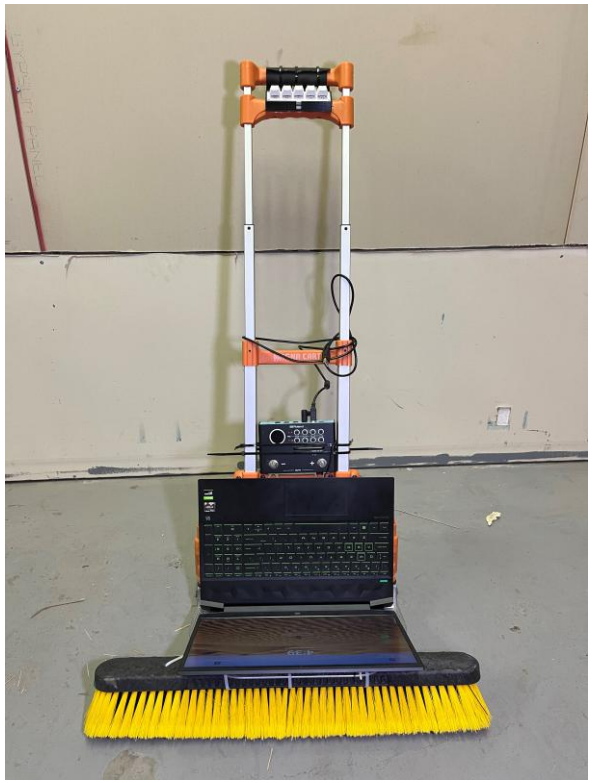
[Published Paper Link]

Artist: Brandon Ables / bwables.com / bwables@gmail.com

Title: Sweep The Series (2023)
Medium: Performance with foldable dolly, 5 key keypad, 3D printed keypad handle mount, laptop, Roland TM-1, contact mic, zip ties, sweeper, software and electronics
Description: Using sweeping as a computer interaction method to influence the outcome of regular and postseason sports series by typing affirmational tweets. As the dolly is pushed, the zip tie connected to a contact mic is triggered by a rung in the wheel sending a message to the laptop through the Roland TM-1 to control left to right mouse cursor movement on an onscreen keyboard. 5 key keypad buttons choose row of onscreen keyboard mouse is moving on. As the motion of sweeping is performed, a statement about sweeping is typed.

Sweep the Series Video Link



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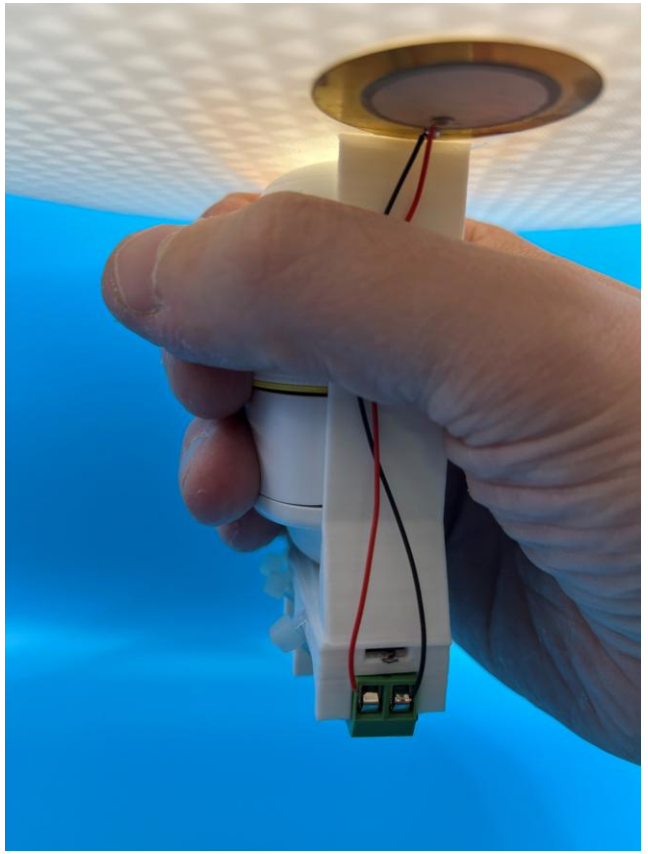
Title: Balance Interface (2023)
Medium: Performance with 3D printed paddle, contact microphone, wireless mouse, solderless terminal, audio adapter, wireless guitar transmitter/receiver, zip ties, bouncy ball, software and electronics
Description: Each bounce of the ball on the paddle moves the mouse cursor to the next key on an onscreen keyboard. 5 buttons on wireless mouse are reprogrammed to pick the row of the onscreen keyboard the mouse is moving on. Performance meant to engage the metaphor of balance, helping the user type a statement about attaining balance in their life through this practice.

Balance Interface Video Link



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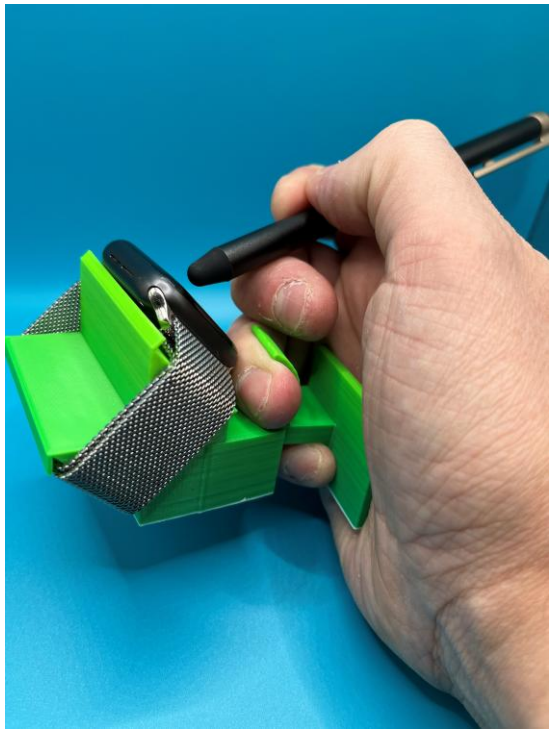
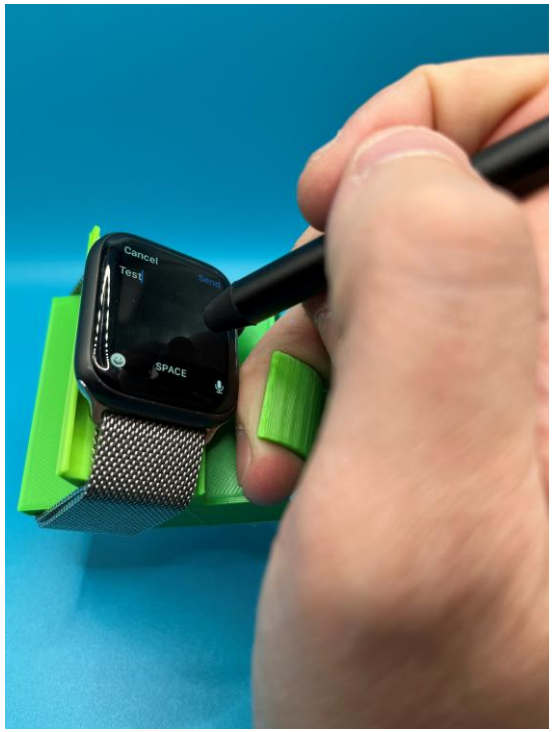
Title: Constant Notetaker (2022)
Medium: Performance with 3D printed Apple Watch hand mount, Apple Watch, stylus, Apple Scribble
Description: Since handwritten notes are better remembered, this adaptation of the Apple Watch allows the user to constantly be writing while engaged in other tasks. The regular watch wearing hand is kept free, so walking and natural daily activities can occur without having both hands occupied. Not being able to see the screen keeps the message being written on the watch in memory longer, increasing its potency. Can be used for notes, text messages, tweets, etc.

Constant Notetaker 1 Video Link

Constant Notetaker 2 Video Link





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Uncommon Artist Residency (2022)

A series of self-hypnosis human-computer interaction work produced during an artist residency through Teton Artlab in Jackson, WY from January 1-14, 2022. See artist talk here.

Title: Chewing Ginger at Geyser (2022)
Medium: Performance with chin switch mounted on snow goggles, Hitch Switch interface, Max/MSP, Ginger Info, Text to Speech, Backpack, Computer, Ginger candy, headphones
Description: Each time I chew a piece of ginger, one syllable of audio plays of a text about how eating ginger can help warm your body.
Text Triggered with Each Chew: “Ginger is known to be good for digestive health and **can stimulate thermogenesis**. It's also a diaphoretic, which means it will help your body warm from the inside out.”

[Chewing Ginger at Geyser Video Link]

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Title: Self-warming Hypnosis (2022)
Medium: Performance with upside down accessibility switch, Hitch Switch, snow goggles, Vufine Wearable Display, Anvil Hotel Wood-Burning Stove Video Frames, Snow Shades, Backpack, Computer
Description: Rubbing hands together against switch mounted upside down to snow goggles triggers playback of frames of a video taken of the Anvil Hotel's wood-burning stove in Jackson, WY (where I stayed during this residency) to play back in the wearable display over one eye of my sunglasses, causing me to feel warmer. This motion can also be used as a metaphorical gesture related to topics and video frames related to excitement, anticipation, or rising to the occasion.

Self-warming Hypnosis Video Link

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Title: Chewing and Viewing Bison (2022)
Medium: Performance with chin switch, snow goggles, Hitch Switch interface, Max/MSP, Bison Info, Text to Speech, Backpack, Computer, Bison Jerky
Description: Each time I chew a piece of bison jerky, one syllable of audio plays of a text from the National Park Service about Bison. Chin switch mounted on snow goggles connected to computer in backpack playing audio through headphones one syllable at a time of what to do if charged by a bison. The performance is meant to reenforce the knowledge that the bison in Yellowstone are not hunted and eaten by humans because their diets contain too many natural chemicals emitted by the geysers in the park that cover the vegetation. The reinforcement of that knowledge is meant to help me carry myself in a less aggressive way through the park, lowering the chances that a bison will charge and gore me while in the park.

Chewing and Viewing Bison Video Link

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Title: Brazil Nut Effect Self-Improvement Machine (2022)
Medium: Performance with 10 Gallon Camping Water Jug, 2 Gallon Camping Water Jug, Air Mattress Inflater, Computer, Roland TM-1, Vufine Wearable Display, Frames of Rising/CEO Book Text, Nut Mix, Paper Scraps, Camelback, Mountaineering Poles, Mouse Movement Controller, Ski Goggles, 6 Microswitches, Arduino Leonardo, Breadboard, 22 AWG Wire
Description: Using scientific ideas from avalanche airbags for self-improvement hypnosis, Brazil nuts are shaken in a 10-gallon camping water dispenser worn on back. Each time I hit the Brazil nuts with mountaineering poles (like a Chilean Chinchinero), a contact mic senses the impact and triggers the playback of video frames about rising filmed around Jackson, WY (where I was staying during the residency) in the wearable mini display mounted on my glasses. Strips of paper with the words "rise to the top" written on them are on the smaller 2-gallon water jug, inspiring the Brazil nuts to rise to the top and show the effect they are named for. Camping mattress inflater worn around neck as avalanche airbag. Alternate performances uses mountaineering pole impacts to trigger left to right mouse movement, and switches mounted on ski goggles to control key selection on an onscreen keyboard.

[Brazil Nut Effect Self-Improvement Machine Video Link]

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One Man Trance (2021)

- In my multimedia interactive installation *One Man Trance*, I used my everyday environments and actions to create, replay, and edit ideas – a new form of self-hypnosis for keeping my subconscious constantly engaged in a loop with my conscious output.

- The installation was structured around the four rooms where I spent most of my time: bedroom (bed, one-man band, and whiteboard locations), bathroom, kitchen, and exercise room.

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Title: Bathroom Vanity Self-Hypnosis Station (2021)

[Link to Virtual Gallery Location]

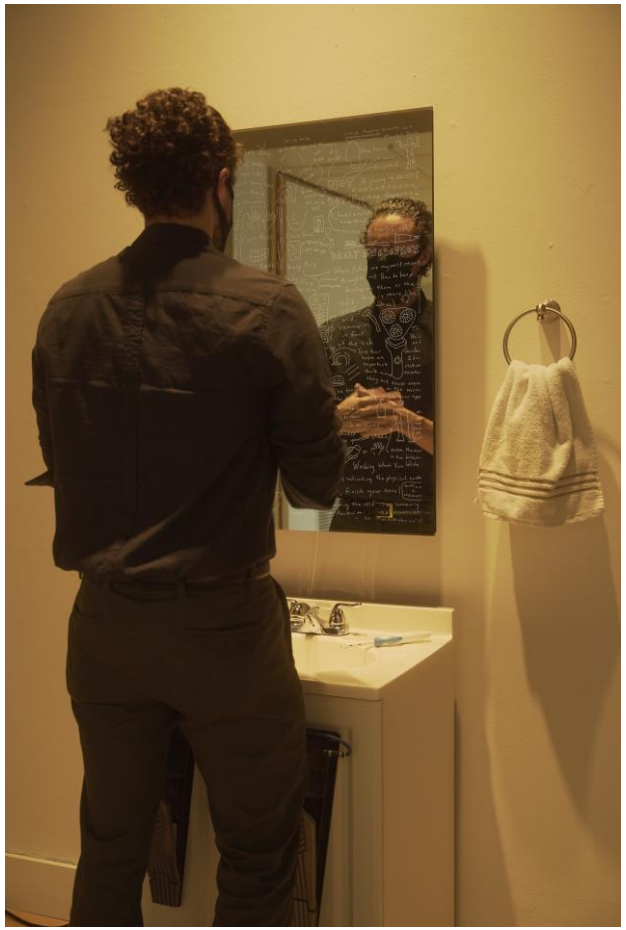
Medium: Interactive installation with computers, smart mirror, bathroom vanity, drum brains, electronic drum pedals, telegraph keys, electric toothbrush, motion activated soap dispenser, software, and electronics

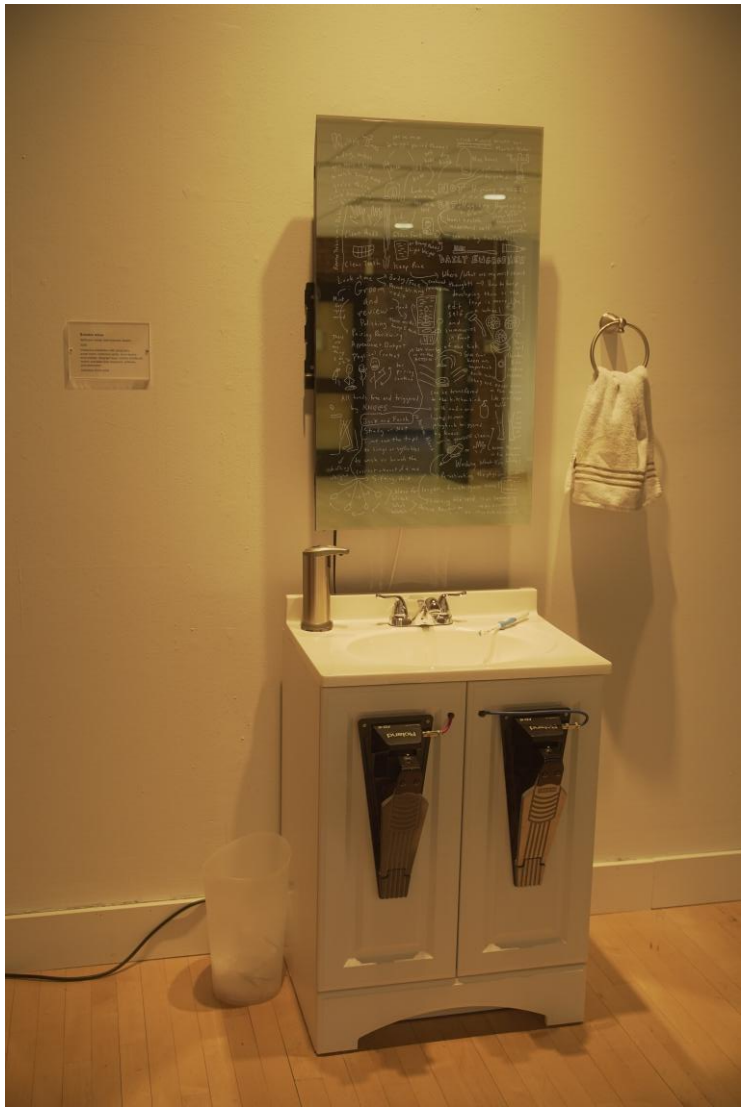
Dimensions: 3 feet wide (including towel hanger), 6.5 feet tall (to top of smart mirror), 3.5 feet depth (including space for interaction)

Work Description: The user stands in front of the smart mirror and vanity and uses hand sanitizer. While rubbing in hand sanitizer, the user taps their knees against the triggers mounted on the vanity cabinet. This movement activates the visual replay of handwritten notes about hygiene and cleanliness in the smart mirror.

The act of using hand sanitizer while standing in front of a sink acts as a placebo or suggestion, enhancing our mental expectations of using the hand sanitizer, making us feel and think we are cleaner.

[Link to video documentation]





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Title: One-man Band Self-Hypnosis Station (2021)
Medium: Interactive installation with computers, drum brains, drum pedals, TVs, furniture, whiteboards, projector, software, electronics.
Dimensions: 10’x10’ square of floorspace, 8’ height for whiteboard.
Work Description: The one-man band self-hypnosis station is designed for active-alert self-hypnosis multi-tasking using the stereotypic man-cave, home-theater, multi-screen setup. Pushing down on the double-bass drum pedals causes single words to play on the different screens. Each screen plays back text from different sources. One screen plays back my active-alert self-hypnosis induction script. A second screen plays back my daily work notes. A third screen plays back my dream journals. A projector plays back frames of a whiteboard created and digitally recorded earlier that day.

Link to virtual gallery location
Variation 1 – Projector
Variation 2 – Pedaler
Variation 3 – Typing
Variation 4 – Doc Cam
Variation 5 – Hypnotic Spiral

Title: Kitchen Pantry Self-Hypnosis Station (2021)
Work Description: In the Kitchen Pantry Self-Hypnosis Station a user can tap their fingers on the telegraph keys to activate the psychological priming screens to influence their subconscious to make a healthier choice from the pantry.
Medium: Interactive installation with computers, drum brains, telegraph keys, TVs, kitchen pantry, food containers, software, and electronics.
Dimensions: 7.5 feet tall (with basket for electronics on top), 3.5 feet wide with pantry doors open, 4 feet depth from wall (including space for people to stand and use).

Link to location in virtual gallery.

Link to video documentation.

Title: Bed Self-Hypnosis Station (2021)
Medium: Interactive installation with bed, wood mount, computer, drum brain, telegraph keys, nail clippers, pinch sensor, guitar, smart mirror TV, software, and electronics.
Dimensions: 8 foot long by 4 foot wide rectangular space in a corner. Reflected screens in opposite corner 35 feet away.
Work Description: One activity that always puts me in a trance is relaxing on my bed and picking at my nails and calluses while watching sports. In this interactive installation, a viewer can lie down on the bed, watch a program on the main TV, and pick at their nails to attempt to conjure a state of trance. When a viewer gets tired of lying in that direction, they can turn in the opposite direction and face the wall, where a small smart mirror displays a reflection of the television, as well as digitally captured whiteboard notes. The amount of handwritten notes in the smart mirror can be controlled by pinching the nail clippers together. The text on the three reflected screens surrounding the sporting event can be advanced by tapping telegraph keys with feet at the end of the bed. The words on the three reflected screens appear backwards, communicating to the viewers' subconscious as a form of psychological priming.

- Link to virtual gallery location.
- Link to video with nail clippers.
- Link to video with guitar.

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Title: Exercise Pedaler Self-Hypnosis Station (2021)
Medium: Interactive installation with exercise pedaler, wire, copper tape, computer, drum brain, TVs, chair, and software
Dimensions: 6’ long by 4’ wide by 5’ tall rectangle of space.
Work Description: At the Exercise Pedaler Self-Hypnosis Station, a viewer sits in an armchair, kicks their feet up, and pedals with their hands to activate the self-hypnosis screens surrounding the main TV playing a live TV feed. This station is designed for active-alert self-hypnosis using the hypnotic rhythm of pedaling. Each time a pedal arm passes the attached copper tape flaps a signal is sent to advance the rapid serial visual presentation displayed text on the screens surrounding the TV, priming the subconscious.

[Link to location in virtual gallery]
[Link to video documentation]

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Chin Music (2018)

Using a chin switch to trigger midi music notes or computer speech when I chew food or use my chin in novel ways.

These pieces seek to create new associations for the chin as it is used to interact with computers during activities like doing chin ups, taking a snack break at the office, and roasting marshmallows around a campfire.

Title: Do You Like Butter? (2018)
Medium: Interactive installation with pull up bar, window planter, bungee cord, fake flowers, wireless keyboard, computer, Max MSP software, audio, amplifier.
Dimensions: 6’ wide, 15’ tall, 6’ long

Video Link: Do You Like Butter?

Work Description: Chin trigger as space bar on computer keyboard in window planter on pull-up bar. Each press of the space bar triggers a syllable of computer speech from the “Do You Like Butter?” children’s game. A user can attempt to perform 5 pull ups in the installation.

5 pull-ups = 5 syllables
Do
You
Like
But-
-Ter?

If you get to 5, the computer speaks “No, you don’t like butter.” If you cannot get to 5, computer speaks, “Yes, you like butter.”
The performance is self-programming to get yourself to eat less fat by associating butter with the inability to do pull-ups.

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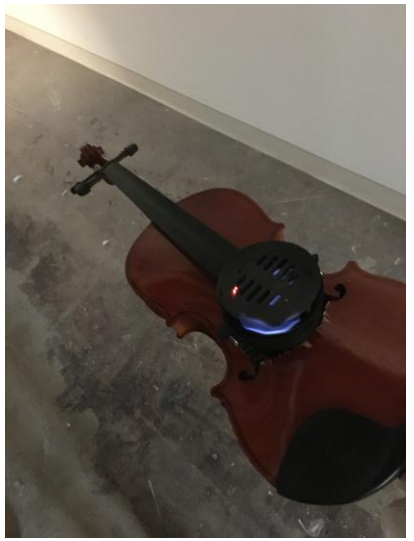
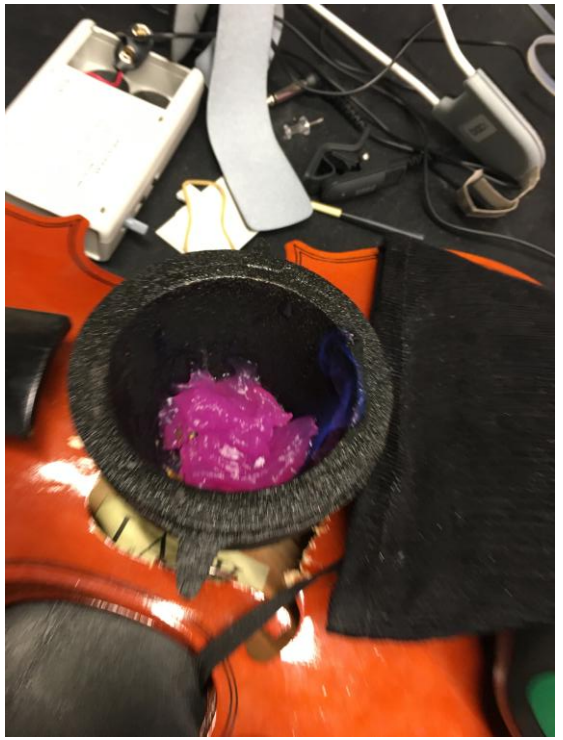
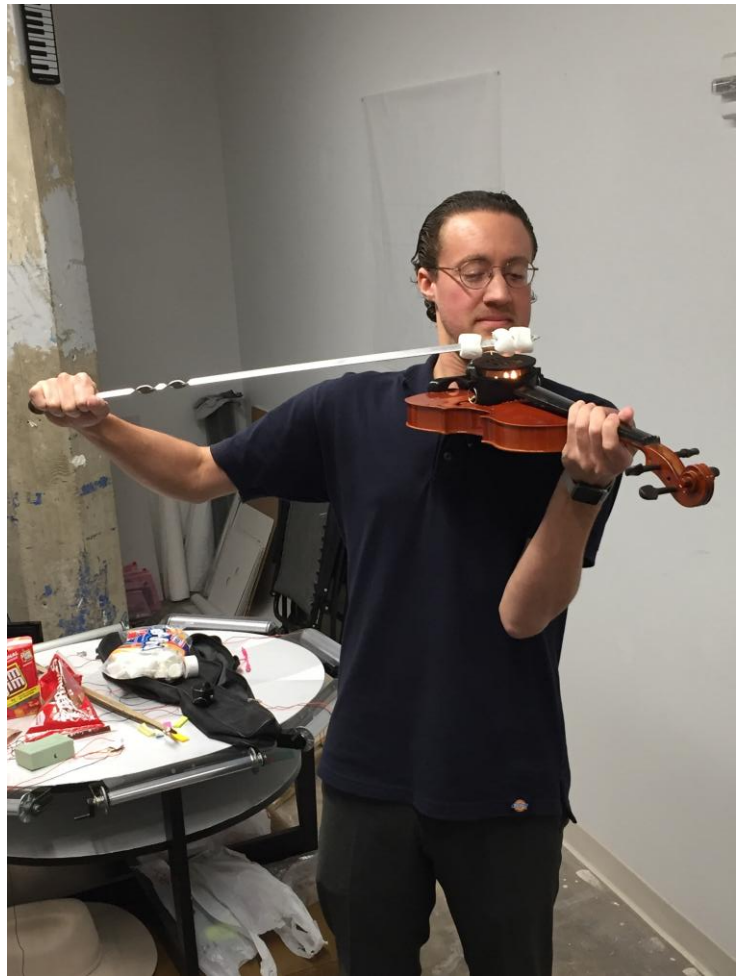


[Campfire Violin Video Link]





Title: Campfire Violin (2018)
Medium: Performance with violin, mini hibachi grill, hibachi skewer as violin bow, smores sterno, lighter, marshmallows, wireless mouse, chinrest pad, software and electronics.
Description: Roasting a marshmallow then eating it triggers the chin switch (hidden under violin chinrest pad) to play the midi score of the campfire classic, “Kumbaya” one note per chew. The performance is meant to enhance the taste of the marshmallows by recreating the sonic atmosphere of a campfire along with the camaraderie of a singalong while chewing.

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Title: Take Five (2018)
Medium: Performance with saxophone, neck strap, Take Five candy bar, jazz glasses and scarf, small fork, rubber band, chin switch accessibility device, switch interface, neck brace as mount, software and electronics.
Description: Take 5 candy bar replaces the mouthpiece and reed on an alto saxophone. Eating the Take 5 bar triggers the chin interface (hidden under jazz scarf) and plays the midi saxophone score of the jazz standard ”Take Five” written by Paul Desmond and performed by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. The performance is meant to enhance the experience of eating a Take Five candy bar during a snack break by making it feel as cool and life-affirming as performing in a hip jazz club.

Take Five Video Link

Artist: Brandon Ables / bwables.com / bwables@gmail.com

Title: Jerky Cowboy (2018)
Medium: Performance with cowboy hat, neck bandana, cowboy fringe jacket, beef jerky, chin switch accessibility device, switch interface, neck brace as mount, software and electronics.
Description: Eating a piece of beef jerky triggers the chin interface (hidden under neck bandana) to play the main theme song from the western “The Magnificent Seven.” The performance is meant to boost my feelings of masculinity and Americanness with each chew of the jerky. The background image is of an adult ESL class I was teaching at that time, hoping to also carry along the jerky benefits with being a more credible teacher of American English.

Jerky Cowboy Video Link

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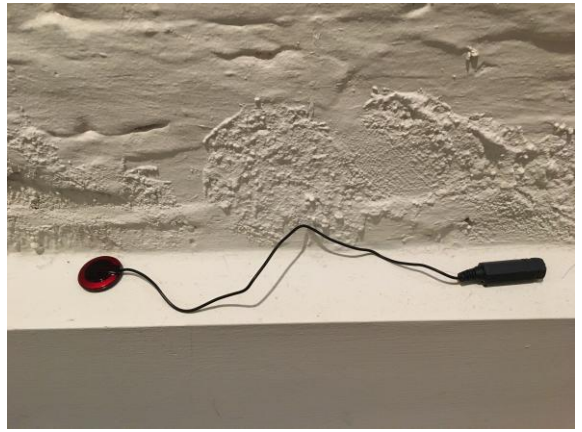
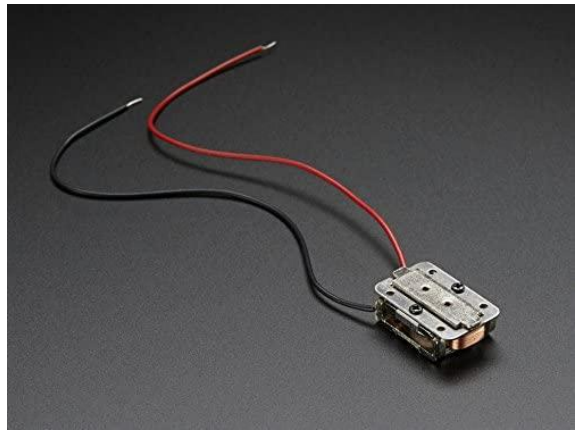
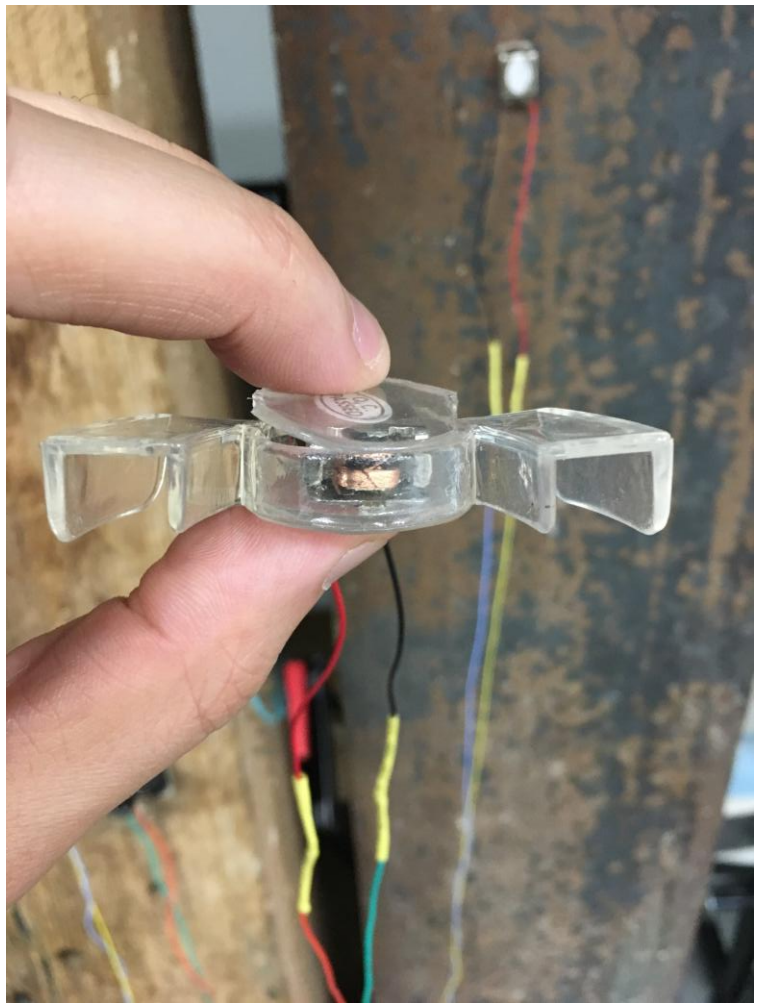
Title: Mantra Mouthguard (2018)
Medium: Performance series with bone conductor audio transducer, amp, adapted LED mouthpiece, contact microphone, clicking interface (computer keyboard, 6 Second Abs machine, exercise stepper, treadmill), software and electronics.
Description: Uses novel computer interaction techniques to turn each step on a stepper, click on a computer keyboard, count on an ab machine, or step on a treadmill into a syllable in a mantra spoken on your tongue for you. It could be the Hare Krishna mantra, a daily prayer, self-affirmations, automatic autosuggestion, and more…







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