What does the Internet do to our emotions?

By Beiya Yang
Introduction

In 2021, the internet has become integral to the way we live, learn, teach, and do business. We are now closely connected to one another through the Internet. We often spend more time online compared with the short time we spend with our lovers and relatives in person, and studies show that the time we spend on social networks is 80%-90%. Although the Internet has brought us speed, convenience, entertainment, and instant gratification, have we forgotten how to connect and communicate in the real world?

Our immersion in the virtual world ignores the real existence of life around us. Though the internet allows us to communicate with anyone, anywhere, at any time, the virtual world ignores the tangible and material warmth of reality. In life, we have many activities that can be performed online, but most of the time I choose to do it in reality. For example, when watching a movie, we can lie on the sofa at home and watch a movie that is carefully selected through high-score evaluations, and we don’t even need to care about the eyes of others. Why do we still choose to watch movies at the theater? Is it because this movie is not available online or is it that we enjoy the shared experience of watching movies with others? There are many similar experiences like this, such as online education, shopping, games, interviews, or even choosing face-to-face conversations over talking on the phone or texting. Compared with online shopping, we are more willing to go shopping with friends offline and enjoy this kind of process. We subconsciously know that something important can only be better articulated in reality and the shared experience or as humans we seek in person connections and subconsciously know that we need this face-to-face communication. The digital platforms cannot replace real world engagement.

As an international student I don't know if I would study abroad without the Internet. Through

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the Internet, I was able to view and visit Universities and once I arrived in the United States, I was able to communicate with my family members in China through email and apps like WeChat. Although I am able to communicate with my family through the internet, I still miss the time together with them. The advent of digital software and social media has eased my longing for family and friends far away but it is not a replacement for physical contact, presence and connection. I hope that screens are not a barrier between us forever.

Through my creative practice, I focus on studying the relationship between people. I am curious about how our lives are slowly changing because we now rely so much on social media and other online platforms to interact with people around us. This means of interaction has gradually become part of our daily lives and people have readily accepted these changes as normal. The jewelry I create visualizes the information we exchange through the Internet. Compared with the handwritten letters we used to regularly send to each other, the information we share on the internet can seem disconnected, and lack our basic human emotions. I try to use my jewelry to remind people to pay attention to real life.

As we spend more time connecting through devices, do we ignore the true emotions in real life? For example, people can like anyone on the internet, they can say I love you to everyone. On the contrary, such genuine expressions in our face-to-face lives are slowly decreasing. People can also be more irritable on the internet and more likely to say hurtful words. Because they can hide behind a screen. People often selfishly say hurtful words on the internet to vent their dissatisfaction in real life, while pretending that the recipient of their anger will not be harmed. 2

The Internet, electronic products, earbuds, and power supplies have become our necessities

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and accessories. They have become things that we will carry with us all the time. This new form of technology has emerged as a kind of jewellery worn on the body.

After discovering repeated comparisons between jewelry and electronic technology, I have found their roles to be increasingly similar. People are inseparable from their mobile phones, computers, earphones and other electronic products. Electronics have become another form of jewelry, even though we don’t wear them like traditional jewelry. There is a personal relationship to the body and these objects—we carry them for long periods of time and keep them. Even people who do not wear jewelry every day make sure to carry their mobile phones at all times. My work attempts to give jewelry a new definition and develop new roles for jewelry.

Through new and developing work, I use code as my research subject. When we send messages through mobile phones or computers, those messages will be displayed on the network in the form of network language-codes. Code is the language used by humans to communicate with electronic devices or issue instructions to computers to achieve a certain purpose. The mechanics of code is explained in the first chapter of Computer Abstractions and Technology³. Computers communicate through electrical signals using the binary on and off. Therefore, the computer alphabet is represented by only 2 symbols—the numbers 0 and 1. We call this computer language binary code. Binary code language or machine language, a language that can be directly recognized by a computer without any translation. The format and code of the instructions of each machine are rigidly stipulated, so they are called machine-oriented language, also called machine language. It is the first generation of computer language. For the convenience of representation, humans have defined new signs by themselves, and use 0 and 1 to represent the meaning. (1 corresponds to high level, 0 corresponds to low level) Computers obey our orders, which are

instructions in computer terminology. Over time, people have perfected and simplified from using Binary⁴ to Hexadecimal⁵. Hexadecimal is easier for humans to understand than binary, and the operation time is shorter and more efficient than other computer languages. Hexadecimal is shorter because one hexadecimal number can top 4 binary digits when converting. Hexadecimal is currently the most popular language (the one used to communicate between people and computers). Hexadecimal is a base 16 digital system, unlike the base 10 system we use in our daily practice. Hexadecimal digit values can be: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, A, B, C, D, E, F. Hexadecimal is widely used in web design and social media, and, since most of our communication is through these platforms, Hexadecimal is the most appropriate computer language for my topic. Hexadecimal will be the only code language used in my artwork.

I translate common language that may be quickly shared in text messages into digital codes and present them in the form of jewelry. One such message is the phrase “I love you.” In my work I have translated I love you to 496C7F7665796F75 (which is "I love you" in Hexadecimal coding). I used code to represent I love you because when we spend too much time-sharing love on the Internet, the text we send out will reduce emotions or be distorted by the recipient because we cannot actually be face-to-face. The development of the Internet has become an unconcerned number, with no original emotion any more.

Before the prevalence of the internet, we used to write letters to communicate. There is something about paper that is different from digital media. Paper is tangible and carries unimaginable emotions. When writing a letter, we will carefully select the paper, and we will

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transfer our emotions to the paper through the pen. The person who receives the letter can feel the presence of the writer and the emotion hidden in the handwriting by touching the physical document. In thinking about personal letters, I wonder how language moves. Is it the personal hand that writes, or are we imagining how the writer feels when the writer writes the letter?

The importance of handwritten letters became very clear recently during a particularly significant relationship. I was in a long-distance relationship with my partner at the time, and we were engaged. I was in America and he was in China. We have a 12-13 hour time difference. It means when it is morning on my side it will be night on his side. As we went about our days, we would contact each other through social networks because we are far away from each other. We used software to video chat and tell each other the stories of our day. After our engagement, both of us relaxed. We didn't continue to insist on some basic things to maintain this relationship, such as good morning, good night, and sharing each other's daily life. In the end, only cold good morning and good night text messages were left. Because we are not in the same time zone and are no longer around each other, neither of us can detect each other’s emotional changes in time, causing things to deteriorate, making things that can be solved by a hug become bigger and bigger like a snowball. Because of the distance, we finally gave up trying to solve it. We finally chose to separate. When I returned to China we were together in person, with no time difference, and only a two-hour drive. But we did not say goodbye online or face each other, we said goodbye by letter. The previous distance had created irreversible problems and we decided to break off our engagement. We didn't choose to communicate through social media. We chose to write letters to express our more personal feelings. We wrote down the feelings of the letter, through the handwritten words to each other to convey the importance of this feeling and regret. We cannot say goodbye face-to-face because of the busy work, we have been unable to find a suitable time.
Both of us are in a state where we cannot communicate normally. The distance and conversation are in reality getting less and less, which makes two of us unable to compromise, lose patience, and even find time to meet and chat. We both think it is a waste of time to meet in real life. We lost the desire to share and maybe we cannot really face each other. Letters helped us say goodbye to the days we lived together in a more appropriate way.

The web translates all data into a stream of numbers, including our conversations. But in letters, we can imagine the mood and state of the other party through the handwriting, while the fonts on social networks are integrated into standard, reasonable and emotionless electronic fonts. There is a sharp contrast between electronic typeface and handwritten language.

My project uses paper as the theme and uses metal techniques to turn paper into wearable objects. I also consider the relationship between paper as a font medium and virtual network as a code medium. The same is the transmission of information. We have changed from a mere paper to a constantly updated web page that can be used unlimitedly. But the emergence of the Internet did not make books and letters disappear. They still exist, naturally because people also realize that there is a huge difference between them.

**Paper**

“When we do a sober analysis, we will find that paper as a material has been playing a very important role as a medium of information dissemination. Especially in today's information flow faster and faster, paper, as a kind of material, is also an "unconscious plane". Whether you write a letter with a pen or output a picture with a printer, you must first have a piece of white flat paper. In the face of such a white picture with a reasonable proportion, we must first abandon its materiality and simply recognize it as a medium for carrying pictures and words. As one of China's Four Great Inventions, paper was awarded this honor for its functionality as a natural medium capable of conveying information, rather than its materiality. So, instead of thinking about the nature and charm of paper as a material when surrounded by computer screens, people blurted out the word "paperless work."” – Kenya Hara（Hara 102-104）
Paper has always been the carrier of information and emotion, but I love that. Despite our use of digital documents, newspapers, online news and email, we still rely on paper as an icon visually and verbally. I want to show the magic and power of paper again. In my work, I use the paper that is commonly used in daily life, which respectively include: white cardstock, non-coated paper, tracing paper and black matboard.

White cardstock, with high smoothness, good stiffness, clean appearance and good uniformity characteristics is often used for business cards, menus, etc. White cardstock is a kind of thick solid pure high-quality white wood pulp, so many packaging boxes will also use this material. Non-coated paper refers to not adding a surface coating during processing. In addition to note paper, non-coated paper is also suitable for print media that does not need reflective effect. This is also the most standard paper we use. It is often used for photocopying paper, notebooks, books, comics, etc. The transparency of tracing paper is higher than ordinary paper and also has good toughness and is not easy to adulterate. Picture books are common in this material and this paper is often used to make book cover title pages and inner packaging. Black cardboard is often used for shell packaging, protection plate, and food packaging.

I try to apply the most frequently used paper in my daily life to my work. Different papers represent different situations, habits and states. As the most common paper we use, non-coated paper represents the records of our daily lives. White cardboard is used in advertisements, magazines, books, and packaging. It represents the information we receive from the outside world in our daily life. I chose to add black cardboard because of the black text it is closer to the code on the computer. I used it to remind the audience of the messages and emails sent by our mobile phones.
I - You

In the series of I – you, I transformed the paper (white cardstock, non-coated paper, tracing paper) that is common in daily life into a wearable brooch. Similarly, as we spend more time on the internet through device connections, do we ignore the true emotions in real life? For example, we can "like" or ❤ to all the people we follow, and can easily say "I love you", "I need you", "I want you", "I miss you" to anyone on the internet. On the contrary, this true expression in our lives is gradually diminishing. I hope people can reminisce about how we felt when we used letters to convey our feelings. I made the brooch the size of a mobile phone, and then converted the "I love you", "I need you", "I want you", and "I want you" into hexadecimal codes. I used staples to convert the cut and formed codes (paper) are overlapped to make a brooch that can be taken away. Taking it means that the person wearing the brooch can tear off a piece of code and give it to the people around. The person who receives the paper, it is impossible to know what the wearer wants to convey through a mere code.

100 I LOVE YOU

In 100 I Love You, I converted “I love you” into one hundred different languages, then translated those languages into hexanomial code. Then I cut out these groups of letters and numbers in paper and made them into wearable brooches.

In 100 I Love You, I include translations in Chinese, English, Korean, French, Japanese, Spanish and many other languages from around the world. One hundred pieces is significant because digital communication and the internet are not only prevalent in most countries, but in a recent personal experience when I went to change the language, I observed that my phone has 100 different languages that can be converted.

I use thick, matte, black cardboard as the main material in this piece. This opaque material
expresses the "emotionless" or strangeness of code on a computer screen. Each section of cut code hangs from black cord which then connects to a silver pin forming a brooch. The black cord symbolizes mourning in China for an elderly person who has passed on. Mourners will wear this cord on their wrists or in their hair and during this time will abstain from entertainment and socializing. In my works, I mourn the loss of emotion and personal connection in digital communication.

Each brooch is placed inside an envelope and has a corresponding QR code in place of the stamp. This work requires audience interaction. The QR codes link to web pages that show the I love you translation in each of the one hundred languages I used. I decided to use the letter format because it is a way to respond to the time when we used letters and handwriting to convey and share our feelings. Now I'm using this form again in my packaging, trying to make people realize that these codes carry emotions, like affection, friendship and love. I chose a transparent envelope made of vegetable parchment to allow the audience to see the black code inside, similar to the feeling of looking into a mobile phone or computer screen.

There are many layers--physical and metaphorical--to get through in order to discover the actual meaning of the language embedded in the code: The envelope, the mobile phone screen, and the translation of language into digital code. The sense of distance between layers is an important feeling that I want the audience to realize and speaks to the complexity of the emotion contained in the code, in language, and in the way, we communicate digitally.

**Prism sheet**

After using paper, I started to use the material in the LCD screen - Prism Sheet. In the 21st century, paper is no longer the only carrier of information. The emergence of the Internet
and the invention of electronic screens have made most of the information go online. The electronic screen is like another kind of paper, carrying information.

As explained in the introduction of *Understanding Today's LCD Screen Technology*\(^6\) The polarizer (Prism Sheet) is stretched by a plastic-like material to extend its fibers, and then immersed in iodine to further extend and organize the fibers of this material are made into a dark grid of parallel lines invisible to the human eye. This is like a filter that only allows light waves in the vertical direction to pass, and the rest of the light waves are blocked. There is no international production standard for this material, but the ultra-thin Prism Sheet is gradually being widely used because of its strong heat resistance, sturdiness, abrasion resistance and low price. The material is cheap and widely used in electronic computer, phone, and tablet screens. The material of the prism is different from the other layers on the screen because of the fine mesh on the prism which allows the viewer to see two different effects through the prism sheet. One side will produce double shadow, the other side through the refraction of light will produce colorful spots.

**19 I LOVE YOU - Love that cannot be told**

I use a Prism sheet as the main material of this work because this material can produce complex effects of light and shadow due to refraction--appear like ghost images through continuous superposition. When we transfer text to a web page, it is turned into code, yet there are so many emotions in that code that are invisible. I used cold connection techniques to link 19 prism sheets that were cut into code to create a brooch.

The content of the code is “I love you” in different languages. I use the number 19 instead of the Chinese word for "持久", which means forever. Nineteen pieces of code in different

\(^6\) Samsung “Understanding Today's LCD Screen Technology.” *Samsung Display PID*
languages overlap to symbolize "I love you Forever". The audience cannot get the inner meaning of the work through just looking at the brooch. And this effective form produced by this work points out that we can't understand each other's feelings only through text messaging. Just like using the Internet to express our feelings, we cannot truly convey our love to each other through this digital format. The audience needs to learn the meaning of the work through communication with the author or through explanation. I use this work to make the audience more aware of the necessity of actual face-to-face communication. We cannot just communicate online to increase our relationship. We need to communicate with friends in reality to cultivate deeper friendships. But it is not said that online communication is completely bad. Online communication provides us with opportunities and conditions to get together anytime, anywhere. It also allows people who could not meet in real life to meet. When watching my work, the audience cannot understand the meaning of the work only through the code itself. It needs to combine the QR code I made to get the meaning of the work. Therefore, I hope to communicate with the audience in real and explain the concept of my work in more and more detail. Just like the importance of offline communication that I continue to emphasize. The sense of distance that the audience produces when watching my work is exactly what I want to express. It is the same sense of distance when we only communicate online.

**Hey siri, Do you want to marry me?**

After returning to China during the Covid-19 epidemic, I learned about a particularly interesting phenomenon with friends around me, because of China's special national conditions. The city I live in is a fast-developing city and everyone is very busy and unable to interact and communicate offline for long periods of time. Because of this, as well as the pandemic, online dating became very popular.
This situation is in stark contrast to the current Chinese families urging their children to marry. In order to meet the social needs of China, as a new generation of young people, I have started to come into contact with all kinds of social online dating software. They start from hobbies, screen by academic qualifications, online voice chat, online singing together, games, etc. All kinds of novel ways attract busy workers in China who can't normally contact each other and have the opportunity to contact through various online software. Online software appeared long ago, but driven by the epidemic, online dating software is now widely used. Compared with the conservative psychology of China in the past. The new generation of young people has also gradually begun to accept this way of dating. We have begun to stop resisting this way of dating and think it is normal and reasonable.

The new generation of young people cannot meet new people in a good way because of their busy work. In other words, whether the way of love guided by the emergence of the Internet is good or bad is the key question I hope the audience will discuss and think about.

Through dialogue with our mobile phone artificial intelligence, we can get the answer that most of us may answer. This work is my reflection on the love concept of the new generation of Chinese youth.

I designed the shape of the work to be an ID badge that we must use when working. After converting the answer, I got from Siri into code, I use the Prism sheet screen as the main material for representing this information. I hope the audience can actively ask Siri: Do you want to marry me? this problem. In order to get to their own answer.

**Hey siri, what is the meaning of life ?**

In the process of asking siri, I realized that we have entered an era of relying on electronic products and relying on online search. And artificial intelligence has entered our lives long ago.
We began to keep asking them various questions. For example: "How is the weather today?" "How can I go to a destination?" Wait for the answers we need to search on the Internet. In the constant inquiries, I realized that all the questions have returned to one of the most original questions. "What is the meaning of life?" I use the Prism sheet as my main tool without changing its size. Keep the original size of the computer. Use code to replace Siri's answer. Try to guide the audience to get answers by asking their own artificial intelligence.

The Internet has become an indispensable part of our lives. This is an undeniable fact, and because of the large-scale influx of complex information into our daily lives in a short period of time, people have begun to find a balance between the current virtual network and real life. Emotions affect most of our daily thinking and behavior, and the Internet has changed the way we contact the world through various social media and news. And my work cuts in from the perspective of emotions and the Internet, does not talk about right and wrong, but only expresses the subtle things I observe that cannot be described in words. The direction of the work is also changing with the continuous changes of people's thoughts. I tried to lead the audience to think about why such a change occurred, and how we should deal with ourselves as a new generation of young people under such changes.
1. As the screen is powered-up, backlight LED emits the white light.

2. Light goes into the light guide plate (LGP), reflects internally, and is distributed evenly over the upper surface of the panel.

3. Diffuser sheet further disperses the light, so no hot-spots are observed outside of the LGP.

4. DBEF recycles the scattered light and prism sheet ensures that the light is focused and directed towards the viewer.

5. Bottom polarizer allows light of the vertical wavelength to pass through while blocking other orientations.

6. Vertically polarized light then passes through the liquid crystal layer.

7. The liquid crystals are then manipulated by applying appropriate voltage through the TFT and common electrode. Liquid crystals can block the white light to a variable
degree. The filter in front of each subpixel only allows through a range of wavelengths appropriate to its color. To control the brightness of each subpixel, the liquid crystal cell is energized or de-energized to block or transmit light.

8. The light passes through the liquid crystals and the color filters to produce the primary red, green and blue colors.

9. The polarized light then is filtered by the top polarizer—only horizontally polarized light is transmitted.

10. Finally, the viewer can enjoy the vibrant color, high contrast and crisp image on the digital display.
Word Cited


Artist statement 2021 - Beiya

I found that people born in the 21st century are accustomed to convenience and having everything at our fingertips. We use the Internet to search for all the answers we want and even prefer to use our phone for all communication, such as chatting with others, finding addresses, taking out food, online shopping, even games, and other entertainment activities. We are surrounded by virtual reality and forget the true emotions of real life. People may not realize that the world we live in is beginning to be covered by another language. This language is called coding - a series of numbers and letters without evidence of real emotions and meaning. My work reminds people that through this form of communication, feelings are being forgotten as we immerse ourselves in our screens. The translation of words-to-code parallels the disconnect between people as they communicate virtually.

Similarly, as we spend more time on the internet by connecting through devices, do we ignore the true emotions in real life? For example, we can “like” or ❤ everyone we follow, and can easily say “I love you” to anyone on the internet. On the contrary, such genuine expressions in our lives are slowly decreasing. In the process of working on the internet and using Siri, I realized that we have entered an era of relying on electronic products and relying on online search. And artificial intelligence has entered our lives long ago.

Through new and developing work, I use code as my research subject. I translate the common language that may be quickly shared in text messages into codes and present them in the form of jewelry. Technology allows people to use mobile phones to connect with people living far away. We used to need to send physical letters to reach people far away, but because of technology, we
risk losing true personal connections. Feelings in reality cannot be replaced by virtual ones. We used to write by hand, now we type by hand. Paper and mobile phones are just tools for us to express our emotions and thoughts. They are like things related to the body.
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**Beiya, YANG**

**Education Background**

M.F.A concentration on Metal Arts, in Suny school of fine & performing arts

**Jun. 2015-May. 2019  Virginia Commonwealth University**  
B.F.A as Craft & Material Studies, concentration on Metal Arts, in VCU Arts

**Honors**

- May.2018  Honor on the VCU Arts Spring 2018 Dean’s List
- May.2017  Honor on the VCU Arts Spring 2017 Dean’s List
- May.2015  International Freshman Enrollment Scholarship $5,000

**Exhibitions**

**May. 2018**  
**Undergraduate juried exhibition Award of Distinction – Craft/Material studies**

The Anderson gallery hosted a topic of Politics exhibition, my artwork was awarded the Award of Distinction with $200 bonus.

**Mar. 2018**  
**Tiny Shiny Jewelry Exhibition & Sale at Quirk Gallery**

It was an auction competition held by the Quirk Gallery and my TWO artworks were sold at the auction.

**Oct. 2018**  
**Meyer Gallery Exhibition**

A SOLO exhibition held at our VCU School of the Arts in Virginia Commonwealth University.

**May 2018**  
**Sound Vision Exploring Music Through Glass Art Show**

My glass-made music instrument was elected to the art show held at National Liberty Museum, in Philadelphia, musical students perform music with those glass-made instruments.

**Dec. 2018**  
**Heart Failure Exhibition, Alliages Bijoux Contemporains, France**

Over 400 works, 173 applications are elected to attend this anniversary exhibition.

**Oct. 2018**  
**The Hawthorn Gallery, VCU School of the Arts, Richmond, VA**

Selected as excellent work and exhibited in 2/F exhibition room

**Dec. 2018**  
**Lille Exhibitions, Alliages Bijoux Contemporains, France**

Exhibition Theme: heart

**Dec. 2018 – Jan 2019**  
**International XiaoYan art and design exhibitions**

Xiaoyan School of Art The Sea World Culture and Arts Center 1187 Wanghai Road Shekou, Nanshan Shenzhen, China

**Mar. 2019**  
**Munich Exhibitions, Alliages Bijoux Contemporains, France**

Exhibition Theme: heart
Mar. 2019   **Tiny Shiny Jewelry Exhibition & Sale at Quirk Gallery**
It was an auction competition held by the Quirk Gallery

May. 2019  **Meyer Gallery Exhibition**
A SOLO exhibition held at our VCU School of the Arts in Virginia Commonwealth University.

May. 2019  **2019 VCUarts Fashion show Shimmer**
A collaborate exhibition with VCU School of the Arts (Fashion).

May. 2019  **Athens Jewelry Week**
Exhibition Theme: heart

Oct. 2019  **Lalabeyou gallery**
Exhibition Theme: heart

Nov. 2019(11/18-23) **Mulan Exhibition-New York Jewelry week**
New age Chinese art jewelry exhibition

Nov. 2019(11/22-25) **Denizen-New York Jewelry week**
The SUNY New Paltz Metal Program presents the second edition of denizen.

Feb. 2020  **2020 Growth & Evolution International Jewellery Exhibition**

May.2021  **2021 The SUNY New Paltz Fine Art Program MFA Show**
Work show in Dorsky Museum.

**May 2021 Assembly Online Art Journal**
Works will be published in the magazine in May.

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**In-Campus Internships**

2016 - 2019  **Craft Studio Teaching Assistant**
- Maintained the studio routine work and took care of craft tools;
- Gave proper advises for students in using craft tools, i.e. how to shape metal with a hammer; how to use the torch to make an artwork in variety of materials.

Oct. 2018  **Teaching Assistant**
- Teach the metal skill of foot, spout in forming class.8
- Acquired accurate data through careful measurement and calculation

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**Professional Membership**

Aug. 2018  **Member of Ethical Metalsmith**

Mar. 2018  **Member of Society of North American Goldsmiths**

**Computer skill:** CNC, laser cutter, Rhinoceros