



# Visual Melodies

Design and Evaluation of an Interactive Art Installation for  
Clinical Environments

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Doctor of Creative Arts

University of Technology, Sydney

2012

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## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this exegesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the exegesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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## Abstract

Over the past decades there has been a growing recognition of the value of art activities, such as visual arts, music, drawing, dance, poetry and writing, as therapeutic approaches to enhance healthcare settings. Numerous studies have identified the value of art and design in decreasing depression and anxiety and creating a holistic healing environment for hospital visitors and patients, as well as offering a positive working environment for staff. Therefore, I propose that interactive multimedia art offers an important new therapeutic avenue as a service for engaging visitors, patients and staff in hospitals.

Visual Melodies is an interactive art installation that engenders feelings of calm and relaxation in users. In this exegesis, I describe the theoretical background, development and evaluation of Visual Melodies. This creative trajectory draws on practice-based research, with the aims to create an interactive art installation, to evaluate its therapeutic potential, and to identify the semiotic dimensions of multimedia art that are most generally effective for producing therapeutic effects.

Based on the literature of the different techniques used in art therapy, colour therapy and music therapy, I propose a bridge between these three therapies through a platform of an interactive multimedia installation – harnessing images, colours and sounds. Eight design principles that form the foundation of the practice were developed along with the discussion of the design elements that have been shown to be effective for enhancing relaxation. In line with the design principles, the design

practice was then developed as a series of original landscape artworks and interactive animations accompanied by music specifically composed for the researcher.

Audience feedback to the installation in a hospital waiting room was studied as a way of assessing its therapeutic potential. The evaluation feedback has been very positive and welcoming from visitors, patients and staff of all ages. Overall, Visual Melodies provides a relaxing and playful experience for the participants. The feelings most often reported were that of being relaxed, followed by calm, diverted, evoking memories and happy.

This project demonstrates that it is beneficial to create a relaxing and supportive therapeutic interactive multimedia artwork for promoting holistic healing environments. The practice-based research and findings in this exegesis extend our understanding of how we can fuse artwork and technology, to transform our healthcare settings from sterile treatment spaces, into healing places where ‘care’ is built into the environment itself.