
SYNTONIC REFUGE

NETWORK VISUALIZATION IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH

LabSynthE

New media art presented at *Digital Frontiers: Tear Down the Walls*, September 26-28, 2019 at UT Austin

In community, people find and offer refuge by coming together in common practices such as hugging and holding hands. The space between our bodies co-regulates our embodied reactions, thus cultivating a sense of peace amid stress or fear.

People are syntonics, harmoniously responsive to the changing needs of the situation. Through close human interaction, *Syntonics Refuge* discloses the heartbeats of two people who wrap themselves in the embrace of a shawl, which represents both care of the individual, and a shelter for shared experiences (figure 1).



Figure 1 Bodies co-regulate inside the shawl for *Syntonics Refuge*. Photo from *Digital Frontiers: Tear Down the Walls*, Austin, Texas, September 26, 2019.



Syntonic Refuge is a social engagement that explores the importance of refuge for survivors and the act of surviving. *Syntonic Refuge* discloses ways that bodies harmonize with the environment and co-regulate heartbeats.

While we are ideologically aligned with the insurrectionary language of the call, “Tear Down the Walls,” our project is a quiet meditation on connections between survivors and the refuge we can create between our bodies in the aftermath of division or trauma. As barriers divide people, this project requires collaboration (figure 2). The shawl is a bridge for bodies negotiating space.



Figure 2 Participants collaborate to measure each other's heartbeats in *Syntonic Refuge*. Photo from *Digital Frontiers: Tear Down the Walls*, Austin, Texas, September 26, 2019.

Syntonic Refuge asks participants to come closer. Consider our common experience of survivorship, especially when we are remembering, and continue to witness, the enormity of human suffering through global atrocities, and share refuge in the heart.

Directions for Participation

Choose a partner and sit together on a bench.

Wrap yourselves in the shawl.

Place your hand in the glove sewn into the shawl (figure 3).

Bring your two hands together so the sensor measures your partner's pulse: You and your partner will work together to press the sensor against your fingers.

Your heartbeats will flash simultaneously across the shawl, making visible the pulse that symbolically animates your life and your compassion.

Will you co-regulate? Maybe the light pulses will sync up as you sit together.



Figure 3 Each participant wears a glove sewn into the shawl and modified to house a sensor that measures the rate of their collaborator's heartbeat. Photo from *Digital Frontiers: Tear Down the Walls*, Austin, Texas, September 26, 2019.