

LETTER OF SUPPORT

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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you today in support of Kyle West's application for the College of Creative Arts and Media Mentored Student Research Award for his piece entitled *Overwhelmed*. Kyle created this interactive artwork in my Art 370S section during the Spring Semester of 2024. This section of the class was focusing on realtime, generative, interactive, and performable media. As our final project for the semester, the students worked collaboratively with artists from my other classes and with electronic music composition students from Jake Sandridge's class to curate a public event that involved interactive installations and screenings of short films. Kyle's final project, *Overwhelmed*, required a fearless dedication to technical research and an openminded approach to artistic inquiry that led him to create a technically, formally, and conceptually sophisticated work that was surprisingly poignant.

In the work, the viewer is confronted with a lonely, silicon, hand wrapped in wire and sitting on a plinth in front of a seemingly endless tunnel of digitally projected negative self-talk. When the viewer reaches out to cradle the hand, the video and soundtrack suddenly change to feature gentle drones, a delicately undulating orb featuring live footage of the viewer, and the sound of a calming heartbeat. The empathic touch of the viewer calms the racing mind of the disembodied hand as they notice that they are calming themselves in the act of showing compassion to the other.

My role in a class like this one is to provide young artists with the basic technical grounding in realtime, interactive, media, to push them to refine the conceptual sophistication of their work, and to help them to develop a studio research practice that they can use to solve the technical challenges that their work requires. Kyle's self-motivated approach to carrying out this research was gratifying to witness. Contrary to the title of his work, Kyle never seemed *Overwhelmed* and his level-headed approach to solving difficult technical challenges was impressive. In the context of this class, and in the introductory class we had together the previous semester, Kyle always exhibited an enthusiastic attitude toward trying new things and experimenting even when the outcomes were not quite clear. The success of this work is a testament to his creative problem-solving skills that will continue to benefit him in his future career. For all of these reasons, Kyle has my fullest support for this award.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

