

Abstract

This dissertation explores how sensory touch and tactile interaction within artistic practice can support emotional healing, creative expression, and personal reconnection. While the research is not based in clinical art therapy, it is shaped by its philosophies and methodologies, using art therapy as a conceptual and practical tool to frame embodied creative experience.

The project is grounded in positive psychology and practice-led artistic research. It investigates how tactile engagement, especially through hand-to-skin gestures, textured materials, and physical interaction, can foster emotional resilience, self-awareness, and reflection. A series of participatory workshops invited participants to work with soft textiles, clay, yarn, paper, and glass, exploring personal expression through sensory interaction. These activities included tactile drawing, object tracing, collaborative gestures, and the use of haptic signals and EEG technology to deepen sensory awareness.

The research is supported by the PERMA model of well-being, which identifies positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment as essential elements of human flourishing. Through touch-based art-making, participants experienced a sense of grounding, emotional presence, and relational trust, especially valuable for those who find verbal communication challenging.

The final stage of the project culminated in BLOOM, an immersive and interactive exhibition that offered a sensory-rich space for reflection and connection. The installation, composed of hand-sewn textiles, sculptural forms, woodcut prints, and ceramic objects, invites visitors to engage through touch and bodily presence.

This dissertation offers not only an artistic inquiry but also a tactile invitation to reimagine how care, creativity, and vulnerability can coexist within the process of healing. It proposes that touch, when approached through mindful and creative practice, becomes a quiet yet powerful form of communication and a pathway to emotional connection and transformation.

Keywords: art therapy, sensory touch, haptic communication, positive psychology, emotional healing, embodied experience, PERMA model