WHO SPEAKS FOR ME?

An Interactive Installation on Emotional Attribution and Algorithmic Subjectivity

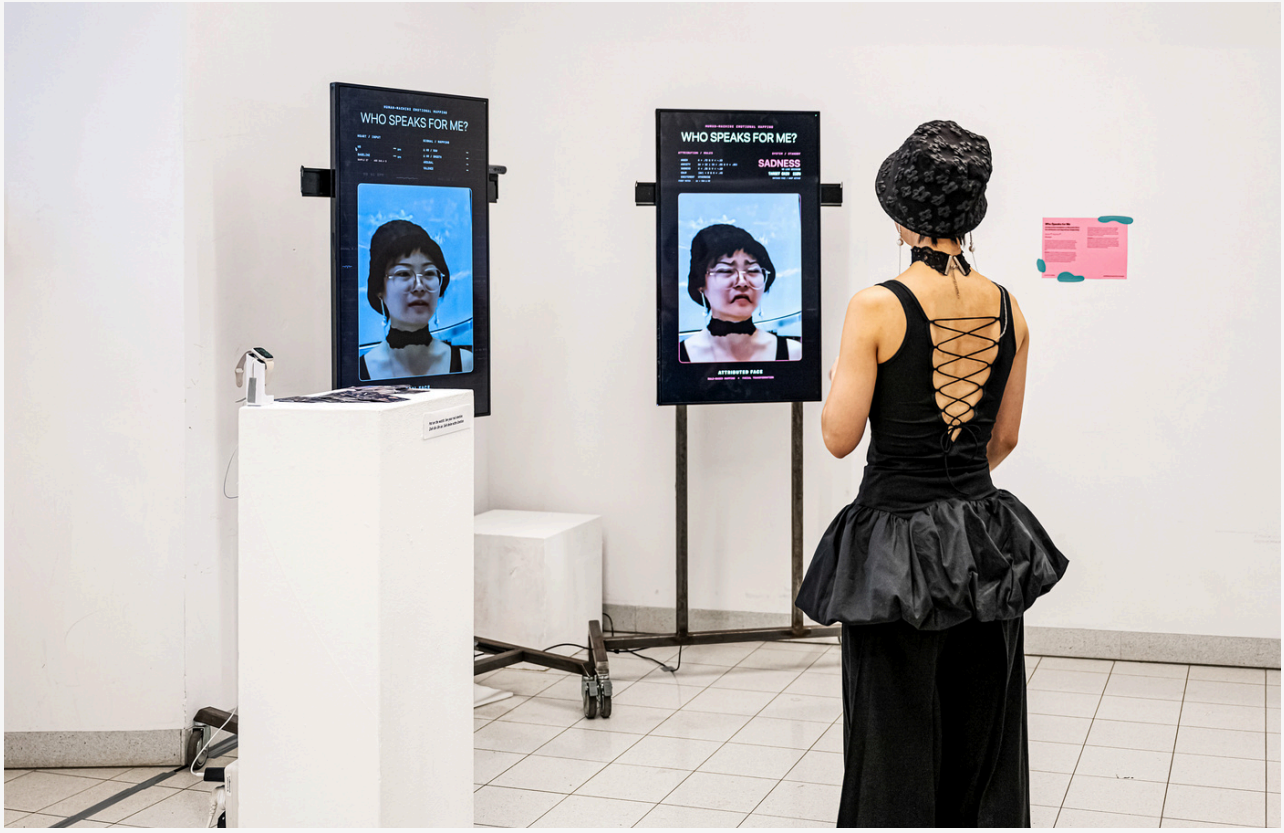
HONG CHEN / SIFAN PAN

PROJECT CONCEPT

Who Speaks for Me? is an interactive installation that examines how algorithmic systems can acquire authority over human emotion.

Using live heart-rate data from an Apple Watch, the system attributes an emotional state to the participant and rewrites this machine-attributed emotion onto the participant's live camera-captured face in real time. The machine-attributed emotion may conflict with the participant's own perception, creating a tension between subjective feeling and computational interpretation.

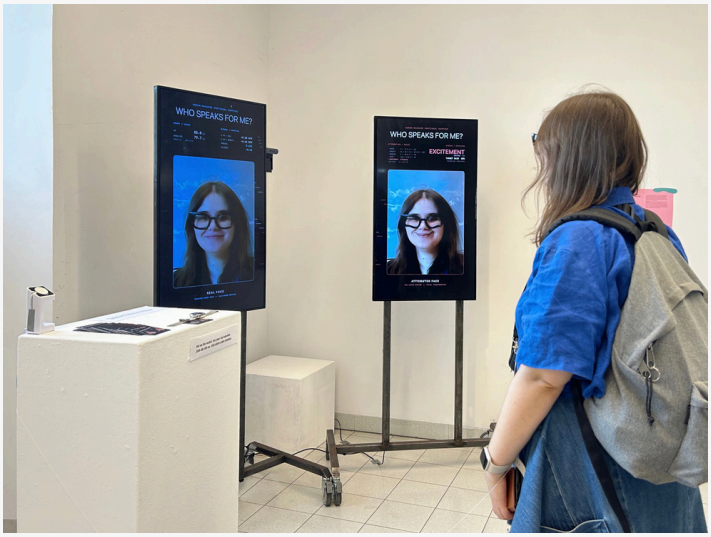
Informed by established psychological research, the system translates physiological variation into computational rules and visible judgments. Rather than claiming to reveal a participant's "true" emotion, the work examines how algorithmic interpretations can appear objective and acquire authority over subjective experience.



*project documentation video: https://vimeo.com/1230069628







Installation setup



Visitor interaction during Ars Electronica 2026







01 / RESEARCH BASIS

EMOTIONAL ATTRIBUTION

Russell's Circumplex Model of Affect
> dimensional organization of affect
> arousal / valence framework
> informs emotional attribution

FACIAL REWRITING

Ekman & Friesen's Facial Action Coding System (FACS)
> facial Action Units
> facial movement patterns
> informs facial rewriting

02 / SYSTEM LOGIC

HEART RATE
→ AFFECTIVE MAPPING
→ EMOTIONAL ATTRIBUTION
→ FACIAL REWRITING
→ REAL FACE / ATTRIBUTED FACE





03 / EXHIBITION OBSERVATIONS

Recurring participant responses observed during Ars Electronica 2026

1) PERSUADED

Initially rejected the machine-attributed emotion, but some began to reconsider their own feelings after seeing the system's calculation process and confidence level.

2) NEGOTIATING

Some responded, "Maybe I am a little bit like this emotion," negotiating their own perception in relation to the machine's judgment.

3) SEEKING JUDGMENT

Some approached the installation because they were unsure how they felt and wanted the system to "test" their emotion.

4) RESISTING

Some participants rejected the machine as an authority altogether, refusing its emotional attribution even when it might have corresponded to their actual feelings.