The Fantasy Beyond Control

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A (pre)condition of a video dialogue is that it does not talk back. Rather, it exists as a moving stasis; a one-sided discourse; like a trick mirror that absorbs instead of reflects. Perhaps it was nostalgia that led me to search for an interactive video fantasy—a craving for control, a longing for liveness, a drive toward direct action. This total, cumulative, and chronic condition I suffered from is reputed to side effect (or for video artists an occupational hazard) of watching television, a medium that is by nature fragmentary and incomplete distanced and unsatisfying; like platonic sex.

My path to interactive works began covertly not with video, but in performance when in 1971 an alternative identity named Roberta Breitmore was created. She was a breathing simulacrum, a persona, played first by myself, and then by a series of multiple individuals. Roberta existed in both real life and real time and during the decade of her activity engaged in many adventures that typified the culture in which she participated. She had a checking account and a driver’s license and saw a psychiatrist. That she existed was proved by the trackings of her psychiatric reports and credit ratings. Her construction included specific language and gestures as well as a stereotyped cosmetic ambiance. By accumulating artifacts from culture and interacting directly with life, she became a two-way mirror that reflected societal biases experienced through time. Roberta was always seen as a surveillance target. Her decisions were random, only very remotely controlled. Roberta’s manipulated reality, or bending of time, became a model for a private system of interactive performance. Instead of a disk or hardware, her records were stored on photographs and texts that could be viewed without predetermined sequence. This allowed viewers to become voyeurs into Roberta’s history. Their interpretations shifted depending on the perspective and order of the sequences.

Two years after ROBERTA’s transformation, Lorna, the first interactive art video disk was completed. Unlike Roberta, whose adventures took place rectly in the environment, Lorna was a middle-aged agoraphobic, fearful of leaving her tiny apartment. The premise was that the more she stayed home and watched television, the more fearful she became—primarily because she was absorbing the frightening messages of advertising and news broadcasts. Because she never left home, the objects in her room took on a magnificent proportion, they were to her what Mount St. Victoire was to Cezanne. In that disk, every object in her room is numbered and becomes a chapter in her life that opens into branching sequences. Viewers/participants access information...
about her past, future, and personal conflicts via these archetypes. Many images on the screen are of the remote-control device. Luma's use of the remote-control device makes her a metaphorical link to the remote-control device, making her a spectator in the process. The viewer/participant's window to the viewer/participant's world is established through the remote-control device. Luma's decisions are influenced by both external and internal factors. The viewer/participant's decisions are influenced by both external and internal factors.

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that computer systems will eventually reflect the personality and biases of users. Yet these systems only appear to talk back. That they are alive or independent is an illusion. They depend upon the architectural strategy of the gram. However, there is a space between the system and player in which link, fusion, or transplant occurs. Content is codified. Truth and fiction Action becomes icon and relies on movement and plasticity of time—iconics and logomotion. According to Freud, reality may be limited to perception that can be verified through words or visual codes. Therefore perceptions the drive to action that influences, if not controls, real events. Perception therefore become the key to reality.

Electronic media are based on the speed of information. The termina once a sign for closure, has become the matrix for information expansion. introduction of new mass media in the late 1940s created an unparalleled portunity to control mass perceptions. Immediate communication tended crease the importance of media. Beaming pictures into millions of homes night had the effect of speeding up time, of increasing the pace of life and stabilizing traditional communities, replacing them with a distant globu lage. Individuals were left powerless to affect what was being imposed, or than simply turning off their sets and becoming even more alienated. A s
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The Cybernetic Continuum
published with the

Yvon Arnaud

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