void communication:
a method of communication for the future

by

Amanda M Moore

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Signature of Author: ________________________________

Department of Architecture
August 5, 2011

Certified by: ________________________________

Antoni Muntadas
Professor of Art, Culture & Technology
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: ________________________________

Takehiko Nagakura
Professor of Design and Computation
Chairman, Committee for Graduate Students
Communication /ˈkərnəri nɪˈkeɪ fən/
a method of communication for the future

Thesis Supervisor
Antoni Muntadas
Professor of Art, Culture & Technology

Thesis Reader
Ute Meta Bauer
Professor of Art, Culture & Technology
Director of the MIT Program in Art, Culture & Technology
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Abstract

The rapid transmutation of technology enables us to experience the world indirectly much of the time. As it becomes less possible to exist without new modes of technological communication —cellular phones, global positioning systems, portable computers, Youtube™ and Skype™— our relationship to the world around us transforms into a series of impersonal contact-less transactions. These technologies simultaneously augment and conceal an already present void in communication, which prevents individuals from achieving mutual understanding. This void in communication originates from and is perpetuated by the complex and varied meaning of signs and symbols, with which we use to convey and interpret information. How can we, as individuals, negotiate these technologies, enabling them to fulfill their function of resolving this ever-present void in communication?

Rather than persisting in futile attempts to circumnavigate this void in communication through these technologies, I propose a repurposing of these devices, enabling communication directly with the problem, the void. Addressing the void directly will facilitate successful communication.

I argue for a new method, “Communication” or Void Communication as a means to achieve mutual understanding.

I aim to demonstrate the need for the Communication method by first acknowledging and identifying this void. I will support the method based on primary examples of telecommunications experiments, which, although carried out for various different purposes, suggest that Communication is possible. I will provide evidence of my own experiments in Communication proving that this method is capable of achieving its desired result. I will conclude with a discussion of potential future applications of Communication.

Thesis Supervisor: Antoni Muntadas
Title: Professor of Art, Culture & Technology
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for steffen,
the one who brings disorder,
disappearing and reappearing
in the oblivion of our metamorphosis.
Communication

/ˈvɔɪd keˈmyu ˈnɪkər ˈfən/
a method of communication for the future

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"I aspire to the day when the misunderstanding will so thrill me at coming from you that I will be pathic to the point of no longer insisting on it"

Communication /ˈkɒməˌkjuːneɪʃən/  
a method of communication for the future
I. Introduction

*Communication: the successful transmission and reception of information.*

A scenario. You are walking down a street one afternoon, heading somewhere or nowhere in particular, just strolling along the sidewalk as cars pass by. Suddenly, one of the cars sounds its horn rapidly several times as it drives past you. So immersed in your own experience, it takes you a moment to become aware of what just happened. In this time the car has passed you and is now so far ahead that you can’t make out the likeness of its passengers and you do not recognize the car. Based upon past experience—personal, a story described by a friend, a scene you saw on television or in the movies—you interpret and respond to this event. Perhaps you are offended that a complete stranger would signal you by such tactless means; alternatively, you may be flattered that someone has noticed your appearance, or you feel frightened by the recklessness of the driver and continue on your walk now more conscious of your surroundings. You might also become angry and yell after the driver to calm down. Through the immediate perception and recognition of such a simple event, you may experience a wide array of emotions and responses. Yet the driver was attempting to communicate a single message, which you will likely never know. It is possible that the driver meant to greet another pedestrian or another driver on the road. It could be that the driver intended to signal another car to alert them of his presence. The sounding of the horn might have been a ritual—the driver may make this gesture each time he passes that spot. Maybe the driver was, in fact, someone you know. Might the signal have been simply a meaningless horn honk of joy?
Whatever the reason, the driver transmits a signal and you, whether or not it was meant for you, receive that signal and interpret it through your own lens. Your own perceived experience consistently varies from that of the other—this is the perpetual difference between intention and interpretation. Had the driver in the passing car been an acquaintance and you had been able to recognize them and wave hello, there is still a distinction between the one who transmits and the other who receives a communication.

Void in communication: the space in which information, once transmitted, is distorted through the process of reception, or perception and interpretation.

Another example of a common interpersonal communication should further clarify this difference. A friend visits you. While sitting together in your home, your friend remarks, “It’s cold.” You receive this information and understand your friend’s statement to refer to the atmosphere of the room—not the weather outside or the beverage that you’ve served. You interpret your friend’s statement in reference to the room, so you busy yourself with closing the windows. Meanwhile, your friend removes the sweater they have been wearing. You realize that you’ve misunderstood and ask your friend if they are comfortable. Your friend replies, “Yes, I am fine,” but you are still confused and doubtful. And so on.

How can two individuals have such different experiences of one moment? Why is it so difficult to achieve mutual understanding? If the intended meaning of the one who
transmits a message is so wholly different from that which is received/perceived by the other, how successful are we in our communications? What happens to the original meaning and where does this new/other meaning emerge? What is this space between individuals where meaning is lost, where meaning becomes different, and is found again? What is this void space between us in which meaning becomes ambiguous? What is this void from whence perception comes?

*Technologies—language, apparatus—can be defined as tools, structures, & processes developed by humans for the purposes of improvement.*

Let us envision another scenario, in which this ever-present void in communication is not only apparent, it is magnified through the use of communications technology.

You receive a letter. No, you receive a telephone call—actually a video call. So, you receive this video call from a friend with whom you haven’t spoken in a while. You exchange routine pleasantries and catch up on everyday affairs. As you speak, you begin to notice your voice reverberating from your friend’s speakers on the other end of the connection. They must have the volume up too loud because your voice is then picked up from the microphone on the other end and sent back to you. You begin to notice the distance between yourself and the other person as you listen to the delayed echo of your every word as it’s feeding back to you through this technological circuit. When you speak, your own voice is the first to respond. You can’t help but listen to yourself as your focus shifts from the contents of the communication with the other to...
the projection of yourself, which is formed by the technology that divides you. Filling the
screen through which you are visually communicating is a flattened, 2-dimensional
image of your friend with a much smaller representation of the image you are projecting
to your friend floating in the lower left hand corner. This image of yourself contributes to
the distraction you've already been experiencing through the reverberation of your
voice. Through these echoes, reflections, impressions, you become so conscious of
yourself within this interaction, that you momentarily forget that your friend is a real
person, actually trying to communicate information to you. There is a long pause, your
friend awaits your response to a comment or question. All of a sudden, you realize that
you weren't there at all.

Meaning becomes convoluted in our interpersonal communications as we strive to
achieve mutual understanding. There is a lapse, a void between the transmission and
reception of a communication. The implementation of technology creates an additional
barrier, between subjects attempting to express and understand ideas and information.
Technology fragments modes of potential reception, as it is the first recipient of our
transmission, one which filters and interprets information, before retransmitting
projections of the original message to the intended recipient. Technology exponentially
expands the potential interpretations of a communication by providing additional
perceptual information to the human recipient. An additional recipient and transmitter,
communications technology ensures the estrangement of two subjects in an attempt to
understand each other. The use of technology exacerbates the ever-present void in
communication.
Communication /kəˈmjuːnɪkeɪʃən/ a method of communication for the future
II. Methodology

Telecommunications technologies are inherently paradoxical in that they claim to bring individuals from disparate locations close together, regardless of time and distance, while functioning to distort and often obliterate essential audiovisual cues\(^1\) through their mediation. Accustomed usage of telecommunications technologies foster only superficial connections. How can we, as individuals negotiate these technologies, repurpose them, and reorient ourselves in relation to them, enabling them to fulfill their function, by resolving this ever-present void in communication.

In the following paper the concepts of *communication*, *void*, and *technology* will be explored in relation to each other. I will identify the problematic connection between these entities at the present moment, tracing it’s trajectory from various potential points of origin, present research attempts to overcome the obstacles with which this relation confronts us, resulting in a method for the future.

I will begin by defining the concepts, void, technology, and communication, through their cultural significance and relationship to every day life. These concepts will be discussed in an expanded sense, seeming to suggest infinite or interpretation.

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\(^1\) Audiovisual cues are a necessary part of basic communication, in that they aid us in the contextualization of transmitted messages during the phase of interpretation. If an individual has a smile on their face or laughs after saying something, we interpret the message quite differently than if they state it with no expression at all. This poses a problem particularly with video chat systems, as delays in video reception are common, with voice only technologies, like cell phones, we must do without facial expressions and rely on the intonation of the other’s voice, while with email, we must altogether construct the context from which communication emerges.
However, it is important to note that it is this ambiguity in the communication of an idea that lies at the core of this issue. In this section, it is the futility of communication caused by the inherent instability of technologies, such as language that is central. I will clarify the lack of mutual understanding in all forms of communication—dialogue, correspondence, body language, telepathy—distinguishing between those, which are mediated by telecommunications technologies and those, which are not. In this section, I will identify and expand the void that exists between ourselves and those with whom we attempt to communicate.

Case studies bring the central issues, communication, void, and technology, into focus under the auspices of telematic or telecommunications art. These historical examples will function to elucidate this void in communication in connection with telecommunications technology. The cultural climate surrounding the emergence of these projects in the late 1960's through early 1980's will be contextualized by critical theory of the period as well as first person accounts by some of the artists who were involved in these works. These artists were attempting to utilize art and technology as mediums of communication to counteract the void in communication identified in the first section. These projects and experiments revealed hidden aspects of control, access, and the mediation of communication, at times brought audiences close to the kind of mutual understanding desired in everyday interpersonal communications, and predicted future changes in our social world. Although these projects were successful to a degree, in subverting the systems of communication control, which interfere with attempts at personal interaction through technologies, ultimately, these projects serve
as templates for today's modes of communication, in which technology functions as an additional mediation, a void, which increases distortion. In this section I will reveal this paradox, demonstrating how ambitions to create new systems of communication through the utilization of telecommunications technology can result in an augmentation of that which it desires to circumvent.

In the third and final section, I will present four case studies, chronicling my own artistic research. These experimental performances employ various technologies and strategies as tools to facilitate communications amongst the individual and the void. These investigations support my argument, that the most successful communications are experienced when we address the void directly, as this approach enables us to interact universally. Void communication is a means to achieve mutual understanding. Void communication is the future.
Communication /ˈkɒmjuːnɪkeɪʃən/ a method of communication for the future
1. The Void in Communication

**void** an ambiguous, inexplicable entity. A void contains everything and nothing.

**Communication**: the successful transmission and reception of information.

**Technologies**—language, apparatus—can be defined as tools, structures, & processes developed by humans for the purposes of improvement.

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figure 1

figure 2

figure 3, path of wisdom, the Kabbalah.
1.1 The State of Communication Today

The rapid transmutation of technology enables us to experience the world indirectly much of the time. Today, as it becomes less possible to exist without new modes of technological communication—cellular phones, global positioning systems, portable computers, Youtube™ and Skype™—through them we are able to transcend the limits of our physical beings experiencing virtual co-existence in multiple geographic locations at once. These advances in technology provide an expanded connectedness to disparate people and places, reflective of the interpersonal connections we sense through interactions in our immediate geographical proximity. Through the implementation and use of new means of technological communication, our collective self-image has become illusory and inflated as we imagine ourselves to be more than we are through these projections. Current communications technologies connect us to each other, enabling us to transmit and receive messages. The connectedness we experience through the use of these technologies exacerbates an issue of human interaction, which exists on a more fundamental level. Our continued use of these tools accentuates the predominant failure of human beings to successfully engage in even the most basic communication. The attempts of one individual to convey a thought, feeling, intention to another will inevitably result in failure through (mis)interpretation. Both the sender and recipient of a communication have developed their own associations with words and language through each subject’s own individual life experience. Meaning can both originate from and lead to completely dissimilar, even conflicting understandings. We cannot succeed in the accurate transmission and
reception of communication amongst each other, yet we perceive that we are
communicating. The communications we perceive ourselves to be engaging in are a
result of our own prior experience. Communication intended or perceived is defined by
interpretation from the void of our subconscious.\(^2\) This void lies between ourselves, and
the others with whom we attempt to communicate. Today, the implementation of new
devices for technological communication serves to exacerbate this void, as these
technologies become additional mediators, interferences, which emphasize the futility of
communication amongst each other. Successful communication relies on accuracy.
The current state of communication through technology is distortion.

Communication surfaced as a concept in the 1960’s through the works and writing of
Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller and shortly thereafter exploded as a popular

\(^2\) The process of communication, as I structure it, can be broken down into three parts; 1.
Transmission; 2. Perception/Reception; and 3. Interpretation. Stage 2., is similar to the process
of recollection described by Henri Bergson and developed by Gilles Deleuze in the following
excerpt from his book entitled, Bergsonism (1988):
"When we look for a recollection that escapes us, "We become conscious of an act sui generis
by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in
general, then in a certain region of the past - a work of adjustment, something like the focusing
of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it
by adopting the appropriate attitude. Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud;
from the virtual state it passes into the actual..."
Deleuze continues on to compare Bergson’s position on the function of language, which brings
us closer to communication, the topic at hand,
"For Bergson analyzes language in the same way as memory. The way in which we understand
what is said to us is identical to the way in which we find a recollection. Far from recomposing
sense on the basis of sounds that are heard and associated images, we place ourselves at
once in the element of sense, then in a region of this element. A true leap into Being. It is only
then that sense is actualized in the psychologically perceived sounds, and in the images that
are psychologically associated with sounds. Here there is a kind of transcendence of sense and
an ontological foundation of language that, as we shall see, are particularly important in the
work of an author whose critique is considered to have been overly hasty." Deleuze, Gilles,
pg 57.
theme to be adopted by artists and filmmakers such as Michelangelo Antonioni and Jean Luc Godard. These works brought us into an awareness of the power of communication—how communication can function to distribute news and information to which we might otherwise be denied access, and conversely how this power of communication can be abused. With his essay, “The Medium is the Message,” McLuhan caused us to reconsider the relationship between communication and media—that all mediums (except the electric light) simultaneously convey additional media as part of their content. McLuhan refers to this additional content as an invisible enemy, as it is often overlooked and is precisely what makes a medium so powerful. Serving as a catalyst, which brought issues of media control to the consciousness of the public, this was coupled by the spread of a fairly new telecommunications technology—television. This combination of elements inspired an atmosphere which motivated many artists, as producers and reflectors of culture, to react through their works—inserting themselves into media, such as radio and television and to simultaneously develop these subversive practices, experimenting with other telecommunications media such as video. New technologies and forms of communications developed as artists collapsed their works into these systems—some works (to be discussed in chapter 2) become almost indistinguishable from the medium which they critique—“Black Gate, Cologne, 1968” and “Selling The Future”—while others, such as “TV to TV,” by

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3 “Our conventional response to all media, namely that is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the “content” of a medium is the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind. The effect of the medium is made strong and intense because it is given another medium as “content,” McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” McLuhan, Marshall, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994) pg. 207.

4 Piene, Otto and Tambellini, Aldo (1968).

5 Muntadas, Antoni (1982).
Communicationsphere, subvert McLuhan’s notion that the medium is the message and facilitate situations in which the message becomes the medium. These works cancel out known concepts of communication as they insist that we reflect on our own reception of void communications.

This void in communication is perpetuated by the complex and varied meaning of the signs and symbols, with which we use to convey and interpret information. These various symbols—written words, gestures, images, sounds—are placed in relation to each other, then transmitted from one individual and received and interpreted by another. Both the intended meaning of the transmitter and the perceived interpretation of the recipient are subjective. According to Antoni Muntadas (1979):

> Every image has a different reading to every person and every image has an infinite number of interpretations. Each meaning attributed to an image is a result of each person’s individual collected influence, knowledge and personality.

Each of us comes to know these signs and symbols of which our language, our communications are constructed, through individual experience which forms not only our understanding of each individual component, but also our interpretation of the related parts.

The potential of one subject to communicate a single idea to another is destined to failure by misperception—either the misinterpretation of the recipient or the assumption

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of mutual understanding by the transmitter. All languages, be they spoken, written text, visual image-based, physical, or intuitive non-verbal, fall prey to semiotics. Every word, image, linguistic element signifies a multiplicity of additional signs or symbols, each with their own multiplicity of referents, and these their own multiplicities, ad infinitum. The particular “chain of significance,” or series of signs or symbols a subject may choose in order to construct the meaning of even one linguistic element relates to its own memory, its own past relationship with that sign. The memories a subject associates with signs, in order to attempt an interpretation of communication, are not consciously selected. The elements of past experience, which individuals exploit for the purpose of understanding are not perceived through communication with the other, rather, these perceptions occur through communication with a void.

Figure 4: A visual representation of En-Sof, the Kabbalah.

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1.2 Void Space

What would be my spontaneous attitude toward the universe? It's a very dark one. The first thesis would have been a kind of total vanity: there is nothing, basically. I mean it quite literally, like... ultimately... there are just some fragments, some vanishing things. If you look at the universe, it's one big void. But then: how do things emerge? Here I feel a kind of spontaneous affinity with quantum physics, where... you know... the idea there is that the universe is a void, but a kind of positively charged void, and then particular things appear when the balance of the void is disturbed." Žižek!

I could employ a number of words, each complete with a set of infinite potential interpretations to identify the space, which I have named void. Words, signs through context and relation could ultimately only hint at a common or general understanding. The term "void" can be found attached to a variety of associations, which may or may not be consistent with the application of the void concept within the scope of this argument. The notion that one, simple, monosyllabic word can be imbued with such diverse meaning can be advantageous. The connotations of void can be identified and

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9 Žižek, Slavoj, Žižek!, dir. by Astra Taylor, 71 mins, USA, 2005.
brought into focus, even voided as a means of simplification of the hypothetical void that is to be referenced within this text. I choose void because of its emptiness. Void represents a space of nothing that is filled with nothing. But nothing is always something, a concept with a name at least. And as this “nothing” becomes the subject of our consciousness, it ceases to be nothing. When we focus our awareness on a thing, we bring energy to it, we give it power, life. Once, perceived and identified and titled, “nothing” is given an existence. Void can also be defined by its functionality. To void a thing is to reduce that subject or object to nothing. Void is always present when we engage consciously with an entity. We participate in activities and interactions, yet part of us is always absent, invariably void. Suggesting a gap, void can imply an interstice, or conversely an overlap between two entities. Void is not a structure in and of itself. Void is an immeasurable force that operates around and through all matter.

Quantum physics describes the current state of our universe as a positively charged void. According to the theory of cosmological singularity, distinct entities in the universe were pulled together by gravitational forces and compressed into a single point, a black hole, a void, at zero entropy. The second law of thermodynamics states that entropy, chaos, disorder will always increase, therefore we can imagine that for a moment, there really was nothing. An instant later, “the big bang,” the birth of the universe and catalyst for eternal entropy, a trajectory which will inevitably move toward eventual cosmic heat death.

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Void is associated with the inexplicable, with “para” phenomena. “Para” originating from Greek, meaning “beyond” is outside of what is known. In parapsychology, apparitions, energies, telepathic messages materialize from the void, from beyond. Void is an ever-present energy, which is “operating everywhere at every moment, but with too little intensity to be noticed.” Void escapes rational interpretation. Undefined, void is a space in which individuals may encounter unconscious perceptions detached from logical systems. Dreams, ideas, recollections, revelations thrive in the void. Void is inexplicable and universal.

The void is infinitely ambiguous. Human conceptions of time and space do not exist in the void. All that we know and that of which we are unaware has a connection to the void. Perceptions emerge and ideas penetrate the void. The subconscious mind interacts freely with the void. From the void, we perceive sounds and images with no known origin, thoughts occur, detached from chains of logic.

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11 “Suppose, let us say, that this phenomenon were due to the action of the consciousness of one of the two persons on the consciousness of the other, that therefore some minds were able to communicate without any visible intermedium, that there were what you call “telepathy.” If telepathy be a real fact, it is a fact capable of being repeated indefinitely. I go further: if telepathy be real, it is possible that it is operating at every moment and everywhere, but with too little intensity to be noticed, or else in such a way that a cerebral mechanism stops the effect, for our benefit, at the very moment at which it is about to clear the threshold of consciousness. We produce electricity at every moment, the atmosphere is continually electrified, we move among magnetic currents, yet for thousands of years millions of human beings have lived who never suspected the existence of electricity. We might very well have gone on without perceiving it; and it may be that this is now our case with telepathy. But what is indisputable in any case is that if telepathy be real, it is natural, and that whenever the day comes that we know its conditions, it will no more be necessary to wait for a “phantasm of the living” in order to obtain a telepathic effect than it is necessary for us now, if we wish to see an electric spark, to wait until it pleases the heavens to make it appear during a thunderstorm” Bergson, Henri, *Mind Energy*, (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1920), pgs. 79-80.
Since ancient times, void has possessed religious and cultural significance. According to the Genesis creation narrative, the earth, which God created along with everything else, was, at first, "without form, and void." Similarly, the ancient Greeks refer to a formless void state, termed ‘chaos,’ which preceded the cosmos. Everything emerges from void. Not unlike energy, void is present in all substance and matter. According to Buddhist teaching, the practice of meditation can enable an individual to communicate with void inside its own being, through which universal interface is possible. Buddha had no physical representation, was invisible before Alexander the Great. Visions, images appear in void meditation. The Kabbalah, the book of ancient Jewish mysticism, describes an entity akin to the void called, *En-Sof*. Likened to infinity, the *En-Sof* (fig. 4) is incomprehensible, as explained by Poncé (1973):

> The *En-Sof* comes before the creator God. Even that does not explain Him. He cannot be localized in space or time. The only thing that may be said with some certainty is that the *En-Sof* was not the cause of this world. He stands even beyond the impetus of cause, desire. He is without desire, without non-desire. He is Himself. He is *En-Sof*, a plenum of emptiness.

Religious and cultural artifacts can be viewed as archetypes of void— we can see the void depicted in and around representations of deities. God/Gods have traditionally functioned to represent/explain the inexplicable. As I have identified void in terms of the inexplicable, we may be able to trace awareness/ consciousness of void to the birth of civilization.

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12 Genesis 1:2, *King James Bible*, 1611.
In Kabalistic practice, the En-Sof is often depicted as three or more concentric circles (see figure 4). These can be read also as instructions for achieving some higher position, for getting closer to God. If we look at representations of deities from other ancient cultures (see figure 7), we also find our higher beings, our representations for the inexplicable, for the void, encircled as well. If the deity represents, or is a stand-in for that which human minds are unable to explain, and if we have defined the void to be also inexplicable, then we will go further and suggest that the void had a presence through the religious practices of early civilizations in the manifestation of the deity, that God and deities in general represent void.

14 Note the visual similarity between representations of En-Sof and fig. 5, which represents the void in communication and fig. 6, "the no no nothing," which is also intended to be used as a tool for achieving zero existence.
In the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche writes about the historicization or mythologizing of religions, their rituals, idols, and the worldview of which these are constellations, which occurs through the process of dying out and giving way to new systems of belief:

For it is the lot of every myth gradually to creep into the crevice of an assumed historical reality and to become analyzed as a unique fact in answer to the historical demands of some later time or other. The Greek were already fully on their way to labeling cleverly and arbitrarily the completely mythical dreams of their youth as historical, pragmatic, and youthful history. For this is the way religions tend to die out, namely, when the mythical pre-conditions of a religion, under the strong, rational eyes of an orthodox dogmatism become classified as a closed totality of historical events and people begin anxiously to defend the credibility of their myths, but to resist the naturally continuing life and growth of those myths, and when the feeling for the myth dies out and in its place the claim to put religion on a historical footing steps onto the scene.\(^{15}\)

As discussed above, most pre-modern religions address a void concept, either as an entity or a state of being, yet this notion seems to have escaped or transcended the kind of regeneration that the other fundamental elements of early religions underwent as they evolved into modern practices\(^{16}\). The significance of void may go unrecognized in contemporary cultural or religious practices, but it has not disappeared.

What would be a contemporary cultural representation of void? Have we forgotten how to negotiate the ever-present unknown, or is the unknown somehow inconsistent with the post-enlightenment worldview? The stratification of culture and religious beliefs, as a result of globalization, renders a singular representation of void impossible. What forms of belief are have replaced religion as the center of society? If we are to consider

\(^{16}\) Note: the void remains central to Buddhist principles.
religious objects, representations of idols as mediums with which we humans have attempted to communicate with God/Gods or inexplicable entities, where can we locate these void symbols, these archetypes in relation to communication today? Who, or what are we communicating with? If we consider our everyday communications, the technologies which through means and processes inexplicable to most of us, then the void begins to materialize between us. Coincidentally, many of the logos used to advertise and promote these technological devices and applications, such as AT&T, Dell Computers, Safari, and Firefox logos, have similar characteristics to religious archetypical representations of void. Let us shift our perspective and consider our current tools and technologies for communication in relation to void space.
1.3 Complicating networks, catalyzing feedback

![Diagram of communication structure](image)

fig. 8, structure of communication through technology, Amanda Moore, 2011.

The transformation of communications technology has expanded our potential today to connect with others and share information almost infinitely. Today, technological devices enable us to interface with each other virtually anytime, anywhere. Even in the most basic interpersonal communications, there exists a gap, a void in mutual understanding. This divide is often overlooked as we want so badly to believe we are understood/understanding that our minds compensate, our minds perceive what may or may not be there, sometimes we perceive things that are not there at all. These perceptions enable us to believe in the success of our communications and move forward. We experience communication as a synthesis of transmitted signs and cues received and interpreted through emergent virtual\(^{17}\) perceptions of each individual's

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\(^{17}\) “Real is a distinction drawn between actual and virtual. Actual is the realm of things that exist independently of our understanding of them, outside of our ways of thinking about them and our perceptions. Virtual is the realm of transcendental conditions for the actual, things we must presuppose for actual things to exist at all. The real is the virtual and the actual.” Deleuze, Gilles, “The Actual & The Virtual,” *Dialogues II*, (London: Continuum, 2002), pg. 5.
subconscious perceptual void. If the success of communication is reliant upon these virtual perceptions, which come from a space other than that of the individuals attempting to communicate, then when we communicate, we are in actuality interacting more with this void space, than with each other, however the content obscures the character\textsuperscript{18}. The use and implementation of additional technological tools for interaction with one another deepen this fundamental divide between transmission and reception of human interpersonal communication.

Today, it is common for individuals to utilize technological tools as a means for communication, or the successful transmission and reception of information, amongst each other. Technologies are created by and for humans, often to replicate or mirror human functions. Look closely enough and you will notice a likeness between humans & the technologies they produce. The technologies employed for communication as well as all other technologies can be defined by their functions. Almost all technologies require human participation in order to fulfill these functions– we must activate our senses and engage with technologies, we must turn on our computers and touch them, we must watch television, and listen to radio. Human interaction is integral to the performance of a technology’s function, therefore we, the human participants are essentially communicating with and becoming part of these technologies as we engage with them.\textsuperscript{19} When we use technology to communicate with each other, the technology–

\textsuperscript{18} "Indeed it is only too typical that the, "content" of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium," McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man}, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), pg. 108.
\textsuperscript{19} Technological singularity, the notion that humans and machines are advancing toward a state of becoming indiscernible. things that are essentially different in kind come together to become
the telephone receiver or the computer keyboard, separates us, forcing us to communicate indirectly with each other. We speak, type, express messages directly to technological tools, which are eventually received and filtered through identical technologies through which our human counterparts interpret. Through the mediation of our communication through technological devices, we are ultimately communicating (transmitting and receiving messages) more with machines than the humans on the other end of these systems.

One such technology, which has exacerbated this false sense of communication is television. Televisual space is void space. Television (tele ‘far’ vision ‘sight’) literally permits its viewers to “see far,” transporting the consciousness of its subjects beyond the limits of their immediate physical surroundings. While its audiences make visual journeys to the sites of daily disasters on the evening news and visit the homes of friends on their favorite sitcom or soap opera, these individuals are also communicating. Television functions a substitution for the real world, as a medium for the transmission

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one. Singularity is the state, fact, or quality of being singular; a point at which a function takes on limitless or infinite value.

20 “Televisual,” often referred to as “television media,” alludes to the interpretation of any subject from the perspective through which television is viewed.

4a Technologies through which audiences have traditionally received television, have been evolving and expanding since television became available to the public. Current television “programming” can be viewed via the internet on network and pay-per-view web sites, on user generated content sites, via DVD, as well as through traditional black box cable options. With the mutation of television formats and technological means through which programming can be viewed, is it possible to distinguish television from other media? Television, like all technologies, can be defined by its function. Furthermore, television, despite its perpetually transforming technology, can be identified through audience perception and interaction.

31 Television, like the electric light McLuhan writes about in “The Medium is the Message,” escapes attention as a communication medium because it has no content, rather its content has no substance or exists as a reflection of the everyday or it is so engaging that we do not
of experience, rather than reality.\textsuperscript{22} The repurposing of communication, the staging of communication and meaning makes possible the transcendence of sense.

Communicating in and through void. We become the medium and the real. Television is a metaphor for communication within its own void, which can be accessed through human collaboration with technology. A subject enters the televisual void through engagement with its (television’s) technology. Again, technologies are defined by their functions and fulfilling the function of a technology\textsuperscript{23} necessitates human participation. This human/machine interaction is a kind of collaboration, which serves to fulfill the function, by which a particular technology is defined. This collaboration produces a third

\underline{recognize it for what it truly is– a black box which perverts anything and everything close to realness.}

\textsuperscript{22} As Jean Baudrillard explains (1981):

"Information devours its own content. It devours communication and the social. And for two reasons:
1. Rather than creating communication, it exhausts itself in the act of staging communication. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the act of staging meaning. A gigantic process of simulation that is very familiar. The non-directive interview, speech, listeners who call in, participation at every level, blackmail through speech: "You are concerned, you are the event, etc." More and more information is invaded by this kind of phantom content, this homeopathic grafting, this awakening dream of communication. A circular arrangement through which one stages the desire of the audience, the antitheater of communication, which, as one knows, is never anything but the recycling of the negative of the traditional institution, the integrated circuit of the negative. Immense energies are deployed to hold this simulacrum at bay, to avoid the brutal desimulation that would confront us in the face of the obvious reality of a radical loss of meaning...The hyperreality of communication and of meaning. More real than real, that is how real is abolished...
2. Behind this exacerbated mise-en-scène of communication, the mass media, the pressure of information pursues and irresistible destructuration of he social.
Thus information dissolves meaning and dissolves the social in a sort of nebulous state dedicated not to a surplus of innovation, but, on the contrary, to total entropy.
Thus the media are producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite, the implosion of the social in the masses. And this is only the macroscopic extension of the implosion of meaning at the microscopic level of the sign. This implosion should be analyzed according to McLuhan’s formula, the medium is the message, the consequences of which have yet to be exhausted." Baudrillard, Jean, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media," \textit{Simulacra and Simulation}, 1981, pgs 80-81.

\textsuperscript{23} Technologies can be identified as tools created by a species, which, when put to use by a being, serve to advance the functionality of said species. Technology is also inextricably linked to progress.
entity, a void. This manifestation of the void is quite similar to the void in human communications in that it lies between transmission and reception. Based on the level of interactivity with the televisual media, transmission and reception can operate in one direction, from the medium to the human, the medium as the transmitter and the human as the recipient, it can be a back and forth in which both the technology also receives, interprets and responds to signals transmitted by the human or the technology can function as intermediary between two other entities.24

How do we negotiate this void, this gap? Is it possible to overcome it? And if so, through which media—if televisual media exacerbates a problem inherent in basic human communication, is it possible to use technologies to overcome this void? And if so, who shall reimagine, repurpose these technologies? Through the identification of

24 Nora and Minc, in their letter to the French President of 1981, discuss critical changes in communication systems as a result of developing telecommunications technologies: “Up until now, television networks and telecommunications networks were clearly differentiated. Designed like a star, with a single point of emission, the television network is unidirectional, broadcasting from the center toward all of the receivers. On the other hand, telecommunications networks handle the traffic between two points, a transmitter and a receiver; furthermore, the communication can occur in each direction, while the television receiver is condemned to remain totally voiceless... The convergence of means of communication is based on the disappearing difference between one-directional and two-directional networks, on the development of data networks and on the increasing digitalization of signals. Radio-television networks no longer function exclusively in one direction. They give the receiver some capacity to ‘send’ to the transmitter, certainly more restricted than in the direction of broadcast but nonetheless sufficient for establishing a dialogue: this response potential may be the result of a coupling with the telephone line. Similarly, the installation of communal television antennae, provided adequate equipment is added, makes it possible to join transmission on a more modest scale with reception. This unequal dialogue is not a handicap for teleprocessing, in which transmission is always asymmetrical: one of the two interlocutors briefly orders a processing operation, which the other carries out and whose results, however enormous, reach him on the large output line. Transmissions such as these, therefore, can find a place in the ‘troughs’ of a television network, as they have heretofore done on telephone lines alone.” Nora, Simon and Minc, Alain, The Computerization of Society, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), pg 19-21.
technology as a metaphor for the void in communication and art as a technology for communication, technologies can be implemented into artworks and utilized to address issues of communication. The intention an artist directs through the creation of a particular work and the reception and interpretation of meaning through said work by another subject will never be analogous. Communication is void. Artists can utilize these technologies, subvert their functions to convey and communicate self reflexively about communication. 

"The artist will have to get to this medium and begin to explore all possibilities," Tambellini urges. "After all, television is actually an image made of light which travels through time and space. I'm interested in getting to that particular point to actually show that light is a constantly moving and ever-changing form, that light is energy, and the same energy, which moves through us is the energy which moves through the universe. It is the same energy we have discovered in the atom. When creative people begin to get involved with this idea of energy rather than making objects for someone, they will be exploring possibilities for everybody, art will be an exploration for all of mankind."

In this next section we will look at examples of artists and artworks who subvert the established functions of media & technology and who utilize telecommunications technology to engage directly with the void in communication.

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Communication /ˌkəˈmiʃən/ a method of communication for the future
2. Telecommunications and the Future: The Paradox

“...It’s a mistake to divorce art from communication. I know of no durable art whatever which hasn’t communicated, and which doesn’t still communicate—and quite explicitly. It doesn’t have to communicate with everybody, of course, but art is a dialogue, not a monologue. The artist says something, and the viewer reacts. Without the reaction, (there) isn’t any art.”

(John Burchard, 1966)

Artist’s Communication of Void

Art is, by nature, a means of communication. Throughout history, humans have perceived visual images, interpreting them in relation to lived experience. As technology continues to advance, we have seen the use and value of modes of representation consistently transform along with it. Pictorial languages, such as cave painting and hieroglyphics were first used as tools for communication, slowly developing as symbols became imbued with increasing meaning. As ancient and indigenous cultures vanished into obsolescence, evolving through assimilation or hybridization, visual language developed simultaneously. Pictorial language continued to transform through the Byzantine, Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque periods, its potential expanding exponentially with the advent of photography. The ease of reproduction through photographic techniques developed by Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre and William Fox Talbot made possible rapid experimentation of visual language. George Eastman’s ensuing invention of roll film, easy to use cameras and off-site processing laboratories paralleled by the emergence of motion pictures sparked a proliferation of visual language's potential.

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27 In 1966, shortly before the Center for Advanced Visual Studies ("CAVS") was founded by Gyorgy Kepes (1968) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ("MIT"), John Burchard, then retired Dean of Humanities at MIT, published an essay in ASPEN magazine, entitled, “It’s not what you put in, it’s what you leave out.”

images, a catalyst for a shift in the value system of representational art. Traditional media, such as drawing and painting, were no longer required to visually document events and encapsulate moments in time. As technological tools for visual communication continue to advance, allowing the rapid increase of visual information and images, which mediate our reality to penetrate both public and private spheres of our day-to-day lives, artists, the early mediators of visual communication, have naturally begun to reflect and interrogate the function of these media in our culture.

The exploitation of telecommunications technologies to promote Western Capitalist ideologies surfaced in the public consciousness in the late 1960's. Media functioned to suppress contradictory or oppositional voices and opinions, in the selective dissemination of public information, and through the monitoring of information exchange. Marshall McLuhan’s seminal essay, “The Medium is the Message,” brought issues of control through technological media to the consciousness of the public. An awareness of this emergent form of social control, motivated some artists to subvert these structures, inserting themselves into the media through the use of telecommunications technologies (television, radio, internet). At MIT, where many telecommunications technologies were developed and advanced, artists from the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (“CAVS”) were integrating media and technology into their works establishing and enabling alternative methods of communication. From 1968 to 1983 CAVS artists developed the medium of telecommunications through art.

28 McLuhan, “In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that in operational and practical fact, “the medium is the message,” McLuhan, Marshall, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).
These works not only revealed hidden aspects of communication, they succeeded in identifying, sometimes overcoming the void in communication, while predicting future usages of such technologies and foreshadowing changes in human social interaction, through which the inherent futility of communication became reestablished as void.

Our technological transparency makes it obvious that communications devices such as cellular phones, laptops, email, Skype™, internet, blogs, and Youtube™ have become a necessity for maintaining our sense of connectedness. The following telecommunications works not only imagined the technological tools of today and the means, these works foreshadowed the impact that new modes of communication would have on human interaction and communication. Through their work in telecommunications, these artists envisioned the future, predicting that these technological systems would transform our social world. In this section I will reveal this paradox, demonstrating how ambitions to create new systems of communication through the utilization of telecommunications technology can result in an augmentation of that which it desires to circumvent.
2.1 Medium Communicates Void

"Black Spiral," a modified TV sculpture, Tambellini

"To me it was nature as we will see it in the future, in circular or spiral form," Tambellini.29

Figure 10: Black Spiral, Tambellini, 1968

In 1968, prior to his fellowship at MIT CAVS, Aldo Tambellini, along with engineers Tracy Kinsel and Hank Reinhold, designed, Black Spiral, a television sculpture modified so that transmission and reception were self contained in an internal feedback loop. The object would broadcast signals to itself, resulting in a spiral image. Interference in communication, distorting the signal, would produce short phosphorescent explosions. If we consider technologies as contemporary metaphors or producers of void in communication, we can view this work as an example of void communication, making visible, the invisible void, which is present when we engage with technologies. Black Spiral brings us into an awareness of the unknown.

Tambellini, former CAVS fellow writes about Black Spiral, a functional television
culpture which we will examine as the initial metaphor for void communication. If we
continue to view communications technologies, televisual technologies as void, black
spiral is a self-contained televisual void. A closed circuit, a feedback loop, black spiral
employed the functions of transmission, reception, processing/interpretation to
communicate with its own void.

"Television is not an object," Tambellini said. "It's a live communication media. Black
Spiral brings you live information. One day we will look at nature as the floating
astronauts do in a spiral or circular form where no up or down or gravity exists." The
sound was transformed by modulating normal audio signals from the television station
with a random audio signal.
2.2 the Origin of Telecommunications Collaboration

"Black Gate Cologne, 1968" Piene & Tambellini


The new emerging telecommunications systems will restructure our social life, produce social change, and allow new creative concepts to evolve.\(^\text{30}\)

As discussed in chapter 1, communications technologies have today become an integral part of our daily lives, as a means for maintaining a necessary sense of connectedness. The works I will discuss in the following section are prescient because they not only intervened in already existing media, repurposing and at times simultaneously imagining technologies of the future, these artists also foreshadowed the impact that future modes of communication would have on human interaction, transforming our social world.

The first of these works I will examine is, "Black Gate, Cologne, 1968," the first televised artwork broadcast in Europe, developed by CAVS fellows\(^\text{31}\) Otto Piene and Aldo Tambellini, Aldo, "4.897 Special Problems in Environmental Art: Interactive Visual Telecommunication," syllabus for a course in interactive visual tele-communication, 1980, MIT CAVS.

\(^{30}\) The artists, Piene and Tambellini, produced "Black Gate, Cologne, 1968," prior to their fellowships at MIT CAVS.
Tambellini. "Black Gate, Cologne, 1968," emerged from a series of performances by Piene and Tambellini, the first of which took place in Tambellini’s artist-run, Black Gate Theater\textsuperscript{32} in New York City. According to Piene, the work was developed out of 22 repetitive performances before it was presented in Cologne. Piene and Tambellini each presented individual performances in succession, Piene beginning with “The Proliferation of the Sun,” a work consisting of light sculpture and hand-painted slides. Afterward, Tambellini would perform, “Black Out,” a work, which involved slide and film projection. “Black Gate, Cologne” was accompanied by music and studio audience participation, as well as the addition of Piene’s inflatable sculptures. Examining this work in the context of it’s appropriation and repurposing of telecommunications technology, in particular, televisual media, the following points of transmission and reception can be identified; the two artists, Piene and Tambellini; the television crew; the live studio audience; the television viewers; and finally, the viewers of the documented archival material.

Forming a constellation of communication, individuals from each party are participating in communication via transmission and/or reception. We must also consider the context in which “Black Gate, Cologne,” was initially aired. The work, which included footage of the Kennedy assassination, was aired in 1968 on one of three available public television channels with no preface, no commentary, no censorship. Because of the limited number of channels for viewers to choose from, this program had the potential to reach a massive audience. The fact that the work was not explained before or after meant

\textsuperscript{32} The Black Gate Theater in New York City was originally developed as a space to present experimental film and showcased installation and performance art as well as theater works by former associates of Andy Warhol.
that the audience would read it as any other program on television, the evening news, variety shows, etc. A criticism of the means in which we receive and interpret messages and information via the media. Neglecting to explain this irregular transmission inspires the audience to reflect on the passive reception we’ve grown accustomed to when we interface with media and telecommunications technologies. It can also be read as a dystopic prediction of future interaction with such media/voids as well as with each other.
2.3 Predicting the Future of Communication through Void
“TV to TV,” Tambellini & Communicationsphere

Tambellini furthers these predictions/investigations with the work he engaged in while at MIT. During his fellowship at MIT CAVS, Tambellini founded the group, “Communicationsphere.” Motivated by the emergence in the 1960’s of control by systems and governments of media and modes of communication, “Communicationsphere,” brought together artists, scientists, as well as members of the MIT cable station, for projects such as “Picturephone Event,” (1977), “TV to TV (1979),” “Artist’s Use of Telecommunications,”(1980) and “Telesky” (1981).

“TV to TV,” a two-way live telecommunications happening, conducted at MIT, involved the use of MIT’s closed circuit television system to connect live audience participants in two simultaneous locations on the MIT campus (Lobby 7 and the Student Center). Two televisions and one video camera were installed in each location. Participants were able to simultaneously see and hear each other on one monitor while watching their own movements on the other. The documentation of this work featured typical everyday communications as well as creative experimentations of the media, some participants making use of this “double vision” to synthesize their own image with that of the other. This means of communication bears an uncanny resemblance to certain video chat applications such as Skype™, which today have become integrated into our daily communications. Through this project and others, Tambellini and Communicationsphere provided the means for critical reflection in relation to communication and access in our everyday media. How means of transmission, the
technologies we use, enable us to transmit different kinds of information for reception, this affects interpretation. Will simple communications/messages bring us closer to mutual understanding or lead us down the path of more personal interpretation?

As Aldo Tambellini (1980) states:

We make the connection. You make the communication.33

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2.4 Media Communication & the Future: THE PARADOX

"THE UN/NECESSARY IMAGE / Muntadas

Figure 11: d'Agostino and Muntadas, The Unnecessary Image, Tanam Press, 1982.

Returning to John Burchard's essay from 1966, he suggests that critics of art, theatre, and media are responsible for communicating what is worthwhile to the public:

The collective voice of a group of critics which we, the outsiders, find on the whole have not led us astray by causing us to miss too much of real importance.\textsuperscript{34}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{34} ibid.}
However, media critics are not successful at this—media critics aren’t able to mediate the media— to distinguish what is worthwhile. In a sense, this democratizes the media, by allowing individuals to discern what is quality. But the nature of media and advertising—of television—is not democratic, recall Marshall McLuhan’s essay, “The Medium is the Message." Media communications, especially advertisements often take the form of persuasive opinion. In the introduction to THE UN/NECESSARY IMAGE, (d’Agostino & Muntadas, 1982), a collection of artist’s works and writings which reflect on communication, compiled and published by artists, d’Agostino & Muntadas, while the two were fellows at MIT CAVS, the authors state:

Determinations of what is Necessary and Unnecessary are based on cultural, socio-political and economic factors as well as individual value and use.36

In this project, the artists take the role of “critics” who examine the media and reduce complex signs and symbols in order to communicate the importance of truth. Note here the authors (d’Agostino and Muntadas) aim to communicate the importance of truth. This leaves open such questions as; is communicating the truth is impossible; perhaps communication is the truth; perhaps this elucidates the failure to communicate the truth and the frame “the importance of truth” is the lens through which communication with the truth becomes possible.

“Selling the Future,” Muntadas’ contribution to *THE UN/NECESSARY IMAGE* a selection of advertisements, which exploit the future in order to sell their ideas and products, can be read as a kind of oracle, as many of these predictions of the “future” were strangely accurate. We can also read this collection of images as indicative of failure in our society with regard to those projections, which were naively over-optimistic or blatant lies. Examining the promised development of certain transportation and telecommunications systems and their ultimate transformation into obsolescence begs us to reconsider our view of the future from our present perspective.

A few years prior to this project, in 1979, Muntadas wrote about the manipulation of the ‘invisible mechanisms,’ of the media by special interest groups:

> How we read this information and how conscious we are of its persuasive powers has to do with our subjective and objective processing of the information as we encounter it. The nature and volume of the transmission, and of our reception, along with our cultural, historical and space-time conceptions affect our determination of the character of the message.

With projects such as, “On Subjectivity,” Muntadas exploits the exploitative system of reproduction. He reproduces that which is easily reproducible. Muntadas mediates the media through his selection of visual information. By this means, he, himself, becomes

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39 “On Subjectivity: Fifty Photographs from the “Best of Life,” (a publication)” wherein fifty photographs were selected and reproduced, then redistributed and captioned each by five different people, the 250 photographs were then reproduced in the form of a book with new captions. Another work from the series, titled, “On Subjectivity: About TV (a videotape),” a montage of excerpts from television programming and opinion of viewers, reflecting on perception, and manipulation by the media.
the structure he calls to question. In, “Selling the Future,” Muntadas negotiates the proliferation of images, which overwhelm our everyday lives, he receives transmissions, interprets, filters and re-distributes or re-transmits the media material by the same or similar means. Thus, the aesthetics of these subversive re-presentations makes it often indistinguishable from genuine products of the apparatus it critiques. Time often renders these works indistinguishable from their own contemporary media. And “time” surely factors into the implied critique of “Selling the Future.” The law of entropy reassures us that over time, all systems break down. A review of this early work from our present perspective (time) reveals their seamless consistency with their respective media. By this means, Muntadas writes himself into media history. Although this work takes on the aesthetics of media advertising and is almost indistinguishable, “Selling the Future” (much like Black Gate, Cologne and the projects of Communicationsphere), forces a critical self-reflection, through the exposure of the apparatus of manipulation. By exposing this pathetic desire–imposed and preyed upon by the media–to see into, to know the future, the futility of such predictions becomes clear. Rather than providing us with new images or information, Muntadas instead re-presents a selection, an arrangement familiar images, images we know or perceive as if we know. Muntadas changes the way we look at these images and, as a result, the images we look at change. Muntadas voids out the future and returns us to ourselves.

Although not all of the aforementioned works made use of the media’s medium as a self-reflexive vehicle for the dissemination of their critique (as in Black Gate, Cologne), each of these artists made use of the aesthetic structure/framework as a basis for
criticism. The difference lies in the archive. Works such as Black Gate, Cologne 1968, which intervened in the medium of television, were directly absorbed into media history along with the evening news, variety shows, and made for TV movies. Alternatively, works like, “Selling the Future,” are presented in the form of an artist’s book, the pages of which reflect magazine aesthetics and are likened to the anniversary editions of Life Magazine and National Geographic, also published and distributed in book format, encapsulating selected images and memorable news events. Despite the differences in dissemination of these media works, they ultimately reconverge with the media, collapsing into a kind of singularity, the origin of our needs and desires, which the media exploits, the unknown, the future, the void.

These artists employed the media as a vehicle for self-reflexive criticism. From a future perspective, the work has become indistinguishable from that which it critiques. As technologies surpass these models, the messages or information they convey becomes uniform, noise.\textsuperscript{40}

In the future, perhaps the way these works have been woven into the fabric of media history and visual culture will affect future interpretations and historical revisions. This anxiety resulting from communications control fueled the experimentation and development of new modes of communication by CAVS artists.

\textsuperscript{40} See Serres, Michel, \textit{The Parasite}, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
Artists involved with MIT CAVS were utilizing existing telecommunications technologies—broadcast/closed circuit TV, internet—to invent their own systems of communication and predicting the way telecommunications technology would revolutionize our social world.
Communication /ˌkɒmjuˈneɪʃ(ə)n/  
a method of communication for the future
3. **Communicating**

Once we are honest with ourselves and admit that no matter how hard we try to communicate with the other, we will never achieve mutual understanding, we can look for alternatives, we can communicate directly with the problem.

Figure 12: "Void Communication: the Medium and the Real," performance still, Amanda Moore, 2011.

The void, as I have defined it, is inexplicable and ambiguous. It is precisely the thing that is always there, but refuses to be pinned down. As discussed in Chapter 1, communication, as a means of achieving mutual understanding, begins to fail, to break down, as we try to identify, to name, to interpret, to make things concrete. The moment we use language to name something, it escapes us and becomes something else.

Towards an amorphous goal, the following projects utilize communications technology
to provide access to and elucidate communications with the void between transmission
and reception, this Research is motivated by a desire for the real, the real. Void
communication and the future.

Technologies—languages, tools, mediums—contribute to the void in communication,
expanding the very distance they allegedly function to reduce. When we use these
machines for the purposes of interpersonal communication, in many ways interact and
connect more with these technologies and with ourselves through them. As noted
previously, technologies are defined by their functions and human interaction (use) is
often required in order to fulfill these functions, therefore the human and machine form a
collaboration in order to be defined by achieving a purpose. As we have seen in the
artworks discussed in Chapter 2, it is possible to subvert the media under critique in
order to communicate differently or to say more. or to I employ televisual technology as
a tool for the manifestation of and communication with the void in the space of my
performances.

The void in communication indicates a failure not only within the verbal and written
technologies humans have developed, but also an insufficiency in visual language.
Although human understanding of the other can only exist in our perceptual imagination,
artists can facilitate communication through their works. Artistic media, such as
performance, electromedia, and video, works, which are only fully realized through the
facilitation of communication (transmission and reception) between audience, artist,
and work. The notion that these works require audience reception in order to be
realized suggests that there is a critical communication, occurring at this moment. The success of these communications relies on something other than the direct transmission/reception between artist and audience, as it is clear that accurate communication between beings is not possible. The crux of communication is an engagement with the void and entails a form of abstract perception, and is contingent upon the medium through which transmission and reception occurs. The medium brings us into an awareness of the inexplicable substance of void, as inexplicable as the space from whence it comes.
3.1 Initializing Contact with the Void

Before we can attempt to achieve mutual understanding through communication we must first understand the nature of our relationship to the world around us and to understand for ourselves what it is we are trying to communicate. We must become aware of communication which proceeds, supercedes, is more essential than language, and understand that language—visual, body, written, spoken—all of these languages which frame or direct us to our real meaning. The following experiments, were attempts to achieve this level of communication/understanding with the individual. Language was used as a guide, a texture, a rhythm, which helped myself and sometimes others to find a place of perception and reflection. These were attempts at communication between the self and the void to facilitate understanding of our own meaning.

The first experiment, took the form of a performance in July of 2010. At the time, I was experiencing a period of estrangement from my own culture, language, personal relationships—a “void in communication.” I was confronted with this alienation/isolation in such a way that distraction, which is usually my escape from reality, was impossible. At a certain point, I had to accept that this was my situation, and rather than trying to resist my surroundings, I was forced to adapt, to apply a method of assimilation, not through becoming part of the other culture specifically, rather, this assimilation was more of a becoming of culture in general, a becoming the thing called culture that connects individuals. This kind of becoming was very much the same as the “becoming animal,” which Deleuze and Guattari discuss in “A Thousand Plateus, Capitalism and
Schizophrenia,” as the impossibility of being part of the species which one resembles, to which one should belong and after making contact with a member of another species, becoming part of this other group or entity. According to D&G, becoming is not a choice, nor is it mimetic, (you either mimic or you are), although mimesis is itself a kind of void— in that structures infinitely and inexplicably mimic other structures which mimic preceeding structures, and so on.

This assimilation involved a conscious surrender, as I had not the tools (language, cultural knowledge) to masquerade as the other, it was more of an openness, a letting go of what had come before, of needs, of expectations. I considered myself to be “at zero,” completely open to the possible.

Once I stopped struggling or reacting against my situation, the void in communication, I realized that I was still able to communicate, I became aware of communication outside of language. It occured to me that I was only aware of this, only sensitive to this communication when I was perceptually open, or at zero. And that this kind of communication was not possible when I was trying to elevate myself above zero. This kind of communication occured beneath the surface of zero, or “beyond the zero.” Once aware of this, I began to notice that allowing oneself to be at the zero point enabled me to experience communication with something real, “Beyond the Zero.” I developed the diagram, “the no no nothing,” (figure 6) to depict these layers and describe how they function. I wanted to test this theory, to validate the reality of the real, to see if others could have experience beyond the zero.
“Performance, Perception, Parasocial Interaction,” a performance lecture, which took place at the Würtembergischer Kunstverein in June of 2010 (figures 13 & 14), began with reinterpretation of a traditional native american ritual. Once a year, in the fall, the chief of the tribe (Cherokee) invites all of the members into the meeting house before dawn. He places a crystal in the wall of the building and recites prayers while waiting for the sun to rise. As the sun rises, the light passes through the crystal and shines on the faces of the community. The chief watches closely and takes note of this effect. If the light does not shine on the face of an individual, it is read as an omen that they will not survive the next year. As I was asked to lecture about my current research, which involved crystals, parapsychology, media studies, and mysticism, I thought it fitting that I
begin with a performance, which synthesized my interests. The exhibition at the time also featured an enormous mirrored rotating skull suspended from the ceiling ("Disco Skull," Ana Konik, 2005) which cast a large shadow on the wall, into which I projected my slides and a video of the sunrise during the performance.

The performance, lasting about ten minutes, the duration of the sunrise video, began with an incantation—a recitation of abstracts from my research, followed by a meditation on the crystal, which was placed directly in the center of the room beneath the suspended skull. As I hovered my hands over the object, I began to feel an unfamiliar tingling/loss of feeling in my hands, gradually moving up my arms. This sensation, a
force overcoming my body was so intense, that I had to step away and turn my attention to the audience who were wearing the skull masks provided to them in the event of superstition. As the performance concluded, I continued on with my lecture, reflecting later, at length about this strange force I'd interacted with. Perhaps it was at the moment of performing in an environment in which assimilation was not possible, a certain moment within a context in which I finally became myself (connecting with my roots / my own native american roots). I think it’s more related to the fact that I was completely empty, void, I was able to function as the medium myself, and experience that medium..

Figure 15: "Performance, Perception, Parasocial Interaction," lecture slide, Amanda Moore, 2010.
As I was developing this theory through the personal experience of surrender, I really did begin to assimilate into the culture— I befriended artist, Ulrike Buck, and through our conversations, I began to explain my theory of the no no nothing. I asked her if she would do an experiment with me, a performance, in which we attempt to bring ourselves to zero, to allow ourselves to exist at zero. A kind of absence which evokes presence, “zero level,” a term which comes from semiotics is developed by George Glusberg (1979) within the context of performance art:

Semiologists give the name “zero level” to this process in which the lack of something becomes significant. We might speak of the “zero level of the performance” in the cases of eblations, inscribings, lack of real elements. Although absence in performance always overflows with meaning.

My interest was in enabling potential, the potential to move beyond zero for what I would later term, “void communication.”

The resulting performance experiment, “Beyond the Zero,” took place in July 2010, in Stuttgart, Germany. Both Buck and I were interested in communicating with unknown entities or energies (Buck had been engaged in parapsychological research at the time), therefore, we decided to incorporate certain natural elements which have historically facilitated access—celestial movements, nature. “Beyond the Zero,” took place outdoors on a rooftop terrace elevated high above the city at sunset. Buck and I sat facing each other in the center of a zero painted on the ground (see figure 15 diagram), a large crystal place between us. Prior to the event, Buck and I had independently researched history and philosophy about zero and common phrases in our respective native

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languages, which include zero (punkt auf Deutsch). The performance consisted of a dialogue in which we attempted to communicate this collected research to one another. Utilizing these two languages, we aimed to exacerbate the void in communication. The performance concluded with a “zero/punkt” call and response between Buck and I, which developed into a rhythmic chant “zero, zero, zero, zero, zero...” as the audience joined in. As we continued to repeat this word, its meaning and context seemed to fall away as the participants (artists and audience) began to communicate through sound, noise, and vibration, beyond language.
Figure 16: diagram of “Beyond the Zero,” 2010.
3.2 Mapping the Void Through Which We communicate

Through the development of the previously described projects, it became apparent that I had inadvertently enabled a kind of force, an entity which came to embody the space of my performances. In trying to identify, to locate, to find it again, it became clear to me that it was paradoxiacally ever-present and never present. It was the thing that is always there and simultaneously not there at all. A void.

I wanted to harness this power, to cultivate it, so i conducted a series of performance experiments in which I employed stereotypical methods of engaging with the void.

The first series of experiments relied upon stereotypes of both "void" as a concept and common performance techniques. With a video camera, I documented myself filling the pages of a notebook with the word, "void," and tearing each page away, "voiding" each page and letting them fall to the ground. As I filled the floor with these "voided pages" I became aware of a strange physical sensation—a kind of electricity filled my body and I became unable to feel my hands, thus writing became extremely difficult. As I continued to write, the words developed into abstract and unintelligable symbols. Continuing, I began to hyperventillate as this strange energy force consumed my body.
I relocated from chair to floor for the next action, in which I attempted to engage the void through myself by obscuring my connection to the outside world. I began by blindfolding and gagging myself, then I placed a bag over my head. As I crawled around the floor, in an attempt to encase my entire body in a large black nylon garment bag, I lost all sense of time and space.

For the final experiment, I faced a mirror, my back to the camera, staring deep into my reflection, repeating the phrase, “The void is inside you,” until time and space again fell away. Although I have reviewed this documentation several times, and watch my physical body reclining before the mirror, I cannot seem to locate myself.

Through these experiments, I developed methods of communicating/engaging with this void for myself, yet I was ultimately interested in how this void functions in my everyday experience, in my interactions with people and technologies. My next challenge was to take these experiences and try to elucidate this ambiguity between myself and others, to experience an awareness of this medium with others.

Continuing on, I researched representations of this void in everyday communications, in tools for used for the purposes of communication, technologies. I asked myself how I interact with others and the world around me on a daily basis— I use the telephone, email, television, skype, I receive information from the internet, movies, radio, advertising. I had been aware for quite some time that these technologies were not transparent, that on the surface they claim to fulfill certain functions, but in actuality,
they communicate more. I recalled the subliminal messaging in advertising paranoia craze of the late 80’s/early 90’s and in my research I became aware of a technique developed by Russian scientists in the 1920’s, termed, “the 25th Frame Effect.” Films are composed of single images, “frames,” connected to each other on reels of film. Each second of film generally consists of 24 frames in succession per second. “The 25th Frame Effect,” makes use of subliminal messaging by inserting an additional image, a 25th frame into each second of film. These additional images, repeating each second through the course of a given film functioned to hypnotize the viewer. Under hypnosis, the subject experiences a kind of “void state.”

As my focus shifted from engaging one on one with the void and I became interested in cultivating the void in my communications with others, I considered the type of interface which might lend itself to this kind of interaction. I decided to employ “The 25th Frame Effect” through the re-presentation of the documentation from the “Black Void” experiments I had engaged in.

I began by collecting an archive of images, both representations of void/s and psychadellic images which might inspire relaxed psychological states such as trance or hypnosis. Weaving these together with an abridged version of the durational void performances, I became conscious of the ethical implications of inducing hypnotic states in my audience without their consent. The goal of the project was to promote engagement with void, in order to become more aware of it in everyday

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42 Siliņa et al., SPECTROPIA: Acoustic Space #7, MPLab, Art Research Laboratory of Liepāja University (Liepāja, Latvia) and RIXC, The Centre for New Media Culture (Riga, Latvia), 2008.
communication—hypnotizing my audience may bring them into void, but it interferes with their ability to reflect on voids in everyday experience. Taking this into consideration, I brought the work back to myself. I measured my pulse and composed a score, which corresponded to my personal experience in these performances. I chose to synchronize the images with this audio, rather than inserting them every 25th frame per second.

The resulting product, a 6 minute video, presented on a large video projection screen before a live audience, was more of an illustration of void, yet it maintained a sensory function. Rather than drawing the viewer into a void, “Black Void,” shocked the senses, the sound 43 had a physical presence, while the intermittent, brightly colored flashes (psychedellic images) interruptions which shocked the eyes from the muted darkness of the “Black Void” documentation. This work induced some physical sensations in the viewer, leaving them somehow relieved or “void,” yet not in the void.

43 Sound is possibly the only of our five senses which we cannot disengage— we may close our eyes, choose not to taste or touch, cover our nose, but sound is impossible to ignore, to tune out. Sound is often experienced physically, rhythms, pulses, pierce and surge through our bodies.
3.3 (Re)Performance for Mutual Engagement with the Void

*reenacting events in order to facilitate a portal for perception (void) with which both performer and audience may transmit and receive communications.*

The Parasite

I want to be honest with you. I am closer to you than I am to myself. I watch you. I follow you. I'm trying to find out as much information about you as possible so that I may construct a more complete picture of your life.

I know you. You are part of me, yet still I don't trust you. I am reliant on you, yet I lie to you. I recount narratives to you of other people's lives as if they were my own. Stories about the people I saw on TV. I can't tell you the truth about myself because there is nothing there. But if I don't tell you the truth, you might leave because I've told you nothing of myself.

The truth is that I've been wondering what the truth is for as long as I can remember. I am American. I was born on July 27, 1981 in NY, though I've lived most of my life in CT. My parents divorced when I was 2 years old. I spent most of my childhood watching television, riding in cars between my parent's homes, and shopping in corporate chain stores. I was raised to believe that buying and owning the newest, most highly desired products and gadgets featured on television was essential and probably made one a better person. I would become anxious and depressed about possessing and owning products. When I was 5 years old, a television was installed in one of my bedrooms. By the time I was 12, we had a television in every room of each house except the bathroom. The televisions were always on, even when the rooms were not occupied. The televisions are still always on.44

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44 Moore, Amanda, 2010.
I needed to get closer to my audience in order to engage in void communication. I
needed to get inside them, to cultivate a kind of empathy—empathy as a function of
perception, which makes us feel a connection, albeit a false connection, to one another,
to the artist. I considered modes of communication, technologies which make me feel
something that isn’t there, a false sense of mutual understanding. Television is one
such apparatus, and one many of us have grown close to. Television uses a variety of
“devices,” to keep its viewers engaged—liveness, flow, repetition—but what makes me
keep watching a show, returning to it again and again, is a certain affinity for a
character. I need to feel as if, by watching television, I am spending time with a friend.
This is actually a legitimate strategy termed, “parasocial interaction,” by psychologists and media theorists. Parasocial interaction is a media technique used to cultivate one-sided relationships between audiences and media personas. The relationships experiences are not unlike real interpersonal relationships that the viewer might have with their own friends and family. At the time I was also looking into the histories of performance, video, and telecommunications artworks, especially in relation to MIT CAVS. With these interests in mind, I continued to pursue a form for performance which would enable void communication.

I had employed parasocial interaction techniques in earlier performance works, often mimicking and attempting to embody television personas and was interested in the implementation of this techniques by artists, specifically how artists inspire this sense of empathy, which is imperative in the facilitation of connection with the audience.

I returned again to the technologies I employ on an everyday basis for communication—I often communicate via skype, watch movies and TV on the internet— and the means through which these screenalities falsify, pervert a sense of empathy. While engaging in these activities and simultaneously researching video and performance art on Ubuweb, an online archive containing extensive amounts of video art, documentation of performance, text, and audio, I came across Vito Acconci’s 1973 video, “Theme

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45 “Acceptance of the parasocial interaction equals watching again, leading to the continued development of parasocial relationships. These relationships may continue outside of the viewing experience, reflecting the way that real relationships continue when our friends are not present.” Rubin, Rebecca and McHugh, Michael “Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships,” Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 31: 279, 1987.

46 www.ubuweb.com
Song.” Acconci\textsuperscript{47}, a pioneer of video art, often made use of parasocial interaction techniques in his video and performance works in order to seduce his audiences. In “Theme Song,” Acconci employs a variety of televisual techniques as he performs a manipulative monologue. Speaking directly to the viewer, Acconci plays a corresponding soundtrack of “love songs,” which he periodically interrupts his monologue to play on a device, presumably a cassette player, which sits just off camera. Acconci appears to be speaking directly to the viewer as he cultivates a fictional relationship, complete with emotional developments and responses that might correspond with it. When Acconci originally recorded/performed the video, he did so before a camera, communicating, not to the audience who would ultimately receive and interpret his transmissions. Acconci communicated with a void and, as a result, as a viewer, I felt a more direct connection to him. This seemed to come closer to the kind of “void communication,” I hoped to engage in through my own performances.

As I was already closely examining works of artists involved with CAVS, specifically those who had made advances in void communication through technology, I decided to deepen my research through a reenactment of, “Theme Song.” I began to memorize Acconci’s monologue, his gestures, his method of communicating with the void and through this it became clear that my own interest in void communication involved live mutual engagement with others. Void communication in performance involved a physical interaction that activates the senses. As I rehearsed my reenactment of, “Theme Song,” before the camera I also began to consider the context in which Acconci

\textsuperscript{47} Acconci had been involved briefly with MIT CAVS from 2005 to 2006.
produced the work (the time and place), his own perspective (his physical presence and appearance), and the technologies which were being used (video camera and television)\textsuperscript{48}. It became clear that a reenactment was not possible. Any reenactment would inevitably be read as a reinterpretation. Moving forward, I decided to consciously produce a reinterpretation of the work, moreover, to utilize this reenactment as a tool for enabling simultaneous mutual void communication.

\textbf{Figure 24}: "Cover Song," part 1, performance still, 2010.

The resulting work, "Cover Song," (fig) involved a live reinterpretation of "Theme Song," taking place out of sight from the audience, behind a wall, in front of which stood an audiovisual sculpture composed of three televisions and audio speakers, in a clear

\textsuperscript{48} In 1973, when Acconci made this video, artists did not often have access to editing equipment, thus the works were performed live and directly recorded to tape. These unedited tapes served as the final product. See David Antin, "Television, Video's Frightful Parent."
plexiglass box meant to reference the history of television⁴⁹ and its placement in the social center of the family sphere. Ranging in size, the smallest of the three televisions displaying Acconci’s, “Theme Song,” while a 13” monitor, connected to a laptop on which a selection of “love songs,” youtube videos, which I incorporated into my own live performance interpretation presented on a 19” television monitor at the top of the sculpture. Behind the wall, where I performed the work stood two amplifiers, a theramin (the first electronic synthesizer), a keyboard, laptop computer, and two video cameras—one connected and feeding live to the video monitor and the other on a tripod, filming the audience through a hole cut in the wall as they watched my performance playing on television.

“Cover Song,” was structured in three parts, the first, the live reinterpretation of, “Theme Song,” presented to the audience via television with simultaneous televisual presentations of the original work and youtube videos of the songs worked into my void

⁴⁹ The first televisions were built into cabinets, with doors, which could be closed to conceal them when not in use.
⁵⁰ The songs I chose to replace Acconci’s original “theme songs”, were cover songs of Acconci’s choices, recorded recently.
communication. Part one continued for approximately six minutes, at which point I literally “pulled the plug” on all technology. All audiovisual information stopped as I, with no explanation allowed the audience to sit, for a moment in complete silence, with void. After about a minute of this void, I reached for a microphone and announced that I was having some technical problems and would continue the performance momentarily. As the audience waited, facing the blank television monitors before the black wall, I busied myself behind the scenes, preparing for part three. As I removed the hidden camera from the wall and switched the tape into the camera feeding live into the 18” monitor, positioned the laptop to begin capturing and presenting a new perspective, and turned on the audio equipment, the audience continued to face void. As suddenly as I had voided out all audiovisual media, electricity returned and the televisions turned on. On one monitor, the audience could now watch themselves watching me while simultaneously viewing another live performance— a theramin concert, shrieking distortion accompanied by beats from the “Black Void,” soundtrack. Through this sound performance, I entered into a similar kind of energetic trance as I had experienced in the performance experiments for “Black Void.” The theramin functions through physical interactions of electromagnetic waves, responding to the energy and movement of the performer’s body. The resulting combination of this sensitivity to my movements was a cacaphony of electronic noise-distortion with which it was my intention to replace the need for “sense,” creating an environment which made possible logical interpretation. Through sound I wanted to create the physical sensation of engaging with void. I wanted the void to run through and around everyone and everything in the space. I was also interested in the reception of the performance on the screen, the metaphor for the
real, watching something on television and simultaneously experiencing its immediate physical presence.

Figure 26: "Cover Song," audience view, 2010.
3.4 The Medium and the Real

_the audience and I confront the void together, utilizing communication as content to convey the void context._

My final performance “Void Communication: The Medium and The Real” was a reinterpretation of related prior work I’d engaged in while at MIT. I wanted to utilize everyday technologies, symbols, and messages to develop void communication through the collapse of time and space (past, present, and future). I aimed to abstract, to collapse my own work into a singularity, a void. I reviewed the projects I’d been involved in while at MIT, tracing the trajectory of my interest in the void. The following projects were incorporated into this final, “Void Communication”:

“Crystals: Meaning and Power,” Fall 2009; “Time Machine,” (figure 20), Spring, 2010 (a 6’x6’ two-way mirrored rotating plexiglass structure, intended as a platform for performance);

51 “Crystals are infinite. Production is finite: idea; production; product. Does use of a product perpetuate its production? Are crystals merely produced or are they also used for transformative production? What does the word “transformation” call to mind? Can any change be perceived of as a transformation? Does a transformation have to be powerful and dramatic to be valid? Can a subtle change in temperature or mood be transformative? Is everything in a constant state of transformation? The world around us and we ourselves are constantly changing, becoming different. We look to crystals as manifestations of this phenomenon- in the crystal, production is infinite. Long after the crystal forms, it continues to respond, remember, and grow in relation to its environment. The crystal reflects images of the world outside, as we experience it and the crystal expresses our reactions. We know ourselves through the gaze of the crystal. We know the crystal because it meaningfully displays a reflection of ourselves. We are composed of the same substance as the crystal. We will eventually transform into the crystal, become the crystal. The crystal is constantly transforming, as transformation must occur in order for all things to become different.

The crystal is displayed as an object of great potency and power. The crystal is fetishization of oneself. The subject approaches the crystal and relates to its scale. The crystal has a presence. The subject and the crystal interact without words. It is alive. It is humming with energy, wisdom, truth. The subject senses the crystal’s transformative power. The crystal is alive, it is ancient. Transformation is its own time, real time, in which changes occur. Captivated, the crystal renders the subject motionless, frozen, inarticulate. The crystal memory transcends dimensional barriers, imparting the subject with its perception. The subject is altered through...
Communication /ˈkɒm.əˌrɛk.ʃən/ a method of communication for the future

“Alpha Void,” Fall 2010, (a video in which I used live chroma key effects to edit and insert myself into a particular scene from Jean Luc Godard’s, “Alphaville”); “Black Void,” Fall 2010; “Cover Song,” Fall 2010; and “Becoming Archive,” Spring, 2011. The transference of crystal knowledge. The crystal allows us to see ourselves in the context of a transforming virtual eternity. Crystals do not distance from the past, future, or present by reflecting on events as static points or states, and neither shall we. Instead, we must accept that we are all engaged in eternal transformation. Let us embrace the changes in our lives with the knowledge that, just as crystals, we are perpetually adapting, changing, transforming.”

52 “Becoming Archive” is a performative RE-presentation of materials collected through archival research and interviews with artists of MIT’s Center for Advanced Visual Studies ("CAVS") working in the field of telecommunication between 1968 and 1983. The use of telecommunications technologies by CAVS artists, Otto Piene, Aldo Tambellini (Communicationsphere), & Antoni Muntadas, to subvert, to co-opt existing systems and to develop new modes of communication, independent of social control, bear a remarkable resemblance to the applications and devices—email, video chat—that mediate our current communication. Through intervention into macro media structures of broadcast television (“Black Gate, Cologne, 1968” & “The Medium is The Medium,” 1969) and/or simulations of...
I aimed to combine elements of and research from these projects not only as a means of facilitating simultaneous void communication for both the audience and myself in the form of a live performance with pre-recorded elements, but also as an attempt to resolve these former projects. Through the course of my research at MIT, I had come to realize the value of honesty and transparency in works of art. One must release limited ideas, as withholding information limits the ability of the viewer to define their own perspective. As an artist, my interest lies in the sense that something is there, but I can’t find it, I can’t see it. The work constructs itself as I search for the unattainable.

The goal of this final work was to create an environment which fosters the impossibility of understanding, to catalyze a kind of entropy. To be transparent about this and to move toward an acceptance of and an engagement with the problem, the void in communication. By communicating with this void, rather than persisting in futile attempts at direct communication, I believe we can actually come closer to mutual understanding.

these larger structures on a micro scale ("Picturephone Event," 1977 & "TV to TV," 1979), these artists elucidated a failure in communication, which still exists today. Inspired by an interest in the role of 'artist as innovator' at MIT, with respect to the overlaps in disciplines of media, communications, and the technologies which negotiate the transmission and reception of information, “Becoming Archive” is a developing collection of video, documents, photographs, statements and narratives which, through technologically mediated RE-presentation, adopts the form of the telecommunications works and electromedia performances that continue to shape its content.
Networks no longer function exclusively in one direction. The receiver has some capacity to ‘send’ to the transmitter, to connect with others and share information almost infinitely. Noise is part of the signal, an augmentation of that which it wants to conceal—truth is indecipherable. Appearances replace the need for sense.

The re-purposing of communication, the staging of communication and meaning, makes possible the transcendence of sense.

We become the medium & the real.

void communication: the medium & the real

durational performances by Lily Tran & Amanda Moore
Sunday, May 15, 2011
durational work on view: 12 PM – 5PM
At 7 PM: a final performance result of the day’s experiments

Location:
MIT Wiesner Building
20 Ames Street
E15-001 Lower Level
Cambridge, MA 02139

Figure 29: “Void Communication Invitation,” Amanda Moore, 2011.
The performance was structured in three parts for a duration of ten minutes. The audience faced a viewing screen on which all three parts were projected, which combined elements of, “Time Machine,” (2-way mirrored plexiglass panels). The media sculpture also radiated/projected video footage, research for “Time Machine,” of the interior of a scale model I had constructed out of mylar and cardboard in my studio, experimenting with various lighting situations and camera perspectives. These projections were captured on a white wall facing opposite (behind the audience) before which I was positioned with a microphone, theramin, and two amplifiers.

“Void Communication: The Medium and The Real,” began with a barrage of images, tracing the development of voids throughout history—representations of voids in ancient cultures, religions, technological voids, advertisements for telecommunications media,
diagrams of void communication—accompanied by an electronic beat similar to one you
might hear before a news or radio broadcast. After about a minute, the beats faded into
part two, an excerpt from Godard’s film, “Alphaville” (a classroom scene with its own
slide with its own slide presentation) in which I’d inserted previously recorded video
footage of the media sculpture. The scene from “Alphaville,” was meant to function as a
dystopic metaphor for the future of communication. The audio, recited by the Alpha 60
computer, features text from Paul Eluard’s “The Capital of Pain,” may better elucidate
my meaning:

“no one has ever lived in the past
no one will ever live in the future
the present is the form of all life
it is a possession
that no force can take away from us.
time is like a circle
spinning infinitely
the declining arc is the past
and the inclining arc is the future
that's all there is to say
unless words change their meanings
and meanings change their words
doesn't it make sense
that someone who generally lives
in a state of suffering
needs a different sort of religion
to someone who generally lives
in a state of well-being?
before us there was nothing here
no one
we are totally alone here
we are unique
dreadfully unique
the meaning of words
and of expressions is no longer understood
an isolated word, or an isolated detail in a drawing
can be understood
but the meaning of the whole
is lost
once we know the number one
we think we know the number two because one plus one equals two we forget that first we must know the meaning of plus. 53

Towards the end of the scene, which lasted approximately six minutes, my own image, filmed on a laptop (also located in the media sculpture) was transposed onto/into the video. I stood behind the audience, before a wall, onto which were projected abstract textures and colors (the documentation from the “Time Machine” machette). During the first two parts of the presentation, I had been silently meditating and breathing myself into a trance-like state. The interruption of my image into the space of the projected video was a precursor to an ensuing void communication, part three, a sound performance with theramin and amplified audio of my breath, complimented by a pre-recorded sound work in which I recited the following text:

“The Void in Communication
Meaning Nothing Means Everything

Hysterically initiating chains of significance I aim to potentiate infinite meaning. I perpetually introduce new elements into radiating rings of meaning, connecting circuits, complicating networks, catalyzing feedback. Paranoiacs may take comfort in the assumption that significance is not what it appears. Unable to conceive of the one, the paranoid will not reconcile these interminable interpretations in order to reduce the amalgamation of words, signs, and symbols to a single interpretation—through eternal multiplicity, meaning is void.

Each attempt to communicate is filtered through a void. Meaning is reduced to nothing then inflated into ambiguity. Fragments of language—sound, image, text—depart from the origin of intent and are stripped of specificity in a void, a vacuum of instability. In this void the significance of the original transmission is generalized, its potentiality expanded, and ultimately received as a perceptual interpretation. The void in communication enables an illusion of mutual understanding. We must nurture the delusion of human connection facilitated by this portal of communication. Only through our participation, can the entropy of the void be neutralized. We must perpetuate this system by exponentially and objectively ambiguating future interfaces—transmission and reception functioning to cultivate the futility of mutual understanding. We must put an end to our failure to communicate with each other through the void. Let us begin now to utilize our opportunities for interaction with each other to enrich, to celebrate our awareness of this void, the omniscient entity. The void is communication.”

Projecting this intensely physical and emotional experience onto the screen before the audience was meant to subvert the usual modes of telecommunication—I was not speaking to the audience or attempting to communicate directly to them, I was presenting them with a void, a simultaneous remove to the real and a perfection of that state.

Eventually, the audience turned around to watch the performance directly. It seems possible that through the perpectival structure of the performance I’d triggered something, perhaps empathy. Ultimately, we return to structure. Structures which we perceive, and those which we don’t see, those structures which form our perspectives

54 Moore, Amanda, 2010.
and lead us to make judgements. When we communicate directly with the void, these structures disappear.

"We are fascinated by all forms of disappearance, of our disappearance."  

Disappearance potentiates reappearance. Appearances replace the need for sense. Appearance, interference, disappearance, reappearance—coincidence, the emergence of mutual uncertainty in a given experience. So much power is given to coincidence. In trying to understand the one, the meaning of the whole is lost. Therefore, we map these collisions, cultivating a network of logic as we trace coincidences along the trajectories of transformation. Searching for the emergence of a structure, as if we might rediscover that which had initially disappeared. This constellation of coincidence forms an apparatus, which functions to reduce experience to nothing, to void. An augmentation of that which it wants to conceal, meaning is indecipherable. Ambiguous, inexplicable, universal—ordinary conceptions of space and duration do not exist in this void. Perceptions emerge and ideas penetrate this void. Perceptions are

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56 Suggesting a gap, void can imply an interstice, or conversely an overlap between two entities. According to the theory of cosmological singularity, distinct entities in the universe were pulled together by gravitational forces and compressed into a single point, a black hole, a void, which eventually became so pressurized that it exploded matter out of which our known universe developed. Quantum physics tells us that the universe is a positively charged void. Void is associated with the inexplicable, with “para” phenomena. “Para” originating from Greek, meaning “beyond” is outside of what is known. In parapsychology, apparitions, energies, telepathic messages materialize from the void, from beyond. Void is an ever-present energy, which is operating everywhere at every moment, but with too little intensity to be noticed. Void escapes rational interpretation.
detached from logic as the subconscious mind communicates freely with void. We empathize with void.

Empathy and perception. Empathy perpetuates the lie that coincidence means something. Empathy inspires a projection of the self into the other. Our perceived experience of the other becomes our own. We will never understand the other.

This false sense of mutual understanding, this assumed empathy, draws us to objects, experiences, and people. Subconsciously, we see ourselves in the role of the other, we interpret, we reconstruct, we idealize their works and lives. The other becomes us and we become the other, protagonist, the artist.

Consider the artist, as a platform for psychic reflection of vicarious experience, a catalyst for the return to the Self. Disappearing into the void, making possible your own re-appearance.

Figure 32: "Becoming Archive," performance lecture composite, From Bauhaus to Our House, Amanda Moore, 2010.

57 Every word, image, linguistic element signifies a multiplicity of additional signs or symbols, each with their own multiplicity of referents, and these their own multiplicities, ad infinitum. The particular "chain of significance," or series of signs or symbols a subject may choose in order to construct the meaning of even one linguistic element relates to its own memory, its own past relationship with that sign. The memories a subject associates with signs, in order to attempt an interpretation of communication, are not consciously selected. The elements of past experience, which individuals exploit for the purpose of understanding are not perceived through communication with the other, rather, these perceptions occur through communication with a void.

58 Mutual understanding is the ultimate goal of all communication—visual, physical, linguistic.
Communication /kəˈmiːnəˈkeɪʃən/
a method of communication for the future
4. Un-Defined: A Glossary for Subjective Interpretation

archetypical schizophrenia characteristic of or relating to the pluralization of a singular, diverse in banality; an individual or product so ambiguous in plurality or diversity unique specificity is void, referring to all and nothing

automation "Automation: this term is at present used as a noun to designate the science that deals with the study and construction of mechanisms and systems capable of fulfilling certain functions regularly and without human intervention." 59

communication can be understood as the successful transmission and reception of information.

empathy a function of perception, which results in a sense of mutual understanding. Often, this experience is false, as we perceive that in our communications, we are understood or understanding. Void communication is a means of achieving something close to an experience of real empathy.

flow the intentional seamlessness or purposeful disruptions between segments of televisual media.

heterogeneric heterogeneric qualities are not inherent in linguistic signs or symbols, rather information becomes heterogeneric through the process of communication. heterogenericization, or the process of becoming heterogeneric is catalyzed by an ambiguous, often abusive, exploitation of an archetype, consciously or subconsciously by the transmitter. A process of degradation through particulation of an archetype suggesting atypical ambivalence.

liveness the implementation of media cues in television, video, and live performance in order to produce or sustain the sensation of reality. Such "meditating" elements—applause at certain moments during programming, electronically projected vocals through the use of microphones, cinematic camera shots, such as 'cutting on action'—have come to be expected by viewers, even in live situations, where they may be technically superfluous.

machine language "Machine Language: Every computer has a set of instructions expressed by means of one or more machine words. A program consists of a suitable juxtaposition of these commands, which describe the required actions and cause them to be performed in succession. Generally speaking, a machine instruction gives the type of command and the memory location of the necessary parameters and codes relative to specific registers. Such elements are defined digitally, generally in binary, or using systems based on eight digits, sixteen digits, and so on.

At the time of its execution, a program is always expressed in machine language.  

**real time** 'Real time' is the processing method that makes it possible to receive data at any time and obtain the results immediately. This concept originated in connection with physical phenomena that required the immediate processing and inclusion of results. It has gradually extended to all processes that demand a very quick response. The reaction time varies as a function of processing constraints as well as of need. Thus, in physical systems, the immediate response corresponds to a few milliseconds or is less than one second, while in interrogating data banks there may be a delay of several seconds, several minutes, or even more.  

**real time networks** "'Real-Time Networks' A real-time network consists of a terminal sub-system, a transmission network, and a processing subsystem, operating in such a manner as to enable a certain number of users to have access to it simultaneously, with each of their requests being fulfilled within a given time and at given intervals. Examples of applications: Air or train ticket reservation systems: a few seconds' delay. Order-taking systems: a few seconds' delay. Payroll transmission system: the delay may reach a few hours at weekly or monthly intervals."  

**reenactment / reinterpretation:** temporality in relation to event: unintentional reenactment: repetition, sitcoms, videophone, skype, justintv (live surveillance), repetition of repetition  

**reception:** perception and interpretation of information that has been transmitted.  

**seriality** (recurrence of a program, previews at the beginning & ends of episodes)  

**simultaneity** the perception that actual events, as they unfold in real time, are concurrently transmitted by media and received by viewers. News events, for example, may have actually occurred hours or even the day before, are edited to appear contemporaneous to the audience's reality enabling a sense of participation.  

**technology technologies**– language, apparatus– can be defined as tools, structures, & processes developed by humans for the purposes of improvement; technologies are also defined by their function/s and generally require human interaction / participation to fulfill said function/s.  

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television technologies in general are defined by interaction, participation, defined by the way we use it. Television can be defined by, the way we use it, or the way it uses us. The following characteristics or components can help us to distinguish television from other televisual media:

**televisual media** signs, symbols, & signals, which we perceive, experience and interact with as we do, as we have historically done with television.

**virtual perception** an entity existing outside of consciousness, which is perceived by our subconscious, triggering the process of conscious actualization of a thought, idea, or emotion.

**void** an ambiguous space through which transmission and reception passes. things pass through a void. a void contains everything and nothing.

**void communication** a method of communication which increases the potential for mutual understanding. By engaging directly with the perceptual void which distorts and interferes with pure transmission and reception, participants become open to receiving the same or similar virtual perceptions, thereby potentiating a state of empathy.

**void in communication** The *void in communication* is the space in which information, once transmitted, is distorted through the process of reception, or perception and interpretation.
Communication /ˌkɒm.əˈkeɪ.ʃən/  
a method of communication for the future
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