telematic connections : LOST IN THE DATASPHERE

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http://www.turbulence.org/Works/channelUntitled/

DATASPHERE

[1] TeleZone Erich Berger, Peter Purgarthofer, Volker Christian	[2] channelUntitled Diane Bertolo	[3] Light on the Net Masaki Fujihata
[4] Ouija 2000 Ken Goldberg	[5] Community Ochen K	[6] Re:mote_corp@REALities Tina LaPorta
[7] Telematic Manifesto Randall Packer	[8] Superchannel Superflex	[9] clip.fm Angie Waller

channelUntitled, 2000
Diane Bertolo

...the tapping of specters of the spiritistic séances, with their messages from the realm of the dead, appeared quite promptly at the moment of the invention of the Morse alphabet in 1837.
Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone Film Typewriter*

"channelUntitled" is a kind of poetics of telematics, exploring connections to the beyond mediated by the telephone, the radio, and the terminal.

Sylvie Parent
[First published for the online catalogue of the exhibition, "*L'autre monde*/Out of this World" during La Biennale de Montreal 2000]
http://www.ciac.ca/biennale2000/fr/e-bertolo.html

In "channelUntitled," Diane Bertolo explores the history of communication technologies that have allowed us to transmit messages over distance and have therefore contributed, by the invention of each new device, to the "the death of human contact." Using the examples of three "contact" instruments—-the telephone, the radio and the computer"—-the work is a reflection on the materialization of the intangible, the manifestation of the invisible, the relationship between the presence and the absence of the individual, and the future of the body in the contexts created by telecommunications.

"An electrically transmitted voice is not a real voice.(...) We've all grown used to these simulacra of ourselves, but when you stop and think about it, the telephone is an instrument of distortion and fantasy. It's communication between ghosts, the verbal secretions of minds without bodies."[1]

In fact, it is surprising to realize that, when these inventions came into use, the absence of physical proximity between the speakers was explained in the popular mind by the presence of ghosts, who bridged the gap and served as intermediaries between emittors and receptors—-because someone or something had to be doing the job in the place of the person who was no longer there. Thus, "by their constant presence among us, spirits are the agents of a wide range of phenomena."[2] "channelUntitled" proposes that the history of communication technology is filled with spirits, that in their conquest of the invisible, human beings have run across ghosts along the way. Plugging in, transmitting, and connecting meet extrasensory perception here. The premise of the work rests on this surprising association: the world of the irrational invading the technical world, even though they appear to be diametrically opposed to each other.

"Those who believe in transcommunication are once again positively affirming that we will be able to communicate with the beyond in the same way that we can switch on a radio station or a television channel. According to them, it is simply a matter of properly adapting the equipment to the different levels of reality, here and on the other side."[3]

Even though it is commonly accepted that what cannot be seen is not necessarily non-existent, there are still lingering doubts about the veritable origins of these inventions, and this has been the case throughout their development. "Telephony itself arrived at a time when electricity was closely identified with a spiritual and/or cosmic force, and electronic transmission with the movement of the soul through wordly and heavenly spheres."[4] In "channelUntitled," these communication lines, these channels, are invisible conduits peopled by souls that manifest themselves without having been directly summoned. In the work, acts of interference occur: the interposition of ghosts can block the desired exchanges. In this way, death and the deceased, removed from life and denied by the living, find their way back to the world and impose themselves by means of these techniques; now it is the Web's turn, as an ambiguous space, to receive them.

[1] Paul Auster, *Moon Palace*, New York, Penguin, 1989, p. 26.
[2] Edgar Morin, *L'homme et la mort*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 179.
[3] Jean Vernette, *L'au-delà*, Paris, PUF, 1998, p. 119.
[4] Frances Dyson, "When is the Ear Pierced", *Immersed in Technology, Art and Virtual Environments*, The MIT Press, 1996, p. 75.

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