



<http://www.intimacyandloneliness.f2s.com>

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RESEARCH

The conception of this project lies in my initial interest in creating a project which dealt with the human Genome (that which defines us genetically). The Genome Project is an attempt to list, categorize and store a complete copy of the human genome and has been going on now for several years. It's stated purpose is to "determine the complete genetic information carried in the human genome. This information will then be used to improve the quality of human life" (<http://www.genome.ad.jp/brochure/english/>).

For me it seems that fascination with the genome is more rooted in an obsession with information and using this attempts to solve the scientific questions of 'what are we, who are we?' Everything is text and data these days and this has been long noted by the term 'the information age'. The rise of the network, most notably the internet has changed nearly everybody's life. "Everything is being collected: culture, asteroids, DNA, patterns, credit records, telephone conversations" (http://www.mediamatic.com/magazine/9_4/) and this is what marks our generation.

In effect we are a society of 'gatherers' like never before, gathering every type of information, making it possible to index and store, to better understand it and hopefully add to the collective consciousness. The most dominant professions that now exist are ones where people only deal with information. This virtuality in everyday life existed before the images now conjured to mind of people with head mounted displays attached to their heads and bionic type clothing measuring every movement of selected parts of the body or those given to us by such popular cultural icons as the movie 'Bladerunner' and the book 'Snow Crash'. All signs indicate a desire to control our

bodies, our evolution, yet are unclear as to how this will happen. Some focus on biological knowledge such as the genome project, others on a computer/roboticised vision maligning biological and electronic.

Whatever our direction in evolution my desire is not to propose one. The work is one that questions more than it answers. The answers it will provide are based on the experience of the work as a whole, so these will in the majority be personal answers. The construction and enactment of the work will entail physical electronic objects due to current technological restraints. If it were possible to complete the project without these objects via some means of airborne transmission and hence not physically interfere with the body, then I would as the intention would rest the same.

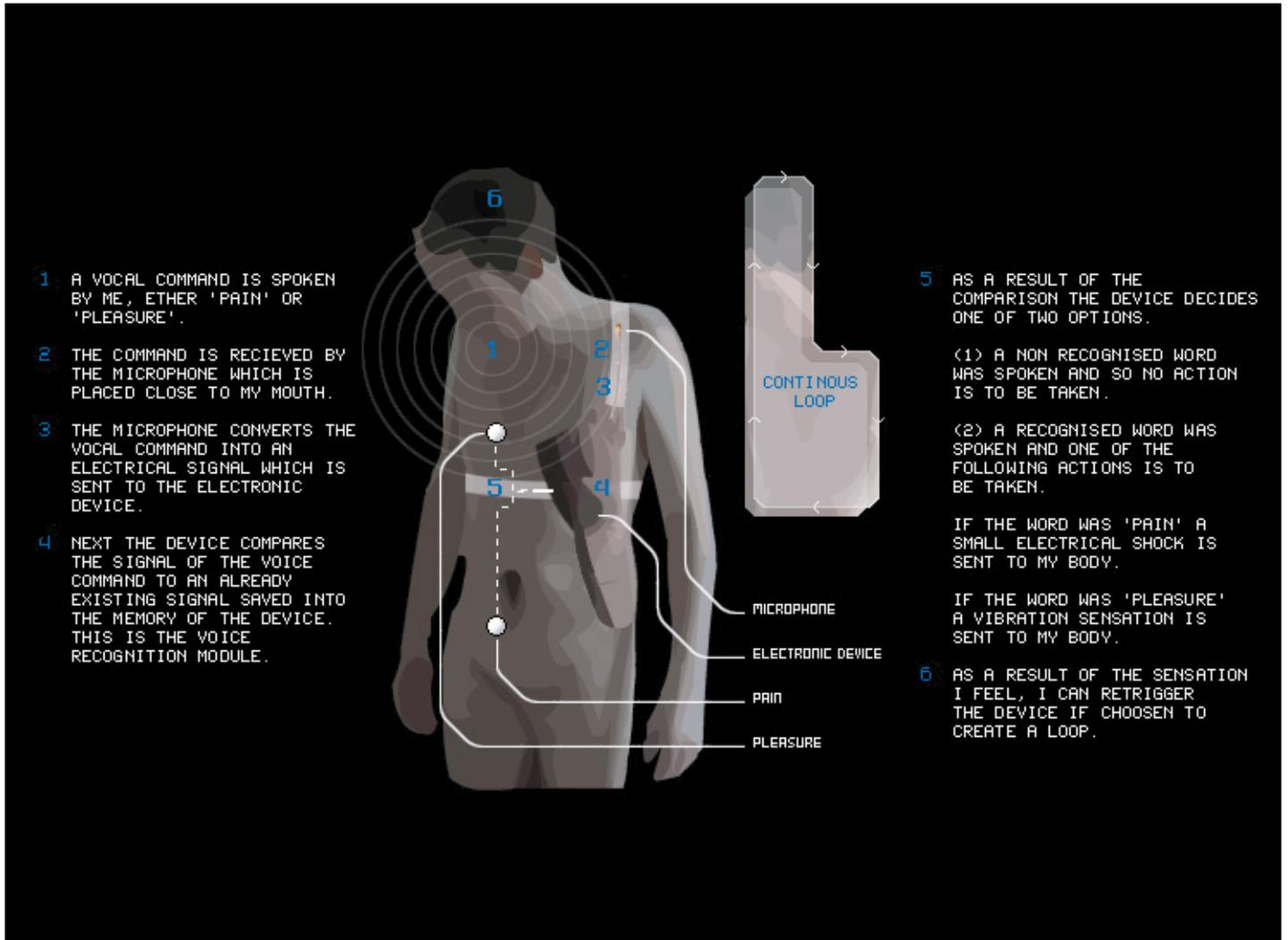
FOR THOSE WHO FEAR INTIMACY

The device for "For those who fear intimacy" is a wearable electronic object. It is voice activated by two words 'pain' and 'pleasure', which can only be triggered by me, the person who wears the object for a certain duration of the work. A miniature microphone is permanently clipped close to my mouth so as to rapidly pick up the words if spoken. If my body receives a sensation via one of my five senses or more appropriately has an emotional reaction to my environment (by which I can make evident what is normally not), the sensation is distilled down via my brain to either a positive or negative effect. Once I have decided this I vocalize instantly how I feel and this triggers the device. The voice passes on the message to the device as a nerve passes on a message to the brain. Yet here there is the option to falsify the sensation as it has already passed via the brain. Finally the device decodes the vocal input into the appropriate electrical signal to output it to the corresponding emitter, 'pain' or 'pleasure' that is connected directly to my skin to recreate a sensation.

The device serves many functions for me. It can allow me to recreate the same sensation over and over again to intensify that sensation in either a positive or negative way. Positively, the device could function as a sort of sense enhancer, making me feel more involved and in touch with the moment and my surrounding environment. On the negative side the device could become a sort of 'vicious circle' or biological 'short circuit', where the time between the original sensation, reaction and the generated sensation is so short that it has adverse effects on me, such as falsifying the sensation, agitating or even stressing me needlessly.

Besides recreating the same sensation the device allows me to redirect that sensation to another, depending on how my state has changed since the preceding sensation, due to it or any external factors. This is also where freewill plays an extremely important role since the device mimics the functions of a nerve yet reverses the relationship between nerve and brain. Usually the nerve just sends the message to the brain and the brain processes it into the relevant sensation. Here the nerve is controlled by my brain to send messages back to myself, creating a sort of intimacy with myself, which is ultimately under my control. It proposes a nearly closed system whose only possibility to modify or diversify is via my brain, i.e. a conscious decision to stop the loop, to break the circuit.

The device questions the nature of interactivity due to the difficulty to differentiate between the interrogator and the interrogated. If an interaction is defined as 'to communicate with or react to', this supposes two individual elements or bodies, yet here the device which although is controllable, simply passes on the message. My body is the beginning and the end of the interaction, both the cause and effect so is this really interaction or simply reaction? How do I separate both beginning and end to define the interaction, since both are me, and I am both? Can I define myself as simply "a sum of my parts"?



- 1 A VOCAL COMMAND IS SPOKEN BY ME, EITHER 'PAIN' OR 'PLEASURE'.
- 2 THE COMMAND IS RECEIVED BY THE MICROPHONE WHICH IS PLACED CLOSE TO MY MOUTH.
- 3 THE MICROPHONE CONVERTS THE VOCAL COMMAND INTO AN ELECTRICAL SIGNAL WHICH IS SENT TO THE ELECTRONIC DEVICE.
- 4 NEXT THE DEVICE COMPARES THE SIGNAL OF THE VOICE COMMAND TO AN ALREADY EXISTING SIGNAL SAVED INTO THE MEMORY OF THE DEVICE. THIS IS THE VOICE RECOGNITION MODULE.

- 5 AS A RESULT OF THE COMPARISON THE DEVICE DECIDES ONE OF TWO OPTIONS.

(1) A NON RECOGNISED WORD WAS SPOKEN AND SO NO ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN.

(2) A RECOGNISED WORD WAS SPOKEN AND ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS IS TO BE TAKEN.

IF THE WORD WAS 'PAIN' A SMALL ELECTRICAL SHOCK IS SENT TO MY BODY.

IF THE WORD WAS 'PLEASURE' A VIBRATION SENSATION IS SENT TO MY BODY.

- 6 AS A RESULT OF THE SENSATION I FEEL, I CAN RETRIGGER THE DEVICE IF CHOOSER TO CREATE A LOOP.

For those who fear intimacy

FOR THOSE WHO FEAR LONELINESS

The device for "For those who fear loneliness" is an electronic object similar in function to that of "For those who fear intimacy". It too will be worn by me for a certain duration of the work however its purpose and means of triggering are very different. In replace of a microphone which reacts to my vocal commands, here control is handed over to the network and whoever happens to be connected. Users will be able to connect to the device by interacting with a webpage. From the webpage they can trigger one of the same two sensations used for "For those who fear intimacy" in me, 'pain' or 'pleasure'. Their interaction is sent to me, the interface, via the integration of a mobile phone in the device, which receives the information through an SMS (Short Message Service) text message.

While "For those who fear intimacy" is a reflection on self-intimacy and self-control, "For those who fear loneliness" is one of obviously loneliness and a possible way of dealing with it, bringing with it both positive and negative results. Here I continue to be the interface however now the user is unknown to me. "For those who fear loneliness" doesn't focus on the idea of 'loops' or 'short circuits' like its counterpart, as the user feels no physical result of their interaction upon which they can react to interact once again. Instead they have on the webpage a real-time log of all interactions, which updates as soon as the interaction has been sent. For me the device is triggered and reacts like before as soon as the mobile phone receives it and sends it on to the device. At no point here do I have control over when or how the device is triggered and I can not react to the sensations by re-triggering them. The concentration here is on trust, putting myself into the hands of anyone who wants to interact with me. A way of being permanently connected to evade loneliness, paralleling current uses of icq and irc.

Sensing the interaction of somebody unknown to me who am at no immediate proximity to me makes me into a remote controlled object in many ways. While the first part of the project uses an electronic device, which becomes a part of me, as would an artificial limb, I always rest in control in that I both trigger and receive the interaction. Here I become as much a part of the device as it of me. I have no control over the device and simply receive the interactions of others. There are parallels between this piece and the works of Stelarc which use the idea of remote control via networks, or networking the body. Yet while Stelarc concentrates more on physical control and the idea that 'the body' (i.e. his body) is a shared object, my purpose is to concentrate more on psychological and emotion control.

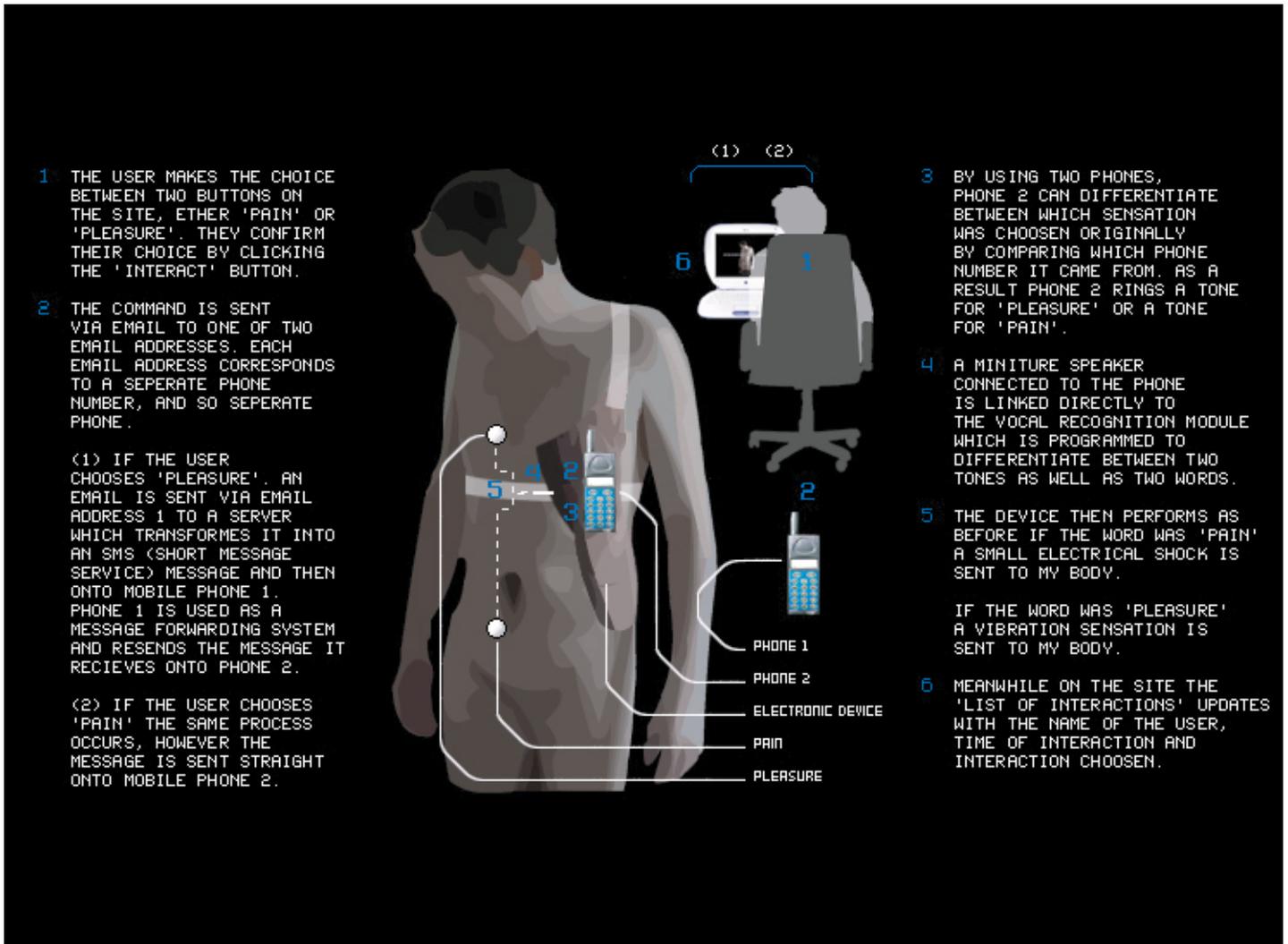
My effect of Pain will be a little shock to the body and pleasure will be a warming sensation. So while pain might not have the same impact as the pain I would sense to a real emotional occurrence such as the breakup of a relationship. In the duration of a day if I receive 45 sensations of pain out of 50 sensations in all, and I check the log at the end of each day to see if this was many different people or just one or two continually sending the same sensation. Wouldn't this have the same effect, as it would either indicate the general state of mind or of just a few in particular, is one of aggressiveness and by doing this they are passing me their emotional state?

DATES

"For those who fear loneliness" will occur for a duration (probably one month) this summer, exact date as yet to be determined.

"For those who fear Intimacy" will occur in the following month. Note: Dates will be posted as soon as they are decided.

Dates will be published on the site as soon as they are known.



For those who fear loneliness

AIMS

"For those who fear intimacy" and "For those who fear loneliness" have both negative and positive aspects in every regard. While on the positive side "For those who fear intimacy" is an expression of self intimacy through the enactment of self induced sensations, it is on the negative side a fear of others and loss of trust in any sort of intimacy or expression of emotion in others. "For those who fear loneliness" expresses positively confidence in others and is a sort of overtness to all, regardless of cost, a belief in human good nature. Yet at the same time it is a fear of loneliness, loss of confidence and peace of mind with oneself.

The reason for so many apparently contradictory aspects to the work is to continually echo the idea of duality and opposites. Most of us live our lives as part of a couple, we are generally optimistic or pessimistic in our outlook and when something effects us emotionally or psychologically it generally leads to positive or negative effects. This is foremost a project of two's, antitheses. The opposite duality of our emotions and sensations, the analogy between man and machine, between the biological and the electronic.

What are the differences between a computers calculated 0's and 1's and our psychological or emotional states which can be divided into many more than two categories? What is information, what is information to control? Can we be broken up into information or can we be controlled as the Genome Project most certainly implies? Can we reduce sensations to just two, or at the least emulate the two which I feel are the most important? What am I and what are my sensations? What is intimacy for me and who or how am I supposed to feel these with? What are the taboos of relationships and sexuality, ideas of morality and do they exist in these contexts?

What is my relation to the electronic device, does it become a sort of partner or rest in the domain of an electronic aid? If it were an artificial leg which replaced one of my legs I would come to think of it as part of me, so why not so a device which connects to me more than physically but also emotionally? What is my relation to ever emerging electronic environments? How do I relate to myself and to others especially when I have never physically met them and when it is via an electronic device/environment?

While posing many questions which affect us all, ultimately this project is a personal experience, a performance which has more results for me than anyone else. Here I have done my best to document all that has been through my mind in regard to the project. All my questions, which are still continually occurring to me, my intentions and hopefully a glimpse at what I hope to achieve which of course depends on how the experience goes. During the performance the site will be continually updated as I feel necessary. Images and/or qt's of what the final objects look like, text or streaming audio on how they feel to wear, whether people notice I am wearing them and how they react. How my average day goes in adapting to wearing the device, all day, every day. And most importantly whether I grow accustomed to the device or feel a sense of dread at wearing it.

REFERENCES

- Rebecca Horn "Séance for two breasts" 1970, "Touching the walls with both hands simultaneously" 1974/75.

- Rachel Murphy, <http://www.crd.rca.ac.uk/~rachel>

- E.J. Marey "la Méthode Graphique dans les sciences experimentales", "La mouvement en Lumière" on-line exhibition, <http://www.expo-marley.com/home.html>

- Stelarc, <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/>

- Steve Mann, <http://wearcam.org/>
- Petra Vargova "The Zone Project" nominee in the Sony Heart young artists online competition.
- "Boundary Functions" by Scott Sona Snibbe nominee in Ars Electronica 98, <http://www.snibbe.com>
- "Continue" concept and realisation: Dieter Kiessling, Programming: Volker Kuchelmeister, <http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/werke/continue> (note: in German).
- "Untitled" by Erik Conrad, <http://www.nomadnet.org/message4/projectroom/> (note: will probably crash your browser but worth looking at!).
- "Floating Time" by Tatsuo Miyajima, http://art.arseed.co.jp/miyajima/index_js.html
- The universal declaration on the human Genome, http://www.unesco.org/human_rights/hrbc.htm
- "Bion" an electronic device for the restoration of movement to paralysed limbs.