

Ascend Receiver
a video by Nick Warner
www.nwarner.com
April 20, 2004

Background:

With the inevitable formation of a wireless, ubiquitous communications network, this piece demonstrates the potential that such a network could enable for eliminating many communication barriers. Currently, much of the world suffers from an uneven distribution of technologies for accelerating the dissemination of ideas. This is largely a result of remotely located peoples and the costs of implementing technology for them. Such people unknowingly suffer greatly in that their lack of tools, such as voice and data communications over the Internet, position them to be far powerless and not as organized than those who are better equipped. As advancing technology begins to eliminate this digital division and allow for a global, ubiquitous communications network, the possibility for any individual to share their experiences or ideas with another person or six billion persons will be a reality.

Thematic Synopsis:

This piece narrates the transformation of a physically and mentally isolated society, burdened with the extreme saturation of recycled media content throughout all controlled outlets. With the tools of a wireless communications network, the society finds freedom and becomes a truthfully connected, global force operating on the power of individuals.

Narrative Sequence and Symbolism:

The piece operates from the symbolic interaction of several characters. In the beginning, the walking grey, shadow figures demonstrate the duality of a mass society, endlessly curious but tirelessly/mindlessly working. These figures show the most human incarnation of all the characters. When they peel away the surface, the conflict of that which they are blind is revealed. A gentle, darkly colored landscape built from wires can now be seen. The most important character, the Musician, solemnly plays his accordion. As the scene zooms closer to him, he sets down the accordion to reveal his knife and the explosives strapped to his chest. This martyr character represents the struggle of ideas and their ascension to freedom. He is tightly tied to the surface of the spheroid planet by bundles of cords.

The camera now tracks along one particular cord/fuse to its end on the other side of the spheroid. The end of the data cord/fuse is magically lit by the embodiment of the polluted aether, the Product character, which surrounds the spheroid's outer space. This enveloping antagonist, which represents the controlled systems of media and their

exploitation of consumers through over saturation of recycled, junk content, sets a time limit on the Musician's struggle to freedom by way of the fuse.

The camera tracks back to the Musician to show his growing concern. The camera continues its movement to zoom into his hair. Here, it is seen that the Children characters are stagnantly growing from the Musician's hair. They lethargically squirm and suck in fumes of the polluted aether Product. The Children represent the static, pacified mindsets of peoples whom are fed manipulative, mind numbing content via conduits better suited for individual communication/expression.

The Musician becomes truly concerned. He draws his knife and ponders suicide, the symbolic death of communication freedom. However, he chooses to use this tool to cut away at his hair. This frees the Children from their lethargy and they float about in space, blinking with data beacons of light. The transformation of moving from wired to wireless begins now. The Children encircle the Musician and unplug the wires that bound him to the spheroid. The wires majestically flail away and are consumed by the planet. Meanwhile, the Children's flying circles erode the polluted aether and a bright, endless outer space is revealed. The Musician is now free, save for the fuse that grows closer to the explosives. He begins to float away from the planet and curiously smiles. The Musician continues his ascension, floating high above the spheroid, until the fuse reaches the explosives. As a serene cloud of smoke slowly cloaks the Musician to a fade out to white, he continues his growing smile despite the uncertain fate of his destruction or true ascension to freedom.

Function in Installation:

Located at an outdoor satellite dish array, this installation functions by juxtaposing the static elements of communication system hardware and video content that would normally be distributed over such a system.