

Winds of the Media from Asia

Human Beings and Art in the B-ISDN Era

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The Idea of a Co-Creating Era

Today, our social system and life-style have revolutionized in accordance with the remarkable development of electronic media, and historically have reached a major turning point for human kind who are now groping for a new social structure. For example it is no exaggeration to say that the electric wave of the Western European countries led the demolition of socialism of the Eastern European countries, such as the Berlin Wall which was the symbol of a cold war structure. After the demolition their politics, economy, industry, living, culture, and so on are being supported by the information of this electronic media and are groping for a new way of prosperous coexistence.

Advanced media is being studied, such as the electronic media shifting from analog we have been using to digital, fusing broadcasting and communication and making intensive terminal apparatus. For example, by connecting the two COMs of Communication and Computer, the analog Information and Communication Infrastructure is now shifting to Digital Communication Network ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network). This transmission method, which was a one-way communication till recently, has developed to "a two-way transmission," "fusing various media," and made "interactive use" possible.

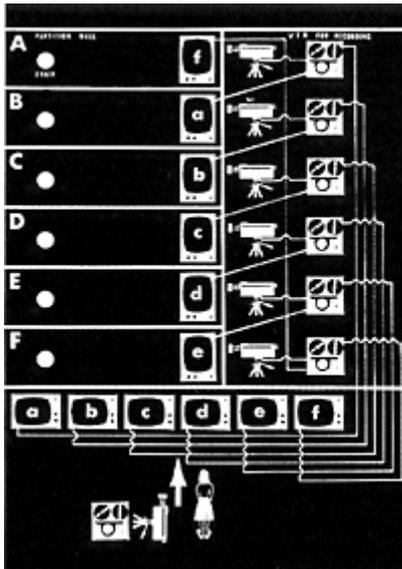
Further, like the transportation system which was railroad in the 19th century changing to automobile, an individual transportation in the 20th century, the Multi Media Communication Network will become a personal use and at the same time "official media" and "personal media" will be separated. Communication will "zeronize" time and space, which will connect the whole world into something like one living thing and "a Barthian Village Era" will arrive, but what we must keep in mind about this development is that there will still be "the West" and "the East" and this life, just as a human brain will have "a right brain" and "a left brain" and a heart also will have "a right atrium" and "a left atrium." Just like not being able to live with only the right brain or the left brain, the Barthian Village Era will become a whole when they are both in position.

Historically, till the industrialized society, culture had a one-way stream from countries of high cultural level to those of low cultural level. Metaphorically speaking, the industrialized societies flowed in one direction from the West to the East carried by western lies. I believe that in a high standard information society, the West and the East will communicate and complement each other's thoughts and cultures and by doing so will finally make good use of each of their own organic functions.

So I'd like to make my report titled "Winds of the media from Asia" from the artist's angle through my studies of making Network Art.

Art by Communication

I have been studying "the relation between transmission and art" from the beginning of 1970 and have continued producing Interactive Media Installations which were done on terms of the participation of general viewers.



Line of "MIMIC", 1973

For example, Video Performance "MIMIC," which I did in 1973, connects each separate room A, B C, D, E, F, like in Drawing 1. First of all, the picture prepared by the artist will be sent to A of Room A. A will correspond to this picture. The picture in Room A will simultaneously be transmitted to Room B. Using this method it will be transmitted from Room A to B to C to D to E to F. Further, by repeatedly transmitting from A to B, C, D, E, F the picture will start making changes.

Like in Drawing 1, by looking at the monitors gathered in one place transmitted from room to room, it enables the viewers to easily understand "the scene of each room" and "the transforming relation of transmission" in real time. Here you are not able to actually look into each room or compare one room with the other. However, by transmitting at zero seconds you are able to "read the mental activities," from "the time lag" and "the space lag" between rooms, and also "intervals" between perceiving and putting it into action.

(see Connecting Drawing 1)

Look into the Relation Between "To See" and "To Be Seen" Through Network Video Game "Gomokunarabe" (1974—75) Is a work to communicate with remote places by using satellite, which deals with the communication and art relation in a more game-like way, and was produced to see the relation of "to see" and "to be seen" by taking scenes of participating viewers with a video camera placed at an upper diagonal position like when facing a person. (see Picture 1)



Video Game "Gomokunarabe", 1975

In 1981, I went further with this work and made "Between Sound & Sound No. 2." This work was the exact same system as Video Game "Gomokunarabe," but while Video Game "Gomokunarabe" develops on a go board, this "Between Sound & Sound No. 2" develops with the whole body on a drum. In other words, "a human body turned into drumsticks."

"Between Sounds & Sounds No. 2," using a satellite, in Picture No. 2 and 3 the video cameras placed above each of the two monitors in two separate places A and B, capture "a wooden drum" installed diagonally below in front. The viewers will perform on these drums. The video camera above the upper monitor of point A transmits the picture and sound of the viewer's feet performed on the drum to the upper monitor of point B. The performer of point B beats the drum with his feet by watching the picture on the upper monitor. When doing so he/ she corresponds to "the expression and volume of sound of the movement of his/her feet." By combining the picture and sound transmitted from the two points A and B, the system is made to transmit it to the lower monitor of both point A and B.



Sound & Sound no. 2 "A Corner"



Between Sound & Sound no. 2, 1981-89

Though the action between the two, A and B, may look simple, (the relation between the picture transmitted from Point A and the movement of the performer's feet of Point B) they are in a "to see and to be seen relationship." In other words, the two performers therefore must keep in mind that they are in a "to see and to be seen relationship" when beating their drums with their feet.

If I may explain the relation between "to see" and "to be seen" a little more in detail, when facing a mirror, if you raise your left hand it will be reflected on the left side of the mirror and if your right hand it will be reflected on the right side of the mirror. In short, the relation when facing a mirror is "a plane symmetry."

The relation between "to see" and "to be seen" when facing a video camera will be, if you raise your left hand it will be shown on the right side and if your right hand is raised it will be shown on the left side. Also, objects in a close range view will be seen on the upper part of the monitor because a close range view is further from the camera. Objects in a distant view on the contrary will be seen on the lower part of the monitor. So therefore, when using a video camera it is differently reflected from that of a mirror. So, the relation is "a point symmetry" and must be understood by rotating 180 degrees on the point placed in the center. Up till today we believed that the relation between "to see" and "to be seen" are that of a mirror but the relation a video camera creates is much more humane.

"The recognition lag" made by the relation "to see" and "to be seen, and "the time lag" and "the space lag" between perceiving an act and putting it into action are shown as the difference of pitch and volume of the sound of a drum, and will appear as the difference between the action on the monitor transmitted from Point A and the action corresponding to this. This difference can be apprehended at each "interval" or as "an internal breath."

For this explanation you might assume that one might mimic, but I want him/her to correspond very freely to the monitor transmitted from Point A and ask that the two make the effort to become one expression. Also, in order to make the work successful the two in both Point A and B must react by each reading the other's breathing.

Footwork similar to the expressions of a face also reveals the expression of a body. Because feet support the whole body from feet to head, their expressions are closely related to the rhythm of movements of waist and arms. There are also many different ways of how a foot touches the ground and its characteristics are seen in the performing arts such as Spanish flamenco that stamps the ground, Japanese Noh dance that slides feet and ballet from Europe that stands on its toes.

When corresponding at Point B by perceiving the footwork transmitted from Point A, in the minute time and space before putting it into action after going through numerous functions such as the optic nerve, "interval" or "breathing" will be created. However, these "intervals" and "breathings" are extremely difficult to capture with the naked eye. Therefore my intention is to take "the footwork transmitted from Point A" and "the footwork of a performer" corresponding to this with a video camera which is transmitted at zero seconds and then compose it so I can show them simultaneously using two monitors, and by doing so I will make the relation between them more clear. In short, by using the zero second transmission of Information Network things invisible will become visible.

If I may explain things not visible in more detail, I believe that between "the footwork transmitted from Point A" and "the performer's footwork corresponding at Point B," there is an "air current" (physical energy) like an electric field being emitted. In other words, a place between two frames of monitors where nothing actually exists, there exists something internal, and this is seen more clearly with a body than with one's eyes and more. I think it is seen with a "ki" (physical or mental energy). In short, I believe that "in the silent time and space while transmitting" it imparts meaningful words.

In order to understand the relation of this silent time and space more clearly, I used a half mirror in "Between Sound & Sound N. 3" (1993) (see Drawing 3) so that the relation between the two performers A and B can be looked at.

Sharing Space with Remote Places

In March 1988, between Japan and America in Fukui and in New York, I performed satellite art, and in April 1988 for the opening ceremony of Nagoya City Museum I performed "Art Crossing" using FPU (Micro line) and in July 1989 I performed Network Art by using animated communication at the Modern Art Museum, Toyama, titled "image Crossing No. 2," being conscious of the B-ISDN Era. This picture is a scene from "Telephone from Ghosts." Only "W" alone is at the setting but on the wide screen "M" also comes into the scene. As they talk to each other, various items such as beer and a knife pop onto the screen.



Image crossing no. 2 Telephone



Telephone from Ghosts

Female "X" suddenly appears into this conversation. After a while the phone rings and "X" answers the phone. She tries to hand the receiver to "W" and "M" but can't hand it to them. That means this deals with "a conversation system of virtual images and real images by sharing the same space."

Satellite and B-ISDN should be used for the works I have introduced to you in here but because the line charges are extremely high and a license is necessary, I could not actually perform them. However, because the ISDN line has opened recently I have decided to grope through actual practice aiming for the art of the B-ISDN Era.

Art That Has More Than One Pole

When three artists A, B, C, collaborate by using still picture transmissions, regardless of using the exact same medium, the work will turn out to be completely different depending on whether it will be transmitted to Artist B from Artist A or to Artist C from Artist A beforehand (see Drawing 3).

Another interesting aspect of this method is when you look at the three pieces of work together produced each at communication station A, B and C, you are able to experience the fun of "reading the process of producing and intervals between producing." This has a completely different interest from the conventional pictures and the combination photographs you often see. In short, rather than the final piece as a completed work, it is "an art of process" made by number of pieces and also is an art that reads the "interval" between A and B. In

Japan during the Muromachi Era (1338—1573), "Renga" (linked poem) "a poem read in a game-like way by collaborating" was the trend, where A recites the first half of a poem and B must recite the other half by linking to the first half of it, and this could be said to have guided Network Art because it is also an art to read the I interval" between A and B.

So, it is a form of art that let's you experience the process of "combination," "mixture," "conversion" and "fusion" by meeting each artist as a pole. In other words, it's more like an international marriage, a "collaboration" that cannot be foreseen, created by meeting people on equal terms regardless of race, nationality, philosophy, language, character, personality and sense of value, rather than expressing a painter's individual inner feeling when painting in a closed up studio. This sort of meeting obviously will have a I recognition lag, even when apprehending the theme of a work.

This "lag" "brings out new energy and brings forth an unpredictable effect or work and as a result creates a great piece of work.

This Network Art will hold "a number of poles" on equal terms, and by pluralistic meeting they will all start coping unconsciously with his/her feelings, and as art fused by the unconscious effect I believe that interesting works beyond my imagination can be created. Therefore, it is also "art that crosses the border" by making an electronic community with a new type of group of artists that goes beyond the border and even to the people living on the opposite side of the globe who can collaborate by sharing the pictures real time in I cyberspace and time."

Still picture / Work transmitted to Fukui Communication Station from Nagoya Communication Station Work by restructuring the material of the work Japan-France Network Art (1990. 10).



J-F-Network Art, 1990

Towards the B-ISDN Era—Sound Image Crossing

In the B-ISDN Era, in order to work by cooperating with people in remote places in a virtual environment, the progress of "remote control," automation," "real time," "two-way," and so forth are essential. When making studies of these characteristics, as long as B-ISDN can't be used as a public line the only choice is to study the ISDN-84.

When doing so, music is easier to connect to computers. For instance, the reason why people of the Pythagorean Era before Christ were solving the relation of frequency and scale, and why electronic art at the early stage of art created a synthesizer are because music has played

the leading role. Further, MIDI made it possible for musical instruments in other communication stations to be remote controlled, so sound transmission is easier to study than picture transmission. Because of the reasons I have written, I have decided to make "Sound Image Crossing."

The basic types of "Sound Image Crossing" series I have done are as below.

Through a MIDI interface, I connected sound sources such as synthesizer with computer so that I can remotely control the MIDI instruments of the other stations and compose an instrument so that viewers can participate.

Also, to make a system to communicate analog sounds as well with a microphone by using Audio Cordex above 7 kHz. Further, it will depend on the distance between each communication station but making it so it will repeat and go in a loop. "To write scales by collaborating" with people in other communication stations using remote control. (Make music using remote control by transmitting music to each communication station and discussing it through phone.)

For those who can't make music with scales, have them write their names on application "M" which is a sound that can be improvised and used as music.

In order to create the feeling of being at a live performance, a total of more than eight speakers on both sides is necessary. Because hearing compared to seeing has a character that's non-directional, to create the feeling of being at a live performance made in a three dimensional sound and space environment, it is necessary to produce Hearing Information from all directions. To do this, at least eight speakers are necessary. I might add that an analog telephone can be attached to PLANET ISDN.

Performance by Sound Image Crossing "MA"–The Meaning of Silent Time and Space

Each participant will use one monotone each to do a performance. Receiving the monotone transmitted from other stations, he/she will correspond only by the length and strength of a monotone. Because it's so simple, anybody can participate in this performance making use of "MA" (interval). Also, the instrument does not have to be a synthesizer, it could be anything that will make a sound, such as wood, bamboo and iron.



Sound Image Crossing "MA"

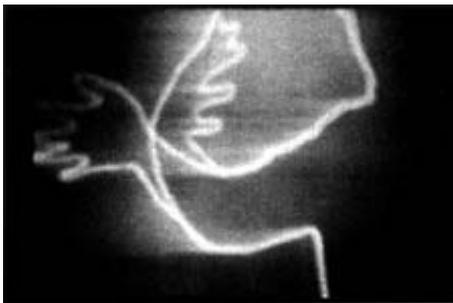
Like there is a master of ceremonies in a symposium "a program director" using a mouse control is necessary to change the tempo freely and to turn the pages. This program director

will conduct to heighten "silent words" like "interval, "breathing" and "ki" (mental and physical energy), that are invisible, into an expression. By using this method Sound Image Crossing "MA" I will concentrate on "interval" which is a silent word, and will make my work by "producing joint music" + "performed by participating viewers" + "automatic performance" + "MIDI remote control."

When talking about a theme, a conversation goes on by "looking into the mental condition" of the person you talk to. For example, when reacting to what the other person said, when you "absolutely agree" you will instantly nod but when you have any doubts about what he/she said you will probably shake your head after a slight interval.

We keep a conversation going by reading this slight time lag, in other words silent "intervals." These invisible "intervals" are "words" and also "a feeler of the mind." Different from the meetings between objects, meetings between people are an inner "meeting of mind" as well, so there could never be the same situation or meeting. In other words, every meeting is "a decisive meeting" and "a once-in-a-lifetime chance" of Zen. Sound Image Crossing "MA" is the exact same sort of "meeting the intervals."

Interval Between Information



Breath no. 4, 1980

For instance, the picture below "Breath No. 4" is a work expressing a physical energy. This work is composed by two outlines, the situation now (Information A) and the situation 0.3 seconds ago (Information B) of a person. His/her arm hardly moves, so Information A and Information B overlaps. On the other hand, the hand moves largely, but this movement is being supported by (Information B of 0.3 seconds ago reading the information of A 0.3 seconds later. Because of this "interval" between Information A and Information B that has movement, it can convey not only "the expression of arm" but also "the emotion of that person."

This indeed is the "blank" of the Eastern drawing done in Indian ink. Only will a content have a deep meaning when there are "spaces that are not drawn." These blanks are what takes you out into the space. People who express by some means put more energy into "interval" or "blank." They concentrate on putting all their energy, but still it adds to "zero." But without this "zero," words do not exist.

Information Network was made from "positive thinking" of economic effect but this "zero" is just as important.