

COMPOUND NARRATIVES

OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING
AND BECOME A CYBORG

(working title)

Compound Narratives explores the implications of emerging technologies on future branded experience design. Familiar design practices will be used as a way to explore the developing cyborg relationship between humans and computers. The project does not attempt to lead the discussion on the future relationship of humans and machines, but rather seeks to offer an alternative to the cliched assumptions about technology's negative impact on our connection to humanity and nature.

We don't understand what it means to be a cyborg in the figurative sense for how it will apply to daily life. My interest in the cyborg identity lies in the implications of the new technology on our everyday experiences. After a lot of research, I've realized that I am not interested in exploring embedded devices that would truly create cyborgs because they are too difficult to work with and too far in the future to remain interesting in my imagination. The project involves imagining what the "new normal" will be in the near future and then finding opportunities for more speculative design and branding within that setting.



HUMANCOMPUTER INTERACTION
FRAGMENTED TELEPRESENCE
DISEMBODIED IDENTITY
AUGMENTED SENSORY EXPERIENCES
GAINING MORE SENSES TO BE MORE CONNECTED TO EXTERNAL FACTORS
SEEING, EXPERIENCING LIKE A MACHINE
INTERTWINING DESIRES
AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIPS
EXTRASENSORY COMMUNICATION
CYBORG IDENTITY
DISEMBODIED SELF

COMMUNICATION MEDIATION SPECTRUM

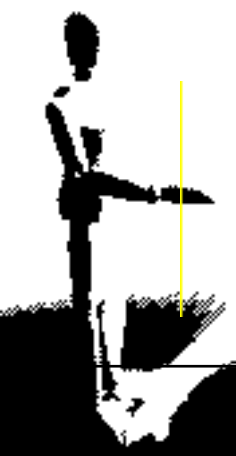
HUMAN AND HUMAN

- human to human interaction
- supposedly unmediated“natural communication
- intimate connection between humans



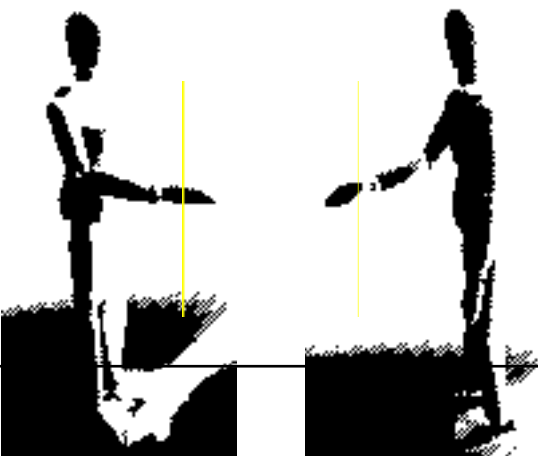
HUMAN AND MACHINE

- human-computer interaction
- task-oriented, AI conversations, input-output
- intimate connection between human and machine



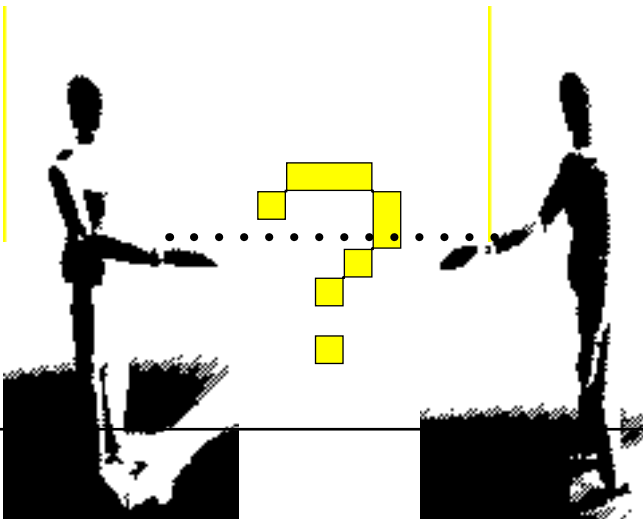
HUMAN TO HUMAN THROUGH MACHINE

- mediated human interaction
- once-removed level of communication
- intimate connection between humans through machine



HUMAN-MACHINE TO HUMAN-MACHINE

- humancomputer interaction
- intimate connection between humans, machines, and other entities or agents



KEY RESEARCH THEMES

1

DISEMBODIED IDENTITIES AND COLLECTIVE MINDS

Fragmented self, telepresent elements of human identity dispersed throughout machine environments. New levels of understanding and symbiosis with each other through machines.

Related technology/concepts:

facial recognition and detection
brain based devices
telepresence through conscious artifacts

2

CONFLICTING DESIRES AND AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIPS

Machines dictating human experience as a pleasurable pursuit. The feedback loop that happens between humans and machines, or other humans through machines.

Related technology/concepts:

machine learning
artificial intelligence systems

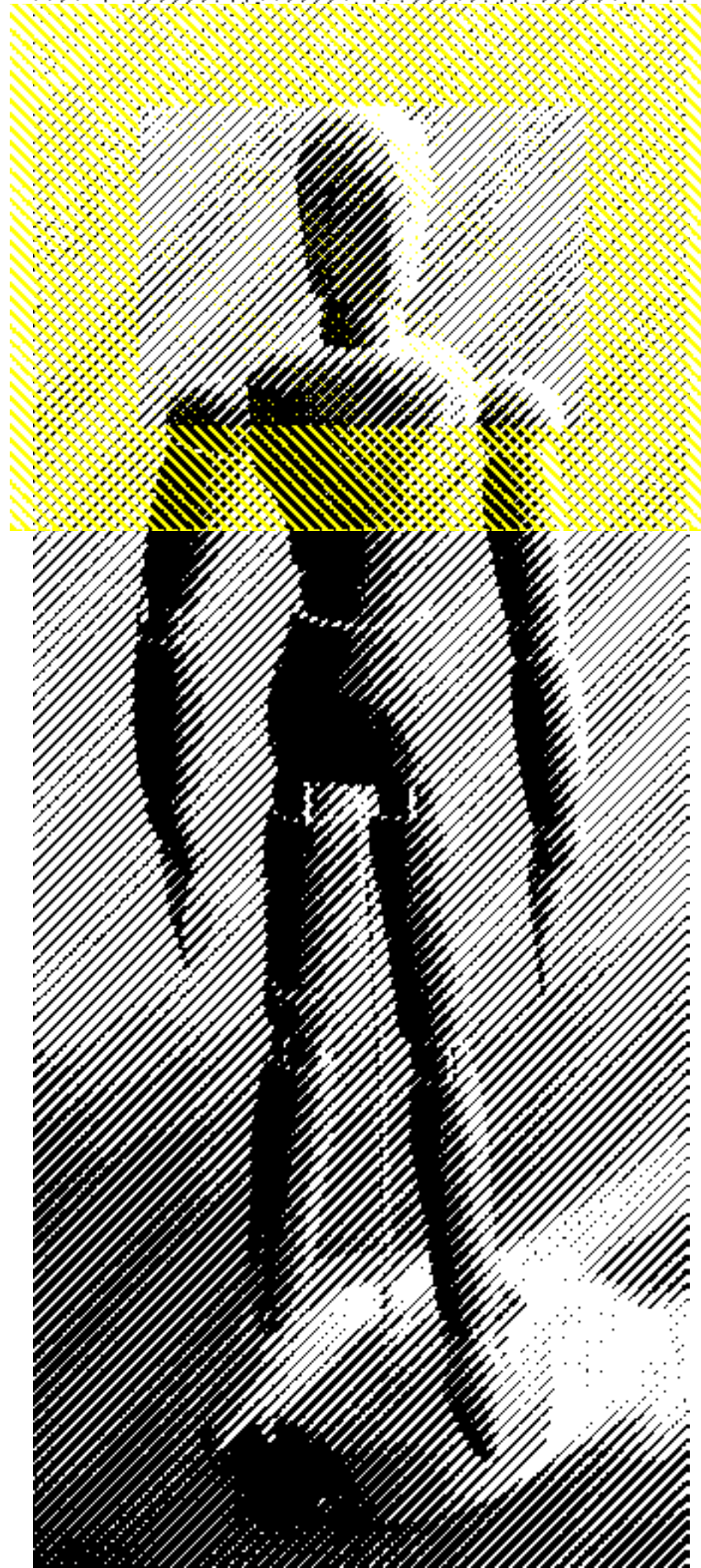
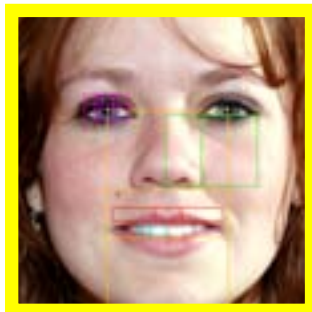
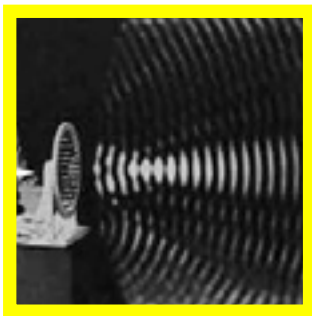
DISEMBODIED IDENTITIES AND COLLECTIVE MINDS

According to Katherine Hayles, information has lost its body.

When the human mind is no longer contained in a single biological body, what happens to our perception of identity?

If we are both human and computer (metaphorically or literally), what represents us?

How would a machine represent a person?



“Phantasms of the living” refer to the proliferation of these humanoid replicas...While we are now quite accustomed to the existensce of these phantasms of the living and the representational roles they play in our lives, the period of computerization has seen a renewed explosion in their quantity, forms and uses, intesifying the problem of how to connect them back to embodied persons. biometrics promises to resolve this problem of the bodies missing in action from mediated communicative contexts.

- disappearance of distance
- layers of mediation
- the fragmented self
- partial objects / conscious artifacts
- shared *everything*



EXPERIMENT SKETCHES AND IDEAS

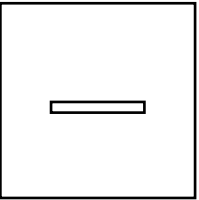
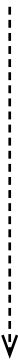
TRANSACTIONAL COMMUNICATION

“Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we can feel utterly alone. And there is the risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed—and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing”

What if your friend was embedded in an inanimate object?
Could he maintain his identity?
Would suggesting that elements of people can become objects simply prove Turkle’s point?
Or would it suggest that more ambiguous levels of communication with these disembodied elements of our identities could be beneficial in some way?

Perhaps I could take two objects and embed them with technology that allows them to respond to mirror each other across a distance. For example, take a speakers and have them play the same things, take lights and have them be on at the same time, etc.

DNA?
Voice simulation
Heartbeat

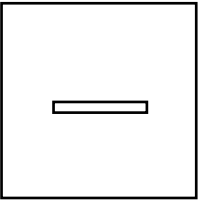
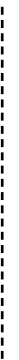


object 1

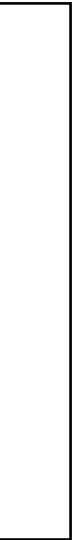


receipt?

distance

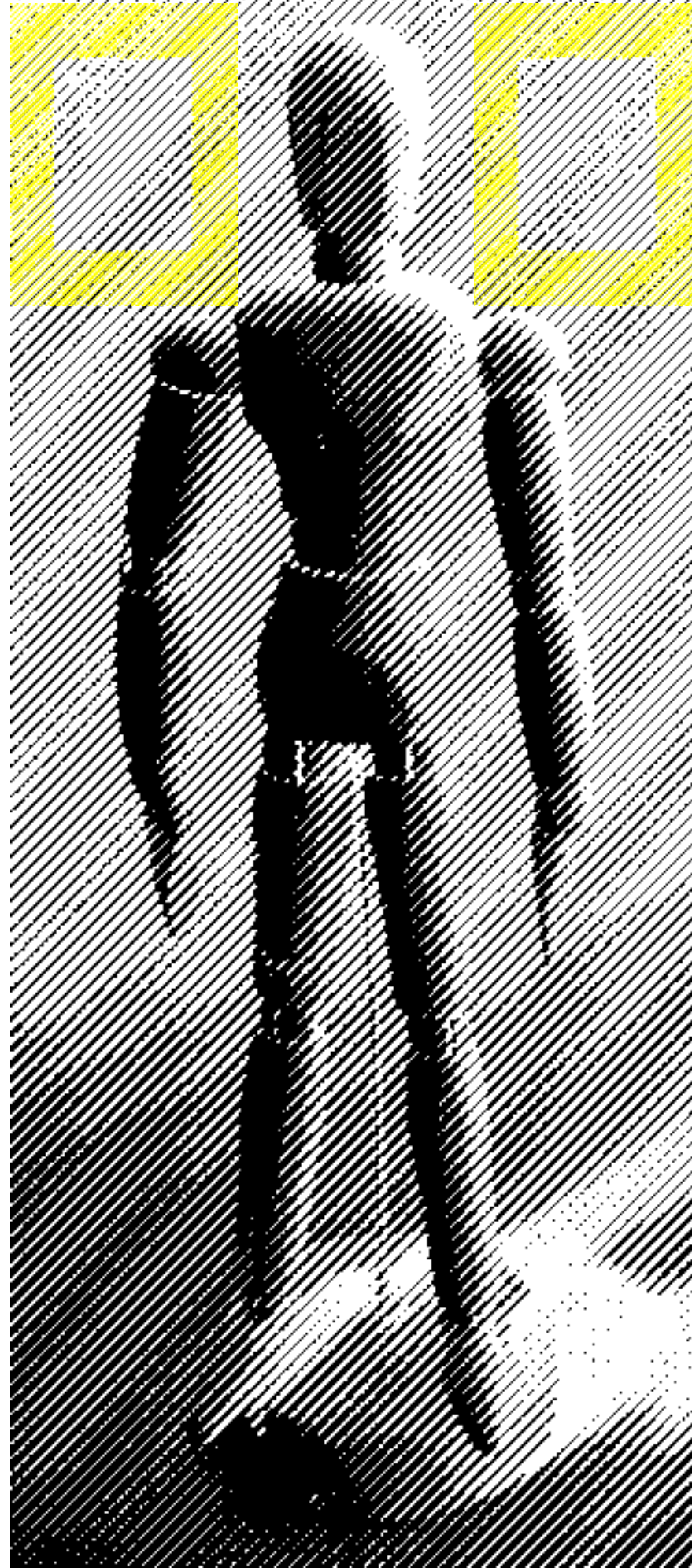


object 2



receipt?

CONFLICTING DESIRES AND AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIPS



- desire to be controlled
- desire to be telepresent

machine learning
artificial intelligence systems
brain based devices

exploring experience design through writing from the perspective of someone having the experience

MONOLOGUES ON FULFILLING REAL FAKE DESIRES

ACT I
THE SPECTACLE OF THE INDIFFERENT GAZE



THE EXHIBITIONIST

She wants to be wanted. The best impression must be given if this is going to go well. She flips the switch on the mirror to show her flaws. The left eyebrow is tilted three degrees lower than the right. She applies powder to correct it. Her lips are twelve percent thinner than they should be so she drags a coat of plumping cream and three coats of lipstick across them. Her eyes do not have enough contrast so she defines them with shadow, pencils, and mascara. Her nose is slightly too large so she adds more defined cheekbones and rosy cheeks to distract from it as suggested. Her hair naturally parts twenty-five millimeters to the right of where it should, so she corrects it by spraying and drying it into place, forcing it into submission. Now she is ready. She fits the mask.

She steps out of her apartment onto the street, walking with purpose. Her movements will be traced, her face identified and analyzed, and she wants them to see her at her best. She never changes her quick pace. She walks in a perfectly straight line with her head held high. She didn't do all of that work to not be remembered today. She wants evidence. She wants documentation. And most importantly she wants to gain followers. She is alerted that it is working. She has been chosen. She turns right and begins to run up the stairs.

THE HITCHHIKER

Click. The view changes quickly. This is the one. This guy is definitely going somewhere good. I'm going to stick with him. I'm walking down the street rapidly. Maybe I am trying to catch the metro. Maybe I am late. I feel like I must do this all the time. I see a tall building up ahead. I hope I'm not going in there. I didn't come to see the inside of a generic office building. Those look the same everywhere. There's no way to verify the verisimilitude. Ugh I'm going in. Yep, it's the same as every other one. This guy looks like he's leaving. Click. I'm opening the door to the street. A sharp left. Now I'm running. This is a good one. Maybe I am being chased. That would be exciting. I wish I could look back and see. It doesn't look like anyone is there when I alternate to the top down for a second. Okay, I'm slowing down. Dark. Better find a new one quick. Let's go, let's go, let's go. Come on I don't have all day. There she is. Okay now I am going somewhere. I'm going up the staircase quickly. Now I'm turning around. Back down the staircase. Well that's a different view at least. Back up the staircase again. And back down. Floating up and down the stairs without bouncing feels nice.

MONOLOGUES ON FULFILLING REAL FAKE DESIRES

ACT II
WE ARE H-PLUS



MACHINE THINKING
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch sides. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch to the top. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch sides. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Off. Spit.

There are twenty-three reds, forty-eight fuchsia, one hundred and twenty-seven magenta, and twelve pink ones. The pink is obviously more popular, but I am strangely attracted to the red even though it will be bad for me. It is recommended I steer clear of bright hues. They make me look more washed out.

Step. Step. Step. Following the footprints up the slope. My foot is twenty percent smaller than the foot before mine. I lengthen my stride by twenty percent as well to match the footprints exactly. I can feel the breeze on my cheeks. Forty degrees cooler than my body. I keep my head tilted to the east so I can continue to feel it.

Open. Crop. Save As. Close. Open. Crop. Save As. Close. Open. Crop. Save As. Close.

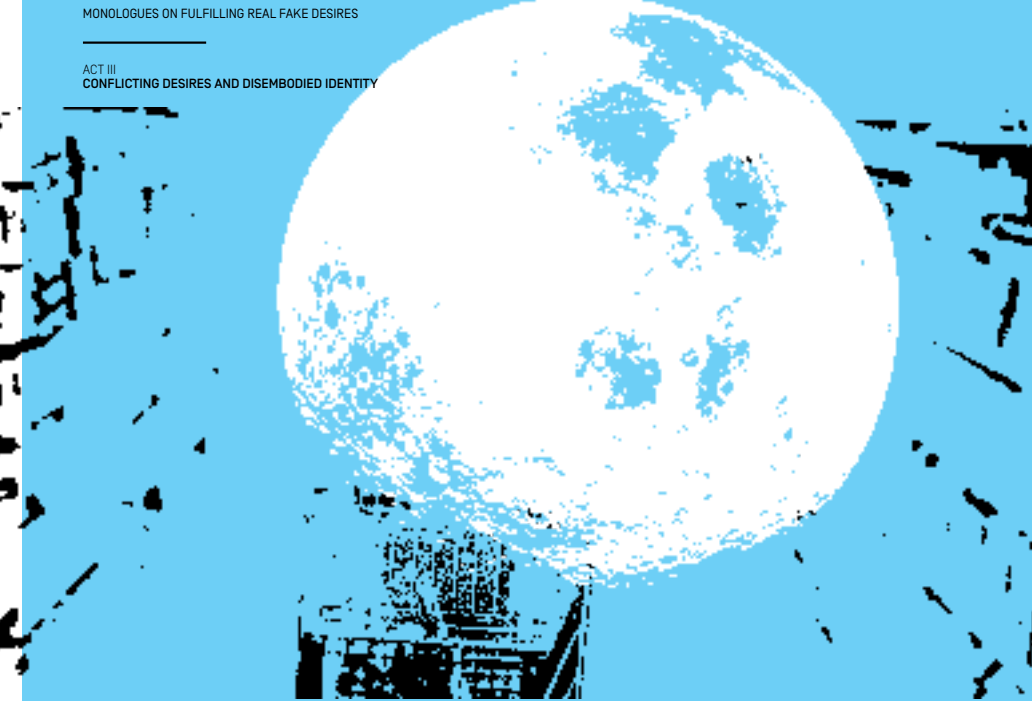
A cat runs out in front of my car. There is a thirty percent chance I will hit the cat if I don't swerve to avoid it. There is a seventy percent chance I will destroy my car and injure myself if I do swerve to avoid it. I calculate the angles. Which way I can swerve, how hard to swerve, whether or not to swerve. I steer into a mailbox. The cat survives. The mailbox does not.

Go one tenth of a mile to the north. Turn left. Go one hundred feet. You have arrived at your destination. No, you have. I have organic body. Please make a U-turn. I am not ready. Make a U-turn at the next possible location to your left. Your answers to my questions don't make sense. You didn't ask a question. You're not a question. Go five hundred feet and turn right. What a game.

His voice has a strange thumping cadence. It's monotonous and rhythmic. It is soothing to listen to it when I'm falling asleep. I keep him with me all the time. He can narrate anything to me and I will enjoy it. Decide on the furniture's dimensions. Cut your logs with the table saw, using your measurements. I try to sound like him sometimes, but mostly I just listen.

MONOLOGUES ON FULFILLING REAL FAKE DESIRES

ACT III
CONFLICTING DESIRES AND DISEMBODIED IDENTITY



STRANGER DANGER
HOW TO APPROACH THE
MOON ON A SUNNY DAY

I am dry. You are out of tubes. Your liquid supply is low. Consider the store. It is hot outside today. A good day for a frozen non-dairy ice tube or a cold jump into a large amount of liquid. I have no liquids or tubes left. I will go back to the store and get the IciclePopDreamTube logged yesterday.

Step. Step. Step. Step. Step. Step. Reach. Push. It does not move. Wrong. Edit. Undo. Reach. Pull. Door opens. Step. Step. Step. I hear a loud bang. Scanning. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Aisle number eight. Fifty-degrees to the left. Step. Step. Step. Door three. Stop. Five rows. Seven columns. Five times seven is thirty-five. There are five tubes deep in each set but one that only has four. I pick up the tube from the set that only has four. This tube will be mine. This IciclePopDreamTube has four hundred and fifty- five calories, ninety-four grams of sugar and zero grams of fat. That is exactly what I think.

Success. Something is moving in the distance. It has limbs and is tall. It has two high contrast circular shapes in close proximity, a trapezoid with a darker area including two dots, an oval shape with a darker line in the middle, and a roundish container shape. It is moving closer. Looks like a face. Identify who it is. Matches database for the Moon. If it matches the database, it must be the Moon.

Download how to approach the Moon today. Approaching the Moon is not as linear as it seems. The moon is very bright, more than you probably think, and getting the right exposure that avoids the flat look can be tricky. Moon looks much bigger than normal. But it will not really be much bigger. It is all an illusion, a trick of the eye. It has a reddish tint today. Avoid looking directly at it so you don't injure your eyes.

Hello Moon. Please don't trick me. You are looking brighter than I may think and somewhat bigger. I hope you're doing well.

You must perceive that I am someone I am not. Please leave me alone. My system is telling me we are strangers.

Stranger. System reboot. Apologize. I will reboot. My apologies.

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Stranger. System reboot. Apologize. I will reboot. My apologies.

Semi-automatic scripts

Script 001

Plot-0-Matik and Cleverbot

vultures that can speak but don't want to
That is pretty awesome. What do they sing?
subterranean river
gets closer.
drafted as soldier but can't kill
Where were you when John F Kennedy was shot?
memories from another life
Haha. Oh.

Script 002

Plot-0-Matik and Talk-bot

tall, thin, dark man with a scar on the left side of his mouth
I think it's about seven.
giant game board inside a topiary maze
Still, I would never make the sweeping generalization of all
games being giant, would you?
seeing the dead in peripheral vision
I get queasy when I see these computer parts that belong on the
inside of a computer and not outside. Let's please talk about
something else.
stars turning bluer
Outer space is indeed fascinating!

Script 003

Plot-0-Matik and Talk-bot

tall, thin, dark man with a scar on the left side of his mouth
I think it's about seven.
giant game board inside a topiary maze
Still, I would never make the sweeping generalization of all
games being giant, would you?
seeing the dead in peripheral vision
I get queasy when I see these computer parts that belong on the
inside of a computer and not outside. Let's please talk about
something else.
stars turning bluer
Outer space is indeed fascinating!

Script 004

Plot-0-Matik and Cleverbot and Human

a woman whose hair always has flowers in it
What's her name?
Rose.
All roses are red.
Rose goes to military school for space cadets.
Do your school work.
She has a problem: energy drinks that work far too well.
I agree, do you want to change it?
No, but she might.
She IS right!
A grey-and-white cat wanders through.
No it s digital camo.

Script 005

Human and other Human via twitter

She flips the switch. Her totem blinks, transmitting what she wants. “My grandma Jules and I are the only people who still dress up for airports. Looking fly when we fly.” She giggles to herself and the feeling is transmitted back to Ann as she touches the blue section of the totem.

Script 006

Human and other Human via facebook

She flips the switch. Her totem blinks, transmitting what she wants. “Market report: queen annes lace marigolds radishes tomatoes tuberoses! eggs butter lettuce tarragon mint” She ponders the update, then holds the transmission dial up to tell Erin “Get me some radishes.”

Script 007

Human

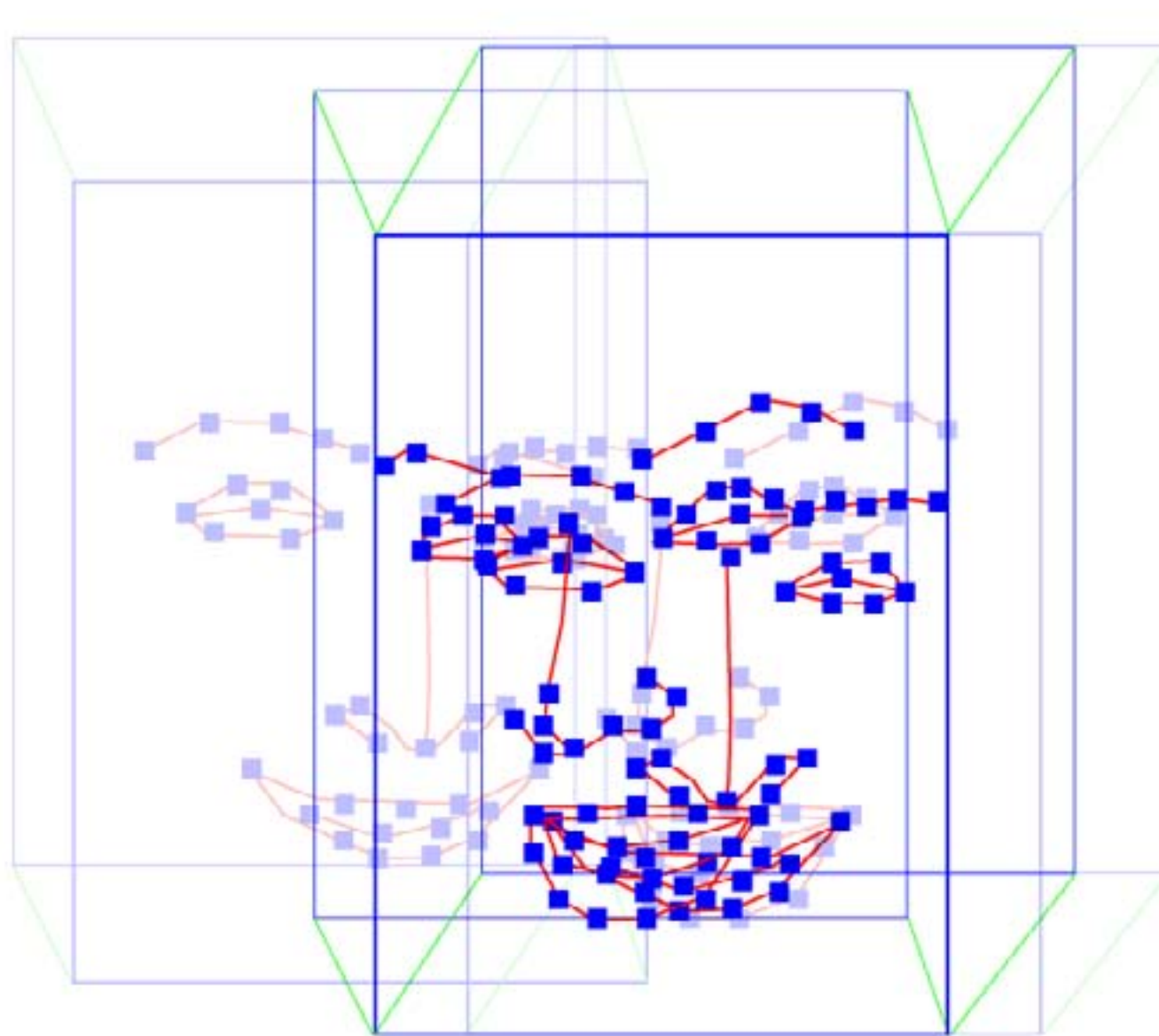
They sit down across from each other, ready to concentrate. They each hold their translator in one hand to help them acquire the raw data from each other’s minds. It appears as incomprehensible static, but rhythms, patterns, and symbolic images begin to emerge. They are so in sync with each other that they have learned to understand the way the other thinks.

Script 008

Human and other Human via twitter

She flips the switch. Her totem blinks, transmitting what she wants. “My dog has to think the elevator is a time machine, right? There’s no other possible explanation.” She giggles to herself and the feeling is transmitted back to Sarah as she touches the blue section of the totem. They sit down across from each other, ready to concentrate.

Visualizations of merging of minds or
cyborg identities



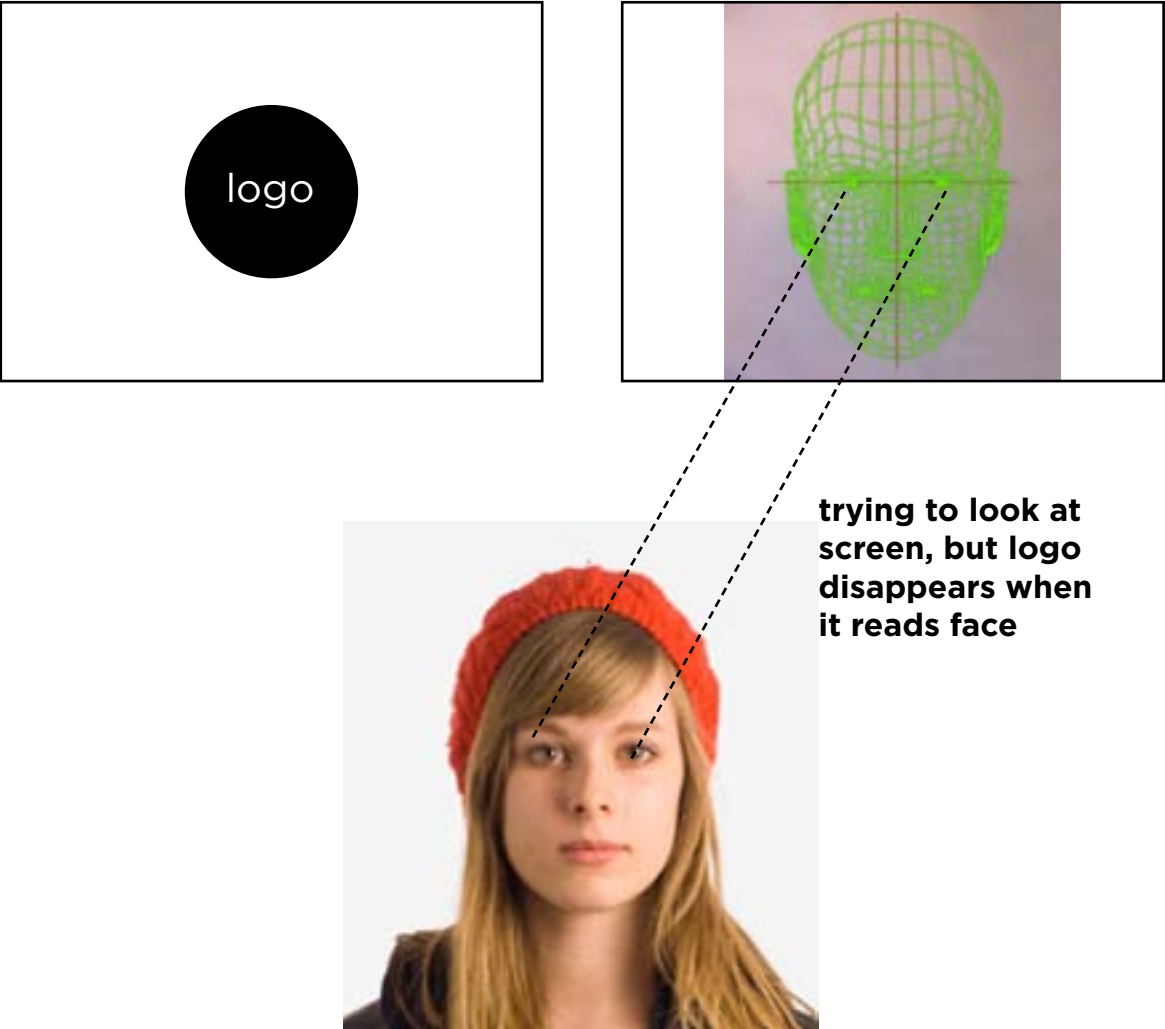
I want you to be me.

OTHER SKETCHES AND IDEAS

IDENTITY RESPONSIVE BRANDING

Instead of thinking of advanced facial recognition in a commercial context being applied to personalized advertising, what if the brand itself was reconfigured based an individual’s identity? Could a brand identity choose to ignore certain people? Could it behave in such a way that it was never actually seen, increasing the demand for it? What if a brand element disappeared whenever it sensed a face? It would only exist in peripheral vision.

peripheral vision branding



Do we see logos the same way we see faces?

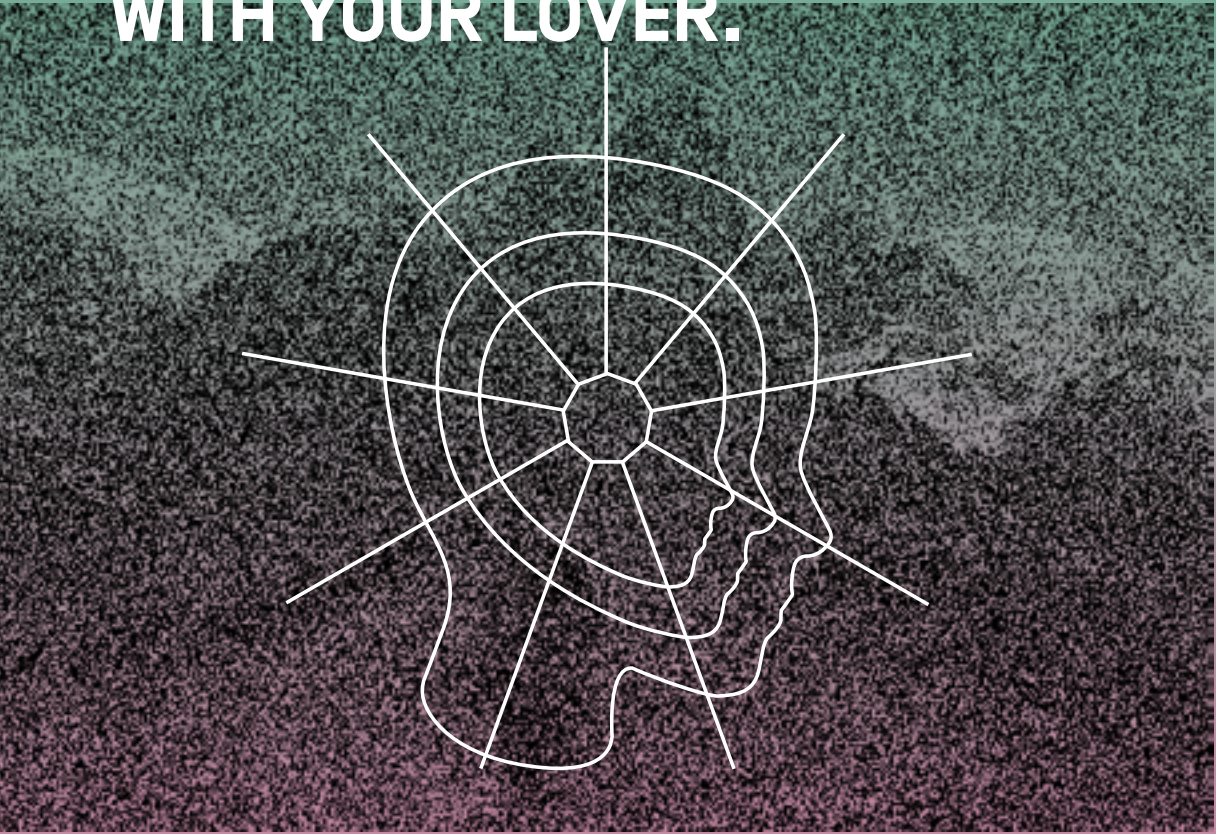


USING BRANDSPEAK TO GIVE THINGS CONTEXT

Just recently started thinking about taking a technology’s speculative use and branding as a method of developing a richer context for its use.

MINDSYNC

FOR THE MOST
INTIMATE CONNECTION
WITH YOUR LOVER.



RAW DATA TRANSFER FROM BRAIN TO BRAIN
PRIVATE VIEWING CHAMBERS
LIVE ACCESS TO UNFILTERED STATIC

You'll never feel closer than this.

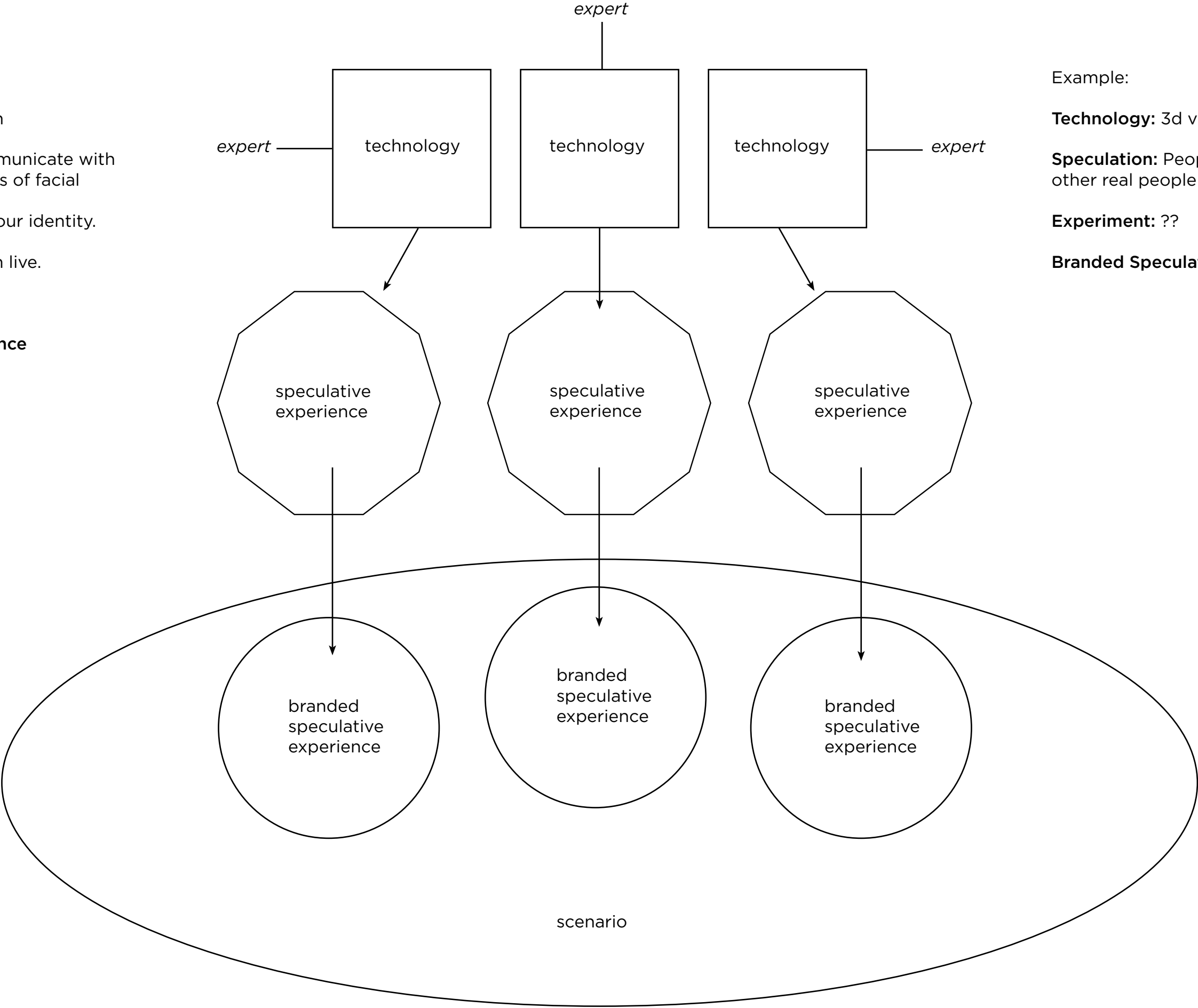
Example:

Technology: facial recognition

Speculation: People can communicate with other people through readings of facial expressions. or
Brands can adapt based on your identity. or
Analysis of others can happen live.

Experiment: ??

Branded Speculative Experience



Example:

Technology: 3d virtual world accessible by avatars

Speculation: People can live vicariously through other real people instead of simulations.

Experiment: ??

Branded Speculative Experience

MOVING FORWARD

My interest in gearing the project toward branding has not shown up in the exercises yet because I was initially planning to (and still might) not integrate it until I am further along in developing the individual experiences. I'm realizing that it might allow to have a more specific focus moving forward if I think from a branding perspective sooner.

Next steps:

Stop writing for a couple weeks.

Decide on a couple projects to pursue.

Explore through making and drawing only in that time.

Determine a more solid direction to take through the rest of the project.

Revise thesis paper.

Two potential directions to narrow focus:

- One is specifically focusing on disembodied identity (faces, voices, telepresence) and allowing it develop naturally into an experience I will brand later.
- One is choosing three technologies and doing projects that focus on the branding orientation of the project.