

Shamanic Sequences: Gateways between the Corporeal, Virtual and Spiritual Realms

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.



## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the multi-dimensional aspects of space by engaging three primary “modes of knowing”: the corporeal, the virtual and the spiritual. The crossings of these modes are investigated through the development of three characters in a film; Kira is the earth-worshipping goddess; Kisho is the cyborg, a permanently uploaded information-seeker; and the Shaman is a shape-shifting lightworker. These characters evolve from the distillation of specific readings related to each of the aforementioned modes as well as from interviews and experiences that assist in their development. These readings range from Novalis and Ashley Montagu on corporeal knowledge, Donna Haraway and Neil Spiller on technologically enhanced trans-human states and Fritjof Capra and Alex Grey on the intersection of ancient mystical teaching with recent findings in quantum physics. This exploration is followed by the design portion of the thesis: a short film where each character occupies a separate world in the dystopian future. The radical and regenerative possibilities of their crossings are what the film initiates.

## **Acknowledgement**

Thank you to Dereck for your perceptive guidance through all the growth stages of this thesis, Phillip and Ryzard - your understanding of these topics drove the project to the next level. Andrew, I will always be grateful for your intuitive support and encouragement. Nevena, Amanda, and Pascale, to all the years and many more to come. Bo, this film would not have been the same without your assistance. And Mazyar - you were my strength through it all.

**To**

My family, who taught me that life has no limit.

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## **PERSONAL ACCOUNT**

The past two years of working on this thesis have followed an intense and liberating path. The core of my work is born out of close personal interests and experiences that began when I became aware of three bodies that exist within my being. The first and most obvious is my corporeal body that entails the physical attributes of my existence with all of its pleasures and pains; the second is my virtual body, attached to my technological prosthetics that capture all the zeros and ones of information that float around me; the third, and most recently discovered, is my energetic body that brings me into the world of subtle energies, a place where I can tune into the vibrations and fields that exist between, within and around every object, person and space in my surroundings. My awareness of these three bodies fueled a dive into the world of 'light-energy' and a survey of its presence in our contemporary culture. Through the course of my research, I encountered the spiritual realm, experiencing its potential through my participation in a series of energy sessions. I traveled to Bali, Indonesia to an energy gathering with 88 people from around the world. These were all transformative experiences that allowed me to tune into the qualities of energy that exist around me. This thesis combines my research into the concept of subtle bodies from ancient traditions up until today, as well as accounts of my personal experiences; where the world of energy is set against the backdrop of our contemporary condition. These investigations have helped identify the impact of the spiritual realm on our interactions and our experiences of the spaces and places we inhabit day-to-day.



## INTRODUCTION

Insights from disciplines such as architecture, art, science, film, science fiction, psychology and energy practices initiates this investigation into human space. The multi-dimensional space that human beings occupy is not only physical: it is also emotional, psychological, virtual, psychic and spiritual. The idea that complexities of human existence have to be mirrored by its intricate interactions with the world has become the starting point of this study.

This thesis, therefore, investigates the boundaries and layers of the contemporary body and reveals the potential of expanded sensory awareness. Within every single person, there exist multiple 'modes of knowing' (Wilber). These are the ways in which we use our senses to activate different aspects of our being and become conscious of the world around us. Depending on which modes of knowing are activated, a person's perception of the world and the boundary of her body's ability to receive information about its environment can drastically change. The thesis surveys modes of knowing that exist in our contemporary condition within three realms of consciousness: the corporeal, the virtual and the spiritual. The corporeal realm contains all physical manifestations, easily recognizable to the human eye, and singularly experienced through the physical body. The virtual realm is a result of our contemporary reliance on technological prosthetics, leading us into the simulated domains of cyberspace: liquid locations of the collective mind where we digitally exist beyond our physical bodies. The thesis focuses particular attention on the most subtle mode of knowing inside the spiritual world of energy. To illustrate, René Magritte's *Black Magic* (*figure 1*) depicts a nude in two worlds at once; as the flesh of the figure's body grounds and connects her with the earth, her upper core dissipates and becomes one with the sky. In this image, body and space impact, fuse and amalgamate. An exchange occurs and just as the space affects the body, so too does the body affect the space. At the same time, Magritte's work depicts a state of expansion, one which allows the figure to extend her presence far beyond the boundary of her flesh. She is both here and there, finding place simultaneously on earth and in sky. Although Magritte's painting is stylistically surrealist, its messaging is not. The contemporary body simultaneously melds and resists; it is a vessel which contains boundaries that are dissolved and parts that are in motion.

Figure 1 (opposite page)

*Black Magic*  
Magritte  
1945

Throughout history, modes of knowing and the relationship between body and space have drastically evolved, especially with the advent of technology in our contemporary world. This has impacted the evolution of our consciousness and our awareness of the world in which we exist. Using Jay Earley's and Margaret Wertheim's accounts of body-space relationship from the Middle Ages to today's futuristic worldview, we witness the transition from a dualistic conception of physical and spiritual space to a purely monistic, physical view. This raises the question whether there is any potential of tuning into those modes of perception that extend beyond this purely mechanistic view. This is possible only with sensitivity to the world of the senses which is accessed through a re-connection in our highly technological world to the physical body. There exists expanded modes of knowing, which are revealed through an analysis of the subtle world of energy from ancient times up until today and these modes are subsequently investigated through personal experience. The thesis reveals that the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms each carry very different types of bodies and spaces. Every person has the ability to tune into each of these realms. Although the virtual and spiritual realms are similar in that they both distance consciousness away from the corporeal realm, they are also quite different. While the virtual realm takes us into the intellectualized flatlands of zero and one tunnel vision, the spiritual realm of energy initiates us into expanded states of awareness that take our bodies' layers of existence to spiritual dimensions. These dimensions are best apprehended in the interview with Abdy Electriciteh, a "modern day shaman," a term that I use while referring to those who practice spiritual healing techniques. In the interview recorded with the author in November 2005, Electriciteh said:

Beyond the three dimensions... there is no such thing as time. Everything... exists now. Also there is no concept of space... because everything is everywhere. We are everywhere.

This interview is one of the main provisions of information and contributes to the thesis alongside the personal experiences that are described occurring in Bali, Indonesia included in appendix of the thesis.

Raul Ruiz, a Chilean writer and filmmaker, says that cinema allows for the production of a series of "shamanic sequences," sequences that allow you to easily jump from one world to the other. This is the ideal medium for the design aspect of this thesis and a short film reveals the crossing of three characters: 'a she', a cyborg and a shaman. These three characters are reflections



of the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms respectively. They serve as the guides for the entire research portion of the thesis. As the research expands, so does the evolution of the characters. Sketches depicting the development of the characters and the film have been included through the body of the thesis as they relate to the specific topic that is being discussed.

The film was created with live actors and composed with computer animated backgrounds. It tells the story of an abandoned city set 300 years from now that remains deserted because of an underground cyborg subculture that has abducted the energetic source of the sun. The shaman is the narrator and guides the earth goddess Kira (she appears from light to flesh) to assist him in revealing to the cyborgs the limitations of the technical world in which they have submersed themselves.

The process of character and environment creation began with an image research exercise that told the story of a cycle, beginning with cyborg birth and leading to shamanic re-birth. The corporeal realm sits between these two worlds, connecting them through flesh. The images that were chosen lead to a schematic map (*figure 2*) that set the foundation for the film's production design.

The keymap on the following page represents early depictions of the three central characters that have been developed in this thesis: the Shaman, who represents the spiritual world; Kira, who is an earth goddess and symbolically represents the corporeal realm; and Kisho, a cyborg who exists in the artificial underworld and is representative of the virtual realm. The titles are descriptions given by the Author.

### **Kisho**

- a. Baby Kisho, flesh translucent, uploaded inside the virtual realm (*Author*)
- b. Adult Kisho (*Author*)
- c. Kisho's internal network - the virtual pleasure centers (*Author*)
- d. Tunnel that leads to cyborg underworld (*Author*)
- e. Corridors in cyborg underworld (*Author*)
- f. Land Case Image (M1) - technology piercing through the earth (*Author*)

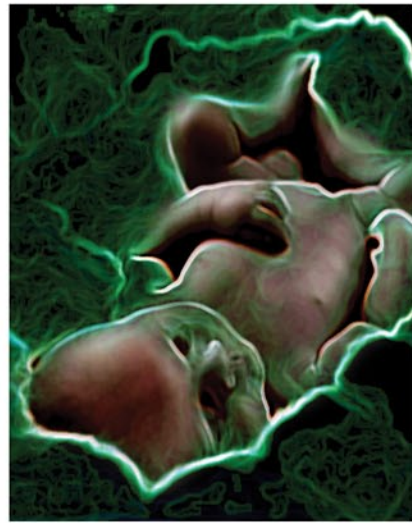
### **Kira**

- g. "Landing" - Image of sun particle having landed on earth (*Getty Images*)
- h. "The Bridge" - Close-up of well connection from earth to cyborg underworld (*Goldsworthy*)
- i. Family of wells, increasing openings, bridges to the world below (*Goldsworthy*)
- j. Kira (*Author*)
- k. Earthly notion of earthly explosions (*Getty Images*)
- l. Splitting the earth plane, opening up to new possibilities. (*Goldsworthy*)

### **Shaman**

- m. Spiraling Dimensions (*Goldsworthy*)
- n. Bridges from one world to the next (*Goldsworthy*)
- o. The split to the next (*Goldsworthy*)
- p. Gateways (*Getty Images*)
- q. Shapeshifting waters (*Getty Images*)
- u. Rebrith (*Goldsworthy*)

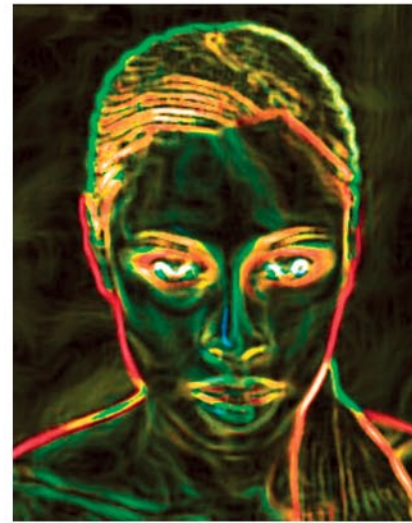
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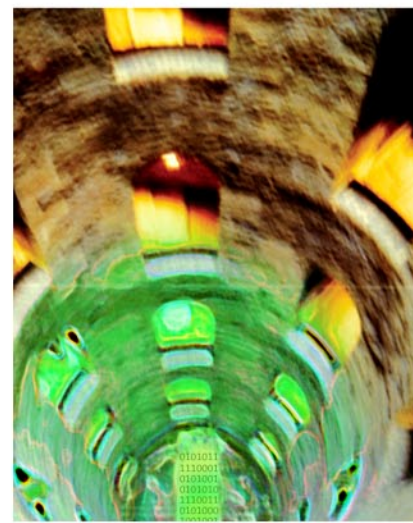
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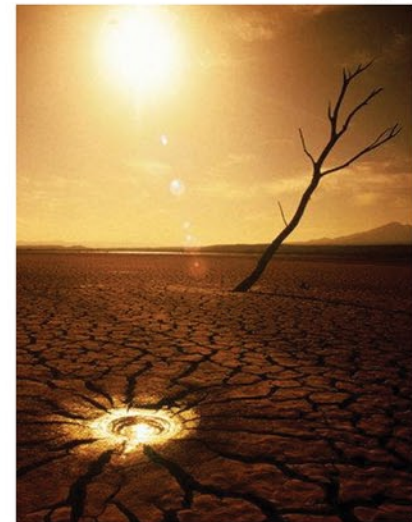
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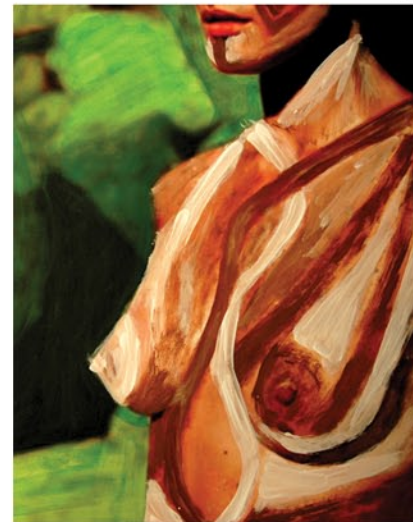
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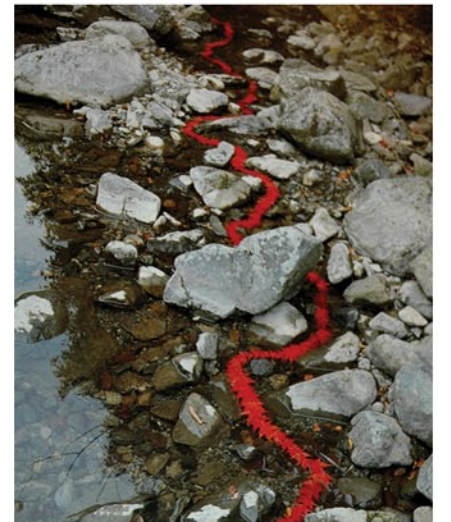
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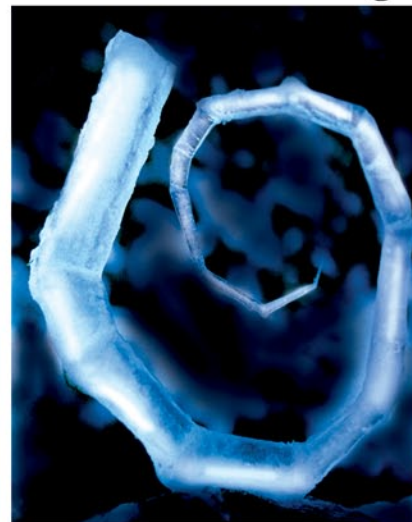
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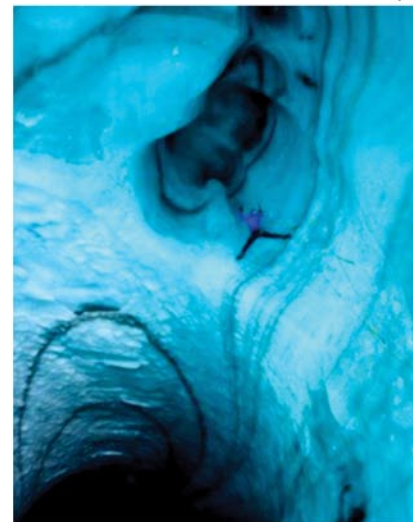
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r



## Chapter 1

### Body and Space

#### Two Accounts

Throughout history, the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms have been activated to various degrees depending on the scientific understandings, the cultural beliefs and the social practices of the time and the specific society. As time passes, cultural and individual evolution occurs; body/space relationships evolve and the consciousness resulting from this relationship consequently shifts.

Jay Earley, a transformational psychologist wrote the article *The Social Evolution of Consciousness*. In the article, Earley describes:

A new model for understanding the social evolution of consciousness and its relationship to the contemporary world situation. It begins with a brief overview of the model followed by an account of how consciousness has evolved over five eras of human history. (Earley 2002, 107)

Although Earley draws an idealized and seamless history of all of civilizations social consciousness, he still tells a story which has a sensitive truth to it. In the ancient past, focus was on spirit and nature. From the middle ages, this transformed into a mechanistic world view in the industrial era that

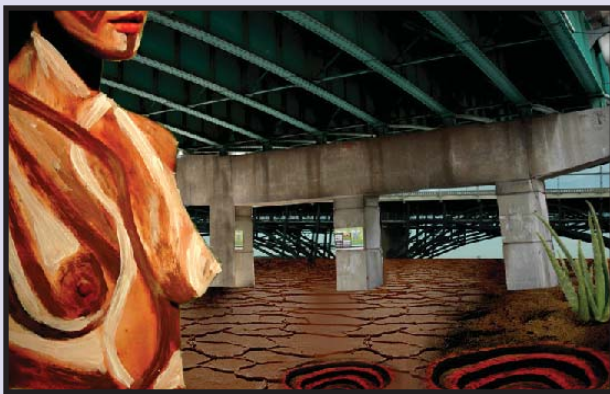


Figure 3 *Kira in Abandoned City*, Author.

Character development played a key role in the creation of this film. The characters had to simultaneously represent the concepts being explored in the thesis as well as be unique and interesting to the film. This image represents the character Kira and shows her inside the abandoned city.



Figure 4

*Anatomy Lesson of  
Dr. Nicolaas Tulp*  
Rembrandt  
1632

evolved in to an obsession with the discovery of the micro and macro of the physical world. Today, in the modern era, our physical obsessions are buried beneath layers of technological prosthetics, and our awareness of the world has generally moved outside of the corporeal realm. According to Earley, we move from nature towards technology, we move from a “participatory consciousness” to a “reflexive consciousness,” shifting from an expanded awareness of nature and the universe towards an individualistic, introverted perspective of it. A chart summarizing Earley’s paper is located in the Appendix section on page 69.

Another source of research for the mapping of conscious evolution, more specifically tied to the evolution of the relationship between body and space, is in Margaret Wertheim’s book *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*. Wertheim, who writes extensively about science and society, traces the evolution of the body/space relationship from Dante’s time to our contemporary obsession with cyberspace. She weaves a story that reveals how we have moved from a soul-centric/body relationship in the medieval era, towards detachment from soul in our contemporary body that sits in a materially bound universe. Wertheim accounts a prevalent shift from a medieval view of spirit, towards a mechanistic view of body and the physical world born out of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. She states that this shift continues to reverberate through Western culture today and has not only transformed our conception of space, but has also transformed our conception of ourselves. In this transformation, from spiritual belief to science alone, physical reality takes over, and the world operates as a vast machine. Wertheim writes:

The old world picture with its striving souls, and its heavenly spiritual space, had given way to a purely mechanical universe in which the earth was just a lump of rock revolving in a vast Euclidian void. (Wertheim 1999, 37)

Both Earley’s and Wertheim’s accounts are valid, in that we have transferred away from spirit towards material existence. Even further, we are going beyond the physical in the modern era, as technological prosthetics now drive us away from our corporeal ties, leading us into the virtual realm. Through history, the cycle of conscious evolution, resulting from the body/space relationship, according to both Earley and Wertheim went from spiritual, to corporeal to virtual. As this thesis navigates through these realms this process reads clearly. However, the thesis further investigates the possibility in our contemporary culture of collectively returning to a connection with the spiritual realm within the subtle world of energy.

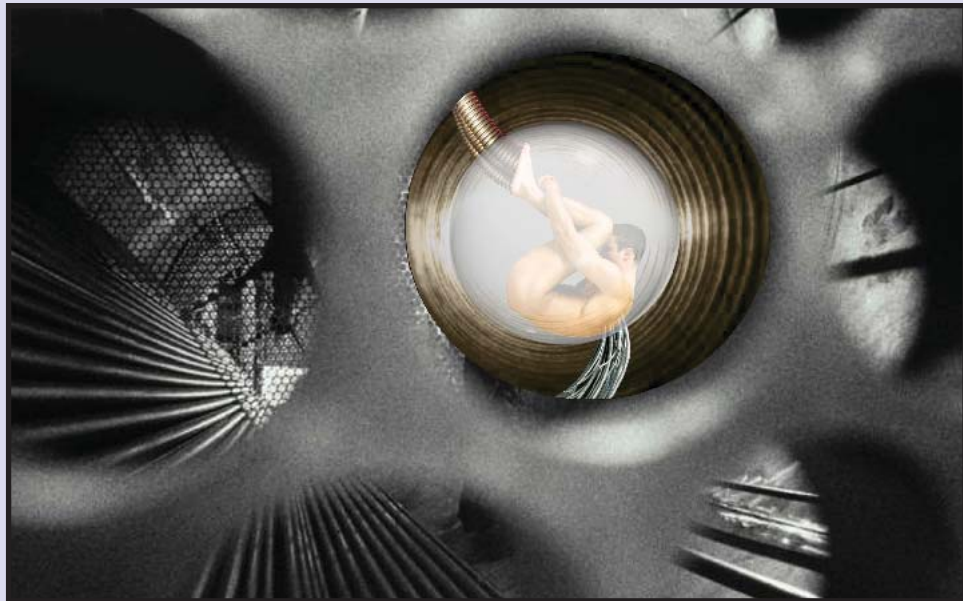
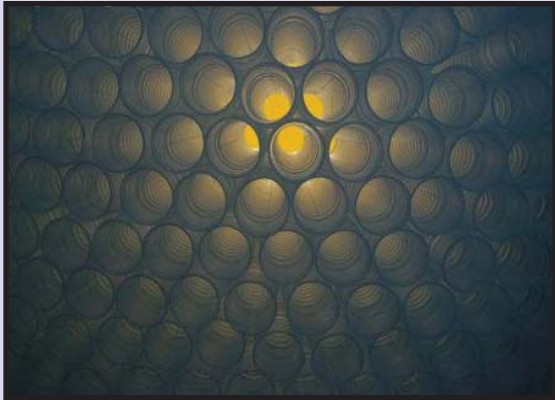


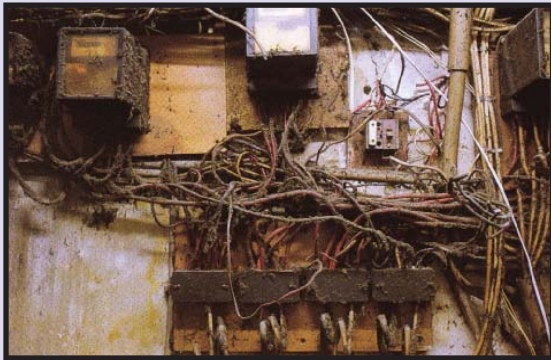
Figure 5

*Nanoscopic Cyborg Cell*, Author.

An early rendition of Kisho in a nanoscopic cell from the artificial underground.  
The sketches and research images that followed this are on the following page.



6



7



8



9

Figure 6: *Skin of Cyborg Cells*, Getty Images.

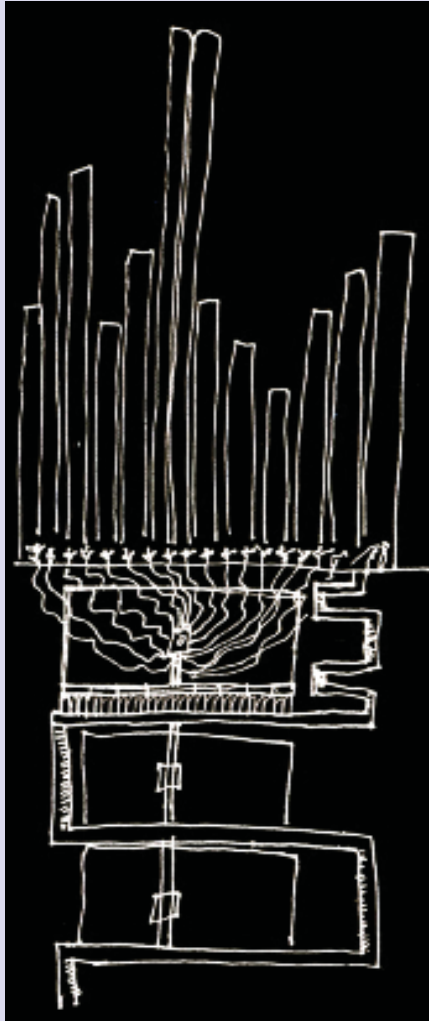
7: *The Ancient Leftovers*, Lambot & Girard, 1999.

8: *Tubular Regularity*, Getty Images.

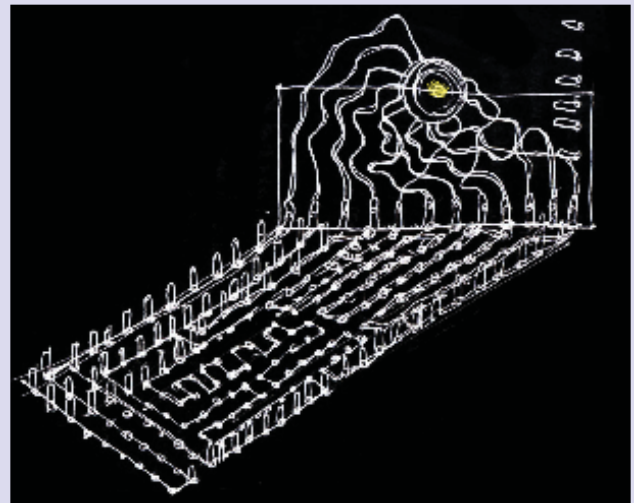
9: *Pumping the Source*, Getty Images.

These images served as precedent for the design of the underground cyborg laboratories.





10



11

Figure 10: *Sketch of Underground Labyrinth Systems*, Author.

11: *Sketch of Cyborg Distribution Lines*, Author.

Preliminary sketches of the underground cyborg laboratories, running as a vast machine, distributing the abducted energy.

## Body & Space in Art

Magritte, as an artist, is not alone in his depiction of the body/space relationship in his work; Oskar Schlemmer's interests in dance lead to his studies of bodies in space, light in motion and architecture. These studies were realized in his diagrammatic depictions; his piece: *Egocentric Space Lines* (Figure 12) shows idealized lines of space emanating from a human body's center. In this diagram, Schlemmer reveals the impact of the body's presence on space, as rows of flowing arcs grow out from the figure's center. Reversely, in *Figure in Space with Plane Geometry and Spatial Delineations* (Figure 13), Schlemmer portrays how space impacts body; prisms are sent out from the boxed room, landing around the figure standing in the middle. Both diagrams are distilled and geometrically calculated representations, however no matter how mechanistically illustrated the exchange may seem the diagrams allow us to understand the force, presence, and caress of body and space against each other. While Magritte's painting reveals an emotive body that is absorptive and receptive, Schlemmer reveals a rational and mathematical representation of the body/space relationship. Both artists reveal that a body affects a space, just as a space affects a body.

Just like Magritte and Schlemmer's attempt to depict the body/space relationship, there has been recent work that examines the energetic relationship between body and space. This quote, from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, accompanies Alex Grey's painting *Universal Mind Lattice* (Figure 14):

Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable, Boundless Light. (Padmasambhava, n.d.)

In his painting, Grey illustrates the pure and dynamic flow of universal light, an energy that according to Grey operates constantly throughout every cell of every organism, object and body. Grey's work surveys the light body exchange that occurs between people and the spaces around them; he intricately connects precise flowing energetic fields with detailed anatomy of the human body. Grey's work searches to illustrate how the internal energy that exists within each body sends its presence out onto the universe, and then how the body then absorbs energy from the external world. If we take a step back in time, we can see that an interest of movement in the energetic realm was prevalent in the early twentieth century. Similar to Grey's vision is Max Ernst's painting: *A Young Man Intrigued by the Flight of a Non-Euclidean Fly* (Figure 15). In this painting, Ernst interests lie in the world of quantum

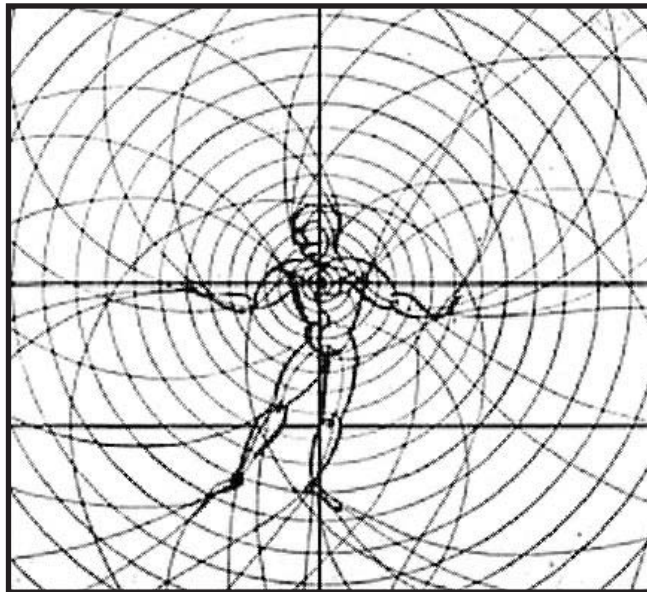


Figure 12

*Egocentric Space Lines*

Oskar Schelmmmer

1924

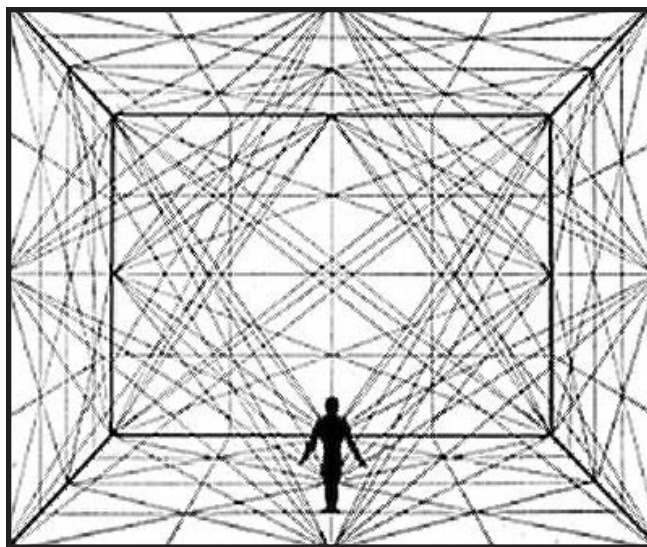


Figure 13

*Figure in Space with Plane Geometry  
and Spatial Delineations*

Oskar Schelmmmer

1924

Figure 14

*Universal Mind Lattice*

Alex Grey

1981

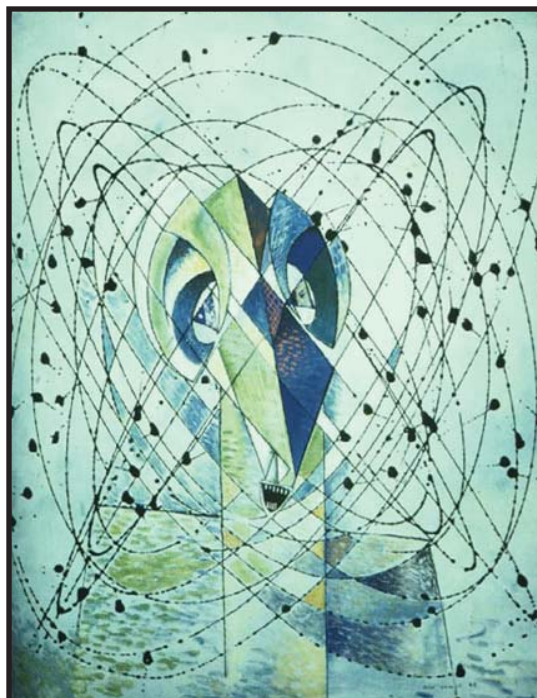


Figure 15

*A Young Man Intrigued by the Flight  
of a Non-Euclidean Fly*

Max Ernst

1942-47



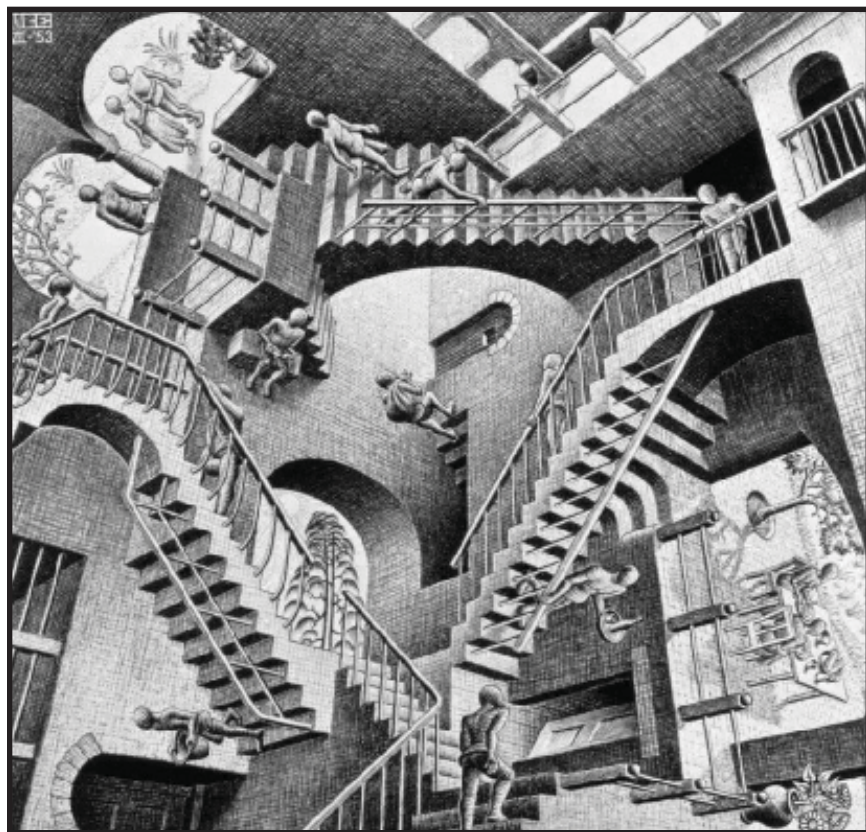
motion. Although a fly is the subject matter of the work, it is not the body of the fly that is accentuated, but the lines of space that the fly seemingly generates around itself. As observers, we get the sense that movement and energy are pulsating around the fly. If we are to apply this layer of existence to Magritte's figure, the figure's body and the space of earth and sky will begin to resonate their vibratory fields onto one another.

It is evident that through history, as in present times, we have had, and continue to have, the ability to connect with the three realms: the corporeal, the virtual and the spiritual. Each realm contains very different types of bodies and spaces. However, these realms do not exist as separate entities. Each realm is intertwined with the other; they each charge the other and take from the other. Ken Wilber, an American philosopher whose work focuses on developing an integral theory of consciousness confirms this notion. His theories combine disciplines from psychology, sociology, philosophy, mysticism, postmodernism, empirical science and systems theory. In Alex Grey's *Sacred Mirrors*, Wilber writes the essay 'In the eye of the artist: Art and the perennial philosophy':

According to perennial philosophy – the common mystical core of the world's greatest spiritual traditions – men and women possess at least three different modes of knowing: the eye of the flesh, which discloses the material, concrete, and sensual world; the eye of the mind, which discloses the symbolic, conceptual, and linguistic world; and the eye of contemplation, which discloses the spiritual, transcendental, and transpersonal world. These are not three different worlds, but three different aspects of our one world, disclosed by different modes of knowing and perceiving. (Grey et al. 1990, 9)

Wilber believes that there are 'different modes of knowing', intertwined and existing simultaneously at once. These are the "material" (corporeal), "conceptual" (virtual) and "transcendental" (spiritual). If we are aware of all the possibilities of perception that are available to us within these modes of knowing, then we can choose in which of the realms we prefer to activate our consciousness.

Figure 16  
*Relativity*  
M.C. Escher  
1953



## Chapter 2

### Modes of Knowing

*If the doors of perception were cleansed everything  
Would appear to man as it is, infinite.  
For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through  
narrow chinks of his cavern.*

Blake <sup>1</sup>

*We build up models of how we see the world outside of us. The  
more information we have, the more we refine our model one way  
or another. What we ultimately do, is tell ourselves a story about  
what the outside world is."*

Monti <sup>2</sup>

While the work of Magritte, Schlemmer, Ernst and Grey alludes to the notion that there exist multiple layers of exchange between a body and a space, Escher's *Relativity* (Figure 16) draws a picture where different body/space relationships exist simultaneously on multiple planes. In this image, Escher creates parallel dimensions of existence, portraying a world where gravity is negligent as multiple paths co-exist within their own time and space. In our contemporary condition, relationships simultaneously co-exist between different bodies exchanging information with different spaces. Depending on our activated awareness of the corporeal, virtual or spiritual realm of our being, our consciousness of our surroundings dramatically changes.

This awareness depends on which of our senses are activated. There is no common agreement through scientific and philosophical research about how many senses exist. Anthony Synott is quoted in the Canadian Center for Architecture's catalogue on the exhibit *Sense of the City*, as saying:

The reduction of the sensorium into five senses was first determined by Aristotle, perhaps for neat numerological reasons rather than physiological ones; but Galen said there were six, Erasmus Darwin thought there were 12 and Von Frey reduced them to eight... Zen Buddhists say there is a sixth sense... but a different one from the Western notion of the sixth sense as extra-sensory perception. Recent authorities calculate that there are 17 senses. (Zardini 2005, 33)

From Aristotle to Zen Buddhism, the fact that there is the potential for a multitude of senses beyond those we have scientifically identified, means that

there are multiple ways of taking in and interpreting information about our environment; hence, there are multiple ways of becoming conscious of our surroundings.

In the animal kingdom, the number of senses significantly exceeds the commonly known five human senses. Howard C. Hughes, professor of psychology at Dartmouth College, wrote the book *Sensory Exotica, A World Beyond Human Experience*. Hughes investigates the world of animal senses, examining a large number of species from insects to fish, snakes and mammals. In looking at the specifics of the acuity of animal senses, his research reveals that animals are far more sensitive to their environments than humans. Hughes tells the story of pit vipers with heat sensitive organs in between their eyes, butterflies with chemoreceptors at their feet, bees that can see light between 300-650 nanometers in wavelength (Figure 17), eagles with a retina carrying one million photoreceptors per square millimeter and dolphins and bats that use echolocation for movement and the location of objects and prey. Hughes introduces his work with:

We all need to be reminded that our limited perspective can lead to gross misperceptions of the nature of things. (Hughes 2001, 26)

There are many potential ways of tuning into an awareness of the surrounding world. It is not that these extra senses, and extra modes of



18

Figure 18: *Heat Sensed Flowers*, Getty Images

19

19: *Energy Moving*, Getty Images

Precedent for potential expanded modes of knowing (states of awareness), where we receive information from the environment through the use of our non-dominant senses.



perception, are impossible to acquire, it is that the culture and environment of our contemporary condition has forced us to close ourselves off from attuning ourselves to receive extra-sensory information. Could it ever be possible for us to tune into similar acuities of perception? Through advances in technology, are we at risk of losing the refinement of our existing senses?

Senses evolve for survival, especially in animals against predators, and also as a result of the cultural and environmental stimuli that exists around the body which carries the senses. A clear example of this is in the journal *Empire of the Senses*, where Constance Classen, professor in the department of sociology and anthropology at Concordia University, writes an essay, *McLuhan in the Rainforest, The Sensory Worlds of Oral Cultures*, surveying sensory territories both foreign and familiar in our contemporary cultures. She writes about three non-literate societies which function completely through the use of non-dominant senses:

The Tzotzil accord primacy to heat in their cosmology, the Ongee to odor, and the Desana to colour. (Classen 2005, 148)

This is directly reflected in the each of the tribes' behavior patterns. Constance proves that the accumulation and activation of the senses in a body are mainly a result of the cultural and environmental conditions that exists around the body. Conversely, a slight shift in the dominance of the senses completely shifts societal behavior and cultural interests. Classen writes:

The Tzotzil, the Ongee and the Desana each conceptualize the vital force of the cosmos in terms of a different sensory energy. These sensory energies order space and time, determine health and illness, life and death, and govern social and personal identity. In each of these cultures putting the cosmos in order, and putting one's house in order, involves putting the senses in order. (Classen 2005, 160)

Their senses dominate their culture, and their culture dominates their senses – it is a correlative relationship.

R. Murray Schaeffer, a Canadian composer and writer known as the parent of acoustic ecology, writes about the potential of perceiving the environment with non-dominant senses:

A man walks across the snow. You know the temperature from the sound of his footsteps. This is a different way of perceiving the environment; one in which the sensorium is undivided; one which recognizes that all information is interconnected. (Zardini 2005, 101)

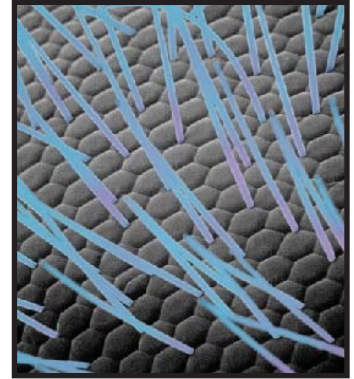


Figure 17

*A Bee's Compound Eye*  
Getty Images.

Perhaps we have always subconsciously been taking in this subtle information. How much control do we have about the information that we receive of the world around us? Juhani Pallasmaa, who believes that the task of architecture is not to tailor to the occularly dominated society of the contemporary world, but to allow access to the expanded dimensions of our consciousness. In *Eyes of the Skin*, Pallasmaa says,

Every significant experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of matter, space and scale are measured by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle. (Pallasmaa 2005, 41)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist philosopher who believes that the body is a permanent condition of experiences, says that we always perceive a space with our entire being. Merleau-Ponty affirms:

My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once. (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 50)

No matter what the dominating senses are, Schaeffer and Merleau-Ponty both confirm that the body contains potential dormant senses that subconsciously take in information from the environment at all times. We retrieve information about the world around us with our entire being, with conscious and subconscious senses. The limits of our sensory boundaries may not be within the bounds of our well-known five senses. Perhaps one day it will be a part of our evolution for certain senses to shift from a subconscious state to a conscious state. Perhaps one day we will be able to have awareness of much that goes on outside of our physical locale. In understanding the significance of the senses, we must ask ourselves how our contemporary condition could change socially, politically and culturally if we were to change the dominance of our senses. What aspects of society would change if we became aware of subtle modes of perception that emits sensorial information far beyond what we are capable of tuning into today? In order to answer this question, it is important to understand what the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms offer us and how they affect the quality of our consciousness.

## Chapter 3

### Contemporary Place

#### Territories of the Contemporary Corporeal

The corporeal realm contains the bodies and spaces of the physical world: the pleasures and pains of the material universe. We are born into the world tuned into our corporeality, in raw form, naked. From the moment of our birth, and arguably, even while we are in the womb, our physical body serves as our base. In the past, the physical body was valued much more than it is today; many believed that our corporeal connections were the most important part of our being. Novalis, an author and philosopher of early German Romanticism, wrote on the importance of our physicality:

There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before man is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch heaven when we lay our hands on a human body. (Novalis, n.d.)

Ashley Montagu, a humanist and anthropologist, writes in his book *Touching, The Human Significance of the Skin*, about the skin as one of the major contributors of perceiving the external world:

As the most ancient and largest sense organ of the body, the skin enables the organism to learn about its environment. It is the medium, in all its differentiated parts, by which the external world is perceived. (Montagu 1971, 5)

Montagu writes on how even the eye is covered with a vital outer layer of skin, that is then used to perceive its surroundings. In our contemporary culture, it is important to understand that a dramatic shift has occurred in our relationship with the corporeal realm.

The significance of our physical body has diminished in our contemporary condition; the corporeal aspect of our being is buried underneath layers of technological prosthetics. This is not a recent phenomenon, but one that has transgressed almost invisibly over the last fifty years. Architects, artists and science fiction writers have been aware of this phenomenon and have expressed this condition in their work. Superstudio, a group of architects formed in 1966 in Florence, Italy, revealed their disillusionment with the modernist ideals of their time, questioning their culture's boundless

Figure 20

*Landscape as Motherboard*

Superstudio

1973



faith in technology. *Landscape as Motherboard* (Figure 20) is a collage that shows a hardwired artificial grid layered over a tulip field. A happy seventies family sits with their backs to the tulip field, grouped together comfortably as they are plugged into the ground through machine wires. They seem completely unaware of the implications of the ground beneath them. In his installation: *Beauty of Our Pain* (Figures 25 and 26), Shin Egashira, an architect and teacher from Tokyo, reconstructs fitness machines in the form of medieval torture devices. Egashira's drawings and installations graphically depict a medieval-like past, while depicting our modern obsession with obtaining artificial physical "upgrades," the work in-turn shows his perceived strain of technology on humanity today.

In science fiction too, there are many depictions of technological invasion. Neil Spiller, a professor at the Architectural Association, tells a graphic, gory depiction of nanoscopic invasion.

Imagine millions, perhaps billions, of micro - and nanoscopic computing machines crawling over your body: in your face, in your eyes and ears, up your nose, in your mouth and down your throat; infesting your lung cavities, swimming in your bloodstream and bathing in your fluids – all battling for survival against each other. (Spiller 1998, 105)



21



22

Figures 21 & 22

Photos of Kowloon from *City of Darkness*, Lambot & Girard, 1999.

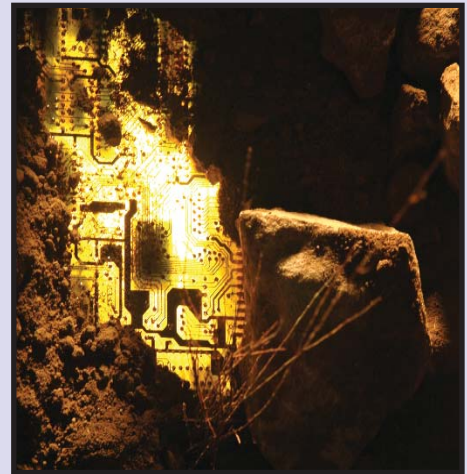
The abandoned quality of Kowloon served as precedent for the design of the abandoned city in Kira's world.

Although these artists reveal exaggerated versions of body/machine relationships, their depictions may not be as far-fetched as they appear. Superstudio's image of the family on a 'digital rug' is not far from the picture of our contemporary corporeal culture. We remain attached to the artificial grid of our technological prosthetics that lie on top of our earth landscapes. In the same light, Egashira's torture device may seem absurd and overstated, but this is only because our technological prosthetics are themselves artificially skinned, hiding the cold materiality of the metal and plastics from which they are created. Moreover, nanoscopic technology is readily available today; however it has not yet become common enough to begin its invasion beneath our skin. William Gibson, the science fiction writer who coined the word cyberspace in 1984, describes in an interview in the documentary *No Maps for These Territories*, how society remains technologically comfortable ten years behind what is accessible to date. It is clear that the future may hold a much more invasive relationship between our bodies and technology; the virtual realm could easily takeover the corporeal realm, without us even noticing.

What is it that entices us to dislodge from our physicality in our contemporary condition? Since our bodies in raw form have no choice but to adhere to the natural cycles of life and death, the burial of our physicality comes as a means to avoid the finite aspect of our existence. We will do



23



24

Figures 23 & 24

*The Land Case*, Author.

An M1 installation, alluding to the takeover of technology and its insertion over the earth.

These images were inspiration for the earth plane - abandoned earth layered by a technological skin.

Figure 25

*Face Lift*  
Shin Egashira  
1996

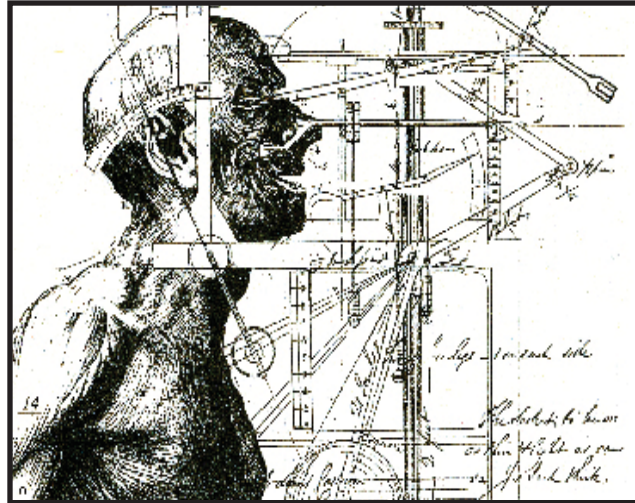
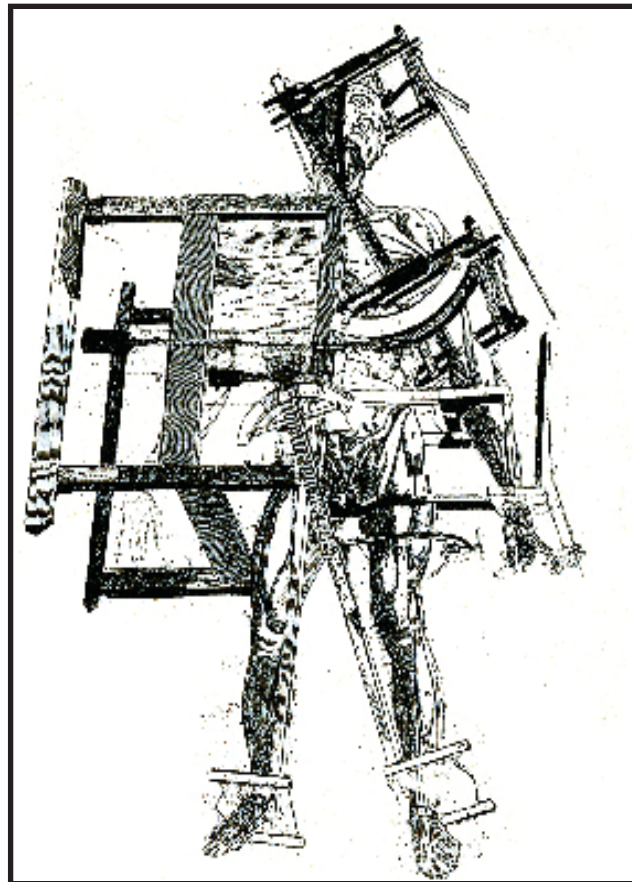


Figure 26

*Hermes' Loom*  
Shin Egashira  
1996



anything to ensure our survival; including covering our natural corporeal form with technological prosthetics. We have become dependent on technology, obsessed with its ability to increasingly maximize our lifespan. These values are descriptive of a recent movement called Extropy. The term is defined as:

Extropy means affirming continual ethical, intellectual, and physical self-improvement, through critical and creative thinking, perpetual learning, personal responsibility, proactivity, and experimentation. Using technology — in the widest sense to seek physiological and neurological augmentation along with emotional and psychological refinement. ([www.extropy.org](http://www.extropy.org))

One of the main principles of Extropy is the belief in self-transformation. Extropians believe in transhuman existence, using technology as a means to satisfy desires for invincibility, immortality and liberation. This movement has gained vast popularity on the internet over the last twenty years, boasting “the longest running transhumanist email list in the world” ([www.extropy.org](http://www.extropy.org)). The Extropy website brings together forums, local events and scheduled extropic on-line chats where “scientific, technological, and cultural minds discuss world problems and possible solutions”, using technology as a means to improve humanity.

Although technology has tremendously assisted humanity’s evolution, there are also disadvantages in full machine takeover. The abundance of technological filters we surround ourselves with today separates body to body experiences. Artificial cultivation occurs: from our bodies grow cars, roads, bridges, planes, cell phones, music players, PDA systems, and medical replacement parts. We do not often carry ourselves around in the world without our technological extensions. Although it may appear as though we have moved into a successful evolutionary fast-forward, these prosthetics mute our natural senses. And further, our technological dependency not only affects our bodies, but also impacts our spaces. As we abandon our physical body, we are abandoning our physical spaces, see *Figures 29-31*. The more our contemporary territories turn increasingly into mass havens of technological extensions, the faster we speed through life without an awareness of the physical elements around us. How much are our surroundings blurred as we jet-speed blindly through the city? Since we dislodge from physical spaces, what are the spaces we are choosing to enter instead?



27



28

Figures 27 & 28

*Speed Series*

Author



29

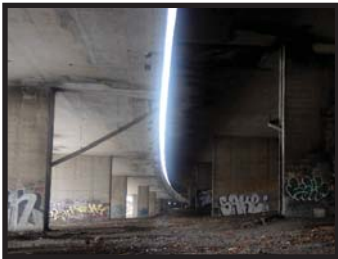
Figures 29-31

*The Abandoned City Series*

Author



30



31

## Domains of the Contemporary Virtual

*“Technology sufficiently advanced enough is indistinguishable from magic.”*

*Clarke’s Third Law*<sup>3</sup>

*“All I can do is assure you that the cyborg is not to be found in the realm of hypothetical eventualities and hyperbolic horrors – it is real; it is now.”*

*Steve Mann*<sup>4</sup>

*“A cyborg is a creature of social reality as well as a creature of science fiction... Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs – creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted... By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. This cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation... It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories.”*

*Donna Haraway*<sup>5</sup>

With corporeal abandonment and virtual adoption, the spaces we choose to enter are inside the simulated world of cyberspace. With the increasing penetration of this place into our contemporary culture, we become cyborgs: “creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted” (Haraway 1991, 149), as described by Donna Haraway who is a leading thinker about people’s love and hate relationship with machines. She writes about cyborgs defining them as cybernetic organisms that are hybrids of machine and organism; creatures of both lived social reality and fiction. The number and severity of cyborgs is growing on a daily basis. Over 1 billion people in the world today have easy internet access ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). This figure will only continue to grow. In Canada in 2006, 67.9% of individuals used the internet regularly ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). The more we embrace a cyborg-mode of existence, the more we enter non-physical spaces, and the more we upload our consciousness outside the



boundaries of our physical connections.

Human beings have already begun to fully embrace living as cyborgs. Steve Mann, professor in the electrical and computer engineering department at the University of Toronto, is a self-made cyborg. He describes his day to day experiences in his biography *Cyborg*, where he reveals his life through his invented EyeTap system, a set of glasses connected with other wearable devices that keep him connected to his computer every second of the day. This system allows him to change elements of his surroundings to suit his desire for ultimate perceptive comfort.

All I can do is assure you that the cyborg is not to be found in the realm of hypothetical eventualities and hyperbolic horrors – it is real; it is now... (Mann 2001, xi)

I alter my perceptions and states of being. Every morning I decide how I will see the world. One day I give myself eyes in the back of my head. On other days I add a sixth or seven sense, such as the ability to feel objects that are not touching me. Things appear different to me than they do to other people. I see everyday objects as hyper-icons I can click on and bring to life (similar to the way you click on an icon on a Web site). I can choose stroboscopic vision to “freeze” the motion on the spinning wheels of a car going a hundred kilometers an hour, allowing me to count the grooves in the tread. I can block out the view of particular objects – sparing myself the distraction, for example, of the vast sea of advertising that surrounds us.” (Mann 2001, 3)

With Mann-like cyborg mode, our conscious existence is fully inside cyberspace: a simulated place where we continually upload ourselves into arenas of the collective mind. The more we surf on-line, transfer e-mail, compete against other video game characters, exchange on-line photos and video, partake in messaging chat programs, or upload into any record of identity, the more we sink away into “the place that is no place, the space of computer simulation” (Spiller 1998, 42).

Inside cyberspace, body turns into waves of digital information, beating into complex formulas inside tunnels of zeros and ones. Here, human parts float within data realms, exchanging bits and bytes of their being with other virtual elements. We are always plugged into the virtual realm. While we have conscious moments of exchange with cyberspace; unconsciously too, we are constantly surfing virtual lines. Even as we engage ourselves in the physical world, our body’s information waves transfer back and forth, floating in and out of the conscious and subconscious of physical place. Inside cyberspace, we exist in multiple places at once, as we can be anywhere we want to be, unattached from the roots of our physical selves.



Figure 32

*Virtual Overload*

Author

Figure 33

*Virtual Upload*

Author

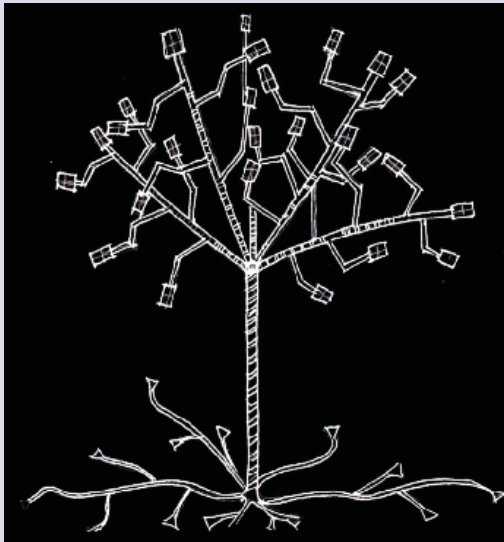


Marcos Novak was one of the first architects to have anticipated virtual space as a genuine architectural and urban space. He writes in his essay *Liquid Architectures in Cyberspace*,

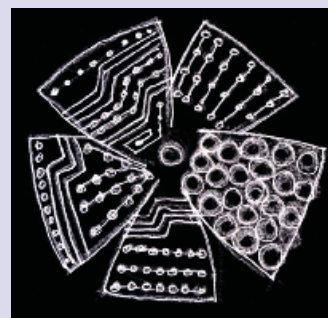
I look to my left, and I am in one city; I look to my right, and I am in another. My friends in one can wave to my friends in the other, through my having brought them together. (Novak 1991, 225)

According to Novak, the virtual realm leads to a constantly metamorphosing set of “liquid” spaces, that change as per the user’s pleasure, “an architecture that breaths, pulses, leaps as one form and lands as another” (Novak 1991, 227) Novak tells the story about the benefits of living inside the virtual realm, alluding to it as being a space for the architecture of our dreams. Similar to Novak’s passions for cyberspace is Neil Spiller’s vision.

Spiller, professor of architecture and digital theory at the University of London, Bartlett, believes that inside cyberspace, our conscious boundaries are completely detached from the physical body, allowing us to exist in an eternally virtual shamanic state. Spiller describes how inside cyberspace, we can jump from place to place, gathering and exchanging information with boundaries far beyond those of our physical bodies. Spiller writes in *Digital Dreams, The Architecture of the new Alchemic Technologies* about the notion of



34



35

Figure 34 & 35

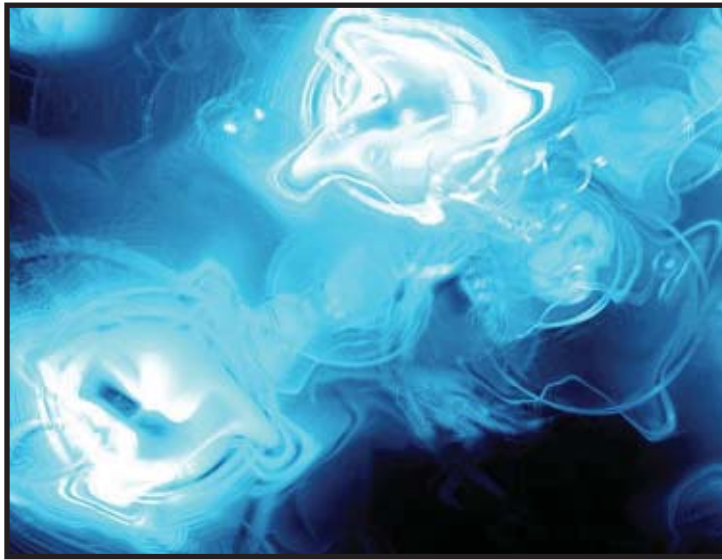
*Design Sketches of Machine Trees*

Author

dislocation and ecstasy in cyberspace, which exist as a result of our “quest for experiences of the realm of the gods” (Spiller 1998, 61), he continues where he links shamanism and virtuality as having similar characteristics:

Could it be that cyberspace is the culmination of man’s search for a ‘bridge to heaven’, a search that has encompassed the use of narcotics, ritual and meditation, all of which are the foundation of a variety of ecstatic religions? (Spiller 1998, 61)

Although there appears to be many advantages of living with our technological prosthetics and uploading into arenas of the collective mind, there are also disadvantages in full virtual upload. Not only does the virtual realm take us way from our corporeality, but also our devotion to virtuality affects our consciousness and quality of awareness of the world around us. Although most have not yet taken Steve Mann’s extreme approach to unifying with the machine world, Mann serves as the proof that it is possible today, to completely upload into virtual consciousness. The more our consciousness becomes linked inside the virtual realm, the more we become closed to awareness of our physical environment, and block other potential modes of consciousness that are layered to our physical bodies. With cyborgian tunnel vision, our lens of perception remains limited. It is important to be aware of other modes of perception besides the one that takes us away from our physical body. We can still live shamanically through the physical world. The body is tied closely with subtle layers of information which are accessible through attunement into the subtle world of energy. This realm has not been as activated as the virtual in our contemporary condition, however it is possible to become aware of the subtle layers of energy that exist within and around everything in the universe.



36

*All things are aggregations of atoms that dance and by their movements produce sounds. When the rhythm of the dance changes the sound that it produces also changes. Each atom perpetually sings its song, and the sound, at every moment, creates dense and subtle forms.*

*Alexandra David-Néel* <sup>6</sup>

## Fields of the Contemporary Spiritual

*"We are parted many thousands of kalpas ago, yet we have not been separated even for a moment. We are facing each other all day long, yet we have never met."*

*Ashtvaghosha*<sup>7</sup>

According to various esoteric, occult and mystical teachings, subtle bodies are non-physical energies or psycho-spiritual bodies that all beings and spaces have. The concept of an energy field around a body is not one which is a new phenomenon. Subtle energy has always existed. With today's scientific discoveries, there is now evidence that everything is energy. With awareness of the energetic world, the relationship of body and space is not solely defined through Euclidian three dimensional coordinates. Place is multi-dimensional, existing outside of traditional notions of time and space.

Many ancient traditions include the subtle body as a major aspect of their belief system. Dating back 5000 years ago in ancient India, spiritual traditions firmly believed in "prana": a vital, life-sustaining force that drives all living beings and natural processes in the universe. Prana is present both in macrocosm (space) and microcosm (bodies of living beings). Still today, pranic energy is commonly activated in yogic practices and meditations, as these traditions still believe in the power of prana. With awareness of prana, practitioners increase their vitality through the control of movement of these vital energies within the body. Similarly, in 3rd millennium BC, the Chinese also strongly believed in a vital energy called ch'i, which held two polar forces, a yin and yang. When these forces are in balance, health would exist around them, when unbalanced, they would be surrounded by disease. Even today, Chinese medicine still incorporates the natural patterns of ch'i, seeking to remove imbalances through adjusting the circulation of ch'i that is connected to meridians aligned with the physical body. Also other yogic-occult systems in Japan and Polynesia believed in the life forces of ki and mana. All these traditions describe a subtle anatomy through channels of energy (nadis, meridians – *Figure 40*), that vibrate with a life force (prana, ch'i, ki, mana). These channels pass through a number of focal points referred to as chakras (*Figure 41*) or energy centers. These traditions believed that with the practice of various breathing and visualization exercise, which lead to stillness of the mind, one is able to direct the flow of vital life source in order attain higher states of consciousness, immortality or liberation.

Western culture has not evolved with the same types of belief systems. However, we have entered the beginning of our journey in

Figure 36 (opposite page)

*Luminous Dreams*

Steve Truett

2004

Figure 37-39

*The River Case*

Author

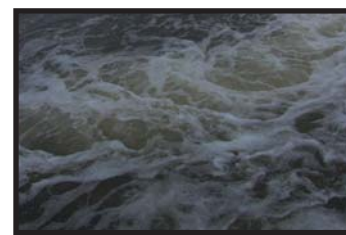
Stills from a film made in the M1 term. It reveals the shape-shifting properties of water at a junction in the river.



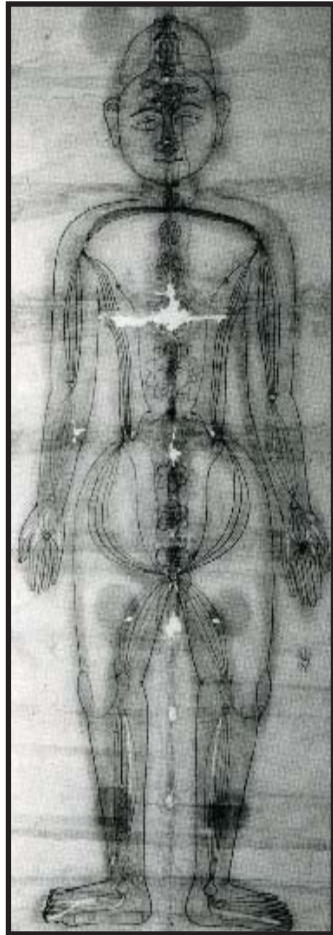
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38



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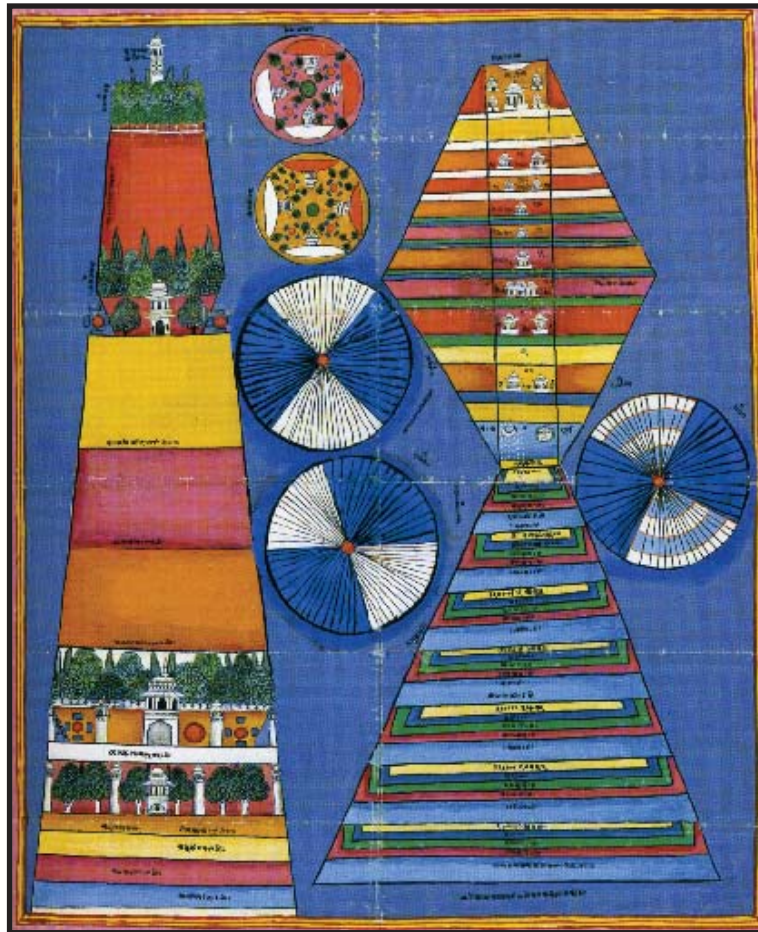


40



41

- Figure 40: *The nadis, the subtle channels of the human body*  
 c.18th century, Mookerjee
- 41: *The chakras of the subtle body*  
 c.17th century, Mookerjee



42

Figure 42

Ascending Levels of Consciousness within the body of Cosmic Man  
c. 18th century, Mookerjee



43

Figure 43

*Amida with two attendant Bodhisattvas*

Japan

Late 12th century



$$\begin{aligned}
& i\gamma^{\mu} D_{\mu} \psi - \frac{1}{2} g \bar{\psi} \gamma^{\mu} (Q U) \psi - m \bar{\psi} U \psi + \frac{1}{4f} \text{Tr} (D^{\nu} U D_{\nu} U^{\dagger}) \\
& i\gamma^{\mu} (D_{\mu} + M_{\nu}) N - m \bar{N} N + \frac{1}{4f} \text{Tr} (D^{\nu} U D_{\nu} U^{\dagger}) \\
& \partial_{\mu} U - 2igf \gamma_{5} \vec{e} (\vec{e} \times \vec{e}_{\mu}) + ig \gamma_{5} \vec{e} \vec{e}_{\mu} - 2gf \vec{e} \cdot \vec{e}_{\mu} \\
& \partial_{\mu} N - ig \left[ \vec{e} \cdot \frac{\vec{e}}{2} - (ig) \gamma_{5} \vec{e} \cdot \vec{e}_{\mu} \right] + \frac{2f}{4f} (\vec{e} \cdot \vec{e}_{\mu}) \\
& \quad - ig \left[ (ig) \gamma_{5} \vec{e} \cdot \frac{\vec{e}}{2} - f \vec{e} \cdot \vec{e}_{\mu} \right] + (ig) \gamma_{5} \frac{2f}{4f} (\vec{e} \cdot \vec{e}_{\mu}) \\
& U^{\mu} \partial_{\mu} U^{-\mu} + \frac{1}{2} (U^{\mu} \partial_{\mu} U^{\dagger}) U^{-\mu} \\
& i\gamma^{\mu} (D_{\mu} + M_{\nu}) N - m \bar{N} N + \frac{1}{4f} \text{Tr} (D^{\nu} U D_{\nu} U^{\dagger}) \\
& \vec{R}_{\mu\nu} = \partial_{\mu} \vec{e}_{\nu} - \partial_{\nu} \vec{e}_{\mu} + g (\vec{e}_{\mu} \times \vec{e}_{\nu}) + g (\vec{e}_{\nu} \times \vec{e}_{\mu}) \\
& \vec{A}_{\mu\nu} = \partial_{\mu} \vec{a}_{\nu} - \partial_{\nu} \vec{a}_{\mu} + g (\vec{a}_{\mu} \times \vec{e}_{\nu}) + g (\vec{e}_{\mu} \times \vec{a}_{\nu}) \\
& \partial^{\nu} \vec{R}_{\mu\nu} = -g \vec{V}'_{\mu} + m \vec{e}_{\mu}; \quad \vec{V}_{\mu} = \vec{V}'_{\mu} + \frac{1}{g} \partial^{\nu} \vec{R}_{\mu\nu} \\
& \partial^{\nu} \vec{A}_{\mu\nu} = -g \vec{A}'_{\mu} + m \vec{a}_{\mu}; \quad \vec{A}_{\mu} = \vec{A}'_{\mu} + \frac{1}{g} \partial^{\nu} \vec{A}_{\mu\nu} \\
& (t, U^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t)) = [A^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t), A^{\nu}(\vec{x}, t)] = i \epsilon^{\mu\nu\alpha} U^{\alpha}(\vec{x}, t) \\
& (t, A^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t)) = [A^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t), U^{\nu}(\vec{x}, t)] = i \epsilon^{\mu\nu\alpha} A^{\alpha}(\vec{x}, t) \\
& (t, U^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t)) = [A^{\mu}(\vec{x}, t), U^{\nu}(\vec{x}, t)] = i \epsilon^{\mu\nu\alpha} A^{\alpha}(\vec{x}, t)
\end{aligned}$$

यज्ञस्य धूर्षदं धृरि निर्वहणे मीढन्नं यज्ञनि  
मिचमित्त पमिधानः इधोर्दापयमानः च्छते । प्र  
: प्रसाधनकर्मा । इन्वानः । सम्यग्दीप्यमानः  
मिदादिभिराकान्तः । अन्यरनाकान्तो वा । कमे  
विदथेषु । यज्ञेषु वेदयत्सु स्तोत्रेषु निमित्तभूते  
पमानोऽस्मदीयां धियं प्रजां यागादिविषया  
निर्मलां ज्योतिष्टोमादि कर्म वा उद यंमते ।  
मेलेश्चडागमः । मिप् । उगच्छोऽवधारणे । धीरि  
धीः शमोति तन्नामसु पाटात् ॥  
अप्रयुच्छन्प्रयुच्छद्भिर्म  
शिवेभिर्नः पायुभिः पाहि शग्मैः ।  
अदव्येभिर्दृष्टेभिर्दृष्टेऽ-  
निमित्तपद्भिः परि पाहि नो जाः ॥  
पदपाठः ।  
युच्छन् । अप्रयुच्छत्ऽभिः । अग्ने । शि  
पायुऽभिः । पाहि । शग्मैः । अद  
नेभिः । दृष्टे । अनिमित्तपद्भिः । परि ।  
ताः । ८ ॥

Figure 44

Parallels between Western Science and Eastern Mysticism  
Capra  
n.d.

becoming aware of these subtle layers of vibration through the assistance of the scientific world. Barbara Ann Brennan, a healer, therapist, and scientist who has devoted more than twenty years of research and exploration to the human energy field, defines the human energy field as all electrostatic, magnetic, electromagnetic, sonic and thermal energies emanating from the human body. She begins her book *Hands of Light* by describing the process by which science today has arrived towards an awareness of the subtle energetic world.

Until recently, when eastern religions began to have a greater impact upon our culture, much of our self-definition (largely unconscious) was based on the physics of a few hundred years ago... This definition of the universe, as made of solid objects, was held largely by Isaac Newton and his colleagues in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries... In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, new physical phenomena were discovered that could not be discovered by Newtonian physics. (Brennan 1988, 22)

To summarize, scientific awareness of the energetic world began when experiments conducted less than a hundred years ago in 1831 by Michael Faraday and James Clerk introduced the concept of a field. Faraday and Clerk discovered that a changing magnetic field produces an electric field. Then in 1905, Einstein shattered the principle concepts of a Newtonian world view when he discovered that space is not three dimensional and that space and time are not separate entities. Einstein conceived a 4<sup>th</sup> dimension continuum where matter and energy are interchangeable. In other words, Einstein discovered that mass is nothing but a form of energy, simply slowed down or crystallized energy. This means that our bodies are made of energy. The discovery deepens even more by the 1920s, when science started becoming aware of a previously invisible realm, with the ability to perceive extended ranges of human vision with the inventions of the telescope and microscope. This is when physics moved into the subatomic world. With the assistance of microscopic vision, it became known that there was a vibration at the core of every single particle in the universe.

The connection between ancient belief systems and science is precisely described by Fritjof Capra in his book *The Tao of Physics*:

The exploration of the atomic and subatomic world in the 20th century has revealed an unsuspected limitation of classical ideas, and has necessitated a radical revision of many of our basic concepts. The concept of matter in subatomic physics, for example, is totally different from the traditional idea of a material substance in classical physics... Modern physics leads us into a view of the world which is very similar to the views held by mystics of all ages and traditions. (Capra 1999, 17-19)

Capra tells the story about the evolution of spiritual belief, from the mystical philosophies of the early Greeks to western use of science in the modern era (*Figure 44*):

The parallels to modern physics appear not only in the Vedas of Hinduism, in the I Ching, or in the Buddhist sutras, but also in fragments of Heraclitus, in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi, or in the teachings of the Yaqui sorcerer Don Juan. (Capra 1999, 19)

While energy can be seen with the assistance of technology, there are also people who have the ability to tune into energy completely naturally, and furthermore translate the information that resonates from energy fields. With this knowledge, they are able to manipulate, shape and influence energy and the matter that it is connected to it. Barbara Ann Brennan goes into detail about the layers of the auric body system, the functions of the major chakras and minor energy centers of the body, and further describes how to purify the energy body and bring it back to a state of health and harmony:

Each major stage of life corresponds with new and higher vibrations and the activation of different charkas. At each stage, new energy and consciousness is thus available to the personality for her expansion. (Brennan 1988, 61)

With an awareness of the energetic realm, not only is it important to understand and interpret the information from this realm, it is also important to have an awareness of one's own energetic presence in order to assure that it carries a non-destructive presence. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese doctor of alternative medicine, is well-known for his recent discoveries on how emotions and feelings affect the crystallization of water molecules. In his book, *The Hidden Messages in Water*, Emoto reveals how: "words and thoughts have the power to change water and other substances" in "this world of chaos we find ourselves in." (Emoto 2004, 4). If our feelings and intentions can transform the cellular structure of the particles around us, it is vital to build up our energy vibration to a pure state, one which is in health and harmony with the elements that surround us. With the awareness of subtle energy, we could better our presence in the world.

Through interviews and personal experiences with Abdy Electriciteh (Electriciteh's name finds its roots in his grandfather who was an electrical engineer), whom I have termed 'modern day shaman', I came to understand just how shifts in energy can change the perception of oneself and one's surroundings. Electriciteh conducts energy sessions all around the world.

Figure 45

*Abdy Electriciteh Interview*

Author



In these sessions, he naturally ignites high vibrations of energy onto those attending. He states:

If I were to explain what happens exactly, in a session that I have, it's just... a vortex of energy being created and that vortex of energy is totally in harmony with universal energy. (Electriciteh 2005)

This insertion of “universal energy” over the energy field of those present (this is not confined to those that are in the room – Electriciteh’s sessions are tuned into from far physical locations) assists them in vibrating at higher frequencies, more in tune with universal harmonious energy. This leads to the shedding of lower vibrations of energy, such as fear, anger, sadness and pain. Electriciteh begins the interview by describing that everything in the universe has an energy:

The nature of every matter is pure energy... and the nature of humans, of trees, of everything, is the same way. Energy doesn't die; it transforms from one kind to another, and always exists. But we tend to look at things and people and situations in what we see only. Basically, as an energetic entity, through cycles of lives, we attract and we repulse certain energies. And our energy is modified, not ours, everything, is modified, by repulsion and attraction of other entities energetic entities... the moment we are introduced to life, we are introduced as a new energetic entity... and our life is based on the repulsion and attraction of other energetic entities. (Electriciteh 2005)

Throughout the interview with Electriciteh, he describes how those attending his sessions are impacted by the energy, allowing them to tune into dimensions of consciousness beyond the three common dimensions:

And the only way your heart, your intuition, or some other people say your third eye, can be activated to an understanding beyond three dimensions is by your mind giving up. If your mind wants to be in control, which we are all trained to be that way, we deny any experiences beyond three dimensions. (Electriciteh 2005)

In other words, when the rational mind is silenced, there is room for extraordinary awareness. It allows for the environment to be experienced in a way that is outside our typical level of consciousness. For Electriciteh, consciousness is composed of twelve general dimensions, in which: “there is no such thing as time. Everything... it exists now. Also there is no concept of space... because everything is everywhere. We are everywhere.” (Electriciteh 2005)

Since everything is energy, it is important to understand the different qualities of energy that exist around us. Contemporary culture has shut us off from tuning into the subtle and infinite aspects of our being. This results in cut off from the higher quality energetic frequencies. Our obsession with cyberspace leads to auto-operating in tunnel-vision, functioning as machines even while we are disconnected. Upon return from cyberspace, our bodies continue to function in flatlands of zero and one modes, at a seeming uni-dimensional level. Although cyberspace alludes to shamanistic characteristics, through attaining information outside of our bodily confinements, it nonetheless deteriorates the quality of our corporeality. With this deterioration comes a decline in the quality of energy that is attracted to us. It is imperative then to return to our corporeality, in order to be in touch with the higher energetic qualities that are connected with it.

*(The distilled interview with Abdy Electriciteh as well as images and personal accounts from the energy sessions in Bali with Electriciteh and 88 other people can be found in the Appendix section on page 70 .)*



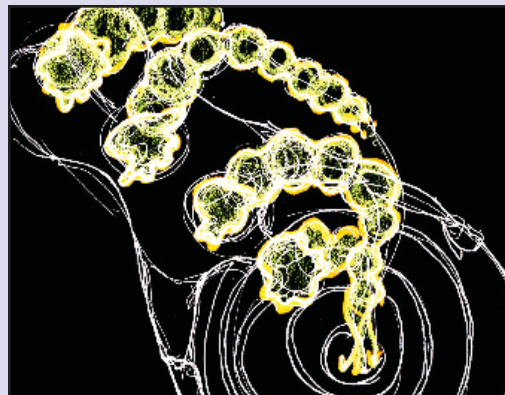
Figure 46

*The Energy Wind Call*

Author



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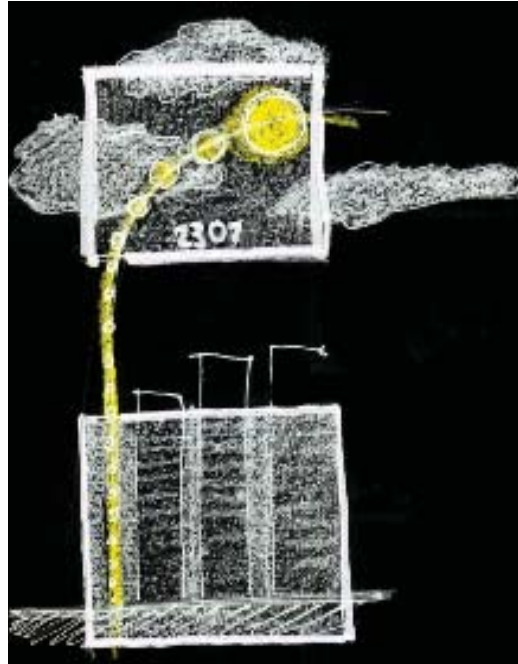
48

Figure 47: *Sketch of make-up contours on Kira's body, Author.*

48: *Sketch of Kira's light body moving into tunnels, Author.*

The main energy centers of Kira's body enter the tunnel and spiral outwards towards the underground cyborg world.

making of the film



**STORY SYNOPSIS** - It is the year 2307. The earth plane is in a state of abandonment. An underground cyborg society has abducted the energetic source of the sun. A shaman guides the earth goddess Kira to assist him in revealing to the cyborgs the limitations of the technical world in which they have submersed themselves.

Figure 49

*Conceptual Story Sketch*

Author

## DESIGN – FILM

*“A thousand paths, a thousand short-cuts and secret passages from one world to the next, still awaiting their discovery... We all possess a huge number of potential film sequences that coexist in a compact space and time. These sequences are interchangeable and superimposed one on the other. All these films are sleeping with us. An ordinary narrative movie provides a vast environment in which these potential film sequences disperse and vanish. A shamanic film, on the other hand, would be more like a land mine: it explodes among these potential films and sometimes provides chain reactions, allowing other events to come into being. In the same way, the shamanic sequence makes us believe we remember events which we have not experienced; and it puts these fabricated memories in touch with genuine memories which we never thought to see again, and which now rise up and march towards us like the living dead in a horror movie. This mechanism is the first step in a process which could permit us to pass from our own world into the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdom, even to the stars, before returning to humanity again.”*

Raul Ruiz<sup>8</sup>

Raul Ruiz, a Chilean writer and filmmaker, accurately summarizes the reason for using film as a medium to reveal the crossing of the three characters, the central element of the thesis. The three characters, Kira, Kisho and the Shaman each come from very different worlds. The audience needs to be able to travel from one world to the other, in a shaman-like state. Film is the medium for the shaman's world; allowing the collapse of time and space, the coming together of multiple worlds co-existing simultaneously, as well as the ability for the shape-shifting of characters. Film is used as the medium for the thesis because it allows the audience to enter a world which is familiar to them, a place which is waiting to be aroused from subconsciousness.

## CHARACTERS

### **Kira**

She is the embodiment of Gaia, the goddess of the earth. No matter how much the earth is invaded, she has unconditional love and devotion towards it because she fully feels her deep bond with every aspect of its existence. She feels that her own body is made of the same matter as the earth. She is the chosen one, the initiator of the reintegration of light on the earth plane.

She is invoked by the voice of the shaman as she is transformed through a lightbody exchange from a state of anguish and despair to a poised, assured woman, ready to send her expanded self towards the cyborg underworld.

### **Kisho**

He was born into the underground cyborg networks. He knows nothing of the world above, and lives only through the networks that lead him into the simulated worlds of virtual paradise. This has muted his senses; making him completely unaware of the potentials of using his skin, of feeling the world through its existence. He has also muted his sense of smell, and knows of no fragrance besides the sterile circuits of the underworld.

### **Shaman**

The shaman is a master of light; a shape shifting entity, capable of being everywhere yet nowhere, inside and outside all that exists in the universe. The shaman is both male and female, the carrier of the forces that exist in every form. The shaman desires the universal knowledge of the oneness and unity of all things to remain as a part of the traditions of the earth plane. The shaman ignites an alchemical marriage between the cyborg underworld and Kira's earth plane through the process of activating Kisho's awareness of his physical body, which lead to gateways into more expanded modes of consciousness.

## **STORY**

300 years in the future, a power hungry cybernetic engineer, banished from the scientific community, completes his life-long work by abducting the energy of the sun as a resource for an underground cyborg society. Using highly sophisticated electromagnetic machines, the sun's gravitational center is thrown off balance. From the inability to repulse the forces, the pressures lead to the explosion of the sun's shell. This leads to the outpouring of the pure, central energy. The cyborg underworld uses highly evolved machine trees to suction the sun fragments and particles into the underground tubes and tunnels. These tubes lead to the feeding lines for the machine prosthetics of hundreds of thousands of cyborgs who live inside this completely simulated and manufactured paradise. They receive their nutrients, regenerating their machine-flesh through plugging into their base-pods which lie in networks of underground pockets. The sun's energy is used as their infinite source of power.



On the surface of the earth, after 300 years of abduction, lack of resources kill many, while the lust for a promised immortal life drives others to joining this underground cult. A few generations later, the earth plane remains forgotten, as the bodies born inside the cyborg networks know only the comforts of their artificial machine extensions. The cyborgs are completely unaware that there still remain living bodies on the earth plane, groups of tribes that remain addicted to the pleasures and pains of the earth plane. One of these is the earth Goddess Kira, one of the main figures of the earthly tribes.

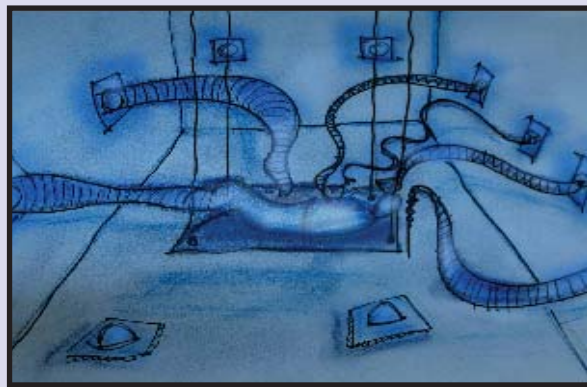
Completely unaware of truth behind the boundless power of the light, the cyborgs still have not understood that light can not be contained; that it exists always, in everything. There are masters of light which weave the light, machine-free, manipulating its matter. One of these is the narrator of this short film, the shaman: master of light. Upon assumed complete energetic takeover of the sun, the shaman decides it is time to reverse the artificial cycle – he invokes the earth goddess Kira to assist the process of returning the energies back to where they belong. The two work together – as the shaman forms an opening into the earth, creating the bridge between the earth world and the cyborgian underground. As Kira approaches the opening, her light fields extend, floating off her body. The light follows the tunnel down into the underground pod where Kisho resides. Upon the light touching his body, it heats his flesh, causing a system malfunction, waking him for the first time. This awakening activates a heat wave through the cyborgian network, spreading malfunction like a virus through the fiber optic network lines.

Kisho manages to escape the network meltdowns and finds Kira on the earth plane. Through an intense love affair and connections with his physical body for the first time, the cyborg discovers his soul. Kisho and Kira work together in re-establishing the balance between flesh, machine and light on the earth plane.

*(The DVD is located in a sleeve on the inside back cover of the book.)*



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51

Preliminary Storyboard Development Sketches

Figure 50: *The Abandoned City*, Author

51: *Cyborg Birth*, Author

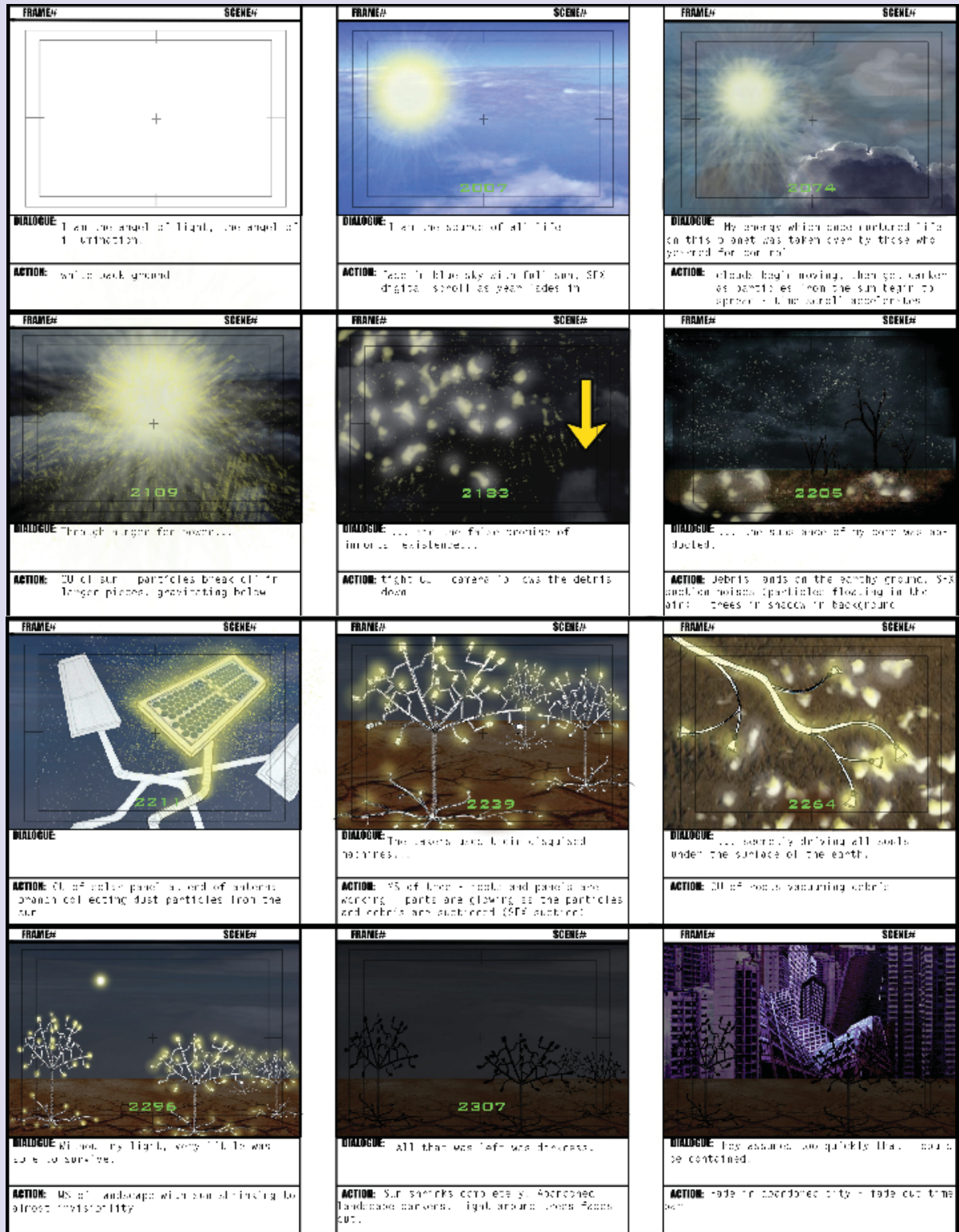


Figure 52  
Storyboards, Author

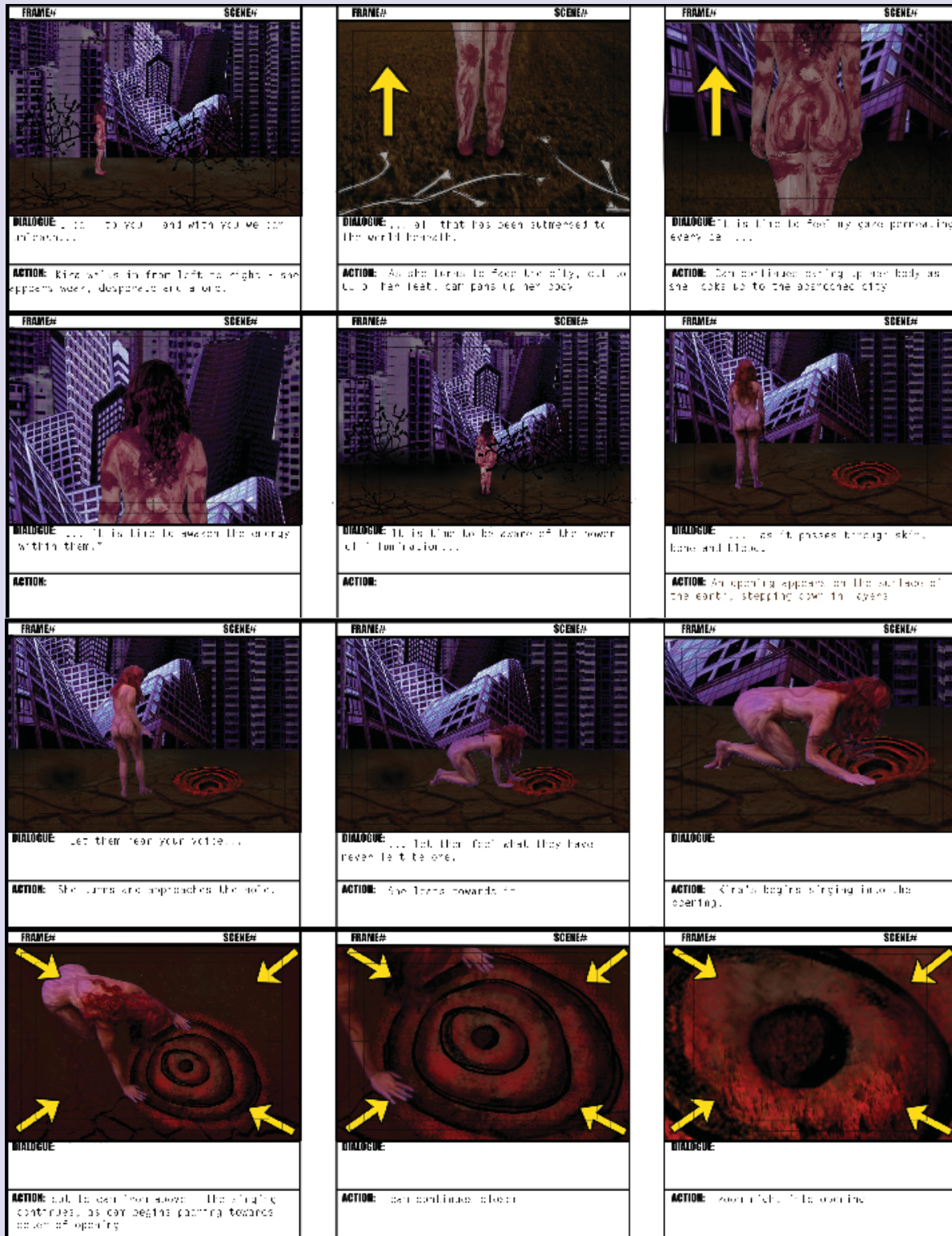


Figure 53  
 Storyboards, Author

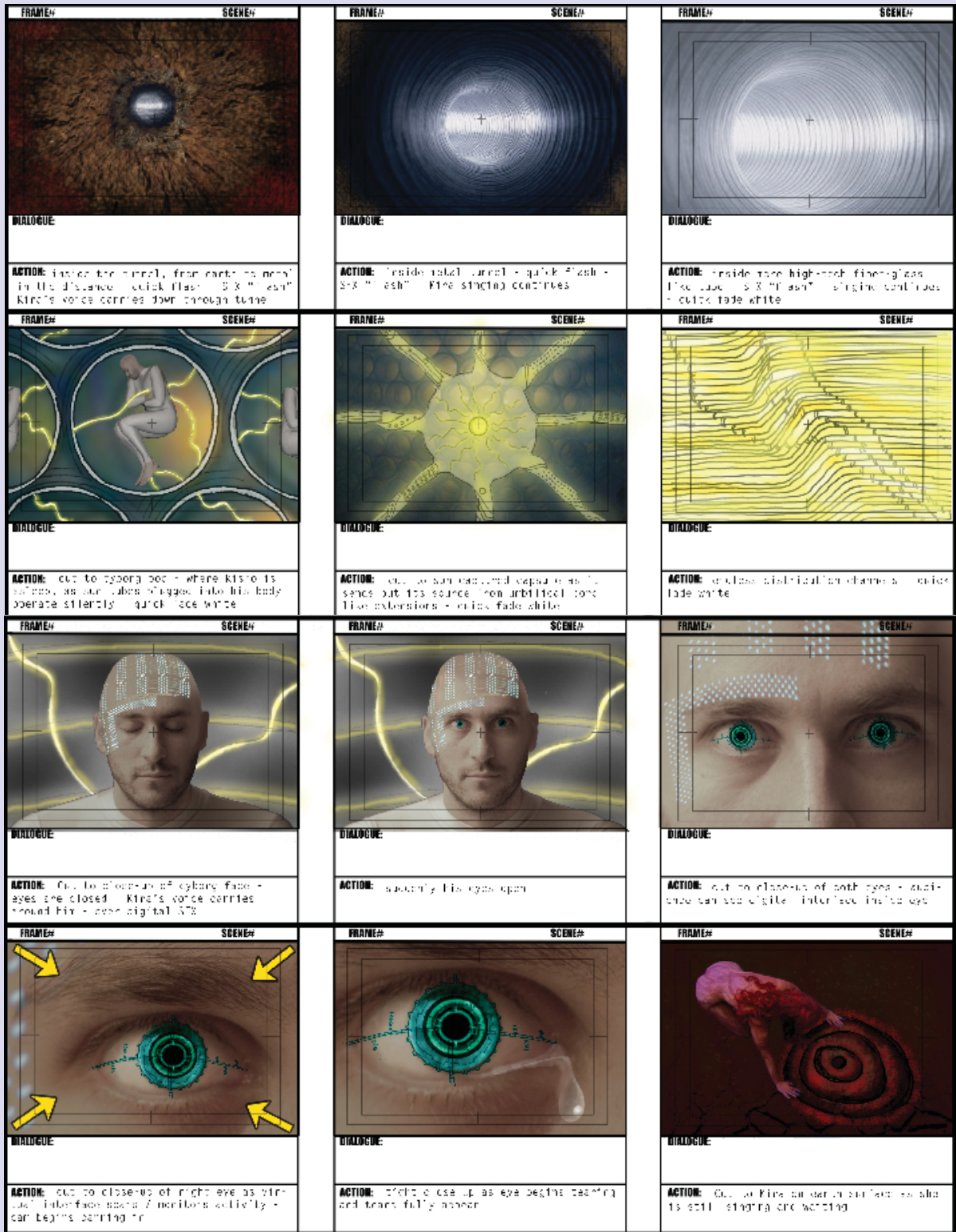


Figure 54  
 Storyboards, Author

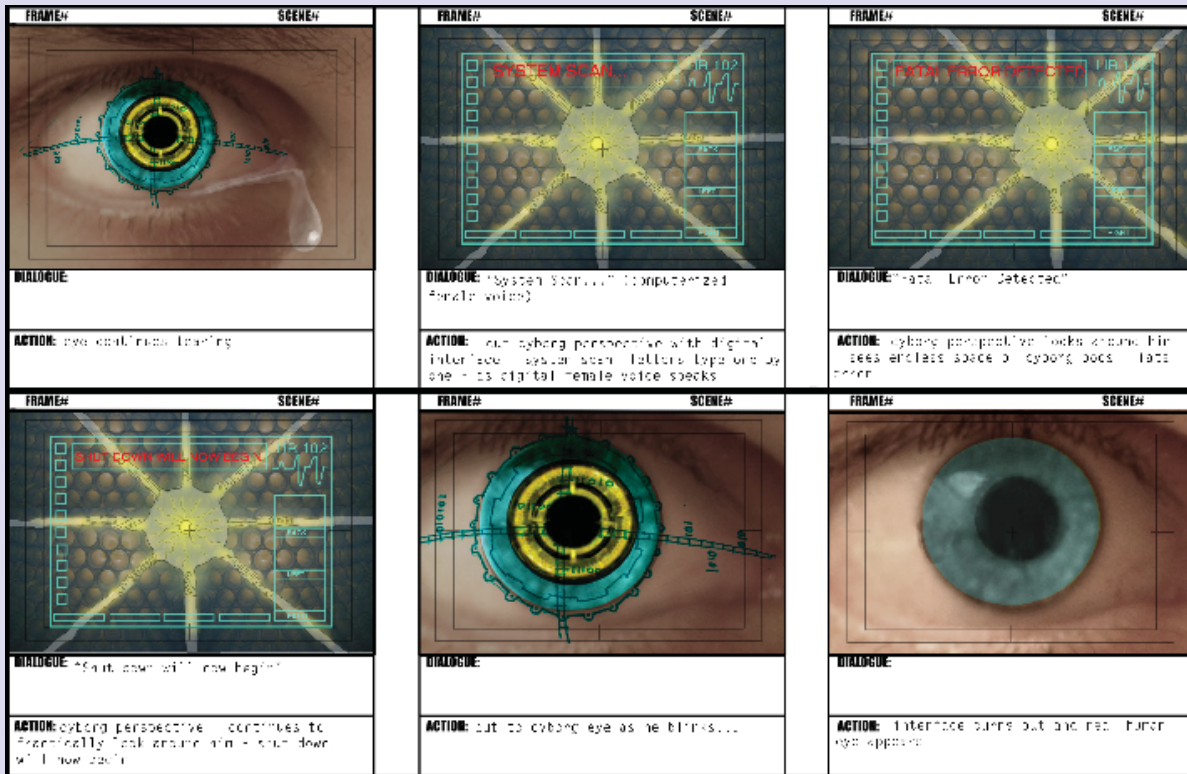


Figure 55  
Storyboards, Author

*The moment we are introduced to life  
we are introduced as a new energetic entity.*

*and our life is based  
on the repulsion and attraction  
of other energetic entities.*

300 years of collective neglect  
Bridged the gateway to oblivion

lured  
seized  
captured

from the nucleus to a simulated paradise  
souls driven under

drained  
emptied  
lost

the takers are blindly disillusioned

body and soul in search of union

through light - the origin

innate  
infinite  
immortal

this is your calling  
release the charge from the world beneath

it is time to feel  
radiant echoes  
permeating  
every cell

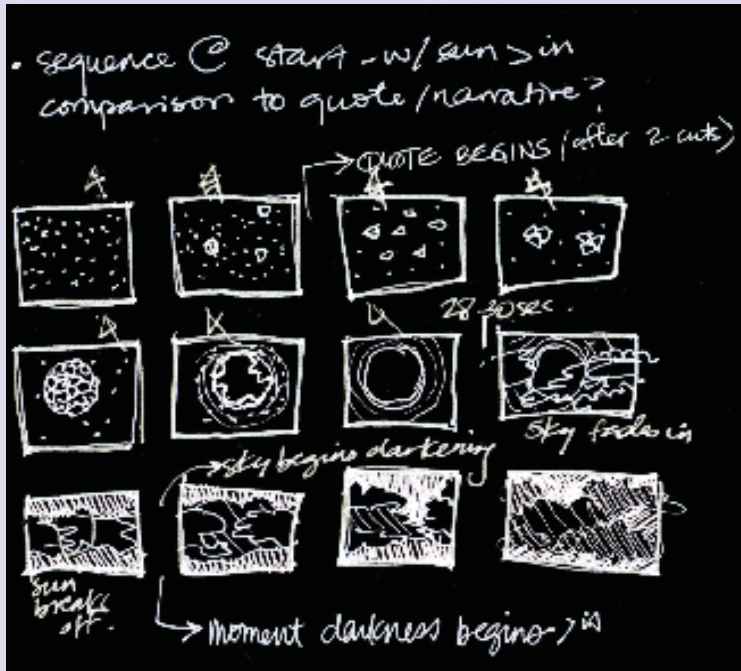
it is time to awaken  
the energy within

it is time to be aware  
of the power of illumination  
as it passes through skin, bone and blood

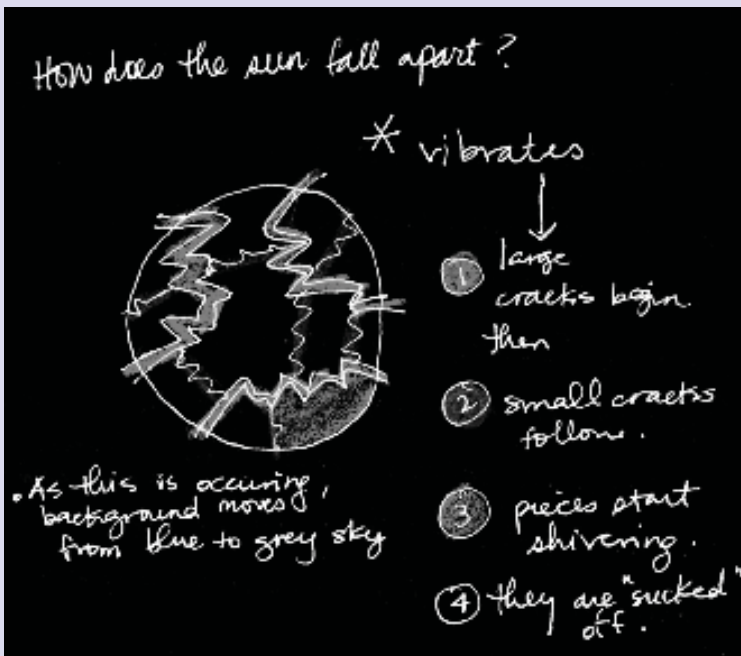
your way begins on the other side

Quote (in italics) adapted from  
the interview with Electriciteh.

Film Narrative, Author.



56

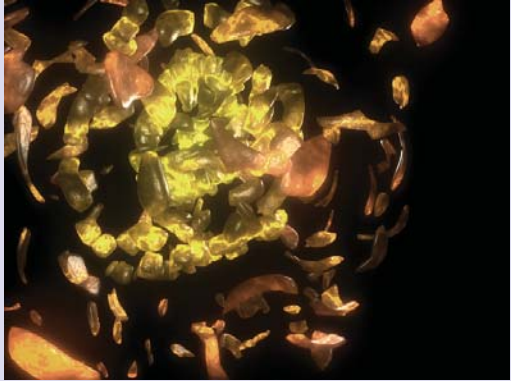


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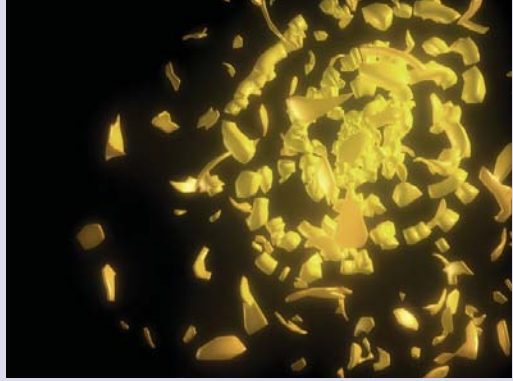
Figure 56 & 57

Sketches of sun attraction sequence, Author.





58



59



60



61



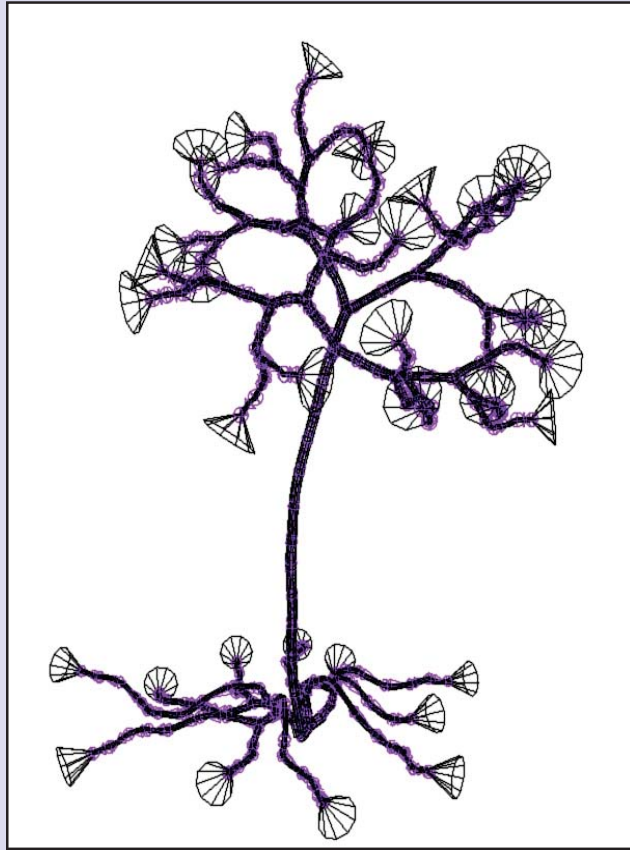
62



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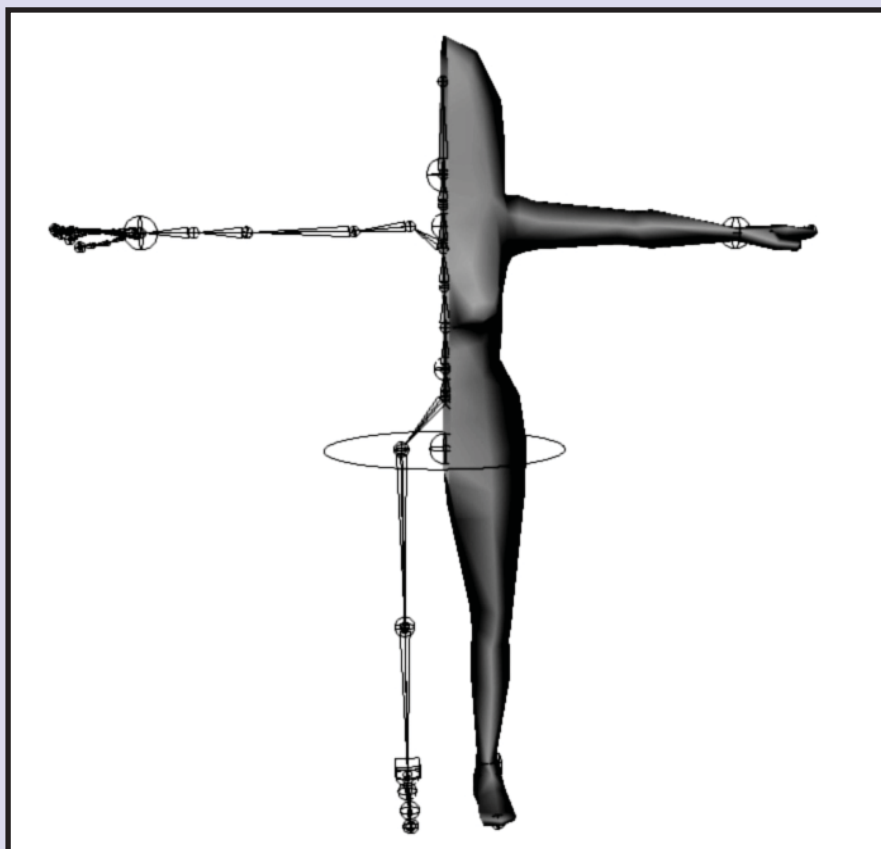
Figures 58-63

Still shots from the sun-sequence of the film, Author.



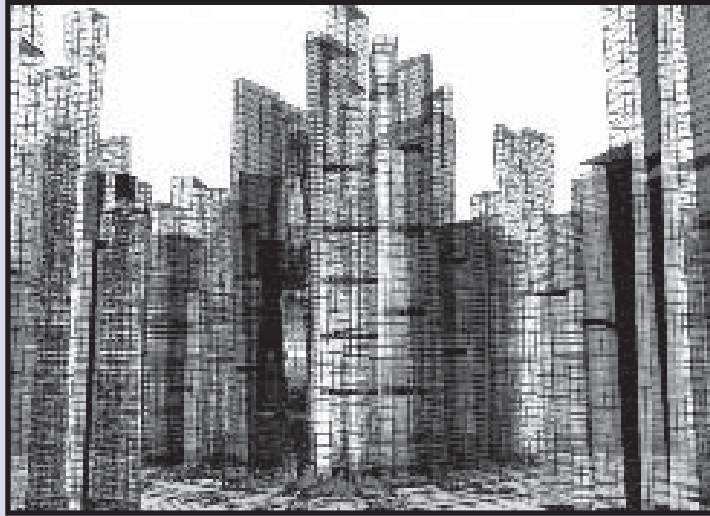
64

Figure 64: Maya wireframe of machine tree, Author.

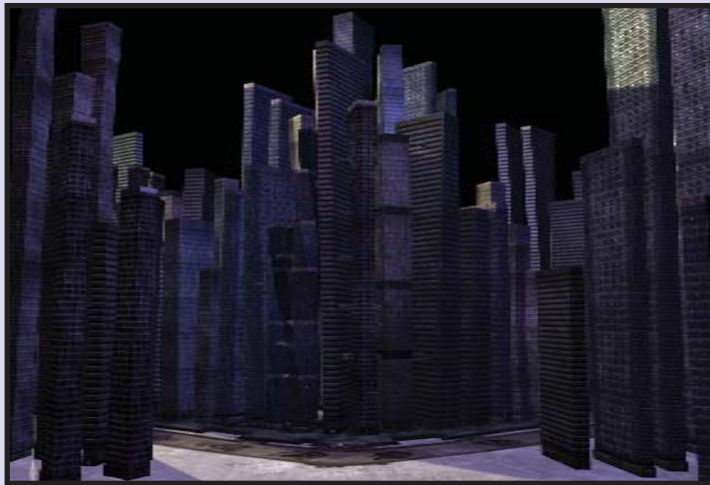


65

Figure 65: Maya skeleton showing rigged model of Kira, which was used to animate her light-body, Author.



66



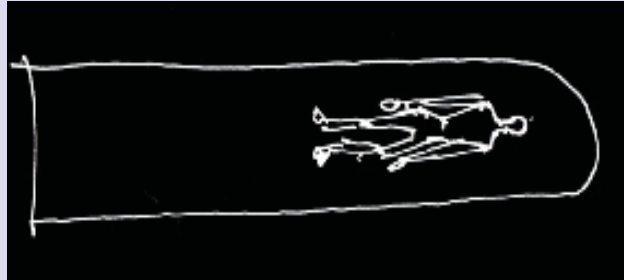
67

Figure 66: Wireframe from maya of abandoned city, Author.

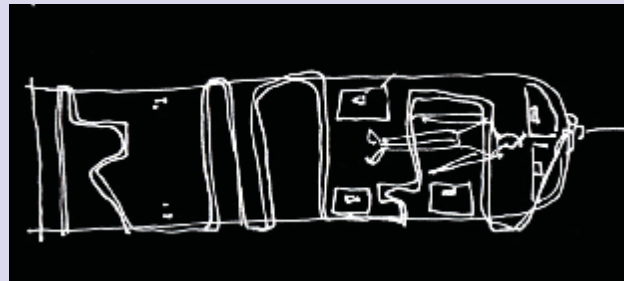
67: Rendered maya image of abandoned city, Author.



68



69

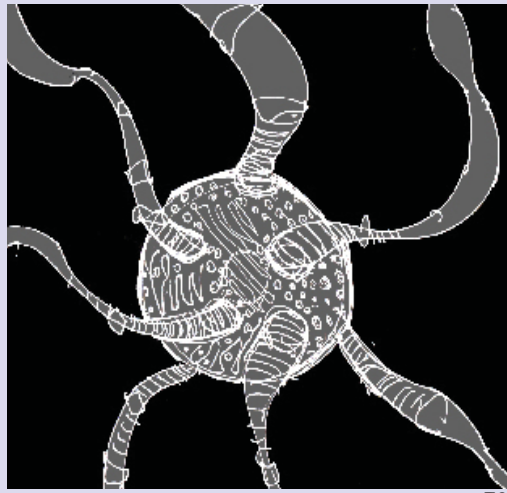


70

Figure 68-70  
Sketches of Cyborg Pod, Author.



71



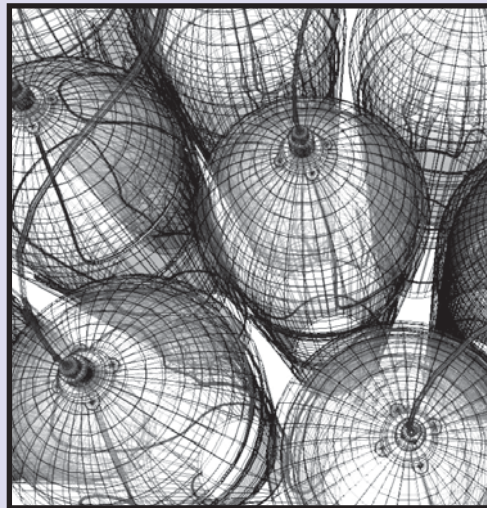
72

Figures 71 & 72

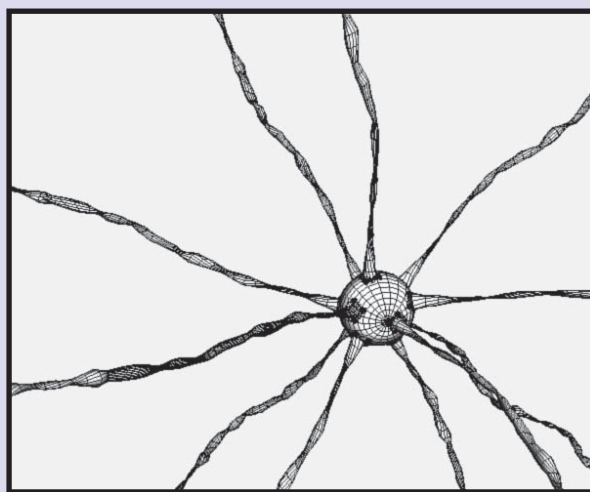
*Sun Capture Device Design Sketches*, Author.



73



74



75



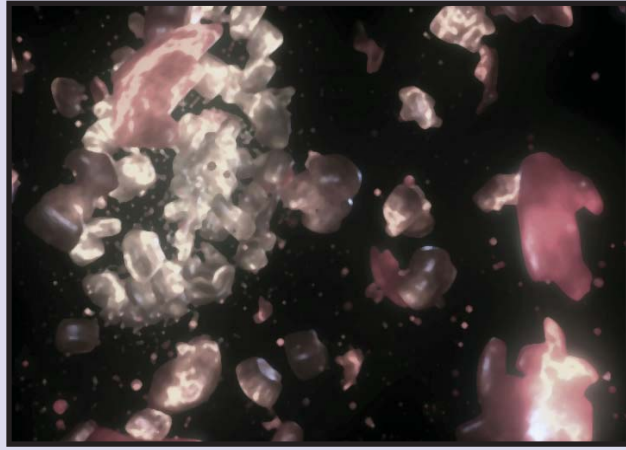
76

Figure 73: *Blue Screen production of Kisbo*, Author.

74: *Maya Wireframe of Cyborg pods*, Author.

75: *Maya Wireframe of Sun Capture Device*, Author.

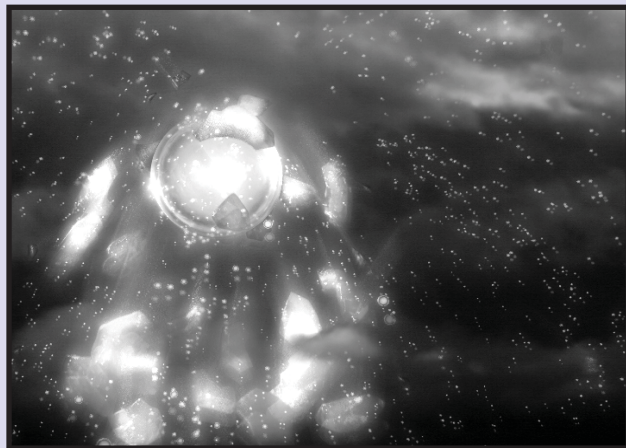
76: *Make-up application on Kisbo*, Author.



77



78



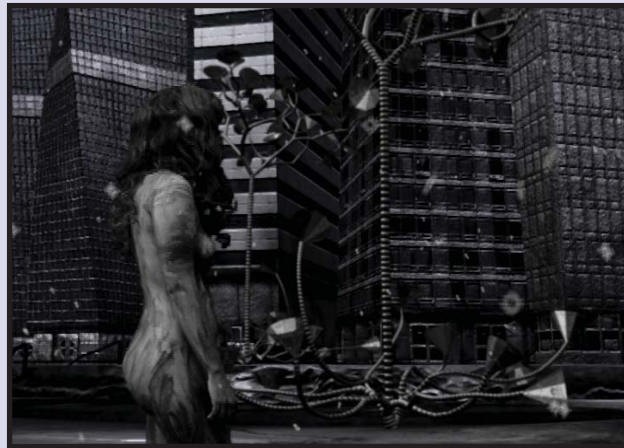
79

Figures 77-79  
*Final Stills from Film, Author.*





80



81

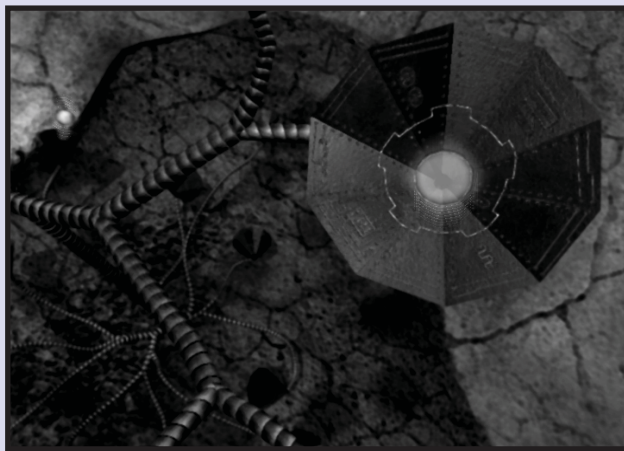


82

Figures 81-82  
*Final Stills from Film, Author.*



83

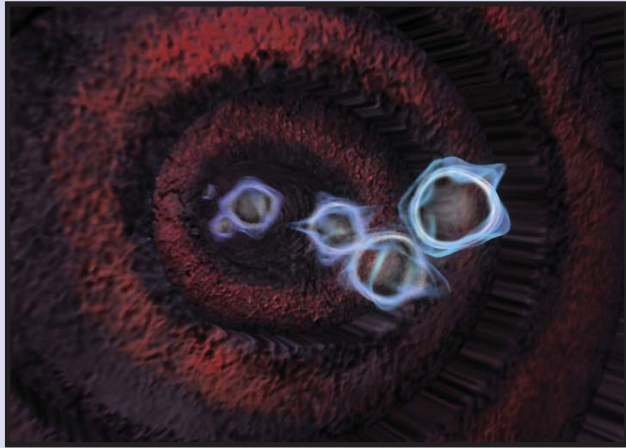


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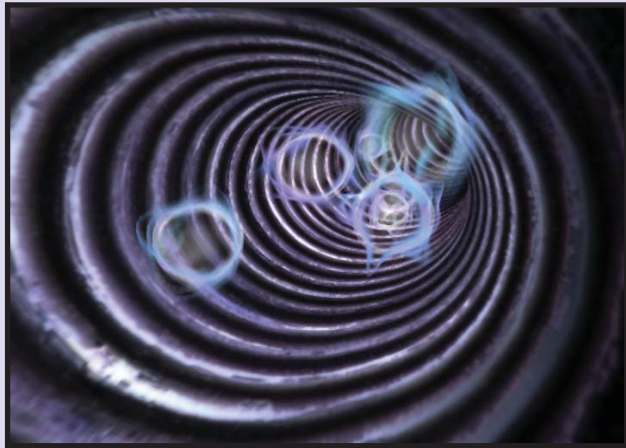


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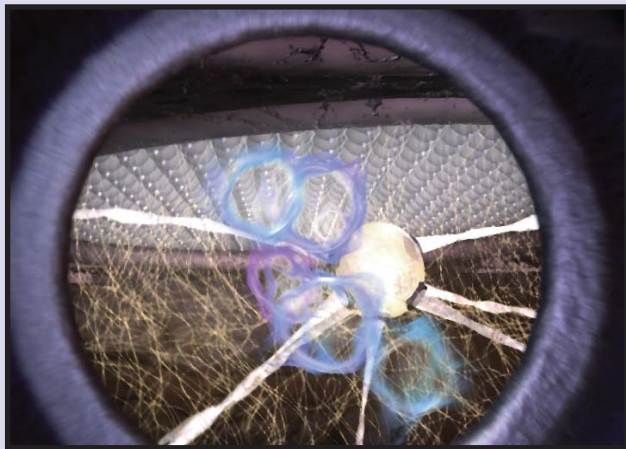
Figures 83-85  
*Final Stills from Film*, Author.



86



87



88

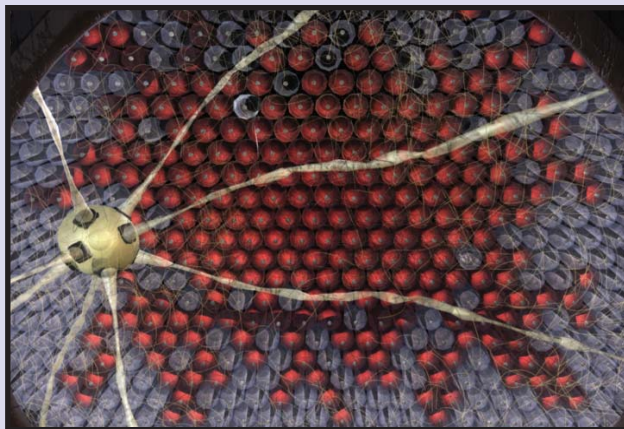
Figures 86-88  
*Final Stills from Film*, Author.



89

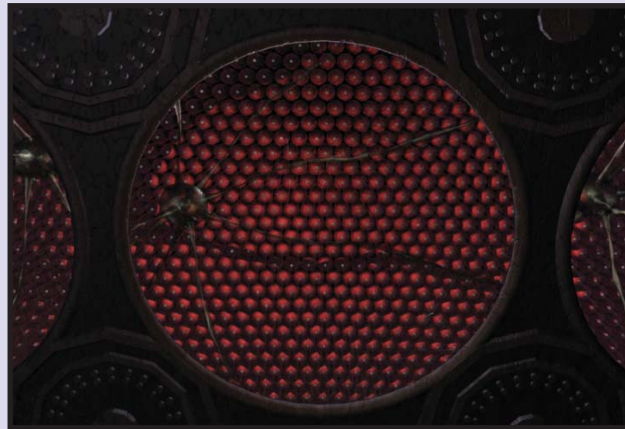


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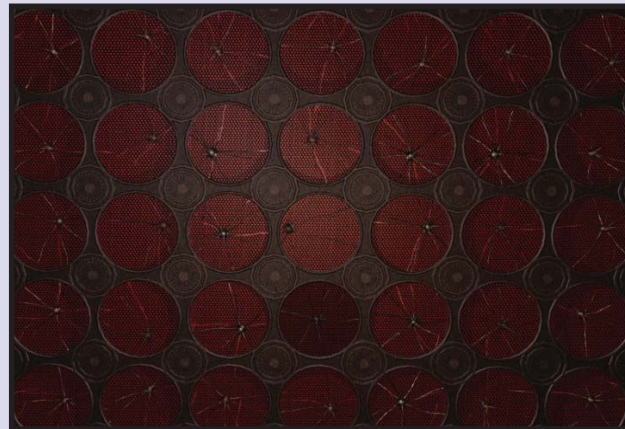


91

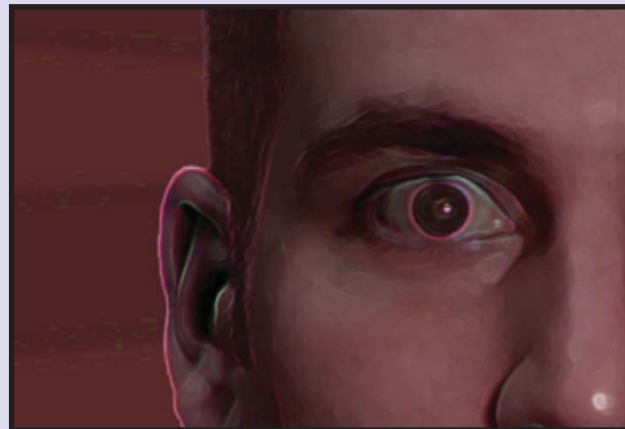
Figures 89-91  
*Final Stills from Film*, Author.



92

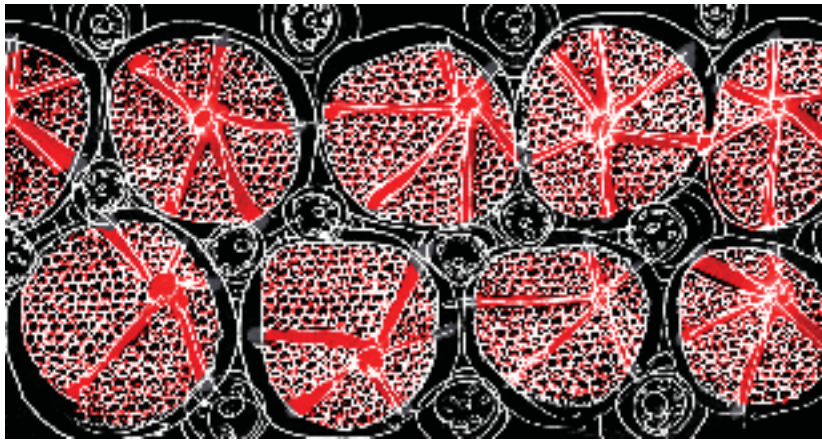


93



94

Figures 92-94  
*Final Stills from Film*, Author.



95

## CONCLUSION

In an attempt to dislodge from the finitude of our physical selves, we remain attached to the comforts of our technological prosthetics, disconnected from our corporeality. Our cyborg fascination mutes our senses and desensitizes our ability to receive subtle information from our environment. However, the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms are inseparable; we simultaneously exist in all three, and unlimited by our virtual obsessions, the boundaries of our perceptual world can expand. Fields of subtle energy are layered around our physical bodies, connected to our contemporary skin and its technological prosthetics. Layered over, around, and within our human bodies and spaces, the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms float in and out of each other endlessly.

The design aspect of this thesis, a short film, reveals the crossing of these three realms. Three characters are brought to life, an earth goddess - representing our inherent connection to the corporeal aspect of our being, a cyborg - the projection of our current reliance on the world of technology as well as a shaman - the voice and guide of the story as well as the symbol of our innate energetic body. The film shows the junction where the three characters and the realms in which they exist merge and meet. It begins with a connection between flesh and origin, which is investigated through the thesis in a study of the world of energy. Kira, the earth goddess, comes to life through an invocation from the shaman's world. She transforms through this process, gaining the strength to call the underground cyborg world to awakening. As her energetic body extends like a bridge through the earth into the underworld, the cyborgs connect to their physical bodies and dislodge from their collective virtual domains for the first time. The gateway is formed unifying the corporeal, virtual and spiritual realms.

Kisho's reaction to Kira's energy affirms that no matter how much we layer ourselves with technological prosthetics, the corporeal aspect of our being is still connected with subtle layers of information that makes us aware of the fluid and expansive behaviour of our selves. We have access to subtle modes of knowing and this thesis looks into the practices of becoming aware of the subtle vibrations of the energetic world, making it possible to tune into information that exists between every person, object and space in the universe. The subtle world of energy is not a new phenomenon. It has existed in ancient traditions as well as in recent practices which use energy to access harmonious frequencies. In these traditions and practices, the physical body carries nodes, channels, and gateways to more subtle modes of perception,

Figures 95 (opposite page)  
*Sketch of Final Scene*, Author.

where access to information is non-linear and the traditional notions of time and space are collapsed.

Since these three realms do not exist separately, our mode of consciousness in each affects the other. If we give full committal to the virtual, we exist outside of our corporeal bounds, disconnected from our corporeality and the subtle gateways that are associated with it. This thesis reveals the possibility of becoming conscious of the junction where the three realms co-exist. Once this awareness is achieved, it is up to the individual to choose to what extent she will receive information from each realm. In tuning into all three realms, we can move in and out of them with full conscious awareness. We can know when we are tuned into our raw/corporeal selves, our digital zeros and ones, or our energetic light body. We can either choose to tune into one realm and block the rest, or, we can come to terms with the notion that we can exist in all three realms simultaneously, as one multiple being, hybrid of the corporeal, virtual and spiritual.



## APPENDIX A

Chart: Jay Earley's The Social Evolution of Consciousness

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Time	35000 - 8000 BC	8000 - 3000 BC	3000 BC	500 BC - 1500 AD	1500-1700	Current
People & Place	Tribes / Small bands	Villages / Larger societies held together by mythic beliefs	Male ruling class, Monarchs, Kings	Religion: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taosim	Individuals	Cyborg & Virtual
Experience & Activity	Vitality of the body	Horticulture	Agriculture, bronze, first cities, first political units	Self observation and reflection	Struggle for personal gain and power	Search for artificial pleasure
Belonging / Belief	Natural world / Magic	Myths of the goddess or the Great Mother	Men as actors in the world	Universal Gods, open to anyone who believed in them	Science as Religion	Technology / Material
Resulting Consciousness	-Participatory-	-Reflexive- Starts to grow (participatory still present)	-Reflexive- Emerges, split from Participatory	-Participatory- intention to Reflexive segregation	-Reflexive-	?

Figure 96

This chart is a distillation of Jay Earley's article, *The Social Evolution of Consciousness*. According to Earley, as we move from nature towards technology, we move from a "participatory consciousness" to a "reflexive consciousness," shifting from an expanded awareness of nature and the universe towards an individualistic, introverted perspective of it.

## APPENDIX B

### Summary of Electricteh Interview Accompanied by Images from Bali.

“Whatever we describe, our description is based on our mental capacity to relate to something that we know, and exists, and we have experienced in a certain way. And that is confined to a three dimensional world. What I do is tap into dimensions beyond the three dimensional world. That has no description; there is no way to describe it. There are ways to help people, to draw people’s attention to some specifics that has to do with it... but there is no description. So if I were to explain what I do, I would give many examples of how... what I do does to people, in certain levels. Well, on a ‘spirituality 101’ level, everybody... everything is an energetic entity that we call it soul, spirit, whatever you want to call it. Basically, the nature of every matter is pure energy... and the nature of humans, of trees, are the same way. And energy doesn’t die; it transforms from one kind to another, and always exists.” (Electricteh, Interview, Nov. 2005)



Figure 97

Abdy bringing the energy into the session room.

(Nancy Lessard)



Figure 98

Lightworker transferring the energy.

(Nancy Lessard)

“There is no such thing as good energy or a bad energy. Good and bad serves within a duality aspect of the universe. In a twelve dimensional universe, which is the totality of the whole universe, there is no duality; it’s just a frequency at different levels. You can’t define it as bad or good. There are certain energies that are in harmony with us, that makes us feel good... and there are certain energy that are not in harmony with our energy, we decide that’s a bad energy. But the energy that we say is a bad energy that is not in harmony with us, is in harmony with something else in the universe.” (Electriciteh)



Figure 99

Woman in trance.

(Nancy Lessard)

Figure 100

Group Energy Healing

(Nancy Lessard)



“I still felt a link with my body; I was aware of the room around me; though my eyes were closed, I could still hear all the sounds in the room and I could still feel the room. Yet my being, my essence was also connected to many other places all at once. It was remembering, it was removing and releasing the energies that I held from my past and my future. This energy was a result of not only my own energetic field, but my ancestral history, all the way to their cellular configuration. My energy was also a huge result of the energies around me, resulting from exchanges with the people and the places where I had been, from where I had come from, and perhaps even the places I was heading towards.” (Author, describing Bali Session Experience, March 2006)



Figure 101

Medicine woman from  
Columbia removing a block  
from an energy center

(Nancy Lessard)



102

“We spread out along the edge of the road, holding hands while facing the distant lake and volcanoes. We were instructed to give a part of our being to the landscape in front of us.”

Figures 102-104

Tuning into the energy of the sky, the earth and releasing into nature.

(Nancy Lessard)

“The release began. We sounded like creatures, inhuman, uncivilized; screaming, shouting, singing, laughing; all at the same time. We were liberated. As we stood there, Mother Nature played with us. The heavy clouds parted allowing the sun-rays to stroke us; then suddenly, a thundershower attacked, pouring down on us, testing us, as we remained and kept on going with our invigorating mania.” (Author)



103



104

Figure 105

Lightworker releasing the energy of sadness.

(Nancy Lessard)



“It didn’t take long for the sadness to take over. I don’t know how it was initiated, what its source was, and how much exactly of it was my own ; but it poured out. I sobbed, I howled, I wept like never before. It wouldn’t stop. I tried hard, but I couldn’t put it to an end. It was so extreme that I became very afraid. I feared my own sadness and what it was doing to me. Then I became part of an energetic transfer. A woman who I had become close with over the last couple of days, a doctor and healer from Columbia, placed herself next to me, took my hand, and soon joined the hysterical sobbing. She absorbed what I needed to let go, and further released whatever she held onto that was consistent with that particular energy. The force of two releasing the same energetic vibration was powerful. It was as though we had become a conduit for sadness, liberating ourselves of not only our own grief, but also the sadness of our surroundings; our homes, our cities, our countries and our continents. This energetic relay continued over two other people, each again sobbing in order to remove, release and let go. I came out of it in a state of calm shock. It took some time to gain the strength to be in my body again. I was in a new shell, one which felt lighter and much more graceful. I wondered though, where my sadness had gone and who or what had taken it in.” (Author)



Figure 106

Energy being passed through the meridians in the feet.

(Nancy Lessard)

## **APPENDIX C**

This appendix is a video file of the design portion of the thesis.

The file of this video can be found on the DVD in the sleeve on the inside back cover of the thesis book.

If you have accessed this thesis from a source other than the University of Waterloo, you may not have access to this file. You may access it by searching for this thesis at <http://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca>.

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