



DIGITAL
BY
DESIGN

TROIKA

Conny Freyer

Sebastien Noel

Eva Rucki

Thames & Hudson

LOOKING

FOR GOD

A SPIRITUAL ROBOT
LOOKING FOR GOD

FERNANDO ORELLANA

Fernando Orellana's work often uses new media to deal with socio-political ideas, as in this installation, *Looking for God*. The origin of the idea of God has always been hotly debated by seekers of truth. While Creationists argue that the idea of God is inherent in us, Evolutionists believe that it was a way for primitive humankind to cope with a hostile and mysterious environment. Yet some would see an uncanny similarity between the search for God and the methodical scrutiny of our skies in search of alien signals. Although religions and philosophies differ in their attitudes, this seeking for truth is deeply ingrained in humans.

With *Looking for God*, Orellana ponders what this question might mean for an artificially made intelligence, should self-aware devices be one day possible. Would intelligent machines search for a deity, whether it be a god, aliens or another artificial intelligence? If so, how would they do it? Would they also inherit the desire to seek the truth from generation to generation? The installation consists of an old General Electrics radio, a microphone, an electronic odometer, an electronic bell, a microprocessor and a mechanism that is able to tune the radio. The mechanism turns the dial of the radio slightly, either to the left or right. The microphone then captures a three-second sample of the audio signal coming out of the radio. This captured signal is then compared to a signal saved in the microprocessor's memory of the word 'god'. If the new signal does not match the signal in memory, the mechanism turns the dial again and the process is repeated. If the signal captured does match, the piece deduces that it has found the word 'god'. It then triggers the electronic bell and marks one unit on the electronic odometer. In this way, *Looking for God* tries metaphorically to replicate humanity's own quest to understand the world.

Looking for God
2004





«I AM FASCINATED THAT THE HUMAN RACE IS LOOKING FOR ALIENS IN RADIATION, INCLUDING RADIO WAVES. I FOUND THAT THIS PURSUIT IS ANALOGOUS TO THE SEARCH FOR RELIGION OR GOD. I WONDERED, IF A SELF-AWARE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WAS POSSIBLE, WOULD IT ALSO BECOME OBSESSED WITH THE 'GOD' IDEA?» FERNANDO ORELLANA

