

The Spiritual Machine

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Abstract. In this Science Fiction Prototype (SFP) we explore the evolving relationship between technology and people. We do this by considering what may seem to be two irreconcilable aspirations of the human condition; the desire for utilizing ever increasingly sophisticated technology in our life whilst at the same time preserving the spiritual values that make us human. Superficially it would seem that these two forces in our life are pulling us in opposite directions. Can the forces of technology and spirituality be balanced in modern life? To investigate this issue we invent a future in which nano-computing technology is available for sale in many forms. One form is smart-paint called “*iSkin*” which, when painted on surfaces, turns them into interactive multi-media mediums. The characters in this story use this “magical” paint to create an immersive reality environment, the “*WonderHome*” in which reality and virtuality become confused in an intoxicating mix of sensory experiences that causes a madness known as “Obsessive-Compulsive Technophilia Disorder (OCTD)”. In the story a cure to this emerges in the form of the ancient Chinese practice of Chan, a form of Buddhism.

Keywords. Science fiction prototype, HCI, AI, digital lifestyle, immersive environment, nano-computers, machines, OCD, love, technology and disorders, Buddhism, Chan practice, social innovation, mental health, spirituality, education



*"There is always some madness in love.
But there is also always some reason in madness."
- Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844 - 1900)*

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