

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Nearly 1,000 Artists present an online exhibition of  
a worldwide game of *TELEPHONE*  
ONLINE LAUNCH: April 10, 2021**

More than 950 artists from 70 countries played a game of *TELEPHONE*, in which a message was passed from art form to art form. The message could become a poem, then a painting, then a film, then a dance, as it was passed 7,177,703 kilometers between 489 cities. An interactive, online exhibition of these hundreds of original, interconnected works will debut to the public for free on Saturday, April 10, 2021 at 9am EST at <https://phonebook.gallery/>.

Only a handful of staff members know the original message of *TELEPHONE*. The participating artists are only aware of the work that directly preceded their own, and do not know how their own work was translated or further translated in subsequent. When *TELEPHONE* becomes publicly available, it will be the first time that any of the artists get to see the exhibition in full.

Participants in *TELEPHONE* were primarily recruited by word-of-mouth, as well via various international message boards. Approximately 60% are based in the United States and approximately 65% are women. In terms of career, players range from Guggenheim Fellows to newly emerging artists, from high school students and elderly artists just developing their practices to Academy Award and Pulitzer Prize winners.

Full list of participating artist is attached.

It's possible to consider *TELEPHONE* as a presentation of nearly 1,000 individual and original works of art. It's equally valid to view this exhibition as a single work of art by people from across the Earth. Regardless, the result is the largest data set of ekphrastic artistic exchange in history. Ekphrasis is the process of translation of one art form into another. This helps us better understand each art form, the neurological processes at work in translation, and how information is passed from person to person. The second half of the game employs synthesis, allowing us to study how artists combine multiple influences simultaneously.

Unlike the children's game (known elsewhere as Dengon, Teléfono Descompuesto, Operator, Gluchy Telefon, Stille Post, Telefon Shavur, and countless other names across the world), this *TELEPHONE* message was not whispered in a straight line. Each finished work was assigned to two or three other artists, so the game branched out exponentially like a family tree. Halfway through, the process was reversed, meaning that

the game contracted exponentially so that TELEPHONE, which began with a single message, will be passed through almost 1,000 artists, and conclude with a single work of art.

This game was first played and published at a smaller scale in 2015, and another game was not planned. But as the pandemic began to worsen in the United States in March 2020, the time was right to pick it up again. *TELEPHONE* requires no physical contact and intimately connects individuals in isolation. The project directly engaged with artists in hard-hit countries as the global crisis unfolded and, for decades to come, this exhibition will remain a poignant time capsule of what we have endured and overcome.

The user interface of the online exhibition has been composed by professional UX designers and constructed by a talented engineering and development group. Visitors to *TELEPHONE* will be able to explore each work of art, from the original message to the final work, and then start over, choosing another of the hundreds of contiguous pathways through the exhibition. Each visitor will be supplied with a geographic map, as well as a game map to help them navigate through the structure of the game. The exhibition platform, designed and built from scratch, will seamlessly integrate more than 10,000 artist files.

The ten-member team behind the exhibition, most of whom have never met in person, are drawn from tech companies like Google, Microsoft, T-Mobile, Dropbox, and various academic institutions. By the end of the year-long project, it is expected that 10,000 hours will have gone into curating and presenting this exhibition and all of the staff are working for free. *TELEPHONE* will not generate revenue or profit and the entire cost of the project is \$150.

Conceived in 2010, the first game of TELEPHONE, was published in 2015 as an online exhibition. TELEPHONE draws inspiration from *Das Glasperlenspiel* by Hermann Hesse, the Black Mountain College, Bauhaus, the Fluxus movement, the *Cadavre Exquis* games played by the Surrealists as early as 1918. But the game structure can be traced back to at least 1827, known as a European parlor game called Consequences, though it's almost certainly older, partly because the rules are so simple that there's little need to write them down and leave a paper record. Today, TELEPHONE is known in almost every country on Earth and has a multitude of names.

This particular game of TELEPHONE was started on March 23rd, 2020 and will be available for free to the public after running for 383 days.