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Re-enacting/mediating/ activating: Towards a collaborative feminist approach to research-creation

ABSTRACT

Worldwide interest in understanding art and creative practices as valid forms of knowledge production has led to the establishment of research-creation as an interdisciplinary academic field in the last twenty years in Canada as elsewhere. Its establishment relates to a growing interest in critical making and technological innovation and to the legacies of feminism(s) and its critique of the power dynamics of knowledge production within academia. This article outlines a series of interactive projects that bring visibility to Latin American women in art, science and technology and speculates on the legacies of feminism(s) in the emergence of research-creation. The four projects discussed build on each other and explore re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment as part of a collaborative feminist research-creation methodology. I theorize their potential to activate political memory by highlighting how these three approaches to creation share a preoccupation for revisiting the past through repetition, iteration and the facilitation of intergenerational encounters among humans, non-humans and across media and technologies. While discussing the feminist orientation of these approaches, I

KEYWORDS

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suggest a critique of dominant modes of knowledge production that have obscured the contributions of Latin American women and offer four research-creation interventions in the media arts archive.

LOCATING RESEARCH-CREATION

In Canada, research-creation is an umbrella term that points towards the increasing recognition of artistic expression and creative practices as valid forms of academic knowledge. Within the last twenty years, research-creation has been progressively adopted as an interdisciplinary field and funding category in universities worldwide. In the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States it is also known as 'practice arts-based research, practice-led research, research-based practice, research-led practice, creative-praxis, art-driven inquiry, arts-based research, and increasingly artistic research' (Loveless 2019: 40). In Latin America, research-creation is called *investigación-creación* ('research-creation') or *investigación-creación artística* ('research-art creation') and has been discussed and implemented in design and art faculties since the early 2000s in Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil (Alba and Buenaventura 2020: 31–32; Cañaverall-Silva 2016: 50; Carreño 2014: 59–62, 53; Cuartas 2009: 87).

Regardless of its name, its recent recognition as an academic field intersects with the growing push for critical making practices and technological innovation in academia as well as the adoption of neoliberal economics that transformed the ethos and funding models of universities (Sawchuk and Chapman 2012: 8–10; Chapman and Sawchuk 2015; Escobar 2018: 16–20; Loveless 2019: 9–13). However, as Arturo Escobar points out in 'Designs for the pluriverse' (2018), this turn towards making practices and innovation is also closely connected and informed by the emergence of critical discourses and practices including feminism(s) within and outside academia in the global south and north. These critical discourses and practices have targeted the longstanding assumptions of the dualist ontologies (mind/body, self/other, reason/emotion, nature/culture, etc.) which are the foundations of western modernity and its institutions of knowledge production (Escobar 2018: 3–5). Escobar offers a broad philosophical overview on how to think about the ubiquity of design in our current world, and critical design specifically, from a politico-ontological perspective. According to Escobar (2018: 1), this perspective defines the nature of all beings as relational and in so doing engages in a political and philosophical framework. Similarly, in *How to Make Art at the End of the World* (2019), Nathalie Loveless relates the emergence of research-creation within the North American academy to the legacies of critical studies (feminism, Indigenous studies, critical race studies, cultural studies, etc.) which are not only concerned about knowledge that is deemed valid but also about who gets to produce it and how (Loveless 2019: 15). In exploring these legacies through her own pedagogical approach, Loveless develops a manifesto to challenge the prevalence of written-based practices in the humanities and the arts. Reflecting on my own experience directing an interdisciplinary research-creation studio based in a Canadian university and my interest in recovering the contributions of Latin American women in art, science and technology, in this article I build on Loveless and Escobar's critical understandings of the academic turn towards critical making and creation to historicize its feminist orientations and intervene in the media arts archive through research-creation.

Based in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University, since 2015, members and collaborators of the Critical MediArts Studio (cMAS) have developed a series of interactive art projects that investigate and foreground the histories, roles and experiences of women in art, science and technology. cMAS projects interrogate women as a category of analysis in its broadest sense. Informed by the work of Joan Wallach Scott (1988), Judith Butler (1990, 2004), Jack Halberstam (2005), Patricia Hill Collins (2019) and others, we employ an intersectional perspective that allows us to understand and interrogate ‘women’ not as fixed gender or sexual identity but as a category of analysis with a complex history which is part of a heteropatriarchal capitalist system that overvalues masculinity and mobilizes its power by silencing or marginalizing the feminine or the queer from rational discourses or intellectual fields. cMAS interactive projects have explored the kitchen as a laboratory, an intergenerational family cookbook as an archive, and explored motherhood as an expanded mode of caring that moves beyond the boundaries of the human into the non-human and the machine. Our projects combine analogue, digital and artificial intelligence (AI) with live performance and sound to bring visibility to women’s contributions.

Focusing on four collaborative interactive projects *Remediating Mama Pina’s Cookbook* (2015–17), *The Real, the Virtual and the We* (2016), *Mothering Bacteria* (2018–19) and the *Mitochondrial Ontologies Series* (2019–present) in this article, I discuss the possibilities of re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment as part of a collaborative feminist research-creation methodology. I theorize their potential to activate political memory by highlighting how re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment share a preoccupation for revisiting the past through repetition, iteration and the facilitation of intergenerational encounters among humans and non-humans and across media and technologies. While discussing the feminist orientation of these three approaches to creation, I suggest a critique of dominant modes of knowledge production that have obscured the contributions of Latin American women and offer four research-creation projects as interventions in the media arts archive.

RE-MEDIATION, RE-ENACTMENT AND RE-ACTIVATION AS FEMINIST ORIENTATION

Re-mediation, re-enactment and re-activation combine insights from various disciplinary fields including media archaeology (Huhtamo and Parikka 2011), media studies (Bolter and Grusin 1999), performance studies (Schneider 2019, 2011; Jones 2011), visual art, curatorial studies (Caronia et al. 2014; *Mujeres ¿y qué más? Reactivando el archivo de Ana Victoria Jiménez* 2011; Cordero et al. 2016) and history (Agnew 2004). Critical discussions within these disciplines share an interest in dismantling dominant historical narratives by rescuing silenced practices and voices and investigating how old media protocols, technologies and social practices are embedded in and inform new media and our sense of self.

Re-mediation as defined by Bolter and Grusin consists of the ‘formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms’ (1999: 257). From an environmental, human-rights and Indigenous perspective re-mediation goes beyond Bolter and Grusin media approach to signal acts of reparation and justice in the context of reconciliation (Gills 2014; Beckett and Keeling 2019). Re-mediation in this sense refers not only to the act of restoring a contaminated site, but also to an understanding of the colonial legacies that determine

our relation to land, to the world and to the value systems that define what is knowledge and who is a valid knowledge producer. Through this lens, re-mediation signals thus a commitment to remedial acts, to acts of reparation that centre Indigenous concerns and ways of knowing or, more broadly, aim to redress human-rights violations. This sense of re-mediation considers the political, sociocultural and historical dimensions of our relation to land and knowledge production in a way that speaks to Escobar's (2018) political-ontological perspective. Re-mediation is then a politics of care in the context of an 'ongoing processes of trust building, reconciliation, and perpetual care for humans, animals and environments alike' (Beckett and Keeling 2019: 217).

Understood as an artistic and historical practice to visualize and contemporize the past, re-enactment focuses primarily on recreating events and creating them anew. Performance theorists and cultural historians see in historical re-enactments the potential of giving voice to marginalized voices, while also raising important questions on how re-enactments challenge the linearity of time and the ways we think about temporality (Schneider 2011, 2019). For Tommy DeFranz and Gustavo D. Furtado the main characteristic of re-enactments is the creation of a disturbance in the perceived linearity of time whereby 'through corporeal repetition the past gains a ghostly simultaneity with the present and every repetition harbors the possibility of difference' (DeFranz and Furtado, cited in Schneider 2019: 121). Hence, re-enactments for DeFranz and Furtado suggest the possibility of new futures for the past.

My understanding of re-activation draws significantly from the feminist curatorial and artistic practice of Mónica Mayer and Karen Cordero (*Mujeres ¿y qué más? Reactivando el archivo de Ana Victoria Jiménez* 2011; Cordero 2016; Aceves Sepúlveda 2019a: 139–48, 2019b). Mayer and Cordero promote a re-engagement with the archive from the present through an intergenerational framework that draws points of rupture and continuity. Through the organization of intergenerational gatherings, participants re-activate an existing archive through a myriad of initiatives that range from exhibitions and re-enactments of artworks to conversations (*Mujeres ¿y qué más? Reactivando el archivo de Ana Victoria Jiménez* 2011). As a result, the archive is redefined as a living archive rather than a static collection of documents housed in an institution. Building on Mayer and Cordero's approach, which draws heavily on 1970s feminist small conscious-raising groups (Aceves Sepúlveda 2019a: 83–121), I define re-activation as a political and social justice intervention which emerges from a participatory and intergenerational practice that promotes historical memory by re-engaging with an archive that is not commonly considered as such (Aceves Sepúlveda 2019b). Rather than a mere act of recovery or reinterpretation, re-activation is a tactic to bring awareness to the historical value of an archive by reinserting it in the present, thus turning historical memory into political memory and a matter of social justice.

As it is well known, when feminists organized around the dictum 'the personal is political', they have continued to enhance their critique to the dominant way of understanding the world through fixed binaries (dualisms). More recently and from new materialist to post-humanist lenses, feminists have insisted on the relational embodied becoming of all matter in a world where matter is not opposed to culture or technological mediation and includes, as Rossi Braidotti puts it, 'the specific slice of matter that is human embodiment' (2013: 35). For Sara Ahmed (2010), orientation refers to how we direct our embodied attention to the world and how, at that same time, the world shapes us. Both embodied attention and embodied becoming signal an

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understanding of the human body in all its affective and physical capacities intersected and co-produced by multiple social categories and non-human relations. Drawing from Ahmed and Braidotti, a feminist orientation is thus an embodied positionality, a particular perspective or a 'situated knowledge' in the words of Donna Haraway (1988). This orientation proposes a critique of patriarchal techno-capitalism and its techno-fixes and embraces the production of knowledge as not something pre-determined but emerging through a human and non-human dialogical process of exchange (Ahmed 2010; Braidotti 2013; Haraway 1988).

For feminists in both the global south and north (Segato 2016; Lugones 2010; Paredes 2015; Ahmed 2010; Braidotti 2013; Haraway 1988; von Werlhof 2013), the dualist ontologies that classify and validate knowledge production in western modernity have their roots in patriarchy which in turn has engendered our current techno-capitalist world order. Patriarchy does not point exclusively to the exploitation of women but extends to the systematic destruction of nature. It constitutes the blueprint for a world based on domination, hierarchies and dualisms (as separated binaries) instead of a world that is 'respectful of the relational fabric of all life' (Escobar 2018: 10). Through a collaborative approach and engagement with technology, the interactive research-creation projects described below take on a feminist orientation as a critique to patriarchy and suggest new re-engagements with the past through re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment to bring visibility to the contributions of women in the media arts archive.

RE-ENACTING/MEDIATING/ACTIVATING AS A COLLABORATIVE FEMINIST APPROACH TO RESEARCH-CREATION

I was introduced to re-activation as a feminist curatorial methodology through Mónica Mayer and Karen Cordero's *MEMORA* project (*Mujeres ¿y qué más? Reactivando el archivo de Ana Victoria Jiménez* 2011). The *MEMORA* project sought to raise awareness of the historical value of the Archive of feminist activist and artist Ana Victoria Jiménez, which contains photos, documents and ephemera documenting feminist activism and feminist art in Mexico City since 1970 (Aceves Sepúlveda 2019a: 139–48). To do so, Mayer and Cordero organized intergenerational workshops with artists and university students and the exhibition *Mujeres ¿y qué más? Reactivando el archivo de Ana Victoria Jiménez*. As a result, Ana Victoria's Archive was donated to the library of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. The inclusion of the curatorial programme of the exhibition organized by Mayer and Cordero as part of Jiménez's Archive points to their efforts of understanding re-activating, not only as raising awareness on the historical value of an archive to obtain an institutional home for it but also of reinserting the archive in the present making it a living archive. Through this process of re-activation, Mayer and Cordero turn historical memory into political memory. In other words, they transform historical memory into an intergenerational, active engagement with the past from the present (Aceves Sepúlveda 2019a: 139–48).

Taking inspiration from Mayer and Cordero's project, I began to reflect on what constitutes an archive and who defines it, and more significantly, on the role of women as agents of the archive. A position that Kate Eichhorn (2013: 2) defined as women's work as enablers, producers and keepers of knowledge. I turned to my family archives to explore these issues and specifically to a recipe notebook written collaboratively by three generations of women in my

family. The recipe book belonged to Mama Pina, my great-grandmother. She began to hand-write recipes on it around 1918 in Guadalajara, Mexico. The recipe notebook was handed down to my grandmother and her twin sister and then to my mother, who continued to write cooking recipes and knitting instructions in the notebook. As a child I used the recipe book to bake with my mother. The book also contains records of other forms of writing, such as calligraphy exercises, disciplinary writing lines, doodles and scribbles possibly done by children from the many households the notebook inhabited. Some of its pages are covered with smears and stains of food; others are ripped, all of which are traces of lived experiences (Figure 1).

By reflecting on how three generations of women in my family had recorded instructions on how to cook meals and bake cakes, and used it to discipline and enforce good behaviour, I began to conceive the notebook as an archive of sorts. In other words, as a collection of information bounded together, indexed and categorized which was not held in an institution but rather in kitchen cupboards and was passed down from generation to generation and used and actualized daily. That is, an archive that is both transformative and performative, domestic and gendered feminine.

For Ann Laura Stoler the archive is not static but processual it is 'an epistemological experiment that is always in the process of changing' (2002: 87). Rather than serving as a source, for Stoler archives are 'cross-sections of contested knowledge' (2002: 87). Hence, building on Stoler, I conceived Mama Pina's notebook as an archival technology to bring forth the processual qualities of the archive as contested knowledge. The notebook as an

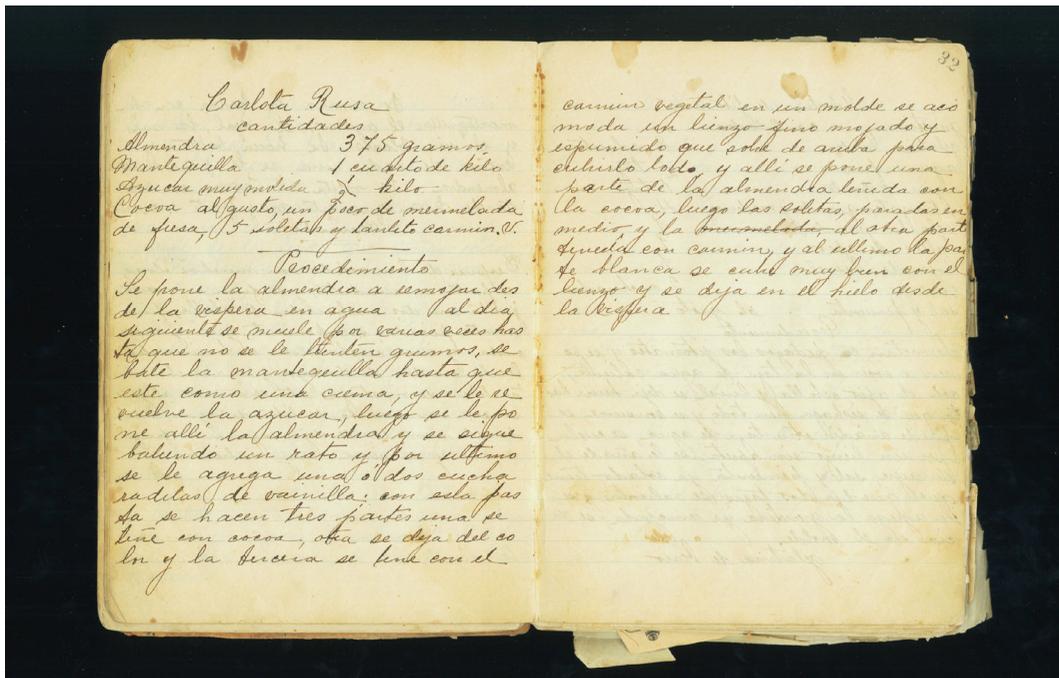


Figure 1: Pages from Mamá Pina's recipe notebook, c. 1918. Guadalajara, Mexico. Courtesy of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda.

archival technology guides a performative and gendered activity that shaped the sense of self of members of many households as it was passed down from generation to generation, and which involves multiple temporalities. In other words, as an archival technology Mama Pina's recipe notebook brings forth the tensions between performative forms and recorded forms of knowledge production, as theorized by Rebecca Schneider (2001: 101, 2011: 38–42) and Diane Taylor (2003: 16–20). These tensions exist in the recipe notebook as it served to record female reproductive labour, domestic forms of writing as well as traces of family gatherings and long hours spent in the kitchen. In exploring how domestic material culture transmits and transfers cultural memories and social identities, I was not only interested in proposing artefacts traditionally gendered as female as valid sources of the archive, by re-activating family recipes in different forms, I was equally concerned with exploring its intangible and performative remains, its absences and the slippages produced in each act of re-mediation.

Using Bolter and Grusin's (1999) concept of re-mediation combined with an understanding of the environmental and Indigenous dimensions of re-mediation as a remedial act (Beckett and Keeling 2019) but in this case geared at undoing the silences that patriarchy has produced in relation to the contributions of women as knowledge producers, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* expands Mayer and Cordero's notion of re-activation through digital re-mediation. It centres on various acts of re-mediation that attempt to activate and unpack the affective traces and the remains of lived experiences left in the handwritten record, as well as the absences it produces as it is handed down from generation to generation to centre female reproductive labour and domestic forms of writing as central forces of the archive. In making domestic practices of writing and the kitchen a site of knowledge production and experimentations, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* highlights female reproductive labour as an embodied intergenerational practice of knowledge creation and transmission.

The project proposes digital re-mediation as a strategy to re-activate forms of domestic writing that have been traditionally excluded from the archive. Specifically, it provides access to my family notebook handwritten by three generations of women in Guadalajara, in the form of digital scans and limited transcribed texts and to a series of collaborations that emerged as responses to the recipes. I invited several friends and colleagues to respond, in the media of their choice, to a cooking recipe included in Mama Pina's recipe notebook. I sent a selection of 25 recipes to 40 people via e-mail without translation or transcription (recipes are written in Spanish). The responses I received included digital images, audio recordings, videos, poems in the form of recipes and documentation of family gatherings and conversations. The responses re-activated the handwritten record while unpacking its absences and creating new experiences and connections that remediated the recipes.

Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook (2015–17) began as a participatory video art installation and, through different iterations, it was disseminated in a diverse range of formats that address different research communities. It consists of a four-channel video art installation and a website that contains the responses I received from my collaborators, as well as an index of the recipes and digitized pages of the notebook (Figure 2).

The first video in the installation records my attempts at learning different handwriting styles recorded in the book. The second video features myself cooking one of the recipes while my mother reads the recipe to me via Skype.



Figure 2: Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17. Four channel video installation. Still image of video. Courtesy of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda.

The third video consists of mapping and documenting the collaborations of friends and colleagues who were invited to respond to some of the recipes from the cookbook in the media of their choice. The fourth video is an interactive channel that invites viewers to write responses to one of the recipes in the cookbook using a stylus pen or a mouse. These responses are not recorded, but slowly disappear as the user types or draws onto the image. This disappearance was designed to maintain the liberating aspects of forgetting inherent in any archival practice. Similarly, while the website provides some access to the recipes it is not meant to be a complete and accessible database. Instead, it offers traces and fragments for new points of departure, while questioning understandings of who and what the agents of the archive are, as well as its limits, its insufficiencies and its potential (Figure 3).

Each collaboration exists as an individual page on the website that is linked to the recipe that inspired the response. Many of these collaborations have been shown or published as stand-alone projects (Bronfman et al. 2018). *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* has been exhibited as video installation (Aceves Sepúlveda 2016), it was published as journal article on feminist data (Aceves Sepúlveda 2017) and as a book chapter focusing on methods and sources for writing family histories and working with family archives (Aceves Sepúlveda forthcoming 2024) (Figure 4).

Using Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star concept of boundary objects Natalie Loveless describes how research-creation outputs do not belong to a single discipline but rather ask 'what output forms – modes of publication – might most interestingly and generatively render that research public' (2019: 31). In using this term, Loveless emphasizes the ethics of research-creation as an interdisciplinary method and methodology that continues to speak to distinct communities of practice while 'paying rigorous attention to



Figure 3: Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17. Still image of webpage. Courtesy of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda.

“non-writerly” forms as challenges to conventional knowledge production as inherited within the settler colonial spaces’ (2020: 230). Following Loveless, I describe *Remediating Mama Pina Cookbook* as a boundary object, that is as an object that inhabits several communities of practice and satisfies the informational requirements of each of them (Loveless 2019: 32).

Methodologically, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* gave continuity to the collaborative practice of writing established by the authors of the recipe notebook and suggests ways to continue to re-activate and remediate the process digitally. While all the collaborations included in *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* resulted in embodied experiences, they were digitally remediated for public viewing. In order to explore live and embodied encounters with the media archive, I turned to re-enactment to further explore what Diane Taylor characterizes as the tensions between what is considered valid forms of knowledge as not being between the oral and the spoken word, but between the archive of supposedly ‘enduring materials (texts, bones, buildings, monuments, etc.) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practices/knowledges (spoken language, dance, sports, rituals, etc.)’ (2003: 19).

Inspired by the work of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, who explored the body in all its dimensions through the creation of embodied and multisensory experiences in which spectators were co-creators and active participants, in 2017 I began to collaborate with three artists, Alessandra Santos, Sarah Shamash and Steve DiPaola, to think about the legacy of Clark’s work. Combining my interest in using re-mediation and re-activation to bring visibility to Latin



Figure 4: Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook, 2015–17. Still image of webpage showing collaboration by Alessandra Santos. Courtesy of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda.

American female artists with Alessandra Santos' performance practice, Sarah Shamash's video practice and Steve DiPaola's expertise in creative AI, we proposed to re-enact one of Clark's best-known performance *The I and the You: Clothing/Body/Clothing* (1967). In this performance, a man and a woman

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explore each other's bodies while wearing a hooded suit that obstructs their sight and keeps them connected through an extension jutting out of their abdomen. By forcing the participants to explore each other through touch, in this performance, Clark makes a comment about interpersonal relations, the limits of ocularcentricism, communication and different ways of knowing oneself, the other and the world.

In response to *thirstDays*, an exhibition based on the concepts of love, intimacy and compassion from within a geopolitical context curated by Denise Rayner, Tonel and Jayce Salloum at VIVO Media Arts Centre in Vancouver, BC, in 2016, we proposed to use re-enactment to understand how Clark's explorations were relevant at a time when our social interactions are increasingly mediated through digital technologies, and when the limits of our real and virtual bodies are constantly being blurred. We aimed to explore whether there is an ontological distinction between electronic image and electronic being, and what new potentials are opened up in between the interstices of human scale and electronic possibilities. The result of our collaboration was an interactive durational performance (approximately fifteen minutes), and a two-channel video installation entitled *The Real, the Virtual and the We (Re-activating Lygia Clark's The I and You: Clothing/Body/Clothing, 1967)*.

Alessandra Santos designed and made the outfits, and Sarah Shamash Alessandra and I performed in front of a video camera and filmed each other to produce the first video. In the video we see a person (one of us) moving towards one of the edges of the frame wearing a suit with several extensions/connections. The movements imply that the performer is looking to connect with something/someone that is outside the frame. The second video is an AI-generated mirrored version of the first video developed by Steve DiPaola using his custom-built AI tools. In this project, the AI is conceived as an active agent in the triad of relations set out in this re-enactment that actively shapes our sense of self. The two videos are projected onto two adjacent walls.

During the presentation at VIVO Media Arts, Alessandra Santos performed live in an attempt to connect with the two personas being projected, thus creating another axis/or connection point. During the live performance, another suit lay inert on the floor as part of the installation and to invite the audience to participate (Figure 5).

Similar to *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, the *Real the Virtual and the We* developed a network of collaborations and relations between artists, publics and machines that sought to re-imagine other futures for the past. By making Lygia Clark's multisensory and embodied explorations the point of departure to think through the ways in which technology co-produces a sense of self, this re-enactment not only brought visibility to Clark's important contributions to the archives of media arts, but also alluded to the continuities and ruptures on theorizations of our relation to technology. Most significantly, it locates Clark at the forefront of a critique to ocularcentricism that speaks to Ahmed's (2010) feminist orientation as a way in which we direct our embodied attention to the world and how the world continually shapes us as embodied and entangled subjects.

The integration of AI has led to a series of collaborative projects with Steve DiPaola, and artists and scholars, prOphecy sun and Freya Zinovieff. In these collaborations we use the female body inscribed by the lived experience of childbearing as a metaphor to reflect on the idea of the body as an interface between self and Other. In *Mothering Bacteria* (2018–19) a three-channel video installation we projected a combination of pre-recorded images of growing



Figure 5: Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Sarah Shamash, Alessandra Santos and Steve DiPaola, *The Real, the Virtual and the We (Re-activating Lygia Clark's The I and You: Clothing/Body/Clothing, 1967)*, 2016. Alessandra Santos performing live at VIVO Media Arts, 2016. Photo courtesy of Josema Zamorano.

bacteria in petri-dishes and sounds generated by machine-learning digital tools onto the three female bodies. The female bodies were covered with white paint as we choreographed movements inspired by butoh dance. Over time, the image and soundscape sequences are morphed by the digital tools to the point of disintegration, thus setting the stage for new lives to generate (Figure 6).

As a research-creation project, *Mothering Bacteria* also exists in various formats and has generated different iterations and collaborations (Sun et al. 2019, 2021). Building on the collaborative methodology established in *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook* and the use of re-enactment, performance and the integration of AI and bacteria as agents and collaborators, cMAS members and collaborators continue to explore re-mediation, re-enactment and re-activation as feminist approaches to interrogate and expand the media archive through research-creation.

Our most current project takes inspiration from Lynn Margulis' (1986) endosymbiotic theory and her invitation to think through the deep connections between the microcosmos and the macrocosms to explore the female body as a generative host of human and non-human life. In the series *Mitochondrial Ontologies: Deep Time and The Digital* (2019–present) we employ the concept of mitochondria as a metaphor pointing to the possibility of

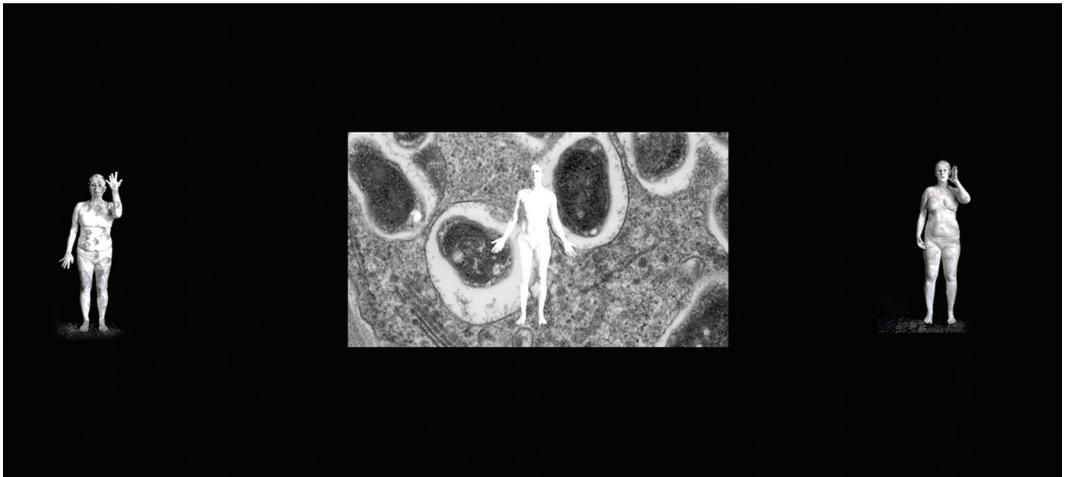


Figure 6: *prOphecy sun*, Freya Zinovieff and Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, *Mothering Bacteria*, 2019. Still image of video. Courtesy of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda.

tracing maternal lineages of human and non-human bodies across time to reference information flows across bodies, machines and geographies. To date, ten artists are collaborating to develop a live performance and a generative-video installation that connects us to past lineages and geological times when unicellular organisms established a symbiotic relation with each other to develop multicellular organisms. The artists include Salome Nieto, Matilda Aslizadeh, Maira Cristina Castro, Lois Klassen, Alessandra Santos, Sarah Shamash, prOphecy sun, Freya Zinovieff, Steve DiPaola, Jay Tseng, Reese Muntean and me.

The initial part of the project involves a series of three butoh-inspired movement workshops directed by butoh-dancer and choreographer Salome Nieto. The objective of these workshops is to develop a repertoire of movements collectively. In parallel to the workshops, each artist was provided with a kit of petri-dishes, instructions on how to culture bacteria and a digital camera capable of microscopic photography to record their cultures. They were also asked to seek images of fossils of early microbial life found in their places of birth. Over three months, we will co-develop a repertoire of movements and share our experiences of culturing microorganisms. The results of these exchanges will be integrated in a live performance that will incorporate AI images. This ongoing project explores a longer temporality of co-creation and collaboration with each other to continue to think jointly through the possibilities of re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment as components of a collaborative feminist methodology of research-creation.

Building on each other, the four interactive research-creation projects described above propose re-mediation, re-activation and re-enactment as parts of a collaborative feminist research-creation methodology to bring visibility to the contributions of women in the media arts archive as it intersects with art, science and technology. The following working definitions emerge from these four projects:

1. *Re-activation*: A feminist call to action that seeks to intervene in the present by re-activating political memory through intergenerational and creative engagements. As a feminist practice, re-activation interrogates the archive as a source, as a repository of what knowledge is deemed valid and as an institution that defines who gets to produce it and how. It redefines the archive as transformative and performative, as a living archive.
- 2a. *Re-mediation A*: A critical engagement with the so-called newness of digital technology. An exploration and experimentation with modes of knowledge preservation and communication across generations of humans, technologies and media.
- 2b. *Re-mediation B*: A step towards non-human-centred ways of being in the world that is in dialogue with Escobar's politico-ontological perspective focused on undoing the devastating effects of patriarchy (the exploitation of women, the separation of the world in dualisms and the systematic destruction of nature). A critical act of care that invites us to perform remedial actions to undo the hierarchies that sustain dominant ways of knowing and being.
3. *Re-enactment*: An invitation to stage embodied encounters with Others (human and non-human) employing repetition and iteration to disturb the linearity of time. Following DeFranz and Furtado, these encounters are acts of disobedience that push us to speculate about other futures for our pasts to harbour possibilities for difference.

These working definitions take on a feminist orientation to offer a critique to patriarchy by promoting collaborations with humans, non-humans and AI tools to suggest new ways to understand the contributions of women in the media arts archive.

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