Diversifying the Art Tech World

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ABSTRACT

In this transcript of a panel discussion at the 2018 College Art Association conference, participants discuss the gender gap in the art tech world. Against a backdrop of both the current political climate and recent reporting into the gender gap in the tech industry, panelists gave short presentations of their work with commentary on their early access to technology, mentors and other support structures that helped them to create significant artwork. Questions focused on how, going forward, we can support younger, female and trans new media artists, particularly artists of color.

Joelle Dietrick

[JD]: This panel started with the gender gap, but in light of the recent election, clearly needed to be expanded to consider other forms of identity, to include race and class. This group of panelists bravely offer brief descriptions of how they learned to be confident and productive in fields that were typically dominated by white cis males. Recognizing that the audience knows as much as we do, all have kept their presentations incredibly brief – about ten minutes each – to allow time for discussion.

On the topic of diversity, it's extremely important to me that we consider both visible and invisible forms of diversity. Coming from a working-class family, I did not have the economic or social capital that makes success in this field more likely. It was by way of grit and amazing mentors, especially my female mentors, that I found the confidence to persevere. One of those early mentors is Kathy Rae Huffman, who at the 2009 ISEA conference in Belfast, offered to meet with women artists specifically.

Throughout her career, Kathy Rae Huffman has been an important advocate for women new media artists. From 1979 to 1984, she curated significant video art exhibitions at the Long Beach Museum of Art; later, from 1984 to 1991, she did the same at Boston's Institute for Contemporary Art. From 1991 to 2014, Kathy was based in Europe, busy as an early advocate for net art and interactive online environments. During that time, in 1997, she co-founded the *Faces* listserv, which just celebrated its 20th anniversary, and will be the focus of her presentation today.

Following Kathy is Nao Bustamante, a Chicana multimedia and performance artist and Professor and Vice Dean of Art at USC. Venues that have exhibited her work include ICA London, MoMA and the Kiasma Museum. In 2001 she received the Anonymous Was a Woman Award and in 2007 was named a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow. She'll discuss her cutting-edge, research-based work in hybrid media.

Next is Annina Rüst. She's an Assistant Professor of Art at the Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University in Jupiter, Florida. As an artist, she is known for software and electronics-based art. Her work as has been reviewed in *Wired* and *New York Times Magazine* and has been shown internationally, including here in Los Angeles, as part of LACMA's Art+Technology Lab grant. She'll talk about her LACMA-funded food robot titled *A Piece of the Pie Chart* and her new performance *Bad Mother / Good Mother* which will premiere tonight at Feminist Friday at the Situation Room in Eagle Rock.

After Annina, artist Kerry Tribe will talk about recent video projects dealing with empathy and communication, and about her approach to working with the human subjects that appear in her films. Kerry's work has been shown at MoMA, the Hammer Museum, the Whitney Museum and Modern Art Oxford. Her films have screened at IFFRotterdam, Views from the Avant Garde and in a retrospective presentation at New York's Anthology Film Archives. The recipient of a Creative Capital grant, a USA Artists Award, and the Herb Alpert Award in Film/Video, Kerry's latest project is currently on view at SFMoMA through Sunday. She's core faculty at ArtCenter here in Pasadena.

Finally, Gloria Sutton has agreed to summarize key points from today's presentations and start the conversation with the audience. She is an Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History and New Media at Northeastern University, and a research affiliate in the Art Culture Technology Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Sutton has recently published on the problematics of Post-Internet Art; the digital conditions of Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirror Rooms*; the video "errors" of Pipilotti Rist; Rosa Barba's film installations; monoprints by Jennifer Bornstein; and Anna Craycroft's current live animation for the New Museum. This year Sutton is scholar-in-residence at the Carpenter Center at Harvard, collaborating with Renée Green on a series of public projects.

These are all extraordinary women. Because of a scheduling snafu, we have to move everyone along at a breakneck speed. Hold onto your seats, and please join me in welcoming all of them and our first panelist, Kathy Rae Huffman.

Kathy Rae Huffman

[KRH]: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the project *Faces – Gender, Art and Technology*. The work began as a response to comments that I was receiving as an organizer in the 90s: that there were no women working in digital media, no women worth showing in festival programs. It was the time of the opening of the borders in Europe – East and West were merging together – and female artists from Central and Eastern Europe really needed a boost. A few of us decided to do that.

We formed the *Faces* communication network with the only requirement being that you were a female or identified as a female. I am one of the founders together with Diana McCarthy (an

American, then living in Budapest, now in Berlin), Vali Djordjevic (a Serbian born German living in Berlin), and Ushi Reiter, an Austrian living in Linz, who since 2002 has been our server manager. But, it was at our meeting together for dinner in Vienna, November of 1996, where we were discussing other things that were happening, listservs that were starting. There was *nettime*, there was a group called *The Syndicate*. But as a group of women, either in a dark bar someplace strange, or around a familiar dinner table, we realized that we needed to do something. We started as a *Majordomo* list hosted by an art platform, just to stay in contact. In 1999, I bought the Faces domain, and we established a web presence at Webgrrls, a new platform in NYC. In 2002 we moved again to servus.at in Linz, our current web host.

Maybe you get the idea – that all of these were free hosting services. We never had any money at all – not a cent. In 2004, we got a very tiny grant from Austria to plan and construct a website which would be hosted at servus.at. Ours was a pragmatic response to a small but growing group of women who did not have their own website, and did not have any access to servers. So, we wanted to give them a public portal for their work. Unfortunately 2004 was the same year Facebook started – instant disaster. This is what our website looked like in 2004 (fig. 1). It was constructed using Drupal, an open source platform, but because it wasn't so easy to use this platform everybody just went to Facebook (although the listserv continued).
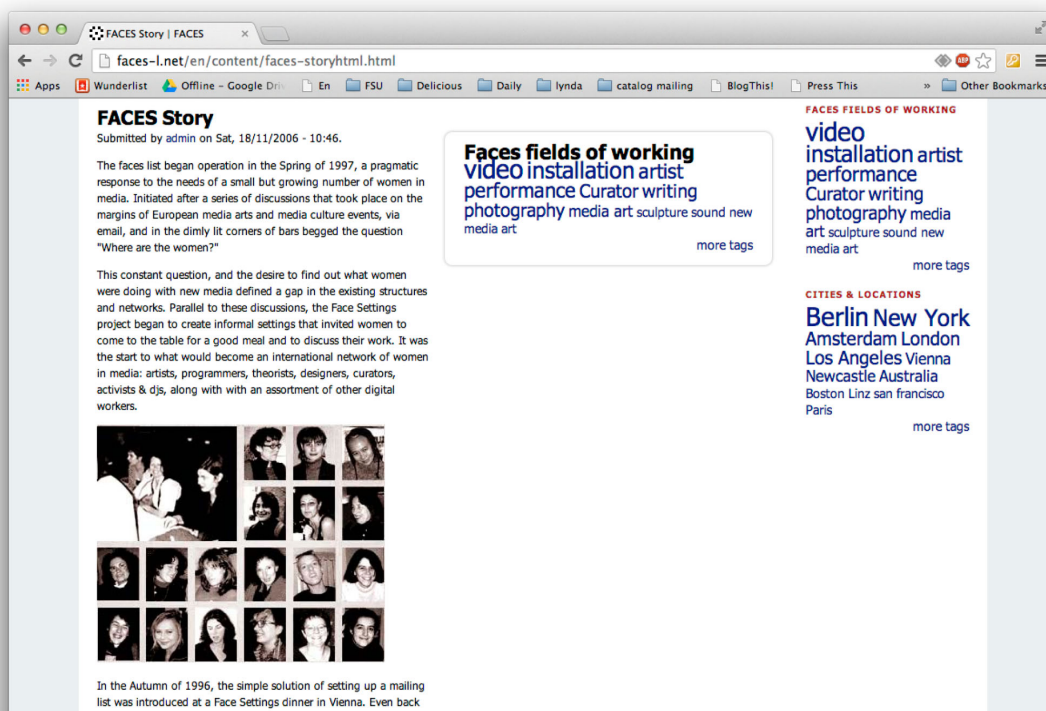
Figure 1. www.faces-l.net screenshot, 2004.

The predecessor to all this online activity was an art project called *Face Settings* that was active between 1996 and 1998. *Face Settings* was a second project I co-authored with Eva Wohlgemuth,

made after our work *Siberian Deal (1995)*, for which we travelled through Russia into Siberia and posted dispatches (an early blog) and made trading deals for value. *Face Settings* dealt with women in five different regional border situations, who came together with the intention of using cooking as an entry point for internet communication, as part of their daily practice. Our early IRC chats which I usually moderated and Eva set up the connections, included connecting groups of women from Belgrade, Bilbao, London, Glasgow, Berlin, and Vienna. We brought these kinds of chats together in various ways; one was supported by an Austrian television network. We hosted dinners, online communication gatherings, and actually, it got to be a lot of fun. Our private mailing list, formed from our dinners, became the organizing tool for the first Cyber-Feminist International, which was part of documenta X in 1997.

The list at the time we started was about 24 women – they were all people that knew each other. Once we started to organize for the documenta project, the list just grew really fast. It was a big job to maintain all of that, but it was really fun too. The Cyber-Feminist International was a week-long event as part of *Hybrid Workspace*, the hundred-day project of documenta x. Incidentally, this was the first time that net art had shown at documenta. The list stands today as a group of between 400 and 500 women on average.

In 1998, we had our first exhibition of women on the mailing list Faces. It was called *Face2Face*, curated by Eva Ursprung and myself, it was held at Forum Stadtpark in Graz, Austria. That gathering was an important one because it brought women from the East and West together in the meeting place with girls from Graz. We had women from Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Austria, Hungary, the UK, and the USA, sitting around the table and sharing our stories and ideas and creating projects together. Here are some views from that particular event. (It was always food sitting next to the computers that made the technicians very nervous.) In Graz, as in many other places where we had events, a local mailing list started. This one, called *42*, was in German, and it afforded the women in that community to make a pod from the *Faces* mailing list. And lists like this still go on today.

We had projects at festivals like *Ars Electronica*. This one was in 1998; it was a kind of an overlap between *Face Settings* and the *Faces* mailing list. Everybody, especially all the women, gathered there; it was a place where we could feel like we could share what was going on. We also made a soup every day. And so in this big hall of geeks and techies from all over Europe, there was this soup that was boiling (and smelling amazing) in the corner (fig. 2). At lunchtime there was a kind of soup kitchen from which we fed everybody in the hall. We also had informal meetings.

Figure 2. At Ars Electronica, September 7-12, 1998. Face Settings/FACES at the OpenX workspace in the Post City. Although not listed in the official catalogue, it was supported by the Ars Electronica Festival, and FACES fed the artists with a daily soup. The pumpkin on the counter became the next day's meal. l to r: Sabine Seymour (A), (blonde behind the computer) Liz Haas (A), (man walking) Max Kossatz (A), (woman half hidden) Eva Wohlgemuth (A). Photo by Kathy Rae Huffman.

This was in Linz, at the 2003 *Ars Electronica*. You can see in these examples that the group and the people vary but it was always a great chance for us to be together. This is at *Transmediale* around 2007, this is at *Transmediale* around 2009, and again in 2010.

In spring 2017, we called on the mailing list to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, to contribute works for an exhibition. It was amazing to me that the list responded with such positive energy, and that it continues to promote women, to give them a feeling that someone has their back, that there is someone they can call on. Women on the list will share their ideas, give assistance while traveling, and especially help when they are needed with coding and translations.

After meeting in Berlin to plan activities for the twentieth anniversary, we finalized our plans. We focused on two events: a panel discussion at *Ars Electronica and the exhibition in Graz*. The panel ended up as a sort of a political statement on where *Ars Electronica* sits today in regards to women, and the critical positions which women are taking. The 20th anniversary exhibition in Graz was at a space called the Schaumbad-Freies Atelierhaus Graz (which previously was a bubble bath

factory!) (fig. 3). Forty-two artists participated (fig. 5). Here's a view at the opening. At the rear you see Nancy Buchanan's video projection piece, in the front on the pedestals are *Body-Scan* figures by Eva Wohlgemuth; over to the far left, work by Marina Grzinic. In this main space, there's also work visible by Evelin Stermitz, Anja Westerfrölke, and Hito Steyerl (you can barely see her piece *Strike* over here at the right).

Figure 3. *Faces: Gender, Art, Technology: 20th Anniversary Exhibition*, October 14 – November 5, 2017. Schaumbad Freies Atelierhaus Graz. Visible works: front, Eva Wohlgemuth, Body scan figures (1997-2004); Works by Marina Grzinic to left, Evelyn Stermitz (fem.art.tv), rear: Nancy Buchanan (projections Operation Empathy (2016); Anja Westerfrolke "im Zwischenraum" / 'In the gap' interactive card game; Right, Hito Steyerl, STRIKE (2010). Photo by Myriam Thyes.

We also had online performances at the opening night between Graz and Munich by Helen Varley Jamieson who is from New Zealand but lives in Munich, and Amy Abrahams, who is French and is also from the Netherlands. Their piece was called *Nontranslatable*, where they presented the problems of language in translation. Boryana Rossa choreographed a performance with local women, about the cult of celebrity and paparazzi. *n.paradoxa*, the very important feminist journal produced by Katy Deepwell from the UK, retired from service in 2017 after 20 years. Katy brought a copy of each edition that she published through the 20 years and gave it to the Schaumbad, for the exhibition. It was really an incredible collection (fig. 4).

Figure 4. n.paradoxa, feminist journal, was also retired in 2017 after 20 years of publication. Katy Deepwell, a longtime member of FACES, presented her editorial vision, and contributed the total collection (pictured) to Schaumbad. Photo by Alexandra Gschiel.

We had a special screening of Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Women Art Revolution!*, and we had a birthday dinner, of course. It was a lot of fun, and we had many serious discussions about what to do next. There is a manifesto that Marina Grzinic has written, which is on the website, where you can go for more information and for more photos from the exhibition. There you can also find out how to subscribe to the list. It's been a great time to be involved with so many women from around the world, and it came out of a need, a real need in which some women really needed to know that they had a community – a community in the art and tech business- and that they were not working on their own. I think that's all for my time. See: www.faces-l.net

Figure 5. *Faces: Gender, Art, Technology: 20th Anniversary Exhibition*, October 14 – November 5, 2017. Schaumbad Freies Atelierhaus Graz. Participating members. First row, l to r: Reni Hofmueller, Ushi Reiter, Kathy Rae Huffman, Diana McCarty, Valie Djordjevic, Margarete Jahrmann, Eva Ursprung, Marina Grzinic. Second row, l to r: Nina Sobell, Nancy Buchanan, Doris Jauk-Hinz, Helen Varley Jamison, Liz Haas, Charlotte Eifler, Katy Deepwell, Sol Haring, Milica Tomic. Back row: l to r: Evelin Stermitz/ArtFemTV, unidentified; Elaine Wing-Ah Ho, Myriam Thyes, Anja Westerfrolke, Lena Chen, Arghyro Paouri, Perry Bard. Photo by Alexandra Gschiel.

Nao Bustamante

[NB]: Hello everyone. Good afternoon. So great to be here, thank you so much for the invitation. I'm really honored to be here with this group of women, it's a really exciting time to be working in the fields of arts and technology in particular, and also just to be here in Los Angeles.

This first image is not my work, it's an image of a quilt from online – it's what's considered a crazy quilt. That sort of style, combining different kinds of fabrics and materials, wild power-clashes – that's how I think of my production, more as a mandala, as a clashing of materiality. As opposed to a more linear setup, in my work ideas or concepts build on each other. I see it as a kind of mixing, and I wanted to particularly talk today about one wide-ranging project, a work called *Soldadera*. it began in 2010 when I was invited to a show called "Chewbacca to Zapata, Re-envisioning the Myth of the Mexican Revolution." At this time that I was invited to be in the show, I had been a part of a reality TV series called *Work of Art: America's Next Great Artist* on Bravo (my really great episodes are 1 and 4).

The show was just hitting the mainstream, and I've always sort of been what could be considered an underground artist, really just locating myself in the art world community or context. When my

work and my body and myself started being more present in a more mainstream way or at least being introduced to that audience, I began experiencing trolling, people really denigrating me and my process and my body and my performance. I started imagining this talisman that would be made out of protective material. The thing that came into my head was Kevlar which at the time, when I was thinking about this in 2010, was the best kind of bullet-resistant material we had in the market. I was imagining this dress with long sleeves that went all the way to the floor that had a high-neck and in my mind, it looked like an Edwardian-styled dress (fig. 6).

Figure 6. Nao Bustamante, *Soldadera*, 2015. Installation View, Vincent Price Art Museum. Photo by Dale Griner.

I started costing out Kevlar and looking into it. And then that week, I was invited to this exhibition, so I started doing some research on the Mexican revolution, and I ended up finding that there were these whole battalions of fighters, and of course, more than fighters – nurses, comfort women, caretakers – people that both followed along with the male troops and also defended their own villages. And there's a really rich history, largely undocumented, of women in the Mexican Revolution. It's undocumented partly because of what they were fighting for – literacy and the right bring up the peasant class. There weren't a lot of first-hand accounts about women by women in this history, and I ended up having to go pretty deep into the archives, both at the Nettie Benson Collection at University of Texas, Austin and at the University of California Riverside special collections. I started just digging, digging, digging through photographs to find these examples of women who were fighting in the Mexican Revolution.

You might be asking yourself, "Why is she at the technological panel?" We're getting to that as we move back into the idea of material travel. I was trying to find different ways of engaging these ideas, thinking about time travel and thinking of material travel as opposed to this idea of the interdisciplinary or something along those lines. I think right now, what's happening, particularly if I could place it in a kind of Latina/Latinx context, is a space of "ancient future." It's a space of not simply time travel but of taking core sediments, claiming multiple identities at once and embodying them at once, as opposed to "code switching."

Do you remember code switching? Do you remember that? The idea of code switching is that I'm like *this* when I'm talking to you, and I'm like *this* when I'm talking to *you.* Now it's different – there's this kind of code sample that's being taken from time, and we can see it. There's a real at-once-ness happening. I started making these Kevlar gowns based on these Edwardian fashions that I was seeing at the archive, and I tested the first one against weapons that were used in the Mexican Revolution – here's a picture of the old Winchester rifle. And the gown did in fact, stop a slug – here it's seen on display, more as a relic, probably in the imaginary, after I shot it with a different kind of weapon as a test (fig. 7). An idea started coming into focus – more about a kind of travelling back in time as a memorial, and creating these Kevlar dresses as a way of protecting women who fought in the Mexican Revolution.

Figure 7. Nao Bustamante, *Tierra y Libertad*, 2009. Video still. Courtesy of Nao Bustamante

I ended up pulling up from the archive and creating different kinds of dresses for different classes of women. Bizarrely in the process, I found that there was a lost film, an unfinished Eisenstein film, called ¡Que Viva *Mexico.* The portion that exists are a beautiful, beautiful film. There was a lost section that he wasn't able to shoot, which was called *Soldadera.* There was even a loose script in existence, so I knew that I should shoot it with women, with some fellow local artists in the costumes that I was creating based on these archival photos that I was mashing and mixing with. I ended up in the process of searching in the archives, finding photos like this, an incredible photo with incredible depth of field, bringing the foreground and connectivity, looking in the eyes of these women. I found many photos like this of the women who had left the villages and followed along with the soldiers, and many of the soldiers themselves.

In the process of this, through the magic of Facebook, I did receive a posting of the oldest woman of the world, who was also the last survivor of the Mexican Revolution. Her name was Leandra Becerra Lumbreras. Here's an image of her from a video I made going to visit her (fig. 8). That visit itself was a real complicated activity, finding people in Guadalajara. We'd go to a family home, ask if we could come in and shoot. I had some things in mind and we shot them, but then the second day after we put her in bed, she was beating out this rhythm, and I ended up handing her a cookie tin, and she kept going to town on this while she was in bed.

Figure 8. Nao Bustamante, *Chacmool,* 2015. Video still. Pictured: Leandra Becerra Lumbreras (August 31, 1887 – March 19, 2015), courtesy of Nao Bustamante.

She kept going, she was really stoked about us being there and us asking questions about the Mexican Revolution. It felt like she wanted to keep performing her role, if I could say that, recognizing that I'm also putting my own desire and narrative on top her performance. But anyway, we shot it, and I ended up recalling the word *chacmool*, a pre-Columbian figure that goes between the living and dead, often thought of as somebody who takes soldiers or warriors

into the afterlife. I ended up making a fake virtual reality space for her video. It was inspired by the archives that I was looking in – it's a stereographic viewer for the video itself. The viewer listens to this with headphones, while hanging below them is fresh guava, which was the overpowering scent in her home, because it was guava season.

The viewer sits on a bench and the bench itself has a booty bass in it that connects to her clapping. So, you're getting the clapping into your booty while you're watching. And when you're sitting town to view her, you end up in the same *chacmool* position as you're viewing. There's a kind of cyclical analogue VR thing happening. I'm going to show you some of the footage now of Leandra. I think it's really special since she has since passed. I feel like it's a blessing for me to have been able to be in the room with her – to have that experience of touching her and feeling like there was a sense of time travel for me as an artist from being in the archives and for me to be with her, to have a kind of sense of the edges of time and the possibility of what one could grasp in a lifetime. I'd like to share a little bit of her with you.

[screens video]

Annina Rüst

[AR]: Hi, my name is Annina, thank you to the organizers for organizing this. I started exhibiting new media art, mostly software art, around 2001 and 2002. I did this as part of the collective LAN and under my own name, making projects on topics surrounding surveillance policy and environmentalism. These days, for about ten years, I've been making more directly feminist technology projects. The reason I did not start these projects earlier was, because I did not identify as a woman in tech.

It's kind of weird, right, when you make software art and that type of work – as a woman, you often have to explain that "yes, I did all the programming in this project, etc." This is one of the reasons why I didn't really want to identify myself as a woman in tech, or make feminist projects, because that would have invited more questions than I was necessarily ready to answer. This is purely subjective – it's that I find that in tech, certain types of topics like surveillance, privacy, environmentalism etc., are seen as responding to the issues of our time, while overtly feminist projects are seen more as a fringe interest.

This is strange because there are obviously a lot of intersections, and because women and girls make up half of the population. I don't have any evidence for this – this is purely subjective, this is often the problem when presenting arguments for why things should be better in art and tech. Here's a project that's really literal in that regard – it's called *A Piece of the Pie Chart* (fig. 9). In it, the machine puts pie charts onto pies – the pies you can eat. These are the pie charts – they're made out of paper. You select the pie chart which depicts a gender ratio, and you select a pie, and you put that pie in the machine. There's a heat gun that heats up the chocolate covering off the pie and then the conveyor belt takes under a robotic arm. The robotic arm finds the appropriate pie chart, puts the pie chart into the slightly sticky chocolate, so that it sticks there and the chocolate dries, which makes the paper pie chart stick.

Figure 9. Annina Rüst, *A Piece of the Pie Chart,* 2015. Part of the exhibition *Hacking / Modding / Remixing as Feminist Protest* at Carnegie Mellon University's Miller Gallery in 2017. Curated by Angela Washko.

Then, the pie goes under a webcam, and the webcam takes a picture for twitter. For most exhibitions where there's not liability – there's a label printer that prints a label where the pie can be shipped to the place where it originates. The gender ratios on the pies come from companies like Apple – they publish worker statistics and exhibition venues such as Bitforms Gallery, festivals like Ars Electronica, and conferences such as Indicate.

So, what I've learned existing in some of these art and tech spaces, is that people typically believe you when you have data. So, this is a literal form of 'believe me.' This is a quick overview of the data from last year. (The yellow is for women.) Some of these places do a better job than others – sometimes it's just for a year or for a longer period of time. I previously mentioned that I have data from tech companies such as Apple, Google etc.; they publish this data as percentages. Everything else is self-collected. I go to websites, I read artists bios, etc. A friend of mine who is a media psychologist taught me to label the self-collected data as "presented gender" – that's how I label that data. It's not necessarily from an authoritative source but depending on how people present I will label them "as." I found that typically people present along the gender line, so this is why this looks that way.

I made one of the versions of this project for the LACMA Art and Technology Lab. The picture is from the feminist data collect-a-thon that I held with Micol Hebron. It was a workshop for collecting data related to feminism and visualizing it. At the workshop, one participant who had been active as a feminist artist and activist in the 1970s told me is that she liked the project's humor,

but found the limitation of protest to twitter and mailed pies a bit bland. I liked the work of the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists, who protested at LACMA in the 70s and held them more accountable. Here you see that group's report from 1971; it's a very succinct look at how the institution exhibits primarily white men. An appendix of data lists all artists' shows in LACMA, revealing that only woman among those artists at the time. In this report the Council also threatens to sue LACMA for gender and race discrimination. The museum's director at the time eventually agreed to meet with the group; after a long negotiation, what came out was the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, curated by Anne Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. They kept protesting; in this picture from 1981 they're wearing masks ((fig. 10). The face on the mask is that of Maurice Tuchman, one of the head curators at LACMA at the time; they're also holding balloons that read, "Where are women and minorities?"

Figure 10. Protest at County Art Museum, July 16, 1981. Photo by Anne Knudsen / Los Angeles Herald-Examiner. Digital Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

Switching back the present, I wanted to say that tonight I'm presenting my project *Good Mother Bad Mother* at The Situation Room, so you should show up! It's a project that uses primarily a breast pump. I think that technology for women is a field that has been underexplored by women. For example, most period tracker apps are made by men. My project is not about period tracking but about breast pumps. *Good Mother Bad Mother* uses a breast pump; I used a breast pump until about a year ago, and during that time, I came to appreciate the techno-like sounds that it makes. I created a performance around that sound, and the performance deals with motherhood, workplace and tech. It also deals with a variety of difficult topics such as the privilege of pumping at work and maternity leave, egg-freezing, and more.

To conclude, I'd like to speak in some general terms. Tech is really fast-lived, there's this quickly rotating carousel of exciting, new technologies, such the blockchain, virtual reality, et cetera. That is why it may feel, I think, that the struggles related to diversifying the art-tech world, in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation, and class may seem like an old topic, because it's an ongoing struggle. It's been on-going forever. That's why I want to urge everyone in this field to keep it going – keep doing what you're doing!

Kerry Tribe

[KT]: I'm Kerry Tribe, it's a pleasure to be here. I live in L.A., and here's one thing I wanted to talk about in response to our prompt to discuss early access to mentors, technology, and support systems: here in Los Angeles, we have a very transparent, quick turnaround between generations of artists who then move into teaching. I recently had this nice experience of leading a production workshop at CalArts and having this amazing teaching assistant, and on the last day I found out that before CalArts, she was at Brown University, where her mentor was my mentor, Tony Cokes. Then I remembered that I was going to come here, so I thought this would be an occasion to touch base with Tony Cokes, because I didn't know a lot of black male artists in the 1990's making super conceptual, highly critical, theoretically heavy work.

I don't think I knew many people making much work. He exposed me to this work. It was only in looking back at his work that I realized how incredibly indebted I am to him. So I got in touch with him, and asked, "Hey, how did you end up doing what you're doing?" And like me, he owes a great debt to academic institutions. Apparently, at Virginia Commonwealth University in graduate school, Vibeke Sorensen was his mentor and introduced him to the work of Martha Rosler and Yvonne Rainer which inspired him to go to the Whitney Independent Study program in New York.

When I was a student, he suggested that I might like to be there, and I met Martha Rosler and Yvonne Rainer there and I went on to work for Martha for a year, which was an amazing and challenging experience. So through an incredibly privileged educational situation, I found myself having access to the technology necessary to edit the work that I wanted to make. (Back then, video work was exclusively tape-to-tape.) My understanding of media art was that there were all these feminist artists doing really important, critical activities, and that this was a natural medium to make critical, rigorous, conceptually informed, and often very funny work.

So, I was asking Tony, "When you were in the Whitney program in New York, how did you ever edit?" He said, "Oh, there was this film branch of a place called Downtown Community TV, and I edited my first film or project there." And I was like, "Oh my god, right, Downtown Community TV!" Back in the day, when we were starting to edit non-linearly, none of us had computers at home and couldn't handle any of this. So down on Lafayette Street, around the corner from the Whitney Program, there was this amazing place where for ten bucks an hour, anybody could go in and take a workshop and learn how to edit on an avid system and have access to their equipment. It was a very vibrant and wonderful scene there, because it was this old converted firehouse, people drifting in and out – from the art world and the museum world, and the Whitney program, but also from a lot of youth programs. The place had a real sense of energy.

I say all this to say that my earliest days of working in film and video (which better describes what I do than "media art") were heavily influenced by the community building and relationship building, the one-to-one personal connections with people who would tell you how they figured

out how to do something. They would transmit that knowledge, and you would figure out how to do it somehow. I recently found out that that Downtown Community TV is still up and running and doing good things, so that was exciting to me.

I want to switch gears now to talk for a few minutes about two projects I made recently, projects that are less relevant to questions about how to diversify the art tech world, than questions about how to work in art and technologies in structures that are traditionally, very hierarchical and usually male-dominated. I'd like to show now how these sort of individual points of contact between people can really make a difference in such things.

When I go to the studio and feel tortured by not knowing what to do, and I'm feeling pressure to come up with a lot of brilliant ideas, feeling lonely and anxious, usually, the first step to getting out of that toxic mind state is to get somebody else involved in the project. I've joked over the years that my superpower is convincing people that have nothing to do with art to work on art with me. Also, because of my education with Martha Rosler and Tony Cokes, I'm preoccupied with the power dynamics involved in my living on one side of the camera, while my subject lives on the other. How can I responsibly make a representation of them that they don't edit, a representation that then goes out in the world living on timelessly, while they go on and live the rest of their life and grow up and do whatever they do? These questions nag at me and cause problems.

This image is at Cedar Sinai Hospital – I took this photo with my phone a few years ago. This is the aphasia support group that's been meeting for about 12 years at Cedar Sinai in Los Angeles. Aphasia, for those that don't know it, is a neurological condition that's acquired – you're not born with it – that involves damage to the parts of the brain responsible for language and communication. If you have aphasia, it can be either extremely hard to understand and make sense of incoming language – whether you're reading or listening to someone speak – or it can be really difficult to deal with language expression – you may know what you want to say but not be able to find the words, or some combination of both. I was super lucky to get a Creative Capital grant based on a proposal to do a personal project about aphasia.

Full disclosure: I had an incredibly biased idea of what people with aphasia might be like. And a very utilitarian one. I was offered this amazing grant, $50,000, to make a project about people with aphasia. My idea was that I've been making work about speaking subjects for many years – they often talk about themselves, they express themselves, and I might collaborate with them. The kind of impossible subject for this kind of work is someone who can't self-express verbally. If you make talking head videos, the worst thing you could do is have someone with aphasia in front of the camera. So I went to meet people with aphasia. I found myself in a lot of stroke survivor groups and support groups. But this particular group was really astonishing in how immediately at home I felt, how little pressure I felt to be charming and smart. I could just sit among them; on the first day, I said, "I'm an artist, I make videos, they have something to do with documentary but they're not documentaries – I want to do something about aphasia, but I don't know what." And they were like, "Cool!"

This is a picture of them looking at my work in an early state. I started showing them in an early part of our relationship, an early part of my progress and of the things I made. Long story short, after a year of going to these weekly meetings, someone turned to me in the group and said, "you've been coming for a year, you're an honorary (member), what do you want from us?" I was like,

"Honestly, I want to do something with you, I have no idea what. Would you be willing to be interviewed? And maybe you could raise your hands?" Everybody raised their hands. It was very humbling, and I brought people with aphasia back to my studio, and this project emerged.

It became pretty clear to me that my interest was not just in questions around how to involve people that maybe aren't normally represented in this way, and how to problematize the terms of the work. In fact I was learning about how the very interesting, intelligent, compassionate, loving people in this group who couldn't express themselves comfortably through language, really were able to express themselves in other ways. It was uncanny how connected to many of them I felt and how I very quickly became friends with many of them – there were a number of artists among them. So, I ended up making a project called *The Aphasia Poetry Club* that was shown at a space in downtown L.A. called 356 Mission. The project is essentially a collaborative portrait of three individuals from the aphasia support group at Cedar Sinai Hospital, all of whom had a creative background. Pretty early on, it became clear that at the intersection of my interest in them and theirs in mine, lay the fact that as an artist, I don't know the form that the expressions I'm interested and the ideas I want to express need to take. And as an aphasic, finding that form is a problem. We actually, in many ways, had similar senses of frustration and insecurity about representation (which is not to say that my situation is anything like living with aphasia). But there was a commonality that was palpable to me and I think, to them. I want to show just the last minute of this piece, because in it, a young woman named Laura describes a little bit of her condition, but also why she wanted to be involved with the project, since that's the nature of the topic and that's what I wanted to show. You'll see a lot of images come up really fast – it's the very end of a film that's around 28 minutes in total, so it's a kind of climax and references things you would've seen throughout the whole film.

[screens video]

I know I'm almost out of time, I'll go quickly over this; that's Laura in the middle, the woman on the left is Susan who runs the support group, the man on the right is the photographer named Chris Riley – he also appears in the video. We held a series of events in the gallery after the show opened. This one invited people with aphasia, and from the speech pathology and language pathology communities around LA to do a panel. It was pretty great to be able to help facilitate a situation in which people who have struggled with speaking for many, many, years since a stroke felt comfortable enough to get in front of a room with hundred-and-fifty people and talk about their experience with aphasia, with working with me, and with contemporary art.

I'll just quickly mention my show currently up at San Francisco MoMA and opening here soon in L.A. that involves different kind of communication – yet somewhat related. You may know that in medical training are people known as "standardized patients." There are paid actors who portray medical patients in order to help doctors – or students learning to be doctors – become more compassionate and better communicators. The idea in this practice is that actors (who I've often worked with in conventional, collaborative way) are empowered to actually train doctors, and then grade doctors and give feedback and a report on how they did, as many of these aspiring doctors don't start off with strong communication skills. This practice was really fascinating to me, how it turned the power dynamics that I'm accustomed to in the art world on its head. I'm going to show you this tiny clip (fig. 11).

[screens video]

Figure 11. Kerry Tribe, *Standardized Patient*, 2017. 2-channel video projection, 17:27 minutes loop.

There are number of scenarios that this project covers, so for now I'll just point to one thing that I really love – that we get to talk about sexually transmitted diseases and contraception in the middle of a fancy art museum. It's been really a joy to see people interested and to see people squirm. My dad set next to my ten-year-old son and watched it together, another panelist saw it with her mother and two daughters. So, there's also a pleasure in trying to find a way in – what I make is some form of entertainment one could say, there's an argument whether to say art is a form of an entertainment. But in general today I just wanted to inject a little conversation about the collaborative nature of the relationship that can be built-in to production – who's on set, who's behind the camera, and what these things cover. Thank you.

Gloria Sutton

[GS]: I'd like to open this discussion up quickly by first setting up a few lines of possible [GS]: I'd like to open this discussion up by setting up a few lines of conversation. Among the things that immediately struck me were the lines that Joelle laid out in her introduction. She invited us to think about the different visible and invisible strains or trajectories of diversity, and what that could mean. Kathy's discussion underscored the role of diversity in communities and role of women in particular as organizers. As a historian of media myself, one of the recurring things that Kathy's talk really reaffirmed, was the way in which women historically have done the heavy-lifting of running the organization. They spend unglamorous time doing the editing, the buying, hosting of services, and maintenance of the listserv. Kathy had me thinking about the work of maintenance and the laborious aspects of such tasks. And then there's the role of women behind-the-scenes throughout history versus who is in front of the camera, as Kerry mentioned.

I'm also thinking about the extraordinary methodologies that Nao put on the table: first, to think about the role of clashing materialities, clashing histories, which I think is important metaphor not only for artists but for historians. I'm also struck by the incredibly compelling metaphor that Nao brought up –the "core sample" —as a way of thinking about how we move through history. Nao's research activates the choices we all make as historians, archivists, artists, curators. Who are we choosing to bring back? Why? And at what moment? This was, I thought, beautifully brought up in Nao's presentation.

And then with Annina, among the questions that came to mind were the ways we want to measure. What are the quantifiable ways that we measure diversity? If we reached parity, what would that look like? And is that in fact, the goal?

And then finally, turning to Kerry's presentation, one of the bigger questions that comes up in a panel of art and tech diversity is that of the ethics of representation. From there, a question I'd like to open up with, is this: you've all spoken to the ethics of representation in your modes of production, the choices of who you picture, and why you picture them. But I want to also begin to think about modes of perception. How do you think about the ethics of the representation not just in terms of the communities who make your work, who collaborate with your work, but in terms of who your audiences are?

Kerry Tribe

[KT]: I have to think about the audience and when making the work, often I can't get out of my head the questions of how the participants would feel and how they'd be comfortable with it – because this thing will live on forever. But I'm also always asking, "What does the audience walk away with?" And if there is an epistemological component to the work – if people are seeking knowledge and information – what does it mean if they don't find in the work the use-value of say, an hour-long documentary on PBS? What does this sphere of work do, this sphere of work we're working in that many would consider highly elite?

One way that I've dealt with these questions in my own work – and this may not be totally satisfactory – is through the process of collaboration itself. Through that process, I'm often talking with scientists, doctors, people in other fields about what they would want to see, what misconceptions exist, and how they would access the work as its forming. For example, as I was making the "standardized patient" project, I had in mind it that if the work could be useful in some way to medical education – even if I did a terrible job, and totally fucked up and gave a poor impression of the practice in the field – that it would still be of some satisfaction.

The moments for me are when the smart scientists and doctors and smart art people are in the same room together, and all kinds of sparks fly. Happily, yesterday, some MD PHD candidate in San Francisco asked me about the work at SFMoMa, "Is there any way we could include this in our curriculum? Because we're super interested in compassionate caregiving, etc." For me, those moments are exciting when the audience can reach out. But there are also these weird divides between the media art world, tech art world, experimental filmmakers, independent filmmakers, and artists like me that work in the gallery system. I don't have an answer to that, but I think at a very minimum, when we showed the project here in Los Angeles, the gallery space put in accessibility ramps and made sure that there was accessible parking – and you know, that's a sort

of bare minimum you could do. It's important to force those kinds of conversations about access and inclusivity.

Question for Nao Bustamante

[Audience member]: Did you think about, when you were revamping the USC program - did you think about diversity in your hiring practices, and what did you do?

Nao Bustamante

[NB]: This is a question about my new position of leadership at University of Southern California's Roski School of Art and Design. This doesn't exactly have something to do with my art practice, but I welcome the question – thank you. I'll say that there's been an absurd uptick in diversity since I've been at Roski since January 2016, and it's pretty wild. We just did a big diversity report, and the diversity in, for instance, our MFA program has improved by 600%. It's pretty weird. [audience laughter] I don't even know how it happens, because we're not even officially separating out candidates for diversity, for instance, and we're not looking at the pool, and saying, for example "Do we have enough of this? Do we have enough of that?" The committees are basing their preferences on the work first, then the interview – just doing their typical work. All of this really does emphasize and put more balance on that point of decision-making in the review process – on questions of who is on the review committee, who's in the room, and that sort of thing?

Question for the Panelists

[Audience member]: I really appreciated hearing how a lot of you came into your networks through your mentors, or your education. I was wondering if you had any advice for those in the room who are in new media, female media artists, who don't have access to this kind of network, who aren't from these sort of situations. How does one make connections to make the community?

[NB]: Great question. I would say that the best thing to do is to make yourself visible, to bring together whatever connections you have to create something, present something, place yourself in a public space, or within a community. Are you in LA? [Yes.] Okay. I think there are a lot of opportunities here, through artist-run spaces, or even in parks, or online. Wherever it is, you have to make yourself visible, because I think that is the way that you find communities by people being attracted to the work or what you're saying, if they're interested in. What's your name? [Ahree] What kind of work do you make? Do you have a website or anything? [I make video installation, and yes my website is ahreelee.com, but probably people won't know how to spell it.] So spell it out! [audience laughter] [OK, it's A-H-R-E-E-L-E-E-dot-com!] There you go!

[KRH]: I would also say, just start looking at what's going on, and identify people and places that you feel at home with, and just become a regular and hold your hand out and tell them who you are.

[GS]: I'll also add as an editor for Art Journal Open and contributor to publications is a reminder that artists, like many on this panel, have advocated, written and created reviews about the work of their colleagues and their own constituency. In this particular moment, there's a dearth of artists writing about their milieu—the scenes that they are in. There are many publications right now looking for and seeking contributions, so it's very porous, I would say. That's something that I

always encourage folks to do – especially non-English language speakers, your role as translators for different non-English texts is incredibly valuable in the field right now.

[JD]: I would also like to say, that CAA is really trying to make sure that it's relevant, and that the New Media Caucus is growing – thank you so much for coming out. Also, FACES Listserv just celebrated 20 years. There are all these ways that we can collect resources online so that we can network in ways that are productive. Let's end there – thank you so much, all.

AUTHOR BIO

Joelle Dietrick is an artist who produces work about the human impact of global trade. Her paintings, drawings and animations have been shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Transitio_MX in Mexico City, TINA B Festival in Prague and Venice, Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago, MCA San Diego, Long March Space Beijing, ARC Gallery Chicago and Soho20 New York. She has attended residencies at MacDowell, the Künstlerhaus Salzburg, Anderson Ranch, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Banff Centre for the Arts, and the School of the Visual Arts and received grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the University of California, Florida State University, the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program.

Kathy Rae Huffman is a curator currently based in Los Angeles. She was Chief Curator at the Long Beach Museum of Art in Long Beach, California from 1979 to 1984, where she established LBMA Video as a regional center supporting early video art. From 1984 to 1991, Huffman was Adjunct Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts and curator/producer of The Contemporary Art Television Fund. From 1991 to 1998, Huffman worked as free-lance writer, curator, lecturer, producer and consultant, based in Austria. During this time, she co-founded FACES listserv. After two years from 1998 to 2000 as an Associate Professor of Art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, she was the director of Hull Time Based Arts, UK from 2000 to 2002 and the Visual Arts Director at Cornerhouse in Manchester from 2002 - 2008. Since 2008, she has curated major exhibitions for EMAF, SIGGRAPH, ISEA, Transmediale and The Getty.