DAY 2: PRODUCTION/LABS/COMMISSIONING, AND TANIA AEDO

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TANIA AEDO PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Tania Aedo is coordinator of Cátedra Max Aub for Transdiscipline, Art and Technology, at National Autonomous University of Mexico City. She presented *7Y: (media) art as repository of knowledges — and warnings*, a 21min video concerning working in an interdisciplinary way within a defined lab context, and how her experience of 'lab' based method evolved over seven years.

CRITICAL THRESHOLDS BETWEEN ART, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Tania Aedo framed the session by outlining her methods for navigating the current global 'emergency mode' we are living through today. In times of mutation and global peaks (for example earthquakes, pollution, pandemics etc.), Aedo suggests that shifting from the concept of the contemporary to the concept or phenomenon of the contingent — something that may happen or may have been different — can be useful. Recognising that we are living within historical, irreversible and contingent processes enables an identification and exploration of cross disciplinary practices operating within the 'curves' of 'critical thresholds' of new knowledge, which often emerge from crises. What can happen when several such events combine, such as those in Mexico City over the past five years? What can emerge when two or more curves converge? She called for institutions to develop protocols that handle not only the immediate event or its aftermath, but also the longer term.

Pointing to the critical knowledge that has emerged from the relationships between art, science and technology, Aedo posits new media art as a fruitful repository of 'knowledge, warnings and resources' in relation to the present contingency. Describing 'art as an epistemic transdisciplinary arena' she highlights two directions that (new media) art holds a space within and between — the first going towards entropic and extraction processes and the other direction going towards negentropic and looking for the sustenance of life. When science is reaching its limits, Heisenberg wrote in 1942 (2019) that scientists rely on intuition when jumping across critical thresholds from the old to the new paradigm, which can lead to abrupt changes. The role of intuition also resonates with cross-disciplinary practice particularly with the intensification of art and scientific and technical knowledge. Within this, we can explore how concepts of time, space, living, nature, order, observer, matter and mind have changed, and the way that science looks at this knowledge. We have to learn 'to act in the unknown'.

Arts Catalyst with Claudia Lastre. Exhibition: *Notes from the Field: Commoning Practices in Art and Science*



STRATEGIES FOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY WORKING:

Prototipos (2021) is an interdisciplinary lab currently being led by Aedo in her role of Max Aub Extraordinary Chair, at UNAM, Mexico City. The lab explores uses of the prototype (understood as first versions and always provisional) as a transdisciplinary laboratory for the co-creation of projects that will help 'lead us to speculate about what the contingencies could be in the immediate future and what roles art could play in its intersections with the future, science, technology as well as other knowledge and disciplines.'

THE LAB ETHOS IN REFERENCE TO THE HERITAGE VENUE:

Mediating between different groups as a director, rather than a curator of LAA, Aedo considered herself to be more of a programmer or 'DJ'. While health and safety remained a big factor in her planning, Aedo brought the lab ethos into the heart of the heritage venue. She invited artists and curators to see the LAA as a space for play and experimentation and encouraged them to push the institution to its limits.

THE LAB ETHOS IN REFERENCE TO ARCHIVE AND PRESERVATION METHODS FOR MEDIA ARTWORKS AND EXHIBITIONS:

Aedo developed virtual reality artworks in the 1990s during her time at Cenart. These works included avatars and multi-user environments that no longer exist. How best do we preserve these kinds of media in the long term, particularly its assets and the obsolete parts of it? Aedo notes that at the time (1995) the preservation of this kind of work was not necessarily seen as important but as the technology has progressed, archiving media-based artworks is a growing field that is gaining more importance and interest amongst scholars. The avatars she created for her own works developed from drawings and now it's easier to access VR technologies, so she can rebuild them given the time and space. Had she kept the basic wire-frames, she would have migrated the assets from one software program to another, which would have been a more future-proof way of documenting the project (compared to screenshots/ digital images).

The LAA has a hybrid documentation system for archiving new media art exhibitions, which she took and modified to work for individual works. These methods are very resilient as it combines a physical archive with a digital one.

REMOTE INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE WORKING:

The first phase of the *Prototipos (2021)* programme was delivered during the most recent COVID-19 national lockdown. A group of cross-disciplinary students coming from the arts and a range of sciences were asked what the next disaster/emergency/ contingency will be from the perspective of their field or discipline and what would they do about it? This proved to be a very effective speculative exercise and media art is often full of warnings and strategies for these emergencies/contingencies.

Students were then invited to turn their bedrooms into labs and create prototypes with whatever materials they had to hand. By approaching the idea of prototyping in a very broad sense, students could create prototypes of 'possible futures', ranging from books to spaceships. An effective strategy to inspire cross-disciplinary working amongst the distributed student group involved engaging younger workshop hosts to 'play' with Zoom and explore how to fully exploit its tools for creative activities. This involved, for example, sending students to different breakout rooms to do different creative activities and encouraging rapid problem solving in and across diverse groups. Sessions were kept short with lots of unguided time provided to work on the project on their own.

REMOTE INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE WORKING:

When working across disciplines, curators can bridge conversations and ensure all disciplines see new media art as a valuable resource to engage with. Tania invited artists such as Rafael Lozano Hemmer to facilitate a workshop and asked him to mix history, theory and the artistic outcome when presenting his work. Lozano Hemmer brought an academic paper as part of his practice, which comprised technical and historical contexts, meaning the work could be understood in different ways.