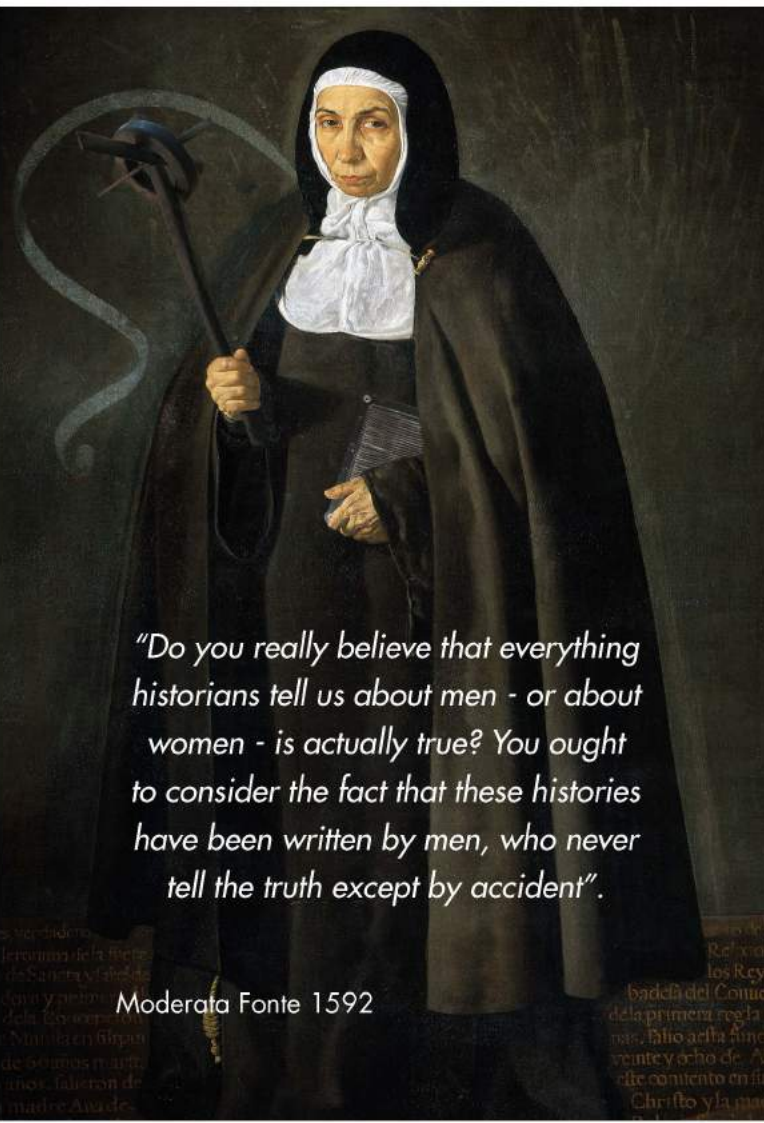


The Transubstantiation of Knowledge

Rachel Ara

15 - 23 September 2018
V&A Medieval and Renaissance galleries

#LDF2018
#Transubstantiationofknowledge
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/TOK>

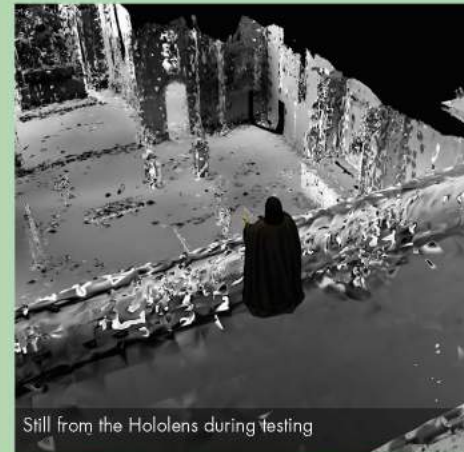


"Do you really believe that everything historians tell us about men - or about women - is actually true? You ought to consider the fact that these histories have been written by men, who never tell the truth except by accident".

Moderata Fonte 1592

The Installation

The Transubstantiation of Knowledge is a mixed-reality story set in the Medieval & Renaissance galleries at the V&A. Located around the chapel of Santa Chiara. Adopting lo-fi technology, recycled materials and with a minimum budget, holographic nuns are brought back from the 15th century via loop space. The nuns can be seen within the chapel and surrounding gallery space when wearing a holens headset and on a small screen in front of the chapel.



Still from the Holens during testing

The Transubstantiation of Knowledge merges real and virtual worlds to tap into an alternative universe where the fifth force, the key to the theory of everything, remains embodied by the Franciscan nuns of Santa Chiara. The Whispering Gallery (the passage behind the chapel) is filled with the sound of voices, speaking in mother tongues that reflect the multiple languages within the museum and the collective strength of women worldwide. At the entrance, to the right, is a display that draws from the collection of chausibiles. Mixing artifacts and untruths, the coded garments and recently discovered apprentice piece, can actually be read. On the left, a display contains woven magnetic cores, circa 1960, that were once RAM memory in computers, illustrating the physical nature of data storage. Behind the chapel is a large loom physically referencing the magnetic cores, weaving of code and the transubstantiation or embodiment of knowledge.

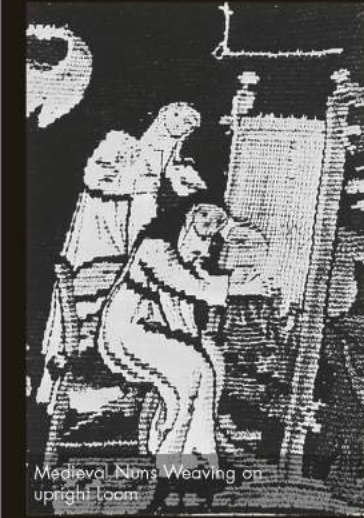
Critique



Factory Women weaving computer memory in the 1940s

The Transubstantiation of Knowledge is a feminist narrative critiquing hypercapitalism, post truths and how we look at things. A parallel is being drawn. The silencing of women is ongoing and knowledge is being devalued. The artifacts are in front of us, but the

question is, are we really looking at them? The story weaves together facts and possible fictions, manipulating some of the facts because we need to question who is telling our stories and what it is they want us to believe.



Medieval Nuns Weaving on upright loom

Mary Beard demonstrates that when it comes to silencing women, "Western culture has had thousands of years of practice." much of it violent. In ancient Greece Philomela, whose tongue was cut out, denounced her rapist by weaving his name with threads. In Shakespeare's England Lavinia, whose hands and tongue were severed, carried the shadows of their guilt, until all they could do to silence her was murder.

Activity: Decoding the Apprentice Piece

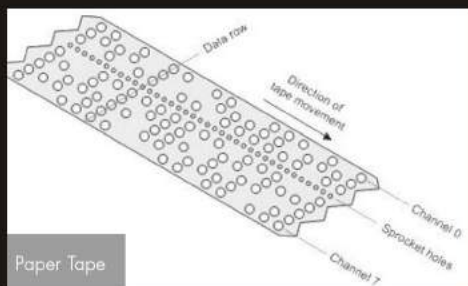
A rare piece of coded embroidery was found during the installation of the Santa Chiara Chapel at the V&A. It is thought to have been an apprentice piece as it used a very basic form of character encoding similar to the ones in computers this century. We know the nuns used much more sophisticated methods that we don't yet fully understand so have attributed this to an apprentice.



Apprentice Piece

How to Translate:

This code is read in rows of five from left to right, which is quite similar to the punched paper tape of the last century.



Paper Tape

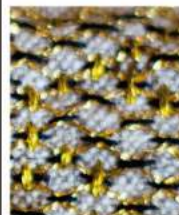
Character Encoding

A	00001
B	00010
C	00011
D	00100
E	00101
F	00110
G	00111
H	01000
I	01001
J	01010
K	01011
L	01100
M	01101
N	01110
O	01111
P	10000
Q	10001
R	10010
S	10011
T	10100
U	10101
V	10110
W	10111
X	11000
Y	11001
Z	11010
?	11011
,	11100
'	11101
;	11110
.	11111



Apprentice Piece

G U I L T
0 1 0 0 1
0 0 1 1 0
1 1 0 0 0
1 1 1 0 0



This example above translates to the word "guilt". When the black stitch is crossed with a gold stitch, this denotes a "1" and when left untouched a "0". By using the character encoding you can decipher the apprentice piece.

Activity: Hand Gestures & Missing Bits

As the story goes, the gestures of the nuns were interpreted into stone by the masons of elite merchants but their mysteries were still not understood. Fearing what they could not understand or control, an order was given to remove all gesturing hands. To avoid attracting more attention to the gestures and what may have been communicated, the dismembering was hidden behind the mass removal of other body parts to rid public sculptures of male nudity.*



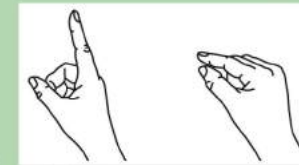
Apollo
No: LOAN:ROYAL BOTANIC.1

missing, some deliberately and carefully cut, some broken off accidentally, others violently. (Angels in 50b). The more you notice the more you might see. Do you notice any other bits missing from statues?

*[Using the rules laid down by the Council of Trent, Pope Paul IV mandated the use of concealing fig leaves, promulgating the church's attack on nudity in art in a papal bull dated 1557.]



The Angel of the Annunciation
No: A.10-1914



Holens Gestures



Kneeling Angel
No: 7614.1861

CREDITS

Director: Rachel Ara
Writer: Laura Hudson
Costume: Charlie Flint
Sound: Shan Verma
Mixed Reality: DoubleMe
DoubleMe: Albert Kim
Loopspace Creator: Marius Matesan
DoubleMe Project Manager: James Edward Marks
Holoboy: Chris Szkoda
V&A Project Manager: Kate Quinlin
Layout: Angela Lam
Audio Voice (Italian): Dani Parodi
Audio Voice (English): Elaine Tierney
Speaking in Tongues: Women at the V&A
Assistant: Beth Taylor
Ruby Loveday Hudson

FURTHER READING

Fonte, Moderata, 1592, *The Merits of Women*. Venetian poet, Modesta Pozzo, the author's real name, completed the dialogue the night before she died of childbirth at the age of thirty-seven. Ed.Tr. Virginia Cox, University of Chicago Press 2018

Solanas, Valerie, 1967, *Scum Manifesto*, self-published, USA

Dunye, Cheryl, 1997, *Watermelon Woman* DVD RT 90 mins. Dunye plays a filmmaker attempting to make a documentary about 1930's black actress Fae Richard. The film is a treatise on the complications of persistent iniquities and how we might uncover the histories of marginalized people, written out and unable to document themselves. "Sometimes you have to create your own history." say the end credits.

Strocchia, Sharon T. 2009, *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA

Houston, Jean, 2009, *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*. Sentient Publications, 2009. An anthropological study predicting the emergence of a different kind of human being, shaped by new technologies and previously dormant capabilities.

Beard, Mary, 2017, *Women & Power: A Manifesto*, Profile Books Ltd., London