Women Reclaiming AI

B Aga & Coral Manton

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Abstract

Women Reclaiming AI is an activist community, co-founded by B Aga and Coral Manton, who aim to reclaim women's voices and identities from non-representative AI product development teams and critique the commercial pursuit of humanising AI. They do this through co-designing and co-developing new AI artworks, harnessing AI as a medium for protest.

Representation of Women in Gendered Technology

In the UK women hold less than 17% of all available tech jobs, (The Alan Turing Institute 2021). At Google, Black women make up less than 5% of their global tech workforce (Google 2020). However, when it comes to making humanoid chatbots or robots, women appear regularly—but not as makers. When asked to name a woman in technology, people respond "I don't know" or "Alexa" or "Siri"—chatbots gendered women, designed by male-dominated teams (West et al. 2019).

As speech recognition, chatbot technology and robotics are improving at pace, the sci-fi fantasy and commercial benefit of creating technology gendered as women are driving new artistic, cultural, and industrial endeavours. Men are responsible for re-coding women's identity within technology, amplifying the issues of the past, without consultation or inclusion of women's voices.

Women Reclaiming AI

Women Reclaiming AI, WRAI, is an art as activism project facilitated through a growing community of 100+ diverse women (inclusive of non-binary, genderqueer and woman-identifying people). The community harness AI and robotics as a medium for protest reclaiming women's voices and identities from non-diverse development teams. In so doing, it reimagines the representation of women in technology as equitable and empowered.

Fig. 1. *WRAI*, 2018, Aga & Manton, Copyright acknowledgement.

WRAI includes a collaborative AI voice assistant developed by the community through a shared platform for writing and editing. This evolving artwork is a response to the pervasive depiction of AI voice assistants gendered as women and subordinate and serving. Through workshops for collective writing the community is creating a collective intelligence and feminist dataset revealing womanhood and women's identity.
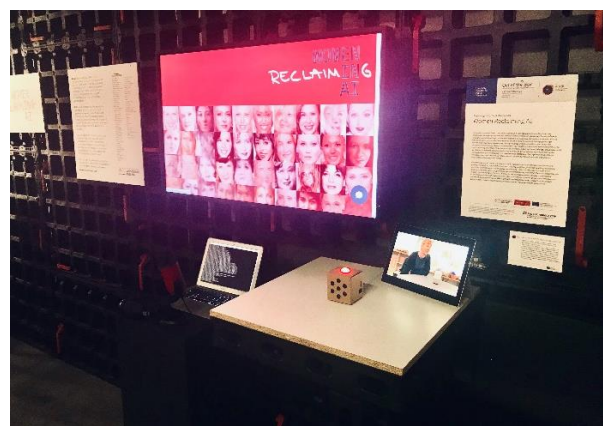

Fig. 2. *WRAI* Exhibited at ARS Electronica, 2019, Aga & Manton.

The collaborative voice assistant has been exhibited as an interactive artwork and visual dataset, facilitated through workshops at ARS Electronica (2019) and Birmingham Open Media (2019), ARS Electronica (2019), MozFest (2020), and as part of the programme for The Barbican "AI: More than Human".

References

The Alan Turing Institute. 2021. "Women in data science and AI," last modified Jan 10, 2020. https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/research-projects/women-data-science-and-ai.

Google. 2020. "2020 Diversity Annual Report." Diversity, last modified Jan 10, 2020. https://diversity.google/annual-report/.

West, M., Kraut. R. and Ei Chew, H. 2019. "I'd blush if I could." EQUALS Skills Coalition and UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/ 48223/pf0000367416.locale=es.

Biographies

The work of artist-technologist duo **B Aga** and **Coral Manton** manifests as collaborative workshops, events and installations aimed at (re)claiming conversational AI systems as a medium for protest. It critiques the commercial pursuit of humanizing AI technologies and challenges the bias, stereotyping and pervasive influence embedded within. By activating the public, Aga and Manton re-write and re-imagine the cultural myths of AI and robotics, creating alternative technology-mediated futures. Their most recent work is *Women Reclaiming AI* (2018), an expanding activist art-work, presented as a feminist AI voice assistant, programmed through workshops by a growing community of women.

https://womenreclaimingai.com/
https://www.coralmanton.com/
https://birgitteaga.com/