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ART | CULTURE | IDEAS

**ARCHIVE/  
COUNTER-ARCHIVES**

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SUPPORTED BY THE AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE

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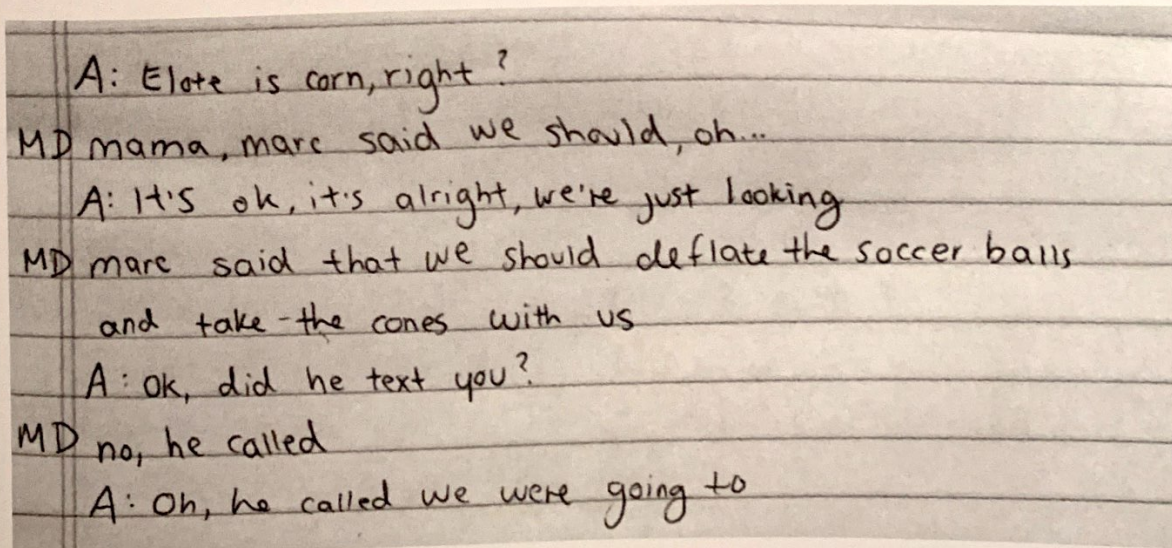
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and GABRIELA ACEVES SEPÚLVEDA

## MAKING PANCAKES:

### Intergenerational Cooking and Remediating the Archive

MAKING PANCAKES is one of the twelve projects included in my four-channel video installation, *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, which is based on a handwritten family cookbook that belonged to three generations of women in my family. The installation investigates the family cookbook as an archive of sorts. In the project, I examine the cookbook as a medium through which gender roles, social status, memories, and household economies are recorded and passed on from generation to generation. My aim is to revive this cookbook. To reactivate it, I invited several friends to respond to one of the recipes in Mamá Pina's cookbook in any media format of their choice. The responses included digital images, audio recordings, videos, documentation of family gatherings, and conversations that reactivated the handwritten record while unpacking its absences and creating new experiences that remediate the recipes. In *Making Pancakes*, Alejandra Bronfman cooks the recipe, "Cakes para el Desayuno," that was handwritten by my great grandmother, Mamá Pina. Along with her mother, Marisa Bronfman, her daughters Maia and Nina Dawson, and her partner Alec Dawson as the videographer, Bronfman sets up a family gathering where three different generations make pancakes together and, in both English and Spanish, share their particular skills and perspectives on cooking.



A: Elote is corn, right?  
MD mama, marc said we should, oh...  
A: It's ok, it's alright, we're just looking  
MD marc said that we should deflate the soccer balls  
and take the cones with us  
A: ok, did he text you?  
MD no, he called  
A: Oh, he called we were going to

### Cakes para el desayuno

Se baten muy bien 2 yemas de huevo y cuando están duras se les pone  $\frac{1}{2}$  de leche de leche y se envuelven bien a las yemas. Cuando está bien incorporado se le va mezclando poco a poco 5 onzas de harina cebada con 2 cucharaditas de Royal y al último las claras de los huevos muy bien batidas. La masa debe de quedar espesa, se calienta bien la cazuela se le pone poquitita manteca, se le echa la masa, no muy gruesa la tortilla y se cocina hasta que hace agujeritos. Se sirven calientes con mantequilla y miel de colmena.

### Came.

16  
Un kilo de lomo, o de paloma se pone en rebanadas, con jitomate tam-  
bién rebanado, tantita manteca, tam-  
bién rebanado, aceitunas, chonzo de miente,  
un trozo de laurel, sal y  
una taza de vino blanco, se deja  
con un poco de caldo para servir, y  
se come.

### Macarrones.

Se cuecen los macarrones del fino  
y se lavan con agua fría.  
Se hace una salsa de pino jitomate  
con laurel, sal, pimentón y un  
chiquito de canela, en esa salsa se  
ponen a hervir los macarrones, ya  
para salir se le ponen unos pedacitos  
de mantecilla, ya se tiene  
cocida carne de pulpa en pedacitos  
muy chiquitos, en su propio jugo, cuando  
está blandita se le pone una cucharada  
de salsa inglesa se acomoda  
la carne en medio, y los ma-  
carrones al rededor con un poco de  
queso.

## Cakes para el desayuno

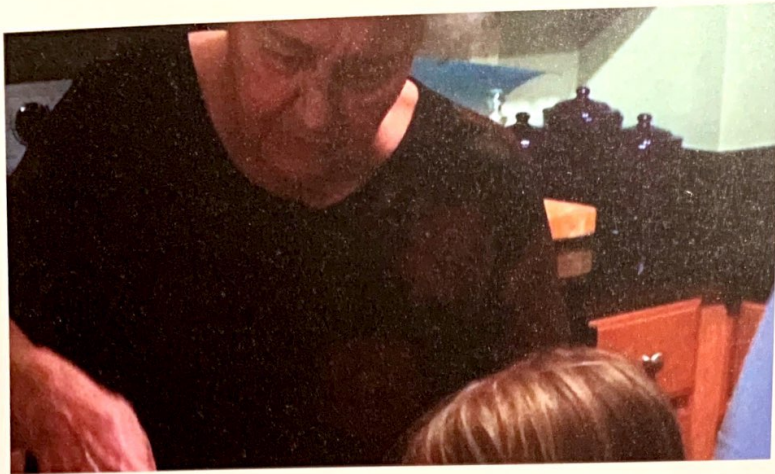
Se baten muy bien 2 yemas de huevo y cuando estan duras se les pone  $\frac{1}{2}$  de leche de leche y se revuelven bien a las yemas. Cuando esta bien incorporado se le va mezclando poco a poco 5 onzas de harina cernida con 2 cucharaditas de Royal y al ultimo las claras de los huevos muy bien batidas. La masa debe de quedar espesa, se calienta bien la cacerola y se le pone poquitita manteca, se le echa la masa, no muy gruesa la tortilla y se voltea hasta que hace agujeritos. Se aman calientes con mantequilla y miel de colmena.

# Carne.

Un kilo de lomo, o de paloma se pone en rebanadas, con jitomate tam bien rebanado, tantita manteca, fruta en vinagre, aceitunas, choizo desmenuzado, una hoja de laurel, sal y pimienta molida, en poca agua y una taza de vino blanco, se deja con un poco de caldo para servir, y se come.

# Macarrones.

Se cuecen los macarrones del fino se estilan y se lavan con agua fria, se hace una salsa de pavo jito mate con laurel, sal, azucar y un chuguito de canela, en esa salsa se ponen a hervir los macarrones, ya para salir se le ponen unos pedacitos de mansegulla, ya se tiene cocida carne de pulpa en pedacitos muy chiquitos, en su propio jugo, cuando esta blandita se le pone una cuchara de salsa en inglesa, se acomoda la carne en medio, y los macarrones al rededor con un polvo de queso.



This recipe is just one paragraph of text, and yet it yielded 5 or 6 delicious warm eggy pancakes that we ate for lunch, instead of breakfast. Looking at the video almost two years after we made it, I am struck by how the text generates chaos, and then order. Order as a pancake. But the chaos is not really chaos. It is each person doing what they do. This is a character driven story.

Marisa is amused, helpful. She knows things.



Maia is mostly silent, acting instead of talking, quietly separating eggs, beating batter, pouring it out, tolerating her sister's insistent desires and her way of narrating the present as she experiences it.



Nina's voice runs throughout. She talks a lot. She wants things. She lets us know. She wants to do stuff, to be in it. She wants syrup.



Alec is out of the picture but he controls the picture, letting us do our thing as he shapes it in his image. As for my role, I will let others describe it.



A: This is part of the process...

¿Qué más? Fudge... Rellenos para pavo al horno... chiles en frío, Torta de... Torta de zanahoria

M: aha

A: ¿no se que de cocoa? ... ¿de Ti?

M: ¿Qué es eso? No se que es

A: Ensalada de camarones, croquetas de pollo.

M: Ah... croquetas de pollo

A: Maia quería hacer croquettas de pollo, porque yo me acordaba que la yaya siempre hacía, los hacía

M: ya, yo hago a veces croquetas de pollo

A: ella quiso, galletas, duraznos, budín de fresa, dulce de almendra

M: dulce de almendra

A: frijoles de siete cazuelas, dice?

M: ya

A: CARNE de teresita, chiles me es difícil de leer...

¿gelatina de pinto? Después va cambiando

porque son tres generaciones.

M: claro está escrito en distintas...

A: ¿paella?

M: ¿hay paella esta también?

A: Are you cineasting, darling?

- { cineasting hana... }

AL: No not at the moment

A: OK

AL: So, what kind of video do you want?

A: I don't want a video I want audio

AL: Why do you want an audio?

A: Because I don't want video I want audio

AL: But what do you think is special about audio and recording all of this?

: Because in a video you can see our faces and we don't want to see our faces "hana" that's the thing

AL: And what kind of audio do you want?

A: I want audio because um, actually I want audio because I think often in - you're not recording this are you?

AL: I am

A: Often in Latin American households you hear the women off in the kitchen cooking and you don't see them... you just hear them... mhm... And cooking happens behind closed doors... mhm... that's why I want audio

AL: So it's like a performance piece

A: No, so it's like a recording of people, of women cooking

AL: OK, well then the women should start cooking, shouldn't they?

- { unintelligible agitated gurgling }

AL: can we introduce everyone that's doing the cooking?

A: No no no no it's not that kind of video darling

AL: Well it's not a video it's an audio

A: It a snippet, an audio snippet -

AL: But I thought you said I could whatever kind of audio I wanted to make

No I want you to record { humorous/pitiful laughter } I want you to just record, no, there's not gonna be lots of explanation { this isn't Rachel Ray you poor lil white man }

AL: (reluctant) ok

A: Girls

(slaves !!!)

.. ok girls (come on slaves we're getting impatient)

ok caenn+it ano

abbhjrvei

...

lecha ?? /

... you didn't teach me Spanish so not my fault

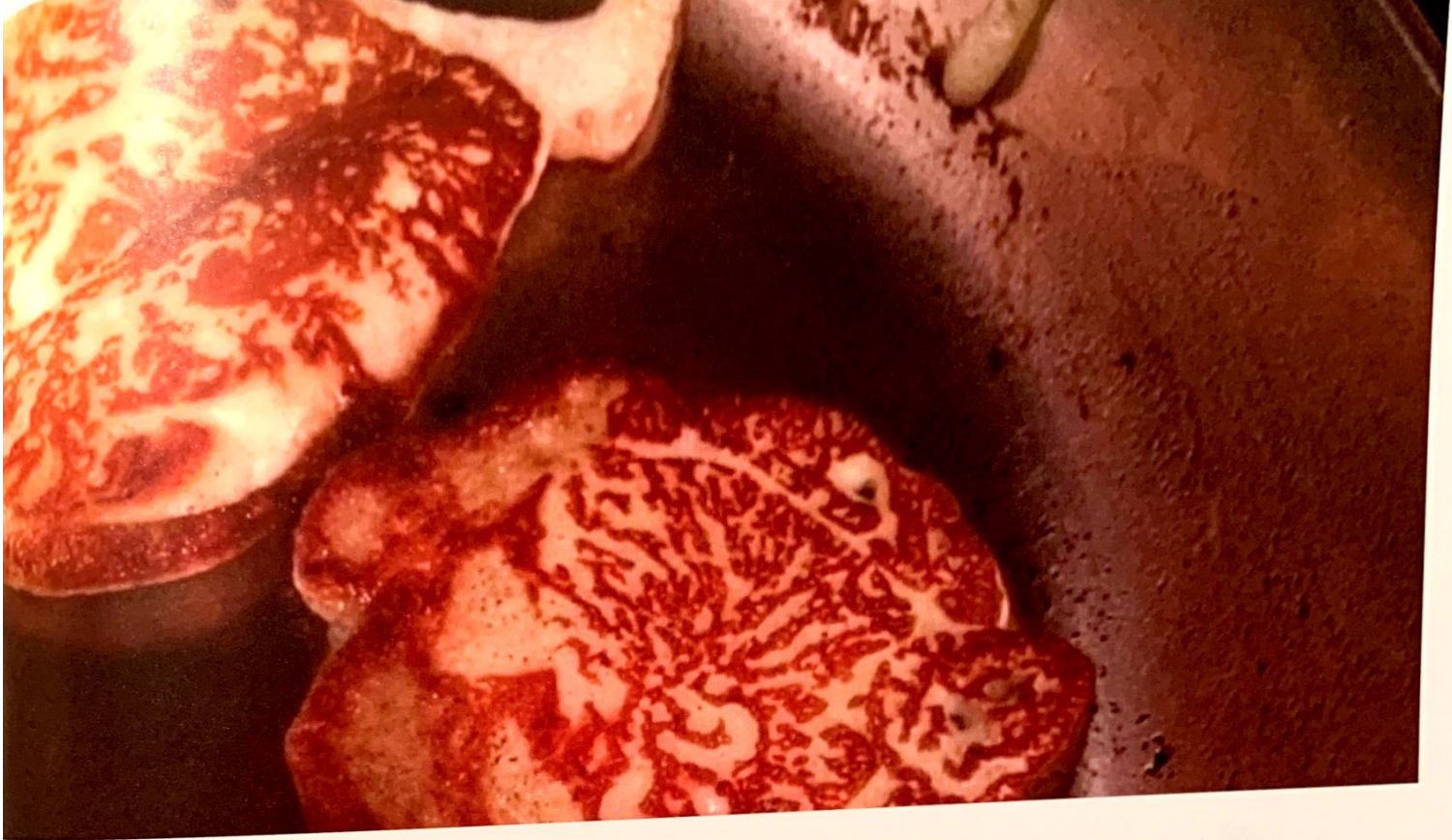
no essai



The text within the cookbook yields all of that, or somehow nudges us into playing our parts. The script is beautiful, clear, round. The instructions are perfect, and I wonder, how many times did she make this with a recipe? Without? Did it end up in text only after years of pancakes, for the purpose of passing it along? Was it passed to her by a mother-in-law or a mother, offering guidance as food, food as guidance? Who was Mamá Pina anyway? Gabriela didn't really tell us. But we can glean a little from the recipes. They are precise. They feed the family. They are a little Mexican and a little French. When we read the list we recognize some but not others, some that my Spanish grandmother used to make, and some that she wouldn't have touched. I am reminded that my mother and grandmother didn't think much of corn and that kitchens in the old and new world diverge when it comes to corn. But we aren't using corn.

We are making pancakes with white flour. Did they really eat them for breakfast?

I'm in the middle. I want it to go well. We don't often cook all together. I like it, but I really like cooking alone, selfishly. I hope people like them. I hope Gabriela likes the outcome. I didn't want a video. I didn't want pictures. But now looking at them, I love seeing my daughters and thinking about how they've changed. I like the recording even more. I'm thinking that I don't have any other recordings of my mother, who is now 85. She has a nice voice. She has a wonderful laugh. She wants me to make salad. I have always made the salad, since I was ten or twelve years old.



The remediation begins with food. Food is the medium for memory and knowledge. It transmits them. We read through the list of recipes and I come across chicken croquettes. From Gabriela's Mamá Pina's cookbook to my grandmother, transplanted to the American suburbs, where she cooked things that no one else made, that I loved to eat and was slightly embarrassed about. I used to get scrambled egg sandwiches for lunch. No one else had those, and I battled with my parents for peanut butter, the ultimate American sandwich before peanut allergies changed school lunches forever. She made croquettes of chicken and sometimes spinach, and also albondigas and flan, but also jello, which she loved. And now here we are, making sure our kids know how to separate eggs, that they know how to beat the whites, that they appreciate the things we make for them.

The remediation takes many forms. It is a hall of mirrors. The cookbook has been scanned, so we read it off the iPad.

Our process generates photographs, an audio recording, and in Alec's control, the video. And pancakes. We are remediating again, making a transcript of the audio. Maia has agreed to help with the transcription, and she turns it into an annotated transcription, with her commentary on what she hears and remembers.

A cookbook is a generative text. It makes you make things.

To see the project go to: <http://criticalmediartstudio.com/index.php/portfolio/making-pancakes/>

ah!... I got it on my leg... oh no

A: what happened?

M: I - audio CUTS ME OFF

A: OK darling, I think we're good. I think we're

(gram span)

oh thanks, that's delightful

(gram span) ---

A: Oh that's helpful. Well now you're, you're balking, you're balking, you're pushing back against the look

A: I'm artistic director

{ nina in the background }

AL: you wanna

A: You work for me

AL: you want to talk about the making of this film. You wanna talk about the making of this film -

A: You work for me

AL: You got a problem?

A: Wait till it melts a little bit

N: Fluffy

(gram span) Maia!!

what. k well (Spanish)

(Spanish) Ensalada

pancakes: pancakes and salad...

(gram span)

the butter is almost melted

(spanish)

start cooking the pancakes

A: Yeah

(Spanish)

MD: like this?

A: Perfect

N: But I wanna pour some into the pan

A: You can to sweetie pie, let Mala do a batch and then you do a batch

That looks very good... That's perfect!

MD: Do I do another one next to it

A: Yeah, do another one next to it

The pancakes are wierdly shaped!

Are they wierd?

A: Yeah, they are wierdly shaped

MD: Can I flip with this?

A: They are 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexican pancakes. So...

MD: mom do I flip with this?

A: Yeah

(gram span)

- audio cuts off

A: They are 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexican pancakes...

Yeah, (Spanish)

N: So, we are making pancakes... they are wierdly shaped

Strange cakes...