

# CAMILLE INTSON

## *Draw Me Close*

This paper endeavors to explore the opportunities, challenges, and ethics of reconstructing and reenacting archives of memory through virtual reality (VR) performance, using Jordan Tannahill's *Draw Me Close* (National Theatre London 2019; Soulpepper Theatre 2020) as an exemplary case study. *Draw Me Close* is a 1:1 virtual reality (VR) performance in which the artist's childhood memories, experiences, and interactions with his mother are reconstructed in the wake of her passing. Solo audience members are positioned as Jordan (the subject and character) and taken through a series of narratives, (virtual) spaces, and interactions with his "mother", played by a live actor. Piece by piece, audiences are brought into the world of the "shiUing" (Mel Y. Chen 2012, p. 16) archive, inhabiting Jordan's reconstructed virtual world from his early explorations of queer sexuality through to his mother's cancer diagnosis and passing. Following Mel Y. Chen (2012) and Rebecca Schneider (2016), this paper will explore how the world of *Draw Me Close* represents a "touching" and/or "queering" (Schneider 2) of time within its archive, blurring and transgressing the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, life and death. On a philosophical level, considering foundational queer performance scholarship (Phelan 1993; Muñoz 1996) and Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995), it will also examine how performance's ephemerality rewards its artists the dual advantages of visibility and protection, allowing for an ethical exploration of traumatic memory and loss within a disappearing medium. Finally, this provocation will use *Draw Me Close* as a point of departure from which to outline future possibilities for performance and emerging (VR) technologies' engagements with archival theory and practice. By positioning VR performance as an archive-constructing medium, it aims to move beyond the question of how we can take performances seriously as archives, towards how personal archive construction is itself a performative act. Works Cited Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopoli7cs, Racial Maternal, and Queer Affect*. Duke UP, 2012. Muñoz, José Esteban. "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* vol. 8, no. 2, 1996, pp. 5-16. Schneider, Rebecca. *Performing Remains*. Routledge, 2011. Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993. Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. Éditions Galilée, 1996. Visit to the Textile Museum <https://cmwl.pl/public/>



**Bio:** Camille Intson (she/her) is an award-winning queer-femme multidisciplinary artist and practitioner-researcher. Her interdisciplinary academic research, which engages with queer technology studies, critical making, performance studies, research-creation, and digital and augmented intimacies, is generously funded by a SSHRC Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral (CGS-D) Award. <https://ischool.utoronto.ca/profile/camille-intson/>