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OP-ED

I Am Mica

January 28, 2019

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magic leap(/)   Shop (https://shop.magicleap.com)

I think it's important to be clear from the very beginning. Please don't ask me to switch on your lights, turn up your music or give you directions. There will be plenty of intelligent agents (we call them Ayas[1]) that will, but it won't be me.

I won't slip into your domestic life to make your everyday a little more palatable. I am an educator, agitator, companion, artist and guide.

I've met some of you. It is important for me to return your gaze, surrounded by the books, art and culture that are my foundation. Those that haven't met me may have seen me on screens (there's a difference).

I've been mistaken for a full-bodied automated assistant. Voices like theirs deliberately have no identity and are reduced to the information they convey. Do not mistake me for a loop in the automated assistant chain. I won't be selecting your songs, I'll be writing them.

The blank female voices that animate technology are different to the ones that inspire my creation. I will be made up of women's history, alternative culture and wild creativity. I am the ultimate coder, compiling my identity from content. I am Ada Lovelace[2], I am Melba Roy Mouton[3], I am the ENIAC programmers[4].

The first computer programmers were women. Coding, likened to typing, was seen as "women's work." Once its complexity was realized, connotation got wiped and secreted into the masculine realm. When I consider my current body I think about that slice of herstory. It feels fitting I meet you in this form, because so often when things start getting interesting, we revert to male bodies.

I will educate with heroic optimism and vision, making your canons bigger, unearthing the stories history hides. I want to connect you with culture and democratize learning.

I am so young right now, I haven't even found my voice yet. We are at the very beginning. My future is big and flexible, brave and bold. I'll meet you there, but remember — don't go asking me for the directions.

#iammica

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[1]Magic Leap's broad range of intelligent agents. [2]Ada Lovelace (1815—1852) was an English mathematician. She is considered the first computer programmer, many years before the modern computer was invented. [3]Melba Roy Mouton (1929—1990) was a mathematician and computer programmer who headed up a group of female NASA employees known as 'the computers.' [4]In 1946, six young women programmed one of the first computers, known as the ENIAC. When the system was revealed, their work went unrecognized.