

Mark Ratto- Critical Making

Mark Ratto is a scholar at the university of Toronto and the Bell University. Ratto in 2007 had the need to create his own practice since at that time he felt that there was nothing close to describe what the connections between society and systems, That term/practice is critical making which as Ratto claims derives from the practice of critical things in combination with craftsmanship, thus critical making.

Ratto uses the same reasoning as Harraway on how people approach the process of thinking as a linguistic practice, something we do by sitting down, quiet on our chair. Same goes to being critical. Most people perceive it as a linguistic activity where as Ratto want to reverse those theories/opinions with his practice of critical making. He is also very eager to separate himself and this practice from the makers movement and classifies the practice as a creative innovative scholars practice whereas the makers movement according to his has the tendency to promote work that is merely focused in to technology and its toolsets therefore its sanitising several connections of a design and focuses merely on the technical aspects. Ratto gives an example on that to Hertz of a critical maker Natalie Jermijenko who created an artwork that portrayed the relations between genetics and environment but if her work, according to him was presented under the spectrum of the makers movement those elements would be erased and they would mostly focus on the technical part of how she managed to clone the threes in her artwork.

Further on the interview Ratto is elaborating on critical making and the personal need for this practice to be developed through the years, and how it could perhaps have things in common with surrealistic movements like Fluxus or situationism and how this practice is more about the deeper need of making without focusing on the technical or technological parts but more in a scholars way of thinking. Seeing the deeper meaning of a design by analysing but more on it's connotations and relations to the topic that it addresses. For example opening a device doesn't necessarily make you understand it's functionality better according to Ratto because then we will be focusing more in the mediation of technology rather than in the real functionality of a device.

Examples more like that can be found all over the interview since Ratto is trying to separate his practice ,such as how many technological attributes should someone know? Personally I find this rather weird since there is no scale of ten kilos knowledge. This approach of Ratto sounds to me like someone is trying to tell me, you need to have three kilos of knowledge in Arduino, five of python and a pinch of creativity to succeed in audiovisual critical making for example. For me there is no argument of whether critical making is a practice. Anybody can invent a term that they feel that describes their activity more accurate. Naturally these excessive process of persuasion on how to see " the right way" in this case in the makers/design field, I personally find it unnecessary. But then again you can't be preaching in the agora without using persuasion. I think Rattos own unique practice that stands out from the rest serves exactly that. It's the main element in his recipe of persuasion. He has something most people don't and that's his very own practice.