

Introduction Making Matters II

Janneke

Talking points:

- History of the project
- Mention researchers/the whole collective, and partners involved
- Began as project on Critical Making
- Our own researchers emphasized material practices in conjunction with new materialist philosophies
- We were never a project on Maker culture, 3D printing, fab labs etc., and this created confusion
- Look back at Making Matters at West Den Haag

Florian

Our initial interest in Critical Making concerned two aspects that we are still researching, and that remain the core of our project:

1. doing away with the divide between idea (or concept) and matter, respectively thinking and making. This is what “Critical Making” means in its most general definition, as a contraction of “making” and “critical thinking”. This corresponds to the basic critique in new materialist philosophy: to question and reject the traditional divide in Western thinking between idea and matter, as it had been established by Plato and Descartes; which means to also question and reject the divide between culture and nature, and to new ecologies and new ways of thinking *through* matter and *through* material conditions.

(This is the first, unchanged aspect of our project. The second is:)

2. working with contemporary practitioners who do exactly this, but (mostly) not in the form of philosophy books, but through practices that fall in between contemporary art, design, technology and social activism - and often done in interdisciplinary collectives. Obviously, this also applies to this conference itself, which takes place in between these aforementioned systems.

Since these collective material practices break with traditional Western dichotomies of the conceptual versus the material, and with Western distinctions of fine art versus applied art versus technology versus activism, it is not entirely coincidental that our presenters and workshop leaders come from all five continents, often bringing in postcolonial perspectives on material practices.

If this sounds still abstract, let me just concrete examples from the forthcoming three days.

- communities of human and non-human life (Klaas Kuitenbrouwer and the second workshop of Otolith Group),
- the materiality of the letter (West Den Haag),
- Critical Making and do-it-yourself (Garnet Hertz),
- feral business (Kate Rich),
- performative publishing (by the a.pass collective and in the “Public Time” workshops),
- substances in the environment that disrupt the human hormonal system (Aliens in Green),
- rhythm (Olu Taiwo),
- Tanah, the Indonesian word for soil, clay and land (Jatiwangi art Factory),
- black feminist digital cosmology (The Otolith Group),
- formation of collectives for enacting and imagining collective futures (Jeanne van Heeswijk)
- infrastructural processes that make social and ecological states “tip” (Feral Atlas)
- transport logistics (Display Distribute),
- looms in community gardens (EnsadLab).

In the preparation of this conference, we and all guests worked on a conversational lexicon, or dictionary, of concepts investigated the practices that will be presented here during the three days. The presentations and workshops correspond to lexicon entries, but in fact the lexicon has already become larger than the words and concepts that will be explored during this conference. Here’s the current list of entries:

Making Matters Conversational Lexicon:

[only show/scroll, don’t read:]

- Alternative Presents
- Business
- Bloodletting
- Collective
- Collective Bodies
- Craft
- Creativity
- Critical Making
- Criticality
- Destruction
- D.I.Y.
- Disciplinary
- Embeddedness
- Feral
- How-to
- Hosting
- Knowledge

- Learning Object
- Logistics
- Maker Movement
- Material
- Mattering
- Material Practice
- the Not Yet
- Organizing
- Public Time
- Practice
- Representation
- Rumination
- Secretarial Spine
- Tanah
- Transdisciplinary
- Underground
- Unmaking
- Undisciplinary
- Verticality
- Xeno politics
- Zoönomy
- Zoöp

We welcome your readings, comments and suggested additions for this lexicon, which you can easily do on the Etherpad where they currently reside - we will share its address here in Zoom. Next year, we will wrap up our research project with the publication of this lexicon as a book.

If you look at all these words, both in the lexicon and in the presentations and workshops of this conference, it becomes quite clear that “collective material practices” for us are not one unified tendency or phenomenon, let alone recipes or solutions. First of all, they are a practices that we observe as currently happening, and as having urgency - both intrinsic artistic urgency, and societal urgency in our catastrophic times.

But in the end, the title “collective material practices” needs to be imagined with a question mark (to come back to the materiality of the letter as investigated by West Den Haag) - as question for you as the audience participants, which is why you are probably here; but also as a research question for us as the collective that has organized this conference and is working on the lexicon.