

Render-Conceive-Stage: critical making as methods, theories, and actions.

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It is time to start critical making. As STS scholars, it is time for us to move beyond the linguistic and textual biases of the humanities and social sciences and engage directly with the material artifacts and systems that we study. As makers, crafters, designers, artists or engineers, it is time to move beyond propositions of instrumental or aesthetic value, to move beyond the exhibition or the demo or the one-off, and to reflect more explicitly and concretely on the relations between what things are made, how they are made, and our responsibilities for things and to things. To be clear, these dual moves are not my own, novel propositions but are situated within a number of long term projects working towards clearer articulations of what has been termed the socio-material world. Such projects are visible in a the scholarly trend in the humanities and social sciences towards the material (the so-called ‘material turn,’) but are equally visible in conceptual work associated with the fields of art and design and in attempts to incorporate ‘social issues’ in engineering and other technical disciplines.

This chapter is intended to act as a brief enframing and outline of work that I carry out more extensively in a book currently in process on critical making. Like the planned digitalSTS volume, the planned book is not so much a scholarly monograph as it is an instruction manual, a field guide, intended and intent-ing the reader towards action. Here in this chapter for digitalSTS I propose to provide three brief parts of the longer work; first, an expansive definition of critical making that seeks to articulate what is similar in a variety of related material-conceptual practices; second, instructions to encourage readers of this chapter to carry out a specific critical making experience that uses the Arduino system to explore concepts of morality and technology; and third, some brief conclusions on issues and needs associated with future work. The intention of this chapter is to introduce readers both materially and conceptually to hybrid engagements that take seriously the commitments associated with material semiotic theories and STS work more generally. In the remainder of this document I provide a brief outline and some example images from past engagements with the cm instructions to be included in this chapter.

Making Critical Making explicit

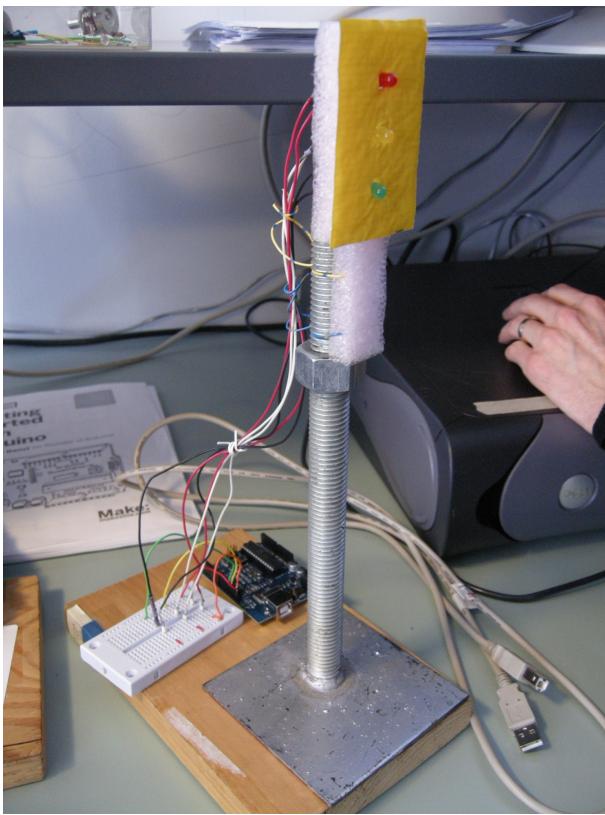
- Brief examples from academic contexts; designers, makers, an artists
- An expansive definition
- Impetus to action

A Notional Practice

- Exploring the material semiotic world through making
- Render-Conceive-Stage: an initial framework
- Instructions: Prompt: Build a Moral Technology (see fig 1 & 2 for examples from the related CM experience)

Conclusions

- Review
- Institutional needs and issues



[figure 1: Traffic Signal (2009)]



[figure 2: Bell Tolls (2012)]