Book Review | *Transmissions: Critical Tactics for Making and Communicating Research*, edited by Kat Jungnickel (MIT Press, 2020)

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Transmissions: Critical Tactics for Making and Communicating Research, edited by Kat Jungnickel, brings together scholars to examine the question of how research communication or transmission can be innovated. In the Introduction, Jungnickel explains that the mission of the book is to investigate how researchers' notions about the ultimate form their contributions will take (journal article, art installation, documentary film, etc.) recursively influence the research process and outcome itself. Jungnickel rightly points out that a lack of "attention has been given to how the dissemination of research delimits what kind of research can be done" (2). The collection is divided into four sections, themed "Critical Discomfort," "Public-Making," "Holding Ambiguity," and "Evoking the Sensory." The chapters in these sections report on a broad range of research-in-practice outputs. Contributions include art installations, creative writing, and performances. Most works in the collection belong to the emerging category of artworks made by researchers in fields that do not commonly entail making or practice as part of their scholarly work, such as sociology, anthropology, ethnography, ecology, and informatics.

While projects featured in the book span a wide range, many do conform to a common set of characteristics readers may recognize as stemming from early twentieth-century Modernist avant-garde and conceptual art practices. Examples include a set of kinetic sculptures made from salvaged materials (McHardy and Jungnickel); a discussion of scholarly writing as an oppressive form (Watts); reconstruction of a historical dress (Jungnickel); a participatory art exhibit for

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children based on Minecraft (Hjorth and Richardson); a search for plastiglomerates on a beach with no reasonable expectation of finding them, and a worm composting project without proper equipment (Lindström and Ståhl); discussion of a conceptual art project on air quality as citizen science (Calvillo); a meditation on the ethics of participatory performance art (Jeffries); a piece on science fiction writing as feminist “invitalizing”—a portmanteau of *inviting* and *revitalizing* (Kember); and a sound ethnography project in which researchers record their own environments (Lippman). These projects are welcome forays into the world of making for researchers whose own new engagement in the domain of material practice injects their work with excitement and energy. Moving forward, connection with other scholars and disciplines with long-standing traditions of making and doing accompanied by theoretical work such as performance studies (Taylor 2016), theatre studies (Bogart 2003), architecture (Peponis 2018), and public history (Parry 2013) would further strengthen this research approach.

As a collective, the projects do indeed move beyond materials-as-metaphors in research practice. Project descriptions are rich with detail, particularly about researchers’ own intent and interpretations. The intricacies and difficulties of making, fabrication, and documentation processes are also discussed at length. These descriptions and reflections reaffirm that the making process can certainly be a powerful tool for self-learning and exploration. Taken as a group, these projects may be valuable to the researchers themselves, for their own exploration and knowledge creation, especially when coupled with questions that could further their critical and creative depth, such as who benefits most from this work? What is the impact of this work beyond the researcher? Who is doing the labor to create this work? How does this work relate to work in other disciplines that have long histories of making things in the world? Why should the work be written about now, when it already has been transmitted in material form?

There is an inherent irony, of course, in a book publication examining modes of research transmission that seek to push beyond the confines of the codex, as these multidimensional research works are pressed into text-and-image form to fit between the pages of the book. However, this contortion may be a reflection of the truly restrictive nature of some disciplines, in which research in practice is undervalued or even punished. Unsurprisingly, the strongest contributions in the volume are the two chapters that explicitly engage the reader in novel or unexpected ways through the medium of the book itself.

Max Liboiron’s chapter, “Exchanging,” stands out as a particularly well-executed and thought-provoking work in the collection. Liboiron opens the chapter with a description of their series of participatory art exhibitions that invite visitors to take home components from the installation, provided they leave something of equal or greater value in return. Liboiron articulates the research question at the core of

these installations as “what modes of valuation, besides those recognized by capitalism, are already among us?” (91). In examining the ways in which installation visitors think about valuation, exchange, and reciprocity by inviting them into performative action, Liboiron is able to demonstrate that “We do not need geniuses and accredited economists to imagine a radically different future—it is already among us” (90). Excitingly, the chapter then takes a sharp turn to address *you*, the reader, directly, demarcating the remainder of the chapter as only available for what Liboiron terms the “reciprocating reader.” Prompts and blank spaces are provided in the following pages, along with an insightful discussion on extractive reading practices, which Liboiron connects to “one kind of knowledge transmission (acquisition)” (103). They point out that within academia acquisition is weaponized as appropriation to “flatten the epistemological horizon” and violently diminish the contributions of researchers with marginalized social identities such as women, queer people, BIPOC people, and disabled people (Liboiron 103). This flattening preserves the white supremacist nature of “canons” in disciplinary literatures, and maintains oppressive power structures within academia (103). Inventively, the reader is called beyond reflection or awareness-raising into reciprocal knowledge exchange with Liboiron, even to the provocative point of being invited to assume co-authorship, and cite the chapter itself on their own CV.

Similarly, Bonnie Mak and Julia Pollack’s chapter, “Cataloging,” provides the reader with an inventive, participatory approach to accessing their research on information history. With text divided into two columns, the chapter provides two pathways or narrative threads for the reader to follow. A slimmer column of text traces the history of bibliographical structures, both material and conceptual. The history of the development of the library card catalog is illuminated, from its sixteenth-century origins to its eventual transformation to the computer medium in the 1960s. A larger column of text describes Mak and Pollack’s collaborative research examining the power of the catalog as “interface between a user and a collection,...entangled *in* and as *part of* knowledge” (229). As an orchestrator of knowledge configuration, the catalog is understood as more than a set of paper cards—indeed, the catalog is refigured as a worldbuilding machine. Directing the reader to the back of the volume, Mak and Pollack have enclosed a set of creatively designed catalog cards for the reader to engage with. These cards represent not only the series of multimedia works the authors collaborated on over a span of years, but also key works of scholarship that informed their research, and even a card citing a woodworking diagram. Three exercises are suggested to the reader for interaction with the cards, each providing opportunity for a deeper learning experience on the topic of the power of the catalog in knowledge production. Providing the reader with this creative material engagement powerfully demonstrates the fascinating, messy, culturally and historically entangled nature of the catalog in a way that descriptive text alone could not.

Liboiron's and Mak and Pollack's chapters are excellent demonstrations of research-in-practice transmitted through the codex form in innovative, impactful ways. These two chapters are thoughtfully and meticulously constructed to maximize the potentials of the book format, while also playfully, and most importantly, meaningfully subverting the medium itself. While writing in a book is not new, Liboiron's invitation to then cite *yourself* as a co-author brings up vital and important questions about the ethics of citation, knowledge production, and valuation that are key to addressing the challenges to justice in academia and the world at large. Mak and Pollack's chapter likewise resonates with this discussion of the ethics of citation, and the power of information structures to generate (or erase) knowledge. Both chapters point to the ways in which information structures and their accompanying cultural valuation have the power to make or (re)make worlds, visions that could not be more relevant during this moment of global upheaval, but are of ongoing necessity for scholars and students to engage with as we continue to consider what kind of world our research is making, and if it is the kind of world we want to live in.

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