

MAKING IS THE UNIVERSAL INFRA- STRUCTURE OF PRODUCTION

Power of Making by Daniel Charny | POM font by Oscar & Ewan

Power of Making

It seems we are in the midst of a great awakening of making, or even as some have declared the dawn of the next (maker driven!) industrial revolution. The reality is that although most people can make, most people don't. In fact fewer and fewer, especially those who live in cities, actually know how to make the things they use, need or want; or even how these things are made. This is one of the most dramatic and unfortunate legacies of the Industrial Revolution which has shaped the world we live in. The distance between the maker and the user is growing and, with it, knowledge, understanding and appreciation are diminishing. This is true in all walks of life, and increasingly in many professional disciplines. Distance and lack of understanding are impacting also on governments and educational institutions, which are failing to see that making is very much part of the future - that the power of making lies far beyond thoughtless production and supporting the vision of those who manage. Nor is making the exclusive domain of the arts. Making is the universal infrastructure of production - be it technical or artistic, scientific or cultural. Making is a type of applied thinking that sits at the core of creating new knowledge of all kinds, and the sensibilities of making should actively be made a part of our future.

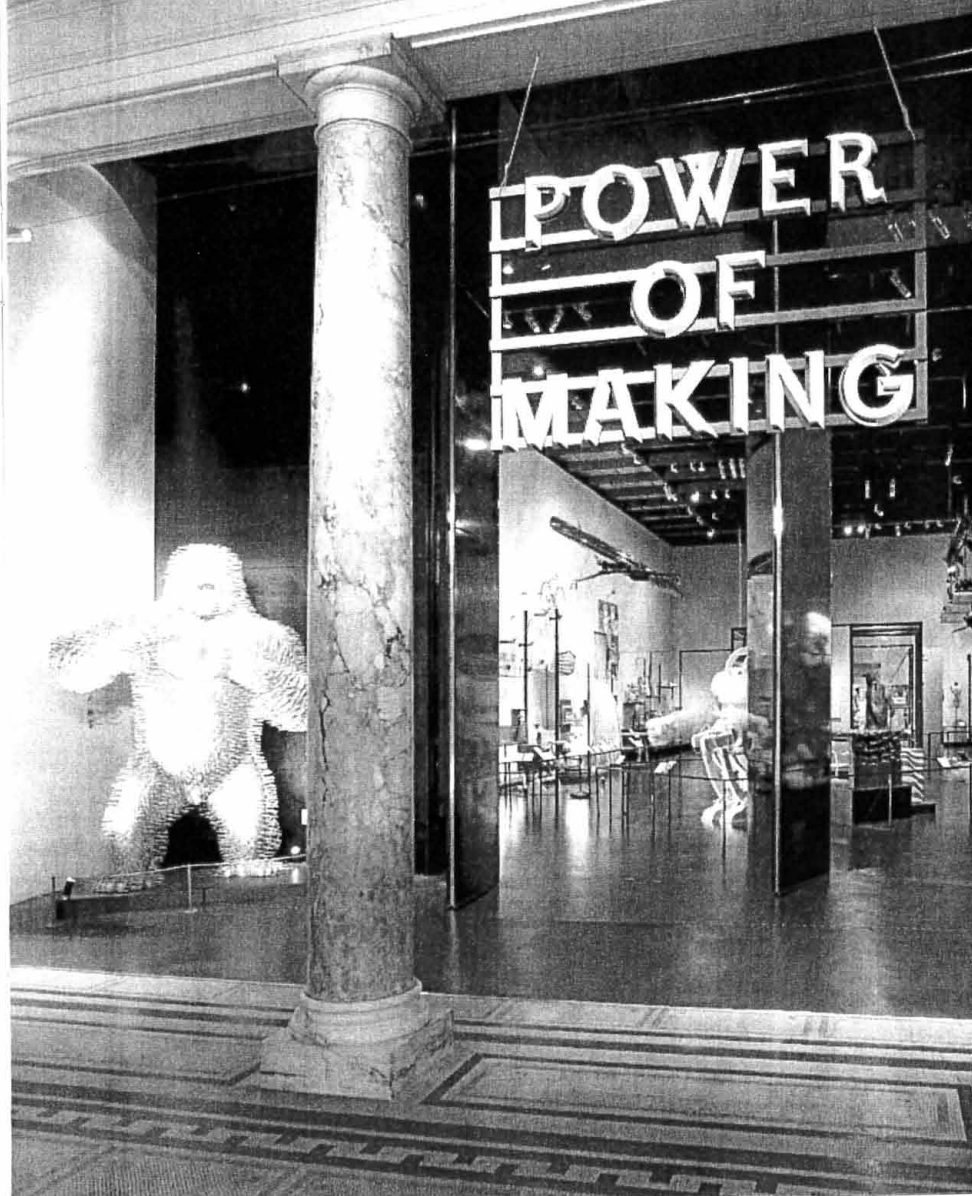
Many would say we have passed the point of no return. But making itself holds the potential to overcome mechanization's anti-human effects while reaping the very human benefits of technological progress. 'The future of making is in hacking the post-industrial milieu' wrote perceptive author and critic Bruce Sterling in his article for the publication of the V&A exhibition Power of Making*.

So how will this happen? Will the change driven by massive computational powers and social movements be able to reinstate the value and humanity of making? Will the new networks for sharing knowledge create new types of makers and fuel new communities of practice? Will the unprecedented way crafts are mixing with digital practices and finding new audiences change education and markets? Will emerging alterna-

* Power of Making ed. by Daniel Charny, London: V&A Publishing and the Crafts Council, 2011

Does the idea of fabrication, production and distribution, being eagerly developed by few, become viable alternatives? Can communities that see making as central to their values get industry to serve society? Or can the advocates promoting making over buying, in order to take care of the planet's limited resources, reach enough people to have an impact? Could the growing number of people interested in where their food, clothing, furniture, building materials and cultural products are coming from influence priorities? Is it conceivable that through all these forces there may be a shift to re-engage masses in the value of making?

My first step in answering these questions is to remind myself that almost all of us can make. That the power of making, from the height of luxurious freedom to the depth of deprivation, is that it is something people can do. That it is one of the strongest of human impulses and one of the most significant means of human expression. That it not only releases creative ideas but for many, is about participating in society and defining personal identity. And while it is true that for many making is a non creative means for survival, for others it is a way of learning, of defying conventions, enjoying life or solving its problems. A way of exercising (free) will.



Power of Making

Making is the most powerful way that we solve problems, express ideas and shape our world.

What and how we make defines who we are, and communicates who we want to be.

For many people, making is critical for survival.

For others, it is a chosen vocation: a way of thinking, inventing and innovating. And for some, it is simply a delight to be able to shape a material and say 'I made that'. The power of making is that it fulfills each of these essential human needs.

Those whose craft and ingenuity reaches the very highest levels can create amazing things. But making is something that everyone can do. The knowledge of how to make - both everyday objects and highly - skilled creations - is one of humanity's most precious resources.

