



fig. 00.03 Crystalline Body - Inside

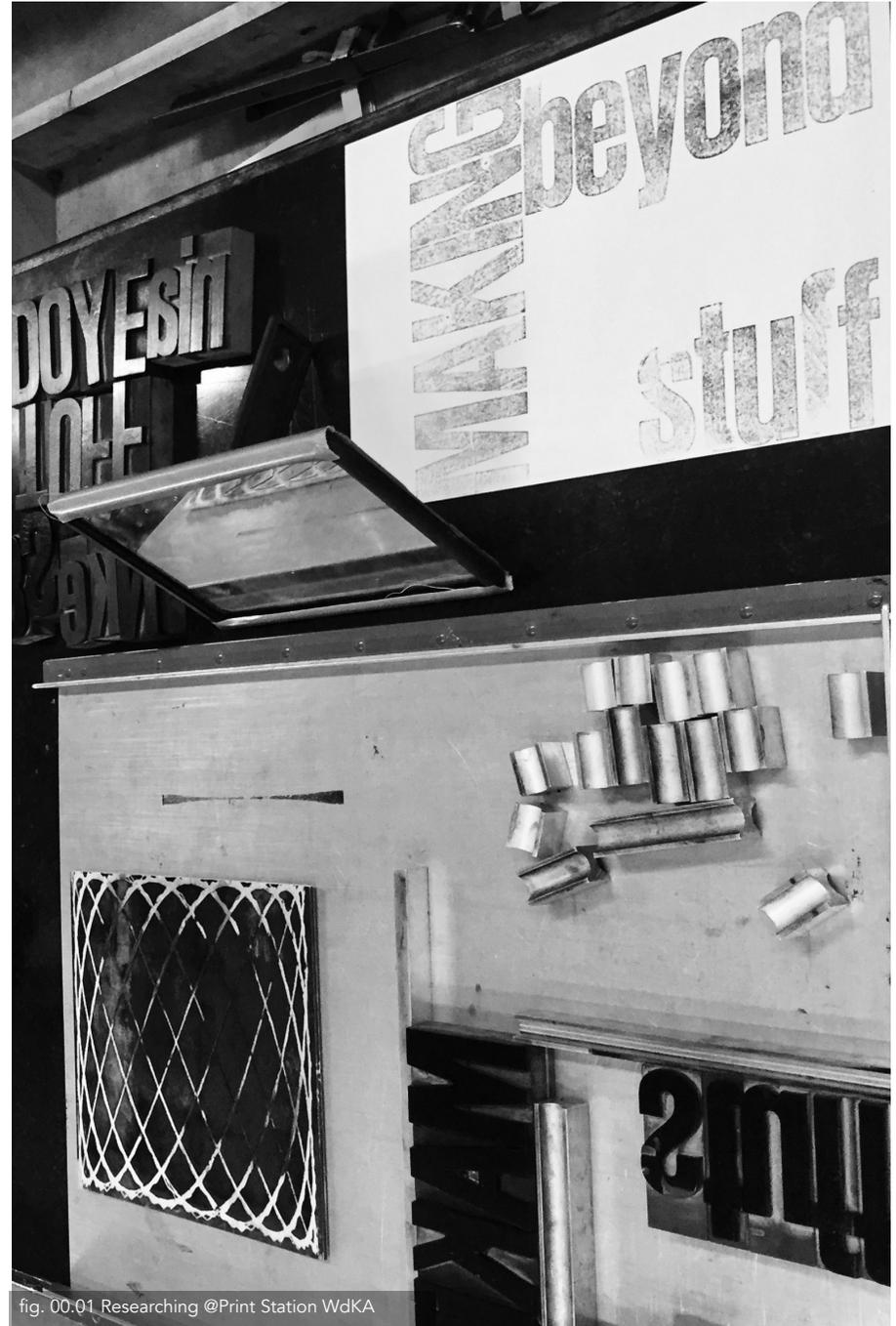


fig. 00.01 Researching @Print Station WdKA

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THINKING THROUGH MAKING

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Beyond Making Stuff  
A thesis of thinking through making

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## ABSTRACT

The idea of the educator as critical maker of learning and curriculum referred to in my graduation research project, underpins my ambition to challenge and transform pedagogical learning environments; into spaces of possibility through embodied making practices which open seemingly invisible structures and networks within school.

It is a call for open approaches to teaching and learning situated in a post-digital space, which explore the role of temporal and spatial arts based practices in the context of the pedagogy of inquiry.

This non-linear, rhizome body of work invites the participant to negotiate a network of voices and echoes which are animated through a diverse and interconnected collection of field tactics from, embodied and interdisciplinary learning to wayfaring and situational reflection. These tactics grew out of a practice which provided educators with a means of navigating the ruptures in everyday practice; disrupting the rhythms and flows of school through the lived experiences of young learners.

The underlying thread of the educator as an activist proposes taking action in the learning environment which positions 'making' as a way thinking.

I attend to an approach for educators to explore and critically make curriculum from the directions, impulses and curiosity of the children they work with and ask how these experiences lead to greater presence, voice and agency for students.

## PRELUDE

"You have to be looking for something to find something else." (Brendan Dawes, 2012)

This research project was initially embedded in digital pedagogies driven by a desire to uncover a methodology for teaching and learning through media technologies with young learners aged between three and sixteen years. However, as the project progressed it became apparent that the 'digital' hid the wider concerns of contemporary learning in a digital, networked age. A practice unfolded that existed within a convergence of both digital and analogue learning. This practice began to challenge some of the notions of how young learners learn and how educators navigate this converging space.

Beginning with conceptually driven, constructivist, inquiry pedagogy, this practice sought to reveal the visible and less visible ways in which institutions shape the way educators teach and young learners learn. Rather than mass curriculum reform the approach takes a tactical stance in a post-digital space, adopting the position that the teacher/educator can take an activist stance to their practice and the experiences they imagine and craft.

#activism  
#agency  
#analogue (non-digital)  
#constructivism  
#convergence  
#critical making  
#curriculum  
#digital  
#dissensus  
#hegemony  
#inquiry  
#making  
#maker movement  
#network  
#open  
#rhizome  
#tactics

"(Craftivism) as a form of dissensus therefore involves making with digital and nondigital tools through fields of perception so that individuals can undo and unknow, if ever so briefly, dominant forms of thinking and representation during their (learning) craft/making work". (Rowell, J. & Shillitoe, M., 2019)

As noted above by Brendan Dawes at TEDxManchester (2012) in "Find Something Else", I was seeking to understand my own methodologies and practice. As the layers of research unravelled the notion of thinking through making was a recurring feature of my practice. Critical Making, coined by Matt Ratto (2007) describes work that combines humanities insights and engineering practices. Outlined by Garnet Hertz in Critical Making (2014) - a handmade zine project that explores how hands-on productive work or making; can "supplement and extend critical reflection on technology and society."

**"It works to blend and extend the fields of design, contemporary art, DIY/craft and technological development."** (Hertz, 2014)

Extending these discussions to the social and cultural aspects of maker culture I wondered what critical making in elementary and middle school education would look like within and beyond my own practice.

Apparent disruptions or conflicts began to surface which required further investigation.

*Critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony (Mouffe 2007, p. 4-5).*



fig. 00.02 Crystalline Body - Inside/Outside