



Self-made media as models of autonomy

“Suppose for instance that we had developed our own physics and chemistry, would not the techniques and industries based on them have taken a different form, would not our myriads of everyday gadgets, our medicines, the products of our industrial art – would they not have suited our national temper better than they do?”

Junichiro Tanizaki, In Praise of Shadows, 1933

iii represents a community of artists whose practice involves the creation of unique media that draw on materials, knowledge and skills from diverse fields within science, technology, humanities and the arts. Beyond differences in material, technical or disciplinary qualities, these media find commonality in the necessity of their makers to negotiate a complex and changing cultural landscape. While science, technology and the consumer market are dominant forces in this landscape, they pose barriers to entry that often escape the reach of individual agency and negotiation. The question raised by Junichiro Tanizaki in response to the invasion of western technology in Japanese homes in the early 20th century referenced above, suggests a paradoxical but powerful idea that science can be adapted to local sensitivities, leading to a multiplicity of universal standards.

Deviating from the standard, the creation of unique artifacts responds to an urge to synthesize “reality-fantasies”. Science and technology come into play here as instruments that enable the realization of fantasies, while simultaneously describing and forming the field of play. The instruments devised, like pendulums to measure time or prisms to observe the spectrum of light in past centuries, serve to answer specific questions which could not otherwise be addressed and they allow us to find new methods to articulate matter in significant ways.

In this practice, compositions are arranged through the articulation of simple elements over time, which find in the nature of the phenomena explored and in the structure of the medium employed their own dictionary and grammar. The explicit constraints and freedoms that these incorporate allow for the emergence of unique forms that lend themselves to comprehension, simply out of comparison with ordinary experience, even as they are presented for the first time.

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