

on hacking ideas / sharing experiences / electronic textile / DIY

with **Afra Sonmez**

26 april 2021

*an ongoing collective exploration / learning from experiences of togetherness and uncertainty / reflecting on listening – with Afra Sonmez, Matteo Zoccolo – 26 april 2021
matteozoccolo.net/on_listening/conversations.html*

MZ: So, how do you steal ideas from people?

AS: Actually, I don't steal. Or better, I don't define it as stealing. You know, it's sharing and trying to make it in a better way or using it in a different way. I would say it's a hacking. For example, I'm making a sensor, let's say, a stretch sensor, and I'm using it to trigger the music and doing a musical performance. If you want to use my stretch sensor, you can make it and use it for another purpose. I like to see all the things I'm creating being used in a different way. And it's interesting to see how people can change them by their knowledge, you know. I love it when people are using my stuff.

MZ: Cool!

AS: I'm proud when I see people using my stuff in a way I've never thought about. You are growing with the community, without your ego, without your artistic narcissism and statements, you're just purely sharing and growing together. When I was in the workshop with Hannah Perner-Wilson and Mika Satomi, they came to Istanbul and taught us what electronic textile is. And I was like, "Wow, this is the thing that I want to do my whole life!" They opened this fire in my mind. They also have a website called "How to get what you want" on www.kobakant.at/DIY/ in which they're doing everything open source. I was seeing other people doing exactly the same sensor, same color, the shape, everything is the same. They're not even giving credit to Mika and Hannah. And they don't care! Because they know that they did it first. They don't care about how and whatever reason you're using their knowledge for. I think we should also not care about it. We should care about how we can grow more, not stealing ideas or this kind of old-school things, because everything is open source now. Now, when you hide something, people are shaming you, like, "Why don't you share? This is so narcissistic!" You know, in this decade we should share experiences, tools, anything we can, as much as we can.

MZ: I don't have anything to say. I completely agree.

AS: Yeah. Also, regarding the creation of a new artwork, we say that amateurs are looking at similar artworks before starting their creative process. The professionals already know that their eyes are thieves. They subconsciously steal ideas. The inspiration comes to you, it's going to find you. You don't have to look at similar works, you know. In the electronic field, yes, of course, it's coding, there's just one or a few ways you can connect motors. But in an aesthetic way, I think we should not look that much around. We're already looking at a lot of things, we're going to exhibitions, now mainly online, we're going to performances. We already have a lot of knowledge. And this is already subconsciously in our brain. Whatever we're thinking, actually, is not really unique because everything is already invented, right? You're just changing some stuff. And

when you're an amateur and you discover that your idea was previously made by someone else, you're getting this low energy, you don't want to do that because it's already invented. But you cannot make exactly the same thing with the same feelings, because art is something you do with your senses, with your heart. You're putting your thoughts, your emotions on that. It's not just like creating something.

MZ: So, originality and creativity are just illusions.

AS: Even The Beatles were getting inspiration from older bands. Everything is already invented, you just change it with your perspective. Being unique depends on your vision. You don't have to create a servo motor, you can make a servo motor that works exactly how the industrial motor works, for example. But always in your way, you're going to put another color. You're going to put another material there, you know, not like an industrialized thing. That's why, actually, I'm doing electronic textile. First of all, I am really curious, and I'm willing to do more DIY. I like DIY culture and I don't like to use something that industry forces us to use. Second, I can make my own sensors, decide on the size, the color, the shape, the material based on my aesthetic knowledge, so that it fits to all my performances. I can change, I'm in the power to choose what I want, not just choosing what the industry gives me. Why am I doing electronic textile? This is the question of my thesis. And this is why – Because I can choose how to make the sensors and do whatever I want with them.