



On the Social Basis of Cultural Production: Moving Beyond the 'Creator'

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3 avril 2014

Scholarship on Cultural Industries and the Place of the Creative Worker

- Coincides with rise of post-fordist economy and the growing significance of aesthetic qualities as basis for differentiation (Scott 1996, Pratt 1999).
- Greater valuation of 'immaterial labour' over 'material labour' (Lazzarato 1996)
- 'Creative worker' viewed as key source of new ideas ('immaterial labour') (Florida 2002)

Scholarship on Cultural Industries and the Place of the Creative Worker

- For the realization of a cultural commodity, artistic workers are inter-dependent on other actors, consumption-oriented and production-oriented (Hirsch 1972; Nixon and Du Gay 2002).
- To date, actors on the production side have been under-examined (Banks 2010)
- All non-artistic workers (on either consumption or production side) viewed as 'supports'

What Constitutes “Creative Work” in Fashion?

- Designer as source of immaterial labour?
 - selects silhouettes, colours and textures that defines the concept for a garment
- What enables the materialization of the concept?

What Constitutes “Creative Work” in Fashion?

- Role of Patternmaker
 - responsible for technical rendering of design; bridging practical and aesthetic considerations
 - “the patternmaker must visualize what the designer is thinking” (Interview with designer, 1999)

What Constitutes “Creative Work” in Fashion?

- Role of Sewing Operator
 - garment assembly is a single-person, single machine operation; fabrics are handled by human hand
 - “a lot of the understanding of the design process requires a conversation – physical, like point and touch – with the person that is sewing... because the item itself is tactile and fluid” (Interview with designer, 2000)

What Constitutes “Creative Work” in Fashion?

- Giving material form constitutive to a design is constitutive of creative work; a form of ‘embodied knowledge’
- In research, need to better recognize the labour process of production-oriented work *as* creative labour

What is at Stake? Biases in Economic Development Policy

- Narrow conception of creativity prevails
- Emphasis on Marketing/Promotion and Design (e.g. Pro Mode in Québec)
- Limited funding for production work: training; skill upgrading; forging connections to prospective employers

What is at Stake? Biases in Industry-wide Practices

- Valorization of artistic work confers relatively greater recognition (in terms of awards and compensation) for designers
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, the average hourly wage ...
 - for designer: \$30/hr
 - for pattern-maker: \$20/hr
 - for sewing-operator: \$10/hr

Reasserting Cultural Production as a Social Process

Considerations for Research:

- Counter status of production as creativity's 'other' by acknowledging interdependence of immaterial and material labour (McRobbie 1998; Banks 2010).
- Shift from the privileging of artistic workers to an analysis of the range of actors that define cultural production