

Abstract

Designing and Living with Organisms

Today researchers, artists, and designers increasingly collaborate with living organisms such as fungi, bacteria, and plants. They explore microencapsulation of targeted bacteria in women's underwear to support the skin flora (Tomasello, 2020), biomaterials in fashion and textile education (fabricacademy, 2020); biomineralization of textiles through bacteria (Beyer, 2019), extrusion of algae-laden hydrogels to facade panels (Malik et al., 2019), tile production by mycelium (mogu, 2020), living plant constructions (Ludwig et al. 2012), robot plant relationships (Flora Robotica, 2019), and computational living substrate (Fungar, 2020) for developing perspectives to living buildings.

Many of these activities are initiated by designers and start-ups in semi-professional environments, design workshops, and private kitchens before they are pursued in more professional lab environments and with experts in the field. Working together with living organisms in design workshops and domestic homes establishes a connection to everyday life activities and experiences. They allow physical experiences and identification with the living.

The conversation is stimulated by recorded interviews with professionals, young practitioners, and students working with living organisms and aims to create a discourse that revolves around the potentials and challenges of designing and living with living organisms. How can we design for, and together with living organisms, how does it change the practice, what are the methods, ethics, and implications, how can we develop shared visions for multi-species cohabitation?

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