

The Future of Plastic

by Officina Corpuscoli | Maurizio Montalti



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a project by: Maurizio Montalti | Officina Corpuscoli

commissioned by: Fondazione Plart

curated by: Marco Petroni

By looking at the design discipline as one that analyses, creates and leads the profound transformations characterising the contemporary time we live in, the exhibition “The Future of Plastic” aims to embody a suggestion and a vision about the way plastic materials will change in the future.

“The Future of Plastic” proposes a radical paradigm shift, offering a different insight into the objects occupying our everyday life. By moving beyond traditional production methods, a new domestic landscape of “cultivated” objects starts to emerge. This is in fact the “Growing Design” approach, designed and developed by Maurizio Montalti | Officina Corpuscoli: a definition of a new field resulting from the constant exchange between theory and practice, research-based projects and hands-on experimentation, stimulating and promoting further developments, affecting both the scientific and the design field. The Italian designer (who based his professional practice in Amsterdam, NL) has been presenting the early results of his research concerning “The Growing Lab” project, by transforming the Plart spaces in a process-based laboratory.

Travelling through micro-landscapes and experimental alchemies, it is possible to follow the evolution of “cultivated” objects, deriving from the action of natural, widespread fungal organisms (mushrooms), employed as agents of cohesion and transformation of organic elements, such as fibres and agricultural wastes. By directly feeding on nutrients and compounds available in such substrates, the fungi evolve into an intricate network of filaments – the so-called mycelium -, which act both as a natural binder and as a pure material for the creation of matters, which differ according to the ingredients and the growth conditions implemented. As a result of such process, which utilises local waste and resources or the degradation and transformation of existing polymeric materials, a small collection of unique objects and decorative elements comes to life, generating new narratives and new possibilities for future production models. Overall, a purely natural process that can be compared to a sort of “slow” 3-D printing, in which the speed of printing corresponds to the time fungi need for growing.

‘The Growing Lab’ is in fact an emerging project which seeks to engage in a strong collaboration with natural systems, indicating unprecedented paths regarding the generation of better and economically sustainable production models, transforming current existing paradigms, systems and networks, and suggesting a shift from the traditional concept of industrial production towards a novel cultivation model.

For these reasons, “The Future of Plastic” represents an open invitation to the need of researching possible alternatives and potentially different futures, in which plastics exist as a completely natural material. Design, just as our social and cultural dynamics, grows towards complexity. It is indeed needed to design new possibilities and future scenarios, which could allow defining and creating a different world.

NOTES:

The exhibition “The Future of Plastic” was realised with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Italy.

The research activities of Montalti’s “The Growing Lab” result from the combination of an autonomous research process with an ongoing collaborative process with partners, such as Utrecht Universiteit and Stichting Mediamatic (“Mycelium Design”). Furthermore, a thank you goes to CNC Exotic Mushrooms for the support given. For more information: www.corpuscoli.com

In line with the opening of the exhibition, Fondazione PLART has been producing a publication with original contributions by Marco Petroni (curator), Michiel den Hond (Ambassador of the Netherlands in Italy), Luigi Nicolais (President CNR – National Research Council) and Danielle Arets (journalist and Associate Lector Strategic Creativity - DAE). The publication is available for orders (ISBN: 978-88-906988-9-7)



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