

Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design

September 28, 2024 – January 5, 2025



Image Top to Bottom:

DOSU Architecture Studio, *Bloom*, 2011. Installation view of an architectural application of thermal bimetal, a sheet metal that curls when heated. Image courtesy of artist/ Materials & Applications.

Rael San Fratello, *Hearth*, 2019. 3D Printed "Hearth" with cedar embedded for structural stability of adobe walls. Image courtesy of artist.

LOS ANGELES- *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design* begins with a reframing of materials as processes. Materials are typically described as raw resources, fixed products, or inert objects to be sourced from a shelf in the store—a function of commodity more than of making. Yet, such understandings of materials belie the complex logistical, economic, ecological, and technological actions that transform matter into the material substrate for our lives. Instead, *Material Acts* considers materials as participants in and outputs of cultural practices and techniques. Prior to their arrival at a building site, materials are selected, treated, and redefined by processes conducted by human hands and machines (the latter of which can be understood as an extension of the human hand) across various locations. Consider the simplest dimensional lumber found at the hardware store: it's been harvested, milled and sawn, pressure-treated, decontaminated, and transported. Concrete, similarly, can be understood as a series of logistical operations and energy flows—the result of a vast geography of extractive activities, uneven labor practices, complex managerial coordination, and carbon dioxide emissions. Even after a building is complete, the materials found within it embody the potential for alteration, continuing an unending cycle of change. This perspective of materials as an ongoing process—rather than a raw resource or finished product—recenters human actors and systems in the event of the transformation of material, reminding us that materials are not inert objects, but active.

The exhibition *Material Acts* presents over twenty contemporary designers, architects and artists who approach materials as research, processes, and systems. In *Material Acts*, five gerunds operate as lenses onto agents and actions in material production: Animating, Disassembling, Feeding, Re-fusing, and Stitching. From SCOBY skins to jammed gravel, bioregional materials to 3D printed adobe, designers are making not only new materials but building new systems in response to climate precarity. A community-sourced library gathers material samples by contemporary design and adjacent practices, including experiments in chemical reactions, design with living organisms, environment-reactive metals, biocalcified foam, woven earth fibers, and other mobilizations of matters and the material accidents that happen along the way.

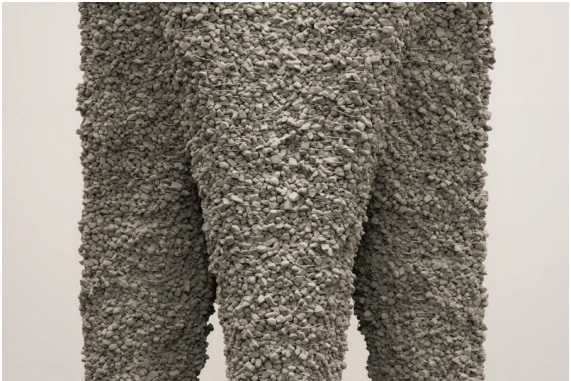


Image Top to Bottom:

Maru Garcia, *Shelter*, 2021. Process documentation of artist working with SCOBY (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast). Image courtesy of the artist. Photography by Jack Bool.

Gramazio Kohler Research and Self-Assembly Lab, *Rock Print*, 2015. Installation view of Rock Print, built from low-grade granular material and constructed by robotic machines. Image courtesy of artist/Chicago Architecture Biennale.

The exhibition's process-based approach to materials centers human actors and systems in the event of the transformation of material, reminding us that materials are not "natural." The perspectives presented in *Material Acts* lean away from the framing of "nature" as a romantic origin or authority and instead explore how a multitude of natures, alongside cultural values, enter into material processes and practices, showcasing how contemporary design and architecture practices mobilize, confound, and generate natures through the making of material. Rather than approach material technologies and experimentation through a narrative of "newness," this curatorial framework asks how materials undergo change, through what operations, and to enable what actions. What does it mean to fire a building? To feed an algae? To print biopolymers? To source locally? And to recirculate waste? Installations, material samples, prototypes, and documentations illustrate the breadth of research and representations required in material experimentation.

Curated by: Kate Yeh Chiu and Jia Yi Gu

Generous support of *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design* is provided by The Getty Foundation.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Adobe is Not Software, After Architecture, Anupama Kundoo, Assemble, Assia Crawford, Atelier LUMA, BC Architects, Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, DOSU Studio Architecture, Dylan Wood, Gramazio Kohler Research, HANNAH, Joar Nango, Lola Ben-Alon, Maru Garcia, Omar Kahn, Post Rock, Rael San Fratello, Sara Inga Utsi Bongo, SOFTLAB, Soft Matters, Sutherlin Santo, Yogi Aman Tracy Design

ABOUT GETTY PACIFIC STANDARD TIME

Southern California's landmark arts event, Pacific Standard Time, returns in September 2024 with PST ART: Art & Science Collide, featuring over 70 exhibitions exploring the intersections of art and science. This edition follows Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (2017–2018) and Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980 (2011–2012). Among the highlights is *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design*. PST ART is presented by Getty. For more details, visit pst.art.



Image Top to Bottom:

SOFTLAB, *Dreadlock Series*, 2024. Model knit with a flatbed knitting machine, sewn into a tube, and stretched into place. Image courtesy of artist. SOFTLAB is led by Felecia Davis. *Deadlock Series* project team includes Felecia Davis, Ian Danner, knitter of this tube and Aysan Jafarzadeh, and Hiranshi Patel.

Sutherlin Santo, *Biocraft*, 2020. Plant-based biomaterial samples made from 3D printed biopolymer gels. Image courtesy of the artist.

OPENING RECEPTION

Be first to experience *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design*. Evening celebrations include an open cash bar, DJ performance, and exclusive preview of exhibition. Event is on Saturday, September 28, 2024 from 6 – 9 pm.

Opening Reception:

Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design

6 – 9 pm

Free

PROGRAMS

Material Acts: A Symposium

Friday, November 22 — Saturday, November 23

Location: Craft Contemporary & USC

Material Acts: A Symposium brings together artists, designers, and architects experimenting with material processes and systems. Against the backdrop of accelerating environmental degradation, material practitioners are challenging traditional modes of building by exploring the ideas of bioregional design, waste economies, and living systems, alongside perspectives of care, constraint, and regeneration.

Organized in partnership with Craft Contemporary, University of Southern California School of Architecture and Harvey Mudd College.

Material Acts: Curator Walkthrough

Sunday, October 6 | 11:30 am

Curators Kate Yeh Chiu and Jia Yi Gu lead a tour of the exhibition *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design*, with a focus on new techniques in material production, including disassembling, stitching and re-fusing.

Material Acts: Curator Walkthrough

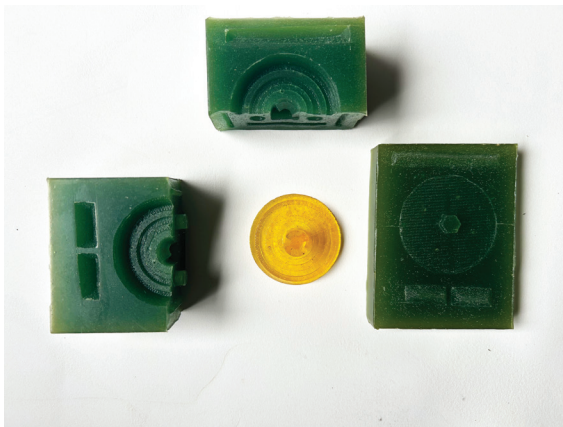
Sunday, November 3 | 11:30 am

Curators Kate Yeh Chiu and Jia Yi Gu lead a tour of the exhibition *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design*, with a focus on designers working through living systems and notions of 'liveness' in new materials.

Robotic Craft: Printing Biomaterial Textiles

Sunday, November 24 | 2 – 5 pm | \$100/\$90 members

Art, technology, and biomaterial exploration converge in this multi-disciplinary workshop with Sutherlin Santo. Alternating between demonstration and hands-on experimentation, this program will walk participants through the process of creating their own plant-based biopolymer material gels and printing them into textile sheets using a robotic arm.



Images:

Omar Khan, *Open Columns*, 2007. Elastomer arms, connector prototypes, and mold for component parts used in the assembly of *Open Columns*, designed to sense carbon dioxide in the air. Image courtesy of artist.

Gallery Demonstration and Cellulose Harvesting with Maru García Saturday, December 14 | 12 – 1:30 pm | free

Artist and alchemist Maru García leads a presentation about her site-specific installation composed of living cultures of SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast). García will also demonstrate how the living cultures are sustained, grown, and how the bacterial cellulose is harvested.

MATERIALS LIBRARY

The Materials Library is a hands-on learning space within *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design* at Craft Contemporary in Los Angeles. Material samples, diagrams, and documents in this room serve as introductions to the exhibition's focus on materials as processes. A community-sourced collection of material samples, as well as documents that trace global supply chain and illustrate materials regulation, pose the question: where do our materials come from and how are they governed by building codes?

Throughout the room, a library of materials welcomes hands-on encounters with objects including experiments in chemical reactions, design with living organisms, environment-reactive metals, biocalcified foam, woven earth fibers, and other mobilizations of matters and the material accidents that happen along the way. Displayed on shelves, tables, and other interpretive surfaces, the samples present outcomes of diverse sites of crafting and fabrication, from the backyard, to the kitchen sink, to the lab hood booth.

EXHIBITIONS CATALOG

The publication *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design* accompanies and shares a name with the exhibition, offering a companion space that delves deeply into and expands the research shown in Craft Contemporary's galleries. The publication is organized around the same five thematic material acts of the exhibition: Animating, Disassembling, Feeding, Re-fusing, and Stitching. Content formats include commissioned essays, photography, how-to-guides, and conversations featuring exhibition participants and expert scholars, providing readers with perspectives, insights, and provocations that broaden the exhibition's scope.

A limited number of special-edition catalog publications will include an exclusive box of material samples. This unique addition allows readers to physically experience some of the experimental materials featured in the exhibition, offering a tangible connection to the work and deepening their understanding of contemporary material practices.



ART &
SCIENCE
COLLIDE

Craft Contemporary

5814 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 6, 2024

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Craft Contemporary is an art museum whose purpose is to reveal the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. Craft Contemporary achieves its mission by exhibiting the artists of our time who favor craft materials and processes. Giving voice to local artists, emerging artists and often under-recognized mid-career artists is a museum priority that works to ensure the recognition of various voices not always heard in larger institutions. The museum strives to achieve equitable access through free and low-cost programs, and the inclusion of multiple teaching artists from communities throughout Los Angeles who offer unique art-making workshops, K-12 school programs, senior adult workshops, and art talks. For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members;
FREE admission every Sunday

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm

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