

Vlasta Kubušová + Verena Michels

CRAFTING PLASTICS!



WE DO NOT CARE FOR COFFEE WITHOUT CAFFEINE.
WE DO NOT LOVE ALCOHOL-FREE BEERS.
BUT WE DO ENJOY OUR PLASTICS WITHOUT OIL.

∞

Crafting Plastics

In dialogue with:

Prof. Ing. Pavol Alexy, Phd., (STU Bratislava),
Dr. Diana Tartakowska, (TU Berlin), Alex Horisberger
(BASF, Senior Specialist Industrial Designer),
Christian Nobis (PAUL LUTZ Manufaktur Berlin),
Julius Iversen (ic berlin!, Product Development /
Designer.)

Special thanks to Prof. Wowo Kraus, Kam Dhillon,
Agnes Eilers, Astrid De Swart, Miroslav Král,
Filip Ruisl, Dana Tomečková, Alexander Kraemer,
Vlasta Kubušová (2. Generation).



Fashion is the world's second most polluting industry, second only to oil. »Danish Fashion Institute (2013)«





Photo shoot in Amsterdam Photo © Elina Abdrakhmanova, Models: Jessica Irabor, Paulina Blahova

What is Crafting Plastics! and what is your design philosophy?

Crafting Plastics! is a project spanning fashion, product design, science, industry and participation. This concept was initiated by a generation which graduated following the financial crisis and has been confronted with climate change early on. We push forward the idea that in design and everyday life synthetical plastics can be replaced with bioplastics from re-growing resources and not using oil. In order to bring the widely undiscovered material to our day-to-day lives, we make (rain) coats and (sun) glasses from it. We create a tension between conventional production methods and personalised elements of craft. We give workshops to open up elements of our methodology and share do-it-yourself strategies. We create a network of like-minded individuals, companies and scientists. We believe in cooperation rather than in exclusive, non-transparent modes of production.

Crafting Plastics! stands for unlikely combinations which trigger both surprise and innovation: plastic + natural fibres which are both 100% organic; the combination of technology and social workshops; an open source mentality and an industrial-led approach (for instance, raincoats made by an ultrasonic machine; the possibility of glasses in collaboration with a trendy manufacture in Berlin).

What's it like working together as practitioners from two different fields in design — product and fashion?

We are connected by a common interest to link different fields in order to create something larger and more unexpected than a singular product. We share an urge to make projects which are relevant for more people. During this year, an important lesson has been that communication is everything: surprisingly, there are huge differences between the different fields, in both education and practice. This is definitely inspirational, despite oftentimes being challenging.

As a fashion designer, you create a point of view. Fashion reflects a Zeitgeist and is a medium for an idea, an innovation. Fashion can inform, warn, inspire, seduce. Sometimes fashion is luxurious, exclusive, an illusion. For this project we combine these narrative potentials with product design values: functionality, rationality, usability and a clear link to industry standards. Moreover, we let the material speak with all its qualities and shortcomings, letting it guide our choices in shaping and cutting garments and products that are made to be worn and torn by people. Instead of shining during fashion shows, the items shall penetrate reality and carry themselves as conversation pieces: "what is this coat / what are these glasses made of? can i touch this? will it decompose on me? can i bury it underground?"

How does your practice provide short term solutions to current problems as well as long term utopian ones?

Short term: We work with qualities that exist right now, and the material is not fully developed at all. It is at this point mainly used for packaging. Therefore, we often reinforce a lack of quality through design. In workshops we communicate the problem of conventional plastics, the current state of the research in bioplastics; we encourage the participants to engage with the material and ask users for feedback.

Long term: Our goal is to bring useful and / or narrative products on the market which infiltrate different segments from exclusive to mass market. We aim to inspire producers to channel their research in this new direction. We want to stimulate the industry to invest in this development, help each other, push research forward with an open source mentality instead of patent wars!

How do you connect information, controversy and aesthetic pleasure?

We invest in ongoing research rather than making, for the sake of it. We create a dialogue with producers and scientists. We mix knowledge with play and create our personal design methodology. Challenges like the characteristic fragility of the material turn into unexpectedly beautiful surprises. Through transformation we create unexpected surfaces and

textures. A shortcoming in natural pigment research by the industry led us to use food pigments for the glasses which turned out to look playful, catchy and organic. We are developing a new signature visuality for bioplastics: instead of green and brown eco-looks, we attract with black, white, transparent, yellow and blue, bubbly or hairy surfaces and graphic shapes.

What's the future of materiality?

- A mix of craft, tech and humour. Tech not as a utopia, but as a means for technosocial innovation and change.
- Nothing looks anymore like what you have learned.
- Materiality will be less excessive.
- Durability no longer equals quality-what advantages can a temporary material bring?



Interview questions by Kam Dhillon (Not Just A Label) with answers by Crafting Plastics! in October 2015

- Betreuer** Prof. Marloes ten Bhomer, Prof. Axel Kufus,
KM Lars Paschke, KM Hanna Wiesener
- Material** Ecovio bio plastic foil for rain coats supplied by BASF,
Bio plastic granulate supplied by STU Bratislava
- Kontakt** info@craftingplastics.com, www.craftingplastics.com