

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *LIFE CYCLES: THE MATERIALS OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN*, AN EXHIBITION EXPLORING DESIGNERS' INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF MATERIALS

New York, NY, June 22, 2023— The Museum of Modern Art announces *Life Cycles: The Materials of Contemporary Design*, an exhibition that examines how design can be elegant and innovative while also responsible and respectful of other ecosystems. On view in the Museum's street-level gallery from September 2, 2023, through July 7, 2024, this exhibition of approximately 80 contemporary design works from MoMA's collection looks at how some 40 designers are considering the full life-cycles of materials—from extraction all the way to recycling, upcycling, or disposal. The exhibition investigates the fundamental role design can play in translating current environmental considerations into sophisticated and informed responses. *Life Cycles: The Materials of Contemporary Design* is organized by Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator, and Maya Ellerkmann, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design.

The exhibition showcases the unconventional ways in which designers have rethought and deployed materials to embrace restorative attitudes and facilitate the preservation and protection of the environment. The featured works highlight new approaches and include examples of ingenious reuse, upcycling, and use of waste as a new material, such as Nendo's *Cabbage Chair* (2007). Other methods, including co-creation with other species, are seen in works such as Tomáš Gabzdil Libertíny's *Honeycomb Vase* (2006), which is made in collaboration with hundreds of bees. Mae-ling Lokko's commission of a wall panel made of hemp, kenaf fibers and fungal mycelium is an example of an approach that utilizes manufacturing practices with naturally available forms of energy or materials. These and many more works on view exemplify this next era of progress in sustainable design.

"The environmental crisis is front and center in everybody's mind," says Antonelli. "Design has an integral responsibility, and any act of good design should involve awareness, empathy, respect, and consideration toward all objects, organisms, and ecosystems—as well as future generations. Design can be an agent of positive change and play a crucial part in restoring the fragile ties between humans and the rest of nature. The materials with which objects are made, and our cultural attitudes toward them—as designers and as citizens—lead this evolutionary process."

The relationship between designers and materials is continuously changing and evolving, from the intimacy of crafts to the efficient remove of injection molding and the experimental exuberance of 3D printing. In the 1990s, for instance, designers began customizing new materials, such as resins and composites, without the need to rely on chemical engineers or companies, expanding the boundaries of their creativity and control. However, while these new materials could be fine-tuned and behaved in ways never before

seen, little attention was paid to their long-term behavior and impact. Almost three decades later, *Life Cycles* provides insight into the changed role of materials and designers' shifted priorities.

SPONSORSHIP:



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PRESS CONTACTS:

Jack Spielsinger, jack_spielsinger@moma.org
Olivia Oramas, olivia_oramas@moma.org
Press Office, pressooffice@moma.org

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