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What is Environmental Consciousness? A Thematic Cluster



An Ecosystem of Excess

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An Ecosystem of Excess

by Pinar Yoldaş



About the Author

Pinar Yoldaş is an intradisciplinary designer/artist/researcher. Her work develops within biological sciences and digital technologies through architectural installations, kinetic sculpture, sound, video and drawing with a focus on post-humanism, eco-nihilism, Anthropocene and feminist technoscience. Pinar is a 2015 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow in the Fine Arts and a 2016 FEAT Future Emerging Arts and Technologies Award recipient. Selected exhibitions: “The Warm, the Cool and the Cat” (Roda Sten Konsthall, 2016), “An Ecosystem of Excess”, (Schering Stiftung 2014); NAMOC National Art Museum of Beijing (2014); Transmediale Festival (2014), ExoEvolution (ZKM, 2015), 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015).

An Ecosystem of Excess

Pınar Yoldaş

An Ecosystem of Excess (2014) starts in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Covering between seven hundred thousand and fifteen million square kilometers, the site is a monument to plastic waste on a global scale. Referring to Kantian aesthetics, it is a truly “sublime” kinetic sculpture built by all the nations around the Pacific Ocean through many years of mindless, unsustainable consumption. As environmental activist and discoverer of the “Trash Vortex,” Captain Charles Moore claims, “the ocean has turned into a plastic soup” (quoted in Barry 2009). From primordial soup to plastic soup, the project asks: “If life started today in our plastic debris filled oceans, what kinds of life forms would emerge out of this contemporary primordial ooze?”

The project introduces pelagic insects, marine reptilia, fish and birds endowed with organs to sense and metabolize plastics as a new Linnean order of post-human life forms. Inspired by the groundbreaking findings of new bacteria that burrow into pelagic plastics, project envisions various life forms of greater complexity, life forms that can thrive in man-made extreme environments, life forms that can turn the toxic surplus of our capitalistic desire into eggs, vibrations, and joy. Starting from excessive anthropocentrism *An Ecosystem of Excess* (2014) reaches anthropo-de-centrism, by offering life without mankind (see Fig. 1–4).



Figure 1–3. Yoldaş, Pinar. *An Ecosystem of Excess*, 2014. Detail of E-plastoceptor, P-plastoceptor and installation. Sascha Krischock photos.



Figure 4. Yoldaş, Pınar. *An Ecosystem of Excess*, 2014. Detail of P-plasticeptor. Sascha Krischock photos.

Microplastics and Plastisphere Insects

Pelagic insects require hard substrates upon which to lay eggs, and their reproduction is limited by the availability of floating materials. Microplastics—i.e., the main ingredients of the plastic ocean—are the perfect sites for the oviposition of aquatic insects. According to a 2012 scientific study, there is a positive correlation between increased levels of microplastics in the neuston layer and the reproductive success of pelagic insects. As a consequence, the plastisphere opens a new chapter in the wondrous world of aquatic insects. With their state-of-the-art microplastics nests, their most delicate and nutritious eggs, and their wildly colored bodies, plastisphere insects are key players in the Ecosystem of Excess.

P-Plastoceptor

Plastosensory Organ

P-plastoceptors are aptly named after their physical appearance that resembles the letter P, as well as their superb performance in sensing the polypropylene family. The plastosensory organ works like a spectrograph rendering it a great example of quantum biology in action.

E-Plastoceptor

Plastosensory Organ

Plastoception is the sense by which an organism perceives plastics in the environment. The neural processes of encoding and processing plastics are carried out by an array of plastosensory structures. E-plastoceptors are the most common, possibly due to the abundance of anthropogenic polyethylene in the plastisphere.

References

Barry, Carolyn. 2009. "Plastic Breaks Down in Ocean, After All—And Fast." *National Geographic*, August 20, 2009. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/8/plastic-breaks-down-in-ocean-after-all-and-fast/>.