Material Kin:

A Maker's Guide

Nahum McLean

Master of Design

University of Technology Sydney

Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

2018

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Nahum McLean declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Design, in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Production Note:
Signature: Signature removed prior to publication.

Date: 18/02/2019

Acknowledgements

The Indigenous peoples of this land are the traditional custodians of knowledge of the land on which we live, make and work, and it is their knowledge and respect for Country which I draw upon for this project. Whilst I merely allude to these ideas, caring for Country and forming kinship relations have long been expressed by the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and their elders past and present.

I would like to thank Alexandra Crosby for her time, patience and multifaceted help in guiding me through this project. I would also like to thank Tim Gregory for his encouragement and sustained engagement with my practice. Thank you to Jacquie Lorber-Kasunic and Todd Robinson who provided meaningful feedback and finally, to Rebecca McLean-Chan for her editing and support throughout.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Using readily available ingredients and processes and a practice-based approach, *Material Kin* seeks to answer the question: how can sustainable materials be developed in preparation for a range of possible futures?

I started this project by researching a wide range of sources while experimenting by mixing different types of ingredients. These investigations in the studio led to unexpected discoveries forming relations and connections between the ingredients, processes and myself as a designer. Drawing on Donna Haraway's use of the term 'kinship', I have called the results 'material kin', which are linked by relationships rather than genealogy or hierarchy. Tony Fry's theory of sustainment and a quality economy have also informed this project by offering a post-natural position on sustainability. An outworking of post-natural sustainability is that hybridity is encouraged through the substitution of various ingredients and processes.

As I became more involved with the process of creating new materials for possible futures, my emphasis shifted from generating new materials and exploring their uses, to developing a process of making materials through kinship. The method of creating Material Kin is carefully articulated through the rubric of a game, whereas the specific Material Kin remain speculative, ambiguous and contingent of possible futures. In addition to articulating the process of creating the materials, I wanted to be able to share this knowledge easily with other DIY material makers both now and in the future, finding an aesthetic and design approach that were appropriate for DIY maker communities. *Material Kin: the guidebook and game* is the designed research artefact for this project.