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New reality calls for new materials

My first experiments with new materials were done from the high chair. Waving my spoon, I splashed splendid patterns of mashed vegetables on the tablecloth. This was followed by experiences in the sandpit with castles and tunnels, and later by perilous adventures with flaming sticks. I built whole cities of Lego, and bolted together structures of Meccano which towered above my head.



At twelve years old, I fell under the spell of the pale pink lips of my first sweetheart. It was a fascination that has never left me. The unknown lures the creative spirit. You have to explore it, discover it and master it.

In order to put my interest in all that is new to good use, I decided a few years ago to set up an archive of materials. It consists of samples with a standard size of 85 by 135 mm, and is divided into several categories. The archive chiefly consists of sustainable materials such as recyclates, renewable raw materials and reusable wastes.

From these archives, there emerged a ruler made of Venetian blind slats and a fruit dish made of gramophone records. Unlike most products, these were designed *starting with* the materials.

Designers pay little or no attention to sustainability when choosing their materials. What is more, society is overflowing with useless knickknacks and design products that are no more than a cosmetic rehash of something that already existed.

Recycling and reuse are good steps on the road to a sustainable society. But it is clear to me that they alone are not enough. We need a new mind set, one in which possession is frowned on and experience is encouraged.

Under this new mind set, the products with which we surround ourselves will for hire. We will pay to have access to experiences that make our hearts race. Rational control of the self will be a thing of the past and we will gradually evolve into truly emotional beings.

This new mentality demands new materials. Emotional man and woman need food, drink, oxygen, sex and music. Designers must set to work with foodstuffs, fire, text and musical notes - with sensual and natural materials that are a



regular part of human experience. It is up to manufacturers to develop these new materials. It is up to designers to transform them into things that have meaning, like ink flowing on the paper of a love letter.

Footnote

Patrick Kruihof is an industrial designer currently occupied with research, concept development, education and writing.

