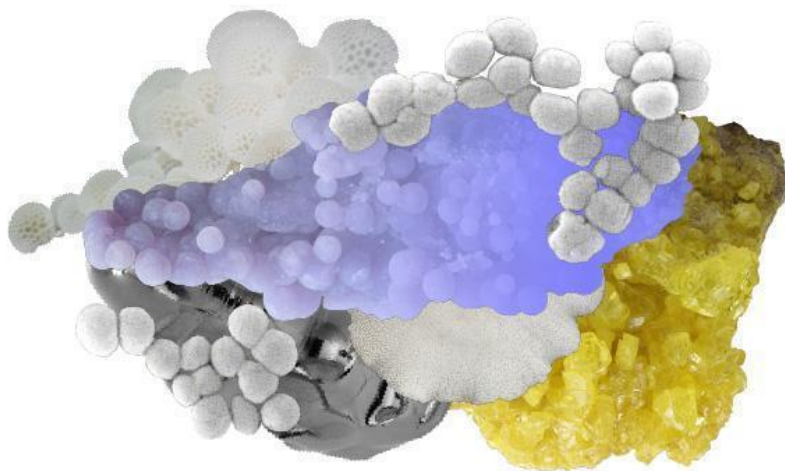


From 21 February 2025. Disseny Hub Barcelona

‘Matter Matters’ exposes the decline of extractivism and imagines new ways of designing with the world

- The exhibition explores the relationship between design and materials, shaped by the legacies of colonialism, extractivism and mass consumption. In the context of climate emergency, it envisions a transition to a regenerative model that promotes design practices committed to planetary restoration.
- The new long-term exhibition at Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHub), which opens on 21 February, offers a fresh and contemporary perspective on the Museu del Disseny-DHub collection, focusing on the materials used in its pieces.
- *Matter Matters. Designing with the World*, curated by Olga Subirós, highlights the historical collections and puts them in dialogue with contemporary design, encouraging reflection on the past, present and future.
- The exhibition brings together more than 700 works by over 200 creators, including designers, architects, artists, craftspeople, researchers and social activists. Around forty new projects have been added to the collection, representing a significant update in terms of 21st-century pieces.
- The exhibition is complemented by *Shared Matter*, a year-long programme of activities, and a publication with contributions from around fifty leading figures in design and contemporary thought, further enriching the ideas of the exhibition.



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On 21 February, *Matter Matters. Designing with the World* will open at Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHub). This long-term exhibition, curated by the architect **Olga Subirós**, offers a **profound reflection on the past, present and future of materials** at a time when the extractivist and colonialist dynamics that have shaped the last 500 years of human history are showing clear signs of strain due to the increasing scarcity of raw materials. This reflection unfolds through a dialogue between **pieces from the Museu del Disseny's historical collections and works from the 21st century**.

The exhibition **questions the extractivist model that has pursued limitless growth**, leading to the climate emergency and geopolitical conflicts over the control of raw materials, among other systemic crises. As well as offering a critical perspective on the past and present, the exhibition also **takes an optimistic view of the future, with a shift towards a regenerative model** that not only minimises damage, but actively contributes to the restoration of the planet. To this end, it presents a wide range of alternative approaches that propose new ways of designing with the world, taking into account their impact on both humans and non-humans.

Matter Matters. Designing with the World **positions design as a key actor** in this process. It examines the **role of design in perpetuating extractivism** and, by extension, the climate emergency. At the same time, it presents design as an **essential part of the solution**, demonstrating sustainable practices that rely on new materials and alternative processes.

The title of the exhibition, *Matter Matters. Designing with the World*, is inspired by the phrase 'matter matters', coined by philosopher and physicist **Karen Barad**, which invites us to **understand matter as a dynamic and relational reality. Matter matters, counts and carries meaning** because it is through its interactions that the world's boundaries (form and function in space), properties (physical, chemical, etc) and meanings (cultural and symbolic interpretations) are defined. The exhibition explores how design can embrace this perspective, not only shaping objects but actively engaging with the material and social networks that surround us. 'Designing with the world' means listening to what material is telling us, rethinking our relationships with it, and creating space for new ways of being and doing.

As well as inviting reflection, the exhibition **brings to light and to life a new narrative of design for the 21st century – one that can only be regenerative**. At this crossroads, the exhibition highlights the urgent need to abandon outdated models, both in professional practice and in individual and collective decision-making.

Celebrating the Museu del Disseny-DHub collection

With a strong **interdisciplinary focus**, the exhibition offers a **fresh and contemporary perspective on the Museu del Disseny-DHub collection through the lens of materials**. The pieces are arranged in juxtaposition, challenging conventional exhibition formats and often creating a sense of surprise or cognitive friction. These initial tensions are

not intended to provide a single interpretation, but rather to encourage exploration and discussions.

The exhibition is the result of almost **two years of work** by the curator in close collaboration with the teams at the Museu del Disseny-DHub. **Around eighty national and international contributors** were involved in this process. **As a result, some forty new pieces have been added to the collection**, representing a significant increase in terms of 21st century works. This expansion enriches the Museum's holdings and reflects its ongoing commitment to broadening and updating its collection.

Matter Matters. Designing with the World is the first exhibition to align with the Museu del Disseny's **new strategy**, which aims to **present its collection in a way that is more cross-cutting, inclusive, integrative, accessible and relevant to the public**. In doing so, the Museum seeks to move beyond disciplinary distinctions and chronological narratives to offer perspectives and stories that transcend a linear display of its collections. Like most museums in the 21st century, it aspires to be an **active agent, bringing its collections into dialogue with contemporary thought** and fostering a more conscientious society. This vision is aligned with the **Museum's firm commitment to preservation, dissemination and public engagement in relation to its collection, while continuing to acquire new works** to ensure its growth.

The exhibition is part of the **Barcelona World Capital of Architecture 2026**, an initiative that positions the city as a global leader in the dialogue between architecture, design and society. For the first time, the presentation of the collection includes architectural pieces, broadening the narratives about heritage and its ability to engage the public.

This project has been made possible thanks to a networked collaboration with institutions such as MATERFAD (Barcelona's Materials Centre), the support of other museums in Barcelona (Museum of Natural Sciences, Maritime Museum and Museum of Ethnology) and contributions from companies such as Tvitec-Cricursa and Andreu World, as well as the Ernesto Ventós Foundation, all of which have played a key role in bringing it to life.

700 pieces by over 200 national and international creators

The exhibition covers an area of **1,000 square metres** and presents around **700 objects by more than 200 national and international creators**. The project has invited more than eighty participants, including designers, architects, artists and researchers: 2Monos, 300.000 km/s, Samira Allaouat Benini, Frederic Amat, Prada Poole Archive, Antoni Arola, Arrels Foundation, Banzai Turba, Basurama, Nerea Calvillo, Leandro Cano, Matilde Cassani, Izaskun Chinchilla, Curro Claret, Cooperativa La Col, Kate Crawford, Domestic Data Streamers, ecoLogicStudio, Eliurpi, El Último Grito, Julia Esqué, Estampa, Teresa Estapé, Flores & Prats Arquitectes, Laura Freixas, Ignacio Galán, Alex Gifreu, Sara González de Ubieta, Grandeza Studio, Martí Guixé, Herobeat Studios, Cristian Herrera Dalmau, Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia

(IAAC), Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation, Vladan Joler, Youngmin Kang, Klarenbeek & Dros, Zsofia Kollar, Rem Koolhaas – Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Locument, Mary Maggic, Makeat, MATERFAD (Barcelona's Materials Centre), Ana Mir, Txell Miras, Gerard Moliné, Joana Moll, Marc Morro, Iván Munera, Lucas Muñoz, Cris Noguer, Nomada Studio, Carles Oliver, Anastasia Pistofidou, Miriam Ponsa, Josep Ponsatí, Philippe Rahm, RCR Arquitectes (R. Aranda, C. Pigem, R. Vilalta), Recetas Urbanas, Andrés Reisinger, Enric Ruiz-Geli/Cloud9, Guillermo Santomá, Inés Sistiaga, SILA Studio, Squeeze The Orange, Fanni Stafford, Daniel Steegman, Studio Lemercier, Studio Jaia, Suma arquitectura, TAKK (mireia luzárraga + alejandro muiño), The Glass Apprentice, Top Manta, Tornen les Esquelles, Ramón Úbeda, Un Parell d'Arquitectes, Patricia Urquiola, Joan Vellvé and Sanne Visser.

Key installations include *Calculating Empires* by Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, a research project revealing the deep interconnections between technology, extractivism and colonialism; *Slow Violence* by Studio Lemercier, documenting resistance to extractivist devastation at the Hambach mine in Germany; *Strata Incognita*, an audiovisual work by Grandeza Studio + Locument that poetically reveals the living complexity of soil ecosystems; *Still Life*, an exhibition of 200 ceramic pieces from the 13th to the 20th centuries that challenges the Cartesian division between nature and culture; and *Red Smoke* by El Último Grito, which reminds us of the fragility of our environmental balance.

Our relationship with materials ranges from exploitation to regeneration. The exhibition thus creates a **political ecology of objects in which materials are not only displayed but also activated as a discursive agent**. Through more than **sixty-five micro-narratives**, it establishes a dialogue between historical material production, design and contemporary architecture, and proposes new ways of exploring the tensions between local agency and globalising forces.

These narratives unfold across **eight themed sections, addressing matter in its many forms: petrochemical, plant, animal, microbiological, mineral, digital, intangible and emotional**. The pieces are arranged in juxtaposition, challenging conventional exhibition formats and often creating a sense of surprise or cognitive friction. These initial tensions are not intended to provide a single interpretation, but rather to **encourage exploration and discussions**. Each micro-narrative acts as a crack in dominant narratives of matter, problematising their conceptual frameworks and allowing us to imagine a transition from extractivism to composting: from exploitation to cycles, from plunder to regeneration, from dominance to shared responsibility.

The exhibition takes visitors to a new viewing room overlooking Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes. A large panoramic window acts as a **showcase for the last two pieces**: human-made hyper-objects that do not fit into the collection. The first is **the city**, a giant artefact that is both part of the problem and part of the solution to systemic crises; the second is **the climate emergency**. This unique space will be open to the public as a venue for the exhibition's educational and public programme of events, *Shared Matter*.

Sustainability and accessibility

The exhibition follows a **sustainable design** approach in line with its curatorial discourse. It prioritises durable, reusable and recyclable materials and features a modular display system that is both highly versatile and reusable. In addition, the publication produced for the exhibition was printed and bound in Barcelona on FSC Recycled certified paper.

The exhibition also includes an **accessible route with six tactile stations**, designed to improve access for visitors with disabilities, while enriching the experience for the general public by allowing for direct interaction with the pieces on display. To further improve accessibility, **an audio guide has been created** to enrich the experience and make it easier to understand.

Public programme and publication

To complement the exhibition, DHub has developed a **public programme** called *Shared Matter*, which will run for as many years as the exhibition is open. For the first time, it involves all the organisations based in the centre: Foment de les Arts i del Disseny (FAD), Associació per a l'Estudi del Moble and Barcelona Creativity & Design Foundation. In its first year, the programme will **focus on making the exhibition more accessible to all audiences**. These parallel activities will begin with the presentation of the exhibition publication on 4 March, followed by the ***Designing with the World* symposium** on 5 and 6 March. Other activities include a space for consulting documents from the Design Library and Archive, open on Sunday mornings; a programme of activities for schools and families; lectures, talks and workshops; and community events. In addition, a public call for papers inspired by *Matter Matters* has been announced for the academic journal *Inmaterial*, in a special issue edited by Olga Subirós.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **publication** featuring more than 50 articles by **authors** from a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, design, architecture, sociology, geology, anthropology and chemistry. Contributors include 300.000 km/s, Andreu Balias, Karen Barad, Ethel Baraona and Anna Puigjaner, Laura Benítez Valero, Jane Bennett, Francesca Bria and Malcolm Bain, Benjamin Bratton, Blanca Callén, Nerea Calvillo, Isabel Campi, Josep Capsir, Rossend Casanova, Maria Antonia Casanovas, María Íñigo Clavo, Antonio Cobo, Pilar Cortada, Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, José Luis de Vicente, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, Elvira Dyangani Ose and Raúl Muñoz de la Vega, Estampa, Pol Esteve, Isabel Fernández del Moral, Uriel Fogué, Blanca Garcia Gardelegui, Eva Franch i Gilibert, Raul Goñi, Clara Guasch, David Howe, Daniel Ibáñez, Tim Ingold, Institute for Postnatural Studies, Andrés Jaque / Office of Political Innovation, Zsofia Kollar, Joan Miquel Llodrà Nogueras, Marta Malé-Aleman and Tony Schoen, Valérie Bergeron, Timothy Morton, William Myers, Cris Noguer, Carles Oliver, Marina Otero, Javier Peña, Mónica Piera, Blanca Pujals, Philippe Rahm, Bika Rebek and Marlies Wirth, Iván Rodríguez, Olga Subirós, Robert Thompson, Laura Tripaldi, Ramón Úbeda and Alicia Valer.

The book explores and connects lines of thought that converge on a pressing issue: **redefining society's relationship with matter at a time of historical change**. Illustrated with over 500 images, it invites readers to question the extractivist principles of the past and to imagine a regenerative, environmentally respectful future. At a time of resource scarcity and with the inescapable challenge of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, *Matter Matters. Designing with the World* is an essential work for those seeking to understand and engage in the transition to conscious and responsible design.

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