PLASTOID:

MICROPLASTICS AND THE POROUS SELF

GENDER, HEALTH, AND THE ETHICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

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Dedicated in beloved memory of
Dr. Benjamin “Buz” Graham
1945-2025

INTRODUCTION

PLASTOID emerged from inquiry into the increasing presence of microplastics in the human body. My initial question, how do people respond to these internalized environmental pollutants, led me to consider the profound ways in which the ecological crisis has become deeply personal, bodily. How might future generations view this predicament? If the crisis resides within us, would this provoke systemic change in our modes of production and consumption? As synthetic contaminants, like microplastics, are no longer confined to external ecosystems but are found within human tissues (blood, lungs, placenta, breast milk, and semen) the environmental crisis can no longer be viewed as distant or abstract. It becomes embedded within the flesh, raising urgent questions about biopolitics, medical accountability, and environmental justice (Prata et al., 2020; Campanale et al., 2020). The purpose of PLASTOID is to confront how our bodies are entangled with the Anthropocene and the ethical implications of living in an era where synthetic materials circulate not only through oceans and airways, but through bloodstreams, organs, and generational fluids.

This text situates PLASTOID within wider discourses on gendered health, plastic pollution, and biopolitics. It also aims to explain the project's speculative and aesthetic strategies for engagement. Drawing from scientific study, feminist theory, and critical design, the project exposes how the ecological crisis has migrated inward. In this context, the human body is no longer conceived of as an autonomous entity but is instead revealed to be porous, chemically entangled, and shaped by material exchanges. By reframing environmental harm as an embodied experience, the viewer is urged to consider how our systems respond to biological and ecological vulnerabilities.

PLASTOID confronts its audience with the intimate realities of the environmental crisis, revealing how microplastic pollution has become a deeply embodied, existential predicament; by reframing contamination as a shared biological condition rather than a distant ecological issue, the project demands systemic change and explores the feelings of agency through speculative design and critical aesthetics.

Bigsnooz
William Feeney
2001

ENTANGLED ECOLOGY

Understanding the history of plastic is essential to reframing its legacy, not as a material failure, but as a socio-political and ecological reckoning. It compels a critical reflection on the systems that have celebrated plastic's promises while externalising its costs, and on the urgent need for generational responsibility in addressing its long-term consequences. The omnipresence of microplastics in contemporary ecosystems is a direct consequence of the rapid proliferation of synthetic polymers since the invention in the early twentieth century. Initially praised for their lightness, durability, and infinite malleability, plastics offered unprecedented industrial and consumer possibilities (Meikle, 1995).

Microplastics, defined as plastic particles smaller than five millimetres, have now been detected across all major environmental systems: terrestrial soils, freshwater sources, marine ecosystems, and the atmosphere. The unintended legacy of this material innovation is visible at both planetary and cellular levels. Due to the widespread use of plastics and the breakdown of larger items, these particles have become a persistent component of environmental exposure pathways. Importantly, research has demonstrated that microplastics are not confined to the external environment; they are entering the human body through multiple vectors, including ingestion of contaminated food and water, inhalation of airborne plastic particles, and potentially through dermal contact (Prata et al., 2020; Wright & Kelly, 2017). PLASTOID exposes the environmental crisis as an embodied and shared condition, using speculative design to challenge personal responsibility narratives and call for systemic change in the face of intimate ecological harm.

Microplastics have been found in numerous bodily tissues and fluids, indicating their ability to translocate beyond initial points of entry. Studies have identified microplastics in human lungs, liver, kidneys, and even in placental tissue, suggesting that these particles can cross physiological barriers once thought to protect the body from environmental contaminants (Ragusa et al., 2021; Leslie et al., 2022). In 2022, researchers confirmed the presence of microplastics in human blood for the first time, indicating systemic circulation throughout the body (Leslie et al., 2022). The detection of plastic particles in breast milk and semen further implicates microplastics in reproductive and transgenerational

health concerns (Ragusa et al., 2022; Campanale et al., 2020). These findings underscore the body's permeability and its entanglement with industrial by-products, highlighting the inadequacy of any division between a human and its environment.

The transgenerational transmission of microplastics, through fluids such as breast milk, semen, and placental tissue, not only signifies a biological inheritance of pollution, but also highlights plastic contamination as a multigenerational crisis, sustained by decades of industrial practice and deferred responsibility. Over the past century, each generation has both benefitted from and contributed to this material dependency, while largely deferring responsibility for its environmental and biological aftermath. The cultural success of plastic has rested on a core paradox: a substance designed for longevity, celebrated for its resistance to degradation, yet overwhelmingly used in disposable forms. As Heather Davis (2015) argues, plastic exemplifies the temporal disjunctions of modernity, produced in seconds, used for minutes, and persisting for centuries. Its resistance to decomposition, once championed as a technological miracle, has now become the basis of its toxicity, enabling its accumulation across ecological systems and inside human bodies (Prata et al., 2020).

As we confront the persistence of microplastics in both our environment and bodies, it becomes evident that plastic is not merely an external pollutant, but something that intimately entangles with human physiology. This entanglement challenges the traditional boundaries between the self and the environment, a challenge that is at the core of the project's speculative inquiry. To explore this further, I turned to the framework of transcorporeality, which offers a lens for understanding the continuous material exchanges between the human body and the ecological systems that sustain it.

Carole
Nadia Lee Cohen
2022

TRANSCORPOREALITY

PLASTOID engages the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism and transcorporeality to interrogate how the environmental crisis, and specifically microplastic pollution, manifests within and through the human body. Transcorporeality, a concept developed by material feminist scholar Stacy Alaimo, challenges the notion of the human body as an autonomous, bounded entity, instead emphasising its continuous material exchanges with ecological systems (Alaimo, 2010). This framework foregrounds the permeability of bodily boundaries, illustrating how pollutants such as microplastics do not remain external environmental threats but enter and circulate within our biological systems. PLASTOID draws on this concept to explore how human bodies are chemically and politically entangled with synthetic materials, and to provoke critical reflection on the personal and systemic implications of this entanglement.

Through the design of satirical biomedical and pharmaceutical products, such as a breast milk filtration device *(Mother's Pearl),* semen-enhancing microplastic removers

(PlastiGuard), and at-home urine tests *(PlastiClear),* the project aims to make visible the invisible presence of environmental contamination. These artifacts are framed as consumer solutions to a pervasive ecological issue, satirising the commodification of bodily health and the privatisation of environmental responsibility. For instance, the breast milk filter imagines a future in which mothers must actively purify their bodily fluids before feeding their children, while the semen supplement frames reproductive fluids as sites requiring cleansing (or “clumping”). These speculative devices operate as critical design fictions, drawing attention to how the most intimate aspects of human biology become implicated in, and transformed by industrial production.

From a transcorporeal perspective, these proposed interventions highlight the collapse of the boundary between the self and the environment. The presence of microplastics in breast milk, semen, and urine (bodily fluids associated with care, reproduction, and excretion) reveals the body is not a sealed container but a porous exchange. As Alaimo (2016) argues, such transcorporeal flows compel a rethinking of human identity, agency, and responsibility within a polluted world. PLASTOID leverages this theoretical insight to expose the inadequacies of current political and medical responses to pollution. These often focus on individualised risk management (water filters) rather than systemic reform. By presenting contamination as something to be managed through domestic devices and personal pharmaceuticals, the project aims to critique the logic that centres individual responsibility, while masking the industrial and regulatory failures that enable this contamination in the first place.

While the body becomes a site for the infiltration of microplastics, these pollutants don’t affect all bodies equally. The gendered nature of reproductive health, especially in the context of infertility, exposes how environmental harm is disproportionately attributed to women. This is despite emerging evidence of its widespread impact on male reproductive systems as well. PLASTOID critiques not only the ecological entanglements of pollution but also the gendered frameworks through which reproductive health and environmental harm are understood and politicized.

During a Fox News town hall in Georgia on October 15, 2024, President Donald Trump referred to himself as the "father of IVF" while discussing in vitro fertilization (IVF). His campaign later clarified that the remark was made in jest.

GENDERED POLITICS OF FERTILITY

The discourse surrounding infertility remains heavily gendered, shaped by loaded assumptions that place reproductive responsibility (and by extension, reproductive failure) primarily within the female body. This bias is deeply rooted in both medical practice and cultural narratives, resulting in a conspicuous lack of representation and discussion around male infertility. Even though male factors contribute to nearly 50% of infertility cases globally (Agarwal et al., 2021), societal narratives continue to treat reproductive toxicity as a "women’s issue." This reflects not only the feminisation of reproductive health but also the broader logics of patriarchal medicine, in which female bodies are disproportionately medicalised, monitored, and morally scrutinised.

Reproductive rights in the United States have increasingly come under threat due to deeply rooted misogynistic ideologies that seek to control women's autonomy over their bodies. The recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022) by the U.S.

Supreme Court exemplifies how legal mechanisms are being weaponized to limit reproductive freedoms. This decision not only revoked a nearly 50-year constitutional protection for abortion but also signalled a broader sociopolitical shift toward patriarchal governance over female reproductive choices. Legislative rollbacks are grounded in longstanding gender hierarchies that perceive women's reproductive capacities as subject to state and male authority (Solinger, 2005; Bridges, 2017).

The disproportionate impact of abortion restrictions on low-income women and women of colour reflects an intersectional dynamic where misogyny converges with racism and classism to enforce systemic inequality (Roberts, 1997). These policies are not merely about "life" or "morality" but rather about reinforcing traditional gender roles and restricting the agency of those who can become pregnant. As legal scholar Dorothy Roberts asserts, "controlling women's reproductive decisions is a central tenet of the broader project of controlling women's lives" (Roberts, 1997, p. 8). Therefore, the erosion of reproductive rights must be understood not only as a legal and political issue but also as a manifestation of entrenched misogynistic control.

Environmental health discourses further exacerbate this imbalance. The biological impacts of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) found in plastics, such as phthalates and bisphenol A, are not uniformly distributed across sexes, but research increasingly reveals their significant effects on sperm quality, hormonal regulation, and immune function (Prata et al., 2020). Yet, environmental contamination is framed through the lens of maternal risk and foetal development, reinforcing the gendered burden of care and biological vulnerability. As Silvia Federici (2004) argues, reproductive labour under capitalism has historically been feminised and devalued, a pattern that continues in the environmental sphere where women are expected to manage and mitigate the consequences of systemic ecological degradation.

By confronting the cultural silence, denial, and shame that often surround male infertility, the project also critiques the ways in which patriarchal systems suppress collective ecological action. When male bodies are presumed to be resilient and impervious, environmental damage becomes feminised, privatised, and depoliticised. This not only limits the scope of environmental justice but also reinforces a dangerous illusion of masculine immunity. In challenging these assumptions, the project advocates for a more inclusive and intersectional framework of reproductive justice, one that recognises the ecological entanglements of all bodies, regardless of gender, and holds systemic structures accountable for their reproductive consequences.

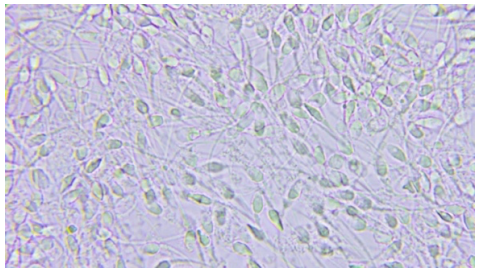
Anger Bump
Erwin Wurm
2007

The decline in sperm quality is increasingly seen as both a medical and cultural issue. As sperm count continues to decrease globally (Levine et al., 2017), it challenges traditional associations of masculinity with virility, power, and reproductive success. Sperm, long symbolized as a marker of strength and fertility, now signals fragility and environmental harm. This shift underscores a larger cultural crisis:

the connection between masculinity and environmental damage. Masculinity, as theorized by Connell (1995) in her concept of “hegemonic masculinity,” often emphasizes dominance and control. These ideals align with an extractive relationship to nature, reinforcing a worldview that has contributed to ecological destruction. In this context, environmental crises like infertility are not just health concerns but are seen as failures of masculinity itself.

Recent scholarship in toxic masculinity and eco-anxiety addresses how environmental harms affect men’s bodies and psyches. Scholars such as Paul Pulé (2018) argue that dominant forms of masculinity are deeply entangled with exploitative practices toward the environment. At the same time, research in affect theory and ecocriticism, including work by Stacy Alaimo and Mel Y. Chen, explores how pollutants like microplastics infiltrate male bodies, undermining their physical and emotional resilience. This environmental contamination forces a re-evaluation of masculinity, revealing its vulnerabilities.

By using a reframing of sperm as fragile, PLASTOID critiques the cultural narrative of male invulnerability and calls for a broader, more inclusive environmental consciousness. Rather than seeking to restore traditional masculinity, the project suggests that the decline of certain masculine ideals may offer an opportunity for transformation. In this way, the crisis of male infertility becomes a powerful metaphor for reimagining masculinity in a world shaped by environmental collapse. The invisibility of male infertility within both medical and cultural discourses underscores a broader issue: the environmental impact on reproductive health, especially for men, is too often overlooked. By focusing on sperm as an environmental biomarker, the project forces us to reckon with the ways in which male bodies, too, are implicated in ecological harm, challenging entrenched notions of masculine resilience.



One study utilized Raman Microspectroscopy to detect pigmented microplastic fragments, ranging from 2 to 6 μm in size, in semen samples collected from men in a polluted area of Southern Italy. These microplastics were composed of various polymers, including polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polystyrene (PS), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). (Ragusa, A. et al. 2023)

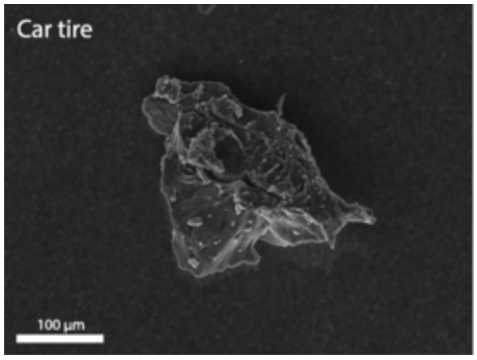
NOT ALL MEN LIKE CARS

In examining the physiological effects of microplastic exposure, sperm emerges as a potent yet overlooked site of environmental vulnerability. While infertility is evenly attributable to both male and female biological factors, reproductive health discourse and clinical practice continue to disproportionately place responsibility on women. This imbalance reveals longstanding gendered assumptions within biomedicine and popular culture, where male fertility remains under-scrutinised and culturally seen as stable and robust.

The neglect of male infertility also reflects what sociologists describe as a “categorical hole” in medicine, where the historical feminisation of reproductive health has obscured male vulnerability (Inhorn and Patrizio, 2015). Few andrologists exist relative to gynaecologists, and funding for male infertility research lags far behind. This erasure not only harms individuals but hinders collective ecological action.

Sperm is typically framed either through medical abstraction or pornographic excess, symbolising virility, abundance, and masculine prowess. These narratives reinforce a cultural silence around male infertility, despite scientific evidence suggesting that sperm count, and quality have declined dramatically over recent decades, likely due to environmental exposures such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals found in

plastics (Levine et al., 2017). Yet, engaging men in conversations about fertility remains challenging, in part because these dominant representations leave little space for vulnerability or ecological accountability. To address this gap, there must be a considered and culturally resonant access point. *Running on Empty*, an installation disguised as a car garage, uses the familiar language of car culture to reveal the link between tire-derived microplastic pollution and sperm decline. By embedding ecological vulnerability within a masculine-coded space, the work offers a strategic access point for male audiences to confront reproductive and environmental fragility.



Recent studies using advanced epithelial models have demonstrated that microplastic particles (nylon, car tire) can pass through human lung and gut barriers, raising significant concerns about their biological integration and long-term effects. (Stock et al., 2021)

The aesthetics of car culture are employed as a means of engaging male audiences, drawing upon the contentious stereotype that men have a natural affinity for cars. While this association is neither universally true nor inherently masculine, it remains embedded within broader performances of gender. The project deliberately draws viewers in through this familiar cultural trope, only to confront them with a subject that remains culturally taboo: male infertility. This calculated juxtaposition between surface familiarity and deeper discomfort operates as a critical disruption, encouraging reflection on topics that are often silenced or excluded from public discourse.

Running on Empty exposes sperm not as a symbol of vitality, but as a biomarker of environmental collapse. Despite being biologically sensitive to chemical interference, semen is not routinely analysed in environmental health studies. A gap that reflects deeper ideological biases about which bodies (and fluids) are deemed worthy of protection and surveillance. This reframing draws on Emily Martin's (1991) foundational critique of reproductive science, which exposes how gendered metaphors have long cast the egg as passive and the sperm as active, thus reinforcing patriarchal notions of male biological dominance. *Running on Empty* disrupts these metaphors by presenting sperm as fragile, vulnerable, and ecologically entangled. It considers if masculinity itself must be reconfigured through the lens of environmental precarity, rather than strength or immunity.

The use of irony serves to underscore the camp nature of excessive male investment in car culture, presenting it not as authentic but as exaggerated and performative. As Susan Sontag (1964) notes, camp employs theatricality, irony, and excess to challenge what is taken for granted as natural. In a similar vein, Guy Debord (1967) argues that dominant cultural imagery can be reappropriated to expose the ideological frameworks that shape perception. Drawing on these ideas, PLASTOID uses spectacle not to affirm masculinity, but to unravel it, repurposing a gendered stereotype as a point of entry, and ultimately, a site of critique and inquiry.

Crucially, the project leverages car culture as both a metaphorical and material framework for engaging men in ecological and reproductive health discourse. Traditionally associated with masculinity, autonomy, and power, the car becomes a powerful symbol of environmental contradiction. Cars are simultaneously sites of freedom and major contributors to microplastic pollution, particularly through tire wear, which is estimated to account for up to 30% of global microplastic emissions

(Kole et al., 2017). These particles enter human bodies through inhalation, ingestion, and skin contact, where they release hormone-disrupting chemicals that interfere with reproductive function (Prata et al., 2020).

By juxtaposing microscopic sperm with automotive adrenaline, *Running on Empty* uses irony to bridge two domains rarely associated: car culture and fertility. The performance of masculinity through machines (torque, speed, control) is contrasted with the declining motility and vitality of sperm, reframing "performance" in more vulnerable terms. This symbolic collision challenges cultural scripts that deny male biological fragility and exclude men from conversations about environmental health.

Mother's Pearl
2024

AESTHETIC STRATEGY

PLASTOID adopts a familiar visual language to guide viewers into its speculative world. Drawing on the aesthetics of medical devices, pharmaceutical packaging, and wellness culture (sterile white surfaces, transparent plastics, medical-grade silicone) the project intentionally mimics the design codes of products we already associate with trust, cleanliness, and care. This familiarity is a critical strategy. It invites viewers to engage without resistance, only to later confront the unsettling implications of these seemingly helpful interventions.

This design approach echoes how consumer culture often packages vitality through polished, desirable forms. The products in PLASTOID initially appear practical, even comforting. But on closer inspection, they expose deeper truths: the normalization of contamination and the commercialization of health anxiety. Devices like a breast milk filter or semen-cleansing supplement don't offer real solutions, they are speculative provocations. These tools critique how environmental harm is increasingly framed as a personal issue to be managed through consumption, rather than a systemic failure demanding collective action.

The project draws from the legacy of critical and abject art, where bodily materials are used to challenge cultural norms and discomforts. Artists like Andres Serrano, whose infamous *Piss Christ* (1987) placed a crucifix in a container of the artist's urine, confronted viewers with the visceral and taboo. Serrano's work sparked outrage not only because of its religious imagery but because it used a bodily fluid, something culturally coded as abject, to provoke questions about what society deems sacred, profane, or unclean. PLASTOID takes a different, subtler approach. Instead of the raw or grotesque, it smooths over bodily messiness with a sleek, marketable finish.

Inspired by Serrano's transgressive use of bodily fluids, I chose to develop synthetic stand-ins to visually and texturally mimic breastmilk, urine, blood, and semen. This exploration extended into the design of my business cards, which I distributed during the exhibition of *Running on Empty*. Each card was treated with a custom blend of acrylic mediums and pigments to simulate a wet, milky, translucent "ejaculation." Audiences responded with a mix of excitement, discomfort, and curiosity. The reaction

underscored an important cultural tension: bodily fluids like semen are often rendered invisible outside of pornographic frameworks, even though they hold untapped potential for bio-tracking. The business card (typically a sterile, professional object) was framed here as a site of a visceral encounter.

Mother's Pearl, for instance, filters microplastics from "breast milk" and refines them into compacted pearls, three for every forty ounces. The device transforms waste into something precious, turning a future bodily byproduct into commodity. Where Serrano used shock to confront abjection head-on, PLASTOID aestheticizes it, making contamination appear commercial. Familiar settings serve as anchors throughout the project, grounding its speculative devices in environments that feel known and trustworthy. *Running on Empty*, modelled to be a one-person auto garage, uses the cultural language of car maintenance, a space often coded as masculine, to explore male infertility as a site of ecological vulnerability. The installation is immersive and isolating, viewers enter a confined space filled with sound, aluminium and plastic, drifting smoke, and looping visuals that suggest both industrial excessiveness and the internal breakdown of sperm function. It leverages stereotypical associations with cars and control, reframing reproductive decline because of invisible environmental damage, such as microplastic pollution from tire wear.

A study by Leslie et al. (2022) identified microplastic particles, including those derived from car tires, in human blood. This finding offered a symbolic and material link: the car tire, once made of natural rubber, now composed of synthetic chemicals, becomes a marker of both environmental degradation and gendered cultural identity. Positioning the tire as a metaphor enabled a critical engagement with car culture and its ties to masculinity. The car became a tool through which I examined the role of microplastics in declining male fertility, bridging personal vulnerability and social interests.

Ultimately, PLASTOID uses subliminal recognition to critique the systems that normalize environmental toxicity. By mimicking the look and feel of commercial healthcare and consumer practices, it reveals how deeply embedded pollution has become in our lives, and how cultural responses continue to treat it as maintainable, rather than preventable. The project calls into question who is asked to care, who benefits from inaction, and how design can reveal what culture seeks to conceal.

"I'm sad about human nature in general you know we're so puny really our greatest accomplishments backfire ten years later it seems … plastics were a miracle although any hippy knew, you know hippies were real anti-plastic, and now you can see with good reason why. The plastics that fill the sky, plastics are made from the blood of the mother, from the earth and when it's burnt and it goes up and eats the father, which is the sky."

Joni Mitchell
1989

LEGACY OF PLASTIC

The very properties that made plastic desirable (strength, stability, and resistance to decay) now contribute to its status as an ecological threat. As it accumulates in oceans, soils, and bodies, plastic becomes a marker of systemic excess, industrial inertia, and environmental injustice. Microplastics, the fragmented remnants of larger plastic waste, are no longer confined to the realm of external pollution. They circulate through atmospheric currents, infiltrate food systems, and embed themselves within human tissues (Prata et al., 2020; Campanale et al., 2020). The consequences are generational,

both in terms of biological inheritance and social complicity.

PLASTOID engages with this historical trajectory not by rejecting plastic outright, but by interrogating its dual legacy. It acknowledges that plastic has enabled extraordinary medical and material advances while simultaneously producing profound ecological harm. Rather than indulging in nostalgic utopianism or outright demonisation, the project demands a more accountable engagement with the afterlife of plastic. It begs the question: if plastic was designed to solve the problems of the past, why have our systems failed to evolve in response to its unintended consequences?

This critical stance aligns with Heather Davis's (2015) concept of plastic as both material and metaphor. Davis argues that plastic exemplifies the temporal disjunctions of the Anthropocene: produced in moments of convenience and discarded just as quickly, yet persisting across geological and biological timescales. Its near-infinite persistence contrasts starkly with the short-term thinking of industrial capitalism, revealing a mismatch between material reality and social responsibility.

Through speculative design, PLASTOID explores these contradictions. It positions plastic as a legacy material, something we have inherited, continue to produce, and must reckon with. The project invites viewers to consider how generational ideologies have shaped the success of plastic while also ignoring its long-term consequences. It critiques the inertia of global systems that continue to prioritise profit and convenience over adaptation and accountability.

The project uses satire to make visible the consequences of an unchecked plastic legacy, urging viewers to consider how their daily actions contribute to the systemic pollution of our environment. This personal reckoning, however, must be paired with collective action: the fight against microplastic pollution and the restoration of ecological balance cannot rest solely on the shoulders of individuals. It requires a societal commitment to change, guided by a vision of justice and long-term sustainability. In this light, the call is not simply to eliminate plastic but to reimagine its place within socio-ecological systems. Who controls the narrative of progress? Who profits from plastic's continued proliferation? And what futures might be possible if responsibility (ecological, corporate, and cultural) were re-centred?

The monobloc chair, a single-piece, injection-molded plastic seat, is a globally pervasive example of functional, low-cost industrial design. Its mass production, durability, and stack-ability have led to widespread adoption across socio-economic and cultural contexts (Elshafie, M).

CONCLUSION

Plastic is not just an environmental contaminant, it is a biological inheritance, circulating through blood, milk, and semen, shaping futures at a cellular level. In confronting this legacy, PLASTOID refuses the logic of resilience that asks us to adapt to contamination. Instead, it poses a more urgent question: what does it mean to design for reckoning? To make visible what has been rendered invisible? To demand structural change over individual compliance?

PLASTOID does not suggest solutions to this crisis; instead, it embraces the complexity of living with pollution as an intimate, biological condition. Here, the body is reframed not as a sealed vessel, but as a porous site of ecological entanglement where gender, care, and responsibility converge. By centring bodily contamination and the gendered politics of infertility, the

project challenges narratives that frame reproductive health as private or exclusively female. It demands collective accountability, not only for ecological harm, but for how that harm is represented, medicalized, and managed through culture and design. Through satire and straight-forward aesthetics, the project draws on the visual language of consumer culture to expose the absurdity of treating systemic pollution as a matter of personal responsibility.

This is not a call to return to purity, nor an escape from plastic. It is an invitation to dwell within the mess of our synthetic condition and to confront it to imagine futures rooted in accountability. Futures where contamination becomes not an end, but a beginning: a site for radical reflection. The pervasive presence of microplastics forces us to reckon with a new reality, one where ecological damage is no longer abstract, but intimately biological. PLASTOID challenges us to rethink identity, health, and responsibility in the face of environmental degradation, and to recognize that addressing this crisis requires both personal awareness and systemic transformation.

Great Expectations
Camille Summersvalli
DAZED 2025

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MAËL HÉNAFF AND MATERIAL FUTURES,
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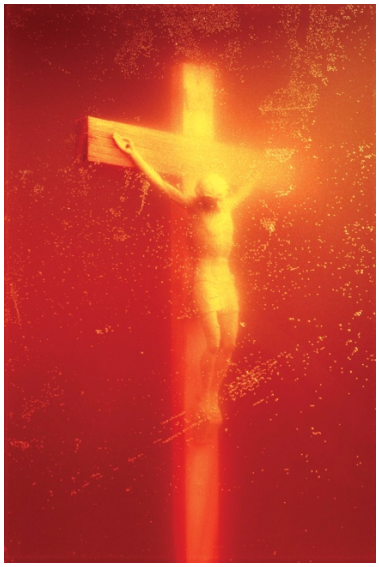

Piss Christ
Andres Serrano
1987

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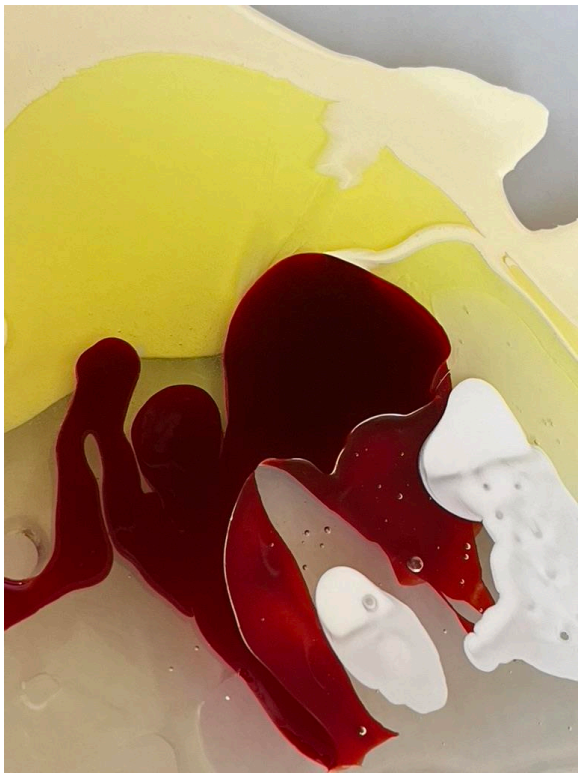
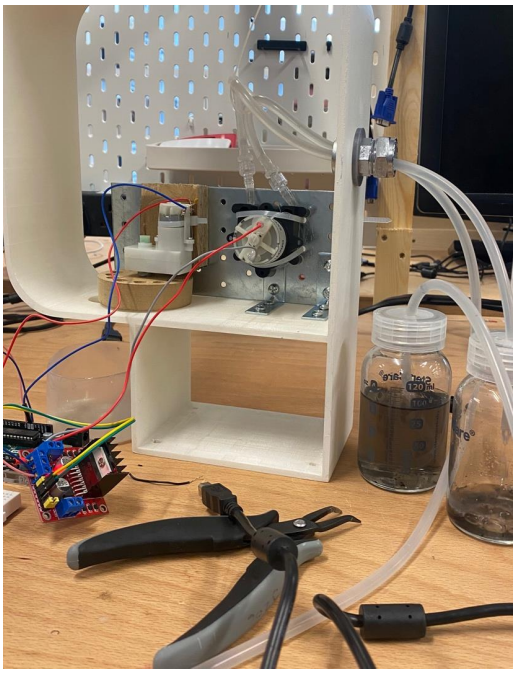


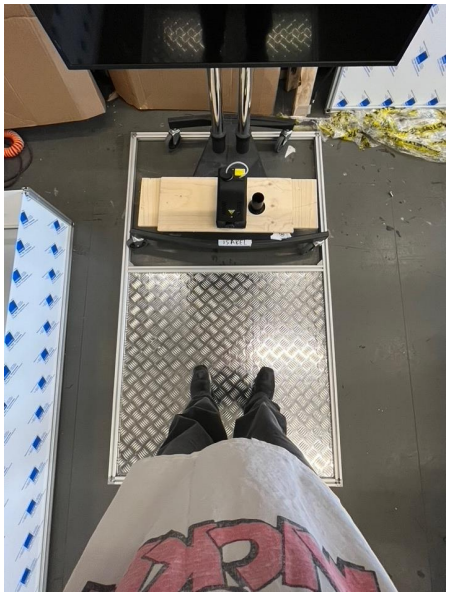

Plasti CLEAR
Urine Test


Plasti GUARD
FOR SEMEN


AL SPRING WATER
WARNING
MICROPLASTICS MAY CAUSE PLASTOSIS
CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES


KILNER





1800s: NATURAL PLASTICS

SHELLAC: RESINOUS INSECT SECRETION TO MAKE CASES

SAP - USED TO MOLD SMALL CONSUMER GOODS

CAOUTCHOUC / RUBBER (VULCANIZED WITH SULPHUR = VULCANITE, EBONITE, HARD RUBBER)

CASEIN PLASTIC 1899 (MILK PLASTIC) PATENTED BY ADOLPH SPITTELER

ADVANCEMENT IN THE FIELD AND LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS IN BIOPLASTICS.

1869: CELLULOID

(JOHN WESLEY HYATT) NITRATED CELLULOSE (PULP) AND CAMPHOR +HEAT AND PRESSURE

CELLULOID (IMITATED THE LAYERING OF IVORY, TORTOISE SHELL, AMBER AND SEMI PRECIOUS GEMS, WEAVE OF LINEN, VEINING OF MARBLE)

USED AS CHEAP SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPENSIVE MATERIALS

PURPOSE FOR MASS PRODUCTION, SEEN AS SUPERIOR MATERIAL

1903:

US PLASTIC PATENT CLASSIFICATION

1907: BAKELITE

LEO H. BAEKELAND CONDENSATION REACTION BETWEEN PHENOL AND FORMALDYHYDE (FIRST SYNTHETIC PLASTIC)

FORMALDEHYDE AND PHENOL, UNDER HEAT AND PRESSURE

FIRST PLASTIC TO BE PERMANENTLY HARD

"BAKELIGHT, THE MATERIAL OF A THOUSAND USES"

1927:

PUBLISCISTS FOR THE INDUSTRY PROCLAIM "PLASTIC AGE"

1930s:

POLYETHYLENE
NYLON
TEFLON

1932: PERSPEX

WASTE MATERIAL FROM PROCESSING CRUDE OIL AND NATURAL GAS

1934:

AMERICAN DICTIONARY ACKNOWLEDGED AN EMERGING CLASS OF MATERIALS KNOWN TO INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTS AND ENGINEERS

1940-45:

MILITARY USE
COCKPIT COVERS
MORTAR FUSES
BAYONET SCABBARDS
HELMET LINERS
ATOM BOMB

1960s:

WHAM-O HULAHOOPS
FRISBEES
BARBIE
LEGO
SARAN WRAP
FORMICA DINETTES
POLYETHYLENE
TABLE WARE
BIC PENS
TUPPERWARE
GARBAGE/LAUNDRY BASKETS
SARAN WRAP
COOLERS
ARTIFICIAL XMAS TREES

1968: *THE GRADUATE*
"I JUST WANT TO SAY ONE WORD TO YOU – PLASTICS – THERES A GREAT FUTURE IN PLASTICS."