

# Adventurous Upcrafting Ventures.

Markus Wernli

Published: April 2018

**How to Cite - APA**

Wernli, M. (2018). Adventurous Upcrafting Ventures. *Cubic Journal*, 1(1), 210-213. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31182/cubic.2018.1.013>

**How to Cite - Chicago**

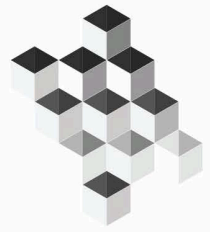
Wernli, Markus. "Adventurous Upcrafting Ventures". In *Cubic Journal* 1 (1): 210-213, 2018. doi:10.31182/cubic.2018.1.013.

**DOI**

10.31182/cubic.2018.1.013

**WWW**

<http://www.cubicjournal.org/wp/>



## CUBIC JOURNAL

Design Economy  
Design Social  
Design Making

@

[www.cubicjournal.org](http://www.cubicjournal.org)

[editors@cubicjournal.org](mailto:editors@cubicjournal.org)



School of Design

Jockey Club Innovation Tower

Hong Kong Polytechnic

University

Hung Hom, Hong Kong

////////////////////////////////////

*Cubic Journal* is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal. All journal content, except where otherwise noted, is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). Work may be copied, shared and distributed when authors are properly accredited; this includes outlines of any work. Amendments to the original work needs to be shown. The licensor does not in any way endorse third party views or how journal content is used by others.

013

ABSTRACT

# Adventurous *Upcrafting* Ventures

Markus Wernli  
210–213

Since 2015, the Research Institute of Organic Treasures (R.I.O.T.) has combined fermentation practices and social experimentation in Hong Kong to give biological byproducts from human and urban metabolisms a regenerative purpose. Here putrescible wastes emitted from our kitchens, toilets, and bodies are considered our most foundational design material that contributes to a “world of eaters” (DuPuis, 2015). In this applied design work, the concept of upcycling is socio-materially extended into shared forms of upskilling, and therefore referred to as *upcrafting*. In an effort to combine practical outcomes with long-term welfare creation, R.I.O.T. brings together laypersons, natural scientists, and artists, into open-ended explorations of alternative knowledge and change making, or what Melanie DuPuis calls “extended peer communities” (*ibid*: 155).

#Urine fermentation

#Generative vulnerability

#Radical homemaking

#Risky collaborations

#EID

Mary Douglas defined waste as the result of the “impure,” that is, a mental construction to make up for our lack of social relations (Liboiron, 2016). Here, the “social” is not just about inter-personal, institutional, or technological relations. Moving beyond our purification treadmills necessitates a “digestive turn” that brings us into full contact with the more-than-human world where we “make bargains for our safety with those who will not make us fully safe” (DuPuis, 2015:158). Composting feces and fermenting urine can be considered hyper-social design. Bacteria can be steered but never fully controlled; hence, we enter into durational collaborations with uncertain outcomes. Here, being social means encountering vulnerability with adequate support derived from a cultivated sense of our selves and for others (Stevenson, 2016). Design enables a wealth of boundary negotiations, where the precarious nature of *upcrafting* human waste can be an opening for connection, spontaneity, and innovation. Through an experimental study with twenty-three participants (or would-be “precarity pilots”) in a horticultural urine *upcrafting* mission – with humbling technical shortcomings – how such generative vulnerability can be a source of individual agency and social renewal was evaluated.

In the video shoot depicted below, a cast of adventurous homemakers, shop vendors, and construction workers bring their organic residues to the Kung Fu master (center) to have it fire-transformed (bio charred) into a potent purifier and probiotic medium for air, water, soil, and interiors. As part of a business pitch, R.I.O.T. attempted to wow the Green Building Council in Hong Kong with a social *upcrafting* venture. Built on courage and desire to learn, ventures are missions with potential of failure. The proposed enterprise was rejected, yet remained a social enactment of re-investing into our biological humanity and rehearsed more convivial forms of “waste treatment,” which proved to produce fun: <https://vimeo.com/socialorganism/bc>.

This article derives from a PhD research project entitled *Adventurous Homemaking and Design of Generative Vulnerabilities* that looks at what collaborative dynamics can support the purposeful reuse of human waste in contemporary urbanity. Directly re-engaging with our visceral role in metabolic circulations as part of human-environment health interactions, whereby reclaiming our “agro-ecological” potential (DuPuis, 2015), is life affirming. The research, which was conducted over two years, explored, forms of collective and durational forms of human waste *upcrafting* in a series of activation probes. The resulting main study engaged twenty-three Hong Kong residents in a socio-horticultural venture for *upcrafting* urine over eight weeks – without any dropouts.

## Bibliography

DuPuis, Melanie. *Dangerous Digestion*: Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Stevenson, Herb. *Coaching at the Point of Contact: A Gestalt Approach*. *Gestalt Review* 20 (3):260-78, 2016.

Liboiron, Max. *On Solidarity & Molecules (#MakeMuskratRight)*. *Journal for Discard Studies*, 2016.

## Bio

Markus Wernli is a doctoral candidate at the School of Design of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research explores the bodily role of city dwellers in biochemical circulations. Markus' work takes inspiration from learning encounters found at eating design studio Proef of Marije Vogelzang in Amsterdam, practicing Japanese tea ceremony with Imotosenke master Obana Ichiro in Kyoto, and impromptu composting school with ecologist David Freudenberger at the Australian National University in Canberra. In Hong Kong Markus is honing with fellow rooftop gardeners and plant enthusiasts the practice of ‘lazy farming’ on the impermeable clay soils of the Pearl River Delta.



Fermentation

Upcrafting Ventures



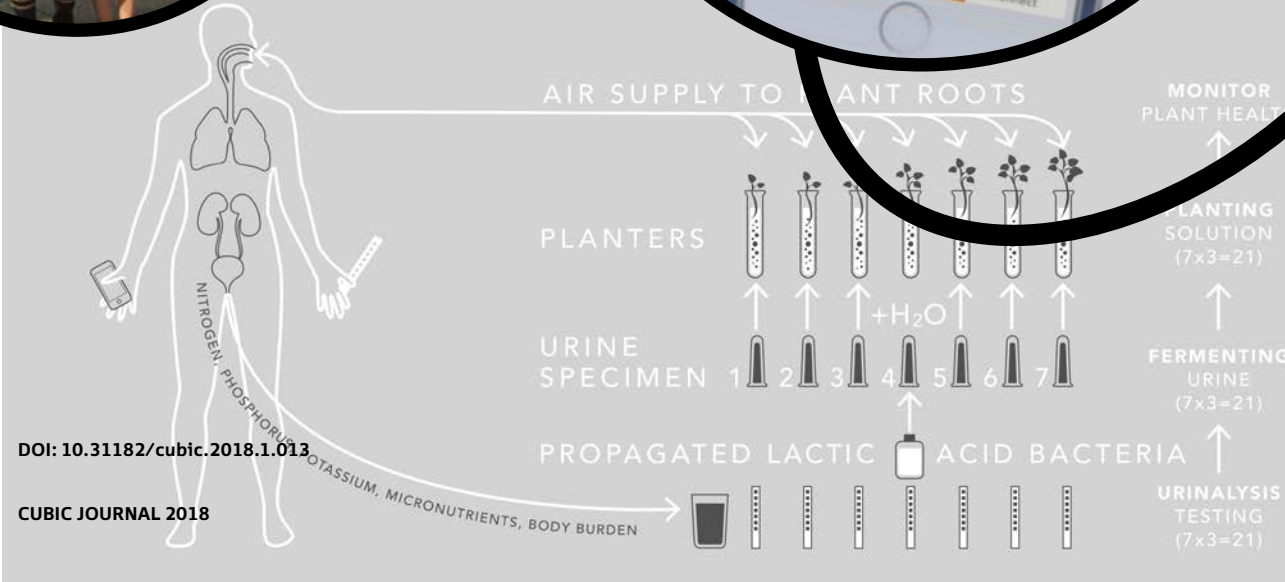
LAB<sup>B</sup>  
 IMO<sup>A</sup>  
 Ricebran Biochar



Bokashi collective at Hong Kong University farm (Workshop)

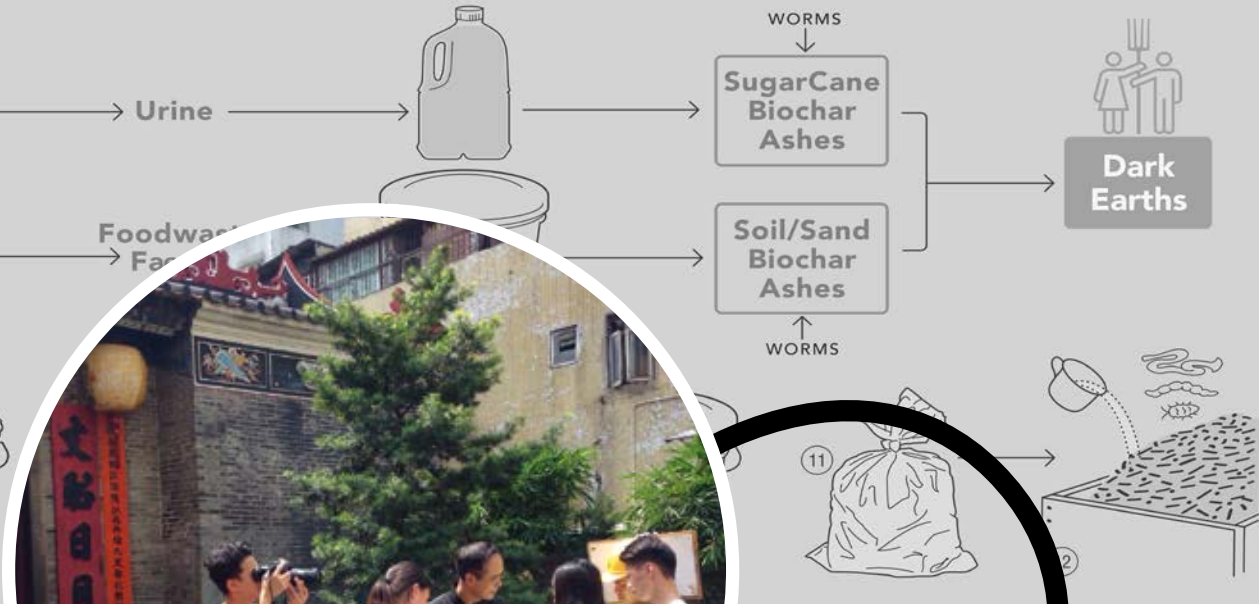


Black Circle Biochar purifier as trackable social process (Business Pitch)



DOI: 10.31182/cubic.2018.1.013

CUBIC JOURNAL 2018



Black Circle  
videoshoot  
with biocharring  
Kung Fu master  
(Business Pitch)

Aquaforming Mars:  
Urine as time capsule  
for orchard nurturing  
on Mars  
(Exhibit)



Generative  
Vulnerability

Nutrients accountability  
with the use of sense organs  
for recirculating urine into  
consequential food loop  
with plants.

Organoleptic  
Trophography



JOURNAL OF  
MUTUAL  
FLOURISHING  
PLANT  
HUMAN  
HEALTH  
INTERACTION

**Cubic Journal**

Design Social, Design Economies, Design Making

**Volume 1—Issue 1**

Design Social | Technology – Activism – Anti-Social.

**Issue Editors**

Gerhard Bruyns & Peter Hasdell

**Operational Editors**

Gerhard Bruyns—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Hanna Wirman—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

**Editorial Board**

Peter Benz—Baptist University, Hong Kong.

Gerhard Bruyns—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Jörn Bühring—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Leon Buker—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Daniel Elkin—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Pirjo Haikola—IADE-Creative University, Portugal.

Peter Hasdell—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Yan Tina Luximon—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

Camilo Pinilla—Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Heidi Sohn—TU Delft, The Netherlands.

Huaxin Wei—School of Design, PolyU, Hong Kong.

**Advisory Board**

Eli Blevis—Indiana University Bloomington.

MC Boyer—Princeton University.

Patrick Healy—TU Delft / Free University of Amsterdam.

Peter Gall Krogh—Aarhus University.

Ilpo Koskinen—The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville—Yale University.

Lawrence Wallen—University of Technology Sydney.

Natalija Subotincic—MEF University, Istanbul.

**Layout**

Gabriella Lai and Markus Wernli

**Cover Pattern**

Yiu Yim Wa—Ada

**Copyeditor**

Shannon Ross—Make No Bones Studio, Hong Kong.

**ISSN:** 2589-7098 (Print)

**ISSN:** 2589-7101 (Online)

**Publisher**

Jap Sam Books, The Netherlands.

**Reviewing Policy**

Cubic Journal operates on a double blind peer review process, unless mentioned otherwise. All work is checked against plagiarism before publication.

**About**

Cubic Journal, is published in conjunction with Cubic Society and the Cubic Research Network as an academic platform aimed at the dissemination of design related research.

Operating from within The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Design, the platform aims to draw together global scholars in order to generate, exchange and discuss contemporary questions within the pursuit of advancing knowledge through and within a number of design disciplines.

**Licensing**

All work part of the Cubic Journal falls under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). Work may be copied, shared and distributed when authors are properly accredited. Any amendments to the original work needs to be shown. This agreement does not directly or indirectly endorse third party views or how the information is used in other formats.

**Contact**

The Editors

Cubic Journal

c/o Dr.ir. Gerhard Bruyns

Environmental & Interior Design

School of Design

802 Jockey Club Innovation Tower

Core V

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Hung Hom, Hong Kong

editors@cubicjournal.org

**Associations**

Cubic Research Network.



CUBIC  
RESEARCH  
NETWORK



www.cubicjournal.org

editors@cubicjournal.org

