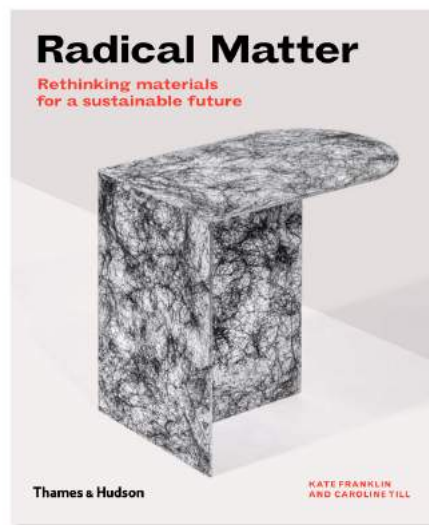

FranklinTill's Radical Matter

Rethinking materials for a sustainable future

Published: 8 March 2018



For over 13 years – even before they started research and forecasting consultancy **FranklinTill** – **Caroline Till** and **Kate Franklin** have been exploring the role of the designer and maker in shaping the sustainable future of the material world. This year, their research culminates in the new book **Radical Matter** – a wide-ranging and visually beautiful compendium of the experimental approaches, new materials and revolutionary thinkers that are rewriting design convention and creating a blueprint for a new model of production and consumption.

Shit, hair and dust. Soot, soya and sawdust. Fungus and cellulose. All over the world, an emerging generation of designers and makers are rethinking raw materials, repurposing waste, and presenting radical solutions to the challenges of making and surviving in the modern world. In these 256 pages, FranklinTill present a snapshot of projects and material innovations by the designers at the forefront of the making revolution. Experimental, visionary and motivated by sustainability and social welfare, they and their ideas are, perhaps, our best hope for the long-term future of our society, our planet and the objects we use everyday.

Radical Matter is underpinned by the knowledge that the planet's resources are finite and dwindling; that human production generates vast and increasing quantities of waste; and that, for decades, the design industries have colluded in a 'take-make-discard' model of consumption that actively nurtures the seeds of its own destruction.

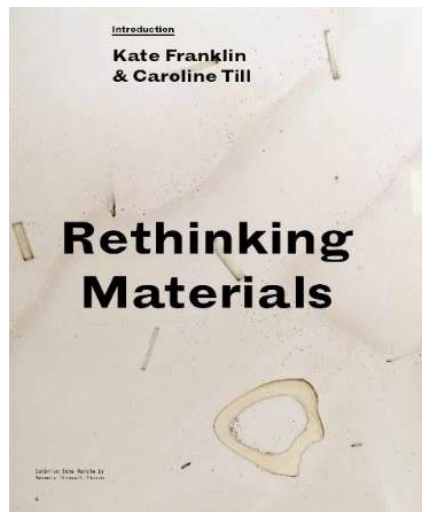
'We are potentially on the brink of a materials revolution that could help rebalance our relationship with our planet and reshape society for the better.'

– FranklinTill

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We are potentially on the brink of a materials revolution that could help rebalance our relationship with our planet and reshape society for the better. Up to now, we have relied on a supply of natural raw materials that we transport to large factories and turn into products. We then ship those products around the world, where we enjoy them all too briefly and discard them when we no longer require them. This model is reaching its physical limits. We are running out of raw materials and creating enormous quantities of waste. We cannot continue to race through our planet's finite resources; indeed, all the evidence suggests that if we continue at our current rate, we'll soon need a second planet.

We need a better, smarter, more cyclical approach, in contrast to our current linear 'take, make, discard' relationship with materials – and a new future seems to be within our reach. Placing emphasis on materiality enables us to reconsider the building blocks of the design process from the bottom up. Thanks to a raft of exciting designers and makers who are fostering disruptive approaches, we are beginning to see that alternative systems of production and consumption are possible – and we are recognising that material innovation will be crucial to achieving this.

But the tide is turning. All over the world, makers are taking it upon themselves to tackle the problems of 21st-century consumption head-on. They are **pioneering new technologies and re-evaluating old ones**, crossing boundaries and disciplines, promoting collaboration and the free exchange of knowledge, and seeing opportunities for new and exciting making materials where their predecessors saw only waste. Collected in *Radical Matter*, these makers represent what could become a new model for design as a practice – one that is cyclical, sustainable and socially conscious.

Radical Matter combines the thinking of a global network of academics, scientists, designers and innovators with FranklinTill's own expertise and their passion for the field of sustainable design. For eight years, **Kate Franklin** and **Caroline Till** have consulted on sustainable design innovation for brands and government organisations across the world, and shared industry-essential intelligence via *Viewpoint* magazine. Caroline was instrumental in developing the multidisciplinary MA Material Futures at Central Saint Martins, working on the course for eight years.

For FranklinTill and the makers of *Radical Matter*, sustainable design is not about constraints but **possibilities**. These are the people who are developing processes that transform by-products into versatile new materials, turning newspaper back into wood, construction waste into brick, food waste into musical instruments... They are harnessing untapped resources such as **seaweed, corn husks, and human hair** to create entirely new materials. They are developing new collaborative practices that minimise waste; partnering with industries, institutions and communities to develop symbiotic making relationships with tangible social benefits. They are seizing upon the possibilities of technology to put design directly in the hands of the consumer; turning **pollution into products**; and delving into the realms of biology to find ways not of making new materials, but growing them.

'If you consider holistically where materials have come from, the processes and transformation you put them through, and where they will go after use, the social and environmental impact of our products can be totally redesigned.'

– **Caroline Till**, co-founder, FranklinTill

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(Left) Reconfiguration of a Tree by Thomas Vailly, featured in Radical Matter.

(Right) Material Illusions by Sophie Rowley. Featured in Radical Matter, Chapter 1: Today's Waste Tomorrow's Raw Material.

CHAPTERS

- 1. Today's Waste, Tomorrow's Raw Material** – Can we use industrial waste streams as tomorrow's raw material?
- 2. Natural Assets** – Can we find new applications that minimise waste of natural resources?
- 3. Shit, Hair, Dust** – Can we reimagine human and animal detritus as a sustainable raw material?
- 4. Material Connections** – Can design connect communities and promote the exchange of ideas?
- 5. Co-Creation** – Can digital fabrication enable us to manufacture on demand with minimal waste?
- 6. Designed to Disappear** – How can disposable products be redesigned to leave no trace?
- 7. Living Materials** – Could living materials be grown in labs, becoming the factories of the future?
- 8. Future Mining** – What will we mine in the future as a result of human impact on the planet?

Divided into **eight chapters**, each exploring a different approach, technique or material source, the book is interlaced with expert views from leading industry voices, beginning with an introduction from Carole Collet, professor of design for sustainable futures and director of the design and living systems lab at Central Saint Martin's. Other contributors include Joni Stenier from **Opendesk** discussing the potential of co-creation and distributed manufacture; leading geologist Dr Jan Zalasiewicz assessing the impact of moving into a new geological era; architect **Anders Lendager** arguing for the environmental necessity of developing new materials from existing waste streams; and Kingston University professor of design, **Fixperts** founder and director of the **From Now On** consultancy Daniel Charny advocating for a balance between traditional craft and modern technology, open-source knowledge and individual authorship.

The eight chapters are ordered by the immediacy of their likely impact – from the harvesting of alternative raw materials from modern-day waste streams to speculation on the kinds of materials we might expect to mine and use in the decades to come.

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The publication of *Radical Matter* will coincide with a special series of 2018 events, public discussions and exhibitions across Europe, inspired by the ideas explored within the book. This will include a partnership with the radical design collective **Dutch Invertuals**, who will be responding to the thoughts and themes of *Radical Matter* at their **Milan 2018** exhibition in April.

In sum, *Radical Matter* is an eye-opening overview of the people and practices making a positive impact on how, why and what we make and – crucially – what we make it out of.



For more information, images from the book and interviews with Kate Franklin and Caroline Till, please contact Dorothy Bourne at dorothy@zetteler.co.uk or on +44 (0)7939 200519.

Radical Matter, Rethinking Materials for a Sustainable Future

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Authors Kate Franklin and Caroline Till

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About FranklinTill

In 2010, disillusioned by the flighty, short-term approach of the forecasting industry, Kate Franklin and Caroline Till brought together extensive experience in design, education, research and forecasting to found their one-of-a-kind agency. Today, FranklinTill delivers research-based strategic insight and inspiration to

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world-leading brands in the lifestyle and design sectors. The company specialises in providing content with context, identifying convergences in sociocultural movements, scientific and technological innovation and public mindset, and communicating its findings via a variety of platforms. Underpinned by Kate and Caroline's expertise in sustainable design innovation, every project sees a studio of researchers, designers and writers working alongside a roster of collaborative talent to create a holistic, positive impact. Always founded on fact, never short of inspiring, FranklinTill's publications, design consultancy, workshops, exhibitions and events, creative content, editorial, art direction, styling and commercial visual strategy have helped countless organisations stay afloat in a rapidly changing world.

FranklinTills's clients include: Caesarstone; Crafts Council; Channel 4; Curver; Design Junction; Future Publishing; G . F Smith; Heimtextil; Humanscale; Pernod Ricard; IKEA/ Space 10; Samsung; Thames & Hudson; VF Corporation; and University of the Arts London.

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