

# THE FAT FACTORY: CHEWING THE FAT

MIKE THOMPSON

INDEPENDENT DESIGNER

MIKE@THEFATFACTORY.NL

DANIELLE ARETS

ASSOCIATE READER STRATEGIC CREATIVITY,  
INDEPENDENT DESIGN RESEARCHER

DANIELLE@THEFATFACTORY.NL

## ABSTRACT

In 2005, the global adult biomass hit around 287 million metric tons, 15 million metric tonnes of which being caused by an overweight global population (a body mass of 25 or greater). As the worlds population continues to soar (the UN estimates the world population will reach 9.1 billion by 2050) there will be considerably more mouths to feed, and energy needed to sustain this rate of development. Paradoxically then, fat is both a waste of resources and a valuable resource in its own right.

The Fat Factory is a Critical Design Research project investigating the full, untapped potential of fat. Developing a critical approach to this topic, we investigate whether a research based, analytical design process can lead to truly innovative design solutions. What if we stop thinking of fat as abhorrent or waste? What if we learn to love fat?

## WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION

FAT. A natural, oily substance occurring in our bodies underneath the skin or around our organs. A form of stored energy (37.8 kilojoules / 9 calories per gram). A vital molecule, serving both structural and metabolic functions and food stuff for both humans and livestock. A vital component in the manufacture of lubricants, biodiesel, paints, soaps, cosmetics and even munitions. A scourge of the sewage system - Thames Water

(London), clears some 55,000 hardened fat blockages from sewers annually to a tune of £12 million. A signature of poor health and nutrition.

*Nordes 13* marks the official Kick-Off of *The Fat Factory*, starting with a preliminary exploration into an alternative approach to fat. In the workshop "*Chewing The Fat*", we invite participants to get hands-on with this most decisive of materials. Starting with the group preparation and eating of a high-fat lunch, inspired by the Inuit diet (a high protein, high-fat diet proven to increase cardiovascular health), participants will use this same material (and waste) to experiment in the production of Bacon Soap and Blubber (Fat) Lamps. Following these hands-on experiences with fat, participants will be invited [in groups] to explore the potential risks, challenges and opportunities in reaction to the theme "*Fat As The New Oil*", developing their own speculative scenarios and critical design concepts in response to the key topics and facts (including obesity, waste management, energy production, the meat industry, and the constitution of fat in extreme conditions), discussed throughout the day.

## AIMS

We believe it is critical that designers contemplate how to become involved with new scientific, technological and societal developments. Using design as cultural probes, designing prototypes, making comprehensible visualisations, and presenting imaginable scenarios, designers act as the perfect bridge for popularisation, but they can also design tools drawing the public into the process, involving them in defining potential outcomes. We believe this is essential, especially for highly complicated topics where experts define the brief for later exploration with the public.

With the workshop "*Chewing The Fat*" we aim to gain a better understanding of the 'culture' and 'nature' of fat and potentially reframe its current notion as a waste product. By conducting hands-on experiences with fat we hope, together with the participants, to develop innovative ways to approach, discuss and create with fat, generating valuable scenarios and ideas for products that provide us with tools for a sustainable future.

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME



Figure 1: Influenced by the Inuit Diet, fatty meats such as Bacon & Whale Blubber will act as inspiration for the workshop.

Time	Activity
08:00 - 08:15	Meet & Greet.
08:15 - 09:00	Introduction to The Fat Factory & Keynote Presentation.
09:00 - 11:00	Experiment 1: Blubber Lamp.
11:00 - 12:00	Participants join in with the preparation of a "Fatty Lunch" (a high fat meal with factual tutorial).
12:00 - 13:00	Fatty Lunch & Discussion.
13:00 - 15:00	Experiment 2: Bacon Soap.
15:00 - 16:00	Fat As The New Oil - Speculative scenario and concept development.
16:00 - 16:45	Groups present their final concepts / scenarios & discussion on the implications of these concepts.
16:45 - 17:00	Wrap Up.

Table 1: Fat Factory Workshop Programme. Please note the exact timings are still subject to change.

Please be aware there will be no vegetarian option, so if you don't like meat this workshop might not be for you!

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

As there is space for a maximum of 16 participants in the workshop, applicants are asked to provide a short Biography (140 words max) and Letter of Motivation (4-6 sentences max). If you would like to participate please email your Bio and Letter of Motivation along with your contact details before **24th May 2013** to [signup@thefatfactory.nl](mailto:signup@thefatfactory.nl). Successful applicants will be notified by the 31st May 2013.

## CONTACT INFO

For further information please contact:

[INFO@THEFATFACTORY.NL](mailto:INFO@THEFATFACTORY.NL)

[WWW.THEFATFACTORY.NL](http://WWW.THEFATFACTORY.NL)

## ABOUT THE INITIATORS

Mike Thompson and Danielle Arets share an interest in Critical Design and its potential to create innovative design solutions for existing industrial and academic problems. Thompson and Arets explore various activities and design projects that aim to stimulate a new way of thinking and designing, bringing in various forms of expertise, tools and methodologies.

Thompson and Arets first met when participating respectively as Research Associate & Associate Reader in the Creative Industry Scientific Programme (CRISP), an ambitious research project funded by the Dutch government, 60 industrial partners and 6 Universities including Design Academy Eindhoven, that explores new methods for collaborative research and finding new ways of doing research through design.



Figure 2: Thompson's Blood Lamp asks, "What if power came at a cost to the individual?"

With Blood Lamp, a lamp powered by blood as an energy source, Mike Thompson ([www.miket.co.uk](http://www.miket.co.uk)) gained international reputation as a critical designer. The lamp was discussed on many international platforms and exhibitions triggering questions about a more sustainable future and the need to make consumers greater aware of their own energy consumption.

Last year Thompson, together with Cámara Leret, was awarded the Designers and Artists 4 Genomics Awards for Aqua Vita, a project stressing that Urine, commonly approached as a waste product, is in fact a valuable source of biological information. The project brings together experts in medical science, biology and informatics with designers, to investigate the supposed paradigm shift in health care, towards the lifelong monitoring of health and personalised medicine.

Danielle Arets works on the cross section of design, science and industry by publishing books and articles, and organising debates and workshops to create a better understanding in multidisciplinary environments. Together with the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture and Innovation she worked for 2 years on an ambitious design project *Pig Your Own* stressing the fact that consumers are not consciously involved in their massive meat consumption and hardly aware of the associated

costs (both to nature and the economy). With a critical design approach the project stimulated much public discussion and innovative design solutions such as a digital meat- stock market.

Last year, Arets worked with leading experts at the University of Utrecht on a design research project focusing on climate change, bringing in the expertise of climatologists, designers and industrial companies in order to generate a better public understanding of urgent environmental issues. Arets also frequently organises international debate programmes and exhibitions for Design Academy Eindhoven and Utrecht Manifest (social biennale on design) aiming to make designers aware of research potential.

## PARTNERS

Participating in the project are several Academic and Industrial partners of outstanding reputation including, Utrecht University (UU), Utrecht School of the Arts (HKU), Hogeschool Utrecht (HU), Science Park Utrecht, Danone, Eindhoven University of Technology (TUE), Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE) and House of Commons (HOC). Together, this interdisciplinary team of scientists (life sciences and public health), designers (with an international scope, including Arne Hendriks) and R&D groups of industrial partners, explore the full, untapped potential of fat.



Figure 3: Mapping potential research directions.

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