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Offcut

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Offcut

Lydia Meyer

There is a tendency in nature to repeat forms that are successful. Because of their strength or efficiency, structures used for one purpose by a creature may resemble those created for different tasks by another. In creating "Offcut" I attempt to integrate myself into this way of thinking to better understand natural/evolved processes, by borrowing structures from both the human and animal world that look like neither. I use materials that I foraged from my environment and occasionally the Internet. The foam is free offcuts from a plastics factory and all of the wood is scrap from the UBS woodshop.

The process of natural selection propagates strategies that best meet the conditions of their environment at a given moment in time. If an environment is static, very little adaptation is needed and generally change is extremely slow. We live in an era that is particularly interesting because this is not the case. In the last century there has been a tremendous outpouring of novel materials from human processes into the environment for which we do not yet know the evolutionary consequences. I'm interested in how these materials can be swept up and integrated into old tried-and-true processes developed by centuries of natural selection. For example, several urban bird species in Mexico were found to be lining their nests with cigarette butts because the residual chemicals act as an anti parasitic for their young. In my case I explore the physical, tensile strengths and structural abilities of two primary elements, foam and wood, in order to encase, protect and feed a central living mass.

Because selection works through differential reproductions (the ones with the best idea have the most babies), structures and strategies associated with reproduction are often the ones most susceptible to change because they are the most important ones to get right. For this reason and many others I believe the females of species to have the most evolutionary power, although this is a gross simplification. Females are the egg layers, nest builders, reproducers and thereby the game-changers of the world. I see this as being a common denominator that females of all species share. In a time of immense ecological change, female construction and strategy will shape and define evolutionary future. I explore creating an environment as a member of this group while working with my obvious limitations and incredible advantages as a human woman.





