

# AZURE

DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | INTERIORS | CURIOSITY



## TRENDS 2018

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Inflatable theatres, bioplastic furniture,  
energy from algae, and more

Studio Swine's  
eco-friendly  
Ebonite chair

**ECOLOGICSTUDIO'S BIO.TECH HUT  
OFFERS A BEAUTIFUL METHOD FOR  
TURNING ALGAE INTO ENERGY AND FOOD**

In Kazakhstan, an energy museum has opened with one floor given over to a pavilion called *BIO.Tech HUT*. The pavilion was created by *EcoLogicStudio*, a London studio run by *Marco Poletto* and *Claudia Pasquero*, who are devoted to creating self-sustaining buildings using algae energy systems.

**AZURE:** Algae is like super-nature; it can be turned into energy and food. Is the world ready to embrace it?

**CLAUDIA PASQUERO:** Algae farms already exist. What we are proposing with *BIO.Tech HUT* is a way to embed the production of algae into an urban context. One of the main purposes of the pavilion is to expose [algae] production and let people visualize it in order to understand it.

**MARCO POLETTTO:** Also, it's to stimulate discussion around how a building could be made where the walls and ceilings – any surface, really – are alive, capturing oxygen and producing proteins and energy, and so on. We've been able to realize that kind of system with *BIO.Tech HUT*, which is a pretty exciting step because it's a real building that could be replicated.

**What does the hut actually do?**

**MP:** It shows what a dwelling of the future might be like. In particular, it's organized into three spaces: the Lab, the Living and the Garden. They are kind of interwoven, but they come in a sequence. The Lab is the place of rationality, so that's where you learn and investigate different types of micro-organisms, using microscopes, for instance. We see it as a kitchen of the future. The second area, the Living, is a space of intuition and artistic appreciation. It's where you can immerse yourself into this living sculpture. There's another area in that room that is about revitalizing, a relaxing space that is illuminated only by algae-fuelled biochemical light. The Garden is where you actually learn how to grow and harvest algae, basically how you can transform it into something usable.

**It's also beautiful. That's not what you expect with algae.**

**MP:** Its aesthetics aren't simply about style; it's an appreciation for showing how architecture could come alive. We're thinking well beyond the idea of a picturesque backdrop like a park. We're not against that kind of use of nature, of course, but when you start to look at nature's incredible ability to regenerate and to photosynthesize, you think about how to attain that kind of complex self-sufficiency.

**You've also made energy visible when it usually isn't.**

**MP:** Yes, it's a different way of gaining knowledge that isn't through reading books. People get a visual measure of how much energy can be produced because the system we've built is transparent.

**What kind of reactions have you had?**

**CP:** We've had many, as we usually do with our pavilions. Because they are beautiful, people are generally fascinated. They often know something about algae, too, but they tend to be shocked by the idea of using it as a food source, even though most of the food we eat isn't served raw – there is a whole culture associated with cooking. So the question that is also evolving with our installation is, How do you eat algae? In the past we have collaborated with chefs to speculate on that. I'm Italian, so it's important that we are looking at function as well as desire. Someone commented to us that the installation appeared over-aestheticized to be productive. Actually, the energy systems we have now are aestheticized, too, but in a very brutal way. So I say: Don't worry about our aesthetics, we can just switch off the light if you don't want to see it! For us, the more important aspect is to reveal how the process is evolving.

**I've never eaten algae. Is it good?**

**CP:** When we presented at Expo Milan a few years ago, we developed a dessert that was similar to a Panna Cotta, and it was very good. The taste is somewhere between grass and nuts. *C.O. ecologicstudio.com*





