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**QuickTakes!**

## **Kean Industrial Design Students Gain Fame by Growing New Products with Mushroom® Materials**

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Is it possible to grow a guitar? A helmet? A tote bag? Working with patented Mushroom® Materials, Kean University industrial design students have done just that, growing a diverse array of products during the last academic year, and in the process gaining invaluable insights into the power and potential of sustainable design. The products designed by Kean undergraduate and graduate students are now on display at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF). Kean is one of only 12 colleges and universities nationwide to be invited to display student work at the major global design show.

“It was really interesting exploring the different applications of this material that we never heard of,” said Kean student Emily Saltysiak. “Creating consumer products out of nature’s own is awesome!”

After participating in a workshop on the use of mycelium materials developed by New York-based biomaterials company Ecovative, Robert Bush School of Design Industrial Design Program Director Efecem Kutuk incorporated this new materials science into his work at Kean’s Industrial Design studio. Ecovative pioneered the use of mycelium (mushroom roots) and often locally-sourced agricultural waste, such as hemp and cornstalks, to create non-toxic materials that are used in the packaging and furniture industries. Started in 2007 by then college students Eben Bayer and Gavin McIntyre, the company was built on the breakthrough idea that the mycelium of a mushroom can work as what they call ‘nature’s glue’ to bind agriculture salvage together, making it possible to biofabricate an array of sustainable products.

At Kean, what began as the GIY (grow-it-yourself) studio project in Fall 2016, was then opened up to the entire industrial design program. Students were challenged to create everyday objects using grown materials, with the caveat that all components of their products – paint, glue, fabric fasteners – had to be sustainable.

“When I introduced this project to my students, I remembered the words of designer and educator Victor Papanek: ‘There are professions more harmful than industrial design but

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only a few of them,” said Director Kutuk. “I tried to inspire my students to focus on sustainable thinking to create awareness of how we can follow an alternate route to design everyday objects. It pushed them to explore the opportunities in mass production in a sustainable manner.”

Twelve of the student GIY mycelium industrial product designs are on display at the 29<sup>th</sup> annual ICFF at New York City’s Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, May 21-24, in Booth 2956. ICFF features more than 750 exhibitors from “all points of the globe” and opens its doors to the general public on Wednesday, May 24.

“There is a growing awareness that industrial designers must take into consideration where the materials they use to create products come from, what effect those materials have on the people using the products, and what happens to the products and component parts at the end of its useful life,” said Ecovative Chief Evangelist Jeff Betts, who met with Kean University students and provided guidance on the project. “Sustainable design is quickly becoming a fundamental component of any project. Sustainable design is quickly becoming a fundamental component of any project. Kean University recognizes the value of that and is preparing its students to be leaders in the biofabricated future.”

“Kean University’s industrial design program continues to push the boundaries of design explorations, combining new materials and new systems of thinking. Students and program faculty are committed to excellence in design that serves the public interest. The program is a vital component of Kean’s commitment to the field of design,” said David Mohny, FAIA, Dean, Michael Graves College.