

Hypernatural: Brave. New. Designs.

Description

First there was biomimicry; now there's hypernatural architecture.

Artists, architects and students worldwide are beginning to explore the concept of designing with crystals and algae.

At the International Building Exhibition in Hamburg in 2012, the BIQ House debuted with a bio-skin of micro-algae cultivated in glass elements to produce energy and control light and shade.

"What's profound is that living organisms are being used in a way never used before – to call it biomimicry would be wrong, but to call it biodesign would be more appropriate," says Blaine Brownell, author of *Hypernatural: Architecture's New Relationship with Nature*.

Brownell cites also two artists – one in Great Britain and another in Japan – who are experimenting with crystalline structures. The British artist has sealed an apartment from the exterior and "grown" a crystal environment inside. The Japanese artist is creating furniture from crystals.

"To the lay person, at a minimum it's a really jaw-dropping stunning experience, he says. "It's like going to see a jewelry display in a museum."

It is, he says, geological design – and its potential is just beginning to be explored.

When students at the University of Minnesota recently wrapped a four-inch PVC pipe in polyester material, then applied borax crystals, they created a new kind of building block – and created a structure from it.

"Crystals formed on the surface and then the tube was removed," he says. "They were growing a building product out of a water solution -and these crystals don't melt, even in a hot climate."

So what's the takeaway here?

"By working with nature, we can create more thoughtful and more environmentally aware products to give people an insight and appreciation for nature," he says. It means better design and higher performing machines and equipment because of working with nature."

For more on *Hypernatural*, go [here](#).

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Author

mike

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