

Gairai Dougui (2023) by Susanne Goetz and Theanne Schiros, FIT. Inspired by nature, this compostable piece is made of mushroom mycelium, cotton and wool fabric, and natural dye. Photo by Jessica Talos.

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Soil to Surface

Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) Art and Design Gallery
Opening Reception, September 24, 5–7 pm
Exhibition On View September 24–November 1, 2026

WHAT: ***Soil to Surface*** brings together the work of small-scale women farmers, women's cooperatives, and internationally recognized designers from Türkiye, alongside work by students, faculty, and alumni from **FIT's School of Art and Design**. The exhibition, which opens during **New York Textile Month** and **Climate Week 2026**, explores an alternative approach to material and design in which farmers, craftspeople, artists, and designers are positioned as equal contributors. Agricultural byproducts and locally sourced textile materials are transformed through technical experimentation and contemporary design, demonstrating new possibilities for sustainable, local, and value-driven creative practices.

"We look forward to the exhibition creating a space to exchange ideas and deepen artistic connections," said Susanne Goetz, chair, FIT Textile/Surface Design and co-curator of the exhibition. "It's an exciting opportunity to show the work around natural dyes that's been going on at FIT for many years and how that's tied to scientific research that's always guided by design."

"*Soil to Surface* is about making visible what often remains invisible: the knowledge behind a material, the hands behind a process, and the relationships that allow an agricultural byproduct to take on an entirely new life," said Birnur Temel Birtane, co-curator of *Soil to Surface* and founding director of **MILKist Social Design Center**, an organization that transforms agricultural byproducts and waste into sustainable materials, culture, and creative

futures. “At FIT, these ideas enter a new context—one where they can be shared, questioned, and expanded through new conversations and collaborations.”

“*Soil to Surface* brings together important questions addressing where materials come from, who has knowledge about them, whose labor is valued, and how design can participate in more sustainable and equitable systems,” said Fawz Kabra, curator, FIT Art and Design Gallery. “As a college gallery, we have an opportunity not simply to show the results of this project, but to make the process of exchange and experimentation part of the exhibition itself. Material knowledge is in direct dialogue with the educational, experimental, and interdisciplinary culture of FIT.”

Soil to Surface is realized through a collaboration between FIT’s School of Art and Design and MILKist Social Design Center, and presented as part of the **Second Harvest project**, developed in partnership with Anadolu Efes and the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye**.

WHO: Participating artists from FIT: **Juliana Cho**, assistant professor, Fashion Design; **Heaven Leigh Cluesman**, student, Footwear and Accessories Design; **Whitney Crutchfield**, assistant professor, Textile Development and Marketing; **Delfina Farías** (FIT ’23); **Susanne Goetz**, chair, Textile/Surface Design; **Nomi Dale Kleinman**, assistant professor, Textile/Surface Design; **Vrushti Mehta** (FIT ’26); **Mimi Prober** (FIT ’12), creative director and founder at Mimi Prober; **Theanne Schiros**, professor, Science and Mathematics; **Ajoy Sarkar**, professor and assistant chair, Textile Development and Marketing; **Jeffrey Silberman**, retired professor, Textile Development and Marketing; **Stephanie Stickle** (FIT ’20); **Maria Van Horn**, adjunct instructor, Accessories Design.

Participants from Türkiye: **Başak Cankeş**, **Çiğdem Kaçar Selimoğlu**, **Burcu Sülek**, **Studio Birtane**, designers; **Nurşan Güneş**, **Nermin Çerçil**, **Ayşe Güneş Havva Değirmenci**, **Emel Duman**, farmers and natural dyers; **Cara Marie Piazza**, **Sunaina Bhalla**, **Sarah Nsikak,** guest artists. Women’s cooperatives from Adiyaman, Türkiye: Eliyaman Women’s Initiative Cooperative and Fortuna Women Entrepreurs Cooperative. Association of Women Tie-Dyers from Guinea (supported by There Is No Limit Foundation), and artisans supported by Mariama Fashion Production in Kindia, Guinea; and in Abidjan and Grand-Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire.

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