Slime! The Domesticated Aesthetic of DIY-Goo

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Recently, homemade "DIY-slime", created from a variety homefound ingredients and dubbed a child cultural phenomenon, has become a global trend with more than 20 million videos instructing in its creation and use on YouTube and Instagram. According to The Telegraph (13.12.2017), the year 2017 could even be termed "Year of the Slime" with "How to make slime?" being the most popular "how to" Google query by UK residents in 2017. The phenomenon has been celebrated as a trend that creates economic opportunities for young slime enthusiasts, whose social media following has brought them both sponsorships and possibilities for running home industries of their own. In particular, slime has been connected to wellness, with many of the YouTube videos competing in their ability to trigger the acoustic and visual stimuli for anxiety relieving ASMR-experiences.

From the combined perspective of cultural studies, aesthetics and childhood studies, the trend is, however, especially interesting as a phenomenon in that celebrates touch – one of the arguably "lower" senses – and because it relates to the history of child cultural appropriation of "kets", items judged as useless by adults. In this domain, DIY-slime’s aesthetic, celebrating "trash" and seeking to evoke both disgust and pleasure, is familiar both from "spectacularly disgusting" monster entertainment, such as Ghostbusters or the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and from Mattel’s toys and Nickelodeon’s TV programming from 1970’s and ’80’s, which sold "slimes" in plastic trash cans and organised "slime tours". In comparison to these "oozy green slimes" the current trend seems somewhat "domesticated" in terms of the kitschy aesthetic it evokes: the tutorials resemble cooking videos, in addition to which some slimes are spiced with glitter and rainbow colors, perchance in an attempt to tempt girl customers.

Furthermore, although the phenomenon is easily labeled children’s culture, it engages also adults and even appears to be lead by them. In this, the slime trend raises a variety of questions related to gender(ing), and children’s agency as well as cross-generational play. In our presentation, we wish to approach these questions through aesthetic theories and a content analysis of a selection of YouTube-videos.

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