

Assignment 4: Interview with Nur Horsanali

Cilia: The first question is: How would you define, or how do these terms define, your practices of teaching, researching, and art-making? Could you answer that question by speaking from within and about your practices, perhaps giving examples of your work?

Nur: I'll start by saying that I am a designer by training. I studied product design, however I no longer work with products in a traditional sense. Instead, I explore material culture and the built environment, looking at how humans interact with these realms—how we connect with the matter around us. My approach is fluid, blending elements of both academic rigor and experiential exploration. I learn and research by experiencing, often using methods like autoethnography and first-person accounts. Observing myself and learning from my own lived experiences play a significant role in how I conduct research. Currently, I teach in the design department at an art academy. While my work still relates to products, we take a broad approach to design, more akin to art education. My official title is 'context teacher,' a term I strongly connect with. Essentially, I teach theory, but rather than simply delivering lectures or assigning readings, my role is to help students make connections. I guide them in understanding that design, like all creative practices, never exists in isolation—it is always embedded in social, political, and environmental contexts. Currently, my artistic work largely functions as a means of communicating my research and teaching—through books, publications, exhibitions, and public programs.

Cilia: How do these different practices of teaching, researching, and art-making overlap? How do they interact with each other? Would you describe them as a compost pile, where everything nurtures and transforms together? Do you have another metaphor that captures their relationship?

Nur: A metaphor that resonates with me is that of symbiotic microorganisms—living together, influencing each other, and adapting in response to their environment. They are not always equal; sometimes, one practice dominates more than the others, but they all contribute to a larger whole. I try to bring artistic elements into my teaching. For example, I incorporate meditation exercises and other embodied learning techniques into my lectures, though I still consider myself a student in this area. It is something I want to explore further. I often find myself questioning the purpose of my artistic practice—how it reaches people, how it impacts the world. Teaching, on the other hand, provides an immediate sense of purpose and connection.

Cilia: You work a lot with more-than-human beings. Do you feel they teach you something? Do you think they conduct research or create art? How do they influence your work?

Nur: What a beautiful question. More-than-human beings teach me how to be a better human—how to care, how to appreciate life. I came to this realization later in life. Growing up, I didn't see them as teachers, but now I consider learning from them to be a lifelong process. I believe they create art—perhaps they *are* art. They also teach me how to see art in the world around me. However, I don't think they conduct research in the way humans do. Research is about making sense of things, forming connections, and communicating ideas. More-than-human beings already exist in a state of deep knowing; they don't need to conduct research. In my teaching and research, I try to create accessible ways for people to learn from more-than-human beings. I emphasize non-anthropocentric perspectives.

Cilia: Which beings—human and more-than-human—inspire you in your teaching, research, and art-making?

Nur: My artist friends and my collective, *Sympoietic Society*, inspire me deeply. I learn a lot from the experience of being in a collective, even through its challenges. My students also inspire me, particularly their fresh perspectives and criticality. As for places, Finland's sea, water, snow, and ice have been my teachers. They introduced me to ideas of interconnectedness. My hometown, Istanbul, is another great inspiration—a complex being in itself, full of human and more-than-human interactions. It taught me about pluriversality and the coexistence of multiple ways of being.

Cilia: In our collective, *Sympoietic Society*, do you think we engage in teaching, researching, and art-making? How do they overlap?

Nur: I see our collective as a learning community. We teach and learn from each other without formal roles. Our research is deeply intertwined with art-making—we explore ideas through creative practice rather than traditional academic research. Our research is embodied, artistic, and deeply meaningful in its own way.