

Introduction

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In 2006, Documenta 12 director Roger Buergel announced Ferran Adrià's inclusion in the 2008 fair. Best known as an avant-garde chef specializing in sensory-challenging, conceptual cuisine at his restaurant El Bulli, Adrià's place on the roster of artists marked the first time that Documenta had invited a professional chef. Adrià's practice has never been far from concerns of the art world, however. Beginning in 2001, he began creating a visual catalogue of all of the dishes conceived at El Bulli, as well as at its experimental culinary laboratory workshop, El Taller. In 2008, Phaidon, best known for producing glossy, coffee table art books, published *A Day in the Life of El Bulli*, which tracks the operations of the restaurant through 600 pages of lush photographs of dishes, the kitchen, and food-stained, handwritten recipes. Adrià had also previously made visual contributions to art exhibitions. These include photographs and thought-boards for an exhibition about chefs and their creative processes at the Palau Robert in Barcelona, and designing a series of specialized kitchen tools for an exhibition about industrial design at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Food and art critics alike have likened Adrià's conceptualization of dishes and scientific culinary methods to artistic genius.¹ Documenta was no different in acclaiming Adrià as an artist-genius. Buergel writes: "[Adrià] almost single-handedly . . . managed to transform the way in which we perceive food. . . . His lesson is a straightforward one, a fact reflected by the strong interest his creativity arouses."² Pop Artist Richard Hamilton has been similarly effusive in his words, citing Adrià's "poetic sensibility" and continuing to praise the "lyrical quality in what he does."³ Many had anticipated that Adrià's participation in Documenta, due to cuisine being a non-traditional medium for art, would stir up controversy

¹ See the recently published book *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, eds. Richard Hamilton and Vicente Todolí (New York, NY: Actar, 2009).

² Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack, "One Artist," in *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, 77.

³ Richard Hamilton, "Thought for Food," in *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, 50.

and encourage a dialogue about the fluidity of disciplinary categories in contemporary art. However, few questioned the boundaries of the art fair, or of the chef's own culinary practice, and, more importantly, little was done to concretely bring the two fields into conversation.

Rather than conceiving of a new project for the art fair, Adrià's contribution was to reserve a table for two at El Bulli in Spain, whose seats would be filled nightly by attendees of the art fair in Kassel, Germany. Every night, two different randomly selected diners were flown to Spain for the evening to eat a multicourse, conceptual meal. During the course of Documenta 12, this table served as one of the art fair's pavilions: the offsite Pavillion G. According to descriptions by the visiting Documenta diners, it was difficult to characterize what exactly was happening. One described the experience as "something beyond words," and some produced photographs or drawings to attempt to visually describe their experience.⁴ While the art-goers were not sure how to engage with the El Bulli meal *as art*, Marta Arzak and Josep Maria Pinto point out that Adrià was likewise surprised by the "general lack of knowledge within the art world for the world of avant-garde cuisine."⁵

Adrià's inclusion in Documenta 12 specifically highlighted the role of food as a mediator in aesthetic experience and the disciplines into which it intervenes, but it also revealed the lack of a shared and sustained vocabulary with which to describe this experience. The coming together of art and food at Documenta speaks to a confluence of concerns in the art world and the world of cuisine—namely the paramount role of food beyond a biological imperative. This issue of *Invisible Culture*, "Aesthetes and Eaters: Food and Artistry," takes food to be a multifaceted practice that includes the production and consumption of food, as well as modes of sociality specific to cooking and eating. We seek to situate these practices outside of strict disciplinary boundaries, and in many cases to disrupt them.

The history of food in art is rich and varied. Pop artists such as Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg often used food products (and food brands) to comment on popular culture and consumerism. In the same period, food products were also used as materials for sculptural works. Piero Manzoni's "Achrome" paintings often featured organic items such as bread or eggs. In his "snare pictures," Daniel Spoerri glued the leftovers of a meal to the tabletop, and then

⁴ Juan Dávila and Graeme Smith, "Feedback," in *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, 137.

⁵ Marta Arzak and Josep Maria Pinto, "Ferran Adrià's Participation in Documenta 12," in *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, 108.

mounted it at 90 degrees on a gallery wall; he would also eventually open his own restaurant, Restaurant de la Galerie J, in the space of an art gallery. Tom Marioni similarly created a bar inside an art gallery, and the Fluxus movement often organized conceptual meals. In the early 1970s, the artist Gordon Matta-Clark co-owned and worked in the SoHo restaurant "FOOD," which was frequented by many of the artists who lived or worked in the neighborhood and which often hosted elaborate, conceptually-themed dinners with artists serving as guest chefs.

Art historians have acknowledged the food-themed or food-based works by artists better known for other kinds of work; however, little scholarship has been done on the qualities and meanings particular to the use of food, its preparation, and its spaces as an *artistic medium*. Instead, food has often served as only a symbol of other cultural or aesthetic themes. One prominent example of this practice is Nicolas Bourriaud's classic study on 1990s art, *Relational Aesthetics*. For Bourriaud, the Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's gallery feasts, in which the artist prepares curry for gallery or museum visitors, are representative of a new form of sociality and artistic participation in the art space. However, he does not examine the specific practice of food in Tiravanija's staged social relations.

Food production and the theorization of food preparation as a form of artistry share with the art projects discussed above a concern with the formal characteristics of the food object. Philosophers such as Elizabeth Telfer, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Allen S. Weiss have variously attempted to define and explore the aesthetic nature of food and eating in terms of other theoretical or philosophical models of experience, such as the sublime. In his essay, "How Can Food Be Art?", Kuehn uses the philosophy of John Dewey to argue for a transformative potential of aesthetic experience, and, more broadly, for the potential of aesthetic experience to occur in daily encounters. As an aesthetic object, the various ephemeral properties of food—its temporality, its necessary destruction through consumption, its usually non-mimetic nature, and its general inutility as a medium to express or record its creator's emotion—might be seen as negating food from the context of art; Kuehn argues instead that "an aesthetics of food shows another way in which primal aspects of valuing how we live can be expressed through articulate modes of experience."⁶ While food, and the artistry involved in it, may not conform to a strict

⁶ Glenn Kuehn, "How Can Food Be Art?", in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, eds. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 210.

philosophical aesthetics, it does perhaps lead to a different mode of aesthetics in which our experiences in the social and everyday world become the site of artful meaning-making. Sociologists Jonathan Murdoch and Mara Miele have examined alternative food movements such as Slow Food and Locavorism in terms of sensory and reflexive experience, conceiving of food as both an aesthetic and ethical practice.

The study of food, through an examination of its properties beyond purely biological or functional ones, might contribute to a theorization of everyday life that takes aesthetics into account. The tools and language used to enact this examination share much with art historical discourse and criticism in terms of definitions of what constitutes an art object, and might also be used to elucidate the specific role of food in works of art. Our goal for this issue is to undertake an exploration of food and art that includes and interrelates both social and art historical theories. Part of this involves the creation of a multisensory platform to fit the multisensory dimensions of food in, and as, art. To do so, we have included peer-reviewed academic essays, experimental writings, art projects, videos, and sounds to challenge not only what might be considered a work of art, but also to explore under-analyzed sensory forms that a work of art can take.

The first section of the issue, "Eating Words," contains propositions for written and sensory vocabularies that might be used to discuss food in the arts and food as an art.⁷ Yael Raviv's essay "Eating My Words" examines a series of artistic, performance-based projects mounted at the 2008 Umami: food and art festival in New York. Charting the ways we discuss food as a medium in both artistic and culinary practices, Raviv uses the work of aesthetic philosophers to consider different critical terminologies with which to discuss the experience of food and eating. Raviv's argument, as well as her position as a performance studies scholar and producer of the Umami: food and art festival, demonstrate the potential of food to help us rethink our ideas of artistic value, and points to the need for a new language that takes account of its multidisciplinary and multisensory meanings as performance, art, craft, and cultural production. Mimi Oka and Doug Fitch, an artist group discussed in Raviv's article, have contributed photographic documentation of

⁷ The following refers to the structure and thematic layout of the online version of this issue. See: http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_14/index.html.

their work “Orphic Memory Sausage,” a performance in which any and all items were ritualistically combined into a large sausage link and distributed among the audience-participants. In their companion essay, Oka and Fitch redefine “edibility” and the ways in which their artistic practice challenges traditional notions of what it means to consume. In “How to Cook a Heart with Butcher Mario Ribaud: Dialogues of 4 Heart Recipes,” Annie Rachele Lanzillotto collaborates with the Arthur Avenue Retail Market in the Bronx to create visual and narrative descriptions of family traditions and recipes. Francisco M. Palma-Dias’s “Liquefied Lusitania: A Paradoxical Country” explores the natural and gastronomic richness of Portugal and the recently renewed interest in centuries-old agricultural practices. We are excited to publish it here in partial-translation for the first time as an example of the potential of experimental writing practices to encapsulate the meanings of a particular food ecology and its itinerant meanings and politics.

Our second section, “Kitchen Paraphernalia,” collects together projects that examine the potentially non-culinary uses and meanings of kitchen and eating utensils. One of the most elaborate explorations of this theme occurs in the work of the musical composer and performer Fast Forward, whose instruments in the work “Musique à la Mode (MALMO)” are materials generally used for the preparation and consumption of food. We include here the visual score for MALMO, the video documentation of Fast Forward’s solo performance in New York, as well as the online premiere of two sound recordings of the newly-conceived quartet performance in Berlin (comprised of Fast Forward, David Moss, David Linton, and Michael Evans). Nicole Peyrafitte tests the sensory and spatial definitions of food and performance through her “mélange” work, “The Bi-Continental Chowder.” In this video documentation of the performance, Peyrafitte recounts poetry, dances, and narrates and cooks a chowder to impart to the audience a sensory connection of memory, culture, and place represented by her two homes—Albany, NY and Luchon, France. As a soundtrack to eating, Anthony Leslie has curated a musical playlist inspired by the sounds of food production and consumption. Kate Hanson’s article, “The Language of the Banquet: Reconsidering Paolo Veronese’s *Marriage at Cana*,” looks to renaissance rituals, and tools of the banquet to consider the contemporaneous reception of Veronese’s painting. Hanson also elucidates the value of a social history of food and eating to the field of art historical analysis.

Our third section, “Leftover Menus,” explores the medium of the menu. The artist group EIDIA is best known for its video work “The Starving Artist Cookbook (1986-1991),” which documents, through 150 video segments, artists such as Lynda Benglis, Louise Bourgeois, Tony Conrad, Lawrence Weiner, Jonas Mekas, and John Cage (whose “Soup des Jours” is included on our website) cooking their favorite recipes from their personal menus. The work’s aim was to explore the idea of an artist’s actual relation to life practices, and as a final documentation of artistic communality—a form of artistic life that the artists perceived to be disappearing in the 1980s. Out of a discussion of this work with this issue’s co-editor Paula Pinto, EIDIA has allowed *Invisible Culture* to host, for the first time online, three segments from their earlier work “The Chelsea Tapes (1983-1991),” one of which documents the initial conception of “The Starving Artist Cookbook.” EIDIA’s original textual contribution, “Eat me!,” rethinks the historical moment of the work’s production, and the specific use of food as a means of exploring artists and their social standing. Rebecca Federman, a librarian at the New York Public Library’s culinary collection and author of the blog Cooked Books, shares a series of her favorite menus, historical and eccentric, from the online holdings of the NYPL’s impressive repository, and considers the possibilities of this collection for future research. Artist Steve Dalachinsky’s project playfully imagines what might have existed on the menu board if Kafka had owned a deli.

Changing perceptions of food, especially in terms of its various sensory apprehensions, frame the projects in our fourth section, “Do Fish Smell?” Barbara Philipp’s video “La Belle Vue/The Great View,” originally an installation piece but displayed here on its own as a video work, is an obscured video recording of a musty wine cellar that paradoxically emphasizes senses other than the visual. Cary Levine’s article “You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy’s Food-Flinging Frenzies” explores McCarthy’s use of food products in his performances, in particular analyzing these works in relation to theoretical and cultural definitions of compulsive consumption in gustatory, sexual, and economic forms, themes relevant to 1960s American culture in which the works were produced. Most importantly, Levine’s article demonstrates the power of food to serve as a demarcation of various types of social norms, as well as a clear signal of when these norms are crossed. While not dealing explicitly with food, Katie McGowan’s experimental audio documentary “The Smell of Eddie Griggs’ Dad Lying Next to the Christmas Tree After Pouring Concrete” takes on an expanded definition of aesthetic

experience by focusing on smell, bringing together narratives of memory through musings on the olfactory. Bioproduction and food manufacture have served as key political discussions in the public sphere, and the confusion and rhetoric around these issues informs “Free Range Grain” by Critical Art Ensemble, Beatriz da Costa, and Shyh-shiun Shyu. Building a food testing facility inside a museum, the project develops an immediate and public science in order to demystify the origins of food. *Invisible Culture* reproduces here the project statement and visual materials documenting the project.

Our final section, “On the Edge of the Table,” elaborates the potential of food’s surreal and uncanny qualities. Photographer Susana Reisman playfully recreates masterpieces of Minimalist and Conceptual art using food and serving ware, prompting Marusya Bociurkiw to examine their affective potential in her companion essay to the works. Janine Catalano looks to the underside of surrealism in her essay “Distasteful: An Investigation of Food’s Subversive Function in René Magritte’s *The Portrait* and Meret Oppenheim’s *Ma Gouvernante—My Nurse—Mein Kindermädchen*.” Using Georges Bataille’s theoretical writings on the eye and debasement, Catalano argues that the surrealist works she discusses challenge the viewer’s ideas about consumption in visual and physical terms, and thus provide a politics of eating. Julia Pine’s “Breaking Dalinian Bread: On Consuming the Anthropomorphic, Performative, Ferocious, and Eucharistic Loaves of Salvador Dalí” presents an alternative narrative of Dalí’s career, using his obsession with bread as its crux.

Taken as a piece, these writings and works emphasize the variety of forms and meanings that the coming together of food and art can take. They also reveal the critical potential of aesthetes and eaters to expand the parameters of artistic practice, art history, and cultural studies.