The Artist's Restaurant: Taste and the Performative Still Life

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Abstract

The Artist's Restaurant: Taste and the Performative Still Life
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This thesis examines twentieth and twenty-first century artworks that have taken the form of food service sites of varying scale, menu, clientele, and duration, and it proposes an interpretation of artist's restaurants as a contemporary extension of the historical still life genre – that they have become performative still lifes. Seventeenth-century Dutch still life images, particularly *pronk* or opulent still life, and humble breakfast pieces, are addressed as counterparts to the contemporary artist's restaurant; Ancient Greek and Roman *xenia*, and sixteenth and seventeenth-century market stall images are also analyzed in relationship to these contemporary artworks. Also foundational for this thesis project are the relationship between aesthetic taste and gustatory taste as taken up in eighteenth-century philosophy, as well as nineteenth-century gastronomy and restaurant practices.

Still life has at times been denigrated in philosophy and art history as a lowly genre tied to bodily impulses of appetite that confuses gustatory taste and aesthetic taste. Still life images have also been investigated for their moral significance, as representations of commodities and social conditions, as rhetorical structures, and as displays of commensality and social relations around food. This thesis investigates these very qualities as motivating factors for contemporary artists who are reinventing the genre through edible, performative still lifes. The core qualities of the institution we today call "the restaurant" are investigated with particular emphasis on their utility in defining social relations around material things. These include proto-restaurants (inns and taverns,) quasi-restaurants (street stalls, cookshops and traiteurs), and the modern restaurant. The ten artist's restaurants that provide the case studies for this thesis use food, décor, and architecture to present rhetorical structures of seduction and persuasion to their participants. In relation to discourses of public art, these artist's restaurants mobilize the rhetoric of "the public" to give their projects an air of urgency and they develop economies of generosity to demonstrate an investment in the well being of communities (ATSA, Spurse). Some case studies capitalize on the associations between traditional foods, ethnic and social identity, and commodities: to create forms of auto-ethnography (Rirkrit Tiravanija); to present hybrid identities (Karen Tam); to destabilize binaries of identity and policies of multiculturalism in the wake of colonialism (Carsten Höller, Peter Morin); and to confuse connections between social class and aesthetic taste (Daniel Spoerri, Dean Baldwin). Additionally artist's restaurants that present ambiguous, difficult to identify foods are discussed in relation to the sublime, which is a form of experience that destabilizes the human subject, and to queer aesthetics, which celebrates ambiguity (Queer Food for Love, elBulli).

Still lifes that include food often describe a cumulative moment when the ingredients for a noble feast or a frugal meal come together on the table. Artists continue to explore the arrested instant before dining commences, as well as its aftermath while this thesis argues that artists' restaurants also set in motion a new kind of performative still life, where the aesthetic qualities, physical space, social relations, and political context of the restaurant are folded into the very taste of the artwork itself.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Dr. Ernest and Linda Clintberg, two people who have passed on their love of comfort foods and rituals of the table. My mother's ability to combine prepackaged food commodities (such as Dream Whip) and artisanal baked goods she made by hand (blueberry pies, breads) – with no irony or hint of contradiction – has long inspired me. In secondary school my father supported my desires to conduct a survey of so-called "weeds" growing in our suburban neighborhood to identify edible species, thus encouraging me to look past colloquial wisdom about edibility and consider these maligned species as a bounty worth celebrating and ingesting. These two incredible people have willingly, enthusiastically eaten everything I have ever made them – even weedy salad. I offer my loving thanks to them.

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This project would not have been possible without my Ph.D. advisor, Dr. Johanne Sloan, who has assisted me in refining my research topic and this dissertation with such patience and generosity. Her input has been instrumental in toning its methodology, and her careful, skillful editorial work has been above and beyond the call of duty. This scholar listened carefully to my initial research proposal, agreed to take me on as a student, and worked with me to bring focus (and taste) to this topic. Dr. Sloan encouraged me to think critically about the use of commodities and identities in these contemporary artworks, and helped me bring to light the analogic relationship between gustatory and aesthetic tastes – among many other subjects. Thank you Johanne: it has been a genuine pleasure to work with an advisor who understood the importance of having delicious food at every one of our meetings. My doctoral committee, Dr. Bronwen Wilson, Dr. David Howes, Dr. Martha Langford and Dr. Annie Gérin, have given generous feedback, provocative questions, and supportive advice. Dr. Hanneke Grootenboer, my host supervisor at Oxford University, has been a rigorous interlocutor and great aid in my research. She welcomed me into her lectures, guided me through the still life collection of the Ashmolean Museum, unflinchingly tutored me following Socratic method over tea service, and introduced me to entirely new ways of considering the still life genre. Thank you to these incredible academics.

While researching my Ph.D. thesis, I have often been asked to provide the “cocktail party version” of my research topic to new colleagues. This expression, a commonplace in graduate work, is intended to prompt from the student a pithy but exciting summary of their area of study, argument, and case studies, all condensed into

one appetizing mouthful. Instead of denigrating the cocktail party as a lesser, frivolous form, I hope this thesis will cause a serious consideration of such gatherings as potentially meaningful, thoughtful, even political sites. Discussions at cocktail parties have in fact served as one of the most beneficial components of my research process. I include a short list of reflective and generous fellow-diners and hosts: Team elBulli (Jeff S. Kulak, Ebony Bertorelli, Daniel Weatherhill, and Garner Beggs), Zoë Chan, Ryan Crouchman, Jim Verburg, Sondra Meszaros, Justin Waddell, Candice Tarnowski, Zoe Mapp, Anthea Black, Gentiane Belanger, Anithe de Carvalho, Anne Marie Ninacs, Jennifer Roberts, Nicole Burisch, Zoë Tousignant, Sharon Murray, Dr. Anna Waclawek, Dina Vescio, Mike Rattray, Sarah Watson, Eduardo Ralikas, Kitty Scott, Jesse McKee, Alexis Sornin, Ian Scott McGregor, Larissa Muzzy, Palen Lehr, Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay, Jason Friedman, Noeli, Karen Zupiger, K.G. Guttmann, Shié Kasai and Dac Chartrand.

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Finally, and most importantly, I thank the artists I discuss in these pages. Your work has challenged, provoked, attracted my appetite and – sometimes – roused my disgust … in the best possible way. Thank you for feeding me.

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Preface

The germ for this thesis first occurred to me while visiting documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany in 2007. The curators of that year's festival, Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack, included the famed molecular gastronomy chef Ferran Adrià, known for his strange culinary creations fabricated using high-tech processes at the three Michelin star restaurant elBulli, in their exhibition (fig. 1). Critical reactions to this decision were mixed, but many high profile art critics including Adrian Searle and Robert Hughes were puzzled and even aggressively against this curatorial choice. Many colleagues of mine at *The Art Newspaper*, where I was working as a freelance journalist that year, were dismissive of documenta 12 and particularly of Adrià's involvement. It seemed to be that year's love-to-hate exhibition. Debate about this curatorial framing of Adrià's restaurant as an artwork continue, as with *e-flux Journal's* "Art Without Artists?" by Anton Vidokle, which cites documenta's use of elBulli as a "curatorial embarrassment."[1]

I was crestfallen to learn that Adrià's cuisine was not available in Kassel as part of documenta. No analyses, photographs or any other documentation of Adrià's culinary practice appeared in the exhibition. Instead, a lottery system was devised whereby visitors to the exhibition were "randomly" selected and sent on an all expenses paid trip to Spain to experience elBulli's food. From the moment it became clear that I was not a winner in this lottery, I was determined to accomplish two things: to understand the

[1] www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-artists/ . Site accessed July 13, 2013. First published in 2010.

negative reactions to this chef's inclusion in an art exhibition, and to eat at elBulli. With the deposit of this thesis I have happily accomplished both of these goals - and more.

Although I cannot say I found it to be a critically insightful exhibition on the whole, Noack and Bruegel's willful designation of a restaurant as an exhibition venue innovatively implied that they as curators – not as artists – also had the power to designate a restaurant as an artwork. Unfortunately, the written material and statements this curatorial duo contributed to explain Adrià's involvement did not venture much further than asserting that the chef showed evidence of "artistic intelligence," a quality they did not go to the trouble of defining or debating as the rationale for his involvement. A form of reserved praise, the curators' appraisal stopped one notch short of declaring Adrià an artist – an identity the chef himself has refused many times in print and during press events. elBulli's role in documenta seemed to me, and still does seem, a missed opportunity for the curators: first, to reflect in depth on the relationship between Adrià's technically sophisticated foods and the legacy of the many other artists who have served edible creations to audiences; and second, to root out the relationship – or lack thereof – between food, art, and aesthetics that seemed to motivate some critics to negatively critique elBulli's contributions to documenta.

elBulli is exceptional in this study since it was maintained by a chef who made no claims to be an artist; professional, practicing artists have established all the other case studies examined herein. For my purposes, the question is not whether Adrià is an artist or not. Rather, we should ask: what pivotal antecedent artworks have led to a moment where it would occur to two curators to include his restaurant as an exhibition venue and artwork in one of the largest recurring art exhibitions in the world; and what other artist's

restaurants have been established since elBulli's well publicized initiation into the world of contemporary art? These questions have served to orient my study over the last five years.

Chapter One: The Artist's Restaurant: Introduction

This thesis examines twentieth and twenty-first century artworks that have taken the form of food service sites of varying scale, menu, clientele, and duration, and it proposes an interpretation of artists' restaurants as a contemporary extension of the historical still life genre. The artist's restaurant, now a trope of contemporary art production, is a place where food that has been cooked, designed, or selected by the artist is served to participants who are often also customers. At these sites décor, architecture, and service are all specially designed as framing devices for edible objects that are intended to carry interpretive value for the diner-participant. Many examples of still life are devoted to the depiction of edible goods that are surrounded by architectural and decorative details, utensils, and vessels - and these images have often been approached by art historians as having interpretive value on political, economic or spiritual registers. The artist's restaurant similarly puts food on display as a kind of live or *performative still life*; in these contemporary examples the still life genre's foundational quality of stillness is interrupted, and food travels through the frame, and is eaten by the participant.

Seventeenth-century Dutch still life images have a special importance in this thesis. These images were created in an early, frenetic moment of growth in the development of capitalism. At this time the category of the commodity and the functions of the marketplace were dramatically shifting – and still life images from this period represent such commodities and serve as evidence of the particular operation of economies in Northern Europe. We might say that today we find capitalism in another, more geopolitically expansive, frenetic stage of its development - one where the circulation of commodities as well as their representation through various cultural forms

has achieved a new temper and velocity. In the present-day, globalization has resulted in very specific and far-reaching outcomes with respect to food commodities - outcomes that are distinct from the conditions of early capitalism. The ease of consumer access to many food commodities such as fruits and spices in North America, for instance, has increased to an extent that contrasts dramatically with consumer access to such goods in Northern Europe of the seventeenth-century. Today it is possible to walk down an urban thoroughfare in a city like Montreal and encounter and consume cuisines and ingredients from dozens of countries in a matter of steps. The conditions of capitalism today permit the middle-class North American consumer to contact, purchase, and eat a range of foods unimaginable in Europe four centuries ago. Indeed, because of these factors the importance for us to grapple with seventeenth-century Dutch still life now seems especially acute – in order to reckon with an early moment in capitalism's history and the way that commodity objects were then depicted and circulated (still life paintings being a commodity themselves), and to understand how and why contemporary artists continue to respond to and intervene in the flow of commodities by establishing sites of food service - at a moment when capitalism seems to have come to a climactic term.

This thesis focuses on still life images that are staged arrangements of objects that may appear meal-like, but in fact present a theatrical conceit of a meal. For this reason I do not discuss artworks that offer depictions of situations where groups or individuals are shown eating food, although such images are abundant in still life paintings of the seventeenth century (Jacob Jordaen's feasts and meals are striking examples), and while this category of representation extends into the nineteenth century, with works such as Edouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1862-1863) or Vincent Van Gogh's *The*

Potato Eaters (1885). The still life images I focus on do not invite us to observe other people while they eat, but instead these images provoke viewers to visually feast upon a painted depiction of food, suggesting that the depicted meal lies in wait for us, and solely exists for our enjoyment. These staged meal-scenarios appear to await the performer who will activate them.

Related to this point, there is a strong tradition of performance art practices that use food as a material and put the artist's own body centre stage before the spectator – in these cases, the artist is present, and it is she or he who interacts with foodstuffs while the audience watches. Artist's restaurants are in relationship with these types of practices, since both can be said to be ephemeral and performative. But artists' restaurants are distinct from many examples of performance art because the former position visitors not as spectators, but as active, responsive agents at immersive, carefully designed sites. At artists' restaurants, the artist is often absent, and the audience-member's body is at the centre of the artwork because she or he interacts with the restaurant environment and eats there.

This thesis investigates the core qualities of the institution that we today call "the restaurant" with particular emphasis on their utility in defining social relations around material things. These include proto-restaurants (inns and taverns), quasi-restaurants (street stalls, cookshops and traiteurs), and the modern restaurant. I will demonstrate that these types of food service sites have been places where social identity is expressed and contested, where social life is instigated between familiars and strangers, and where traditions and experimentations of food creation and food service are performed.

Contemporary artists harness and toy with these qualities through the establishment of artist's restaurants.

Relatively little scholarly attention has been given to artist's restaurants despite a flourishing of examples in the last two decades. Still life, too, has at times been considered an inferior genre that, as Norman Bryson has written, is "still thought of […] as not quite the province of the serious and ambitious student; not really the most recommendable topic for a dissertation that would wish to show its professional mettle."[2] Beyond the fact that my thesis is written as a direct counterargument to the kind of prejudice against still life that Bryson thoroughly excoriates in his book *Looking at the Overlooked*, I additionally argue that there is a connection between negative assessments of the genre of still life, and the gap in scholarly literature on the contemporary phenomenon of artist's restaurants. Both of these types of artwork bring to light the routes taken by philosophers – and other authors, including art historians – to explain aesthetic taste using analogies of gustatory taste. In many cases, perhaps most famously in the writing of German philosopher Immanuel Kant, the bodily roots of the very term "taste" have been elided or seen as irrelevant to the study of aesthetics, a second kind of "taste." This thesis therefore offers a selective review of philosophies that directly compare aesthetic taste and gustatory taste and by so doing either praise, problematize, or reject this homograph. I propose that artist's restaurants and still lifes that depict food serve as a bitter irritant for those who would seek to void aesthetic experiences of any bodily, non-cognitive, or non-visual components. For others, artist's restaurants and still life are thrilling sites for the consideration of gustatory taste's positive values as a set of

[2] Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (1990) First published London: Reaktion Books. 8

sensory experiences that are bodily, seductive, persuasive, and repellent by turns. At the crux of both the still life genre and artist's restaurants are crucial questions about the use of aesthetic philosophy in art history, and the utility of artworks that display the quotidian material of food.

My project takes a genealogical approach: beginning in the twenty-first century and reaching back to objects and discourses from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, to illuminate these contemporary art practices. My thesis therefore addresses the still life genre, with a special focus on Northern European examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this includes the various methods and interpretive modes developed by art historians studying the still life genre. I discuss currents in eighteenth-century philosophy that address analogies of gustatory and aesthetic taste. I also investigate nineteenth-century gastronomic theories and restaurant practices. This genealogical framework is used to set the stage for the twentieth- and twenty-first century artist's restaurant, a type of practice that unites the theories and modalities at play across epochs in these disciplines.

The primary case studies of this thesis are ten in number: Daniel Spoerri's *Un coup de dés* (1968, 2010 Düsseldorf); Ferran Adrià's restaurant elBulli, (1984-2011, Costa Brava, Spain); Rirkrit Tiravanija's ongoing food service works (1991-); collective Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable's (ATSA) serial project *État d'urgence* (1998-2010, Montreal); Karen Tam's series *Golden Mountain Restaurants* (2002-); *Team Diversity: World's Largest Bannock Attempt* (2005, Vancouver) by Peter Morin; artist's collective Spurse's *The Public Table: A restaurant presented by The Collective for the Finding of the Commons* (2006, New Haven; Bellows Falls); Carsten Höller's *The*

Double Club (2008-2009, London); Dean Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* (2010, Toronto); and *Queer Science: A Molecular Gaystronomy Laboratory* (2011, San Francisco) by the artist's collective Queer Food for Love.

I have chosen my case studies according to several criteria. Although I do not claim that this corpus is global in scope, these artworks were selected with the objective of presenting an international view of this phenomenon in contemporary art in terms of the locations where the works have been sited, and the cuisines they have involved. As will become evident, these case studies were also chosen for their ability to stand as counterpoints to one another, and in order to present different methods used by artists to deal with the thematic categories of Chapters Five through Seven: rhetoric, commodity and identity, and "difficult" foods. Finally, I chose to include a range of artworks that had been realized according to varied funding and sponsorship strategies: through financing or donations from communities, via direct corporate or institutional sponsorship, as entrepreneurial ventures, or through blends of these methods.

The majority of authors who have ventured to analyze artist's restaurants have often done so monographically, as with Catherine Morris' *Gordon Matta-Clark: Food* (2001), which does not thoroughly analyze the other artist's restaurants in this period by Daniel Spoerri (Düsseldorf) and Les Levine (New York), or give proper credit to Caroline Goodden's collaboration in this restaurant. Other monographic studies that give useful details about artist's restaurants include Françoise Bonnefoy's *Restaurant Spoerri* (2002), and publisher Progetto Prada Arte's unattributed *The Double Club* (2012) – but these do not situate their artworks in the larger field of artist's restaurants. Another example of this monographic approach is former Tate Museum director Vincente Todolí

and artist Richard Hamilton's largely pictorial account of the restaurant elBulli, *Food for Thought, Thought for Food* (2009), which orients (but does not analyze in detail) Ferran Adrià's contribution to documenta alongside antecedent works of art, including examples of seventeenth-century Dutch still life.

Alternately, artist's restaurants have been analyzed incidentally, and without a focus on food service, gustatory and aesthetic taste, or the history of restaurants, as in Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), which discusses edible artworks by Rirkrit Tiravanija, Gordon Matta-Clark, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and others. In recent years a few scholarly studies of edible artworks and artists who create sites of hospitality have appeared. *Foodculture: tasting identities and geographies in art,* (1999) edited by Barbara Fischer, charts out the philosophical debates that art historical discussions of multi-sensorial, food based practices have hinged on. This volume proposes that many artists (including Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Elaine Tin Nyo, and others) take advantage of food's powerful associations with personal identity in order to create kinds of sensorial self-portraits, and it raises for inspection the feminist and post-colonial registers of these practices. A second important contribution to the field is historian Cecilia Novero's *Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art* (2010), which focuses on food practices created by the historical and neo-avant gardes in Europe – taking the writing of Walter Benjamin as a starting point for discussions of altered states through ingestion – but this book does not deal with the history of restaurants or propose any connection between these food practices and still life. Similarly, *The Unexpected Guest: Art Writing and Thinking on Hospitality* (2013) edited by Sally Tallant and Paul Domela, while successfully problematizing the line between hospitality and hostility in many

contemporary art practices, does not give any detailed account of artist's restaurants, the connection between aesthetic taste and gustatory taste, or the particular form of the restaurant as a determining model for these artworks.[3] Finally, no sustained scholarly study approaches these artist's restaurants as an extension of the still life genre. This thesis attempts to address and bridge these lacunae, and also to problematize the artist's restaurant as a place not just for gustatory pleasure, but also one for food distribution, political activity, and intervention into economies.

The methodological strategy of this thesis draws on the scholarly inroads that have been made by art historians into the analysis of still life. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Two, still life has been denigrated at times: for being tied to lowly, everyday objects; for its dangerous ability to stir appetites; and for its associations with the domestic sphere and femininity. Despite these negative critiques, scholarly study of the genre by art historians has flourished. The iconographic tradition, pioneered by Erwin Panofsky, and employed by art historian Ingvar Bergström, for example has interpreted still life by consulting contemporaneous sources such as emblem books, diaries and local folk practices to shed light on the symbolic value of the genre. The rhetorical value of still life has also been analyzed, most notably by art historian Hanneke Grootenboer, who considers seventeenth-century Dutch still lifes "as theories of vision, as treatises on their own representation."[4] Authors working in the tradition of social art history, including art historians Norman Bryson and Julie Berger Hochstrasser, have turned to still life to

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[3] The soon to be published exhibition catalogue *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Art* (2013) edited by curator Stephanie Smith may address these gaps.
[4] Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still Life Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (2005): 10.

understand economic and political conditions, particularly with respect to the trade of commodities. Art historians, including Elizabeth Honig and Marc Eli Blanchard, who are interested in the social relations and human narratives that still life images suggest, have also pursued still life's implications of relationality. These four vibrant interpretive strains are of great utility in discussing artist's restaurants since, as I will explain momentarily, these contemporary artworks recurrently present symbolic, rhetorical, economic, and social outcomes and meanings.

This thesis will present comparisons and analyses of ten pivotal artist's restaurants in relation to subgenres of still life – primarily Northern European examples of still life, including sixteenth-century market stall images, and seventeenth-century breakfast pieces, and *pronk* (or opulent) still life. Recurring subjects addressed by art historians in relation to these images have to do with: their symbolic and moral value relating to transience and mortality; their representation of commodities and social conditions in a period of intense colonial expansion; their rhetorical qualities, since they present scenes of humble or extravagant objects in shallow space; and their suggestion of commensality and social relations around food. These four central themes can equally be seen at work in artist's restaurants, which present concepts of morality, bring attention to the trade and production of commodities, make rhetorical arguments, and promote conviviality through the display and service of food.

The Historic Avant-Garde Restaurant

An early example of a deliberately staged artist's restaurant intended as an artwork appeared in Italy in 1931. On March 8, 1931 the Italian Futurists opened a

restaurant conceived as an artwork under the name *Taverna del Santopalato* or *The Holy Palate Tavern* at no. 2 via Vanchiglia, Turin. (fig. 2) *The Holy Palate Tavern* became a social hub, performance space, and exhibition venue. Although the artist known as Fillìa and the architect Nicolaj Diulgheroff were responsible for its décor – which included floor to ceiling aluminum cladding[5] – it is often attributed to F.T. Marinetti, the ostensible leader of the Futurists.

Futurist feasts and banquets with specially designed foods – such as *The Excited Pig*, "a whole salami, skinned, […] served upright on a dish containing some very hot black coffee mixed with a good deal of eau de Cologne,"[6] – were developed through and influenced by this site, and later published in *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932). This artist's restaurant anticipated a steadily growing trend in twentieth- and twenty-first century artistic production: for artists to use food and its aesthetics, service, and venues in the creation of artworks while also challenging and disrupting the conventions of the restaurant institution.

The Holy Palate was quite distinct from the phenomenon of theatrical dinners going back to Greek and Roman antiquity, of the sort satirically recorded in Petronius' *Satyricon* (1st century AD), or specially designed feasts mounted by artists, like the legendary meal sponsored and planned in 1788 by the artist Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-

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[5] Cecilia Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. (2010): 12-13. Deirdre Pirro, "Filippo Tammaso Marinetti: The man who tried to ban pasta," *The Florentine*, No. 94, January 2009. http://www.theflorentine.net/articles/article-view.asp?issuetocId=4041 Site accessed June 2, 2013.

[6] F.T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*. Susan Brill, trans., Lesley Chamberlain, ed. London; San Francisco: Trefoil Publications; Bedford Arts, Publishers. (1989): 144.

LeBrun, who modeled a feast on speculations about Ancient Greek traditions of dining.[7] Unlike these earlier examples, at *The Holy Palate* food, architecture and décor were all intended as a single artwork, or *Gesamtkunstwerk.* The key concept *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art, popularized by opera composer Richard Wagner's writing in the late 1840s, underlies my approach to every case study discussed in this thesis. Immersive in the extreme since they ask the participant to physically metabolize the artwork, an artist's restaurant is a performative theatre that unifies a building or site, furniture, utensils, chefs and service staff, food, images, packaging design, and many other elements into one integrated experience for the participant. These examples of *Gesamtkunstwerk* are places for eating, but also conversation, argument, and a range of other activities that ultimately extend beyond the site itself, since food eaten at the restaurant becomes the fuel and cellular building blocks for the participant's body.

The Holy Palate, and other artist's restaurants like it, put food on display for the viewer who is invited to become an eating-participant. Like still life, artist's restaurants are centered on the moment when edible objects are put on display before the diner, thus recreating an arrested instant before dining commences that recalls the type of food display seen in many examples of painted still life. But more importantly, sites like *The*

[7] Cathy K. Kaufman describes the scene set by Vigée-LeBrun: "She had at her disposal everything she thought necessary: rich fabrics to drape the dining-room, tunic-swathed beauties bedecked with garlands, antique vases, a guitarist whose instrument was transformed into a golden lyre and, most importantly, a cooperative cook willing to make 'a certain sauce for poultry and another for eels,' supplemented with 'two vegetable dishes and a cake made with honey and Corinthian raisins' ...[and] a bottle of old Cyprus wine. By her account the effect was picturesque..." Kaufman, "Remembrance of Meals Past: Cooking by Apicius' Book, *Food and Memory*, Blackawton, Totnes, Devon: Prospect Books (2001): 123

Holy Palate echo key pictorial and thematic features apparent in specific subgenres of still life as analyzed by art historians.

The Holy Palate introduced several key points of artistic inquiry connected to the history of still life that would go on to be readdressed, echoed and shifted by future artists in several later artist's restaurants. For example, the Futurists wanted pasta removed from the Italian diet, and did not serve any pasta at their restaurant or in their banquets. They considered pasta to be a stultifying scourge on the Italian metabolism, because it slowed down productivity and caused fatigue. A lesser-known fact is that this policy was very much in line with the dietary plan fascist leader Benito Mussolini had in mind for Italy. Italy's pasta preference was fueled by imported wheat, and so for economic reasons Mussolini wanted Italians to shift their starch intake and eat rice instead. The Futurist diet, by no coincidence, echoed this governmental program.[8]

There are three points of artistic inquiry evident in the Futurist restaurant which echo the methodological themes I have identified as primary modes of inquiry that art historians have brought to still life. First, Futurist foods were developed for their rhetorical features: the Futurists believed that the minds and dreams of citizens are shaped by the foods they eat. Second, the symbolic and economic value of the commodities *The Holy Palate* served, and national identity and political ideologies, were considered and deliberate: pasta, both an emblem of Italy's past and a drain on the

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[8] See Romy Golan, "Ingestion/Anti-pasta," *Cabinet*, (Issue 10, Spring 2003). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/10/anti-pasta.php . Site accessed August 31, 2013 ; Kate Bolick, "Back to the Futurists: Italy's First Avant-Garde Turns 100. Posted July 2, 2009.
http://www.slate.com/articles/life/welltraveled/features/2009/back_to_the_futurists_italys_first_avantgarde_turns_100/against_pasta.html
Site accessed August 31, 2013.

national economy, was rejected. Third, this was a site for where difficult and strange food was served. These themes – rhetoric, the links between commodity and identity, and "difficult" food – are repeated in many artists' restaurants, and serve as the organizational structure for the case studies examined in this thesis.

Building on the inquiries posed by this early twentieth-century example, this thesis poses two related questions. First, is there a link between the apparent disregard by some art historians for the genre of still life, the philosophical bias against the proximal sense of gustatory taste, and the relative lack of scholarly research focusing on cases where artists create restaurants and banquets? Second, what has drawn artists to restaurants as sites for the production of artworks, and how have they differently interpreted the central themes of rhetoric, commodity and identity, and "difficult" food through food service?

The Twentieth-Century Artist's Restaurant

The late 1960s, 70s, and 80s saw a sudden escalation in artist's projects tangentially related to the artist's restaurant, which is to say, artworks that used food and culinary tools as a material to create representations or objects, such as Piero Mazoni's *Merde d'artista, no. 68* (1961), and Jana Sterbak's *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorexic* (1987), or in performative works like Carolee Schneeman's *Meat Joy* (1964), Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), and Paul McCarthy's *Sailor's Meat (Sailor's Delight)* (1979). Artworks of this kind are clearly in relationship with the typology I refer to as the artist's restaurant, but I will restrict my study to cases where artists serve food to participants, who are expected to eat these objects. Likewise, my

study will not discuss restaurants launched by artists strictly as business ventures, or sites where artists have only been consulted on matters such as décor or artworks on display. Examples of these types of cases include: German artist Martin Kippenberger's investment in *Capri* (1989, Venice Beach); British artist Damien Hirst's restaurant interior décor and artwork for *Pharmacy* (1997-2003, London); Japanese Yoshitomo Nara's décor and artworks for his restaurant *A to Z* (2000s, Tokyo); Canadian Jesse Sherburn's prolific work designing restaurant interiors (2000s, Edmonton); Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and M/M Interior Decoration's designs for *Café Étienne Marcel* (Paris, 2002); Canadian Will Munro's founding of the restaurant and bar *The Beaver* (2006-, Toronto); Canadian Ken Lum's financing of *Maenam* (2009-, Vancouver); and British artist Martin Creed's interior decoration of the London restaurant *Sketch* (2012-, London).

After *The Holy Palate*, a steadily increasing number of artist's locales for food production, artist's restaurants, and food service sites appeared between the 1940s and the 1980s. At *Night in a Surreal Forest* (Pebble Beach, United States of America, 1941), Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí created a meal of live frogs, and fish served in women's high heel shoes among other dishes - all as a benefit for refugee European artists at the start of the Second World War. Swiss-born Meret Oppenheim's work *Cannibal Feast* (1950, 1959, Paris), sometimes also called *Spring Banquet,* was a performance work where a meal was served off of a live nude woman. In 1958, Yves Klein's *The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility, The Void* served blue-tinted beverages to audiences, with the intention of altering the color of participants' urine. Canadian artist Les Levine's *Levine's Restaurant*

(1969, New York), which he called an “autobiographical culinary environment,” served Irish-Jewish-Canadian cuisine, echoing the artist’s own ethnic background; it was also outfitted with several video cameras and monitors with a live feed of the restaurant interior, allowing people to watch one another discreetly while dining, and while also being in spatially separate areas of the restaurant.[9] Also in 1969, Allan Ruppersberg’s Los Angeles-based project *Al’s Café* operated for three months and sold food-assemblages (such as a mixture of bubble-gum and raisins, a platter of sea shells with pinto beans served with a mound of cotton, and a plate of toast served with leaves) and found object sculptures.[10] Tom Marioni’s ongoing performance piece *The Act of Drinking Beer With Friends Is the Highest Form of Art*, (1970, first performed at the Oakland Museum, California) was a temporary, roving alcohol service performance. As its title suggests, Marioni’s project repurposed museum and gallery spaces for socialization around the sharing of alcohol. American artists Caroline Goodden, Gordon Matta-Clark, Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, and Rachel Lew opened the restaurant *Food* in 1971 (1971-1974, New York City). It sustained itself for three years under Goodden’s guidance, eventually closing due to financial difficulties. *Food* had a menu that was quite innovative and international for its time, including bouillabaisse, carrot soup, and ceviche, but also rabbit stew with prunes, canary pudding, and a mysteriously named

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[9] N.a., “Two to try,” *New York*, (April 7, 1969): 49. The restaurant was located at 232 Park Avenue South, at 19th Street.

[10] *Al’s Café*’s address was 1913 West Sixth Street, Los Angeles, California. See the video, “A Conversation with Allen Ruppersberg about *Al’s Café*, 1969 Hosted by Constance Lewallen,” *Kadist San Francisco*, http://vimeo.com/29648784 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

"used car stew."[11] Many meals at *Food* were given out for free and were often sold for much less than their actual value.[12] Designed by Matta-Clark, who trained as an architect at Cornell University, *Food*'s kitchen was visible from the dining area, making the creation of every meal a performance, as if "the whole event" in Matta-Clark's words, were "a live 'piece'."[13] The artist's collective N.E. Thing Co., founded by Canadian artists Iain Baxter and Ingrid Baxter, created the restaurant *Eye Scream* in Vancouver in 1977; it closed after eighteen months of business.[14] *Eye Scream* served many foods that through name or composition referred to well-known artworks, art movements, and artists, including *Cubist Salad*, which had small vegetables and fruit cut into cubes, and *Group of Seven Snails*, which was a plate of seven escargots. Suzanne Lacy and Linda Pruess' *International Dinner Party* (1979) was a multi-sited open invitation event planned to coincide with American artist Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. More than two thousand women participated in regions around the world by hosting dinner parties "that would honor a woman in their own region," echoing the theme of Chicago's work.[15] In 1984 Spanish artist Antoni Miralda, known for his elaborately staged theatrical feast artworks, opened *El Internacional* in New York City – a glitzy restaurant known for its tapas and outrageous

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[11] Catherine Morris, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Food*. Köln: Walther König. (2001): rear cover.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 46.
[14] *Eye Scream's* address was 2043 West 4th Street, Vancouver. N.E. Thing Co., which was founded by Iain Baxter and ran from 1966-1978, forged connections between the world of artistic production, corporate models, media, and everyday life.
[15] N.a., "International Dinner Party," http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980sdinner_international.htm . Site accessed April 24, 2013. Lacy has held other similarly themed food service events since, including *River Meetings: Lives of Women in the Delta* (1981-1982), *Immigrants and Survivors* (1983), and *Dinner at Janes* (1990s).

architecture, including a massive reproduction of the Statue of Liberty's crown on its front façade. In this period, food composition, architecture and décor were given special attention by artists who established restaurants.

The early 1990s saw further examples of artists creating and serving food, offering pre-fabricated foods, and appropriating preexisting restaurant models and sites. Beginning in 1991, Cuban-born American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres created a large series of "candy spills," which featured piles of thousands of candies; visitors were invited to take a single candy with them for free, and the sub-textual, intended message of many of these works had to do with the spread of HIV. Canadian artist Vera Frenkel's *from the Transit Bar* (1992, Kassel) was a functioning piano bar featuring a six-channel video that shared stories of emigration; it was featured in documenta IX. *Waffles for an Opening* (1991) by American artist Ben Kinmont was a series of free waffle breakfasts offered to anyone who came to the artist's family home. Similarly, American artist Diana Mars' recurring *Any Wednesday* (1993-, San Francisco) was a home-cooked meal offered to the public for free in the artist's home. These two works positioned the artist as a host to strangers. Swedish artist Jörgen Svensson's *Government Dinner* (1994) was a publicly subsidized dinner where anyone was welcome to eat with several members of the Swedish prime minister's cabinet and share their grievances or their gratitude for the price of around $4.00 USD, suggesting that the restaurant dining table was a site for political action.[16] *The Bake Sale* (1997) by American artist Elaine Tin Nyo was hosted at New York's Deitch Projects; Nyo coordinated artists represented by Soho gallerists to sell home baked goods, and she split the profits with the gallery and the other artists, in

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[16] Ted Purves, *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art.* Albany: State University of New York Press. (2005): 53-54.

order to satirize the economic arrangements between gallerists and artists.[17] These examples show that in this period a growing number of artists began creating and serving food as hospitable, generous works with social or political agendas. This development is in keeping with concurrent trends toward social practice, dialogics, new genre public art, or relational aesthetics, apparent in the 1990s; with these models, artists work with communities to establish projects that engage with social arrangements, collaborate with audiences, or otherwise use social relations as the basis for artistic projects.

Since 2000, the typology I refer to as the artist's restaurant – where artists inhabit or design architectural environments or specially selected locales in order to serve food to the public – has become firmly established as a trope regularly employed by artists, with dozens of examples in Europe, Asia, and North America. Although sometimes attributed to a single artist, most of these projects are large-scale works that involve collaboration with several stakeholders such as architects, graphic designers, interior designers, chefs, and wait staff. Artist's restaurants of the last decade and a half have been housed in diverse types of built environments including gardens, abandoned warehouses, refurbished sanctuaries, repurposed houses, moveable push-carts and other vehicles. Artist's restaurants are created and stocked with a wide range of materials: recuperated garbage; recycled metals, woods and textiles; prefabricated or found furniture, storage units, linens, and table settings; specially designed cookery equipment, furniture, and lighting – not to mention an incredible variety of edible ingredients. Rather than organizing this thesis according to material concerns, therefore, it is in part organized by

[17] Salespeople working the *Bake Sale* table included critic Bill Arning, curator Dan Cameron, and art historian Kirby Gookin. See "Bake Sale, 1997," http://elainetinnyo.com/?cat=4 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

typology, which is to say the theme and food service model employed by the case study in question. I have identified seven thematic categories for considering the artist's restaurants my research has uncovered. The case studies discussed in this thesis each correspond to more than one of these categories.

The first type is the generous artist's restaurant: either food is offered to participants for free, or in other cases participants pay for a meal crafted by an artist, and the profits are pooled and then granted to one of a number of artists whose proposals are reviewed by diners. The second type is much smaller in scale; although held in publicly accessible spaces, artist's restaurants are sometimes not open to broad publics, but only allow invited guests for intimate gatherings. Third, many artist's restaurants are community spaces, sometimes offering food-workshops, and training or information about food production and cooking methods, or they simply facilitate large scale conviviality. Fourth, some artist's restaurants encourage diners to experiment with unusual foods, or to reconsider and make familiar foods strange. The fifth type serves food associated with forms of identity such as social class or ethnicity, and sometimes tampers with connections between food and identity. Sixth, several artist's restaurants aim to follow the principles of the local food movement, educate neighborhoods about food produced in their area, and encourage new understandings of locality. Finally, some artist's restaurants work with commodities, and put edible commodities on display in order to trace out lines of trade and exchange, or labor conditions, in order to reveal hidden or overlooked histories.

Because my research has revealed so many interesting examples of artist's restaurants, I have chosen ten primary case studies that each precisely deal with one of

these themes. Clearly, some artist's restaurants could be classified according to several of these types. To situate these ten core examples, I will outline other recent examples of artist's restaurants that have thematically coincided with them.

Food Funding and Generosity: Artist's restaurants can be founded to undertake acts of generosity and crowd funding. The Chicago artist's collective InCUBATE's *Sunday Soup* (2007-2009) was a crowd-funding project where meals were sold to diners, and the profits were used to fund artist's proposals; diners selected winning proposals.[18] *FEAST* (which stands for Funding Emerging Art with Sustainable Tactics) is a serialized public dinner party run by artists in Brooklyn since 2009. Continuing the trend established by *Sunday Soup*, participants pay $20 USD, and in return receive a meal and a ballot, which they use to vote for one in a series of art proposals put forward by contributing artists.[19] Toronto artist's collective Life of a Craphead presented the generous event *Free Lunch* (2007, Toronto) at the Lucky Dragon Restaurant; the artists ordered every item on the extensive menu of the restaurant and served it for free to the public, who learned about the feast through advertisements in the local newspaper and on lampposts across the city.

The (Private) Dinner Party: Other artist's banquets have deliberately been kept private affairs or small in scale. For the artwork *First Postapocalyptic Christmas Dinner* (2007, New York) Agathe Snow invited a select group of diners into her home to consume a massive buffet of strange foods, including boiled eggs dyed green, served with

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[18] "InCUBATE: Sunday Soup," http://incubate-chicago.org/sunday-soup/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[19] At last report *FEAST* had funded thirty projects and given a total of $19,656 USD toward proposals. "FEAST," http://feastinbklyn.org/?page_id=2 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

roast goose. Since 2003 Lee Kit has held a series of small performative picnics for acquaintances on hand-painted picnic blankets, including *Picnic with friends and hand-painted cloth in Beijing* (2009, Beijing). Artists Maaike Bertens and Marieke van de Bruggen's mobile restaurant project *Public Pie* (2009-2010, the Netherlands) seated two people at a time and served a small selection of pastries, creating an intimate scenario for a *tête à tête* between friends or strangers.

Sites of Commensality, Sharing, and Training: Other artists have established restaurants as community spaces in the hopes of bringing about conviviality, and sharing political ideas, food, knowledge and skills with the public. Aaron Gach's *Tactical Ice Cream Unit* (2005) was a politically oriented ice cream truck painted with Soviet-era styled icons of fists holding ice cream cones, and outfitted with surveillance equipment and a sound system. Gach's vehicle drove city streets giving out free ice cream along with "printed information developed by local progressive groups" in keeping with Gach's own politics.[20] The artist collective Red76 completed the project *Ghosttown* (2006, Portland, Oregon), a series of events including a potluck restaurant called *Open Kitchen,* which asked the people of Portland to bring food to share with others.[21] Artist Leif Hedendal's *Dinner Discussion* (2009-) was a series of dinners made from donated produce; guests were a mix of chefs, farmers, artists, curators, and academics. As of September 2012, Hedendal had held thirty-six editions of the project, most recently at Art in General (New York) with the intention that the conversations at his dinners result in

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[20] "Tactical Ice Cream Unit: Conceptual Installation by Artist The Center for Tactical Magic," [sic] http://culturehall.com/artwork.html?page=16149 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

[21] "Welcome to Ghosttown," http://www.red76.com/ghosttownhome.html . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

the exchange of ideas on particular themes selected by the artist.[22] At Tom Dean's feast *Fire and Sausage*, (2009, Nuit Blanche, Toronto) autumn-chilled audiences were warmed by an outdoor campfire, hotdogs, and hot chocolate in a parking lot. Francis Monillaud's *Propriété Publique* (2009, Montreal) was a public barbeque meal held at the Mount Royal Metro station intended as a celebration of life and humanity. Tonia Di Risio's *Pasta Supper* (2010, 2011, Halifax, Sackville) was a series of public education workshops where guests were instructed in how to make homemade fresh pasta from scratch. Pasta created during the event was shared with the public at a roundtable feast.[23] *Bean In* (2010, San Francisco), a short-term artist's restaurant that served free bean-based foods and held lectures to increase knowledge about the positive nutritional value of beans, was created by artists Mark Gravel, Natasha Wheat and designer Sarah Magrish Cline.[24] *Social Kitchen* (Kyoto, 2011-) is an artwork as well as a community space and café founded by artists Sakiko Sugawa, Shingo Yamasaki, Megumi Shishikura, Michiko Yoshimura, Yufuko Takahashi that hopes to bring community members into contact and begin conversations between the Japanese art world and the international art world.

Shocking or Familiar Foods on Display: Some artists hold food events to shock diners with unusual foods, or simply to put the act of food creation on display for serious reflection. OPENrestaurant, founded in 2010, is an artist-chef's collective founded by

[22] "Dinner Discussion," http://dinner-discussion.blogspot.ca/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[23] "Pasta Supper September 2011: Tonia Di Risio," http://www.toniadirisio.com/index.php?/work/pasta-supper/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013
[24] Twilight Greenaway, "Serving, Cooking, Giving it Away: Food, Art, and the Places in Between," *Art Practical*, Issue 2.5, the Food Issue. http://www.artpractical.com/feature/serving_cooking_giving_it_away/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

former employees of the San Francisco restaurant Chez Panisse; projects have included a lemonade stand, and a publicly served meal featuring a soup made with a pig-skin shoe. Corin Hewitt's 2008, three-month-long installation *Seed Stage* was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The artist was present nearly every day for the duration of the project, preparing food, canning preserves and making other forms of artwork.[25] Kim Waldron received training in slaughtering and butchering animals, and then served the results of her labors to the public in the serialized meal project *Beautiful Creatures* (2009). This artwork culminated in three feasts: a buffet feast held at English Harbour Arts Centre, and two four-course meals held at the inn The Fisher's Loft at Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.

Food Identity: Many artists have created food service sites in order to highlight or contest personal and group identity. For the project *Funky Baskenland* (2000) by Bilbao artist Asier Pérez González, a chef prepared a menu of traditional Basque dishes at a Surinamese restaurant in Utrecht, thus confusing the category of "ethnic cuisine," and raising public awareness about the vibrant Surinamese and Javanese communities living in the Netherlands.[26] Michael Rakowitz's *Enemy Kitchen* (2004-) is a collaborative work completed with the artist's mother; the pair stage events where they teach Baghdadi recipes to the American public. In 2012 the project was mobilized via a traveling food truck serving cuisine from Iraq in different cities in the United States – a country with a

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[25] "Whitney Museum of American Art: Corin Hewitt: Seed Stage," http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/CorinHewitt . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[26] "Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory," http://cascoprojects.org/?show=&entryid=215 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

well-known history of conflict with Iraq.[27] For the project *All you CAN eat Keecheerrii Kooroot* (2005) Leeza Ahmady served traditional Afghani food at New York's Apexart gallery, drawing attention to another nation that has strained relations with the United States, Afghanistan. Chinese-born artist Jun Yang's restaurant and nightclub *Ramien* (2006-, Vienna) serves traditional noodle dishes, serves mojitos, and plays Austrian techno music into the wee hours – all in an interior modeled after the design of typical Chinese restaurants scattered across Europe. Yang's artwork appears to challenge the conventions of décor, musical entertainment and foods stereotypically associated with Asian identity.[28] Theo Sims' *Candahar Bar* (2007-) was a functional recreation of an actual Belfast pub named The Blackthorn; this artwork has been installed in diverse locations including the Alberta College of Art & Design, and Vancouver's Granville Island art district – complete with specially hired Irish bartenders.[29] For André Anne Vien's *Les lieux invisibles* (2008, Montreal) the artist invited the public to dine with her at restaurants that served so-called ethnic cuisine from countries she had never visited. Her objective was to highlight diasporic communities living in Montreal.[30] Daniel Avazpour's catering and food delivery service *The Hideaway* (2009-, Kansas City), brings homemade Persian food into client's houses with the hope of ameliorating negative attitudes held by some Americans about Iran. The restaurant *Conflict Kitchen* (2012, Pittsburgh) served take-away cuisines from countries that the United States

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[27] "Michael Rakowitz," http://michaelrakowitz.com/projects/enemy-kitchen/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[28] Bert Rebhandl, "Man of the World: Bert Rebhandl on Jun Yang," *Frieze. http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/man_of_the_world/* Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[29] Nancy Tousley, "Theo Sims: The Candahar Pub Returns To Calgary," *Canadian Art Online*. February 16, 2012. http://www.canadianart.ca/features/2012/02/16/the_candahar/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[30] http://andreeannevien.com/projets/projets.html . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

currently has politically conflicted or aggressive relationships with, including Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran. Artists John Rubin, John Peña, and Dawn Weleski created this project.

Local Food Movement: Local food and local knowledge are frequently key themes at artist's restaurants. For Ted Purves and Susanne Cockrell's serial project *Temescal Amity Works* (2004-2007), the artists wandered the blocks around their home and foraged for free fruit, and distributed their harvest to the community without charge via a local storefront. The Los Angeles-based artist's collective *Fallen Fruit* (David Burns, Matias Viegener, and Austin Young) have been foraging free fruit from public property as part of their art practice since 2006. Harvested fruit is often turned into preserves during the collective's ongoing open-to-the-public workshops *Public Fruit Jams* (2006-); the resulting spreads are given away for free to the public.[31] The Vienna-based artist's collective AO& (Philipp Furtenbach, Philip Riccabona, Andrea Silmbroth, Thomas A. Wisser) has created several public food events, including *Feed the Rich* (2010); their general strategy is to spend time in a region, develop personal relationships with food-producers, and collect local ingredients to create a massive feast for diners. Joseph Krupczynski's roving food trailer *Moveable Feast* (2010, Amherst) served ecologically selected, healthful foods to customers with the aim of causing "food system change."[32] *Commodity Exchanges:* This final type of artist's restaurant works with preexisting commodities, or creates edible objects that complicate the definition of commodities, and the role of exchange value at restaurants. Jennifer Rubell has held many public feast artworks, including *Backyard Readymade* (2006, Miami) - a barbeque

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[31] "About: Fallen Fruit," http://fallenfruit.org/about/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.
[32] "Moveable Feast," http://www.movablefeastproject.org/ . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

meal held on the back patio of the Rubell Family Collection. She served iconic American food commodities such as Heinz Ketchup and Hellman's mayonnaise. *Time/Food* (2012, Moscow) was a temporary restaurant at the Stella Art Foundation organized and maintained by the art organization e-flux; visitors could only pay for their meal with specially designed currency accumulated through labor credits distributed by a parallel project called *Time/Bank*.[33]

Context: Exhibitions, Catalogues, and Commissions

As mentioned above, the use of food in contemporary art extends well beyond the category of artist's restaurants, and indeed, several museum exhibitions in recent years have taken art practices that incorporate food as a primary focus. The Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK) in Vienna opened *mäßig und gefräßig (Feed and Greed)* in 1996, an exhibition devoted to artworks involving food as material. In 2002, the Contemporary Art Center Salamanca presented *Comer o no Comer: To Eat or not to Eat, or, the relations between art and questions of eating*. Other group exhibitions dealing with the theme of edibility and food include: *Banquete: Metabolism and Communication*, Palau de la Virreina, Barcelona; ZKM Centre for Art and Media Kalrsruhe (2003); *The Big Eat: From Pop till the Present (grandbouffe d'art)*, Kunsthalle Bielefeld (2004); *Hor d'oeuvre: ordre et désordres de la nourriture*, capc Musée d'art contemporain, Bourdeaux (2004); Galerie Lisi Hämmerle, *Bon Appetit*, Bregenz, Austria (2006); *20/vingt, l'oeil gourmand*, E.s.p.a.c.e. Peiresc, Toulon (2007); *Pot Luck*, New Art

[33] "Moscow: Timebank by e-flux," http://e-flux.com/timebank/branch/Moscow . Site accessed April 24, 2013. The *Time/bank* currency's design was created by American artist Lawrence Weiner

Gallery, Walsall (2009). Kunsthalle Düsseldorf launched *Eating the Universe: Vom Essen in der Kunst* in 2009, a major survey exhibition featuring twentieth- and twenty-first century practices dealing with food and eating. The 2009 edition of the annual performance art festival Performa, which took Futurism as its theme that year, launched in New York with a reenactment of an Italian Futurist dinner. For the 2010 edition of the annual contemporary performance art festival *Visualeyez*, organized by artist-run centre Latitude 53 (Edmonton) curator Todd Janes chose artworks related to the theme of "food." Following a similar thread, the annual exhibition series established in 2003, *Orange*, held in Sainte-Hyacinthe, Quebec at Expression: Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, is devoted entirely to contemporary art that uses or responds to food and its role in everyday life. Even larger scale exhibitions have recently been devoted to artworks that involve food. In 2010, the Los Angeles County Museum undertook a one-year collaboration with artist's collective Fallen Fruit titled *EATLACMA*, which included a commissioned series of artist's gardens, and a public program of lectures and other projects. Also in 2010, the non-profit art and design organization named REV- held *Recipes Interpreted: An Afternoon of Shared Instructions, Recipes and Scores*, a public event where artists presented recipes to an audience. This event was held in tandem with the exhibition *Recipes for an Encounter* at Dorsky Gallery, Long Island City, which included seminal conceptual works from the 1970s and 1960s, and treated them as recipes. Giving further evidence of the importance of food as a material in contemporary art, one commercial gallery in France is entirely dedicated to showing food-art practices: Galerie Fraîch'attitude (Paris).

It is important to note that a few significant exhibitions, associated catalogues and publications have recently tied historical still life to contemporary art practices by pointing out formal, thematic, or pictorial similarities. For example, through the exhibition *Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life*, (1997) the Museum of Modern Art (New York) acknowledged the ongoing importance of still life by comparing historical and contemporary artworks by artists such as Meret Oppenheim and Wolfgang Laib. Also drawing on the history of still life, Prefix Photo's *Milk and Melancholy* (2008) by Kenneth Hayes is a photographic history of milk's representation – from Harold Edgerton's image of a milk drop to multi-media works by General Idea, Barbara Kruger, and Ed Ruscha. The *Triumphant Carrot: The Persistence of Still Life* opened in 2010 at Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery, and displayed works by contemporary artists who reinterpret the formal devices of the still life genre. Works by Liz Magor, James Carl and Sam-Taylor Wood were included in the exhibition. Also in 2010, The J. Paul Getty Museum opened the photography exhibition *In Focus: Still Life*; a few artists included were Man Ray, André Kertész, and contemporary artist Sharon Core. 2011 saw two major surveys of the representation and use of food in art practices: *Tous Cannibalism (We Cannibals)* at Paris' Maison Rouge, which responded to the structuralist theories of French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in order to frame artworks that involve the theme of devouring; and *el arte de comer: de la naturaleza muerta a Ferran Adrià (From Still Life to Ferran Adrià),* hosted by CatalunyaCaixa Social Project in Barcelona, which contextualized twentieth- and twenty-first century images of food with historical examples of still life painting. In 2013, curator Matthew Leifheit presented the group show *What You Want* at the Camera Club of New York gallery, which reflected on five

photographic artist's approaches to the still life genre. Vancouver's artist run centre Or Gallery presented the still life themed group exhibition *Death and Objects* (2009) and *Death and Objects II* (2013), featuring artworks by Debra Baxter, Dawn Cerny, Ryan Peter and Emilie Halpern among others. The didactic materials for these exhibitions largely describe rather than analyze the artworks in question, and analyses that they do contain are not focused on drawing connections between the historical genre of still life, the institution of the restaurant, and artist's restaurants.

Eating Artworks, Looking at Images

The research for this thesis involved first-hand experience, primary sources, and secondary sources. I visited a number of the restaurants and ate at many of them: Ferran Adrià's elBulli, Daniel Spoerri's *Un coup de dés*, ATSA's *État d'urgence*, Dean Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* and Karen Tam's *Golden Mountain Restaurants*. In other cases, I have accessed archives, personal accounts, newspaper articles, critical reviews, journal articles, blogs, magazines, film and video footage and – most notably – photographs of the food and architecture at artist's restaurants. With Carsten Höller's *The Double Club*, Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled 1992 (Free)*, Queer Food for Love's *Queer Science* and Spurse's *The Public Table,* photographs of food and restaurant spaces have played a vital role in my understanding of these fascinating practices. My use of photographic resources in this thesis warrants further explanation.

This thesis presents artist's restaurants in a dynamic relationship with the visual, pictorial form of still life – but for the most part, when it comes to the examples of contemporary art I discuss, this is not a thesis *about images*. With rare exceptions, I do

not conduct visual analysis of photographs documenting artist's restaurants in photographic terms (with respect to depth of field, cropping, lighting, and so on), but instead use these photographs as conduits by which to analyze the performative nature of the immersive artworks they partially represent.

A major component of these artist's restaurants is inherently fleeting in form (edible, perishable food) and so photographs have served as documents that have helped me to sum up arrangements of food and restaurant settings. In the course of this project I have relied on many photographs: photographs I have taken myself and refer to as *aide-mémoire* to spark recollections of my own bodily experiences at artist's restaurants; and photos taken by others, which I use in order to access knowledge about food service and the bodily experiences of other participants at artist's restaurants – knowledge further fleshed out through personal accounts, and interviews with artist's and participants. Photographs are no substitute for the lived, bodily experience of dining in an artist's restaurant. But photographic records are very useful tools in researching artist's restaurants - they simply offer a distinct valence of experience – a visual one – that is useful in understanding edible artworks. Thus, instead of singular photographs (which might themselves be accorded the status of still life images), it is instead the ubiquity and ready access to photographs of food that have allowed me to undertake the kind of visual study not generally afforded in artist's restaurants; when dining, one rarely has more than a few seconds, or at most a few minutes, to comfortably *visually observe* food before eating it, whereas photographic records of artist's restaurants can be contemplated and studied for much longer. This drawn out viewing situation is at the core of still life images of food, which arrest a single moment before dining commences.

Context: Public Art, Social Practice, and Relational Aesthetics

Artists' restaurants are related to modes of public art that involve consultation or constituent participation in the realization of public spaces, monuments, or other forms of art erected in the civic sphere. These consultative, dialogue-based, and often municipally organized approaches that have become more common since the late 1980s were popularized in the aftermath of negative public reactions to the installation of public artworks that *did not ask* for public input or consultation; this situation is epitomized by the critical responses and protests against Richard Serra's public artwork *Tilted Arc* (1981) (fig. 3). Serra's piece was a public artwork made from a twelve-foot high, one hundred and twenty foot long solid sheet of COR-TEN steel installed in front of New York's Federal Plaza. The orientation of the piece required visitors to the building and its workers to make a significant detour in order to reach the entrance. For this and other reasons, a group of people who worked in the area protested Serra's work and eventually had it removed in 1989 after a lengthy court case, arguing that it was an artwork that did not accord with the interests of a key constituency who encountered it on a daily basis: the workers in the Federal Plaza and in its neighborhood. This group wanted a public artwork that was created through some kind of interaction between audience and artist, where the audience's needs were considered.

Related to the increasing role of participation in contemporary art,[34] the provision of food in artist's restaurants, and the backlash against public artworks like *Tilted Arc,* is

[34] Many art exhibitions have attempted to survey this tendency. In 2008 alone, four major North American institutions published lavish catalogues for large-scale group exhibitions focused on participatory practices: the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the

a trend to invite audience involvement in the conception and realization of artworks, a method sometimes called "social practice." This can include community consultation, where the particular social or political situation of a constituency is taken into account by the artist, who fashions an artwork in response to a perceived need in the community. Alternately, social practices can invite community members to get involved in the creation of an artwork under the tutelage or guidance of an artist. Many institutions of higher learning now train artists in social practice.[35] From a cynical point of view, such events and programs might be seen as drumming up public attendance figures as bids for financial support; a more optimistic evaluation might consider these projects as being sincere efforts designed to ameliorate life for a larger demographic cross-section. By adding forms of material, social or affective involvement to the act of experiencing artworks, participants in social art practices are presumed to be more invested in the stakes of art, museums, and galleries - and hopefully in one another too.

A significant body of writing analyzing social art practices exists, including artist and curator Suzanne Lacy's edited collection of essays *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995), as well as *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism* (1995), edited by

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Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), the Canadian Centre for Architecture (Montreal), and the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa).

[35] Emily Carr University of Art & Design (Vancouver) currently offers a minor in Social Practice and Community Engagement. http://www.ecuad.ca/node/104757 . Site accessed June 18, 2013. Carnegie Mellon University's School of Art offers an MFA in "contextual practice," also referred to as social practice. http://www.cmu.edu/art/programs/mfa/contextual-practice/ . Site accessed June 18, 2013. California College of the Arts currently offers a Social Practice Workshop. http://www.cca.edu/academics/graduate/fine-arts/socialpractices. Site accessed June 18, 2013. Portland State University now offers a three-year, low residency MFA degree in Social Practice. http://www.psusocialpractice.org/ Site accessed June 18, 2013. The Maryland Institute College of Art offers a degree in Sustainability and Social Practice. http://www.mica.edu/Programs_of_Study/Undergraduate_Programs/Studio_Concentrations/Sustainability_and_Social_Practice_.html . Site accessed June 18, 2013.

curator Nina Felshin, *The Reenchantment of Art* (1991) by art historian and critic Suzi Gablik, *The Lure of the Local* (2004) by curator Lucy Lippard, and art historian Grant Kester's *Conversation Pieces* (2004). What these five texts have in common is their valuation of an active audience whose situation is improved by their involvement with the creative process as fostered by an artist. In Lacy's volume, curator Mary Jane Jacob argues for art that takes audience involvement as its point of origin, "as the goal at the centre of art production, at the point of conception."[36] For Jacob, the artist's responsibility is not to follow their own inspiration, inclinations, and whims, but to conceptualize an artwork with the specific needs of viewers in mind. Gablik in a like manner argues that, for art to successfully reach out to the public, "transformation cannot come from ever more manic production and consumption in the marketplace; it is more likely to come from some new sense of service to the whole – from a new intensity in personal commitment."[37] Gablik has great faith in the transformative power of artworks. She overlooks the fact, however, that even acts of service involve production, consumption, and the marketplace. Lippard searches for a post-colonial model for socially intervening practices that result in what she calls a "place ethic."[38] Kester sees the ideal method for creating meaningful artworks as one where the audience is included in the very inception and realization of the artwork, a strategy that he summarizes in the term "dialogics,"[39] since audiences fashion the work in dialogue with the artist. Kester dismisses as

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[36] Mary Jane Jacobs, "An Unfashionable Audience," *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Suzanne Lacy, ed. Seattle: Bay Press (1995): 50.
[37] Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*, New York: Thames and Hudson (1991): 26.
[38] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society*, New York: The New Press (1997): 286.
[39] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, Berkeley: University of California Press (2004): 58.

patronizing the strategies used by Dada and Surrealism – the surprise and disjuncture meant to shake viewers out of daily routines – since he believes such strategies assume the public is uninformed, and that artists carry superior forms of knowledge. In the Kester model, the artist is an ameliorative agent who must successfully evaluate an audience's deficiencies and desires in order to decide the best modus operandi to create an artwork by. Artist's restaurants can be said to contribute to the social art practices debate because they provide for a physical need that audiences have – for sustenance through food – and these artists take the provision of that requirement as a point of conception for an artwork. In some cases, such as ATSA's *État d'urgence*, artist's restaurants directly address gaps in food distribution and therefore require a consultative approach to their constituency: in this case the homeless. But the artist's restaurants I discuss in this thesis are not dialogical artworks, in Kester's sense, except to the extent that they may have encouraged conversation between constituents/participants and the artist after the food service site was already established.

There have been other responses to the social turn in art production that specifically address generosity and largesse. *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* (2005), edited by curator Ted Purves, is an important collection of essays teasing out these two threads. Mary Jane Jacob's text in this volume sees the practices of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rirkrit Tiravanija – both of whom give edibles to audiences – as a form of "generous art as a free commodity," signaling that artists have the ability to *redirect* commodities through gifting practices.[40] Kate Fowle and Lars Bang Larsen's essay "Lunch Hour" points out that capitalism requires a supply and demand

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[40] Jacobs (2005): 3.

model, and that contemporary artworks often attempt to transgress this system by interrupting "the functional development of the community, [and in so doing] they create a space in which "irrational" behavior is possible."[41] Georges Bataille, Jean Baudrillard, and Marcel Mauss are invoked here as arguing that "to 'waste' significantly" in a situation of excess rather than scarcity, "can be seen as a metaphysical and ideological process of collective renewal and stimulation."[42] Many of the case studies in this thesis also created gifting economies, and fashioned commodified gifts of the sort Jacob identifies. The gifted foods offered by these sites are intended to spark ideological changes in communities by demanding *political action* – even through a reconsideration of daily activities like eating – *as reciprocity* from their participants.

Connected to these theories of generous art production and social art practices is a distinct model for interpreting participatory art now commonly known as "relational aesthetics," a term coined by French curator Nicolas Bourriaud to identify a trend in contemporary art he identifies as emerging in the 1990s. According to Bourriaud, relational practices use social relations as a material. He argues that relational artwork "tightens the space of relations" by activating viewer participation, and sometimes by adopting utopic twentieth-century avant-garde methodologies in the hopes of countering the supposedly alienating effects of modernity.[43] Today, Bourriaud contends, artists present scenarios where "utopia is being lived on a subjective, everyday basis, in the real

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[41] Kate Fowle, Lars Bang Larsen, "Lunch Hour," *What We Want is Free*, Albany: Statue University of New York Press (2005): 17.
[42] Ibid., 18.
[43] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods and Mathieu Copeland, trans. Dijon: Les presses du reel (1998, English edition 2002): 15.

time of concrete and intentionally fragmentary experiments."[44] Often, this involves the use or mimicry of the everyday spaces of public life - plazas, squares, libraries, cafés, bars, and restaurants. Artists that Bourriaud studies – Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Carsten Höller, Gordon Matta-Clark, Daniel Spoerri and Rirkrit Tiravanija to name just a few – have utilized or created spaces of conviviality in order to achieve this objective of closely-knit social relations, and all of these artists have repeatedly used food-based offerings to accomplish this goal. Notably, though these artists' practices offer the foundation of the relational aesthetics category, Bourriaud does not discuss the restaurant and banquet works created by these artists in any significant detail.

Many authors – curators, art historians, and others – have critically responded to Bourriaud's category of relational aesthetics and the art practices he raises for examination. As further explored in Claire Bishop's articles, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents" (2006), and "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" (2004), and her book *Artificial Hells* (2013), when these touchstone sites of public life are created or altered by artistic intervention, the nature of civic life, democracy, and even morality are raised for debate. Bishop's work builds on ideas introduced in in Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (1998), and Miwon Kwon's *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity* (2002). Deutsche argues that the rhetorical device of "the public" has been used to control public space, particularly when it comes to the public display of artworks. Kwon writes that site-specific art "adopts strategies that are either aggressively antivisual – informational, textual, expositional, didactic – or immaterial altogether – gestures, events or performances bracketed by

[44] Ibid., 45.

temporal boundaries."[45] Bishop's overall argument is that ephemeral, socially intervening practices are regularly judged for their ethical value, and a proper critique of such practices should remember to critique their aesthetics as artworks, whether they take physical or immaterial form. She also argues that social practices most vividly animate democracy when they encourage antagonism rather than conviviality. Bishop's argument raises the question of whether the artist's restaurant is a site of conviviality or one of antagonism – or perhaps both.

Context: Bodily Theories and Practices

Artist's restaurants exist in a moment when the human body and the human sensorium are increasingly theorized and scrutinized in history, cultural studies, and other academic disciplines. Particularly in art history and philosophy, there has been a recent surge in scholarship that investigates the non-visual senses in relationship to daily experiences, artworks, and aesthetic encounters.

The edited collection *Food & Philosophy* (Fritz Allhoff, Dave Monroe, eds, 2007) applies and dissects theories by Plato, Epicurus, Immanuel Kant, and David Hume among others, in relation to dietary choice, eating disorders, and recent trends in art production to create edible artworks. Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (1999) carefully analyzes the connection between the literal sense of taste and the use of taste as a philosophical tool to explain aesthetic sensitivity, taking into consideration the full range of bodily experiences possible with daily life, and artwork. *Empire of the Senses* (2005), edited by David Howes, is a "sensual culture reader" that is

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[45] Miwon Kwon, *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press (2002): 24.

part of Berg Publishing's Sensory Formation Series, and explores the ways that sensation has been described, debated and researched across disciplines. Howes introduces the term "intersensorality," which he defines as "the multi-directional interaction of the senses and of sensory ideologies, whether considered in relation to a society, an individual, or a work."[46] Intersensorality, Howes points out, can either involve sensory harmony, or situations where the senses clash and are confused. The majority of case studies in this thesis pursue the latter course. Meaningful work has also been done in art history to argue that tactility and vision work together when audiences experience sculpture: both Alex Potts and Geraldine A. Johnson, for example, have recently argued for the visual tactility of art objects.[47] Contributing to this research area, but providing a sense-specific pair of surveys, Jim Drobnick edited the significantly scaled sensory-focused collections *The Smell Culture Reader* (2006) and *Aural Cultures* (2004), both of which consider in detail contemporary art that highlights these two distal senses – that is, senses which do not involve physical contact between the sensing subject and the sensed object.

Adding to such bodily discussions, philosophers working in the field of phenomenology have considered the subtle latticework of sensory experience that brings us knowledge of the world and shapes cognition. Martin Heidegger's "My Way to Phenomenology," (1963), Edith Stein's *On the Problem of Empathy*, (1917) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) all attempt to *describe experience*, and to work through how consciousness takes grasp of the world through bodily

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[46] David Howes, ed. *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader,* Oxford; New York: Berg Press (2005): 9.

[47] Alex Potts, "Tactility: The Interrogation of the Medium in the Art of the 1960s," *Art History*, No. 27. (2004): 282- 304; Geraldine A. Johnstone. "Touch, Tactility and the Reception of Sculpture in Early Modern Italy," *A Companion to Art Theory*, P. Smith and C. Wilde, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002): 61-74.

experience. As these authors insist, phenomenology requires an accounting for the non-visual senses. Merleau-Ponty's perspective guides my approach to several case studies in this thesis, and I will return to his ideas frequently, primarily because his concept of "sense experience" explains that perception does not reveal the world to us as "one unbroken text" as empirical science presumes, but rather as a series of fragments mediated by the body.[48] This evaluation of fragmented experience, I believe, is very true to the immersive, performative still lifes I discuss in this thesis, which are whirling, constantly changing venues for entertainment, reflection, and digestion. Merleau-Ponty also accounts for the body's role in experiencing the world as a *theatrical one*, where the body is the "darkness needed in the theatre in order to show up the performance."[49] From Merleau-Ponty's point of view, even the performance of cognition occurs in the bodily theatre. He further argues that the "thickness of the body"[50] is what enables the human subject to have contact with the world. Because of this, we cannot hope to see things-in-themselves since through our vision, "the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh."[51] Merleau-Ponty's account of the eye's fluctuating perception of an object's color under different lighting conditions, which prevents the human subject from accessing the thing-it-itself, gives one example of how the body as device *becomes part* of perception rather than simply channeling it.[52]

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[48] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* Colin Smith, trans. First published 1945, first English edition by Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. London; New York: Routledge. (2007): 61-63.
[49] Ibid., 115.
[50] Ibid., 167.
[51] Ibid., 164.
[52] Ibid., 354-359.

Queer theorist Sarah Ahmed further adds to this conversation by considering how gender and sexuality bear on phenomenological philosophies in her book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), where she argues that a queer perspective on phenomenology sees sensory experience as *twisted* rather than coherently organized. I will raise Ahmed's ideas again and in greater detail in my discussion of Queer Food for Love's project *Queer Science* in Chapter Seven.

Museum studies, curatorial studies, and the field of exhibition design also have recently taken bodily experience into account, and developed new ways of thinking of the sensory qualities involved in experiencing artworks. The Canadian Centre for Architecture's major exhibition *Sense of the City* (2005-2006), curated by Mirko Zardini, considered the urban built environment as a multi-sensorial space and included audio and olfactory components. The exhibition *Odor Limits* at The Esther M. Klein Art Gallery (2008, Philadelphia) curated by DisplayCult (Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher) included four artists whose work "explored the potential of smell in aesthetic experience."[53] Connected to this exhibition, Drobnick notes elsewhere that a growing trend in institutional display methods is to "infuse" display-sites with smells in order to enliven and provoke audience responses to exhibits.[54] *Sensorialités Excentriques* (2010) at Musée d'Art contemporain de Rochechouart showed artworks that differently reconsidered and profiled the human sensorium. *The Art of Scent* at the Museum of Arts and Design (2012, New York) was a detailed study of olfactory design surveying twelve "pivotal"

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[53] "Exhibitions: Odor Limits," http://www.displaycult.com/exhibitions/odor_limits.html . Site accessed May 2, 2013.

[54] For a detailed reflection on several smell-infusion methods used in amusement parks, museums, and other sites of display, see Drobnick, "Volatile Effects: Olfactory Dimensions of Art and Architecture," *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, Oxford; New York: Berg Publishing, David Howes, ed. (2005)

perfumes.[55] Hearing's importance in contemporary art was acknowledged by The Museum of Modern Art's *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* (2013), the institution's first major survey of sound based artworks. The National Gallery of Canada's public tour program called "Stimulating the Senses: Contemporary Art," follows this turn to bodily experience, since it invites audiences to "experience art in new and exciting ways by touching sculptures in a tactile tour, hearing a description of a painting, or listening to contemporary audio-based artworks."[56] Scent, sound, taste, and touch are all growing concerns in curatorial practices and museum work, with more reflection given in exhibition design to these senses as modalities equal to, and entwined with, vision.

Context: The Food Turn

Recently, food has become a subject of interest to academics researching in many different fields across the humanities and sciences, with a focus on food production, consumption, and assimilation as well as its description and recording through various cultural media. In sociology and anthropology influential theories related to taste and food have been proposed by several authors building on foundational texts. Georg Simmel's "The Sociology of the Meal" (1910) discusses the variable formats of meals, which he frames as a constant interchange between rigid norms and individual preferences, where preference dictates aesthetics. Pierre Bourdieu ("Taste of Luxury, Taste of Necessity," from *Distinction*, 1984) argues that taste is a trained behavior

[55] "Museum of Arts and Design Presents First Museum Exhibition Exploring the Design of Perfume Opening November 20, 2012," http://www.madmuseum.org/press/releases/museum-arts-and-design-presents-first-museum-exhibition-exploring-design-perfume . Site accessed May 2, 2013.
[56] http://www.gallery.ca/en/calendar/day/2012/04/26/e:3552 . Site accessed June 10, 2012 . Site accessed May 2, 2013.

particular to social class, and that food preference is an exceptionally strong, resilient marker of social class. Mary Douglas (*Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 1966) examines the way that food practices bring together – or polarize – communities either through proscriptions or preferences for certain ways of eating. Jack Goody (*Food and Love: A Cultural History of the East and West*, 1999) charts the history of elite and quotidian foods in China and Europe, and the social identities tied to forms of food service. Claude Lévi-Strauss ("The Culinary Triangle," 1966) invents a relativistic diagram that categorizes food as raw, rotten, and cooked according to culture and context. Margaret Visser (*The Rituals of Dinner*, 1992) discusses the highly controlled social relations and practices surrounding food service, which, as her title suggests, she sees as ritualistic and deeply meaningful forms of social engagement.

Many universities have recently inaugurated food studies programs, research groups, or courses that approach food from a scholarly perspective.[57] New disciplinary affiliations including Food Culture, Food Studies, Slow Food Studies, and Gastronomic Sciences have come into being.[58] Academic publishers have also shown an extraordinary interest in food-related topics. Many recent journals and other scholarly publications focus on food, eating, and the non-visual senses. For the sake of space a short list of a few examples will have to represent a much larger trend in scholarly and popular publishing. *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* (University of California),

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[57] Examples include: Critical Studies in Food and Culture, American Studies Department, University of California, Davis; Peter Kubelka's course offerings at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, 1980-2000.

[58] Universities offering degrees in these fields include: the University of Gastronomic Sciences, Bra, Italy; Institute of Advanced Studies in Taste, Gastronomy and the Arts of the Table, Hautes Études du Goût, Reims, France.

Cuizine: The Journal of Canadian Food Cultures (McGill), *Anthropology of Food*, and *Food, Culture and Society* are all journals devoted to food research. MIT Press's Alphabet City series, edited by John Knechtel, in 2007 was devoted to the thematic of food. The same publisher released *Eating Architecture* in 2004, which explores the crossover between the edible and built environments, edited by Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley.

For at least the last twenty years, food itself has more and more become a form of popular culture, and also a subject reflected on and depicted in popular culture. Literary authors and essayists have contributed dozens of books on the state of food today, with respect to diet, nutrition, ethics, and trade.[59] The twentieth- and twenty-first-century have produced several food manifestos, written by artists, activists, nutritionists, and literary authors.[60] Neologisms such as "domestic foodways" "foodmiles," "freegan," "flexitarian," "dumpster diving," "gastronaut," "the 100-mile diet," and "locavore" are now used to describe new methodologies and modalities of cooking and eating. Popular culture has made a cult of cuisine: cinema and television have produced countless narratives and practical guides about the preparation and eating of food; chefs are new

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[59] Examples include: Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: An Eater's Manual* (2006); Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (2009); Jeffrey Steingarten, *The Man Who Ate Everything* (1998)*, It Must Have Been Something I Ate* (2003); Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1999); Amy Cotler, *The Locavore Way* (2009). MIT Press released their imprint Alphabet City's *Food* in 2008, the twelfth in a series of publications that are thematically composed. Past editions have included *Trash* and *Suspect*.

[60] Early manifestos include George Orwell's essay "In Defense of English Cooking." (original date of writing unknown, copyright Estate of Sonia Brownell Orwell, 1984) and *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932) by F.T. Marinetti, which holds several treatises and manifestos on food by the Futurists. Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (2008), Anneli Rufus' *The Scavengers' Manifesto* (2009), *Vegan Manifesto* (2011) by Isa Moskowitz, and *Organic Manifesto: How Organic Farming Can Stop the Climate Crisis, Heal Our Planet, Feed the World, and Keep us Safe* (2010) by Maria Rodale are more recent examples of food manifestos.

celebrities,[61] serialized, franchised, and fetishized (Julia Child), commoditized (Ferran Adrià), sexualized (Nigela Lawson) and are sometimes also politicized (Jamie Oliver's pedagogical enterprises);[62] today's food magazines and cookbooks are highly profitable publishing ventures – as are the proliferation of food blogs that regularly become print-books, e-books, films, and television shows.[63] The art publisher Phaidon released *Coco: 10 World-Leading Masters Choose 100 Contemporary Chefs* (2010), and *The Art of the Restaurateur* (2012), by food critic Nicholas Lander, suggesting a cross pollination between readership on art, and readership interested in the realm of contemporary restaurants and cuisine. News media frequently focus on food shortages, genetically modified foods, and skyrocketing food prices, but also present eating and cooking as forms of lifestyle through restaurant and recipe features.

What can explain this explosion of interest in the profile, role, and importance of food today, and the vital development of knowledge on this subject that is taking place? From a certain perspective, little has changed in terms of food's power as a matter of human concern. Yet the urgency of this requirement and its importance seems amplified

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[61] A staggering number of television shows that are dedicated to cookery (*Iron Chef, Hell's Kitchen, Barefoot Contessa, Dinner: Impossible, Giada at Home, Ace of Cakes, Boy Meets Grill, Nigella Feasts, the Essence of Emeril*) and entire television networks devoted only to food programming (The Food Network, TasteTV, Zeste) there is also an impressive boom in the publishing industry of cookbooks, and new forms of publishing that reconsider the cookbook genre, including countless food blogs (thestonesoup.com, chocolateandzucchini.com, abstractgourmet.com, cookbookaddict.blogspot.com)

[62] Oliver's restaurant *Fifteen* is built around an outreach and apprenticeship program for youth ages 18 to 24, and run through The Jamie Oliver Foundation, a charitable non-profit that "offers young people, often in need of a break in life, the chance to transform their lives through the experience of learning to work in the restaurant business." http://www.fifteen.net/Pages/default.aspx . Site accessed April 8, 2010.

[63] Noteworthy examples of films taking food as their prime narrative device include *Tampopo*, (1985) *Eat Drink Man Woman,* (1994) *Babette's Feast,* (1987) *Julie and Julia,* (2009) *Like Water for Chocolate,* (1992) *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, (1989) *Mostly Martha*, (2001) and *Sukkar banat*. (2007).

today judging by the colossal production – literary, artistic, scholarly, material – associated with it. There are several factors driving this sense of urgency, I believe. It is a recognized fact that a significant percent of the world does not have access to the nutrition it requires in order to stay healthy. Food is commoditized and continually displayed through print advertising and photography, but also through package design, television, and other formats that present foodstuffs as objects of desire. The modification of food on a genetic level and the ways in which it is produced through factory farming, organic farming, or food coops are heatedly debated at local, municipal, federal, and international levels. In most parts of the Western world, the materials and labor involved in the production of the food that people eat today are largely hidden, and proponents of various counter-cultures have framed this divide between consumer and producer as problematic. These factors have all contributed to the torrential force of food on the contemporary imagination.

Food as Art?

The arguments that have been used against food's potential to be incorporated into artwork as either subject, such as in still life images, or in actual material form, as in artist's restaurants, are numerous. These will be explored in more detail throughout this thesis.

First, food is sometimes said to be inherently fleeting in form. As Dave Monroe puts it, "food is often dismissed as a genuine artistic medium on the grounds that the

object of culinary art is consumed as it is enjoyed."[64] This argument against food's potential as artistic material has to do with two related qualities of edible goods. Food is transitory in nature: most foods, if left uneaten and unpreserved, quickly decompose leaving little trace of their existence; and to eat an artwork is to destroy it.

Second, since eating is often a pleasurable act, objective judgments and evaluations of edible goods may seem difficult or untenable. Adding to this complication, Elizabeth Tefler writes that it is impossible for two people to taste the same bite of food and to therefore accurately compare their qualitative reflections.[65]

Third, and related to the previous point, food has been called an unsuitable artistic material because eating is a daily requirement of survival. Because of this audiences seem predisposed to praise - perhaps unreflectively - any creation that helps them sustain their physical health, with little reflection on the object's contribution to their spiritual or moral health, or the conceptual rigor of the edible artwork itself.

Fourth, it has been argued that the risks of making an "incorrect" judgment of taste when it comes to foodstuffs are of such weightiness that they exceed the aesthetic. Art critic Peter Schjeldahl reminds us that when we eat, we ingest the world, and therefore it is the responsibility of taste "to decide what will sustain and what might poison us. Oral judgments of "good" and "bad" are thus far sterner than visual, auditory, or tactile ones."[66] Everyday eating experiences can be said to be occasions of high drama:

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[64] Dave Monroe, "Can Food be Art? The Problem of Consumption," *Food & Philosophy: Eat Drink and be Merry*, Oxford; Malden; Carleton: Blackwell Publishing (2007): 133.
[65] Elizabeth Tefler, "Food As Art." *Arguing about art: contemporary philosophical debates.* Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley, Eds. London; New York: Routledge. (2001): 17
[66] Peter Schjeldahl, "Notes on Taste," *Yours in Food*, John Baldessari, ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, (2004): 19.

each meal could be our last lest we misjudge whether an item is edible or inedible, nutritious or toxic.

A final argument against the use of food as an artistic material is that such activities are seen as wasteful, or encouraging of confusing notions of the uses of food and art themselves.[67]

This thesis considers these "negative" properties of food as what has *motivated* artists to use food in artwork. Claims that using food in art is somehow "wasteful" could just as easily be made about a range of other recently employed contemporary art materials, such as diamonds in Damien Hirst's jewel-encrusted skull *For the Love of God* (2007), or even Ai Weiwei's massive field of hand-crafted porcelain sunflower seeds, *Sunflower Seeds* (2010). The ephemeral qualities of food, in light of many contemporary art practices that use "unmonumental" or transitory materials, are what draw today's artists to use edible materials rather than to reject them.[68] Also, the purely subjective nature of eating ties into the growing interest in the individual participant's experiences of artworks. Since food is a necessity for survival, this adds to the dramatic effects that artists can realize with food as a material – an advantage, not a disadvantage, in the minds of many creators. Tied to this, the risk of toxicity and inherent level of trust required for

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[67] As argued by Ni Chang, a child educator writing for the *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, using food as a material in children's art classes raises anxiety-inducing questions for many young students. While Chang's example involves young children, the scenarios this author describes reveal deeply held assumptions about the divide between food and art, and in particular the conception that to use food for anything other than nutrition is wasteful. See Chang, "Rethinking Food Utilized as Materials for Art," *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1998): 25-29.

[68] This trend and the terminology I use are defined and discussed in the exhibition materials for *Unmonumental*, which opened at The New Museum (New York) in 2007. The exhibition focused on practices that use humble or lowly materials – such as foam, cardboard, wax, and damaged, found objects like books, furniture, and décor – running counter to the monumental.

audiences to ingest an artist's food-objects stand to forge a deeper bond between the artist and the participant.

Chapter Review

This thesis is split into six chapters in two main sections. The first section, Chapters Two through Four, is a genealogy of artist's restaurants, beginning with a history of still life in the sixteenth century and seventeenth century, leading into the aesthetic theory of the eighteenth century, followed by theories and practices of restaurants in the nineteenth century. Chapter Two provides a review of influential theories by art historians dealing with still life, as well as sample analyses, and negative critiques of the genre. This chapter gives particular attention to still life subgenres of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – *pronk* or opulent still life, market stall images, and breakfast pieces – since these examples are particularly relevant to the contemporary artist's restaurants discussed in this thesis. Chapter Three explores and synthesizes pivotal philosophical approaches to aesthetic taste and so-called literal taste, or gustatory taste. This is a detailed investigation of ideas held by advocates and opponents to the serious study of gustatory taste – drawing primarily from philosophy of the eighteenth century – particularly when it is evident in artworks. Chapter Four offers a history of the restaurant as a nineteenth-century institution, with a special focus on the social outcomes these spaces have produced, charting out and characterizing several of its progenitors such as the street stall, the inn, the tavern, and the cookshop. This chapter also provides a review of influential gastronomic theories developed in tandem with the restaurant institution.

The second section of this thesis, Chapters Five through Seven, deals with case studies and compares contemporary artist's restaurants with historical subgenres of still life. Although this thesis draws on a wide range of examples from the history of still life, three subgenres from Northern Europe recur: sixteenth-century market stall pieces; and seventeenth-century breakfast pieces and *pronk* still life. Each chapter approaches these subgenres from a distinct point of view in order to illuminate a series of contemporary artist's restaurants.

Chapter Five focuses on the rhetorical properties of artist's restaurants by Spurse and ATSA in comparison with both breakfast pieces and *pronk* still life. These contemporaneous subgenres of still life operate on very different rhetorical levels, according to Hanneke Grootenboer: while *pronk* still lifes present bounty and ornament to seduce viewers, traditional breakfast pieces present humble objects in clear depictions to convince viewers of the veracity of the image. These different modes of engaging with the viewer/audience resonate within these case studies. For *The Public Table: A restaurant presented by The Collective for the Finding of the Commons* (2006, New Haven; Bellows Falls) (fig. 4) the artist's collective Spurse collected donations of unwanted food and cooking equipment from local communities, and used these discards to fashion edible gifts for the same constituencies, which they served from a donated storefront. Spurse's project presented dishes that visually seemed simply composed, although they concealed a complex and sometimes strange combination of ingredients. *The Public Table* also used the tool of generosity to persuade participants to become involved, and to persuade them that donated waste had indeed been transformed into edible dishes. For Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable's (ATSA) food service

series *État d'urgence* (1998-2010, Montreal) (fig. 5), food was donated by local restaurants, and then served to the local homeless population and the general public as part of a media-attracting festival of visual art and performance in the city's downtown core. ATSA's intention was to draw attention to the social problems surrounding homelessness, and they evoked economies of generosity to persuade participants and the public of their good intentions and the importance of their cause. ATSA's feast was abundant, in the style of bountiful *pronk* still life, but also incredibly provisional in the style of humble breakfast pieces, as evidenced by their use of temporary architecture, and publicly visible plastic storage bins and serving implements.

In Chapter Six, the discussion turns to the role of commodities in artist's restaurants by Rirkrit Tiravanija, Karen Tam, Carsten Höller, Peter Morin, Daniel Spoerri and Dean Baldwin, insofar as all of these projects link the commodification of food to questions of identity. Again, the *pronk* and the breakfast piece are addressed, but with a different emphasis than in the previous chapter. *Pronk* images generally depict commodities from distant lands, while breakfast pieces tend to show regionally sourced commodities – and these edible commodities have been considered by art historians to carry particular associations with identities of the region from which they were harvested. Offering a very direct equation between regional food commodities and personal identity, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's series of food service projects (1991-) (fig. 6) give audiences traditional Thai food for free; the dirty dishes and cooking equipment used during meal service are left on display as a record of the event. Complicating the links between restaurant architecture, commodities, regional cuisine and identity, Karen Tam's series *Golden Mountain Restaurants* (2002-) (fig. 7) are temporary installations that

resemble prototypical Chinese Canadian restaurant interiors constructed from materials donated by local communities, who also are invited to bring any type of food they like to the site to share. Satirically contesting the ability for food commodities and architecture to encapsulate regional identities, *The Double Club* (2008-2009, London) (fig. 8) by Carsten Höller was a nightclub, restaurant and bar that imported traditional Congolese foods, drinks, and décor to the London borough of Islington in order to spotlight the colonial history of resource extraction from the Democratic Republic of the Congo by European governments and companies. Ultimately exploding firm associations between singular cultural identity and foodstuffs, at Peter Morin's one-day feast *Team Diversity: World's Largest Bannock Attempt* (2005, Vancouver) (fig. 9) the artist and volunteers of diverse ethnicities cooked and gave away for free servings of a massive bannock, a fried quick bread associated with North American First Nations communities, to bring media attention to protests against resource extraction for commodity production from First Nations' land in Northern British Columbia – a political matter that the artist framed as being worthy of every citizen's attention. The final two artworks discussed in this chapter grapple with identity, food and social class in comparison with the luxurious, elite associations of *pronk* still life, and the working and middle-class associations of breakfast pieces. Dean Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* (2010, Toronto) (fig. 10) displaced high-class cuisine from an art gallery's restaurant and relocated it into an ad hoc porch-environment roughly crafted by the artist. At Daniel Spoerri's banquet *Un coup de dés* (1968, 2010, Düsseldorf), (fig. 11) guests were told to act out temporarily assigned class roles as "rich" and "poor" for one evening, and were served food deemed appropriate for their performed social position.

Difficult and disgusting-looking food served at artist's restaurants is analyzed in Chapter Seven. Seventeenth-century Dutch depictions of rotting and ambiguous foods provide the historical foundation for this discussion, which encompasses projects by Ferran Adrià and Queer Food for Love. elBulli, (1984-2011, Costa Brava, Spain) (fig. 12) the restaurant made famous by chef Ferran Adrià, concocted surprising foods using chemicals and esoteric techniques with the objective of shocking diners with new taste and texture sensations. At times these bizarre-looking foods replicated the look of unexpected objects including potting soil, or dinosaur eggs. *Queer Science: A Molecular Gaystronomy Laboratory* (sic) (2011, San Francisco) (fig. 13) was a one-day food service event by the artist's collective Queer Food for Love that served appetizers inspired by Adrià's techniques in order to parallel the ambiguous food qualities of molecular gastronomy with queer valuations of ambiguity.

Chapter Two: Food in View: The Art Historical Genre of Still Life

Simply put, still life is a genre devoted solely to the depiction of inanimate things. Other genres of painting often contain compositional elements that are effectively miniature still lifes. Diego Velázquez's *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* (1618), (fig. 14) depicts a pivotal scene in the life of Christ set in an architectural interior. In this compelling image, Martha is shown fretting in the kitchen alongside a meticulously painted foreground arrangement of vessels, fish, chili pepper, eggs, and garlic, while a second scene painted in a much looser style appears through a window, which shows her sister Mary attending worshipfully to Christ in the next room. This example shows that still life compositions can play an important role in narrative paintings, even when apparently positioned as backdrops or secondary elements. But, as I will explain throughout this chapter, paintings that *only show* inanimate objects have sometimes been denigrated as the lowliest images of all – as the genre of still life.

The genre we refer to as "still life" has appeared in several very different cultural, geopolitical, historical, religious, and social settings. Because of this, I will not generalize about still life across epochs as a universal or stable genre, but instead I will focus on particular, pivotal forms of artistic production that can be considered as still life - primarily from the seventeenth century since this is a crucial moment in the early formation of capitalism in the Netherlands. I will draw out what is unique and distinctive about the still life subgenres I discuss, and their historical context in relation to the contemporary form of the artist's restaurant.

Still life, which at times has been denigrated as a lowly genre, has also been the subject of lively debate and discussion in the field of art history, serving as a testament to both the complexity and diversity of this genre. Despite a proliferation of scholarly reflection on the genre, still life has rarely been seriously considered as a model to guide reflections by art historians writing on contemporary art until relatively recently. Although many scholars have contributed extensive research on still life, as outlined above, other authors' biases against the genre are deeply seated. Art historian Charles Sterling notes that the French Academy's hierarchy of painting's various genres placed "the painting of inanimate objects"[69] at the bottom. Professor of comparative literature Marc Eli Blanchard writes that even as late as the 1970s, some art historical texts have argued that artists have created images of inanimate things only as a "'divertissement,' an exercise to take their minds away from the preoccupations of real history."[70] There have been exceptionally strong proscriptions against still lifes showing *edible* inanimate things. German aesthetic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer considered paintings of still life including food to be inferior to all other forms of painting since these images "necessarily excite the appetite […] which puts an end to any aesthetic contemplation of the object."[71] These texts reveal that this genre has at times been considered the lowest

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[69] Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, New York: Harper and Row (1981, first published 1952): 63. He also speculates that the eventual adoption of the term *nature morte* as a translation of *Still-leven* was intended as a subtle jab against its practitioners.

[70] Marc Eli Blanchard, "On Still Life," *Yale French Studies*, No. 61 (1981): 276. He cites two volumes on the subject of *nature mort*: *Le Grand Siècle de la nature morte en France* (1974) and *La vie silencieuse en France* (1976) which primarily tell the story of painters' lives rather than that of the paintings themselves, and veer away from any analysis of the artworks.

[71] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. E.F.J. Payne, trans. New York: Dover (1969): Vol. 1., 208.

grade of painting, and that a significant factor in this evaluation has been that still life compositions showing food are considered to have the potential to distract or even to corrupt viewer and artist alike. Bryson proposes one further explanation: because of its subject matter still life has been linked to the domestic sphere and the "cultural construction of gender" that holds feminine and domestic space as inferior, resulting in a paucity of theoretical reflections on the genre.[72]

Yet several art historians *have* seriously investigated still life as an important and dynamic genre. Elizabeth Honig argues that Northern European still life images of the sixteenth century are vital pieces of evidence that assist in our understanding of social spaces established through market conditions of the period.[73] Hanneke Grootenboer argues for the intellectual value of the genre when she claims that nearness in seventeenth-century Dutch still life represents an epistemological form and that such images "should be understood as theories of vision, as treatises on their own representation."[74] Bryson argues for the importance of the genre when he observes that ordinary cooking vessels represented in still life powerfully resonate across time, forming a human bond via the "creaturality" of the audience and artist. These vessels, he writes, resemble other containers that viewers have encountered and used to prepare and store food, and this familiarity serves to ingratiate such images to the viewer.[75]

Taking into account Bryson's assessment as well as denigrations of the genre, still life appears to find itself in a somewhat paradoxical situation: it is too lowly and

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[72] Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 136.
[73] Elizabeth Honig, "Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life," *Res*. (No. 34, Autumn 1998): 166-183.
[74] Grootenboer, 10.
[75] Bryson, 13-14.

frivolous to bother taking the time to consider, or its subject matter is so shallow that there is nothing to understand about it; and yet it is a genre that shows objects inherently familiar, and it is therefore a very powerful, evocative genre. From a negative perspective, then, still life seems to have at least three strikes against it as a subject of scholarly inquiry: frivolity, femininity, and familiarity.

At least two of these three "negative" qualities of still life images are also in many ways inherent to artists' restaurants – which are sites that celebrate entertainment, and profile the familiar vessels and utensils Bryson describes – although the argument could be made that commercial kitchens, unlike domestic ones, are sites dominantly coded as masculine rather than feminine. Nonetheless, artists' restaurants are, just like still life, wrapped up in the ornamentation and manipulation of transitory materials, tied to food preparation, and built around those seemingly banal objects: vessels, utensils, tables, chairs, and so on. Most importantly, the artist's restaurant, like the still life depicting food, endeavors to toy with and tease its audience's appetites, perhaps risking an embrace with the clouded aesthetic judgments that so concern Schopenhauer.

In addition to these negative associations, there have been other hurdles for the consideration of still life and artist's restaurants. First, these two related artistic forms highlight the function of the non-visual senses, particularly the proximal sense of gustatory taste. Second, the experiences and sensory modes that these artworks do promote are difficult for art historians *to describe*.

One example of a stifled attempt to describe the *nature morte* genre can be found in French art critic and philosopher Denis Diderot's (1713-1784) description of a still life painting by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), brought to our attention by art

historian Hanneke Grootenboer: "I am going to say one thing about Chardin, and here it is: select a spot, arrange the objects on it just as I described them, and you can be sure you'll have seen this picture."[76] Since Diderot is well known for his exhaustive descriptions of artworks, a mode of writing he called *hieroglyphs* – which he hoped he could communicate in significant enough detail to make the reader feels as if they were seeing the image themselves – his resignation and vexation with Chardin's image is poignant.

Grootenboer argues that examples like Diderot's, where the important art historical tool of verbal description is cast aside as unnecessary or redundant in dealing with still life, reveals the perceived danger lurking in still life images: that there is nothing to say about them at all.[77] I propose that this same threat hovers around the corpus of artists' restaurants I that have assembled: because they provide food – a daily requirement for survival, and also a material many of us eat without reflection – from a certain point of view surely there can be little to say about them other than that they exist. Artists' restaurants are also difficult to coherently describe (and therefore analyze) because they involve a fragmented, durational but fleeting, overwhelming experience that occurs on all sensory registers.

What process takes place when the art historian translates images (or objects, or performances) into text? Art historian Ernst Gombrich writes that, "in so far as painting is something like a language the limits of its translatability are of a different character. They

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[76] Hanneke Grootenboer quoting Diderot in *The Rhetoric of Perspective*. From Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art Vol. 1: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, John Goodman, ed. New Haven: Yale University Press (1995).
[77] Grootenboer writes, "Diderot's failing words betray that the complexity of still lifes resides precisely in the difficulty of saying something about them to begin with." Grootenboer, 25.

lie in the difficulty in finding clear and unambiguous terms for each of the possibilities the artist rejected or selected […] *All the critic can do is to search for equivalent gamuts that allow him to convey his meaning through metaphor and analogy.*”[78] His use of the term gamuts is revealing: musically speaking, it refers to the scale a particular instrument allows. When translating a score between instruments, a composer can be said to be “shifting gamuts.” Similarly, art historians shift gamuts when they describe artworks, often giving accent to particular sensory registers. When writers do describe still life images, fragments of intersensorial experience (imagined or real) occasionally slip into their phrasings – and these moments suggest that the visual form of still life is one with potential to stimulate bodily response.

Gombrich claims that an artist’s “treatment of paint can put unexpected sweetness into the lemon, unsuspected vigour into tender spring flowers and sensuous softness into bronze vegetables.”[79] Gombrich suggests that “sweetness” can be delivered by the painted image. Echoing this core idea, the dynamically descriptive writer Roland Barthes detects the “crisp greenness of cucumbers or the pallor of plucked fowls” in Dutch still life and kitchen scenes, particularly those of Joachim Beuckelaer.[80] Art historian William S. Talbot describes the painting *Partridge in a Niche* (1685) by Nicolas de Largillière: “The painter has captured the softness of feathers, the hardness of the beak, the bloom and translucency of grapes, the fuzzy surface of the peach, and the juicy pulp of the

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[78] Gombrich, Ernst “Tradition and Expression in Western Still Life,” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 103, No. 698. (May 1961): 177, emphasis mine.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Roland Barthes, “The World as Object,” *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France*, Norman Bryson, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1988): 108. He also compares the interior church-paintings of Saenredam to “butterscotch ice cream” in this same text.

pomegranate."[81] Talbot highlights the material, sensorial qualities implied in Largillière's image. This description goes beyond the visual into matters of tactility. Another art historian, Barbara S. Groseclose gives a vibrant description of general formal tendencies in American still life painting of the nineteenth century. Her points of reference include William Michael Harnett's painting *A wooden basket of Catawba grapes* (1876) and the work of William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). She writes of general trends in depictions by the artists: "drawing up a list of American still-lifes containing open melons, we find that, say, seventy percent of the splits melons are cut or sliced, the remainder broken. Broken, the hull exposes pulpy flesh and spilling seeds, suggestive perhaps of overripeness, voluptuousness, abundance, and deterioration simultaneously. Sliced, the fruit is dewy and succulent, the edges of the rind crisp and the interior firm."[82] Once again, an art historian transmits visceral and sensual values – that significantly imply gustatory qualities – along with a visual description of a painted still life image. Clearly, written and verbal descriptions sometimes unwittingly reveal intersensorial encounters with paintings, despite the fact that these are images generally understood to give purely visual experiences to audiences. These examples suggest that bodily stimulus is occasioned by such images. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the possibility of disgust and sensorial confusion is often latent in depictions and displays of foodstuffs.

Other authors have discussed the multi-sensorial, bodily stimuli occasioned by certain examples of still life. For instance, Howes describes a painting that contains many

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[81] William Talbot, "Observations on Contemporaries of Chardin in the Eighteenth Century," *Gabriel P. Weisberg with William Talbot*, Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art; Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1979): 13.
[82] Barbara S. Groseclose, "Vanity and the Artist: Some Still-Life Paintings by William Michael Harnett," *American Art Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1. (Winter, 1987): 53. [sic]

still life elements titled *The Yarmouth Collection*,[83] which depicts fruits, exotic shells, a lobster, and many other objects. He discusses this painting (which, but for the presence of two human figures would qualify as a still life image) as showing an "empire of the senses" by virtue of the array of things depicted in it, since,

> Roses and perfume bottles cater to the sense of smell. Musical instruments and a singing girl are ready to delight the ear. Intricately carved vessels and soft folds of cloth await a sensuous touch. The colorful assemblage with its glittering surfaces provides a feast for the eyes.[84]

This image reveals intersensorial experience. *The Yarmouth Collection* depicts still life elements that allegorically refer to each of the human senses through different sets of objects, and it does so through the visual medium of painting. Howes goes on to point out that the sensory empire shown in this painting is also a political one since the objects assembled in *The Yarmouth Collection* are gathered from around the globe by virtue of a colonial order. Similarly, the intersensorial, performative still lifes of the artist's restaurant also show political, intersensorial empires.

The artist's restaurant involves an intersensorial, "integrated" experience, being a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but it is an inherently disorderly experience, one that is difficult to capture with words. Because of this, my thesis deliberately presents a fragmented series of descriptions and personal accounts of my own dining-research at these artist's restaurants. I have eaten, drank, sat, conversed, and relaxed at many of these sites – but I have also selected examples of artist's restaurants that I have not eaten at in order to show the quite different variety of critique that is possible when artwork is not physically

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[83] This is an unattributed work, and the date of its production is unknown.
[84] Howes, 13.

ingested, but instead accounted for and encountered through other means, including photographic images. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that, as with examples of performance art, it is indeed possible for non-participants, at a later date, to carry out fruitful analyses and discussions of fleeting, participatory artworks.

A Selected Review of Still Life's Art History

Of the scholarly studies conducted on the genre of still life before 1960, Charles Sterling's survey *Still Life Painting: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (1952) is a turning point in art-historical writing on the subject for several reasons. This is one of the longest and most detailed accounts of the genre published in English or French up to the date of its publication. He attempts to isolate the defining principles of the genre according to the quality of stillness: not only is the *painted image* still, but also the objects it depicts are by their nature inanimate.[85] He speculates about the historically generative moment that signals the genre's inception, which he believes to be at least as early as Renaissance Italy, rather than seventeenth-century Flanders and Holland as was commonly held in Sterling's day. He is critical of the art historical approach to still life that hinges on the "hidden symbolism" sought out by the likes of Erwin Panofsky and his students which reiterates two basic ideas, as Sterling puts it, "[h]owever ingeniously 'disguised,' […] the vanity of life and the idea that the only hope to vanquish death is in faith."[86] He argues that symbolism of this kind is too easily overlaid onto images that involve the preparation and storage of comestibles that are perishable. I will say more

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[85] Sterling writes that still life "was born the day a painter made the fundamental decision to organize into a plastically self-sufficient work a group of inanimate objects." See Sterling, 24.
[86] *Ibid.*, 17.

about this tradition of iconology momentarily. Finally, he seeks to identify historical conditions that might explain swells in still life image production. He holds that the physical proximity and social distance promoted by urban living can inspire a "nostalgic yearning for the 'natural' and 'genuine' things of life" including "humbler realities, hitherto disregarded or dismissed as vulgar [such as] the well-stocked shelves of a pantry,"[87] and that this desire leads to the production and collection of still life images. He argues that these same urban conditions were present in seventeenth-century Holland and nineteenth-century France – key moments of still life production. Sterling's description of urban experience echoes a key aspect of modernity – the increased daily pace and social distance resulting in a nostalgia for former modes of living that are closer to nature. We could add that these conditions of urban living are very apparent, perhaps even more so than ever, in many places today – leading to the question: what examples of still life are artists creating now? A partial but significant answer, I believe, is found in the example of the artist's restaurant.

In the years following the publication of Sterling's text, other art historians began to further flesh out an iconological approach to still life. These queries sought the intended meanings and prescribed uses for still life image production from several periods and cultures – with special fervor for Dutch and Flemish images of the seventeenth century. The objective of this line of inquiry was to isolate and clarify the apparent mysterious confluence of certain seemingly unrelated objects in still life images.

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[87] *Ibid.,* 27. He observes these conditions in ancient Athens, as well as in seventeenth century Holland and nineteenth-century France.

This undertaking was a hunt, as Erwin Panofsky puts it, for “disguised symbolism”[88] in the image. Certain objects alone or in groups, Panofsky holds, can be read as a text – a text that while not exactly narrative is laden with meaning. Whether they carry connotative or actually denotative meaning, the iconological approach tends to see moral instruction as the chief intention of still life images.

Writers and thinkers in other fields have supported this chorus. Dozens of influential texts following this method exist and continue to be published in the present day. Key contributions include: *Early Netherlandish Painting, its Origins and Character* (Cambridge, 1953) by Panofsky; Ingvar Bergström, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (1956; reprint, New York: Hacker, 1983); and Norbert Schneider, *The Art of Still Life* (Cologne: Taschen, 1990). For some it has been a commonplace assumption that Dutch seventeenth-century still life is a genre rife with moral content. As noted by Donna R. Barnes, and Peter G. Rose, the English author Henry James (1843-1916) exclaimed in an 1871 review of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York: “we know what it is to have turned with a sort of moral relief, in the galleries of Italy, to some stray specimen of Dutch patience and conscience.”[89] Art historian Svetlana Alpers describes how this methodology aims to uncover morals in these still life images: “Iconographers have made it a principle of Dutch seventeenth-

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[88] Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, its Origins and Character*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass. 1953): 140-144.
[89] See Barnes, Rose, *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life*, Albany; Syracuse: Albany Institute of History & Art; Syracuse University Press (2002). Henry James, “The Metropolitan Museum’s 1871 Purchase.” *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1871).

century picture-making that the realism hides meanings beneath its descriptive surface."[90] Scholars working in the iconological tradition frequently turn to primary textual evidence in order to corroborate their theses concerning still life images. These documents include letters, inventories, and, particularly, seventeenth-century emblem books – known for illustrating and extolling moral virtues. Emblem books, volumes that "combined images with rhymed texts, learned quotations, or biblical verses to invite contemplation of moral or religious ideas," as described by Barnes, are pieces of printed matter that art historians routinely consult in unraveling Dutch iconography.[91] As summarized by historian Henri Stegemeier, "the intent of the emblems was indeed wide and varied; it might be aesthetic, amatory, decorative, doctrinal, emotional, erotic, ethical, geographic, heroic, historical, military, moral, natural, panegyrical, political, religious, satyric, scientific, social."[92] Emblems, in other words, were and are fluid signifiers that carried multiple rather than singular meanings, and it is this polyvalent quality that I want to highlight in my discussion of contemporary artists' restaurants.

Bergström, an outspoken supporter and practitioner of Panofsky's method, believes that European Madonna images produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,

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[90] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (1983): xix.
[91] Barnes, and Rose, *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life*, 11. Emblem books are also used in ascertaining general attitudes prevalent in Northern Europe in this period. Elizabeth Honig, for one, uses emblem books produced around 1640 to determine how spending habits in the region had changed. She notes, "Outside of the symbolic realm the acquisition of commodities on a large scale was also becoming increasingly acceptable. As the propriety of profit was admitted, attitudes toward the use of wealth changed, and spending money came to be portrayed as a virtuous means of behavior." Honig, *Painting & the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press. (1998): 107.
[92] Henri Stegemeier, "Problems in Emblem Literature," *The Journal of English and German Philology* 45, 1 (1946): 28.

when interpreted according to contemporary primary sources, provide guidance for the interpretation of later seventeenth-century still life images. He relays the demands of this method with clarity: art historians must become versed in religious doctrine, literature, social custom, and artworks contemporary with the image(s) they study in order to interpret said artwork.[93] Those clues can then be applied to individual artworks to understand the artist's intended meaning.

From the brief outline of this methodology, so often used with still life images, one can see that it is possible that difference of interpretation is quite likely to be chiasmic depending on just what parallel evidence from outside of the image the historian brings in. What Bergström overlooks is the inherent assumption of iconological analysis, which is that audiences, artists and commissioners of these images were both versed in and took stock of such lexicons of meaning, relative to still life images. Other art historians have advocated for still life methodologies that stress how knowledge is delivered by the image not through symbolism, but by other means.

Elizabeth Honig's approach responds to the iconological tradition and, because she is concerned that iconology is a partial method easily molded to suit any given hypothesis or intention of the art historian, she suggests alternative approaches. Showing some frustration with the interpretive disparity of iconological methods, she writes, "Hence, writers who favor Italy will call upon antiquity, intarsia, and forms of perspectival illusionism to justify the artistic turn to objects; while Northernists point to

[93] Ingvar Bergström, "Disguised Symbolism in 'Madonna' Pictures and Still life, Part 1," *The Burlington Magazine*, 63 no. 97 (1955): 304.

illuminated manuscripts, disguised symbolism, and mimetic naturalism."[94] In lieu of these models for the intentions and reception of still life, Honig argues that the seventeenth-century still life came directly out of sixteenth-century market scenes, such as Pieter Aertsen's *The Meat Stall* (1551), which depicts an outdoor butcher's stall overflowing with sausages, animal carcasses, and cuts of meat. She goes on to suggest that these market stall images should be considered as motivated not by moralizing purposes, or by artistic fascination with the aesthetic characteristics of the commodities on view, but instead an interest in "the civic space and social environment within which they [commodities] circulated."[95] For Honig, still lifes of the sixteenth and seventeenth century are fundamentally *social images* that offer instruction and reflection on codes of social encounter prevalent in the period. Of equal interest to Honig are the possibilities for still life images to be considered as representations of knowledge or modes of investigating knowledge – a possibility investigated by several other art historians.

Alpers, for instance, approaches Dutch seventeenth-century images as carriers of knowledge (rather than "meaning") in her widely renowned *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. While Alper's study is not restricted to still life – she also discusses, portraiture, landscape, and other images produced by Dutch and Flemish artists – her core observation about still life paintings by Northerners in the seventeenth century is useful because she also critiques the approach taken by students of Panofsky and Heinrich Wölfflin to the artworks of Northern artists of the seventeenth century; she sees that their respective theories of iconography and style, designed from the theoretical texts

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[94] Elizabeth Honig, "Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life," *Res*. (No. 34, Autumn 1998): 167.
[95] *Ibid.,* 172.

and documents of Renaissance Italy, have frequently been retrofitted by art historians to investigate Dutch and Flemish works. Her position is that the iconological analytic route does not serve the interests and particularities of said artworks or their context. Art in the Italian Renaissance, she summarizes, was couched in the theories of Italian critic, architect, and painter Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), according to whom art should be: a pictorial window onto a world; narrative in nature; and be in conversation with popular and revered histories, myths, and other texts.[96] Alpers points out that Dutch attitudes about artistic production were markedly different from that of Italians since images were seen by the former group as primary forms of knowledge rather than as conduits for the expression of textual knowledge. Crucially, she instead believes Dutch images to be *descriptive* rather than narrative, in as much as they use description to convey "certain knowledge of the world" that shows the "world as seen rather than as imitations of significant human actions."[97] The scientific work of German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), which endeavored to demonstrate the operation of vision as a "picture" of the world, offers for Alpers an opportunity to think through Dutch seventeenth-century still life images as *picturing vision itself*.[98] What I want to add to Alpers perspective is that still life showing foodstuffs can also *picture taste itself* – which is to say that food-based still lifes give the viewer an opportunity to reflect on the

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[96] Alpers, xix.
[97] *Ibid.*, xxv. Dutch images, Alpers goes on to explain, use a consistent set of rhetorical pictorial devices to deliver knowledge to their audience: first, a composition that gives no single grounded vantage point; second, a play with scale that collapses the miniscule and the gigantic; third, a tendency to compositions that ignore or trail outside of the frame; fourth, a stress on "picture as a surface" that records information; finally, a proclivity toward subjects and surfaces that will allow technical showmanship to flatter the representational skills of the artist.
[98] *Ibid.*, 30-38, 70-71.

gustatory value suggested by an image of food in an imaginative way, detached from the actual ingestion of a specific food. Still life images that involve food offer an opportunity for the viewer to develop a fresh understanding of gustatory taste; when confronted with such images the viewer can experience appetite and disgust, and in turn experience the capabilities of the gustatory faculties without ingesting anything. This is the very operation that Schopenhauer anxiously predicts in his phrase that still life images "necessarily excite the appetite […] which puts an end to any aesthetic contemplation of the object."[99] Schopenhauer's ideas, which basically present how vision can stimulate the sense of taste, uncannily correlate with Merleau-Ponty's theories, since both of these thinkers consider how the senses overlap and braid together for a holistic bodily experience. The difference is that Schopenhauer saw this overlapping as a corruption of art's responsibilities.

Adding further to the art historical approach to still life, art historian Stephen G. Nichols argues that still life has been long used to negotiate several culturally determined boundaries since food service, a subject often included in still life, is a device that unites "the private and the public, the lofty and the low, the virtuous and the licentious," giving artists great latitude to "maneuver between the various options, from ritual solemnity to the carnivalesque."[100] It is the thematic malleability of still life's comestible subjects that I will argue continues to draw artists to food as material today at artist's restaurants.

Several authors have investigated the narrative properties of still life images. Grootenboer holds that the still life shows not only an image set free of human narrative,

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[99] Schopenhauer, 208.
[100] Stephen G. Nichols, "Seeing Food: An Anthropology of Ekphrasis, and Still Life in Classical and Medieval Examples," *MLN*, Vol. 106, No. 4. (September 1991): 818.

but also one that entirely removes the human point-of-view from the composition itself, since humans do not normally sit and observe objects of the still life kind in their daily lives.[101] Art historian Eli Blanchard claims that still life is “a challenge to narrativity and constitutes a praise of the virtues of description,” since the genre refuses to offer an immediately apparent human narrative.[102] This type of position overlooks the work of a human mind and body that has collected, harvested and arranged objects to display in still life, which offers a narrative of its own. Artists’ restaurants similarly ask their audiences to contemplate the quotidian rituals of the table and narratives of collection, harvest, and arrangement of meals, but they quite differently also invite audiences to partake in and respond to the meal laid out before them.

Social art historians see still life painting as deeply narrative because of its potential to assist in decoding and describing historical economic and social conditions as reflected in the artistic representations of the time. With seventeenth-century still life, for example, objects from distant continents appear together in one painting, suggesting expanded and intersecting lines of trade. Working in this tradition, Julie Berger Hochstrasser notes that still life thrived during the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, “a key period in the birth of consumer society.”[103] She argues that the narrative information held in these images has to do with the story of industry and trade routes of the Dutch empire.[104] Hochstrasser goes to great pains to uncover the paths of trade behind certain commodities included in various seventeenth-century Dutch still life

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[101] Grootenboer, 79.
[102] Blanchard, 276-277.
[103] Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press (2007): 1.
[104] *Ibid,* 6.

paintings. Her research uncovers the location and design of the very salt cellar represented in one painting, for example, in the hopes of giving evidence for the various associations these artworks would have had for their owners and commissioners – who were often the merchants responsible for selling the very wares these paintings depict. Food and tableware depicted in still life images are ciphers that this art historian uses to flesh out the history and circulation of certain commodities.

Barnes introduces her still life study *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life* by describing the historical moment surrounding the images in question. Her historical account of seventeenth-century Northern Europe buttresses the argument that Dutch artists took refuge in the still life genre as a response to the Netherlands's recent emancipation from Spanish control and the Catholic faith. Barnes explains that this socio-political and religious shift away from Catholicism included a dominant proscription on biblical scenes painted by artists, which were considered forms of idolatry. Barnes argues that these strong attitudes against the depiction of biblical scenes in turn encouraged artists to hide religious imagery new types of depiction: market scenes, also called market stall images.[105] As a result, the period saw an explosive increase in the number of still life images – including market scenes – produced by artists. Peter G. Rose, a food historian and contributor to Barnes' book, uses the catalogue of still life images included in the publication as an interpretive aid in his discussion of Dutch "foodways", meaning how food was presented and relished by contemporary diners. From Rose's position, it would appear that still life images are a

[105] Barnes, 9.

form of evidence that reveals a historical culture's rituals, social stratification, and available ingredients.[106]

Simon Schama, also working in art history, pursues the commodity value of the objects that Dutch images portray and the feelings of "pleasure, guilt and (for many sensibilities) disgust" concomitant with their viewing because of the largesse and luxuriant objects and foods they often depict.[107] Schama notably links the commodity value of objects in still life images with the haptic experiences of the viewer, since "the paintings make the eye do the work of the hand, registering alterations experienced [when] running fingers over changing surface textures and temperatures: hard crystal, nacreous nautilus cups, shell-smooth porcelain, embossed plate."[108] Schama, like Schopenhauer, is an author who believes that still life images have polysensorial value – perhaps even intersensorial value, to borrow Howes' term. Schama believes that desire and national pride are at the core of seventeenth-century assessments of these artworks.

Bryson's *Looking at the Overlooked* places stress on the material culture represented in the genre of still life. He writes that it is the material culture on display in still life – vessels and tools for the preparation and consumption of food – that gives the genre its coherence, and that these objects "have enormous *force*"[109] and are deeply operational across lines of class and age since their materiality is "inescapable" for all

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[106] See Rose, "Dutch Foodways: An American Connection." in Barnes, 17-28. Rose makes frequent reference to the catalogue images printed in the rear of the book throughout his text but does not analyze the images themselves.
[107] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, New York: Vintage Books. (1997): 478.
[108] Schama, 478.
[109] Bryson, 138.

humans.[110] Moreover this genre largely rejects the Renaissance project of perspective since its "principal spatial value [is] nearness," Bryson observes.[111] The still life, in other words, shows a shallow and isolated space dedicated to the close and meditative observation of material objects deeply involved in the daily lives of humans.

In her book *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still Life Painting* Grootenboer examines the various discursive positions taken by art historians and philosophers to deal with still life images. In response to Dutch art theorist Gerard de Lairesse's evaluation that still life "lacks meaning" in his *Groot Schilderboek* (1707) for example, she asks, "could there be a relation between the absence of pictorial depth and the lack of deeper meaning in still life?"[112] Seventeenth-century still life, she argues in response, opposes the perspectival pursuit that has defined a strain of painting's development in Western history, and she concludes that by extension these still life images can be seen as a treatise against the unified, humanist argument for stable viewing subjects.[113]

Instead of signaling a shortfall or lack in still life images, Grootenboer believes that the genre's resistance to description by authors is the result of an essential and deliberate rhetorical property of the images themselves: that they are conceived to show the world of things, objects simply-as-they-are. She writes, "Still life presents objects in a purely deitic way, so the only thing that Diderot can say about them is that they are

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[110] *Ibid*, 13. He argues that the vessels and tools represented in a Dutch seventeenth century painting differ little in design or function from those in a Pompeian painting.
[111] *Ibid*, 71.
[112] Grootenboer, 7.
[113] *Ibid*., 10.

'there.'"[114] Artists' restaurants similarly operate within the purview of the everyday, putting on display the stuff of the table in an apparently unencumbered way, outside of museological or gallery settings, in order to suggest that the very specialized and focused ideas embedded in their food practices are as self-evident and clear as the relationship between a knife blade and a partially peeled lemon. These are rhetorical strategies intended to convince the audience of the merit of the artwork.

Because of its frequent representation of shallow space, seventeenth-century Dutch still life has been argued to be a dominantly anti-perspectival art form. According to Grootenboer, Dutch artists also created still life images to counter the humanistic philosophy of perspective, which positioned the viewer as a positivist subject at the centre of a visual field. After looking closely at still life images of the seventeenth century, it becomes clear that from a very literal, technical point of view, these paintings are pictorial records of the anti-perspectival ethos that Grootenboer identifies. Still life paintings from the seventeenth century tend inadvertently to show multiple vanishing points in a single image. As discussed by David Hockney and Martin Kemp, the multiple vanishing points in these paintings record a trace of the technical devices frequently used in their production, the concave mirror, the camera lucida, and camera obscura.[115] In order to capture the likenesses of multiple objects, the lenses of these mechanisms must be regularly repositioned, resulting in the recording of multiple vantage points in a single

[114] *Ibid.,* 25.
[115] David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the lost techniques of the Old Masters* (2001); Martin Kemp *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (1992).

image.[116] Additionally, since still life painting of the seventeenth century represents a set of foodstuffs prone to rapid decay, the view that is represented in these images involves an assembly of fragmented moments.

Still life images have sometimes been negatively critiqued for reasons similar to those behind the current paucity of literature focusing on artists' restaurants. Bodily-grounded pleasure and disgust involved in both still life and artists' restaurants upsets the dominant interpretive modes used in art history, which rely on vision as a masterful tool for gathering knowledge about the world. The case studies examined in this thesis cross the pictorial frame, and serve forth a variety of knowledge that is eaten, felt by the tongue, harnessed by the mind, sensed by the nose, and extrapolated by the flesh – and in this way, they are examples of edible, performative still life.

These discussions by art historians situate still life as a record of economic and social realities, and also as a genre that sparks embodied experiences for viewers. This body of literature serves as an introduction to contemporary practices that reflect on social and economic context, and encourage audience participation and thereby aim to satisfy the audience's bodily desires. The experiences provided at contemporary artists' restaurants relate biographies of trade, international relations, science, commerce, transportation, and even tourism, and social mobility - but they do this while also stimulating the bodies and minds of their audiences.

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[116] See Hockney, *Secret Knowledge*: *Rediscovering the lost techniques of the Old Masters*, 60-66. Although Hockney's main focus is on the lucida's application in portraiture, his argument can equally apply to still life. See his diagram overlaid on a detail of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* for an example of a still life scene that contains multiple vanishing points. For his summary of the concave mirror's functions for still life, see 104-111.

Bryson's focus on the material culture of still life, in tandem with an interest in the condition of nearness in the genre are also apparent in the case of the artist's restaurant, which brings the viewer within the frame of the still life for the purpose of dining. Artists' restaurants bring the objects of still life as spatially near as is physically possible, through serving food to audiences. Drawing on the research of Hockney, Kemp, and Grootenboer, we can say that artists' restaurants, though often theatrical and public spectacles, are equally acted out in the bodily interior theatre of the senses, and in this way edible artworks set up a perceptual lattice. Since each audience member must judge and experience the artwork through ingestion, there can be no single vantage point, no unified experience of the work that is common among its participants. Also, views of still life images as rhetorical structures (as Grootenboer argues), indicators of economic scenarios (as with Hochstrasser), as well as transmitters of knowledge (as with Alpers) influence my own approach to the artist's restaurant as a form that creates edible still lifes that are materially infused with knowledge. Artists' restaurants, I argue, manifest and articulate theories of gustatory and aesthetic taste, express food politics, trade in edible commodities, and create new venues for conviviality.

Chapter Three: Gustatory and Aesthetic Taste

The critical value of both art and food are sometimes said to be matters of taste, in keeping with the often quoted Latin phrase *de gustibus non disputandum est*: there is no disputing about taste. Locked away in this aphorism is a connection between what it means to eat and what it means to perceive and to judge. Both the experience of tasting an object, and that of aesthetically discerning the value of an object, are deeply subjective acts. The notion of "good taste" has frequently been invoked and debated in the field of art history, and the connected discipline of connoisseurship is likewise involved in determining quality and identifying genuine articles by virtue of an aesthetic sensitivity sometimes called taste. Tasting food has been used as a productive analogy for discerning aesthetic quality in many fields, such as fashion, architecture, music, and dance. Yet, obviously the phrase, "She has good taste in architecture," is not intended to say anything about a person's ability to literally taste the discipline in question - perhaps evoking visions of someone eating a building. Rather, the expression is used to point out a level of acuity and experience that allows someone to carry out a studied reflection on the defining qualities of that particular field as determined by the dominant values of their own context and period.

The core similarity between these two varieties of taste - gustatory taste and aesthetic taste - seems to be that they both involve internal and subjective judgment that is shaped by and influential upon basic notions of "good" and "bad." This commonality may have engendered the homograph of "taste" itself, as well as a profusion of analogies and similes between these two types of taste in philosophy, art history, and popular

culture. As will be demonstrated, the artist's restaurant and the genre of still life offer a productive intersection of these two disputed forms of taste.

Another point of comparison between these two varieties of taste is that experiences of art and food are remarkably challenging to describe using language. Because of this, words themselves can never persuade others of the suitability of any critical judgment in either aesthetics or gastronomy. Rather than stifling attempts to convince listeners and readers of the value of particular pieces of food and art, the limitations of language and its persuasive power have had the reverse effect and led to an endless debate about the nature of critical judgment. Aesthetic taste – the ability to judge quality in things – has been a subject of theorizing, posturing and conjecture for centuries. Gustatory taste has been disputed, too, as in the discipline of food criticism, but with markedly different goals from those pursued relative to the arguments within the philosophy of aesthetics. Like many aphorisms, *de gustibus non disputandum est* captures a paradox: although there is no adequate fashion to communicate either gustatory or aesthetic taste, some people stridently continue to attempt to do so, while others continue to call such pursuits folly.

To explore these interrelated but distinct forms of taste I will introduce some key moments in the western philosophical tradition concerning aesthetic taste, as well as some pivotal assessments of gustatory taste. Rather than giving a summary of aesthetic philosophy in general, this chapter looks at pivotal moments in philosophy where these two tastes are compared. First I will consider two detractors of gustatory taste and the culinary arts: Plato, who dismisses cooking as trivial, and Aristotle, who valued the distal senses that keep their objects at a distance – hearing and sight – over those that are

proximal and require physical contact with their object - touch, taste, and smell. I will then discuss the theories of philosopher Immanuel Kant, who saw food as a merely enjoyable distraction from serious matters. Although Kant's discussion focuses on banquets rather than restaurants *per se*, his critique of food's aesthetic potential applies equally to other forms of communal feasting. Next I will introduce thinkers who problematize taste: John Ruskin, who argued that both aesthetic and gustatory taste are corrupted categories, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the French phenomenologist who contended that all experience - even cognition - is grounded first in the body and its sensorium. Following this I will survey some persuasive advocates of gustatory taste, including: the Greek philosopher Epicurus, who thought sensory pleasure could be ennobled; Scottish philosopher David Hume, known for his argument that taste can be trained and expanded through exposure to a particular cultural form; and French utopian Charles Fourier, who considered touch and taste the chief senses of the social realm.

A significant source guiding my research throughout this chapter is philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer's book *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*, one of the few recent studies to grapple in detail with the philosophical, scientific, symbolic and artistic potential of gustatory taste. In this chapter I further develop Korsmeyer's historic survey of and argument about the two registers of taste by including a range of authors and perspectives she does not address including Epicurus, Merleau-Ponty, and Fourier. My study also extends Korsmeyer's core observations and applies her theories and my own conclusions about artist's restaurants as performative still lifes.

Detractors of Gustatory Taste

Many have written about why food and the other entertainments offered at the restaurant are beneath the pursuits of philosophy, and such detractors often base their negative views of these categories on the assumption that some of the human senses are superior to others. Korsmeyer presents this core idea, which she calls the "hierarchy of the senses," in her survey of authors who denigrate taste. According to Korsmeyer, gustatory taste has frequently been considered as a distraction from the life of the mind, and framed as being morally suspect. She writes,

> Enjoyment of objects of the eyes and ears – beautiful scenes, sounds, works of art – directs attention outward to the world around [resulting in aesthetic pleasure...] By contrast, the pleasures of touch, smell, and taste supposedly direct our attention inward to the state of our own bodies. These senses are considered cognitively dull, and what is more, pursuit of their pleasures leads to self-indulgence, laziness, gluttony, and overall moral degeneration.[117]

Korsmeyer points out that aesthetic philosophy has avoided the edible as a subject of study because of this supposed "hierarchy of the senses," which places vision and hearing in a superior position to touch, smell, and taste. This exact phrase, "hierarchy of the senses," and indeed the idea that there has been and remains today a sensorial pecking order, is at play in more than one recent text on taste(s), both aesthetic and gustatory.[118]

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[117] Korsmeyer, "Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting," *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60, No. 3, (2002): 217-218.

[118] For examples of this phraseology, "hierarchy of the senses," see Parkhurst Ferguson, "The Senses of Taste," *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 116, No. 2. (April 2011): 371-384; Larry Shiner and Kriskovets, "The Aesthetics of Smelly Art," *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 3. (2007): 273-286; Donald M. Lowe, "Review: The Varieties of Sensory Experiences: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses by David Howes," *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 6. (1992): 858; Christopher Lawrence, "Review: Medicine and the Five Senses," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 440, (1996): 198; Howard Hall Creed, "Coleridge on 'Taste'," *ELH*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1946): 143-155. David Howes also notes the history of sense hierarchies. See Howes, 10.

In her article “The Senses of Taste,” sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson writes, for example, “Largely as a consequence of these qualifications, the *hierarchy of the senses* traditionally places taste in the company of touch and smell, well below the much less aggressively sensual faculties of sight and hearing.”[119] Sense hierarchies rather than sense equivalences have been, across disciplinary boundaries, a habitual assumption - or, increasingly, a reconsidered problematic.

Philosophical biases against gustatory taste are, Korsmeyer believes, born from biases against the non-visual senses, and linked to high opinions of vision as being analogous to knowledge and understanding. To see is to know. Korsmeyer argues that the sense of taste has generally remained the least valorized sense in western philosophy, but she also shows that this sensorial ranking has not remained stable and intact across history, and that these biases are reflected in other disciplines as well. As will be discussed shortly, vision for instance has been both praised and reviled by writers in different periods.

Although all of the senses are involved in gustation and the act of eating to some degree, in this section I will primarily focus on the distinctions and prejudices having to do with vision and taste. I agree with Korsmeyer's contention that, while taste is not always relegated to the lowliest evaluative position by all aesthetic philosophies, it has been quite consistently denigrated. I will therefore point to some of the key arguments that have been used both against and for the value of gustatory taste as a conduit for aesthetic appreciation. This will necessarily involve a braided discussion of approaches to taste and its chief sensory rival: vision.

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[119] Parkhurst Ferguson, “The Senses of Taste,” *American Historical Review*, No. 2, Vol. 116 (2011): 371-384.

Historian Martin Jay has traced out how vision, although a dominant sense discussed in philosophy, has been subject to the disdain and even denigration of twentieth-century philosophers and art historians. From Plato to Lyotard, Jay maps the changing views on vision itself. His study *Downcast Eyes* (1993) charts developments in philosophical positions on vision and its relationship to other senses. His ultimate aim is to reveal a trend in twentieth-century French thought, which he sees as "imbued with a profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era."[120] *Downcast Eyes* presents strong evidence that the ancient Greeks valued sight over non-visual senses, including the use of visual verbs in the Homeric period, the appearance of the Greek gods in physical form, the advanced use of theatre in Greece, and especially in Greek philosophy.[121] But Jay goes on to explain that "a certain anxiety about vision's malevolent power is expressed in many of the central Greek myths, most notably those of Narcissus, Orpheus, and Medusa."[122] Myths such as these warn that looking can be a dangerous act: looking hypnotizes and captures; looking evinces regret or lack of trust; looking can leave one open to attack or cause paralysis. Often at stake in such cases is how the senses "picture" the world. Complicating any scopically-centred view of ancient Greek culture, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy" (1872) presents a rather different view of the Apollonian (or visual) and the Dionysian (or bodily and sensual) aspects of Greek theatre. In Nietzsche's view, sight and mind, and the non-visual senses and the body, continually do battle for supremacy in the theatre of ancient Greece. Rather than considering the visual as a mastering sense, solely capable of

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[120] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought,* Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press. (1993): 14.
[121] *Ibid.*, 22, 23.
[122] *Ibid.,* 28.

enacting and gathering knowledge, Nietzsche is mindful of the equivalent power of bodily experience in ruling human action and feeling. Both Jay and Nietzsche present the narrativization of vision as a potentially ordering and rational principle for knowledge of the world.

Taste, by contrast, has often been described as an inherently dis-ordered sense. Philosopher Kevin W. Sweeney points out that some aesthetic philosophers have claimed that gustatory taste is incapable of delivering "ordered aesthetic structures,"[123] meaning that food and drink resist description and reflection because our experience of them takes place in a disordered fashion and internally - unlike vision, which experiences its object at a distance and organizes it in spatial, temporal terms. Foodstuffs are sometimes not only said to be experienced in a disordered manner, but perhaps more gravely, comestibles are said to have the potential to disorder thought itself. Plato's *Symposium*, (383-380 BCE) for example, tells the story of a group of diners who have gathered to discuss ideas. In order to keep their minds sharply focused on philosophical debate and discussion, they abstain from the distractions of food, drink and musical entertainment.[124] Jay emphasizes that for Plato, ""vision" seems to have meant only that of the inner eye of the mind. In fact, Plato often expressed severe reservations about the reliability of the two eyes of normal perception. We see through the eyes, he insisted, not with them."[125] From Plato's point of view, the eyes are tools of perception that, so to speak, are "in the way" of seeing as much as they enable seeing.

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[123] Kevin W. Sweeney, "Alice's Discriminating Palate," *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (1999) 21.
[124] Korsmeyer (1999), 17-18.
[125] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 26.

There are few stronger allegories describing the limited or even punitive aspects of vision than Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* (c. 380 BCE), which describes humanity as a crowd of prisoners shackled underground watching a shadow play and confusing it with reality. *The Cave* gives a strong indication that for this philosopher vision is not an entirely trustworthy sense - and yet, no more does *The Cave* valorize the other human senses. All of the human senses are unstable and mistrusted in his allegory. Author of *A History of Cooks and Cooking* Michael Symons presents that for Plato, food and its pleasures figure as clear examples of the "transient, inadequate, inferior, material world of the senses, bodily pleasures, and humdrum, non-philosophical activities."[126] The sense of taste is not the only problem when it comes to food, in Plato's view. Plato also critiques cooking itself with even more vitriol, describing it as a "kind of knack gained by experience ... a knack of ... producing gratification and pleasure," that is at its core "pandering."[127] Cooking is an ignoble art for Plato.

Aristotle has a similar bias against taste, and considers sight to be the most valuable and noble sense of them all. He writes,

> All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight ... The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.[128]

This passage describes the human sensorium as a system that delivers knowledge to us, with vision being the strongest signal received by the sensorial system because its

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[126] Michael Symons, "Epicurus, the Foodies' Philosopher," *Food & Philosophy: Eat, Drink and Be Merry*, Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe, eds. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2007): 24.
[127] *Ibid.*, 24.
[128] Korsmeyer (1999): 18-19.

transmission allows us to differentiate between things. Aristotle has other reasons for praising sight as superior and for diminishing taste and touch: he believes that the proximal senses, which involve being in physical contact with the thing sensed (touch, smell, and taste), are inferior to the distal senses, which hold their sensed objects at a distance (sight, and hearing).[129]

The risk of the proximal senses, for both Plato and Aristotle, is that they can be easily indulged to excess and cause an immoral life. Korsmeyer notes that according to these two philosophers, the distal senses of "vision and hearing actually appear to be senses that cannot be overindulged."[130] Though the distal sense of vision has its pitfalls in Plato's and Aristotle's opinions, proximal taste is even more deeply mired in the potential immoralities of gluttony, lust and avarice. These philosophies suggest that vision's ability to keep its subject at a physical distance allow for stronger objective judgments than could ever be possible with the senses of taste and touch.

Immanuel Kant: the Agreeable and the Beautiful

The most well-known contributor to the debate surrounding the two varieties of taste and their relationship to beauty in the field of philosophy - although not the first to borrow the term "taste" from the culinary world - is likely Immanuel Kant. His theories are of particular interest to a study of artist's restaurants since he considers the enjoyment of food and the entertainments of banquets to be among the experiences most remote from pure judgment and beauty. He claims that dining experiences cannot possibly involve true aesthetic encounters, and as a result that food cannot be art.

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[129] *Ibid.,* 21.
[130] *Ibid.,* 22.

In *The Critique of Judgment* Kant writes, “a judgment of taste determines its object in respect to our liking (beauty) [but] makes a claim to everyone's assent, as if it were an objective judgment.”[131] If an individual responds to an object, for example, by exclaiming “That is beautiful,” Kant argues that by using the term “beautiful” this person is *de facto* suggesting that all other people will agree with them. Yet people do not agree about what is beautiful. Kant sets out to puzzle through this peculiarity of the beautiful. To do so, he uses the concept of “taste” - drawing from the term's use in gustatory acts - to describe aesthetic judgment.

Elsewhere, Kant ponders why the analogy of aesthetic and gustatory taste has been widely propagated, and he concludes that it is because the potent social experience of dining in groups involves comparing subjective gustatory taste experiences. “There is no situation in which sensibility and understanding, united in enjoyment, can be as long continued and as often repeated with satisfaction as a good meal in good company,” Kant writes. He continues,

> The aesthetic of taste of the host manifests itself in his ability to make a universally acceptable selection, something which he cannot accomplish completely with his own sense of taste, because his guests might perhaps wish to choose other foods or drinks, each according to his own private sense. Consequently, the host makes his decisions with the tastes of this guests in mind, so that everyone finds something to his own liking; such a procedure yields a comparatively universal validity [...] And so the feeling of an organ through a particular sense has been able to yield the name for an ideal feeling, a feeling for a sensory, universally valid choice in general.[132]

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[131] Immanuel Kant, “Extracts from ‘Analytic of Aesthetic Judgement,’ and ‘Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgement,’ Critique of Judgement,” *The Continental Aesthetics Reader,* London; New York: Routledge. (First Routledge publication, 2000. First published 1790): 16.

[132] Immanuel Kant, “Objective and Subjective Senses: The Sense of Taste,” *The Taste Culture Reader*, Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed. Oxford; New York: Berg Publishing (2005): 214.

The “name for an ideal feeling” he has in mind here is “taste.” Kant observes that group meals are challenging to their hosts since they generally require the advance selection of foods in anticipation of individual taste preferences. Despite the potential catastrophes presented by this culinary guesswork, when meals are well planned according to a host's careful hypotheses of the guests' taste preferences, Kant sees that a sort of orchestral harmony can result from the combination of sociability and flavor. The scenario of the host's banquet that Kant describes here is ultimately only an analogy for a finer and higher sensitivity that he wishes to illustrate, and one that is not bodily in nature from his perspective: that of aesthetic taste. Gustatory taste is for Kant merely a “vehicle of conversation,” and as will be discussed below, Kant holds such dinner party conversations in very low esteem.

The reasons that philosophers and lay-folk alike have compared and made analogies between gustatory and aesthetic taste are not wasted on this philosopher. Kant declares,

> It seems that this is one of the main reasons why this aesthetic power of judging was given that very name: taste. For even if someone lists all the ingredients of a dish, pointing out that I have always found each of them agreeable, and goes on to praise this food - and rightly so - as wholesome, I shall be deaf to all these reasons: I shall try the dish on my tongue and palate, and thereby (and not by universal principles) make my judgment.[133]

Kant describes the experience of judging a meal one has eaten in parallel with the experience of judging aesthetic value. A diner tastes the food in question and can only internally know the pleasure (or lack thereof) that they have felt, and they do

[133] Ibid., 18.

not wait for the opinion of those around them to determine if they have felt bodily pleasure or disgust from eating something. Similarly, a viewer encountering an artwork first establishes their own opinion of its worth privately, and this judgment takes place within the human mind, out of sight. Because gustatory taste is a private event occurring within the body it seems to provide an apt analogy for the aesthetic problem of discerning beauty in art and other fields.

Kant proposes that true beauty has to be unclouded by personal interest. Here he somewhat veers from the analogy of gustatory taste, since he argues that true critical judgments of taste cannot involve any personal interest - a difficult criterion to realize when it comes to edible goods because a diner has an inherent stake in the nutritional content and flavor of the food. Based on this idea, Kant is quick to disqualify the rites of the table and food itself as possible sources of beauty worthy of aesthetic contemplation, since any subject encountering food is bound to take an interest in the potential physical pleasures or displeasures that food promises. In short, when food is “beautiful” we want more - and more - of it, meaning that it can never be truly beautiful in the sense that Kant means. As he puts it,

> everyone must allow that a judgment on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favor of the existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.[134]

[134] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, James Creed Meredith, trans. (2007, First published by Oxford 1952, First published 1790): 38

Appetite and gustatory taste are obstacles for pure judgments of aesthetic taste. Appetite can only attain limited registers of affect and these are instinctual rather than rational, in Kant's view, since “the senses of taste and smell are both more subjective than objective.”[135] Smell and taste provide “enjoyment, rather than the cognition of the external object.”[136] Enjoyment stands in the way of people's cognitive reflection on objects that are tasted and smelled.

While Kant's assessment is not limited to foodstuffs - indeed the majority of his writing hardly mentions food at all - he does isolate the tasting and critical judgment of foods as an experience that parallels judging aesthetic quality in art, nature, and other realms. Both tasting food and making judgments of aesthetic taste involve subjective experiences, and therefore result in opinions that are irreconcilable and indisputable outside the human subject.

In order to organize his theory, Kant designates three categories of experience: the agreeable, the beautiful, and the good. He describes them as follows: “The agreeable is what GRATIFIES US; the beautiful what simply PLEASES US; the good what is ESTEEMED (approved), i.e. that on which we set an objective worth.”[137] For Kant, forms of stimulus that result in appetite, bodily satisfaction, or “interest” on behalf of the human subject are merely “agreeable.”[138] The agreeable rouses a desire for more of the thing in question; it shows the subject simply things as they are. The interest that Kant will not admit

[135] Kant, “Objective and Subjective Senses: The Sense of Taste,” 210.
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] Kant, (2007): 41, emphasis original.
[138] Ibid.

into pure judgments of beauty is the kind that "provokes a desire for similar objects."[139] The good, by contrast, is a moral category of things as they should be.

Kant also writes about the pleasures centered at a dining table, which he claims are mere entertainment and never intended to be reflected on meaningfully. He distinguishes between fine art, which has as its purpose the goals of pleasure combined with "presentations that are ways of cognizing" and agreeable art, "whose purpose is merely enjoyment."[140] His description of the agreeable arts is worth quoting at length. Agreeable arts,

> include [the art of providing] all those charms that can gratify a party at table, such as telling stories entertainingly, animating a group to open and lively conversation, or using jest and laughter to induce a certain cheerful tone among them - a tone such that, as is said, there may be a lot of loose talk over the feast, and no one wants to be held responsible for what he says, because the whole point is the entertainment of the moment, not any material for future meditation or quotation. (Such arts also include the art of furnishing a table so that people will enjoy themselves, or include, at large banquets, presumably even the table-music - a strange thing which is meant to be only an agreeable noise serving to keep the minds in a cheerful mood, and which fosters the free flow of conversation between each person and his neighbor, without anyone's paying the slightest attention to the music's composition.)[141]

Feasts, banquets, and proceedings at restaurants - even when organized or conceptualized by artists - fall within Kant's category of the agreeable arts, but I will argue that there is more to this category than what he describes. Kant sees the agreeable arts as mere facilitators for conversation and merriment, and in his view they certainly are not capable of triggering the level of reflection he has in mind for the fine arts or the beautiful, which by contrast bring to light our methods of cognition. He believes that the aesthetic is made

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[139] *Ibid.*, 38
[140] Kant, (2000): 23.
[141] *Ibid.*

visible by the fine arts, and brings our faculties into harmony to reveal how the faculties themselves function.

Why are pure judgments so important in *The Critique of Judgment*? This has to do with Kant's concept of the categorical imperative, which he wants to see reflected in the general operation of beauty. The categorical imperative demands that we all do as we would if we were in the position of every other person, in other words, to behave in the interests of the greater good. In the same way, to identify pure beauty we must judge according to the rules of the categorical imperative by removing self-interest from our judgments. Gustatory taste, Kant seems to think, can never achieve this act of stepping into the role of the other, and therefore the edible and its pleasures obfuscate and block the aims of the categorical imperative.

For readers today it may seem counterintuitive or illogical that true beauty would not involve pleasure and personal interest, but for Kant pleasure is not the ultimate end or purpose of beauty. The agreeable and the good both involve desire – the former a desire for pleasure, and the latter a desire for what is right. The beautiful, Kant holds, reveals to us the distinction between the world as it is and the world as it should be. Beauty uncovers the moral dimension of life in contrast with the base reality of the world, and shows the subject how to live the good life.

In an unexpected twist, Kant argues that before a judgment of taste can be made, appetites and needs must be satisfied. He writes,

> so far as the interest of inclination in the case of the agreeable goes, everyone says: Hunger is the best sauce; and people with a healthy appetite relish everything, so long as it is something they can eat

> […]only when people's needs have been satisfied can we tell who among the crowd has taste or not.[142]

In order to manage the level of attention and impartiality he has in mind for critical judgments, people have to be materially contented and satiated. *To know beauty, first one must eat.*

Korsmeyer alerts the reader to this prerequisite for the judgment of taste and its problems when she writes, "the very disengaged, disinterested attitude that Kant requires for the pure judgment of Taste, it has been argued, represents a lofty remove that is indeed not a universal possibility but a privilege made easy only for someone who confidently occupies a socially privileged position within a dominant and respected group."[143] Certain social conditions must be met to facilitate pure judgments, therefore, meaning that the leisure class is most likely to have "refined" skills of aesthetic judgment.

Problematizing Taste

One hundred years after Kant's writing, the question of aesthetic taste and its connection to gustatory taste was still up for debate. After the analogic connection between aesthetic and gustatory taste was more firmly cemented by eighteenth-century German aesthetic philosophers such as Johann Christoph Gottsched and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, some commentators began to critique the validity of equating these two forms of taste.

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[142] Kant, (2007): 42.
[143] Korsmeyer, (1999): 63.

John Ruskin, for one, rejects the link between taste and aesthetic sensitivity; he claims that the truly aesthetic has nothing to do with the term taste. He writes,

> Wherever the word "taste" is used with respect to matters of art, it indicates either that the thing spoken of belongs to some inferior class of objects, or that the person speaking has a false conception of its nature. For, consider the exact sense in which a work of art is said to be "in good or bad taste." It does not mean that it is true, or false; that it is beautiful, or ugly: but that it does or does not comply either with the laws of choice, which are enforced by certain modes of life; or the habits of mind produced by a particular sort of education.[144]

Taste is merely the product of habit and upbringing according to this author, foreshadowing social critiques of aesthetics and class that would appear in philosophy and beyond around a century later. Ruskin goes on to argue that "liberal education" merely serves to reinforce divisions between classes according to what is considered in good or bad taste. Training in taste does lead, Ruskin thinks, to more "delicate" senses and more "accurate" perceptions, but it has also served to "narrow the sympathies and harden the heart, diminishing the interest of all beautiful things by familiarity, until even what is best can hardly please, and what is brightest hardly entertain..."[145] These qualities mean that, for Ruskin, "taste" is actually a negative rather than positive category, and one that is restrictive. In fact, writes Ruskin, the use of the term "taste" to describe the ability to distinguish the good from the bad should reveal to us just how base "good taste" is, since it "implies that art gives only a kind of pleasure analogous to that derived from eating by the palate."[146] These palate-based pleasures, for Ruskin, are of low status, tied to pride and sensual satisfaction, not art.

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[144] John Ruskin, *Modern Painter: Vol. III*, Cambridge: Chadwyk-Healey, (1999, First printed London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1856): 66.
[145] *Ibid.,* 66.
[146] *Ibid.,* 67.

In the wake of Kant's disregard for gustatory taste, other thinkers have critiqued the delimitation of the individual senses in favor of describing overall sensory experience. Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that cognition, consciousness, and knowledge of the world are delivered to the human subject through holistic bodily sensation and are contained in the body. He argues that rationalism and empiricism are both incapable of animating philosophy since both try to develop a system to explain experience in the world, while his ambition is, by contrast, *to describe experience*. Merleau-Ponty's approach to bodily experience is the antithesis of the Kantian model of a subject who impartially considers and evaluates the world. As Merleau-Ponty argues,

> The Kantian subject posits a world, but, in order to be able to assert a truth, the actual subject must in the first place have a world or be in the world, that is, sustain round about it a system of meanings whose reciprocities, relationships and involvements do not require to be made explicit in order to be exploited.[147]

The human subject, Merleau-Ponty believes, cannot coherently theorize the world as an objective phenomenon since this subject's body occupies the space it conceives of. Before any theoretical model begins, Merleau-Ponty holds, the body is already present and inescapable, and this body is not stratified or sensorially ordered by hierarchy; it is a body, first and foremost, of flesh.

Perhaps Merleau-Ponty's most complex but also most pivotal contribution is the concept of "the flesh." According to his theory, object and subject find a gap between them, and the flesh is what occupies this space. He thus explains that consciousness composes the world through the "thickness of the body."[148] Thickness of the body,

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[147] Merleau-Ponty, (2007): 149.
[148] Merleau-Ponty, (2000): 167.

Merleau-Ponty believes, contributes to subjective identity; our bodily selves are always present in any interpretive or observational act. Because of the flesh, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the meaning we ascribe to objects is not fully developed or absolute, but rather subjective and indeterminate. He writes that via the body the "text of the external world is not so much copied as composed,"[149] for consciousness. Sensation cannot deliver or transmit a facsimile of the world to our consciousness, and for Merleau-Ponty, this means the sensory mechanism is not a corridor or transmitter of the world but is of the world itself.

When considering the scope of this thickness of the body, Merleau-Ponty additionally accounts for the presence of other sensing human subjects. "The Other," that is another person, is a gift that reveals the world, he writes, since "through the other body, I see that, in its coupling with the flesh of the world, the body contributes more than it receives, adding to the world that I see the treasure necessary for what the other body sees."[150] Therefore the flesh is experienced intersubjectively, revealing the world to us through the senses of others and ourselves.

While Merleau-Ponty does not discuss the sense of taste in significant detail - for example, in one discussion of honey he focuses more on the sensation of the viscous amber liquid's coating of hand and fingers[151] – he is an advocate of the proximal senses, including taste, insofar as he values a unified web of sensorial experience that looks beyond individual sensing organs. He problematizes taste as a distinct or demarcated

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[149] Merleau-Ponty, (2007)*:* 10.
[150] Merleau-Ponty, (2000): 172.
[151] Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception,* London; New York: Routledge (2009. First published in French as Causeries 1948, Editions de Seuil, as a transcription of seven lectures for French national radio, October 9 to November 13, 1948): 46-48.

sense since he considers bodily experience to be holistic. “Honey is sugary,” he writes, “Yet sugariness in the realm of taste [...] constitutes the same sticky presence as honey in the realm of touch.”[152] Sensory experience is integrated between, not divided among distinguishable senses, he writes, since “it is impossible to gauge the contribution of each sense” to an experience.[153] Instead of discarding taste as too bodily, Merleau-Ponty incorporates taste into a web of sensory experience.

It has been established above that many pejorative assessments of the proximal senses rely on negative assessments of the body and its potential role in philosophy. Yet, although vision and hearing can sense things at a distance, thus encouraging philosophies that consider these senses as inherently objective, these distal senses involve the body too. The body rather than the individual senses, it might be said, is a conduit for all knowledge since the senses are within the body, the mind is within the body, and the mind itself is bodily.

Advocates for Gustatory Taste

Some philosophers in the western tradition have examined the philosophical potential of gustatory taste and have even valorized the sense of taste. Taking a philosophical position contrary to that of Aristotle and Plato, Epicurus (308-270 BCE), enjoys simultaneous and contradictory reputations as a hedonistic thinker and an ascetic cult leader of antiquity. Being the namesake for the term epicurean, Epicurus is sometimes misunderstood as a philosopher who argues for the blind pursuit of sensual

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[152] Ibid., 47.
[153] Merleau-Ponty, (2007): 137.

pleasures through food and alcohol.[154] His philosophies are much more complex, however. A core aphorism of Epicurus' is "The beginning and root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach; even wisdom and culture must be referred to this."[155] The impact of this quotation has been extremely durable in terms of his reputation as a "foodies' philosopher," as culinary researcher Michael Symons wishfully terms him. Perhaps in keeping with this quote, Symons somewhat erroneously describes Epicurus' reputation in antiquity as "the belly-centered philosopher."[156] The belly is just one organ of interest to Epicurus, however, who in truth was interested in bodily pleasure as well as what people's predispositions are with respect to belief, desire, and so on.[157]

Epicurus argues that pleasure should be pursued and pain avoided, but he makes allowances for tolerating periods of pain that lead to eventual pleasure, meaning that he encourages a rational rather than hedonistic approach to pleasure.[158] His philosophy involves much more than blind abandon to hedonism, but rather presents a moral view of the pleasures that the body does allow. He writes, "For I at least cannot conceive the good if I take away the pleasures due to tastes, the pleasures due to sex, the pleasures due to sounds, and the pleasant visual motions due to shape."[159] Epicurus calls these varieties of pleasure "kinetic," or pleasures of motion, distinguished from "static" pleasures. Kinetic

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[154] The popular recipe website www.epicurious.com, and the American food retailer Epicure have further confused Epicurus' legacy in popular culture.
[155] Symons, 19.
[156] Ibid., 17.
[157] David Sedley, "Epicurus' Theological Innatism," *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*, Jeffery Fish and Kirk R. Sanders, eds. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press (2011): 38.
[158] Elizabeth Asmis, "The Necessity of Anger in Philodemus' On Anger," *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*, Jeffery Fish and Kirk R. Sanders, eds. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press (2011): 164.
[159] Jeffrey S. Purinton, "Epicurus on the Telos," *Phronesis*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1993): 281.

sensory pleasures, including gustatory taste, are intrinsically part of the good in Epicurus' view.

Another advocate of gustatory taste is philosopher David Hume. His essay "Of the Standard of Taste" predates Kant's text, and raises some of the same paradoxes of taste: taste is entirely subjective, yet people frequently hold that their taste is superior to that of others and that there is such a thing as "bad taste." Hume writes,

> To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. According to the disposition of the organs, the same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has justly determined it to be fruitless to dispute concerning tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary, to extend this axiom to mental, as well as bodily taste.[160]

Hume believes that the subtle differences of taste can be overlooked in favor of a general human proclivity toward pleasure when encountering certain tastes.

Hume also identifies a special class of individuals – those of "delicate taste" – who have cultivated a sensitivity enabling them to identify things of fine taste, including works of art. To illustrate this delicate taste, Hume refers to the well-known enological episode of Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). During a wine-tasting contest, two characters remark that a certain vintage is quite good but each of them senses a mild undertone discoloring the bouquet of the wine. The first character senses a whiff of metal, the second the aroma of leather. Their audience laughs in disbelief, considering their oral reports on gustatory taste as the products of affectation; these naysayers are silenced when a metal key on a leather strap is discovered at the bottom of the wine vat. Hume's account of this story is meant to suggest that even those

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[160] David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, eds., London: Longmans, Green (1898, First published 1757): 1:269.

sources of sensation that are out of view – much like the hidden key and leather strap – can be apperceived *through taste* by those who are sensitive enough, and those who cannot detect these subtleties should listen to those of delicate taste, who are authorities on a world that is out of view for most people. As Hume writes,

> The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story [...] Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition; This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense. Here then the general rules of beauty are of use, being drawn from established models and from the observation of what pleases or displeases [...] To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong...[161]

Hume does believe that a rule of beauty can be calculated – something Kant denies – and he also holds that exposure to "a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty" can increase one's acuity and "delicacy" of taste.[162] In other words, to desire more of a thing or increased exposure to it does not necessarily prevent the possibility of experiencing aesthetic feeling. Small quantities of the thing in question should still be capable of stirring aesthetic feeling, Hume thinks, since,

> A good palate is not tried by strong flavours, but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest. In like manner, a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste; nor can a man be satisfied with himself while he suspects that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved.[163]

Gustatory taste offers the possibility of a high level of sensitivity, and Hume uses this positive quality to help his reader to understand just how finely tuned judgments of

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[161] Hume, 202, sic.
[162] *Ibid.,* 203.
[163] *Ibid.*

aesthetic taste can be. According to Hume, gustatory taste and aesthetic taste are both highly discerning senses.

Scottish philosopher Edmund Burke thought gustatory taste important enough to devote a section of his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) to the nature of tasting. In many ways similar in tone and method to gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*, discussed later in this thesis, Burke's section XXI titled “Sweetness, its nature,” presents a sensually deductive method for understanding gustatory taste. He speculates that taste is delivered by liquid rather than solid states, and that “the vehicles of all tastes are water and oil.”[164] Fluidity, Burke believes, is characterized by “roundness, smoothness, and weak cohesion,” and because of these properties water is, in terms of taste, “relaxing.” Microscopic observations of salt, sugar and “nitre,” Burke claims, show that each of these substances has its own particulate shape: cubic, globular, and oblong respectively. These shapes offer a vehicle for the transmission of taste.[165] This is an intersensorial moment in Burke’s philosophy: taste is described in visual, spatial terms. He concludes the section by remarking, “We often apply the quality of sweetness, metaphorically, to visual objects. For the better carrying on this remarkable analogy of the senses, we may here call sweetness the beautiful of the taste.”[166] In this passage Burke, it would seem, has no reservations about the analogic relationship between gustatory and aesthetic taste, and even identifies a particular flavor - sweetness - as being the equivalent of the beautiful.

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[164] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Cambridge: Proquest, (First published 1757, London: R. and J. Dodsley): 152.
[165] *Ibid.*, 154-155.
[166] *Ibid.*, 157.

Several authors have debated the temporality of tasting. Is taste experienced in a flash or over a drawn out period? French philosopher Voltaire believes that the judgment of gustatory taste happens in an instant - much like a critical judgment of aesthetic taste. He writes that critical judgment,

> is a quick discernment, a sudden perception, which, like the sensation of the palate, anticipates reflection; like the palate, it relishes what is good with an exquisite and voluptuous sensibility, and rejects the contrary with loathing and disgust; like the palate also, it is often doubtful, and, as it were bewildered, not knowing whether it should relish or reject certain objects; and frequently requires the influence of habit to give it a fixed and uniform determination.[167]

Here he describes critical judgments as tinged with uncertainty, quite unlike Kant's absolute and disinterested judgment of taste. Most importantly, Voltaire is concerned with the effects of habit, or training, on a person's sensitivity when it comes to both forms of taste. In contrast to Kant, who believes that the personal interests involved in gustatory taste place it beneath aesthetic taste, Voltaire sees gustatory and aesthetic taste as both having instinctual rejection or pleasure at their core.

Charles Fourier was a radical utopian that believed the sense of taste as animated through food's production and pleasurable consumption was a vital component in producing satisfied citizens. In "The System of Passionate Attraction," (1822) Fourier lays out designs for a utopian community he names Harmony, and discusses the role of taste in the realization of this community. Although two actual communities were formed during his lifetime to manifest his highly complex plans,[168] some authors, such as Karl

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[167] Voltaire, "An Essay on Taste," *An Essay on Taste*, Alexander Gerard, ed. New York: Garland (1764, First published 1970): 209-210.

[168] Two main efforts were made to realize Fourier's phalanstry plans during his lifetime: the first was in 1832 at Condé-sur-Vesgre and the second was in Rumania in 1835-1837.

Marx and Friedrich Engels, consider Fourier to be a satirist. Fourier's theory that the cosmos is a cluster of sexual beings that reproduce, and his claims that the oceans of the world would one day turn to delicious lemonade suggest that his books were written with a satirical edge. At the very least, Fourier's philosophical tradition is markedly different from the other thinkers presented in this section because of his ability to meld pragmatism and pure fantasy in a plan for a utopian community.

Fourier takes the senses seriously enough to develop what he calls a “calculus of passional attraction.”[169] He calls taste “first in rank among the sensual passions” since this sense is a requirement for survival.[170] Without the sense of taste to drive appetite, he insists, the human organism would wither and die. As French philosopher Roland Barthes writes, “Fourierist sensuality is, above all, oral.”[171] Love-making and eating are of the utmost importance in Fourier's view – the residents of Harmony, called Harmonians, eat five meals a day and, as Barthes writes, make sexual congress, “the main business of the long Harmonian day...”[172] Fourier also considers taste and sight to be “active pleasure[s],”[173] suggesting that they require concentration and reflection.

Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Teaching of Charles Fourier,* Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (1969): 13. Both communities collapsed.

[169] Charles Fourier, “Selections from Development of the Senses, the System of Passionate Attraction,” *French Utopias*, F. Manuel, ed. New York: Free Press, (First published 1822, 1966): 302.

[170] Fourier, 301.

[171] Roland Barthes, *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*, Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (1989, First published 1971): 81.

[172] *Ibid.,* 113.

[173] *Ibid.*

Fourier champions taste and touch as the "kings of the social world."[174] The pleasures associated with these senses are a crucial component of the utopian community because individuals who are sensorially satisfied are easier to govern. As Fourier writes, "the furies of ambition, the inclination of the populace for insurrection, for atrocities, only spring from the want of satisfying these two senses," taste and touch.[175] Fourier argues that food's adequate supply and its pleasurable consumption are vital components in an ideal state, and he strongly advocated that children be educated to refine their palettes and, as put by Fourier specialist Jonathan Beecher, "be encouraged to demand that even the most inconsequential foods be prepared to their exact specifications."[176] In other words, from childhood, citizens of Fourier's utopian community were to be trained in aesthetic taste as mobilized through gustatory taste, and taught how to communicate their taste preferences.

By seeking sensory stimulation and attention through the study that Fourier calls "gourmandism," he holds that individuals will become more balanced internally and therefore more at harmony with one another. Those who are well fed are not only satisfied corporeally, but also are motivated to be more productive citizens who are less prone to cause each other suffering or violence, and because of this Fourier celebrates luxury as a vested interest for the entire community rather than an elite few. The soubriquet "gourmand" is usually intended as an insult, meaning that someone selfishly indulges in excessive eating of fine foods, but rather than being considered a failing or

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[174] Fourier, "Selections from Development of the Senses, The System of Passionate Attraction, 302-303.
[175] *Ibid.,* 303.
[176] Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World*, Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (1986): 251.

liability, for Fourier gourmandism is capable of fortifying the human toward "labor and study."[177] Good gustatory taste leads to good labor and increased capacity to be educated.

While Kant is certain that beauty will reveal just how similar all of humanity is, and that the sense of taste animated during a feast can only highlight lowly appetites, Fourier's approach suggests that the pleasure associated with satisfying gustatory appetites might be positive for its ability to show the tremendous differences between human subjects. Fourier's theory suggests that the sense of taste will be instrumental in realizing a utopia based not on attaining a solid social order of human subjects with *a priori* qualities in common, but one that shifts continually according to the competing tastes of its citizens. I will return to Fourier's ideas in relation to the history of eighteenth and nineteenth-century gastronomy in Chapter Four.

A final advocate of gustatory taste is philosopher Anthony Savile, who adds to the discussion of food's ability to affect both mind and body by further expanding on Kant's view of gustatory taste and beauty. Kant meant to frame beauty, Savile argues, as the philosophical analogue of food because of its capacity to "feed" and "nourish" the human faculties.[178] Savile's argument hints that foodstuffs can lead to aesthetic experience, and thus become an art form. He writes, "Just as it is of the essence of food to strengthen the body and promote its growth, so too with beauty; with the difference that what it strengthens and promotes the growth of is the mind or the spirit, not the body."[179] The crucial difference, as Savile is aware, is that Kant's so-called true judgments of beauty

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[177] Fourier, 305.
[178] Anthony Savile, "The Idealism of Purposiveness," *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, Paul Guyer, ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (2003): 91.
[179] *Ibid.*

should not involve personal interests, and food's stimulation of appetites automatically negates the possibility of disinterestedness.

Gustatory taste has long been a ready analogy used by philosophers and lay folk to discuss aesthetic taste. Gustatory taste has been seen as a dangerous sense that may mislead or tempt people into lives of gluttony and excess, and in this paradigm, aesthetic taste is praised as a dramatically different counterpoint that permits people to take an impartial view of the quality of particular objects. Gustatory taste has also been praised as a sense of the highest order, being tied to pleasure and even the realization of utopian communities. And gustatory taste has been problematized as an analogy that reveals just how base aesthetic taste is as a constructed product of society, one with little or no real value. The various philosophical positions on taste taken up in this chapter will serve as points of orientation for the next chapter, which charts out the history of gastronomy and food service sites in Europe, and the remaining case study chapters, which explore the alluring qualities of taste combined with other senses at work in artist's restaurants.

Chapter Four: Restaurant Typologies, Gastronomic Genealogies

A frenzied interest in cuisine and the emerging field of gastronomy arose in France in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, coinciding with developments in aesthetic theory spurred by writers like Baumgarten, Burke, and Kant. The field of gastronomy produced several pivotal ideas about the functions of gustatory taste, the culinary arts, personal preference and food connoisseurship, and the potential for sensory pleasure and the rites of the table to reinforce social groups and contribute to social change. Gastronomy encompassed debates and negotiations over what foods were delicious, passable, or distasteful. We could say that food became further aestheticized by developments in gastronomy. Crucially, restaurants of this period began to *display* food in ways entirely different from the methods used by their forebears, putting food center-stage by making food service visible in restaurant interiors through street facing windows, for instance. Although food certainly existed as a commodity before this time, this particular method of display initiated food commodities into a new function and effect. I will refer to this special type of displayed food as an *edible commodity*.

Food display practices in the larger sense - the restaurant as an interior that is occupied, and as a form of architecture that showcases food, décor, and people – can be productively considered as types of still life. Restaurants, I will argue, are enveloping and immersive, performative forms of still life; both restaurants and still life images display food, tableware, and vessels, but the former permits its audience to enter into, consume, and become a part of the display.

Contributing to the use and meaning of the word "gastronomy" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, restaurants became popular venues for the display of social cachet and conspicuous consumption, and facilitated further refinement of traditional dishes, and enabled experimentation with food forms – all for the sake of gathering around and consuming edible commodities. Restaurants provided, and continue to provide, the opportunity for diners to "perform taste." This facility suited the aspirations of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century to define themselves as a distinguished social class, and it continues to serve the interests of any social group who wants to display their taste distinction today. Likewise, the chef's own technical ability, taste and distinction are put on display according to what dishes they create - each of these dishes being tested and configured according to the taste of the chef. Restaurants, then, are social, gastronomical and theatrical ventures, and artists capitalize on these attributes when they establish their own food service sites.

Gastronomic Theories

Theories of gastronomy and debate about the nature of gustatory taste in turn fueled the growing popularity and number of restaurants in France, which spiked dramatically at the start of the nineteenth century. Treatises on culinary arts, taste, and food were written, traded and debated. By understanding such writings, a great deal can be illuminated about philosophical and popular presumptions related to gustatory taste that remain in wide circulation to this day. Treatises on gastronomy help to bring into greater focus the growing distinction between gustatory taste and aesthetic taste in this period. A notable eighteenth century example of a gastronomic treatise is German

physician J.L.W. Thudichum's (1829-1901) *The Spirit of Cookery* (1895), which has one chapter devoted to "The Philosophy of Sauces," and another titled "the Philosophy of Cakes," and "The Philosophy of Dinners and Dining." Earlier gastronomic treatises and texts on dining of note include Italian writers Bartolomeo Scappi's *Opera dell'arte del cucinare* (1570), Cervio Vincenzo's *Il Trinciante* (1581), and Giovanni Battista Rosetti's *Dello Scalco* (1584) – but unlike Brillat-Savarin's volume, which is a reflection on the qualities of taste, these are primarily collections of recipes with brief notes on methods of food service.

In the first section of this chapter I will introduce the gustatory treatises of two influential French authors. The first is by French gastronome Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent Grimod de La Reynière (1758-1837), known for his almanacs on dining and table service, and the second is by French philosopher and gourmand, Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826), who closely studied how the mouth delivers the pleasures of food to the human subject, and theorized about the political consequences of dining. Brillat-Savarin's theories will be compared with those of French utopian philosopher Charles Fourier, introduced in the previous chapter. In the second section of this chapter I will give a history of the restaurant institution, and other related food service sites: inns, taverns, cookshops, *traiteur* and street stalls.

Taste and Gastronomy in France

Gastronomy is the science of cooking and the culinary arts, but the term also refers to the science of eating and selecting foods. It comes from the Ancient Greek *gastér nómos*: γαστήρ (stomach) and νόμος (laws that govern). First used in 1801 as the

title of a poem by Joseph de Berchoux, "gastronomy" was not initially a term having strictly to do with fine eating, but rather personal fine breeding and the display of it. The laws that govern the stomach, the laws of the gastronome, also govern social behavior and class relations, particularly in restaurants. Social scientist Rick Fantasia defines gastronomy in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe as "a form of perception that, among other things, abandoned the traditional dietetic/medicinal principles of cooking that had governed culinary practice for several hundred years, in favor of a kind of pure gastronomic aesthetic, a stance equivalent to that of 'art for art's sake' ..."[180] Fantasia holds the opinion that the gastronomy of this period encouraged a special form of perception – new rules for the governance of the stomach. By using the phrase "pure gastronomic aesthetic," Fantasia refers to the philosophical traditions established by Kant and others that have explored the similarities and differences between aesthetic taste and gustatory taste. According to Fantasia, unlike cooking, gastronomy celebrates food for food's sake in the pursuit of a pure – and perhaps universal – aesthetic experience. But gastronomy in practice has rarely been presented as a truly universal science since, as has been expressed above, sites of food service have so often been class-specific environments.

The practitioner of gastronomy is the gastronome. Sociologist Stephen Mennell describes the gastronome as a "theorist and propagandist about culinary taste,"[181] and he is right to detect the ideological character of the gastronome-figure.

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[180] Rick Fantasia, "'Cooking the Books' of the French Gastronomic Field," *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: Settling Accounts and Developing Alternatives*, London; New York: Routledge (2010): 30.
[181] Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, Anneke H. Van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture*, London: SAGE Publications (1992): 267.

In his book *The Rules of Art* (1996) and his essay “The Field of Cultural Production” (1983), sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has theorized the concept of “the field” to discuss, among other areas of research and production, the art world. Bourdieu’s “field” is a highly organized power system of social arrangements that he identifies in the realms of literature and art production. He explains that, “the literary or artistic field is a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces.”[182] These fields are places where antagonism and struggle are sponsored by the field itself. A given field, Bourdieu holds, is defined by “permanent conflict.”[183] Fantasia adapts Bourdieu’s concept to discuss how gastronomy can also be considered a field, “a structured space of positions that is, at once, a field of force operating upon those within it, and equally a field of struggles through which social agents act to preserve or transform the distribution of resources within it.”[184] The theories of these two authors converge in my discussion of the artist’s restaurant, which combines aspects of gastronomy with the production of art.

As I will discuss in this chapter, the field of gastronomy was historically forged around bourgeois social identities. As with Bourdieu’s concept of the field, which involves a struggle between participants who hope to control and access resources (or knowledge), historically the bourgeois social class determined and performed taste preferences laid out by gastronomy, and stood to benefit from the continual affirmation of

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[182] Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, Randal Johnson, ed. (1993, essay first published 1983): 29-73.
[183] *Ibid.,* 34.
[184] Fantasia, 28.

their abilities in the realm of aesthetic distinction. A key site where this struggle has been animated is in the gastronomic treatises of the nineteenth century.

Grimod's Almanach des Gourmands and Manners of the Table

As food historian Alain Drouard explains, a significant figure behind the growing use of the term "gastronomy" was the writer Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent Grimod de La Reynière, known for his annual publication *Almanach des Gourmands* (1803-1812). Drouard writes that for this author,

> gastronomy was a means of legitimizing the new social hierarchy that had emerged from the French Revolution [...] Grimod wanted to help the new ruling class acquire the customs and manners of the old [...] For Grimod, gastronomy brought together the old ruling class (the aristocracy) and the new (the bourgeoisie) by subjecting them both to the same laws.[185]

What laws did Grimod have in mind? None other than those of the table: laws, meaning customs, to do with food service. Grimod wanted standards in place for actions such as the slicing up of game, an "art" that he considered,

> so indispensable to every *maître de maison* anxious to prove that he was not born yesterday, [that] adds greatly to the pleasure of fine food, to the visual impression and even to the true bounty of a feast. These elements have been lost during the revolutionary turmoil, we have sought to bring them back into focus.[186]

Reinstating the apparent grace – and luxury – of the French table was only one of gastronomy's goals, according to Grimod.

Social historian Elliott Shore positions Grimod as a primary figure responsible for establishing the modern restaurant as a distinct site with particular rules and regulations

[185] Alain Drouard, "Chefs, Gourmets, and Gourmands," *French Cuisine in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (2007): 264-265.
[186] Drouard, 265

that visitors had to observe. This gastronome argued that restaurants were places where, in Shore's words, “learning to read the menu and to order the right foods and wines developed into an act of taste that would take an effort to perform correctly. The client as well as the waiter had to obtain a degree of expertise.”[187] Grimod's campaign was educational, perhaps, but it was equally a matter of drawing further distinction between those who had the disposable income to learn about food and wine pairings through experience, and those who did not. Reinforcing adherent social class boundaries through these performances of table manners was certainly an equal, if not principle, objective of Grimod’s gastronomy.

Grimod's assertive cries for strict table rules were part of a wide-ranging conversation tinged by shades of nationalism. A debate about table etiquette and service was furiously underway in France: how should food be served at table? Two competing methods were associated with France and Russia respectively. *Service à la française*, the common presentation method in France before the French Revolution, was like a more elaborate version of today's North American “buffet,” a theatrical affair where all dishes were available at table at the same time, with the exception of soup, which was served separately. But food service methods associated with a foreign culture were making inroads in French kitchens and dining rooms. *Service à la russe*, named for its popularity in Russia, involved the presentation of individual courses with the aim of assuring that food would not cool down before it was eaten. This service style, which did become the popular and dominant method used in nineteenth-century restaurants in France, continues

[187] Elliott Shore, “Dining Out: The Development of the Restaurant,” *Food: The History of Taste,* Paul Freedman, ed. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (2007): 309.

to be observed in most fine dining establishments and sometimes during formal domestic meals in the west.

Tellingly, author Ian Kelly refers to the plated course service - *à la russe* - as inherently "modern" and "democratic," presumably because rather than having guests fend for themselves, grabbing what food they could as with *service à la française*, with *service à la russe* guests were offered individual, pre-portioned plates of food.[188] The democratic ambitions of the Revolution, by this logic, found themselves animated and worked out at the French table since *service à la russe* gave all diners the same amount of food. Dining service became a synecdoche for the operation of the state and the equal rights of citizens within it. Others agree with Kelly's perspective on the democratic undercurrents of *service à la russe*. Culinary scholar Cathy K. Kaufman writes,

> Looking first at the dinner plate, *service à la russe* treats all diners equally. The dinner plate is no longer the unique and personally-tailored product resulting from the diner's selections at table and solicitous assistance of his companions. There is a whiff of the standardizing assembly line in even the most gracious meals catered *à la russe*.[189]

Service à la russe gives little or no room for the diner to customize the composition of foods on their own plate. Kelly's and Kaufman's positions involve a serious elision of the term "democracy" - democracy being not only a matter of equality but also one of choice and debate. Regardless, it is obvious that political and ideological questions were at the core of decisions about food service in early nineteenth-century France, and Grimod was a central figure in guiding such discussions through his writing.

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[188] Ian Kelly, *Cooking for Kings: The Life of Antonin Carême*, New York: Walker and Company (2003): 33. Kelly is a playwright and biographer of French chef Antonin Carême.
[189] Cathy Kaufman, "Structuring the Meal: Revolution of service à la russe," *The Meal: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*, Harlan Walker, ed. Blackawton, Totnes, Devon: Prospect Books (2002): 127.

These two methods of food display imply two very different types of still life display - which is to say, two very different ways of presenting utensils, edibles, and vessels to audiences. *Service à la française* involves a vast array of radially symmetrical dishes arranged in complex linear patterns of ovals and chevrons spreading outwards from the centre of banquet tables, leaving scarcely any empty space. Also, in this service style, all dishes are visible simultaneously, leading to a baroque and sumptuous display of diverse foods. *Service à la russe* generally has fewer items of tableware on display, involves more sparing use of vessels and utensils, and allows for more unoccupied table space - and because foods are served in courses, the diner only visually, olfactorally, and orally "takes in" one dish at a time. Each service style encourages distinct modes of bodily interaction with the objects on offer. I want to call attention to the fact that these methods of service allow for contrasting experiences of inhabitable, performative still life - and I do this in order to set the stage for the diverse examples of food service and table layout utilized by the contemporary artists I use as case studies in later chapters.

Brillat-Savarin's Physiology of Taste

Enmeshed in this burgeoning gastronomic field of debate was the politician, judge, and renowned epicure known for his essays on the nature of gustation Brillat-Savarin, author of *Physiology of Taste: or, Transcendental Gastronomy*. His book consists of miscellaneous short articles on the theme of gastronomy, and a reflection on gustatory taste and its physiological capacities. *Physiology of Taste*, written over the course of twenty-five years, unites broad fields under the gastronomic banner. As Barthes argues in his essay "Reading Brillat-Savarin," which introduces some editions of

Physiology of Taste, "All of B.-S.'s culinary ideology is armed with a notion at once medical, chemical, and metaphysical: that of a simple essence ... The reduction to essence, or quintessence, the old alchemist's dream, greatly impresses B.-S."[190] In this quotation, Barthes notes that Brillat-Savarin's gastronomical project braids together food's curative properties, its material malleability, and its potential to surpass physical limitations and affect the spirit of the individual. Like the alchemist who seeks to transform base metals into precious metals, Brillat-Savarin aspires to understand the transformation of base materials - foodstuffs - into a higher state through human intervention.

Physiology of Taste is a poetic, whirling series of metaphors, positivist scientific method, feast-narratives, menus, jokes, and pronouncements on the importance of gourmandism in the advancement of civilization. Brillat-Savarin introduces a series of arguments about the senses and the way that pleasure is delivered to the human subject. In his estimation, "the senses are the organs by which man places himself in connexion with exterior objects."[191] There are not five senses, he speculates, but at the very least six: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and "genesiac or physical love."[192] This last sense is responsible for drawing people together for procreation, Brillat-Savarin contends, and it is closely linked to taste since both serve to drive the human toward survival. He writes, "If the TASTE, the object of which is the preservation of the individual, be incontestably a sense, the same title must indubitably be preserved on the organs destined to the

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[190] Roland Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," *The Rustle of Language*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1989): 256.
[191] Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: or, Transcendental Gastronomy*, Charleston: BiblioBazaar (2006. First published 1825) 35. (sic)
[192] *Ibid.*

preservation of the species."[193] Taste and genesiac love are responsible for perpetuating the human species according to Brillat-Savarin, and he shares this conclusion with the utopian Charles Fourier, known for his view that taste and touch are the senses that rule the social sphere. Every sense is tied to an art or mode in Brillat-Savarin's estimation: sight to painting and sculpture, smell to perfumes, taste to food, and touch to "all art, trades and occupations."[194] *Physiology of Taste* presents taste as the most powerful of the human senses - and also the one that "procures the most enjoyments."[195] He also claims that the senses aid one another:

> Thus touch rectifies the errors of sight; sound, by means of articulate speech, becomes the interpreter of every sentiment; taste is aided by sight and smell; hearing compares sounds, appreciates distance; and the genesiac sense takes possession of the organs of all the senses.[196]

The interdependence of the senses described by Brillat-Savarin is radical for his time, because it eschews the dominant philosophical view of his era as promoted by Kant among others: that the human senses could be identified and demarcated individually, and organized hierarchically. Brillat-Savarin anticipates the later work of phenomenological thinkers, like Merleau-Ponty, who argue that the world is experienced not through single distinguishable senses but rather through sense experiences braided together by the body.

Equally unusual for his epoch is Brillat-Savarin's belief that the sense of taste and its stimulus are responsible for the vitality of nations. Gastronomy is a science, he declares, "which feeds, nourishes, restores, preserves, persuades, consoles, and not

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[193] *Ibid.,* 36.
[194] *Ibid.*
[195] *Ibid.,* 48.
[196] *Ibid.,* 36.

content with strewing handsfull of flowers over the individual, contributes much to the power and prosperity of empires."[197] Gastronomy and the food it involves have rhetorical might and the ability to bend political will. Unlike Kant, Brillat-Savarin has incredible faith in the power of banquets to affect sovereignty and global politics. Brillat-Savarin writes:

> he who has enjoyed a sumptuous banquet in a hall decked with flowers, mirrors, paintings, and statues, embalmed in perfume, enriched with pretty women, filled with delicious harmony, will not require any great effort of thought to satisfy himself that all sciences have been put in requisition to exalt and to enhance the pleasures of taste.[198]

In this quotation, Brillat-Savarin describes the full theater of a banquet where all senses are stimulated simultaneously. The elements tabulated in the gastronome's montage are strikingly similar to the agreeable banquet Kant describes in *The Critique of Judgment* as quoted in the previous chapter, but Brillat-Savarin sees his sumptuous feast as no distraction from more noble pursuits; rather, each element of the French philosopher's banquet is at the service of stimulating gustatory pleasure, and he considers this a worthy goal.

In his model of political gastronomy, "the table [has] established a kind of alliance between the parties, and made guests more apt to receive certain impressions and submit to certain influences," writes Brillat-Savarin, who concludes, "the fate of nations is decided on a banquet."[199] In this gastronome's opinion, matters of taste discussed at banquets are not trifling and distracting as Kant would have it, or simple and private as Hume would say, but rather public matters of the utmost importance. According to

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[197] *Ibid.,* 51 (sic)
[198] *Ibid.,* 39.
[199] *Ibid.,* 57.

Physiology of Taste, political discussions held amidst the architecture, music, design and gustatory taste of a banquet are likely to shape world history – and the pleasures or displeasures that occur at the table are crucial in determining such outcomes. Such a perspective tends to explode the notion that banquets are just "agreeable" in nature. Political gastronomy helps us to understand how feasting is a rhetorical device that can be used to encourage conviviality, subordination, or other outcomes between diplomats and leaders from different nations or individual citizens. Dining creates a relation between guest and host, whereby the guest can be dazzled, persuaded, and made to trust, or feel beholden to, their host because of the rhetorical power of food and dining.

Gustatory taste, in Brillat-Savarin's opinion, has the advantage of being experienced over an extended period of time rather than in an instant. He itemizes the distinct processes involved in gustation and in so doing he highlights the temporal and reflective nature of eating.[200] For Brillat-Savarin gustation involves a process, and it is one that involves both thinking and feeling. Dining, he thinks, is experienced not as a totality in an instant, as

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[200] Kevin W. Sweeney, "Can Soup be Beautiful? The Rise of Gastronomy and the Aesthetics of Food," *Food & Philosophy: Eat, Drink, and Be Merry*, Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe, eds., Oxford; Malden; Carlton: Blackwell Publishing (2007): 124. There are three temporal "moments" involved in gustation, which *Physiology of Taste* lists. They are: direct, complete and reflective. He describes them as follows:
"Direct sensation is the first perception emanating from the intermediate organs of the mouth, during the time that the sapid body rests on the tongue. Complete sensation is that composed of the first impression which is created when the food abandons this first position, passes into the back of the mouth, and impresses all the organ with both taste and perfume. Reflected sensation is the judgment which conveys to the soul the impressions transmitted to it by the organ. Let us put this system into action by observing what takes place when a man either eats or drinks. Let a man, for instance, eat a peach, and he will first be agreeably impressed by the odor which emanates from it. He places it in his mouth, and acid and fresh flavors induce him to continue. Not, though, until he has swallowed it, does the perfume reveal itself, nor does he till then discover the peculiar flavor of every variety. Some time is necessary for any gourmet [...] to say, "It is good, passable, or bad." Brillat-Savarin, 46-47.

argued by Voltaire, but as a series of reflections. A mouthful of food is first seen as a morsel on a plate, then brought to the mouth by hand or utensil, next smelled, chewed, worked over by the tongue, and even listened to - the sound of eating an oyster being quite distinct from eating chocolate soufflé. But are such reflections of a caliber that they can lead to critical reflection anything like what Kant has in mind for judgments of beauty? Brillat-Savarin's banquet and the act of eating itself are not a parade of distracting and fleeting pleasures - as is Kant's feast - but instead a carefully controlled and planned series of stimuli that should be experienced attentively.

As literary and linguistic specialist Daniel Sipe observes, Brillat-Savarin's speculative book and its theories,

> place him at the centre of a debate that dominated nineteenth-century social-scientific discourse. In essence, it concerns the authenticity of knowledge and assumes that previous forms of discovery [...] are mere deviations of instinctual techniques and thus must be corrected or reconfirmed by the scientific method.[201]

Far from being only a series of quips, Sipe points out, Brillat-Savarin's treatise attempts to seriously wrestle with and understand the nature of taste and food connoisseurship *as important questions of knowledge* to be worked out through observation and empiricism.

As Barthes observes, Brillat-Savarin believed that taste has metaphysical aspects that should be taken up by philosophy. Brillat-Savarin's subtitle, *Transcendental Gastronomy*, is evocative in this respect: it not only alludes to the philosophical method of Immanuel Kant, “transcendental philosophy,” it also subtly suggests that the pleasures of the table should not be divorced from accounts of beauty, and that food, so often considered a quotidian material, can transcend the everyday, material realm. In this,

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[201] Daniel Sipe, “Social Gastronomy: Fourier and Brillat-Savarin,” *French Cultural Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (August 2009): 222.

Brillat-Savarin is ideologically poised as Kant's arch-nemesis because impartiality and disinterestedness are of no concern for Brillat-Savarin's theory of taste. Although he makes no mention of Kant in his text it is likely Brillat-Savarin was familiar with his ideas either through reading them himself, or through second-hand accounts of the transcendental method by colleagues. At the least it is likely that Brillat-Savarin would have been aware of the cachet associated with this new tide in philosophical thought.[202] Brillat-Savarin suggests alternatives to Kant's views on the nature of pleasure relative to the sense of taste, and he provides some options quite different from the philosophical biases against gustatory taste that are outlined in Chapter Three.

Brillat-Savarin, Fourier and Pierre de Pressac

Brillat-Savarin and Fourier stayed together in 1789 at the Paris home of Fourier's brother-in-law, who may have also been related to Brillat-Savarin.[203] It would seem that their meeting involved certain clashes of opinion. Apparently the latter was familiar with but unimpressed by Brillat-Savarin's theories. Sipe claims that Fourier's negative assessment of Brillat-Savarin's ideas may have directly catalyzed Fourier's ambition to develop a theory of "gastrosophy."[204] What is the meaning of this neologism, combining the Ancient Greek "γαστήρ," or stomach and "σοφῐ́ᾱ," or wisdom? Gastrosophy, a term that seems to be of Fourier's own invention, is "the art of refined gluttony," whereby citizens of his theoretical community named Harmony would be encouraged to express

[202] Brillat-Savarin does, however, name Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Fenelon, Buffon, Cochin and Aguesseau as his favorite authors. Kant does not make the list.
[203] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Teaching of Charles Fourier*, Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press. (1969): 25-26. Also see Sipe (2009).
[204] Sipe, 220.

all of the gustatory sensitivities and demand all dishes be prepared to their exact specifications and desires.[205] In Fourier's day gluttony was considered a deadly sin by the Catholic Church, making his claim that much more risky and salacious. Gastrosophy considers gluttony as ripe for use toward transformative ends. As historian Jonathan Beecher describes this process,

> As a social science gastrosophy dealt with the role of food and eating in the establishment of passionate ties between individuals [...] Thus the day's first meal, the "gastronomic antenna," was described by Fourier as "a very delightful imbroglio" at which lover's quarrels would be settled, visitors introduced, and cabals organized.[206]

Meals and eating would provide stages for the resolution and introduction of debates and disputes in Harmony, all couched in the pleasures of taste and the satisfaction of seeing one's personal taste preferences realized. Here it is important to recognize the satirical potential of Fourier's writing: in his scheme, individual aesthetic taste drives each person to demand their own satisfaction in every gastronomical detail, and yet the arena of the dining table becomes a forum for argument *and the resolution* of differences of opinion. With this model, Fourier's Harmonians would find themselves in continual struggle between their own personal desire and the compromises necessary to maintain a community of very different and very demanding individuals. In Harmony, daily activities would include manual labor, such as building infrastructural elements, but also competitions for the production of fine pâtés and the incitement of further taste-based rivalries.[207]

[205] Beecher, 251.
[206] Beecher, 252.
[207] Riasanovsky, 198-199.

Food-based rivalries would serve to regulate conflict, promote conviviality, and spark competition in Fourier's community. In his triadic reflection titled *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*, Barthes explores these aspects of Fourier's theories of taste and rivalry by relating a personal anecdote about a meal of couscous the French semiotician was served. The dish was dressed with rancid butter, as he explains is customary in some regions he has visited. Barthes uses his anecdotal experience of disgust to discuss some of Fourier's theories. Faced with the repellent property of rancidity, Fourier would have "persuaded" Barthes to see three things, the latter author writes,

> the first is that the rancidness of couscous is in no way an idle, futile, or trivial question [...] the second is that by forcing me to lie about my likes (or dislikes) society is manifesting its falseness [...] the third, that this same society cannot rest until it has guaranteed [...] the exercise of my manias, whether "bizarre" or "minor"...[208]

Instead of the unhappy, bitter couscous meal Barthes was subjected to, if guided by the founder of Harmony, a rather different scenario would unfold. In Barthes words,

> Fourier would have put an end to my embarrassment [...] by taking me from my meal [...] and sending me to the Anti-Rancid group, where I would be allowed to eat fresh couscous as I liked without bothering anyone - which would not have kept me from preserving the best of relations with the Rancid group, whom I would henceforth consider as not at all "ethnic," foreign, strange, at for example a great couscous tournament, at which couscous would be the "theme," and where a jury of gastrosophers would decide on the superiority of rancid over fresh (I almost said: normal, but for Fourier, and this is his victory, there is no normality).[209]

Barthes remarks that Fourier's vision for society does not involve the disappearance of conflict, but instead reroutes conflict through a system of regulated rivalries. Community dining in Harmony would allow the negotiation of disputes and, since there "is no normality" in Fourier's universe, the full enjoyment of personal drives and desires would

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[208] Barthes (1989): 77.
[209] *Ibid.*, 78.

be promoted in order to avoid violent conflict – resulting in an antagonistic setting. As Sipe further explains, Fourier believed that "in order to unleash (and effectively control) a society's productive potential, its members needed to rationally organize their instincts and appetites - hunger and its concomitant refinement, taste, being the most elemental among them."[210]

While it seems that Brillat-Savarin and Fourier did not agree on a personal level, both of these thinkers raise the issue that gustatory taste can be marshaled as a political force. It is in their mutual "attempt to theorize and master the 'economies of desire'" writes Sipe, "of an emerging consumer society," that these two French theoreticians are on common theoretical ground.[211] Yet Sipe's perspective on this front overlooks the fact that Brillat-Savarin's philosophy of food, while fanciful, is still more or less an applied philosophy built on observed reality; Fourier's theories are speculative, and fantastic. Brillat-Savarin observes particular trends and habits in the French society of his day that he wants to see honed and expanded, while Fourier, as noted, creates a satire of French society and its conservatism, largely rejecting the status quo. In Fourier and Brillat-Savarin's writings, it is evident that the dining table is a forum for political thought and action. Both of these thinkers emphasize how pacts, treaties, and disagreements are animated in the communal act of dining. If Brillat-Savarin believed that dining dictated global politics and what we today might call realpolitik, then clearly Fourier believed that individual politics are articulated through personal taste preferences.

The adamant centrality of these dining-disputes in Fourier's theory is illustrated through the ire he expressed for the theories of Brillat-Savarin. Fourier derided Brillat-

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[210] Sipe, 220.
[211] Sipe (2009): 221.

Savarin as a "simplist" guilty of "ignoring gastrosophy … the art of combining the refinements of consumption and preparation with rivalries and hygienic methods."[212] Fourier's negative critique of Brillat-Savarin is based on the high importance the former philosopher places on rivalry - especially when it comes to food. Competition, Fourier thinks, is meant to stimulate the pursuit of new innovations in all fields of production, including cookery, allowing antagonisms between members of society to be expressed and resolved in non-violent settings. In Fourier's view, any gastronomic pursuit – such as a banquet staged only for sensual pleasure – would be ultimately much less useful than it could have been if it was put to the service of improving the social order through his system of rivalries.

Gastronomy evolved and shifted many times after its heady first days in France during the time of Fourier and Brillat-Savarin, but as a testament to the tenacity of its core values, Pierre Bourdieu points to a telling quotation by French gastronome Pierre de Pressac in his *Considérations sur la cuisine* (1931), written about one century after *Physiology of Taste*:

> Taste must not be confused with gastronomy. Whereas taste is the natural gift of recognizing and loving perfection, gastronomy is the set of rules which govern the cultivation and education of taste. Gastronomy is to taste as grammar and literature are to the literary sense [...] There is such a thing as bad taste ... and persons of refinement know this instinctively. For those who do not, rules are needed.[213]

Rules are indeed something of a requirement for gastronomy as presented by Grimod and Brillat-Savarin. de Pressac's words are a reminder of the initial mission of gastronomy

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[212] Quoted in Beecher, 251.
[213] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1984, First published 1979): 68. Quoting from *Considerations sur la cuisine*. (Paris: NRF, 1931): 23-24. Italics Bourdieu's.

described by Grimod: to educate the newly formed bourgeoisie, tighten up table manners, restore the grace of the table perhaps sacrificed by the French Revolution, and establish laws of taste. About one hundred years after Brillat-Savarin, during de Pressac's age, this component of gastronomy was little changed. But de Pressac's quotation also points out the vital difference between gustatory taste - as theorized by Brillat-Savarin, de Pressac, Grimod, and even Burke - and aesthetic taste - as theorized by Hume and Kant. Gastronomy allows that there are rules, which, if simply followed, will result in culinary beauty; aesthetic theory as practiced by Kant claims that there can be no rule of beauty. Gastronomy, far from being a snobbish discourse, is for thinkers like Fourier, de Pressac, Grimod and Brillat-Savarin, a people's art to the extent that its operations can be taught and learned. Yet, these same thinkers still believed that class distinctions should be rigidly held, performed, and detected through gastronomy itself. Even Fourier the utopian imagined his community would maintain separate social classes for the wealthy and the poor, and that these classes would enjoy different pleasures. And Hume's aesthetic theory holds that real beauty is the province of those of delicate senses, those of breeding who have natural talents for deciphering the refined.

The gourmand Brillat-Savarin and the utopian thinker Fourier have each contributed theoretical models exploring the sensory potential and sociopolitical outcomes of gastronomy. These theories relate to the social functions of restaurants and their potential in realizing social change or political objectives through the pleasure of the human subject, delivered through the body. Contemporary artists who create restaurant projects contribute to the theoretical strains of gourmandism and gastronomic considerations of taste, and question and contest aesthetic theories that have ascribed

lowly status to touch, taste, and smell. This thesis recognizes that artist's restaurants can achieve not only the kind of sequential, temporally drawn out experience that Brillat-Savarin introduces, but also that they allow reflection on taste itself – its ability to carry political and social meaning, and to invite a collision of social forces and rivalries as described by Fourier. Woven into such experiences are the socially restorative and antagonistic potentials of the shared meal. As Brillat-Savarin's idea of political gastronomy suggests, foodstuffs can be used to ply favors from recipients since a person who has enjoyed a fine meal may be more apt to agree to the host's terms or ideas. These theories of gastronomy reveal that gustatory taste can influence ideologies at the restaurant table.

Roots of the Restaurant

The Introduction to this thesis proposed that artists have altered and adapted the institution of the restaurant to make artworks that serve economic, social, and political ends. It is therefore important to define more precisely the usual operations of restaurants, and to study some ways that restaurants have intersected with social and historical currents. Restaurants are conventionally understood as commercial enterprises that are also hospitable sites. Restaurants are places where visitors, who are customers, are invited to dine for both pleasure and nourishment, and where clients are offered a menu of foods to select from. Restaurants aim to entertain, sustain, and satisfy their customers, even while they obviously seek profit from this relationship. But although these qualities are at the core of the majority of restaurants in the west today, multiple models for

restaurants have existed according to region and historical moment, and varied food service sites have existed and do exist in parallel to the restaurant.

In this section I propose four categories of food service sites. These are: quasi-restaurant, proto-restaurant, modern restaurant, and artist's restaurant. What I am calling quasi-restaurants, which predate modern restaurants and appear in the west as early as the Middle Ages, are cookshops, street stalls and mobile forms of food service. These sites often involve a small selection of foods, or one specialty food, for purchase by a public, who generally must eat standing or find their own seating away from the immediate site. I differentiate the proto-restaurant, also a precedent of the modern restaurant, as a category that includes inns and taverns, where food is available for members of the public to purchase, but clients are not given the opportunity to select food from a menu and table-space is shared with strangers. Modern restaurants, a typology defined by sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, date at least as early as 1789 in Europe. These sites offer guests an extensive menu, and private seating for individuals and groups. Artist's restaurants blend aspects of these three other typologies, and often add further variables of the artist's own design; I will describe this type of food service site in more detail in my individual case study chapters. Research from the fields of sociology, history, and food studies guides my genealogy of these food service sites.

Quasi-Restaurant

Street stalls, cookshops, *traiteur*, and itinerant food service sites – which I refer to as quasi-restaurants – predate proto-restaurants and modern restaurants, and many businesses of this kind remain active today. Quasi-restaurants are sites that only provide

ready-to-eat prepared foodstuffs for sale, unlike grocers and markets, which also retail produce and other ingredients in a raw state.

In the eleventh century such ready-to-eat goods, so-called "potable foodstuffs," were available in England and France.[214] The English cookshop, a type of quasi-restaurant, appeared in the Middle Ages. As sociologist Stephen Mennell explains, cookshops were sites "where townspeople could send their own meat to be cooked, or where equally they could buy a hot dish ready cooked, choosing from a side selection of pies, puddings, and joints of meat."[215] Poor housing conditions, a lack of domestic kitchen facilities, and population density figured into the foundation of the quasi-restaurant in Europe, and cultural anthropologist Amy Trubek argues that "increasing urbanism" resulted in a spike in the production of prepared foods in France.[216] Entrance into and use of a cookshop would effectively be an expression of one's financial means, but also an indication that one did not employ a domestic cook, or potentially that one did not have access to kitchen facilities or a hearth. In other words, it would seem the typical client of the quasi-restaurant was likely lower-middle class: not living in abject poverty, but also certainly not wealthy. In this way, we can say that the establishment of quasi-restaurants was a result of the needs of members of particular social classes, and a place where class position was made evident through participation.

The French counterpart to the cookshop, the *traiteur*, evolved on a distinct course due to the actions of regulatory guilds who influenced what foods could be produced by

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[214] Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, (2000).
[215] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd (1985): 136.
[216] Trubek, 31.

certain enterprises, and Trubek frames this institution as the bedrock of the modern restaurant.[217] Ferguson agrees with Trubek on this point, and explains that before the French Revolution guilds maintained proscriptions on and rules about what establishments could serve particular foods.[218] Laws of this kind governed and shaped *traiteur* as businesses and also influenced the varieties of food they offered to their clientele. Spang explains that under the guild system, "the man who made stews technically could not sell mustard, and the preparer of pâtés was prohibited from selling coffee," which would seem to effectively block the inauguration of anything resembling what we today call a publicly accessible restaurant, where multiple dishes are served under one roof.[219] If food service sites ruled by these laws could only serve one type of food - pâté or mustard, but not both – then the modern restaurant - known for providing an array of food types - salads, pies, stews, desserts - it might seem incongruous to claim that modern restaurants were partially born from the *traiteur*. However, Spang goes on to show how the phases of production involved in processing raw materials and prepared comestibles were of sufficient complexity to suggest there must have been loopholes through the guild system for food service sites like *traiteur*. Constructing a savory tart filled with charcuterie, for example, would require transgressing the boundary between at least two guilds. As she writes,

> given the complications of a system in which the crust of a meat pie would technically have to be made by the pastrycook, and its filling prepared by a meatcook, it is hardly surprising that the accumulation of multiple and

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[217] Trubek, 36.
[218] Patricia Parkhurst Ferguson, "A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in 19th Century France," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (November 1998): 604.
[219] Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2000): 9.

> overlapping masterships was, in the retain food trades of the mid-1700s, more nearly the rule than the exception.[220]

Spang challenges and rejects the idea that guilds entirely blocked the development of quasi-restaurants into fully-fledged modern restaurants serving a broad menu of foods. Rather than portraying a system of tightly guild-controlled production and distribution prior to the French Revolution, Spang illustrates how the emergent group of pre-Revolutionary *traiteur* "would have been well within their legal rights had they run businesses that sold a variety of foods and a wide range of potables."[221] Part of this trend may be explained by the fact that *traiteur* were within their rights to cater dinner parties off-premises in the homes of clients. Since *traiteur* could legally cater elaborate feasts in private homes, it stands to reason that such employment would allow them to hone their skills in crafting diverse foods, not just one specialty like pâté. All that stood between quasi-restaurant and modern restaurant, in the case of the *traiteur*, was the boundary line demarcated by the physical architecture where the goods were in fact sold and served.

Considering that they were not legally prevented from operating such businesses purveying a diverse list of comestibles in one way or another, it seems very likely that pre-Revolutionary *traiteur* were actively pursuing enterprises bearing a striking resemblance to post-Revolutionary restaurants. As Mennell writes, *traiteur* "had in effect decided it was to their commercial advantage to be, in modern terms, something between outside caterers and a superior sort of take-away..."[222] It would seem that the controlling guild system and its tight regulation paradoxically encouraged traiteurs to circumvent the rules however possible, resulting in sites that sold a diverse blend of comestibles. Over

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[220] *Ibid.,* 10.
[221] *Ibid.,* 11.
[222] Mennell, 138.

time, the boundary between private service (catering) and public sale (quasi-restaurant) became more and more slender until it dissolved entirely.

Proto-Restaurant

Functioning alongside quasi-restaurants were proto-restaurants such as inns and taverns that fed clients who were away from the domestic sphere. Clients of such places were usually travelers, people running errands away from their homes, or folks wanting to be seen in society.

Inns had coexisted with cookshops for several centuries, but would cater specifically to guests who lodged there. Unlike diners in later restaurants, guests at inns did not have a selection of foods offered to them, but instead had to be content to sustain themselves on whatever the innkeeper set before them.[223] "At the time," Trubek describes, "if you were a traveler and dining at an inn, you would be seated with others at a large table - a style known as *table d'hôte*. The traditional menu had simply informed the customer of the dishes to be served and the cost of the meal."[224] Eventually the *table d'hôte* did allow guests to make a selection from a small menu of different dishes, evolving into today's continuation of this customary service style, where guests select from a reduced menu of perhaps three main dishes and two or three options for each other course at a predetermined price.

Taverns, today usually thought of as places mainly for drink and not dining, (with the exception perhaps of the related English pub) in the eighteenth century were "noted

[223] Mennell, 136.
[224] Trubek, 36.

eating-places and centres of social life."[225] Sociability and commensality mark the tavern as distinct from the inn, which by its very nature would be largely populated by relative strangers; taverns served as social loci for people who were for the most part familiar with one another, and who lived in the same community.

Inns and taverns existed concurrently with another proto-restaurant: a curious food site that served only soup. It is after these retailers of bouillon that the restaurant of today is named. The term "restaurant" was used as early as the fifteenth century to refer not to an architectural site, but a "semi-medicinal preparation" designed to revive the ailing.[226] It was not for the sake of eating that clients visited these purveyors, but for the purpose of imbibing a remedy designed to tax the client's body as little as possible while still providing apparent nutritional value.

"Restaurant" draws from the French *restauratif*, meaning to restore, and foods served at these sites were themselves eventually called restaurants, since they were intended to restore the strength of their clients. Restaurants - or soups - of the fifteenth century included dishes such as "a freshly killed capon [...] cooked in an alchemist's glass kettle with sixty gold ducats," or alternately mixed with "any other good and virtuous precious stones the doctor may order."[227] In this passage we see evidence that such proto-restaurants were pseudo-medical in nature. For these reasons, those who maintain

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[225] Mennell, 137.
[226] Spang, 1.
[227] *Ibid.*. Quoting from Master Chiquart Amiczo. *Du fait de cuisine*, ed. Terence Scully, "Du fait du cuisine par Maistre Chiquart 1420. *Vallesia, Bulletin annuel de la Bibliothèque et des Archives cantonales du Valais*, No. 40 (1985): 101-231. Spang's translation.

restaurants were and still are called restaurateurs in reference to these early sites serving soup.[228] Restaurateurs were part chef, and part pharmacist.

Trubek refers to the offerings of these sites as "an early version of health food, created to serve the customer's "delicate constitution"."[229] Early French restaurants, then, were sites of healing and medicine - indeed, Spang calls them a kind of "urban spa"[230] - quite a far cry from many later French iterations of restaurants in the nineteenth century where pleasure, "good taste," and sociability were the primary focus. Spang describes how proto-restaurants were distinct from other contemporaneous institutions like taverns and inns because the former served primarily liquid foods, had "individual tables," and "unfixed mealtimes," whereas inns and taverns usually only offered one or two dishes and featured common seating for their guests.[231]

Shore recognizes the business opened by the enterprising Frenchman Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau in 1766 as the earliest example of a restaurant, and its specialty was indeed a liquid meal said to improve health. De Chantoiseau's venture, Shore writes, promised to "serve broth made from a nutritious extract of meats and vegetables, a claim that was based on the quasi-scientific ideals of the Enlightenment, the movement that among its many projects purported to apply reason to such problems as curing the ailments of intellectuals and artists."[232] These soups, which claimed to be healthful, were both rhetorically clear in purpose and literally clear in physical composition. And in terms of clientele, then, the first true *restaurant* was an *artist's restaurant.* These people

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[228] Drouard, 269.
[229] Trubek, 35.
[230] *Ibid.,* 3.
[231] *Ibid.*, 2.
[232] Shore, 304.

of “delicate taste,” as the philosopher Hume would label them, it would seem, also required delicate food.

The early uses of the word “restaurant” and its related terms from outside gastronomic culture are equally revealing in terms of the legacy of the artist’s restaurant. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* of 1835, Spang reveals, defines restaurateur as “he or she who repairs or re-establishes [...] This city had been ruined, and the prince rebuilt it. He is its restaurateur. It is more often used in the moral sense. This prince is the restaurateur of literature and the arts...”[233] The original meanings of the three terms, restauratif, restaurant, and restaurateur have served as a compass directing my queries in this thesis. The first term highlights the role of restaurants in the establishment and maintenance of public life, the second term suggests ameliorative and even alchemical possibilities for restaurants, and the third term hints at a moral and preservative responsibility. These entwined themes carry forward in the artists' restaurants examined in the following chapters.

Modern Restaurant

Perhaps through these linguistic associations, so-called modern restaurants as they are understood today are frequently argued to “begin” in France - specifically around 1789, since some academics claim that before the 1789 Revolution restaurants were illegal in France. Ferguson contends that the first urban enterprise going by the name of restaurant dates from 1765 in France, and that the French Revolution later “set the

[233] *Ibid.*, x.

restaurant on its modern course of development."[234] Drouard, however, notes that before the Revolution itself, there were "less than a hundred restaurants in Paris, but by 1804 the number had increased five or six fold. In 1825 there were nearly a thousand, and in 1834 over 2,000."[235] Mennell corroborates these figures.[236] 1789, although an important year in French history, did not see the sudden, spontaneous invention of the restaurant institution.

"Modern restaurants," a term that Ferguson develops, offer diners flexible service according to the customer's own schedule, and are a unique mix of a private space (a single table among many) in a public environment, and are thought to appear in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An additional vital component of these sites is succinctly phrased by Shore: "At a restaurant one eats what one desires from an often extensive menu."[237] Choice and variety are defining features for the modern restaurant. Modern restaurants are also defined by what they are not, and Shore holds that cafés and coffeehouses, which predate 1760, do not qualify for the category since they offer a small selection of snacks designed simply to accompany coffee, not to stand on their own as a meal.[238] In Ferguson's view, the lineage of the modern restaurant involves a few key defining attributes that she sees evidence of in the years following the French Revolution. These include: the establishment of enclosed or isolated and specially designated pieces of architecture; the service of food in exchange for money; a collection of clients who are relative strangers, often being individuals who are navigating public space either alone or in groups, but who are seated at separate tables, allowing for individuals to be alone in

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[234] Parkhurst Ferguson, 604.
[235] Drouard, 273.
[236] Mennell, 139.
[237] Shore, 301.
[238] *Ibid.*, 303.

public. Brillat-Savarin agrees with these defining features when he writes that a restaurateur is, "he whose business consists in offering the public a banquet which is always prepared and whose dishes are served in portions at a fixed price on demand from consumers."[239]

Ferguson is not alone in her view that the history of the modern restaurant was set into motion in late-eighteenth century France. Other sources that make these claims directly or indirectly include Trubek's *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (2000) and *French Food: on the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture* (2001) edited by Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss. Trubek points out that modern restaurants "combined two hitherto separate phenomena in European society: commercial food production and public food consumption."[240] This collision of spheres had major ramifications for both consumers and producers of foodstuffs.

Modern restaurants served the needs and desires of those individuals who no longer wished to patronize inns and taverns since these latter sites were apparently known for cheaper food and therefore a mixed demographic of clients, including the lower classes.[241] Higher prices at modern restaurants set up a class-filter, effectively barring entry for the lower classes. Also, unlike inns, where a kind of sociability and conversation was expected between guests who were potentially strangers to one another and seated around immense tables, restaurants offered islands of controlled and contrived social isolation in a sea of public life. One could dine at the modern restaurant without fear of being interrupted by a stranger.

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[239] Drouard, 273.
[240] Trubek, 35, emphasis original.
[241] Spang, 72.

The bourgeoisie was the ideal client for the modern restaurant that Ferguson describes since they had disposable wealth and were eager to be conspicuously present as a distinct class in the growing public sphere of France. Yet, casting some doubt on this conclusion, in 1852 the English gastronome Abraham Hayward, quoted by Mennell, describes an anxious bourgeois social class dining in restaurants. This new class, Hayward writes,

> the new patriotic millionaires, who had enriched themselves by the plunder of the church and nobility, were fearful, in those troubled times, of letting the full extent of their opulence be known; and thus, instead of setting up an establishment, preferred gratifying their Epicurean inclinations at an eating house.[242]

Hayward's account describes restaurants as if they were cloisters of gourmandise, supplying secretive meals of excess, rather than as theatrical stages providing opulence in public view. It seems likely that both currents – the nervous and self-conscious in camera dinner, and the brazen spectatorial feast of decadence – commanded the imaginations of bourgeois restaurant patrons at the time.

Clearly the "modern course" that Ferguson has in mind for the restaurant was built upon the increasing political and economic power of an emerging bourgeois social class and the ability of this class to patronize new and experimental culinary forms fashioned by a group of food experts with specialized skills - namely French chefs. The highly trained and experienced chefs of France, no longer encumbered by the whims of the single aristocratic employer who would have enlisted their service, after the Revolution found themselves able to experiment with ingredients for a new group of clients who could behave as individual consumers. These new clients, the bourgeoisie,

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[242] Mennell, 139-140.

were at once eager to show their taste, distinction, and their social position; food preparation, service, display and consumption offered the bourgeoisie new opportunities to grasp onto and sculpt their developing social identity.

The laborers providing these edible goods, of course, not only responded to but also guided their clients' needs and desires, and a significant factor in culinary developments of the period was competition among chefs themselves. Chefs previously in the employ of the aristocracy became free agents who began to "put their culinary talents in the service of a general elite public (as opposed to a private patron)."[243] This sparked a new flexibility and creativity in the culinary arts in France. "There was now an alternate route," Mennell writes, "to the top of the culinary profession; rather than ingratiating themselves with one of a small number of rich employers, ambitious cooks could proudly compete with each other for the custom of a much larger body of diners-out."[244] Before the nineteenth century the relationship between chef and aristocrat was one of patronage; the wealthy would sponsor the services of a chef in the same way they might a talented visual artist. Trubek explains that, "it was only in the closed world of the aristocracy that a chef de cuisine could practice his craft up until the 1800s, but it was also in this protected environment [...] that haute cuisine that we know it today was developed and refined."[245] The effects of this arrangement in the aristocrat's kitchen provided chefs with security and the opportunity to research and experiment with food material. The shift in relationships engendered at the modern restaurant between employer/client and employee/chef encouraged rival culinary methodologies, to be sure,

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[243] Parkhurst Ferguson, 604.
[244] Mennell, 142.
[245] Trubek, 31.

but also encouraged the emergence of the culinary auteur, the figure of the *grand maître chef* who commands the kitchen and realizes culinary innovations. Rivalries of taste are at work not only as Fourier envisioned - between consumers - but also between food producers, which is to say chefs. Today's cult of formally and informally competing celebrity chefs, apparent in cooking shows and cooking competitions on reality television shows, is a current, though significantly diluted form of Fourier's vision for rivalries of taste. These chefs are "voted off" or "kept on" such cooking shows by virtue of their cooking abilities, and their ability to champion their own culinary method and taste distinction.

Modern restaurant sites provided a total and immersive experience for clients – a kind of *Gesamtkuntswerk*. These were theatrical sites - offering package deals, so to speak - where clients "bought the food, the surroundings, and the service, perhaps reminiscent of buying a ticket to the opera or a ballet," as Trubek asserts.[246] In turn, apparently liberated chefs and restaurant owners could freely imagine and rethink what food and hospitality were capable of being in composition, display, objective, and flavor.

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the modern restaurant immediately resulted in spaces of equality, fraternity, and liberty. Only some citizens experienced the freedoms the Revolution allowed in matters culinary. Kitchens in restaurants were notoriously gendered and homosocial spaces. Women were never employed as commercial kitchen chefs in the Europe of the nineteenth century, or before.[247] Women were also not always welcomed as clients in early European restaurants. As historian Kate Colquhoun notes, "In 1851 the first restaurant guide for

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[246] Trubek, 40.
[247] *Ibid.*

London was published to assist the masses streaming to the Great Exhibition, but it noted that there was almost nowhere for ladies, who were limited for the time being to the elaborate ritual of 'visiting' instead."[248]

Beyond France: Earlier Restaurant Iterations

Although the word "restaurant" may have only appeared in the mid-eighteenth century within the borders of l'Hexagone – other nations and states have had their own, and earlier, developments in public dining establishments. Imperial China's Song dynasty (1127-1279), for example, saw an explosion of public dining sites - some of which served hundreds in one seating - offering meals to people of diverse classes and occupations.[249] These sites were specialized restaurants that offered regional cuisine and catered to religious dietary specifications, rather than offering a strictly set menu, making them very similar in one respect to the so-called modern French restaurant.[250] Shore relates the account of Marco Polo, who visited restaurants in Hangzhou in 1280, "which had familiar elements of contemporary restaurants: waiters, menus, banquet facilities, along with some aspects of a sexual market and meeting place that would make at least a brief appearance in the restaurant culture of the West."[251] Shore also contends that the very first "modern restaurants" appear in China. But there are clues hinting that the roots of the restaurant may go back in history further still.

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[248] Kate Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain Through its Cooking*, New York: Bloomsbury (2007): 287.
[249] Joanna Waley-Cohen, "The Quest for Perfect Balance: Taste and Gastronomy in Imperial China," *Food: The History of Taste*, Paul Freedman, ed., Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press (2007): 111.
[250] Waley-Cohen, 112.
[251] Shore, 301.

Ancient Pompeii is reputed as having been a city with many affordable bars and taverns that offered food. Archeological digs have already uncovered more than one hundred and fifty buildings at Pompeii identified as food service sites, though some of these may have been more like grocery stores or market stalls than taverns.[252] Historian Mary Beard speculates about the atmosphere of these sites:

> It is easy to get the impression of a town crammed full of fast-food joints serving, from the dolia set in the counters, wine and filling stews to a hungry populace – albeit in an atmosphere less "family friendly" than the modern McDonalds. For Roman writers certainly tend to portray such bars and taverns as shady premises, associated with a range of vices that went beyond drunkenness and the over-consumption of food. They were said to be places of sex, prostitution, gambling, and crime, run by unscrupulous landlords, who were crooks and cheats.[253]

Much more than just food was on offer at the Ancient Roman food service site. These ancient restaurants were centres of entertainment and vice. This example demonstrates that the core principles of proto-restaurants - providing readily available food in public space shared by diverse demographics - were present in several locations, appearing long before the eighteenth century in France.

Conclusion

The shifts in food service immediately before and after the French Revolution have reinforced the idea that restaurants in the west were occasioned by the rise of the bourgeoisie. While the Revolution may have allowed shifts in food service and theorization, it seems more productive to consider a series of ongoing reassessments of cuisine throughout French history since the end of the eighteenth century, as Philip

[252] Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (2008): 225, 227.
[253] *Ibid.,* 225-226.

Hyman argues, rather than reckoning a cataclysmic change in food service in precisely 1789.[254] Trubek, too, contends that there was a gradual shift - not a sudden exodus - of chefs working in private homes of the nobility to establishing private enterprises of their own named "restaurants." [255]These sites adapted tropes from both quasi- and proto-restaurants.

Modern restaurants became the primary settings where gastronomy could fully realize the outcomes proposed by gastronomic thinkers raised in the previous section. Grimod hoped that enforcing refined table manners would further divide upper, middle, and lower classes, and modern restaurants presented filters to favor the economically advantaged who could afford the menus on offer, in turn giving such individuals a stage for further exercising their taste distinction skills. Brillat-Savarin's high esteem of feasting was motivated by his belief that eating involved a series of moments begging reflection - and restaurants, being enclaves devoted to the enjoyment of foodstuffs, provide an arena for diners to combine thinking and feeling while dining in order to reach conclusions about the item tasted, and also the individual's own taste distinction skills. Fourier's thoughts on individual tastes could also be achieved effectively in the modern restaurant setting, being a venue where commentary on personal taste preferences and demands for particular preparations ("medium rare, dressing on the side," and so on) are permitted and even encouraged.

Ferguson's ideas raise for consideration the possibility that today's western restaurant institution remains largely focused on providing patrons with *staging*

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[254] Philip Hyman, "Culina Mutata: Carême and l'ancienne cuisine," *French Food: On the Table, on the Page and in French Culture*, London; New York: Routledge (2001)
[255] Trubek, 31.

opportunities for social identity. Today it remains clear that restaurant dining can have political and social consequences according to a diner's ability to perform distinction and the chef's ability to master culinary mainstays and invent novel dishes. Particularly in light of today's array of restaurants in urban centres – which offer customers a wide swath of regionally and ethnically associated cuisines and fusions of global cuisines – diners are faced with more opportunity than ever to display especially cosmopolitan forms of taste distinction. I argue that, especially in public settings like restaurants, food choices, method of eating, and comments and expressions concerning food preferences, amount to making personal identity evident to those around, as well as to the self, and that these performative factors can be contained within the rubric of "taste." How a diner selects, serves and ingests food, as well as how he or she distinguishes tastes and makes evident their ability to sense subtleties of taste, texture, and smell, can be interpreted by other diners and hosts as indicators of the diner's social status, upbringing, and education. The artist's restaurant is a site for the union of gustatory and aesthetic taste, the restoration of the public, and a place to perform taste distinction.

Chapter Five: Rhetoric: Generous Feasts and Edible Manifestos

Restaurants in urban centres attempt to persuade passersby to come in to purchase and to sample the food on offer. Wandering through the downtown core of a city like Montreal, the urban citizen is enveloped in a miasmic cloud of food odors, food images, and actual food offerings. The smells and sights of grilled meats, sweet fruits, and pungent herbs filter onto the street and, when they are persuasive, beckon customers into the restaurant. From this example, we can see that food has rhetorical powers.

The artist's restaurants in this chapter present generous acts, recipes, food, and vessels that tempt participants and make rhetorical arguments, and create what I call edible manifestos. Aligned with the concept of political gastronomy, developed by gastronome Brillat-Savarin and outlined in the previous chapter, the restaurant projects I discuss in this chapter aim to persuade their participants to eat, and of the value of certain ideological positions. I will compare these contemporary artworks with historical examples of still life from the subgenres of *pronk* or sumptuous still life, spare breakfast pieces, and Ancient Greek *xenia* paintings, which were depictions of food that domestic hosts gave – along with baskets of food – to their guests.

For twelve years, the artist's collective Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable [ATSA] or Socially Acceptable Terrorist Action, annually operated a temporary restaurant for their protest-festival *État d'urgence* (1998-2010, Montreal) (fig. 15). At this site, ATSA distributed massive feasts donated by local restaurants to the people of Montreal who live without homes in order to draw public attention to the issue of homelessness. A second restaurant artwork that offered free food, *The Public Table: A restaurant presented by The Collective for the Finding of the Commons* (2006, New

Haven; Bellows Falls) (fig. 16), was presented by the artist's collective Spurse; this food service site also relied on donations of ingredients and equipment from local communities, which it then served back to the local population, encouraging new understandings of locality and waste.

Echoing the opulent qualities of *pronk*, and the generous foundation of *xenia*, ATSA gave luxurious foods to the public, but contrastingly the collective used spare display strategies in the spirit of modest breakfast pieces. Also recalling sumptuous *pronk* imagery, Spurse lavished aesthetic attention on food, but equally alluding to the properties of breakfast pieces, the collective created these compositions using very humble discarded vessels that were gathered from diverse publics. *The Public Table* evokes the *xenia* tradition too, since the event re-gifted donated objects back to the local community. Food, cooking equipment, vessels, and architecture were fulcrums for social relations at these restaurants, resulting in what I refer to as performative still lifes.

My primary aim in this chapter is to investigate the rhetorical properties of these two artist's restaurants. To do so, I draw on art-historical discussions of the still life genre, particularly Grootenboer's analysis, which teases out the persuasive properties of display as used in seventeenth-century Dutch still life images.[256] This chapter also addresses the rhetorical operations of gift economies as applied in these art practices, especially insofar as such acts take place in a public realm. Finally, I conclude this

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[256] Although Grootenboer's case study of Jan Dibbet's anamorphic representations is distant formally and conceptually from my chosen artworks, her innovative comparison of historical still life images with recent art production, conducted on rhetorical grounds, has greatly assisted in my own reflections on rhetoric in artists' restaurants. I also gratefully acknowledge the many gains made for this thesis – and particularly the core concept of "the rhetorical still life" – during tutorial meetings with Dr. Grootenboer at Saint Peter's College, Oxford University, where I conducted research as a visiting student under her guidance in 2010.

chapter by referring to a broader culture of food manifestos that provide an ideological and discursive context for these artist's restaurant projects, and in this sense my methodology here is in relation to the iconological tradition of Erwin Panofsky.

These two contemporary artworks make rhetorical arguments in multiple ways. By using the everyday material of food in specific forms of spatial arrangement and display, these restaurants aimed to make their political or ideological argument appear as plainly "true and good" as the act of offering free food to the public seems to be. For these artists, free food service provides the ideal means to show how artists can - and should - intervene in the daily life of their audiences through generous acts. The edible artworks discussed here can also be regarded as rhetorical in that they are akin to manifestos, and so the structures of these artworks will be compared with two other manifestos that engage with the categories of the everyday and the extraordinary in relation to food: *The Futurist Manifesto* and *The Slow Food Manifesto*. I will also review methods employed by the activist movement *Food Not Bombs* – loosely affiliated groups across North America that collect and distribute free vegetarian meals in publicly accessible spaces – whose tactics *État d'urgence* and *The Public Table* both mobilize. Both collectives have also pooled resources and contacts with *Food Not Bombs* to realize these artworks.

The Public Table was a community-based project executed at two different sites: first, in New Haven, Connecticut - known as the home of Yale University; second, in Bellows Falls, a small village in Vermont. The recuperation of surplus and waste is the defining principle of this project. Spurse canvassed to secure a free space for their ad-hoc restaurant, aiming, in their words, to experiment with "tactics" to "occupy urban

locations."[257] Spurse also undertook daily walks in the community to collect discarded materials including ingredients and cookware from local residents, and they used these objects to assemble a temporary kitchen, dining area, and menu. These dishes were presented as a gift, without charge, to the community. At the close of the project, remaining ingredients and supplies were offered back to the community for free.

From street level, *The Public Table* seemed to belie its frugal roots: metallic-gold vinyl lettering in a calligraphic cursive announced the title of the piece in the large picture window facing passing traffic (fig. 17). Inside the restaurant something of a different impression was made: mismatched tables of varying heights, materials, and colors were scattered around the space; a provisional bar was rigged using roughly sawed planks of wood; one sprawling preparation surface was improvised from plywood and old tabletops, and stacked with plates and equipment; the space was stocked with metal cheese graters, cookie sheets, and pans all colored by different patinas; fabric covered benches were arranged at irregular angles (fig. 18). Compositionally, this installation looked to have shifted and surged according to force of circumstance, which is to say, according to available materials and the aesthetic whims of the collective. The "recipe" – the physical arrangement of components – for this project was formulated ad hoc, according to the generosity of local people, and Spurse's use of local-origin materials served to situate the project as literally of its place, and site specific in the extreme in that it is made of its surroundings and context. This project then *fed back* to this locale.

The subtitle of Spurse's project speaks to the group's ambitions: *A restaurant presented by The Collective for the Finding of the Commons*. Establishing a commons, a

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[257] Spurse, "Vectoral Generosities," Unpublished manuscript.

public space for dialogue that implies a locality and the founding of a community, might seem to align this artwork with the political project of democracy, but its creators used the unexpected role of restaurateur to achieve their objectives. Several difficult to define key terms appear in the title of this work: "collective," "commons," and "public." I have just used equally ambiguous terms to describe its location, objectives, and audience: "community," "public," "democracy," and "commons." These are words that have rhetorical weight on their own – there are many models of "democracy," for instance – and they are terms with ambivalent meanings critiqued by some of the authors that I will discuss later in this chapter. Rather than taking these terms for granted, I want to point out that they have substantial rhetorical weight even if their precise definitions are continually contested.

Spurse's artist's restaurant adapts the proto-restaurant traditions of the *table d'hôte* served at inns, since it has a fixed menu at a fixed price (free), and the quasi-restaurant called the English cookshop, since the community sent its ingredients to Spurse's kitchen to be cooked. Also, since the root of the term *restoratif* can also refer to a leader who restores the conditions of a political system or civil order, as discussed earlier in this thesis, we can see this artist's restaurant as a continuation of the *restoratif* restaurant. Similarly, Spurse's restaurant serves food to heal, restore and make a more vibrant "commons" through the provision of restorative foods made from waste.

The Public Table also referred to the legacy of still life. By soliciting generous acts from individual donors, and by augmenting the value of banal discarded objects, Spurse tapped into two of the main thrusts of still life outlined by Bryson: first, the representation of abundance, and second, the attribution of importance to material goods

of daily life. Spurse used discarded quotidian things and reformulated them as gifts to create a sense of locality, community, and bounty.

Just east of Montreal's downtown core, on the border of the city's gay village, at the same intersection as the *Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec*, the city bus station, and the Judith Jasmin pavilion of the *Université du Québec à Montréal*'s urban campus, *État d'urgence* has made its home at Place Émilie-Gamelin for between three and ten days almost every year since 1998.[258] *État d'urgence* (2008) was the eighth edition of a public outreach event organized by Montreal-based artists' collective ATSA, founded by duo Annie Roy and Pierre Allard. The event included a cinemathèque, colloquium, photo exhibition, performance, and other festive components. At the hub of the project was a free meal service, *Art de la table*, billed as "*Le Banquet cochon*," which was sponsored by several well-known Montreal restaurants including Laïka, Chu Chaï, and Le Commensal, each of which donated meals for each day of the festival (fig. 19).

État d'urgence highlighted local poverty within the context of global economic disparity. Media have explained the festival as an attempt to "humanize homelessness."[259] Here, too, the "recipe" for the project involved locality, and its combination of edible and non-edible components was meant to persuade audiences of a

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[258] The first mounting of the event took place at Parvis de la place des arts in Montreal rather than Place Émilie-Gamelin, and was sponsored by the Musée d'art contemporain. In 1999, the authorities in charge of Place Émilie-Gamelin declined ATSA's request to remount *État d'urgence* at the park. More recently they were hosted by SNC-Lavalin's space at the intersection of René-Lévesque Boulevard and Bleury Street, Montreal. In 2000 the event was suspended for one year due to the CAF's hesitance, predicated by 1999's cancellation. See Pierre Allard, Annie Roy. *ATSA: Quand l'art passé à l'action (1998-2008) / ATSA: When art takes action*. Nazzareno Bulette, trans. Montreal: Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable (2008): 46-47.
[259] Irwin Block, "Fest aims to humanize homelessness," *The Gazette*, (Friday, November 26, 2010): A8.

particular message: that all people deserve access to healthy food, and that current food distribution is in a state of emergency.

Once described as a "refugee camp […] focused on human values and the importance of 'community',"[260] *État d'urgence* drew media attention but also hungry crowds. Its location is key to this dual response. ATSA called their event a *manifestival*, suggesting that it was both protest (*manifestation*) and carnival (or *festival*) that aimed to raise awareness about the large number of Montrealers who go without proper housing and food every day. Place Émilie-Gamelin, where the event was hosted in 2008, is a blend of grassed seating, small rows of arboreta and flower boxes, and a large open plaza with picnic benches. A mix of students, people without homes, office workers, cyclists, and flâneurs usually animates the area. *État d'urgence*'s temporary architecture – an eye-catching and festive blend of brightly gelled-lights, theatre rigging and rental tents – is a striking contrast with the rather brutalist *gare central d'autobus* that was the backdrop for the event when viewed from a southern vista. Place Émilie-Gamelin is used as a social territory and temporary domicile by some of Montreal's economically disadvantaged citizens.

ATSA's event called attention to some of the usual social routines and the class stratification evident in Montreal's urban setting by mounting a temporary carnival where people of multiple demographics were brought together to share free, sumptuous foods. This artist's restaurant alluded to the history of the restaurant by continuing the tradition of the inn in two ways: first, like the inn it provided conditions of possibility to bring

[260] Shannon McMath, "Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable," KC Solano, ed. Note that in interview, ATSA's Christian Bégin also referred to the event as a refugee camp. http://www.ontherundesign.com/Artists/ATSA2.htm. Site accessed September 15, 2009.

people of multiple classes together to dine, who were relative strangers. Also, because the food was prepared off-site, *État d'urgence* recalled the proto-restaurant example of the *traiteur* or caterer. Finally, ATSA's project echoed the curative aspirations of the *restoratif*-serving soup-restaurant, since *État d'urgence* provided meals to its publics to improve daily life, but also to mend apparently fractured inter-class social relations.

The Rhetorical Still Life

In Chapter Two we saw that art historians such as Panofsky and Bergström analyzed still life paintings by identifying the depicted objects and then researching primary sources contemporary with the artworks in question in search of symbolic associations. This iconological method, which seeks to reveal what Panofsky called "disguised symbolism"[261] is not restricted to use in the genre of still life. But the iconological method, once established, offered another gateway to interpretations of still life and sparked a new way to interpret this genre.

Other art historians have investigated still life images not as ciphers that conceal meaning, but as a series of argumentative, rhetorical structures. Grootenboer believes that the sub-genres of breakfast pieces and sumptuous *pronk* still life can be effectively contrasted and understood through a rhetorical reading, a reading that seeks to understand the argumentative structure inherent in still life images. She argues that clarity of depiction in Dutch seventeenth-century still life is a rhetorical strategy since it shows objects in an apparently straightforward depiction of a flat, shallow space. She also

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[261] Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, its Origin and Character*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (1953): 140-144.

argues that bountiful *pronk* images seduce viewers – a second rhetorical strategy – by confusing viewers with an array of attractive objects.

Her discussion is structured around a two-part essay written by the French mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), "The Mind of the Geometrician" and "The Art of Persuasion." Pascal proposes that people are led to accept arguments either by understanding the statements that constitute the argument (persuasion), or they are led to believe through their will, which could also be expressed by the word "desire" (seduction).[262] If an argument is free of all superfluous themes and components, clarity results, according to Pascal. He believes that the clarity that results from a straightforward argument is convincing in itself. Grootenboer introduces seventeenth-century Dutch breakfast pieces, which often include platters of herring, glasses of beer, and leavened bread, as consummate examples of still life that use the rhetorical strategy of clarity. Breakfast pieces, by showing simple, modest food, seem to show everything and hide nothing of the objects they depict. By contrast, Pascal argues that seduction seeks to convince the listener/reader/viewer by stimulating desire. Rather than offering clarity, Grootenboer writes, "seduction operates by virtue of confusion, since it is founded on a desire whose object constantly changes."[263] *Pronk* still life, Grootenboer argues, uses the rhetorical strategy of seduction. *Pronk* images include depictions of abundant, richly flavored foods that glisten (oysters, lemons, pomegranates, freshly slaughtered game), glittering finery and costly vessels (nautilus cups, bejeweled knives, silver salt cellars). The bounty of *pronk*, Grootenboer argues, has powerful seductive sway over the viewer because it stimulates the appetites and also confuses the viewers

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[262] Grootenboer, 83.
[263] *Ibid.*

mind with its tangled plethora of enticing objects. Seduction and reason are not equivalent forces in argumentation, however. Grootenboer points out that Pascal worries that seduction is likely to overpower reason.[264] *Pronk* images, by this logic, will always be rhetorically stronger than breakfast pieces.

After establishing the rhetorical power of geometry via Pascal's writing, Grootenboer turns to specific still life images by Jan Davidsz. De Heem and Pieter Claesz. to show how the latter's simple breakfast piece employs clarity as an argumentative form, while the former's *pronk* piece, full of sumptuous foods and luxurious tableware, uses seduction as an argumentative form.

De Heem's seductive *Pronk Still Life* (1648) (fig. 20) shows a vividly red lobster, a profusion of ripe fruits sliced and peeled, a crab, a shrimp, a hacked up joint of meat, and an array of greenery that seems to grow in tangles across the table. This is a table literally overflowing with foods and vessels. Claesz.'s humble *Still Life with Wine Goblet and Oysters* (c. 1630s) (fig. 21) contrastingly shows a simply laid table with a saltcellar, cut lemons, and shucked oysters on a tray. "Far less subtle than Claesz." Grootenboer writes,

> [De Heem] does not operate on the level of proof, but on the level of seduction by displaying objects of desire in all their colorful richness. The elements refer directly to a sensuality of taste, touch, smell, and vision, tinged with a sexual overtone.[265]

De Heem's image, she believes, has the power to persuade by virtue of seduction. Breakfast pieces like Claesz.'s, by contrast, austere and spartan in their depiction of

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[264] *Ibid.,* 85-86.
[265] Grootenboer, 87.

humble foods such as bread and roughly hewn tableware, persuade the viewer through their simplicity. To explain further, she writes,

> Since there is so little to see in *Still Life with Wine Goblet and Oysters*, it follows that what is represented must be the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Indeed, just as Pascal recommends, Claesz. accomplishes truthfulness by eliminating redundant information. He strips painting to its bare essentials.[266]

Claesz.'s image presents simple objects clearly depicted to persuade the viewer of the *veracity of the image itself*.

We can see these polarities of seduction and persuasion simultaneously at work in contemporary food imagery. Food is continually put on display today - either through the display of actual food in restaurants, grocery stores, markets, food stalls, cafés, kitchens, or through depictions of food in advertising, blogs, magazines, newspapers, menus, cookbooks, photographic snapshots - not to mention artworks. These food images are frequently intended to be both seductive (by showing glistening, tempting and/or abundant quantities of food) *and* persuasive (by clearly depicting identifiable foods and vessels). Food images are often intended to rouse a consumer to buy a product, and food displays are usually intended to stimulate appetite and turn a viewer into a diner. In this broader context of rhetorically displayed foods, these two artist's restaurants mobilized the seductive and persuasive tendencies of food to their advantage.

Rhetorical Restaurants

One dish Spurse created for *The Public Table* involved finely chopped green onions carefully balanced on a glass platter where slightly dented silver spoons rested

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[266] *Ibid.*, 86.

convex-side-up. Each spoon held a tiny disc of pâté surmounted by a miniature reflective gold sphere. Its ingredients surprisingly included mayonnaise, shredded coconut, salt, sugar, gold dragees, and Cheerios (fig. 22). *The Public Table* used ornamental details and strangely combined ingredients to dazzle visitors, and seduce their appetites. Through these decisions, the food on display served to mildly confuse visitors about what exactly they were eating. This rhetorical strategy was important since it served to distance the menu served from the history of the donated ingredients – which were more or less waste before being transformed into edible canapés. Equally, Spurse used rhetorical strategies of clarity to persuade participants – through delicately proportioned, small servings that also served to aesthetically distance the dishes it served from their history as recuperated leftovers. A second rhetorical strategy of clarity that Spurse employed was that of recuperation and generosity. The simple equation of their project, which set out to benevolently collect surplus and redistribute it, made for a compelling, persuasive and clear narrative about the project. Like Claesz.'s painting, which is pared down and unembellished, *The Public Table's* straight-forward process of collection and free distribution seemed so simple as to show "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" of their project. These aesthetic choices served to attract donors and participants, and to persuade them to dine. Indeed, through Spurse's refashioning and gifting of foodstuffs, audiences were convinced to eat ingredients they would likely judge as inedible in another setting. Nonetheless, some visitors to *The Public Table* may have remained unconvinced of the shift from inedible waste material to edible food that Spurse pushed forward with their project.

État d'urgence also blended rhetorical strategies of clarity and confusion related to particular instances of the still life genre. Guests were served a combination of extravagant entrées and quotidian staples – and all of these were available in huge quantities, and served from a seemingly limitless collection of storage bins, jars, chafing dishes, and pots. Tables were covered in a surfeit of delicious foods that resembled the overflowing displays of *pronk* still life. This was a true act of largesse, and possibly an act of gastrosophy (or refined gluttony) as proposed by Fourier: a meal where an excess of different foods are on offer, encouraging diners to express subjective taste preferences and select only the foods that exactly match their desires. The objective of the gastrosophical meal, according to Fourier, was to encourage rivalry at the table, and stir up political and social contest – an objective very much in keeping with ATSA's goals to raise debate about the social conditions surrounding poverty and homelessness.

Menu items included simple fare such as *potage légumes rôti*, and *salade de betteraves*, but also nourishing and costly *boeuf bourguignon*, *jarret d'agneau à la marocaine*, and even *terrine de foie gras*. Echoing the display strategies of the *pronk* still life, the seductive draw of abundant quantities of free food at *État d'urgence* potentially served to attract diners, but perhaps more importantly, to smooth out social discomfort between some participants who were strangers to one another. Bountiful free food was the ostensible, shared, seductive draw – the cover story – for diners who may in fact have been there for many other reasons, including socializing, curiosity about who else might attend, altruism, antagonism, or other factors. Like the clear and simple depiction of foodstuffs in breakfast pieces, (and the clear and simple broths served at early restaurants) the formula that ATSA's project proposed for food distribution was

persuasive and mesmerizing for the media (and the public) because it removed all complicating factors and extraneous details affecting the social problem of poverty.

État d'urgence tried to facilitate a sense of conviviality through an open invitation; everyone was welcome because from ATSA's perspective poverty is a problem that should be everyone's concern. Like the breakfast piece, *État d'urgence* was a rhetorically clear artwork. ATSA's project was a controlled experiment, a controlled environment, that temporarily set aside issues linked to poverty and homelessness such as barriers to education, substance use, histories of abuse, and other factors that define the daily situation of the demographics that ATSA hoped to help. The provision of free, relatively healthy food was the simple - some would say simplistic - answer to the problem of poverty this banquet offered – and yet it was also an event that presented a wide variety of sumptuous dishes in a confusing, rhetorically seductive manner. In other words, *État d'urgence* combined the rhetorical strategies of *pronk* and breakfast pieces into one festival of temporary generosity.

There are other connections between these contemporary artworks and the historical subgenres of *pronk* and breakfast pieces. *The Public Table*'s focus on "local food," for instance, meaning food collected from a small community rather than food produced within a certain distance of the event, is similar to breakfast pieces in that, as Julie Berger Hochstrasser points out, breakfast pieces typically show foods produced within a short distance of the place where the painted image itself was produced.[267] Pretzels, beer, and herring – the staple foods so often depicted in breakfast pieces – were

[267] Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press (2007): 2.

all regional foods of the Dutch Republic. Although the goods used at *The Public Table* were in fact manufactured outside the local community, Spurse re-harvested these goods following the spirit of locally derived diet.

We can see that these two qualities of breakfast pieces, locality and simplicity, indicated by Hochstrasser and Grootenboer respectively, were united and also complicated in one key dish from *The Public Table*. The single-spoon of pâté and Cheerios that Spurse created came together in one dish because the local community provided certain ingredients to the artists. Because of these diverse ingredients, this pâté carried rhetorical similarities with *pronk*, since for the diner the precise contents of the dish were numerous and mysterious, and its presentation quite fanciful – even while the overall composition of the dish had elements of clarity and truthfulness characteristic of the breakfast piece. Although these discs of pâté were ornamented, as with breakfast pieces there was "so little to see" with this miniature work, which can be taken in by the eye quickly. Being so small, visually this disc of pâté seems to represent the "truth and nothing but the truth" of itself. And this simplicity, I propose, would factor in to any audience member's decision to ingest it.

At this point, it is worthwhile to consider Spurse's photograph of this Cheerio pâté in photographic terms in order to consider further the rhetoric of this artwork and the documents that represent it to future audiences. Spurse's photograph is closely cropped, and shot in close proximity to its subject, enlarging this very small object and bringing it extremely close to the viewer. This photograph also has shallow depth of field, and was shot under direct, very strong light. This technique focuses the viewer's attention on the reflective qualities of the dragees and spoons, which have sheen and glisten, and allows

the viewer to notice the porous surface texture of the pâté itself. This photograph is simply composed, and gives a seemingly clear, direct depiction of Spurse's pâté – echoing the simple rhetoric of breakfast pieces.

Spurse's photograph, on a certain level, engages with the rhetoric of seduction and therefore the legacy of breakfast pieces. In visual terms, these orbs of pâté might be associated with a familiar array of cakes and cookies similarly ornamented with gold dragees. Like Pascal's theory of geometry's rhetorical power, the visually simple form of Spurse's dish was persuasive because its simplicity appeared to hide nothing. The visual "argument" of this dish, particularly because it was served on a spoon, was: "this dish is edible." And yet, there is something very mysterious about the contents of this bit of food, even if its size and geometric cylindrical form are so simple - namely that it was made using an unidentified combination of surplus products, and that many participants at the event would have been well aware of this fact since they donated the materials themselves. Therefore, hidden within this dish there was much more to be taken in by the mouth and speculated by the mind: an abundant, confused combination of foodstuffs in the style of a *pronk* still life. Additionally, the taboo nature of an act like eating garbage troubles the simple rhetoric of clarity functioning in Spurse's project. Spurse's confusing foods also carried the rhetoric of seduction, a rhetoric powerful enough to persuade many diners to eat these dishes. Beyond this, the unusual combination of mayonnaise and Cheerios was bound to reveal other, more complicated and potentially less persuasive, potentially disgusting, gustatory qualities. The complexity of flavor and taboo at work in Spurse's project suggests that even with simple breakfast pieces there is more to be taken

in than initially meets the eye, and this complex relationship between confusion, ambiguity, and difficult to identify foods will be explored in detail in Chapter Seven.

ATSA's feast followed the rhetorical mode of *pronk* still life as described by Hochstrasser and Grootenboer in so far as *État d'urgence* involved massive quantities of food, and an expansive menu of multicultural foods. *État d'urgence* featured platters overflowing with bountiful piles of baklava, cookies, and stuffed dates. Other wooden serving trays stocked with immense filets of smoked fish, and dishes of condiments including shallots in vinegar. Because of these lavish qualities, and the fact that its menu included foods from diverse cultures, ATSA's food may have been aligned with *pronk* imagery. Hochstrasser points out that bountiful *pronk* images tend to show goods imported from distant lands colonized by European countries, and that these exotic delicacies made their way to Northern Europe largely because of the colonial efforts of the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company. Like foods displayed on *pronk* tabletops, ATSA's foods were very diverse in terms of origin, with French, Moroccan, Indian and many other culinary traditions represented. But its vessels and utensils (plain ceramic plates, basic silverware) were as relatively banal and simple as any depicted in a seventeenth-century breakfast piece, particularly evident in ATSA's use of single-serving plastic bottles of water (fig. 23).

Because of *pronk's* ties to the exploitative acts of colonialism in the seventeenth century, the rhetorical and aesthetic similarities between *pronk* still life and ATSA's project may grant today's reader pause. In light of the problematic and often violent nature of colonial relations that led to the bountiful collection of the goods depicted in *pronk* still life, ATSA's contemporary enactment of local, temporary abundance amid

international conditions of longstanding hunger is worth scrutinizing. As ATSA's project demonstrates, when artists engage with morality in their practices, it is enticing to critique their work not only on aesthetic terms, but also to critique the *ethics* of the work - a growing tendency in art criticism noted by Claire Bishop, whose ideas I will return to momentarily.

Although ATSA's meal did not deliberately evoke the legacies of colonial domination that *pronk* still life is complicit in, the menu offered by *État d'urgence* - which was oriented toward a fusion of multiple regional cuisines offered by their donor restaurants - was clearly occasioned by trade routes and imbalanced trade relations between developed and developing nations. If ATSA's objective was to work locally to bring about social justice and to encourage civic responsibility, we are left with a dizzying quandary in relation to the types of food served at the event. If the objective of *État d'urgence* was to raise awareness about poverty, and alleviate hunger, how far beyond the geography of Montreal should their project have attempted to reach? Considering the overall objectives of this project, was it appropriate for ATSA to have used ingredients and other materials that have been produced under conditions of exploitation or imbalanced trade relations - inadvertently supporting poverty in regions where these goods are produced in order to alleviate poverty in Montreal? Obviously this is a question that has to do with the global network of food production and distribution - largely beyond ATSA's control, since they are working with donations from restaurants. But using the overflowing abundance of the *pronk* still life as a parallel example sheds light on the question of trade routes and morality in relation to these donated foods. I do not intend to question the ethics of ATSA's feast, but rather to point out that poverty and

hunger are problems that extend beyond the context of urban Montreal, and that as has been pointed out with the *pronk* subgenre, a significant factor in international poverty and hunger has to do with the international distribution of food, and the routing of food resources.[268]

Generosity as a Public Discourse

In order to build on the close consideration of the rhetorical properties of *pronk* still life and breakfast pieces in relation to these contemporary artworks, at this point it is useful to turn to the social context of artist's restaurants. When artists offer gifts to communities - especially when those gifts are linked to basic survival, such as offerings of food, shelter, and clothing - their projects should be considered in light of practices and discourses that mobilize generosity as a social gesture, as well as examples of food philanthropy.

There are many forms of free food philanthropy in North America, but a particularly visible and long-standing activist strain is the movement called Food Not Bombs. This activist movement operates as a system of loosely affiliated chapters in different communities. Food Not Bombs collects ingredients bound for the discard bin from local grocers and bakeries, and offers the free food created from these spoils to diverse publics by using mobile architecture or by temporarily occupying existent architecture. The Food Not Bombs handbook serves as a manifesto for the movement's ambitions. It states, "We work against the perspective of scarcity that causes many people

[268] For an example of a discussion of colonial foodways in relation to still life, see Meta F. Janowitz. "Indian Corn and Dutch Pots: Seventeenth-Century Foodways in New Amsterdam/New York," *Historical Archeology* (Vol. 27, No. 2, 1993): 6-24.

to fear cooperation among groups." It goes on to say, "They [that fear cooperation] believe they must keep apart to preserve their resources, so we try to encourage feelings of abundance and the recognition that if we cooperate together, all become stronger."[269] Alongside these communitarian values, Food Not Bombs challenges the dominant food production and distribution industry by circumventing monetary exchange and working with materials that would otherwise be discarded. Additionally, menus at Food Not Bombs events are generally vegetarian and often vegan, two dietary practices that, while growing concerns in North America, are still adhered to by a minority of people today, and retain some of the luster of radicalism that associates them with other counter-cultures of the 1960s and 1970s. The rhetorical structure apparent in Food Not Bombs events is intended to be simple, clear, and persuasive: they provide free, healthy food to the public.

The Public Table and *État d'urgence* both employed activist strategies similar to those used by Food Not Bombs. First, these practices all use generosity to draw in and persuade their audiences. Second, they all use donated space, ingredients, and equipment to prepare food for the public. Third, they all are intended as ameliorative gestures: *The Public Table* gave free food and attempted to facilitate public dialogue; Food Not Bombs and *État d'urgence* endeavor to alleviate their participants' hunger, and cause social change. Spurse's project echoes the recuperative values and the association between politics and food production and distribution apparent in Food Not Bombs' events. In the words of Spurse, "Healthy preparation of food was important," for *The Public Table*, "which fit into our practice of preparing exquisite meals from the generous capacity of

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[269] C.T. Lawrence and Keith McHenry, *Food Not Bombs: How to Feed the Hungry and Build Community*, Philadelphia; Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers (1992): 4

others."[270] The local community's openness *to give* dictated the scope of Spurse's project, just as with Food Not Bombs. Spurse hoped to be of service to a community that is not pre-existent but is formed by the event itself. *The Public Table* became a daily locus for inter-personal encounter that was built around the consumption of food, just as Food Not Bombs events present food and result in sociability. Similarly, *État d'urgence* identified a social problem - poverty - and aimed to remedy it by providing free food to communities. All were welcome since ATSA hoped to bring multiple classes together to raise awareness about poverty. However, unlike Food Not Bombs and Spurse, ATSA does not recuperate waste.

Acts of food philanthropy such as these are embroiled in larger economies of gift giving that involve imbalanced rather than equivalent relations between giver and receiver.

The Rhetoric of the Gift

Gifts have rhetorical power. Analyses of gift economies suggest both celebratory and critical perspectives on how generosity shapes and expresses social relations. Practical experience in social situations demonstrates that few – if any – gifts are offered without some form of expectation of reciprocity, and that gifts are delivered laden with significance. The occasion for the gift, the context in which it is given, and the existent relationship between giver and receiver all color the interpretive value carried by the gift. With these factors taken into account, it is clear that gifts offered by artists should not be understood as purely benevolent.

[270] Interview with the author via email, November 2008.

Socially based cycles of accumulation and expenditure have been theorized by many anthropologists and sociologists, but the work of Marcel Mauss has retained special attention in these fields and in other disciplines interested in gift economies. Mauss' anthropological study *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925) considers the practice of gifting to be at the centre of social behavior and organization. Gifts, Mauss believes, seem to be offered voluntarily, but in fact involve obligation for reciprocity. All gifts require the receiver to give something in return.[271] Mauss presents evidence from fieldwork in and research on several cultures, including Northwest Coast First Nations, Polynesian, Ancient Roman, and Maori systems of giving. The Maori concept of *hau*, as presented by Mauss, is a metaphysical force that resides in objects given. By bonding with whoever receives the gift, the *hau* requires reciprocity.[272] Givers of gifts stand to gain *mana* in the Maori tradition, an increased prestige, "the talisman and source of wealth that is authority itself."[273] *The Gift* also cites examples of gifting that result in destruction, where objects of value are reduced to waste. Mauss explains that in some forms of potlatch practiced by Northwest Coast indigenous populations, objects of great worth are purposefully ruined, sometimes by fire. Jewelry, ornaments, blankets, and even houses are ignited, "in order to put down and to 'flatten' one's rival."[274] In these cases, goods are materially transformed into waste in order to fashion them as gifts. What is the purpose of this destruction of goods, according to

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[271] Mauss, 3.
[272] Ibid., 12.
[273] Ibid., 8.
[274] *Ibid.,* 37.

Mauss? "It is a competition," Mauss concludes, "to see who is the richest and the most madly extravagant. Everything is based upon the principles of antagonism and rivalry."[275]

It can be argued that Spurse reverses the process of goods turned to waste that Mauss describes, since *The Public Table* transforms waste into serviceable goods as ingredients, and re-characterizes waste as a gift. Instead of being a competition to "flatten" a rival, as Mauss describes, Spurse's gifts are intended to set the stage for the commons, a site for equal dialogue.

While Mauss' tendency to primitivize and exoticize his chosen case studies has been justifiably criticized, his study is useful in its skepticism about the benevolent nature of gifts.[276] Just as Mauss approaches the gift as a complex and potentially antagonistic gesture, so too should the inflammatory qualities of Spurse's gift be investigated rather than overlooked.

While Mauss stresses the supposedly destructive and wasteful nature of gifts in the potlatch, Spurse *recovers* waste and channels trifles into an abundant collection. But does this possible reversal of waste necessarily cancel or reverse the other antagonistic outcomes that Mauss interposes onto the potlatch? Here we must return to the title of Spurse's restaurant: *The Public Table: A restaurant presented by the Collective for the Finding of the Commons*. This title marshals terms to do with communitarian and democratic values. Although "collectivity" might seem to bar the possibility of "antagonism" and "rivalry" as set out by Mauss, it is clear that such an interpretation merely responds to the rhetorical power of collectivity as a *positive value*. The

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[275] *Ibid.*

[276] For contemporary critiques of Mauss' research, see Karen Sykes, *Arguing with Anthropology: An Introduction to Critical Theories of the Gift*, London; New York: Routledge (2005).

collective's recuperation of waste, in fact, demonstrates and rationalizes *The Public Table*'s presence in the community – and this action also serves as a competitive gesture in its own right. That is to say, *The Public Table* identifies and recuperates objects that would otherwise be discarded, and by so doing it insinuates itself into the community it forms. *The Public Table* was both the savior of waste in this newly formed community, and the *raison d'être* for this same community. Their recuperation of waste was "madly extravagant" in its own way, because it proudly conducted a fool's errand requiring significant labor. Gathering scraps and leftovers, gleaning materials, was no small undertaking. These actions were undertaken to assemble a magnificent feast, prepared as a gift – yet this feast was surprisingly meager in scale, and humble in its ingredients. *Recovering* and *destroying* surplus, as means of gift economies, are equally invested in demonstrating mad extravagance.

The collection of essays *What We Want is Free* edited by Ted Purves, briefly discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, is devoted to addressing systems of generosity at work in contemporary art practices. As expressed by the art critic Bill Arning in this same volume, "The art object today is best understood not as wondrous, but rather as a catalyst for a set of stimulating relationships that make up the art experience. At least that is one utopian vision for how art of our times functions."[277] Contemporary art involving gifts often sparks sociability, Arning observes. Purves' own contribution to the book, "Blows Against the Empire," presents the view that the primary outcome of gifting is "to

[277] Bill Arning, "Sure, Everyone Might Be An Artist…But Only One Artist Gets to be the Guy Who Says That Everyone Else is an Artist," *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art,* Albany: State University of New York Press. Ted Purves, ed. (2005): 12.

create social bonds, which cement ties between individuals and mark relationships."[278] The maintenance of these bonds, Purves writes, requires reciprocity or "moving the gift property along."[279] A gift that does not circulate stifles rather than encourages social bonds, by this logic. According to Mary Jane Jacob's chapter "Reciprocal Generosity," the now widespread artistic method of offering objects or services to the public was "catapulted into mainstream art consciousness by Felix Gonzalez-Torres' candy piles and poster stacks and Rirkrit Tiravanija's food-events."[280] It should not escape our attention that both of these influential gift practices involve edible materials. Foodstuffs, we can extrapolate from Jacob's observations, have been decisive rhetorical tools in ushering economies of generosity into the dominant discourse of contemporary art.

In his pursuit of a theory of "general economy," philosopher Georges Bataille sketches out the functions and outcomes of expenditure and surfeit, and his theories help to measure the tidal forces of gifting in artist's restaurants. Bataille's *The Accursed Share* attempts to generate a unified system for understanding the flow of energy through nature, social situations, and economies. Resisting the dispersal of wealth, he argues, can have dire consequences: the mayhem of war. In order to avoid these calamities, Bataille explains that antecedent cultures used festivals and monuments to disperse energies; in contemporary times, his European culture used this energy up with "'services' that make

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[278] Ted Purves, "Blows Against the Empire," *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art,* Albany: State University of New York Press. Ted Purves, ed. (2005): 31.
[279] *Ibid.*
[280] Mary Jane Jacobs, "Reciprocal Generosity," *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art.* Albany: State University of New York Press. Ted Purves, ed. (2005): 3.

life smoother," and then re-received this energy through leisure.[281] The provision of services by artists is an extension of this contemporary version of carnivalesque expenditure, and such provisions are rhetorical in nature.

Bataille's theory of general economy raises the issue of the gift routes used in these two artist's restaurants, and helps us to understand further their rhetorical quality. *État d'urgence* is billed as a *manifestival*, and Spurse's restaurant similarly carries the tone of a demonstration-festival. *The Public Table* locates the discharged excess hidden in its host community, and extracts this otherwise dormant waste in order to return the discard to circulation, all in the context of a social celebration. The waste Spurse located was the excess that must be spent without profit, according to Bataille's ideas. With regards to the question of gleaning's role in their piece, Spurse responded in interview,

> In a general sense, community service is linked with a much larger mandate of socialized betterment, usually associated with the state […] We were interested in what it would take to make a restaurant operate for free and to see what type of community could be produced from it. We were interested in the production of a community centered on the question of how a place is generous in both its waste and excess.[282]

Because of the gleaning method the artists used for the construction and maintenance of their restaurant, new aesthetic solutions and gustatory tastes were invented by Spurse's project.

Squander and excess were at work toward different ends and via alternate routes in ATSA's case. The excess material fueling *État d'urgence* came from the charity of local businesses. The food donated by these Montreal restaurants was not bound to be waste, as was the case with Spurse's material. Instead, ATSA's benefactors set aside

[281] *Ibid.*, 24.
[282] Interview with the author via email, November 2008.

material and human resources that might have been used for profit, and directed them toward ATSA's cause. This *manifestival* can be likened to antecedent festival modes that Bataille describes: these are dispersals of wealth and excess energy that are planned to avoid calamity - the calamity of ongoing suffering and hunger. *The Accursed Share's* approach, when applied to these two artworks, suggests that the gifts that enable these restaurants are in fact part of a larger economic system that generates, propels and expels surplus.

The Generous Still Life

The research of both Bryson and Sterling reveals a historical connection between gift economies and still life images from Greek and Roman antiquity. These two art historians discuss *xenia* paintings, often identified as the progenitors for later still life images because they depict edible goods. The term *xenia* is Ancient Greek for the notion of "hospitality," and this name is directly related to the function of these images in mediating social relations. *Xenia* images were frequently given along with baskets of raw ingredients assembled by a host and given to a guest, and these paintings usually would be depictions of the goods included in the basket – a kind of visual inventory. Through these gifts, the guest was implicitly invited to prepare their own food. In this way, the guest was welcomed into a more level relationship with their host; if the host prepared food for the guest, it would lower the guest's social position and leave them more greatly beholden to the host. Bryson describes the nature of the relations facilitated by these objects:

> This particular form of hospitality is precise about the boundaries that demarcate social distance: the stranger is welcomed and absorbed into the

> household through the gift of food, yet at the same time the gift creates a sort of satellite household within the house, so that strangers eat their own food separately prepared, in a separate space of their own. They are raw, not cooked, and the freedom given to prepare the foodstuffs separately marks a respect for the stranger's needs, for sustenance but also for autonomy and a measure of the independent existence within the *oikos*; this is the difference between such provisions and, say, a banquet.[283]

Xenia still lifes were representations of gifts, and were gifts – and they were also contracts establishing the terms of a relationship. This example demonstrates the rhetorical weight of particular still life representations toward not just convincing the viewer of their verisimilitude, but also toward negotiating how social relations will occur. In this way, *xenia* images were proto-relational artworks, and their particular method of tightening social relations – to corrupt a phrase from Bourriaud – should alter the way we consider other cases where artists give food to guests.

The apparent simplicity and uncomplicated nature of some examples from the still life genre – particularly the breakfast piece – has served to reinforce the idea that what these images depict is true. I have ventured to expand Grootenboer's argument in this respect to show how contemporary artists' restaurants not only represent food, but actually manipulate and serve foodstuffs to audiences as a rhetorical strategy that also involves generosity.

Like the *xenia* painting, these two artist's restaurants used gifts to persuade their audiences and to propose particular social relations. Despite collaborating with diverse groups, including the audience themselves, these artist's collectives were still *the hosts* of their projects. *Xenia* were offered to guests to *level relations* between host and guest, and gifts offered by *The Public Table* and *État d'urgence* were perhaps expected to have a

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[283] Bryson, 23. *Oikos* is the Greek concept of the household, which is understood as a (domestic) state within a (civic) state, where the individual citizen is sovereign.

similar leveling effect. Ultimately, however, I would argue that ATSA's edible gift merely served to *display economic difference* rather than remove it. At best, Spurse's edible gift merely positioned the dining participant as an implicated donor rather than an individual with a stake in the project equal to that of the artist. These were edible still lifes that presented generosity as a rhetorically simple and uncomplicated gesture, but it is clear that their gifts served to *reveal* inequality between giver and receiver, not remove it.

These artworks, which at first blush seem to be simple philanthropic gestures, carried other, more subtle rhetorical properties. Echoing the rhetorical strategies of *pronk* and breakfast pieces, these two temporary restaurants also contrasted the everyday with the extravagant in terms of ingredients and tools of display, juxtaposing luxurious and quotidian aesthetics in order to persuade their audience of the veracity of their claims.

Hospitality and/or Hostility in Public Space

By virtue of their use of space, their open invitations to the public, and their interests in such broad concepts as "commons," "democracy," and "collectivity," public banquet projects like ATSA's and Spurse's have a strong relationship with public art practices. As established earlier in this thesis, restaurants have historically functioned as places where diverse demographics gather to be convivial. The frictions and adhesions that such sites promote bear comparison to a few core principles of "the public."

Claire Bishop, a theorist known for her discussion of antagonism in contemporary art involving social practices, has famously challenged curator Nicolas Bourriaud's sanguine views about artworks that use social relations as materials. While Bourriaud

believes that artists facilitate or “tighten” social relations,[284] Bishop is interested in cases where artists stir up discontent in order to further the causes of democracy. Rather than praising artists for developing apparently “ethical” practices, a trend Bishop observes in art criticism, she is interested in art practices that sustain social discomfort.

To defend her approach to antagonism in artworks, Bishop calls on political theorist and philosopher Chantal Mouffe, whose principle argument is that true democracy is made ineffective if its citizens are considered to be a body unified under consensus.[285] Bishop sees a tacit analogy between the operation of social art practices and the maintenance of a healthy, dissent-welcoming democracy. This idea echoes the argument of art historian Rosalyn Deutsche, who also accesses the writing of Mouffe and other political theorists to demonstrate that democratic public space is a site of uncertainty and difficulty rather than resolution.

Since democracy is a political system founded on the commons – a public space where no single individual is in charge – Deutsche holds that any art that occupies the commons is not only an interpretive litmus of the operation of democracy, but actively involved in affecting public life. In her book *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* Deutsche describes New York’s Jackson Park, now named Jackson Square, which went through a 1.2 million dollar reconstruction in the early 1990s. After the park was renovated, there was a campaign by a neighborhood advocacy group, the Friends of Jackson Park, to

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[284] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon, France: Les Presse Du Réel. (2002. First edition published 1998): 16. Relational art succeeds where popular culture fails, according to Bourriaud, "because it *tightens the space of relations*, unlike TV and literature which refer each individual person to his or her own space of private consumption, and also unlike theatre and cinema which bring small groups together before specific, unmistakable images."
[285] Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London; New York: Verso. (1993): 12

protect the site's sanctity. As a solution, the Friends put locks on the gates of the park to keep out "undesirable" citizens. Deutsche points out how in this example the homeless person becomes "an ideological figure," who seems to be creating chaos and lack of resolution within democracy – as if without homeless people, a state of peace and stability would finally be achieved. As she puts it "the homeless person embodies the fantasy of a unified urban space that can – must – be retrieved."[286] These ideologies about public space have ramifications for public art: what art is commissioned, what is shown, and what is removed, but also how art will engage with civic life. Instead of seeing the homeless person as a problem for democracy, Deutsche argues that their presence is the very force that should vividly animate democracy, and so she advocates a form of public art that highlights these conflicts rather than attempting to conceal them.

Deutsche argues for an analysis of public art that takes into account how "the public is a rhetorical instrument open to diverse, even antagonistic, uses that vary with widely different contexts."[287] Her identification of "the public" as a "rhetorical instrument" is crucial for my discussion. Deutsche keenly observes that the very idea of "the public" – in fact a very vague notion – serves to establish particular codes of conduct about how public space – equally vague in theory but spatially determined and instituted in practice – is to be used. In my chosen case studies, the rhetorical power of "the public" intersected with the rhetorical nature of still life images as investigated by Grootenboer, and I will return to these intersections.

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[286] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Agoraphobia," *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics,* Cambridge; London: MIT Press (1998): 278.
[287] Deutsche, 160.

By occupying so-called public space, *État d'urgence* made claims about the importance and far-reaching nature of the issue they drew attention to: homelessness. And by framing their project as *a search for* the commons, Spurse similarly used the rhetorical instrument of "the public" as a supposedly genuine article that has been misplaced. Whereas "the public" in Deutsche's example is a rhetorical device used to claim a space for a particular demographic to the exclusion of others, these two artworks invoked "the public's" rhetorical power to lend their works an air of importance and urgency.

The Public Table, billed as a project that aimed to locate a commons, did affect the public life of its communities by bringing together constituents who might otherwise not meet, and this restaurant opened up a place for dialogue - but what the dialogue might have focused on is less firmly established than in the cast of *État d'urgence*, which directly intended to raise the issue of homelessness for discussion. I have introduced the idea that *The Public Table* encouraged new understandings of waste and food/non-food, but the precise nature of the dialogue that will occur in the commons it establishes was open-ended - just as the requirements of public space demand *vis à vis* the system of democracy. In Spurse's model for gift economy, the trajectory of the gift began with "the public," which was actually a collection of individuals that Spurse chose to engage with rather than a concrete, preexistent entity. This "public" transmitted waste to the artists, and then shifted back to "the public," again a select group rather than some broad collectivity, who become invitees at least partly obliged or beholden or encouraged to attend the restaurant's meals. This set of shifting definitions of "the public" instituted by

the title and operations of *The Public Table* echoes Deutsche's observation of how "the public" is a loose and malleable rhetorical instrument.

The objects featured in *The Public Table* had a rhetorical structure, too. Spurse's materials and ingredients were recuperated waste. As a result, this piece questioned the distribution and disposal of foodstuffs, and invited communities to come together to apportion salvaged waste. Was this project aimed at social justice, though? Did *The Public Table* have a moralistic undertone, arguing that so-called "waste" is most often salvageable? The objective here did not seem to be simple thrift, because *The Public Table* demonstrated how waste could also be aestheticized by being transformed into edible compositions. While the vessels and ingredients used in this project are incredibly lowly - essentially being garbage - they were re-crafted into aesthetically *seductive* forms, thus repeating a key rhetorical feature Grootenboer identifies in *pronk* still life.

Along with the *pronk* strategies it used by displaying bountiful and extravagant foods, *État d'urgence* simultaneously displayed storage bins and other humble and utilitarian vessels. The utilitarian means of service that ATSA used in their banquet stressed the simplicity of their call to action, the direct and urgent nature of the problem it focused on, and the apparent honesty of the project itself. By contrast, the collective's choice to serve healthy, nutritionally rich standards of middle- and upper- class cooking suggested not just that all deserve food, but that all deserve *boeuf bourguignon*. Extending Grootenboer's analysis, we can say that the vessels in this artwork were persuasive in terms of their simplicity, and the foods of *État d'urgence* were seductive by virtue of their luxury.

The Public Table and *État d'urgence* troubled conceptions of public space and democracy, and harnessed food to make rhetorical claims. In their direct provision of material goods, and their respective platforms relative to food distribution, these ameliorative gestures aimed to hide nothing and reveal everything concerning their structure, means, and objectives. This aim for conceptual clarity underpins the argumentative structure of both projects, which was reinforced by the apparent benevolence of giving away food. Nonetheless, there were also *seductive* qualities to these artworks, namely ATSA's opulent foods and Spurse's ambiguous canapés.

Manifestos

There are ways of eating that are manifestos in their own right. Vegetarianism, the one-hundred-mile diet, macrobiotic diets, and veganism can be grounded in personal taste, health and well being, and political and ideological programs. Manifestos have also paralleled the production of art in the twentieth century. Martin Puchner's essay "Manifesto = Theatre," points out that the two terms used in his title have similar meanings: the former comes from the Latin "manifestare," meaning "to bring into the open, to make manifest"; the latter comes from *theatron*, a Greek word meaning "a place of seeing."[288] The manifesto exposes ideas, raises discussion, and also is a form of theatre. Puchner also lays out a convincing typology for the manifesto form:

> numbered theses; denunciations of the past; an aggressive attitude toward the audience; a collective authorship; exaggerated, shrill declarations;

[288] Martin Puchner, "Manifesto = Theatre," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3. (October 2002): 449. Puchner suggests that the manifesto of today might turn away from modernity out of nostalgia for former models.

> varied, often bold, letters; and a mass distribution in newspapers, on bill-boards, and as flyers.[289]

Another important component of an effective manifesto I would add to this list is “a persuasive rhetorical structure.” We can draw from Grootenboer’s discussion to consider that if manifestos are statements of belief brought into the open and made manifest, then persuasiveness is a crucial element in their construction. Even the absurdist manifesto is invested in a rhetorical structure: convincing the reader that the absurd is a worthy subject and way of encountering the world.

While many of these manifesto-qualities are particular to printed matter and textual manifestos, several of Puchner's qualifiers are germane to the structure of the artists’ restaurants examined here: shared authorship, assertive political stances that reject the status quo, and messages mass distributed through the carnival form. ATSA and Spurse’s projects used food to make politics visible, and worked to coercively transmit politics through ingestion. Additionally, Spurse and ATSA have both employed the overtly rhetorical form of the written manifesto. For these collectives, the written word and the edible object were forms with the potential to communicate ideological content. Before discussing ATSA and Spurse’s manifestos, I will review two important related manifestos: *Futurist Manifesto* and *The Slow Food Manifesto*.

The art practice of the Italian Futurists gives a fine example of how political material can be woven into artwork and everyday life, particularly through their use of food as a material. *The Futurist Cookbook,* full of recipes using unconventional ingredient-combinations and instructions for elaborate banquets, is a realization of many of the *Futurist Manifesto’s* ideals. Often the recipes of *The Futurist Cookbook* include

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[289] *Ibid.*, 451.

diagrams for the assembly of ingredients that resemble the angular geometries of Futurist sculpture (fig. 24).

In all of their activities, which included, among other things, painting, theatre, and gastronomy, the Italian Futurists promoted the two idealistic functions of the manifesto: the rejection of the past in favor of the glorious future, and reliance on words as a rapid force of communication alongside a preference for raw action. Discarding tradition and history in favor of the continually new was at the core of the Futurist ethos. Industry and war were positioned by Futurism as positive forces that would sweep away the atrophied old order of Italy. They write in a manifesto dated 1909, "We will glorify war – the world's only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women." It goes on, "For too long Italy has been a dealer in second hand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards." They continue, "while recognizing that badly or crudely nourished men have achieved great things in the past, we affirm this truth: men think dream and act according to what they eat and drink."[290] Food is fuel for the physical, psychic and spiritual health of the human being from this point of view. If a revolution hopes to be effective, according to the Futurist position, then it must take into consideration the daily fuel driving its human collaborators.

The Futurists hoped to elevate the everyday nature of foodstuffs, and show that food is important in the political realm precisely because it is a category that we encounter and manipulate every day. As outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, the Futurist proscription on pasta was directly tied to Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini's

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[290] Marinetti, 36.

own insistence that Italy's citizens reduce or eliminate their intake of pasta.[291] It is clear, then, that the foods Marinetti promoted via his artistic production carried the subterfuge of political and economic objectives: the Futurist's food manifesto served the interests of the Italian economy and nationalism. Marinetti wanted Italians to be thoughtful, imaginative, and brave eaters - even while food carried powerful political messages.

The Slow Food Manifesto (1987) is a rather different example, drawn from outside the context of art, but it also illustrates that ideology and food consumption are connected. This manifesto was prompted by the 1986 grand opening of a McDonalds fast food restaurant in the neighborhood of Rome's eighteenth-century architectural landmark, the Spanish Steps. As Italian political specialist and author of *Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure* Geoff Andrews observes, the Manifesto's subtitle is bold, and summarizes poetically the objectives of Slow Food: "International Movement for the Defence of and Right to Pleasure." A section of the *Slow Food Manifesto* reads: "We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat fast food."[292] It continues,

> The culture of our times rests on a false interpretation of industrial civilization; in the name of dynamism and acceleration, man invents machines to find relief from work but at the same time adopts the machine as a model of how to live his life. … Against those, and they are in the

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[291] See Romy Golan, "Ingestion/Anti-pasta," *Cabinet*, (Issue 10, Spring 2003). http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/10/anti-pasta.php . Site accessed August 31, 2013 ; Kate Bolick, "Back to the Futurists: Italy's First Avant-Garde Turns 100. Posted July 2, 2009.
http://www.slate.com/articles/life/welltraveled/features/2009/back_to_the_futurists_italys_first_avantgarde_turns_100/against_pasta.html
Site accessed August 31, 2013.

[292] Quoted in Geoff Andrews, *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*, Montreal; Kingston; Ithaca: McGill-Queens University Press (2008): 29.

> majority, who can't see the difference between efficiency and frenzy, we propose a healthy dose of sensual pleasures to be followed up with prolonged enjoyment.[293]

The Slow Food Movement promotes a local, artisanal approach to food production, and suggests that citizens *slow down* daily life, the enjoyment of food and the social time afforded by dining. Andrew's detailed account of the movement's history and philosophy explains Slow Food's primary aim: eco-gastronomy, defined as "[t]he combination of a concern for the environment with the pleasures associated with the production, preparation, cooking and consumption of food."[294] Paradoxically, the *Slow Food Manifesto* cites the Italian Futurists' interest in combining ingredients in unusual combinations as an important influence on the movement – even though the Futurists wanted to *accelerate* daily life, not slow it down.[295] Slow Food is a negative response to the late twentieth century conditions of industry and technology that the Futurists wished to harness and see amplified at the start of the same century. While contemporary life may demand that we ingest, consume, and produce as quickly as possible, Slow Food celebrates prolonged gustatory enjoyment. The pursuit of pleasure as a form of ecological stewardship is revolutionary indeed! What these two ideologies have in common is the desire to bring humans greater awareness of what they eat, and to call attention to the relationship between food's construction and its effect on the human organism.

A Grape Manifesto

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[293] *Ibid.,* 30.
[294] *Ibid.,* 18.
[295] *Ibid.,* 11.

Spurse's textual manifesto "Skinning" is a series of directives concerning the tasting and preparation of foods that encourages a methodology for food-based research. "Skinning" is nine pages of densely written text that describe a very detailed and experimental gustatory approach to a single grape. Most of the document is a collection of aphoristic statements that ask the reader to reconsider their idea of what in the world is edible. The bulk of its written material is crammed into footnotes, which often dominate half or even almost all of each page. What Spurse asks the reader to do in this manifesto is quite simple, but could result in some unexpected and perhaps unpleasant experiences for the reader. They ask the reader to:

> 1. Take an object. 2. Ascertain its edibility (be generous in understanding this term). 3. Divide into as many distinct components as possible. 4. Smell, taste and feel (with the tongue) each of these distinct parts. 5. Make a list of all of these. 6. Use these items to make a meal. 7. Treat each dish as the object in step one. 8. Repeat. 9. Repeat again…[296]

Following Puchner's qualifiers, this manifesto is declarative, imperative, and contains numbered passages that demarcate separate themes. Rather than simply tasting the grape, the reader is asked to systematize their eating and cooking process to an extreme. Spurse's objective is to "un-meld what is inherently "grapeness"," by attempting "to taste before ontology."[297] This phrase suggests an approach to taste that comes *before being itself*, before the experience of being in the world, and before the being of the grape itself, have cohered. Action rather than being-itself is of great concern for Spurse, who want to see their readers test and reconfigure their understandings of what alimentary building blocks are by breaking them into component parts. Sense organs and their transmission of

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[296] Spurse, "Skinning," Unpublished manuscript. "Skinning" was originally written for a book edited by Chris Thompson and Amee Beseriee. The artists kindly shared this document with me during my research.
[297] *Ibid.*

sensory stimuli to the subject are to be questioned rather than accepted. Dull habit, routine, and convention are unwelcome here. “Skinning,” like the *Slow Food Manifesto,* asks the diner to eat slowly and reflectively - and yet, Spurse’s text also echoes the Futurists’ demands that their readers entirely rethink the ideas about edibility and food experimentation. Spurse determines that byproducts as well as vestigial and discarded ingredients are viable materials for new sensory experiences – and we can immediately see the relationship between this manifesto’s food experiment and the collective’s method of gleaning material and of transforming and recombining ingredients at *The Public Table*. With this manifesto and *The Public Table*, waste is positioned as an unintentionally manifested form of generosity to be culled and harnessed rather than derided. *The Public Table* and “Skinning” refigure the rhetorical properties of waste.

A Hygienic Manifesto

Sociologist Louis Jacob’s reflection on *État d’urgence* is telling for its argument that this event showed “that each of us as a citizen has it in him or her to take action that is concrete, dignified, and, however small, meaningful.”[298] But if we consider *État d’urgence* as an antagonistic satire, its rhetorical value shifts dramatically.[299] Like Fourier’s detailed visions for a utopian society, which can be read as satire, it is equally

[298] Louis Jacob, “Sur l’art et l’errance, Place Émilie-Gamelin, État d’urgence / On art and wandering: État d’urgence at Place Émilie-Gamelin,” *ATSA: Quand l’art passé à l’action (1998-2008) / ATSA: When art takes action*. Pierre Allard and Annie Roy, eds. Nazzareno Bulette, trans. Montreal: Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable (2008): 53.
[299] ATSA have held many satirical “terrorist actions,” including the series *Attack* (2003), which involved a series of destroyed SUVs installed in public spaces, surrounded by notice boards and a video manifesto that uses some very strong language to protest the energy draining and polluting properties of sport utility vehicles. This project was launched shortly after American president Bush declared war on Iraq in 2002.

conceivable that *État d'urgence* was an absurdist theatrical event intended to draw attention to just how non-sustainable such lavish acts of distribution are, and that more fundamental changes must be made to remove the class stratifications and inequities that result in people living without homes and without proper access to food.

ATSA's use of the manifesto form gives evidence that their event is intended as satire. The collective has presented more than one antagonistic and satirical manifesto.[300] For the 2009 edition of *État d'urgence* ATSA prepared the text "Welcome to l'*État d'urgence*, the Manifestival that Promotes Proper Social Hygiene." This manifesto title is not to be taken at face value. ATSA's use of the term social hygiene refers satirically to the ideologies arising at the end of the nineteenth century promoting sexual education, the control of sexually transmitted infections, and the regulation of sex work. It is introduced as follows: "If we view society as a physical organism, there are clearly parts of this organism that are in dire neglect. For to leave one's own, here and elsewhere, without shelter, without food, without love... *is not very hygienic*."[301] They go on to explain that,

> Aside from providing superficial entertainment and beyond the purely mercantile considerations related to such product, artists serve as the pressure valve and mirror for our collective and individual ills. They help us know ourselves. Without them, we become strangers to ourselves. Artists fulfill this role—provided they can overcome the staggering pressures of celebrity and ratings. *Not very hygienic*...[302]

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[300] ATSA's first action, *La Banque à Bas* (1998), was a sock drive and free clothing distribution program accompanied by an outdoor soup kitchen at the entrance of the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal. ATSA's statement on the event reads "This installation was partly a response to the lack of public art visibility during the exhibit *De fougue [FOOOG] et de passion* at the M.A.C.," an exhibition of contemporary art, "and especially condemned the staggering profits of 7.5 billion dollars made by Canadian banks as opposed to the increase in the number of underprivileged people." Since the MAC's show was about ardor and passion, it seems appropriate that ATSA would mount a piece at this site about showing compassion for Montrealer's without homes.

[301] http://atsa.qc.ca/projs/eu09/uk/motatsa.html . Site accessed January 26, 2010.

[302] *Ibid.*

In this text, the collective critiques their own role as dissenting agents who have simultaneously been affirmed and celebrated by the very institutions of power they are attempting to undermine. ATSA's writing encourages a serious reflection on the social role of artists and their potential culpability in continuing the very problems they hope to end. This "Social Hygiene" text reflects on a central contradiction of their project. The philanthropic provision of food to people without homes can equally serve to promote the message that such provisions actually *solve* the problem, while in fact doing nothing to *end poverty*. But ATSA's language suggests their aims are different. Rather than working toward concrete solutions to the problem of poverty, the artist's responsibilities laid out in this text are to behave as "the pressure valve and mirror" of society, both reflecting and exerting/releasing pressures present in society. For ATSA, art is a rallying point brought into focus through the manifesto, and the artist is diagnostician, and also ameliorative agent. Specialized skills for "mirroring" the illness of society qualify the artist to operate in communities, argue ATSA. In this case the provision of free food is their chosen healing tool, and also the means by which they deliver their political manifesto. In this way, ATSA continues the restorative theme of early restaurants.

But there are lacunae in ATSA's manifesto. "Social Hygiene" does not address how their project occupied and took a space from the set of individuals that usually occupy and use Place Émelie Gamelin – people without homes not the least among them – and then hosted a spectacle there in order to *invite back* these same individuals under ATSA's terms. Their text also does not reflect on the collective's privilege as instigators of the generous act who managed the abundance of donations offered by local businesses. ATSA was the filter, the managerial arm, and the mediator of these social relations – and

these roles gave them great authority both on the ground at Place Émilie Gamelin, and rhetorically in the discourses surrounding the project itself.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that ATSA's and Spurse's temporary restaurants presented rhetorical structures through manifestos, food service, food display, and generosity. These two restaurant projects combined the rhetorical strategies evident in *pronk* still life and breakfast pieces: seduction and persuasion. Spurse's restaurant harnessed the luxurious aesthetics of ornament, but constructed its dishes from surplus, suggesting that the category of waste can be fluidly reworked toward luxuriant ends. The aesthetic principles that ATSA applied to presentation and food service were similarly evocative: their use of utilitarian containers and utensils to serve staples of bourgeois or aristocratic households and restaurants presented a clash of class-associated aesthetics – a theme that will be explored further in the following chapter. In terms of display surfaces and vessels, ATSA's project suggested that frugality is the greatest good, but the entrées on offer included ingredients of prodigality. Also, *État d'urgence* and *The Public Table* mobilized discourses of generosity in order to present their projects as benevolent, rhetorically clear and invested in locality. A final key rhetorical method both of these collectives used was that of the manifesto: an ideological device used to swiftly and urgently communicate ideological positions to audiences. Beyond their textual manifestos, the artist's restaurants created by these collectives presented forms of edible manifestos, since the very food served on site carried rhetorical power. Through these

means, these projects both either suggested or directly instigated situations of antagonism in the public sphere.

Chapter Six: Identity and the Edible Commodity

The contemporary artists addressed in this chapter served food commodities to perform or question identity in terms of citizenship, ethnicity, and social class. I will investigate feasts and restaurants where artists alter and present pre-existing food commodities – flour, dried shrimp, and Mazola corn oil for instance – to create new dishes and food combinations. The resulting foods are displayed alongside décor and within architectural settings in order to inflect these comestible objects into what I will call edible commodities.

The plate of pad thai consumed in a North American restaurant does not make apparent the dozens of material transformations its ingredients have gone through, the geographic origins of those materials, the economic system supporting the movement of commodities, nor the human agents who have been involved in these multiple processes. The dried shrimp used in a particular plate of *pad thai* may indeed have been imported from Thailand, the country associated with the dish – but the shrimp paste added to it could be from Vietnam, its rice noodles manufactured in South California, and its peanuts grown in Brazil. On a material level, regional dishes like this one are often a confused collage of products from diverse, distant locations from around the world – and this concealed history is what makes such plates of food akin to other commodities that circulate in today's global economy.

Because many details about food commodities, such as the labor conditions, material processes, and sources of extraction behind their creation, remain unknown to their eventual consumer, such objects are deeply mysterious. When restaurateurs harness

food commodities in order to create and display new types of products (such as entrées), then these commodities enter into a new phase of their lifespan as edible commodities. Although edible commodities are made up of other commodities that have been materially altered, and they are served in a setting where the diner usually has some sense of the techniques and conditions by which they were produced, the longer history of processes and conditions of production of their *component* commodities nonetheless usually remain obscured, and seem effectively *removed* from the edible commodity. Yet something is also *added*: the edible commodity is displayed and theatricalized in the setting of the restaurant through plating, surrounding décor, and service among many other factors.

There are sensory models that are particular to the conditions of capitalism and how consumers interact with commodities. Earlier in this thesis, I charted out key moments in eighteenth-century philosophy that reveal biases against the non-visual senses - especially gustatory taste. In the wake of these philosophies, through acts of marketing and display, industrial and consumer capitalism have taken quite different approaches to the human sensorium. David Howes argues that late capitalism has introduced a particular, new sensory model for daily life, and that a primary stage for its performance is through encounters with commodities. A central figure to reject the visual or even asensory biases of eighteenth and nineteenth-century aesthetic philosophy and thus reflect on new sensory modalities particular to capitalism was Karl Marx. Rejecting the idealist projects of philosophers like Kant, Marx wrote that, "man is affirmed in the objective world not only in the act of thinking, but with *all* his senses."[303] As noted by

[303] Quoted in Howes, "Hyperesthesia," *Empire of the Senses*, 282.

Howes, if the industrial capitalism of Marx's day, where workers found their senses under attack from the soot, crashes, and flames of the factory "seemingly depended on a stripping of the senses," while consumer capitalism is intent on "seducing the senses."[304] We can see how this seduction of the senses is at work in today's capitalist setting *par excellence*: the shopping centre. Today's commodity displays make use of sensory experience to persuade and seduce shoppers: encouraging tactile contact with garments, the use of artificial flavors in foods, and the artificial projection of scents into shopping environments are just a few strategies that Howes notes. Contemporary shopping experiences, which are founded on the marketing of commodities, increasingly put the client into a "state of hyperesthesia" through "multisensory marketing," Howes claims.[305] The contemporary condition of capitalism, in other words, is a multisensorial one where *display is no longer a visual matter* – but rather a multisensorial one. By the same token, edible commodities at artist's restaurants are put on display in a way that extends beyond the sense of sight, and captures the attention of the full body of the participant.

I argue that the display practices employed by contemporary artists to dramatize the edible commodity share certain visual and intersensorial qualities with the strategies of representation used by artists working in the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch still life's representations of imported goods, Northern European market stall images, and Dutch breakfast pieces. Therefore, this chapter deals with artist's restaurants as sites that unite commodities and still life in a performative setting in order to highlight questions of identity. I will categorize and frame such practices according to three paradigmatic artistic strategies: staging or upsetting scenes and actions of cookery; highlighting the

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[304] *Ibid.*, 289.
[305] *Ibid.*, 288.

role of desire and the sensorial body of the visitor; and representing or reconfiguring traditional cuisines. The category of food as a social construct is differently manipulated by each artwork discussed in this chapter.

First, I examine artworks that display food to signify ethnic identity, or to present hybrid identities. Rirkrit Tiravanija's projects, such as *Untitled 1992 (Free),* first presented at New York City's Gallery 303, achieved the former objective by serving Thai "national dishes," including *pad thai* and curry, to gallery-goers through informal service. Karen Tam's series of restaurant installations *Golden Mountain Restaurants* (2002-), which she has presented in galleries and artist-run centres in Europe and North America, were a pastiche of typical Chinese Canadian restaurant interiors and kitchens – but these sites served a mixture of donated foods provided by the surrounding community, and there was no requirement that the foods on offer be Chinese in origin. The menu often included soft drinks, pie, and other items that do not have strong ties to ethnic Chinese cooking.

Second, I turn to cases where artists have established restaurants to entangle and confuse relationships between food commodities and their ties to colonialism and food service: Carsten Höller's *The Double Club* (2008, London) and Peter Morin's *Team Diversity: World's Largest Bannock Attempt* (2005, Vancouver). *The Double Club* imported edible commodities from the Congo and marketed and sold them to London's Congolese diaspora as well as to a broader public through a hybrid restaurant-nightclub-bar site. Morin's one-time-only feast, hosted in a public park, served free, freshly fried bannock to the public in order to draw media attention to contested natural resource extraction on Tahltan Nation land.

Third, I discuss projects where artists use food to dramatize social class: Daniel Spoerri's *Un coup de dés* (1968, 2010, Düsseldorf) and Dean Baldwin's The *Dork Porch* (2010, Toronto). These two restaurants interceded in the flow of commodities in order to contest the associations between foodstuffs and class-based identity. Spoerri's event demanded that participants adopt temporary roles as "rich" or "poor" persons, and consume foods associated with their performed class. Baldwin opened a roughly constructed restaurant resembling a middle-class porch inside the Art Gallery of Ontario, and had wait staff serve food from the host institution's adjoining deluxe restaurant named FRANK, which aspires to offer an elite dining experience.

Edible Commodities as Social Symbols

Foods carry highly malleable symbolic, social meanings. The structures that determine which objects are interpreted as non-food and which as food are variable according to the identity of the interpreter. Similarly, situation and interpretation determine the status of an object as commodity or non-commodity.

As a key thinker in structural anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss's impact with respect to food practices has been immense – and his ideas provide a theoretical framework for considering the intersections of food commodity production, the categorization of food, and identity. His frequently cited essay "The Culinary Triangle" identifies three food categories: raw, rotten, and cooked. His text argues that food reveals to us the potential mutability of social symbols: his food-categories are what he considers "empty" positions that can be filled differently according to subjective and cultural conditions.

Lévi-Strauss writes that the raw is an "unmarked pole" while cooked and rotted are "strongly marked."[306] Natural alteration (nature) brings about the rotted, and human alteration (culture) causes the cooked. Editors of the periodical *Collapse* Robin Mackay and Reza Negarestani have said that Lévi-Strauss's theories reveal that, "we eat not just physical food, but also symbols."[307] The culinary triangle that Lévi-Strauss outlines is meant to show that through food's material properties and the plastic and chemical manipulation of them, the symbolic value of food can shift, and in this way please, repel, or shock its creators and recipients. But at that same time, through an act of perception rather than actual cooking or physical change, raw can become cooked, cooked can become rotten.

In light of Lévi-Strauss' theories about the cultural transformation of foodstuffs and objects in general from a raw (pre-cultural) to a cooked (cultural) state, we can say that the so-called raw goods used in conventional commercial kitchens are not "raw" at all, but are actually deeply cultured items that have gone through multiple shifts in physical form and connotation before reaching the site where they are served: the restaurant. Raw foods are, culturally speaking, "cooked" from the moment they are planted, farmed and harvested – and possibly from even the moment a human conceives of them as edible. The literal act of cooking that takes place in restaurant kitchens is but one of many transformations caused by human activity that such goods go through. Human labor "cooks" the raw. The process of labor investment into commodities begins

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306 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," *Food and Culture: A Reader*, P. Brooks, trans. C.M. Counihan and P. Van Esterik, eds. New York: Routledge (First published 1966, Routledge edition 2008): 37.
307 Mackay and Negarestani, "Editorial Introduction," *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, Vol. 5. Falmouth: Ubranomic (2011): 3-37.

from the first moment a seed is germinated under human supervision, which are among the first moments of "cooking." In this way we can say that in capitalist settings, "cooking" is a process often closely aligned with commoditization.

The diverse processes that bring about and transform commodities are of interest to many contemporary artists working in the realms of restaurants and food creation. Much as Lévi-Strauss' theories encourage us to take a broader, longer-spanning view of the "cooking" of cultured objects, in this chapter I will analyze the lifespan and network of key commodities used in several of my case studies. My objective is to explore how at these restaurant sites commodities are altered in order to concurrently transform the perception and enactment of identities.

In the developed world of the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries, the conditions and labor behind the production of food commodities have often remained complete mysteries to the eventual consumers of said products.[308] Something fundamental about this situation has started to change in recent years: many consumers now expect producers to shed more light on the stories – the biographies – of the food they consume. Trends such as fair trade, the local food movement, and the Slow Food Movement are outcomes of, and influences on, the growing desire some consumers have for producers to openly state the sources and production of commodities. These trends demand that every act of "cooking" in a commodity's lifespan be scrutinized.[309] The origin and ethics

[308] There are exceptions to this general trend, however, including agricultural communities and other forms of settlement that harvest their food directly from the land, and various nomadic groups that are deeply aware of the processes involved in such food sources.

[309] The recent United States of America's government ballot initiative "Prop 37," which proposes to require that food companies put labels on food that has genetically engineered ingredients, is a indication that in North America the question of transparency

of food production now more than ever are factors in determining what consumers desire, and in turn, what they buy and eat. The artists' restaurants discussed in this chapter aspired to shed light on the frequently shadowy category of commodities, and how commodities relate to identities.

Extracted Commodities: Revealing Social Relations

Before analyzing these artworks it is crucial to identify particular models by which to characterize the commodity. Numerous authors have theorized what commodities are, how they function, and what they tell us about the cultures that produce and consume them. I begin with the fundamental theory of commodities provided by Karl Marx, then address the innovative research of cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who considers commodities as objects defined by their situation rather than their material properties, and finally address a Baudelairean understanding of the emotional experience of encountering commodities on display.

Marx is known for his subtle handling of the concept of the commodity and his interest in the non-material values it carries. In Volume One of *Capital* he writes, "A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."[310] The metaphysical character that Marx ascribes to the commodity in this passage has to do with how its exchange value reaches beyond its use value, and

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in food production is far from resolved. Stephanie Strom, "Genetic Changes to Food May Get Uniform Labeling," *New York Times*, January 31, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/01/business/food-companies-meet-to-weigh-federal-label-for-gene-engineered-ingredients.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 . Site accessed April 24, 2013.

[310] Karl Marx, "Chapter 1, Part 4," *Capital. Vol. 1*, London: Penguin Books. Ben Fowkes, trans. (First published Penguin edition first published 1976, Reprinted 1990): 163.

how the processes of production and labor involved in creating the commodity remain out of the consumer's view and understanding. A plastic vessel of corn oil produced in a capitalist setting, for instance, appears to the consumer on the shelf of a grocery store where it is purchased seemingly out of nowhere; the site and source of its harvesting, production, and packaging remain unknown to its potential buyer, as do the individual persons involved in its creation. Marx would point out that the sale price of this commodity is equally mysterious and determined by market forces that the consumer usually has little or no understanding of, and this price is not seen in direct relationship to the actual labor and resources that went into creating the commodity in question.[311] The consumer is alienated from the circumstances of production behind the commodity. Therefore, in capitalism, through the commodity, social relations are treated as relations between things; the outcome is that human labor is dehumanized and turned into simply another object to be traded.

Other authors question such stable views of the commodity category. Appadurai offers this variety of critique. He discusses commodities as "things in a certain situation"[312] rather than a stable category of things in themselves, which has influenced my own approach to the goods, services, identities, and social relations that are exchanged through my chosen artworks. From his position, "commodities, like persons, have social lives."[313] Following his ideas, if we can determine the flow of objects that human subjects imbue with exchange value, this will in turn reveal a great deal to us

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[311] This estrangement between labour and the sale price of commodities is further exaggerated in North America, where corn is a heavily government subsidized crop.
[312] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* Arjun Appadurai ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1986): 13.
[313] *Ibid.,* 3.

about the politics of those situations and people. Appadurai also introduces his theory of "commodity phase."[314] Commodity phases are determined by the shifting situations of commodities, which can be both economic and material in nature. Corn oil, for instance, can go through several commodity phases. First, its antecedent form of corn has a commodity phase as a raw resource. Second, once the oil is extracted and packaged as Mazola it takes on a life as a branded food commodity. Third, this commodity is used as an ingredient in other food commodities, including those used in restaurants, which introduces the corn oil as one component among many making up an edible commodity. But there are other phases this commodity can enter into: if this corn oil goes rancid, it might seem to have lost its exchange value and therefore lost its commodity value, but in fact it may enter into a fourth commodity phase, where it is sold as a combustible fuel source. Spurse's *The Public Table*, discussed in the previous chapter, retrieved waste-objects and brought them back into circulation, and a new phase of their functional lifespan. Similarly, the artists addressed in the remainder of this thesis in many cases augment value to commodities they have acquired, or otherwise introduce commodities into a new phase of their lifespan. Artists accomplish this shift in commodity phase by abducting commodities from circulation in the mainstream economy, or they halt the commodity value of the objects they include in their artworks by giving them away for free.

The edible commodity is unique in that it is put on display for the diner to enjoy through sight (and through smell) before it is enjoyed through eating. The architecture of

[314] *Ibid.,* 13. Appadurai's chosen example is a postage stamp, which might only function as a commodity until it is purchased, and placed on an envelope; cancellation terminates this object's commodity status. Stamp collectors, however, give a second life to these objects, and initiate a separate phase of their biography as commodities.

many restaurants is carefully designed to allow passers-by to visually encounter foods from street level, and because of this these sites have a great deal in common with shop windows that display commodities. French author Charles Baudelaire has offered an influential reflection on nineteenth-century shop windows. Paul Wood notes that while Marx investigated the economic conditions behind the commodity, Baudelaire "tried to grasp the experience of it."[315] Wood explains that from Baudelaire's point of view, commodity objects "took on characters of their own: as when a group of luxury objects arranged in a shop window along one of Haussmann's new boulevards murmur among themselves and mock the inability of a poor passerby to purchase them."[316] Those who view restaurants through the window-glass are similarly enticed to consume, ingest – or dream of ingesting – the edible commodities put on display on tables before diners, while also feeling mocked by the edible commodities just out of reach. Edible commodities nurture appetite and covetousness through display.

Northern European Still Life and the Depiction of Commodities

The previous chapter approached the rhetorical nature of Northern European sixteenth- and seventeenth-century still life images in comparison with the aesthetics and rhetorical properties of food put on display in two artist's restaurants. In this chapter I return to some of these subgenres – *pronk* and breakfast pieces – but in this case I do so in order to analyze the category of the commodity. Here, a discussion of the exchange

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[315] Paul Wood, "Commodity," *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. R. Nelson and R. Shiff Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1996): 391.
[316] *Ibid.*

value, marketplace, geographies, identities, and notions of place that are implicit in these still life subgenres can serve to illuminate artist's restaurants.

Pronk still lifes show luxurious commodities including nautilus cups, silver trays, peeled lemons, and oysters. (fig. 25) Market stall images depict merchants purveying cabbages, cherries, fish, and other food commodities. (fig. 26) Breakfast pieces are often spare, humble compositions of bread, herring, and other staple commodities such as beer. (fig. 27) A fundamental question frequently addressed by art historians in relation to these three subgenres of still life is what these combinations of objects was intended to signify.

Breakfast pieces showing frugal meals might at first blush appear to have no particular ideological or political value; they seem to only show an average working class meal in Northern Europe in the seventeenth century. Yet the selection of foods for a breakfast piece does reflect particular values. Julie Berger Hochstrasser points out that many breakfast pieces show goods produced in the region where the painting itself was created.[317] Breakfast pieces celebrated the local diet, and exhibited pride in the food commodities produced by Dutch hands – although in these still lifes, the labor situation and system of production that created these commodities is entirely out of view. Artist's restaurants frequently have a similar interest in reflecting and *revealing* local or regional food cultures, often with the objective of putting audiences in touch with and displaying the artist's pride or skepticism concerning apparently ethnically authentic foods.

Pronk still lifes are often opulent displays of material wealth and commodities from distant lands. Critic and art historian Hal Foster's explanation for the seemingly

[317] Hochstrasser, 2.

hodgepodge collection of goods apparent in many sumptuous or *pronk* still lifes of the seventeenth century is that, "diverse objects can be brought together in these paintings because they are *already* brought together not so much in the domestic space as on the marketplace – they already exist to be exchanged, collected, consumed."[318] Foster believes that the goods in *pronk* still lifes are depicted together because they were in common as commodities in the vibrant new economy of seventeenth-century Northern Europe - and Marx had posited that the first appearance of capital took place in seventeenth-century Holland, which coincided with the emergence of commodities.[319] The notion of "commodity fetishism," whereby "social relations take on the character of object relations and commodities assume the active agency of people,"[320] implies that consumers develop an emotional relationship with the commodity object, while objectifying and trivializing the human labor that has gone into said commodity. Foster's observations can be applied to the performative still life manifested at artist's restaurants: these sites, much like many still life images, bring together diverse goods from distant places, while often, commodities displayed in artist's restaurants can become fetishes to the extent that they stand in for and conceal social and economic relationships.

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[318] Hal Foster, "The Art of Fetishism: Notes on Dutch Still Life," *Fetish, The Princeton Architectural Journal*, No. 4. Sarah Whiting, Edward Mitchell, Greg Lynn, eds. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. (1992): 12.

[319] Hochstrasser summarizes that Marx puts great stress on how resource extraction from the colonies undertaken by European powers played a decisive role in the development of capitalism. She quotes Marx: "The colonial system ripened, like a hot-house, trade and navigation … The colonies secured a market for the budding manufactures, and, through the monopoly of the market, an increased accumulation. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement, and murder, floated back to the mother-country and were there turned into capital." Hochstrasser, 244.

[320] Foster, 7.

Sixteenth-century market scenes produced in Northern Europe also provide a useful reference point for the commodities on display in contemporary artist's restaurants because both types of artwork equally display a set of social relations surrounding commodity exchanges. Market stall images were produced in Antwerp at the same moment that capitalism was beginning to emerge in Europe, and therefore at the moment when the commodity category was also coming into being. Art historian Elizabeth Honig investigates the social systems that such images reflected, and specifically how these paintings might have influenced the populace's attitudes about the role of merchants and artists in purveying commodities. As Honig explains, these economic changes introduced a new series of social relations and moral attitudes in the region; commodities became things desired, and troubled emblems for economic value.[321] Early in the century the merchant's role was to deliver goods to communities - not for financial gain but as a service. Eventually, however, profit became an acceptable end for merchants to pursue.[322] This in turn altered many social relations, particularly between merchants and customers. *Fish Market* (1618/20), co-painted by Frans Snyders and Anthony Van Dyck, offers an example of the type of market stall image that attracts Honig's attention (fig. 28). It shows a consumer disputing the value of seafood peddled by a merchant. [323] Honig believes that artist's representations of market scenes, being prototypical forms of still life, served to "mediate the market itself" for viewers and reflect but also influence social

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[321] Honig, *Painting & the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press. (1998): ix.
[322] *Ibid.*, 9.
[323] Here the merchant is portrayed as a deceptive character that overvalues the vast array of edible sea creatures he displays. The moral message of the image appears to be *caveat emptor*, "buyer beware," a cautionary tale delivered through depiction that would have helped viewers negotiate and understand new market relations between consumer and merchant.

relations between buyers and sellers of the period.[324] Also, while artists were positively depicting the morality of the merchant's pursuit of profits, through painting itself they were also arguing for the morality of *artists themselves* pursuing profits. She writes,

> through [artists'] deceptive artifice, a discourse could be created that would have the potential to bridge the gap between old ideals and new realities, providing a form of meta-representation with which exchanges could be enacted and, eventually, comprehended.[325]

Artists, Honig maintains, introduced viewers to new ideas about how early capitalism would function, and what type of social relations it would involve, and they did so through an important subgenre of still life. This view of sixteenth-century market stall images is useful in considering how contemporary artists use food, via performative still lifes, to mediate social relations in order to bring social and political situations to light, as well as to declare their own role as artists in offering a service to the community, and the virtue of the actions they carry out. As with market stall images, artist's restaurants – like *The Public Table* and *État d'urgence* as discussed earlier – frequently claim to enact morality through displaying edible commodities in controlled circumstances of display.

Still life subgenres like market stall images display and isolate commodity objects for the viewer's attention in order to reveal – or sometimes obfuscate – social relations occurring around diverse commodities.

Food and Identity

[324] Honig, 13.
[325] Ibid.

The well-rehearsed adage "you are what you eat," more poetically expressed by French gastronome Brillat-Savarin as "tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are,"[326] neatly condenses a perceived relationship between group and individual identity and comestibles as mediated by gustatory taste. Brillat-Savarin's phrase suggests that food preferences can be taken as a synecdoche for a lifestyle, perhaps even a genetic makeup, and therefore can be simplified as "typical of" or expressive for certain groups of people. This adage sums up a facile view of the relationship between food and ethnicity often reflected in popular cookbooks and ethnographic studies that identify regional specialties and rites of food preparation and dining, while aligning these with regional identities.[327] Unlike Brillat-Savarin's promise that a dietary summary will reveal a clear understanding of identity, many of the artworks discussed in this chapter present edible commodities to deliver tangled messages concerning identity.

Food has been theorized as having semiotic values associated with ethnicity – in fact, a major thrust in food research in curatorial, sociological, ethnographic and anthropological studies focuses on food's capacity to carry symbolic value related to identity.[328] Post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, however, contests the ability of food

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[326] Brillat-Savarin quoted in Kelly, 44.

[327] Just a few examples of this include: Lisa Heldke's "But is it Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the "Genuine Article"," *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed. Oxford; New York: Berg (2005): 385-394; Stephen Mennell's *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (1985): 6-10; Elizabeth David's *French Provincial Cooking,* London: Penguin Books. First published by Michael Joseph (1960) Reprinted 1970; Arjun Appadurai's "Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 8, No. 3. (August 1981): 494-511.

[328] A small selection of relevant titles includes: Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* (Vol. 101, No 1, 1972): 61-81. Reprinted in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*, 249-275. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge

to be a clear marker of ethnicity, or clear tool of communication relative to social identity. Bhabha's chapter "By bread alone: signs of violence in the mid-nineteenth-century" in his book *The Location of Culture* describes the conditions by which edible objects – chapattis, a type of quick bread popular in India – became a spark for mutiny in nineteenth-century British-colonized India. Bhabha describes the ability of food to act as a contagion holding "the agency of politics."[329] His account of the role of circulating chapattis in antagonizing political conflict between imperial British military, their incumbent Indian sepoys, and the colonized population is instrumental in my understanding of the semiotic potential of foodstuffs. The chapatti was no simple signifier of Indian ethnic identity. From the perspective of some colonized, it was seen as a foreign pathogen, and a signal that flour supplies had become contaminated by bone meal. Some British suspected the chapatti was a flare symptomatic of an immanent revolution. In this food Bhabha observes an "infectious ambivalence, an 'abyssal overlapping', of too much meaning and a certain meaninglessness."[330]

Bhabha's overall argument is that "terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affinitive, are produced performatively."[331] He considers the social channels that chapattis were traded through and the multiple readings that this food inspired, summarized by his key term of *hybridity*. The hybrid is on the borders and

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University Press. (1982): 17-29; David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Consuming Geographies*: *We are Where We Eat*, London; New York: Routledge (1997); Barbara Fischer, ed. *Foodculture: tasting identities and geographies in art*. Toronto: YYZ Books. (1999); Stephen Mennell and Anne Murcott, Anneke H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture*, London: SAGE Publications. (1992).

[329] Homi K. Bhabha, "By bread alone: signs of violence in the mid-nineteenth century," *The Location of Culture,* New York: Routledge (2004): 290.

[330] *Ibid.*

[331] *Ibid.*, 3.

resistant to categorization, and gives the human subject options for political agency by blending elements from dominant and subaltern cultures or classes. Instead of turning to foodstuffs as articulations of singular national identity, Bhabha recognizes that this flatbread became a hybrid signal for competing views and ideas of nationhood and national identity in a politically uncertain situation. Similarly, in this section I will highlight how ethnically associated edible commodities can take on unexpected hybrid qualities according to the situation under which they are displayed and exchanged.

Luce Giard's introduction to Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking* refers to a "plural language of stratified histories," evident in food preparation techniques and actions.[332] While such remarks suggest food's uncertain meanings, she also addresses regional ways of eating, such as the nature of "traditional" French bread as a "basic 'cultural symbol,' a monument constantly restored in order to avert suffering and hunger."[333] She later states that bread and wine in France should be investigated for their "philosophical function," since a meal in France seems "unthinkable" without them.[334] Her use of the term "monument" is telling because it suggests that food relates, represents, and communicates a history that is shared and defining for a community, as if the memories of all its members could be condensed into one type of object.[335]

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[332] Luce Giard, and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking,* Timothy J. Tomasik, trans. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press (1998): 3.
[333] *Ibid.*
[334] *Ibid.,* 86.
[335] See Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, "The Nourishing Arts," *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik, eds., New York and London: Routledge (2008): 67-77.

French semiotician Roland Barthes proposes that national identity is linked to food preferences through a form of mythology. He believes that foods "necessarily imply a specific set of images, dreams, tastes, choices, and values" for their consumers, and that this language can in turn be understood by researchers.[336] To explain his method further, Barthes lays out the mythology of wine in France, whereby the nation imagines the commodity of wine "to be a possession which is its very own."[337] Barthes points out that wine is a "resilient totem" in France that "supports a varied mythology which does not trouble about contradictions."[338] Barthes is surely right to be suspicious of this uncomplicated narrative of French culture and identity that wine appears to encapsulate here, since even the concept of locality often cited as a defining feature of French wine, *terroir*, is only a concept that can adequately summarize the relationship between a region (soil, air quality, humidity) and the grape it produces – but not the individual identities of the people who consume and produce the wine. Although as Barthes hints, concepts like *terroir* have been invoked to simultaneously express an essential connection between regional/national identities, such paradigms fall short of accurately representing the diverse human identities that create, ingest, and appreciate the *terroir*-commodity itself.

The theories put forward by these two authors imply that for diasporic communities, food commodities have a peculiar ability to stir emotion and memories of home, and to act as a mooring for individuals put into unfamiliar circumstance. In the

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[336] Roland Barthes, "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik, eds., New York and London: Routledge (First published 1961, this edition 2008): 28.
[337] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* Trans. Jonathan Cape Ltd. Toronto: Harper Collins Canada Ltd. (First published 1972, Translated 1972): 58.
[338] *Ibid.*

next section, I will discuss two examples of art practices that work with the display, service, and consumption of food to make different arguments about ethnic identity's relationship to food. Rirkrit Tiravanija's ad-hoc dining and cooking installations offer free servings of ethnic Thai food to gallery visitors. Karen Tam's architectural recreations of prototypical Chinese Canadian restaurant interiors are collages of commodities the artist receives from the local public, who are invited to bring any food they would like to share.

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Argentinean-born Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija has created and served food in teahouses, supermarkets, street stalls, gallery offices, museum galleries, and at the side of roads. A pivotal work for the artist in this body of work was the 1992 piece *Untitled 1992 (Free)* (fig. 29), for which he moved the entire contents of the offices of commercial dealer Gallery 303 into its exhibitions area, and converted the offices into a food service site. Vessels, cooking equipment, and utensils used during *Untitled 1992 (Free)* were left on display in the space as a record of the dining experiences that took place there. Visitors were invited to relax, converse, and share in the meal made by the artist. By inviting visitors to socialize and effectively loiter in the gallery, to a certain extent Tiravanija repurposed the commercial setting of Gallery 303 as a free service site that in some ways seemed to be entirely de-commoditized. I will call this assumption into question and point out ways that this practice involved edible commodities, and how it commoditized national identity through food service.

Because he presents Thai cuisine to visitors, Tiravanija's work can be understood in relationship to questions of identity. Beyond simple conviviality, since the food served at *Untitled 1992 (Free)* was traditional Thai curry, a dish that serves as a "resilient totem" of Thai food culture, this piece could also be considered as an artist's self-portrait.[339] Some authors seem to suggest that by serving green curry and pad thai, the artist is also serving forth his ethnic identity.[340] Tiravanija's work also offers some participants a type of food tourism experience, though others may experience the meal as a marker of their own ethnic identity.

During *Untitled 1992 (Free)* Tiravanija served two kinds of green curry in the space: one was cooked by the method used by New York-based Thai restaurants; the other "was an authentically made Thai curry," as the artist describes it. Tiravanija relies on an understanding of this food's indelible link to Thai identity, taking stock in what Barthes calls food's facility to be a "resilient totem" of identity. Tiravanija continues, "I was working on the idea of food, but in a kind of anthropological and archeological way. It was a lot about, the layers of, taste and, otherness."[341] Since Tiravanija is of Thai descent, if this work follows an anthropological method, it appears to be one of auto-

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[339] Another artist who has used curry as a marker of ethnic identity in her art practice is Elaine Tin Nyo. Her *Egg Curry* (1997) is a cooking and food service performance where the artist fashions a curry in the style her mother taught her, while narrating events from her upbringing. See Barbara Fischer, ed. *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 1999).

[340] For one example of this apparent connection between the cultures of South East Asia, identity, and the artist's practice, see Yvane Chapuis, "Rirkrit Tiravanija: the space of unconditional action," Parachute, No. 101, (January-March 2001): 14 -25. Weil also makes rather spurious observations about the food practices of Buddhist monks in relation to the artist's work.

[341] (sic) From an audio program excerpt featuring Rirkrit Tiravanija and MoMA director Glenn Lowry. "MoMA: The Collection: Rirkrit Tiravanija. untitled 1992/1995 (free/still)," http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=147206 . Site accessed February 28, 2013.

anthropology or auto-ethnography. *Untitled 1992 (Free)* enacted and displayed Tiravanija's understanding of Thai cuisine versus New York inflections of Thai cuisine by staging the identity-value of food - what Giard refers to as food's value as a "basic cultural symbol."

Critiquing interpretations of food culture that see food in a stable relationship to identity, art historian Deborah Root's "Global Delicatessen" questions how food commodities relate to identity-formation. Root's essay is focused on the commoditization of cultural tourism at work in a mass-produced brand of convenience foods made by manufacturer President's Choice. These packaged foods, named *Memories of Bangkok, Memories of Singapore*, and so on, play out the illusion of regional food's abilities to forge solid identities, but also give the false impression of contributing to a vaguely defined democratic project, she argues. The ready availability of "ethnic" foods from around the world "at first glance […] appears to erase a certain pretension – the notion that one must actually travel around the world to achieve culinary knowledge."[342] She dismisses the suggestion of accessibility and democracy implied in these products as illusory. Root's perspective implies that we should approach food-authenticity with skepticism, particularly when the food in question is presented as a branded, packaged commodity.

Following this theme, although the goals of Tiravanija's practice are perhaps different from those of *President's Choice* foods, the potential outcomes of his practice are quite similar when it comes to depicting ethnic identity through food. Tiravanija's food service work, like *President's Choice* foods, suggests that there is a singular,

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[342] Deborah Root, "Global Delicatessen," *Foodculture: tasting identities and geographies in art*, Barbara Fischer, ed., Toronto: YYZ Books (1999): 142.

authentic method for producing Thai curry – an assertion difficult to maintain since Thailand is a country of over 70 million people that has widely divergent available produce, herbs, and spices by region. Related to this, there is another illusion at work in *President's Choice* products, and one that Root does not significantly explore: food commodities of this kind imply the packaging of exotic perceptions of various cities as collective memories, suggesting that an entire culture can be understood via its food, as encapsulated by one regional specialty. Spicy Soya Sesame Sauce is *the* memory of Bangkok in the instance of *President's Choice* products. Also, these *Memories* are manufactured commodities meant to evoke an imagined experience of particular cities in Asia. Similarly, if Tiravanija claims to be performing a form of anthropology (or auto-ethnography) through cooking, the audience is presumably meant to believe that *Untitled 1992 (Free)* is an authentic representation of Thai food and Thai culture. Root's argument reminds us that Tiravanija's food events are themselves a form of commodity, one that is sometimes framed as summarizing an exotic, authentic encounter with Asia – and yet those who dine on Tiravanija's curry encounter but one (or two) versions of the dish.

Tiravanija's practice stages an illusion of democratization, by allowing "all people" to enjoy his free food gift. This edible artwork site might seem an entirely open structure that invites anyone and everyone to dine, but this conclusion too should be questioned. Gallery 303, like museums and other commercial galleries, (and restaurants) is a private space where some people can be refused entry, and not a democratic abstraction like "the commons." Because it was a place where certain social relations between particular classes were encouraged, Tiravanija's temporary restaurant can be considered in relation to market stall images, which Honig argues mediated social

relations between merchants and members of the public who could afford to purchase their wares. In their exclusivity, Tiravanija's meals at this site were in keeping with the history of the proto-restaurant, since as outlined in Chapter Four, these food service sites also had strong socially driven filters dictating who would and could enter.[343] Despite this connection with class-segregated sites like proto-restaurants, some authors praise Tiravanija's food service sites as being social equalizers that invite people of all backgrounds, incomes, and persuasions to dine on free food. Curator Alexandre Melo claims that,

> Tiravanija's work is one of the rare examples of an intervention that effectively breaks down the barriers isolating the small audience in the art circuit. Tiravanija's food is available to anyone who turns up. In this way, he also dismantles the elitist model of the meal of the initiates as a form that reproduces the special social position of artists as a group.[344]

Melo's certainty that Tiravanija's work rejects elitism and is boundlessly generous to any person "who turns up" should be interrogated according to the special relationship that museums and galleries have with the "anyone" – "the public" – Melo refers to. As established earlier in this thesis, "the public" is a rhetorical device that can be instrumentalized toward many purposes. Those who attend Tiravanija's events, by Melo's logic, are inherently members of the category "anyone," overlooking the many people who *do not attend* as outside the category of "anyone" and therefore outside of the category of "the public." Clearly, there are filters that determine who is made aware of Tiravanija's practice (through education, media, and so on) and thus who experiences his generous gift of food. Also, institutions that host his projects frequently charge

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[343] Spang, 72.
[344] Alexandre Melo, "Guess who's coming to dinner," *Parkett*, No. 44 (1995): 105.

admission; those who cannot pay admission cannot receive the "free" meal of the artist. Nonetheless, it is advantageous to the artist's practice that his work rhetorically appear to be open to "the public" in order to rationalize connections between his food service sites and the goals of the democratic project. As explored earlier in this thesis, this rationale is closely connected with the history of the modern restaurant, which has frequently been braided into the narrative of the French Revolution and its establishment of keystone characteristics of modern democracy.

Tiravanija's latest version of the piece, now titled *Untitled (Free/Still)* (2011-2012), was acquired and exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2012 – revealing that the artist's act of food generosity is certainly one that can be commoditized and purchased.[345] Its new title alludes both to the connection this piece has to the genre of still life and to the perennial promise of free food. Nonetheless, for most audience members there are costs involved in experiencing the piece: as of 2013 admission fees for entry into the museum are $25 USD for adults, $18 USD for seniors, and $14 USD for students. With the exception of Friday evenings between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m., when the MoMA grants free admission to visitors, Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free/Still)* will in fact *not* be free at all whenever it is exhibited there. No free gift, *Untitled (Free/Still)* is in fact an edible commodity with a price tag that admits only individuals with the ready money to pay admission.

Emma Allen describes the clientele for the piece at the MoMA when she attended in 2012:

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[345] In this new version of the work, MoMA employees serve Tiravanija's food – vegetarian green curry – to visitors. Strict fire regulations prohibit the service of food in the MoMA's galleries, and so when *Untitled (Free/Still)* is exhibited, curry is prepared in the kitchen of the museum's cafeteria and then brought to the gallery space.

> it was a room filled with European tourists and other museum-going types, who spoke in hushed tones and photographed one another with smartphones as they downed their curry […] All in all, it was like a sacred soup kitchen for the middle-to-upper classes.[346]

Allen's report of the demographics that attended the MoMA installation quite complicates Melo's hopeful observation that "Tiravanija's food is available to anyone who turns up." Obviously there are systemic reasons that keep many people from visiting the MoMA and therefore prevent the blend of demographics that Melo has in mind.

For other writers, Tiravanija's generosity has obscured other aesthetic details in his work. As reported by Benjamin Weil, "What seems important [with *Untitled 1992 (Free)*] is that there is no attempt to make any kind of aesthetic statement. The presentation of all the objects in the space is purely a matter of practicality."[347] Weil believes this practice overlooks aesthetics in favor of fostering "social interaction."[348] Weil, Allen, Saltz and Bourriaud choose to focus primarily on the social relations that occur during Tiravanija's meals, but we should also take into account the aesthetic and material properties at work in this practice alongside its ethnic associations.

It is important to stress that the heterogeneous accumulation of everyday objects in his Gallery 303 piece does not *reject* aesthetics. Rather it is a pastiche of many aesthetic qualities common to street stall food service sites – such as folding tables and stools, woks, gas burners, propane tanks, beer and soda pop. Tiravanija's installations use locally purchased mass-produced commodities common in North America to approximate the aesthetic of street-stall dining facilities such as those found in Thailand,

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[346] Emma Allen, "Curry up!" *ArtNews*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (March 2012): 97.
[347] Benjamin Weil, "Overture: Rirkrit Tiravanija," *Flash Art,* Vol. 26, No. 168, (Jan.-Feb. 1993): 79.
[348] *Ibid.*

which are particularly common on street corners in Bangkok. One set of objects particularly prevalent at Thai street stalls that also appears in this artist's work is a coal and/or gas fired burner mounted with a large steel pot (fig. 30). Tiravanija's decision to profile rather than conceal these cooking implements is an aesthetic decision that is intended to add to the authentic feeling of his temporary restaurant and the food it serves, and to evoke a regionally inflected type of food service site.

Untitled 1992 (Free)'s array of commodity-objects and edible commodities, which mimic aspects of food service sites in Thailand, also bear comparison with the Dutch market stall still life. *Untitled 1992 (Free),* like many still life paintings from the 1600s, included a collection of commodities that are readily available to the artist on the open market, such as spices, dried shrimp, and noodles. As in some historical still life images produced in Northern Europe in the seventeenth century, Tiravanija's food project presented commodity fetishes to the extent that the objects the artist used and displayed stand in for and conceal the human labor behind their production.

Foster theorizes how Dutch seventeenth-century still life images show fetishized commodities, and many of the images Foster examines include goods imported from Asia by the Dutch East India Company, or those decorated with Orientalist effect. He notes that these depictions stand in for something else that remains concealed: human labor. In a similar vein, Hochstrasser writes about depictions of desserts and delicacies in *pronk* still life that, "…the rarified atmosphere of Kalf's paintings is another world altogether, far removed from the sweat and blood of the sugarmills. Here all traces of labor are

banished…"[349] The human cost associated with these commodities, their processing, and shipment is not depicted in these images, but is nonetheless narratively implied.

In keeping with these concerns, Tiravanija's banquets present edible commodities associated with regions of Asia while concealing the human labor invested in the creation of each of the mass-produced commodities put on display. Instead, the viewer encounters the indexical marks left by Tiravanija's acts of cookery, a different form of labor: dirty dishes, dried up noodles, shrimp paste, and discarded Coca-Cola cans. The artist's decision to leave detritus on display shows very directly the traces of Tiravanija's labor, but conceals the human labor or social costs involved in the global circulation of commodities. Tiravanija's ingredients are, in truth, not chosen because they are *the most authentic* ingredients, but because they are the ingredients *made available* by the capitalist market.

Karen Tam

Many of Karen Tam's artworks involve the display of commoditized food, and her projects complicate the relationship between food commodities, regional identity, and architecture. The artist has created several installations of temporary restaurant interiors inside of galleries and museums. The spaces she builds are careful recreations of typical Canadian Chinese restaurants from the 1960s, including dining areas and kitchens. These projects, which currently are a dozen in number, all fall under the series title of *Golden Mountain Restaurants* (2002-present) (fig. 31).[350] Chinese food is not necessarily served

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[349] Hochstrasser, 199.
[350] Previous iterations of the project always include a second title, such as *Miss Chinatown Wassall* (2009, Walsall, United Kingdom), *On Rock Garden* (2008, AKA

in these spaces, but the *Golden Mountain Restaurants* always put on display many commodities and edible commodities with ethnic associations. Her *Golden Mountain Restaurant* spaces are decorated with mid-twentieth-century furnishings that might be called kitsch, which are provided by the surrounding community. Restaurants and former restaurant owners, local businesses and local community groups such as theatre troupes lend or donate items to Tam's cause. Décor that she has harvested to use in the series includes Bakelite wall clocks, bright green bamboo awnings, mass-produced wood and red paper lanterns, folding tables with faux-wood veneer, coral colored table cloths, large red and black painted wall murals of Chinese insignia, chrome upholstered chairs, custom made menus and placemats, and hundreds of other objects. When asked in interview about how this arrangement evolved, she replied,

> When I first started [the project] at the Khyber [Centre for the Arts, Halifax], I decided to give myself the challenge of going to the space with almost nothing. I got in touch with the local high schools, theatre companies, the local restaurants, and sometimes from retired restaurateurs. They like to bring more than one thing back from their restaurants as mementos. For current restaurants I remember it was hard to get stuff because what they have they are using. But we did have a few places that did provide tables and chairs. One of the oddest places I got stuff from in Lethbridge [for the exhibition at Southern Alberta Art Gallery] was from a bowling alley that went out of business.[351]

Although the artist does make aesthetic decisions in the process, because of Tam's harvesting-method, each iteration of her *Golden Mountain Restaurants* is a reflection of local conceptions of the aesthetics of Chinese Canadian restaurants, and of ethnic Chinese and Chinese Canadian identity.

Gallery, Saskatoon, Canada), and *China Doll* (2007, Centre A, Vancouver, Canada) among others.

[351] From a telephone interview with the author, February 26, 2013.

Tam considers her project to be a series of community centres that can be used for events initiated by any group. The site becomes a place for dancing, karaoke, conversation, and eating; she encourages people to bring whatever food they like to the space. Her open invitation has resulted in a wide variety of culinary offerings, including wasabi peas, Chinese crackers, almond cookies, chop suey, fried rice, ice cream, pie, and soda pop.[352] This mixed menu is in keeping with the types of food Canadian Chinese restaurants often did serve starting at least as early as the mid-twentieth century, where according to Tam one could find leg of lamb, apple pie, wontons and fried rice under one roof. The hybrid culture of this type of restaurant intrigues Tam because, as she says,

> they are the site of self-representation, misrepresentation, stereotypes and meeting - I don't want to say east and west - but different cultures and communities. [The Chinese Canadian restaurant] functions as a site of exotic imagination, which has in a way all the décor, all the visual cues. I bring [the viewer] to an imaginary place where they might not have been to before. For the owners, they are representing what they think the customer wants.[353]

Tam believes that the restaurant owner, who may or may not be of Chinese origin, selects particular décor in order to satisfy the visitor's desires and expectations of Asian culture and identity. Tam is experienced in such matters since her family operated a Chinese restaurant in Montreal during her childhood and adolescence.

The hybridity of Tam's project has important links with specific instances of the pictorial tradition of still life. The commodities and edible commodities included in

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[352] At *Orientally Yours* (2007), hosted by the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge) pie, ice cream, tea and soft drinks were served. Pie, tea, and coffee were served at *House of Wong: A Division of Gold Mountain Restaurant*, installed at Artcite Inc. (Windsor). During the food art festival *Orange* (St. Hyacinthe), Tam's restaurant space *Jardin Chow Chow Garden: A Division of Gold Mountain Restaurant* served shrimp chips, soya drinks, coffee, and soft drinks.

[353] From a telephone interview with the author, February 26, 2013.

Tam's project come together by the same rationale Foster considers to be the founding principle of Dutch seventeenth-century still life images; these objects are put on display in Tam's still life arrangement because they already have been brought into being through and circulate within a capitalist marketplace. They also come together because of aesthetic stereotypes associated with Asian identity, décor, and food service, which are determined by the donating locales that Tam accesses. Because of this, the *Golden Mountain Restaurant* bears comparison to the tradition of food service sites at world's fairs.

Focusing on the question of authenticity in relation to foods served at national pavilions at Expo '67, (Montreal's 1967 world's fair) architectural historian and food studies researcher Rhona Richman Kenneally claims that,

> at these pavilion restaurants, foods were selected, cooked, and served according to predetermined ideas about how they would best reflect and activate the culture of their origins. That is, carefully defined national cuisines were a central vehicle through which visitors to these pavilions could be introduced to – could actually ingest – these markers of national identity as an experience consistently described, by the authorities that generated them, as 'authentic.'[354]

Kenneally's text points out that Expo '67 – much like other world's fairs such as the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893) and the St. Louis World's Fair (1904) – presented national cuisines as coherent categories to be encountered and digested by audiences. But Kenneally problematizes the concept of authenticity, describing how each pavilion "projected a sanitized, idealized version of that country's heritage, aspirations,

[354] Rhona Richman Kenneally, "'The greatest Dining extravaganza in Canada's history': Food, Nationalism, and Authenticity at Expo 67," *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, Keneally and Johanne Sloan, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (2010): 28.

and hegemonic practices."[355]

Tam's restaurants quite deliberately recreate a "typical" – but also sanitized and idealized – Chinese-Canadian restaurant made up of an accumulation of commodity objects. In this way, *Golden Mountain Restaurants* are as much a sketch of imagined ethnic identity as those Kenneally gives attention to. But unlike the restaurants of Expo '67, which were focused on regional and national cuisines, Tam's restaurants directly refer to a much smaller local context – small towns and cities in Canada – since *the community she borrows from* to create these fake restaurants is very real. Tam's restaurants, like those of Expo '67, present an "idealized" narrative of Chinese Canadians in Canada – skirting any hints of Canada's troubled history with citizens who migrated from China, such as the exploitation of Chinese Canadians in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Food can be mobilized to encapsulate or question notions of national identity. Tiravanija's free food projects, which he describes as anthropological work, attempt to represent a national food culture in a de-commoditized setting. As has been revealed, his offerings are edible commodities that often do cost participants money, and in cases where they do not, class-specific filters (among others) determine who will ultimately taste his foods. Tam's fabricated restaurants repurpose forgotten, disused, or neglected commodities in order to create a prototypical, idealized Chinese Canadian restaurant. *Golden Mountain Restaurants* reveal the décor details – which included commodities – often associated with Chinese Canadian dining settings. In this case, the relationship between décor, cuisine and national identity was complicated since visitors can bring any

[355] *Ibid.*

type of food the like into the space.

Commodity Exchanges: The Double Club

The two artworks discussed in this section intervene in the display and flow of commodities in different ways, while in both cases they do so in order to raise political awareness about issues related to social identity and the legacy of colonialism.

The Double Club operated as a restaurant, bar, and nightclub for just over six months near the Angel tube station in the Islington area of London in 2008.[356] This artwork was commissioned by the Fondazione Prada and spearheaded by fashion designer Miuccia Prada herself.[357] Höller's club was "double" in the sense that it offered cuisine, architecture, and decorative details borrowed from Europe (French bistros, British nightclubs) and from restaurants and bars the artist visited as a tourist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[358] Primus beer branded plastic chairs and tables evoked the DR Congo, and designer tables by Reed Kram and Clemens Weisshaar who are jointly based in Munich, Germany and Stockholm, Sweden, connoted "the West." The Double Club had two menus: one purveying delicacies from the Congo, and the other providing a selection of Western European entrées. On offer from the Congo were

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[356] Angel is on the Northern line of the London Underground, one station to the east of King's Cross, a nodal point for transit to and from the city since it connects to the Eurostar train service to France and continental Europe through the Chunnel, and discount airline service to international destinations via Luton Airport. In 2008 Islington had a population of 188,460 people. http://data.london.gov.uk/datastorefiles/visualisations/atlas/ons-mye-2010-coc/atlas.html . Site accessed June 23, 2013.

[357] Initial plans for the project titled the work *The Prada Congo Club*. See Carsten Höller, *The Double Club: 20 November 2008 – 12 July 2009.* Milan: Progetto Prada Arte; Fondazione Prada (2011) n.p.

[358] The artist's photographic documentation of various aesthetic details he appropriated from sites in the DR Congo is can be seen in the publication *The Double Club: 20 November 2008 – 12 July 2009*.

fumbwa (yam leaves cooked in peanut paste with smoked salted fish) and goat skewers. Western dishes included poached Yorkshire rhubarb with stem ginger ice cream, and mini rump of beef burger. Different typefaces were used to distinguish these two categories of cuisine: the Congolese menu used a type in the `Courier` family, which resembles the typeface of a mid-twentieth-century typewriter; the western menu used a serif font similar to Times New Roman, a font often used in newspapers. These typographic selections imply that something anachronistic haunts the Congo's food-cultures, and that the comestibles associated with the West are somehow more refined and up to date. By maintaining separate menus but allowing diverse entrées from each menu to be ordered and to appear together at any given table, *The Double Club* hyperbolized the divide between the West and the Congo while also implying that cuisines develop and adapt through a process of fusion rather than fission.

The Double Club additionally contained a wall mural advertisement for Tembo, Primus and Turbo King beers, a ceramic tile work mural based on a 1928 drawing of a flying city by Russian architect Georgi Krutikow, and a large-scale hand painted reproduction of the painting *J'aime la Couleur* by artist Cheri Samba. It would seem that in Höller's restaurant, not only different national cultures, but also the values of corporate branding, avant-garde utopianism, and personal creativity were made to appear in each other's company.

To maintain a distinction through the remainder of this thesis and to dispense with quotation marks I will use the term Democratic Republic of the Congo or DR Congo and Europe to refer to the geopolitical sites this work draws from, and the Congo and the

West to refer to the various concepts and signs this restaurant parodies and hyperbolizes.[359]

In his article on Höller's piece, curator Daniel Birnbaum compares its bisected space to a "large cake" because of "the wedgelike divisions of the floor" that split the Congolese- and European-styled architecture and furnishings.[360] Birnbaum stresses that through these architectural decisions Höller's restaurant divided rather than united its chosen cultural references, being "hardly an attempt to create a unified crossover expression mixing African and Western cultural elements."[361] Defending his decision to divide the restaurant's architecture into culturally ghettoized segments, Höller has said, "I truly believe in the power of letting things stand next to each other with identical claim to importance"[362] An early design brief for the project, dating from 27 July 2007, explains this stance further:

> The main idea of the Prada Congo Club is to have a space which both divides and unites while avoiding the dilutions of the middle ground. It avoids mediocrity while keeping the balance between aesthetic extremes. […] It aims at being two things at the same time: to have a double identity […] It is a contest, and a dialogue, between two forms of music and style.[363]

These strains are echoed in other critical discussions of *The Double Club*. *Domus* reporter Francesca Picchi anticipated that *The Double Club* would "not only be a vibrant new public space in London but also an alliance of *two cultures* in real life that will facilitate

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[359] Between 1908 and 1960 Belgium asserted control of the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo as a colony, refered to by the title "The Belgian Congo."
[360] Birnbaum, 85.
[361] *Ibid.*
[362] Daniel Birnbaum, "Turning Tables: Daniel Birnbaum on Carsten Höller's Double Club," *Artforum*, Vol. 47, No. 8 (2009): 85.
[363] Höller, *The Double Club: 20 November 2008 – 12 July 2009.* n.p.

cross-pollination without any attempt of fusion."[364] Statements like Picchi's take it for granted that *two coherent cultures* were represented at Höller's restaurant – as if Western Europe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo both constitute homogenous cultural masses with uniform qualities that can be summed up by a collection of objects and images. But the compositional details of this work gave many signals that dualities of this kind – the construction of the Congo and the West – are ideological devices that simply serve to ghettoize places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other developing nations that are sites of violence related to their legacies as the former colonies of European powers. *The Double Club* parodied this divide between the West and the rest, and by so doing underlined the troubled history of the DR Congo relative to the international community, and to the internal conflicts and violence concurrently occurring in the region.

Adding to the complexity of this project, Höller's restaurant was also a philanthropic venture. According to its website, half of the profits from *The Double Club* went to City of Joy, a UNICEF organization that assists victims of rape in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Höller's Belgian background further electrifies this restaurant's involvement in philanthropic aid since the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a former Belgian colony. The relationship between the two countries has involved a long legacy of commodity exchange, including foods, but this situation has largely meant resource extraction from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, profiting Western Europe. Because of this, Höller's project and its support by a multinational

[364] Emphasis mine. Francesca Picchi, "The Double Club by Carsten Höller," *Domus*, Published November 27, 2008. http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/the-double-club-by-carsten-holler/ Site accessed December 5, 2012.

fashion house might be seen as an ameliorative gesture meant to make up for the ravages of European colonialism. Diners at this restaurant could be philanthropic through the purchase of commodities. This in turn vouchsafed Prada's reputation as a good corporate citizen – not to mention Höller's own reputation as a philanthropic artist.[365] Prada's public image no doubt benefited from *The Double Club's* fundraising initiatives, particularly in a moment when fashion houses and clothing manufacturers have been harshly criticized by news media for exploiting cheap labor in developing countries.[366] For some people, *The Double Club* was likely nothing more than another hip London venue for food, drink, and dancing, and indeed, events at the site were covered in society pages and fashion magazines, including *Pop Magazine* and *Vogue*.[367] Höller's message of advocacy for the DR Congo was apparently not always received as intended, and the frivolity and entertainment that occurred at this site necessarily are part of its life as a performative still life.

Fission Cooking

The Double Club replied to a twentieth-century cooking style called fusion

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[365] Numerous food blogs report on the food, philanthropy, and architecture of *The Double Club*. In my research I uncovered more sources in food journalism and on food blogs dealing with Höller's piece than in the domains of art journalism or art history. Notable entries are posted on the following sites:
http://www.kabulawayo.co.uk/2009/02/democratic-republic-of-congo-double.html
http://www.foodepedia.co.uk/restaurant-reviews/2009/mar/the_double_club.htm
[366] The most recent wave of scrutiny of the garment industry's use of factories in the developing world comes after a deadly fire in a Bangladesh clothing factory that supplied many European and North American brands. See Jim Yardley, "Horrific Fire Revealed Gap in Safety for Global Brands," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/07/world/asia/bangladesh-fire-exposes-safety-gap-in-supply-chain.html?pagewanted=all Site accessed January 27, 2013.
[367] See the column "Miss V: Prada Congo Benefit UNICEF Party," *Vogue*, October 2009. n.p.

cooking. As early as 1969 French chefs such as Paul Bocuse and Raymond Oliver sought to, among other objectives, refashion cooking methods and uses of ingredients so as to jettison the restrictive rules of *ancienne cuisine*. These chefs ushered in new food practices in restaurants located in France, Europe at large, and North America. Among these changes were the incorporation of food knowledge and practices of non-European nations, particularly Japan and the cultures of South-East Asia. The resulting blend of global cuisines has been referred to as fusion cuisine. In his book *Food: The History of Taste*, historian Paul Freedman writes that fusion manifests a "tendency towards artifice and innovation" achieved by blending "ingredients from different cultures, especially European dishes made with the addition of Asian or African spices and flavors (cream sauce with vanilla; lemon-grass infusions, hoisin sauce)."[368] Freedman's association of fusion with artifice is worth investigating further. He explains that artifice in fusion cooking "includes reversals of expectations: clashing ingredients, mixtures of plebian and elegant, alchemical transformations of ingredients."[369] From Freedman's vantage point, fusion cooking presents dishes that are lacking in authenticity to do with ethnic origin, and this artificiality is to the benefit rather than detriment of the diner's experience. In fusion, he seems to be arguing, artifice is in good taste.

By contrast, Höller's menus presented *fission* cooking. In the Western menu some examples of fusion cuisine can be observed – since some details from French bistro cuisine and English gastro-pub fare blended together. The *Stilton and leek tart* served at the *Club*, for instance, combined a classic British cheese with a vegetable long associated

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[368] Paul Freedman. ed. *Food: The History of Taste*. Berkley; Los Angeles: The University of California Press (2007): 29.
[369] *Ibid*.

with French cuisine. But cuisine from the Congo remained entirely *of itself* in Höller's restaurant. This attempt to keep Congolese cooking essential and distinct was stymied (or perhaps enriched) by the fact that Congolese cooking is not in stasis and is the product of long standing trade and conversation between the Congo and other cultures, and that Congolese cuisine, much like Congolese citizenship, is a category mutable, debatable, and unstable.

At *The Double Club* there was one other site where cultures of the Congo and the West did converge, blend and become deeply hybrid: the visitor's mouth. *The Double Club* was a site of fission cuisine where the most likely and feasible site for fusion was within the body of each visitor, and this interior is an interpretive location whose contours and sensitivities are difficult to detect. When the visitor's guts do the fusion, the interpretive results are both bewildering and powerful.

The Double Club overwhelmed the visitor with an array of diverse foods and beverages served in a carnivalesque setting, echoing the seductive properties of *pronk*. Through this setting, Höller hoped to cause audiences to reconsider the commodities produced by the Congo. However, there is a key export commodity produced in the DR Congo that was not represented or referred to at *The Double Club:* diamonds.[370] In the interest of protecting human rights, news media and forms of popular culture have in recent years increased awareness about the extraction of diamonds from the region and the related turmoil and violence that have attended the trade of these commodities.[371]

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[370] Other natural resources extracted from the Congo include coltan, the subject of A widely exhibited film produced by Steve McQueen titled *Gravesend* (2007). This artwork displays and aesthetisizes sites of coltan production and refinement.

[371] Jeffrey Gettleman, "The World's Worst War," *The New York Times*, December 15, 2012; Tristram Hunt, "Diamonds that spell death: Western commerce still feeds the war

Höller championed an alternative to this narrative about the DR Congo, one that revolves around the exportation of quite different highly valued commodities – food and drink commodities. Much as Honig argues that market stall scenes of the sixteenth century helped rationalize new forms of social relations occurring around marketplaces, Höller's restaurant tried to displace dominantly negative views often taken in developed countries about resource extraction from the Congo, and replaced these with sanguine, celebratory attitudes about the consumption of other Congolese edible commodities.

Commodity Exchanges:
Team Diversity: World's Largest Bannock Attempt

Team Diversity: World's Largest Bannock Attempt was a one-day performative meal event organized by Tahltan Nation artist Peter Morin, and held in the public park surrounding the Britannia Community Centre on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. During the event the artist and his volunteer assistants cooked bannock, a type of fried quick bread, and distributed it to the public free of charge. As the title suggests, Morin promoted the event as a Guinness Book of World Records attempt. The assembled team of chefs and assistants cooked ten massive pieces of five-foot long and two-foot wide bannock. The artist used the resulting media attention for this spectacle as an opportunity to speak out publicly concerning a political impasse in Telegraph Creek, British Columbia. The conflict was concentrated on the traditional territory of the Indigenous Tahltan Nation – a community Morin remains active in although he now lives in Victoria, British Columbia. As Morin explains,

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in Congo," *The Guardian*, Saturday August 30, 2003; n.a. "Africa's future: Hope, and doubt, south of the Sahara," *The Economist*, November 22, 2012.

> The traditional territory of the Tahltan Nation is the largest in BC. Up until this point they've had resource extraction going on in the territory for over 30 years, over 50 years if you include big game hunters coming in for sport. They had a chief who was signing all these exploratory deals with mining companies... so [the elders] decided to occupy [the band office] … I knew that if I made the world's largest bannock I would get some media coverage and I would be able to talk about what the elders were doing.[372]

Morin created this artwork in reply to a controversy surrounding the extraction of resources – to be transformed into commodities – from First Nations' land. Before Morin presented his project the Tahltan Central Council, which manages the affairs of the First Nation, had been in negotiations with Fortune Minerals to drill at the Mount Klappan coalfields, and NovaGold Resources who hoped to drill at nearby Galore Creek.[373] Both of these mine sites are on Tahltan Nation land. A group of elders disagreed with Chief P. Jerry Asp's position on negotiations with NovaGold and held a months-long sit-in at the band office in protest. Curator Lisa Myers further describes the details of this conflict in Telegraph Creek. She writes that,

> demanding a meeting with their chief, the Tahltan Elders demonstrated for over eight months contesting controversial band council decisions made without community consultation or environmental assessments for the development of resource extraction ventures.[374]

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[372] From a phone interview conducted between the author and Morin, October 2012.
[373] Tyler Allan McCreary, "Struggles of the Tahltan Nation," *Canadian Dimension*. November 1, 2005. http://canadiandimension.com/articles/1889/ . Site accessed March 27, 2013; Monte Paulsen, "A Gentle Revolution," *The Walrus*. December/January 2006. Site accessed March 27, 2013. This political conflict continued well beyond the date of Morin's event. In September of 2005 the RCMP arrested several protestors blocking Fortune Minerals from entering the coalfield site. Paulsen reveals that Galore Creek holds an "estimated 13 million ounces of gold, 156 million ounces of silver, and 12 billion pounds of copper."
[374] Lisa Myers, "Serving it Up: Recipes, Art, and Indigenous Perspectives," *Senses & Society: Sensory Aesthetics*, Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher, eds. Vol. 7, Issue 2 (July 2012): 185.

Myers goes on to explain that a central issue at stake for local communities in regards to these plans for resource extraction was the impact such acts would have on the harvesting of traditional foods from the local environment.

Bannock, a food often popularly considered a traditional food of First Nations peoples, was used in this artwork as a spark for a media event. In the publication *Bannockology*, compiled and edited by the artist after this banquet, bannock is described as "the ubiquitous bread that is a part of every First Nations social event, private or public."[375] Bannock, which is generally made domestically and from scratch, may be described the extreme opposite of one archetypal food commodity: brand name sliced white bread, such as Wonderbread, available in supermarket chains. All this to say that bannock may seem an entirely un-commoditized foodstuff. But Morin used bannock as a point of leverage for a discussion about the creation and circulation of commodities.

Morin advantageously used bannock to underscore the fundamental rights of the Tahltan people to their territory and its resources.[376] Through this artwork, bannock became a broad marker of First Nations' cultural sovereignty and cultural singularity. On a different level, however, this public meal promoted some multicultural ideals,

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[375] Peter Morin, *Bannockology* (2009), listed on the Open Space "Publications" page. http://www.openspace.ca/web/publications.php . Site accessed January 25, 2013.

[376] For an example of other ties made between bannock and First Nations' rights, see Tony Hall, "Blockades and Bannock: Aboriginal Protests and Politics in Northern Ontario, 1980-1990," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Autumn 1991): 58-77. An official Canadian government "Native food guide" lists "bannock, bread and cereal" as one of the four food groups. See Michael P. Milburn, "Indigenous Nutrition: Using Traditional Knowledge to Solve Contemporary Health Problems," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 and 4 (Summer and Fall 2004): 429. In a 2010 study titled "Feeding the family during times of stress: experience and determinants of food insecurity in an Inuit community," a respondent from Igloolik, Nunavut, explained that bannock is a food frequently consumed in times of financial stress. See James D. For and Maude Beaumier, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 177, Issue 1 (March 2011): 44-61.

specifically the idea that in a country like Canada cultural groups can retain their distinct traditions but also benefit from the other cultures that surround them. These attitudes are not unlike those doctrines that the Canadian government has promoted as a national policy, particularly in *The Canadian Multiculturalism Act* of 1988.[377] Morin's food giveaway and its title suggest that bannock is a food to please, or at least feed, all peoples, and a symbol of Canadian multicultural policy at work - although free food of any kind might bring diverse individuals together. Like Canadian "ethnic" food festivals such as Heritage Days (Edmonton, Alberta), which involve cultural groups displaying and serving their food heritages for public consumption in order to increase the visibility of the cultural traditions of these groups in the city and celebrate the city's diverse ethnic makeup, Morin's project seems to assure that cultural traditions like bannock will remain a visible fixture of First Nations' life in the future, and are part of the praiseworthy patchwork quilt of Canadian identity.

There are further components of this artwork that allude to multicultural policies. The title *Team Diversity*, which seems a subtle parody on the recent trends in spheres of national government, management, and public education in Canada and elsewhere to have diversity policies, is also a reference to Morin's selection of a wide swath of assistants who were of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Volunteer workers who performed as cooking and service staff in *Team Diversity* included: several Tahltans, an indigenous Egyptian woman, a Sikh man, an indigenous Malaysian man, and the artist's wife – of part-Chinese descent – and her family. It would seem that by virtue of the blended, multicultural cast of workers involved in this work, the production of bannock and the

[377] http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/ Site accessed January 18, 2013.

cause of the Tahltan people are something *people of any ethnicity* can support. Such a rhetorical claim was perhaps further strengthened by the fact that so many cultures do have traditional fry breads in their culinary vocabulary. The word "bannock" is Celtic in origin, and is a food very popular in Scotland (where it is also called "scone"). Scottish bannock has strong similarities to other forms of fry bread such as Indian naan, and Newfoundland's toutons (fried bread dough served with molasses). As a result, bannock seems to be a kind of gastronomic hybrid with ties to other fry breads from diverse cultures, a food that exists in an arch-multicultural category of edibles.

The food that became the centerpiece of this artwork was certainly not a commodity in the Marxian sense – being offered for free, produced by volunteer workers, and in full view of diners. Morin's volunteers verbally interacted with the consumers of the food, and could be seen performing the mixing, cooking, and serving of the product in question. Being made from scratch, foods like Morin's might seem to have no relationship with commodities at all. Two factors complicate this conclusion. First, the ingredients that Morin used to create the bannock were indeed food commodities (flour, Mazola corn oil, and so on) produced under the veiled conditions that Marx identifies as endemic under capitalism. Second, Morin's bannock was used to bring to light a larger series of commodity exchanges causing political friction between members of the Tahltan nation and big business. Specifically, it was the commoditization of land that angered the Tahltan elders, which they saw in conflict with their traditional way of life. Morin's bannock gifts attempted to mitigate the lack of broader public awareness about this conflict, and shed light on a turbulent set of social relations occurring around natural resource extraction on First Nations land.

This project harnessed pre-fabricated food commodities – the ingredients in the bannock – and through cooking put them into a new situation: as a seemingly handcrafted food. *Team Diversity* is an excellent example to animate with Appadurai's theory of the commodity phase, since the artist shifted food commodities into a new phase by cooking them and giving the resulting food away without charge. Morin's project was a generous form of still life that profiled an edible commodity that had many markers of locality.[378] Like the breakfast pieces discussed by Hochstrasser, Morin's feast showed pride in a regional food through clear and direct display of foodstuffs. Similarly, many of the photographs recording the event are pictorial forms of still life, since they depict inanimate edible things arrested in one moment of their commodity phase. In this case the cooking of the bannock was performed in front of the audience, serving as both an educational experience and a type of guarantee that the bannock served was "authentic" – that is, not purchased as a premade food commodity from a supermarket as sliced white bread would be.

Disruption, Commodities, and Resources

Team Diversity and *The Double Club* positioned artists as agents of both disruption and philanthropy. Through these artworks Höller and Morin both tried to engage in debates about social justice. A key question related to this ambition concerns how commodities were deployed in these artworks. In Morin's artwork, the "non-commoditized" sharing of bread as gift called attention to the trade of commodities,

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[378] Because Morin gives his food away to audiences for free, the *xenia* still life images of antiquity also provide a dynamic counterpart to *Team Diversity*. Norman Bryson's analysis of *xenia*, introduced in Chapter Five, explains how images from this genre of painting were often given as a host's offering to visiting guests.

which was positioned as a matter of community sovereignty, and something to be controlled and restricted. Höller's project granted equal access to what it presented as two distinct categories of edible commodities, and other forms of commoditized décor, music, and culture. These commodities were rallied in an attempt to cast the DR Congo in a new light, where the country's legacy of violence was substituted by an ebullient celebration of music and culture through the consumption of commodities in the context of ongoing parties and social gatherings. Both of these artworks served food to mediate new social relations that occurred around commodities, much in the way that Honig sees that still life painters of the sixteenth and seventh-centuries introduced new forms of social relation to their audiences through the depiction of commodity scenarios.

Taste and Social Class: Dean Baldwin and Daniel Spoerri

Another register of identity at play in relation to aesthetic taste and commodities is social class. The two restaurant projects discussed in this section both confuse and draw connections between these categories.

Dean Baldwin's restaurant *The Dork Porch* operated inside the Art Gallery of Ontario's (AGO) Young Gallery. To access Baldwin's eatery, visitors first walked through the AGO's own in-house restaurant FRANK (fig. 32), named for the architect behind the gallery's recent renovations, Frank Gehry. Since *The Dork Porch* had no menu, staff or kitchen of its own, the foods it offered were identical in price and ingredients to those served at FRANK – which serves a variety of fusion dishes presented with elaborate garnishes and custom-designed plates. The décor of *The Dork Porch* featured roughly hewn bar stools of mismatched dimensions, strings of patio lanterns

made from plastic watering cans, plywood and timber booths decorated with felt marker and ballpoint pen, and a meandering copper-pipe drinking fountain. Baldwin's restaurant presented a collision of décor and foods associated with upper and middle social classes. Daniel Spoerri's feast *Un coup de dés* also worked with social class. Invited, paying participants in the meal were split into two groups, one designated "rich" and the other "poor," and then served meals and given table service appropriate for their ascribed social class.

A key theme with both of these restaurant works is the relationship between aesthetic taste, gustatory taste, and social class. A useful guide in this respect is Pierre Bourdieu's study of the aesthetic preferences of French social classes after the Second World War, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (1979). Bourdieu's book is based on detailed primary research, where participants of different vocations and educational backgrounds were asked to state and describe their aesthetic taste preferences for music, photography, and so on. From these surveys, Bourdieu concludes that we can "map out a universe of class bodies,"[379] suggesting in a rather surprising and phenomenological way that *the body itself is the location of class identity*. Bourdieu argues that class divisions are reinforced by hierarchies of aesthetic taste, and, perversely adapting a phrase from Kant, that these divisions are jeopardized by any "animal attachment to the sensible" brought to light through "the object which "insists on being enjoyed"."[380] This rubric suggests that something *essential*, bodily, even natural, distinguishes the poor from the rich other than simple chance. He continues,

[379] Bourdieu, "Tase of Luxury, Taste of Necessity," *The Taste Culture Reader*, Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed. (Oxford: Berg): 76.
[380] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 489.

> Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.) and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin.[381]

According to the logic implied by this class-specific hierarchy of taste, which Bourdieu critiques as a construction, one might extrapolate that those who have good taste find themselves in positions of financial security as a kind of reward for their ability to distinguish the lowly from the elevated.

Moments when people can display their aesthetic taste also offer a chance to show personal class-rank, Bourdieu points out. He writes, "Objectively and subjectively aesthetic stances adopted in matters like cosmetics, clothing or home decoration are opportunities to experience or assert one's position in social space, as a rank to be upheld or a distance to be kept."[382] He notably argues that aesthetic tastes in food are very durable markers of early childhood education and environment, and therefore are the most obvious markers of a person's class background.[383] By extension, restaurants are profound sites for the enactment of personal dramas of social class in public, and Baldwin's and Spoerri's feasts offer a similar performance opportunity for participants to show their class.

The Dork Porch: Deluxe and Degraded Aesthetics

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[381] *Ibid.,* 1.
[382] *Ibid.*, 57.
[383] *Ibid.,* 79.

Baldwin's performative still life was a collage of disparate aesthetics. *The Dork Porch's* décor had the look of quick and somewhat ham-fisted domestic backyard construction projects completed using whatever material happens to be close at hand. In some ways, the wooden shakes and two by four construction visible in his piece recalls the typical domestic architecture in some Torontonian backyards and alleyways, which feature roughly constructed – and sometimes lopsided – garages, fences, and porches decorated with wooden and plastic accouterments, often built and installed by the home owner (fig. 33). Through these rough details, *The Dork Porch* contrasted dramatically with FRANK's luxurious decor of Canadian- and Danish-designed furniture, including Arne Jacobsen's iconic orange *Swan* chairs (1968), and artworks by Frank Stella and Candida Höfer (fig. 34). The cost and cachet of Gehry's design for FRANK is further displayed through its angular bar-counter fashioned from frosted glass, and backlit shelving housing numerous vintages of wine that clad the restaurant's walls.

FRANK's prices for food ($17 - $22 CAD for mains) are at parity with admission to the AGO itself ($19.50 CAD for adults), and this suggests that the intended audience for both spaces is middle class – or elite. Perhaps it would be expected that these visitors would have few scruples concerning Baldwin's blending of restaurant and artwork, and would welcome the opportunity to eat in the Young Gallery. It would seem this was the AGO's assumption. During my visit to *The Dork Porch* however, I was the only client who asked to be seated in Baldwin's domain rather than FRANK's. Many visitors entered *The Dork Porch*, explored the space, and left. I ate alone. It would seem that some visitors were disinclined to accept Baldwin's offer to eat in a gallery setting and content to simply view the setting.

Foods typically served at FRANK – and therefore at *The Dork Porch* – have included: honey-glazed forelle pear with Okanagan tiger blue cheese, and purple watercress and cider vinaigrette; and grilled Perth county Berkshire pork chop with bacon-roasted brussel sprouts, heirloom carrots and quince jus. The AGO's website describes FRANK's "casual, chic décor," and its menu of "contemporary comfort cuisine: food that is warm and inviting, prepared with honesty and integrity." These attributes, the reader is led to conclude, are delivered by FRANK's list of Ontario wines, seasonal and local ingredients, and a "dedication to global concepts of sustainable farming and slow food."[384] FRANK's statement of purpose refers to the Slow Food Movement, known for its interest in ecological responsibility and the pursuit of gastronomic pleasure,[385] and also makes clear its preference for "sustainable" farming over monocrops and the use of pesticides. Clientele are presumably meant to see FRANK and the AGO as friendly, honest, cosmopolitan, socio-economically elite, and also invested in local community.

Foods at FRANK are served on asymmetrical, ovoid plates and oversized, low-lipped bowls specially designed by Frank Gehry. Cutlery is stainless steel, unornamented, in the unembellished style of Danish modern flatware. Serving sizes are generous, with meat dominating the composition. Pork ribs are served with bones splayed upward on a bed of mashed potatoes, a side of roasted whole tomatoes, with a translucent jus puddled in the interior circumference of the plate. FRANK's food service, with its combination of bounty and costly ingredients, echoes the aesthetics of *pronk* still life. And yet FRANK's unembellished tableware is quite distinct from the jeweled and ornamented vessels and

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[384] www.ago.net/frank . Site accessed July 15, 2013.
[385] Andrews, 18, 29.

utensils on display in *pronk,* and its dishes remain relatively un-garnished – with herbs and other edible decorative touches being almost entirely absent from their plates – presenting food nearly as plainly as that found in a breakfast piece. FRANK's food service is an appeal to the rhetorical values of breakfast pieces and *pronk* discussed in Chapter Five: the unembellished presentation of FRANK's food is meant to persuade the diner that its ingredients are in turn simple, healthy and unpretentious, while simultaneously seducing the viewer through the presentation of a massive quantity of food. Overall, the qualities of FRANK's food and tableware clashed dramatically with *The Dork Porch*'s ad hoc furnishings.

Audiences experienced this clash of class associations related to food and décor on a bodily level, through the tasting and digestion of food in parallel with the visual aesthetics, smells, and tactile properties of Baldwin's selected furnishings. But because the price of FRANK's food keeps dining in both restaurants the province of the middle and elite classes, the class-clash only went so far. Expense kept people of restricted financial means from fully experiencing *The Dork Porch's* edible commodities. By extension, *The Dork Porch*'s physical presence referred to the amount of real estate at the AGO where edible commodities are available for purchase in the company of artworks.[386]

The furnishings, architecture and food of these two parallel and mutually parasitic restaurants were each carefully designed to stir class-associations in visitors' minds. Do-it-yourself domestic architecture became the mark of suburban middle class living in

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[386] *The Dork Porch* was a counterpart to the other cafés and restaurants that are peppered through and adjacent to the institution's galleries, including the *Espresso Bar in Galleria Italia*, the *Norma Ridley Member's Lounge*, *caféAGO*, and *Baillie Court*.

1950s North America, and it could be said that the association between class and the do-it-yourself ethos remains germane today.[387] Baldwin's mismatched, unevenly cut wooden planks and stools aped the vernacular architecture of the Canadian suburban middle class, but by exaggerating the imperfect qualities of DIY carpentry – quite a contrast with the professional woodwork and building done by carpenters and other trades workers on FRANK and the AGO itself – *The Dork Porch* presented a farcical version of this type of architecture.

The restaurant name "FRANK" implies that a meal eaten here is not only enjoyed within a building designed by Frank Gehry, but that the architect himself is the proprietor of the space – perhaps even its head chef – and that he is approachable enough to be addressed by his first name. *The Dork Porch's* moniker trumps the no-nonsense familiarity, ease, and folksy attitude that the first name basis of "Frank" suggests: to speak frankly and to eat freely. Baldwin's chosen title for this artwork, by contrast, seems to imply DIY home renovations, outsider status, and also slack comfort and ease with oneself. When asked about the selection of his title, Baldwin replied,

> I was craving something which felt awkward and uncool to contrast with the sleekness of the restaurant design of FRANK (who had signature plates designed by Gehry!) and the new AGO exterior of bent steel and West Coast Fir. I needed something opposite that to stand out […] which also expressed this clumsiness of the construction, the rough hewn and haphazard design of the whole thing - which also gave you permission to cast off the formality and feel more at ease in ones own dorkyness when faced with the propriety of a classy joint like FRANK.[388]

[387] Steven M. Gelber, "Do-It-Yourself: Construcing, Reparing, and Maintaining Domestic Masculinity," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (March 1997): 66-112.
[388] From an interview by the author with Baldwin conducted via email on June 28, 2011.

Going strictly on names, those who eat at FRANK are associated with the prestige of an internationally celebrated architect; those who eat at *The Dork Porch* are by extension “dorks” or social misfits, but also art insiders. Of course, being an outsider has clout all its own. Diners at the Dork Porch may have been members of a subculture: those who enjoy subverting the rules observed in art institutions. These implications of “dork”-hood were furthered by the ad hoc and banal qualities of the architecture and furniture Baldwin assembled. From Bourdieu’s position, décor selection is also a way to assert class rank. Through the aesthetics of *The Dork Porch* Baldwin himself occupied and performed multiple taste-class positions as: culturally savvy artist; elite décor aficionado toying with naïveté; working class partying hipster. The character Baldwin adopts – the quasi-fictional constructor of *The Dork Porch* – would seem to either be a working class individual attempting but failing to replicate the middle class vision of do-it-yourself architecture, or an eccentric member of the elite class – that is to say, an artist, a person of “delicate taste.”

Diners who decide to eat in *The Dork Porch* rather than FRANK make their aesthetic preferences known: a predilection for décor associated with the middle class, but only when it is presented ironically. Such a diner – myself included – is a particularly trained member of a certain class: a person educated in or aware of the central debates of contemporary art, who is also interested in food culture (especially local food). In other words, the dining audience (distinguished from the viewing audience) for Baldwin’s work is remarkably small and privileged.

Serving Class: Daniel Spoerri’s Un coup de dés

Romanian-born artist Daniel Spoerri has a long-standing interest in working with food as an artist's material. He is perhaps best known for his *tableaux-pièges*, also called *Fallenbilder,* snare pictures, or trap paintings, which are sculptural wall mounted assemblages that preserve the arrangements of vessels, utensils and detritus that remain after meals (fig. 35). The title of this series of works refers to the capturing of the moment just after a meal has finished – and in this way these explicitly engage with the genre of still life.[389]

Spoerri also has a long history of creating restaurants and meals as artworks. In 1967 he converted a small *bar tabac* a five minute walk down the street from the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, at #19 Burgplatz, into a restaurant named *Restaurant Spoerri* (fig. 36). The artist explains that the project was instigated by his growing dissatisfaction with the limitations of art as a category.[390] It was a personal project, evidently: he wallpapered the space with his correspondence. In practice, the restaurant served delicious meals to its clientele (it was known for its excellent steaks), but menus would also veer toward the fantastic according to the designs of temporarily appointed chefs, including Joseph Beuys. Often, the resulting food would be very experimental in nature: *escalopes de python*, ant omelets, and schnitzel of elephant trunk for instance.[391] Visitors could dine at a table and have the remains of their meal fixed in place, turned into a vertically oriented

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[389] We can also see this practice as a progenitor to Tiravanija's tendency to leave dirty dishes and utensils on display after his meals have concluded.

[390] *Restaurant de la Galerie J* (1963) was Spoerri's earlier project along a similar vein, based in Paris. Judith E. Stein, "Spoerri's Habitat," *Art in America*, July 2002. 63-65.

[391] Renate Buschmann, "Evocations of Pleasure and Disgust. Daniel Spoerri and the Establishment of Eat Art," *Eating the Universe: Vom Essen in der Kunst*. Elodie Evers, et al, eds. Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2009): 235.

picture plane, and transformed into a snare picture. These tabletop still lifes were then made available for sale.[392]

Spoerri also ran a gallery named Eat Art upstairs from *Restaurant Spoerri*. He opened it in 1970, and the gallery specialized in edible artworks, and artworks made from food. In this same year he published *Mythology and Meatballs*, a diary and cookbook based on a long sabbatical he took on the Greek island of Symi. He has since mounted many more themed banquets as artworks. *Le Banquet Henkel* (29 October, 1970) included cakes decorated in the style of artworks by Frank Stella, Arman, and others. *Le Coin Restaurant Spoerri, cuisine astro-gastronomique à la noix* (19 May – 5 June, 1975) was a restaurant that served meals according to the diner's Zodiac symbol. *Le dejeuner sous l'herbe*, (1983) was an outdoor meal where after diners finished their feast at a beautifully appointed table, the dirty dishes, leftover food, and entire table were interred. *Le diner palindromique* (1998) seemed to reverse the usual order of foods: "coffee" served to start the meal was served in a cup but was actually very dark brown mushroom bouillon; the next course of "ice cream" was three spheres of mashed potato colored with spinach, beetroot, and pumpkin.[393]

Spoerri refers to himself as a "collaborator of chance," (*Handlanger des Zufalls*),[394] a designation that suits the method behind his *tableaux-pièges*, since during a meal as diners pass around foodstuffs and vessels it is chance that dictates the final placement of each of these elements. Historian Cecilia Novero writes of this practice,

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[392] See "Eat Art Galerie."
http://www.danielspoerri.org/web_daniel/englisch_ds/werk_einzel/18_eatartgalerie.htm. Site accessed February 9, 2013.

[393] For and exhaustive list of Spoerri's food actions, see Françoise Bonnefoy, *Restaurant Spoerri*, Paris: Jeu de Paume. (2002).

[394] Novero, 152.

"By trapping the banal, halting the everyday, and especially putting on view the work of consumption in the chance-instants of tables, objects, and food, Spoerri thought he would thus whet the audience's desire for movement and life."[395] By virtue of this interest, Spoerri's work has been considered illustrative of *Nouveau Réalisme*, an art movement centered in France in the 1960s. French critic Pierre Restany, who effectively founded the movement in the early 1960s, characterized *Nouveau Réalisme's* interest in plainly displaying the stuff of daily life. Art historian Jill Carrick explains that Spoerri, in contrast to Restany, did not want to simply celebrate the quotidian commodities that surrounded him, but also to problematize them. For Spoerri *Nouveau Réalisme* was "a folding of narratives of memory, blindness, and opacity through the so-called 'matter-of-fact'."[396] By presenting edible commodities in a dining scenario, Spoerri wanted to question the arrangement of daily life that we often take for granted – particularly with regards to class. Spoerri asked his audience to be attuned to chance outcomes because he is very interested in how chance has resulted in particular class positions for each of us as individuals. He has pursued this theme in more than one artwork.

One of Spoerri's most striking banquets in keeping with this theme was *Un coup de dés*, a 1968 event at *Restaurant Spoerri* that has been remounted numerous times, including a 2010 version held at Düsseldorf's Haus Maria Theresia.[397] The title of Spoerri's piece refers to an 1897 poem written by French Symbolist poet Stéphane

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[395] *Ibid.*

[396] Jill Carrick, "Introduction: Topographies of Chance and Return," *Nouveau Réalisme, 1960s France, and the Neo-avant-garde*, Surrey; London; Burlington: Ashgate (2010): 5.

[397] This version of the work, which I attended and participated in, was presented as part of the survey exhibition focused on food-based art practices titled *Eating the Universe: Food in Art*. Haus Maria Theresia is a former convent and emerging cultural space in Düsseldorf.

Mallarmé: "*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard.*" Mallarmé's title translates in English to "a roll of the dice will never abolish chance," and Spoerri's banquet serves as an illustration of this poem's spirit. The artist describes the 1980 incarnation of the piece as follows,

> Le principe de la 'simultanéité' que nous avons appelé 'égalisateur' dans l'expérience repas de prison, sera renversé dans la contraste 'riche-et-pauvre'. Les participants à cette soirée seront désignés comme riches et pauvres suivant le principe du hazard et ils joueront leur rôle tout au long de la soirée.[398]

Each participant in the event was required to follow the rules of chance and pursue their designated social-class role – related to where they were seated, the décor they were surrounded by, and most importantly, the food and drink they were served.[399]

The format of Spoerri's banquet referred to the history of restaurants in Europe, specifically the fact that proto-restaurants brought divergent classes together at table to enact conviviality.[400] *Un coup de dés* played out this type of scenario for participants who were in reality of similar class to one another – which is to say they were financially privileged. Spoerri's banquet was a moralistic piece of theatre that introduced class difference through role-play, but ultimately revealed that all present at the meal were in a greatly privileged position; no one who was actually poor was admitted.

The 2010 banquet was a five-hour, seven-course ticketed dinner for one hundred people. Admission cost 100 euro. Guests included museum donors, trustees, and notable

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[398] Bonnefoy, 110.
[399] For the 2010 edition of *Un coup de dés* the artist did not cook, prepare, or serve the food himself; instead he hired chef Volker Drkosch of the Düsseldorf caterer Victorian Restaurant to follow general directions provided by the artist in order to develop the menu.
[400] Spang, 72.

members of the Düsseldorf art community. Upon entry to the Haus Maria Theresia foyer, each guest was given a unique identifying sequential number and a glass of Gosset champagne. After trays of canapés circulated the space, the artist appeared and, in a booming baritone, announced that diners would be split into two groups according to assigned numbers and the roll of the dice: one team designated as "rich" and the other as "poor." Guests then shuffled into the main hall of the facility, which contained three sprawling banquet tables, each of which was split laterally into two distinct decorative schemes (fig. 37). One side of every table had a bare wood surface outfitted with wooden trays, paper napkins, table wine by the carafe, and candles haphazardly jammed into empty wine bottles. The opposite side of the table featured fine china, baroque candelabras, cloth napkins, and fine vintages of wine served by attendants. In full view of the dining hall was a small, temporarily installed kitchen with fridges, service area, storage containers, and cooking equipment, allowing guests to witness the staff furiously assembling the food. Custom printed menus – each of which were signed as an artist's edition – also decorated the tables. These menus served to create anticipation for the "luxurious" or "impoverished" foods each diner expected to receive (fig. 38).

Over the course of several hours, the "rich" were served an assortment of traditional French foods associated with the middle and upper classes, such as *Médaillon de Lotte de l'Antlantique avec des artichauts et Dialogue de poivrons et paprikas et Pommes rissolées* (medallion of monkfish with artichokes and dialogue of peppers, paprika and browned apples). The poor were served foods of the German working class, including *Linsen Eintopf mit erdfruchten & gebrackenen Kartoffelschalen* (black lentil soup with deep fried potato skins). The food of *Un coup de dés* accessed historical, and

stereotypical, attitudes about what these regional cuisines signify, and their exchange value. For the host chef, German food was seen as the ideal form for characterizing poverty, while French food was apparently ideal for representing luxury.

This artist's restaurant continues the key themes explored in the previous chapter in relation to opulent (seductive) *pronk* still life and austere (persuasive) breakfast pieces. While the previous chapter focused on the rhetorical qualities of these two subgenres, here I want to build on those observations to show how social class entered into the rhetorical structure of Spoerri's edible commodities.

As he later revealed during interviews, Spoerri's trick this night was to fool the rich and poor role players by using the finest ingredients in the peasant fare and ingredients of lower quality in the aristocratically styled entrees. This banquet played with the *sensory perception* of foodstuffs, where entrées that signal poverty to the visual senses turned out to have a richer taste. In *Un coup de dés*, lavishly ornamented entrées were prepared using humble ingredients, and modest-looking dishes were prepared using extravagant ingredients.

Because the "poor" foods were simply presented, following the structure of humble, pared down breakfast pieces, and the "rich" foods were seductively ornamented, following the structure of *pronk* still life, the "rich" participants expected lavish flavors, and the "poor" expected simple ones. Through this clash of visual aesthetics and actual flavor, the class positions people had agreed to play out for the evening were increasingly unclear as the event progressed. Confusion and even frustration resulted for some people present, with some vocal outbursts at the tables as the evening wore on since, although most took the situation in good humor, some rich participants seemed to feel cheated out

of a taste experience they felt they were entitled to because of their ascribed class position.

The material components of this artwork served as signals to the diners, many of who were relative strangers to one another, giving them cues about how to relate socially to one another. For example, during the dinner members of the "rich" class repeatedly took carafes of wine from the poor side of the table, causing one "poor" woman to shout "Do not take *our wine*!" The event might have remained simply playful, but the coveting of objects arranged on the table prompted a form of antagonism. The edible commodities on display at each table sparked desire and jealousy in some diner's minds. With *Un coup de dés*, dramatic differences in food service led to discord because it sowed malcontent between actors temporarily performing class roles. Spoerri's diners experienced a controlled and artificial form of class difference. This distinction was not entirely maintained in practice, however; many guests swapped food from opposite sides of the table, and with a bit of enterprising banter I was able to persuade one "rich" woman to give me her dessert.

These types of exchanges at *Un coup de dés*, prompted by visual experiences of edible commodities, were very similar in spirit to those described by Baudelaire in relation to shop window displays. Spoerri's meal mocked its participants for wanting what chance had withheld from them: an experience of particular edible commodities. *Un coup de dés* denied its participants access to the edible commodities put on display just across the table from them; each person had to either be content with the edible commodities that fortune provided, or negotiate access to the other foods they desired.

Countering the usual circumstances of aesthetic judgment that Bourdieu investigates through his study, Spoerri's banquet demonstrated to its participants that their class position did not give them inherent skills in predicting aesthetic *and* gustatory value in concert when faced with edible artworks. *Un coup de dés* showed how frameworks of aesthetic assumptions are easily toppled, relative to class position, and revealed that aesthetic judgment is a trained behavior, and one very easily misled by parlor tricks such as décor, and the plating and aesthetic composition of food.

And so, as is the case with the other restaurant projects discussed in this thesis, it can be argued that Spoerri's and Baldwin's meals evoke particular aspects of still life traditions. In his book *Embarrassment of Riches,* Simon Schama argues that *pronk* still life images, so dazzling, were created to negotiate Netherlandish discomfort and apparent "embarrassment" for their newfound prosperity. *Pronk* images stage the affluent identity of Dutch citizens relative to their subaltern trading partners by assembling a collection of commodities from diverse locales in order to display local wealth, colonial conquest, and political clout. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century artist's restaurants continue to manipulate the material of commodities, especially food, to negotiate social identity with references to marginalized and dominant social groups. At *Un coup de dés* and *The Dork Porch*, audience members participated in a commercial transaction with the artist (and the art institution as mediator) to procure edible goods that were fashioned by bringing together ingredients from diverse locales. In Spoerri's and Baldwin's artworks the commodities on display, being markers for certain aspects of class identity, were striated (Spoerri), and shuffled or displayed in new settings (Baldwin) to emphasize their incredibly significant power as performative objects. Most importantly, though, it was the

capacity for these projects to display local wealth and cultural cachet that ties these artworks to the history of *pronk* images. *Pronk* still lifes served to rationalize the situation of Dutch wealth as entirely morally appropriate, while these two artworks amassed and served commodities to throw into question the moral and aesthetic authority of those who find themselves in class positions that enable them to consume the meals these artworks offer. These two artist's restaurants, by dramatizing class position through different food commodities, might similarly lead to an "embarrassment of riches."

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the relationship between ethnic and class identity, edible commodities, and still life in six case studies presented along a thematic trajectory. The subgenres of market stall images, *pronk* still life, and breakfast pieces were framed in relation to a range of contemporary artworks. This discussion began with Tiravanija's temporary restaurant: an auto-ethnographic project that intended to offer quite uncomplicated narratives of food authenticity and the artist's own ethnic identity. *Untitled 1992 (Free)*, which is often discussed as a space of equality, was shown to be a socially filtered, commoditized site that also echoed key themes of market stall images – specifically, the display of edible commodities that stand in for and conceal the human labor, geographic location, conditions of manufacture endemic under capitalism that bring about their production. Karen Tam's restaurants were shown to problematize the relationship between food display, commodities, architecture, and identity. Picking up on themes of locality evident in breakfast pieces, the *Golden Mountain Restaurants* series draws on local understandings of hybrid Chinese Canadian identity by accessing donated

furnishings and other materials, while also inviting audiences to bring whatever food they like to the site to share. This emphasis on hybridity was pushed further with Carsten Höller's *The Double Club*, which was an architecturally stratified space that presented fission cuisine; the Congolese and Western cuisines offered by this restaurant were kept separate in order to hyperbolize the divide between these two, artificially constructed, categories. At *The Double Club*, ethnically associated commodities became further hybridized once they blended in the mouth of the diner. Peter Morin's *Team Diversity* went beyond Höller's binary approach to ethnicity and food commodities by stressing the multicultural associations of a particular fry bread, bannock, with far reaching appeal, and by demonstrating that the political cause he championed – specific to the Tahltan Nation and resource extraction – was one with broad support across a wide range of ethnicities. Although Tiravanija and Morin both access traditional foods and enact types of auto-ethnography, their final objectives couldn't be more at odds. Tiravanija's temporary restaurants are intended to use food to demonstrate what authentic Thai identity is, while Morin's restaurant project endeavored to show that bannock is an arch-multicultural food, and that his political cause was one that transcended categories of ethnic identity. Dean Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* humbled the foods of the AGO's restaurant, fusing the elite commodities purveyed by FRANK with the ad hoc and rough furnishings created by the artist. This artist's restaurant combined rhetorical and aesthetic properties of *pronk* still life (through FRANK's ingredients) and breakfast pieces (through Baldwin's own humble furnishings) in order to draw attention to the class-specific values that the AGO aims to present through its galleries and its restaurant. Daniel Spoerri's role-play restaurant surprised and shocked diners by concealing

sumptuous ingredients in plainly crafted “peasant” fare and embellishing modest ingredients in the guise of *haute cuisine*. Like the *pronk* images of the seventeenth century, which have been analyzed as betraying an “embarrassment of riches,” the confused commodities at Spoerri’s and Baldwin’s restaurants were intended to make participants reflect on their social class as a product of chance rather than entitlement. This theme of confusing foods in performative still lifes is continued in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven:

Difficult Foods, Disgusting Foods: The Taste of Others

Across various cultures and historical periods, there is evidence that people have appetite for some foods and feel utter revulsion for others. This divide between the delicious and the disgusting, which is partially subjective but also has to do with group identities related to religion, ethnicity, and other factors, stakes out the territory of what each person believes is edible and what is non-edible. As has been expressed in the previous chapters of this thesis, these categories are malleable not only from culture to culture, but also from person to person.

The two artist's restaurants presented in this chapter, Ferran Adrià's restaurant elBulli (1984-2011, Costa Brava, Spain) (fig. 39) and the artist's collective Queer Food for Love's project *Queer Science: A Molecular Gaystronomy Laboratory* (2011, San Francisco) (fig. 40) [sic], pushed the limits of how food is cooked, served, and eaten, and reconsidered food's physical appearance, flavor, and material properties. In so doing these projects deliberately risked reactions of disgust or confusion from their customers or audiences. Using the recently emerged culinary techniques referred to as molecular gastronomy, both restaurant projects asked diners to eat foods that had unfamiliar textures and shapes, made from ingredients that were difficult to identify. I will therefore refer to the foods these projects purveyed as "difficult foods."

It can be argued that the genre of still life has depicted difficult foods in some instances, too. elBulli and *Queer Science's* confusing cuisine has a parallel example in seventeenth-century Dutch still life paintings that show difficult to identify foods –

particularly apparent in the work of Willem Claesz. Heda, whose work often depicts pastries broken apart to reveal cavernous interiors of uncertain composition. His painting *Still Life with Silver Goblets* (1637) (fig. 41) includes two silver platters holding what is presumably a broken apart pastry, its contents spilling forth. *What fills this pie?* The viewer can make out glossy black spheres of uncertain makeup, and globs of deep brown paste. Like molecular gastronomy, the food shown in Claesz. Heda's still lifes is very ambiguous and skates the edge of the disgusting. Such depictions of "difficult foods" will be distinguished from *potentially disgusting* images of still life such as the subgenre of gamepieces, which often show grisly scenes of disemboweled wild animals slaughtered by hunters, or Dutch still life paintings that show rotting fruits, or comestibles crawling with insects.

As outlined in Chapter Three, Kant argues that food is incapable of inspiring true critical judgments because it causes pleasure and excites appetites, and because of this, in his opinion food cannot be art. If we left our analysis of the relationship between food and aesthetics at that, we would overlook something crucial about food, still life, gamepieces, and restaurants: the radical power of disgust. If food only had the ability to charm and give pleasure to people, then perhaps Kant would be right in thinking that food could never be art. But the balance between disgust and delicacy, when manipulated by an artist, can result in very powerful critical judgments indeed.

elBulli, a restaurant that has been included in several art exhibitions including documenta 12 (2007, Kassel), created unconventional, critically acclaimed (and sometimes negatively critiqued) foods using specialized equipment and techniques including liquid nitrogen, compressed gas siphons, "spherification," and sous-vide among

many others.[401] An example of the dishes served at the restaurant included *Globe,* a one-foot-diameter hollow spherical shell that resembled a dinosaur egg (fig. 42). After this dish was "cracked" by the wait staff, diners were invited to snap off sections of the shell, which would stickily melt on their fingers, lips and tongues while being eaten. Only once it was tasted would the diner know that the "egg" was made of frozen, very pungent, rich and creamy cheese. Despite these unusual and experimental foods, in terms of seating arrangements elBulli explicitly responded to and operated within the conservative tradition of the modern restaurant: customers were seated at separate tables and banquettes in relative privacy. Since elBulli customers were served a *prix fixe* menu that took into account allergies, we can see that this restaurant adapted the tradition of inns and taverns, which use fixed menus. Unlike the style of service used in modern restaurants, inns and taverns, however, diners at elBulli were given little or no information about composite ingredients in the dishes served. Customers at elBulli were not permitted to select what they would eat off a menu. Instead, the chefs of the restaurant determined nightly menu service according to their own plans. Because of this, each of the over thirty courses on offer was bound to be a surprise and cause some confusion when brought to the table. elBulli also used specially designed, unfamiliar utensils for their food service; wait staff often had to instruct diners in the "proper" way to eat the food they served using these tools.

Queer Food For Love's one-day outdoor restaurant project *Queer Science* took place in a San Francisco garden in June 2011. Queer Science was presented for the National Queer Arts Festival as part of the program *Dirt Star: Take Root.* At this event

[401] elBulli operated under Adrià's direction between 1984 and 2011. The site is currently transitioning into an educational facility called elBullifoundation.

experimental *amuse bouche* in the style of Adrià were served to the public for free in an open-air laboratory setting that fashioned "spherified strawberries," and rose petal jellies with basil foam, mounted by petals made from isomalts and thin webs of sugar (fig. 43). Queer Food for Love's *hors d'oeuvre* thus resembled a spider-web covering an unidentified green foam and red effluent-like fluid. This was no normal canapé. This strange, unnerving food-composition was presented as "queer food," at the very least implicitly because of the collective's name. Collective co-founder Yasmin Golan describes the group's interest in molecular gastronomy in relation to "queering ingredients."[402] Golan uses the word "queer" as a verb. This usage suggests that it is possible to *make queer*, that is, make relations queer, make aesthetics queer, and make food queer. This collective identified and appropriated the ambiguous and theatrical qualities of Adrià's cuisine, and further dramatized and repurposed these qualities much in the way that queer practices, such as drag, identify theatrical codes of performing gender and further dramatize these codes in order to critique them.[403]

I will compare *Queer Science* to elBulli in order to consider how these case studies triggered experiences that were similar to the sublime - by presenting difficult food experiences to diners through foods that have strange and ambiguous qualities. Because of this, two key texts guiding this discussion are Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), which holds that experience and cognition are grounded first in the body, and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), which argues that

[402] From a phone interview with the author January 19, 2013.
[403] Molecular gastronomy is just one of the collective's culinary interests. The collective has held a Valentine's Day community dinner, as well as events where they fashioned and served homemade Pop Tarts as homage to Andy Warhol, and a re-interpreted version of Ants on a Log as a protest against censorship of David Wojnarowicz's work.

gender is constructed and performed. Like the sublime, which resists stable categorization and definition, the queer celebrates instability of identity. Much in the way that personal taste is dramatized through the categories of the delicious and the disgusting, the queer dramatizes the performance of gender. After summarizing key theories of the sublime and disgusting, I will discuss dining experiences at elBulli and *Queer Science*. These sites had the ability to shake up stable personal identities by presenting ambiguous, difficult food that tested the edge of what food has been and can be. To cast light on these contemporary artist's restaurants, I will return to the categories of still life already introduced and discussed in this thesis.

Many examples of artworks discussed in previous sections of this thesis stand to be disgusting-looking (or just outright disgusting) for some diners: Caroline Goodden and Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant *Food* had canary pudding on its menu; Daniel Spoerri's restaurant in Dusseldorf served ant omelets; Spurse's *The Public Table* recuperated waste from the public and served discarded ingredients as menu items. Other contemporary artists have created disgusting still lifes. Sam Taylor Wood's video series *Still Life* (2001), which show various foods including rabbit and fruit decomposing and being overtaken by maggots and mold, is an additional example that pushes the limit of what is tasteful to depict in an artwork. Clearly, art practices like these deliberately challenge conventions about what objects in the world are edible, and they toy with disgust. The case studies in this chapter accomplish something quite different. elBulli and *Queer Science* stimulate a category of experience related to but not the same as disgust: the experience of encountering ambiguous, difficult foods.

Anti-Gustation: The Taste of Others

According to architectural historian John MacArthur, literally speaking, disgust means vomiting or "anti-gustation."[404] It other words, disgust is the reverse of eating. He goes on to say,

> This uncritical sense of disgust is not only visual; the psychologists think of it as a kind of sympathetic magic governed by a 'law of similarity' in which all things connected with the disgusting are potentially disgusting […] Contagion is undoubtedly at play in the disgust that we feel at others who eat things that disgust us: not only do they consume disgusting things; they fail to be disgusted.[405]

MacArthur believes that we pathologize the other's failure to recognize the thing in question as disgusting, and we suspect that through contact we too may become infected by this lack of discretion in matters of disgust. As put by MacArthur, "the radical alterity of disgust is merely the taste of others."[406] Our sense of aesthetic taste, or aesthetic preference, is sometimes so strong that it seeks to negate all other aesthetic preferences. We can add to MacArthur's perspective that one's preferences in food are sometimes strong enough that the food preferences of others are seen as abhorrent.

Claude Lévi-Strauss' framework of "The Culinary Triangle," discussed earlier in this thesis, speculates that there are three poles of food in all societies: raw, rotten, and cooked. Every society has its own definition of each of these three categories, Lévi-Strauss admits, and he offers a historical anecdote as evidence for his argument that the culinary triangle is culturally relative. He writes,

> we know of some incidents that followed the Allied landings in 1944 that American soldiers conceived the category of rotted in more extended

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[404] John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: architecture, disgust and other irregularities,* London; New York: Routledge (2007): 58.
[405] *Ibid.,* 61.
[406] *Ibid.,* 73.

> fashion than we [the French], since the odor given off by Norman cheese dairies seemed to them to smell of corpses, and occasionally prompted them to destroy the dairies.[407]

The rather extreme form of food criticism this tale encapsulates also hints at Lévi-Strauss' assumption that there are few or no French citizens who are repelled by the cheeses of Normandy. For a French person to critique the smell of strong cheeses would not be simply unpatriotic, or even treason, but an outright proof of a person's un-Frenchness. By the same token, it would appear from Lévi-Strauss' premise that Americans are incapable of enjoying the pungent, musty delicacy of intense Norman cheeses. It is clear from this anecdote that – at least in the view of Lévi-Strauss – individual taste implies upbringing and cultural milieu as well as the context in which food is encountered.

Anthropologist Dylan Clark's "The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine" is a twenty-first-century response to Lévi-Strauss' categories that investigates punk culture's views of the culinary triangle. Clark details how most punks prefer foods that are as close to the raw state as possible. As an act of resistance, punks are also willing to consume foods in states most North Americans would consider rotten, however: comestibles left in dumpsters.[408] This liberal interpretation of waste is in keeping with Spurse's rejection of taboos against eating garbage, explored earlier in this thesis. Clark explains that by being free, dumpster food is cleansed of the problems punk cultures generally associate with the mass production of food in capitalist states.[409] Since, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, food is the material through which humanity forms civilization, Clark argues that punks turn to food

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[407] *Ibid.*
[408] Dylan Clark, "The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine," *Ethnology*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Winter, 2004): 20.
[409] *Ibid.*, 26.

as the first line of defense and identification against capitalism. For punks, the fact that discarded foods are considered by many people in North America's capitalist culture to be in the "rotten" category is what makes dumpster diving an act of insurgency, and therefore makes it an attractive activity for punks. Also, this example shows how any given arrangement of the culinary triangle is affected by identity – even an adopted rather than ethnic identity, such as punk identity. If there can be a punk-specific understanding of the culinary triangle, surely there can be a queer-specific understanding of the culinary triangle, and therefore a form of cooking that is queered.

What other people find delicious or disgusting is generally seen as something inexplicable, unreasonable, and beyond belief – unless the person in question agrees with our own taste-judgments. This discrepancy is the motivating force behind disgust. My perspective builds on the groundwork laid by MacArthur, since in my view, anti-gustation has a parallel in the categories of gender and sexuality. Similarly, the distaste some feel for non-heteronormative sexual practices, and for actions that step outside of conventional or mainstream expectations with respect to gender, are motivated by a fear of contagion and a fear of the (sexual) taste of others. Queered cooking then would be a *rotten* category, according to the most conservative judgments.

Philosophies of the Sublime and the Disgusting in Relation to Food

Although my primary interest in this chapter is difficult food, it is important to first define key philosophies of disgust in order to characterize what these case studies *are not.* What consequences does disgust – rooted in the taste of others – have for the still life genre, the artist's restaurant, and aesthetic theory? As will be made evident through

these two artist's restaurants, it is possible to regard difficult food as a type of experience similar to Kant's category of the sublime, which opens up the possibility that food might cause aesthetic experiences in line with those caused by artworks. Because food can enliven appetites, some philosophers have considered it the enemy of aesthetic contemplation, as outlined in Chapter Three. Kant denied that food was capable of inciting feelings or outcomes of this kind. If it can be shown that the perception of food can stir such aesthetic feeling, this would further enable the serious study of food and still life in philosophy and art history respectively.

Kant has specific, if briefly stated, views about the power of disgust in connection to the sublime. In his chapter "The Analytic of the Sublime," he writes,

> One kind of ugliness alone is incapable of being represented conformably to nature without destroying all aesthetic delight, and consequently artistic beauty, namely, that which excites disgust. For, as in this strange sensation, which depends purely on the imagination, the object is represented as insisting, as it were, upon our enjoying it, while we violently resist it, the artificial representation of the object is no longer distinguishable from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and so it cannot possibly be regarded as beautiful.[410]

The disgusting thing "insists" that we should enjoy it, but we reject its entreaties through a very physical expression of violent resistance: nausea. In Kant's view, disgust is literally, "a stimulus to discharge what has been consumed through the shortest path of the gullet (to vomit)."[411]

Winfried Menninghaus' expansive study *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* provides a detailed analysis of Kant's ideas about disgust. Disgust can

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[410] Kant, (2007): 141.
[411] Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, Albany: State University of New York Press (2003): 106. From *Kant, Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 45. Translation modified by Menninghaus.

be delivered through the proximal and distal senses alike, Menninghaus reminds the reader, since as Kant writes, "Filth is an object of vision; but it cannot directly excite visual aversion, rather drawing our imagination to smell and taste."[412] Filth is experienced through vision, but it stimulates responses and expressions of disgust related to other senses, such as taste, touch, and smell. Vision has a special relationship with disgust, Kant argues, since beholding a filthy thing (or a thing that inspires disgust) sparks *imagined or speculative sensations* in the realms of taste and smell. It is clear that for Kant disgust is a strong sensation that boils over, overflows the visual, and seeps into other sensory registers. Although it was not Kant's intention to praise taste and smell, in his writing we can see how disgust reveals the power of taste and smell in their full fortitude.

Edmund Burke is also known for introducing a theory of the sublime that has strong similarities to disgust. He explains the sublime as follows:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.[413]

Burke's conception of the sublime is similar to Kant's since both philosophers consider the sublime to be overwhelming, and closely connected with feelings of fear. Burke's theory of the sublime, like Kant's, considers taste and smell to be inferior senses. Burke writes,

> Smells and Tastes, have some share too, in ideas of greatness; but it is a small one, weak in its nature, and confined in its operations. I shall only

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[412] Menninghaus, 108.
[413] Burke, 13.

> observe, that smells or tastes can produce a grand sensation, except excessive bitters, and intolerable stenches.[414]

In brief, Burke believes that smell and taste are contributors to other, greater senses, and do not give any particularly strong sensation except when they manage to inspire disgust. As with Kant, for Burke the most powerful aspects of the proximal senses are *only stimulated through revulsion*. Burke comments,

> It is true, that these affections of the smell and taste, when they are in their full force, and lean directly upon the sensory, are simply painful, and accompanied with no sort of delight; but when they are moderated, as in a description or narrative, they become sources of the sublime as genuine as any other, and upon the very same principle of a moderated pain.[415]

Burke explains that the full strength of taste and smell is evident not during moments of pleasure, but in moments of what he calls pain - perhaps moments of abject disgust. He believes, however, that written and verbal description and the representation of disgusting things can bring about feelings of the sublime, as might occur with works of art such as still life paintings that represent potentially abhorrent foods.

The Paradox of Aversion

Korsmeyer believes that theories of both art and food appreciation involve a "paradox of aversion," meaning that in both cases, a thing repulsive or fearful has the capacity to be "transformed into something profoundly beautiful."[416] In her assessment, these paradoxes of aversion have in the past been theorized according to three categories: the tragic, the sublime, and the horrific. When explored through art, each of these categories can be transformed into the beautiful. She proposes a fourth category, the

[414] *Ibid.*, 69.
[415] Burke, 69.
[416] Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting," *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2002): 220.

disgusting, which art can turn into the delicious.[417] To set up her argument, she turns to Burke's theory of the sublime. She summarizes that for Burke "at a sufficient degree of remove that permits safety, human beings are simply fascinated by – and therefore take delight in – all manner of things that terrify, either for their size or might or ferocity or power."[418] Burke's idea that the terrifying can be fascinating allows Korsmeyer to explore how such fearful experiences provide a kind of exercise for the mind. She argues that the potentially disgusting meal puts a strenuous load on the terrified diner, who can benefit from overcoming disgust through ingestion. Much as muscle mass is gained by athletes through a process of placing stress on their body and then allowing recovery to replace muscle tissues destroyed in the act of lifting heavy weight, exposure to what Korsmeyer calls "terrifying foods" metaphorically, and through extension of Burke's argument, would seem to build up new "tissues" of the self. Comestibles may have the capability to achieve the level and variety of stimulus required for an aesthetic experience, not only because they strain the limits of what a person considers edible, but because they can encourage the subject to reflect on the differences and similarities between themselves and others in terms of cognition and appreciation. This is not a forgone conclusion though; many a self-interested gourmand or food hipster could encounter difficult or disgusting food and develop no interest in considering the sense-experience of others. In any case, by risking contact with the edge of the category of the edible, a subject stands to stretch their gustatory and aesthetic tastes and renegotiate the category of "disgusting."

While Korsmeyer chooses to use Burke's concept of the horrific to explore how "terrifying foods" can be transformed into beneficial experiences, I believe there is value

[417] *Ibid.*, 220.
[418] *Ibid.*

in also considering Kant's notion of the sublime to understand difficult foods presented at elBulli and in *Queer Science*.

Difficult and Disgusting Still Lifes

Some examples of still life images can be repulsive and confusing. A painting might depict a food that the viewer despises or a situation the viewer finds unappetizing. Equally, still life images showing gratuitous quantities of luxurious foods may inspire repulsion; Simon Schama anticipates that the viewer of *pronk* painting "immediately experiences a rush of pleasure, guilt and (for many sensibilities) disgust."[419] It is the excess of *pronk* images that stands to disgust some viewers. Additionally, a still life might show a food-scenario where ingredients or component parts are impossible to determine.

Other strong feelings can be stirred up by a response of disgust to still life images. Judith A. Barter argues that William H. Harnett's *For Sunday's Dinner* (1888) (fig. 44), a *trompe l'oeil* painting that depicts a plucked bird, "emphasizes the gulf between the delicious, prepared for Sabbath feast and its gruesome beginnings," which results in a humorous, if "repugnant," image.[420] Harnett's painting is a kind of gallows humor, in which case the disgusting is also meant to amuse.

When exploring the possibilities for disgust to inspire sublime feeling, Carolyn Korsmeyer points out that the still life genre, particularly in instances of *memento mori*,

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[419] Simon Schama, "Perishable Commodities: Dutch Still Life Painting and the 'Empire of Things'," *Consumption of the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. London: Routledge. (1993): 478.
[420] Judith A. Barter, "True to the Senses and False in its Essence: Still-Life and Trompe l'Oeil Painting in Victorian America," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*. Vol. 31, No. 1, (2005): 40.

has long been associated with depicting rot and decay. She describes the subgenre of the gamepiece as an especially vibrant strain for disgust, "with its depiction of bloodstained, disemboweled deer and hare virtually celebrates slaughter, a harvesting of the bounties of nature commemorated in paintings that hang on the walls of tastefully decorated dining rooms."[421] Paradoxically, as she writes, although gamepieces might seem to some viewers to be depictions of horrific scenes of butchery, they have been displayed in genteel, refined settings, and taken at least by some as depictions of beauty. Clearly, not all viewers find the gamepiece disgusting.

When a still life image shows food that can be clearly identified, a viewer may reflect on whether the edible items represented seem delicious or disgusting. A vegetarian might describe gamepieces showing dead animals as disgusting, for instance, because they would never consider eating what the painting represents. Likewise, an Orthodox Jew or Muslim may find a gamepiece showing a slaughtered pig to be disgusting because of strict religious proscriptions on the consumption of pork. According to Burke's ideas, though, these people may be experiencing something more like the sublime than disgust because the encounter with the offending food is "moderated" by representation in an artwork. With these sublime still lifes, the contagion, through the act of representation, is held at bay.

Painting is of course only one way that still lifes can be pictorially shown and thereby mediated. The photographic documentation of restaurant food has become fashionable, moreover, and this is how many people experience artist's restaurants as well. Very few people are given the opportunity to dine at a site like elBulli, but many

[421] Korsmeyer (2002): 153.

more people access Adrià's cooking via food photography in printed or digital formats. Yet the professionally taken photographs of elBulli's food tend to be deliberately ambiguous in their presentation of food. This is a useful instance to consider documentation of an artist's restaurant on photographic terms. *Malt Flour Air-Baguette with Caramelized Cinnamon Sweet* (2005) (fig. 45), is a color photograph dominated by sepia, greys, and whites documenting the dish of the same name taken by elBulli's staff photographer Francesc Guillamet. This photograph shows a semi-elliptical shape at its centre, the silhouette of which suggests a baguette, sheathed in a paper-thin translucent layer of – what? – perhaps some sugary substance. A rock supporting the baguette-object is surrounded by water, beneath which is a cloud of turbidity. This submarine, foggy cloud is crisply in focus, suggesting the photograph was shot at a very fast shutter speed. The photograph is cropped in a way that hides the technical apparatus that made the image possible, such as the container for the water, and the depth of field of the image is relatively shallow, so that the foreground and background fade into obscurity and the viewer's attention is focused on the *Air-Baguette,* the rock it sits on, and the underwater cloud it appears to be suspended upon. This carefully constructed photographic moment depicts a fantastic, but ultimately ambiguous, narrative of a bit of food. This is an in-focus photograph taken by a professional under very controlled circumstances – but it is a photograph that, even though it is pictorially clear, has a *deliberate lack of clarity* in terms what components are edible, what the subject tastes like, or what foods it is made up of.

Continuing with the rhetorical themes established in earlier chapters of this thesis, we can say that because the precise nature of the food it depicts is so unclear, *Air-*

Baguette as a photographic still life does not employ the rhetoric of persuasion. Instead, Guillamet's photograph uses the power of confusion and ambiguity to employ the rhetoric of seduction. Like Claesz. Heda's pie still lifes, which have fillings of indeterminate, dark composition, the uncanny photographs of elBulli's food intrigue the viewer because of their ambiguous qualities, which, like the *pronk* still life are seductive because they dazzle and confuse the viewer. Guillamet's photograph and Claesz. Heda's still lifes capture our attention because *what they depict* is so confusing. How was the scenario shown in *Air-Baguette* realized? What is the relationship between the baguette-object, the rock it sits on, and the cloud beneath it? What are the ingredients used to make this dish, and which components of the image are edible? Because of this ambiguity and the range of questions they inspire, these images resist definition, even while they are in strong relationship with the typology of still life.

Many examples of still life that have been discussed in this thesis aim for visual simplicity and clarity. We saw that Grootenboer argues that the rhetorical power of still life is strongest when it makes a simple and clear argument through simple and clear depiction. But still life images have a different and equally powerful strength when they are ambiguous and *formless*,[422] leading to typological confusion. The photographs of elBulli dazzle, mystify, but also give us typological confusion toward pleasure, since in many cases the ingredients are cloaked, reworked, and made entirely foreign to our recognition. Like Heda's pies, with their dark and ambiguous interiors, Guillamet's

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[422] Formlessness is a concept I am adapting from the writing of Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, which they in turn extrapolate from Georges Bataille's category of *informe*, which "serves to bring things down [déclasser] in the world." When a situation is *informe* the boundaries and identities of objects become difficult to determine. Yve-Alain Bois, "The Use Value of "Formless"," *Formless: A User's Guide*, Bois and Rosalind Krauss, New York: Zone Books (1997): 13-40.

photographs are examples of formless still life because we cannot identify what they depict.

The Use-Value of Disgust

Clearly, if someone who found the meats represented in a gamepiece to be disgusting was required to *eat* what he or she saw, that experience would illicit stronger, perhaps uncontrollable emotional and physical responses. And this is exactly the type of scenario artist's restaurants often do put their participants in, since unlike the historical genre of gamepieces, these artworks "insist" that the participant "enjoy" eating something that they might find extremely distasteful. Although potentially unpleasant and nervous-making, these encounters have use-value. Disgust has use-value.

Disgusting foods can cause people to reflect on their critical and cognitive faculties. In his discussion of Kant and Voltaire, philosopher Kevin W. Sweeney discusses gustatory taste's ability to inspire reflection rather than simply to provide pleasure. He writes, "Sometimes, we take cognitive "delight" in what we ingest, such as when we sense a variety of tastes, the relationships among those tastes, and the evolution or emergence of further tastes from earlier ones."[423] I would like to add to Sweeney's comments that this cognitive delight can also occur without physical pleasure; it can also be caused by physical discomfort, encounters with difficult food, and even revulsion. In fact, tasting a disgusting or "difficult food" can inspire a feeling similar to what Kant referred to as the sublime. The use-value of disgust in this case shows the diner *the range of their cognition, their sensorium, and their appetites*. Like the sublime landscape, the

[423] Sweeney, 18-19.

category of disgust and the difficult food dwarfs the diner by showing just how narrow his or her own ability to know the world through gustation is, because it is a place populated by seemingly limitless objects that can never be classified as food. Also, the disgusting object causes the diner to tremble in the shadow of potentially horrific taste experience.

Disgust has sometimes been framed as an innate, primal response that guards the human from accidentally eating toxic objects. If the potentially toxic item disgusts the human subject, this suggests in turn that the nourishing item will attract them and rouse their appetite. By this argument, an organism naturally craves those substances that are nourishing to it, and similarly avoids any item that might poison it.[424] Menninghaus, in summarizing Kant's view on smell and taste, develops such an argument. He writes, "The difference defined by smell and taste [in Kant] through inner "intake" of their objects is that between wholesome and unwholesome, health-promoting versus health-damaging - leading up to deadly."[425] But does disgust protect people from toxins, and deliciousness draw people to nutrients? Human cravings for food often veer toward substances that are in fact unhealthy in excess rather than purely nourishing: sugar, for one. If sugar is not healthy, then why do people crave it? For this reason, Korsmeyer is not convinced that the sense of disgust is solely a protective instinct. She additionally points out that many dishes that a given culture might refer to as delicacies are also acquired tastes and

[424] Korsmeyer explains that the "natural disposition to like sweet substances is considered to have its functional roots in the healthful properties of ripe fruits that nourish the organism." Korsmeyer, (2002): 219.
[425] Menninghaus, 109.

considered disgusting when first encountered, even though they are not toxic.[426] She contends,

> Indeed, much of the haute cuisine of a culture retains an element that some people – both inside and outside that culture – find revolting. And the revulsion appears to be deliberately approached and overcome – not as a matter of necessity (as might be understandable in times of scarcity), but apparently as a way to increase the depth and potency of taste experience.[427]

With effort and repeated exposure, items initially categorized as non-food (disgusting) can *become* food (delicious). Through exposure, following Lévi-Strauss' model, "rotten" foods can become "cooked." Sushi, for instance, which in North America as little as fifty years ago was seen by most non-Japanese as an exotic or even revolting concept, is now as commonly available in most urban centres as fast food such as hamburgers and pizza. Korsmeyer argues that in the face of difficult foods that are acquired tastes people have an opportunity to enliven and widen the scope of their taste. The true gourmet, it would seem, must bravely face and survive the strange, the extreme, the risky, and even the toxic. Like the intrepid wanderer who explores the mountaintops and the open ocean and experiences the drama and power of the sublime, the gourmet skates the boundaries of the disgusting, in order to test and reclassify that province as delicious.

Disgust and Artistic Intelligence: elBulli

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[426] Alcohol, puffer fish, and durian fruit are potential examples: alcohol is actually a toxin for humans; fugu, Japanese puffer-fish is a delicacy that accidentally poisons some adventurous diners who knowingly elect to taste its flesh without its toxic organs first removed; durian fruit is known for its custard-like flavor, and its stink of rotting flesh, and the carriage of durian is banned from hotels and public transit in many parts of South East Asia but the fruit is still widely acknowledged as a delicacy.

[427] Korsmeyer (2002): 219.

In 2007, the curatorial duo Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack invited elBulli's chef, Ferran Adrià, to participate in that year's edition of documenta.[428] Rather than relocating Adrià to Germany to prepare morsels for viewers, the curators dubbed one table for two at elBulli as an offsite exhibition venue named "Pavilion G," more than one thousand kilometers away from documenta's host city, Kassel. Two hundred individuals – a pair of people allegedly chosen by lottery each day of documenta's one hundred days – were flown for an all-expenses-paid experience at Adrià's gastronomical laboratory.[429] This curatorial decision raised the hackles of many journalists, curators, and artists. Some people seemed mystified as to why a chef should be included in one of the foremost exhibitions of contemporary and modern art. Art critic Robert Hughes denounced Adrià's inclusion in documenta as "ridiculous."[430] Shortly after documenta closed, *The Guardian's* art critic Adrian Searle wrote a puzzled and skeptical account of Adrià's role in the art world.[431] There are other indicators that Adrià's role in the field of contemporary art, while still up for debate, is one of increasing visibility and import. The art publisher Phaidon has now printed three books dealing with Adrià and his cooking: *A*

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[428] This recurring art exhibition, which generally focuses on contemporary art, is held every five years in the small German city of Kassel. Documenta began as an effort to revitalize the city and its economy through cultural activity after Kassel was decimated by Allied bombings in the Second World War.

[429] n.a. "2007. Contribution in Documenta 12." http://www.elbulli.com/historia/index.php?lang=en&seccion=7&subseccion=9. Site accessed December 20, 2012.The participants were actually selected by a process that could only loosely be referred to as a lottery; the curators chose "winners" according to personal whim, meaning that many artists and others associated with documenta dined at elBulli. See Todolì, Hamilton, *Food for Thought*, which includes letters written by people who were selected to eat at the restaurant, which describe their experiences.

[430] Lisa Abend, "Postcard: Spain: Is Food Art?" *Time*. Vol. 170, Issue 9, August 16, 2007. p. 8.

[431] Adrian Searle, " Should I eat it or frame it?" *The Guardian.* September 15, 2008. G2, p. 4. http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/sep/15/foodanddrink.restaurants . Site accessed May 30, 2013.

Day at elBulli (2010), *Reinventing Food, Ferran Adrià: The Man Who Changed the Food We Eat* (2010), and *The Family Meal: Home Cooking with Ferran Adrià* (2011). In 2011 he gave a public talk at Stockholm's modern and contemporary art museum, Moderna Museet, which focused on his newly launched research and training foundation.[432] London's music, art and theatre venue Somerset House hosted the exhibition "elBulli: Ferran Adrià and the Art of Food" in 2013. It has recently been reported that an unnamed Soho New York gallery will host an exhibition of Adrià's drawings of his dishes in 2014.[433]

To explain their decision to include a chef in an exhibition of art, Buergel claimed that Adrià showed evidence of "artistic intelligence." As Buergel put it,

> I have invited Ferran Adrià because he has managed to create his own language, something that has turned into a very influential issue on the international scene. This is what I am interested in, I don't care if people consider it as an art or not. It is very important to mention that the artistic intelligence does not depend on the format; we should not relate art only with photography, sculpture, painting […] neither with cooking in its most strict sense. But under certain circumstances, cooking can also be considered as an art.[434]

Buergel does not identify what those "certain circumstances" are. The curator's sound bite was presumably meant as a compliment to the inventive qualities of Adrià's food.

Others have made similar observations about Adrià's cuisine. *Parkett* co-founder and curator of 2011's Venice Biennale Bice Curiger described Adrià's efforts to stupefy

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[432] The talk was held on June 27, 2011. N.a. "Ferran Adrià and elBulli Foundation," http://www.modernamuseet.se/en/Stockholm/Programme/Past-programme/2011/Ferran-Adria-and-ElBUlli-Foundation/ Site accessed June 14, 2013.
[433] N.a. "Chef Ferran Adrià to reveal creative process in NYC exhibit." http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/agencia-efe/130426/chef-ferran-adria-reveal-creative-process-nyc-exhibit . Site accessed June 14, 2013
[434] Published on *Gifre,* http://www.gifre.com/documenta-12-in-el-bulli. Site accessed December 20, 2012.

the diner, saying, "It is a conscious attempt to break up all the conventions that you have assimilated. Which makes him close to what an artist does: it's the same method."[435] My objective here is not to prove whether Adrià is an artist or not, but instead to define the qualities that others have given as evidence of his artistic intelligence. During the roundtable mentioned above, Belgian artist Carsten Höller associated his meal at elBulli with the experience of visiting an amusement park, since "your body's just all twisted around by these machines, and it's really about forgetting everything, and becoming a pure 'pleasure bundle.'"[436]

Adrià's menu frequently included dishes that suggested by appearance that they were of a certain taste or texture, when in fact these dishes concealed unexpected gustatory sensations. *Gold leaves in coffee-chocolate soil* (fig. 46) at first sight seemed to be a plate of potting soil, leaves, and rocks; after the first taste it was revealed to be a grated chocolate concoction. The prospect of eating a substance that seems to be dirt, even in a scenario of suspended disbelief provided by the restaurant setting, is a difficult one indeed. Difficulty and disgust arose with Adrià's food too, particularly since the diner did not select what food was served to them. Also, when food was served, the diner was not always told what the dish in question was, and was left to wonder about its ingredients and potential taste.

Adrià's ability to harness concealment and deception as culinary tactics, and the way that his food encouraged the diner to focus on embodied experience, seem to be significant factors in the "artistic intelligence" noted by the prominent figures of the art world I have quoted. But elBulli's *objective* was to create food that was unfamiliar and

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[435] Menninghaus, 238.
[436] Todolí, Hamilton, (2009): 221.

strange to the diner, and by doing so to encourage bodily reflection and a kind of recalibration of sensation. Adrià's restaurant presented difficult food, which "twisted" the body and the diner's conception of food – and this is what offers potential for queer uses of his culinary tactics. The curators of documenta, however, have overlooked this potential interpretation of Adrià's "artistic intelligence," which is a missed opportunity for critical engagement with his practice.

A Queer Molecular Gastronomy?

What would draw Queer Food for Love, a non-profit artist's collective with a firm footing in activism, to molecular cuisine as a form of expression? Queer aesthetics, which pursue destabilized and polyvalent identities, find a powerful gustatory analogy in molecular gastronomy, which seeks to disrupt expectations about vision, taste, touch, and smell, and interrupt the diner's view of her/himself as a coherent sensing subject. If the cuisine of elBulli has been described as "twisting" the human subject, what is at stake here is the ability for the diner to coherently understand and define their own taste experience and their own body in relation to the food set before them at Adrià's restaurant. *Queer Science* also "twisted" sense experience by presenting ambiguous, difficult food to its diners, but for quite different reasons.

Queer theorist Sara Ahmed explains that queer sexuality has been considered as a misshapen, or deformed approach to the world. She points out that the word "queer" "comes from the Indo-European word 'twist.' Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow

a 'straight line,' a sexuality that is bent and crooked."[437] Related to the queer "twisting" of sexuality, molecular gastronomy endeavors to twist bodily perception for the sake of entertainment and pleasure. Queer aesthetics – and queer molecular gastronomy as practiced by Queer Food for Love – endeavors to twist and shake up the stability of the self. Ahmed's discussion also centers on the way that queerness disrupts bodily stability; she writes that "things as well as bodies appear 'the right way up' when they are 'in line,'" or straight – sexually or spatially – and that "importantly, when one thing is 'out of line,' then it is not just that thing that appears oblique but the world itself might appear on a slant, which disorientates the picture and even unseats the body."[438] Queer Food for Love's canapé is just such an object "out of line" with usual culinary experiences that also encourages diners to get their bodies "out of line" in terms of their understanding of sexualities.

Queer Food for Love is attentive to these connections between twisted sensory experience, molecular cuisine, and queer aesthetics. According to Golan, the collective is drawn to this particular form of cuisine's ability to bridge the "discourse of queer culture, which is more witch-y and alchemical [in contrast] with the scientific side."[439] Golan and her collaborators noticed the sensory ambiguity inherent in molecular gastronomy's products, and harnessed this culinary method because of the value of ambiguity and sensory twisting in queer aesthetics.

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[437] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham; London: Duke University Press (2006): 67.
[438] *Ibid.*, 66-67.
[439] From a phone interview conducted by the author with Yasmin Golan, January 19, 2013.

Queer Food for Love used a favorite chemical substance employed in molecular gastronomy – hydrocolloids – to make their canapé for *Queer Science*. In a quasi-manifesto displayed on their prep and service table, the collective wrote about their use of this chemical. It read,

> Welcome to the world of hydrocolloids; a substance that forms a gel in contact with water, forming edible gels, foams, and spheres, using proteins and polysaccharides. All of these hydrocolloids are of biological origin (from algae, seaweed, beets, and soy), vegan, and edible. Science tells us we can eat them! They are nature squared! You decide. See, smell, taste, feel, as science transforms seasonal summer ingredients into something very queer indeed.

In this text, science – a discipline so often associated with rationality – is a force that is used to *make something queer*. This text additionally suggests that the body, through sight, smell, taste, and touch, is the direct means by which this queerness can be experienced.

Adding to Ahmed's theories, instead of thinking of queerness strictly as a question of innate identity, we can build on Judith Butler's idea that "gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be,"[440] in order to consider queer as an action that can be enacted on a range of situations and objects, including cooking and dining. Discussing Queer Food for Love's performative, communal meal with this kind of approach can bring to light how Adrià's quite strange culinary legacy was made queer. *Queer Science* deliberately begged the question, "is there a form of queer cooking, or a form by which cooking can be queered?" In terms of identity, queering attempts to disrupt the usual actions and expectations associated with gender and sexuality. Queer cooking, then, would seek to disrupt the usual actions and

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[440] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* London; New York: Routledge (1990): 34.

expectations associated with cooking, and would reject any stable notion of personal taste, by asking diners to push their usual assumptions about what food is. Beyond this, Queer Food for Love's project provocatively implied that just as forms of cooking, serving, displaying, and consuming food have long been linked to ethnicity, region, nation, and local community identities, queer culture itself can have its own distinctive food culture.

Theatricalizing Taste, Theatricalizing Gender

Golan explains that Queer Food for Love's *Queer Science* aspired to "demystify" the process of creating molecular cuisine and "make it very pedestrian, at street level, allow people to mess with the ingredients and co-create it and eat it on the spot."[441] *Queer Science* engaged with the quasi-restaurant form of the street stall, and the still life subgenre of the market stall – places where food is displayed and consumed literally "at street level." Echoing the market stall in a second way, *Queer Science* attempted to mediate new social relations – of a queer persuasion – around the display and consumption of foodstuffs. Alongside these connections with the history of restaurants and the legacy of still life, this project equally seems an effort to demystify queer politics, queer relationships, and queer ideas by encouraging dialogue on these subjects over a shared molecular gastronomy canapé. The project also increased the visibility of queer people in cooking roles – a critical contribution since commercial kitchens are usually highly gendered sites where machismo rules. In addition to these outcomes, although it

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[441] From a phone interview conducted by the author with Yasmin Golan, January 19, 2013.

may have presented the *processes* of molecular gastronomy in a very "pedestrian" way, *Queer Science* theatricalized gustatory taste and the experience of dining.

elBulli and *Queer Science's* architectural settings both have theatrical components. Diners were ushered into elBulli's "kitchen" – in fact a stage-like area where foods are assembled – to watch some of the highly technical processes being used to create their meals. Not every stage and tool involved in fashioning elBulli's creations was on view, however; most of the messier work happened out of the public's view or before they have arrived. Queer Food for Love set up *Queer Science* so that the food prep area – the lab – was in full view of participants. *Queer Science's* cooking was made quite visible, but Queer Food for Love hid nothing of the process involved in rendering the food they purveyed to the public. The range of tools on display – plastic syringes, beakers, jars, and a small camping stove – simultaneously gave the impression that a chemical experiment was being conducted, and also that the *Queer Science* kitchen was ad hoc and itinerant.

The theatricalization of taste and cooking at *Queer Science* has parallels with Butler's evaluation of how gender is animated in daily life. She writes, "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being"[442] Butler holds that the "regulatory fictions of sex and gender" as she calls them, are stylizations that can be and deserve to be disrupted.[443] Her description of gender as a substance that "congeals" and gives the "appearance of a substance" fortuitously gives some grist for our consideration of Queer Food for Love's manipulations of chemical

[442] Butler, 45.
[443] *Ibid.,* 44.

compounds to produce edible gels and foams. Although I am certain Butler had no intention of describing how gender relates to cuisine, I want to push her use of the verb "congeal." She describes the performance of gender as a matter of *substance*. The performances that Butler has in mind have to do with physical expressions, language, and the manipulation and use of objects such as clothing. If these categories can be *congealed* to represent gender, surely food too can be manipulated and given the "appearance of a substance" or even "the taste of a substance" to be made queer.

There are ways of eating and particular foodstuffs that are marketed toward particular genders. In Japan, certain varieties of saké have recently been advertised as drinks designed for women to counter the traditional conception that saké is a man's drink. *Petit-fours* and tiny pastries are considered by some as being feminine, while rare steaks are somehow more masculine. Although gender may be ascribed to certain foods, *Queer Science* did not obviously overturn the gender coding of foods. Instead, since the instability and extreme subjectivity of all taste experience are thrown into relief by molecular cuisine, *Queer Science* mobilized molecular cuisine to contest the very idea of stable identities.

With *Queer Science's* molecular gastronomy, it is possible to reformulate and echo the question Butler asks rhetorically, "Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established."[444] Clearly Butler believes the latter, and I agree with her. We can extend her observation about drag practices to the food experiences engineered by molecular gastronomy. Drag is often a matter of showing the caricature involved in codes of dress, mannerism, voice, and

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[444] *Ibid.,* xxxi.

action, and Butler positions drag as a dramatization or exaggeration of those codes. And so Queer Food for Love's food appropriated molecular gastronomy to perform a kind of drag of conventional cuisine – canapés – that is to say that *Queer Science* dramatized conventional cuisine by presenting difficult foods.

Canapés are usually composed of a base layer (bread or pastry) spread with a pâté or cream, topped by a "canopy" of herbs, or vegetables. The food served at *Queer Science* was recognizable as food in part because its composition echoed that of a classic canapé - but it went beyond the usual look of this traditional *hors d'oeuvre*. This queer canapé had: a clear rose petal jelly base, resembling a transparent piece of glycerin soap, instead of a piece of bread or pastry; a viscous crimson pool of strawberry congealed alongside a puddle of basil foam instead of a pâté or cream; and a "canopy" of sugar-web and isomalt petals instead of a garnish of herbs. Because of its alien elements, which nonetheless were arranged in the scale and triadic composition of a canapé, this queer food was a difficult but ultimately alluring one.

Gut Feeling: Conclusion

Building on Merleau-Ponty's idea that sense experience gives people very fragmented access to the surrounding world, we can add that "queer science," as proposed by Queer Food for Love, similarly considers sensory experience as twisted and fragmented by subjectivity. That is to say, every perceptual act is a product of our bodies. Queer Food for Love's food and their event ask us to entertain the notion that there is such a thing as queer *perception* – an approach to sensing the world that is queer oriented. Taking Ahmed's writing as a starting point, moments of queer perception are

most apparent when we are exposed to twisted, ambiguous, difficult bodily experiences that strain the join between our cognitive understanding of the world and our sensory experience of it.

These molecular cuisines also made evident the polyvalency of the diner's sensoria, and revealed the "twisting" nature of sensory experience. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of "the thickness of the body" as the point where world and consciousness meet can help us to understand the dining experiences presented by *Queer Science* and elBulli. The pleasure and sensory confusion resulting from encounters with molecular gastronomy – a kind of sensorial scrambling for detail – is possible because of what Merleau-Ponty considers the fleshy theatre of the body. Additionally, Howes' concept of intersensorality is of great use with these examples because of his emphasis on sensory confusion in relation with sensory ideologies; elBulli capitalized on the sensory "twists" of molecular cuisine for the sake of entertainment, while Queer Food for Love used these same qualities of molecular cuisine because they felt a kinship between Adrià's method and key goals of queer aesthetics. For Queer Food for Love, confused intersensorial experience is akin to queer aesthetics. Howes also stresses how intersensorality is harnessed in capitalist settings in order to sell commodities; at elBulli, sales certainly were the final objective, while *Queer Science* took a rather different approach, aiming instead to promote queer ideologies.

From these two examples of molecular cuisine, we can see that the braided experiences of gustatory taste and aesthetic taste are bound up not only in forms of social identity, as explored in Chapter Six, or with rhetoric as interpreted by the mind, as in Chapter Five, but also one bound up in the body itself. Foods served at elBulli and *Queer*

Science offered the diner an opportunity to either entrench their subjective identity – by rejecting the strange food in question – or to expand their sense of selfhood by risking the edge of disgust. *Queer Science* shared its molecular gastronomy canapés in order to promote the growth of queer community, to rupture the boundary between self and other, and to give an enlarged understanding of sexuality for its participants. This physical gathering, centered on a difficult to define an ambiguously formed canapé, mirrored a philosophical and conversational gathering around the question of queer aesthetics and queer identity. The intended "contagion" carried by Queer Food for Love's molecular gastronomy is a form of empathy for and understanding of non-heteronormative sexualities.

In his essay "Cézanne's Doubt" Merleau-Ponty proposes that paintings show us the structure of perception, and that painting holds a theory of vision within it, echoing Alper's theory of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings as carriers of theories of vision, and Grootenboer's idea that seventeenth-century still lifes are treatises on their own method of representation.[445] We could add that performative still lifes in artist's restaurants hold *theories of taste* within them. In these two final case studies, we see how gustatory taste and aesthetic taste work in tandem with one another, since the foods of elBulli and *Queer Science* encouraged their participants to reflect mindfully on the experience of eating, and the perceptual activities involved in this act. These two food service sites deliberately instigated bodily experiences of confusion and ambiguity in dining scenarios. The cuisine of elBulli tested the limits of the diner's sensory faculties

[445] Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press (2007): 69-84.

because it confounded expectation. Queer Food for Love's canapé likewise encouraged participants to consider that their subjectivities – and their sensoria, alongside their understandings of gender – were on constantly shaky ground. Adrià and Queer Food for Love used compounds like hydrocolloids to toy with bodily sensation and cognition and, much like Ahmed suggests, to *twist* subjectivity.

Bodies hide the mastication and metabolism of food from view, and Kant and other philosophers discussed in this thesis have proposed that this quality of gustatory taste is what has engendered its comparison to aesthetic taste. The two tastes occur out of view, in a mysterious, internal space. But elBulli's and Queer Food for Love's restaurants opened up the possibility to *feel* the guts, to theatricalize and make visible the process of gustatory and aesthetic judgment, and to risk disgust as participants' bodies worked through these art objects and the ideas they articulate by digesting them. The experience of eating in artist's restaurants asks for participants to experience "gut feeling." Each audience member had to judge, experience, and reflect on the artwork through ingestion, and because of this, as argued by Merleau-Ponty, there can be no single, coherently shared, unified experience of these artworks. Rather than being a problem or limitation of these practices, the multi-valency that results from "gut feeling" is what makes them an important contribution to the legacy of still life. Much in the way that Kant's theory of aesthetic taste values interior, private judgments, these artworks privilege the deeply interior processes of digestion as a subjective experience, and they perform the act of intersensorial judgment that usually takes place internally when audiences contemplate still life images. Like the subgenre of *pronk,* which seduces viewers through confusion, elBulli and *Queer Science* presented ambiguous foods to attract and compel diners. Also,

like the ambiguous still lifes of Claesz. Heda, which often depict cavernous, dark interiors of pastries and cause audiences consternation in guessing just what foods and flavors are contained therein, these two artist's restaurants invited multitudinous readings to be worked out using the interpretive device of the gut, a deeply physical enactment of the judgment of taste theorized by thinkers like Kant. "Gut feeling" is an inherently unstable interpretive strategy since it takes place on a subjective and bodily level, but it is also one where disgust and delight hang continually in the balance. Because molecular gastronomy is a form of cuisine that often attempts to stymie diners' expectations, and aims to dramatize the dining experience by showing the extreme latitude of the human sensorium, it is an ideal cooking method to consider as analogous to queer strategies of self-representation and self-reflection.

Conclusion

What has prevented some museums, curators, and art historians from encouraging or positively considering olfactory and gustatory stimulation caused by artworks like artist's restaurants in the past? Curators and conservators have long been wary of smells as worrisome indicators of potential fungi, molds, and other contaminants that threaten the safety of a collection, "thus rendering olfactory artworks as immediately suspicious if not dangerous," Drobnick points out.[446] The firmly entrenched museum-maxim "do not touch," intended to protect the art object from damage, has gradually become less rigid in some art institutions by virtue of art practices that allow audiences to grasp, to whiff, and sometimes even to take by hand or by mouth, samples or particles of the artwork in question. Akin to phenomenological approaches in philosophy, exhibition designs of this kind account for the full, if fragmentary, sensoria of gallery visitors – but these intersensorial encounters are still relatively rarely theorized in contemporary art discourse.

Participatory exhibitions and art practices, including artist's restaurants, have introduced serious discussion about how all of the human senses are stimulated and must be accounted for when it comes to experiencing artworks. The synesthetic effects of artworks, such as still life's ability to facilitate non-visual sensory responses, which Schopenhauer warns against, are increasingly accounted for in art history and philosophy. "Viewers" who visit exhibitions today are now often invited to approach artworks in an

[446] Jim Drobnick, "Volatile Effects: Olfactory Dimensions of Art and Architecture," *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, Oxford; New York: Berg Publishing, Davide Howes, ed. (2005): 266.

embodied fashion, and are more and more invited to be "tasters," "hearers," "touchers," and "smellers."

However, there remain much more deeply held resistances to intersensorial art experiences in contemporary art and art historical discourse – such as those stimulated by artist's restaurants – as this thesis has demonstrated. Long-standing philosophical biases against the proximal senses, which have been framed as ripe for corruption, easily misled, and shallow, until relatively recently have often prevented curators, art historians, and art critics from undertaking serious reflection on art practices that invite audiences to eat components of the artwork. And these same sensorial biases have resulted in significant biases against the genre of still life for some authors – although other authors have rigorously studied this important genre exactly because of the genre's sensorial qualities. Nonetheless, artists return again and again to the genre of still life, and have used and continue to use food both as a material form and as a subject to create performative still lifes in order to meddle in the sensoria of their audiences. The artist's restaurant is the ideal setting to accomplish these objectives.

Developments in social art practice and forms of public art that call for audience participation and consultation have also furnished this study of artist's restaurants with a discursive framework. Social art practices frequently seek to ameliorate situations for their audiences, often by responding to needs of communities as diagnosed by the artist. In these cases, artists create projects that take the form of services offered to the audience. Through these acts of service, the artist ingratiates themselves into a community, a setting where she or he was previously a stranger. In such cases, artist's gifts secure strong social bonds between the artist and the community in question – even

if the gift is simply the artist's presence and involvement with the community. Several explanations of social art practices and art practices of generosity that have been presented in this thesis position artists as benign, politically neutral forces that respond to the condition and needs of communities. Similarly, when contemporary artworks serve food to audiences, they call on comparable rationales to gain legitimacy and to gain access to communities; such claims become more complex, and more persuasive when the provision of food is involved since this material is a requirement for human survival. When artists give free food to communities, then the argument that their services (and therefore their involvement as artists) are absolute necessities becomes even stronger – effectively presenting the artist as an indispensible figure of contemporary civic life. Artist restaurateurs, like the restaurateurs and gastronomes of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, are nevertheless ideologically positioned figures who administer and propose new forms of *gastér nómos*, rules governing the stomach. As we have seen, like the gastronome, the artist restaurateur governs a set of participants by asking that certain actions of the table be performed, and that certain types of food be consumed – and in many cases, these are entirely new, or subtly shifted rules of the table and ways of eating. And like the more conventional restaurateur, these artists also present very specific architectural environments and arrangements of décor that are meant to dictate certain types of social relations. These ideological dimensions of the artist restaurateur figure, by which they become governors of taste, should equally cause us to reconsider the apparent genial force and political neutrality of these art practices.

For this reason, my thesis questions the current discourse about social practice art, by such authors as Bourriaud, Felshin, Gablik and Kester, that argue that artists should

always aspire to be good citizens, which is to say positive forces, in communities. Quite differently, *Untitled (Free/Still) 1992, The Double Club*, *Un coup de dés*, *État d'urgence*, *Team Diversity*, *Queer Science*, *The Public Table*, *The Dork Porch*, *Golden Mountain Restaurants,* and even elBulli, while certainly festive and cordial in setting, brought to light disparities between demographic groups (on the levels of class, ethnicity, gender, and fundamentally according to gustatory taste preference) rather than simply uniting several communities under one banner. These are artist's restaurants that perform still life in order to dispute the nature of gustatory and aesthetic taste.

Counter Capitalism

Several of the artist's restaurants presented in this thesis suggested that participants could be compassionate consumers after the model of many new so-called philanthropic capitalist models where corporations offer a percentage of their profits to charity organizations. *The Double Club*, *État d'urgence, The Public Table, Golden Mountain Restaurants,* and *Team Diversity* all on some level invited participants to be empathetic to a cause, either through offering donations of materials, or through giving financial support to a cause via the purchase of commodities. This form of philanthropy has been theorized by philosopher Slavoj Zizek as "cultural capitalism."[447] According to Zizek, cultural capitalism gives consumers the (false) sense that they are contributing meaningfully to the eradication of poverty, disease, and so on by buying products from corporations. In Zizek's view, cultural capitalism serves as a deflection or concealing veil for the deeper troubles – class disparity and ecological destruction, for example – caused by capitalism. A key rhetorical question of his argument – paraphrased as "do we buy

[447] Slavoj Zizek, *First as Tragedy, then As Farce*, New York: Verso (2009): 53.

organic apples because they taste better or *are better*, in the moral sense" – signals an important connection to the artist's restaurants in this thesis. Did visitors come to such artist's restaurants because they were: exciting contemporary art events; venues with fantastic food spanning continents, genders, or class divides; places for healthy or tasty food; compassionate business ventures that granted aid to peoples in need? Obviously, a combination of these values as well as others will lead people to seek the experiences offered by these artworks.

I want to draw particular attention to the positive feeling engendered by cultural capitalism and how this sense of moral well being figures into the overall experience of artist's restaurants on bodily and psychic levels. At *The Double Club*, for instance, I believe that *fumbwa* might actually give more pleasure to the participant-diner – or even "taste better" – when a portion of its sale price is directed toward "needy folk." This does not erase the moral complexities of aid under the rubric of cultural capitalism, however, and should in fact be troubling to us. When they attempt philanthropy, artist restaurateurs are agents easily instrumentalized by institutions (like the AGO) and corporations (like Prada) who want to use art to appear to be compassionate and invested in locality. But cultural capitalism may have positive outcomes, as well – suggesting more optimistic outcomes for these artist's restaurants. The scheme of cultural capitalism animated at some artist's restaurants also fulfills Fourier's plan for gastrosophy, or refined gluttony, which is the act of dining in order to satisfy personal gustatory taste, while also benefitting the greater community. To be self-interested when it comes to food and gustatory taste, Fourier's philosophy argues, is ultimately to work in the larger interests of communities.

As with ameliorative social practices, artist's restaurants that offer food to communities step in to correct situations they find distasteful, and they often do so by promoting values the artist agrees with via foods they feel are *in good taste*. Like the restaurateur, who in the oldest sense of the term is one that *restores* diners, civic centres, and monuments alike, the artist-restaurateur often aspires to *reestablish* or *restore* a lost or disadvantaged community – as with *The Double Club, The Public Table* and *État d'urgence.*

Grant Kester's theory of dialogics, which considers how artists create outcomes with participants through conversation, can be adapted to show a different type of conversation that takes place in the artist's restaurant – a kind of gastro-dialogics. Instead of simply staging conversations between participants and the artist in order to create a new artwork, as Kester introduces, artist's restaurants stage food service events to provoke conversation between participants, but most importantly in order to spark an inter-subjective conversation *between and about the sensoria of the participants*. At the artist's restaurant the ephemeral, sublime nature of dining is presented as a litmus for the individual participant's sensorial register, and the similarity and differences of sensory experiences with those of other participants.

Edible Social Practices, Performative Still Lifes

As outlined in this thesis, many factors have been cited as explanations for the spike in food-service artworks. The traditions of social art practice and relational aesthetics have evolved in tandem with the increasing number of artist's restaurants. In relationship to these intersections, *Kunstforum International* contributor Jürgen Raap

adds to our understanding of artist's restaurants when he speculates that artists who create food events as artworks are motivated by the "de-ritualization of table culture" which has influenced "the current great interest in the staging of aesthetic and ritual 'counter-images' at artists' banquets and in the field of 'event catering'."[448] Like Deutsche's concept of the lost public sphere, the ritual of dining, Rapp seems to think, has been dissolved - perhaps because of contemporary factors including fast food, pervasive communications technologies, and the accelerated lifestyles engendered by urban dwelling. According to Rapp, artists stage food service events in order to reconstitute this lost ritual.

Do the culinary "counter-images" that Rapp identifies serve to undermine conventional ideas about commensality and ameliorative sociability, suggesting that undercurrents of unrest characterize group-dining practices art artist's restaurants? Turning to the case studies in this thesis, we can see that conflict is a major theme: conflicting opinions about good taste, politics, and community run through these food service sites. These artworks highlight the table as a disputed territory. As raised by Brillat-Savarin, Fourier, Lévi-Strauss, and Clark, the rites of the table are not protected spaces, or free from conflict - in fact, a meal can be an opportunity for coercion, estrangement and argument. But the "counter-image" of dining that artist's restaurants present does not seek to bring old ritual back to the table, as the gastronome Grimod insisted, so much as suggest entirely new culinary rituals and ideologies by enacting the meal as a performative still life.

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[448] Jürgen Raap, "Liebe geht durch den Magen," *Kuntsforum International*, No. 159 (2002): 46-51.

Restaurant-based and food service-based artworks have become a meme of the contemporary art world. As detailed in the Introduction to this thesis, dozens of artists at various stages of their careers have presented artist's restaurants since the turn of the twenty-first century. A central proposal put forward in this thesis is that artist's restaurants can be meaningfully understood as extensions of the still life genre, and that many forms of analysis used by art historians to discuss specific still life images can be usefully adapted and applied to shed light on artist's restaurants.

Chapter Two staked out the territory of the restaurant in relation to the history of still life, a genre that, particularly when it includes food, has sometimes been considered lowly because of its ability to stimulate bodily sensation, appetite, and gustatory taste. Chapter Three discussed key philosophies that have positioned gustatory taste as a villainous or valiant counterpart of aesthetic taste, and it outlined that these two tastes have been compared for being products of interior, subjective judgments. Chapter Four offered a summary of the historical developments and antecedents that led to the institution of the modern restaurant: places of conviviality and relative privacy where customers can purchase food from a large menu of diverse foods. Over the course of this first section, the restaurant was shown to be a vibrant meeting point for theories of aesthetic taste and gustatory taste, which also present edible objects to diners that formally and thematically have a great deal in common with the genre of still life.

As was discussed in Chapter Five, some artist's restaurants are examples of rhetorical, performative still life that make arguments about the production, distribution, and consumption of foodstuffs in settings that recall different historical models of restaurants. Spurse's *The Public Table* was shown to be in relation to the tradition of the

cookshop, which cooked meat provided by clients themselves. This artist's restaurant solicited donations of surplus from small communities in order to transform quotidian, discarded materials into edible delicacies, and served these foods back to the donors. *The Public Table* also proposed to use a restaurant to found "a commons," a heady and complex objective associated with the ideals of democracy that also coincides with one of the original meanings of the term *restaurateur:* an agent who restores the civic sphere. In relation to the inn, which invited diverse demographics to sup together, ATSA's *État d'urgence* hoped to gather together people of multiple classes to dine on middle class and elite foods – all with the objective of drawing attention to the social problems surrounding homelessness. ATSA's event aimed to fulfill the restorative function of the early restaurant: to serve a public as an ameliorative agency. This celebratory, temporary festival involving a sumptuous feast of edible commodities – meals of the type that would be frivolous entertainments for some people – presented a satire that made obvious the daily struggle for survival their homeless participants faced outside of ATSA's enclave of largesse. These two artist's restaurants used rhetorical structures evident in *pronk* and breakfast pieces, which access the rhetoric of seduction of the rhetoric of persuasion respectively. Through composition of dishes, the presentation of abundant foods, and the use of complex ingredients, ATSA's and Spurse's projects combined these two argumentative strategies in order to give their projects an air of urgency, and to make their acts of generosity seem as entirely "true" and self-evident as any humble still life representation of a loaf of bread and a glass of beer.

Artist's restaurants access and comment upon associations between food and various valences of identity, such as class and ethnicity. As discussed in Chapter Six, a

dominant way that artist's restaurants have dealt with this theme is by intervening in the flow of commodities. Commodities, and implicitly their circulation and trade, are also major subjects represented in still life images of the seventeenth century. Carsten Höller's *The Double Club* used food, architecture and décor to cast commodities with regional and national associations into antagonistic roles, in order to show that categories of national and regional identity associated with food cultures are ultimately shallow formats for understanding identity. Peter Morin's *Team Diversity* harnessed bannock's associations with First Nation's cultures (which are hugely diverse cultures, and impossible to summarize through a bread-product, no matter how delicious) in a public act of *largesse* and spectacle with the hopes of drawing media attention to a cause the artist felt strongly about: the extraction of resources from First Nation's land for commodity production. This generous, performative still life used a familiar food-symbol of First Nation's cultures to highlight a struggle less familiar to some Canadian citizens: the struggle against the commodification of resources on Tahltan land, and the impact such actions would have (and are having) on the harvesting of traditional foods in this territory. Morin's and Höller's projects were put into relationship with the still life genre of market stall images, which present food in order to mediate new forms of social relations occurring around commodities. *Team Diversity* was additionally argued to be in relation to the subgenre of breakfast pieces, which show regionally produced foods, since the bannock served during the event is regionally and ethnically associated with the Tahltan nation. Drawing on the tradition of the street stall, Rirkrit Tiravanija's free-food service site presented two versions of Thai cuisine, one allegedly authentic and the other inauthentic, as a form of auto-ethnography, raising for inspection what exactly makes a

regionally-associated food authentic: the ethnic identity of the creator of the food, its ingredients, its geo-political setting, or a host of other factors. His project *Untitled 1992 (Free)* was compared with the subgenre of *pronk*, which sumptuously represents foods and objects from diverse locations, while they represent nothing of the labor, economies, or systems that led to their production. As with *pronk* images, where "all traces of labor are banished,"[449] although Tiravanija's labor is openly displayed through the inclusion of dirty dishes and pots in this project, the longer commodity histories of his ingredients and materials remain out of view. Karen Tam's restaurant series accesses local notions of Asian identity by asking communities in North America and Europe for donated furnishings and equipment for her staged Chinese Canadian restaurant interiors. By virtue of her interest in locality, Tam's project is in relationship to the subgenre of breakfast pieces, which depict local commodities. Her *Golden Mountain Restaurants* display commodities that are well known by viewers who have visited Chinese Canadian food service sites, yet the familiarity of the individual objects that Tam compiles, when paired with a smorgasbord of diverse donated foods, serves to reveal the cliché of Asian identity often used to prop up the illusion of authenticity at Chinese Canadian restaurants. By assembling such a large quantity of mismatched and diverse commodities, her project dramatically reveals how inadequate these familiar mass-produced objects are in accurately communicating "authentic" identity – and as a result they fundamentally question if there *is* such a thing as authentic ethnic identity that can be expressed through objects on view at a restaurant. Dean Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* combined shoddy do-it-yourself architecture with FRANK's *haute cuisine* commodities, surrounded by the slick,

[449] Hochstrasser, 199.

newly renovated AGO, to cause visitors to experience sensorial disjuncture and ultimately to question the social class-associated values that the AGO serves up and sells through its galleries and in its restaurant. Daniel Spoerri's *Un coup de dés* asked diners to role-play new social classes in the light-hearted environment of a segregated meal, which resulted in forms of antagonism on par with the political gastronomy proposed by Brillat-Savarin. As Brillat-Savarin believed, when food is served (or withheld) by a host, guests are more likely to be pliant to the whims and entreaties of their host to reconsider their own class identities as products of chance, not identities they were entitled to.

Chapter Seven proposed that Queer Food for Love presented a destabilized category of cooking that adapted the cuisine of Ferran Adrià to create queer food. The event *Queer Science* provocatively harnessed the intersensorial confusion inherent in molecular cuisine to suggest that there is a queer dining experience: one that is confused and destabilized through interactions with difficult, ambiguous foods. Adrià's and Queer Food for Love's foods were compared with examples of seventeenth-century still life that show foodstuffs that resist identification but nevertheless rouse our gustatory curiosity. This artist's restaurant was presented as rhetorically seductive, and in relation with theories of sublime presented by Burke and Kant. These two philosophers consider the sublime as a type of experience that overwhelms and enthralls – a dwarfing and terrifying situation that was argued to be a close analogue to encounters with difficult to identify and potentially disgusting foods. Queer Food for Love presented difficult foods to profile the values of queer aesthetics, and in part to ask participants to consider the taste of "others."

Theories of gustatory taste and aesthetic taste are raised for debate at these artist's restaurants. In his discussions of aesthetic taste, Kant introduces his concept of the categorical imperative, a response fostered by beauty that encourages people to reflect on a set of laws that exist outside of self-interest, and therefore ask that each person behave in the interests of others. The categorical imperative is innovatively animated in these artist's restaurants through the experience of gustatory taste. These feasts put participants in a position where by experiencing an artwork they had the opportunity to consider *the tastes of others* and how they might behave in relationship to others. The beauty, struggle, and delicious tastes featured at these artist's restaurants presented a chance for participants to think through the overall philosophy of the categorical imperative – even without being familiar with Kant's specific concept. So much for entirely frivolous, merely agreeable, entertainments at the artist's dining table. This is a weighty potential outcome from a feast-artwork even if the majority of participants may not have finally reached such philanthropic, philosophical conclusions as considering the categorical imperative by the end of the meal.

Kant argues that discussions that happen around a banquet table are of little consequence, and probably best not remembered. But as these artist's restaurants show, and philosophers like Brillat-Savarin and Fourier argue, conversations that occur over the sharing of food have an impact on the social relations between their participants. Like the earlier soup-serving *restaurant*, which intended to heal its clients with restorative broths, artist's restaurants also have restorative aims. Yet in many cases instead of offering strictly ameliorative outcomes, these artist's restaurants seek to *incite antagonism while offering hospitality*. Like many other contemporary artworks, such as those discussed by

Deutsche and Bishop, these artist's restaurants aim to animate the instability of democracy by creating publicly accessible sites that encourage dispute. It is fitting that these debates about democracy should be held at sites so closely aligned with the modern restaurant, frequently argued to have begun with the French Revolution's establishment of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Disputes at artist's restaurants, at their most basic level, often occur around the dispute of gustatory taste that Kant describes: *de gustibus non disputandum est*: there is no disputing about taste, and nonetheless people continue to dispute such matters. Like Fourier's antagonistic rivalries of taste, artist's restaurants encourage participants to firmly galvanize their taste preferences, often with the result that the participants' understandings of their sensoria are ultimately shaken and disrupted (or in some cases, more firmly solidified) through witnessing the taste preferences of others. These performative still lifes were immersive, intersensorial environments that invited their participants to reflect on and question connections between gustatory taste and aesthetic taste.

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Illustrations

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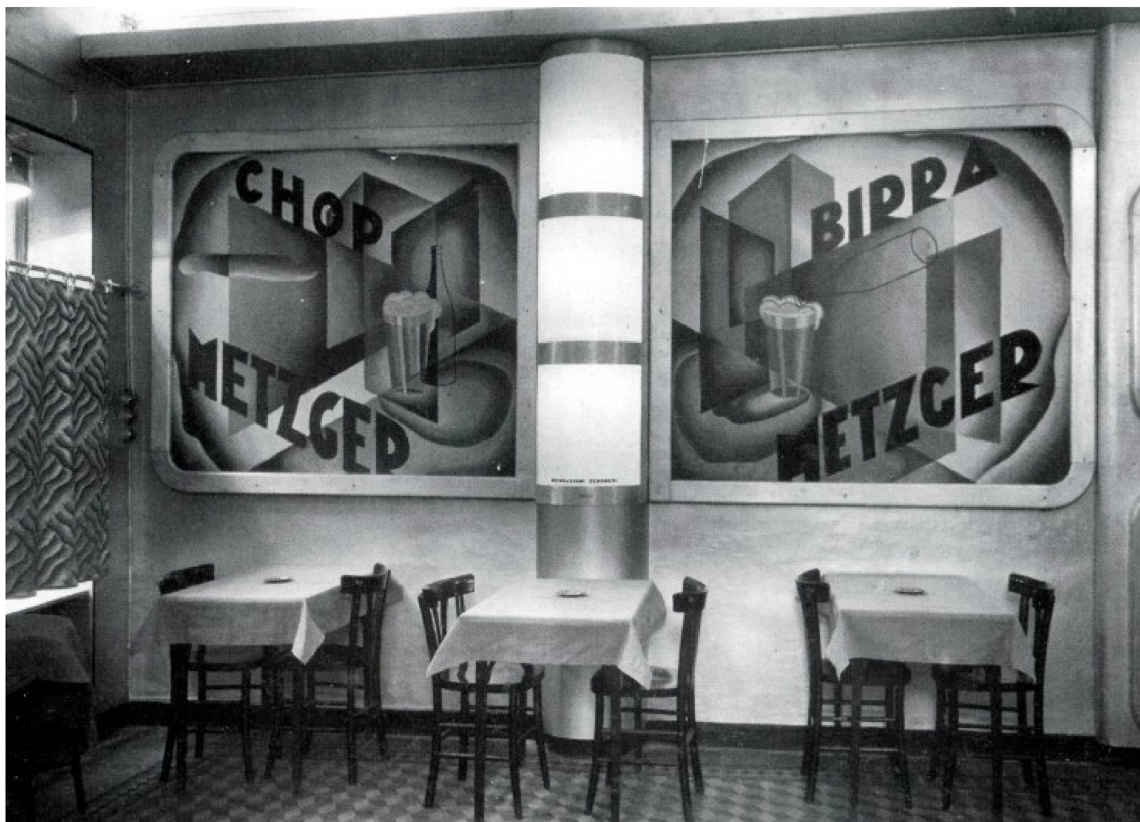

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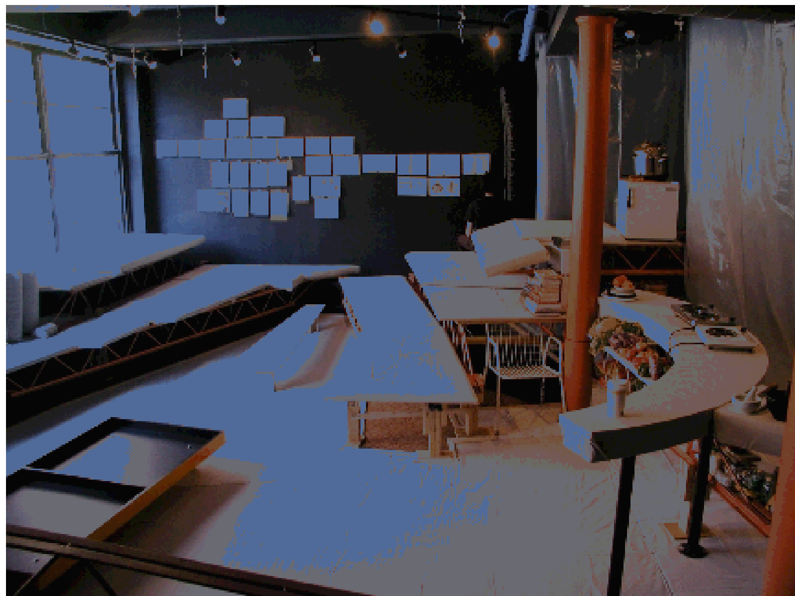
Figure 17. Spurse, *The Public Table: A restaurant presented by The Collective for the Finding of the Commons* (2006, New Haven; Bellows Falls). Photo courtesy of Spurse and Iain Kerr.



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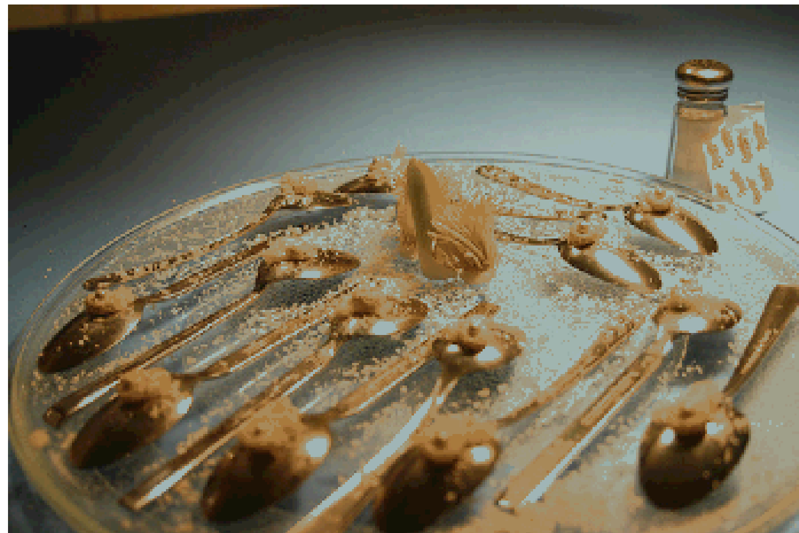

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Figure 23. ATSA, *État d'urgence* (1998-2010, Montreal).
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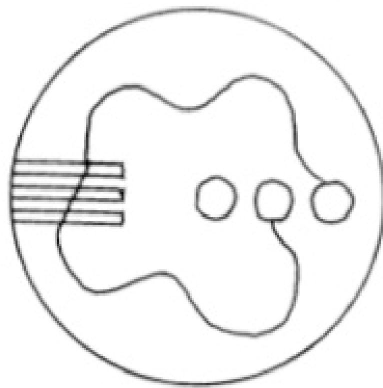
Fisticuff Stuff

(formula by the Futurist art critic P.A. Saladin)

Cover the bottom of a round plate with fondue lightly perfumed with grappa. On one side of the plate put equidistant from each other three halves of red pepper shaped into cones which have been cooked in the oven and filled with a green paste composed of asparagus tips, celery and fennel hearts, little onions, capers, artichokes and olives. On the opposite side set out in a row three boiled leeks. An arabesque of grated truffle which starts at the second pepper and winds its way finally to the one on the edge completes the dish.



Cubist Vegetable Patch

(formula by the Futurist art critic P.A. Saladin)

1. Little cubes of celery from Verona fried and sprinkled with paprika;
2. Little cubes of fried carrot sprinkled with grated horseradish;

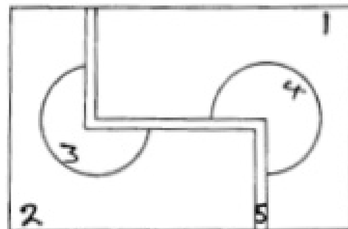


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Figure 30. Photo of a gas fired stove typical in Thailand.
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Figure 31. Karen Tam, *Miss Chinatown Wassall* (2009), part of the series *Golden Mountain Restaurants*, (2002-present). Available from: http://www.karentam.ca/english.html

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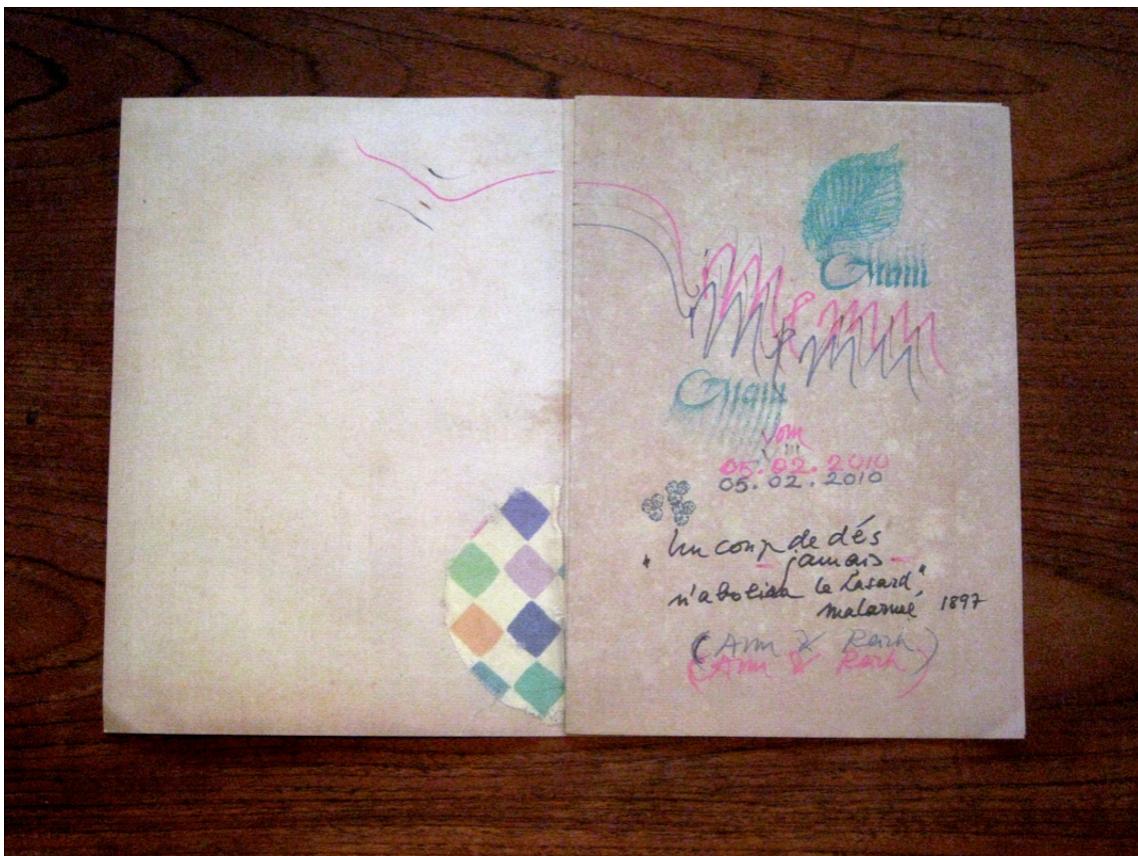

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Figure 39. Ferran Adrià, elBulli (1984-2011, Costa Brava, Spain)
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Figure 46. Ferran Adrià, *Gold leaves in coffee-chocolate soil* (2010)
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