

**The Chair That Wanted to Be a Table:  
A Personal Exploration of Alternative Dining Experiences in Reaction  
to Industrialized Agricultural Practices**

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### **Master of Design**

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## Abstract

The Chair That Wanted to Be a Table:

A personal exploration of alternative dining experiences in reaction to industrialized agricultural practices

Raphaël Viens

This research-creation approach to critical design finds itself at the intersection of agriculture, the built environment of the dining room, and queer philosophy. Adopting lenses from queer design theory to rethink domestic hierarchy, the work confronts consumer responsibilities, the importance of traditional crafting methods, industrialized agriculture, and intimacy surrounding food.

This research investigates the role tangible intermediaries—such as furnishings and instruments—play in the association of value onto ingredients we consume as sustenance, and onto community-based dining rituals. Through a critical point of view, the research investigates the possibilities of augmenting value in food through collaborative approaches of dining. Current food consumption habits are forcing agricultural practices to work in irreversible ways, against nature, to yield maximum results, without considering future implications, and so, this study asks:

**How can the proposal of alternative furnishings and tools shift consumers' perception of food origin, value, and consumption rituals in domestic settings?**

Stemming from this research is a series of homeware, dining instruments, and foraging tools that provoke reflection regarding our habits related to consumption of food, with the intention of creating additional value to its origin. Ultimately, this work aims at highlighting the value of community-based alternatives, for a more sustainable and more inclusive tomorrow. The research proposes an intimate reflection of consumption and access to sustenance through methods such as thinking through making and autoethnography.

**Keywords:** undesigning, queer theory, dining rituals, traditional crafts, dis-domestication, biodynamic agriculture.

## Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that access to sustenance is a privilege and not something to be taken for granted. The proposed outcomes of this research result in a critical form aimed towards those who have a say when it comes to decision-making regarding food and its consumption. The possible artifacts to arise from this research are to be useful to those feeling confronted by resource scarcity regarding ingredients, the loss of rituals, and the reshaping of the interior landscape due to social, cultural, political, and ecological shifts.

As I write this proposal, I acknowledge my presence on unceded Indigenous lands, here in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. This research is concerned with agriculture and includes topics such as land and soil, making it crucial to acknowledge custodianship of the Kanien'kehá:ka nation, for the land and waters where said research is taking place.

Although '[a] land acknowledgment is not enough', as Joseph M. Pierce puts it<sup>1</sup>. Land involves not only taking, but giving, sharing, and caring. Yet, the foods we consume today come from practices of greed, and selflessness. Land doesn't need to be told it exists, it simply does. However, we humans —of the western world at least— need to be told that we only exist because of land and need to heal our broken relationship to it. We not only need to acknowledge the land but also need to embrace the knowledge of those before us by adopting Indigenous ways of knowing. As Robin Wall Kimmerer so gracefully puts it, we need to intertwine 'old stories and new ones that can be medicine for our broken relationship with earth, a pharmacopoeia of healing stories that allow us to imagine a different relationship, in which people and land are good medicine to each other.'<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge those who have supported me over the course of this research-creation thesis:

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<sup>1</sup> Pierce, "Your Land Acknowledgment Is Not Enough."

<sup>2</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

My father, Renald, who taught me how to think in critical ways and continuously shares his infinite knowledge regarding agriculture, making things, and living. He has offered constant support and wise advice when needed.

My mother, Brenda Lee, for always creating a safe space for me to express myself and explore outside of the boundaries often imposed on boys growing up in the country. She is also the one who introduced me to sewing, knitting, and crafting from a young age and for this I will forever be grateful.

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My supervisor and committee members, who have always given me wise feedback and led me in the right direction. Thank you to Rilla Khaled, Miranda Smitheram, and Martin Racine.

I would also like to thank Ying Gao for giving the tools to believe in myself and making me fall in love with design.

## Incipit

Before delving into critical writings of rather complex social topics, I wish to share a few opening thoughts on the topic of food waste in relation to our bodies:

Today we eat; we do not feast.

The mere thought of eating food that has fallen on my ever so clean floors seems blasphemous,  
yet here I am, cleansing your body of its sins with my unbrushed tongue.

The dining room is disappearing.

Where is it going, you ask?

Probably in the trash, since most things are sent there to die.

As I lie on uncovered soil, I ask myself if dining is truly dead,  
or are we the ones who are voided of life?

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## Introduction

During one of my occasional visits to the family homestead, I found myself eating alone in one of two dining rooms in my parent's Canadian middle-class country house—as they enjoy their meal in another room, in front of the television. You'd think farmers would have a greater respect for the ritual of consuming the ever so time-consuming ingredients found in their plate. Not anymore, not today; not for now it seems.

In this lethargic epoch of connecting with other humans through technological devices, and what I perceive as a rise in individuality, grounded food consumption practices appear to be neglected alongside<sup>3</sup>. This is nowhere near a new phenomenon, as this is something that has been observed since the dawn of the industrialization of agriculture, individualized meals, microwaves, and home delivery services<sup>4</sup>. Why take the time to set the table and sit down with others, when you can simply open a take-out box and eat at your own convenience? This results in the idea of communal or even family shared meals as being less significant.<sup>5</sup> Another factor to these solitary acts of dining is the adoption of new or amorphous family structures and how mealtime is valued within these<sup>6</sup>. Through the decolonization of gender and Westernized family power structures—such as the nuclear family<sup>7</sup>—, the commonly known domestic hierarchy is being questioned, thus forcing to rethink not only daily activities such as dining, but also the interior landscape in which these activities are happening.<sup>8</sup>

According to a study conducted by Lori et al., 58% of Canada's food production ends up being wasted, and consumers play their part in this. This work critiques and reimagines the food

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3 Santos, Varnum, and Grossmann, "Global Increases in Individualism."

4 Richard, *Pour en finir avec le gaspillage alimentaire*.

5 Doyard, *Trop nourri, mal nourri*; Giraud, "Claude Fischler, Estelle Masson, *Manger. Français, Européens et Américains Face à l'alimentation*."

6 Richard, *Pour en finir avec le gaspillage alimentaire*.

7 The 'American dream' version of a family, including heterosexual parents who are married, and biological children living under the same roof.

8 Canli, "Binary by Design"; Maher, "Wonderment Domastication."

experience as we have come to know it in western society, through a series of expedient artifacts in relation to food culture—such as foraging, feasting, and dining. As a means of helping both the viewer and the user reflect on the paucity of contemporary dining through commentary, the research aims to restore the perception of food value to its consumer. Food for human consumption goes through multiple actors, from the soil it grows in, to the way it is discarded at the end of its life cycle. Through this research-creation practice, the study will focus on ‘value’ associated to agricultural practices and the consumption activities of its yielding in domestic settings. In the frame of this study, value is expressed as the capability of bringing communities together, whether this be within human communities, or other living organisms.

Starting with contemporary agricultural practices as a means of understanding the impact of ‘fast’ dining on food production, the research then leaps to the experience of food consumption, partially disregarding the preparation portion that comes before the ingestion, due to the time-bound nature of this masters. Although agriculture isn’t as far from the consumer as we may think, most are oblivious of its complexity and the consequences of our dining habits on it<sup>9</sup>. Food not only represents society’s behavior, but also the future of its existence; it is a cultural act central to how we live <sup>10</sup>. According to my perception of the issue, society’s fast-paced lifestyle has rendered food valueless and easily discarded, making the ‘dining’<sup>11</sup> experience a rare activity among most. Consequently, the disappearing of such traditions results in a shift of the domestic interior landscape and dare I say the disappearing of the dining room and its instruments altogether.

Using queer ideology as a theoretical approach, the artifacts created through this research will reflect on alternative relationships with food and its origin. The overall approach for this scrutiny is not to produce items of desire per se, but to reflect on how our everyday objects influence our habits and perception of value [and the possible consequences of these]. Proposed outcomes

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9 Holden, *What you Eat is Political: The Power of Provenance*.

10 Lang, “Food, Brexit and Culture: What Is Food Progress?”

11 In this context, dining is seen as the ritual of enjoying a meal, either by yourself or surrounded by others.

are to be inclusive and future forward, while keeping in mind the idea of undesigning<sup>12</sup> and deindustrializing<sup>13</sup> as a solution to contemporary problems.

Finding itself within queer theory, this study tackles well-known power structures to rethink pre-establish norms and reconsider current approaches to food. Topics rooted in cultural and socio-political conversations are known to be controversial at times, yet inevitable when tackling resources scarcity in relation to agriculture. To reflect on this topic from a self-centered perspective, autoethnography and thinking through making are used to criticize existing binaries and propose reflections on contemporary realities, and possible tomorrows.

The artifacts made through this research-creation thesis are a reflection of values transmitted to me by my environment. Growing up, my mother would occasionally invite friends of hers and other women from the region at our home to 'craft'. They would work on various projects, using various mediums, and share resources and knowledge; learning from one another and teaching the younger ones, such as myself. Today, these same gatherings still happen, but on a different scale. My siblings and I are older, and my parents have moved to a neighbouring village, and things naturally change over time: friendships, hobbies, etc. Nowadays, my mother meets with my two sisters and her best friend to work on sewing projects, more precisely quilting in her case. Quilting is a time-consuming hobby, involving planning, cutting, sewing, basting and such. And the result is a handmade blanket that is meant to be passed onto further generations as a keepsake. When my mother makes these, she does not wish to produce these quickly or run a large-scale production. These mementos, although often for decorative purposes more than functional uses, are meant to tell a story. A tale of knowledge and care.

When making the artifacts as part of this learning process, I had the same intention: to make them count. I surrounded myself with friends and likeminded creatives who wish to make with intention. I unwillingly recreated the space in which my mother taught me to make; one that includes the exchange of knowledge, of intimacy, and of love. Regrouping to make does not only signify working in a common space. This meant sharing a moment, but also sharing a meal and

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12 Instead of proposing new solutions to new problems, undesigning [in this research] means to work backwards to better understand the source of said issue.

13 To resort to pre-industrial modes of production.

conversing over the day. The reason I wish to acknowledge this from the introduction of the thesis is to enlighten my point of view on making and the importance of community within craft.

I approached the making portion with the intention of producing in a slow manner. The reason behind this wasn't to make it hard for myself or to add un-necessary value to the objects themselves (due to production time). As mentioned previously, I wanted to learn through the process of making, from the objects themselves, but also from the act of making with and alongside others. These same people I interacted with during the making, I experienced the artifacts with through testing and researching possible interactions, enhancing my comprehension of the artifacts' potential.

Reflecting on the importance of sustainable agricultural practices, this research asks: **How might perception of food value be reinstated through alternative tools in community-based rituals, in reaction to the disappearing of the conventional dining room in domestic settings?** The outcome of the research serves to enlighten consumers on the true value of food and its ability to bring communities together around a main interest: eating. This could result in the positive expression of community building, the reduction of food waste, and better understanding of the role of holistic agriculture<sup>14</sup> in our complex food system. By informing users on the social capabilities of ingredients to bring communities and groups together, this research speculates the implications of shifting consumers to prosumers—consumer who also partakes in the production—, with the intention of creating a sense of shared responsibility towards sustenance.

The research proposal is structured as such:

Foremost is a literature review on the food supply chain, including agriculture for human consumption, mainly in western settings. Following this section is an overview of the theoretical framework, where major themes such as conventional family structures and hetero-white-centered practices are perceived through critical lenses. These points of view help better understand how sociopolitical influences shaped our relationships to food, and how it influences

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<sup>14</sup> Through this research, holistic agriculture is understood as a sustainable practice which includes complex ecosystems, not only favouring human in the conclusion.

our daily habits. Afterwards, I detail out the methodological approach, which includes the process involved in both the making and the thinking behind the exploratory artifacts. This proposal is concluded with a reflection on the proposed objects and their interactions. See Figure 1: Thesis Architecture.

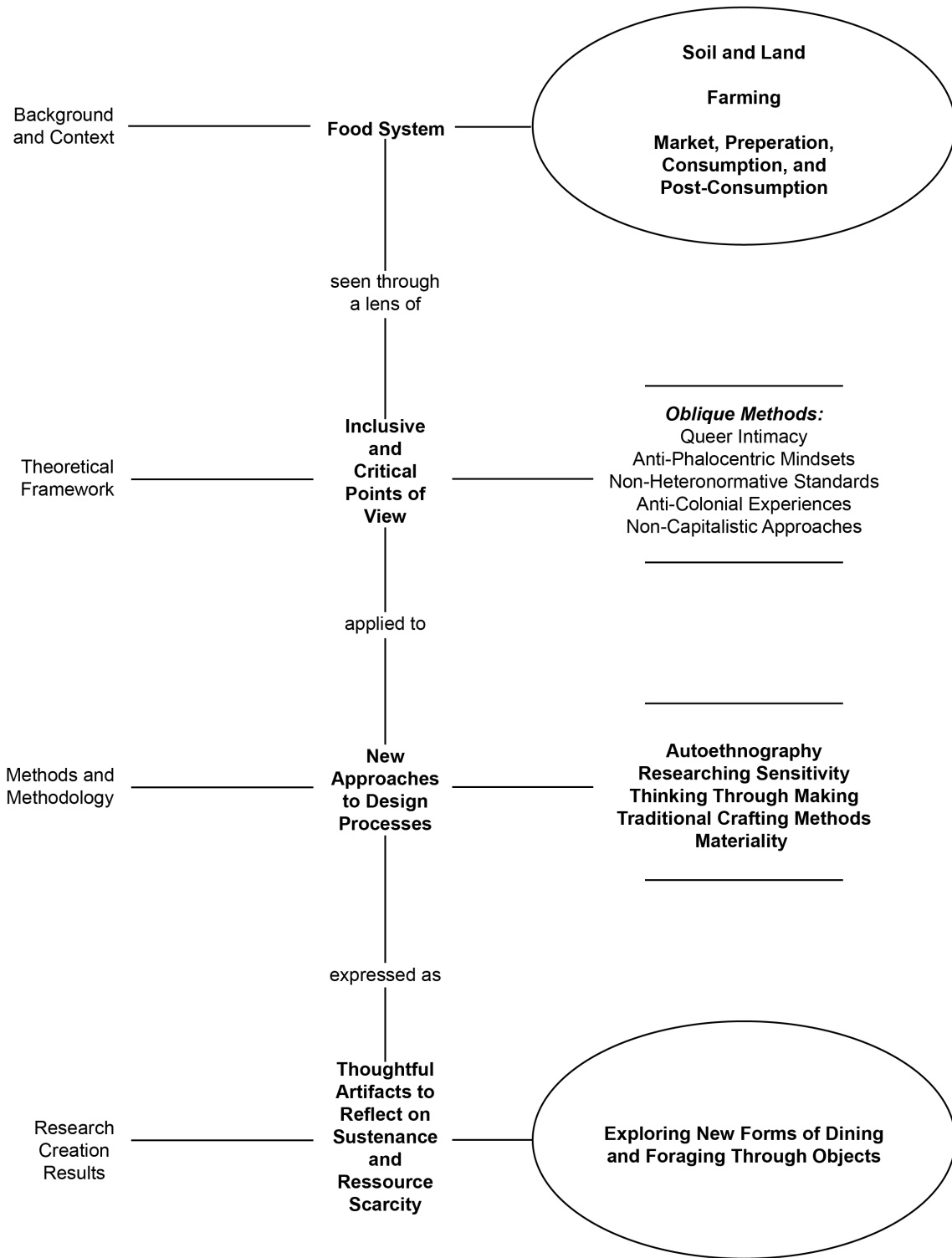


Figure 1: Thesis Architecture



## **Background and Context**

Within this section of the thesis, I will be presenting the scope of the research, the methods of review regarding the current state of agriculture, as well as the cycles we confront our food to. I will briefly go over different stages, from the soil food grows in, or on in certain cases, to the practices involved in cultivating it. I will then go over the distribution and preparations of these ingredients. Lastly, I will introduce the consumption and post-consumption of these foods.

Before I explain how I've explored and analysed the different stages of sustenance, I wish to clarify how I associate value to food. Throughout this thesis, I will often mention my desire to augment or reinstate value within the foods we consume—or simply purchase but neglect to consume. Value associated to food can manifest itself in various forms; in this scenario, the value isn't associated to monetary means in any way, but to the different ways food can bring people and communities together. Food itself is part of a larger community, implicating many actors along the way—from soil to mouth, it interacts with various organisms and plays a major role in many of these. Although I present food as being part of a cycle, I consider food to be *the* cycle; the great and mighty one.

### **Scope**

The scope of this research-creation covers the almost totality of the agricultural process, focusing on the production of human centered consumable goods and the ways in which we enjoy them. Within the categories presented, a principal focus is brought to one topic: production—seeing as how this is the main concern that initiated the research and due to time related restrictions corresponding to this master's degree thesis. Another important step is the consumption, which I will expand on in the Theoretical Framework. The information cumulated covers a time span of 100 years, from 1924 to 2024, to allow a wider understanding of the origin of industrialized agriculture, and its popularisation over time.

### **Methods of Review**

The ideology behind this thesis is focused on alternative methods relating to food productions and consumptions, adapted to contemporary social realities, all while embracing tradition and time-honed knowledge. For this reason, the selected literature diverges into two directions, the first being both historical and contemporary literature surrounding food consumption and food production from an almost technical point of view. The second direction concerns more critical

points of view on agricultural practices and food ethics. Both approaches later converge to create a hybrid point of view, that is then translated into the research through the thinking and making portion of this thesis.

Having grown-up in a farming household, a fair amount of information is tacit for myself—from casual conversations with my father on the repercussions of the winter weather on the summer harvest, to witnessing the hardships of family-owned farms. For this reason, I tried to cover as many angles as possible on the topic, to not be biased when reflecting on them later. Although, I must state from the get-go that my intentions stir away from industrialized processes in farming and wish to revert to more holistic practices, because after all, people tend to work harder than they need to obtain what they desire, and sometimes, what they desire isn't needed.<sup>15</sup>

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15 Fukuoka, Berry, and Prieur Dutheillet de Lamothe, *La révolution d'un seul brin de paille*.

## Uncovered Soil and Lands

“Soil is the first and ultimate state of matter” (Pausz, 2019, p. 60). From the sprouting of the first seed, life emerges, yet it isn’t limited to the growing of crops. Life is in the roots of the plant and the soil surrounding them, sharing vitality—water, nitrogen, carbon, and various minerals—and connecting them to an infinite underground community<sup>16</sup>. A healthy relationship between soil and consumer—human in this case— would result in a mutual respect and allyship.

Although we have the technology to grow food outside of soil, such as in water with the help of hydroponic methods, or simply out of the land, with rooftop green houses, I will focus on traditional land-based practices—as I believe it is crucial for crops to yield in this matter to be part of the holistic experience of agriculture. In controlled environments such as greenhouses, the producer decides what goes in the soil and what needs to be eliminated from it, thus limiting the complexity of its network. ‘Wild’ soil contains nutriment, minerals, insects, rodents, carcasses, and other rotting things. This allows micro-communities to exist and thrive alongside networks of mycelium.<sup>17</sup> Fungi is all over the place, although they mostly live hidden lives and most of their species remain undocumented.<sup>18</sup> They are around in inside of us and sustain the things we depend on. ‘They are eating rock, making soil, digesting pollutants, nourishing and killing plants, surviving in space, inducing vision, producing food, making medicines, manipulating animal behaviour, and influencing the composition of earth’s atmosphere.’<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, mycorrhiza, ‘is a symbiosis between fungi and plant root: 92% of plant families interact with fungi this way.’<sup>20</sup> Mycorrhiza benefits both the plants and the fungi, and allows plants to yield preferable results— mycorrhiza fungi benefits agricultural crops in great ways.<sup>21</sup> In forests, this underground

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16 Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*.

17 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

18 Sheldrake, *Entangled Life*. P.9

19 Sheldrake. P.9

20 Cluitmans et al., *On the Necessity of Gardening*. P.102

21 Cluitmans et al.

network use for sharing and communication is referred to as the ‘*wood wide web*’,<sup>22</sup> as its structures allow interactions within large forests.

Although this friendship between living organisms seems dreamlike, today’s reality isn’t quite as storybook worthy. Land for industrial farming does not share a relationship with its underground community, as its topsoil is often voided of life and repeatedly being overturned.<sup>23</sup> Every time we harvest, we are taking from the soil, but there is only so much we can take without having to give back. As an immediate solution, farmers might use artificial fertilizers to enhance the soil, yet these treatments often come with a higher price. Repercussions from these chemical products reveal themselves to ruin soil and its microorganisms, all for an immediate and ‘better’ harvest. But at what price? This is what happens when food becomes a product and not a basic human right.<sup>24</sup> Although healthy soils are the incipient of sustenance, it is often disregarded and left to die by industrialized farming practices that serve an immediate purpose and do not consider long term practices, nor does it consider the next generations regarding sustenance’s and the future of agriculture itself. As Raj Patel puts it: “The food industry’s out to poison us for profit”.<sup>25</sup> To this I ask myself: how can the consumer influence the ways in which their food is being produced?

Another crucial aspect to consider when it comes to soil is its location and history. As this research is taking place in North America—more precisely in Quebec, Canada/ Kanien’kehá:ka— its agricultural fields are located on unceded indigenous land. My research’s current scope does not include land rights, but I do wish to acknowledge the presence of farming land on unceded indigenous territory. And so, before I explore agriculture through what is most likely known as land from a western point of view, I wish to expose myself to what land means from a non-colonial point of view. Vanessa Watts mentions the term *Place-Thought*, which she then describes as being a non-singular space where place and thought are impossible to disconnect; although in contemporary farming, machinery, chemicals and other intervenient might try to do so. Watts then goes on to say that *Place-Thought* is established on the concept of land being alive and thinking

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22 Cluitmans et al.

23 Fukuoka, Berry, and Prieur Dutheillet de Lamothe, *La révolution d’un seul brin de paille*.

24 Wang, *Blockchain Chicken Farm*.

25 Patel, “The Epistemology of the Shopping Cart.”

and that humans and non-humans derive agency through these thoughts.<sup>26</sup> Human-centered perspectives are what makes the world a gift,<sup>27</sup> but the true gift here is the one of knowledge. Soil forming and knowledge forming live in parallel, making the idea of compost and soil as means for learning, living, and sharing in a slow, sensorial, and symbiotic adventure even more meaningful.<sup>28</sup> Land exists beyond sustenance yet '[o]ur health and physical abilities, from fertility to virility, depend on food, soil and microbial diversity' (Upham, 2021, p. 117).

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26 Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)."

27 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

28 Pausz, "Making Kin with Liminal Species."

## Agri-Culture

Many types of harvesting and production methods exist, even though industrialized farming is most likely the one we are familiar with. Through time and trends, humans have shifted their practices to adapt their means to their new lifestyles. From rudimentary farming such as ‘wild’ agriculture, all the way to GMO’s, I will cover various approaches to cultivating provisions over the next chapter. Although, due to the time bound aspect of this thesis, I will concentrate on certain methods more than others.

Although far different from farming, foraging\* —known today as one of many reactions to industrial farming— is a form of self-sustenance that connects the consumer directly with the produce and the land, making it evident how time consuming the simple act of harvesting can be. To learn more about the local foraging possibilities I had, I turn to *Forêt: Identifier, Cueillir, Cuisiner*<sup>29</sup>, a book listing the various species of greens, roots, flowers, and such that are safe for human consumption, as well as supply recipes to incorporate these unusual ingredients in our daily diets. What I wish to highlight here is the crucial adoption of locally sourced ingredients when it comes to sustenance, sustainability, and decolonization. In his book *Sauver la planète une bouchée à la fois*, nutritionist Bernard Lavallée encourages us to eat ‘weeds’.<sup>30</sup> Not only are they local and in season, but they are free and often undesired by the community, solving two problems at once. To work as a worldwide community, we need the places we live from, to be the places we live at, as Linda Schilling Cuellar covers in *The Avocado Toast (2021)*. Not only is foraging the first type of ‘agriculture’ —note that it is not actually *agriculture*, since it does not require any type of farming—, but it is also one that proves itself to be at the origin of humanity, alongside hunting.<sup>31</sup> Since this act of searching for food does not require any type of specialized equipment, licences, or monetary means, it proves itself to be at the opposite end of the spectrum from capitalism, as no one profits from it. Unfortunately, considering earth’s ever-growing population, foraging could not suffice our ever-esurient-mouths. So, what’s our next best option?

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\* The search for food in non-farming contexts, such as seeking mushrooms in a forest

29 Le Gal and Paré-Le Gal, *Forêt: Identifier, Cueillir, Cuisiner*.

30 Lavallée, *Sauver la planète une bouchée de fois*.

31 Le Guin, Yi, and Haraway, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*.

From Masanobu Fukuoka's 1975 book, *Shizen noho wara ippon no Kakumei*—which translates from Japanese to *The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural farming*— I have learned the true definition of *natural farming*, also known as *wild agriculture*. What Fukuoka means by this is a form of untamed farming; one where it's about cooperating with nature, instead of trying to make it better or to conquer it. He establishes four principals for it:

- 1: Do not cultivate; meaning not to plow, till or rotate the soil in any way.
- 2: No usage of chemical fertilisation or prepared compost.
- 3: Do not weed with any mechanical or chemical process.
- 4: No dependence of any kind to chemical products.

To make sure his point of view is clear, I wish to highlight that he doesn't dislike science per se, —he himself was a research scientist for a while—but mentions that using science to heal the damaged soil [from past agriculture] is not the same as using science to yield higher crop. In his book, he promotes a return to more holistic approaches to farming, one outside of politics and money. A practice that highlights the human implication in the process and not that of machinery. After all, food is what makes us human and allows us to live, yet living is but the consequence of being born, as Fukuoka says.<sup>32</sup> We have come to a time where people not only purchase their food instead of growing it but have become bored with the idea of consuming it only for sustenance. The reason why man chose to switch from cattle field work to automatized field work was to save time and finish before its neighbour. So, what does one do with all this extra time? One dreams and begins to create needs—superficial ones. If we have a food crisis, it will not be because of nature's insufficiency, but because of human's extravagant desires—and these desires are the fundamental cause that drove us to this difficult situation.<sup>33</sup>

As highlighted in the previous section on land, soil is at the beginning of good agricultural practices. In his book *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture* (1993) —based on his series of lectures from 1924—, Steiner introduces 'biodynamic' agriculture. This type of organic farming brings together soil, plants, animals, humans, and the cosmos. As a reaction to the

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32 Fukuoka, Berry, and Prieur Dutheillet de Lamothe, *La révolution d'un seul brin de paille*.

33 Fukuoka, Berry, and Prieur Dutheillet de Lamothe.

industrialized agriculture of post-World War I, this type of agriculture uses the land to yield crops that will not only feed us, but also participate in a living community. Writings like these [from the '20s] highlight the timelessness of the topic and raise concerns on the scale of the current food crisis. “People make food happen” as Tim Lang puts it (2019). The current food system is way past the tweaking stage and needs to be reconsidered as a whole, while considering all the implicated parties. It is time to align this so-called system to actual human needs, but also to planetary health. Food is what makes us human, it is not only sustenance, but also what makes up our culture, our feelings, and our minds.<sup>34</sup> We often see food as an individual decision, but it is part of something bigger than the sum of us. In this social cornucopia we need to start acting like a community and behave in a group manner. In response to this, small-scale farming has gained popularity over the past years. In Québec, Jean-Martin Fortier acts as a spokesperson and activist for the organic small-scale farming movement. Publishing books, giving workshops, and offering mentorship, he is behind many pieces of this social farming puzzle. Building a network of likeminded farmers, he offers answers and opportunities to those who seek a healthier land and sustainable practices, notably by showing new and old farmers how ‘actors’ on a farm can help each other grow when done strategically and responsibly. These farms promote locally sourced ingredients and the establishment of communities that care for the future of our food, while going against industrialized practices.

‘Big Pharma; Big Corn; Big Dick’ stated one of the posters outside of the *Canadian Center for Architecture*<sup>35</sup>, this past summer. I surmise this was from a past exhibition, one I assume I would have enjoyed viewing. One thing these three topics have in common is men and their egos. War—another theme I perceive to be masculine—brought the acceleration of industrialization, including farming. Additionally, this modernity of means of production came with its consequences—industrialization over evolution perhaps. For instance, anterior to the metallic and mechanical agriculture equipment known to us since the nineteenth and twentieth century, pre-industrialized equipment was composed of wood and glass—and clay prior to these.<sup>36</sup> Modernity meant abandoning handcrafted processes for automated ones, with the intent of extricating farmers and

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34 Lang, “Food, Brexit and Culture: What Is Food Progress?”

35 <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/about-overview>

36 Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie, “Deeper in the Pyramid: Journeys of Lactic Abstraction.”



yielding larger volumes. Nowadays, robotic systems are taking over what used to be human labor— in part due to the lack of implication or interest of the latest generations. Canadian dairy farms equipped with fully robotised milking technologies have more than doubled between 2016 and 2021, according to the Canadian Census of Agriculture (1063 in 2016 vs. 2197 in 2021).<sup>37</sup> In 2021, more than 1 out of 5 dairy farm was equipped with the material allowing for automated milking, among the other automated services such as cleaning, feeding, processing, and packaging. Farmers have no choice to adapt if they wish to keep up with the industry. They have themselves become secluded from what makes a farm what it is and believe me when I say that they're not the ones to blame. The only remaining contact between human and cattle, or human and produce, is the moment of consumption. *Mom-and-pop* type farms are becoming more unusual. 'Non-family corporations are the most profitable farm operating arrangement', states the March 2023 article published on Statistic Canada's website, reporting that although non-family corporations generated nearly three-quarters (74.3%) of the amount of operating revenues that partnerships reported, they only represented one tenth (10.2%) of these farms.<sup>38</sup> This shows us that it has become unprofitable to be a family-owned business. In the book *Blockchain Chicken Farm*<sup>39</sup> we find similar instances happening in China. Wang investigate the risks of including high-tech approaches to farming, resulting in further cultivated distrust and selfishness within communities, as well as deepening segregation between rural and urban populations. Once again, highlighting the implications of 'culture', in 'agri-culture'.

*There's no use crying over spilled milk.* You may be familiar with that saying, or maybe not so much. So, here's what it means: It's useless to be upset over things that have already happened and cannot be changed. Yet I find myself drenched in tears over things that have happened—and still are—in our food system. If only it was as simple and easy as cleaning up a puddle of white—nowadays blue— liquid from the ground. Agriculture and farming span above and beyond milk, but for the sake of this spiel, I will focus on this once cherished dairy product. To have milk in your coffee every morning, and cheese in your sandwich at lunch time, cows have been bred over centuries. These once wild beasts are now human's protégés; their gestation cycles have been

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37 Government of Canada, "Technologies Used on the Operation, Census of Agriculture, 2016, Inactive."

38 Government of Canada, "Canada's Farms Were More Profitable in 2020 than in 2015."

39 Wang, *Blockchain Chicken Farm*.

altered and extended into a never ending and expanding thing, making them more than dependent on our help to survive.<sup>40</sup> No one knows where milk starts or ends, as the market is responsible of always carrying the 2% or 3,25% milk you desire—an endless stream of pasteurized beauty leading to our mouths, acting as a staple of modernity and technological advancement in food chains. Today, the word ‘farming’ is synonymous with ‘invasion’ and for lack of better words, I will quote the work of Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie:

Milk is messy and compromised. Milk is original and pure. Milk is troubled, a turbid substance whose representation is difficult. It is presented as natural, health-giving, but is enmeshed in industrial processes and commercial strategies. It appears whole and entangled in life and liveliness, yet it speaks of death. To perceive the shapes within milk, the ways in which it has been shaped over time, is to give oneself up to its minglings, its combinations and recombinations with myth, social norms, social fantasy, and cultural practices. It means to conceive its expressibility, its capacity to be images, to seep into language and be made metaphorical. It necessitates thinking about the ways in which an orientation toward separation from the body, from suppliers has fed into it becoming abstracted for capital, into data, into something limitlessly reproducible and separate from or other to itself, as it flows between purity and abjection, the technoscientific and the bucolic, never settling, always spilling somewhere else.

Looking into the future of food, books such as *The Sausage of the Future*<sup>41</sup> not only suggests variations of the food we already know and consume, but also their history. Niebling discusses a crucial topic: the impact of meat in a sustainable food chain, which cannot be ignored when discussing agriculture. They introduce more sustainable ways of making sausages, by promoting the use of undesired parts of the animals or by including other protein sources such as insects. Meat and dairy are not the evil ones; it is those who consume them in unconscionable ways. In *Green Meat? Sustainable Eaters, Animals and the Planet*, Ryan M. Katz-Rosene and Sarah J. Martin emphasise the importance of ‘thinking carefully about *what* you eat, *where* it comes from,

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40 Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie, “Deeper in the Pyramid: Journeys of Lactic Abstraction.”

41 Niebling, *The Sausage of the Future*.

and *how* it was produced.<sup>42</sup> The solution they are promoting is not the abolition of meat or dairy, but the repeal of industrialized processes. For instance, adopting a plant-based diet that sources its ingredients from industrialized processes is not necessarily more sustainable than a responsibly sourced meat-based diet.<sup>43</sup> Katz-Rosene argues that the popular belief that ‘meat is bad for the environment’ is a confounding statement that is often expressed in a reductive manner. They propose three different approaches to ‘greening’ meat production and relations:<sup>44</sup>

First is the *modernizing of meat*—with the use of technological innovation to improve production efficiency.

Second is the *replacing of meat*—includes the phasing out of traditional meat and replacing it with alternative proteins (including laboratory meat).

Third is the *restoration of meat*—aims at achieving appropriate balance of livestock (and meat) within agro-ecological and socio-economic systems.

Although this was a brief overview of the entanglement of agriculture both then and now, I wished to highlight some of the complexities of farming and reiterate that the decision lies in the hands of the consumer when it comes to buying food<sup>45</sup>. On the topic of exchanging money for food, Robin Wall Kimmerer mentions the following:

Refusal to participate is a moral choice. Water is a gift for all, not meant to be bought and sold. Don’t buy it. When food has been wrenched from the earth, depleting the soil and poisoning our relatives in the name of higher yields, don’t buy it. <sup>46</sup>

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42 Katz-Rosene and Martin, *Green Meat?* P.xi

43 Katz-Rosene and Martin.

44 Katz-Rosene and Martin. P.15

45 Richard, *Pour en finir avec le gaspillage alimentaire*.

46 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

## From Market to Mouth

“Know your farmer, know your food,”<sup>47</sup> said Patrick Holden in a 2019 interview with Mark Hix on the topic of food provenance. As the intermediary between producer and consumer, from farm to fridge, the following sections highlights the realities of food distribution, and the disconnectedness of consumers towards the origin of the ingredients they ingest. I believe that we are more and more oblivious of how crops are grown, and cattle are raised, as well as to the realities of producing these. But the matter of fact is that ‘food does not come from a flock in the sky’.<sup>48</sup>

Nowadays, eating three meals at home has become an exception; the growing number of spaces dedicated to restaurants reflects the rise of out-of-home dining, thus removing the importance of markets and supermarkets.<sup>49</sup> Another influence in the domination of restaurants over grocery focused stores, is the increase of home food delivery systems.<sup>50</sup> Yet, the market’s goal is not only to get food from farms to your door, but to also act as selling points for transformed foods and ready-made foods. This results in a further separation between the consumer and the soil in which crops grew, or farms on which cattle are raised. Packaged and shelved, food becomes a product of desire, presented through marketing and selling tactics. Food marketing finds itself way out the scope of this thesis, but I still wish to emphasise the importance it has on our daily decisions, both in and out of the supermarkets.

Although this next portion of the food system is also outside of the research’s scope, as it is a complex topic in itself, I still consider the value of recipe books passed down through generations. They are vessels of tradition, culture, and knowledge, but with the disappearing of heirloom crops, how will we ever recreate these unique flavors reminiscent of a different epoch? Whether it be at home with the help of a family recipe or from a second-hand source such as a restaurant, preparation—and transformation—account for a considerable contribution towards food’s value.

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47 Holden, *What you Eat is Political: The Power of Provenance*.

48 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. p.31

49 Steegmann, “The New Meaning of a Collective Space: La Baroqueria Market.”

50 Ortigosa, “Home Food Delivery.”

Eating can be done in the comfort of your dining room, in front of the television, in a park, or at a restaurant—among other settings. This research focuses mostly on the domestic relationship with food, such as the kitchen and the dining room, and the influence of it on reimagining the interior landscape. The dining room splits itself into two categories: the built environment composed of furniture and tools, and as a “socio-political” reflection of humanity. The physical space isn’t the only thing I am interested in when it comes to the dining experience. Tools and instruments play a large role in our communication and the origin of said objects also influence our actions and interactions today. Later, in the Theoretical Framework, I will unpack these topics and explore why the nuclear family hasn’t quite blown up yet.

Once the meal is over, leftovers are generally discarded or transformed. It is pivotal to take into consideration the origin of food, but what is the meal without the *postprandial*<sup>51</sup> and the waste generated by it? According to a recent study, on a yearly basis, 58% of all food in Canada is lost or wasted.<sup>52</sup> Would proposing a time and place for dining force us to think about what we’re eating, or rather what we are *not* eating?<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

For each portion of food’s cycle, value can be reinforced or reinstated in different ways, but due to the time-bound aspect of this master’s research, this work focuses on two elements: food origin and the dining experience. With the intent of exploring paradigm shifts in relation to food consumption, the research aims at understanding the migration of certain practices and relate them to social movements. The act of eating is an important part of the food cycle, yet it is a very social one; thus, I will expand on its implications in the following section, the Theoretical Framework.

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51 That comes after the dining period.

52 Lori et al., “The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste: Roadmap.”

53 Richard, *Pour en finir avec le gaspillage alimentaire*.

I've quickly gone over the agricultural cycle, although the truth is, more actors are involved, and many more elements make up our food system. Growing or raising food involves multiple actors and multiple steps—although we might only know the one that entails pushing ingredients in our mouths. As mentioned previously, there are methods of sustenance outside of industrialized agricultural practices, such as wild, biodynamic, or small-scale farming. The answers to our problems exist, and they do not involve the need to design new tools nor systems. The answer is to go back to where things went wrong and learn from the mistakes we committed as a society. How can we move forward, in solidarity, with a goal of a better tomorrow, one where food and survival aren't traded for profits of multi-million-dollar companies? In this capital-driven reality we are faced with, this task of 'going back' seems inconceivable. Would it be possible for me to imagine a world where consumers change the way food is produced—a world where we consume with intention? Could this newfound appreciation for food stem from the dining table, our most intimate moment with sustenance and the utensils we use? This emotional connection to things, or food is important, "[w]e live in a time when emotions are currency. Economically and politically what we feel really does matter. It's also time for design to get emotional."<sup>54</sup> (p.37). As I reflect on the implication of the artifacts surrounding us in relation to the value we associate to ingredients, I ask myself: **how can the proposal of alternative furnishings and tools shift consumers' perception of food origin, value, and consumption rituals in domestic settings, to promote better agricultural practices?**

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54 Pestana, "Empathy Revisited: Designs for More That One."

## Theoretical Framework

### Objectives

*How silly that we measure the day by how much light fits inside it and not by the number of ordinary wounds the light lands on at any given second.*<sup>55</sup>

I see agriculture through poetry; yet seeing scientific matter through a romanticized lens does not inform us on the topic of 'queering' agricultural and dining practices per se, but could it bring us to reflect on the ways in which we measure them. The exploration of alternative approaches to well-known ideologies regarding food are based on various writers and researchers that will be mentioned below, but first, I wish to state my intentions with this said lens; to me, 'queer' is not a single thing, nor a unique way of approaching things, but rather a multitude of right answers to contemporary issues as well as a potential of undoing (by viewing things from a new perspective or understanding, we can learn different ways of producing that might seem counterintuitive to our current counterintuitive to our current habits). My hopes are—for these human-centered approaches—to leave room for exploration and discovery, both in and outside of the margins.

When initially writing the theoretical framework it was divided into three main sections. The first covered queer and feminist theories, and how these approaches can be applied towards our relationship to sustenance. The second, anti-capitalistic mindsets seen through the exploration of craft-based methods and ideologies. The third segment leaned into decolonial practices and approaches in reaction to western mindsets. The reason why all three were segmented was to facilitate with the structure of the thesis and to create hierarchy in the reading. But it was an unimaginable task. All three themes coexist on many levels and are tangled in impossible manners, making it unthinkable to separate one from another. With this research, I am proposing new rituals; ones where we explore the act of eating, while exploring ourselves as individuals and as a community through it. No prescribed ways of consuming food, rather suggestions and possibilities; tools for rediscovering the act and pleasures of dining and to find new means of

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55 Belcourt, *A History of My Brief Body*. P.130

consuming food outside of heteronormative, white, money-making ways, because food sovereignty exists outside of capitalism and patriarchal systems.<sup>56</sup>

### **Oblique Methods of Learning**

I am a white, cis-gendered man; yet I am not heterosexual, nor do I wish to be.

I grew up in a rural middle-class farming family who loved me, and still do.

I am fortunate and acknowledge it.

Many of the readings that inspired the following portion of this thesis work with or around queer ideologies—but before delving into them, I wish to define my own interpretation of ‘queer’. Queer is the abnormal, weird, or even sometimes dangerous; it involves both sexuality and gender yet does not limit itself to it; queer is the rejection of the ‘normal’ and comes into conflict with the heterosexual capitalistic world; it is the discomfort that tackles white-hetero-monogamous-patriarchy; queer is —among many things— kinship with those who are marginalized and oppressed.<sup>57</sup> In the opening line of his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz writes:

Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain.<sup>58</sup>

In *Radical Intimacy*, Sophie K. Rosa writes about the ‘memefication’ of the word *queer* and how it has become joke material on social media due to its appropriation by corporations.<sup>59</sup> It’s becoming the equivalent of *green washing*, a term used when companies use ecological terms in their favour to profit from consumers. Rosa states that “To queer’ something often equates to a

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56 Pimbert, *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity*.

57 Mary Nardini Gang, *Toward The Queerest Insurrection*.

58 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*. P.1

59 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*.



shallow, aesthetic subversion of heterosexual norms, or to 'pinkwashing', in which conservative and capitalist institutions such as corporations, police forces or nation states invoke 'queerness' to mask harmful practices or to gain legitimacy.<sup>60</sup> And so, going forth in this thesis, I will only refer to 'queer' as *oblique*. *Oblique* design theory; *oblique* approaches to farming; *oblique* ways of living.

### **Love, Lust, or Lettuce?**

Throughout this thesis, the use of the word *intimacy* is not employed to describe activities of sexual nature, nor sexual intercourse. Rather, the word 'intimate' signifies a deep, or detailed knowledge of someone, or something. 'But just as not all sex is intimate, not all intimacy is sexual,'<sup>61</sup> mentions Rosa. So, what can intimacy be, if not solely sexual? From my standpoint, intimacy can be perceived through acts of sharing, such as enjoying a meal with someone—friend, family, or stranger. It is also the farmer, penetrating the soil with their bare hands to harvest vegetables you'll then absorb, by preparing and most likely inserting them into your mouth to consume them. This same farmer who has seen eye to eye with the cow from which the milk in your coffee has been drawn from. To me, this is a form of intimacy, connecting not only to another being through sustenance but connecting to the soil our food rises from as well as its ongoing micro-society. As our predecessors and patrons, microorganisms must be acknowledged as our immediate partners in a lifelong relationship of intimacy.<sup>62</sup> Vital soil, which results from responsible agriculture, is fundamental to human and non-human's perpetuity, yet isn't always considered by the consumer as a considerable element when purchasing consumable goods—in their defense, it is quite a task to research the provenance of each head of lettuce or kale you might buy. But how could the consumer feel a sort of obligation towards the soil that produced their food—or at least care for it?

Utilized to describe a particular area employed for farming or harvesting, as well as a community's connection to it, *terroir*, from French vocabulary, goes above what we would describe as 'land'. *Terroir* implies that factors such as location, climate, and soil matter to food and to its perceived

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60 Rosa. P.70

61 Rosa. P.2

62 Katz, *Wild Fermentation*.

value by consumers.<sup>63</sup> Imagine if we were to acknowledge the intimate relationship our bodies share with ingredients, as well as the possible kinship they could form with food's origin. What if the love we share for our relatives, friends, or even ourselves wasn't limited to human-on-human interactions; but to soil and everything living in it. Food centered limerence expands beyond affection or closeness, '[...] in their intimate, bodily yet social characters, food and sex, eating and eros, have much in common.'<sup>64</sup> Yet humans aren't the only species to reproduce. As mentioned previously, cows have not always produced milk on a yearly basis to feed our greedy bellies. They were once like our mothers, utters filling with milk only when pregnant; to then nourish the newborns from their own bodies. Nowadays, dairy cows produce milk whether they are gestating or not, because we humans enjoy milk so much. We've voluntarily modified these beasts to fit our desires, may they be responsible or not. The cow's body has disappeared in our perception of the food chain, allowing us to enjoy the white, or almost blue liquid that seeps from it, resulting in the obliteration of the once shared intimacy with animal.<sup>65</sup> As mentioned previously, the implication of technology in farming methods comes with its consequences, including the disappearing of our infatuation towards the origin of food. I remember as a child going to a dairy farm, owned by a friend of the family, and drinking milk that was only seconds old. Served in a ceramic mug, still warm from the heat of the cow's body. With this, came a fascination; I had the occasion of meeting the mammal behind the milk in my cereal—or one of them at least. Our obsessions, as a society, prove themselves to have evolved alongside our consideration for the role of the 'mother' in all of this. From the *preggo* or *milky* pornography categories online to the use of slang terminology such as *milk jugs* to describe a person's breasts.<sup>66</sup> Our appreciation for milk's origin and the mother behind it seems to have mutated into something far from its origin, while changing our understanding of intimacy towards food. Although they might be at the origin of it all, I don't consider lactating figures to be the one's behind this mess.

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63 Heather Paxson, "Post-Pasteurian Cultures: The Microbiopolitics of Raw-Milk Cheese in the United States."

64 Alonso Diaz, Serrano, and García-Dory, *Microbiopolitics of Milk*. P.141-142

65 Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie, "Deeper in the Pyramid: Journeys of Lactic Abstraction."

66 Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie.

## Cultivating Sausages: Why Phallogocentric Mindsets Killed the Mother

Where is that wonderful, big, long, hard thing, a bone, I believe, that the Ape Man first bashed somebody with in the movie and then, grunting with ecstasy at having achieved the first proper murder, flung up into the sky, and whirling there it became a space ship thrusting its way into the cosmos to fertilize it and produce at the end of the movie a lovely fetus, a boy of course, drifting around the Milky Way without (oddly enough) any womb, any matrix at all? I don't know. I don't even care. I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained.<sup>67</sup>

Mentions Ursula K. Le Guin, in *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, in 1986. *This is a man's world*, as the expression goes; or *a straight white man's world*, it should go. Inspired by Elizabeth Fisher's work, Le Guin highlights the faultiness of the story behind human's evolution by shifting the focus from bones and spears (associated to masculinity) to vessels and containers (associated to femininity)—and from violent phallic artifacts to receptacles of nourishment and care.<sup>68</sup> The general idea lies behind the interpretation of 'carrier bags' and how they were not only used before weapons (relating to hunting and gathering), but also the lack of importance associated to them. Men and their spears told stories of ferocious hunts and adventures, while women spent their time foraging silently—and not having stories to show for. As a more contemporary representation, Maya Ober shares her point of view on food and feminism. She states that 'to sit at a table and share food while having discussions is a central aspect of feminism.'<sup>69</sup> As of today, even though not as popular as it once was, cooking and eating are often associated to women and to domestic environments—even though the act of sharing a meal has the ability to extinguish the boundaries between the public and the private, while also building communities.<sup>70</sup> Not only can *oblique* mindsets help re-establish—or better yet abolish—roles in the private sphere, they could also

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67 Le Guin, Yi, and Haraway, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*.

68 Le Guin, Yi, and Haraway.

69 Maya Ober, "Working from Within: Depatriarchise Design." p.55

70 Maya Ober.

extend responsibility outside of the home. Some might find it difficult to adhere to this new sense of liberty and acceptance, in fear of losing the stability and familiarity of their pre-established habits or the dread of their own validity in a reviewed society where meaning and security are defined differently.

### **Father Sits at The End of the Table While Mother Cries**

In most homes you can locate a room where the bed finds itself; this is where you would sleep. In a dining room, with a table and chairs surrounding it, this is where you would eat—using plates, forks, knives, etcetera. These familiar systems invite us to live life as it is imagined by heteronormative mindsets—one where the father sits at the end of the table, while mother cooks for the family. The contemporary experience of dining we've come to know is without a doubt exceedingly heteronormative, although it has evolved since Simmel's infomercial about proper mealtime customs—*A Date With Your Family (1950)*—, where the head of the house, the man, is welcomed home from work with a lovely meal he shares with his wife and children. In the video, we are thought 'proper' manners and the role each member plays at mealtime. The family sits down at the table, says grace to honour the food they are about to eat, and the narrator goes over dos and don'ts the children should follow to ensure happy parents.<sup>71</sup> The heteronormalized family is not the 'problem' per se, but the lack of other definitions for 'family' as valid alternatives, is. As Adrien Rich puts it, '[...] the absence of choice remains the great unacknowledged reality'<sup>72</sup>, when talking about 'compulsory heterosexuality'—term coined by Rich himself and often condensed to *comphet*, theorises that heterosexuality is not only assumed, but enforced by patriarchal and heteronormative society.<sup>73</sup> This thus creates segregation amongst communities, separating minority groups from the masses. Eradicating the 'family', or at least our definition of it would solve superficial issues related to the topic, as Rosa mentions, 'Remaking the world by remaking the family does not mean throwing the baby out with the bathwater.' They then go on to mention that '[a]midst the violence of the nuclear family, there are ideas and values we might salvage from the

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71 *A Date With Your Family*.

72 Rich, *Women: Sex and Sexuality*.

73 Rich.

wreckage.<sup>74</sup> Our current understanding of ‘family’ is an inexhaustible source of love and safety, yet this not a shared experience amongst everyone; these feelings should be felt by all, and not only the few.<sup>75</sup>

You may or may not be familiar with the term ‘chosen family’, so here is a brief definition: Chosen families represent nonbiological bonds founded on kinship, love, and mutual support, whether legally recognized or not.<sup>76</sup> In my surroundings, it is used by various folks to describe attachments to other people or groups of people with whom you feel a deep emotional connection and sense of belonging, where roles are redefined and adapted to contemporary realities, releasing people from the strict binaries of domestication and communal housing. In a chapter titled *Kin-Making and Critical Nonmonogamy*, Kim TallBear writes about the act of decolonizing love. More precisely they encourage us to go against structures that wish to mould the way we see and experience relationships. They state the following:

*Decolonization is not an individual choice. We must collectively oppose a system of compulsory settler sexuality and family that continues building a nation upon Indigenous genocide and that marks Indigenous and other marginalized relations as deviant. This includes opposing norms and policies that reward normative kinship ties (e.g., monogamous legal marriage, nuclear biological family) over other forms of kinship obligation. It includes living or supporting others in living within nonmonogamous and more-than-coupled bonds. It includes advocating policies that support a more expansive definition of family, and not rewarding normative family structures with social and financial benefits. Multiple scholars including Scott M. Morgensen and Katherine Franke show us how the present settler sexuality system attempts to railroad all of us into rigid relational forms established historically to serve the patriarchal heteronormative and increasingly*

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74 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*.

75 Rosa.

76 Carlson and Dermer, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Marriage, Family, and Couples Counseling*.

also homonormative imperial state and its unsustainable private property interests and institutions.<sup>77</sup>

I wish for a world where the obligation we feel towards our biological siblings went beyond our immediate circle, and possibly even outside of human-to-human relationships; one where I share my love for a field as deeply as I love my own parents. You might be asking yourself: who will sit at the end of the table, if not father? I think you should be asking yourself why it matters. On the topic of the patriarchal family, the Third World Women's Alliance mentions that:

'Whereas in a capitalist culture, the institution of the family has been used as an economic and psychological tool, not serving the needs of people, we declare that we will not relate to the private ownership of any person by another. We encourage and support the continued growth of communal households and the idea of the extended family. We encourage alternative forms to the patriarchal family and call for the sharing of all work (including housework and childcare) by men and women.'<sup>78</sup>

Because after all, women—no matter how you define them—are not to be held responsible for mothering everyone, nor anyone. They are not responsible for saving men and their mistakes. A family doesn't have to be about hierarchy or power. Nor does it need to be about gender and blood. It is up to you to define who and what your family is and should be—including how you enjoy food, whether it be at a table, or not.

On daily bases, we homo sapiens tend to layout rituals for ourselves. We establish them around daily tasks and include them in our routines— such as brushing our teeth in the morning, coffee in the afternoon, and masturbation before bed; to name a few. When dining, familiar rituals might include setting the table, saying grace before eating, enjoying dessert only on the weekends, etcetera. Would it be possible for us to revise these in favour of the ingredients we are about to consume? What about the people we wish to share them with? As we've seen previously, the nuclear family is being abolished and updated definitions of families are being defined and explored, leading to new rituals and new ways in which we interact with the foods we eat. What

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77 TallBear, "Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family." P.152

78 Crow, *Radical Feminism*. P.463

would it mean '[...] to positively and creatively re-invent social relations'<sup>79</sup>, when it comes to eating?

While rethinking the interior landscape, I take inspiration from Gabriel A. Maher's work, *Wonderment Domastication* (2020) to review the purpose of the dining room in contemporary settings. Coined by the French Poet Caroline Bergvall, in their text *Éclat*<sup>80</sup>, 'domastication', is perceived (by Maher) as the redefinition of 'house rules' in regard to the lived experience—the queering and reinterpretation of the domestic space, the word domestication becomes 'domastication'. This research work not only disequilibrates our perception of normative spatial arrangements, but also manners of occupancy and the relationships we share with space and objects in everyday life. By analysing behaviour in context through methods such as video and site writing, they propose alternatives possibilities from which one can encounter the domestic.<sup>81</sup> We follow guidelines, just as our furniture does. It orients us, and possibly limits us, by dictating how it should be used and for what, and how we should feel regarding them.<sup>82</sup> Furniture, plants, animals, and now us. What will be the next thing on the list of the domesticated?

It is important to note that throughout the thesis, the term *dis-domestication* is used to describe the act of removing pre-established specificities—such as form and function—to any given thing, and to remove associations typically affiliated to its use. The reason for such use of vocabulary is to remove objects from strict binaries and allow users to determine both the form and function associated with their belonging, allowing for unconventional means of interactions with material possessions.

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79 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*. p.8

80 Bergvall, *Éclat*.

81 Maher, "Wonderment Domastication."

82 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

## A Doctrine of Care

Take; eat; this is my body.

In an interview led by Audrey Fondcave, Apolline Vranken discusses her 2017 master's degree thesis titled *From Beguinages to Feminist Architecture* (translated from French; *Des béguines à l'architecture féministe*), in which she introduces the *Beguines* as one of the first feminist movements—a sisterhood of emancipated women. Inspired by catholic religion, all while embracing more liberatory aspects, they lived in communities on the outskirts of patriarchy where women were allowed to practice undying celibacy—among other empowering rights. The formation of such a populace allowed them to live within a larger city, while maintaining their own autocracy inside the walls of their commune. These boroughs included churches, green spaces, and houses; open to all during the day, but closed off by gates in the night. In 1372, it was estimated that 1300 beguines lived in Bruxelles only, representing 4% of the local population.<sup>83</sup> They were first noticed in the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as other areas of Europe; spreading from Italy and Spain, all the way to Sweden. These liberated women would be appointed jobs such as making herbal medicines, crafting illuminated manuscripts, and artisanal tasks such as weaving and embroidery—'many were also excellent businesswomen.'<sup>84</sup> Later in the interview, Vranken indicates that these women were disciplined to practice 'informal care', better known as unremunerated activities of helping; they had a special attention for their self-care, but also for the care of others. She then goes on to mention that:

All these considerations are feminine because, as we are forced to note today, it is mainly women who bring forward these concerns of ecological sustainability. [...] This logic of preserving the earth is instilled in us as women, and for me, that is a social construct. We could not have observed this kind of community of men because men did not have to have this obligation to invent an alternative since they already had options in society.<sup>85</sup>

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83 Apolline Vranken, *The City as a Mirror of Simple Souls*.

84 Apolline Vranken. p.94

85 Apolline Vranken. p.107



Alternatives as solutions only answer the need of those left behind by the majority, yet ‘a better future means loving kinship for the many, not the few.’<sup>86</sup> In *The Irigaray Reader*, Luce Irigaray proposed that all Western culture rests on the murder of the mother, a cultural matricide of sorts. This was not meant in a literal way of course, but her statement revealed that man was often proclaimed as self-made and urged to disregard the work and existence of women. As mentioned previously with cow’s milk, meat, and other produce, we often ignore or disregard their origins and implications, resulting in a lack of their appreciation and value. In these precarious times, we need our mothers more than ever. Yet, it is not solely up to them to care for everyone and everything. O’Brien debates the idea that the love and care we have found in the midst of hardship, — ‘the fun and joy of eroticism; the intimacy of parenting and romance’ as he puts it— could be transposed towards ‘new families’, once the rigidity of identity, superficial restrictions of materialism, and domination of ‘family values’ is abolished. He then goes on to declare that once this is achieved ‘[...] the potential of love and care can be finally freed onto the world.’ And that ‘the abolition of the family must be the positive creation of a society of generalized human care and queer love.’<sup>87</sup> We need to love outside of ourselves and our families; outside of our communities; outside of our own species. We need to feel the societal responsibility of parenting beyond genetics, to give birth to a world in which being alive is better.<sup>88</sup>

Religion and agriculture have a similar purpose according to Sansour, that of alleviating human anxiety.<sup>89</sup> And we, humans, are like seeds: born to die yet living to serve a greater purpose.<sup>90</sup> Although religion is usually good at building communities—or so we’ve been told—I am not suggesting that we start a new faith. Societal partnership can only be achieved if we, as individuals, set our egos aside. On the topic of community, Bell Hooks writes:

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86 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*. P.104

87 O’Brien, *Family Abolition*. p.417

88 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*.

89 Sansour, “The Dark and Handsome One.”

90 Sansour.

I am often struck by the dangerous narcissism fostered by spiritual rhetoric that pays so much attention to individual self-improvement and so little to the practice of love within the context of community.<sup>91</sup>

Because unfortunately, change cannot happen if we do not work together; we need to care for ourselves as a collective. We barely have time to care for our own being, so how can we imagine helping others? Capitalism has manipulated us into thinking that we do not have the time for others, nor do we have time to nurture healthy relationships, because labor is awaiting, and love can wait.<sup>92</sup> Capitalism won't take care of us! And 'the most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another'<sup>93</sup> as Johanna Hedva mentions. They go on about the importance of a healthy population to be able to rise and fight, because 'How do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can't get out of bed?'<sup>94</sup> Although, once we are all bed ridden and unwell, only then will it all stop. Once our vulgar carcasses are voided of superficiality and all that is left is the love for each other, only then can capitalism perish.<sup>95</sup> It might seem silly to admin that not doing anything could be the solution to some of our problems as a civilization. By nothing, I do not mean to cease all activities, but the activities that do not benefit us as individuals or as a whole. Labor, as we know it, is what fuels capitalism. When exchanging labor for money, we participate in a 'labor economy', meaning our time and energy becomes a commodity—something that can be bought or sold.<sup>96</sup> Once this begins, we do not have enough time to fully care for ourselves. For instance, we cannot grow our own food anymore, so we turn to someone who specializes in agriculture and acquire goods with money earned from selling our time. This is the foundation of capitalism, a 'general commodification of social relations' as John Holloway perfectly puts it.

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91 hooks, *All about Love*. P.76

92 Rosa, *Radical Intimacy*.

93 Johanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory."

94 Johanna Hedva.

95 Johanna Hedva.

96 Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*. P.104

In the chapter titled *The Gift of Strawberries*, in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, we can read the following: 'It is human perception that makes the world a gift.' They then explain the concepts of 'private property economy' and 'gift economy' and compare both. In a private property economy, we perceive objects and goods as commodities, for which we have no inherent obligations towards. Whereas a gift economy does not let us exchange items for money. Kimmerer's mention that although gifts might be free when we receive them, they come with a responsibility. For instance, if the gift is offered by a friend or family member, we might cherish it differently and associate a certain additional value compared to a purchased good. In the case where the gift is received from a stranger, we might feel the responsibility to give something back, or to give to the next person in need. This would also yield more considerate consumption. As an example, if you go to the market and everything is at a low price, you might get more than what you need, whereas if everything is a 'gift', you might be more conscious of the individual value of every single item and consume them more responsibly. The truth is, when we over consume or make poor decisions regarding food, we are not only encouraging lousy systems, but we are punishing ourselves and our communities. 'When food has been wrenched from the earth, depleting the soil and poisoning our relatives in the name of higher yields, don't buy it.'<sup>97</sup>

When talking about community, we must not limit ourselves to humans, as we are only a small part of the equation—among us are animals, insects, plants, microbes and more. Coined by Donna Haraway, the term *Chthulucen* would describe the epoch where human and non-human come together in response to environmental disaster. A world where the hierarchy between us is dismantled to allow every part of the whole to be validated and seen as equally necessary for survival. Although nature and culture are often seen as separate, they are one, because without nature, there would be no culture.

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<sup>97</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. P.31

## Conclusion

I believe that food is many things, —including political(!)—making it impossible to propose alternative dining methods without criticizing the systems and structures that brought it to its current point, and how they reflect on society and its individuals. After all, my research is about bringing people together around a simple thing, —that doesn't reveal itself as simple— eating.

Reflecting on resource scarcity, the objective isn't to make people feel bad about the possible unfavorable futures of agriculture and their impact on dining, but rather to shed light on the importance of its appreciation. Thus, the proposed outcome is critical in its form, and suggests that rethinking the sanctity of holistic approaches to eating and agricultural practices as a means of undesigning could yield positive results in the urgency brought by resource scarcity. The purpose of alternative furnishings and dining tools is to show diverse ways through which new rituals of dining can be generated, the importance of associating value to ingredients, and showcase the possibility food has to gather people around eating. All of this is impossible if we keep treating our food resources the way we currently are. Rethinking our relationship to ingredients is mandatory and could result in the positive expression of community building, the reduction of food waste, and a greater appreciation of agricultural practices in relation to sustenance.

In the background and context, I asked myself: **how can the proposal of alternative furnishings and tools shift consumers' perception of food origin, value, and consumption rituals in domestic settings, to promote better agricultural practices?** Yet, value associated to food isn't limited to agriculture, but also the methods by which we consume it. And so, the creation portion of this thesis is also guided by the following methodological question: **how might perception of food value be reinstated through alternative furnishings and tools, in community-based rituals, in reaction to the disappearing of the conventional dining room in domestic settings?**

## Methods and Methodology

Over the course of my undergraduate studies, I was shown design through multiple lenses, but only during the second half of my program did I start exploring the idea of including myself in the work. Through this, I started including lived experiences and obsessions of mine within my designs, yet not fully understanding how to incorporate them properly. For my end of program project, I decided to research the repercussions of dining—more precisely dining alone at home—on garments. In a speculative context of hosting oneself for a solo dinner party, I explored different definitions of intimacy and its relationship to food. After graduating, I knew I wanted to pursue my quest for design theory and to better understand the implication of my lived experience in the built environment. One of the first books that enlightened me on this journey was *Social Matter, Social Design (For good or bad, all design is social)*. Edited by Jan Boelen and Michael Kaethler (2020), this book explores the implication of materiality on social interactions, and the consequences of design on our behaviour. In a conversation with Kaethler, Boelen mentions that ‘only through knowing myself can I begin to reach out better to others’<sup>98</sup>. To put this into context, what I understood is that he cannot relate to the world around himself, if he cannot even understand his own desires, fears, discomforts, and such. *Social design*, he says, is about ourselves first. In this same interview, when asked if he thought it could be possible to ‘design’ our way out of social, economic, and political issues, he mentions that design is, in itself, both the problem and the solution; or parts of them at least. Boelen suggests that we need to shift the responsibility towards the designers, and not the consumers, as they need to be held accountable for what they put out into the world. So, I ask myself, what is it that I want to put out in the world?

A professor of mine once told me this story she was told as a child. A story about a boy so lazy, he starved to death. His mother was leaving the house for several days, and so, to make sure he ate, she baked a circular cake he could wear around his neck. When she returned, she found him dead. Around his neck was the other half of the cake he was too lazy to turn in order to access it. Sometimes, I feel like this. I feel so lazy, or so busy, that I could starve myself to death.

I wake up every morning and open the refrigerator as if I planned on eating something from it. I skip breakfast altogether and instead snack on some nuts after arriving at work. I rinse them down

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98 Boelen, Kaethler, and Althaus, *Social Matter, Social Design*. P.222

with juice or water, as I don't drink coffee. I am above it honestly. I leave work to run to school. I grab the same sandwich every day—or almost every day. I eat in the hallway outside of class. At some point, I make it home. If I felt wise on my way back, I stopped at the grocery store. Otherwise, I go through the pantry and mix whatever is available with some leftovers from last night's takeout. This is what my daily routine has come to.

Let's go back to where my obsession to food in my design practice started. It's the spring of 2020 and all of us find ourselves in a forced stillness. For myself, I am in the countryside, visiting my parents for what I thought would only be two weeks. I had started researching people who dine alone in restaurants for my project at the moment; yet found myself redirected towards eating alone at home, as many people were forced to do it. For myself, I wasn't alone, I was with my parents. I cherished the obligation to eat-in and make elaborate meals for them, as I enjoyed spending my time in the kitchen. Yet, when it came time to consume these meals, they found themselves in the living room, out of habit, in front of the television. I, on the other hand, would sit at the dining table alone. I found it interesting how we went from sharing family meals at the table when I was growing up, to them eating in almost isolation absorbed by the images and sound of their favorite television shows. On occasions, we would have generous family meals, where my siblings, their partners, their children, and I would meet at our parent's house and huddle around the dining table. As I am eating by myself, I look at my parents and wonder how is it that they became so disconnected from their food. Having grown up in the country, in a farming and hunting family, we would manage to provide a generous part of our sustenance. In the summer, my mother would tend to these enormous gardens and provide us with peas, beets, potatoes, and the like. The seeds I would help her plant, would become the vegetables part of the meals we would enjoy as a family. Yet, on that lockdown day, they barely glanced at the food I prepared, from ingredients we had delivered from the nearest grocery store—completely ignoring where these came from or who was to thank for harvesting them.

While I was finishing my undergraduate program, I began obsessing over the idea of respecting food's origin. My first memory surrounding this project is from when I started to research the body as a surface to set the table. My body as surface I could enjoy my meal on. My body as this separate "thing." As if the outside and the inside didn't communicate. I'm discovering my body, inside and out. I want to materialize what I feel inside. I wish to share a meal with myself, but I never take the time to 'dine' with myself.

As I started the research for this master's degree thesis, I became so obsessed with it, that I forgot the intention behind it. Here I was, standing at the kitchen counter, eating *prêt-à-manger* from a random supermarket, while reading on the origins of bio-dynamic farming. It felt ironic. I wanted to share the benefits of holistic approaches to farming and the importance of moving slowly—both in agriculture and in design— yet could not come to do it myself. And so, when it came time to making the artifacts for my thesis, I thought I would force myself to move slowly—I wanted to allow myself to ponder on the methods involved, the people involved and the daily influences my day-to-day interactions could have. Just as small-scale agriculture involves getting your hands dirty, in an intimate manner with soil, plants, and animals; I wanted to explore that same intimacy within the making of the artifacts.

In the succeeding writings, I will be describing the creative process behind them, in relation to both thinking and making. I will be expressing the physical pain of making with my bare hands, the emotional vulnerability of experiencing the objects in various contexts, the thoughts I was thinking as I spent countless hours hand stitching, and the consequences of making on my surroundings.

## **Research Paradigm**

To come back to Jan Boelen and Michael Kaethler, I ask myself, *what is it that I want to put out in the world?*

In order to answer this question, I will start by overviewing both the historical and current dining situation in western and non-western settings, in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Following this stage, I will speculate on possible future dining methods and propose an array of products that aim not at replacing our dining room per se, but at offering alternative solutions to contemporary issues, and possible directions to explore alternative relationships to dining. A mixed-method approach, including archival research, self-reflection, interviews, and prototyping are used in order to include both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as applied research. The intention behind the research is not to propose new products nor to solve a specific set of issues, but rather to enlighten consumers [those who see food as a product] of the potential of new-fangled dining norms that can reappoint value in the act of eating.

In response to the desire of a more holistic approach to making, I've chosen to rethink the design process involved in the making of said artifacts. First, I needed to identify why I was doing all of

this. I knew it wasn't to sell objects and make money. I knew it wasn't to impress anyone, other than myself. All I knew, was that I was trying to do everything and do it fast. I knew I needed to slow down and take my time to appreciate the thinking and the making, just as I need to sit down and enjoy the food I was about to consume; reflect on how it got here, who is responsible for it, and how I could learn to cherish it through the act of consuming it. To achieve an embodied experience of making, slowing down is necessary, I think. How can I design not only from pre-reflexive perception, but also from feeling? Not only from the mind, but from the body and the soul? Slowing down for the 'pursuit of more holistic ways of knowing oneself, encountering others, sharing knowledge, and evolving together toward harmonious and resilient forms of living.' (p.9)<sup>99</sup> Allowing for more significant bonds with said artifacts, and between human, animal, vegetal, and microbial. As Alice Van der Wielen-Honinckx puts it:

We need to slow down: allow experiences of perception to take the time they take. To not rush over them and barely notice, but to taste them fully and allow the experience to unfold at its own pace. (p.92)<sup>100</sup>

What does it mean to 'slow down' for someone who is known to be a workaholic? How can I force myself [and my design process] to decelerate? I needed to reflect on my practice and the methods involved, and how they can be slowed down. 'This truly holistic way of knowing self and world is in essence a microcosm for every other form of Slow encounter' new understandings and relationships shaped by the modeling of practices of care.<sup>101</sup> In the following writings, I describe the various methods utilized in the conceptualization of artifacts, and how I involve myself in the thinking and making of these.

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99 Strauss and Pais, *Slow Reader: A Source for Design Thinking and Practice*.

100 Van der Wielen-Honinckx, "Space as Atmosphere: Floating in a Molecular Bath."

101 Strauss, "The Poetic Ship."



## Autoethnography

Acting as a tool to stop and think, documentation plays a major role in the design process involved in the making of these artifacts. I must make clear that by documentation, I not only mean capturing the current state of the product, but also reflecting on its use, functionality, and possibilities—making documentation a part of the process and not simply the act of archiving the process. This method reveals itself as a form of communication, or better yet, a form of understanding. Although I am learning from the artifact as I am making it, taking the time to document during the process allows me to communicate with the object and discover possible alternatives to its form and functionality—generating feedback loops.

Documentation itself can be done in multiple ways, using multiple tools to do so. In my case, I mainly use photography, video, and photographic scans, alongside sketching and journal entries. Each of these methods can be used in various ways and result in various analysis. This is achieved by capturing the artifact in or out of its context.

Although documentation can be of a finalised product, in this case, it concerns the documentation of a process, an unfinished thing imbued with potential. Now, you might be wondering where the line between documenting as a learning tool or documenting a finished product is. The truth is, there is no line; In my case, I use documentation as a learning tool, one where I [as mentioned above] communicate with the object and explore its potential.

There are many things we can document—and I will go over some later in this chapter—and there are many reasons we might document. In this instance, there are three different approaches I have to it. First is its form, where the purpose is to capture the aesthetics of the said thing. Second, is its function, where you try to explore and showcase how the object works and what it can possibly achieve. Lastly, you can document through a lens of storytelling, which usually implies both form and function. All three approaches are useful and valid, depending on the intention. For instance, if I were to document a set of dining utensils, I could capture its form with a simple image of their appearance, front, back and side profile. As for its function, I could document someone using them to eat, cutting, twirling, and moving food around a plate. As for storytelling, I would showcase the user interacting with the object, but also include context as to the form's inspirations, all while showing the result of said inspiration. I consider the later method

to be crucial when exploring critical or discursive messages, as the context becomes as important as the way the object functions.

For each of these, there are levels of formality we can apply. When documenting in a quick, casual manner, I would describe this as an informal documentation. In this case, the object would most likely be captured on my mobile phone camera as I am making, or as a quick snapshot of a step within a bigger process. This is one side of the spectrum, whereas on the other end, we can find formal documentation. In this case, instead of a quick snapshot, I would consider placing the object in a meaningful or well thought location; I would use proper equipment to 'capture' the moment, whether that be a photo camera, a high-resolution photo-scanner or any other thought-out device.

There is no proper way to document, as the importance lies in the outcome; the possible reflection or ideas to come from it. One way of approaching documentation is to apply the same creative process we apply to our work, to the documentation itself. What that means is having the physical artifact go through the steps or lens of the initial research process. For instance, if my creative process involves utilizing objects outside of their prescribed uses, then I can use the same method and apply it to the in-progress artifacts. The documentation of actions in such manner could manifest itself into new possibilities. In its turn, this creates a feedback loop, integrating the making in the actual design processes once again. While proceeding, I try to use the same tone I use when researching, applying a critical point of view through a playful tone, invoking satire. Applying the same tone to the documentation as I do to the research-creation assure that I do not steer away from my initial intention. Yet, by putting the objects outside of their usual contexts, we open the door to new functions, and challenge their expected goals.<sup>102</sup> What is meant by this, is that experiencing things outside of the studio, or outside of our habits, can force us to discover new meanings or novel functionalities. For instance, if I limit my use and documentations of garments to the body, I might neglect all the potential functionalities of using the garments to harvest food or to dine without a table.

When presenting a final product, or the most finalized version of a prototype, it might be tricky for users to understand what went into the product, what inspired it, and what the designer's true

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<sup>102</sup> Dreessen et al., *Participation Is Risky*.

intentions were. With documentation, it is possible to communicate this to a certain extent. I do not limit this to the documentation of the making of the finished ware. While designing, —and even before doing so— it is crucial for myself to document my environment. From registering the things that I ate, an arbitrary thought, my surroundings, a specific smell or sound on a certain day, the piece of bread I saw on the sidewalk, to noting down and analysing my current obsessions. No matter what it may be, it most likely will influence my work as a thinker, and a maker. I do not limit myself to things I've created, but things I've read, watched, or noticed. I divide these into primary and secondary inspirations. Primary being the things I generated, photographed, thought of, so on. Whereas secondary inspiration are things I've witnessed, for instance a line a poetry that resonated with me or a photograph I admired, to name a few.

To help decipher what can be documented and from what point of view, I refer to various tools. Firstly, I apply the three dimensions proposed by Lueger; (1) actors, (2) events and actions, (3) objects and products. With the help of these three components, it is possible to describe any social situation.<sup>103</sup> I use these broad categories to make sure I cover every angle when making, but mostly when documenting. Who is involved? What are they doing? What are the artifacts involved? In some case, I document the objects by themselves, yet I am still implicated in the process, thus making me the actor—as I am the one behind the camera or positioning the objects in a certain way.

Another tool I refer to is Spradley's matrix (see fig. x), introduced to me from Francis Müller's 2021 book, *Design Ethnography: Epistemology and Methodology*.<sup>104</sup> This matrix is composed of 9 elements, capable of describing in detail any given situation. The elements are *space*, *object*, *act*, *activity*, *event*, *time*, *actor*, *goal*, and *feeling*. Similar to Lueger's dimensions, I use these elements to validate that I've covered every angle when documenting. When using the matrix, we can find a set of questions at the intersection of two key words—for example, at the intersection of *act* (x axis) and *time* (y axis), we are asked: *how do acts vary over time?* As a part of the documentation process, or the design process, answering these questions allows me to validate my

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103 Lehn, "Review."

104 Müller, *Designer Ethnography: Epistemology and Methodology*.

understanding of my research and the clarity of my intentions. With the footage created over the archiving process, I can reveal potential answers to these questions proposed by Spradley.

Lastly, I refer to Michael Taussig's book, *I Swear I Saw This*. He states that, '[t]his book is about drawings in anthropological fieldwork notebooks.'<sup>105</sup> He compares scientific perspectives of 'proof' to more social ones, where human factors come into play, such as emotions and reasoning. Taussig later describes a fieldwork diary as something you rediscover every time you read it, with new meaning, new perspectives, and new possibilities. He also communicates the difficulties of defining 'the lived experience' in fieldwork. How can we express meaning above interpretation? This brings me to highlighting the importance of multi-media documentation. In his book, Taussig describes handwriting as an ancient technology that allows the user to form words out of letters and to draw pictures to then go back to writing. This form of translation is crucial in the multifarious interpretation of information. A simple image cannot communicate the smell of the warm summer air on a given day, yet words can. Combining mediums allows the documentation and communication of the same experience on various levels.

Capturing instances of my daily influences allows me to learn from attractions outside of my research foci. As an example, photo-journaling allows me to capture all the pieces of food I find out of place; for instance, spaghetti on the front yard, strawberries on the parc bench, and half of a carrot at my doorstep. Documenting these instances led me to the discovery of my obsession for misplaced foods, something I later explored as part of this research-creation thesis. By creating primary research such as this, I can bear witness to this phenomenon by myself, seeing it from the inside to be able to translate it to the outside. To be able to say, 'I swear I saw this'<sup>106</sup>.

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105 Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*. P.xi

106 Taussig.

## Researching Sensitivity

In their book *A Wild Thing*, Hilde Bouchez explores the intangible qualities of everyday objects, and how bonds can be made between maker and user, through artifacts. On the topics of *nearness and other sensibilities*, Bouchez writes:

I look through the open window and see the sunshine. I long for rain, as the lover longs to be loved. And so, I step effortlessly into the erotic space, mirrored by Plato's chōra. Between Being and Becoming, the eternal desire that is better than having, the road that is greater than the destination because after love and becoming there is only death and dying.

In this room which smells of rain but tastes of dust, that is and is not, that insinuates but does not promise—here in this place, something begins. An invisible converging of what is alive inside and what is outside. Between what thinks and dreams and what wishes to be born.<sup>107</sup>

There is a sensibility to be perceived in the way they communicate their connection to space and object; one that requires attention and stillness. I had the luxury of reading this book over the summer leading up to my master's degree and to always have it in the back of my mind throughout this thesis—when thinking, creating, and making.

Through their writing, Hilde Bouchez teaches me the *joy of making*. The importance of the process over the final form, and briefly forgetting the end result during the making portion. Becoming present and absorbed by something bigger; making a vase, for example, is more than making a container; it is a vessel of possibilities, challenges, and fears. It can contain life and death—past and future. We are making things that are bigger than ourselves, but only if we allow ourselves to. According to them, what defines a vessel is not how it might be perceived, nor the material from which it is made, but what it harbors. And so, I thought about what it is that I wish to contain. Food of course, but what else? When consuming food, the stomach—or more broadly the body—becomes its vessel, it holds the food while it is being digested and transformed, translating into

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107 Bouchez, *A Wild Thing*. P.89

energy and such. Yet, while all of this is happening, what is holding the body? If vases and stomachs are receptacles to food, are garments and clothes the vessels to our bodies?

To answer these questions, I reflect on the idea of the body as vessel—and how I perceive bodies. Either it be my parent’s ageing bodies, the strangers I see on the street, the body that lies next to mine in bed, or my own. As a means of exploring and expressing the elements that influence my perception of the subjects, through journaling and poetry, I put down my thoughts and map out how they relate them to my research foci. I use two forms of journaling to do so; the first is poetry bases journal entries, exploring instances, feelings, experiences, and such that influence my perception of food. Second is photo-journaling, where I document daily moments that relate to food or my perception of it. As an example, this image of my friend cooking fish for friends and myself (fig.1):



*Figure 2: Will cooking fish on the grill, Summer 2023.*

How is it that the same fish I would have enjoyed from a takeout box now become something more valuable. Does the simple act of sharing it with loved ones makes it different? How can this feeling of respect for the fish be translated into objects and possibly other people’s experience of food, I ask myself. As another example, here are two journal excerpts, reflecting on intimacy and the origin of food:

Spring 2023, A love letter to my friend

*My sweet friend, my sweet man*

*How I miss the raw sunlight landing on your bare body—  
where my hands once laid.*

*The sour taste of fermented liquids isn't the same without the sweetness of your breath.  
How I miss your raw touch once the sun has landed.*

*The sour taste of others leaves me reminiscent of your holistic experience: the union of  
our souls, the complexity of our minds as a whole.*

*You feed my gluttonous behaviour until I vanish in the dust of our uncovered lands.*

*If I were soil, you would nourish me, gift me the best seeds,  
and fill me with more love than I need.*

*More love than what I ask for, even though I am a pit of emotions than never seems full,  
a vessel unable to hold things, nor hold onto things.*

*I keep letting you slip through the cracks.*

I think about my body in relation to sustenance; to the foods I consume:

Summer 2023, An ode to root vegetables

*An ode to you root vegetable,  
who came from the soil only to feed my soul.*

*As I gently remove him from the ground by his leafage  
I can't help but notice his gaze, he stares at me as if he understood me,  
or as if he wished to understand me.*

*His rich foliage caresses my fingers and lets me know it's okay.*

*I slip him in my breast pocket on the left side of my overshirt,  
and whisper my thoughts to him as we enjoy the last instants together.*

*After cleaning the dirt off, he lets me swaddle him.  
Little does he know I enjoy him more than I should.  
Little does he know I held back as much as I could.*

*As I swallow him whole, my body is now the one to hold.*

## **Thinking Through Making**

The Design Academy Eindhoven defines *thinking through making* as a rapid iterative cycle of thinking and making, where the making is influenced intuitively by the thinking and vice versa, where ‘the relationship between the making and the thinking opens up an opportunity to also express knowledge through what is made’. Seeing the result of the object not as a finished product, but as point of reflection towards new knowledge.

‘Thinking-through-making is connected to concepts such as thinking with your hands, learning through doing, and trial and error [...] Thinking is not only expressed through text, but also through everything we make. Making includes crafting objects, organising activities, telling stories, and designing systems and experiences.’ (see lexicon of design)<sup>108</sup>

As part of the Master of Design program at Concordia, in the winter of 2023, I had the opportunity to take the Dart 611 class —Interdisciplinary Practices in Design— led by Miranda Smitheram. In this class, we were prompted to collaborate with other classmates with the objective of learning from their practice. Through this process, I learnt to let material guide the form and let myself be surprised by the results; to learn from making. What I am exploring, is the queer experience of dining: in this case, dining isn’t limited to putting food in one’s mouth—It includes every step before and after consumption. Through the making portion of this class, I wanted to show the beauty of more traditional ways of growing food, more holistic approaches to agriculture, but I wanted to

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108 “Lexicon of Design Research.”



distance myself with traditional ways of consuming. Oblique methods of dining are fairly new and unknown, or at least, undocumented, so how can I explore dining outside of heteronormative habits? Where can I learn to do so? Making these artifacts would be my way of learning. Since I am proposing to revert to more holistic practices in farming, there is no new knowledge to be created, yet oblique dining is not yet here. Through the making and the experiencing, I am hoping to discover new ways to enjoy sustenance; for myself, my friends and family, but mostly, my community. As part of my making and learning for this thesis's research project, my objective was not to produce objects that simply wanted to be beautiful by their form. I wished to create objects that are beautiful because of the possibilities their usage allows.<sup>109</sup>

### **Obsolete Technologies**

Coming from a fashion design background, I learned the importance of atomized processes to save time and resources and propose easily reproducible products. I was told this would allow us, as future designers, to be successful. As a reaction to these mindsets, and trying to 'unlearn' these notions, I thought I would limit my use of mechanical intervention, or at least, technologically driven machinery and interventions. Can I use my own energy and body to make these artifacts, I thought to myself. Now, one might think this doesn't make any sense. Why make something more difficult and more time-consuming. If I spend a few hours, going from step to step to accomplish a product, I am most likely always thinking about the next step and not considering or embracing the one I am currently doing. Additionally, these mechanised processes usually separate human from object, reducing the implication of the body in the making. As I hammer in each hole in the leather, using my arm strength to do so, thinking about the next hole to punch, but also thinking of the possible uses of the artifact I am slowly putting together. I then use a needle to pass through every single hole and thread pieces together, pricking my fingers every now and then, thinking about how this object might propose new methods of consuming, new methods of learning about the value of food, I think of the farmer who is pruning the branches of the tomato plant, later picking each tomato by hand, allowing for many to enjoy the sweet taste of cared for ingredients, all while caring for the soil; giving back in exchange for sustenance. Learning through making does not happen if you do not take the time to actually make. How can

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109 Bouchez, *A Wild Thing*.

I learn about myself in this process if I do not allow myself the time to do so. How can I practice what I preach if I make products in a rush, to be able to move onto the next one. Not only is this process teaching me the possibilities behind the artifacts, but it is also teaching me patience and respect for the built environment, all while I reflect on my perception and possible use of these 'things'.

I wanted to explore the limits and possibilities of *Craftsperson-shrimp*. Yes, you've read that right. 'Craftsperson' because men aren't the only ones to make things; and 'shrimp' for no reason other than satire and a play on the outdated word 'craftsmanship.' Crucial knowledge, methods of productions, and holistic practices are forgotten with the adaptation of commercial means of manufacturing ephemeral happiness in our capitalist environment. Food value is not the only thing I believe to be transmitted through traditions; time-honed methods of fabrication and cultural knowhow are also transmissible. Not only do these methods preserve knowledge and cultural ways of making, but also highlights diversity in production methods and in produced outcomes. The value associated to craft can be quickly disregarded when faced with more automatized production chains that can seem favorable at first, but maybe it is time for us to slow down our production and reflect on the things we are making, and possibly even learn from them while making.

In the scenario of this thesis, the artifacts are not treated as products ready to be bought nor sold. The objects are part of an experiment—one where I try to discover how tools that alter our dining experience can lead to a greater appreciation of the meal itself and where it comes from.

### **Father and I against the church**

When starting to explore these new dining tools, I already considered the importance of materiality on the perception or use of these. Seeing as how these artifacts are experiments, I began by using materials I owned or could easily put my hands on. For the artifacts I've explored, I have mostly had to work with wood, steel, wool, leather, and linen; materials I considered as originating from the land. Wood from the trees in our forests, steel from the ground we walk on, wool from our sheep, leather from our cows, and linen from our fields.

For one of my first exploration, I wished to work with wood to explore alternatives tables. And so, after discussing with my parents of this need and expressing my desire to upcycle wood, they suggested I use these old banisters and a podium they had saved from an old church in the

neighborhood—an Anglican church to be precise. And so, here I was alongside my father, dismantling the churches' insides, piece by piece, returning the lumber to its most basic shape, sanding it down, and cutting it down to size. Historically, in western settings, a great deal of the agricultural yielding was controlled by the Church, and so this simple exercise of taking apart its furnishings seemed significant to me. But what was most significant, was doing it alongside my father; learning from his experience and spending time with him. This once 'sacred' wood lost part of its significance once it was removed from its context and transformed back to basic shapes, losing all its ornament. Yet, the lumber had gained value at the same time, it was once again sacred, as it had now witnessed the love and care my father shows to me through helping me.

For many artifacts, I have used branches as handles. Branches I have accumulated through the years from various trees. Branches from land I grew up on, what I call back home. Branches from trees I climbed in as a child. Branches that could be anything and everything when playing carelessly in the forest. I chose branches as they are accessible to almost anyone and recognizable by most. They come in every shape and size and dictate how the product will function and interact. They require little to no modifications and can be sent back into the earth after their use.

Although the pieces don't include intricate nor complex systems, they still include buttons and rivets to secure them or to easily open and close them. Additionally, steel, more precisely aluminum, was used in the prototyping of an exploratory set of chairs (see appendix), where a thin and light material was needed.

I wanted to highlight a more direct connection to the idea of farming. Since this is purely research, I remained outside of the creation of new materials or the use of unusual ones. And so, when I needed fabrics, I naturally gravitated towards tailoring wool since I already owned some dead-stock yardage. For some of the pieces, I wished to have more light come through, and so I knitted some pieces as well, using once again dead-stock fibers.

Additionally, when starting my master's degree, I wished to better familiarize myself with leather. I had previously work with it, but not in a traditional hand-crafted way. For the assembly of all the leather pieces, I use linen thread to maintain strength without having to use synthetic fibers.

## The Consequences of Research-Creation

To approach the design elements of these objects, I propose answers to both form and function through oblique possibilities. The initial idea stems from a future without dining rooms, forcing us to rethink the interior landscape, adapting it to a lifestyle that isn't led by heteronormative standards imposed by default. This is where *dis-domestication* comes in. By removing the presumptions associated to furniture, instruments, and space, we can open the world to new possibilities: new futures. Another thing I try to keep in mind when designing and making these artifacts is not to limit their use, nor dictate their functionality. *Oblique* design is about offering possibilities, for people to adapt objects to their own needs: unrestrictive. I, myself haven't explored all the possibilities the artifacts have to offer.

Over the course of this research-creation thesis, I have had the opportunity to make multiple objects. In a linear manner, here they are: First, I explore the idea of the chair that wanted to become a table, and so I proposed, in a first instance, a chair that could become a table (see *Figure 18: Dining Chair 1* to *Figure 20: Dining Chair 3*), simply by transferring its back rest to the top of the structure, allowing one to sit backwards and enjoy a flat surface. These chairs also allowed users to create a communal dining surface by joining multiple chairs together. These were made with transport in mind, including a carrying bag for the chair and all its parts. Alongside making this chair-table hybrid, I explored the possibilities of mounting a chair on oneself, with the help of a harness (described more into details in the section entitled *Sharing a Meal*). Next came the exploration of vessels for foraging (seen in *Figure 15: Flogger for Flowers* and *Figure 17: Foraging Censer*). These translated into bigger foraging tools that could also serve the purpose of sharing a meal. They are described in the lower section entitled *Vessels of Intimacy—Foraging Kinship*. Following these, more tools were explored, as seen in *Figure 14: Foraging Sling* and in *Figure 16: Chest Vase*, perusing the idea of receptacles for gathering ingredients. Lastly, I've explored the various concepts through garments and accessories. These can be seen in the *Figures 21 to 40*.

## Sharing a Meal

A body that holds a harness. A harness that holds a chair. A chair holding a plate. The plate carries food. My body carries food. My body is food. Am I a chair?

This was the first exploration within the context of this thesis. In contemporary western homes, most sacrifice what was once known as the dining room. What has become of the table, and all the gravy boats stored away in the credenza now that space doesn't permit these excess belongings? Not only will we need to revisit our vocabulary surrounding these artifacts, but also rethink how they function and interact. With new means of consuming, comes new rituals of dining.

There is a certain performance that follows ritual. The ritual of setting the chairs up, as one would set the table typically. But obviously, setting up a chair is different in many ways. Not only can the chair be set outside of the dining room—it can also be set outside of the house. A part of setting the table is showmanship in a way. We could even call it superficiality. Whom do we set the table for? Ourselves or others? This aspect of 'putting on an act' also leads me to question the impact of such objects (the ones I'm making). Will they be only an ephemeral performance, or will they lead to actual realization from the one's experiencing them?

I started to research the body as a surface to set the table. My body as surface I could enjoy my meal on. My body as this separate "thing." As if the outside and the inside didn't communicate. I'm discovering my body, inside and out. I want to materialize what I feel inside. I wish to share a meal with myself, but I never take the time to 'dine' with myself.

What if this dining chair, became my eating surface. Instead of being a seat for my posterior, why can't it be a vessel to my meal, or at least, hold the plate harnessing the meal I generously made myself? It all goes back to when I tied a string to a stool's legs and wore it as if it were an apron. My intention was to merge two of my passions: fashion and food. But here I am, making harnesses and tables. Exploring myself through the dining room. The initial idea sounded silly to me; and it still does in a certain way. But the products I propose aren't the result of a research, they are part of the research. They allow me to better understand the *enjeux* related to the various topics I'm reflecting on.

How does one carry a chair, as a mother carries her newborn baby? Chairs, like bodies, are different from one another. Sure, some are mass-produced, but in my humble abode, I hoard many different seating instruments; and wish to repurpose all of them into possible eating arrangements. From a one-dining-room-household to an array of feasting possibilities, enticing me to eat, and not skip a meal. Ironically, one of my favorite things to do is to share a meal. With a friend, or maybe a stranger. What about eating alone? Are we ever truly alone? Whether we're accompanied by some form of technology connecting us virtually to a world beyond ours, or simply sharing a conversation with our inner being. When are we truly intimate with ourselves? Do we know our bodies? Have we explored our bodies, in and out? Do we know ourselves?

For this first attempt at proposing new tools, I use the body –the human one– as a pillar. To it, I add a harness. Not with the intention of harnessing the body itself, but with the idea of rendering it capable of holstering artifacts on the surface. Dining tables, as I know them, have four legs and a flat surface; my body has two legs and an uneven plane to set things upon. Yet my body can do anything I let it achieve.

This harness must serve many. Many bodies; many chairs, stools, or benches (?); many. It rests on my shoulders, pushing its weight through my body, tightens my chest and caresses my hips. It features three crucial support points for furniture. First, from my torso, it holds the legs of the chair, right under its seat. The chair's "feet" [to humanize it even more] are pushing against straps that are held to my waist. Lastly, from the top of my shoulder, a strap wraps around it's back to support it in the way I wish I was supported.

I slide my head in between the shoulder pads and become one with the harness. I become part of the ritual. Or am I the ritual? I take the medium length straps and use them to secure a stool to my body. I add another longer strap to support its back legs. I am configuring my own dining table and am simultaneously creating new rituals as I go. The simple act of using the harness becomes a ritual and is accessible to all.

The piece itself is composed of a series of fixed, or even rigid, parts that have specific functions: back support, shoulder support and such. Attached to these parts are straps, making the whole thing adjustable and viable for an array of body types, tall and short; narrow and wide; typical or nonconforming. The product would mean nothing without it having the capacity to adapt to all.

The harness is composed of multiple parts with different functions, attached together according to the intended use. Opening itself to undiscovered functions and undiscovered users.

What if you don't have a chair? Or maybe you do, but you want to sit on it. The harness is also equipped with a reinforced plate at the abdomen, allowing you to insert supports. These supports each serve a different purpose. Some can hold a plate, others to hold stemware, flatware, or even, a candle. These CNC aluminum pieces are sturdy and designed to withstand the weight of a regular meal, whatever that means. The harness was designed with the home in mind. You saddle up, sit or stand and enjoy the meal. But what about decontextualizing dining outside of intimate settings? This harness can be worn outside of the house and becomes a dining table once you add a chair to it. This could be used at work, at a friend's place, outdoors. The product does not come with a set of rules, nor does it come with a preconceived idea of how it should be used, at it is not part of the collective memory surrounding dining.

Harness for one; make it for two. Additional feature of the harness is the ability to mount a chair in the back, making it possible for someone to use it as their table. In the context of many people equipped with harnesses, a circular or chain-like dining set-up can allow users to help each other out. This is about creating a community and rituals of sharing. It also makes it a performance piece by default.

Why not be the third wheel on your friends' date? Instead of being a wheel, be a table. By wearing two chairs, you can accommodate 2 eaters and be at the center of it all, as you so deeply crave the attention. I do too, in a way; isn't that what we do as humans.



*Figure 3: Harness installation*



*Figure 4: Harness with table, side view*



*Figure 5: Harness with table, front view*



## Vessels of Intimacy—Foraging Kinship

This research investigates the role tangible intermediaries—such as furnishings and instruments—play in the association of value onto ingredients we consume as sustenance, and onto communities.

If the body is the recipient to food; are garments vessels to the body? To this, I ask myself, how can the cloths once used to set the table become vestments to the body—hopefully bringing us closer to our food. As a result of this research is a series of homeware and dining instruments that provoke reflection regarding our habits related to consumption of food, with the intention of creating additional value to its origin. Ultimately, this work aims at highlighting the importance of community-based alternatives, for a more sustainable and more inclusive tomorrow. I approach this work with specific intentions; that of understanding my relationship with food through the process. I hope to be able to share my appreciation for it, as well as communicate the sensibilities that make dining an experience of intimacy with the ones I share it with, as well as an act of intimate sharing with whomever grew it. “[...] but also to inspire the pursuit of more holistic ways of knowing oneself, encountering others, sharing knowledge, and evolving together towards harmonious and resilient forms of living.”<sup>110</sup>

If food is the price to pay to occupy the body, sustenance is what allows us to be. Knowing this, I ask myself what role do garments play in the adorning of this recipient [the body]? The initial idea behind these wearables is to explore garments that entangle two bodies in the act of consuming food, making it forcefully an act of sharing or a communal one, but also the union of two bodies in a more than physical way.

Using my background in fashion and textiles, I flirt with the idea of designing through feeling, and not my usual approach of form and function. I wished to let the fabric speak, instead of imposing myself and my vision onto it. The wool was cut on the bias, making it drape softly. The knit was made with the lightness of cloth in mind, as well as transparency. Reminiscent of improvised foraging, these pieces are not describable. Not associated to gender nor garment category, and do not follow any prescribed rules. They are not limited to, or designed, with a specific body in mind.

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110 Strauss and Pais, *Slow Reader: A Source for Design Thinking and Practice*.

I've always considered myself a designer. Someone who makes products. But through this process, I feel like I've flirted with my artist side a bit more. I usually stick to designing and making as a linear process, but this time I tried to stay away from the planning and over thinking and rather work with the material and use my intuition. Not only do I feel I've explored a new way to interact with the material, but I've also included the people around me in the process. Using them as a platform for my research to live on and to be situated on my canvas, the body.



*Figure 6: Communal gown, in proximity*



*Figure 7: Communal gown, extended*



*Figure 8: Wrist braces*



*Figure 9: Wrist braces with knit cloth*



*Figure 10: Wrist braces, with cloth attachment*



*Figure 11: Wrist braces, individual user*



*Figure 12: Wrist braces, collaborative use at rest*



*Figure 13: Wrist braces, collaborative interaction*

## Discussion

What would a world where everyone is conscious of their food's origin look like? I don't think asking everyone to start harvesting their own food is reasonable, nor a good idea. And so, how could I share the agricultural experience and possibly enlighten people on the hardship of farming?

I had two objectives in mind when starting this research: the first, *agricultural kinship*, and the second, *oblique feasting rituals*. *Agricultural kinship*'s goal is to reinstate value and importance in the foods we eat, reduce waste, and bring awareness to the sourcing of ingredients, as well as our responsibility towards sustainable and holistic practices. It also wishes to highlight the potential that food has in developing kinship beyond human relationships. This would be accomplished through tools that question industrialized agricultural practices, as well as promote community bonding and collective acts of harvesting. The second objective was *oblique feasting rituals*, which explores *oblique* ways of dining, with the intention of increasing the value associated to mealtime. This resulted in tools that explore dining outside of heteronormative settings so that everyone no matter their lifestyle can find solace in food. These instruments go beyond form and function to create relationships between people and sustenance.

These instruments, in both instances, are meant to honour food. What if, instead of grabbing a meal on the go, we take the time to appreciate the foods we have and how they got here, by honoring them. I believe that if you take the time to put on a harness, and set the table on yourself, you will most likely care about what is in front of you when it comes time to eat. If you suddenly find yourself bound to someone, having food as a middle ground, you might care about this food and what happens to it. These artifacts are meant to provoke care. When farmers practice holistic methods—as mentioned previously—food becomes undoubtably intimate. Coming from a family of farmers, I know the love, passion, and effort that goes into producing these ingredients. And so, I hope that everyone put the same level of commitment and care into consuming it.

Through this thesis, I asked myself two questions: **how can the proposal of alternative furnishings and tools shift consumers' perception of food origin, value, and consumption rituals in domestic settings, to promote better agricultural practices? And how might perception of food value be reinstated through alternative furnishings and tools, in community-based rituals, in reaction to the disappearing of the conventional dining room**

**in domestic settings?** To these I answer: with intention. A logical solution to this problem already exists. If people were to be considerate when sourcing their foods, and allocate the appropriate amount of time towards eating, a simple dining table and chairs would suffice to appreciate food. But in this never-ending era of busy lifestyles, time is a fleeting thing and things like cooking and dining are being exchanged for extra hours at work and endless scrolling of our screens. The solution is already here and accessible, yet it might be too simple for us to acknowledge it. The proposed artifacts make eating more complex and propose archaic methods of farming in hopes that people realise how simple it is to appreciate food and all its benefits with the tools we already have. Keeping Gabriel Maher's ideas of *dis-domestication* in mind, I propose instruments that go above our habits and propose reflections in regard to dining and foraging outside of heteronormativity, to propose new rituals.

I undertook the making of these artifacts with an ideology of my own. The intention was not to produce things with the goal of later criticizing my own making in the hopes of learning and making a better version; this is not how I put to use the iterative process of making. The testing of these artifacts would be subjective in a way, because each of us would interact and relate in different ways to the objects and their use. But what I feel these artifacts accomplish is to combine knowledge from different fields. As someone who grew up in a rural setting, and not having any exposure to any type of queer culture or marginalized groups, I felt like farming was the enemy, as it was the only thing I knew. This heteronormatively masculine field made me feel uncomfortable and the last thing I wanted as a teenager was to work within it. I was afraid and felt misunderstood by it. How can something so primal as farming and eating be perceived as gendered and inaccessible to all? For me to combine research founded on agriculture and the dining landscape, to queer and oblique mindsets was no doubt a challenge of its own. The way I approached this was through the making of such garments, accessories, tools, and furnishings—making the artifacts made me reflect on the researched topics, but also approach them from various points of view and with different intentions. The goal was to impose queer narratives to things I grew up with and shared mixed feelings towards. This was then expanded to a larger audience, my community.

The rejection of self-criticism or self-evaluation does not come from a place of ego, but from a place of acceptance. The objects' goals were to help me understand my relationship with sustenance and share my understanding of it with my community, family and next of kin. As mentioned previously, these 'things' were not designed to be produced or sold. They were the

mere consequence of my learning and understanding. And so, one might ask what knowledge I can pass on with this research. I encourage designers to think within. Within their selves and within their communities, to be able to later share outwards. Considering the nature of the products and my ambition behind them, the only goal was to generate care and hopefully encourage others to act with meaningful intentions; to make, consume, and interact with guardianship [of our resources and our communities] in mind.

## **Intimacy**

To help amplify my message, I've used information from my readings and translated them into the thinking and the making of the objects. Inspired by Sophie K. Rosa's thoughts on intimacy, and to allude an intimate relationship with food, I used codes from sexual intimacy. In some of these artifacts are subtleties that borrow from tools and rituals we could usually find in the bedroom. For instance, in the *Figure 14: Foraging Sling*, we can see a surface used for foraging or harvesting, one that requires two users. Its shape is reminiscent of slings used for sexual intercourse between two or more people. Slings are used to support a body, to facilitate certain actions. In my case, I use it as a metaphor for care—used to support the ingredients harvested—and use to highlight the intimate nature of harvesting. Another similar instance is the artifact shown in *Figure 15: Flogger for Flowers*. Here we notice a vase with a handle, rendering the vessel used for presentation the same as the one used for harvesting. Additionally, attached to the bottom of it, is a flogger—which is usually used for sexual gratification—once again highlighting intimate activities. In *Figure 16: Chest Vase*, I showcase a vase that is meant to be worn around the neck, allowing for it to be positioned on one's chest, allowing for proximity with the harvested goods.



*Figure 14: Foraging Sling*



*Figure 15: Flogger for Flowers*



*Figure 16: Chest Vase*



## Ceremonial Goods

A lot of my work is focused on rituals—both new and old. As for Apolline Vranken, she focused precisely on the rituals of a group called the *Beguines*, who emancipated from catholic religion, all while keeping the elements that aligned with their values (see *A Doctrine of Care*, P.29). I myself do not come from a religious family, but as a Quebecor, am surrounded with catholic influences, as well as the repercussions it has had on agriculture. Thus, I wished to embrace these influences and subtly include them with my work. In *Figure 17: Foraging Censer*, you will find a foraging tool that is reminiscent of a censer—an instrument used in churches to spread incense during various ceremonies. Additionally, in



*Figure 18: Dining Chair to Figure 20: Dining Chair 3*, you will find wooden components sourced from a church (see *Father and I against the church*, P.47), and forms reminiscent of the interiors of the churches.



*Figure 17: Foraging Censer*



*Figure 18: Dining Chair 1*



*Figure 19: Dining Chair 2*



*Figure 20: Dining Chair 3*

## **Vestments**

I've always questioned my relationship to my own body and more precisely the ways in which I adorn it. I studied fashion to better understand my interactions with garments yet found myself scared of what the industry had in mind for me. I started this thesis thinking I wouldn't make garments yet found myself doubting my ability to translate my intentions through the objects I was making over the research-creation portion of my work. As a form of proof of concept to myself, I wished to apply these new methods explored to the thing I know best, garments. In researching *oblique* approaches (see *Theoretical Framework*, P.20), I was able to better understand not only the value of alternative lifestyles, but the importance of them in our still very hetero-restricting society. Gender stereotypes are one of the many things I've researched on and applied to the

way I imaged and experienced garments. In *Figure 21: Garment 1 Front* to *Figure 40: Garment 10 Back*, I propose vestments that explore outside of what is prescribed by the norm. The idea behind these, is to find new definitions of ceremonial garments that allow expression and exploration of oneself. I've later documented these for learning purposes (see Appendix).



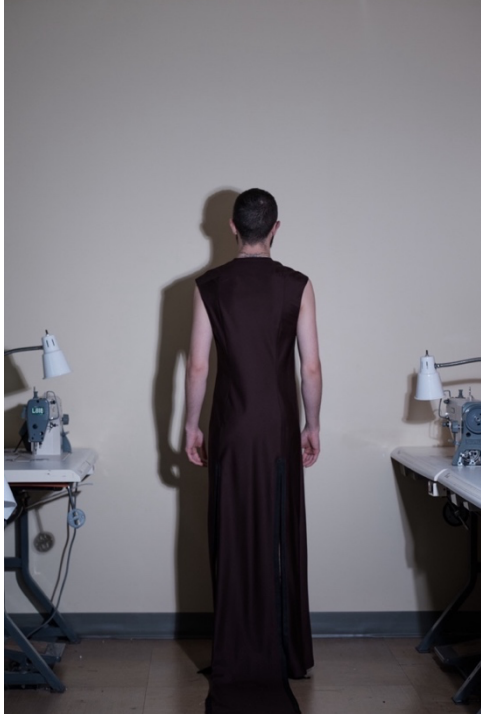
*Figure 21: Garment 1 Front*



*Figure 22: Garment 1 Back*



*Figure 23: Garment 2 Front*



*Figure 24: Garment 2 Back*



*Figure 25: Garment 3 Front*



*Figure 26: Garment 3 Back*



*Figure 27: Garment 4 Front*



*Figure 28: Garment 4 Back*





*Figure 29: Garment 5 Front*



*Figure 30: Garment 5 Back*



*Figure 31: Garment 6 Front*



*Figure 32: Garment 6 Back*



*Figure 33: Garment 7 Front*



*Figure 34: Garment 7 Back*



*Figure 35: Garment 8 Front*



*Figure 36: Garment 8 Back*



*Figure 37: Garment 9 Front*



*Figure 38: Garment 9 Back*



*Figure 39: Garment 10 Front*



*Figure 40: Garment 10 Back*

## Conclusion

In the first part of the proposal, an evaluation of the implicated actors in relation to agriculture for human consumption was done, covering the lifespan of ingredients—from soil to soil. Within this assessment, food is explained through different phases and explores the different social, cultural, and political implications it faces. From growing on unceded indigenous land, to finding itself tangled in between outdated gender binaries, food—whether livestock, vegetables, grains, or such— is victim to its consumer, human.

Food shapes how we interact as individuals, and as a community. Once established, the complex world of what we eat is then observed through critical lenses, relating it to solutions to a better tomorrow. With an approach to queer theory, sustenance becomes a voice for themes such as gender and inclusivity. In this scenario, queering design was meant as an array of write answers to current issues, confronting existing power structures. Throughout this research-creation thesis, a critical regard is projected on colonial and capitalistic mindsets, manifesting itself in both the form and the function of the proposed products.

This research included methods of autoethnography, archival research, and thinking through making, while applying a strict importance to the documentation of the process and the artifacts along the way.

The overarching intention behind this research is to promote food's ability to bring communities together, possibly resulting in a greater appreciation for its origin and vitality, promoting sustainable farming practices. What I am suggesting is heterogeneity in food consumption methods, from a discursive point of view, to show that no matter your lifestyle, it is possible to associate value to food and to appreciate whatever you're putting in your mouth.

Resulting from this research-creation thesis is the exploration of new methods of learning and researching in design. This manifested itself in a set of tangible artifacts reflecting the researched problematics and propose new outcomes to these problematic scenarios.

When touching on subjects of provisions, it is impossible not to discuss the land on which it comes from, the people who are involved, as well as the communities affected by it. Although outside of the research's scope, land acknowledgement and other consequences of colonization are impossible to ignore within this thesis and I hope I was able to proceed with caution, while

respecting any affected groups and minorities involved in these entangled subjects circling the value we associate to food.

As humans, we *eat to live*. I suggest we *live to eat*; and see where that takes us as a society.



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Appendix





