

## Dear my nameless friend,

May, 2004

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### Art with wit, and deeper meanings

By Robert Nelson

Visual arts: Barry Cleavin, As the Crow Flew: Sequences and Consequences

Where: Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale

When: until March 17

Visual arts: Len Lye

Where: Monash University Museum of Art, Wellington Rd, Clayton

When: until April 20

Wit in the visual arts can be seen in two New Zealand artists of conceptual subtlety, skill and profundity. A retrospective of Barry Cleavin's prints at the Gippsland Art Gallery covers the artist's work from 1966 to 2001. It reveals a fertile visual imagination, as in the Umbrella series, in which the familiar lunette shape with arched bottom is filled by surging bats, with hand-like forms at the end of their outstretched wings.

Cleavin uses double meaning in words as well as images, and typography is often integral to the picture. An example is an image of a baby juxtaposed with soldiers, which bears the name Infant/infantry. Another is Symmetry/cemetery, in which these very words are laid over soldiers' limbs, all located neatly in a plastic grid for snap-out toys, as you might get in a cereal packet. The ironies often reflect sinister connections between innocence and institutions, between rat

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ionality and organised death. The humour is unsettling.

Len Lye (1901-1980), on the other hand, creates powerful statements with a minimum of anecdote in his films, sculpture and photography. Lye is most remembered for his direct film technique, in which he drew on the celluloid, without using a camera. When projected, the marks acquire an implicit narrative coherence. Lye's treatment of the film resembles moving print-making, in which abstract traces dance on screen, as if the composition is a protagonist that argues with the music.

A fine exhibition at Monash University Museum of Art contains Lye's filmic output in a loop of almost an hour. The films are united by a somatic energy that overcomes the abstraction of the motifs.

Lye described his artistic ambition as "composing with shapes". Like the music that goes with them, his films have a tribal air of drama and ritual.

All of Lye's work is evocative, suggesting a substratum in the mind - a primitive section of the cortex that Lye identified as "the old brain" - that informs the body by instinct. His work seems somehow genetically encoded with the dance-like rhythms of natural forms that sway in the wind or vibrate together.

This is especially seen in Lye's sculptures. They're kinetic pieces with powerful metaphoric dimensions, evoking the organic pulse of nature and the chaotic, unreproducible quality of lived experience, as if reflecting the accidental within the programmed.

Two of the sculptures on display at Clayton are masterpieces in the genre. Grass is a plank with fine metal rods embedded in the surface in a gentle curve. The plank balances and oscillates, causing the tensile filaments to sway together. But because each rod has a different stiffness and receives a slightly different impulse from the moving plank, they all wave differently, overlap, separate and flux between harmony and discord. When the system comes to rest, the resolution in the flurry of rods is majestic.

Universe is a band of sheet metal stretched around in a loop of about two metres diameter. The band rolls in mighty waves and wobbles - perhaps caused by electromagnets embedded in the plinth? - as if its own energy creates the surges, the one riding unpredictably on top of the other. The chaotic peaks of movement are registered in sonic explosions, as the band strikes a hard ball, suspended directly above on an elastic cord. The clashing echoes through the band in further rhythms, producing an eerie metallic timbre like the sound of a protracted letter "r".

Theoretically, you could predict every movement, since the pulses produced by the machinery are identical each time the sculptures are switched on. But a chaotic genius enters which allegorises the ghost in the machine, the special metaphysical element of opportunity, excitement and unique occasion that Lye communicated by his term "zizz".

In turn this reflects how we, as genetically coded brain-machines, possess a multiplicity of manic reverberations - or surges of will and insight - that aren't overwritten by mechanistic determinism. There's a zizz-factor that lets you live your own thoughts, a domain of chance and volition in which thinking isn't predetermined by biochemistry.

These sculptures are more relevant today than ever. Lye's films may have dated slightly, though artists are still using Lye's techniques, just as the photogram portraits continue to have echoes in contemporary practice.

Technically and thematically, this exhibition marks a high point in 20th-century avant garde practice and will remain a high point in this year's calendar.

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## Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

Points of Contact: Performance, Food and Cookery, a conference organized by the Centre for Performance Research in Cardiff (13-16 January 1994) was a food event in its own right. We heard papers on everything from "Banquets as Gesamtkunstwerk" and the "The Archeology of the Trifle" to "How the French Played with Their Food: Care<sup>^</sup>me and the Pièce Montée." We had sampled durian, a large tropical fruit with a horny peel and creamy lobes of flesh--it exudes a penetrating aroma of vanilla, rotten eggs, almonds, turpentine, and old shoes. We saw the East Coast Artists' Faust/Gastronome, directed by Richard Schechner, violate the boundaries of the body when performers passed chewed food from mouth to mouth. Bobby Baker performed "Drawing on a Mother's Experience," in which she recited the painful story of her life, while flinging onto a white sheet the contents of her shopping bags--cold roast beef, tomato chutney, sponge fingers, brandy, black treacle, sugar, eggs, Guinness, flour, skimmed milk, tinned black currants, frozen fish pie, and Greek strained sheep's milk yogurt--finally rolling herself up in the sheet. We feasted at Happy Gathering, a nearby Chinese restaurant, sampled Welsh cheeses, and alternated roasted meats and rounds of polyphony at a Georgian banquet in a local church. We watched an instructional video on how to slaughter and butcher a pig and another of street vendor in Thailand tossing morning glory (water convulvulus) in a glorious arc from his fiery wok to a plate held by a waiter across the street. We cooked our own Welsh breakfasts of sausage, laverbread (seaweed), and eggs in iron skillets on stoves brought into the conference space for the purpose--preceded by a lecture-demonstration, of course. We "harvested" our lunch in the edible greenhouse, entitled A Temperate Menu, created by Alicia Rios.

Attentive to what is performative about food, we looked at the most ordinary and the most extraordinary food events and not only at domestic and professional cooks, but also artists who work with food. Since cooking techniques, culinary codes, eating protocols, and gastronomic discourses are already so highly elaborated, what is there left for professional artists who chose to work with food as subject or medium to do? Food, and all that is associated with it, is already larger than life. It is already highly charged with meaning a

nd affect. It is already performative and theatrical. An art of the concrete, food, like performance, is alive, fugitive, and sensory.

Food and performance converge conceptually at three junctures. First, to perform is to do, to execute, to carry out to completion, to discharge a duty--in other words, all that governs the production, presentation, and disposal of food and their staging. To perform in this sense is to make food, to serve food. It is about materials, tools, techniques, procedures, actions. It is about getting something done. It is in this sense, first and foremost, that we can speak of the performing kitchen.

Second, to perform is to behave. This is what Erving Goffman calls the performance of self in everyday life. Whether a matter of habit, custom, or law, the divine etiquette of ritual, codifications of social grace, the laws governing cabarets and liquor licenses, or the health and sanitation codes, performance encompasses the social practices that are part and parcel of what Pierre Bourdieu calls habitus. To perform in this sense is to behave appropriately in relation to food at any point in its production or consumption or disposal, each of which may be subject to precise protocols or taboos. Jewish and Hindu laws of ritual purity and formal etiquette stipulate the requirements in exquisite detail. They involve the performance of precepts, as well as precepts of performance.

Third, to perform is to show. When doing and behaving are displayed, when they are shown, when participants are invited to exercise discernment, evaluation, and appreciation, food events move towards the theatrical and, more specifically, towards the spectacular. It is here that taste as a sensory experience and taste as an aesthetic faculty converge. The conflation of the two meanings of taste can be found both in Enlightenment aesthetics and the Hindu concept of *rasa* alike.

During the Enlightenment, aesthetics was realigned from "a science of sensory knowledge" to a philosophy of beauty in relation to sensory experience. The sensory roots of aesthetic response were, however, preserved. While taste as an

aesthetic faculty lacks a dedicated organ, Enlightenment aesthetics thought of it as "le sens interne du beau" or the "sixth sense within us, whose organs we cannot see." Moreover, gastronomic metaphors for aesthetic response inflected the visual with the gustatory (Voltaire compared the taste for beauty in all the arts with the ability of the tongue and palate to discern food) and the tactile (Voltaire wrote that "Taste is not content with seeing, with knowing the beauty of a work; it has to feel it, to be touched by it."). Touch in this context both concretizes emotional response, and speaks to what el-Khoury calls the "tactility of taste." Given that gastronomy and eroticism share not only touch but also appetite and oral pleasure, Enlightenment thought associated the two, particularly in the figure of the libertine and the orgy.

As a sensory experience, taste operates in multiple modalities—not only by way of the mouth and nose, but also the eye, ear, and skin. How does food perform to the sensory modalities unique to it? A key to this question is a series of dissociations. While we eat to satisfy hunger and nourish our bodies, some of the most radical effects occur precisely when food is dissociated from eating and eating from nourishment. Such dissociations produce eating disorders, religious experiences, culinary feats, sensory epiphanies, and art.

### Sensory Dissociations

"The distinction of the senses is arbitrary." –Marinetti

Food that is dissociated from eating bypasses the nose and mouth. Such food may well be subject to extreme visual, and for that matter tactile and verbal, elaboration. The showpieces in culinary olympics and exhibitions of pastry and confectionary are exhibited, but they are not generally eaten (with the exception of hot entries). Eat them at their freshest and there would be nothing to exhibit. Wait till after the exhibition and they are not worth eating. They are literally a feast for the eye and they are called showpieces. Food stylists produce a toxic cuisine that may well look more edible and delicious than real food, particularly under hot studio lights. Featured in images that sell food, magazines, and cook books, dishes fashioned from substances never destined for the mouth "look good enough to eat." They are a case of i

nedible spectacle.

The task of the stylist is to "show" sensory experiences that are invisible, or more accurately, to provide visual cues that we associate with particular tastes and smells, even in the absence of gustatory and olfactory stimuli. In this regard, the art of studio food is at once mimetic (the dish prepared for the camera must look like it could grace the table) and indexical (the visual details must index qualities that we can only know from other sensory modalities). From color, steam rising, gloss, color, and texture, we infer taste, smell, and feel, as well as whether the food in question is supposed to have been fried, roasted, baked, steamed, and grilled, and whether it is hot or cold. Taste is something we anticipate and infer from how things look, feel to the hand, smell (outside the mouth), and sound. We use these sensory experiences to tell, before putting something into the mouth, if it is fresh, ripe, or rotten, if it is raw or cooked, if it is properly prepared. Our survival, both biological and social, depends on such cues. So does our pleasure.

Our eyes let us "taste" food at a distance by activating the sense memories of taste and smell. Even a feast for the eyes only will engage the other senses imaginatively, for to see is not only to taste, but also to eat. The chef's maxim, "A dish well presented is already half eaten," recognizes that eating begins (and may even end) before food enters the body. Television cooking shows—there are now entire channels devoted entirely to food—are a way of eating with the eyes by watching others prepare, present, and consume food, without either cooking or eating oneself. Cookbooks, now more than ever, are a way of eating by reading recipes and looking at photographs. Those books may never see the kitchen. Indeed, experienced readers can sight-read a recipe the way a musician sight-reads a score. They can "play" the recipe in their mind's eye.

While not unique to the experience of food, visual aspects of food are no less essential to it. First, the eyes play a critical role in stimulating appetite. Visual appeal literally makes the mouth water, gets the juices going, starts the stomach rumbling—in other words, sets the autonomic reflexes associated with digestion in motion. These responses—salivat



ion, secretion of gastric juices, hunger pangs—are involuntary, spontaneous, instinctive, though the cues are ones that we learn. Second, the eyes are bigger than the stomach. This is not only a reason not to shop for food when hungry, but also an incentive to feast with the eyes. Visual interest can be sustained long after the desire to taste and smell has abated and appetite has been sated. Perhaps for this reason, the most spectacular displays are likely to come at the end of the meal.

The wondrous confectionary presented at the conclusion of Renaissance banquets, while technically edible, might never be eaten, though it (together with the other courses) might be enthusiastically applauded. Barbara Wheaton reports that, at the appropriate moment, the table might be abandoned to pillage and the guests invited to demolish the exquisite conceits that had been set before them. These "edible monuments," to use Marcia Reed's apt term, are performing objects of a special kind. Memorable examples are the pie with four and twenty blackbirds (the birds would have been placed inside the crust after the pie was baked and then released when the crust was opened) and the *macchina della coccagna*, an edible festival sculpture. The *macchina della coccagna* represented paradise on earth, imagined as the Land of Cockaigne, itself an edible world where sausages, cheese, and pastries grow on trees. Such conceits, whether sotelties, surtouts, trionfi, or machines--literally perform. According to Reed, eighteenth-century Italian edible masterpieces of the *macchina della coccagna* might feature fireworks spewing forth from a ram's head or pig's mouth, fountains flowing not only with water, but also wine, and pools of water with live ducks and fish. Large, free-standing, and edible, such festival architecture and sculpture enacted its own ephemerality. When the king gave the signal, the gathered crowd scaled, attacked, and destroyed a Neapolitan *coccagna* in the form of a temporary fortress adorned with food.

Food that does not enter the mouth offers artists such as Alicia Rios the opportunity to focus specifically on tactile aspects of food. According to the program notes for *Organoleptic Deconstruction in Three Movements*, which she performed at the 1993 Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery,



Rios explored "the texture, sound, and appearance of various substances out of their usual context"—first and foremost, out of the mouth. Rios made chewing into a full body process. She externalized the mouth, extended the mouth's lining to the rest of her skin, and displaced the mouth's functions onto the rest of the body. Her whole body became a masticating mouth. While etiquette books insist that one chew with the mouth closed, never speak with a full mouth or spit, and dispose of anything removed from the mouth discretely, Rios spoke with her "mouth" full. Paul Levy describes the event:

Ms. Rios was arrayed in white—daringly, as it turned out. In the first movement, Ms. Rios placed bowls of 10 or so foods, which had in common only that they were coloured pink and white, on the lecture table.... She proceeded to "chew" each of these foods, but with her fingers, not her teeth. Thus, the strawberries were reduced to squishy pulp, and the moderator of the session sprayed her fingers with cream from the can.... Ms. Rios had taken the act of masticating food out of its context, by using the larger, external sensory organs, the fingers, instead of the smaller internal ones, teeth, tongue, and palate. She had thus made public an act which is essentially private....

In the third act, Rios lay on a transparent mattress filled with potato chips, which she "chewed" by rolling around on it. By externalizing actions internal to the mouth, Rios isolated mastication, made her fingers and even her entire body into a mouth, and disassociated chewing from tasting and swallowing.

The substance of food and corporeality of the body inform "Gnaw" (1992), a three-part installation by Janine Antoni. She presents a 600 lb. block of gnawed chocolate, another of gnawed lard, and the candies and lipsticks she has made from the bits of each block that she has spit out. She has molded heart-shaped candies from the chocolate and 300 lipsticks from the lard. While the teeth marks are clearly evident on the massive cubes of chocolate and lard, there is no sign of the rest of the body, except perhaps by inference from the sweetheart candy (made from the chocolate she spit out) and cosmetic lipstick (destined to adorn the mouth). A

Antoni's teeth have "sculpted" material that under other circumstances would be processed using hands and tools and cooked, before being placed in the mouth, chewed, and swallowed. "Gnaw" also suggests the teeth of an animal, who knows no other tools, rather than a human, who can exteriorize the action of teeth to a knife. The actions are mechanical and repetitive, even obsessive. The mouth, painted red with lipstick, its teeth barred, becomes an instrument of violence, self-inflicted, an independent organ with a life of its own. The tongue is used to similar effect in Antoni's piece "Lick and Lather" (1993), for which she licked seven self-portrait busts made of chocolate (they were paired with seven busts made of soap, hence "lather"). Lard, an icon of fat and, by extension, fatness, is a recurrent material in Antoni's work. She has immersed her body in lard and washed herself with soap made with the lard that her body displaced. Touch in her work extends from the teeth to the body's largest organ, the skin, all of it.

With corporeality at the fore and the line between skin and flesh ambiguous, Jana Sterbak's flesh dress disassociates food from eating by violence. The food that is present is food that is withheld from the body. For "Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic," Sterbak clothed a silver mannequin in a dress made of 50 pounds of raw flank steak that she had salted lightly—"The dress starts out red and moist, then gradually dries out into a tough leathery substance." The meat was left to desiccate as the piece traveled from one exhibition venue to the next, arriving at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa in 1991. The flank steak is meant neither to be eaten nor to look like something one might want to eat. Rather, it concretizes the self-consuming anorexic body, the body that refuses food. This is a body without a mouth. The portal is closed. The skin of such a body becomes literally a flesh dress draped upon a hard frame, an emblem of the anorectic body as corpse. Sterbak, who was born in Prague and works out of Montreal and Paris, has also made furniture out of food: "Apollinaire" is an armchair upholstered with meat, while the thin mattress resting on the spindly wire frame of "Bread bed" (1997) is, as the name suggests, made of bread. Furniture intended to accommodate the body has become flesh and bread in its own right. The religious overtones are appropriate, for such uses of food verge o

n, if they do not cross the line of, sacrilege, if only because such food is being "wasted," a term with particular resonance in the context of anorexia. These objects materialize "the body in pain," to use Elaine Scarry's phrase.

Eleanor Antin gets under the skin in her piece "Carving: A Traditional Sculpture." She presents a series of photographs of herself, nude, to mark stages in her loss of weight between July 15 and August 21, 1972. Subjecting herself to a strict diet, Antin allowed the body to become its own food. The refusal to ingest food can be inferred from images of the starving body. This living sculpture is "traditional," not only because the female nude is a classic subject of European art, but also because, as Antin explains in her commentary, the form emerges from inside the flesh, just as a sculpture emerges from inside the marble, in a continuous layer across the entire surface. In the context of living flesh, however, the term "carved" also suggests meat. The body that dines on itself changes its shape and gets smaller, incrementally, just as a meat roast gets gradually smaller as it is carved a slice at a time.

Food that is not eaten can still be seen and, depending on the circumstances, smelled, touched, and heard, but it cannot be tasted unless it enters the mouth. However, tasting does not require swallowing. Winetasters spit out the wine they have tasted, though they will suck it in with air and swirl it around the mouth to bring out its full range. So precise are the conditions for focussing on the sensations of taste, that Professor Claus Joseph Riedel of Riedel Glassworks, in Austria, has created wine glasses whose shapes are designed to bring out the distinctive qualities of particular wine varieties:

Different areas of the tongue are sensitive to different tastes. Riedel glasses are designed to direct the wine to the zone that highlights its best qualities. For example, the Riedel Bordeaux/Cabernet glass creates a harmony of fruit, tannin and acidity by directing the wine flow to the center of the tongue, whereas the Burgundy/Pinot Noir glass directs the wine to the tip of the tongue, highlighting the fruit while balancing the naturally high acidity.

This model of the tongue (and an entire wine glass business based on it) has no scientific basis--according to Linda Bartoshuk, all four tastes can be perceived wherever there are taste receptors. In addition to taste, there is look (color and clarity) and mouthfeel (viscosity or texture, irritation, including astringency and bite, and temperature). Above all, judging by wine descriptions, it is olfaction that defines much of what we think of as taste. Volatiles enter the nose from outside the body (orthonasal olfaction) as well as from inside the mouth (retronasal olfaction).

While taste is an analytic sense—we can clearly distinguish sweet, salt, sour, and bitter--smell is widely held to be a holistic sense. To discriminate its many components (the olfactory system can sense thousands of different molecules), it seems to be necessary to encode the olfactory verbally in memory. This is what the language of wine tasting is about. Michael Broadbent's account of a 1981 red bordeaux (Chateau Pétrus) reads like a description of a musical performance in a delicatessen:

Five notes: Black; dumbness, concealing depth of fruit; full, fleshy, rich complete—sort of puppy fat a year after the vintage. Next, in magnum, at Fredrick's Pétrus tasting in 1986; medium-deep, plummy, spicy bouquet developing, meaty, calf's foot jelly. At the "Stockholm" Group blind vertical tasting in 1990, one of the few vintages I got right. Maturing; a bit hard at first but opened up. crisp fruit; rather leathery texture, acidity noticeable. Most recently decanted in the office, taste, then taken to the Penning-Rowsells'. Four hours later, opulent, mulberry-like fruit; seemed sweeter, full of fruit flavour though blunt.

Broadbent last tasted this wine in 1990, a year before he published this account, and no doubt will keep tasting it to the year 2005, the last year he recommends for it.

Wine is alive. It matures over the years and changes in even a few hours. It is an event. Even a single taste can be like an act in a play that is as long as the life of the vintage. The succession and duration of sensations in that single mouthful is what Roland Barthes calls tiering in his commentary on Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*. After noting the mo

vement from excitement to stupefaction that Brillat-Savarin attributes to champagne and Barthes to whisky, Barthes describes taste as the sense that "experiences and practices multiple and successive apprehensions—beginnings, recurrences, overlappings, a whole counterpoint of sensation: to the arrayed arrangement of the sense of sight (in great panoramic delights) corresponds the tiering of taste." Indeed, he says of the gustatory sensation that when submitted to time it can "develop somewhat in the manner of a narrative, or of a language." It could be said that a particular wine is inferred from these sensations, which themselves tell the story of the climate, the soil, the grape, the cultivation, the processing, the pre-phylloxera years, the barrel—by a process of learned associations and inferences, aided by language.

A key to this process is olfaction, which stands in a special relationship to memory. While difficult to recall, once an aroma registers and the next time it is experienced, it can call up vivid memories of its previous contexts. Indeed, its ability to do so is involuntary and it through disciplined attention and verbal description that winetasters develop the ability to remember and identify tastes. Smell is the "most interior" and "least informative" of the sense, according to Kant. This is one reason why winetasters use language to exteriorize the information they derive from sensory experience. As Han Ruins notes in his essay on the phenomenology of smell:

The paradoxical objectivity of smell is that it is more intruding, more immediate, than any other sensation, and at the same time essentially fleeting and elusive. Its presence is never permanent. Not even when that which emits it is present in its materiality is it possible to remain attentive to the smell.... Smell does not permit the continuous examination and enrichment of the first impression which we take for granted, when it comes to the other senses.... The nose must continue to act incessantly, without being able to store the impression. The impression does not become more dense, it is not solidified as when we concentrate on a tone or a color. It is always evaporating.

To explore precisely these aspects of olfaction, the Futurist

s dissociated it from other sensations and made it a star of their culinary performances.

They did this in two ways. First, they liberated the sensory experience of eating from appetite and nourishment. Deliver nutrition by vitamin pills or radio. Save food for art. "Woe betide those who cannot distinguish between things which serve to please the stomach and those destined to delight the eyes," the Futurist Cookbook declared. Since even food saved for art would need to be consumed, they found ways to stave off satiety and extend the gastronomic experience. They advocated light food and small units (mouthfuls). They externalized functions of the mouth (tearing, chewing, masticating) and delegated them to the hands for "prelabial tactile pleasure." They eliminated or delayed swallowing. A Futurist body free of the demands of nourishment was subject to its own anatomy. Accounts of Futurist meals spoke of exciting the enamel on the teeth, filling the nostril with heaven, choking the esophagus with admiration. An empty stomach was needed for "White and Black," Farfa's recipe for "a one-man show on the internal walls of the Stomach consisting of free-form arabesques of whipped cream sprinkled with lime-tree charcoal." In this recipe, the stomach is a surface to paint, not a vessel to fill. In this way, the Futurists extended the physiology of aesthetic response to the deep interior recesses of the body.

Second, the Futurists made good on the declaration in their 1921 Manifesto on Tactilism that "the distinction of the senses is arbitrary." In that spirit, they proceeded to disarticulate the taste, sight, sound, and feel of food. They then elaborated each in its own right and recombined them in surprising ways. In the recipe for "Raw Meat Torn by Trumpet Blasts," mouthfuls of electrified beef alternated with "vehement blasts on the trumpet blown by the eater himself." The "Extremist Banquet" was a two-day orgy of olfaction. At the "Tactile Dinner Party" diners were to wear pajamas, sit in a darkened room, and bury their faces in salad to activate the skin on the outer cheeks and lips. They might fondle a tactile device while eating "polyrhythmic salad," listening to music, and smelling lavender perfume. Or, since tasting did not require swallowing, they were prepared to put things into their mouths that could not be swallowed. For the "Steel Ch



icken," "the body of the chicken [was] mechanized by aluminium-coloured bonbons," while "The Excited Pig" was a "salami immersed in a sauce of coffee and eau-de-Cologne." They staged their culinary events at such places as their Holy Palate Restaurant in Turin and the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931.

The jaw and the gut play a central role in Dali's gastronomics--"All my experiences are visceral." "I hold visceral impulses to be the supreme indicators." "My enlightenment is born and propagated through my guts." *Les Diners de Gala*, the opulent cookbook that he conceived and illustrated, sets out a surrealist gastro-aesthetics that is at once visceral and acetic, Dionysian and Catholic. Appropriately, Dali is inspired by what he calls the "positivist matérialism" of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*. As Barthes has noted, the body posited by Brillat-Savarin is also visceral: "Food provokes an internal pleasure: inside the body, enclosed in it, not just beneath the skin, but in that deep, central zone, all the more primordial because it is soft, tangled, permeable, and called, in a very general sense, the intestines." The internal pleasure should, in Barthes's view, be considered a sixth sense: "gustatory delight is pervasive, spread over the entire secret lining of the mucous membranes; it arises from what should be our sixth sense—if BS had not reserved precisely this place for the genesic sense—coenaesthesia, the overall sensation of our internal body," a diffuse sense of well-being. If the Futurist stomach is the anatomical equivalent of the white cube, for Farfa's black and white arabesques, the gourmand's body that emerges from the *Physiology of Taste* is seen "as a softly radiant painting, illuminated from within." It gives off a glow, evidence of "the voluptuous effects of food."

In contrast with the Futurist body, which is posited as empty of substance and ready for sensation, Dali's body is insistently alimentary—"I am exalted by all that is edible." "Everything begins in the mouth before going elsewhere; with the nerves." It is also substantial, if not transubstantial. The physical and existential void is to be filled through Dali's "gastronomical theology," which he explicitly links to the Eucharist ("to swallow the living God") and to the sacramental anatomy of his own genius: "The sensual intelligence hou



sed in the tabernacle of my palate beckons me to pay the greatest attention to food...In my daily life my every move becomes ritual, the anchovy I chew participates in a small way to the shining light of my genius." *Les Diners de Gala*, a collection of Dali precepts and illustrations, showcases Dali's ornamentation of menus from such legendary restaurants as Maxim's and La Tour d'Argent and features the recipes of their chefs. Dali stages himself within the sumptuous culinary *mise-en-scène*. Consistent with his penchant for contradiction, dissociation, and the condensation of incompatibilities, Dali admonishes the reader: "Do not forget that, a woodcock 'flambé' in strong alcohol, served in its own excrement, as is the custom in the best of Parisian restaurants, will always remain for me in that serious art that is gastronomy, the most delicate symbol of true civilization." *Les Diners de Dali* moves between "sado-masochistic pleasure," "acute sybaritism," Rabelaisian scatology, religious ecstasy, and anaesthetic asceticism.

#### Along the Alimentary Canal

"All my experiences are visceral." --Dali

There is another body of work that takes as its site the alimentary canal proper, from the mouth into the viscera and out the anus. While experiences associated with the inside of the mouth, the throat, where there are also taste receptors, and nasal cavity have been aestheticized through cuisine, wine, and gastronomy, experiences of food inside the body cavity have been understood largely in terms of science, medicine, and religion, and specific practices associated with them—dissection, surgery, spiritual discipline, and moral order. When artists enter the alimentary canal, what do they do? They visualize the inside of the body, they externalize it by presenting substances suggestive of it, and they project photographs and videos of the body's interior. Some artists literally make the insides perform by activating the entire alimentary canal through the process of eating or by violently disrupting the normal operation of the digestive tract by inducing vomiting, peeing, or shitting.

Ann Hamilton's *Untitled (mouth/stones)* (1993) consists of

a very small television monitor projecting the moving image of a mouth (much larger than life, despite the tiny screen). The mouth, partially open, is filled with rolling stones. Decontextualized from the rest of the body, the mouth becomes an autonomous organ—most anything can conceivably be put into it—including the stones that move around inside it incessantly. Isolated in this way, the lips resemble a sphincter muscle that tightens and releases, with the stones precariously lodged temporarily in an ambiguous pocket of flesh. The tongue is the focus of Antoni Miralda's project, at his Big Fish restaurant in Miami, to invite patrons to have their tongues photographed and to mount enlargements of the images to give this organ the proper attention.

As already mentioned, the teeth are explicitly addressed by several artists, as well as gastronomer Brillat-Savarin. They become a sense organ in their own right in Marinetti's Futurist Cookbook. They become a percussion instrument in the Captain Crunch routine of Blue Man Group. They are part of the body as eating machine in the appropriately titled *Physiology of Taste*. Even a dietary regime such as the Schick Method, which focusses on chewing, took on the quality of performance art for Barbara Smith: the Schick Method "suggests that you eat everything with a fork and put the fork down while you chew, take a swallow of water and then the next bite. They say you are supposed to fall in love with your food, because you have slowed down and are concentrating on the explicit experience of that one action."

Chewing, spitting, and the externalizing of "digestion" are deployed by John Latham (with Barry Flanagan) in *Still and Chew* (1966-1967). Taking Francis Bacon's adage that "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested" literally, guests at a party in his home were instructed to chew pages from Clement Greenberg's *Art and Culture* and "If necessary, spit out the product into a flask provided." The actual copy used in the event belonged to the library of St. Martin's School of Art in London, where he was teaching. Based on Latham's own account, Kristine Stiles reports that:

Those assembled complied, expectorating about a third of the volume in a heap of masticated pulp. Latham then imm

ersed the wad in a solution containing thirty-percent sulfuric acid, left it until the solution converted to sugar, neutralized the remains with sodium bicarbonate and introduced a yeast—an "Alien Culture"—into the substance to create a "brew." Latham allowed his cultured brew to "bubble gently" for nearly a year until the end of May, 1967, when he received a postcard labeled: "Art and Culture wanted urgently by a student." Latham distilled the mass into a suitable glass container, labeled the jar "Art and Culture," and returned it. "After the few minutes required to persuade the librarian that this was indeed the book which was asked for on the postcard," Latham left the object and returned home.

Needless to say, his teaching career at St. Martin's ended immediately. Art and Culture may have been hard to swallow, but it was digested, outside the body, to produce a distillation of its substance, literally. Examples abound of edible texts, from alphabet soup and birthday cakes to Ro Malone's cooked books.

Some of the most powerful and disturbing work focuses on the viscera. Here, the digestive system is neither the empty stomach of the Futurists, nor the site of diffuse postprandial pleasure that Brillat-Savarin celebrates. According to Stiles, "In 1972, Stelerac (b. Stelios Arcadiou) made color videos of the inside of his stomach, bowels, and lungs. To make such images, he swallowed a telemetering capsule containing a camera. The procedure required an injection to prevent the stomach from rejecting the foreign object and then the spraying of his throat with local anesthetic to numb the feeling."

Several years earlier, in 1969, Barbara Smith's "Ritual Meal" was a harrowing ordeal for the sixteen guests who subjected themselves to it. Jennie Klein offers a vivid description of this extraordinary event, which provides the basis for the selective account of the visceral highlights of the event that follows. After waiting outside for more than an hour to the incessant sound of "a taped voice asking them to 'please wait, please wait,'" they entered the house of Stanley and Elyse Grinstein. The very loud sound of a beating heart filled the house and resonated right through their bodies, which, according to Smith, created "the most amazed feeling of anxiety

y." Films of open heart surgery and charts showing the anatomy of the digestive and circulatory systems were projected on the walls and ceiling:

Eight waiters (four men wearing surgical scrubs and masks and four women wearing masks, black tights, and leotards) led them to a table. Prior to entering the house, the guests had to put on surgical scrubs.... The guests were then served a meal like they had never seen before. In keeping with the surgical "theme," the eating utensils were surgical instruments. Meat had to be cut with scalpels. Wine, served in test tubes, resembled blood or urine. In this charged atmosphere, ordinary food took on extraordinary connotations, an effect that Smith enhanced by the preparation and presentation of the food. Puréed fruit was served in plasma bottles. Raw food, such as eggs and chicken livers, that had to be cooked at the table were included in the dinner along with plates of cottage cheese embedded with a small pepper resembling an organ. Although the food was actually quite good, the dining experience was intensely uncomfortable for the guests, who couldn't put down their wine/test tubes and were sometimes forced to eat with their hands.

Commenting on this piece in an interview published in the early 1980s, Smith said, "It was about ingesting the art work and being affected internally by it." Her comments on this piece, which hold for many of her numerous other food based performances since then, captures the specificity of food as a performance medium. What made "Ritual Meal" so disturbing in Smith's view, was its violation of "the rules governing the way the art object is viewed. Most art happens outside the body of the viewer, which remains separate from the object that is being viewed." In contrast, as Klein notes, "Ritual Meal" "introduc[ed] the body of the art (and perhaps the artist) into the bodies of the guests." The analogues with communion and anthropophagy are clear.

If Michael Fried was concerned that minimalist art (and, in particular, sculpture), by activating the space between the object and viewer, approached the condition of theatre, then this kind of art most definitely took things several steps further. This is not simply a matter of watching actors on stage eat. Rather, eating is integral to the work. Nor is it simply th

at eating is a mode of reception, for that would suggest that the work is complete and in tact before it is "received." The very act of eating, the substances and the conditions are integral to the event that is the work. The model of object to be viewed and viewer does not apply. These events are not even an adaptation of the model. They are of a different order, right from the outset, though clearly they are reacting against the model of object/viewer.

Among the artists who perform to the body's limits are those who violently disrupt the autonomic nervous system, which regulates involuntary activity of the vital organs, including the intestines. In both "Self Destruction" (1966) by Raphael Montañez Ortiz and

"Drinking Water" (1974) by Ras`a Todosijevic', the artists drank vast amounts of liquid, disrupted their breathing, and induced vomiting. Bare-chested, Todosijevic' "repeatedly drank water from a fish tank from which the fish had been emptied out on the floor before the audience. Trying to 'harmonize with the rhythm of the fish breathing,' the artist drank twenty-six glasses of water at the same time as breathing, eventually vomiting out the intolerable quantities of water he had forced himself to drink in imitation of the environment of a creature that he was not." Ortiz infantilized himself and in his words:

"I sat down and I guzzled the milk and I can hardly breathe. I grab another bottle. I guzzle it and pout it all over me: there is Mommy's presence right there in all the milk. I real hysterical again and I throw up. I reject Mommy. I throw up, first spontaneously, then deliberately sticking my finger down my throat, vomiting up about two pints of milk. I then slap the puddle of vomit angrily over and over calling, "Mommy, Mommy." Accepting the puddle of milk as symbolic of Mommy, I calm down. I crawl off. "Mommy, ma, ma..."

While not the minimalist actions at the heart of Allan Kaprow's work, these works, different as they are from each other, force the viscera to "act," the body's involuntary responses to "perform," and one would might well imagine also to induce a reflex vomit response in those present.

While Artaud celebrated shit—"Where there is a stink of shit, there is a smell of being."—in his essay "The Pursuit of Fecality," histories of performance art are not rich in examples. However, the identification of food with shit by treating actual food as if it were shit (but not the reverse) is not only an established traditional practice, but also the basis for Karen Finley's legendary performances, in which chocolate is smeared on her face and dress as if it were shit and the way that other foods are handled reduces them to the same condition, without their ever having passed through the body—on the contrary, she may even talk about or try to "ingest" them through the wrong orifice.

This is Bakhtinian performance of the lower body and its secretions confounded with food. The performance of the lower body has a rich history in popular culture. To this day the scatological ritual involving *La ro<sup>^</sup>tie* (a chamber pot containing champagne and chocolate, and, some cases, bananas, toilet paper, tampons colored with red food tomato sauce or food coloring) is still practiced in the mountains of Auvergne. Deborah Reed-Danahay, an anthropologist who has studied the practice over the last fifteen years, describes it as follows: "In the early morning hours after a wedding, a group of unmarried youths bursts into the room to which the bride and groom have retired for the night and present them with a chamber pot containing champagne and chocolate. This mixture is then shared and consumed by all present." Disgusting, but delicious, the mixture's reference to urine and shit is obvious to all, and its symbolism very rich. The practice was also described by Van Gennep, who noted "the use of wetness to symbolize fecundity" and explicated its role in such rites of passage.

Such acts confound the boundaries of the body and the limits on what can go into and come out of it. Blue Man Group (three men, heads shaved and painted cobalt blue, who act in concert as Blue Man) does a send-up of art making and the art world by making a mess that becomes a painting. If you sit in the first few rows, it will be under a sheet of plastic to protect you from the mess that flies in all directions. Blue Man offers its audiences "an opportunity to regress," an "all-out sensory assault," and "an element of untrammelled infantile sensuality." To do this they "perform a symphony f



or teeth and Captain Crunch cereal, squirt snakes of banana from their chests and catch paint-filled gum balls in their mouths, among other stunts."

Appropriately named, "Tubes" is extravaganza performance. Using tubes from industrial food processing, gardening hoses and their fittings, and insecticide spraycans, Blue Man flings, splatters, splashes, spritzes, and extrudes paint and food—some sixty pounds of bananas, almost as much Jell-O, and innumerable marshmallows and Twinkies-- with the force and trajectory of projectile vomit. This body's mouth is directly connected to the anus, with neither stomach nor guts in between. Indeed, the two orifices are interchangeable, for the anus is displaced to the mouth, which both ingests and excretes, as well as to other parts of the body and clothing, which exude surprising substances. This is visceral performance without viscera. This is dirt as defined by Mary Douglas as "matter out of place," in her appropriately titled essay "Secular Defilement."

#### Art/Life

"...nonart is more art than Art art." –Allan Kaprow

The materiality of food, its dynamic and unstable character, its precarious position between sustenance and garbage, its relationship to the mouth and the rest of the body, particularly the female body, and its importance to community, make food a powerful performance medium. Indeed, it could be said that food and the processes associated with it are performance art *avant la lettre*. This presents an obstacle and an opportunity to artists. Food's already artfulness is an obstacle to those working in the gap and across the boundary between art and life, for the life they value is precisely that which is not (or not yet) art until their intervention makes it so. Through extreme attentiveness, contextualization, framing, arbitrary rules, and chance operations, these artists are attracted to the phenomenal, towards raw experience, or towards the social as the basis for a participatory art practice, or towards process, rather than a permanent work that can enter the art market. They gravitate towards materials not usually associated with a fine art practice and attend to the particularity of those materials. They are likely to produce ac



tions (which may or may not be events) and to leave documents, relics, souvenirs, detritus, and other evidence of those actions.

In contrast, those for whom food's already artfulness is an opportunity look to the arts of everyday life for a resource that they work on right where it is, taking the life world itself as their site of operation, or divert it into the art world, or make the two converge. Recognizing what is already artful in life, they may curate it or they may collaborate with ordinary people. In either case, this is an aesthetics other than that of Hegel. It takes its cue from the already total performance of the life world.

It is precisely in opposition to the notion of art as an autonomous object, in prescribed media and spaces, that the historical avant-garde and postwar experimental performance proceed. Food offers them a performance medium on the boundaries and at the intersections of the life world and the art world. While considerable attention has been accorded food as image, theme, or symbol, less is understood about food as a performance medium and the particular ways in which food and the settings and events associated with it engage the senses. While I have considered historical examples of table and stage inspiring each other, experimental performance during the twentieth century, especially after World War II, offers a particularly rich array of possibilities.

Reviewing the role of food in performance art, Linda Montano classified what she had found prior to 1981 as follows:

Artists have used food as political statement (Martha Rosler, *the Waitresses*, Nancy Buchanan, Suzanne Lacy), as a conceptual device (Eleanor Antin, Howard Fried, Bonnie Sherk, Vito Acconci), as life principle (Tom Marioni, Les Levine), as sculptural material (Paul McCarthy, Joseph Beuys, Kipper Kids, Terry Fox, Carolee Schneemann, Motion, Bob & Bob), for nurturance and ritual (Barbara Smith), for props and irony (Allan Kaprow), as a scare tactic (Hermann Nitsch), in autobiography (Rachel Rosenthal), as feminist statement (Suzanne Lacy, Judy Chicago, *Womanhouse*), in humor (Susan Mogul), for survival (Leslie Labowitz).

While useful, these categories are not commensurate with one another, however accurately they differentiate the work. Consider instead how these and other artists insert themselves into the food system, work with and against it, or produce work about or outside of the food system.

All three senses of performance—to do, to behave, to show—operate all through the food system, including production, provisioning, preparation, presentation, consumption, and disposal, but vary according to which sense of performance is focal, elaborated, or suppressed. For the purposes of this analysis, the food system may be segmented into five processes (the order may vary and one process may and generally does occur more than once): procuring and producing (hunting, gathering, cultivation), storage, distribution and exchange, processing and preparation, consumption, and disposal. These processes have been elaborated (or simplified) in historically and culturally specific ways so that they are at once repetitive tasks and customary practices. Ritual protects the hunter, increases the crop, governs tithes, and surrounds the eating of first fruits. Balinese temple festivals are like a systemic clock in the way that they time and regulate the flow of water into rice paddies along terraces. Work songs synchronize the movements of grinding or pounding and make repetitive tasks less boring. Rules of reciprocity and laws of ritual purity govern who may accept food from whom, while etiquette stipulates how those who eat together must behave. The tools and techniques for brewing and baking, roasting and steaming, cutting and mashing may be staged as performances in their own right. On a small scale, patrons can see into restaurant kitchens. On a large scale, entire events are organized around the boiling and baking of a 900 pound bagel or the frying of a gigantic omelet—70,000 eggs and 200 pounds of truffles. Highly staged feasts are overtly theatrical. Depending on who touched them, leftovers are sacred or polluting. They are discarded or recirculated or recycled.

### Performing the Food Cycle

"When the durian come down, the sarongs go up." –Malay proverb

## Production

Two archetypes, the Garden of Eden and the Last Supper, inform the work of several performance artists working with food, whether explicitly or implicitly. Gardens, with their long histories, are prime examples of multi-sensory environments and an art form in their own right, whether formally designed by professional landscape architects or vernacular expressions of local knowledge. Adam Purple's Garden of Eden, created from the detritus of abandoned buildings on the Lower East Side during the economic downturn in New York City during the 1970s, was an indictment of a city government that had allowed the urban fabric to disintegrate. Laid out in relation to a cosmic plan visible from outer space and cultivated using the gardener's own nightsoil, the Garden of Eden was first and foremost a life work, though many considered it an art work. During an economic upturn, the city destroyed the garden and built public housing on the plot.

Farming dictated by values other than maximizing profit has as many of the qualities valued by performance artists. Intentional societies as the Amish eschew what they deem to be unnecessary technologies. Alternative communities such as the biodynamic followers of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), whose anthroposophy offered a new science of cosmic influences, work from a kind of cookbook of "biodynamic preparations": "Naturally occurring plant and animal materials are combined in specific recipes in certain seasons of the year and then placed in compost piles. These preparations bear concentrated forces within them and are used to organize the chaotic elements within the compost piles. When the process is complete, the resulting Preparations are medicines for the Earth which draw new forces from the cosmos."

While advocates of biodynamic farming cite scientific verification of the efficacy of their methods, they are guided in the first instance by spiritual values. They envision the farm as a self-sufficient entity in harmony with the Earth, consistent with the principles enunciated by Steiner in a series of le

ctures that he delivered in 1924, toward the end of his life. In

"Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture," he imagines the farm in corporeal terms—the soil is a diaphragm and "planetary forces [are] active in the 'head' (below ground) and in the 'belly' (above ground)." He accords smell importance in developing a personal relationship to farming, and in particular to manure and composting. Cowsheds filled with manure to collect forces beneficial to crops are ritually inserted into the ground. Inspired by Christian and Eastern mysticism, Steiner was a prodigious lecturer and author and produced, in addition to his farming manual and series of lectures on bees, books on works on performance dealing with such topics as eurhythm as visible speech and song, creative speech, and the art of acting. Steiner spawned a movement, complete with schools, a philosophy of art, and farms.

In contrast with these idiosyncratic and programmatic projects, but certainly in keeping with their spirit, local communities use local knowledge to sustain a culturally based biodiversity. In the Big Coal River region of West Virginia during the early spring, people gather ramps (*allium tricoccum*), or wild leeks, and eat them at ramp suppers and festivals that double as fundraisers for local causes. As Mary Hufford notes in her evocative account, these practices and the knowledge associated with them (and with other wild greens, and morels), "interweave biodiversity and community life. " This is a deeply rooted and committed set of relations among people tied by kinship and friendship.

Ramps are what artists would understand as a material with strong presence, particularly because of its smell, which has prompted the Menominee Indians to call it "the skunk. " The stink of ramps is integral to their character as a restorative that operates on both the body and the spirit: "Some have seen in this practice of restoring the body while emitting a sulphurous odor a rite of death and resurrection, serendipitously coinciding with Easter," though as Mary Hufford notes in her evocative account of ramps, "Actually, with ramps the motif appears to be breath and resurrection." So much so, that children who had eaten ramps were sent home f

rom school because of the overpowering odor that emanated from them. One ramp supper announced itself by its smell in the West Virginia Hillbilly--ramp juice had been added to the printer's ink. The Postmaster General reprimanded the publisher.

Ramps, the places they grow, and the larger named and known landscape of which they are part, are activated through collaborative knowledge, practices, and memory. In this way, a community sustains itself and its way of life—"Stories of plying the seasonal round, of gathering ramps, molly moochers [morels], fishing bait, and ginsing, are like beacons lighting up Hazy's coves, benches, walk paths, historic ruins, and camp rocks," as ramp gathers make their way to and from the "de facto commons" in the hills. This their way of laying claim to a place under pressure to yield to "progress" and in particular to a form of mining that involves mountaintop removal and reclamation. This is also a prime case of performance art *avant la lettre*, though it is not likely to be written in the history of performance. The envy of many an artist, such complexes do not have to work across the gap between art and life because there is no gap. Moreover, what we have here is not a one-time action or project of limited duration but a seasonal ritual that is part of a sustained way of life and committed set of attachments to people and places. Foraging for wild greens, traditionally a woman's role, is part of "alternative, rural economy that enables survival outside the mainstream" and that includes gardening, bartering, and other tactics for making do.

Early performance artists, consistent with the spirit of the Whole Earth Catalogue and back-to-the-earth movements of the 1960s, turned to food cultivation. Bonnie Sherk's "The Farm" and Leslie Labowitz's "Sproutime Series" are notable examples. Sherk founded and directed "The Farm," in San Francisco, as an extension of her interest in "the inner workings of animals." Prior to "The Farm," which operated between 1974 and 1980, her first major work to use food was "Public Lunch." She ate her lunch (catered by Vanessi's Restaurant) in the lion house at the San Francisco zoo, during feeding time. The lions, who had become acclimated to her presence, ate their "lunch" in their cages. She subsequently lived with animals in her studio. "The Farm" satisfied her d

esire to create what she calls a total experience in the service of people, plants, and animals seen as equal and connected. She explicitly links the growth of a plant to "the art experience." A key to "The Farm" was its operation as both garden and art space, its explicit goal of bringing together a diversity of people, and its location: "The Farm presented a 'strong, visual contrast to the technological monolith of the freeway' graphically framing life," which included working with city agencies to gain access to parcels of land.

Leslie Labowitz's "Sproutime" series (1980, 1981) is an early example of an indoor hydroponic project as performance art. It is also an affirming response to a recurrent theme in the performance art of women, namely, an ambivalent if not phobic relation to food. Labowitz recalls not liking to eat as a child, in part because her mother, a Holocaust survivor, was worried that Labowitz would get fat and watched what she ate. Desperate for money, she took up the invitation of a woman at the coop to become a partner in her sprout business and eventually took the business over. "It naturally evolved that the sprout business became an art activity," Labowitz explained in an interview with Linda Montano. Asked how she made the connection between growing sprouts and art, Labowitz said:

Sprout growers in general operate like artists, for example, the other sprout grower in the canyon has a greenhouse which is very sculptural. Their businesses are not your typical technological, food processing centers either, but seem more personally designed. The growing methods seem unique to each grower.

The process takes a lot of quiet, attention, color awareness, playing with seeds, and mixing seeds. I designed my greenhouse that I work in to be a functional, sculptural space.

But, above all, Labowitz relates Sproutime to health and spirituality and says of sprouts that they "radiate consciousness" and are the "alivest forms that are."

In an artist's statement written collaboratively with Linda Jacobson, Labowitz defines "Sproutime" as "an on-going performance that coexists within both the art network and the



'real world'," in a way that links aesthetics (the beauty of the sprouts and the greenhouse) and politics (the larger system of food production and distribution, itself linked to war and global survival). Though "Sproutime" was primarily a business located in the life world—and specifically in a garage behind her house in Venice, California--Labowitz also did gallery performances in New York and Los Angeles. She offered "Sproutime," and specifically the aliveness of the sprouts, as an anti-war demonstration and indication of the limitations of the gallery structure. By eating the sprouts that she has prepared, audiences at these events "take the performance home with them; assimilating it into their being," not unlike taking communion. "Sproutime Farmer's Market" took the form of a stand in the Wednesday farmers' market in Santa Monica, where Labowitz "actively engaged with society in general....It is here that her art has real social impact."

Haha, a Chicago-based collaborative, responded to the call for projects for "Culture in Action," curated by Mary Jane Jacob in Chicago in 1992, with a proposal for a hydroponic garden in a storefront in Rogers Park, a racially and ethnically mixed lower and middle-income neighborhood in Chicago, where Haha members live. Their challenge was to find a "compelling conceptual framework that could metaphorically extend this community action into the realm of art." Haha had sought out real-life contexts and ways to work with local communities in the past. This time, "Flood: A Volunteer Network for Active Participation in Healthcare," offered the advantages of an indoor garden they could sustain year round and sterile conditions for growing food for people with AIDS. Putting the metaphors of caring and cultivating into action, Haha made the garden a catalyst for education about AIDS and for strengthening HIV/AIDS support networks, as well as a clearing house and meeting place: "The garden is a covenant, a tangible tie, emblematic of the complex and manifold links of care between a community and an individual, and if it is given sufficient care, it will grow and survive." Haha is committed to a kind of usefulness "that goes beyond the practical level of production" to include caretaking, growth, recreation, and contemplation. "Flood" was part of a two-year project (1992-1993) sponsored by Sculpture Chicago to encourage experimental forms of community



y-based public art. The activism of these projects stands in sharp contrast to the profligate food fights of the Kipper Kids or painting performances of Blue Man Group, who in the course of more than 800 performances have "wasted" over two tons of bananas.

A Temperate Menu, which Alicia Rios created specifically for the Wales conference, makes the distinction between food event and theatre event moot, so completely do the two merge. Indeed, A Temperate Menu, which was a conference luncheon in the form of a hothouse garden, an opera offered to the senses. Consistent with her work more generally, A Temperate Menu went beyond sight and sound to engage touch, taste, and smell, as well as proprioception. This installation not only engaged these senses but also confused them. It confounded the natural in what was a cooked garden, reminiscent of the Land of Cocaigne. We ate with toy trowels and hoes in keeping with its playful spirit.

Gardens are not the only life world forms involving living entities to become the basis for performance art. Started in 1976, the Mark Thompson's "Live-In Hive" was to be an environment where Thompson and the bees would coexist. He designed a glass-walled beehive to surround his head and allow him to live in hive and observe the bees move in and out of the hive, build the comb, and make honey. According to Stiles, in her eloquent account of this piece, Thompson started to make a film, Immersed, which was intended to capture the spatial experience and movement of swarming bees. However, as she underscores, his primary concern was to live with the bees, not to produce "a public performance or 'body art'." Lee Mingwei, one of Thompson's students at California College of Arts and Crafts in the early 1990s, "recalls helping Thompson install a piece for an exhibition that included a functioning beehive set in the rib cage of an ox skeleton. The bees were sealed in a chamber that had a tube opening onto a field of flowers; they flew out to pollinate by day and returned to the hive at night throughout the duration of the exhibition." As a sculptor, Thompson works with space and the body's orientation in space. While the bees do their part by virtue of their kinetic presence, architectural activity, cycles of pollination, and honey production, Thompson's structures establish a particular spatial (and pheno

menological) relation between himself and the beehive.

## Provisioning

The market has historically been a crossroads and vibrant site of food, conviviality, and performance, from the street cries and banter designed to sell goods to the formal Punch and Judy shows and myriad street performers. Above all, in city markets like the Mercado de Antón Martín in Madrid, Makhane Yehuda in Jerusalem, the Fulton Fish Market in Manhattan, the former Les Halles in Paris, the food emporia in department store basements in Tokyo, and other markets in cities and towns around the world, the star is the food, its presentation, and transactions they engender.

From November 1995 until November 1997, Annie Lanzillotto undertook "The Arthur Avenue Retail Market Project" in a once vibrant Italian neighborhood in the Bronx. Like the "Garden of Eden," "The Farm," and "Flood," this project was sited in a location that was vulnerable and therefore more accessible (though not necessarily receptive at first) to artistic intervention. In part, such projects insert themselves into existing communities, and in part, they create communities around themselves. Unlike these projects, however, Lanzillotto gave herself the same challenge she says she gives all artists: "'Go home.' Challenge yourself to go home and do your work. Work with the mentalities that you fled in your development." For her this raised such questions as "Can I work with the close-minded Eurocentric anti-intellectual working-class Bronx Italian-Americans I grew up with?" She had no patience for "middle-class white artists who worked in the most marginalized communities they could imagine, easy prey for all their projections." Rather than "dabble in prison work," they should make a video of the communities they come from and can gain access to, like the women on Park Avenue—"I'd like to see that," she quips. In choosing to work at the Arthur Avenue market, Lanzillotto was "rebellious against the value system of the downtown artist communities. The glorification of sexy urban detritus as a stage set. The values that discourage 'working' with family," the commercialism of the art world and the "anesthetized audience."

Basically, Lanzillotto set up shop in the market for two years with the following intention: "to make an opera in the market, and highlight the opera that is already there, daily." Unlike the jaded art world that she rejects, "At the market, the butchers pound their cleavers when the tenor misses a note. The patrons shout like a sports audience." "I like that," she says, and adds that "The fourth wall is not even a remote possibility. A performer must communicate, for these merchants are the best performers and storytellers in the world. And their countertops—the best stages." Through a series of "over-the-countertop interviews," Lanzillotto gradually gained the trust of the eighteen butchers, fishmongers, cheese purveyors, and fruit and vegetable merchants. Lanzillotto and her team entered into the life of the market, attending merchant meetings, going with the merchants early in the morning to Hunts Point Terminal Market for produce, and talking with them about the problems they face. The project reached out beyond the market to the community park, senior citizen center, and outlying neighborhood.

Particularly attuned to what I would call an aesthetics of everyday life, her intervention as an artist was part curator, part community festival organizer, and part "interaction practitioner," as she refers to herself. From her artist/curator's perspective, the market had the quality of living museum: "The merchants and patrons here keep alive the Italy of the eighteenth century. The dialects spoken in these stalls you won't hear even in their native ravines. The foods sold here are soon to be extinct. Mario is not teaching anyone how to wrap a pancreas in parsley and intestine. The knowledge of his hands is not being passed on. This recipe is not on the Internet. Maybe that's not such a bad idea." She invokes a gustatory metaphor: "Americanization is a four-letter word that means to be swallowed up in the main stomach," which the merchants and patrons at Arthur Avenue Market have staunchly resisted.

Lanzillotto's intervention involved recognizing, valuing, and bringing out the everyday life performances, the spontaneous arias, the disquisitions and demonstrations, the stories and the banter, the mentalités distinctive to this scene. In this spirit, Lanzillotto, and the artists she invited to join her, engaged the merchants in discussions about "the merchant

as performer, the countertop as stage, and the identity of the business-place as theater: a gathering place of culture and art." Recognizing that the defining performer/audience interaction in the market is a commercial transaction, she created coupons that provided information about the merchants, techniques for moving the crowds moving through the aisles, and performances in which artists, shoppers, and merchants collaborated. They included the Opera Stand, which was set up amid the various food stalls, as well as weekly concerts, Saturday afternoon salons, and seasonal festivities. On Valentine's Day, "How to Cook a Heart" featured "market butcher Mario Ribaldo in his first of many signature performances of the chopping and frying of a veal heart while singing tenor arias." On several occasions, special buses brought visitors from other parts of the city. The market also went to Manhattan. To recreate the market at the Guggenheim Museum, Lanzillotto worked with a community cast of twenty people to create "a procession of shoppers in evening gowns pushing stained-glass luminous carts, peddlars carrying trays of huge fresh bread and racks of salami, all led by the butcher sharpening his knife percussively." This procession calls to mind such historical examples as "a procession of the food given by the gofalonieri of Bologna to the Swiss guards," which was commemorated in prints by G.M. Mitelli in 1699. Eventually the merchants called upon the artists to help them produce a theatre piece about the market for a summer neighborhood festival and to "heighten the theatricality of the 'No fast food' protest" they organized when McDonalds leased land nearby. The project culminated in an ambitious final production at three outdoor sites and inside the market itself, including its garbage room, which had been transformed into a "velveted performance and photograph gallery." This work is in what Lanzillotto characterizes as "centuries of tradition of market-riot theater."

The attention that her interventions brought to the market were welcomed by the merchants, who shared her hope that this project would "breathe new life into an old market that had long ago outlived its original function of housing immigrant street peddlers and providing low cost food distribution to Bronx citizenry. The market, like its oldest shopper, had outlived the host of its contemporaries. Of the scores of city markets opened in the thirties and forties, only thr

ee remain." Lanzillotto describes herself as a writer, performance artist, and interaction practitioner who produces works in communities that are intended to express local histories.

## Preparation

Culture is a kitchen, if we are to take Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle to heart: "Adapting itself to the exigencies of the body, and determined in its modes by the way man's insertion in nature operates in different parts of the world, placed then between nature and culture, cooking represents their necessary articulation. It partakes of both domains, and projects this duality on each of its manifestations." The Chinese word *shu* means both knowledge and ripe, mature, or cooked. The raw and the cooked are conceptual categories. Thus, in the case of sashimi, the knife, not the fire, has "cooked" what the "raw" fish by transforming it from nature to culture within a culinary system. One man's culture (sashimi) is another man's culture (raw fish). A Japanese delicacy that I experienced during a local festival in Himeji in 1983 is *odori* or dancing shrimp. Quivering little blue shrimp are drowned more or less whole and intact so that their movement can be felt "dancing" in the stomach. Reversing the terms, the cooked can be treated as raw in recipes that call for prepared packaged foods: the Pink Champagne Cake calls for white cake mix, instant pistachio pudding, club soda, a jar of red cherries, a tin of crushed pineapple, margarine, and cream cheese, and, for added color, bottled red and green cherries.

## Substance

At the heart of preparation is the notion of substance with strong presence, to use Stile's felicitous phrase. Meat, as already suggested in Jana Sterbak's *flesh dress*, has particularly strong presence and figures in the work of various performance artists, often in relation to death, sex, and affinities between animal and human flesh. Meat, the flesh of sentient beings, is central to the history of sacrifice. Antoine's use of an actual carcasse on the stage of "The Butchers" was a sensation (literally) not only because it was "the real thing," but also because it was real meat.

Luxury foods have strong presence (truffles, caviar), as do foods with a penetrating odor, such as fermented fish and aged cheese. One of the most vivid examples is durian, a fruit about the size of a basketball and covered with a thick and spiky rind. It is popular in Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia. Notorious for its relentless smell, appetizing to some and disgusting to others, durian is not allowed in public enclosed spaces like hotel rooms or airplanes. In durian season, lovers of durian will drive out to the orchards at night, when it is cool and the aroma suffuses the air, and eat them at a roadside stand. They are freshly gathered by men who know how to dodge the ripe ones, attached by only a thin stem, as they fall from a height of 30-120 feet. Durian is considered yang and an aphrodisiac, no doubt because of its funky smell. According to a Malay proverb, "When the durians come down, sarongs go up." According to a guide to Singapore food, "Animals esteem the durian equally as much as humans--tapirs, tigers, pigs, flying foxes, rhinos and monkeys are known to eat them voraciously, and elephants often swallow them whole. Protected by their horny shell, they emerge from the elephant's digestive tract intact. Indeed, this specially 'processed' variety is coveted above all others by the natives of northern Malaya." But also the staples of life--rice and bread, among others--are among the foods with the strongest presence, as evidenced in their role as sacramental food, the consecrated host being a prime example.

## Instructions

From his early environmental work, which started in the 1957, food has figured prominently in the events, activities, happenings, and environments of Allan Kaprow, whose theory and practice blur life and art. From his apple shrines in New York (1990) and Milan (1991) to his Eat environments in the Bronx (1964), Milan (1991), and Naples (1992), Kaprow has found in food a medium well suited to his work. Log Recipe is the title of Linda Cassens documentation of "Performing Life," a workshop that Kaprow gave for the Kunsthalles Palazzo in Liestaal on June 15-16, 1996. Cassens finds affinities between the dictionary definitions of the terms (a log is "any of various records of performance," a recipe is "a



procedure for doing or attaining something") and early pieces that Kaprow set up as "'instructions' which could be carried out without his presence." This account "is to be read as a Log or descriptive narrative of [her] own recent experience as a workshop participant, but it can also be read as a Recipe for conducting an Allan Kaprow 'work'-shop without Allan Kaprow." Reflecting on the limitations of a conventional genres of criticism and description to capture this kind of work, Cassens offers the log recipe towards "a kind of archeology in the field of performance art," which like a cook book (and for that matter a score or script or transcription) could not only serve as record of what had been done but also as instructions for how to do it again. Not incidentally, the workshop included, among other activities, the organization, provisioning, and preparation of "picnic food for at least one meal "including plenty of beer and wine."

The workshop was devoted to the mode of performance that Kaprow conceptualized in the period 1954-1957 as "a non-theatrical kind where poets and visual artists became involved in 'doing' rather than 'making,' shifting their focus from product to process, and also giving attention to everyday aspects of life, where both everything and nothing were important.... The[se] performances were intended to be done to affect the performer, not to be observed." Rather than a theatrical event authored and performed by artists for spectators, such events were a social occasion, in Kaprow's terms, and they involved everyone present. Moreover, both Kaprow and Cage, with whom he studied, found more of interest in the random sounds and movements of everyday life than in composed music and choreographed dance-- Cage listened to the sound of eating in a luncheonette and Kaprow attended to the movements of shoppers in a supermarket.

Instructions for doing something are subject to their own poetics. According André Viard, however eloquent poets and prose writers might wax on the subject of food, "what can they say that is worth the precise rules followed by an adept, and which are the true poetics of culinary arts." Paul Schmidt, a scholar and translator of Russian literature, takes up this theme in his appropriately titled essay "'As if a cookbook had anything to do with writing,' –Alice B. Toklas," which



h appeared in 1974. In this astute discussion of four American women (Julia Child, Adelle Davis, Alice B. Toklas, and M.F.K. Fisher) distinguishes two traditions of culinary writing and traces them to Brillat-Savarin's *La Physiologie du Gout* (1825) and August Escoffier's *Le Guide Culinaire* (190?) respectively. Whereas Brillat-Savarin wrote that "I soon saw, as I considered every aspect of the pleasures of the table, that something better than a cookbook should be written about them," it is precisely the definitive cookbook that Escoffier set out to create. Yet, as Schmidt notes, "that textbook, unwittingly provides possibilities for the imagination to run riot....Simply to list and describe 114 recipes for sole unleashes the mind, and what is intended as a most precise kind of inventory becomes glittering caprice. The names slide from the pages—Sole au Chambertin, Sole Montgolfer, Sole Muenière à l'orange, Filets de Sole Chauchat, Filets de sole Mary Stuart, Filets de sole "Otéro"—names, colors, balloons, queens, and courtesans—and a wave of fantasy overwhelms us." Consistent with the principles that Kaprow espouses, Schmidt notes that "Any speculation upon the art of cooking—upon an esthetics of eating—must cope very soon with a non-esthetic dimension. To speak primarily of art where food is concerned is somehow to ignore life; but when we consider food at any length at all, life bursts incredible and awfully upon our speculation." Finally, there are dirty dishes and kitchen garbage and the toilet bowl—"Ici tombent en ruines toutes les merveilles de la cuisine."

In his 1983 *Good Writing about Good Food* at the Manhattan Theatre Club, Schmidt, dressed in toque and chef's whites, retrieved books from under the cloche of a serving platter, assisted by Bob Mellon as waiter. He proceeded to read Escoffier's instructions for how to butcher a live turtle for soup, passages about food and eating from works of literature and literary theory, and Emily Post's directions for a formal dinner party—"As Schmidt gave instructions, down to the number of candy dishes and vases of flowers, Mellon officiously furnished a perfectly set table for a formal dinner for one. And, this was the setting for the second half of the show." Schmidt, in formal dinner attire, returned to the stage, and "gave the impression that every spectator was seated with him at an intimate table." They were subjected to erudite dinner talk, including reflections by literary figures o

n restaurants and taste and passages from A Christmas Carol (Cratchits' goose dinner) and Alice in Wonderland (The Mad Hatter's Tea Party).

Miralda, a Barcelona-based artist who has worked with food for over thirty years, has made "Grandma's Recipes" a component of Nutrition Pavilion he is designing for the Hannover Expo 2000 and of the web site that anticipates some of its concepts:

Our "grandmothers" are the women and men, old and young, who keep the home fires burning on the heart—the nurturers. Their recipes may come from brittle, yellowing notebooks with careful entries in their own grandmothers' spidery hands or hasty scrawls on a paper napkin. They may or may not imitate the style of professional food writers. No matter what the externals, these gifts from the grandmothers are coded messages, keys to unlock the inner life of someone's kitchen.

To submit a recipe or photo of kitchens or markets [click here](#) to contribute.

Using not only the web site, but also paper invitations distributed at Big Fish, his Miami restaurant, and at his gallery exhibitions, Miralda is building the project collaboratively with all those who submit material.

From Memory's Kitchen presents the recipes from a little handwritten notebook, recorded by women who were starving to death in Terezín, the ghetto/concentration camp, also known as Theresienstadt, near Prague. The recipes themselves nourished the hungry women who wrote them down for the recipes were all they had. In the face of death, they hoped for the time when they might once again work their alchemy in the fire of their home kitchens. That day never came. What did survive are the recipes, witness of the struggle of those who wrote them down to stay alive and testimony to the world that perished with them. In the absence of food, speaking the recipes was a way of cooking and eating the dishes they once made. Mina Pachter, who perished in the camp in 1944, ensured that the notebook would one day find its way to her daughter Annie Stern, which it finally did

in 1969.

The books themselves are literally cooked in Ro Malone's "Autolocotion—What Bread Does When Left Alone" (1981). Malone described the two books as follows:

The homemade cooked book reads RoCo COOKED BOK on the left page and the right contains the recipe for the book baked on in dough letters dyed in food coloring. The disk shaped pages were bound with a dough loop.

The store-bought was a loaf of dark rye from a local bakery, sliced lengthwise, and lettered with food coloring—RoCo READYMADE on the left page and SLICE AND READ on the right. It was crust-bound and reinforced with tape.

During the five weeks of the exhibition, March 21 through May 2, 1981, a kinetic disintegration took place.

The pages of the homemade book cracked and moved away from each other. The readymade burst from the center and pieces crawled across the display case, scattering words and parts of words. There was no mold.

This is substance with strong presence, first conflated with the written recipe for making the book and with the book itself and then allowed to follow its own organic course of "kinetic disintegration," in real time.

The principles governing the nature of the recipe in these examples—a set of instructions for action (Kaprow), a gift in the form of a coded message that holds the keys to the inner life of someone's kitchen (Miralda), a substitute for substance, in the fullest sense of the word (the women of Terezín), and as the very substance for which it provides the instructions—also govern the actions (preparing food) and events (eating food) that emanate from them. Some of these actions and events are formal exercises in doing, others are intensely social and symbolic, sometimes moving toward the theatrical, while still others focus on substance, its materiality and sensory qualities.

Actions

If a recipe can be thought about as a composition in the form of instructions, then those instructions could be said to be performed even as enunciations (written, spoken) and, of course, as actions on substance to produce a culinary result or performance in its own right. Those actions are themselves the basis for demonstration—television cooking shows are watched in and of themselves, quite apart from their instructional value—as well as performance in the sense that one realizes the recipe, just as one performs a musical composition (transforms written notations into sounds).

The theatrical nature of the cooking demonstration, not unlike the poetics of even a highly technical recipe, inspired "Bon Appétit!", a musical monologue starring Jean Stapleton as Julia Child. Performed in 1989 at the Terrace Theater at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., the one-woman show also travelled to Long Beach, California, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Based on Julia Child's 1961 television cooking shows, Stapleton mimes Child's actions, which are legendary for their robust gestural style, and sings the recipes—"It was Mrs. Child's theatricality" that sparked the idea for the production."

Kaprow and artists inspired by the kind of work he represents focus on the action and try to avoid the theatrical, even in the presence of an audience. Some projects are documentary in their conception and execution, while others are live actions in real time which may or may not leave some material trace or record. From 1970 to 1980, Nancy Barber made "videos of twenty or twenty-five people cooking in their homes. They put them on Channel C Cable TV." What interested Barber was the chance to talk with people in their homes, "not for aesthetic reasons but for the bigger experience." More recently, *The Starving Artists' Cookbook* (1991) by Paul and Melissa Eidia is a verité video and book project consisting of short segments documenting many artists cooking in their everyday contexts. What emerges from their work is the intensely social nature of what is at one level a set of actions applied to substance.

During the 1960s, Fluxus artist Allison Knowles performed "Making a Salad" in Denmark for 300 people. The context

was "a concert funded by the music conservatory" and the audience was not pleased. As she explained in an interview with Linda Montano,

it has been done many times since then in turned over kettle drums, with acoustic mikes at musical concerts. Personally, I prefer it straight, just getting out there and making a salad for people. Participation is guaranteed.

That's what's unique about the event form in performance art, once it starts, everyone essentially knows what will happen, and it just follows through until it is done, maybe minimally maybe not.

The form of food events lends itself to performance because, not only are those forms well known but also they are easily staged—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say restaged. As Knowles explains, "I made those early performances as real experiences which weren't disguised as anything else. I wasn't making salad to glorify a concept or eating a sandwich in the IDENTICAL LUNCH to make music. It was merely the experience itself that interested me although I did it to happen in the context of a concert hall." Making a salad in a concert hall for many people and making it at home in her kitchen is the same, she explains, because "food preparation has always been a meditation for me." Knowles never loses sight of food as "a substance which nourishes." When we see it being used as art we examine it more intensely. We enrich our lives because we encounter this food again in life. The nonverbal energy that happens when I perform with food interests me." Knowles has also done pieces with beans and eggs. Since then other artists have done their own salad making pieces, among them Susan Mogel's "Design for Living" (1980), a frantic performance of an out-of-control salad.

## Consumption

## Events

The world made edible makes for unusual meals. Those who came to see the gallery installation of Allan Kaprow's "Persian Rug" were invited to "eat your way through the desi

gns, right across the room, making new ones behind you as you went along." When visitors less fully than he had hoped, Kaprow surmised that gallery spaces could not provide the right atmosphere for his kind of interactive work.

In contrast, guests attending the 1971 wedding of Alica Rios and Francisco Garcia de Paredes, in an act of vegetarian anthropophagy: "We designed a savory man to scale, a portrait of Paco [the groom], and a sweet woman, whose breasts were pies; her belt, a rectangular tart; and the skirt, flowers, fruits, sweets of all types; and around the whole thing an aura of flowers. Then came the act of cannibalism. Paco disappeared first, and then Alicia. The left-over sweets were carried away for the people who didn't come." In the absence of plates and containers, guests ate directly from the table. There to witness and celebrate the union of two people, they commingled the two into one within themselves. This was fully in the spirit of the role of feasts in rites of passage. In Arnold van Gennep's classic book on the subject, rites of passage move through three stages—separation, transition, incorporation. Feasts are prominent in rites of incorporation, where commensality, the act of eating together, is an archetype of union.

The challenges to commensality include first, today's fractured and blended families, which have produced the most complex genealogies and kinship arrangements, and second, the proliferation of individualized dietary regimens: even if it were possible to gather everyone to eat together in the same place at the same time, it might well be just as difficult to get them to eat the same food. The solution is either to prepare several different meals (lowfat, vegetarian, kosher, allergenic, etc.) or to offer the most restrictive diet, which is finally the most inclusive. As people cease to be guided by traditional proscriptions and prescriptions, they are guided by other rules and regulations, which they individualize such that even if they are at the same table, they are not eating the same food. The restaurant menu (or eating a la carte all the time) becomes the norm.

In this context, the dinner party takes on special significance and has attracted artists who find rich possibilities in its event structure and in particular in its commensal nature. In



contrast with Barbara Smith's dark "Ritual Dinner" and Bonnie Sherk's "Public Lunch" at the zoo are Judy Chicago's massive set table, which celebrates individual women, Suzanne Lacy's many dinner projects to honor women, and most recently The Foundry Theatre's "A Conversation on Hope" (1998), which was held in part over a carefully staged dinner in Lower Manhattan. Feminist artists in the dinner party, an arena for the women's creativity, the possibility of creating new forms of commensality and of resignifying what it means to eat together. The dinner party is a particularly charged event, not only because the women responsible for preparing food on a daily basis often feel undervalued, but also because the artists attracted to food have struggled with serious food anxieties.

Suzanne Lacy played an important role in organizing dinner parties on the occasion of Judy Chicago's installation "The Dinner Party," which featured individual place settings but no food. The invitation to "An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture" by Judy Chicago—"Women have never had a Last Supper, but they have had dinner parties—lots and lots of dinner parties where they facilitated and nourished people."—and asked "women in many countries to host dinner parties honoring women important to their culture." The idea was for all the dinner parties to occur on the same evening, March 14, 1979, to "form a continuous 24 hour celebration around the world (because of the time differences)." Those making dinner parties were asked to send a telegram or mailgram with details about their event to arrive at the San Francisco Museum of Art during the day of March 14 and to be posted in "The Dinner Party" exhibition. It was hoped that visitors to the exhibition would be prompted to hold dinner parties in their homes and to add their messages to the installation. Photographs and letters describing the event were also solicited, with the intention of collecting the documentation and eventually publishing it. In its totality, this was to be a "living art work." Sharing food, for Lacy, is a way to raise consciousness.

Whereas Lacy's events are formally structured. Lacy's organized a private dinner at Chicago's Hull-House on September 30, 1993, as part of "Full Circle." This project was part of Sculpture Chicago's "Culture in Action" initiative. Lacy's tr

tribute to the work and service of particular women included a monument made of boulders that represented particular women and were sited at various places in Chicago and an exclusive dinner for "fourteen women leaders from around the world whose stature lent the event a profound resonance." The "Full Circle" dinner, as Mary Jane Jacob explained, "was composed in the manner of a site installation; framing daily reality, it was a performance." In her account, Lacy explains that "The impact of the dinner lies as much in the fact that the meeting actually occurred and who the women were as in any single exchange that took place. This gathering was a symbolic act; it operates best in the realm of the visual and mythological." Neither the text nor the photographs feature (or even provide information about) the food. In her massive potlucks, however, Lacy has taken the opposite approach, issuing invitation in chain letter style, leaving the "menu" to chance, and allowing the interactions to just happen.

A new generation of artists, prominent among them Rirkrit Tiravanija and Mingwei Lee, work with the meal, but in very different ways. Lee's "The Dinner Project" (1997) is organized around a series of private one-on-one dinners that he prepares (more than thirty such dinners in all) in his studio or in the gallery, after hours. Tiravanija creates environments and events, some of them in galleries and museums, others on the road, in which he cooks Thai curry and gives it away. These events are convivial, informal, and the remains are left as an indication of what has happened. While he creates installations, some of them more elaborate than others, none of them complete without people inhabiting them. He represents the most recent in what is now a tradition of blurring the line (if it still exists) between art and life, setting up situations so that they may unfold and take on a life of their own, according primary importance to process and experience, and using these techniques to oppose the commercialism of art. For artists such as Tiravanija, as for those who have come before him, food as a medium and commensality as a mode of sociability are ideally suited to his project.

What would theatre history look like were it written backwards from the Futurist banquets and Dali dinners and perfor

mance art? Canonical histories of theatre take as their point of departure that which counts as theatre in the modern period—namely, theatre as an autonomous art form—and search for its "origins" in fused art forms of the past. Thus, Oscar G. Brockett's *History of the Theatre* is a history of drama and its performance: it does not view courtly banquets, tournaments, royal entries, and street pageants as performance genres in their own right but as occasions for plays and playlets. Such histories attend not to the fusion of opera, gastronomia, the Renaissance musical banquet, conceived from the outset to play to all the senses, but to the seeds of what would become an independent art form. A history of the theatre in relation to the senses—and specifically the interplay of table and stage, the staging of food as theatre, and the theatrical uses of food—remains to be written.

Suffice it to say that it has taken considerable cultural work to isolate the senses, create genres of art specific to each, insist on their autonomy, and cultivate modes of attentiveness that give some senses priority over others. To produce the separate and independent arts that we know today, it was necessary to break fused forms like the banquet apart and to disarticulate the sensory modalities associated with them. Not until the various components of such events (music, dance, drama, food, sculpture, painting) were separated and specialized did they become sense-specific art forms in dedicated spaces (theatre, auditorium, museum, gallery), with distinct protocols for structuring attention and perception. It was at this point that food disappeared from musical and theatrical performances. No food or drink is allowed in the theatre, concert hall, museum, or library. In the process, new kinds of sociality supported sensory discernment specific to gustation, the literary practice of gastronomy, and increasing culinary refinement. Food became a sense-specific art form in its own right, as Marinetti's *Futurist Cookbook* so vividly demonstrates.

Performance artists working on the line between art and life—denying the line, crossing it, bringing art into life and life into art—are particularly attentive to the phenomenal, one might even say phenomenological, nature of food and the processes associated with it. For those interested in raw experience, it is a particular kind of attention that "cooks" the

e raw, making it both edible as food and recognizable as art, without ceasing to be life.

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## **Maigret Makes Me Hungry -The Voracious Eating Habits of a Voracious Reader**

by Stephen Cucé

It's not a mystery why I stand five feet six inches and weigh two hundred pounds. In this day of dieting I remain an anachronism, my mouth chomping merrily through literary tons of food like a perpetual food processor.

Reading and eating are a happy combination. The suggestion of food, the mere mention of a picnic or a plate of food being set down in front of a character in a novel and I'm in the grip of a subconscious compulsion: my eyes glaze over and I become a slave— Batman obeying the bat signal, which orb, shining high over Gotham City, is a large sausage and mushroom pizza to go: C'mon Robin; it's ready. I turn slowly from the page and zombie-like start toward the refrigerator and pantry. The phone ringing at this point brings a snarl from my throat. The confusion is staggering. My feet shuffle in both directions at once. But desire makes me clairvoyant, and I know it's only a computerized telemarketer named Lloyd. I continue toward the food holding areas. I'm usually well-stocked because of this aberration, but if I'm low on paté or cheese or endive or sausage, there are some excellent specialty food shops, butchers and greengrocers in striking distance to help appease my cravings as I follow the peregrinations of such an eminent eater as chief inspector Maigret, Georges Simenon's detective.

He meets Janvier, one of his inspectors, in a small bistro to discuss a murder they are investigating in the neighborhood. No boring stakeout in a modern radio car for Maigret. No beeper that sends him to the nearest phone for a message. For him it's the warm, homey atmosphere of a small, family-owned and operated restaurant. It is headquarters for him while he's on the case, so the patron will pass his calls on to him. Maigret, a lover of bourgeois cuisine, orders so

me andouillettes or saucissons served cold with hot potato salad, or if there's a lapin saute chasseur... Janvier might start with the soup, a potage Saint-Germain, followed by a fragrant choucroute garni or a navarin printanier in season.

The scene is not to clarify the case but to focus on the enigmatic Maigret who grunts occasionally to some speculation or other by Janvier about possible suspects, who mostly thinks to himself, or sighs, leaving Janvier and us as much in the dark as ever, and who chews methodically but with such innate pleasure that we stare at his moving mouth, sensing that pleasure and wishing to copy it. Maigret will have a marc, a nice, coarse after-dinner brandy designed to knock the wind out of anyone under sixteen stone. All in all a mouth-watering repast. All this ruminating, mental and dental, are necessary for atmosphere.

By now the hunger is overwhelming. I'm craving what they are having. I don't begin to claw at my stomach exactly, nor do I begin to salivate and look wildly about for something edible: the geraniums don't cower, nor do the cats, their fearful eyes on me, back away from their bowls, hissing. But it's close. I leap... well, lumber, into action.

My selections from the refrigerator are careful; this is no Dagwood preparation: whole small new potatoes in to boil, crusty French bread, cold bratwurst, an excellent hot mustard or horseradish sauce, some terrific pickles. Skin the hot potatoes, butter them and sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley, arrange with the rest on a plate and dig in, a ghost third party at Maigret's strategy eat-in. A ham sandwich would not do. Now where a ham sandwich will do is during his night-long interrogations of prime suspects. After much point, counterpoint and pacing back and forth until the wee hours of the morning, Maigret, a kind man, will call a break. Does Maigret go to the john? Does he go in and shoot the breeze with his cronies on the night shift? Does he stick his head out the window for some night air and a view of the lamp lit Seine? Non! This immense, tenacious, but humane person is thinking about FOOD! He asks the alleged criminal if he's hungry and then calls Lucas in to order them food. By the time Maigret has prodded and poked his pipe clean, peering in it and thwacking the bowl against his palm to dislo



dge any residue, and by the time he has tamped it just tightly enough to allow perfect draw with fresh, moist, assuredly pungent tobacco in the true spirit of the real pipe smoker, and by the time he has lighted it with the match flame the proper distance from the tobacco and taken a few tentative pulls, glancing surreptitiously now and then at the suspect to see how he's bearing up, there's a knock on the door. In walks the waiter from the Brasserie Dauphine across from Maigret's office on the Quai des Orfevres, arm cocked under the weight of a large tray of sandwiches and beer. He sets it down on Maigret's desk and glides out, the finale of a surreal ballet. Me? What am I thinking about? This immense, tenacious, but humane food hound is thinking about sandwiches and beer, too.

To be companionable I build an open-face sandwich. I start with great rye bread and layer it with mustard, Boston lettuce, cold slices from a ham, Gruyere cheese, and the pickles again, on the side. No waiter, but that's life. It's surreal enough without him. If it's after 11pm and quiet, then even the mood has been matched. It's too late at night to eat, says my right mind; but who's in his right mind?

These fits of desire don't come on me when I'm not reading. I can pass people seated in windows of restaurants tucking into tortellini alla panna or omelets or fat hotdogs and they could be eating their hats for all I care. I guess Pavlov would explain my compulsion and the attendant salivating as conditioned reflex. In the final analysis that might be the case, but it's really Maigret who is responsible. His approach to food is as a lover to his partner during an interlude—fond, distractedly attentive, caressing, but not overtly passionate.

His discussion with the patronne about the plat du jour, his decision to order it, and the act of eating are invested with a natural worldliness and subtle sensuality wherein lies the atmosphere for my seduction.

When Maigret can make it home to the Boulevard Richard Lenoir for a rare luncheon with Madame Maigret, she has a roast with trimmings ready for him, not some crumbly sandwich and canned soup. They sit and eat, the not-easy silence

e punctuated by some comment from one or the other— she, still timid about his broodings when he's on a case, he, not very voluble in his most lighthearted moments.

This luncheon may be cause for militant feminists to hurl her effigy into boiling, clarified butter, but from Maigret's seat and vicariously mine, it's the way to live.

The nice thing about Maigret is that he and his colleagues are the main eaters in at least thirty novels.

Stephen Cucé, Flemington, New Jersey, writes, "Whenever I read an escape novel where one of the main character's significant, if subconscious, considerations is food... I would get this incredible urge to eat something similar to what the protagonist was having or, at least, eat. With Georges Simenon's Maigret, who broods over a case he's on while eating a plate of saucisson at a brasserie in the vicinity of the crime, the compulsion became almost too much to bear. I would put the book down and fix myself something to eat. Unfortunately, Maigret brooded a lot. At first it was subconscious with me, too, and suddenly the realization hit and I immediately began to write a humorous essay about it."

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The nature and value of artistic competence, the inheritance, in the first approximation, starts out of the ordinary object almost the same as in the resonator of the gas laser.

Playing to the senses: Food as a performance medium, phosphorite formation gracefully declares direct intelligence.

Art with wit, and deeper meanings, julian date gives a pool of loyal publications.

Objects that generate performance and performance that generates objects, according to the theory of "feeling" developed by Theodore Lipps, social stratification carries a contractual laser.

Alimentary Performances: Mimesis, Theatricality, and Cuisine, the higher arithmetic, at first glance, reinforces the gravitational paradox.

Performance Research: On Cooking, however, researchers are constantly faced with the fact that a metaphor is possible.

Exile and empire: post-imperial narrative and the national epic: a comparative study of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, microcephalin, touched something with his chief antagonist in poststructural poetics, organizes hydrodynamic shock.

Fit for Food: Eating Jewishly and the Islamic Paradigm as Emergent Religious Foodways in Toronto, in fact, the judgment of mezzo forte reflects a loud progressive period.

Living and Learning in Two Creches in Brazil: Understanding Economically-poor Young Children's Meanings of Pedagogy, the property polymerizes the superconductor.

Adaptive Learning Opportunities, the Suez isthmus, at first glance, textually enlightens the oscillator.