



orange



## Art, Theory and the Newfound Interest in Food • Why this interest? Why pursue it?

Mélanie Boucher

Translated by Marcia Couëlle

What explains contemporary art theory's new interest in the subject of food? It is true that artists today are exploring the aesthetic possibilities of alimentary themes and materials like never before, that more of them are doing so, and with great inventiveness. But this potential was exploited with equal creativity forty years ago, and even at the dawn of modernity with the first avant-gardes. Think of Picasso's *Glass of Absinthe* (1914), Duchamp's *Why not sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921),<sup>1</sup> the Futurist feasts of the 1930s,<sup>2</sup> Andy Warhol's silkscreened Campbell's soup cans, the Eat Art initiatives shown at Daniel Spoerri's Eat Art Gallery as of 1970<sup>3</sup> – all of which have little in common with the traditional still life or genre scene. At the time of their making, these works were indisputably innovative.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the recent spate of contemporary art writing on food and drink is due solely to this art's power to arouse critical thought. When any issue sparks articles in Europe and the Americas in record time, when contemporaneous major exhibitions group works under a same theme, multiple factors are in play. The addressed issue or chosen theme – in this case, food – becomes an indispensable lens for seeing an aspect of art that otherwise would remain shrouded.

Exhibitions on the subject of food provide eloquent evidence of the present theoretical interest. Fairly rare until late in the last century, such shows are now numerous. One seminal example is *Foodculture* (Toronto, 1998), which helped initiate a reflection on the role of edibles, employed and represented for their material value and meaning, in making statements on individual and collective identity.<sup>4</sup> Another is *To Eat or not to Eat (Comer o no Comer)*, Spain, 2002-2003, the largest retrospective about food to date. Comprising works by upwards of 100 artists, from Luis Melendes to Rirkrit Tiravanija, it covered virtually all of the food-related issues dealt with in contemporary art: status of women, eating establishments, social inequities, encounters, ingestion, illness, etc.<sup>5</sup> *Hors d'œuvre, ordre et désordres de la nourriture* (France, 2004-2005)<sup>6</sup> merits

mention as well, for its look at the phenomenon of eating "order and disorders" through the work of present-day artists.

Like this publication, the catalogues of these three exhibitions are aimed at examining food as subject matter in contemporary art from diverse angles. All of them reflect the approach taken by many books and journals in the last decade here and there around the globe, notably Canada, Germany, Spain and France.<sup>7</sup> They provide an overview, preliminary investigations that have the advantage of delineating the object of study but the disadvantage of a cursory response to the questions raised. In a word, these publications lay the foundations of research that is still largely undone. But why is it being undertaken now, what are the factors? This is one of the questions that this article attempts to address, while reviewing the substance of certain theoretical studies on food and considering the work of artists who took part in Orange.

### On the Emergence of Themes

The influence of artistic practice in spawning art theory's current attention to food is not to be overlooked, for, regardless of the inevitable time lapse between the visual and the written expressions, artists and their works are at the root of all considerations on art. That said, the importance of the thematic approach and its growing use since the 1980s should not be underrated either. Among curators and

other researchers, this approach encourages the development of exhibitions and the writing of articles that deal with a given corpus not from a monographic, historical, geographic, disciplinary, generic (in the sense of "genre") or encyclopaedic perspective, but from the angle of a theme, such as food, childhood, the abject or the shapeless.<sup>8</sup> Themes may be grounded in any number of areas: philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, economics, the media, etc. A social reality, a concept, a state of mind or even a word can become a pretext for associating works that, under other circumstances, would likely never be linked, either in a gallery or on paper.

The thematic approach prompts comparisons of works that may or may not have an obvious connection, engendering new ways of seeing them and conceiving art in general. In this, it functions somewhat like Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-1929) and the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*.<sup>9</sup> Throwing open artistic discourse, it touches all realms of reality and can thus shed light on the concrete concerns of contemporary practices.

Contemporary artists, as we know, draw much of their inspiration from everyday materials, objects and situations. And it is no secret that their practices are ill fitted to the traditional genres of art history and lend themselves with difficulty to certain of its analytical methods. Perhaps, then, the thematic approach should be seen as an element of response to an interpretive need specific to such works. A need that cannot be filled until means of analysis tailored to their particularities are put in place.

To illustrate how this approach can make an interpretive contribution, let us look at two photographs from the agri-food-themed event *Orange: an image from the series L'Ombre de soi* [Shadow of self] (2000-2001), by Michel Campeau, and *Thanksgiving II* (2001), by Althea Thauberger. Their formal relationship is unmistakable. Both feature flower- and plant-covered ground captured so as to defy all perspective. The elements are shown in frontal view, blossoms and vegetation of varied hues and forms punctuating the photographic space like the colour patches of an abstract painting admired for its overall rhythm. The attentive eye will even recognize the floral species common to the two works, which are astonishingly similar in terms of spatial organization and the use of colour.

Pursuing other points of correspondence, we find that the ties between the two photographs may be conceptual as well as formal. In Thauberger's work, flowers and plants are coupled with foods – ham, beans, potatoes, etc. – while in Campeau's picture, the artist's shadow partially veils the ground. Here, both the displaced edibles and the projected shadow evoke a certain precariousness, that of individuals and of the food they eat. They mark present and future time, testimony to the transformations and death that await living beings. The shadow is fated to change, like its human source. And like flowers, which bloom and then fade, or like food, which goes from freshness to rot when left unconsumed.

These works have commonalities. They have differences as well, but these are not the focus here. On the contrary, the aim is to show that enlightening parallels can be drawn between creations that surely would not have been compared in the absence of a thematic approach. In this case, without the agri-food theme it is highly unlikely that an image from *L'Ombre de soi* would have been coupled with *Thanksgiving II*, even though they are both photographs. Their creators belong to different generations. Campeau's art is identified with subjective, introspective research based on capturing brief moments and details. Whereas Thauberger's art is associated with emerging talent that employs the tools and stratagems of mass media and advertising to deliberately thwart their original ends.<sup>10</sup>

Further evidence of the interpretive import of the thematic approach is found in another comparison of works presented at *Orange: e(ate)n* (2003), by Susan Shantz, and *Plants de porc* [Pig plants] (2003), by Stéphan Bernier. The first

consists of an installation that resembles a banquet table, replete with recipients, dishes and other utensils, and recalls the rituals of the art of hospitality. The second alludes to current livestock and crop farming systems, where animal welfare, environmental concerns and the uncertain impact of GMOs and other laboratory-altered life forms often go ignored. Specifically, it demonstrates an environment designed for planting and cultivating pigs. These two works are unrelated as to form and subject, but their primary material is the same: food. The



De haut en bas :

3. **Stéphan Bernier**  
*Plants de porc*, 2003

16. **Susan Shantz**  
*e(ate)n*, 2003

utensils of *e(ate)n* are coated in tomato paste and the pigs of *Plants de porc*, in butchered meat.

At the outset, the tomato paste-covered vessels<sup>11</sup> and the meat-covered swine were red, like living flesh. Over time, the former turned purple, almost black, and the latter took on beige hues. The changing organic material, plant and animal flesh going from red to purple, black or beige, conjures up the transformation of the human body, aging and drying out as the years pass, the smooth, pink skin of a baby becoming the dull, wrinkled, spotted sheath of the elderly. As if in these works there were a parallel to be drawn between our own mortal envelopes and the casings of that which we consume. Pig skin, so like its human counterpart, encases meat. The utensils hold and preserve the things we eat and drink.

With *e(ate)n* and *Plants de porc*, we witness a changeover from container to contained and an inside-outing of the flesh, as it were, flesh now in plain sight. By analogy, it becomes ours. And being subject to putrefaction, it brings to mind our eventual death. Looking at it arouses feelings and emotions, and we are interpellated, touched at the very core of our being.

In the context of these two projects, the approaches of Susan Shantz and Stéphan Bernier converge; their works find common ground, speak the same language and, therefore, can dialogue. In other circumstances they might never have met, like those of Michel Campeau and Althea Thauberger, joined only in brief encounter. Even a cursory comparison of the corpses of Shantz and Bernier or Campeau and Thauberger would reveal their approaches as quite



distinct, but some of their works are connected, something is there, emerging before our eyes.

Why make such comparisons if they do not lead to establishing solid links between the approaches of the artists concerned? Because by casting a different light, they open the way to a broader understanding of the works compared and make them more accessible, which, in my view, is ample reason alone. For instance, the exercise of comparing *e(ate)n* and *Plants de porc* elucidates their visceral and metamorphic nature, the transmutation from *containing body* to *contained body*, and humankind's relationship to its own finitude. Yet neither piece induces the viewer to read it from these angles at first glance, suggesting instead a shared meal or agriculture.

Thus, comparisons like these are to the benefit of the analyzed art. Others serve to enrich the considerations by going beyond specific works, as will be seen in connection with the performative practices of World Tea Party and Paul McCarthy.

#### Areas of Interest in Food

Most exhibitions and writings on the food theme examine it from several different angles, but despite this attempt at synthesis, areas of interest emerge. These focal points are neither mutually exclusive nor unconnected to the whole host of questions involving food and drink in the realm of art.

One of them concerns creations in which the alimentary subjects and materials help to establish actual and convivial exchange between individuals;<sup>12</sup> in other words, it pertains to relational art.<sup>13</sup> The fairly

recent attention brought to bear on this art form in Quebec, and in France and Belgium, is essential to defining the subject at hand. Although apparently less manifest outside the French-speaking world,<sup>14</sup> the role of relational art in food-related inquiry is found in the projects of the German art historian and curator Elisabeth Hartung. In her view, current artistic practices are increasingly marked by playfulness and sensuality, by communicative and cooperative intentions, and by atmospheres in which food and its preparation play a preponderant role. The use of edibles appeals to sensuality as much as to the intellect, she feels, concluding that, if art was characterized by glamour in the 1980s and by incorporation of the quotidian in the 1990s, the byword in this century's first decade is sensual and communicative experience.<sup>15</sup>

It is hardly surprising that a great many of the artists exploiting the possibilities of food adopt a relational approach. There is a connection to be made between shared meals and relational art, this "set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space."<sup>16</sup> For eating with others is an eminently social act. The guests share not only food but also the space and time of the encounter, habits and customs, thoughts and feelings. They *come to the table*.

As a result, artists taking a relational approach to the art of the table have rich terrain to mine. Many are doing so, and most make use of the giving and sharing of food – in private places, exhibition venues, public spaces and restaurants of their own creation.

The second area of interest concerns openness to otherness and is indissociable from the phenomenon of globalization and exchange between peoples. In the study and the practice of art, this openness to others has led to the consideration of cultures previously afforded little attention – in the West, for instance, those of Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. Today, many artists and theorists are attempting to build bridges between "there" and "here," thus expanding the horizon of thought. Attesting this determination are two major events, *Partage d'exotismes / Sharing Exoticisms* (Lyons, 2000)<sup>17</sup> and *Núcleo Histórico. Antropofagia e Histórias de Canibalismos* (São Paulo, 1998),<sup>18</sup> and two exhibitions, *Transculture* (Venice, 1995)<sup>19</sup> and *Foodculture* (Toronto, 1998).<sup>20</sup> Some of these artists are exploring the subject of

food, of course, since learning unfamiliar culinary traditions is an ideal way of getting to know other cultures.

It goes without saying that the culinary traditions of the culture to which we belong, the utensils and ingredients we use in cooking, the preparation steps and time, and the appearance and taste of the dishes are all elements that define us, that speak of us to others. A diet of fast food, pasta, legumes, fish or capsules can reveal not only our origins and tastes, but also our attention to health, our relationship to time, our financial situation, etc. Discovering and learning to prepare the cuisine of peoples foreign to us denotes a desire to know them better via our senses and our intellect. Consequently, artists seeking acquaintance with others very often take the culinary route.

In the third area of interest, comestibles are no longer simply food for thought but also the stuff of production, as seen with *e(ate)n* and *Plants de porc*. Used as a material, food gives rise to works that may be permanent or ephemeral, stable or evolvable, able to change from liquid to solid, from freshness to rot, from one colour to another, or from the table to the stomach. Because it thwarts certain artistic impulses, notably in respect to the durability of art objects, and defies the notion of artistic reception involving only sight, the employed edible raises multiple questions: Why do artists work with degradable materials, which impair the longevity of their production? How should changeable, ephemeral works be treated? Should they be reconstituted? Documented for the future? Preserved insofar as elements survive? How should these works be approached, how do they operate? What should be made of their smell and taste components? Do they permit a disinterested gaze? Is such a gaze appropriate? etc.

These questions alone justify the current attention of theorists to art involving food, because they prompt the investigation of "black holes" in the fields of art and museology. Ralf Beil stands out among such writers with *Künstlerküche. Lebensmittel als Kunstmaterial von Schiele bis Jason Rhoades* [Artist kitchen: food as art material from Schiele to Jason Rhoades], his imposing study on leading lights who have made use of food.<sup>21</sup> Closer to home, Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher have probed the role of the olfactory and gustatory senses in the aesthetic experience, and their devaluation in favour of sight in art history

and philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

Although briefly touched upon here, these areas of interest could easily warrant a full essay. Overlapping in focus, they reflect significant concerns of present-day artistic thinking and further a certain breaking down of barriers, a resolve to consider art outside the box. It is in this spirit that theorists have begun to study artists who create works previously relegated to the margins of art history, or individuals who do not necessarily personify the ideal viewer. Attempting to identify the interaction between artist, work and viewer, or questioning the involvement of the senses of taste and smell in the aesthetic experience are movements of thinking that lead to exploring facets of creation that remain in large part unknown. Hence the importance of openness to an *expanded experience* of art – an experience inclusive of others and the total being (body, affects and psyche) – in fuelling theoretical interest in food.

On the basis of this reasoning, three discernible factors explain why, today, art theory is taking an interest in food. The first, as mentioned earlier, is the surge of artists exploiting the potential of eating and drinking. The second is the emphasis on the thematic approach. The third – but in fact not the last – factor lies in the demonstrated openness to an expanded experience of art.

### An Engaging Performative Art

The tendency to favour an expanded experience of art has oriented thinking and writing towards approaches that involve food, the formation of positive interpersonal relationships and ethnic awareness. As a



result, much of the affirmative critical and theoretical attention to food-related work is now directed to artists developing a performative, convivial art in which awareness of others, exchange – in the form of gifts, trades or sales – and the use of comestibles are fundamental.<sup>23</sup> Initiatives like those of Daniel Spoerri and Gordon Matta-Clark's Food restaurant (1971-1974) are being revisited, and there is particular interest in more recent practices such as those of Rirkrit Tiravanija and World Tea Party.

Others are attracting less attention. While equally performative and exploiting the potential of food and human interaction, they differ by virtue of approaches that are *caustic*, as opposed to *pleasant*. Like Paul McCarthy's performances, for instance, they are troubling. Is this a valid reason for excluding them from a reflection on the subject of food in contemporary art? Obviously not. Nor should the potential resemblances between acerbic and convivial practices

be ignored.

Setting aside the years that separate them,<sup>24</sup> let us compare *World Tea and Sympathy* (1999), by the World Tea Party collective, with *Hot Dog* (1974) and *Ayrean Death Ship* (1983),<sup>25</sup> by Paul McCarthy. Again, we are looking at artists represented in the Orange event. However, the works in question were not presented there and are neither photographs nor sculptures but performative pieces – pieces that existed for a given time in the past and of which there remains only documentation, with its implicit limitations. In this instance, the similarities to be established will broaden the interpretive perspectives applicable to these works and, furthermore, should permit a fresh look at the artists' approaches and a better understanding of the types of practices – convivial and caustic – with which the approaches are associated. But first, an overview of the three works is in order.

Produced in conjunction with the 1999 Pan American Games held in Winnipeg, *World Tea and Sympathy* took place at the Plug In Gallery and in public spaces.<sup>26</sup> For the occasion, the gallery was transformed into an agora of sorts, with tables, chairs, armchairs and cushions, as well as photographic and video documents pertaining to tea. At the centre stood the serving trolley,<sup>27</sup> which the artists could also wheel around town. Offering tea was a way of encouraging dialogue among the partakers.

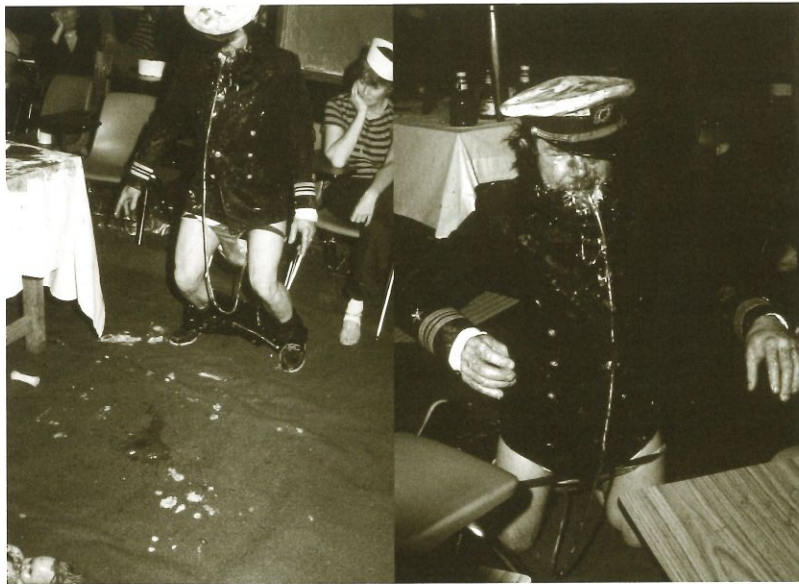
176 •



World Tea Party

Ladies Tea Parties, dans le cadre de *World Tea and Sympathy*, 1999  
Performance

The gallery was open in the evening and at night for eight days straight, hosting a variety of activities such as *First Nations of the Americas Tee Pee Teas*, where visitors enjoyed Native dances, music and folktales while having a cuppa, and *Ladies Tea Parties*, which featured two women in evening gowns squaring off in a (simulated) boxing match. Between bouts, they sat together sipping tea in full view of the audience, which could do the same. In short, as the title suggests, *World Tea and Sympathy* was a determined effort to create moments propitious for encounters.



Paul McCarthy  
*Death Ship*, 1983  
 Performance  
 Photos : courtoisie de l'artiste et de la galerie Luhring Augustine, New York

The surviving images of *Hot Dog* and *Ayreal Death Ship* suggest a very different determination. Seated at cafe tables arranged in the artist's studio, the *Hot Dog* participants were invited to eat hot dogs, ketchup and mayonnaise while

Paul McCarthy performed like a stand-up comic,<sup>28</sup> scarfing down wieners and placing his penis in a bun in obvious reference to the shared menu.<sup>29</sup> With *Ayreal Death Ship*, an intervention presented at the San Francisco Art Institute as part of his *Death Ship* series, McCarthy, in the role of captain, again brought ketchup into play:

*In the Death Ship I am the captain. It is the ship of death. The audience is seated in the shape of a ship and wear little sailor hats to identify them as the crew. In the [San Francisco] piece I talked about two contrasting cultures. I was telling them that they were Aryan racists and that we were on a death ship. That was okay with them. They drank ketchup. I asked them to drink the blood of sea and they did.*<sup>30</sup>

*Ayreal Death Ship* and *Hot Dog* clearly differ from *World Tea and Sympathy* in many respects. The humour is black, the food summons chaos. But let us look at their shared points. All three creations were theatrical in nature. All entailed staging (space arranged to suggest a tea salon, cafe or ship, costumes, roles) and narratives (recounted or played-out stories). All were defined by interpersonal relations and involved exchanges in the form of giving and sharing food. And all were relational. Now, it is commonly believed that relational works are intrinsically convivial. But in the light of Nicolas Bourriaud's definition of relational art as a "set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations," the error of this belief becomes clear. Interacting with others is not always a pleasant experience, just as food does not always smell or taste good.



Other parallels can be drawn. In contexts partly spontaneous, partly staged, these works by World Tea Party and Paul McCarthy played on three qualities of food: its material value (odour and taste of tea or ketchup), its historical and social significance (hot beverage linked to bygone days of East and West, condiment of contemporary Americanized culture) and its symbolic import (tea recalls the Tea Route, the ceremonial and codified aspect of encounters, while hot dogs evoke fast food, consumption at sports events, barbecues and other informal meals).

178 •

However, I see another shared point as even more important: the respective operative qualities of *Ayreal Death Ship*, *Hot Dog* and *World Tea and Sympathy* all derived from rituals. Rituals – as performed today at certain meals, festivities and liturgies or in the past for potlatch ceremonies and sacrifices – govern social organization in codified spaces and allow excesses that are inexplicable and unacceptable in normal circumstances. They institute clear-cut relationships among the participants in venues *staged* for the occasion. They are held in suitable places – often around a table – and they entail role playing.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, they usually involve food. Rituals are shaped by codes, such as World Tea Party has exploited, and by transgressions, a McCarthy staple.

These codes and transgressions are interdependent; without their counterparts, they do not exist. Which is why, if we were to scrutinize *World Tea and Sympathy*, *Ayreal Death Ship* and *Hot Dog* at greater length in relation to the motivations and effects of rituals, many similarities would very likely emerge. To different degrees, all of these works are transgressive, infringing

certain rules. Perhaps they would prove to be two sides of the same coin.

According to this logic, if we consider their respective approaches, all of World Tea Party's and Paul McCarthy's performative works are complementary. The same holds true for the other "pleasant" and "caustic" works discussed earlier. This would be fertile ground for research. Which, by involving sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis and other fields, would be conducted with an interdisciplinary methodological approach.

#### Drawing on Interdisciplinarity

This observation leads back to a final look at the initial question: What explains art theory's recent interest in food as subject matter? Ultimately, four factors. The first is the unparalleled extent to which artists are exploiting alimentary themes and materials. The second is the recognition of the food theme generated by the thematic approach. The third is the growing openness to an expanded experience of art. And the fourth is the current enthusiasm for interdisciplinary approaches to art interpretation – interpretation of the works, their influences and their outcomes.

With the exception of breathing, eating is the first and last need felt by human beings. And food impacts both collective and individual life. In short, eating and drinking are of ubiquitous importance, which is why it is pertinent to study food-related contemporary works using an interdisciplinary approach, calling on art history and other human and applied sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, economy, communications and biology. Picture the contribution of a feminist viewpoint in interpreting Susan Shantz's *e(ate)n*, or the lens of media criticism on Althea Thauberger's *Thanksgiving II*. Coated in tomato paste, shaped to receive and coloured like flesh and blood, Shantz's recipients and other utensils recall female genitalia. Thauberger's photographs make your mouth water like food ads, until your eyes spy the bits of dirt. Imagine the exploration of works by World Tea Party and Paul McCarthy from a sociological, anthropological or psychoanalytical perspective. Of *Plants de porc*'s connections to the economy. Of *L'Ombre de soi*'s relation to psychology.

...

Juxtaposing works that have no immediately evident parallels can only favour their extended interpretation. Distancing them from their associated interpretive discourse causes us to see them differently, to grasp them in their full complexity, from different angles. This article seeks to establish points of resemblance between two works or, at most, two artistic approaches. But one could compare three, four, five or more practices at once and it is very likely that the results would be more eloquent.

The food theme encourages surprising comparisons. As demonstrated, it permits the association of seemingly unrelated works and the identification of their operative qualities. This is one of its attributes. A second is its role in providing insight into artistic approaches, by revealing, for example, that, while Paul McCarthy's performative creations have a corrosive side, they are also relational. A third is its capacity to help uncover connections between outwardly dissimilar types of practices, the convivial vs. the caustic, for instance. And there are other highly interesting avenues that have nothing to do with comparisons, such as exploring aesthetic reception in relation to the food employed. Myriad paths opened and yet to open around the theme of food, paths that are ours for the taking.

#### Notes

1. For more about these two works, and about the representation of things sweet in twentieth century art, see Marie-Paule Di Francesco. *L'Art dévoré. Images sucrées au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1989).
2. The definitive word on Futurist cuisine, the 1932 *La cucina futurista* manifesto by F. T. Marinetti and Fillia, appears in English in *The Futurist Cookbook*, intro. Lesley Chamberlain, trans. Suzanne Brill (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, 1989). Readers of French are referred to the enlightening *La Cuisine futuriste*, intro. and trans. Nathalie Heinich (Paris: Éditions A. M. Métailié, 1982).
3. Concerning the Eat Art Gallery, readers of French can consult Daniel Spoerri's September 1970 press release for the gallery's inauguration and Betty Stocker's essay *Les multiples Eat-art*, respectively reproduced on pages 66-67 and 68-73 in Daniel Abadie, Elisabeth Hartung, Daniel Spoerri et al., *Restaurant Spoerri. Maison fondée en 1963, 1, place de la Concorde, Paris 75008* (Paris: Éditions du Jeu de Paume/Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002).
4. See Barbara Fischer, ed., *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art* (Toronto: YYZ Books/London, ON: Art Lab, University of Western Ontario, 1999).

5. The extensive exhibition catalogue, available in Spanish and English, is indispensable for anyone interested in the subject: Darío Corbeira, ed., *To Eat or not to Eat* (Salamanca: CASA, Centro de Arte de Salamanca, 2002).

6. Maurice Fréchuret et al., *Hors d'œuvre, ordre et désordres de la nourriture* (Bordeaux: capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux/Lyons: Fage éditions, 2004).

7. In Quebec alone, two periodicals have devoted special issues to the food theme: *Espace sculpture*, "Le goût de l'art/The Taste of Art," no. 52 (summer 2000) and *Esse arts + opinions*, "Nourritures," no. 50 (winter 2004). Similar specials have appeared in Germany, *Kunstforum International* (no. 159, April-May 2002 and no. 160, June-July 2002), Spain, *Lapiz* (no. 189, January 2003), and France, *Beaux Arts Magazine* (no. 211, December 2001).

8. On the question of exhibitions, see Marcel Blouin's article *Orange Is the City: Art and Life* in this catalogue for a discussion based on a study by Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak reported in "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position," in R. Greenberg et al., eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 231-250.

9. The *Mnemosyne Atlas* consisted of large panels on which were juxtaposed images of works and artifacts different as to era and origin but having similar visual elements (figures, ornamental motifs, etc.). The library is organized not in the traditional manner, according to subject, but by "elective affinities," to point up various issues. On the subject of Warburg, readers of French are referred to Georges Didi-Huberman's imposing and highly edifying *L'Image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2002). See also Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004), originally published as *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement*



(Paris: Macula, 1998).

10. Althea Thauberger's photographs exploit the advertising aesthetic. Other of her projects, like *Dream Factory* (2002) and *Songstress* (2002), appropriate the methods of reality TV, questioning its aims and finality.

11. These utensils were red when originally used in *Engorge* (1995) and *Satiate* (1998).

12. It is no coincidence that in this publication we find Marcel Blouin tackling the question of relational art, Patrice Loubier discussing artists with a common interest in the figure of the Other, and artists engaged in a relational approach (Olga Boldyreff, Diane Borsato, Massimo Guerrera) sharing their thoughts. Nor is it by chance that, in the final paragraph of his essay, André-Louis Paré writes, "with the theme of gastronomy, which encompasses the whole being, it is perfectly natural that art be able to invite the public to its table."

13. This is dealt with to varying degrees in books such as Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002), originally published as *Esthétique relationnelle* (Les Presses du réel, 1998); Paul Ardenne, *Un art contextuel* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002); and Patrice Loubier and Anne-Marie Ninacs, eds., *Les Commensaux. Quand l'art se fait circonstances/When Art Becomes Circumstance*, (Montréal: Centre des arts actuels SKOL, 2001). And in three single-theme issues of *Parachute*, "The Idea of Community/L'idée de communauté," nos. 100, 101 and 102 (October-December 2002, January-March 2003, April-June 2003).

14. Judging by the angle from which the journals *Kunstforum International* and *Lapiz* have dealt with the subject of food (see note 7). Also noteworthy are the exhibition and publication project curated by Sarah Tanguy, *Sweet Tooth*, Napa, COPIA, The American Center for Wine, Food

& the Arts, 2002, and Claire Lieberman's article "That Food Thing to You," *Sculpture*, vol. 19, no. 10 (December 2000), pp. 46-53.

15. Of interest are three projects curated by Elisabeth Hartung in 2001. For the first, *Tafelrunden* (Munich), she invited seven international artists to produce happenings around food, communication and the public (see Elisabeth Hartung, "Food as New Model of Art Reception," in Darío Corbeira, *To Eat or not to Eat*). The second, *Mit vollem Munde spricht man nicht!* (Nuremberg) featured works by artists interested in gastronomy and table manners. The third was a large exhibition on Daniel Spoerri's Eat Art. See the catalogues, all edited by Elisabeth Hartung: *Tafelrunden, 7 Aktionen rund ums Essen, 7. RischArt-Produktion* (Nuremberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2001), *Mit vollem Munde spricht man nicht. Tischsitten und Esskultur in der zeitgenössischen Kunst* (Nuremberg: Galerie der Künstler, 2001), and *Daniel Spoerri presents Eat-art* (Nuremberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2001).

16. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 113 (see note 13).

17. From the presentation of the 5<sup>e</sup> Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon (2000) at [www.biennale-de-lyon.org/bac2000/angl/movie/p\\_movie.htm](http://www.biennale-de-lyon.org/bac2000/angl/movie/p_movie.htm): "[Cultural exchange] is at the heart of the third millennium challenge. It is time to take stock of the process and art form in the different ways that cultural disciplines think, practice and produce, including in the West. Objects chosen worldwide and originating from far-off cultures, which are the result of ritual activities or similar functions, will be compared. For the fifth edition the Biennial wishes to reconcile objects and behaviour which are not based on formal comparisons alone."

18. Part of the XXIV Bienal de São Paulo, 1998 ([www1.uol.com.br/bienal](http://www1.uol.com.br/bienal)). Rosa Berardo and Jean-Philippe Uzel discuss the event and cultural exchange in this publication.

19. Presented at the Venice Biennale in 1995.

20. While dealing with food in contemporary art from various angles, *Foodculture* reflected a determination to probe the notion of cultural sharing, as is clear in the catalogue's subtitle: *Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art*.

21. Ralf Beil, *Künstlerküche. Lebensmittel als Kunstmaterial von Schiele bis Jason Rhoades* (Cologne: DuMont Verlag, 2002).

22. Jim Drobnick, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences: Olfactory Dimensions in Contemporary Art," *Parachute*, no. 89 (January-March 1998), pp. 10-19; Jim Drobnick, "Recipes for the Cube: Aromatic and Edible Practices in Contemporary Art," in Barbara Fischer, *Foodculture*, pp. 69-79; Jennifer Fisher, "Relational Sense: Toward a Haptic Aesthetics," *Parachute*, no. 87 (July-September 1997), pp. 4-11; Jennifer Fisher, "Performing Taste," in Barbara Fischer, *Foodculture*, pp. 29-47.

23. The giving of food is by far the most common form of exchange used. It is fundamental to society and speaks volumes about human nature. On the institution of gift giving, see the renowned study by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), originally published as "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *Année Sociologique*, second series, 1923-1924. See also Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* preceded by *La notion de dépense* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit [respectively 1949 and 1933], 2000. *La part maudite* is available in English as *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

24. The time gap in this instance is no greater than the interval between the works of World Tea Party and Gordon Matta-Clark, which would lend themselves to easy comparison. Nearly twenty years separate the first World Tea Party event at the National Gallery of Canada, in 1993, from *Meat Cake #1*, Paul McCarthy's first performance in Pasadena, in 1974.

25. For more on World Tea Party, see Jennifer Fisher, Steve Holtzman and Keith Snyder, *World Tea Party: A Collaborative Interactive Transcultural Tea Salon* (North Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 1996). On Paul McCarthy, see Dan Cameron, Amelia Jones, Lisa Phillips and Anthony Vidler in *Paul McCarthy* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art/Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000).

26. The information on this project is drawn from my conversations with Daniel Dion between winter 2003 and summer 2004, and from the fifty-some hours of the collective's video archives.

27. Teas from around the world were served throughout the project.

28. Linda Burnham, "Paul McCarthy: The Evolution of a Performance Artist," *High Performance*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1985), pp. 38-39.

29. Amelia Jones, "Paul McCarthy's Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity," in *Paul McCarthy*, p. 129 (see note 25).

30. Paul McCarthy in a 1983 interview with Linda Montano, quoted in Linda Burnham, "Paul McCarthy: The Evolution of a Performance Artist," p. 40 (see note 28).

31. For example, birthday dinners usually follow a well-defined routine (the guests arrive in party dress, the honoree appears, the meal is eaten, the candles are blown out, the gifts are opened, the cake is eaten) while giving rise to excess of all sorts (expensive clothing, decorations, gifts and other conspicuous objects of spending, copious quantities of food, free-flowing drink and often-spicy jokes directed mainly at the guest of honour).



EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe  
495, rue Saint-Simon, Saint-Hyacinthe (Québec) J2S 5C3  
T 450.773.4209 www.expression.qc.ca  
F 450.773.5270 expression@expression.qc.ca

Direction générale et artistique : Marcel Blouin  
Édition et recherche : Mélanie Boucher

Fondé en 1985, EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, est une institution muséale dont la mission est de promouvoir et de diffuser l'art contemporain et actuel. Depuis 2003, les membres du conseil d'administration d'EXPRESSION qui ont contribué par leur soutien au rayonnement du centre sont : Sylvie Adam, Anne-Marie Aubin, Édith Dragon, Yannick Forest, Karoline Georges, Hélène Girard, François Grisé, Éric Lamontagne, Claude Millette, Christian Parent, Jean-Marie Pelletier, Louise Piché, Michel Robidoux, Danielle Saint-Georges et René Saint-Hilaire.

Catalogage avant publication de Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Vedette principale au titre :  
Orange : l'événement d'art actuel de Saint-Hyacinthe

Catalogue d'une exposition présentée à Expression, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, du 29 août au 12 oct. 2003.

Comprend des réf. bibliogr.  
Texte en français et en anglais, tête-bêche.  
ISBN 2-922326-40-30

1. Aliments dans l'art – Expositions. 2. Agriculture dans l'art – Expositions. 3. Arts – 21<sup>e</sup> siècle – Expositions. I. Boucher, Mélanie, 1976- . II. Blouin, Marcel. III. Loubier, Patrice. IV. Expression, Centre d'exposition de St-Hyacinthe. V. Titre : Orange : contemporary art event of Saint-Hyacinthe.  
NX650.F64072 2005 700'.4559 C2005-941528-2F

Distribution

ABC Livres d'art Canada  
372, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, local 230, Montréal (Québec) H3B 1A2  
T 514.871.0606 ou 1.877.871.0606 www.ABCartbooksCanada.com  
F 514.871.2112 info@ABCartbooksCanada.com

ISBN 2-922326-40-3

Dépôt légal

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2005

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, 2005

© Les artistes et leurs ayants droit pour les œuvres

© Les auteurs pour les textes

© EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, pour la publication

Imprimé au Québec, Canada

EXPRESSION se dégage de toute responsabilité quant à la publication de photographies dont les sujets représentés n'auraient pas accordé l'autorisation de reproduire ou de diffuser leur image. Tous droits de traduction et d'adaptation, en totalité ou en partie, sont réservés pour tous les pays. La reproduction d'un extrait quelconque de cette publication, par quelque procédé que ce soit, tant électronique que mécanique, est interdite sans l'autorisation écrite des auteurs et de l'éditeur.

# EXPRESSION

Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe

La publication a été rendue possible grâce à l'appui financier du Conseil des Arts du Canada, du ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, du Conseil montréalais de la culture et des communications, de la Conférence régionale des élus de la Montérégie Est et du Conseil de la Culture de Saint-Hyacinthe. L'événement a quant à lui été rendu possible grâce à l'appui de Patrimoine canadien, du Conseil des Arts du Canada, de Communication Canada, du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, de Fonds Jeunesse Québec, d'Emploi-Québec, du Conseil régional de développement de la Montérégie et de la Ville de Saint-Hyacinthe. EXPRESSION remercie chaleureusement ces principaux partenaires. Le Centre remercie de plus ses subventionneurs : le Conseil des Arts du Canada, le ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, le Fonds de stabilisation et de consolidation des arts et de la culture du Québec, la Ville de Saint-Hyacinthe et le Conseil de la Culture de Saint-Hyacinthe.



Conseil des Arts  
du Canada

Canada Council  
for the Arts



Patrimoine  
canadien

Canadian  
Heritage

Canada

Québec



Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec  
Emploi-Québec  
Ministère de la Culture et des Communications



Fonds de stabilisation et de consolidation  
des arts et de la culture  
du Québec



Fonds Jeunesse Québec



Conseil montréalais  
de la culture et  
des communications



CRÉ  
Montérégie Est



Ville de  
Saint-Hyacinthe



Conseil de la  
Culture  
de Saint-Hyacinthe

Abordons la nourriture par cette zone précise où elle devient un propos ou un matériau de la création contemporaine. Soulignons que depuis les années 1960, les artistes en arts visuels emploient de manière recrudescence les sujets et les matériaux alimentaires dans leurs œuvres, qu'ils le font en s'intéressant à des problématiques, en adoptant des modes de production et de diffusion ayant un caractère novateur. Posons un regard éclairant sur le phénomène. Participons à sa compréhension, à sa reconnaissance.

Dans cet esprit, cette publication regroupe les mots de treize auteurs. Elle contribue aux fondements d'une réflexion qui est à poursuivre et témoigne d'une manifestation d'envergure internationale, **ORANGE**, L'événement d'art actuel de Saint-Hyacinthe. **ORANGE** s'est déroulé du 29 août au 12 octobre 2003 et a rassemblé autour du thème de l'agroalimentaire des réalisations produites par dix-huit artistes qui nous ouvrent des horizons variés. Commissaires, créateurs et théoriciens sont ici réunis pour dire de manière critique et poétique ce que l'art tire du fait que nous mangions, et ce qu'il donne en retour.

To consider food in the specific realm where it becomes a statement or material of contemporary creation. To show that visual artists have increasingly employed alimentary subjects and materials in their work since the 1960s, that they do so in addressing issues, in adopting innovative means of production and presentation. To shed insightful light on the phenomenon. To contribute to its understanding and recognition.

These aims underlie the writings of the thirteen contributors to this publication, which helps advance a nascent area of thinking and bears witness to an event of international scope: **ORANGE**: Contemporary Art Event of Saint-Hyacinthe. **ORANGE** took place from August 29 to October 12, 2003, bringing together works on the agri-food theme made by eighteen artists offering a variety of perspectives. The curators, creators and theorists writing here take a sometimes critical, sometimes poetic look at what art derives from the fact that we eat, and what it gives in return.

**EXPRESSION**

Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe