



Food Interactions Catalogue

Collection of Best practices

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Aesthetics of Foodwaste

as a design object

essay 5.1

author: Silvia Pericu

ABSTRACT

The essay investigates the relationship between creativity, art, design and food waste aiming at understanding how the diffusion of the practices related to it represents the affirmation of a new aesthetic of the food waste. This aesthetic dimension, in which product, communication, creativity, ethics and processes cannot be distinguished, brings us towards the acceptance of the necessary shift of paradigm in the way we relate to food. Today we are forced to think back again to our methods of food production, packaging, distribution, consumption and disposal, able to inspire citizens in having a critical attitude.

Keywords: food waste, product design, creativity, circular economy.

Considering the waste of food as a resource opens up to a big range of opportunities, and might represent for the design discipline and the project's world a fertile field either for experimentation, either for fully understanding the relationship between ethical elements and the new aesthetic dimension that emerges in the contemporary scenario, if we relate this theme to the goals of sustainability.

For this purpose, what is made within the Creative Food Cycle Project, i.e. the scanning of the diverser phases of the life of food (production, consumption and disposal), is particularly meaningful as for understanding how this theme is tightly linked with almost all the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). Moreover, this occurs both in relation to the system in general and to its optimization, but also in terms of the behaviours of the final consumer, i.e. the individuals.

If we think, indeed, which level of production is necessary to promote new methods leading to the fulfillment of the Zero Hunger goal, and able - as well to reduce the impact that the production of food has on the environment - then the benefits of such promotion will appear undoubtedly evident as for the very high impact that a distributed and sustainable production of food might have at a general system level.

In this realm, a model of the sharing economy appears to be plausible, such as the one proposed by Jeremy Rifkin: it is possible to figure out a network of small peer-to-peer producers, able in bringing back the food production system to a microscale, in which biodiversity can take advantage of what happens in the macroculture. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, about three-quarters of the food comes from only twelve plants and five animal species, leaving supplies extremely vulnerable to climate change and exponentially growing human demand.

In this sense, the planet's health, the human condition and the social justice are closely related to this latter topic. So far it is acknowledged that the system at general level and the choices of individual consumers are intimately intertwined thus making the topic an interesting field of investigation for a design which has a 'reparative' role (Antonelli, 2019, p.18) in respect of environmental and social issues. In the relationship between project and food, design, technology and tradition may be combined to cope with the challenges of the future: from climate change that affects the food system at every level, to scarcity of resources and the unmissable diversification in food production and consumption.

Today we are forced, indeed, to think back again to our methods of food production, packaging, distribution, consumption and disposal to really inspire citizens/consumers in having a critical attitude in respect to their shared experiences and for taking into action to create better conditions for all. To actuate this it is necessary to understand in a deeper way the complex and interconnected systems in which we live, encouraging us each other in adopting a long-term perspective, and to visualize a series of substantial measures capable of inspiring habits and attitudes for rebuilding our bonds with we feed off. Because we are what we eat, as Feuerbach stated in 1862.

In the phase of consumption and re-use of the food, the theme of waste prevails and, first of all, it is necessary to reconsider the stigma around the term and, in the perspective of mending the relationship between man and nature, waste must be considered as a resource, a proper raw material. Promoting the sharing economy into the system level within the food sector, placing back into circulation what is discarded, is ethically a pivotal step. That is partly being fulfilled in the variety of projects which picture new use for industrial waste, but at the level of end consumer a prevailing topic is the active action

through the reduction of waste and the effective exploitation of the produced food. An overview on food waste (BCFN, 2018) underlines that a third part of food produced today is wasted or not used for reasons that change enormously with the different contexts, where anyway change of behaviours and technology can make the difference and lead to impressive results in the reduction of food waste. It is truly a societal food challenge.

Various are the strategies aimed at the final consumer, ranging from food education to waste reduction, to practices of food recovery which is redistributed into new consumption opportunities.

The scrap that comes from the industrial process, i.e. the no longer edible matter, can be used as a resource for creating new materials of vegetable origin, substitutes for plastic, degradable in the environment, a source of fertile humus or suitable as food packaging, thus contributing in a significant way to better manage what we pour off in the environment. Replacing both renewable and non-renewable resources, with regenerated waste material, particularly if originating from the industrial process of food, is the operation that more than any other conveys a message for promoting the dictates of the circular economy, and is therefore embedded in high ethical value.

The waste, therefore, becomes a means for educational purposes, but also a possible and desirable answer to problems we are afflicted from, in which the true essence of contemporary design is expressed, not as a mere intellectual exercise.

In this sense, the aesthetic dimension represents a fundamental theme that, together with the ethical emergency, can become the leverage for persuading the final consumer to change habits. Paraphrasing Bruce Mau (2009), if we want to convince people that changing the way they live is important, we need seduction, not sacrifice. «There is only one way to make this happen:

use design to make the things we love more intelligent. Embrace the revolution of possibility to radically reduce the material and energy consumed, while increasing the positive impact of the things we use. Make sustainable more compelling, more attractive, more exciting and more delightful than the destructive, short-term ways. Compete with beauty and make smart thing sexy». If we talk about food this is truer than ever.

On the idea of experiencing beauty, love, pleasure and delight, especially related to the consumption of food, an interesting direction is represented by some social activities developed by Massimo Bottura, including that of the Refettorio Ambrosiano in a Milanese parish for Expo 2015. A project that recovers the unused food of the Expo Pavilions, and makes it cooked by several international chefs for a month, in the idea that ethics and aesthetics are only one thing: a contemporary refectory capable of narrating how the best chefs of the world can cook dry bread and give life back to more than a million tons of food, making them attractive. Food thus becomes an artistic experience, in which art makes the invisible visible, and generates a sense of responsibility, which in turn is a social act in the form of creativity.

Returning to the field more properly linked to design and to the more authentic design culture an attitude similar to the experiences of Bottura finds himself in the work of two young Dutch designers, *Upprinting Food project*, recently developed on an industrial level in the Chinese context.

The possibility of printing an edible material obtained from discarded food using 3D printing technology is magically combined with an aesthetic study of the product/snack which is offered to the final consumer. The aesthetic dimension and the quality of the visual experience become the prevalent component to allow the acceptance of these new products and the overtaking of common places. Food returning humus, energy for the earth, is natural and

accepted, as well as that it becomes something to be worn, a packaging or an object to be used, whilst it is definitely something else if we consider that the discarded food, for the most different reasons, can be reused and consumed, getting to involve some instincts that lead us to a natural rejection. Therefore, in this perspective, is needed a first step to catalogue and but also real projects, which tell of possible choices for consumers, but also, to consider the projects presented in the catalogue and the best practices that have been collected in the call for proposals call enlightening this evidence. This experimental prototypes and products explore new potentials meaning and spatial combination in design reinterpretation, even and above all, from an experiential point of view and with an aesthetic approach.

In this latter case the idea is not to revive an experience that could recall the Manifesto of Futurist Cuisine (1930) by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti with his invitation to chemistry and his campaign for the abolition of pasta, «absurd Italian gastronomic religion», and which promoted the accentuation of the sensual intensity of food-related extrusion with even synesthetic traits.

The emphasis is on the fact that the experiential practice of these products must be linked to a more authentic design culture capable of fulfilling its task of joint between disciplines, creator of eco-systems and clarifier of complexity.

The environmental emergency has forced the society to develop many technological solutions that allow us to transform edible matter into new products, but what is now needed, in addition to making them work, is to start popularize them, making them known, and adopting them in daily practice. For this latter and for many other reasons, stay tuned.

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