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Sculpturality of Food in Contemporary Art

Abstract

Eating is the most essential need of human beings, both physically and culturally. Through food we follow traditions and identify ourselves. What we eat /or not eat, becomes political, we can express ourselves. Through food we can investigate and address ecological, sociological and economic aspects and habits. Through food we connect. It's a medium everybody understands.

The tradition of representation of food in art history is very long. In the genre still life it gained a high metaphoric and symbolic state. I'm very much interested in this symbolic system. Time plays a huge part within. It is just a moment, which is captured in the still-life, and it implicates its vanity. Although the representation of food has a long tradition, using food as a material is highly reserved by 20th-century artists. With the rise of conceptual art in the '60s and '70s artists started to use banal and everyday objects as art, among kitchen utensils, cooking and food. We can think about early feminist performance artists, like Carolee Schneemann with her performance piece *Meat Joy NYC* (1964) or Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), whose addressing female roles and expectations in society. Another strategy to use food is humour and rebellion, as we see at the artworks by the Swiss artist duo Fischli/Weiss.

While Fischli/Weiss are working in their time with transgression, today's artists don't seem like to do so. It is not anymore a political rebellion. We have enough food, women are not assigned anymore to the kitchen (although still a lot is to improve). I wonder why so many artists are turning to this medium nowadays, in times of #foodporn? Why became imagery of food so important while we are overloaded with personal and consumer visuals in every channel we use? In case of #food, it is one of the most popular hashtags. Or is it the phenomenon to pay attention to the everyday details? And what about the future? How is food going to look like? Is it going to emphasise experiences? Or do we need to give up our senses?

In my research thesis, I'm going to investigate these questions and analyse artworks of contemporary artists which are using food today and why they are using it. Starting with the '90s artworks, I'm rather interested in the sculptural and artistic approach than in applied food photography. An interesting starting point is the artist Urs Fischer who often uses food in his installations, for example, the *Rotten*

Foundation (1998) or the Untitled (Bread House) (2004-2005). Also, I see the common humorous ground in works especially of swiss german contemporary artists who are using food such as Urs Fischer, Olaf Breuning, or Beni Bischof. Young female artists like the Canadian Chloe Wise or the in Kairo born food stylist Laila Gohar are using Instagram, as gallery space and tool of their creations.

I'm fascinated by food in the way how it triggers all of our senses - taste, touch, smell - through a visual picture. It is a vehicle for stories of memories, nostalgia, fantasies, and desires. But it also implicates the impermanence of itself and nature. We know it's going to be eaten and therefore it is a morbid reminder of our own decay.