Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies
Vol. 16, No. 4 (2020)

Food, Art, and the Challenges of Documentation

Yael Raviv

a memory is a story
told so well, it becomes
part of the body.

— Olivia Gatwood

Countless dishes and meals parade on our phone screens daily, shared on Instagram and company. These visual representations leave out a great deal: taste, smell, texture, conversation, ambiance…. Can those pictures serve as triggers, souvenirs that help us recreate and preserve the memory of a full experience or do they reduce it, flattening a complex, multi-sensory event into a small square? Susan Sontag wrote that photography is "a way of certifying experience," of proving the photographer had had the experience, but that it also refutes it "by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir" (Sontag 1973). We can see this double-duty in current "experiential marketing" events (live experiences tied to a commercial brand): creating "content" for an audience looking to fill their Instagram feeds, and offering them a tangible, sensual alternative to digital consumption at the same time. The experience offers certain elements that can only be appreciated by those present, conferring on them a special status, but they must also be visually appealing, hinting to those less fortunate at what they have missed. As a result, taste and scent experiences have become increasingly popular in the experiential marketing arena. The manufacturing of documentation is a key element of the experience by design. Taste and smell experiences are valued precisely because of the challenges they pose, their aliveness, the essentially limited nature of their preservation.

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ISSN: 1557-2935 <http://liminalities.net/16-4/documentation.pdf>

The documentation of performance art or any time-based art poses very similar challenges to that of meal/food documentation: how do you capture the experience (in all its multi-sensory glory) and reflect on it/study it at a later time? This paper explores the subjectivity and the partiality of food-centered artwork documentation and preservation, focusing on artist cookbooks as tools of documentation and their relationship to the original performance. It mines the gaps between the two as a gateway to thinking about the documentation of performance in general. I argue that one of the valuable contributions of artwork that employs food as a medium is in developing tools for analyzing and reflecting on subjective, multi-sensory, time-based experiences. Following John Dewey and Lisa Heldke, I look at artist cookbooks as merging theory and practice, instruction and improvisation, preservation and imagination.

Heldke made a case for cooking and recipes as tools for rethinking philosophical investigation. Highlighting a cook's necessarily flexible approach to recipes, the exchange/dialogue around the sharing of recipes, and the role of personal background and choices, Heldke considers how these qualities can inform theoretical analysis in other fields (Heldke 1988). She further suggests foodmaking is a "thoughtful practice" that bridges theory and practice. One of its hallmarks is "bodily knowledge," an understanding that comes only through tactile, sensory interaction and practice. Heldke argues that this understanding of cooking can be applied to other spheres of human activity, and that this kind of bodily knowing is as valuable as (rather than inferior to) theoretical knowledge (1992). I propose that cookbooks offer a tool for the study of live performance in a similar way: bridging the gap between archive and repertoire, offering a space for an ongoing, embodied reflection. I focus here on artist cookbooks, since I believe the intersection of food and art can offer unique insights into an exploration of the tension between experience and memory, performance and documentation, archive and embodied practice. Artist cookbooks are not attempts at an objective documentation of an event, but are rather explicitly subjective, reflecting a particular voice and mission. They are extensions of the original event and provide space for a nuanced interpretation.

I begin by situating this study within a brief theoretical framework of both performance documentation and food and art, and proceed to look at several examples of artist cookbooks that have close associations to live events, focusing on the relationship between the book and its origin.

Part I: Context

The Archive and the Repertoire

> The task of art is to transform what is continuously happening to us, to transform all of these things into symbols […] into something which can last in man's memory.
>
> — Jorge Luis Borges

Scholarship about the documentation of performance art largely focuses on the relationship between the live performance and its visual documentation (photography and video). Performance Studies scholars like Peggy Phelan and Diana Taylor explored the gap between the live performance and its traces. Phelan famously argued that "Performance's only life is in the present" and that it leaves no "left-overs," "plung[ing] into invisibility" (Phelan 1993, 148). More recently, scholars like Rebecca Schneider and Saini Manninen complicated the notion of performance's "disappearance," highlighting the materiality of performance and the material remains it generates (Schneider 2011 and Manninen 2011 and 2016). These scholars shift the subversive power of performance from its ephemerality to its materiality. In her reflection on the material/embodied nature of performance, Diana Taylor proposes an alternative system of documentation to the Western archive: the repertoire—a space that "enacts embodied memory" that requires presence and individual agency, standing in opposition to the archive with its focus on the written word and on visual, material evidence (Taylor 2003). Manninen argues that despite the effectiveness of Taylor's repertoire as an alternative space that allows for "generating, recording and transmitting knowledge," it still relies on a division between material (archival evidence) and ephemeral (embodied knowledge). Manninen suggests that any material (i.e. archival) evidence such as photography or video is open to individual interpretation, to imagination and to decay, that it is therefore no less "performative" than the original event (Manninen 2016, 165). I would suggest that the power of Taylor's repertoire is also in the space it opens for including the senses beyond sight and sound in any narrative. I am particularly interested in the relationship Taylor proposes between the archive and the repertoire: their ability to coexist and supplement each other. In this case, the relationship between the cookbook (archive) and the preparation and consumption of a meal, as in the son or daughter learning to cook by standing in the kitchen with their parent, smelling the spices, kneading the dough (embodied knowledge).

In her reading of *The Settler's Cookbook* (2009), a culinary memoir by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Maya Parmar applies Taylor's view of embodied knowledge to culinary practice, citing Taylor's assertion that Western culture privileged the archive with its enduring materials over the repertoire of ephemeral, embodied practice and knowledge. Parmar argues that these embodied narratives, among them

recipes and cooking, are not only important, but essential in that they provide insights into memories and identities that are not represented at all in written narratives and other archival evidence, in particular for Parmar, certain diasporic identities, shaped by trauma and pain. In her reading of Alibhai-Brown's memoir, Palmer shows the written recipes are "intimately entangled with the act of cooking" Albhai-Brown describes how certain dishes are consumed and demonstrates an expectation that the reader will actually cook them as well (2019, 59). Further, these acts of cooking typically speak to a communal identity (rather than an individual one), which is part of their importance to a community that prefers expressing itself through collective acts (65). This last point is particularly relevant to the cookbooks discussed below and their negotiation of private and public spheres, individual voice and the collective.

Food as Art

One of the historical barriers to the classification of culinary creations as Art in Western culture was their temporality. A temporary work could not qualify as Art, but had to have a lasting presence, allowing its study and appreciation for years to come. However, new art forms (performance art perhaps the most obvious) encouraged scholars and critics to amend these classifications. Philosopher Noel Carroll, for example, suggested we reflect on artwork by telling a narrative that places the work in relationship to previously agreed-upon art objects (as a development or as a revolt). He proposed that by narrating the story of the piece in context, rather than strictly defining it, we highlight the importance of the creator's intentions, positioning art as a social practice (Caroll 1999). John Dewey asserted that an aesthetic experience is based on interaction and that ordinary experiences in everyday life could be appreciated as aesthetic experiences (Dewey 2005). Glenn Kuehn relied on Dewey's theory when making his case for viewing culinary experience as Art (Kuehn 2005). Dewey's point is particularly useful not only for interpreting the work of artists who choose to work with food as a medium precisely because of its ambiguous position between art and everyday life, but also as a way to reflect on certain culinary creations as Artwork (though, as philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer, reminds us, this prejudice is specific to Western culture).

Artists who gravitate towards food as a medium are often drawn precisely to those qualities that challenge traditional art world definitions: the quotidian, temporary and changeable. They employ food for its power to disrupt and question, drawing attention to notions of authorship and ownership, traditional hierarchies and power structures, value and personal responsibility. Several chefs today offer culinary creations that prompt an emotional response sparked by a combination of flavors and textures. They create multi-sensory, participatory experiences that blur the boundaries between art and everyday life. The chefs most noted for this

approach work within the world of fine dining, constrained by the need to run sustainable businesses. However, their work, I believe, creates a disruption as well. It forces us to rethink Western attitudes towards the chemical senses and engage with taste, smell and touch on a conceptual level, to create tools for evaluating and discussing these multi-sensory, intimate experiences.

Our ideas of disgust and of comfort in the culinary realm are informed by both individual preferences and cultural context. Fermented shark fin, durian fruit, and chicken feet are just a few examples of ingredients relished in certain cultures that can be off-putting to the uninitiated. They highlight the subjective nature of our perceptions. Today we know that sight and sound are not as objective as we once believed, but we still have a sense of a shared common experience when we employ them. We are more aware of the unique, individual and intimate nature of taste and smell experiences. This understanding of individuality, rather than the common narrative of commensality, is, in my opinion, one of the valuable contributions of food as a creative medium to an art discourse[1].

Recipes to Remember?

Susan Stewart, in studying the souvenir, suggested that it authenticates an experience, and that we only need souvenirs of events "whose materiality has escaped us." Stewart writes that a souvenir is by definition incomplete. It is a partial echo of the original experience, evoking it but requiring a narrative to supplement it. Furthermore, the souvenir is individual. It certifies a personal, unique experience. Photographic souvenirs, she says, offer "visual intimacy at the expense of the other senses" making the accompanying narrative even more poignant (Stewart 1993). Her analysis is particularly evocative when thinking about culinary experiences and the recent abundance of writing about food and restaurants, the bounty of supplemental narratives.

One type of narrative that describes a culinary event is a recipe, a form of culinary documentation. Cookbooks may be manuals, how-to texts, and recipes provide instructions, yet they can also be seen as scores, more akin to sheet music or a play, intended to be performed and interpreted. As much as a musical score or the text of a play can serve as part of the evidence available to us in understanding a single, unique performance, recipes offer hints to a culinary event. Fluxus artists' "event scores" highlight the distinction between score and actual performance and the limits of such evidence. Typically very simple and broad, one example of such an event score is Alison Knowles's *Proposition* (1962), which

[1] A few noteworthy volumes interrogate the relationship between food and art and offer a much more rigorous study than I can offer in this paper, particularly *The Taste of Art: Cooking, Food, and Counterculture in Contemporary Practices*, S. Bottinelli and M. D'ayala Valva eds. (University of Arkansas Press, 2017) and *Food and Museums*, N. Levent and I.D. Mihalache eds. (Bloomsbury, 2017).

simply reads: Make a Salad. A more detailed description specified: "Beginning the event, a Mozart duo for violin and cello is followed by production of the salad by the artist and eating of the salad by the audience. The salad is always different as Mozart remains the same."[2] Knowles continues to perform the event score for Make a Salad today.[3] The minimal instructions (lack of a specific salad recipe, for example) speak to an intentional resistance to documentation.

Fluxus artists were inspired by earlier Futurist work, but also reacted against it, their event scores intentionally vague, unlike the Futurists precise "formulas," reflecting their greater interest in primary experience and social interaction. *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932) in contrast, is both a vehicle for documenting past events and an art object in itself. It includes descriptions of several futurist banquets as well as numerous recipes ("formulas") contributed by various artists.

The book is a poetic text that expresses both an artistic agenda and an ethical one, namely advocating a strong nationalist message, condemning bourgeois lifestyle and supporting fascist ideals, with banquet descriptions like that of The Synthesis of Italy Dinner by Fillia or Marinetti's Heroic Winter Dinner (127 and 102 respectively, Marinetti, 1989). However, the book remains first and foremost an art object, highlighted by the selection of clearly inedible dishes scattered through the text, like The Excited Pig: "A whole salami, skinned, is served upright on a dish containing some very hot black coffee mixed with a good deal of eau de Cologne" (Fillia 144 in Marinetti 1989). This and other inedible recipes serve as reminders that this "cookbook" is in fact an artistic creation and not a kitchen manual. They force the reader to pause and consider each recipe. They call into question the very nature of recipes and emphasize the need for vigilance and independent thinking.

Part II: Documenting Meals

At first glance, what is known as Modernist Cuisine often seems like it was taken directly from the pages of *The Futurist Cookbook*. Dishes like "Rabbit Sweetbreads with Electric Chinese Lanterns and Liquorice Air (Adrià 2004)," read like a Futurist formula, though it is, of course, edible. Chefs like Ferran Adrià, Grant Achatz or Heston Blumenthal use new technologies in the kitchen to offer creations on the plate that are as surprising, even shocking, as they are aesthetically inspiring. They subvert common expectations by playing with temperatures, textures and flavors, deconstructing traditional dishes and presenting common ingredients in new and unexpected ways. However, these chefs differ from the Futurists in several significant ways: their food, first and foremost, must always be not

[2] https://www.aknowles.com/salad.html, viewed August 10, 2019.
[3] Knowles performed Make a Salad at the Tate Modern in 2008 and on The Highline in New York City in 2012, among other instances.

only edible, but also delicious. It must be consistent, and, significantly, sustainable, i.e. support the restaurant as a business. These creations are documented in two significantly different ways: first, by their creators, in precise recipes that allow consistent recreation, often accompanied by sketches and/or photographs to illustrate presentation, and second, by their consumers (diners and critics) through photographs and narratives on social media, blogs, review sites and print media. This wealth of documentation approaches and viewpoints differs from other art-spheres.

In 2014 The Drawing Center in NYC presented *Notes on Creativity,* an exhibit examining chef Ferran Adrià's creative process. The exhibit included sketches for dishes prepared at elBulli, diagrams illustrating preparation processes, theoretical deliberations, designs for unique serving dishes, lists, questions, and a film showing all the dishes created at the restaurant since 1987. The exhibit focused on the process of creation rather than on the product. Curator Brett Littman states the intention to employ Adrià's work to achieve a greater understanding of the creative process: what does creativity means? How do you train for it (Littman 2014)? The exhibit serves as an example for the tools we employ for the study of food-art work: detailed descriptions and testimonies, artist interviews, sketches, plans, and photographs. A collection of evidence that hint at the original work when examined as a whole and when seen in the context of previous work. The abundance of other evidence highlights the absence of taste, smell and touch. These senses can be activated to a degree by reading a recipe (for some people more easily than for others), or more fully by attempting recreation/reperformance, but even then the margin of error, the inexactitude, is clear.

Adrià and his team are meticulous about documenting their creations and process, however, most publications detailing their experimentations and culinary creations, do not include recipes or similar instructions for replicating these dishes. When Adrià was invited to participate in the 2007 Documenta art fair in Germany, his team devised a documentation element that was built into the design of their offering. It went a step further, and solicited responses from the audience/diners, collecting the letters and artwork their audience sent in as well as the wait-staff's impressions of them during their visit.[4] This addition highlights the notion of the meal as a dialogue between chef and audience and that a subjective, multi-sensory experience requires a more nuanced form of documentation. Many of the responses were included in the book that followed and documented the

[4] After considering several options of how to present his "art," Adrià and his team decided that a true experience of elBulli art is dinner at elBulli. During the 100 days of Documenta, two visitors a day came and dined at elBulli. Rather than justify Adrià's work as art (that has already been established by the fact of the invitation to participate), he would show that cooking is a unique medium governed by its own strict set of rules (Hamilton and Todoli 2009).

project.[5] The most striking thing about the responses is their diversity: responding to the dinner as an art event generated a range of thoughtful letters from the most straightforward ("The meal at elBulli was an experience and art. I enjoyed it enormously and it made me vomit"[6]) to the truly poetic, along with many visual art pieces created by diners deliberately in dialogue with the event.

Unlike the artist cookbooks described below, Food for Thought is not a cookbook. It includes a range of documentation devices, but, significantly, no recipes. Those who were not present to experience the original piece can form an impression by examining the sum of the evidence, but, like a kiss through a veil, are left feeling there is a gap, a barrier to our understanding of the experience as a whole.

Artist as Chef

It is not what you see that is important but what takes place between people.

— Rirkrit Tiravanija

The changes in the food world in recent years have impacted the way artists employ food in their work. Chefs are trained in creating multi-sensory work on the plate, at engaging taste, smell and touch, senses that classically trained visual (!) artists are less experienced with. As more restaurants become sites for multisensory, aesthetic experiences, artists turn to food with new insights and questions, often turning away from the kitchen and the table, while others are inspired to create collaborations or learn from the culinary arts in exploring multi-sensory projects. Growing/manufacturing on the one hand and waste on the other, have grown in importance in both the art and the food world. Yet, the power of feeding/ingesting, the trust and intimacy it implies, and the multiple meanings food carries, its links to economics, religion, gender roles and identity, make it a powerful tool for change and so we see it employed by artists questioning a range of topics from the nature of Art to social injustice, gender politics to national affiliations. One example is artist Rirkrit Tiravanija who famously served a Thai curry in a gallery instead of displaying artwork in *Untitled (Free)* in 1992. He went on to restage the work several times in later years (1997, 2007, 2011-). According to the artist, his aim was to convert the quiet gallery space into a place for social interaction, "… it's really not so much about coming to see things, but to be in it." In an interview with Laura Trippi (Trippi 1998) he continues to say "I think there is always in Western cultural practice […] some kind of investment in material and in objectness." Tiravanija uses food as "a frame" to shift the focus from the

[5] Hamilton, R., & Todoli, V. 2009. *Food for Thought, Thought for Food* (Barcelona and New York: Actar, 2009), pp. 135-204.

[6] Manuel Washausen in Hamilton and Todoli, 2009.

object to the interaction with others. The piece is about "what takes place between people." In 2019, Tiravnija published the *Bastard Cookbook: The Odious Smell of Truth* with chef Antto Melasniemi and opened a kitchen in upstate New York. He insists on the term kitchen and not restaurant since the food is served for free and is prepared by amateurs (i.e. no one trained as a professional chef). Tiravanija continually blurs the boundaries between art and everyday life to a point where clear distinctions and definitions become impossible. His work shifts the focus from any object or material (temporary or permanent) to the social interaction it generates.

Fig. 1. Image by Janne Tuunanen for *Bastard Cookbook* (2019), courtesy of the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York and Garret Publications

The *Bastard Cookbook* is very different from its *Futurist Cookbook* ancestor. Its ideological stance stands in opposition to the Futurists' nationalistic agenda. It advocates a nomadic, citizen-of-the-world, mixing and matching attitude, combining ingredients and techniques from different geographical locations (mixing the two authors' Thai and Finnish culinary heritage as well as a sprinkling of additional influences). The Futurists strict "formulas" are replaced by an open-ended invitation to experiment: "All of the recipes in this book, as could be said of all recipes in general, are inaccurate. […] Don't let the recipes mislead you; follow your instincts." (Melasniemi and Tiravanija 2019, 61), and finally, while *The Futurist Cookbook* intentionally reminds us it is an art object, the *Bastard Cookbook*

confuses any clear definition, it advocates hybridization and bastardization in all aspects. Essays and interviews interwoven with the recipes raise questions of authenticity, caring, place-making and belonging in a structure more closely aligned with an exhibition catalogue than a traditional cookbook. Photographer Janne Tuunanen's intimate images show empty dishes following a meal or small corners of various spaces as often as they do plates of food or the cooking process. The cookbook, like Tiravanija's other food-centered projects, creates a dialogue among the group of contributors and creators as well as between them and the audience who is invited to take an active part through the making and changing of the book's recipes. Through this ongoing dialogue, the recipes become more than an archive, documenting a single event/meal, but rather a participatory, embodied engagement of the audience with the artists' practice. The book questions the very nature of recipes as prescriptive, "how to" texts that result in a copy, an embodied archive if you will. This does not only happen through the injunction to "take liberties" with the recipes, but also through the nature of the recipes themselves: hybrid, irreverent creations, bringing together disparate cultural influences, ingredients and techniques like pizza with curry sauce or "Kind of Nordic Khao Soi Soup." A section on soup ends with Bastard Bouillabaisse: "Explore the alchemy of the soup by combining the ingredients and methods of the previous recipes as you dare. One should always cook and live without fear." (2019, 71) This cookbook, therefore, does not so much bridge text and practice as it encourages a more flexible relationship between the two.

Artist Michael Rakowitz's cookbook *A House with a Date Palm Will Never Starve* reflects a somewhat inverted process to event documentation: the cookbook serves as an expansion of a constant sculptural piece, *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* (2018), a figure of the mythical Lamassu, displayed on the Fourth Plinth at Trafalgar Square in London.[7] Rakowitz crafted the piece from thousands of empty cans of Iraqi date syrup as a reconstruction and homage to the original winged-bull deity that stood at the Nergal Gate of Nineveh in Iraq from circa 700 BC until its destruction by ISIS in 2015. An initial limited edition of the cookbook included a can of date syrup by an Iraqi producer, highlighting the additional mission of the project, to provide economic support to the industry.[8] The fact that the Lamassu reconstruction is made of repurposed empty cans rather than traditional art materials not only adds layers of meanings to the piece, but also

[7] The Lamassu sculpture is part of a larger project under the overall title *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* (2006-), which includes sculptural reconstructions of numerous artifacts looted from The National Museum of Iraq, made out of a range of Middle Easter food packaging and Arab newspapers (Rakowitz 2019, 16).

[8] This element echoes Rakowitz's earlier project Return (2006): reopening his grandfather's import company Davisons & Co. as a storefront on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, selling imported Iraqi dates.

complicates the notion of an everlasting art piece and the relationship between an object and the story it tells.

Rakowitz states that the cookbook "seeks to extend the space of the Lamassu beyond the Fourth Plinth into your cupboards and bellies. It is a way to taste the sculpture" (Rakowitz 2019, 17). The recipes, contributed by a range of chefs, writers and home-cooks, and the book as a whole, are not meant to preserve or document a meal or a performance, but rather to encourage their future creation. The recipes suggest both traditional uses of date palm syrup and new interpretations and adaptations, like Reem Kassis's recipe for Muhamarra, which she attributes to her great-great-grandmother, and Yotam Ottolenghi's Pot Barley Pudding with Roasted Apples and Date Syrup, his twist on an old-fashioned British rice pudding. This combination and internal dialogue inspires the reader to invent their own unique date palm syrup interpretations.

Rakowitz creates meals and food-centered performances habitually as part of his art practice, often employing food to foster community engagement. One example is *Enemy Kitchen* (2003-): in one of its iterations titled Enemy Kitchen (food truck) (2012), Rakowitz served Iraqi food cooked by Iraqi refugee chefs with US veterans assisting as their sous-chefs. These performances were not documented in recipe form. The dialogue, multi-sensory experience and "aliveness" were built into the projects. The sculpture, on the other hand, can be integrated into everyday life (brought to life?) through the accompanying cookbook. The cookbook, in a way, inverts the relationship between the original event and its documentation, between the archive and the repertoire. It adds a layer of embodied experience and multi-sensory engagement to an object that is "made to last."

Studio Olafur Eliasson: The Kitchen (2016) originated with the idea of pulling together some recipes from the Studio's community lunch kitchen for sharing internally and with friends. It grew into an elegant 367-page, cloth-bound volume published by Phaidon Press. The book includes 100 vegetarian recipes as well as descriptions and documentations of several food-related events and projects hosted by the studio. It also includes thoughts on the intersection of food and art by Olafur Eliasson as well as other team members and guests from both the art and the food worlds. Color photographs accompany the recipes, but the book is also filled with black and white images (with color highlights), sketches and diagrams that capture, beyond any specific event or guest, the daily life and work at the studio. It is a documentation of the studio's inner life seen from a particular perspective. Because this story is told from the point of view of the kitchen it highlights the communal rather than the individual artist Olafur Eliasson, the process (building, growing, thinking, meeting) rather than any art-object or product, and the integration of art with everyday life. This book did not originate as an art-piece, but as it developed it blurred the lines between the Studio's art practice and daily life, creating opportunities for cross-pollination and inspiration.

One example of such crossover work described in the book is the Artist Marathon (Berlin 2009): the artists at the event were grouped according to color as a way to distinguish different practices, topics or media. The Studio Olafur Eliasson's Kitchen team, Asako Iwama, Lauren Maurer and Jules Gaffney prepared lunch for each of the marathon's four days according to the same principle: all white food for the first day, all pink the second, green and orange on the third and forth respectively. The food was accompanied by the team's thoughts on ideas around consuming color (2016, 144-145). Other examples include detailed descriptions of artists' projects involving the growing of vegetables and greens in and around the studio building, or pieces like Jeremias Holliger's combining drawings with pickled root vegetables cut into geometrical shapes (2011). The Kitchen project fits seamlessly into Eliasson's practice with his interest in embodied knowledge and in art as engaged and relevant in the public sphere, particularly in areas of sustainability and climate change. Lunch at the studio transformed from a utilitarian daily exercise into part of the studio's work process and public output, generating new projects. The book not only documents this work, but also expands it, allowing the public to take part in it through recipes designed for home cooking.

The Art of Sahrawi Cooking

ARTifarity's mission is similar to Eliasson's in that it supports the belief that art can be a tool for change, that it can "transform reality," as stated on their website.[9] Created by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and the Ministry for the Arts, ARTifarity was conceived as a form of peaceful resistance against Moroccan occupation of a contested region in Western Sahara, and as a way to raise awareness to the plight of Sahrawis refugees living in the region. Yearly, the organization commissions artists to come live with the Sahrawis and create art inspired by their experience. In 2009, artist Robin Kahn created a cookbook based on a month spent living and cooking with the Sahrawi's in the refugee camps. *Dining in Refugee Camps, the Art of Sahrawi Cooking* is a slim, paperback volume made up of collages of patterned backgrounds, recipes, short texts in English and Spanish, numerous amateur photographs and other elements combined to offer a story of Sahrawi's life and culture, with particular focus on women's life. The book includes a range of texts like a description of the traditional tea ceremony, the challenges of food distribution in a refugee camp in the desert, how to make couscous from scratch, and a recipe for Camel Jerky beginning with "kill a camel." (Kahn 2010, 41) The cookbook is presented as both an art object and a documentation of Sahrawi women's daily life.

[9] http://www.artifariti.org/en/about-artifariti, last viewed January 4, 2020.

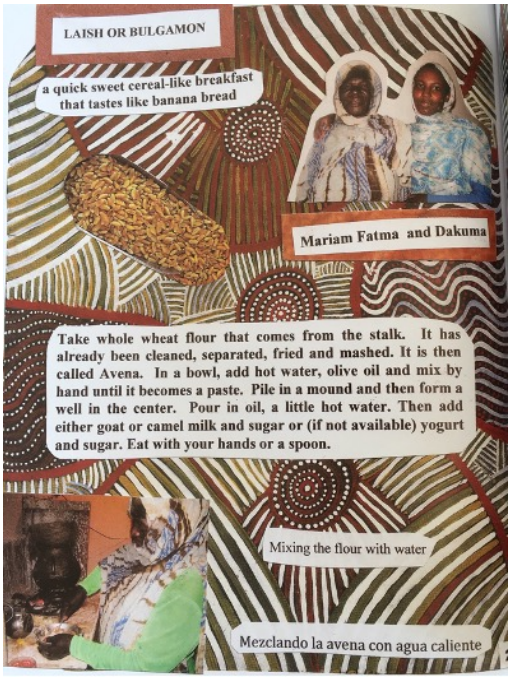
Kahn's work with the Sahrawi women is reminiscent of Parmar's reading of Alibhai-Brown's *The Settler's Cookbook*: the artist's intervention expand the recipes beyond the page, gathering the individual stories/recipes of several women into a collective body of knowledge that reflects several layers of meaning, as do Alibhai-Brown's recipes.

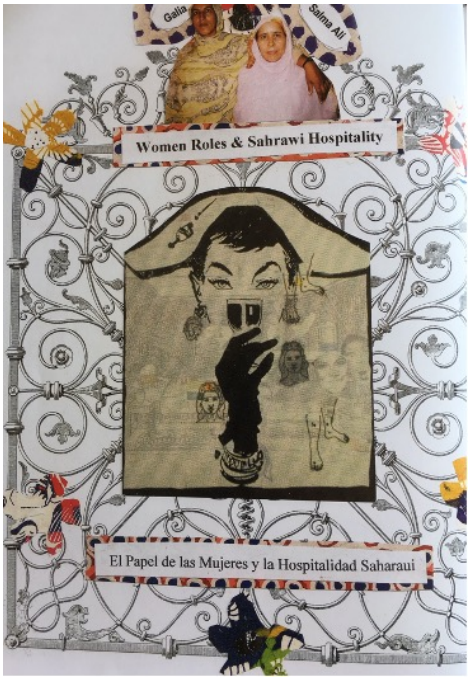
The relevance of cooking as a form of embodied knowledge was further encouraged when Khan created a version of the project for Documenta 13: *The Art of Sahrawi Cooking* (2012) in collaboration with the Cooperative of Western Saharan Women /UNMS. The installation was presented at Documenta in the form of a traditional Sahrawi tent complete with rugs and cushions, decorated with large printouts of some of the collages from the cookbook. Several women in traditional dress welcomed visitors and served them couscous and mint tea.[10] The cookbook as a documentation of everyday life was "revived" in turn through the later installation. It emphasized the practice of cooking and the act of hospitality as providing knowledge about the Sahrawi culture and identity. Significantly in this iteration Kahn overtly collaborated with the Sahrawi: they are mentioned by name in the cookbook and are formally cited as collaborators in the Documenta project. The combination of cooking and art allow Kahn not only to facilitate agency and a voice for her collaborators, but also to elevate their work to the realm of high culture.

Of particular note for this essay is that Kahn's Documenta piece, in turn, was documented in cookbook form. *Skin of the Goat (a Type of Cookbook)* (2014), is a collectively authored volume (there are ten listed authors, among them Robin Kahn), a collection of essays and recipes from a range of participants in The Art of Sahrawi Cooking project at Documenta. In his introduction, David Loder states that the volume has a duel purpose: "a manner of documentation for our activities and interactions" and "a case study for artistic research […]," a model for "hospitality based artistic strategies" where the act of cooking and recipe exchange served to facilitate an open dialogue, a true collaboration, and to blur the distinction between guest and host (2014, 2-3). The recipes included in the book are based on readily available ingredients and simple techniques that were possible within the limited infrastructure of the tent. Contributed by a range of participants and visitors they include empanadas, Greek fouskolatha (beans), Bavarian potato salad, Romanian Cow Stomach Soup and more. Much as the 2012 project was an attempt at expanding Kahn's cookbook project, offering a space for "active spectatorship" and exchange and employing cooking and recipes for that end, *The Skin of the Goat* was crafted as a platform for generating an ongoing conversation and engagement beyond the boundaries of the tent and of Documenta. Loder concludes with the suggestion that a recipe is open to interpretation, manipulation

[10] https://www.robinkahn.com/pages/collab_artpage_1.php, last viewed January 4, 2020.

and variation, but a recipe collection is typically structured by a type of cuisine and a taste of a culture or a place, therefore a cookbook (like a tent) is a "mobile and nomadic vessel," grounded in reciprocity and sharing (you take a recipe from the book and then pass it on through making a meal) (2014, 113). This project intentionally blurs the boundaries between a single event and its documentation, an art object and everyday life, between artist and audience. It continues to evolve, creating feedback loops, with seemingly no end in sight. This "type of cookbook" (one could argue all cookbooks?) exists within the gap between archive and repertoire, text and embodied praxis.





Figs. 2 & 3: Robin Kahn. *Dining in Refugee Camps: The Art of Sahrawi Cooking* (2010).

However, one could also argue that the very existence of *The Skin of the Goat* speaks to some distrust on the part of the artists/researchers in the staying power of the exchange at Documenta. The original cookbook by Kahn and her Sahrawi collaborators was already a dialogue between art and everyday life, host and guest, embodied knowledge and archive. This later addition shifts the conversation from the Sahrawi to a global, non-specific "nomadic" space. Even though it seems to offer numerous evidence for what took place in the 2012 installation, the many voices and fragments are not guided by a unifying, concrete viewpoint; they are not grounded by a single artistic vision or by a specific place and people. Unlike Kahn's earlier cookbook and the other cookbooks described above, *The Skin*

of the Goat is more reminiscent of Taylor's assertion of the Western prioritizing of the archive over the repertoire, transforming an embodied practice and experience into text, into an archivable artifact.

An aside on home cooking and power

The very rise in the importance of food as a medium and of taste and smell as aesthetic categories, speaks to a growing influence of non-Western cultures and traditions and to the questioning of habitual hierarchies and institutions. With the rise of the status of chefs and that of farmers and makers closely following, will the status of the domestic cooks and kitchens rise as well? Kahn's home-cook collaborators acquire power through the aid of a Western artist and by repackaging and reframing their domestic work in an Art context. The League of Kitchens, on the other hand, created a different shift in power: it is a network of immigrant culinary instructors, home cooks who immigrated to New York from various countries and hold cooking workshops in their homes. The League of Kitchens began as a public art project by Lisa Gross (Founder and CEO) with the idea of inverting the traditional power structure between immigrant women and the local American population. The instructors (deliberately *not* "hosts") are in control, they have knowledge and authority, and are familiar with their homes and neighborhoods. Their audience is typically unfamiliar with the neighborhoods the workshops take them to as they are with many of the ingredients and dishes they encounter, the tastes and smells. The project was transformed successfully into a for-profit business with an expanded network of instructors from numerous countries of origin. These women have years of culinary experience, create traditional dishes with their own individual mark, regularly stage immersive experiences for their guests and tell complex stories of culture, immigration and integration. The League of Kitchens offers a modern setting for culinary embodied knowledge. The instructors will share printed recipes of the dishes prepared during the workshop, but those serve only as aids, reminders of the hands-on learning, tasting and smelling that took place during the workshop itself. The workshops act as part of a deliberate repertoire, expanding on the numerous printed cookbooks and other archival materials that already represent these cuisines.[11]

[11] It is interesting to note that with the recent coronavirus pandemic, several LofK workshops were transferred to an online format. They lack, of course, the same total experience, missing smell, taste and touch as well as the experience of traveling to a new neighborhood and home environment. In the future, it could offer unique insights into the relationship between total, immersive experiences, virtual ones, and recorded versions.

Fig. 4: Afsari, Bangladeshi instructor at The League of Kitchens, courtesy of The League of Kitchens

Conclusion

> I […] have been convinced for some time that perfection is not produced except marginally and by chance; therefore it deserves no interest at all, the true nature of things being revealed only in disintegration.
> — Italo Calvino

The concept of Instagram "stories:" ephemeral, disappearing documentations, meant for sharing rather than for preserving, highlights the important role of the narrative (story) in sharing an experience with those who were not present. If the focus is not the object but rather the social interaction, the very notion of documentation is suspect.

The artist cookbooks described above not only expand the notion of documentation, but also the concept of a recipe. Their aim is not necessarily to help the audience recreate a dish in a specific way, but rather to encourage a dialogue. Many artists employ food in their practice as a way of actively engaging the audience, transforming them from passive viewers to active participants. These cookbooks extend this approach beyond the moment of the original experience.
Significantly, all the projects described here are also collaborative in one way or another and so adding the audience as another "collaborator" is perhaps more intuitive. This aspect recalls Maya Parmar's insight on recipes' power to speak to a communal identity while still reflecting individual stories and memories. These cookbooks are similar in their specificity: they embody a dialogue between numerous individual voices rather than a single creation "by committee," they

celebrate subjective viewpoints and offer a space for the audience to expand the dialogue by adding their voice and personal interpretation.

The recipes in these cookbooks are not the final step in the "documentation" process. They are there to be made. The act of cooking is an essential part of the dialogue. Few people can read a musical score and hear the music, likewise recipe readers. The multi-sensory experience can only be achieved through active engagement. Cooking the recipes provides both an embodied knowledge of a past experience and an ongoing contribution to it.

The intimate, illusive nature of culinary experiences highlights the myth of an "objective" interpretation, and calls instead for a transparent, concrete and personal voice and a dialogue between audience and artist, original project and its narration. The artist cookbooks described above offer a new approach to documentation: rather than bridging the gap between the archive and the repertoire they celebrate the gap itself. The space between the archived remains and embodied knowledge offers room for ongoing exploration and growth. It is always in process, never fixed. Like a musical score or a play, a recipe is open to interpretations, but unlike them it is also integrated into everyday life, reflecting the possibilities for a broad set of responses and a more inclusive dialogue.

Acknowledgement

My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for their thoughtful comments.

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