

Food, Architecture and Experience Design

Anna Marie Fisker and Tenna Doktor Olsen

Nordic Journal of Architectural Research
Volume 20, No 1, 2008, 12 pages
Nordic Association for Architectural Research
Anna Marie Fisker and Tenna Doktor Olsen
Department of Architecture and Design, Aalborg University, Denmark

TOPIC: DESIGNING THE EXPERIENCE CITY

Abstract:

The paper explores how performative elements of an architectural-food based approach can be used to generate new experience-related spaces in the future city, putting a focus on the creation of social bonds and citizen relations by means of temporary public meal events and small-scale food activities.

With the overall subject of designing the future experience cities, our initiate goal have therefore been to try to point out some of the parameters used in the interplay between food and architecture to create new food-related experiences and to examine the subject of the meal and food as an "experience-related-system" possibly initiating social relations. The purpose of this approach has been potentially to contribute to illuminate a wide range of needs and undiscovered possibilities within the interrelated field of design, architecture and food; ranging from interior functions, building design, and cityscapes to industrial design and performative activities of the city.

Reconsidering the public spaces of the city from the perspective of an architectural-food based approach implicit demands for an understanding of the inherited relations between the fields of respectively architectural design and culinary arts. As such the first part of the paper outlines considerations on contemporary food experiences based on two restaurant experiences and a

historical study investigating the utilization of architecture and design relative to creating spectacular meal experiences, having a higher purpose of developing social relations and supporting cultural development.

Relative hereto, second part of the paper proposes to utilize the performative and sensuous elements of cooking in an architectural-food based approach as means to generate temporary food domains in the city, inviting for sensuous and explorative meal experiences further serving a cultural and social encouragement among citizens. Taking our point of departure in two specific cases developed at the Institute of Architecture and Design at Aalborg University, we will argue that small-scale urban experiments are needed. With the two cases we further seek to illustrate how chefs in collaboration with architectural designers methodically engage in the work of experience design within a new "sphere" of total-design, and how a combination of performative experiences, food, plate, and room possibly can initiate social relations in public spaces.

Keywords:

performative architecture, food design, experience city, food history

Introduction

Today we witness a time where food and meals move toward performative experiences and where food and meals to a greater extent are social events drifting from the space of the dinner table into the domains of the city.

- A perfectly shaped sphere, yet frizzing from the meeting of cold with warm. Hovering above ingenious geometrical shapes and accompanied by coloured foam, it lures a unification of aesthetic and gustatory taste, and contributes to a unique and spectacular meal experience.

This futuristic strawberry sorbet designed by the MOTO restaurant in New York is just one among several new developments within the contemporary culinary trend; *Molecular Gastronomy*. The USA is, however, not the only country experimenting, and during the last few years a still growing amount of the world's hippest restaurants have gained an interest in the molecular culinary field, and as we will argue, the fields of food- and experience related design.

Today we further witness a time where the ordinary meal reaches out towards new spectacular experiences. Where the meal and food to a greater extent are experiences orchestrated by precise sequences of surprises expressed through texture, composition, form, and interaction with the diners. Where the meal experience drifts from the space of the dinner table into the dining room, the city, and finally merges with the urban landscape by means of grand performative food events. -Where, furthermore, the meal involves new socializing interactive products like the key features iBar™ and iWall™ of the new exclusive club "24" in Soho, London designed by Mindstorm International. The iWall™ is an interactive feature covering the entire wall of the club, and in relation hereto the interactive counter iBar™ is used at the centre of the club as means for clients to relax and meet new people across drinks and chatting. The iBar™ acts as a central, socializing point and invites for new gatherings or social relations by sensuous and bodily involvement in the act of drinking or eating. The ability to change effects at the touch of a button means that visitors at the iBar™ and iWall™ can produce different themes providing varied experiences at any time on any given night. This technology has given the '24' the accolade of "having the most technologically advanced venue in the capital of London".

Mindstorm International. <http://www.mindstorm.eu.com/home> (29.2.2008)

One major effect of introducing this technology in '24' is the number of event bookings the club presently receives. As a venue for hire it boasts the ability to provide customized software effects, which clients can tailor to match their brand or theme, creating a dream venue for any event planner.

On the background of the perspectives of the club "24" it could be argued that interactive tools and performative technology as means to orchestrate spectacular food experiences and form social relations constitute important aspects in the development of social relations in the future experience cities. But what about architectural design and the design of the actual meal experience?

The topic; *Food as experience and event*, as incitement for a development of the future cityscapes has been chosen on the background of an interest in the historical and future potential developments of the meal in relation to the significance of the architectural settings and their staging value of the servings and presentation of food as an event, and the social values inherited herein as means to create spaces in the city where citizens, artists, and chefs can challenge each other.

Food as experience and event

The spaces and domains of food are all around us and food-related activities occur in several places and shapes both indoors and out; perhaps in the design of the restaurant, the cafés, markets, barns, fields or steps and low walls along the street pavements of the city, which we encounter while we are enjoying our lunch in the sun. - Eating and drinking are natural preconditions for human survival and constitute a regular ingredient in our daily lives; both in the private sphere of the home and in the public domains of the city.

Throughout history, food has played an important role in the everyday activities of man, and much of his time has been occupied with the task of gathering, hunting, growing or producing food. Seen in a historical perspective, human culture has developed from a hunter-gatherer and peasant society into an industrial society providing expanded possibilities of standardization and mass production of food and goods, and unfortunately also rising scams and frauds on food products. Recently we entered a new Millennium where starvation and

lack of food in the Third World Countries stands in stark contrast to the wealth and prosperity of western European metropolises characterised by the consumers expecting far more than the mere food ingredients. (Jacobsen, 2005; Carlsen, 2006; Korsmeyer, 1999; Fisker, 2003)

According to the president of the Danish Culinary Academy; Jan Krag Jacobsen, an entirely new agenda prevails as our modern everyday lives are no longer dominated by starvation and lack of food. An agenda where food is not just a matter of nutrition, but where food and meals play crucial roles in our consumer choices making the food an important part of contemporary cultural offers. Cultural offers, which we, due to biological reasons, are forced to consider several times a day. (Jacobsen, 2005)

Purchasing a prepared meal or snack outside the private home has been possible in most European cities since the Roman Antique period and the Middle Ages where cookshops soled hot dishes to be eaten "on-the-go". In time these cookshops or street vendors evolved into taverns, alehouses, inns, and actual restaurant settings as we know them today. (Strong 2002) In the book; *Food + Architecture*, architect and professor Karen A. Franck argues that being able to visit a public place of refreshment regularly, to linger and socialise, gives people an alternative to home and work - "a third place" which generate a sense of community and offer an opportunity for political discourse. Franck further argues that since its invention in 18th-century Paris, the restaurant has been envisioned as a place of display and sensuous luxury, and the coupling of restaurant to consumption by spectacular experiences and product display have been utilized to encourage diners to visit shops and restaurants. (Franck, 2005) If we consider these tendencies from the perspective of contemporary urban planning and architectural development, those fields likewise show a tendency towards growth and the utilization of niche food stores, cafes, and exclusive restaurants as means to advance or regenerate cultural offers. And Franck argues that today, cultural institutions such as art museums, movie theatres, and concert halls are often supplied with individual cafes and restaurant settings, creating an eventful pause or completing the cultural experience with an exclusive meal. An experience engaging all sense modalities gathered in one place. (Franck, 2005)

This is according to Franck a tendency suggesting that food to a greater extent is utilized as a means to promote cultural offers, and it is presumably a result of growing interests within experience economy as a means to regenerate sectors of urban economy. (Franck, 2005) As such, it is no longer just leisure parks, art museums and the like which forms the cultural experience offers of today, but also restaurants and the public dining facilities of the city, acting as important operators in the overall experience-related sector. This tendency, in our opinion, presumably is a result of the current growth in demand and competition within food offers, as well as a rising quest for good food experiences and the extraordinary or exclusive service.

With the Industrialization, modern technologies, and rising globalization the supply of foods and goods in the western world is larger than ever before. Generally speaking, most people have unlimited access to foods from different cultures, of varying qualities and variable prices via grand grocery stores or the Internet. With the advances in technology and knowledge, it has become possible to preserve, can, freeze, stew, refine, and process foods in innumerable ways and manners. The choices of foods are as relevant as ever before, and manufacturers, distributors, salesmen, and restaurant owners must to a greater extent compete to draw customers' attention specifically towards their product or store/ business. (Strong, 2002)

Enrolling the meal and food products in cultural, performative experiences as such become means of creating an extra emotional layer or narrative to the nutritional value of the food, thus opening up towards a more personal and individual engagement in the identity of each consumer.

Food as performative experience

In relation to the expanding utilization of food offers as cultural offers within the restaurant business, a greater focus is put on the sensuous experience and the staging of the meal as "aesthetic taste" and an exclusive total-experience, rather than gustatory taste. Most western restaurants are highly concerned with adding a specific atmosphere or narrative to their food, expressed through architectural means as interior décor, tableware, or preparation and servings of the food. (Kirshenblatt-

Gimblett, 2007)

Within most top-restaurants and acclaimed chefs of the culinary field there is today as such a rising focus on food as experience and event. In small scales, experiments are performed in which food is served as tiny, provocative and almost explosive experiences, where the sensuous effect of the food is obtained through manipulation with sense modalities both visually, auditory, gustatory, and tactile. This experience-related approach to food and the staging of meals is particularly evident within the more experimenting part of the restaurant business where, for instance, Danish Madeleines Madteater dissolves the ordinary restaurant meal into a theatre play orchestrated by live performance, artificial light, mediated pictures, sound, and architectural settings. Here the diners, in line with ordinary theatres, purchase tickets for the show/meal via the Internet store BilletNET, thus entrusting the entire procedure of the evening and dinner course to the restaurant. As restaurant guest you are unaware of the remaining dinner company, the food servings, and the conditions of the visit, but in a really theatrical manner this allows the restaurant to seduce you through a carefully planned scenography of sensuous meal experiences. The meal at Madeleines is spiced with experiences not just luring nose and mouth, but also addressing the body, eyes, ears, and even emotional centres of the brain via the involvement of the diner as a performing part of the entire set-up, and by manipulating motion pictures, sounds, tableware servings, textures, and interior. (Theil, 2007; Wern, 2007; Christensen, 2007)

But is the comprehension of food as more than mere nutrition and the elaborate focus on food as experience and eventful staging, exclusively a characteristic of our contemporary times? And is it a tendency exclusively applicable to restaurants?

The history of food experiences

During our research, we have deliberately studied whether this performative approach towards the comprehension of the meal as event and experience outlined with the cases of Madeleines Madteater and club "24" are new phenomena characterising the contemporary relation to food, or whether this phenomenon of food as experience and event can be traced back in time?

Especially the chef and confectioner Antonin Carême is worthy of consideration in this context. Back in the 19th century, he enrolled the culinary traditions into a new "taste-millennium" with the addition of style, method and knowledge of architecture, paintings, literature, sculpture, and natural sciences, respectively, to the preparation, servings, and presentation of food. (Korsmeyer 1999) As a chef and confectioner, Carême was not just interested in the food preparation but also made a great virtue of decorating the spatial settings and tables of the dining facility in keeping with the style of the served food, thus forming the meal into a narrative of a unified whole. Carême became particularly known for his spectacular piece montées, grand display pieces made from spun sugar, almond paste, and other malleable purées or meat patés. Those grand displays almost resembled architectural shapes and scales of classical temples, ruins or Chinese pavilions, which, even though they were originally a part of the dessert, constituted a central place on the dinner table throughout the entire feast, thus forming a unique space around the diner. (Strong 2002, Glanville, 2002)

The historical study further proved that food during the period of Roman Antique as well as in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the period of Enlightenment, and the Industrialization has been utilized as experience and event, especially with the staging of grandiose royal feasts and banquets among the higher societies. In relation hereto, the study clearly proved coherence between the development of architectural means for an overall staging via music, performance, tableware, cutlery, and furniture, and the contemporary development within technology. Furthermore, the study clarified how the higher intention behind these feasts was not the experience-value alone, but presumably a means for the higher aristocracy to communicate social power, status, and prosperity within society through lavish events and sensuous meal experiences.

Even though the 19th century was hardly as experience focused as the Antique period, the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance, the decoration of the dinner table and the ornamentation of the food still had some kind of experience-related value, and the figurative presentation of the food in line with the tendency of the Renaissance and previous times was re-imposed. The food in its original, recognizable states as ingredients was gone, and instead those

magnificent grand food sculptures or architectural pieces were introduced, to a great extent being dominated by colourful dyeing, neat patterns and paper ornamentations. (Strong, 2002)

Simultaneously with Carême, a gradual change within the culinary field occurred due to alterations in food servings and table settings. What had so far been known as service à la française slowly evolved into service à la russe, which is a method of serving the food directly to each diner from the kitchen off some grand dishes instead of arranging the food altogether at a set dinner table. (Strong 2002, Glanville & Young 2002)

The design of spectacular table settings was by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century aside, therefore primarily taken over by grand flower decorations and sculptural candle holders. (Strong 2002) The focus of the culinary experience is as such to a much greater extent focused around the specific arrangement of the food on the individual plate and the appearance of the plate, as well as the cutlery and the manner of eating, rather than the dinner table as a unified grand display of centre pieces and food sculptures. And this tendency, where everything to a great extent revolves around the diner as an eating individual rather than a part of a larger society, is perhaps underlined with the contemporary tendencies within Molecular Gastronomy, where, for instance, restaurants like Madeleines in some situations remove the plate instead serving the food directly into the mouth of the diner with a spoon or a cannula.

Seen in relation hereto, the historical study did not reveal anything new in the utilization of food as event and experience. It rather pointed towards new tendencies in the approach to food experiences as qualitatively rather than quantitatively grounded. Hence, we could conclude that the discussion concerning food as experience and event is still evident and highly relevant as the intention behind the utilization of food as experience today is far more personally directed in its affirmation of social affiliations and qualitative luxury than the quantitative approach historically being utilized to communicate the plethora of the feudal society. As such, it is not the intention of communicating the power and prosperity of the aristocracy to the common public which today drives the grand focus on experiences, but perhaps rather a desire for standing out and marking one's own place in the enormous offer of con-

temporary foods and goods, and thereby drawing consumers' attention by good meal experiences and meals as events.

However, with the case of for instance Madeleines Madteater the intention behind the meal experiences, in our opinion, reaches beyond the mere aspects of promoting the restaurant and marking their place in the gross offer on food experiences; it further serves a social and cultural purpose initiating social relations among diners by means of spectacular and astonishing meal experiences addressing you both bodily and mentally.

When Madeleines deliberately chooses to move people around different architectural settings during their "meal-performance", forcing strangers to sit closely on the floor in dark spaces eating of toothbrushes, toasting and dancing on tables during mealtime they encourage social interaction by means of the architectural configuration and the settings of the meal. The spectacular architecture and food together with the performative aspect of the entire restaurant environment as such invites for social relations and bonding across strangers despite the otherwise more personally directed tendencies in the food servings.

Food as urban regeneration

When you ask the question whether foods and meals can as such be perceived as potential tools or methods for future experience-related urban regeneration, and whether this approach then calls for new standards and new design-related solutions from the architect, our opinion is; yes. - Considerations on the architectural staging of meal experiences and the utilization of food as a social generator can in our opinion be used to create new experience-related domains in the future city, just as it is seen in the restaurant environment with Madeleines Madteater or partly at the club "24". And with the following outline of the two cases NoRA and ICE-AID our goal is to illustrate how the interdisciplinary co-operation between chefs and architectural designers can contribute to performative city experiences initiating social relations among citizens.

Adopting the considerations on the interrelationship between food and cultural offers put forth by Franck and the history outline, we with the exemplification of the two cases NoRA and ICE-AID proposes to utilize the social relations occurring in the settings of meal experiences,



Exterior NoRA.

The pavilion NoRA encompasses functions and activities of developing and preparing experience-related food, communication, and knowledge-production through an ambient exhibition environment as well as workshop facilities forming the outer frames around a "culinary experience-production unit".

Photo: Michael A. S. Damkjær, Food College Denmark

to create new temporary urban spaces or experience domains in the city, making the meal the central focus around product promotion and cultural offers on experience, learning, and social relating.

NoRA

As a specific case, it is our claim that the pavilion NoRA; an interdisciplinary project brought to life in a close collaboration between the network consortium Food College Denmark, a group of students from the University of Aalborg - Department of Architecture and

Design, Culinary Institute of Denmark, and the National Culinary Team of Denmark, covers several of the performative and socializing parameters outlined above. NoRA encompasses functions and activities of developing and preparing experience-related food, communication, and knowledge-production through an ambient exhibition environment as well as workshop facilities forming the outer frames around a "culinary experience-production unit". The project as such on one hand wishes to initiate a debate and dialog, not just with the surrounding urban environment and its citizens but also with food manufacturers, corporate businesses, and educations. On the other hand, the project further seeks to involve the city in the understanding of an urban scene interchanging knowledge between local and global cultures, through the experience and communication of food and architectural form.

As part of the initial branding value of the pavilion NoRA, the project was exhibited at the 10th International Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2006. The theme of the 10th International Architecture Biennale was; Cities, Architecture and Society. The pavilion NoRA was one of the rare projects actually being shown in full scale, thus representing a real building relative to various scale models of grand city projects, but also representing a tangible architecture focusing on human interaction by means of bodily relations and experiences instead of pure eyesight/ visual communication and mediated presentations, as was the case with the majority of the exhibited biennale projects. As such, the functional and experience related intention of fusing food and design in an architectural setting such as NoRA became a unique small-scale comment on the subjects of social relations, in the otherwise gross offer of urban city structures exhibited at the Biennale.

The architecture of the pavilion NoRA facilitates social relations by means of digital mediated layer and physical furniture as lounge and kitchen inviting you to explore both the new event platforms of culinary arts as well as new ways of interacting with the city and architectural form.

How come? Well, NoRA originates from a site analysis identifying the movement of light and shadow as well as experienced flow of the Biennale visitors or performing chefs inside the pavilion. These dynamic parameters were qualitatively translated into digital parametric values and forces on screen, and based on

fluid dynamics software a diagrammatic volume was generated. The whole process was observed and stopped according to an intended size of 35 square metres, resulting in a pavilion and a volume of immediate interest reflecting the specific Biennale site, and tempting for further exploration. The digital generation of NoRA and simulation of environmental forces using fluid dynamic software is not immaculate. Errors occur with the particle systems, which is evident in wanton drops spreading around the main pavilion volume. These drops or pavilion satellites have become one of the key elements defining the expression of NoRA controlling light and sound. Hereby, NoRA expands architectural agencies in a site sensitive architecture addressing issues such as equitable access and electronic transparency almost resembling the concept of the iBar™. By incorporating cameras, loudspeakers, and sensors in each of the satellites directly connected to a digital system within the main space of the pavilion, an ambient space of sound and light, responsive to human interaction and movement of visitors around NoRA, occurs. Hence, NoRA creates both an intimate space within the pavilion, but further unfolds food activities, social events, and a sensuous environment into the city and surrounding landscape.

Upon meeting the pavilion, it invites you to socially as well as physically interact with the city in new ways. As the satellites spread around the area of the pavilion registers your movements, a responsive layer of light and sound occur, luring attention respectively on the interior of the pavilion and its activities as well as linking your specific movements to the density and diversity of other spectators in the surrounding area. Focusing on movements, touch, and taste; the interior, exterior, and urban landscape unfolded with the satellites physically as mentally links spectators, performing chefs, and objects together forming a space of sensuous experience. The purpose of the pavilion is, with a specific focus on food and meals processed in the northern region of Denmark, to travel around Europe and, through the mediated and tangible space, communicate greater attention to the presentation and enjoyment of healthy food-design experiences. Architects create intentions of space. NoRA is as such an experiment exploring what happens when digital spaces are realized and become physical places linking personal relations to



architectural space and food. By stimulating locally-rooted and food related versions of the experience based city NoRA represents a concrete opportunity for food manufactures to brand themselves and their products in new experience-related manners travelling around different cities, creating temporary domains of cultural and food-related activities as means to both promote their products as well as create new valuable social relations to both customers and consumers. At the time of writing, the pavilion has besides the Biennale in Venice, furthermore visited the two Danish cities of Skagen and Aalborg,

Skagen Harbour Jubilee
 11.7.2007. Thorsten Schmidt, one of Denmark's finest and most innovative chefs, challenged his royal highness the Danish Crown Prince Frederik and the Minister of Food Hans Christian Schmidt with examples of modern cuisine and trend-setting molecular gastronomy such as mock jellyfish, herbal chocolate and flash-frozen yoghurt blinis with caviar and dill in the new foodstuff pavilion, NoRA.
 Photo: Michael A. S. Damkjær, Food College Denmark

during the celebration of the 100 years Skagen Harbour Jubilee and the Aalborg Culture Night, respectively. During these events, the pavilion hosted a wide range of exhibitions and food servings promoting different food manufacturers from the Northern Region of Denmark as well as exhibiting design projects made by students from the Department of Architecture and Design, Aalborg University. In the future, the pavilion will likewise host different events and workshops initiating the field of foods and design, for instance visiting the University of Naples, Italy and the Scandinavian Embassy in Berlin, Germany, in 2009.

CHARITY: ICE-AID

Another specific example of the combination of food with architectural design as an eventful and social facilitator or generator in the public domains of the city is a project developed at Aalborg University in close collaboration with local food manufacturers, external designers, and Food College Denmark, which among other things resulted in the unique and inspiring project ICE-AID. ICE-AID examines some of the potential occurring in the intersection of

ICE-AID

The project ICE-AID is a provoking and direct comment on global warming, utilising the innovative combination of food and design to draw attention to and create a debate on specific subjects.

Photo: Lasse Wind Pedersen, Food College Denmark



foods and design from the question of whether food is design? Can ice-cream be design?

Foods are a relatively new area within the design-related field, but considering its unlimited potential and challenging assignments, the field craves attention. ICE-AID is a provoking and direct comment on global warming, utilizing the innovative combination of food and design to draw attention to and create a debate on specific subjects. ICE-AID is an educational project developed by a group of students in collaboration with the company Ryå Is in Northern Jutland, and is developed as an event ice-cream prepared for sales and marketing at festivals, events, and special arrangements around public city domains. The ICE-AID concept consists of high quality ice-cream delivered by Ryå Is served directly in a bowl-like wrapping of clear tap-water ice. The higher motivation behind this idea is the promotional value and intention of direct pain related to the melting ice covering your hand as you eat the ice. With the experience and digestion of the melting ice, the designer's intention behind the idea of the ICE-AID is to give the consumer a direct experience associating the consequence of our contemporary energy consuming lifestyle with an added twist of humour and positive taste experiences.

Besides promoting the specific product or company, the design contains a specific agenda giving attention to a political and environmental issue, making consumers aware of contemporary circumstances simultaneously adding a layer of astonishment and surprise possibly inviting for discussion and debate among spectators/ consumers, thus again initiating social relations as argued for by Franck and the historic outline. Hence, both the projects NoRA and ICE_AID touch upon more than urbane, architectural, and design-related aspects of experiences and events, but further seek to process and innovate the question of regenerative factors in the city; the social relations and bodily interaction which historically have been formed around the dining table and the shared meal experience, via the performative combination of food with architectural design.

The meal as identity and social generator

Besides the initiate consideration on the aspects of the "experience-value" the argumentation behind food and architecture as frames around the formation of social relations

must be found partly in the field of sociology and history. As long as man has endured and because he is omnivorous – that is capable of eating a wide range of different foods – the choice of food has been a fundamental aspect in our daily intake of different meals.

As human individual, mankind is capable of surviving on several different categories of foods, ranging from vegetable to animal products. Thereby it is no longer just the goal of nutritional value or satiety which determines which foods we as individuals choose to eat, but to a great extent choices made from our subjective values and preferences based on cultural, physiological, and psychological aspects. (Hetherington, 2001; Meiselman, 2000) On the background of exactly this omnivorous ability and a complex system of taste preferences, the meal moves beyond the frame of digestion and physiology, and instead enrolls itself into a cultural and social context where the food we choose to eat or serve to our guests communicates who we are and which social affiliations we represent. (Holm, 2005) Within the field of sociology, food has in relation hereto throughout several years formed the basis of an understanding of how different social relations can be expressed with meals and their inherited food rituals, as well as how this is reflected in different cultures through specific norms of society. The sociologist Kathrine O'Doherty Jensen describes in her article; "Food and eating habits", how manners of eating express one's identity, and how, with the choice of food, one communicates peculiarity and affiliation to a certain group, family, generation, sex, school, religion, or nation. (Jensen, 2003) Perceived in this perspective, food is a certain way of differing from the crowd or marking one's social status in relation to the surrounding society expressed through variations of choices of food quality, preparation, prize, arranging, serving, and taste.

Which foods express especially high social status or prosperity has, however, altered through time as norms of societies and supplies and demands of foods across the world has changed. If we again look back in time, the arrangement of grandiose feasts and banquets had great importance in the marking of political power, wealth, and status within the European aristocracy (royals, nobility, and court) during the Antique period, the Middle Ages and forth to the 20th century. The more luxurious, lavish,

and sumptuous the food and meals were, the wealthier and more powerful you were. The experience and the staging of the food have, in our opinion, therefore been of great importance and been the means by which you reached your goal of communicating social status atop the hierarchy, as well as politically proving your power and wisdom. As part of the staging, it has, however, not just been the food and the taste of the food which have contributed to the sumptuous experience, but especially also the interior decorations and spatial configurations characterising the settings around the feast. And particularly this aspect, the way the food in correlation with the architecture forms the frames around our social world as seen with both the cases of NoRA and ICE_AID, must in our opinion be considered extremely important in the future design of new experience cities.

Based on the historical outline, almost every historical era has defined its own archetype within grand feasts, all in some manner reflecting the contemporary time and society they are a product of. In the Roman Antique period and the Middle Ages, it was seen how food deliberately, by use of decorations and spectacular forms, triggered surprise and astonishment among the diners, though often failing to be what it appeared to. As such, the arrangement and creativity within the servings and preparation of food, as well as the unlimited access to culinary finesse, testified to the cleverness and ingenuity of the host. During the Renaissance, the period of Enlightenment and Industrialization the focus on the aspect of surprise changed, moving more towards a focus on visual seduction and the aesthetic taste expressed through figurative settings, theatrical staging of meals, and grand displays of tableware, china, and silverware combined with exquisite furniture design and interior décor. Distinctive for the different historical feasts and banquets, though, is the aspect of all the diners benefiting from the lavish, sensuous experience and the theatrical event expressed through imaginative arrangements of the food and the additional entertainment of music, singing, recitation, dancing, performing or showing grand displays of material goods. – But perhaps most importantly the multi-sensuous experience, engaging both body, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

In relation hereto, the frames around the meal, the room or the dining hall, its interior and the dining table with its settings, has apparently played an important role in the communication

and staging of the food. The feast becomes an event and an experience for all sense modalities. And those aspects, the multi-sensuous experience communicated in the fusion of food and architecture is what both the projects of NoRA and ICE-AID utilizes to create surprise, astonishment and attention on specific subjects as social relations of the city and environmental, political issues – utilizing the sensuous experience of the dinner table in the urban experience environment.

The meal as a social event

The historical purpose of the dinner has never just been about eating together, but with agendas of debating politics and financial subjects it has often been to form a social event for networking and formation of new relations through conversation and fabulous eating instead. With a profound understanding of the potential of feasts and the rituals of the meal, it was possible to define one's place and role in society. Simultaneously, the meal was a means of excluding or segmenting among social classes, and the rejection of- or lacking invitation to a specific dinner party or feast - could have devastating social consequences for the given individual. (Strong 2002) With the formulation of table manners and formal rituals of dinner, it was to some degree easier for lower ranking people of some prosperity to achieve status and recognition among higher social classes than previously. It is, however, simultaneously an expression of the grand focus of contemporary times on socialization and marking one's status through the meal and its rituals which is seen in the Antique period, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and even today, where several restaurants demand certain dress-codes or unwritten standards of their diners.

The food as experience and event has throughout history been far more than a question of good experiences, sense perception, and lavish dishes, but to a great extent also the answer to sophisticatedly communicating one's social status, reproducing one's affiliations among the higher social classes, and continuously developing the feudal regime. With for instance the initiate pieces of display and the grand imitations of castles, escutcheons, and acts of war in exaggerated dimensions and modelled in foods during the Middle Ages, the food becomes more than an artistic means of expression, but likewise a direct symbol of affiliation, political persuasions, and social status as further argued for above by O'Doherty Jensen.

Food as experience and event – past and present

If we look at Madeleines Madteater, then the difference from the historical feasts is strikingly small. It is still the experience-related and highly sensuous perception expressed through the staging of the meal via architectural settings, form, interior décor, furniture, tableware, artificial lighting, and entertainments of sound, dance and acting, which is going on today. Today, it is perhaps not so much the question of higher social class and feudal regime which drives the higher intentions behind the acts of Madeleines, transforming the restaurant meal into a theatre play of sensuous impressions. Whereas the historical cases were strongly characterised by the political and power-related intentions of the higher social classes to mark their status and prosperity as private persons, then probably totally different intentions drive a public restaurant like Madeleines. The arrangement of the plate and the presentation of the food as it were initiated with service à la russe, is presently through Madeleines Madteater reformatted and enrolled in a new Millennium. Here, the food is, as previously mentioned, as often eaten with cannulas or pipettes, as knives and forks, as well as the ordinary plates usually providing a safe and comfortable frame around the food while not necessarily playing a role in the dinner settings. The tendency to a great extent developed with Madeleines Madteater within the preparation and presentation of food as event also exists in other European culinary experimenting restaurants, and furthermore on far smaller scales in "ordinary" restaurants – even pizzerias - where the intercourse with the food and the sensuous experience of the food preparation becomes an important supplement to the enjoyment of good taste and satiety.

Fundamental aspects of the discussion of why the meal as experience and event is at all relevant still exist. With the experience-related or performative meal and our participation herein, we communicate our social affiliations and privileges to our surrounding society, and hereby achieve accept and acknowledgement, thus assuring our position in specific social groups or potentially develop new social relations by attending public dinners and food events. In our contemporary time, this is manifested with Madeleines Madteater and other restaurants, presumably we as guests visiting their restaurants and participating in their food events become part of a certain group; knowing and trying out those latest trends of eating.

Simultaneously, the food as experience and event is a means among restaurant owners to attract attention and heighten the status of their specific places and foods relative to the extended offer on foods existing today. Whereas the meal as a unified whole with the orchestrated food events and the play on seduction, surprise, and astonishment historically has been a quantitative means of communicating one's power and prosperity; the food as experience and event in relation to the restaurant business today points to a much greater extent towards a qualitative approach, directly aimed at the individual diner, marking one's position and attracting new costumers, simultaneously possibly forming new social bonds across diners and spectators.

Back at the MOTO restaurant in New York, our strawberry sorbet still hovers frizzingly above the accompanying quadratic sweets. A hollow sphere of ice-cream, which the chef Ben Roche has created utilizing tools and equipment in his kitchen ordinarily belonging to the laboratories of gene-technology and bio-chemistry. The experience and the precise sequences of surprises expressed through texture, composition, form, and interaction with the diner. Diners are surprised by the exploratory and spectacular approach towards food and the debate around the tables begins. A transcended experience not necessarily exclusively belonging to the

space of the dinner table, but potentially drifting off the dining room finally merging with the city where it becomes an architectural means; a sensuous impression in combination of food with design and architectural form in scales of both cityscapes, buildings, room, interior, furniture, and tableware, creating a total experience forming social relations among strangers as argued above.

It is these elements, the considerations of the performative experience expressed through form and food, which in particular have been utilized in the mediated spaces of the pavilion NoRA; respectively through its immediate sensuous form and the promotion of different foods, as well as the digital network inviting for physical and metaphysical interaction among visitors. The higher intentions behind the paper and the above case studies have been to examine and draw attention to how the meal and architecture are related, as well as clarifying how the combination of food and architecture or an architectural-food based design approach can potentially enhance the development and design of future experience cities; of either permanent state as the restaurants MOTO and Madeleines, or temporary state as the food domains created with the pavilion NoRA and the Charity project ICE-AID.

AUTHORS



Anna Marie Fisker,
Architect ph.d., Associate Professor
Aalborg University, Department of Architecture & Design.
Furthermore project manager at Food College Denmark and
project curator at the Biennale project NoRA.
fisker@aod.aau.dk



Tenna Doktor Olsen
Master student
Aalborg University, Department of Architecture & Design.
Furthermore one of the 8 architects at the Biennale project NoRA.
tdol03@aod.aau.dk

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARLSEN, HELLE BRØNNUM (2006). Er mad ikke bare noget der skal spises? I : Det æstetiske aktualitet. Bisgaard.

FISKER, ANNA MARIE (2003). Mad og Arkitektur, Skriftserie 28, Institut for Arkitektur & Design, Aalborg Universitet.

FRANCK, KAREN A. (2005). Food and the City. John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

GLANVILLE, PHILIPPA; YOUNG, HILARY (2002). Elegant Eating, four hundred years of dining in style. V&A Publications, China.

HETHERINGTON, MARION M.; ROLLS, BARBARA J. (2001). Sensory-Specific Satiety, the theoretical frameworks and central characteristics. In: Why we eat, what we eat, the psychology of eating. Ed. Carpaldi, Elizabeth D. (2001). Amer Psychological Association.

HOLM, LOTTE (2005). Hvad styrer kostvanerne? I: Holm, Lotte. Kompendium madens sociologi. Institut for Fødevarevidenskab, Samfundslitteratur, pp.13-18

JENSEN, KATHRINE O'DOHERTY (2003). Mad og Identitet. I: Holm, Lotte. Mad, Mennesker og Måltider, samfundsvidenskabelige perspektiver. Munksgaard Danmark, København. 1 udgave, 2. oplag, pp. 51-65

KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, BARBARA (2007). Making sense of food in performance. In The Senses in Performance. Routledge, UK, pp. 71-91

KORSMEYER, CAROLYN. (1999). Making Sense of Taste. Cornell University Press, USA

MEISELMAN, HERBERT L. (2000). Dimensions of the meal. Aspen Publishers, Maryland, ch.1,2,5,7,12,14,15,16

STRONG, ROY (2002). Feast, a history of grand eating. Pimlico, London.

Articles

CHRISTENSEN, ANNE M. (2007). Madteater: mig og Madeleines. Information, 12.9.2007, 1.sektion, s.24.

JACOBSEN, JAN KRAG (2005). Mad og oplevelse. Kompendium til kursus på Performance Design, Roskilde Universitetscenter, Roskilde.

THEIL, PER (2007). Madteater: På sporet af de tabte ritualer. Politiken, 1.9.2007, kultur, s.8

WERN, VIBEKE (2007). Det ophøjede Måltid. Berlinske Tidende Netavis, 12.9.2007

Webpages

Mindstorm International. <http://www.mindstorm.eu.com/home> (29.2.2008)