

# NOSTALGIA DEL CIBO

Master's Thesis  
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*finding a symbiosis  
of nostalgia and food  
in an object*



[01]

This thesis illustrates the premises that make the symbiosis of nostalgia and food in a design object possible.

Nutrition is an essential factor in our survival and, over the centuries, has developed through different cultures and environmental contexts.

There is no better way to retrace this story than to rely on your own taste and smell, observing the different behavioral patterns that surround the act of eating.

It is precisely what surrounds, contains and preserves food, be it material or imaginary, that will be addressed in the pages of this thesis, analyzing the design through the perspective of food, and the art dedicated to it which is culinary, and memory.

While we savor the food shared with others, we add an extra piece to the mosaic of memories, setting up a table where past, present and future come together in the pleasure of conviviality. The plate of *Pfannkuchen* in front of us reminds us of the one, eaten three years ago in Sylt. Who were we with? Was it any better than this? Or maybe it was the sea air that gave it a pinch of saline. And here the present food evokes the past, through the orality, in the conversations around the table between one bite and another.

Lunches and dinners punctuate our daily lives as much as the moments of celebration, unrepeatable occasions such as baptisms, weddings (hopefully!) and funerals, breaking into history such as Marie Antoinette's croissants, *Marengo Chicken* and *Bismarck Hering*.

The aim of the thesis is to understand how food and nostalgia are connected to each other and how they can be translated into design, creating a series of furniture, starting from a personal and heartfelt approach to the topic.

A story about the past but applied to the present.

La tesi di laurea qui presente illustra le premesse che rendono possibile la simbiosi di nostalgia e cibo in un oggetto di design. L'alimentazione è un fattore essenziale della nostra sopravvivenza e, durante i millenni, si è sviluppata attraverso culture e contesti ambientali differenti.

Non esiste modo migliore di ripercorrere questa storia se non affidarsi al proprio gusto e olfatto, osservando con attenzione i diversi schemi comportamentali che circondano l'atto del mangiare.

Ed è proprio ciò che circonda, contiene e custodisce il cibo, sia esso materiale o immaginario, che verrà affrontato nelle pagine di questa tesi, analizzando il design attraverso l'ottica del cibo, e dell'arte a esso dedicata che è la culinaria, e della memoria.

Mentre assaporiamo il cibo condiviso con altri, aggiungiamo un tassello in più al mosaico di ricordi, imbandendo una tavola dove passato, presente e futuro si uniscono nel piacere della convivialità. Il piatto di *Pfannkuchen* che abbiamo davanti ci ricorda quello mangiato un'estate di tre anni fa a Sylt. Con chi eravamo? Era più buono di questo? O forse era l'aria di mare a donargli un pizzico di salino. Ed ecco che il cibo presente evoca quello passato, attraverso l'oralità, nelle conversazioni intorno al tavolo tra un boccone e l'altro.

Pranzi e cene scandiscono tanto la nostra quotidianità, quanto i momenti di festa, le occasioni irripetibili come battesimi, matrimoni (si spera!) e funerali, facendo irruzione nella storia come i croissant di Maria Antonietta, il *Pollo alla Marengo* e l'*Uovo alla Bismarck Hering*.

L'obiettivo della tesi è di capire come cibo e nostalgia sono connessi tra loro e come possano essere tradotti in design, creando una serie di mobili, partendo da un approccio personale e sentito sull'argomento.

Una storia sul passato ma applicata al presente.

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[02]

This thesis is based on change - change in the daily life caused by rapidly evolving technological development, change of circumstances occurring to every individual throughout the course of life, change that is a trigger for new memories and therefore nostalgia.

The aim is to deeply understand how our senses transform moments into nostalgic memories. Memories can be created through many different factors but especially with through a direct link to taste and smell. Even though nostalgia is described as an ambivalent emotion with the tendency to recall the past, not with absolutely accurate memories, but rather by idealised ones, it is still serving as an important factor to our mental balance. Despite inherently being about the past, it helps individuals to manage psychological adversity in the present as it positively influences how one perceives their future. Nostalgia fosters an optimistic outlook in a moment of overwhelming.

The research of this thesis is analysing the psychological connection of senses, memories and food. The act of eating goes by and the taste stays for a short time; thus, only the memory remains and can be recalled by a similar taste or smell. While the ancient human was an ascetic who was living distant to bodily needs and desires of eating and drinking, humans now live from food, live with food and

spend much time, consuming, eating and preparing food. (Berger & Kubelka, 2001) The basic principle can be to gather nutrition but also to treat oneself, to celebrate or to socialise. We also like to remember moments, the act of love and generosity transmitted through a dish, that is deep and not forgotten. Recipes are passed on from generation to generation, holding tight to traditions within families and cultures. Food contains individual, cultural, historical, social and economic influences, under which we ultimately decide what type of food we eat. Like other cultural behaviours, our dishes convey a picture of how we stand with ourselves and how we express ourselves.

Food and memories that are based on a table as a centrepiece of interaction, connection and the underlying social principle of our society, is of importance to finding a symbiosis between food and nostalgia.

My question is, how can nostalgia be made visible? How to transfer emotions into design and find the relationship between human senses and three-dimensional objects. *How to find a symbiosis of nostalgia and food in an object, connecting past and present?*

Nostalgia, emotional and personalised design has been of growing interest as a design strategy and are of significant interest to this thesis. Our behaviour is changing from rational consumption into emotional consumption. We have an ever-stronger subjective consciousness and thus require diversified, differentiated and personalised products. Moreover, consumers' consumption mode is mostly affected by emotional feelings. Therefore, personalised design is a rewarding model

for innovative design. (Tseng & Ho, 2011)

The goal is to design objects with a personal story, visualising nostalgic memories of food. The design should subliminally translate such storytelling while the observer of the object is not supposed to be just taken into the past of the designer. The intention of the design is rather a consistent thread of being hinted at but not strikingly attached to the story of *Nostalgia del Cibo*. The different stories told through the objects have to be present, but also leave freedom for the new owner to link them to his own biography and to fill the object with his own stories thus creating another personal symbiosis of nostalgia, memories present and future, in an object.

FOOD

# WHY DO WE EAT? WHAT IS FOOD?



[03]

*"Food is what we all have in common.  
Like air and water, we need it to survive".*

Like every living being, humans are dependent on eating and drinking to survive - for us, nutrition is a biological constraint. By digesting plant and animal substances, we generate energy and all the crucial elements that sustain our organism. While not drinking for three days will kill a human, collate starvation like Mahatma Gandhi will shut down the organs after an average of 21 days.

(Liebersson, 2004)

A vast abundance of food is available because, unlike animals, humans do not have a specific, species-appropriate diet. As a flexible omnivore (all-eater), we can eat what we find in the respective environment. In addition to the offer, which is dependent on seasonal and regional fluctuations - especially before the rise of 21st-century industrialised countries - there are restrictions only through poisonous and inedible food.

Besides, humans are able to make food edible and durable through various preparation and processing techniques, which further expands their spectrum compared to animals.

(Gibney & Pollan, 2016)

Nevertheless, no matter what part of the earth we live in, we do not eat everything. After all, the choice of certain foods is based on decisions that are only partly due to natural factors. In order to provide orientation, all societies have created rules that regulate and limit human eating behaviour and impose constraints on it. Thus people developed a special cuisine - understood as the regionally

and nationally different types of preparation and the culturally different criteria of the food selection.

We are the only species that cooks "only when we learned to cook we became truly humans" says Richard Wrangham, a primatologist at Harvard (Wrangham, 2016). Compared to, i.e. monkey that chew half a day to digest their food, the human species has small a mouth, small teeth and weak muscles and a small jaw for chewing.

And one of the great anthropologists of the 20th century, the French founder of structuralism, Claude Levi-Strauss, wrote in the first volume *the raw and the cooked* (of his large study *Mythologiques* on Indian mythology), about the three forms of food "raw - cooked - rot", a *culinary triangle*, *Le Triangle Culinair*.

(Levi-Strauss, 1966)

The triangle is used to identify the distinction between nature and culture and their transitions. Claude Levi-Strauss: "The cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation. Underlying our original triangle, here is hence a double opposition between elaborated / unelaborated on the one hand and culture / nature on the other". Or as the sociologist and author Joachim Riedl in the German weekly newspaper *ZEIT* writes in his essay *The ruthless cook*: "In Lévi-Strauss' myth study, the kitchen corresponds to a microcosm in which the process of civilisation can be comprehended: it is the way from raw to cooked". (Riedel, 1986)

One of America's star cooks and nutritionists Michael Pollan, released his series *Cooked* with four episodes, each one highlighting an element and its symbiosis with food preparation. The series was released on *Netflix* in 2018 and starts with the first topic based on water. The episode shows the impact on



humans history of food preparation when pots made of fired clay pottery were started to be used, only little over 10 000 years ago, that could survive the heat of the fire and hold water - "to gather together and to harmonise." (Gibney & Pollan, 2016)

"Water is the medium that that transfers not only heat but also aroma while for example, star anees works as a disinfectant and mustard seeds reduce bloating but suddenly, together with water it becomes a symphony of taste that is healthy at the same time delicious". (Gibney & Pollan, 2016)

While the ancient Christian human was more of an ascetic who was living distant to bodily needs and desires of eating and drinking, humans now live from food, live with food and spend a lot of time, consuming, eating and preparing food. The basic principle can be to gather nutrition but also to treat oneself, to celebrate or to socialise. We also like to remember moments, the act of love and generosity transmitted through a dish, that is deep and not forgotten. Recipes are passed on from generation to generation, holding tight to traditions within families and cultures. (Berger & Kubelka, 2001)

Still, the less time we have nowadays to cook, the more we watch increasing cook shows of things we never get to eat. "For cooking you need time, and that is the missing ingredient in our recipes and in our life". While in 1965, the average time of a meal preparation took 27 minutes, by now it takes around 60 minutes, according to the researcher Harry Balter.

According to a new study with 2000 participants by survey-led marketing research company *OnePoll*, we think about food an average of four times a day, totalling up to about 40 minutes daily. (Pollan, & New York Times Magazine, 2009)

Food - regardless of time, space and political system - is the universal essential condition of human existence and thus a central, vital part of everyday human culture.

In a study for the Ryerson University in Toronto, Mustafa Koc and Jennifer Welsh concluded that food is more than just eating. It is instead a fundamental element of our culture and an essential pillar of our sense of identity, which is defined as a dynamic social formula that fits accordingly to the social conditions and under the influence of ever new life experiences and continuously taking new forms. (Koc, 1999)

It contains individual, cultural, historical, social and economic influences, under which we ultimately decide what type of food we eat. Like other cultural behaviours, our dishes convey a picture of how we stand with ourselves and how we express ourselves.

The Italian chef Massimo Bottura, born in Modena, opened the third best restaurant in the world (San Pellegrino World's 50 Best, 2014), *Osteria Francescana*. His restaurant only has 12 tables and, as described on its website, a kitchen that "is not a list of ingredients or demonstration of technical abilities - it is a narration of the Italian landscape and passions. Cooking is a collision of ideas, techniques, and cultures. It is not mathematical. It is emotional." He creates all of his dishes with traditional Modena ingredients but uses them differently compared to how a traditional trattoria would use them. One could see it as a reinterpretation of the dishes, giving it a new twist or, as a food critic of the *Espresso Magazine* called it, a creation of: *tagliatelle postmodern*. (Gelb, 2015)

In the T.V. series *Chefs Table*, he says: "one of the most important ingredients is memories. Memories of where and how things were made and reinterpreting them in a new way".

"I grew up in a very large family [...] I was running around as crazy. My safety place was in the kitchen under the table where my grandmother was rolling paste. She was defending me from my older brother with her *mattarello* (the item to roll pasta). So, from under the table, I was looking at the world from another perspective. The flour was falling from the table, and I was on my knees, and I was stealing from under, the tortellino. So when they ask me what is the plate of your life? It is a tortellino - a raw tortellino. Because that's the moment in which I was stealing a raw tortellino just made one second before from the hand of my grandmother. That is why food is so important for me because in many creations I do, you can find that I am trying to take you at that moment. Back to when you were a child." (Gelb, 2015)

Modena lies in the region of Emilia Romagna, and there is hardly any other region in Italy that has so much to offer in the gastronomic field. Products such as mortadella come from Bologna, and Parma ham and Parmesan come from the area around the city of Parma which by the way also holds a museum for tomatoes, prosciutto di parma, wine, salame, pasta, and Parmigiano Reggiano. The famous dark vinegar with the sweet and sour taste Aceto Balsamico, on the other hand, comes from Modena. Bottura explains how, especially in the beginning of his trattoria, it was difficult for him, to find an acceptance for his *postmodern dishes*, that also hold very descriptive names: memory of a mortadella sandwich, oops I dropped the lemon tart, five ages of Parmigiano Reggiano (with 24, 30, 36, 40 and 50 month-old Parmesan cheese expressed in five contrasting textures). (Gelb, 2015) The fact that he took long-existing recipes and traditional meals and reinterpreted them, in a surrounding of deep tradition and

connection to food, took time. Bottura sees Modena as a city that takes its time to give quality to its products, respecting the quality of ingredients that, like, i.e. Parmesan, need months to reach its taste which can not be achieved by artificially speeding up the process. Food as a cultural identity has a strong meaning to us, and every change to that well-known taste and smell needs time to be digested.

"Man is what he eats," said the anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). Eating is much more than just a material, and physiological process, instead "eating is a culturally shaped symbolic form that is of elementary importance for the formation of identity." (Abeyasingha, 2010) The literary scholar Christiane Ott puts it similarly in her recently published book *Identity goes through the stomach - Myths of food culture: "Food creates" and "Food is a performance of (social, national, gender) identity; a ritual that creates and perpetuates social meanings."* (Ott, 2017)

# FOOD AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY

## Potatoesalat and family stories



[04]

The first recipes already existed in ancient Greece. The recipe collections bound to cookbooks mainly served as health guides, whose traditional dietary teachings, on the one hand, relate to sacred prescriptions and, on the other hand, to practical experience that is passed on from generation to generation. (Kaufmann, 2006) At the end of the 15th century, the first printed cookbooks were sold to the public, which summarised the old, tried and tested recipes of the local cuisine of a region - not least because the regional dimensions and measurements only became a uniform decimal system in 1872. (Siemens, 1903) Only then it was possible to publish recipes that were understandable across larger areas, with equal quantities, temperatures and times.

Recipes are knowledge repositories for the practice of cooking, which in the form of shortlists and clear instructions serve as a reminder for both oneself and future generations. Old recipe collections offer an insight into the European cuisine of the early Greek and Roman times, the Middle Ages, Victorian England and basically and epoch one wants to "visit". However, family recipes are important in contrast to conventional recipes from cookbooks, magazines or from the Internet since family recipes have a high symbolic value, which is made up of transmission, tradition and identity.

The individual nowadays is "left to its own devices in a world of abundance", "his

freedom sometimes tires and frightens him", (Dollase, 2006) he longs for "support and confirmation of his decisions" in the supermarket, in the restaurant or his cookbook collection. Out of a need for "protection and self-empowerment", (Zischka, 1994) many tend to establish consistency in their diet through repetition. Others try to reduce the complexity with their own rules because only the classification into moral and taste categories creates certainties.

Here, the written down family recipe initially might play a subordinate role but there comes the point in many lives, where one might be wondering about the way a dish of one's childhood was made and therefore reaches out to parents and relatives.

Family recipes are not just "original recipes" of regional specialities since personal preferences appear in family recipes in particular, which can change the recipes over time. The personal note is included in the written recipe in the form of marginal notes or is even rewritten in a modified form. The origin is a central aspect in the cooking tradition of a family and their recipes: family recipes can be used to infer social origin on the one hand and regional origin on the other.

The regional cuisine determines the family recipe not only for practical reasons, such as the use of regional products but functions also as a collection for nostalgia. A change of location is still noticeable after generations in the form of recipes that are not typical of a specific region. Immigrants and their descendants offer the next generations the opportunity to take them back to their roots through cooking the dishes of their roots. Cooking, according to family recipes, means joining the culinary tradition of one's ancestors and going on a search "for something emotional and secret to build on one's past." (Dollase, 2006)

Going through old family recipes is doing genealogy and thus identity-research at the same time. Dealing with ones culinary and thus regional and social origins also brings one closer to one's identity.

The New York Times published the article  *Holding On to Heritage Before It Slips Away*, written by Rachel L. Swarns, that explains the loss of one's traditional family cuisine through time and change of locations and a wish to capture such details, once you become older or simply move out of your parents home. The author's mother left the Bahamas when she was young, to move to the U.S. With her, she brought many typical flavours and dishes that she over the years prepared for her daughter. "It is only now, in my 40s, that I feel those ties slipping through my fingers. There are no close relatives left around me. My children have never known what it is like to squeeze into a kitchen full of Bahamian women serving up fried fish and family stories. Suddenly, I've found myself grappling to hold on to something I never imagined I might lose." (Swarns, 2012)

Identity describes the totality of all characteristics that make up a person and distinguishes them from others - identity thus being the prerequisite for individuality.

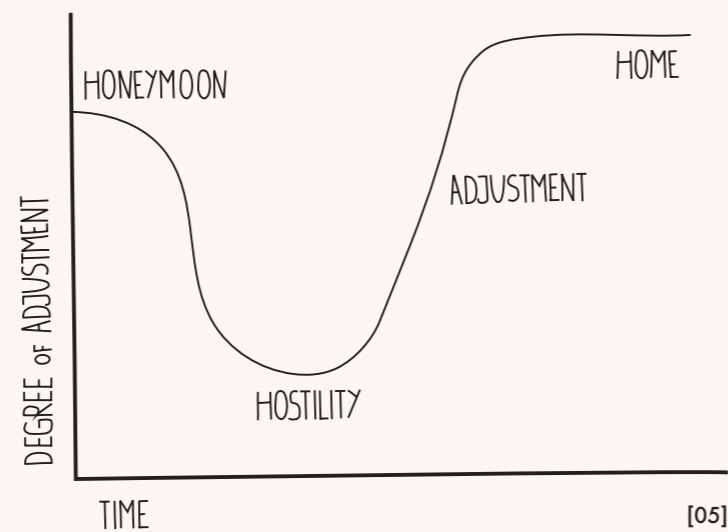
One of many partial identities is the eating identity, which develops in the family circle since one's childhood. Cooking makes it possible to shape this eating identity whether one wants to shape it or not depends on various factors: the family's character, the living situation, the orientation towards enjoyment, capital or even social trends.

The personal recipe collection is "a collage of a thousand colourful pieces of life." (Zischka, 1994)

It forms the basis for everyday cooking, and

at the same time for a manufacturing process of ones own and family identity. Family recipes function as a storage medium with practical experience of one's ancestors. It helps to restore the taste of one's childhood and at the same time to connect with the collective identity of the family.

Leah Selim, the cofounder of *GlobalKitchen*, "a social enterprise that hosts immigrant-led cooking classes in New York City", was holding a *TedTalk* about *Food is not only culture, but it is also diplomacy*. Selim explains a trend which developed among governments and middle power countries to create *government-funded gastro diplomacy programs* which serve as a tool to introduce the cuisine of a country to a foreign audience in order to gain awareness for the country itself - it is called *gastro diplomacy*. (Selim, 2014) Through the process of globalisation, cooking and sharing food, have become powerful tools for preserving culture outside of its cultural and geographical context.



Moving to a new country and adjusting to a new cuisine has the common effect of sometimes emerging food-homesickness, craving dishes that one might not have experienced as extraordinarily special until that point where it is far away. This is called *acculturation*. (Selim, 2014)

A study of Koreans moving to the U.S. showed that in the beginning, they were very venturesome as well as their purchase of American food products. This phase is called the *honeymoon phase* from where they were moving into the *hostility phase*. Once in the *hostility phase*, also the purchase of more traditional Korean food products increased significantly. After the up and down they arrived at the *home phase* at which point they were purchasing American food products as much as they did when they first arrived. The graph below is highlighting this phenomenon called the *U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment* (figure 05), a theory first developed by Sverre Lysgaard in 1955 "which describes the social and emotional shifts one experiences when transferring into any new environment". (Megan, 2008)

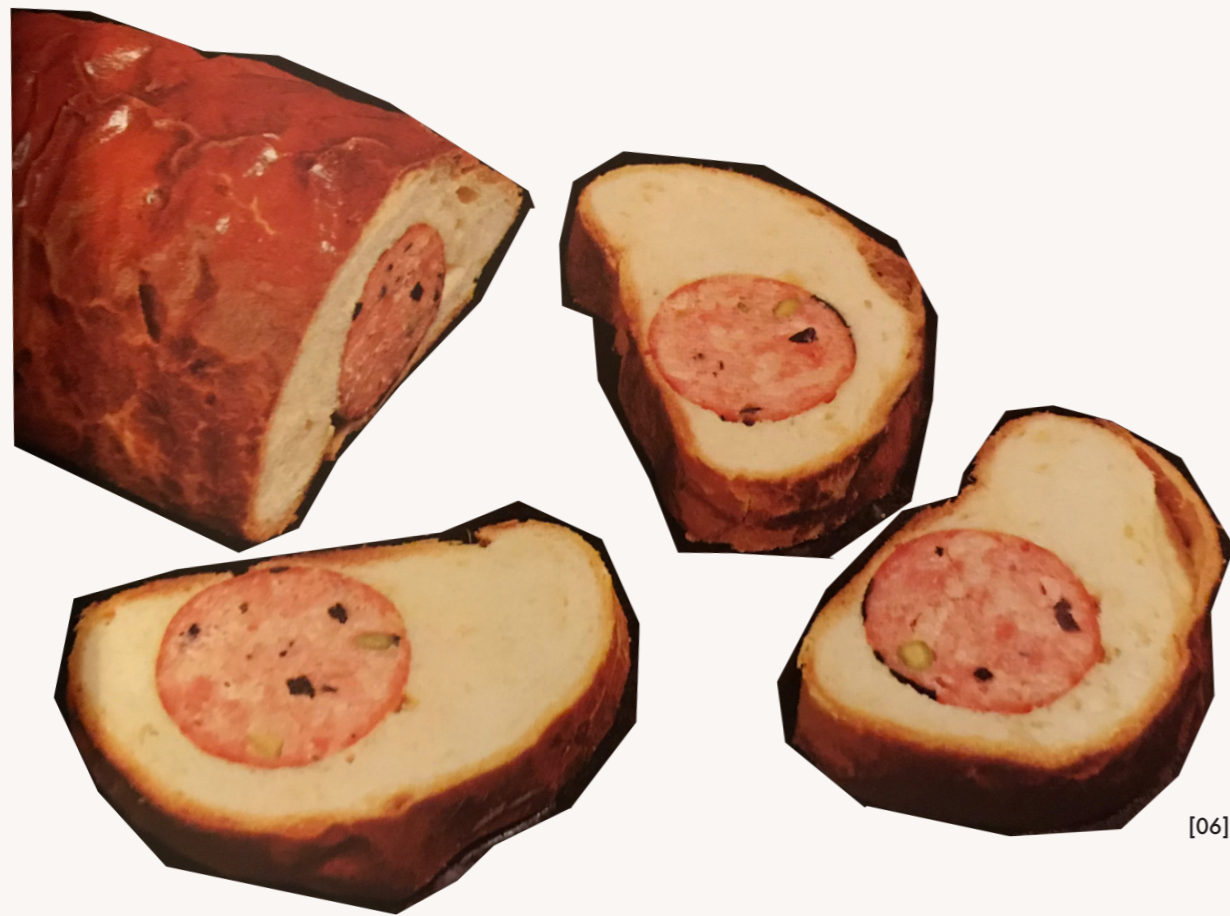
But on the other hand, there is another development as Leah Selim points out, with a sudden increase from worldwide 5 000 Thai restaurants that quickly multiplied to more than 20 000. The result of that significant increase, she says, is part of a program substituted by the Thai government. The *Global Thai Program* was founded some years ago, allowing fundings to restaurant openings and excess to particular ingredients, raising international interest in its cuisine and making it one of the internationally popular cuisines. Korea started its 40 million program shortly after in 2009, followed by Taiwan and many other countries until now. (Selim, 2014)

As we have seen so far, eating is more than just food. It also reflects a kind of worldview that takes circumstances and immediate events into account. Peter Kubelka, an Austrian filmmaker and artist, explains how humankind has managed to pass on its information in two different ways. First, he speaks about the tangible and three-dimensional objects that are passed on to the next generation. The second is the intangible, which he finds to be more long-lasting. Eating is a medium of expression that contains messages - food preparation carries one back, and thus goes further back in time than any other document. "We have the opportunity to receive news from the earliest times of humanity through the traditional cookery and food preparations." (Berger & Kubelka, 2001)

The baroque in German Bavaria, serves Kubelka as an example for the process of passing information in two different ways in objects as well as in eating. Thus, after the Thirty Years' War, the altars suddenly reflected cheerfulness and lightness. Kubelka describes a similar development in food and eating. "Suddenly, the altar consists of gypsum clouds with floating angels. And the potato too was taken from the food cooked in fire and embers and turned into mashed potatoes, airy and light, with which a certain form of earth's gravity was deposited." (Berger & Kubelka, 2001)

# EATING TOGETHER

*The meal as the basis of a contract*



[06]

“A man should not so much respect what he eats, as with whom he eats.” by, Michel de Montaigne, a French philosopher who lived in the 16th century. (de Montaigne, 1553)

The classic meal plan in Western countries consists of three meals a day. However, this regularity, especially within the family, decreased during the 19th and 20th centuries. When, what, how and who is eating today is more often subject to functional requirements than following known patterns. Studies show that restructured daily routines, the number of people living alone, mobility pressures and long working hours lead to increasing out-of-home consumption, irregular meal times and in-between meals. According to the studies, a decline of traditional meal forms is to be feared and thus increasing images of isolated restaurant visitors in the style of Japanese solo-dining restaurants. On the other hand, the same studies show that main-meals, as an integral part of everyday life, are mostly taken with others. (Pfeiffer, Speck, & Strassner, 2017) Thus the social aspect of eating is still highly valued. One often therefor enjoys unprecedented freedom of choice about eating and meal behaviour and finds communality when eating in traditional as well as in new forms of meals. In cases where people come together due to common interests or common goals, “the meal is the basis of a contract.” This includes “peace and contract meals”, (Kara, Albrecht, & Lobenstein, 2019) in which the aspect of

the agreement, pacification or alliance is in the foreground and the common meal gives negotiations and contracting a positive character. These meals still play an important symbolic role today at political receptions and diplomatic gatherings, even if they no longer serve as a final confirmation, as was the case with, i.e. medieval coronations. Socially mediated and habitual behaviours dictate how participants interact with each other and are expected to do so reciprocally.

Eating together, according to the German newspaper *ZEIT*, is a secret weapon, influencing psychological levels at depth. It creates trust, an honest atmosphere and an increased forbearance. As told in the podcast of the newspaper *ZEIT*, during the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany in 2017, massive protests and street battles took place, the mood of the politicians present was visibly tense. “But Angela Merkel, the hostess, had the working lunch transformed into a social dinner given the difficult situation. Instead of agenda items and working papers, pastries and fillets of beef were served.” On such occasions, politicians generally remain secretive and journalists were not allowed in. After this social dinner, the president of America publicly stated on *Twitter*, the summit had been “wonderful”. (Kara, Albrecht, & Lobenstein, 2019) Feasts distributed meat and wine were already used as an effective practice of “eating diplomacy” by the princes of the Celts. The also the 1800 German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck stated that the best way to win guests over was by “serving exquisite dishes, sole and truffle ragouts with intoxicating drinks.” (Kaufmann, 2006)

Eating together and in company is becoming more of a psychological focus with many results of different studies surrounding this topic. “If we do not eat together, we lose

the feeling of safety and secureness, it is the backbone of human interaction," says American psychologist Marshall. (Marshall, 2014) Further on he explains how it already educates children to be resilient, defined by Oxford dictionary as "able to withstand or recover from difficult condition", (Resilience, 2020) by encouraging conversation at the dining table talking on topics between fates, banalities and everyday stories of (with 20-30% of the conversations revolving around what is on the table). Especially important is according to this study, the conversation between the different generations: "what ultimately strengthens resilience is the intergenerational self, i.e. the feeling of being connected with people of other generations." (Wilk, 2010) Because now in the U.S. less than 50% have dinner in company, the initiative of the *Family Dinner Project* was called to life by psychologist Anna Fishel, Professor at Harvard, where psychologists give different ideas and encouragement to parents for a united family dinner. (Poses, 2016)

Whether it is the family dinner, political banquets or birthday parties, table communities are the social product of meals. Through eating, those present are put in relation to each other and connected to storytelling communities. The process of it is a community-building act that involves the participants at the table.

During the meal, the table community is a separate entity from the outside world and is equally perceivable as such. The act of eating unites those who otherwise act in different external environments for a certain period of time. (Kara, Albrecht, & Lobenstein, 2019)



EDMONDO AMATI PRESENTA

MARCELLO MASTROIANNI UGO TOGNAZZI MICHEL PICCOLI PHILIPPE NOIRET

LA GRANDE ABBUFFATA

con ANDREA FERREOL | REGIA DI PHILIPPE SARDE | IL FILM DI MARCO FERRERI | PANAVISION 19 EASTMANCOLOR

IN UN PATRIMONIO CAPITOLINA PRODUZIONI CINEMATOGRAFICHE S.R.L. ROMA - MARA FILMS S.A. PARIGI

# GASTROSOPHY

## Seneca and Nietzsche - thinking needs nourishment



[08]

Everyday food seems to have no connection between something as usual and normal as daily eating with science and even philosophy. But for Harald Lehmke, a German philosopher and director of the think-tank *International Forum Gastrosophy (I.F.G.)*, modern *Gastrosophy* stands for a holistic and trans-disciplinary approach to nutrition. *Gastrosophy*, in the view of *I.F.G.*, combines the daily food with a philosophical and scientific background, a new ethic, sustainability and responsibility. (Reese, 2010) *Gastrosophy* is subject of scientific research and academic studies at Universities as in the *International Università degli Studi di scienze gastronomiche* in the city of Bra, Piemonte and in the Master Program *Gastrosophical Sciences* in the *University of Salzburg* in Austria. At the *University of Salzburg*, Harald Lehmke is a lecturer with a *gastrosophical* focus. Everything surrounding food is an immense social construct of human being, economy, culture and society, from the production, marketing, distribution, preparation, presentation to the joy of food. In that sense, the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss defines food as a *total social phenomenon* which is involving factors as politics, tourism, economy, agriculture, art, daily life and individual identity. (Lehmke, 2009)

This approach to nutrition and food, in the origin of the term *Gastrosophy*, from the Ancient Greek word *gaster* which translates to *stomach* and *sophia* that translates to wis-

dom. The term goes back to the 600 pages work *Gastrosophy or the teaching of the joys of the table* of the Prussian writer and *Gastrosoph* Baron Eugen von Vaerst (1851). In France, Jean Anthèlme Brillat-Savarin, developed a comparable philosophy of taste in his book *Physiologie du goût: Méditations de gastronomie transcendante - Physiology of taste: Meditations of transcendent gastronomy* (1826). (Lehmke, 2009)

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) emphasises that *sophia* from the word *philosophia*, not only comes from the Greek translates to *wisdom* but also stands for *taste*. So it can be said, that through the different epochs of history, there was an interest not only in philosophy but also *Gastrosophy*, even before the term as such was invented. This led through times to the beginning of the deep analysis of nowadays *Gastrosophy*, as a subject of science. Another German philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) stated in his book *Principles of Future Philosophy*, that the scientific studies, from his point of view start with the physical body as a "real, sensual being". For him, the beginning of existence and thinking was nourishment, and thus also the beginning of wisdom. From this point of view, for him, a scientific study of these beginnings and bases of existence was essential. (Lehmke, 2009) In 1880 it was, Friedrich Nietzsche who studied and defined the development of culture through the development of taste. He was the first to develop and refine the culture of taste, that saw the *Homo Sapiens* as part of a philosophical or ethical life practice. (Reitz, 2020)

In contrast to the ideal of modern *Gastrosophy* of good food, many ancient philosophers like Platon and Aristoteles, cultivated a kind of intellectual contempt of good food and the lust of eating and praised an ascetic

kind of spartan ideal of renunciation in a moral of a strict diet. A strict diet as a philosophical idea of a good life as a perfectionist by Diogenes who lived in a simple ton.

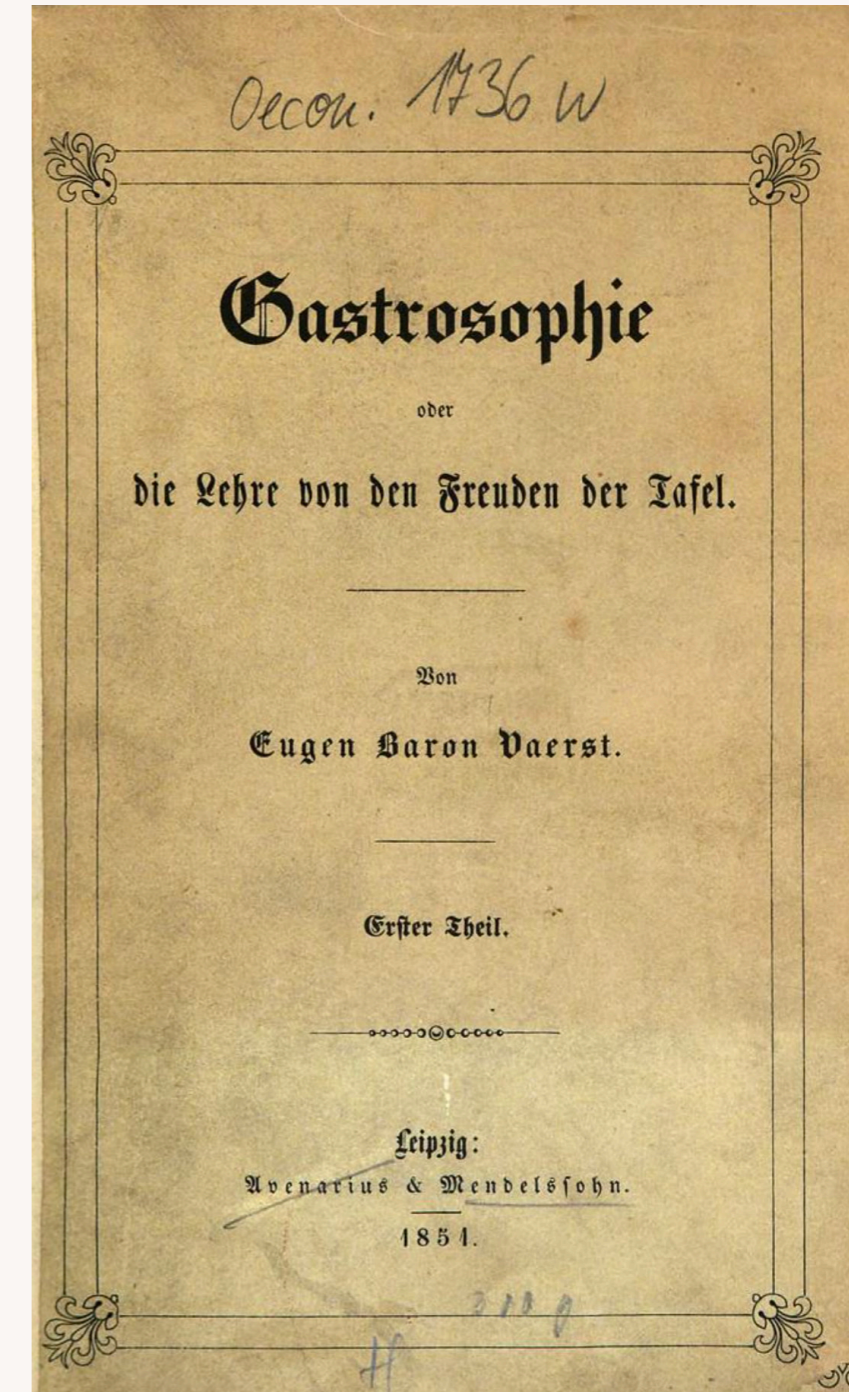
In another contrast of the culture and sciences of good food, now, we live in a fast-food ideology. One that often degrades the joy of eating to a small coexisting part of human existence, a mentality is omnipresent. According to Harald Lehmke, the *gastrosophical* questions of each day might be: "who am I to eat like how I do, each time that I decide on a daily base and at each combination of food that I choose? Which consequences and risks do my food have for myself and others?" (Lehmke, 2006)

Lehmke wants to achieve a change of our thinking pattern also because our nutrition of the 20th and 21st century is causing moral and global problems which is why it is not only our concern what we consume and eat. Here the studies of *Gastrosophy* start to create a more broad and comprehensive picture of what influences food and consumption. The above-mentioned five-semester Master course of *Gastrosophy* at the *University of Salzburg* in Austria is "interdisciplinary and ranges from the cultural history of nutrition to current economic, medical, ethical and philosophical questions. They are geared towards a broad qualification of experts in *gastrosophic* knowledge. The areas of knowledge come from the subjects of history, sociology, philosophy, theology, art history, medicine, law, etc. In addition, special emphasis is placed on practical knowledge, on the implementation of what has been scientifically developed in the life and work areas of the participants." The *gastrosophical* vision in short: "will food improve the world? - Good food for all!" (Lehmke, 2018)

Maybe Seneca should have seen the possibility of *Gastrosophy* and merging together a variety of disciplines since he criticised the change in Ancient Rome from its interest in philosophy onto an increasing interest in food "the professors of the liberal arts teach without an audience in front of abandoned classrooms; yawning emptiness prevails in the schools of rhetoric and philosophy: on the other hand, what influx do the fine kitchens enjoy, how numerous are the young people crowding around the hearths of the bon vivants!" (Lehmke, 2006)



Diogenes who lived in a simple ton [09]



*Gastrosophy or the teaching of the joys of the table* by the writer and *Gastrosoph*, Baron Eugen von Vaerst (1851) [10]

# FOOD IN AN INDUSTRIALISED WORLD

## The story of Wonder-Bread



[11]

In his *ethics* (95th letter, 29), Seneca complains of an “immense decline in morals” in view of the cultural implications of what he sees as bad taste. Fears are expressed farsighted that one day people will be able to be filled with pre-prepared ready-made meals: “I am already waiting for pre-chewed food to be served. It’s not much different than removing the mussel shells and bones and letting the cook do the teeth.” (Ibid., 28)

We are facing the consequences of cheap food due to industry alleviation and industrial agriculture: environmental, health and cultural issues. In the last thirty years, food crises have often repeated themselves at a national and international level. According to a recent survey by the CREDOC on food behaviour and consumption (2011), 85% of the respondent households think that their food pattern has an impact on their health as against 79% in 2000 and 75% in 1997.

(Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014) The list of possible threats is long: Diabetes 2, Cardiovascular disease, a fatty liver and many other dangerous consequences. Modern food is a source of deep anxiety; as a result, consumers no longer trust what they eat. The fear of choosing the wrong product triggers anxiety and a strong feeling of guilt. This feeling of discomfort, anxiety and the loss of confidence in food products can be accounted for by four main factors (Poulain, 1996): lack of identification of products, food abundance, contradictory statements and the influence of the media.

Some nutrients of the food industry arouse suspicion due to lists of unknown ingredients, whereas traditional and artisanal food is considered safe. The consumers are looking for authenticity in origin, in the symbolic dimension and unicity of a product. They are therefore presented with a dilemma: convenience and cheap food on the one hand and on the other hand, the fear resulting from the fact that very little is known on this type of food.

Since, at the beginning of the 20th century, the American food supply market was recognised as the most productive and successful in the world, in this chapter, the United States is the focus of my research. (Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014)

In the early 1900s, many Americans were still farmers who lived in rural areas. With the urbanisation and industrialisation of the country, most of the population moved from agricultural environments to cities in order to participate in the labour market. Since the industry was not yet fully developed, people found themselves confronted with low living



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standards limited financial resources, in a time where profound political, social, scientific and economic changes had a significant impact on the food of today. (Mart, 2018)

New technologies were adopted to transport food from the countryside to the cities and to guarantee its freshness. First was the Western expansion of the nation, facilitated by a growing railroad network, i.e. wheat was transported from Minnesota, corn and pork, on the other hand, from Midwest areas whereas dairy products came from Wisconsin and Iowa. Large corporations were formed to handle the increasing quantities of goods that were available for falling prices. (Kiger, 2019)

“By 1920, one-fifth of the nation’s manufacturing was in food processing which has gotten even more due to the demands of first and Second World War”, says historian Harvey Levinstein. The two decades after World War II are often viewed as the *Golden Age* of industrial agriculture. (Mart, 2018) Building on technological and business innovations of the early 20th century, agriculture was transformed with the civilian adaption of cheap fossil fuel (the key ingredient in both chemical fertilisers and pesticides) which had been developed for military use, according to Michelle Mart, professor of history at *Pennsylvania State University*.

The acceptance of food manufacturing had been laid decades earlier with the introduction of factory foods (in the late 19th and 20th century), and the ability to isolate components of food in the laboratories. At the same time, most preservation techniques like drying, salting and fermentation, with its origins in ancient civilisations, were modified and modernised.

During that time, the U.S. was also home to the first fast-food chain. In 1916 Walter Anderson opened the first of nowadays 377 locations, *White Castle* in the U.S., “introdu-

cing the limited menu, high volume, low cost, high-speed hamburger restaurant.” (Baofu, 2012) In the second half of the 20th century, around the same time that McDonald’s opened its first restaurant in California, many women were starting to work for a second family income, thus having less time at home for household and family meals. In 1950 about 33 percent of the women in the United States were in the workforce. (Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014) The feminist movements of the period proposed automated food chains with the idea to liberate women from the preparation of food that was time-consuming and, at the same time, expensive.

Not only ready-cooked food became popular but equally fast-food restaurants.

After the first chain restaurant opened, almost a century later in 2018, there were 247.191 Fast-Food restaurants in the United States with, according to statistics, the average American spending about \$1,200 on fast food annually. That breaks down to \$100 a month and roughly \$12.50 spent per meal. (Aubrey & Allison, 2014)

While the idea was to save the family meals with a cheap and fast alternative, the B.B.C. Good Food Nation Survey found that until today most people eat fast food on average two days per week. But in the 16 to 20-year-old age group, one in six eat fast-food at least twice a day, with one in eight among the age group of the 21 to 34-year-olds eating as frequently. (BBC, *One in six young people eat fast food ,twice a day’* 2016)

Thus, the concentration was preferably on the production than the product, with its consequences increasing until today. For that kind of development, Michael Pollan, author of many books on food and nutrition, has coined the term *nutritionism*, which stands for “the idea that food was just a collection of nutritional components.” In Pollan point of view,

this destroyed the collected culinary traditions “thus food became divorced from the Earth and from its particular environments.” (Pollan, 2016)

After World War II, the food industry had to sell the leftover stocks of processed food (such as canned or in forms of powder) that had been produced for the troops. With the start of the 50s and the beginning of “modern” processed food, the use of sugar, salt and fat in food was increasing drastically and “as soon as taste buds change, their habit changes.” (Pollan, 2016)

According to a report from the *World Health Organisation* on the health impacts of sugary drinks, “the worldwide prevalence of obesity has more than doubled between 1980 and 2014, with 11% of men and 15% of women (more than half a billion adults) being classified as obese. The number of people living with diabetes has also been rising, from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. The disease was directly responsible for 1.5 million deaths in 2012 alone.” (Tao, 2016)

An example of the drastic changes in the production is based on bread.

Until 100 years ago, bread was made from sourdough thus has three ingredients - flour, water and salt. Commercial types of bread, on the other hand, have 33 or 37 ingredients, which is why the American *F.D.A. (Food and Drug Administration)* in 1921 created the novelty called *Wonder Bread*.

With the start of the industrialisation also came the act of making bread cheaper. White flour was used more instead of whole-grain which was found not to be perishable, thus making white flour important for the economy of a worldwide transport. For this process and a more durable flour, most of the nutritious parts of the flour were removed, and people ate “the leftover”, making them sick. This was when *Wonder Bread* came on the market, a bread that was made to be sold with added vitamins to the population after the government realised the drastic decrease in the health of American citizens. Pollan, for himself, responding to this example, speaks out against *capitalism of food* since he believes that it “creates a problem and in order not to fix the problem, a new business is created to solve the problem.” (Pollan, 2016)



# THE ANTI-MOVEMENT, A FOOD REVOLUTION

*Is sourdough equal to Heimatliebe?*



[14]

A suggestion for a change of these circumstances by historian Michelle Mart was, to take “a closer look on nostalgia and its impact on consumer behaviour, as a concept of reassurance.” (Mart, 2018) With this in mind, the unexpected Covid19 lockdown - apart from fear and problems - by some is also seen as a moment of deceleration, questioning not only the connection to food and natural-based ingredients but also time spent on a daily base. In weeks of quarantine and self-isolation, one might find oneself in an unknown circumstance of empty shelves in the supermarket and much time at home, with the urge to do something useful and remembering traditional forms of preparing one’s own food.

VICE magazine, published an article in March 2020 about the new trend of growing natural yeast made of flour and water, the main ingredient to baking sourdough bread. It takes at least five days, and constant observation and care-taking to create such homemade yeast. According to statistics provided to VICE by Reddit, the *subreddit forum r/Sourdough* has seen activity go up by over 170% since 1st of January 2020.

“I never thought I’d be the type of person who set daily reminders on their phone to feed their starter baby (the base of sourdough) with flour and water. It’s like looking after a child or a pet.” Another statement was: “I think it’s great that more people are making their own bread. It’s such a more

natural product than the stuff we all buy in the supermarkets.” (Makalintal, 2020)

Towards the end of the 20th century, in a developed moment of general nostalgic yearning and a search for pleasure, new cultural groups were formed to strengthen and promote regional food cultures and to integrate them into the globalisation process. In addition, these groups such as the Italian *slow food*, the *new food revolution*, the *local food movement*, the *farm to table movement*, wanted to raise awareness about enjoyment and taste in people thus an unconventional organic food-based cuisine originated.

A dissatisfaction emerged with the idea that food was a mere nutritional commodity and was produced by modern technology, not nature with but instead increasing health risks. (Petrini, 2013)

By the 1970s, new and alternative food distributions were formed such as COOPs, a cooperative movement in which members organised food, production and distribution of food, mostly naturally food, bypassing the existing food system. The attempt was, parallel to climate change, to go back in the time of globalisation and reflect on food which was shipped thousands of miles. (Mart, 2018) The new movement celebrated local foods and relationships with producers which anchored food in particular places at particular seasons.

Alice Waters, a James Bear Award Winner (recognising culinary professionals in the U.S.), National Humanities medalist and Vice President of *Slow Food International*, was one of the leading figures of the food revolution. In 1971 she and six of her local friends founded the world-famous restaurant *Chez Panisse* in Berkley, CA, U.S.A. (Waters, 2014) It influenced the culture around food a

lot, and her model and ideals were quickly spreading as chef and food writer Ruth Rykel observed in 1989 “it changed the way America eats”. It is not only considered one of the 50 worldwide best restaurants but was voted as *Best Restaurant in America*, by the *Gourmet Magazine*, in 2001. (Mart, 2018)

While *Chez Panisse* “began as a challenge to blend process taste which dominated America, it also reflected the communal ideals of the counterculture. This meant local foods by small farmers that used organic methods”. Even if the idea of sustainable, local and healthy cuisine seems very reasonable, critics, who call the participants of this movement *foodies*, point out “a rather selfish and shallow precious experience of elite consumption, inaccessible to most people.” (McNamee, 2007)

The increasing cost of dining at *Chez Panisse* also led many to criticise Waters pursuit of pleasure. The *New York Times* food critic, Ruth Reichl declared Water’s restaurant to be a place of new stylish lifestyle, “where rich people get to remind themselves that they are different from you and me.” (Johnston, & Baumann, 2015)

The many negative aspects of food production so far show only a slow increase of actions for improvement (i.e. soda taxes) from the political side but little standing against the powerful food industry. The result to try to change the established patterns thus is left to the responsibility of the consumer who appreciates good and natural quality food of private and political organisations and activists. *The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations* published some explanation on *how organic food works* and the reasons why it is more expensive than conventional counterparts. To only mention some of the points: “organic food supply is limited as compared to demand; production costs for organic foods are typically higher because of greater labour input and because farmers

don’t produce enough of a single product to lower the overall cost; post-harvest handling of relatively small quantities of organic foods results in higher costs because organic and conventional produce must be separated for processing and transportation; rural development by generating additional farm employment and assuring a fair and sufficient income to producers.” (Parnes, 2020)

Dan Barber, an American chef and co-author of the documentary *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste*, adds, that industrial food is not as inexpensive as it might seem on the first glance. There are many hidden expenses including, i.e. heavily subsidised petroleum at all stages of its production as well as costs in areas like economy, politics, health and the environment. (Pollan, 2016)

Next to the criticism on the prices of sustainable and organic food being too high, other important factors since have been confronted and much improved. While for many, spending money for the weekly grocery shopping at a farmers market is a luxury, sociologist calculated that people have ten times as many conversations at the farmers’ market than they do in the supermarket, clearly highlighting the social and inter-social changes in the belief of community. (Kelly, Crump, & KellyNorth, 2015)

In the essay *The Food Movement, Rising*, Michael Pollan analyses the missing influence of politics (except few examples, i.e. Michelle Obama who planted an “organic garden” on White House lawn) and points out: “Alice Waters has often said, it was not politics or ecology that brought her to organic agriculture, but rather the desire to recover a certain taste (one she had experienced as an exchange student in France). (Pollan, & New York Review of Books, 2010) Of course democratising such tastes, which under current policies

tend to be more expensive, is the hard part, and must eventually lead the movement back to more conventional politics for it not to be tagged as elitist. [...] Good food for everyone is probably the most democratic pleasure a society can offer access to and appreciated by all classes and groups.” (Flammang, 2009) Food writer Kim Severson summed up Waters belief as follows „the most political act we can commit is to eat delicious food that does not exploit workers and is eaten slowly and with reverence.” (Mart, 2018)

“WE HAVE BEEN MADE TO FEEL THAT BEAUTY IS EXPENSIVE, BUT EVERYONE COULD DISCERN AND EXPERIENCE THE PLEASURE OF BEAUTY THAT IS ONCE THEY WERE EDUCATED TO APPRECIATE THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF THE FAST-FOOD CULTURE.” (WATERS, 2002)



[15]

## NOSTALGIA, THE LONGING FOR GOOD FOOD AND THE PLEASURE OF EATING IN PRESENCE AND HISTORY

A tendency of an increase in C.S.A. (*community supported agriculture*) can be observed and by now reached several thousand. The basic thought goes to paying money to the farmer before the season starts and receiving a share of the produce throughout the season from the farm. A similar idea was developed by the Start-Up *Frischebox* (*fresh-box*) in Hamburg, Germany. The philosophy of the “fresh-box” business idea goes back to the same roots: local, healthy, sustainable, fair, trustworthy. It is a delivery system guaranteeing the consumer, the distribution of fresh food straight from the fields to the client’s doorstep and at the same time guaranteeing the farmer a fair price for his products, bypassing discounter and supermarkets. The sustainability of this system is also important considering our contemporary situation in the Covid19 lockdown and the importance of strengthening our immune system: groceries in this system are not stored for weeks like in supermarkets but delivered to the customer fresh from the field, so they still maintain all the vitamins, etc. to support our health and immune system, including a fresh taste. (Wirtz & Wielink, 2016)

It is also an expression of *Heimatliebe* (a love for Hamburg as a homeland) and the wish to share the unique taste of regional cuisine. For and with their producers, they form a network for smaller companies that struggle for their existence due to industrial food companies. At the same time, they allow customers to get to know the producers personally and to re-establish a direct relationship with nature. The range of deliverable goods is not only fresh seasonal vegetables and fruit but also meat, baked

goods, dairy products, juices, specialities and much more.

“As customers, we often do not know exactly where our food comes from. We would like to change this with *Frischebox* and therefore provide information about our producers and their food. With us you can find out exactly where, by whom and how our products are manufactured. This is how we create a new kind of transparency in the food industry. We only purchase products from sustainable cultivation and animal welfare.”

(Wirtz & Wielink, 2016)

The yearning for connection with food suppliers was one of the clearest illustrations of nostalgia as existential part of the new food revolution. “Many Americans look back to a simpler age when small family farmers have dominated the country far from being just an expression of modern dissatisfaction... of course, have had a powerful hold on the nation’s identity since its founding.”

Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America already during the 19th century had the belief that “those who work on the land of the chosen people of God, remained a bedrock of American culture long after the vast majority of citizens had left the land for other types of employment.” (Mart, 2018)

To maintain the roots of good food and quality also in the future of education in nutrition and sustainability, Waters started the *Edible Schoolyard Project* in Berkley, U.S.A. in 1995 where the whole cycle of harvesting to preparing and eating was taken into consideration in order to implant the knowledge of “learning by doing” in the school curriculum. The belief is to teach children greater respect for food, create a connection to the natural world as well as the action of sha-

ring the harvested food. (Waters, 2000) By now, many projects, with the same ethical idea, exist worldwide and have specially developed in cities where the disconnection to soil and nature is tangible.

In the city centres, green areas and above all gardens for the cultivation of vegetables are often rare or even absent. Also, some residents turning forgotten grounds and bold flat roofs into gardens in which even vegetables grew that could be eaten since they did not want to see how their neighbourhood got degenerated. The communal aspect of such a redesign a space is very elementary to everyone involved; thus, the idea is to find collective solutions aesthetically and practically, allowing for greeneries to grow and participants to feel home. Through the idea of shared ownership, everyone is playing a part in cleaning the ground and caring for it.

As a response to the evolving communal thought in 2009, more than 100 volunteers found their way to freeing a 6,000-square-meter site in Berlin-Kreuzberg, Germany for the *Prinzessinnengarten* project from the surrounding garbage. Now, grown in boxes, right on a roundabout, vegetables and herbs in organic quality are growing and also prepared in their own *Gartencafé* and *Gartenrestaurant*. Part of the communal idea is that those who help with urban gardening, get a discount on the purchase of freshly harvested food. It is a place where adults in work clothes are eager to plant, and harvest and children have a chance to connect to the basis of human existence. (Luzina, 2010)

In 1989 food activist Wendell Berry wrote an essay about *the pleasure of eating* where he states that taking pleasure in food should be pleasurable for everyone “the pleasure



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of eating should be a great pleasure not that of a mere gourmet. People who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy will remember their beauty of growing plants. Perhaps in the dewy first light of the morning when the gardens are at their best. Such a memory involved itself with the food and is one of the pleasures of eating. [...] The food industry wanted people to be more consumers, passive, uncritical, independent as consumers, people were unlikely to realise that the overriding concern of the food industry is not quality and health but volume and price.” (Berry, 1989) Instead, he said that people should not be content to be mere consumers - eating with the fullest pleasure. As Berry says, pleasure that does not depend on ignorance is perhaps the most profound enactment of one’s connection with this world.

As a conclusion of this chapter, I would like to quote Dan Barber again, who said that nostalgia and taste, function as mutually supportive and not as competing goals: “taste is a soothsayer, a truth-teller and it can be a guide in reimagining our food system and our diets from the ground up.” (Barber, 2015)

# FROM THE TABLE, TO TABLE MANNERS, TO TABLE SETTINGS



[17]

The basic cross-individual requirements concern the regularity, the hierarchy and the aesthetic stylisation of the meal as well as the field of communication, in opposite to a snack. Often completed by the presence of the table partner at an agreed time in an agreed place. There are behaviours and table manners that regulate the handling of the meal. Correct behaviour, which has changed and adapted throughout the time, has been written down in books and taught to children and adults. They contained instructive information on table prayers, handling cutlery, hygiene regulations, eating habits, how to sit and talk (or when to be silent), table decorations and the use of napkins. Still up to today, in the *European Protocol School*, for example, diplomats learn how to behave when exposed to various cultural influences at political banquettes as part of an etiquette "that defines a set of rules and customs that control excepted behaviour". (Hirsch, 2019) At the table, the community pays attention (often subliminal) to the correct application of the conventions. This task was and is sometimes also assigned to special people, who then accompany and coordinate the being together in the role of the host.

Although the book *fifty courtesies for the table* by the Italian F. Bonvinio was already written in 1290, it is said, that modern table manners were born in 1500. In 1530, a set of rules were written by Erasmus of Rotterdam for the son of a Dutch prince called

Henry of Burgundy, that later got published under the title *a handbook on good manners for children*. A first book was written only on the manner of how children had to behave at the table when dining with adults. (Baer, 2017)

Dining tables, on the other hand, only became popular one century later since tables before were only used for writing, playing cards, etc. Historically the kitchen and tables were also apart from each other. The word table is very descriptive when looking at its Latin origin arriving from *tabula*, which translates to *plank, board, flat piece*. (Fabricant, 2003)

In the middle age, the tables were long and portable so that everyone from the castle could eat together. The main family sat in raised chairs, and the other attendants were arranged in order of rank on long benches. "Table setting included the salt cellar, which was the first thing to put on the table [...] to sit above the salt was to sit in a place of honour and until the salt was put on a table no one could know where would be his allowed seat." (Murphy, 1921)

Occasionally in drawings and painting, a knife is shown, but in those times, spoons and knives were generally brought by guests, whose servants cut the fish and meat and carved the food for each one. Often the guests at the table would eat with fingers and throw the leftovers on the floor thus cats and dogs were welcome guests to eat up the leftovers whereas stroking the animals was against the rules of behaviour as well as picking teeth with a knife. (Murphy, 1921)

Since napkins were not used, hands were wiped outside of the table, which made the cleanliness of the table cloth an important matter for guests to wipe their hands on it.

A servant later came with a pitcher, basin and a towel on his arm to allow a cleanse of mouth and hands since food was shared from the same plate, hands and fingers had to be clean. Social life was progressing in the 16th century, so that wife and husband were eating from the same plate as evidence to their faithfulness and love, “so symbolic was it that Shakespeare makes one of his woman characters reproach her husband with the fact that she had not dipped her fingers in his dish for many months.” (Griffin, 2015)

Spoons at that time -mostly gifts at baptisms, as practised in Germany until today- were the essential utensils on the table. Mostly known was the design with an apostle on top where children of wealthy families owned all twelve figures in silver compared to the cheaper version of tinned iron, from which the saying “to be born with a silver spoon in his mouth” (Hirsch, 2019) occurred.

Forks came from Italy and were not welcomed immediately. Although one of the earliest forks, made of only two horns, belonged to a Byzantine princess who in 1071 travelled to Venice to marry the doge Domenico Selvo. The two-horned fork was not received very well for the catholic Vatican’s of Venice who saw a diabolic instrument, rather than an adjustment to cutlery. Later forks were made from iron or steel but rarely from silver and used in Italy for cutting meat or carrying it to one’s mouth since it was seen as inadequate to use one’s hands. (Reborra, 2009) “Queen Elizabeth had at least three forks: one of crystal garnished with gold and sparks of garnets, another of coral, garnished with gold, and a third of gold decorated with two little rubies, two small pearl pendants and a coral.” (Hirsch, 2019) Only by 1650 silver forks were of use in England and beca-

me common of all materials and shapes, as a contrast to the “messy” days where fingers were used and cleaned at the table, now it was seen to be more hygienic and cleaner when using a napkin (with its appearance also started the rules of how to fold them).

(Jeaffreson, 1875)

Eventually, during the Renaissance, the practice of eating with everyone of every social class started to change, and the nobility wanted to be more intimate. Therefore private dining rooms were used, away from the great hall, which so far had been the central place for special occasions.

The word component “table” indicates the local and spatial reference of a dining situation. It refers to the historically shaped piece of furniture, which is today inseparably linked to food intake in western culture and has materialised symbolic power. For the sociologist Jean Claude Kaufmann, the table is “legacy of the sacrificial altars”. (Hirsch, 2019) Besides, the table and its props always served as a tool for representing and exhibiting power and standing. Picturesque tableware, centrepieces, spice jars, drinking goblets, artistically decorated dishes and arrangements and diverse, differentiated porcelain sets testify to the constant game of demarcation and imitation between the classes.

The sideboard, now used as an individual piece of furniture, also has its origins in the word board. It was originally the end of the 18th century, where it was utilised as a small table next to the main table. (Butler & Wormley, 2020)



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## VICTORIAN AGE AND THE IMPORTANCE ON TABLE SETTING

To go more into detail of *nostalgia and food*, at least one part of the chapter has to be written on the rules and art of table setting. It is not only what we taste, that fascinates us but also what we observe in the first glimpse on a plate or a buffet. It is the three-dimensionality that one tries to fully understand with an analysis of textures and ingredients before taking a bite and tasting the dish. Setting the table in daily life is often just a necessity. However, for some special occasions, one still tries to set the table in response to its celebration, creating a symbiosis between festivity and decoration and the food.

The rules and meals at the table of the middle and upper class of the Victorian Age (1830–1901) in England, are a good example for the manners and table settings of a historical epoch. How all of those different senses and elements come together in one event, in one table-setting, can still be experienced today during an Afternoon Tea at 5 pm. This event was described in the beginning of 1900 as “a factor around which our social and domestic life revolves. Tea gives an opportunity for the exercise of hospitality that adds grace to our everyday life, and the tea table becomes the synonym for simp-

le and agreeable entertaining.” (Murphy, 1921)  
*The splendour of all the ritual elements, taste and impressions, I myself experienced in a High Tea at a Hotel in London.*

“Opulent feasts with expansive floral arrangements in colour coordination with food and drink in the midst of landscapes made of fine sugar structure, fruit tarts covered with jelly that look like perfectly constructed church windows. A table that could tell a story with an introduction, climax and a slowly ending, transitioning into the next tale. Afternoon Tea also called High Tea was a ritual, brought to life by Queen Victoria in 1840, where she invited selected guests to intimate teas every day. I was fascinated by the three-tier cake stand with the sweet and savoury delicacies. Next to a freshly prepared asparagus and cheese tart, small sandwiches are served, including thin slices of cucumber, crab meat with mayonnaise, ham with chutney, nutmeg and paprika - spices brought to England by the East India Company and followed by small cakes, including a scone filled with fruit, a gooseberry tart, an orange tartlet with clementine puree and small strips of the orange peel, almonds and pistachios, all according to recipes from 19th century.”

The British food historian and artist, Ivan Day is a great example of the art of recreating tables, inspired by Victorian England. His settings have become very popular in the U.K. where he is working on many projects involved with various Museums. Day’s latest project, was the exhibition *Feast and Food, The Art of Food in Europe, 1500-1800* in the *Fitzgerald Museum of Cambridge*, where he was the co-curator. For the exhibition, he created life-size facsimiles of banquet displays which involve “a taxidermy swan and peacock parts, gilded rosemary bushes and

a whole shower of sweetmeats, gingerbread, confits, cakes and what the French call *bibe-lots* (little trinkets).” (Richardson, 2020)

Since the interest in his form of art was becoming so highly requested, Ivan Day started his own cooking school some years ago, with unique practical courses on period cookery - *Historic Food*. Many of the classes take place in his own home, a seventeenth-century farmhouse on the edge of the English Lake District. The participants prepare the food in his authentic period kitchen where it is not just about recreating single plates but a whole setting. An interesting fact of how he as a historian, not only sees the aesthetic point of such recreations but the main focus of his courses being English food. He believes the English cuisine to be the most misunderstood and maligned of all European culinary traditions. “At *Historic Food*, we look to our own past and its remarkable gastronomic riches. You will be surprised at the extraordinary legacy of English food to be found on these pages. Yes, there are many historic dishes that are not suitable for the modern table, like the swan pie. But the English culinary tradition, with its vast, almost unfathomable literature, is a treasure house of gastronomic gems, most of them now forgotten.” (Day, 2015)

Ivan Day is reconnecting to what, according to him, nowadays seems to be lost in the 21st century - a connection to one’s roots, cultural identity and a connection to the past. All of these being the profound elements and aspects of nostalgia. In the practicality of aesthetics on the table, he was inspired by Mrs Marshall, an English chef, author, member of the women’s rights movement and inventor who, in 1883 during the Victorian age, opened her private cooking school *Mrs Marshall’s School of Co-*

“TABLE MANNERS DEFINE THE MEANING OF A MEAL. EATING IS A PHYSICAL NEED BUT MEALS ARE A SOCIAL RITUAL” (MURPHY, 1921)



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[20]

[21]

okery in London. (Russell, 2014) The school was of great success with over 2000 students that attended the classes. "Curry lessons were given by a colonel who had been in India; haute cuisine was taught by a Cordon Bleu graduate." (Snodgrass, 2004) Only two years later she had two patents for an ice-making machine and an ice cooler (a forerunner of the freezer).

She is also the inventor of the ice-cream in waffles, as we know them today. A recipe also published in her book in 1885 called *Ices Plain and Fancy: The Book of Ices*. She also thought about how to present such delicate dishes - "previous to this, street vendors used glass licks that they'd put ice cream into, you'd stay near the cart and eat it, then hand it back to them to wash in a bucket of water for the next customer." Not only the waffle cone was a big step in the making of ice-cream but also her discovery to use liquid air, to make instant ice-cream. "She used this machine to make the most spectacular moulded ices, among them her extraordinary *Rosseline Bombe*, a snowy confection flavoured with rosewater, maraschino and preserved cherries. It was wearing spun sugar, in the manner of a mourning veil." (Russell, 2014)

**"ALL CREATURES EAT,  
BUT ONLY MAN DINES"  
MRS BEETON**

During the 18th century, the Western aristocrats turned the art of table setting more into a form of expression, with rich people hiring decorators to set their tables and transform them into parallel worlds. In 1811 the *Gentleman's Magazine* described the table at

*Prince Reagans Feast at Carlton House*, the U.K. as "a canal of pure water flowing from a river fountain beautifully constructed at the head of the fountain. Its banks were covered with green moss and aquatic flowers. Gold- and silverfish swam spurted through the bubbling current, which produced a pleasing murmur where it fell and formed a cascade at the outlet." (Goldsmith, 1812)

In fact, the dining room tables were of masculine taste since men were considered to spend more time at the table while the ladies left the table after the finished formal part, to follow their own interests. "After the formal dinner, when the ladies have retired to the drawing-room, cigars and cigarettes are offered to the gentleman. These may be brought to the table in the cedar-lined silver boxes which accompany many smoking-sets." (Murphy, 1921)

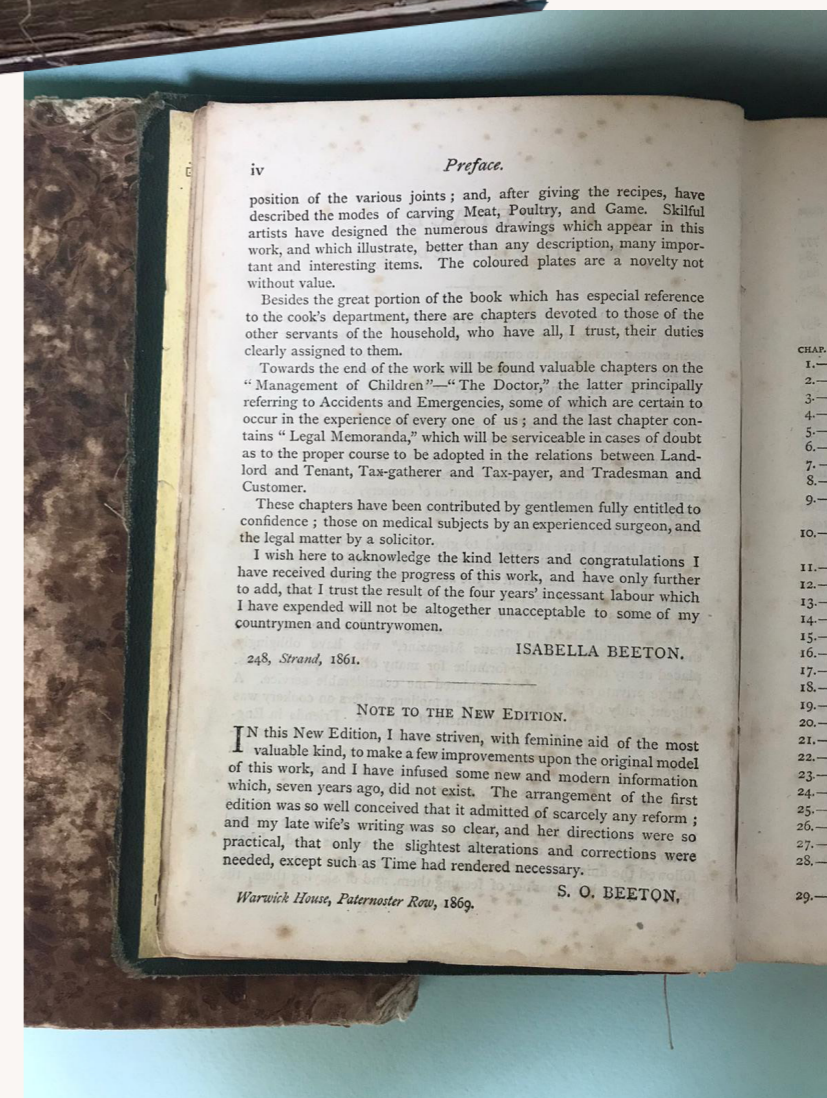
Interestingly, the table legs were of similar shape to "female curves" and therefore considered to be too provocative thus were covered with a tablecloth to "avoid inciting men's imaginations." (Grundhauser, 2017)

In the same period of covering the feminine table legs, Isabella Beeton, better known as Mrs Beeton, started her career in 1859 writing monthly columns called *Cooking, Pickling and Preserving* for the *English Woman's Domestic Magazine*. In 1884 she published the book of household management for women of the middle class as the first author to collect such ideas, help, solutions and recipes for women. It did not only become popular to set the table according to different topics and themes but also to find inspiration in attending exhibitions, on how to do so. (Abrams, History - Victorian Britain: The Cookery Book as Source Material) The different themes were varying from *Mayday luncheon, Arabian buffet, Ski supper* to *Explorer return luncheon* - with every detail thought about and translated



[22]

my father's original version from 1869 of the book of household management for women of the middle class by Mrs Beeton



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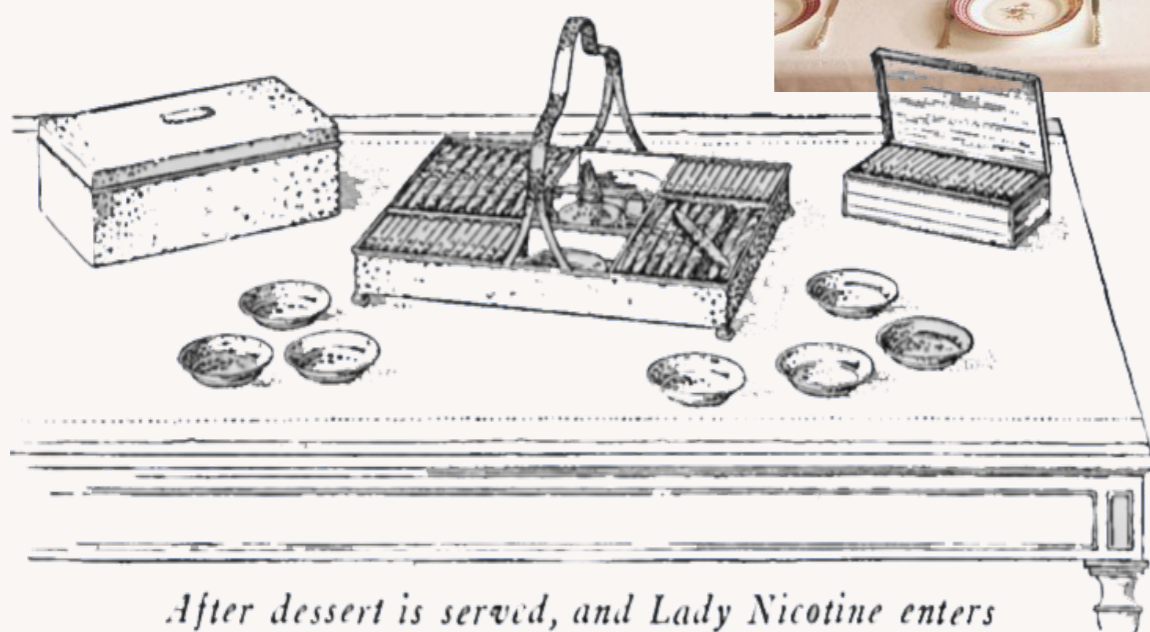


into pyramids of cakes, Italian palazzi made of different fruit and flower arrangements, figures of sugar dancing on the table or flying over the chandeliers. (Beeton, 1884)

After Mrs Beeton's book became internationally famous, Claudia Quigley Murphy, an American consultant in home-economy, wrote a book called *The history of the art of table setting - ancient and modern*. The first page of her book states: "This monograph is intended to give content of knowledge which shall be accurate and suggestive on the subject of table setting for use in schools, colleges and by extension workers and women clubs, etc." (Murphy, 1921)



[25]



After dessert is served, and Lady Nicotine enters  
The cigarette and cigar service

[24]

## MRS BEETON & MRS MURPHY: THE ART OF TABLE-SETTING

It was important "to set the table as beautiful as possible, to only use the snowiest of linen, the brightest of cutlery, and the cleanest of china." It was also considered to be fashionable to have cards laid upon the table, bearing the name, sometimes printed very beautifully upon silk, indicating where each guest shall sit, which saved confusion in being seated. (Murphy, 1921)

Within the display of meat dishes, butlers would bring pyramids of fruits composed of peaches, plums, apples, grapes and oranges - the top was mostly consisting of a pineapple which was frequently rented for the occasion. When a portion of pineapple was requested by a guest, the tactful Butler said: "the flavour of the peaches is choice" (Murphy, 1921), and a portion of peaches was served and the pineapple passed on intact. The rules of a peach to be served was to bring it on a six-inch plate and a silver fruit knife so that guest may cut it into quarters and peel it at ones pleasure (this rule also applied to pears, plums, apricots and mandarines).

Also, the order of serving was important: starting from the first hostess, the guests of honour that was seated on the right of the hostess, to the last host.

Of central importance not only for the table-setting but as well for the social status, are the household linens and table cloth. "Sheets and tablecloth, carefully folded and squarely stacked, have long been both cherished possessions and a delight to the eyes", as the author Françoise de Bonneville states in *The Book Of Fine Linen*. (Beeton, 1884) Table Cloth, Napkins and other fine linens were stored in solid wooden chests in me-

dieval times and later carefully stacked and folded in piles in linen-cupboards, in French called *armoires*. Up till nowadays, these are remembered as the sacred *tabernacle of household linen*.

Table-cloth and household linen up till the 20th century were valued as treasure and wealth of a family and as such, part of the bridal trousseau, the dowry or in German *Aussteuer*. (Bonneville, & Dusingberre, 1995) They were collected by parents and sewn, embroidered and monogrammed for many years by girls and women and brought into marriages by brides, being a valuable asset to the new household: "Linen was richly symbolic, conveying above all the wealth to be displayed before guests". This was practiced in aristocracy, bourgeoisie as well as in poor families. "Whether humble or extravagant, the trousseau was always brought in by the bride and generally remained her property in case of widowhood or remarriage". (Bonneville, & Dusingberre, 1995)

### A short excursion in Storytelling

A personal narrative about the tradition of dowry and linen:

My parents often told me, how they went on a travel back to the time of dowry at the beginning of the 20th century, when they opened the grand wooden cupboards of my father's great aunt, who was born in 1900 and died in 1985 in East Germany, D.D.R.. Hidden under layers of clothing and items such as *Chapeau Clacques* or feather boas there were stored in roles of fine linen, stacks of table cloth and napkins made of finest linen and damask in various delicately woven patterns with artistically embroidered family crests and initials. Next to these lay kitchen towels of fine batiste or thick linen, still wrapped in faded cotton threads by packages of ten. Being afraid of the unscrupulous D.D.R. border guards in that

time, where the State of the D.D.R. were confiscating historical belongings to sell them against foreign exchange, my parents left most of the findings in the D.D.R., only taking a few of the towels and some embroidered batiste handkerchiefs back to their student-home in Hamburg. They still are used and valued.

There were also many different types for every meal of the day and its different occasions. „Lunch will be more elaborate than breakfast and mats or runners will be white not coloured, napkins have to have 14 to 17 inches square. At dinner, a heavy damask cloth is preferred, always rectangular and never round - no matter of the shape of the table. Napkins must be 26-30 inches square. Remember to always put over a silence cloth of white, thick, double-faced material.“

(Beeton, 1884)

Each guest was supposed to have 25 inches space for serving while a bowl of fruits and flowers served as an elegant element of decoration but only if not too high so that guests were still able to see each other and communicate. The layer of cutlery was always the same only with one exception when oysters were the first course to be served. Also, the setting of glasses were following strict rules, not only for the positions and course but also to be filled about three quarters, just before the meat was announced - which was supposed to be done quietly by either the daughter of the family or the hostess herself. No-one should have to approach a table with chairs touching it, and while being served, the servant was to “never reach across a cover. Everything should be served and removed from the left of a guest.“ (Murphy, 1921)

Deserts were only served after all the other dishes were removed from the table, and a

waitress or member of the family brushed the left crumbs off the table, using a plate and a folded napkin. (Beeton, 1884)

Silver for dessert will probably have been laid with the cover when the table was set, but the silver to be used will depend largely on what the desire is to be. “For ice cream, particularly the brick ice cream, the ice cream spoon with prongs should be used.“

(Murphy, 1921)

While the above-mentioned rules were considered for dinner, there were also occasions of a late dinner, a last supper: “is the crowning touch to the theatre party of the returning guests from the dinner dance. A tasty bit of supper which enhances the lingering memory of the evenings entertainment. At this feast no servant enters. The table setting is simple, as outlined, and then - let joy be unconfined.“ (Murphy, 1921)



[26]



For Afternoon Tea [27]  
A touch of charming hospitality

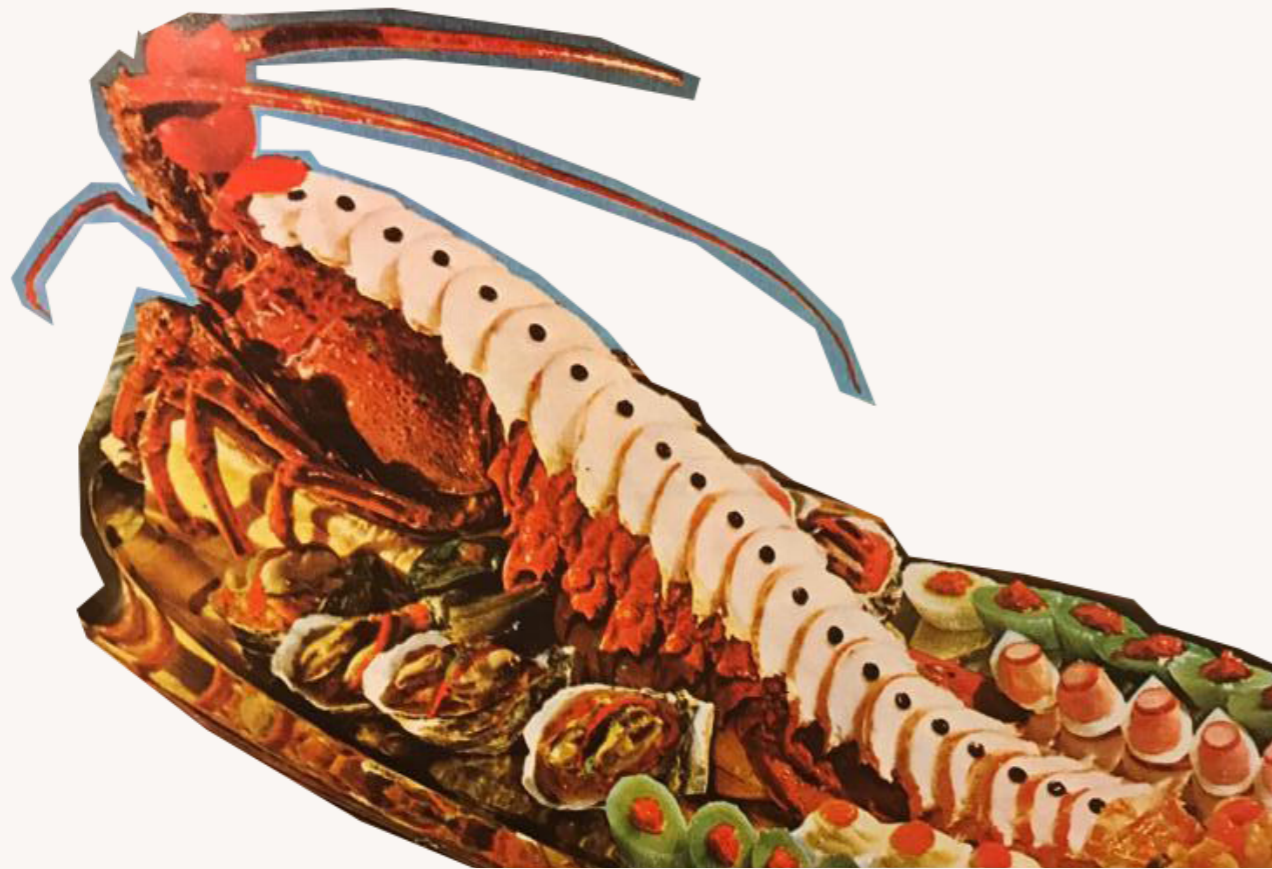


[28]

“TEA GIVES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EXERCISE OF A HOSPITALITY THAT ADDS GRACE TO OUR EVERYDAY LIFE, AND THE TEA-TABLE BECOMES THE SYNONYM FOR SIMPLE AND AGREEABLE ENTERTAINMENT.“ (MURPHY, 1921)

# FOOD IN ART

*Celebrating food as  
a catalyst for creativity*



[29]

While the Victorian rules of table settings and arrangements were rather strict, a particular spirit of artistic intentions was part of decorating festive meals in response to themes, seasons and occasions. This chapter, on the other hand, is mainly focused on the artistic approach to food that appeals to all the senses. In an article of the exhibition *still-life with steak*, in 2010 in Düsseldorf, Germany the author criticises "everything comes on the table here, from the eating disorder to the T.V. cooking show. It is about hunger and globalisation, the mythical and the everyday, about questions of taste, about the kitchen, disgust and death. Food is something elementary, inexhaustible as a topic and material - where do you start, where do you end?" (Kippenberger, 2010)

This chapter starts in 1512, where Giovan Francesco Rustici, a sculptor and painter of the Florentine renaissance, together with eleven other artists and poets, including Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Botticelli, founded *Compagnia del Paiolo*. The intent was to merge art with food through scenographic presentations of delicacies and equally fantastic laid tables, under the principle "art is made for dinner", knowing how to combine culture and conviviality, good artistic and culinary taste. In fact, the Italian artist Vasari mentions that during the Renaissance period, it was natural for an artist to be able to juggle and paint in the kitchen at the same time since

the two arts involved equal manual and creative skills. (Wagner, 2015)

"At dinners each of the twelve members could conduct up to four people; and everyone had the obligation to bring a dinner of his own invention. As soon as the *Compagnia del Paiolo* was established, Giovan Francesco Rustici gave a dinner to his companions; and to better justify its title, he had a vat brought into the room, which he attached to the ceiling by means of irons and stirrups and on the outside, he wrapped it very well with canvases and paintings, which made the idea of a huge cauldron really." (Hibbert, Seiger, & Piggott, 1994)

Among all the artist-chefs, and the little information that we have, especially the works of Andrea del Sarto were praised. He was known to excel in the quality of the food and the beauty of its presentation. Famous is a temple inspired by the Baptistery of Florence - "the floor was a huge plate of jelly with partitions of various colours of mosaics; the columns, which looked like porphyry, were large and large sausages, the bases and capitals were of Parmesan cheese, the cornices of sugar pastes and the tribune was made of quarters of marzipan, in the middle there was a choir lectern made of calf cold with a book of lasagna that had the letters and notes to sing of peppercorn, and those who sang at the lectern were cooked thrushes with the beak open." (Wagner, 2015) It was a circle of likeminded, who by the end of the sixteenth century dissolved in the artistic actions of *Compagnia del Paiolo* with almost no documentation of the events that took place at the dinner table of Rustici, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto and Botticelli.

While we have only little submissions of the turbulent evenings in Florence during the 16th century, many other items of that

period and those prior, still exist until today. Some of those might have only survived due to a wish of an individual to conserve a moment, an object of ones past. Therefore vitrines also called showcases, already existed in ancient times, for wealthy people to display their valuable possessions and their magnificent objects. There is a variety of different types, each serving its specific purpose. There are for example display cases for collectors, for jewellery and exhibitions as well as many other individual protections, made from see-through glass. One of such glasses are the jar bells, bells to protect the cheese, dried flowers and expensive clocks, thin glass to preserve what lies underneath, to exhibit an object to the observer but protect it from dust and the process of ageing. Such bells of decorative and safekeeping matters were much used in the Victorian age. (Levao, 2018) A parallel can be drawn to the use of jelly in many different forms and ways wether it was for sweet or salty dishes. A translucent liquid pored over delicately stapled fruits or carefully arranged lobsters on salad beds. Clearly a matter of conservation and keeping the food fresh as long as possible but also conserving its state in its pure beauty with no fear of oxidation, change of colour and texture. A meal that could stay in the middle of the table for a whole dinner, only to be cut in the very end, when its purpose was not anymore only to be beautiful but to finally reveal its delicate ingredients.

A more long-lasting but equally aesthetically pleasing transformation of the preservation and displaying of food can be found in *food models*. Mostly used in Asia, these models serve the street displays of restaurants to represent dishes available inside. In the 1920s, Japanese artisans and candle makers developed what is now made from plastic,

wax, resin and similar materials. Until now, 95% of the *fake food* is handcrafted and mostly done by moulds and later painted by hand or airbrushed. Different parts can be assembled according to what is needed - salad leaves, for instance, could be used in a burger as well as inside a healthy-looking vegan bowl. (Delicious Vinyl: Japan's Plastic Food Replicas)

Each restaurant can have their food models tailored to their menu - which are rather expensive but also the last long. The industry, a powerful economic force, has already reached the interest of not only restaurant owners, mockups in movies and advertisement but in 1980, were also exhibited at London's *Victoria and Albert Museum*. When the American chain restaurant *Wendys* needed artificial kale for their salad bar display, the first food model factory outside Asia was founded, the *American Fake Food Company*. (AP, 1994)

**"PAINTERS HAVE TAUGHT PEOPLE TO SEE BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO SEE FROM PEOPLE WHO DON'T SEE WHAT YOU SEE."**

**OPENING YOUR EYES, SEEING THINGS, THAT'S WHAT ART DOES. PAINTING FOR THE EYES. MUSIC FOR THE EARS. COOKING DOES THIS FOR THE EDIBLE THINGS OF THIS WORLD. "**

**PETER KUBELKA**



[30]

## STILL-LIFES

Such plastics are long-lasting, improved not to fade in colour and will probably survive generations. In contrast to past centuries, nowadays in the 21st century, we now have the ability to protocol every day of our lives, leaving behind a significant number of information about the status quo of humanity and its revolving matters. For information about past times tho, we depend on tangibles through books, documents, paintings and objects.

A critical factor of information concerning food and nutrition in past times are still-life paintings (*natura morta*, i.e. dead objects). In Pompeii, frescoes and mosaics from

before 79 C.E. were discovered, revealing detailed images of fruits, fish and fowl in the midst of green and rich flora and fauna. One of these original mosaics was shown in Rome at the exhibition *Pompeii And Santorini - Eternity In A Day* at the *Museum Scuderie Del Quirinale*. In the mosaic, one sees an element of an original place of sacrifice, which was decorated with paintings of religious origin and offerings to the Roman gods. (Huber, 2019)

In paintings, for a long time, food was part of an arrangement of subjects, part of a composition, in the midst of peoples gathering, a kitchen or the famous last supper. Slowly, over the centuries, the focus

changed until the figures moved away, making space for different types of the food itself, moving into the foreground, allowing a close look on tables.

In the 15th and 16th century, early forms of still-life paintings were created. The exploration of nature surrounding man became the purpose of detailed nature studies. The interest in nature and its detailed reproduction increased the presence of flowers and fruits in works of art. (Samplers & Shovava, 2018)

At the beginning of the 17th century in the Baroque period, the depictions of arranged food developed into the independent genre of still-lives.

There are many different types of still-life paintings, i.e. flowers, books, musical instruments and precisely those of food: breakfast still lifes, dessert still lifes and every imaginable subcategory and specialisation. (Ekkart, Jackson, Buvelot, & Winkel, 2007)

At the start, it was primarily the painters from Northern Europe, who were interested in depicting objects of everyday life. During the independence of the provinces in the North of Holland, still-lives often began to show exotic objects, fruits from India and China. (Samplers & Shovava, 2018)

“As trade with the New World in North and South America began to flourish, a new eating culture emerged in the Protestant Netherlands. Delicacies became representative luxury goods; sugar candy was imported from tropical regions and replaced honey as a sweetener. Noble and rich merchants celebrated feasts with six to nine courses [...] of course never without demonstrating humility with the help of religious symbols. In this way, they replaced the church, in which there was a strict ban

on images, as the most important patron.” (Fuchs, 1994)

While still-lives do not necessarily show the way people were eating in everyday life, never the less they are revealing dishes, ingredients, objects and artefacts of that historical period. The motives and the size of a work, were often responses to the wishes of clients, who wanted to show and celebrate the newly acquired wealth, giving a definite symbolic meaning to each ingredient found in the paintings, its light and focus, engravings and porcelain.

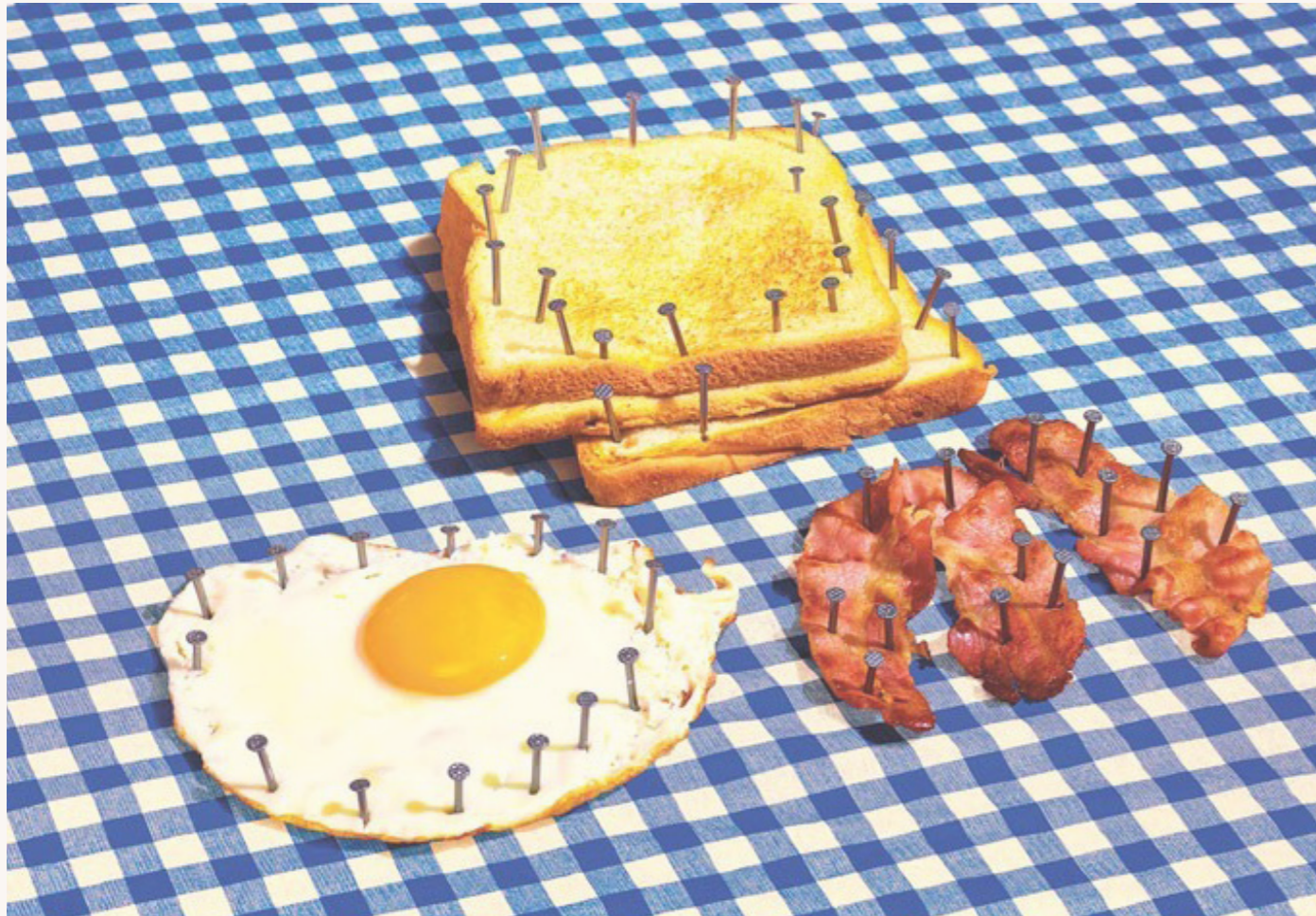
A good example is the painting *Cheese, Almonds and Pretzels* (1615) by the Dutch artist Clara Peters, which is one of the most important works that was emerging at the time.

In Clara Peters' paintings, stories of her epoch are told with its different types of staged food and items. One of those items is the porcelain plate from the period of the Chinese emperor Wanli (very rare and expensive at that time) next to a wine glass, *Facon de Venise*, made of Italian glassblowers, who worked outside their home countries, in and around the city of Antwerp. A glass is half-filled with imported wine, which was part of a good meal for the upper-class while the majority of the country drank the conventional beer. The objects of the painting, like the cheese, are symbols which carry a special meaning for the contemporary viewers. (Murphy, Luca, & Tom, 2017)

The cheese, the central object of the painting highlights a valuable export product from the Netherlands, which here, in its excessive accumulation, reflects the Dutch national pride. Since the Middle Ages, cheese was a central part of the region's economy. “Painters and especially their clients see it as a sign of wealth,” says Patrick Rambourg,

French nutrition-historian. (Samplers & Shovava, 2018) In the knife that protrudes from the table, Clara Peters not only symbolises her name but also marks it as a possession, making one of the objects her own. Next to the cheese, lying in the shadows, Peeters included a loaf of bread which was made from wheat, another sign of wealth since most loaves of bread at that time were made from rye. (Brusati, 1990) Also, the Pretzel plays an interesting role in its special shape: contrary to the common pretzels, instead of two holes, it had three holes. The pretzel was first illustrated in a 12th-century manuscript, meaning they existed since the Middle Ages (consumed by all classes due to its presence in the church like wafers today) and later appeared in Pieter Bruegel's masterpiece (1559) of *The fight between carnival and lent*. (Upton, 2013) Finally, the pretzel is persistent to this day, almost always with three holes. Following some explanations, the three holes stand for the three trinities of the spirit.

Next to the many different foods, dishes and arrangements, throughout this research, whether it is a coincidence or not, apples in all colours and shapes appeared repeatedly. In antiquity and since the Christian bible, apples were considered a symbol of love and fertility, a sensual stimulus, a seductive desire and sin, a fruit of knowledge. (Redding, 2018) A strong symbolic meaning that, did not disappear with still-life paintings but was adapted by the pop-culture, the Beatles and not only in its logo but also its name, the company Apple.



[31]

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND SET-DESIGN

In times where almost everyone owns a cellphone with a camera, always in reach of an online platform to publish the quick shot of a breakfast plate and sometimes carefully arranged product placements in the midst of rainbow coloured doughnuts and unicorn muffins, photos of food seem to lose its appeal of outstanding and different aspects. It is after all an artistic value to be able to capture what might seem trivial but, shown in a different light, suddenly seems unrecognisable and asks for a wholly reworked interpretation of the artist and the viewer. In 2019, the book *Visual Feast, contemporary food staging and photography*, was published, bringing a

collection of famous food enthusiastic artist together, showing the different ways of approaching the same matter. Some of the collected photographers and stylists use the aesthetic of the past with a splash of modernity. In contrast, others follow the trends on plates and technology but manage to give the images an equally appealing twist. There are many different trends of pastel colour versus rough masculine food settings, the industrial imperfection of, i.e. kale, potatoes and other earthy vegetables next to a red and white stake, merging with its dark background. "If social media reflects current social values, foods is undeniable a large part of that collective. What we find on

our plates is also depending like every other aspect of social life, on trends, the so-called food culture. A never-ending spectrum of forms, sizes and colours that are asking to be interpreted." (Klanten, & Kouznetsova, 2017)

A special stylistic element of contemporary food-photography is the use of *Technicolour*, as a symbiosis between the past and the present as illustrated in the book *Visual Feast*. In this technique, colours that were developed for the cinema to be put behind a black and white film were transferring oversaturated red, greens and its middle tones on the images. (Polzer, & Read, 2006) One example is Maurizio Di Iorio's concurrent use of technicolour tableaus together with simplified forms of the 1960s and 70s running with a bright Pop-Art look. "As nostalgia is at play with modern technology, this *Technicolour* work reminds us to question the line between the artificial and the natural." (Cattelan, Ferrari, & Talso, 2017)

Thus, between the artificial and natural, the desire to turn food into a spectacle is omnipresent - food has always played a dual role as both a basic human necessity and the subject of creative endeavours. It is a stylistic element and in the case of the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan and photographer Pierpaolo Ferrari, translated in a surrealistic way since 2010. (Cattelan & Ferrari, 2012) The duo created *Toiletpaper*, a biannual magazine which was published only in limited editions. It is creating an aesthetic language of troubling, trashy and quirky imagery. The images of *Toiletpaper* are evocative of modern-day surrealism. They show things that do not go together that almost consist of two minus poles, only being held together by absurdity. Pink jelly, topped with parsley and crab meat, next to a purple shiny and rather plastic-looking lobster on a bed of bright

green limes, desperately stretching its arms towards the lady serving the food on a tray with her perfectly done pink fingernails, as if she came right from the times where women wore aprons to serve the home-cooked meals. Next to photography, the established design studio has long since also started to produce furniture and other objects for the house, always with the seemingly alien tablets (and sometimes cut fingers on a plate - be careful not to mistake them for sausages!).

The photos are shot and arranged by the duo and trigger a feeling of disgust for food which seems inedible and pervert, with its bold colours and disturbing images. On the other hand "one could also be feeling nostalgic for the quirky past but also happy not to be Betty Crocker's guest during a dinner circa 1970."

(Klanten, & Kouznetsova, 2017)



[32]

**"THE VERY BEGINNING OF FOOD IMAGERY WAS WHEN OPULENT STILL-LIFES WERE THE PREFERRED VEHICLE OF EXPRESSION, THIS STYLE BRINGS THE IMAGINED DELIGHTS OF AN ABUNDANT FEAST BACK TO A SOCIETY THAT HAS SPENT YEARS ASCETICALLY COUNTING CALORIES."**



[33]

## PERFORMANCE AND INTERACTIONS

Daniel Spoerri, a Swiss artist and inventor of *Eat Art*, set up his restaurant and *Eat Art Gallery* near the *Düsseldorf Kunsthalle*, Germany in 1970. (Altemeier, 2015)

"Art just to watch, Spoerri has always been too little. That's why he likes to work with food: because it appeals to all the senses." (Kippenberger, 2010) For 100 Deutsche Mark, guests could have their tables preserved as *Fallenbilder - trap pictures*. In random or tidy situations, objects found by chance were attached to their base exactly where they were (depending on the coincidence - table, chair, box, etc.). Only their position in relation to the viewer changed: the result was explained as an image. The horizontal became the vertical, i.e. the leftovers of breakfast were attached to the table and hung on the wall with the table. (Altemeier, 2015) The restaurant served, an alphabet soup in which only letters of the same type were available as well as menus depending on how the visitor looked. There was also a cannibal dinner with human-looking limbs.

1971, in the same year when Alice Waters opened her restaurant *Chez Panisse* in California, the artist Gordon Matta-Clarke founded the restaurant *Food* in New York City together with a few friends. The restaurant existed approximately three years and was situated in SoHo, a district of New York that during the 70s was still not well known and urbanised. *Food* had an open kitchen, with also local street food vendors offering their food. (Vaines, 2015) *Food* also had many impacts on the world of food, like a Japanese chef who served the first New York sushi. An article of the British food and culture journal *The Gourmand* describes "the movement of guests, waiters, cooks and retailers in the open space as almost choreographic" (Lee, & Matta-Clark, 2001) - *Food* was both a restaurant and an art project where artists were invited on a weekly base to serve as guest chefs with the whole dinner consisting of a performance art piece." The bone dinner, for only \$4, was one of the most famous evenings at *Food*. The name is descriptive when looking at the ingredients of the different dishes "oxtail soup, roasted marrow bones and frogs' legs, among other bony entrees". (Kennedy, 2007) After the guests finished the plate, the bones were cleaned and put into necklaces so that diners could wear their leftovers home. (Lee, & Matta-Clark, 2001)

Gordon Matta-Clarke has a special conception of food, separated into three elements as defined as follows:

"One imagines a complex journey of nutritious (culinary) actions - (opulence pleases, although simplicity is more convincing):

- Selection (the components in their natural form are torn from their landscape)
- Preparation (each substance is boiled, pickled, mixed, in short: undergoes a variety of imaginative changes)

**FOOD**

127 Prince Street OPENING SAT., OCT. 16 . . . WE HOPE!

TUESDAY - FRIDAY 11:30 A.M. until MIDNIGHT  
 SATURDAY 11:30 A.M. until 3 A.M. serving hours  
 SUNDAY SPECIAL GUEST CHEF NIGHT 7 P.M. until 11 P.M.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: WE DO NOT YET HAVE A LIQUOR LICENSE OR A WINE AND BEER LICENSE SO PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN LIQUOR.

OUR MENU CHANGES EVERY DAY. HERE ARE SOME SAMPLES.

LUNCHES are 2 soups and 1 stew with homemade bread, and sandwiches.

stock soup UTD	lamb and squash stew
mushroom and barley soup	beef and vegetable stew
carrot soup	rabbit stew with prunes
black bean soup cuban	used car stew
navy bean, beer and cheese soup	liver dumpling stew and alka seltzer
fish chowder	chili
borscht with sour cream	bouillabaise
gazpacho	shrimp and chicken gumbo
suimono	

DINNERS are one thing each night--a main course with vegetables, salad and dessert.

velvet chicken in satin sauce	canary pudding
acorn squash with mint	winter fruit salad
raw mackerel with wasabi sauce of wasabi, saki & soy	bananas flambé
Japanese New Year's dish	Muster Day gingerbread
mock chicken drumsticks or city chicken	lumberjacks
creamed sorrel	hobnails
yams baked in honeybutter	quakers
stuffed tongue creole	apple apricot sauce with almonds
anchovy onion pie	
baked marrow bones	
roasts, pot roasts, curries	
macaroni maruzze with blueberries	
seviche	
peruska - periog for our vegetarian night which is Tuesdays	
fig, garlic and anchovy salad	
corn and flour tortillas	

SUNDAY SPECIAL GUEST CHEF DINNERS are.

DRINKS

fresh squeezed orange juice	
apple juices	
fresh vegetable juices	
coffee - we are trying several kinds and styles	
teas	
milk	

PRICES - 50¢ - 75¢ for soup with bread \$1.25 - \$1.50 stew with bread  
 \$3.00 for dinner \$5.00 Sunday special guest chef night dinner  
 We have \$10 books of meal tickets on sale at FOOD for only \$9.50

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- Cooking (here flame, time and elements are the palette; moisture versus dryness, charring, brief searing, all types of heat application)" (Lee, & Matta-Clark, 2001)

The Argentine artist Rirkrit Tiravanija started cooking in the gallery context in the 1990s in order to initiate social interactions.

For him, the preparation of food means communication and design of the world.

"You just work with what you have right now, and the essence of it is the spirit and the way it is done. In this respect, it is not just about tasting good. The food is ordinary, but what arises from conversations should be artistic and witty. Stranger that have never met start a discussion from which a real relationship develops. That is the meaning of the matter, a situation should arise - obviously not an everyday one, but a similar one." (Felix-Jager, 2002) In 1992, Rirkrit Tiravanija created an exhibition titled *Untitled (Free)* at 303 Gallery in New York. The artist served rice and Thai curry for free, inside a gallery that he had completely changed into a simple kitchen.

(Herriman, 2015) The visitor was interacting with the art where the gap between artist and viewer dissolved. The viewer is not just looking at the art, but finds himself to be part of it—and, in fact, making the art, as one eats curry and talks with friends or new acquaintances. "Eating as a communicative act is currently an important point of reference for current art." (Felix-Jager, 2002)

Peter Kubelka, the experimental filmmaker, was the first to teach cooking from 1978 to 2000 at the *Städelschule in Frankfurt*. In an interview in 2011, he said: "man is a sculptor (he can shape with his hands). Filming and cooking are also real things - artificial man-made. Both are plastic things that evoke images in the head of the one

watching or eating; both are equally media. Cooking celebrates the presence of man in a world that he has made edible". (Berger & Kubelka, 2001) In his point of view, the base of cooking consists of raw materials and their processing with the different consistencies, i.e. eatable plastics as Peter Kubelka calls the *Wiener Schnitte*. It consists of different layers including almond chocolate biscuit, apricot and marzipan which can not be thoroughly analysed by looking at it before tasting and feeling its different consistencies, which according to Kubelka "counts as the creator of memory when eating". Cooking is a time-consuming process and not like painting: "cooking and eating are not static, like the painting you look at and then you have to go again, and the painting stays on the wall. We are on the other hand in time, in a timed manner - something essential when eating - which ends when you have eaten the artwork." All of this can be repeated like a song or a performance, the essence will always stay the same even if the outcome might slightly change. "This is the tradition that is called oral tradition in literature. The gestural tradition is added when cooking or dancing." (Kubelka, 2008)



[35]



**NOSTALGIA**

# THE DISCOVERY OF THE MEMORY OF TASTE

How a church tower  
became a brioche



[36]

The novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* - *In search of lost time*, by the French author Marcel Proust, published in seven volumes, appeared a little more than 100 years ago on November 14, 1913. It is considered a milestone in world literature, a work of reconstruction of the past through memory and a masterpiece of gastrosophical literature.

Proust "frees the reality spilt by purposes and habits, so that hardly a Proust reader sits as half-happy between the people in a railway compartment as before", because the effect of the stories makes the reader "receptive to subtleties." (Foster, & Cogan, 2016) The phenomenon is probably known to those who have read through a few pages of the book *La vie mode d'emploi* - *Life: A User's Manual* by George Perec.

It might in both cases (Proust and Perec) seem as if one was reading about banalities of another life, in this case about the life of a man called Marcel who "follows the narrator's recollections of childhood and experiences into adulthood during late 19th century to early 20th century aristocratic France, while reflecting on the loss of time and lack of meaning to the world." (Large, 2001) Alfred Humblot, the head of the *Ollendorff Publishing House*, took a look at Proust's manuscript and explained in a letter to the French writer Louis de Robert, "that he could not understand how it took anyone to write thirty pages to describe how one does fall asleep." (Foster, & Cogan, 2016)

But exactly the thirty pages that it takes to fully understand the habits of the narrator, the exact observation of the moment, or as we call it now the "awareness" for every action that at the moment itself might seem of no great importance, but later creates the whole, the existence in the past that is as important as the present.

In his book *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, the author Alain de Botton says that Proust's perceptual acuity, sensitivity and hypochondria are so useful that they can even change the life of the reader. "The author's conclusions can be a new thought-provoking impulse for the reader." (de Botton, 2019)

It is one of the basic facts of this novel that one neither possesses nor understands reality except in memory. Memory as of the moment that is still dark in the immediate experience. The novel is an attempt to find the entirety of a world that has sunk into the subconscious from memory, with all the sharpness of the contours and luminosity of the colours, in a sensual immediacy, "remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were." (de Botton, 2019)

The immersing of a piece of a madeleine in a cup of tea triggers a wave of memories for the narrator. "No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me it

was me. ... Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it? ... And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it. And all from my cup of tea." (Proust, 1975)

Marcel Proust saves the lost, lived time by reviving it through sensual perception and enjoyment together with the memories that arise from it. In symbiosis with that, he has a preference for culinary delights (often as a means of comparison) as metaphorical comparisons in which, i.e. a church tower becomes a brioche: They are parts of his puzzle in his search of the lost time. With Proust, perception is not limited to the visual, but also includes all sensory impressions, which are linked to memories that are only presented through the sensual experience. That is *Gastrosophy* and nostalgia in a symbiosis.



Marcel Proust and his madeleine

[37]

# WHAT IS NOSTALGIA?

*Not all memories are in general nostalgia*



[38]

We remember overwhelming enjoyment for a long time and very often have the accompanying circumstances, such as the season, weather, as well as details of the respective location, or the people present, stored in our memory forever - thinking about time as a fixed quantity, even if it always represents a variable. In our memory, presence and experience of time, food is always present. (Stephan et al., 2014) It has a special meaning and plays a central role in cultural gatherings and religious celebrations. That is why nostalgia often comes with food. These occasions are positive memories, but food is the subconscious but essential part, food. So the taste of food can be evocative of childhood, a decade or a "world of yesterday". (Zweig, 1943)

"When we experience nostalgia, we are given an opportunity to feel a moment as it truly was, void of any fear or uncertainty. This is because the circumstances that we worry about at the time were already passed. At the time, our worries lived in the uncertainty of what the next days, months, years would bring. But those days have since passed. We have lived through the times we were worried about, and here we are, doing just fine." (Tierney, 2013)

## HISTORY OF NOSTALGIA

It all started in the 17th century, when Johannes Hofer, a Swiss doctor discovered an intense yearning for homeland at Swiss soldiers. There are many stories of how the Swiss soldiers were put in that mental state. One story tells that the soldiers experienced traumata to ears and brain, by the constant sounds of cowbells, to the point that commanders forbid the soldiers to sing their own folklore in the fear that it might cause psychological imbalance. Johannes Hofer called the discovered disease, nostalgia. (Stephan et al., 2014)

A feeling that was already described in *The Odyssey* by Homer. The Greek hero Odysseus, king of Ithaca, wanted to return to his home after the ten-year war and fall of Troy. He was on the sea for three years after which the goddess Calypso held him captive for seven years offering him immortality, but Odysseus declined. He only thought of his return - in Greek *nostos*. Nevertheless, he had to endure agony for it, in Greek *algos*. Nostalgia, therefore, stands for the "pain of returning home" also told by Athena to Zeus "but Odysseus longs to see the smoke rise from Ithaca's native hills and then to die." (Rehman, 2017)

Nostalgia was seen as such until the 20th century when its definition shifted to a mental condition, similar to depression, a longing of wanting to return to childhood and even foetal state. (Vess, Arndt, Routledge, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012) The meaning changed over the decades, and in the course of time, its connotation developed into something pleasant. The shift also had to do with Europe's massive changes induced by, i.e. industrialisation and urbanisation and a positive idea of technical progress. Along came the change of science,

which shifted within the field of psychology away from pure theory towards more careful and systematic observation. (Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012)

Nostalgia from this time on was no longer considered a depression or depressive disease. Nostalgia in modern definition: "Nostalgia, in the sense of longing for what is lacking in a changed present ... a yearning for what is now unattainable, simply because of the irreversibility of time." (Pickering & Keightly, 2006)  
"A reaction against the irreversible." (Jankelvitich, 1989)

Nevertheless, nostalgic stories aren't simple exercises in cheeriness. According to the historian Koselleck, memories are always already framed within the "horizons of exceptions" (Reid, Green, Wildschut, & Sedikides, 2014) in the present. An interesting differentiation is made between *nostalgic mood*, caused by a feeling of loss and *nostalgic mode*, the consumable style that does not involve memory per se but describing fragments of the past times that are energetically manufactured and avidly consumed but do not necessarily correspond to the evidence of experience. Memories are never always happy, and even the positive moments are mixed with a sense of loss. (Tilburg, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2015)  
"But on the whole, the positive elements greatly outnumber the negative elements", as the Southampton researchers found by analysing collected stories in the laboratory as well as in a magazine *Nostalgia*. "Nostalgic stories often start badly, with some kind of problem, but then they tend to end well, thanks to help from someone close to you," Dr Sedikides, one of the Southampton researchers says: "you end up with a stronger feeling of belonging and affiliation, and you become more generous toward others." (Til-

burg, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2015) Every person filters sensory impressions, dividing what happened into important and unimportant. Not all memories are, therefore, to be equated with nostalgia.

Particularly beautiful impressions are more formative, which is because we want to unconsciously generate a successful and happy biography. Sad, high-intensity events, however, are also very formative and permanently anchored; thus, nostalgia can be seen as a kind of „corrective“. (Vess, Arndt, Routledge, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012)

## WHY NOSTALGIA?

Today nostalgia seems to be everywhere, partly because advertisers have discovered how powerful it is, according to Routledge. Dr Clay Routledge, an American professor of psychology at the University of Dakota and author of the book *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*, held a *TedTalk* in 2016, speaking about the question *Why we feel nostalgia*. He believes that nostalgia helps us remember that our lives can have meaning and value, “helping us to find the confidence and motivation to face the challenges of our future.” (Routledge, 2013)

Being an intersection of the individual, the social and the political and mirroring the contemporary issues, nostalgia is a fascinating subject for scholars to study. Researchers at the *University of Southampton* created a department of seven members, focused only on nostalgia. Through the years and new researches, the *Southampton Nostalgia Scale* was created. A scale with questions for participants to be rated from one to seven (from not correct to highly correct). (Tilburg, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2015)

Other measuring scales are, i.e. the *Holbrooks Scale* (1993) made of eight factors and the *Pascals Nostalgia Scale* made of ten factors. *The Southampton Department* did many studies and could clearly show in two of them (done in 2006), that makes people feel lonely or sad, making them significantly more likely to feel nostalgic in comparison to someone feeling cheerful and happy. A possible conclusion was that nostalgia exists to help us deal with negative emotions. (Tierney, 2013)

In another study, 50-120 people were asked to either think about something nostalgic from their past or just something they did during the week (as simple as, i.e. cleaning dishes). According to the results of the sur-

veys they did, those who felt nostalgic had improved moods and self-esteem; they were less anxious about their relationships and more bound with other people in general. Part of a study was also asking participants to think and write about their death; half of the participants thought about something nostalgic. Afterwards, all of the participants did a word completion task where they were asked to complete different words, i.e. COFF\_\_ . Non-nostalgic feeling people used more death-related words, i.e. COFFIN instead of COFFEE. (Atia, & Davies, 2010)

Nostalgia is necessary to the human being for different reasons, positive or negative functions, thus for the mental balance. According to Sedikides, Wildschut and Baden (2004), nostalgia fulfils existential functions and acts “as a stock of emotions and experiences which people resort to coping with their existential fears”. (Baden, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2004)

According to this research, nostalgia lifts the mood, feelings of loneliness are subdued, and fears are dispelled. A good example is the time of Christmas, with its traditions that are passed on from generation to generation. It is also a moment of mercy towards oneself and others. Christmas is associated with warmth, the same dishes and smells, songs and films since childhood. A moment in which one feels belonging, where some might visit the church and think back on all the years and moments. It might at that moment offer a way out of those problems, experienced throughout the year, that are now looked back on.

Wistful memories follow similar patterns: the person who remembers is at the centre and is often in difficult circumstances or situations that he or she has successfully overcome with the help of other people. We all have experienced that the gathering of family

and friends also come hand in hand with an ideal image of how celebrations should take place. Sometimes one finds oneself in a fight over too many expectations and still, the memories of how maybe another time went better than this one, can also save that moment, to take back a step, to reflect on the situation thus find a way out of it.

“Many other people,” Dr Clay Routledge explains, “have defined nostalgia as comparing the past with the present and saying, implicitly, that the past was better, those were *the days*. But that may not be the best way for most people to *nostalgise*. The comparison will not benefit, say, the elderly in a nursing home who don’t see their future as bright. But if they focus on the past in an existential way *what has my life meant?* then they can potentially benefit.” (Biskas et al., 2018) This comparison-free *nostalgising* is being taught to first-year college students as part of a study testing its value for people in difficult situations. Other experiments are using the same technique for people in nursing homes, women recovering from cancer surgery, and prison inmates. “If you’re not neurotic or avoidant, I think you’ll benefit by nostalgising two or maybe three times a week,” he says. “Experience it as a prized possession. When Humphrey Bogart (in the film *Casablanca*) says, “*We will always have Paris*” that’s nostalgia for you. We have it, and nobody can take it away from us. It’s our diamond.” (Warner et al., 1942)

The British professor and lecturer of history, Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase published a collection of essays originated in a history workshop at the national conference in Leeds, the UK in 1985. The contributions of different lecturers and researchers mainly in the field of history were released in the book *history and past - the imagined past*.

The topic was nostalgia and focused on the debate about the use of heritage, how “the foundation of sociology as an academic discipline was built upon a conception of modernity imbued with nostalgia”. (Jiménez et al., 2013)

Only shortly before the publication of the above-mentioned paper and its analysis of how nostalgia was becoming a part of almost every aspect of cultural identity, Professor David Lowenthal published the book *The Past is a Foreign Country*. In his book, Lowenthal wrote about the concept of heritage, benefits and burdens of wanting the past, engaging with it and the value of preservation: “most of us know the past was not really like that. Life back then seems brighter not because things were better but because we lived more vividly when young; even the adult world of yesteryear reflects the perspective of childhood. Now unable to experience so intensely, we mourn a lost immediacy that makes the past unmatchable. Such nostalgia can also shore up self-esteem, reminding us that however sad our present lot we were once happy and worthwhile. Childhood thus recalled excludes the family quarrels, the outings dominated by waiting in queues for grubby loos; nostalgia is a memory with the pain removed. The pain is today.” (Lowenthal, 1985)

In summary, Lowenthal defines nostalgia as a modern symptom of memory distortion and finds heritage and nostalgia to now pervade every facet of public and popular culture. Even so much that more than 25 years after publishing his book, he returns to his past, his process of ageing and the reflection on the last years, that brought an enormous change to the field and possibilities of research - the *Past is a Foreign Country - revisited*.

Lastly, Xinyue Zhou, a Chinese researcher states, that as a result of a study, the subjects became warmer with nostalgic memories (room temperature was estimated to be four degrees higher). "Nostalgia not only diminishes physical inactivity associated with cold but also increases tolerance towards it." (Zhou, Wildschut, Sedikides, Chen, & Vingerhoets, 2012)



[39]

**“AND  
WHAT  
ABOUT  
US?”**



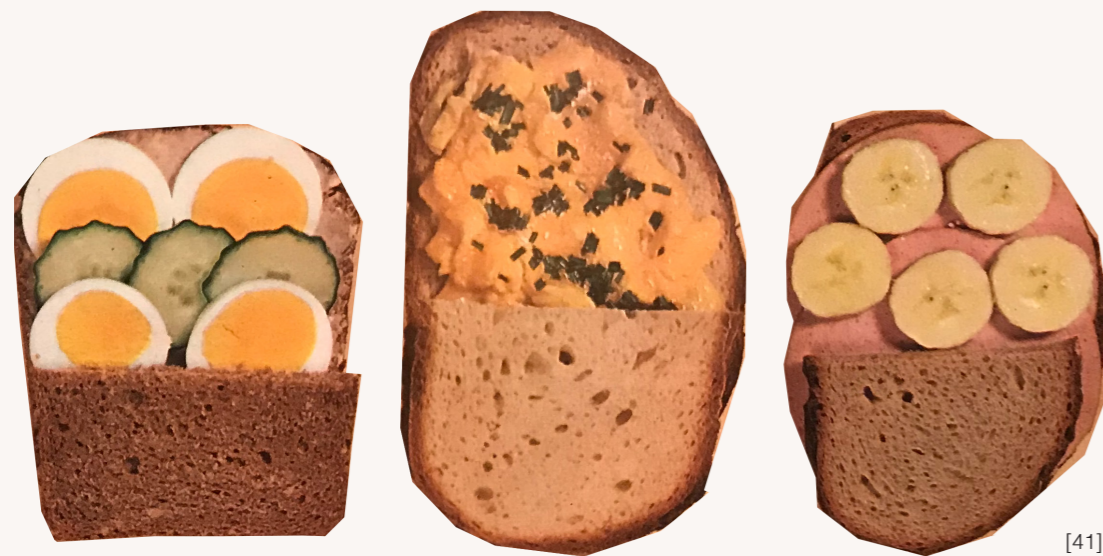
[40]

**“WE  
WILL  
ALWAYS  
HAVE  
PARIS!”**

# FOOD CONSUMPTION AND NOSTALGIA



*Do you miss roasted marshmallows by the fire?*



[41]

The consumption of food and nostalgia as found in the expression, the *Proust's little madeleine effect* (see chapter *The discovery of the memory of taste*), describes the effect of travelling back through a product into one's childhood memories with enthusiasm, but also sometimes with regret or with a bittersweet emotional reaction. (Collini, 2018) The French anthropologist Philippe Robert-Demontrond explains the phenomenon as "a bittersweet emotional reaction, that may be associated to reflection and experienced by an individual when external or internal stimuli take him back to an ideal past moment or event belonging or not to his living experience". (Castellano et al., 2013) The emotions emerging from an idealised past are focused on inanimate objects, sounds, odours or tastes that have been discovered at the very moment the emotions were experienced. The object that has been actually discovered or its substitute has the ability to revive emotions. This can be the case for a food product that has been already consumed or for its substitute and also for a product dating back to an idealised past. It is also a possible approach on the consumers' loss of confidence in modern food, which can be tackled if the brand, the product or the communication are granted a nostalgic touch. (Rehman, 2017)

The French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, known for his developed concept of collective memory, was one of the first to

analyse meals as "a social institution playing a fundamental part in socialising and transmitting the norms and values of social groups". Both nostalgia and food practices tend to increase people's feeling of belonging to a culture. (Angé, & Berliner, 2016)

A symbolic connection of nostalgia is created with people or events from the past, and objects of consumption are significant evidence of the past, even if the past is experienced indirectly. These consumption objects, such as family recipes or specific food products, can bring back nostalgic emotions and memories. (Tilburg, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2015) The results show that these recipes are associated with rituals performed on feast days, significant events, birthdays, new seasons, or recovering from illnesses. Recipes contribute to structuring families and support the intergenerational transmission of the know-how.

Family recipes are also packed with many elements of selfhood, identity, culture, security, belonging and many other aspects. Favourite recipes are often related to happy or intense childhood memories, such as birthdays or time spent with people they loved. A food activity or a mere cooking smell easily creates nostalgic associations. Just like objects either owned or inherited, recipes are left to the people we love, hoping they will also love them and will be reminded of special moments.

Nostalgic links and memories can be manifested "by food practices, whose symbolic function contributes to shaping families, increasing intergenerational links, strengthening selfhood or transmitting rituals (like explained in the example of Christmas)". Exact memories of places, people or events are often brought back through food practices.

A further feature shared by both nostal-



gia and food consumption can account for their similarity, that is the ambivalence existing between their positive and negative aspects. (Baker et al., 2005)

The consumers' complex behaviour concerning food may be characterised by three ambivalent attitudes when eating: "ambivalent pleasure-displeasure approach, ambivalent health-disease approach, and life-death approach. The ambivalent pleasure-displeasure approach relies on taste-distaste. Indeed, eating can be a source of pleasure and joy, but may also cause distaste to the extent of vomiting". (Rehman, 2017) This is, as a personal remark especially added by women by a fat-thin approach. (Kirsch, 2020)

The French researcher Poulain considers that „this ambivalence accounts for the fact that food may be both a source of content and intense sensual pleasure but may also cause a range of unpleasant sensations, from mere unpleasantness to revolting disgust responsible for sickness, and even vomiting. So, anxiety has a sensory and hedonistic component". (Poulain, 1996)

In the following, a qualitative study about the influence of nostalgia on consumer behaviour has been performed by the French researchers Paul-Emmanuel Michon and Alexandra Vignolles. (Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014)

The 300 participants were aged 16 to 84, half males, half females.

The respondents had to answer two questions with as many details as possible:

1. Describe a situation in which you have experienced nostalgia and describe all the emotions you have felt on this occasion
2. Describe a nostalgic situation associated with a consumption activity and all the related emotions you have experienced

The results have pointed to six main themes: food products related to childhood, yearning for products, substitute products, products related to homesickness, products for special occasions, rediscovering products, nearly half of these food consumption activities involve food products related to childhood.

An example of a given answer is of the participant Céline (28 years old) "Upon seeing marshmallows in a supermarket, I felt a mixture of joy and sadness". These memories may also convey time spent in the family, more particularly with the mother or the grandmother. Another answer was given by Martine (35 Years old) who remembers: "While I was purchasing a pack of biscuits, I stopped in front of the Lu strawberry cookies because these were what my mother used to give me for my tea. I felt both joy and yearning". The respondents' accounts clearly show the importance of rituals in nostalgic food consumption. These rituals imply a common place, precise time and the presence of people around (family or friends). This first result is consistent with the results concerning the importance of childhood memories in nostalgic reminiscence, also described by the French researchers Aurelie Kessous and Elyette Roux who have written many publications on the topic of nostalgia. (Kessous & Roux, 2008)

Next in the study, comes the yearning for products which are no longer available or whose production has changed. This feeling was mostly found with participants over 60 like Maurice (75 years old), "when I buy tomatoes, I really yearn for those you could find 30 years ago. They were juicy fruit that you could eat just like that. I really feel sad, but also angry because today no product is genuine, everything is artificially redesigned. The collected answers of these partici-



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pants are highlighting a yearning for their past, which defines the bitter dimension of nostalgia.

Other participants know that the products consumed are just copies of what they used to have; still, they remind them of happy times. "These products act as substitutes filling a gap, which is consistent with nostalgia serving the function of filling an emotional or existential gap in the face of imminent threat" as defined by the scientists of Southampton University, Routledge and Wildschut, mentioned before. (Stephan et al., 2014)

Sometimes, these substitutes replace products that people can no longer have be-

cause the person who used to prepare or cook them has gone away or are deceased. The younger participant Frederic (28 years old) remembered "I always feel nostalgic when I buy some Bonne Maman jam because it reminds me of my mother who used to give us bread with jam and we were always in such a hurry that we couldn't wait to sit down to eat them. Happy because the memory made me smile but also sad because my mother no longer prepares my breakfast".

Lastly, some respondents associate the nostalgic experience with a food product that they did not have for a long time and then rediscover it. This makes the consumer

more willing to buy it because they feel the wish to recreate the emotions experienced in the past and their associated memories. The participant Juliette (27 years old) says: "I was looking for sweets for my nephew when I came across some of the sweets I used to eat as a child and which I had not seen ever since. I thought those *Frizzy Panzy* lollipops that looked like tongues that you would dip into a bitter kind of powder were no longer for sale. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of well-being, from so far away, I could almost feel the taste. I bought two right away, one for me, one for my nephew."

These answers also support the statement by the American researchers Jeremy Sierra and Shaun McQuitty, who wrote the paper *Attitudes and Emotions as Determinants of Nostalgia Purchases: An Application of Social Identity Theory* that investigates the determinants of nostalgic purchasing acts. Their results show that nostalgic consumption practices are influenced by an attraction for the past and a specific attitude in this respect.

Another observation involved unbranded products (62%) to a more significant extent than branded products (38%). "People can travel back into the past thanks to unbranded products attached to some period of their childhood, for instance, homemade cakes and pies but even pasta that are closely related to personal moments."

The design of the product more than its taste seems to evoke a feeling of nostalgia which once more triggers the will to buy. Here the difference lies between a higher attraction of long-lasting packaging compared to a redesign of packaging. The participant Fabrice, 25 years old, explained: "one of my childhood products has kept almost the same packaging, symbols, colours and logos: the *Nestlé milky sweets*. I someti-

mes buy some, just to taste back childhood flavours. It's such an enjoyable feeling of being comfortable and safe". (Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014)

The study developed three clear definitions of food nostalgia were made, based on the answers of the participants:

- Most answers (51%) were positive food nostalgia (sweet): a food product is linked to positive memories and to emotional reactions such as joy, happiness, comfort or peacefulness
- 33% of answers were ambivalent food nostalgia (bittersweet): a food product is linked to both positive and negative memories, emotional reactions are ambivalent and imply contradictory emotions such as joy and sadness.
- 16% of the answers negative food nostalgia (bitter); a food product is linked to negative memories and to emotional reactions such as regret, sadness or even anger.

Telling from the results and according to the authors, "the food processing industry should definitely rely on positive nostalgia to promote their products. This finding is also consistent with the theory of emotional transfer according to which the advertising content may influence consumers' behaviour concerning the brand, the product, and purchasing intention. Finally, a product which has remained the same throughout its life cycle can be an indication of consumers' long-lasting preferences. The use of childhood, happy family times and of intergenerational transmission is particularly suitable for the communication strategies of food brands."

The conclusion of the study highlights that "brands that were present during the consumers' childhood will be remembered and are of particular attraction to them. When

companies decide to resuscitate a brand, marketing managers should determine which brand is iconic enough to propose the brand on the market. When it comes to the design of products and packaging, consumers pay particular attention to products and packaging, which last over time and thus act as reassuring landmarks. Therefore, brands should be cautious when it comes to a logo or packaging changes." (Vignolles, & Pichon, 2014)

# THE “PROUST PHENOMENON”

## Scent-evoked nostalgia



[43]

In this chapter, I am presenting another study by Reid, Green, Wildschut, Sedikides, researchers of the *University of Southampton* together with 160 undergraduate students as participants.

“The kitchen smells of yeast, a nostalgic smell. It reminds me of other kitchens that were mine. It smells of mothers [...] it smells of me, in former times when I was a mother”, by Margaret Atwood, *The handmade tale* from 1998.

Nostalgic moments (more positive than negative) often include others and especially gatherings like birthdays, weddings. Nostalgia itself, according to the psychologists Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt and Routhledge, strengthens self-continuity (i.e. the connection between one’s past and ones present), raises optimism, a sense of “social connectedness” (according to Hopper) and imbues life with meaning. (Wildschut et al., 2006)

In many of the so far studies, the effect of taste as a trigger of nostalgia is reflected versus the acoustic triggers where participants were exposed to songs that were known to evoke nostalgia or also to a variety of brief musical excerpts. In this study, participants are exposed to scents that have a special link to autobiographical memories, especially emotional ones. The power that scents have to activate the autobiographical memory is called the *Proust Phenomenon*. (Chu & Downes, 2002)

Scent cued memories are relatively emotional, vivid and detailed. (Holohan, 2012) They are even more emotional and evocative than memories cued via visual or auditory stimuli. It is connected to parts of the brain (amygdala and hippocampus) that are directly associated with emotional experience and memory. The amygdala is activated more through scents than through visual or auditory cues. (Chu & Downes, 2002)

Nose, feelings and memories are particularly closely interwoven. “In evolutionary terms, this direct connection makes perfect sense: This way, we recognise putrid food very quickly - before we put it in our mouths”, says Rachel Herz, who researched the psychology of smell at *Brown University* in Providence, Rhode Island, and recently published *The Scent of Desire*. (Herz, 2008)

For the study, the participants voted the smell according to a scale called *Barret 7-item* (ranging from 1 to 7, from not at all to very much), based on questions like “how exciting/arousing do you find the smell, how familiar is the scent, describe your autobiographical association with this scent, how familiar is the scent, how personally relevant is the scent”. (Reid, Green, Wildschut, & Sedikides, 2014)

Out of 1906 scent presentations, 1027 were rated at or above the scale midpoint (more than double the percentage of musical excerpts in *Barret scale*). For this study, not only especially nostalgia evoking scents were used. More nostalgia was reported when smelling scents that prompted a greater proportion of positive and of negative emotions. “Scents are subject to similar contingencies as is music in eliciting nostalgia. Scents evoke stronger nostalgia to the extent that they are more arousing, familiar to autobiographically relevant and to the extent that they engender

a higher proportion of positive and of negative emotions.” Given the prevalence of scents in one’s natural environment, nostalgia is likely to be incited more frequently than three times a week - an estimated average produced based on previous research, which relies exclusively on self-reports.”

“Nostalgia prompted by narratives has self-protective results. For example, it buffers individuals from self-threat (e.g. negative feedback).

A podcast episode by *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* talks about the search for the lost scent of the former DDR. Different stories are told of individual memories about a smell, which brings the narrator back to before 1989 to the East of Germany whether it was the strong chemical-smelling cleaning agent, a sour-smell of the wallpaper or soap from the West (not to be used, only to smell).

The most described memory though, is not caused by a personal but communal smell. An unforgettable smell of *Wofasept*, the ultimate disinfectant in the DDR “a little musty, containing bits of plastic”. According to one of the narrator, even now but only on rare occasions, one can still smell it when entering a prefabricated or official building, or simply a train station. *Wofasept* was sprayed in such places, for decades and probably in rough quantities. As well as *Wofased*, many of the industrial smells can almost not be captured today. Recipes and ingredients have changed a long time ago and still.

In case of an urge, to smell back 30 years, the olfactory researcher and artist Sissel Tolaas advises “that you go to the *Jannowitzbrücke*-underground-station in Berlin and remove one of the yellow tiles there, which would reveal the typical DDR flaw”. (Schielke, 2018)

“SCENT EVOKED  
NOSTALGIA PREDICTED  
HIGHER LEVELS OF  
POSITIVE EFFECTS,  
SELF-ESTEEM,  
SELF-CONTINUITY,  
OPTIMISM, SOCIAL AND  
CONNECTEDNESS AS  
WELL AS MEANING IN  
LIFE.” (CHU & DOWNES, 2002)

# REMINISCENCE BUMP

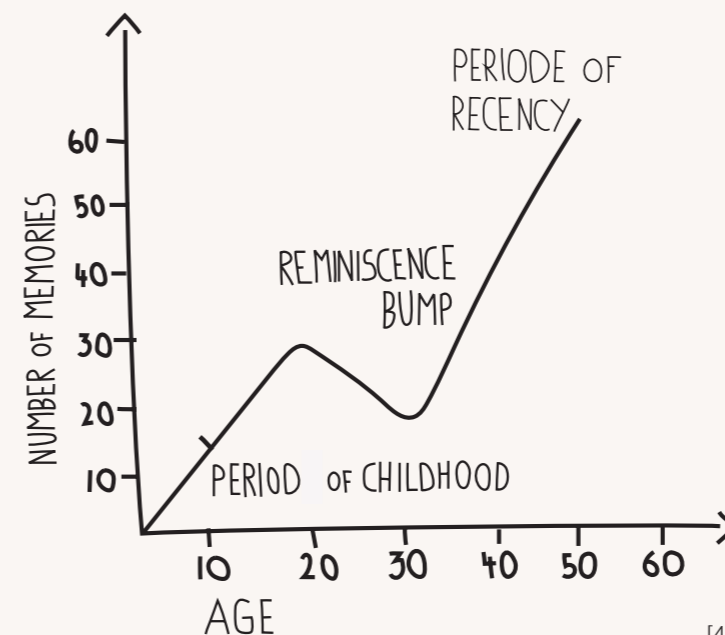
Why is everyone wearing  
"friends" t-shirts?



[44]

Life is a constant change whether it is atoms, our bodies, things, places and humans that we surround ourselves with. In these cases, nostalgia might give you the feeling of some consistency and reduce the anxiety. Nostalgia allows you to connect all of these events of changes (i.e. entering adulthood) since nostalgia itself always thrives on change.

This chapter is highlighting some of the more memory creating moments in life through the lifespan retrieval curve - an average plot of distinct autobiographical memories that reveal what is called the *Reminiscence Bump*. (see figure 45)



[45]

It is a time between fifteen and thirty years of age where more memories are encoded. This time in one's life (both while one is living it and later) is thought to be important because it is much linked to the formation of one's self-identity. Memories formed during that bump tend to be the ones we are most nostalgic for. (Munawar, Kuhn, & Haque, 2018)

"It is not only important to develop a continuous individual identity but also a continuous identity within groups that we belong to." (Angé, & Berliner, 2016)

The *Reminiscence Bump* defines the strongest memories that we have from our age of ten to thirty (the generation that is now working and find themselves in the positions of decision making) is reliving the 80s and 90s with a clear comeback in fashion as well as Hollywood. A noticeable example, are T-shirt and sweaters with the logo of the famous TV show *Friends*. Clothes now being worn by a generation that most probably grew up, not knowing this exact TV show but still relate to the cult status, it has. Also many of the now-famous shows, i.e. *Stranger Things*, clearly refer to the 80s and 90s through its set design, technological references, games, figures of superheroes, posters and everything it needed to create the whole picture.

Interesting is the critics in the characteristic use of nostalgia in marketing, beginning in the second half of the twentieth century. In the West, a "culture of nostalgia" arose in the 60s and 70s, a time of great social transformations accompanied by a growing media culture and the commercialisation of nostalgia through popular culture. At the same time an increase out of a perceived threat to the continuity of the identity in the context of present fears, discontents, uncertainties, when identities have been "badly

bruised by the turmoil of the times” (Angé, & Berliner, 2016)

The growing success of antiques, flea markets and organic food, “natural” childbirth techniques, vintage consumption have a present crescendo in a defined *retromania*, invading modern-day new technologies.

Also explained in the new word *anemonia*, “a nostalgic sense of longing for a past you yourself have never lived. It is nostalgia for the “good ol’ days”; more specifically, the good ol’ days you are too young to have known. It is a sense that something was intrinsically better in the distant past than it is in the present; that we’ve lost something crucial in our ceaseless march of progress.”

(Barlament, 2019)

In Germany, after the fall of the Berlin wall, a very important and defining historic moment occurred, the word *ostalgia* was allegedly created. In 1995, six years after the unification, the German cabaret artist Uwe Steimle invented this definition, which thrived on the floor of change. “People are not interested in repeating the DDR, but in coping with the feeling that they have lost their country.” (Steimle, 1995)

Post Scriptum: There is also a matching *yugonostalgia* for the lost Yugoslavia.

“Manifesting a nostalgia for times he or she has never lived himself, this contemporary urban harlequin appropriates outmoded fashions (the moustache, the tiny shorts), mechanisms (fixed-gear bicycles, portable record players) and hobbies (home brewing, playing the trombone.” (Wampole, 2012)

Published in the New York Times in 2012, the author and professor at Princeton University, Christy Wampole wrote an article on *How to Live Without Irony* where she analysis the phenomenon of female and male *hipsters* that have a longing for times that they have not experienced but expressed,

not through ideology or a reflection of the historical events at that time, but mostly material things. Wampole criticises the missing laments of nostalgia that could be involved in both moral critique of the present and an alternative to deal with social changes.

“Prioritising what is remote over what is immediate, the virtual over the actual, we are absorbed in the public and private sphere by the little devices that take us elsewhere. Furthermore, the nostalgia cycles have become so short that we even try to inject the present moment with sentimentality, for example, by using certain digital filters to *pre-wash* photos with an aura of historicity. Nostalgia needs time. One cannot accelerate meaningful remembrance.” (Munawar, Kuhn, & Haque, 2018)

(Munawar, Kuhn, & Haque, 2018)

The use of nostalgia as a form of advertising certain objects, music, tv-shows or anything else that could be deeply missed over time, has become very popular and can be seen as a proper mythology.

“NOSTALGIA IS A TEMPORAL AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION, CAPTURING TIME AND REEXAMINE IT WHENEVER WE LIKE. WE DON'T HAVE TO LET IT GO.”

(ANGÉ, & BERLINER, 2016)



[46]

# NOSTALGIA IN ADVERTISEMENT

## Pavarotti in the kitchen



[47]

*"Cara signora eccomi qua!  
Eccomi qua chi?  
Chi sono?  
Sono Pippo Baudo.  
Buongiorno, buonasera e buon pomeriggio.  
E sono pronto a seguirla in cucina con le  
ricette in musica Althea.  
Le ricette che sto per presentarle sono due  
autentiche specialità, una del Veneto e una  
della Campania. Semplici da preparare ma  
veramente ottime da gustare e sono entram-  
be accompagnate da musiche tipiche delle  
due regioni. È sempre bello creare in cucina  
un po' di allegria avanti dunque con gli  
ingredienti ma prima mi consenta un piccolo  
intervallo musicale così tanto per iniziare in  
simpatia."*

*"Dear lady here I am!  
Here I am! Who?  
Who I am?  
I'm Pippo Baudo.  
Good morning, good evening and good  
afternoon.  
And I'm ready to follow you in the kitchen  
with recipes in Althea music.  
The recipes I am about to present are two  
authentic specialities, one from Veneto and  
one from Campania. Simple to prepare but  
really excellent to taste and they are both  
accompanied by music typical of the two  
regions. It's always nice to create a little joy  
in the kitchen with the ingredients but first,  
allow me a little musical interval so much to  
start in sympathy." (Suriano, 2017)*

Cooking *Pasta Vongole* with Pavarotti singing in the background, leaving *Bœuf Bourguignon* to stir on the oven with a glass of red wine and Jacques Brel playing from a newly purchased Vinyl player - the ideal image of a cooking session, supported with ready to go playlists by numerous music platforms. One could on the other hand exchange *Ne Me Quitte Pas* to a small vinyl disc distributed in 1979, by the Althea food company.

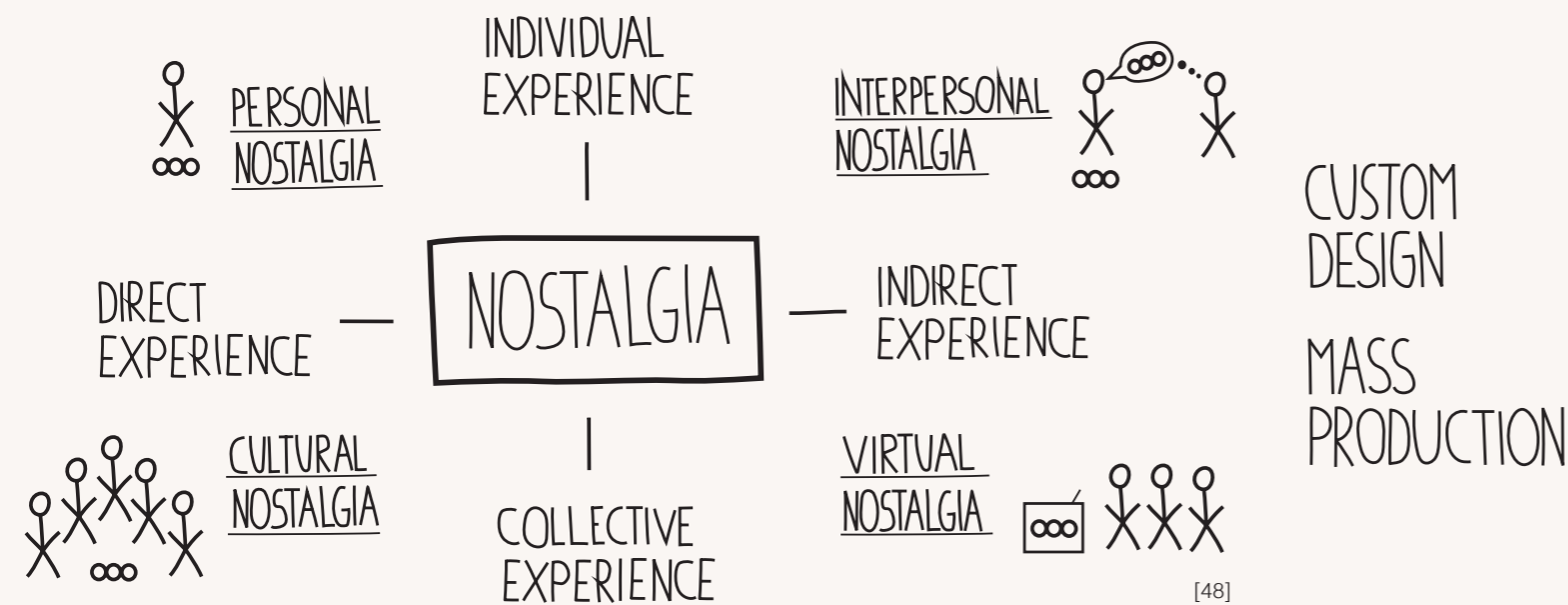
Althea, a company that sold frozen food to Italian housewives, did not want to leave women alone in the kitchen and therefore sent auditory support in the form of Giuseppe Raimondo Vittorio Baudo, better known as Pippo Baudo, an Italian entertainer and presenter. (Vittorio, 2020)

During the preparation of the recipe of *Risi e Bisi* (a pea risotto), Pippo Baudo is explaining the steps of preparation, supported by traditional Venetian song *La mula de Parenzo*. On the B side, Pippo Baudo lists the ingredients for a perfect Neapolitan cod fillet (clearly using the frozen Althea one) with a cheerful rhythm of Southern instruments, underlining the easy and joyful act of preparing the two dishes.

Other musically supported recipes, were available which could be requested with a collection of special coupons.

*"Ah ... good!  
Prepare yourself for the compliments of your  
guests!  
Brava! Very good! Awesome! Good!"*

According to Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience Eleanor Maguire, It is generally believed that memory is one of the most important factors that make us who we are. It is an integral part of material culture and decides on what relationship we have between people and artefacts. "It is important to interpret



advertising, evaluate products and brands, make purchase decisions or figure out how to use certain products. On the other hand, designers memories have a direct influence on the ways they design and on their design decisions.” (Liefgreen, Dalton, & Maguire, 2020)

To highlight and repeat the definition of nostalgia, there is an example from the essay *Nostalgia and its valued design strategy - some fundamental considerations* by Haian Xue and Pedro de Almeida:

Homesickness: unreachable due to distance  
Nostalgia: unreachable due to past which is inaccessible (Xue & Carvalho de Almeida, 2011)

Because of the “bittersweet” feeling (Divard et Robert- Demontrond, 1997) that comes with nostalgia, it is very interesting for design aspects, rather than purely positive emotions. Because it is found to be an important source of both self-identity and cultural identity, it means that for individuals, a sense of selfhood could be enhanced by gathering pieces of memories through nostalgia. On the other

hand, a cultural or virtual nostalgia can protect (especially now in times of globalisation) the identity of culture by reinforcing value of heritage and traditions and in turn offers people the sense of belonging. All of it is therefor an identity keeping method and negative affect management strategy.

Here it is important to differentiate between four different aspects of nostalgia as explained in the drawing (figure 48):

Personal Nostalgia: based on the memory of an individual person

Interpersonal Nostalgia: elicited by recalling memories gleaned from communication with others, especially loved ones

Cultural Nostalgia: a collective memory, directly experienced and shared by members of particular groups

Virtual Nostalgia: virtual reality, with the emotion-based upon the shared indirect experience such as the contents of an old and popular book or film

(Holak & Havlena, 1997)

These psychological functions of nostalgia may also be an explanation for why nostalgic experience and nostalgia evoking artefacts are attractive and make people feel pleasant.

According to Haian Xue and Pedro de Almeida, authors of the essay *Nostalgia and its valued design strategy* - some fundamental considerations, say that the challenge is to analyse properly and not just to replicate something in a retro way that could lead to the disappointment of a customer. In marketing itself, there are different techniques such as age-based targets, according to important variables, i.e. cultural background, age, gender and personality. Consumers are changing from rational consumption into an emotional one which requires diversified and personalised products that are mostly affected by feelings.



## NOSTALGIC PRODUCT

The new consumer trend needs products that can express themselves - external substances that show their self-image as well as personality and taste. In this point of view, nostalgic products serve as a storyteller and create a certain atmosphere. Products in that category will meet a personal demand rather than that of mass production, "pursuing differences while seeking common ground". (Tseng & Ho, 2011) The idea is to create a personalised product that uses combined nostalgic emotions where each experience is equal to direct experience. This point of view can also be found in the paper *Assessment of nostalgic promotion* by Dr Makarand Upadhyay where he suggests "It has to appeal to

emotion, focusing on an emotional connection with the company, product or service. Nostalgia as a new tool can establish and maintain a stable of loyal customers base, which can make an important contribution to the enterprise or business." (Upadhyay, 2016)

Further, the American scientist Norman says: "When we are exposed to a single thing, our reaction is not only influenced by its usability but also depends on if it reflects our image or awakens our nostalgia. Such emotions can be envisioned by hearing, smell, touch, vision and taste." He, therefore, categorised/nostalgic design into three levels: (Tseng & Ho, 2011)

THREE LEVELS OF DESIGN	PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS	METHOD OF PRODUCT MANUFACTURING
VISCERAL	appearance design which is about how things look, feel, sound	MASS PRODUCTION
BEHAVIOURAL	it emphasises on function which is about the product function well and easily accessible	MASS PRODUCTION
REFLECTIVE	it is about the meaning of things, user's emotions or memory, self image and use pleasure	NOSTALGIC/ PERSONALISED DESIGN

[48.1.]

The vision of a product itself is just one element, whereas smell and auditory elements are more capable of bringing back vivid memories. Therefore, the elements that bring back the feeling of nostalgia need to be deeply researched.

Another important factor according to Hai-an Xue and Pedro de Almeida: if nostalgia is evoked excessively, it should not take an interest in new things, of the present and the future thus not become an ethical issue but rather implement the thought of the customer into seeing the value of the product which could lead to less of "buy fast then discard fast." (Xue & Carvalho de Almeida, 2011)

In the paper *designing the personalised nostalgic emotion value of a product* by Yu-Shan Tseng and Ming-Chyuan Ho, the conclusion lies in the strategy of differentiation: "a designer should be able to decompose the story into design elements and convert the story into product possessing symbolism and distinctness." (Tseng & Ho, 2011) In the opinion of the authors, consumers don't emphasise on price, quality or quantity anymore but pursue emotional satisfaction and mental identification while the core of design being the consideration of peoples memories and emotions.

As already explained, nostalgia can also remind us on what we find meaningful in life which is also interesting in terms of people who rate movies from their year of graduation better, compared to the ones currently made, for what reason people are even more willing to pay for objects and things related to their nostalgic feeling. In September 2011, the *European Business School* asked 3,000 soccer fans why they identify with their favourite club. It was only important for 21 percent that the association was successful whereas 34 percent replied: "I associate a

lot of memories with it." (Brown, 2017) An indication of why we love to use our childhood products. It might be because those moments make one feel more connected to others and in the sense makes money seem less important - especially seeing how much nostalgia plays a part in today's pop culture.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF NOSTALGIA TO DESIGN AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN NOSTALGIA AND RETRO

Since nostalgia often occurs due to changes, the swap from handwritten letters to emails, and millions of books on one digital device, the user feels less connection to the three-dimensional world and interaction with objects. Something that has interestingly changed in the field of, i.e. music where the intangible was again made tangible and the sale of LP's and turntables increased since 2007.



The authors of the essay *Creatively designing with/for cultural nostalgia (reflection on technology change and the loss of physicality)*, present a symbiosis of nostalgia and modern technology in two examples. The first one is the IDEO's c60 REDUX, "looking like a square record player, it plays music

off of pieces of paper bearing embedded RFID tags that contain song information", in the style of old mixtape cassettes. The second one is the TDK BOOM BOX, an old school looking combination of sound performance, modern interfaces, a display and many functions other functions. In both cases, the designers were nostalgically involved thus things were generated almost by intuition. "Memory and history provided an invaluable source of inspiration. Usually, industrial designers look at what is happening at the moment, and user research is often just a limited focus on what people would like to have now. Then based on such information, designers imagine what may be the future. Past, memory and history are often ignored in spite of the fact that might provide designers with alternative thinking and opportunities." (Xue & Carvalho de Almeida, 2011)

On the one hand, designers gain their inspiration from cultural memories and pre-set nostalgia to be an intended user-experience. On the other hand, it is seemingly opposite to innovation, a characteristic that is connected to apparent "good design". (Tseng & Ho, 2011)

In the perspective of consumer-behaviour research, Holbrook and Schindler state: "a preference (general liking, positive attitude, favourable effects) towards experiences associated with objects (people, places or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, adolescence or even before birth)". (Holbrook, & Schindler, 1989)

The capacity of brands or products to fulfil the nostalgic preference of consumers is considered to have great potential for commercial success.

With the meaning of nostalgia to design

comes the importance to differentiate: nostalgic and retro are not the same. The official definition of retro is "imitative of a style or fashion from the recent past". While successful nostalgic design relies on creatively extracting the original iconic and combining them with new ones to make the final design outcome well situated in the present, O'Conner said: "there is a distinction to be drawn between retro and nostalgic design. It feels like if someone calls your design retro you've missed the opportunity to change the discussion." (Wood et al., 2015) Nostalgic design considers the user experience and does not make things look only old. "Nostalgia is not induced through absolutely accurate memories, but rather by idealised ones. If every single detail of the past were remembered accurately by everyone, nostalgia would significantly lose its appeal and happen to fewer people." (Tseng & Ho, 2011)

# NOSTALGIA & DESIGN

*A symbiosis between craftsmanship  
and the modern world*



William Morris, born in 1834 in England, grew up in a wealthy British household, strongly influenced by the medieval times. There are many stories circulating that the cuisine of his families home was apparently almost wholly based on recipes of middle Ages. (Mackail, 1977)

During his time as a student at *Oxford University*, he met Edward Burne-Jones with whom he had a deep friendship from then until the end of his life. Both wished for a life as an artist in a community that linked art and handicraft: artists who let their artisans implement their designs in high quality or (themselves) implement them - the opposite of the mechanisation of the industrial revolution of their time.

In the view of Morris, the industrial revolution in the 19th century represented the loss of craftsmanship and craft itself. This resulted in a return to the qualities of the craft. (Morris, & Morris, 2009)

A year after he got married to Jane Morris, he started to entirely create the interior of their first home in London called the *Red House* where everything was made by either him or his friend and colleague Philip Web. It would have been cheaper to order everything from a furniture outlet. Instead, he wanted to give everyone involved the satisfaction through the process of being part of the creation. He believed in the meaning it gave to every single piece that was built by also enjoying the labour of crafting. Those

principles that are told to be the driving force of the Medieval times, according to Morris, should be re-implanted as the principles of modern life. (Mackail, 1977)

In 1861 (still in this twenties) he founded *William Morris & Company* where he also created furniture in addition to tiles, wallpaper, carving and coloured glass windows. The beauty of the objects was due to the design and the use of previously overlooked or neglected materials. (Fiell, & Fiell, 1999)

William Morris repeatedly came up against limits in the implementation of his ideas in the current (industrialised-efficient) craft. So, he began to be interested in artistic and craft methods of the past and set himself the task of renewing lost knowledge. Take dyeing, for example: since there were hardly any dyers left who knew the old vegetable dyes, he studied French herb and plant books from the 16th and 17th centuries. He later founded his own dye works to achieve the desired results. (Morris, 1996)

**“HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF PLEASURE IN WORK AND THE NATURE OF CONSUMER DEMAND.”** (MACKAIL, 1977)

With his talents, William Morris was one of the founders of the *aesthetic movement*, which was characterised by the mutual integration of the arts and the interlocking of arts and crafts. The *arts and craft movement* originated as a search for an authentic style for the 19th century. "It was a reaction to the historicism of the Victorian era and to the *soulless* products of the flourishing industry, where many of the representatives viewed "the machines as the root of all evil." (Fiell, & Fiell, 1999)

In doing so, they rebelled against the wild growth of materialism and the *ugliness* of the Industrial Age with its machine-made products. Morris was the driving force of the British *arts and crafts movement* and influenced - in the course of the Middle Ages nostalgia of his time - the revival of traditional methods of, i.e. fabric production. (Morris, & Morris, 2009)

He aimed to produce affordable goods of the highest quality, beauty and durability for everyone. But then as now, exclusive, handmade goods were expensive, and Morris was unable to lower prices. He was politicised by the frustration with the apparent impossibility of putting this idea into practice. The director of the *William Morris Gallery* in Walthamstow, Anna Mason, wrote: "the fashionable clientele did not match the socialist beliefs of the designer, who considered beauty to be a basic need and wanted to make art and education accessible to everyone." (Mason, 2014)

After he committed to the idea of revolutionary socialism, he published his first utopian novel in 1893, *News from nowhere* - "a picture of a life without social differences, in the green, in the midst of handmade goods". Morris came to socialism through art. The book was considered the first "ecotopia", an ecological utopia. (Mason, 2014)

His designs are still available and, like in his lifetime, adorn the walls of artists' houses.



[52]



[53]

"HE COULD BE DESCRIBED AS AMBIVALENT, AS NOSTALGIA IS DESCRIBED."

## SLOW DESIGN

In the time that groups of food activism were formed, a nostalgic yearning is described as a phenomenon that occurred to those, who felt disconnected to how and what food was consumed, a movement that was of great inspiration to many. This chapter will include examples and statements from the first part of the research, *the anti-movement, a food revolution*. One of the mentioned groups is the *slow-food movement* - an organisation of great influence to international activism for a general change of production and consumption. By now, *slow-food* is followed by *slow-fashion, slow-education, slow-cinema, slow-gardening* and many others, that adapt to a thinking pattern, raising awareness to *slow things down*. (Beverland, 2011)

The philosophy of *slow-food*, an organisation formed by Carlo Petrini, in 1986 in Italy, is to preserve regional peculiarities and the traditions of food production. Consumers' attention should also be drawn back to smaller restaurants, which are based on simplicity, conviviality and often a local cuisine. The fast and hectic intake of food was in need of a counteract to protest against the global triumph of fast food - the term *slow-food* was born. (Campisi, 2013)

The concept of prosperity is increasingly changing in the saturated markets of mass consumption. What matters is time autonomy, individual well-being and quality of life. At the same time, consumers are increasingly asking how and where goods are produced, where the raw materials come from, and what effects production has on the environment and humans.

While manual labour in earlier times, was more of a subsistence economy, the cheaper

alternative to buying, today, in the industrialised countries, it has become expensive status work. Away from local and long-lasting quality to cheap production in other continents. Here the *slow-movement* comes into place, by weighing the influence of the object to be produced and its consequences. The idea is instead of developing, producing and selling as much as possible, to take a step back and reflect, taking the time to change, improve, look for alternatives, always in symbiosis with modern technology and opportunity. (Ampersand, 2016)

Material selection plays a crucial point in the production and designing of an object. By now, over 80 to 90 percent of the environmental impact of a product is already decided in the design process. The ethic search for such solutions that allow materials to circulate in material-cycles for as long as possible is becoming increasingly important. Resource efficiency is the guiding principle in the 21st century and thus a search for alternatives, communication, transparency, local distribution and production as well as a major improvement on sustainable. (Kettley, 2016)

Designer Alastair Fuad-Luke, professor at the Finnish *Aalto University*, coined the modern term of *slow-design* in 2002 as "a creative, sustainable design that is respectful of the environment and the resources of our planet." (Fuad-Luke, 2002) Instead of producing quickly for the market, slow designers design according to specific customer requirements, supporting social, cultural, environmental and unattainable design. Fuad-Luke, together with his colleague Carolyn F. Strauss, published a paper on *The Slow Design Principles, a new interrogative and reflexive tool for design research and practice*, with a guideline of how to follow the principles. Some of these values, qualities and practices, they advocate are:

“Creating new awareness, playing with time (temporal form, time in design, facilitating slowness, designed for ephemerality), playing with materials, slowing resource consumption. Focus on locality, community and Manzini’s *local potential* – materials, needs, community; markers of local identity, community stewardship, and affordability. Honouring *slow knowing/the slow mind*: a type of intelligence associated with what [is called] creativity, or even wisdom.” (Claxton, 2017)

**“THE GOAL OF A DESIGNER SHOULD BE TO CREATE PRODUCTS THAT ARE UNDERSTANDABLE AND AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCOVERY. IF THE USER INVESTS TIME TO UNDERSTAND, OBSERVE AND REFLECT ABOUT THE INTERACTION WITH THE PRODUCT, THIS GOAL IS ACHIEVED.”** (FUAD-LUKE, 2002)

**RIPORELLE  
POSTMODERN**

# PERSONAL NOSTALGIA



[54]

Dinner with friends in my kitchen, Milan, 2017

Nostalgia as a *bittersweet* and often *ambivalent* emotion (Divard et Robert- Demontrond, 1997) is differentiated between four different categories (as shown in the chapter *Nostalgia in advertisement*, figure 48). Following this definition, *personal* and *interpersonal* nostalgia in design, fall under the definition of a *custom made design*. *Cultural* and *virtual* nostalgia, on the other hand, are associated with *mass production*, due to a broader range of people, i.e. a whole generation, with a *collective memory* or *shared experiences*. (Tseng & Ho, 2011) In my work, I concentrate on custom design, based on nostalgia of an individual, in this case, myself.

The research question of my thesis is *how, personal nostalgia and food in a symbiosis, can be translated into a three-dimensional object*. In other words, *how can an object be a carrier and an exhibitor of personal, nostalgia, memory and experience?*

Nostalgia, as demonstrated in this thesis, inevitably has connections with past memories and experiences. These are seemingly in the opposite of innovative design. Critiques of nostalgia often claim that looking back prevents designers from being truly innovative. Such critiques though, oversee the great potential of creating and designing a product, which has the potential of innovation through depth, thoughtfulness and integrating the positive emotions and

attributes of the past. Nostalgia brings a feeling of safety in moments of uncertainty and therefore has a special value.

A safety that often compensates the many anxieties one is feeling when confronted with a constant development of profound technology-driven life-changes. Those changes interfere with daily life and often come along with a feeling of being overwhelmed by constant information overload and too little overview. It is anxiety caused by the loss of control of one's own consumption, caused by the lack of transparency of the production chain and the impossibility to follow it and to understand the many abbreviations of ingredients and their effects on health and nature. The digitalisation and reduction or total loss of physicality, have become dominant in many areas of our daily life: i.e. collected books are bundled on one device, letters turned into an online exchange of email and text messages, cellphones serve as memory storage to-go, etc. "Nevertheless, for millions of years, human beings have evolved in a real physical three-dimensional world and experienced this world and interacted with objects through all sensory modalities." (Hunsucke & Siegel, 2015) Here, nostalgia plays the role of balancing the fast and present evolution with a tranquillity of the past.

Nostalgia is necessary to the human being and in all its positive and negative ambivalence, contributes to the mental balance. As Dr Clay Routledge (as explained in the chapter *why nostalgia?*) points out, it is important to not see nostalgia "as a comparison to the past where things we better" (Baden, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2004) but instead to ask oneself what could be taken from the positive memories of the experienced times into today's, present

context. Nostalgia, recalls idealised memories with stronger positive connotations which blur with the reality of the experienced moments. The task is to create a balance between what was good and what can be good now. "In this sense, a successful nostalgic design relies on creatively extracting the original iconic elements and combining them with new ones, to make the final design outcome well situated in the present." (Xue & Carvalho de Almeida, 2011)

Change is the triggering factor of nostalgia. Change is crucial not only for the individual but also to society. Change also represents the development and thus creates a chain-reaction of the present and the past in a constant exchange of emotions, in need of a mental balance. Change is essential to not solidify in a state of mind and being but to improve, adjust, learn from the past and create an outcome of those factors. (Fritsch, Judice, Sonia, Tretten, 2007)

As stated in my thesis, for William Morris, nostalgia in design and production not only concerns proven and old methods but in his opinion, they are considered to be the only and inevitably right methods. For Morris, a standing against the soulless industrial production was a concentration merely on craftsmanship. A philosophy, with great difficulty.

In my thesis, the basic principle is though how to unite humanity, cultural and personal identity, trust and progress in times of constant and rapid change. The intent is to maintain values that have proven to be important in the past and that seem at risk of a decrease in the interest of rapid further development.

In my approach, it is crucial to give such values the change of inclusion instead of exclusion.

One aspect of design, with many touch-points throughout its development and final product, is storytelling. The listener of a story is presented with a new dimension, from which he can extract individual aspects, learn from them or simply observe. (Zalinger, 2009) However, storytelling itself is also important to the author of the story. He reflects the written, whether fictional or true, whether a memory or a hypothetical future scenario, it is a personal process of discovery. "Stories have been seen as important modes for storing knowledge and assigning meaning to our experiences" (Polkinghorne, 1988; Schank, 1990)

In this thesis, the story is not based on fiction with created scenarios and characters, but a true story experienced and relived in a moment of change, moments of nostalgia.

Storytelling in this project gives meaning to an object, from *personal* to *interpersonal nostalgia*, sharing the experienced within three-dimensionality. A subliminal translation of memories shared with the observer. One might discover a parallel to one's own past, through the story and the object of design told.

It is a *custom design*, without excluding the factors and possible target groups of *cultural* and *virtual nostalgia*. The idea of the different touch-points is based on collective experiences and memories. Experiences that in some way are remembered not only by me, the author/designer but also by a broader group of people who watch, touch, see and buy the designed object. (Tseng & Ho, 2011)

This can happen due to the visual aspects like the shape which one might have seen in other circumstances or the colours, that might remind one on a South African BBQ with orange plastic glasses, eating pancakes

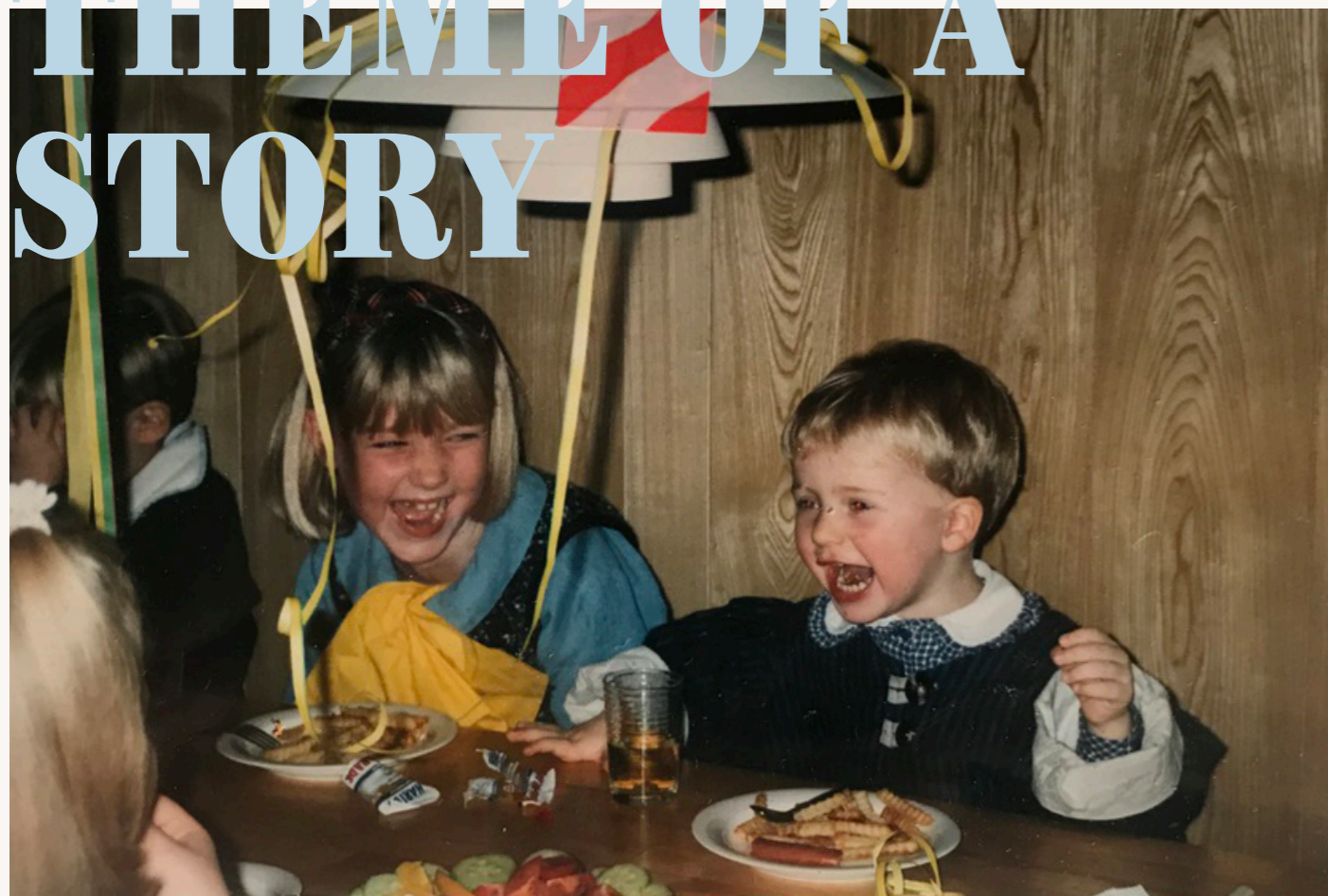
with a red cherry topping as a child or a Mortadella sandwich on a holiday to Italy. While *virtual nostalgia* in design is based on *virtual reality* and *shared in an indirect experience*, *cultural nostalgia* is *directly experienced and shared by members of a particular group*. (Tseng & Ho, 2011) Both cases are important to consider in the story told in this thesis.

The story told through the objects, does not exclude anyone since its topic is based on a matter that involves every individual. It is intended as a dialogue between the designer and the production as well as between the designer and the customer, his memories, his senses and nostalgic feelings.

*The following story is about food.*  
It is called *Riporelle Postmodern*.



# FOOD AS THE CENTRAL THEME OF A STORY



My brother at New Years in Denmark, 2000

Other than pictures and scenes, memories also contain a vast repertoire of smells, sensations and feelings. Through its sensual component, food creates memories that are not just cognitive, but also emotional and physical. All of our five senses are involved: eyes, nose, tongue and fingers check the appearance, smell, taste and consistency of the foods we eat. Only when all sensory impressions are linked in the brain, the actual taste perception begins. Even before food passes through our mouths, our brain processes the multitude of sensations, and certain expectations are raised. A soft bread, the smell of fresh chocolate cake, the rustling of popcorn, a shiny purple aubergine - all of these are stimuli that our brains get before they bite and chew and associate certain things with them. Our senses are the key to enjoying food with all its properties. (Richardson, 2015)

Food preparation is based upon the principle of analysis, disassembling and taking things apart. We separate what is not separated in nature. We take apples from a tree, carrots out of the soil, corn from the fields. We can reshape the single pieces, put them together, leave them for a minute and take them apart again, or we create something homogenous and new, changing the visible attributes of ingredients. All of the different processes are the preparation to form a synthesis. The official definition of synthesis "is the combination of components

or elements to form a connected whole."

(Berger & Kubelka, 2001)

Taking the syllables apart, the translation of the Ancient Greek word *syn* means *together*, *thesis* translates to *put* - to *put together*.

In the case of cooking, something that does not occur in nature - a personal creation. Moreover, that is what the cook does: he *puts things together*.

The kitchen serves as a place of new creations. The disassembled objects can be reassembled by elements. Prototypes are built, tested, modified, salt added, stirred, taken out of the oven, tested, left in the oven longer to adjust the patina and consistency. Now the creator can decide whether he would like to adhere to predetermined rules, move between rules and self-creation or use the kitchen as a laboratory for experiments. A cook can write his own manual if the result of his created food matches his taste.

Massimo Bottura has utilised and created the identity of his restaurant, based on his own story, told to the guest in the form of food. *Tagliatelle postmodern* - cooked with traditional ingredients but transferred to newly composed dishes. Always in reach of its origins, close to the rules but still, disassembling objects and putting them together in a new form. On a plate, one can be sure to taste Emilia Romagna and its culturally embedded dishes.

And at the same time, while eating the *ricordo del panino alla mortadella* - memory of the mortadella sandwich, the guest travels to Bottura's childhood, to the moments where he ate his sandwich, prepared by his mother in the morning, carried in his favourite lunchbox. It may be that the story

is not true, maybe the woman at the table to the left travels the same time back but arrives at another moment. It may be not at school but at a buffet on a cruise boat where she and her family would spend each summer holiday, crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

The name of the Mortadella dish is already creating an image, combined with the taste, expectation and stories, surrounding Bottura's cuisine. Each dish, each background story creates a new synthesis. The person eating, becomes the co-author who is rewriting, adding and continuing the story told by Bottura. He himself can relive his nostalgic moments of eating Mortadella

as a child. At the same time, he gives his guest the chance to experience and share the same time travel.

Storytelling also takes place in the description and personal perception of food. The aesthetics of ingredients, the different consistencies of a dish, the chosen cutlery and napkin to a perhaps arranged and decorated table, all play a part of the experience. (Hunsucke & Siegel, 2015)

As an example, the naturally made orange has geometrically arranged shapes, protected by a bright orange skin. An onion is formed of a central green sprout, surrounded by arranged thick, fleshy

and mostly white leaves inside, topped by tubular leaves on the outer layers with a thin and dry skin on the outside.

Bread, made of natural ingredients but shaped by humans, appears in many shapes, according to the bakers choice of crust, colour and grain, shape and size. The same principle counts for cheese, whose colour depends on the milk whereas its ageing-process and taste is strongly influenced by the producer.

And if one takes:

500 g onions  
White bread, (or toast)  
2 cloves of garlic  
40 g butter  
Salt and black pepper  
20 g of flour  
1 litre of broth (meat)  
¼ litre of white wine  
100 g cheese (grated hard cheese)

it all comes together in a french onion soup. A spoon contains thin, deep brown caramelised onions, in a strong, almost sweet broth, topped with crispy bread and melted cheese that float on the surface.

The optional glass of wine, a soup based on an invitation or cooked at home, a quick meal or dinner setting.

All of the factors play a part as sensual components that are created when eating. They appeal the five senses that are key to enjoying food with all its properties and accompanying side effects.



[56] *Myself eating a Mortadella Sandwich with Ketchup, Hamburg, 1995*

# RIPORELLE POSTMODERN

*A short excursion  
in storytelling, a  
personal narrative*



[57]

*Roadtrip through South Africa, 2017*

Just as it is important for Bottura to use his memories, it is important for this thesis to explain the intention of the final outcome through personal memories. As Kubelka said, eating, is a medium of expression that contains messages. The tangible and three-dimensional objects that are passed on to the next generation as well as the intangible, which he finds to be more long-lasting. In the case of this thesis, I will go from the intangible to the tangible. From nostalgic memories to objects. Objects with the capacity to translate and hold on to the past, without taking room of the presence for it to flourish and continue.

The story starts in 1991, in Hamburg, Germany, with parents that love good food. My childhood included sourdough bread, butter with mostly gouda cheese for school and a centre-schock chewing gum afterwards that was spiked with the sourest liquid I can recall.

My parents pedagogic principal was built on the fact that I had to try every dish, only after I could judge if I liked it. Thanks to that, as a young girl, I got the chance to taste snails, oysters, baked liver and many other organs and ingredients. Once my brother was born, we moved into a house with a garden and a lot of space for my parent's book collection (next to many fishing rods). The house is, until today, home to us and has since survived the weight of weekly antique additions, mostly books. Those are either too old to open due

to the fear of tearing a page or contain many recipes. In fact, for a moment of tranquillity and solitude, my father takes a pile of his cookbooks or gourmet magazines, pours himself a small glass of digestive and sits down to browse the pages of endless cooking recipes. The day came that my mother decided to buy an armchair, with a matching stool to rest the legs, in front of the cabinet that contains most of the cooking books. The cabinet itself is more than a hundred years old and comes from an English barn. My parents found it at an antique store on one of our many holidays in the UK, put it on the rooftop of our old *Renault R4* and drove all the way back to Hamburg. Above the frequently used shelves of cookbooks, one can find a collection of family photographs.

For some years a big BBQ is part of our terrace, right in front of my fathers cookbook-armchair. The BBQ does under no circumstances only serve during the summer but is utilised in every season, mostly by the masculine part of my family. Next to the BBQ stands a silver smoking-cabinet which due to our next-door neighbours, can't be used as often (much to my father's grief).

My mother, on the other hand, is a specialist on chutney and marmalade preparation, birthday cakes in every shape and dishes on the base of family recipes. She is trying out dozens of recipes on food presentations until a result is achieved, precisely as imagined. The table-settings, for many occasions, are arranged with matching colours of flowers and candles, napkins according to the season and hours, invested in thoughtful seating arrangements. I remember since early childhood that the weekend breakfast tables had to have butter on a butter tray, cheese on a plate, juice in a jug and no plastic-



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packaging or bottles insight. Aesthetics which I adapted for whenever I invite someone over - always with a fresh tablecloth and flowers but like my mother's aesthetics, never too sterile over perfection.

Since some of the trees outside the house, leave a lot of old Northern apple varieties to collect during autumn, my mother decided to use them for preparing a sweet and sour chutney, following a Scottish-Monastery recipe.

As a side note, I must mention the always present Anglophile of my family.

The idea was, due to the number of mason jars we had prepared, to open our house to anyone who wanted to try some of the homemade jams and condiments. We emptied the above-mentioned cabinet from cookbooks and family portraits and put the

approximately 300 jars, with my designed labels, arranged in pyramids on round paper doilies together, inside. In order to try each flavour, big loaves of sourdough bread, butter and gouda cheese were arranged next to it.

We sold almost everything.

As I grew older, due to the idea of my mother, we left Hamburg for some months to live in Rome. Shortly after I went away again to study abroad and have since lived



[64]

in many different countries in and outside Europe before I finally settled in Italy again, this time in Milan. Living in another country but always returning to my home in Hamburg, before leaving again, was a constant change of culture, circumstances, stories, relationships and of course the cuisine. Just before I returned from India, I texted my brother to please put away all the rice we had at home. I could not stand the thought of eating rice again. During my stay in South Africa, on the other hand, I ate more sausages and ribs

than my father had ever prepared on his BBQ in our garden. I needed a break from meat for quite a while.

Every place has left stories and added to the experience I made. Building new friendships, adapting to another continent, living daily life and still, knowing that all of it was only temporary and so, after some time I left.

Since I was a teenager, one wall of my room was plastered in notes, pictures, the

unavoidable teenage cutouts of fashion magazines and any kind of memory I found to be important to keep. Subconsciously, I repeated doing the same everywhere I went, taking things down from the walls once I moved only to put them up again in a new location, on a new wall, similar to the cabinet of my family home that stores just as many memories.

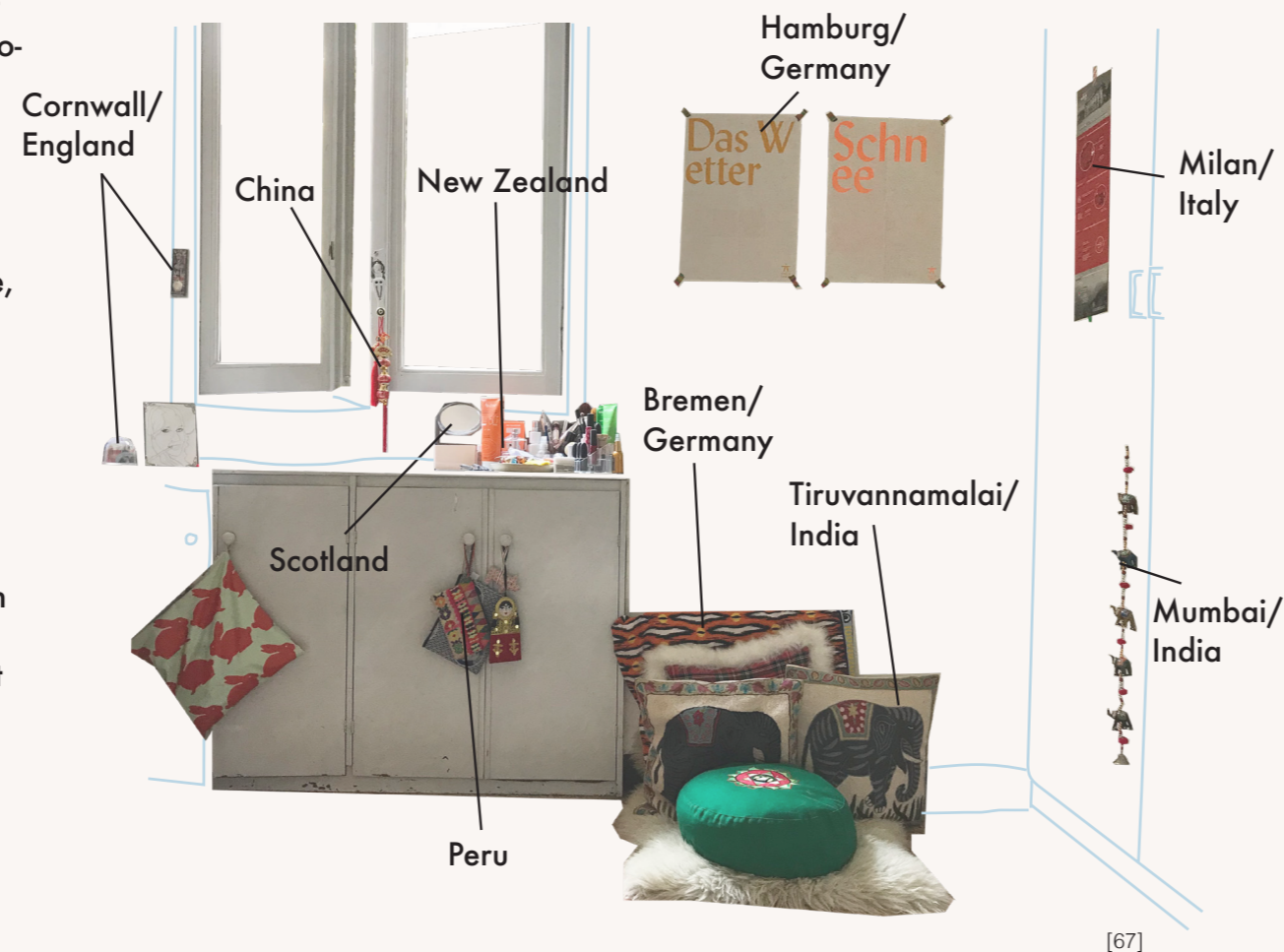
The night I arrived in Milan three years ago, the same happened. I felt home immediately. Again it was a wall of my personal nostalgic identity that, as always was in reach, giving me a feeling of safety. It developed through time and travel always with objects and memories, constantly added by new items from the present time. If anyone asks me about a specific piece, I tell the story. Most though only look at the wall for some time probably making up own stories.

The tangible is important to me; the present loss of physicality in the form of a cellphone as memory storage is unavoidable. Even more important for me, to have a counteract in the form of an analogue Voigtländer photo-camera, a gift from my father.

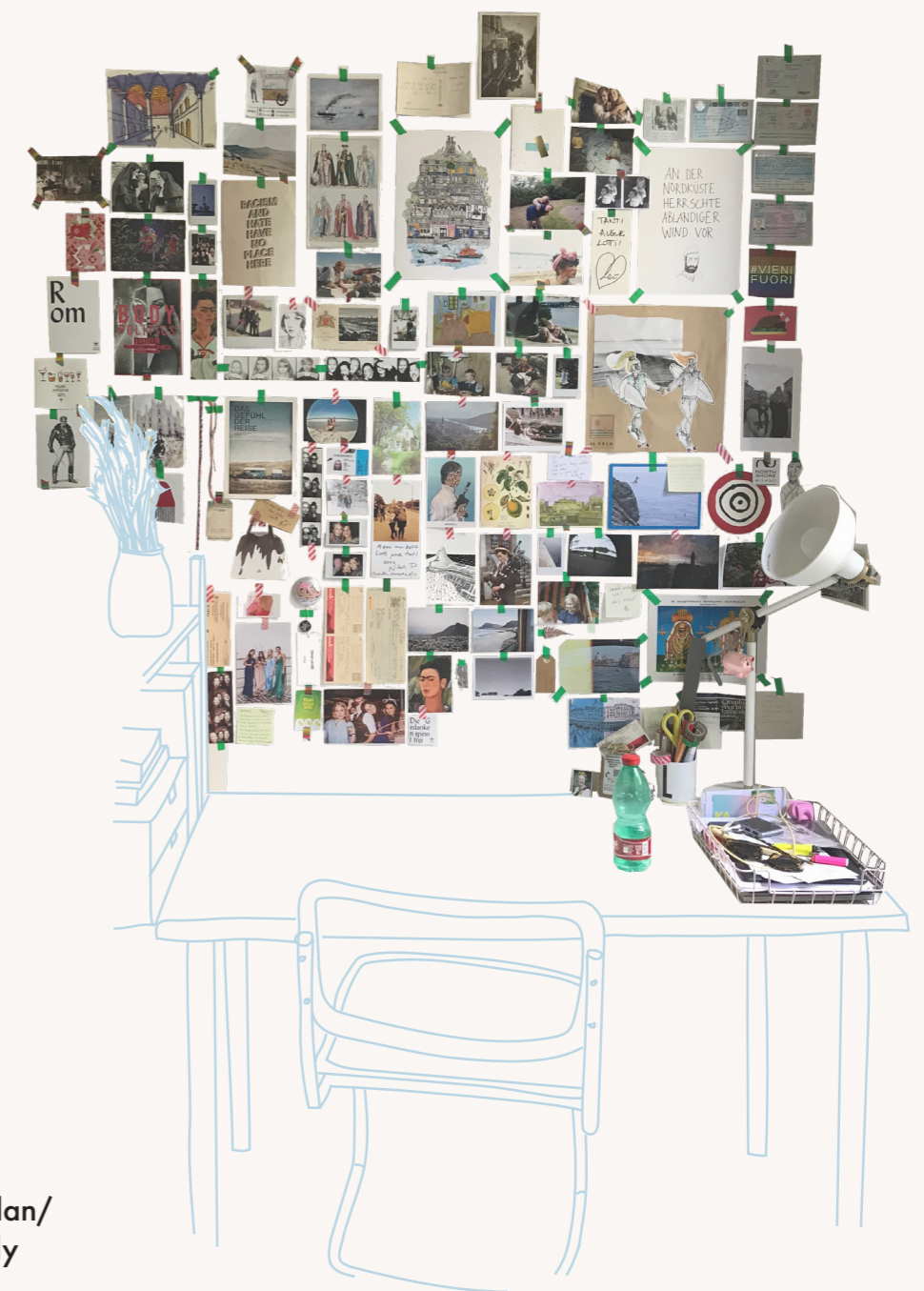
It seems as if the moments I do not want to forget, always contain a table as a centerpiece. Most of the pictures I took over the years, whether it was digital or analogue, are either composed of a table with food, a table with food and drinks or a table with food, drinks and card-games surrounded by individuals or various groups of people. The kitchen as its stage, the people as an important part of memories and thus a developed nostalgia. Moments of interaction often built on a spontaneous invitation to join dinner. The collective memory serves for that explicit moment of being together in a closed and

intimate circle of people. And then, with moving on and the many moments one experiences, the wall in my room, the collected moments and memories, become a personal nostalgia - my nostalgia. The aesthetics of the art of eating, shape and colour, texture and recurring patterns of food. Festive tables or crumbs on the simple tablecloth. Half-empty wine bottles, an overturned vase, the devastated table the next morning, clear it, clean it, continue to use what is leftover (maybe a stew?), stow it away and the table is ready again - ready for a new process of cutting, preparing, inhaling and uncovering - eating. A personal fascination and long-lasting memories that serve as the base of this thesis.

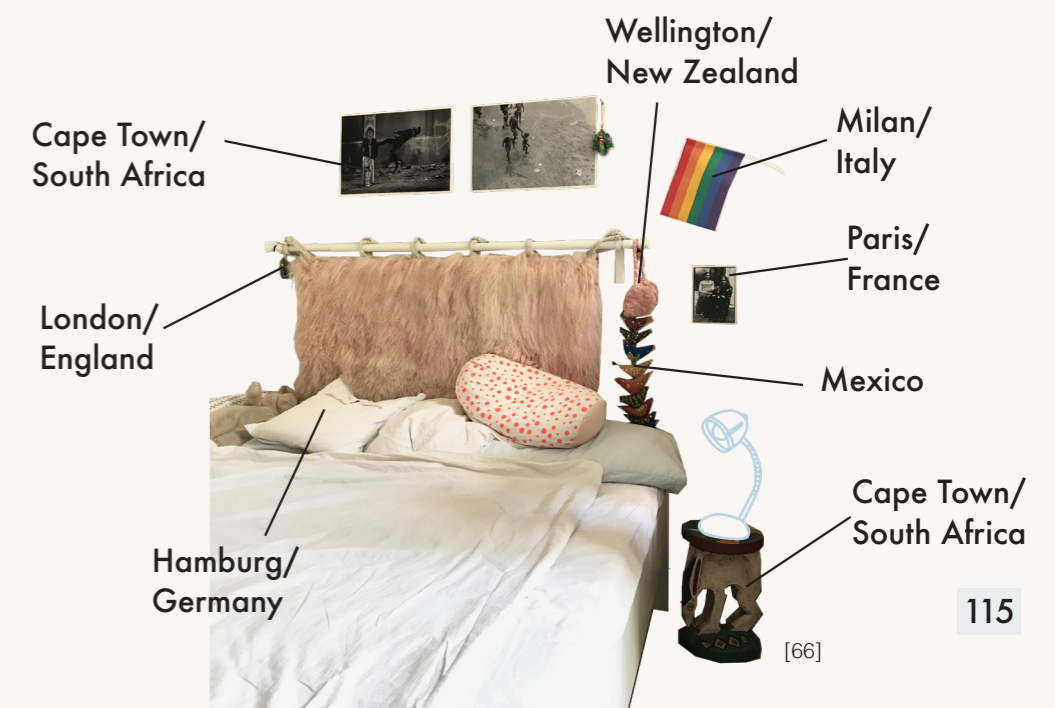
The photos at the beginning of each chapter are some the analogue photos I took, while the embedded interior scenarios in this chapter, serve as a visual attribute to share my family house in Hamburg, Germany as well as my current room in Milan, Italy.



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# FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE



[68]

For my thesis, I designed a family of three vitrines.

A vitrine serves as a space to store personal and important objects, protected from glass and thus always visible from the outside.

My goal was to design a vitrine with meaning, in a state of empty shelves as well as spiked with memories of the person who owns it.

The result is a trio, each of them based on my personal nostalgia, translated into illustrations, held by solid structures of metal.

Each of the vitrines of the trio is aesthetically different in construction and appearance. The shape is developing from the roundness of a circle to organic to rectangular, from a homogenous delicacy in colours to bright and bold - always speaking the same language, through its similarities of the material of the structure, the light blue of the structure and the fabric as the basic colour and its uniform dimensions and measurements.

The developed form of the vitrines was an intuitive process that arose from the thought of an object that has the capacity not to be in the foreground but to coexist in harmony with its contents. The calm, harmoniously round shape and the breezy light blue of the structure of the fabric, combined with the white stitching of vitrine no1 with transparent and airy glass shelves, is carried on slim but strong metal legs. The frame stands for

durability, the material is sturdy, solid and yet not too dominant through its slenderness and the matt light blue tone.

The colour is applied through powder-coating, in the same matt light blue tone (RAL 2508015) for all of the three vitrines. Blue is the colour of longing, the wonderful, the wanderlust and the dream, the sky, but most importantly, it stands for sensitivity and symbolises permanence, as defined in the psychological meaning of colours. Just as I chose a consistent colour to underline the design and its relation in a trio, I chose metal in the same diameter of the carrying structure.

Vitrine no2 takes up the round shape of its predecessor as a semicircle in the frontline, instead of edgy corners. The lightness and visibility from the outside are generated by thin and transparent fabric. From a distance, it looks solid, from close it turns out to be an accumulation of small holes in a kind of loosely woven curtain fabric, through which the viewer can see the inside. The homogeneous shape is slightly lifted off the floor and achieves a lightness even without the use of glass but metal shelves.

Vitrine no3 is the minimalist of the trio. It has a clear rectangular shape, is made of metal without the use of fabric as the other two. It also functions with only three illustrations, which are lightly embedded with a thin line, in the glass of the frontal sliding doors.

It was important to me in the trio to demonstrate a process that shows all mental states of nostalgia. The subliminal, the intense, which is always present and only sometimes emerging, sometimes disappearing, seems distant and then it comes back, more colourful and clearer than ever before, in the round or rectangular shapes, the breezy or bold colours and outlines, the airy or transparent light fabrics, in the designed objects and the objects of

food, applied to the surfaces of fabrics and glass.  
Each vitrine, in its own way and all together as a trio in its corresponding unity, in all its attributes and design, appeals to the senses in different ways and therefore has the ability to provoke different reactions - depending on the variety of the nostalgia, memories and experiences of each viewer.

The name *Riporelle Postmodern* is inspired by *Tagliatelle Postmodern*, a name given to define Bottura's cuisine by the *Espresso Magazine* (as mentioned in chapter *Why do we eat? What is food?*). The word postmodern, as a critical reflection, for me, is summarised in the following:

"In postmodernity, innovation is not the focus of (artistic) interest, but rather a recombination or new application of existing ideas."

The word *Riporelle* is linked to the Italian word *da riporre* which means *to store* - therefore:  
*Riporelle Postmodern*.

"People who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy will remember their beauty of growing plants. Perhaps in the dewy first light of the morning when the gardens are at their best." (Berry, 1989) The beauty of growing plants, their bright greens, reds, yellows and every other shade, the intense tones on our plates and its associated feeling of livelihood and joy, influence and emboss my emotions and thinking and have a significant impact on my design.

Blue, on the other hand in nature, appears as the background of colours, just as I use it as the background colour of my illustrations. My chosen colours, next to the light blue, reflect the intensity that food has on me.

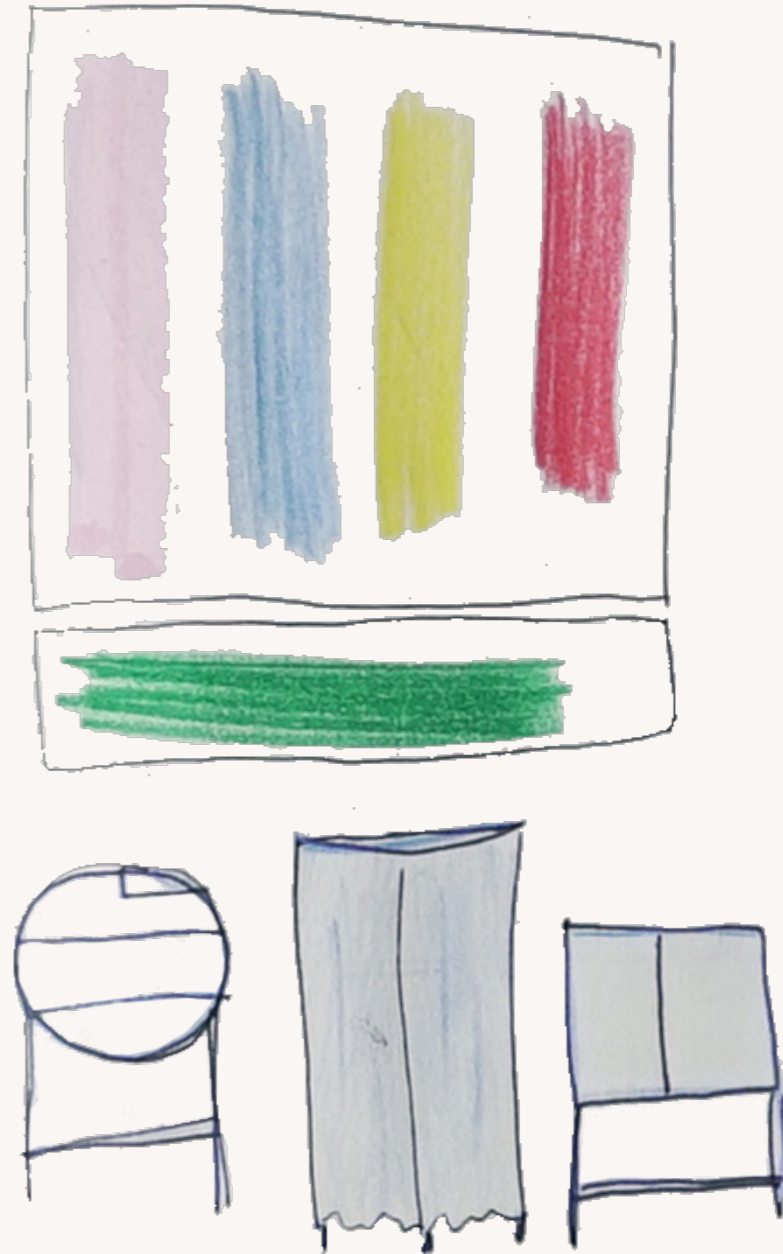
I always lay out fruit and vegetables in my kitchen, and the broccoli is in a vase filled with water since the colouring is too intense to be stowed away. A purple onion with its green sprout, bananas next to a bright orange skin, peaches next to tomatoes and the basil bush in the background. This scenario was an inspiration for the vitrine no2.

Just as the quality, beauty and fresh taste of vegetables from local farmers, my aim is to produce my designed objects locally. I am using the specially developed traditional skills of the region that are elementary for me as an essential part of my design and product.  
In the case of this thesis and work, the production was split between Hamburg, Germany and Milan, Italy.

The observer of the vitrines is not supposed to be just taken into my past. The intention of the design is rather a consistent thread of being hinted at but not strikingly attached to my personal nostalgia of food. The different stories told through the vitrines are present, but also leaving freedom for the new owner to link the form to his own stories, to fill the shelves with his own memories, creating another personal symbiosis of nostalgia, in the present and future, in an object.

If I see the illustrations, the colours and different shapes in its united design, I think of my families cabinet, the photo-wall in my past rooms and the many shared moments around a table with food.

Others might read it according to their past and think their first Mortadella-sandwich.



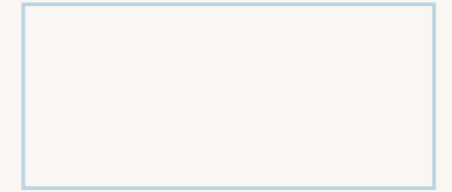
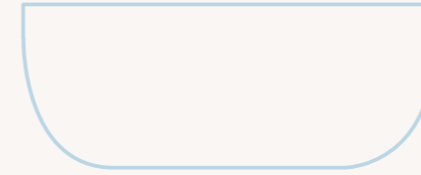
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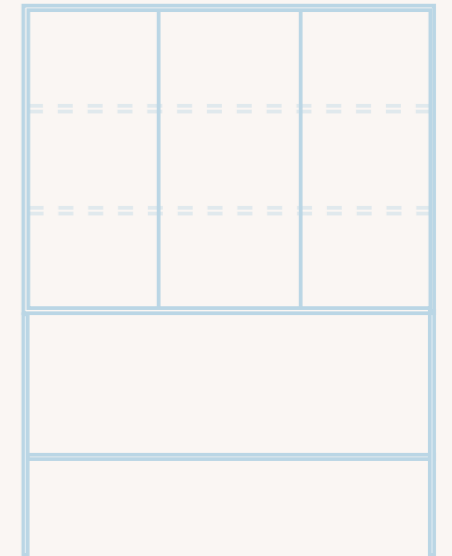
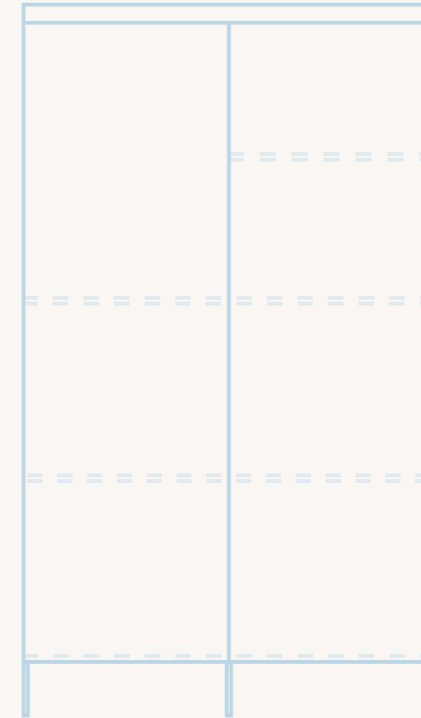
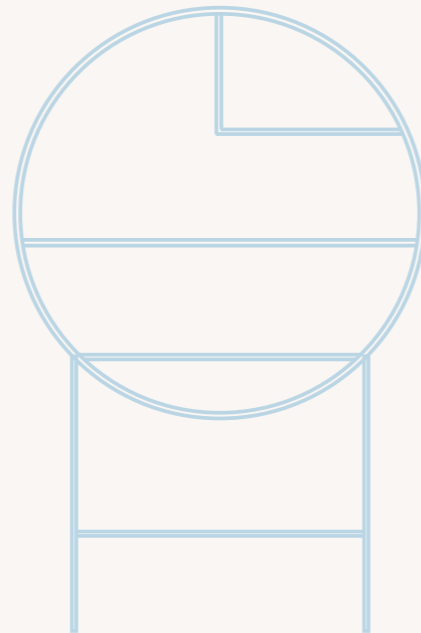
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**TOP VIEW**



**FRONT VIEW**



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VITRINE NO1

VITRINE NO2

VITRINE NO3

**MATERIAL**

STEEL CONSTRUCTION  
FABRIC (COTTON)  
GLASS SHELVES

STEEL CONSTRUCTION  
FABRIC (POLYESTER)

STEEL CONSTRUCTION  
GLASS SLIDING DOORS

**PRODUCTION**

STEEL, MILAN  
FABRIC, MILAN  
STITCHING, HAMBURG  
GLASS SHELVES, HAMBURG

STEEL, MILAN  
FABRIC, MILAN  
PRINTING, MILAN

STEEL, MILAN  
GLASS DOORS, HAMBURG  
LASERCUTTER, HAMBURG

**COLOUR**

METALL: LIGHT BLUE  
POWDERCOATED  
RAL 250 8015  
FABRIC: LIGHT BLUE  
THREAD: WHITE, SILVER

METALL: LIGHT BLUE  
POWDERCOATED  
RAL 250 8015  
FABRIC: LIGHT BLUE  
PRINT: RED, YELLOW,  
GREEN, PINK,  
ORANGE, WHITE

METALL: LIGHT BLUE  
POWDERCOATED  
RAL 250 8015

# VITRINE NO 1



Vitrine No1 has the shape of a circle, standing on contrasting rectangular metal legs; it is made of a metal structure which is powder-coated in light blue. A light blue fabric, with white embroidery, is attached inside the inner part of the circle.

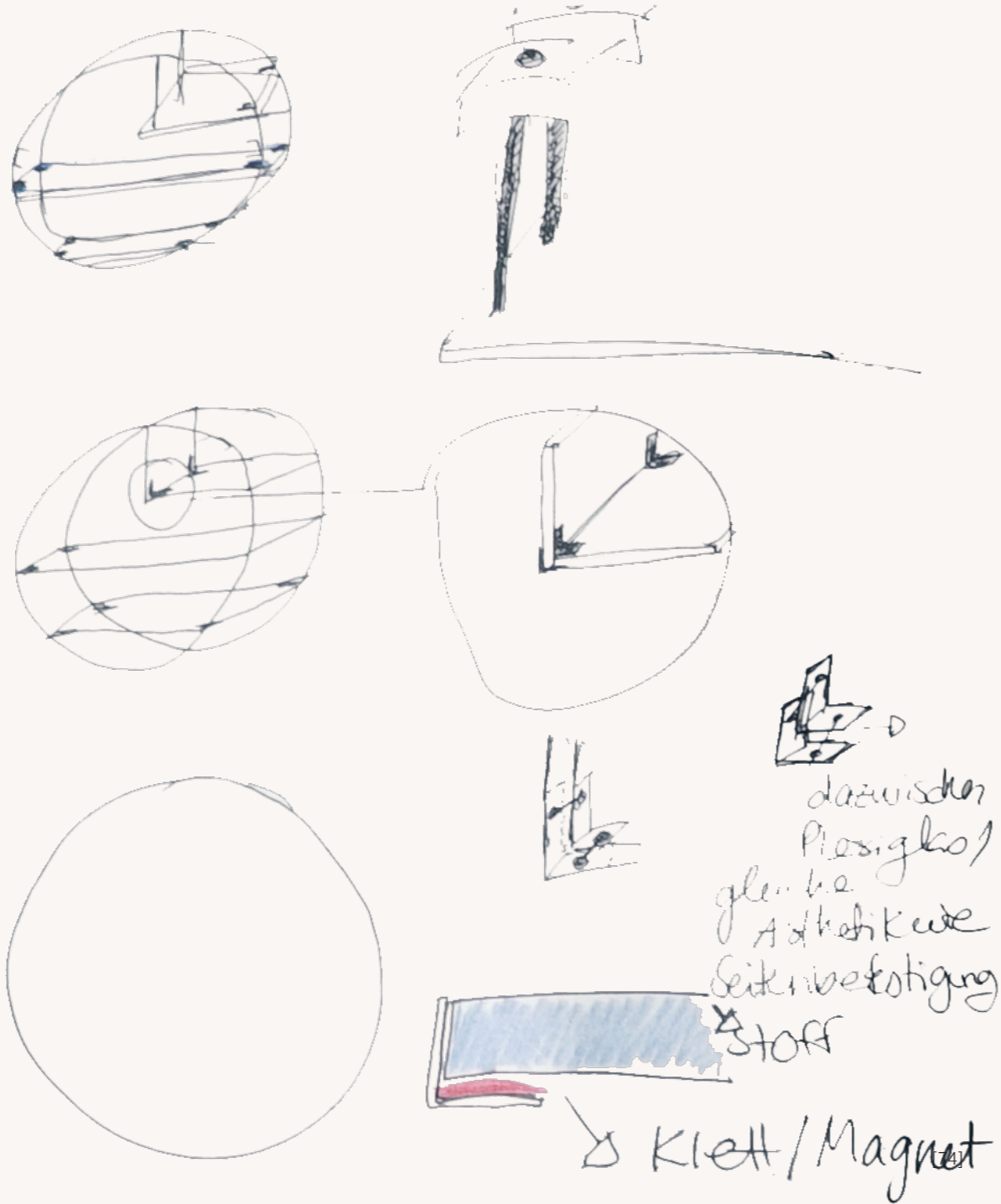
In this design, the illustrations are based on two of my favourite recipes. Mozzarella in Carrozza from Italy and XXX from Germany. Both have a significant meaning in preparation, taste and arrangement, instantly liking me to moments from the past.

The two recipes are illustrated in six drawings, arranged in a chronological order in which each dish is prepared. The drawings are stitched on light blue cotton fabric, the same colour of the powder-coat, with a white, almost silver looking thread.

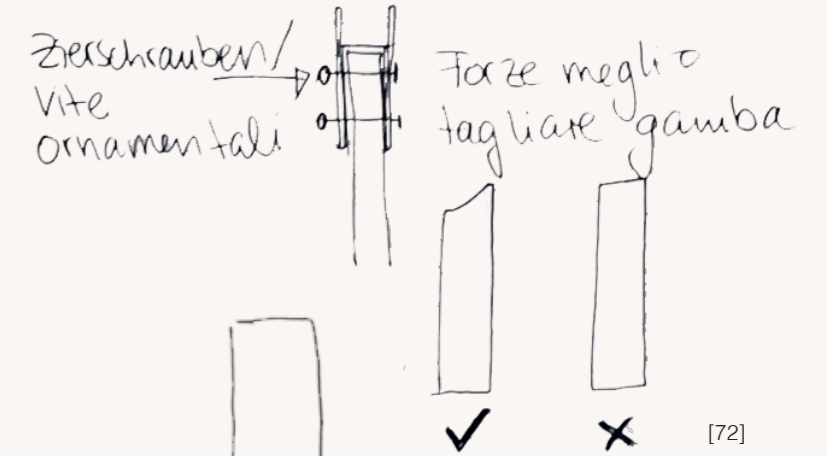
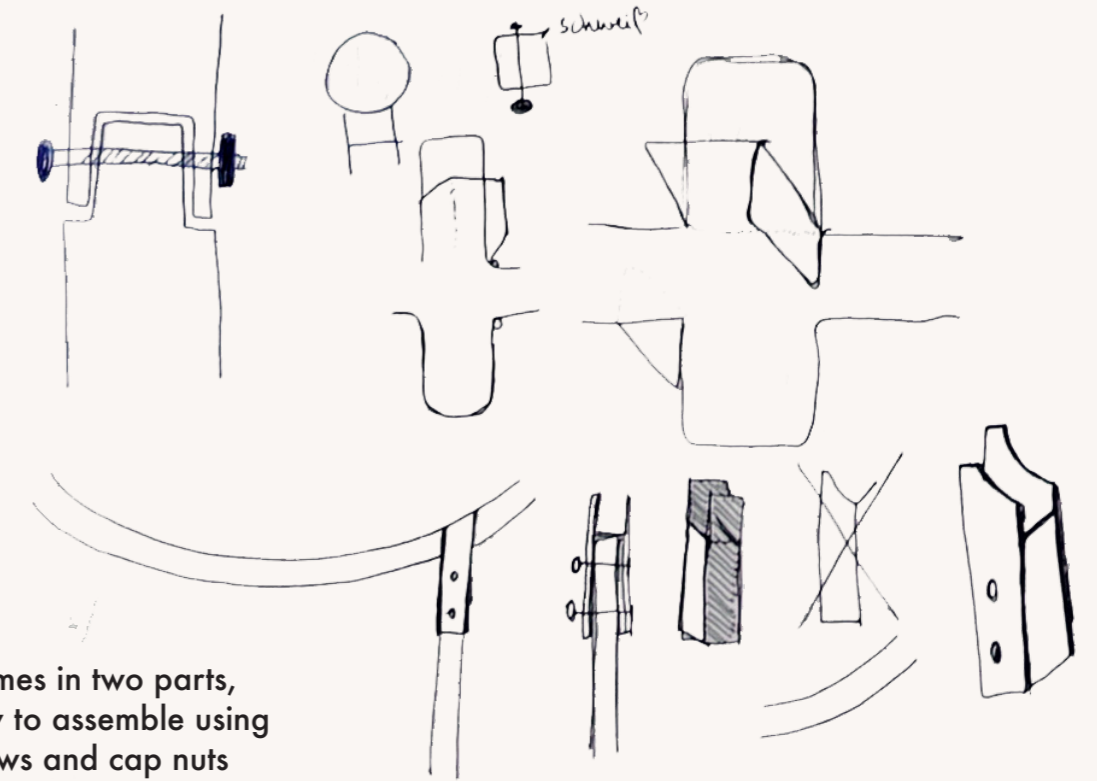
Vitrine No1 has a consistent colour, which creates a smooth, matt transition from fabric to metal. From a distance, the object seems to be made of one piece. But the upper part, each shelf and the fabric, can be easily disassembled and removed. As an incentive to the haptic senses, the embroidery is tangible, almost three-dimensional, made of a thread which is stitched into the fabric.

The white silver thread appears in natural light as a harmonic colour to the light blue of the fabric and the vitrine. In artificial light, however, it reflects the glow on its surroundings.

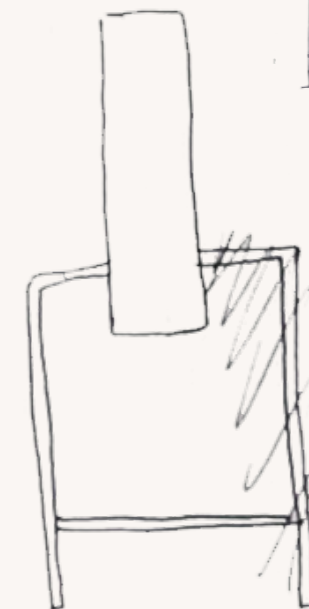
This stitching on the fabric is finished, the structure has been built. The powder has been delivered and is in the process of being applied.



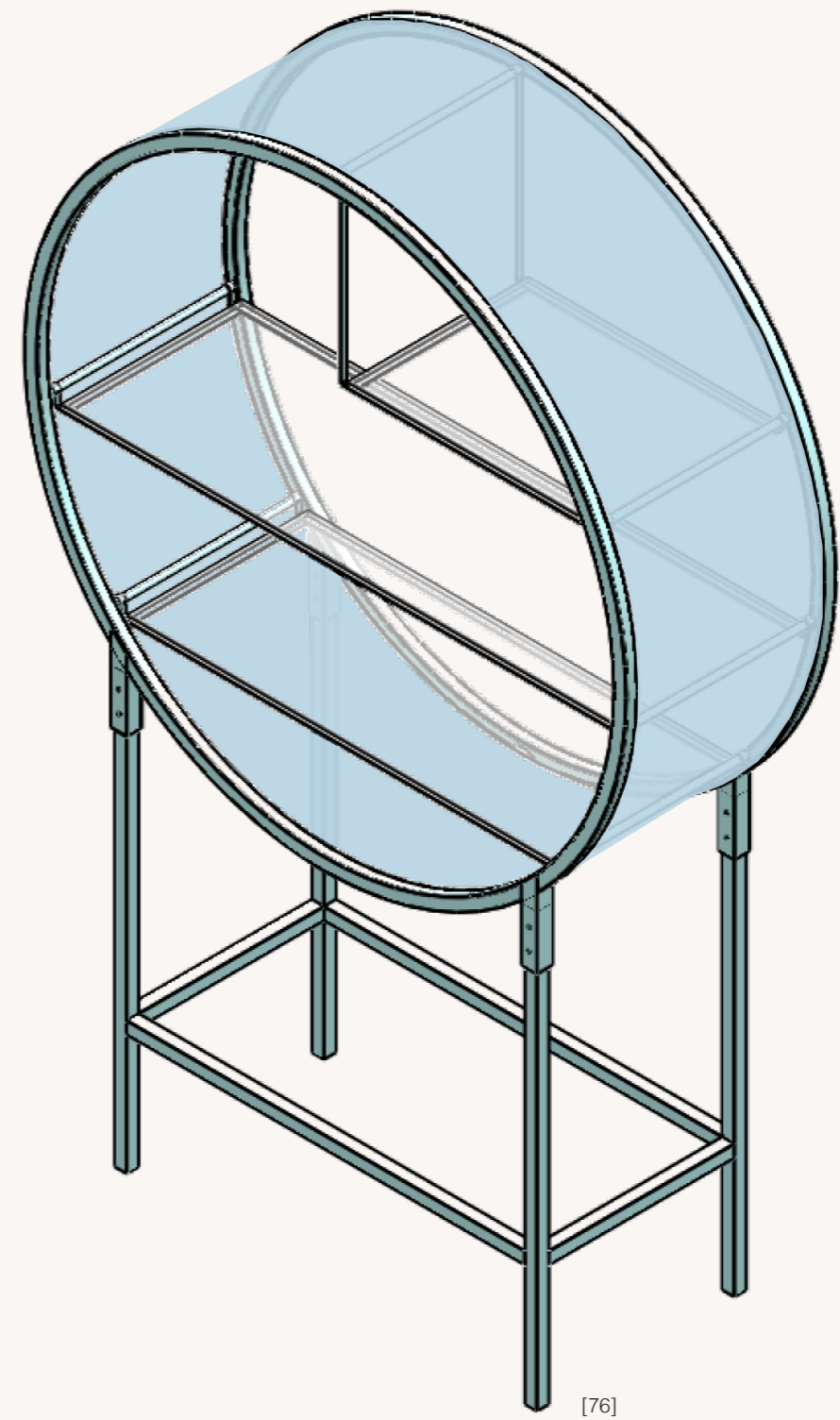
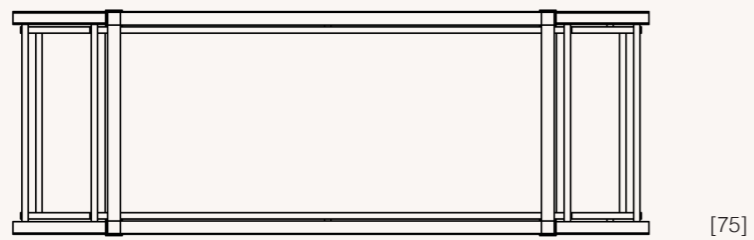
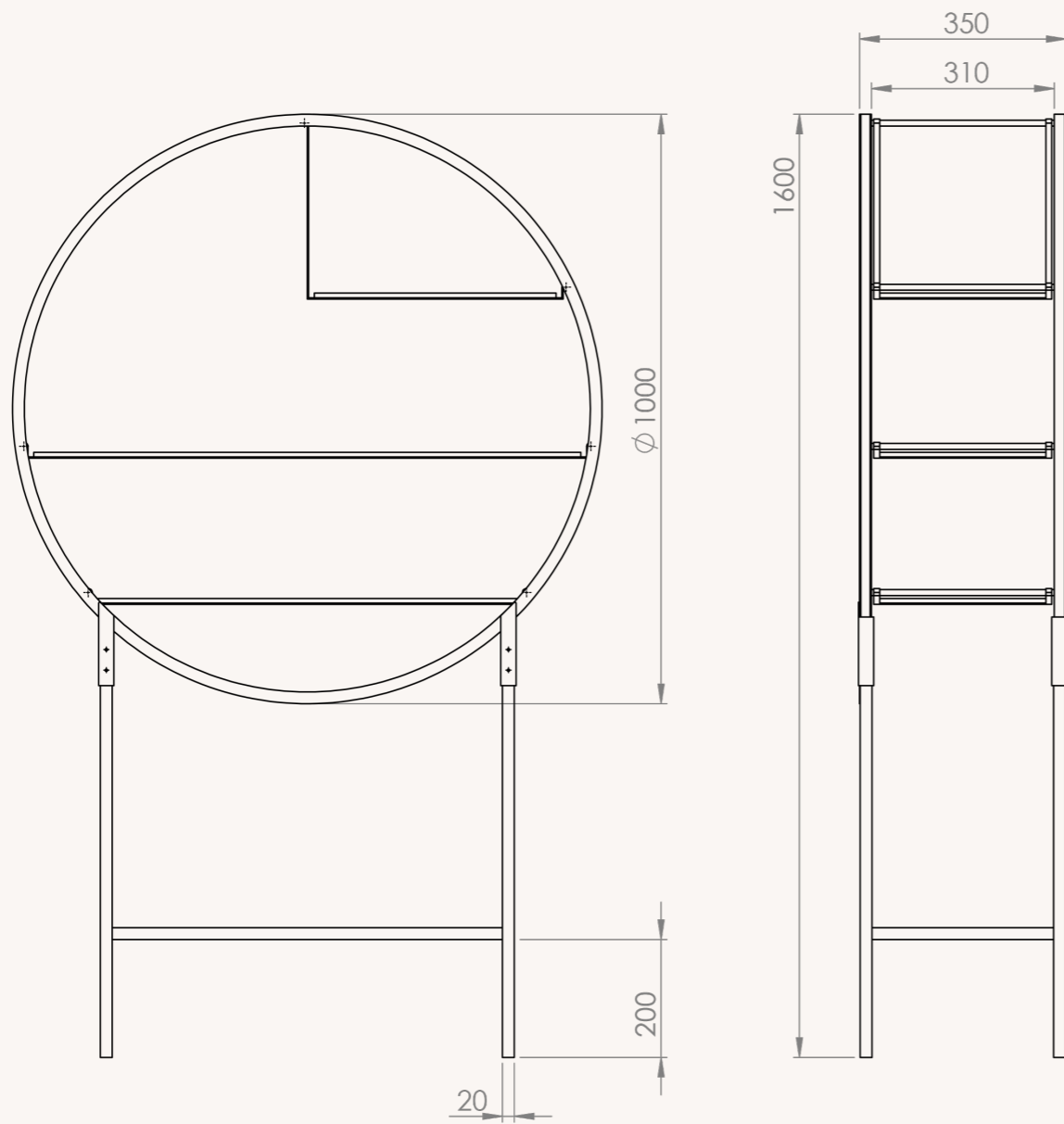
The vitrine comes in two parts, that are easily to assemble using only four screws and cap nuts

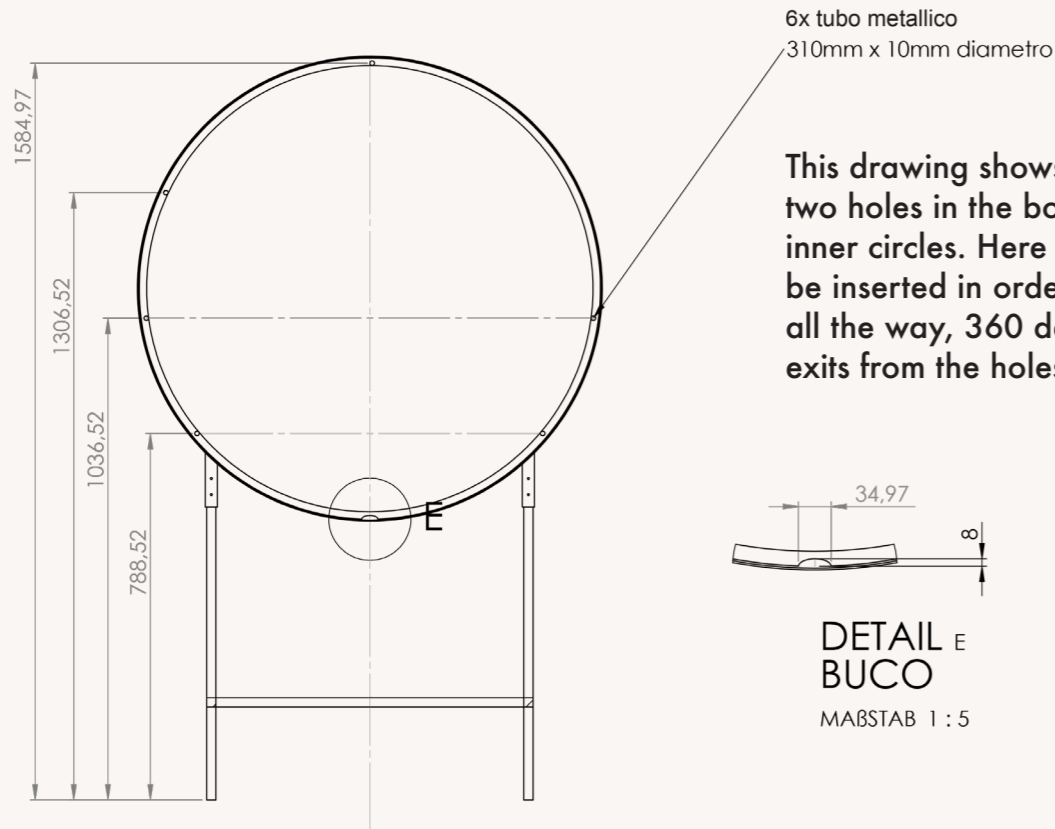


[72]

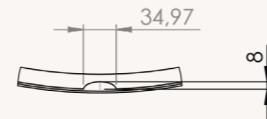


[73]



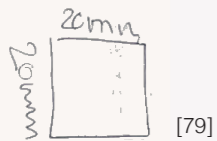
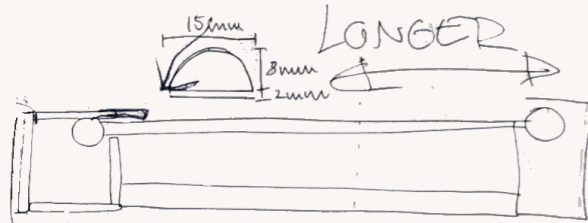
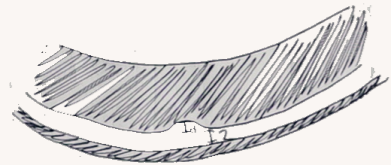


This drawing shows one of the two holes in the bottom of the inner circles. Here the fabric can be inserted in order to slide it all the way, 360 degrees, until it exits from the holes again

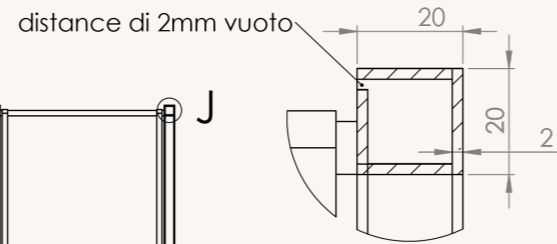


DETAIL E  
BUCO  
MABSTAB 1 : 5

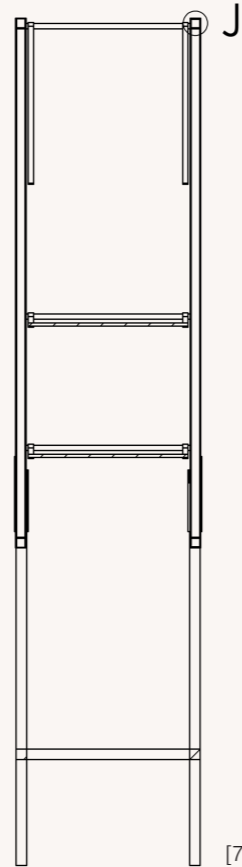
SCHNITT D-D  
MABSTAB 1 : 10 [77]



This drawing shows the details of rods, attached to both sides along the fabric. The rods are sewn into the seam, keeping it stretched and tight

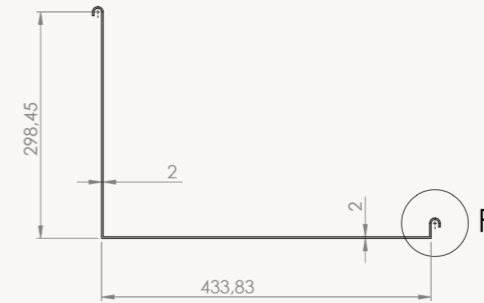


DETAIL J  
MABSTAB 1 : 1

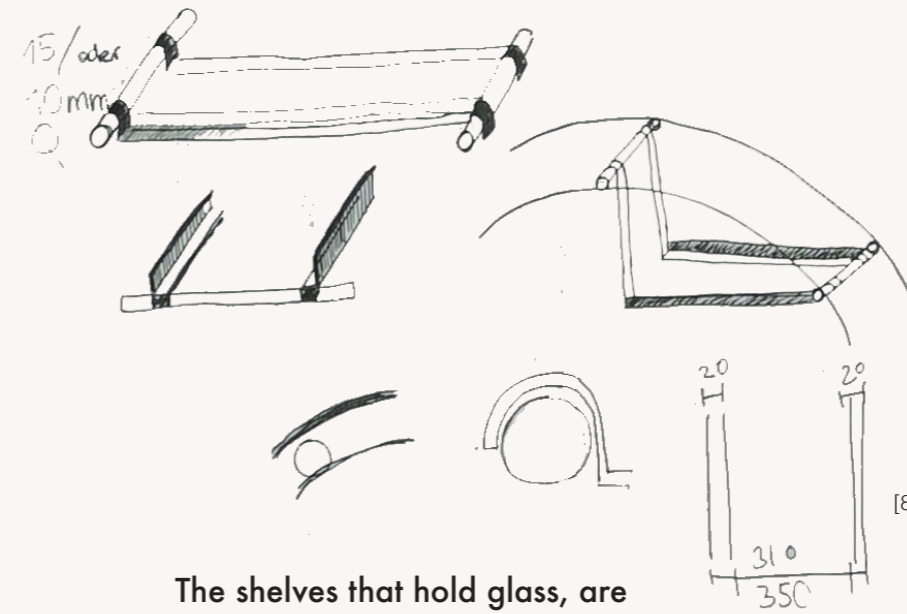
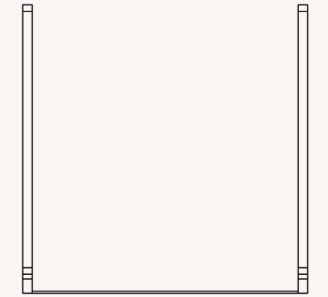


[78]

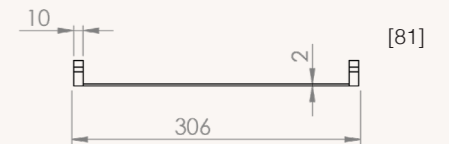
This drawing shows the detail of the circular tubes, that have a 2mm gap, where to fabric is held inside



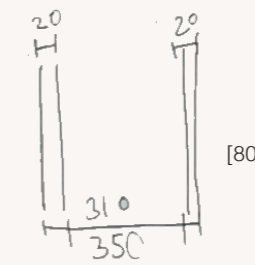
DETAIL F  
MABSTAB 2 : 5



The shelves that hold glass, are simply layed onto the tubes and can be easily removed

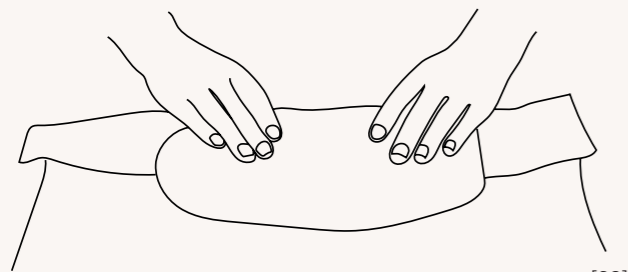


[81]



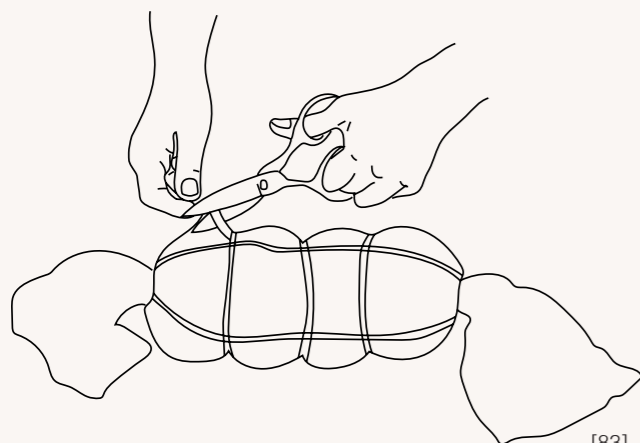
[80]

# ILLUSTRATION



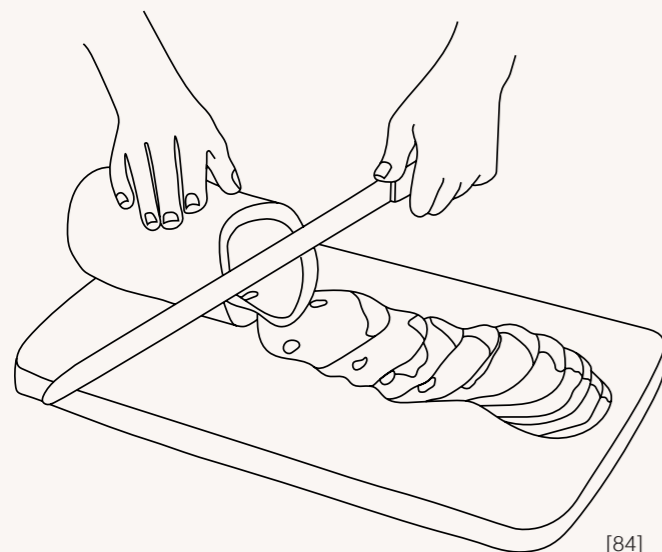
[82]

The different pieces of meat (pork, beef and chicken), have to be layered, compressed and in the end rolled into the chicken skin. The skin needs to be stitched together in order to close it. After, wrap it tightly in baking paper



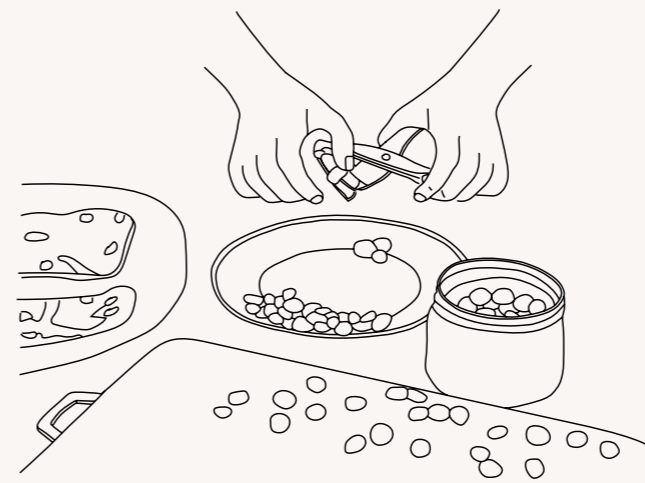
[83]

Put the wrapped meat into a cloth and use a thread to close it tightly. Leave it to cook on a small flame in a pot, together with half an onion and the left-over pieces of meat



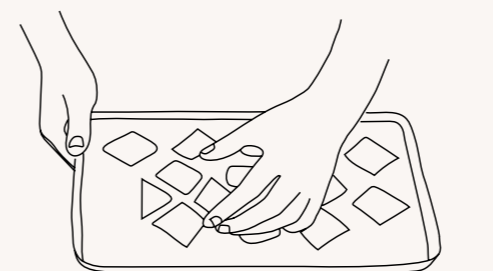
[84]

Leave it on a wooden board to cool for 15 minutes then cut it in slices



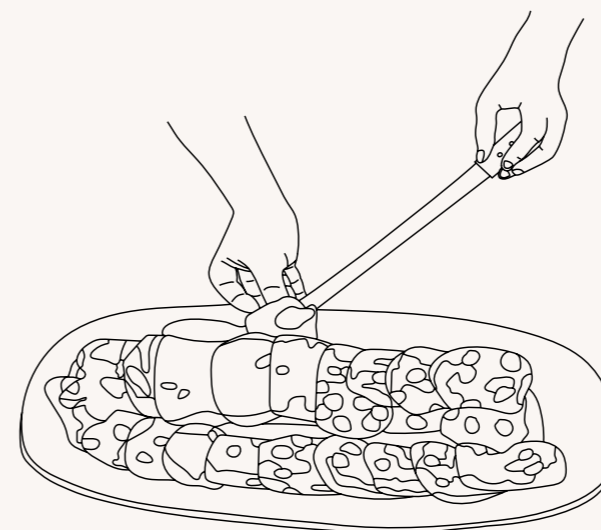
[85]

Take out the stones of the black olives with the right instrument



[86]

Prepare a tray of gelatine to cut out with your preferred shape and put it on a side plate



[87]

Arrange the sliced meat elegantly on a big plate and decorate it with the pieces of gelatine, olives and if you want with pistachios. Pore over some liquid gelatine and leave to cool. Enjoy!



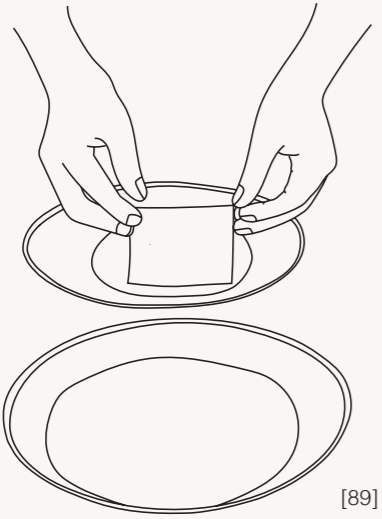
Cut the edges off the toast

[88]



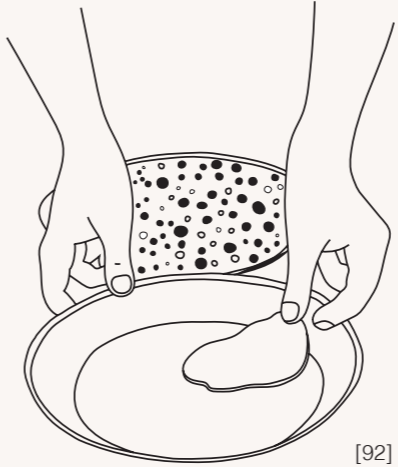
Dip the slice of toast in the egg again

[91]



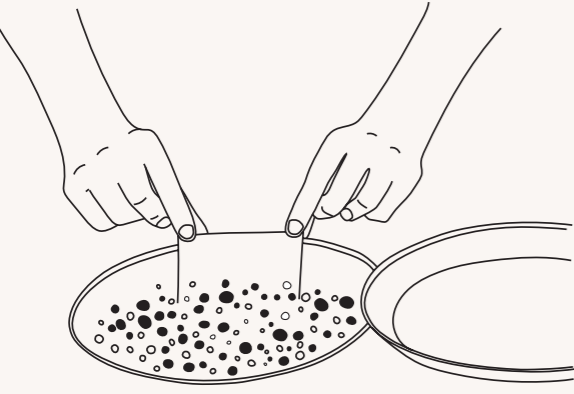
Soak the slice of toast in eggs with a little salt added, beaten with a fork

[89]



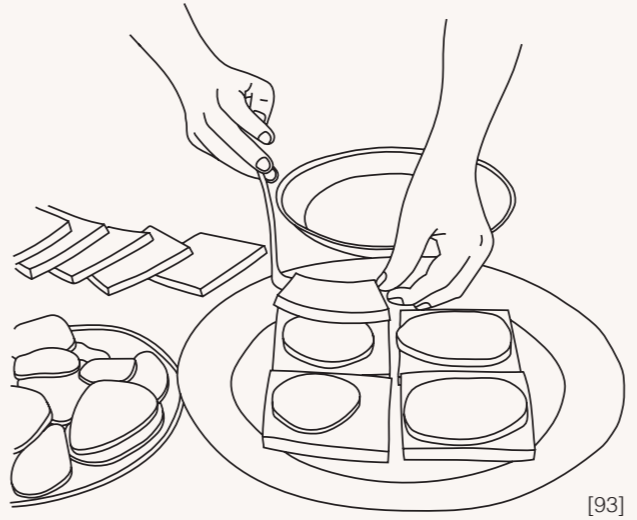
Turn a slice of mozzarella in the beaten egg

[92]



Apply flour to both sides of the toast

[90]



Take two of the prepared slices of toast, add a slice of mozzarella in the middle and fry is as a whole until the bread is golden brown. Enjoy!

[93]

# PROTOTYPE 1:5



[94]



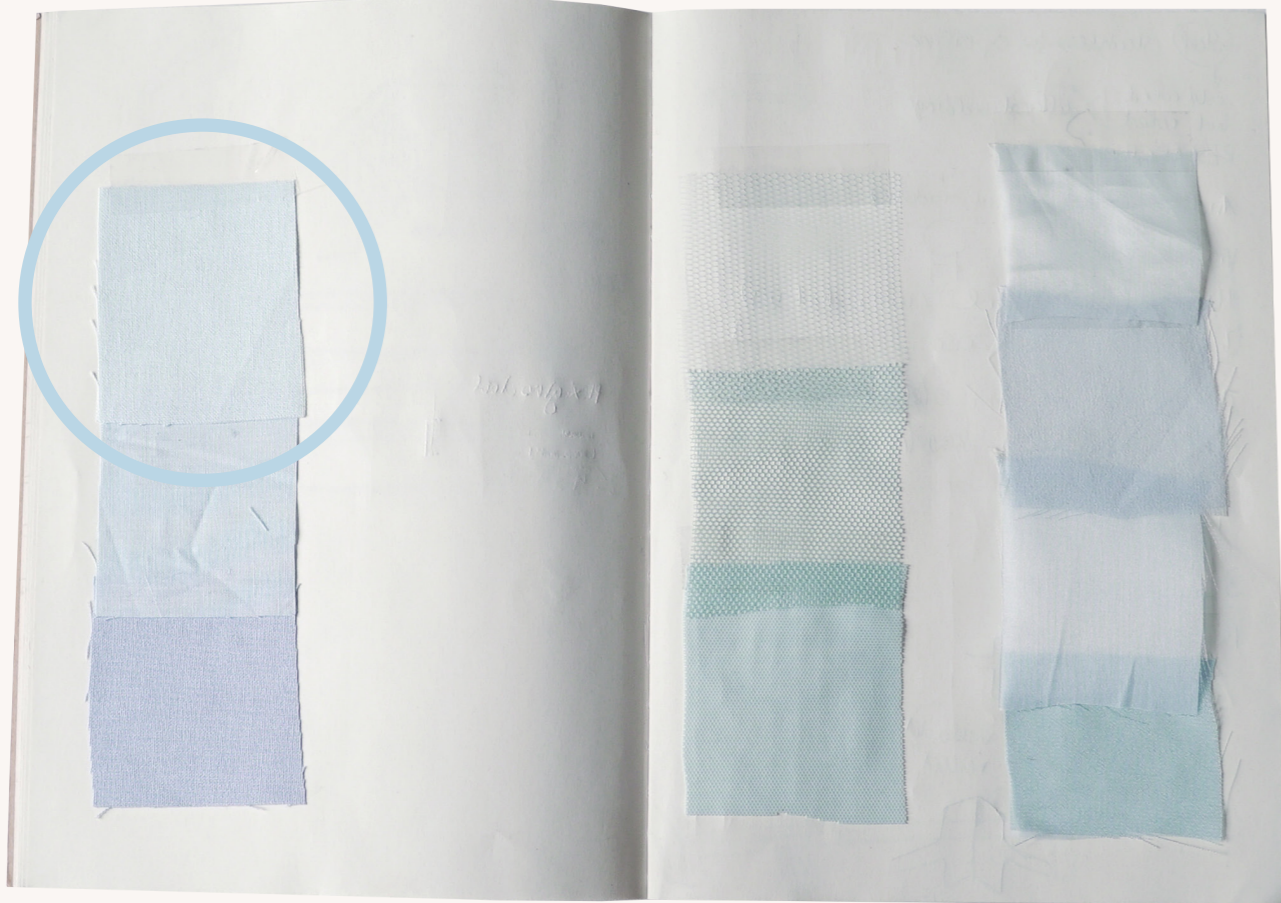
[95]



[96]



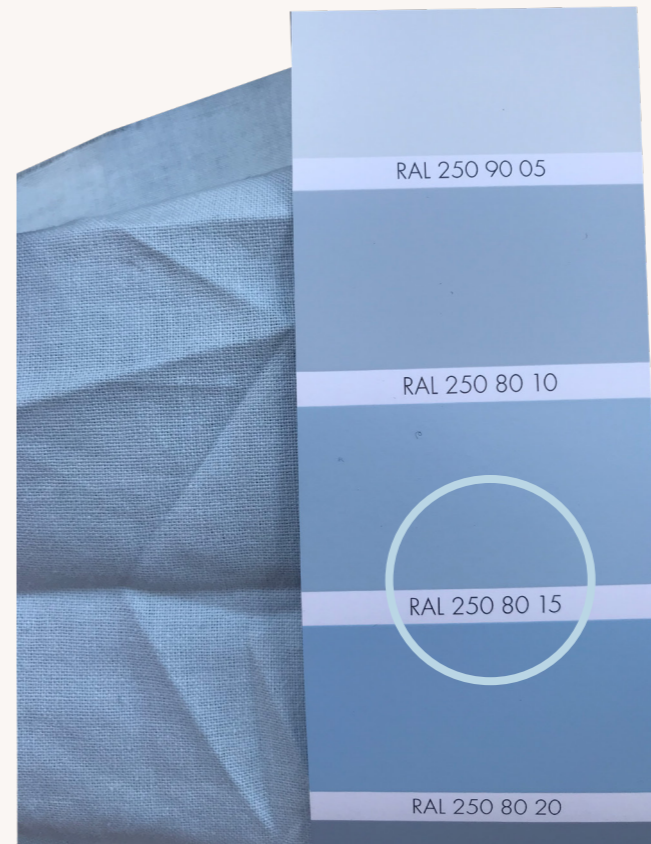
# FABRIC



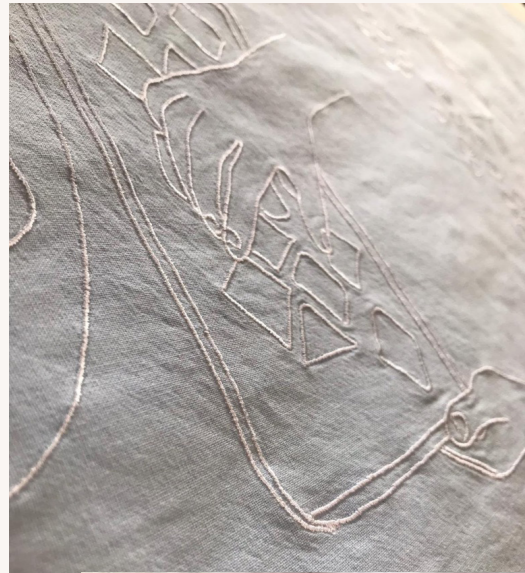
[97]



[99]



[98]



the haptic thread  
of the stitching

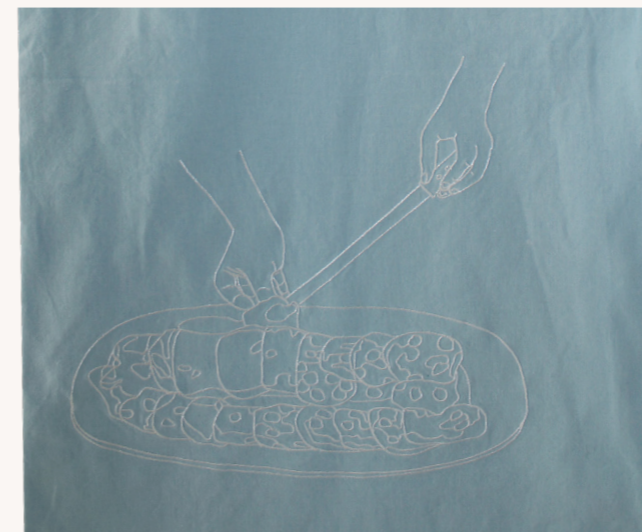
[109]



[105]



[106]

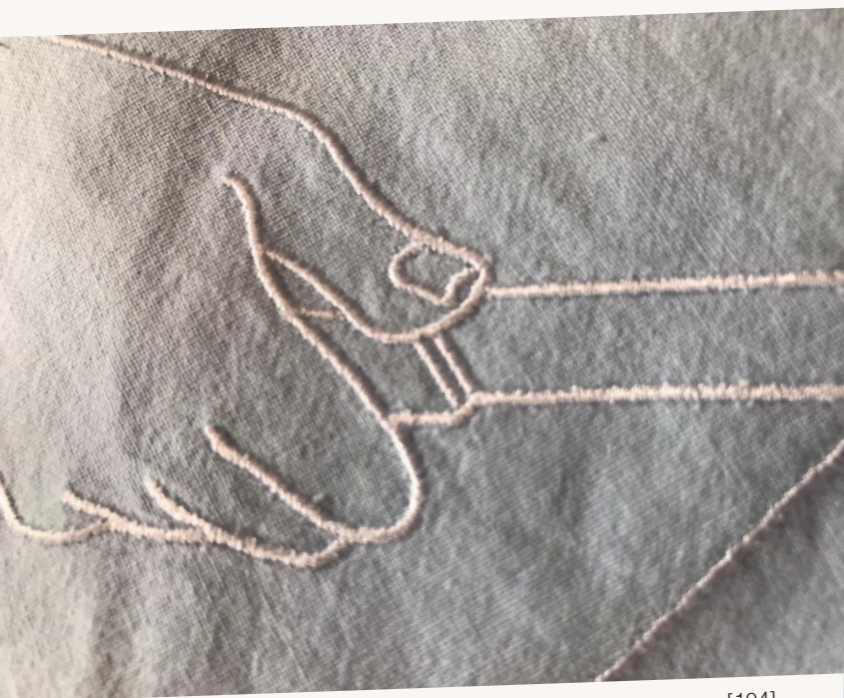


[107]

photo taken with flash  
to show the reflection  
of the thread



[108]

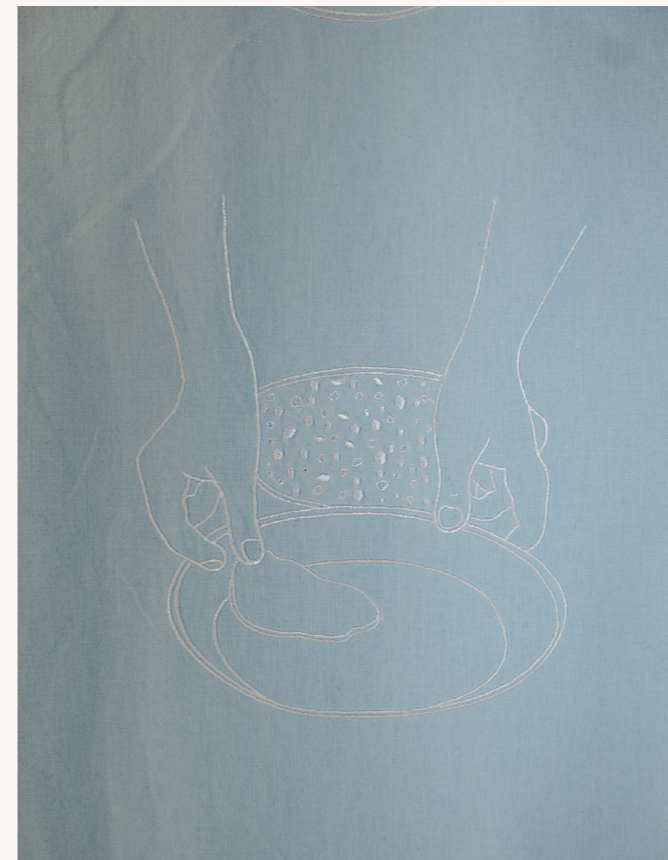


[104]

the haptic thread  
of the stitching



[100]



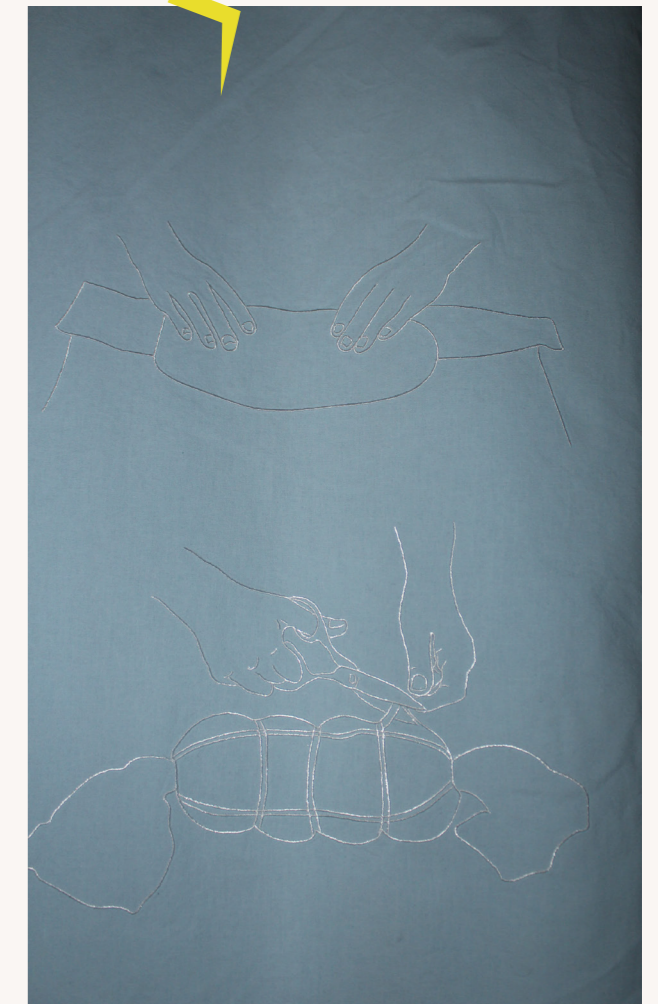
[101]



[102]



photo taken with flash  
to show the reflection  
of the thread



[103]

# REALISATION



[110]



[111]



[113]



[112]



[114]

Different types of glass to understand its relation to the metal structure. In this case not only an aesthetic decision but also one for safety reasons



[114.1.]



[114.2.]

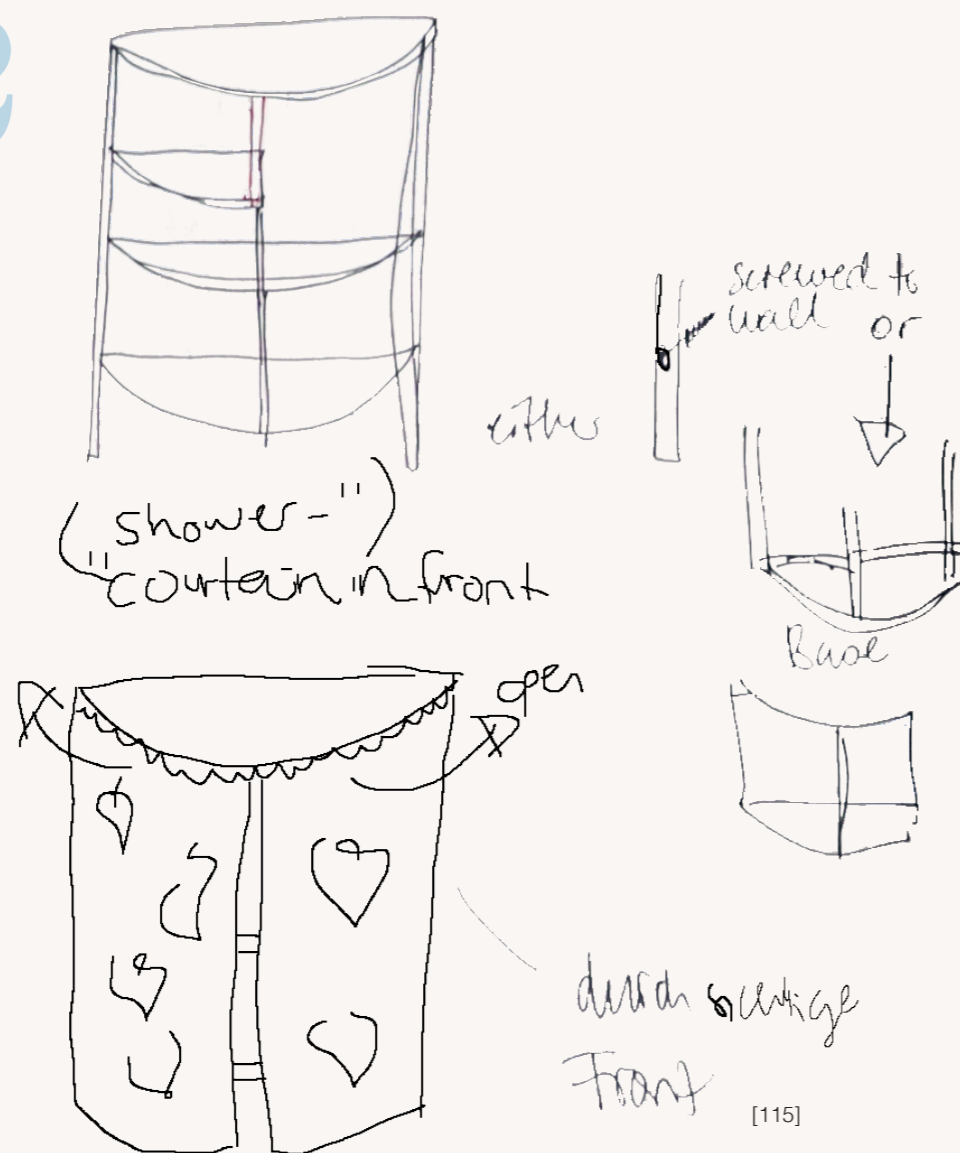


[114.3.]



[114.4.]

# VITRINE NO 2

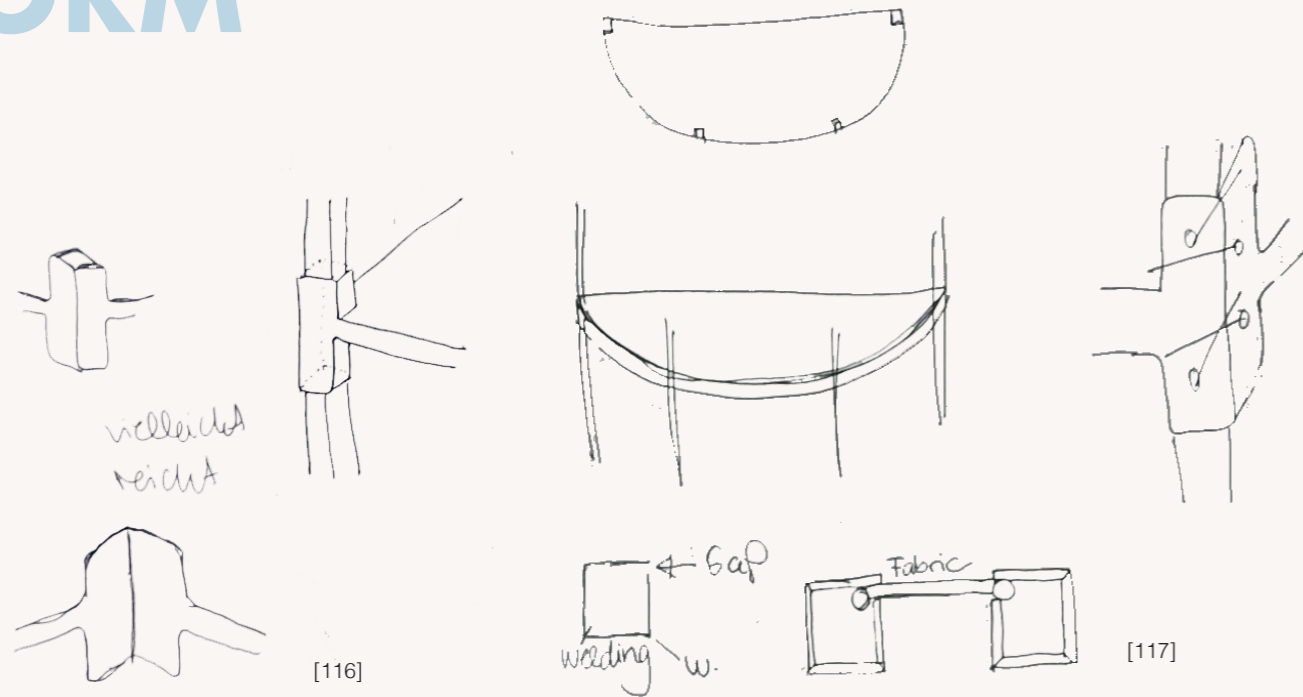


Vitrine No2 has a half-circular shape, a bulbous front; it is made of a metal structure that is powder-coated in light blue. In the front two curtains, can be opened by gliding sideways on a rail, with the help of a drapery wand. The system is invisibly attached on the upper part of the vitrine .

Each design of the illustrations on the curtain, is based on selected photos that show a personal moment, that I often look back to, always based around a table. One object of each photo is isolated and serves as a representative for the moment. The illustrations were printed on translucent and light fabric, allowing the view inside the vitrine. The colour of the fabric is light blue in its base, the same colour of the metal structure. The objects, on the other hand, are printed in bold and intense colours, which can be seen from far. In this vitrine, the visual aspect of different colours is crucial to the design since, once the print is seen from close, dissolve due to transparency of the fabric.

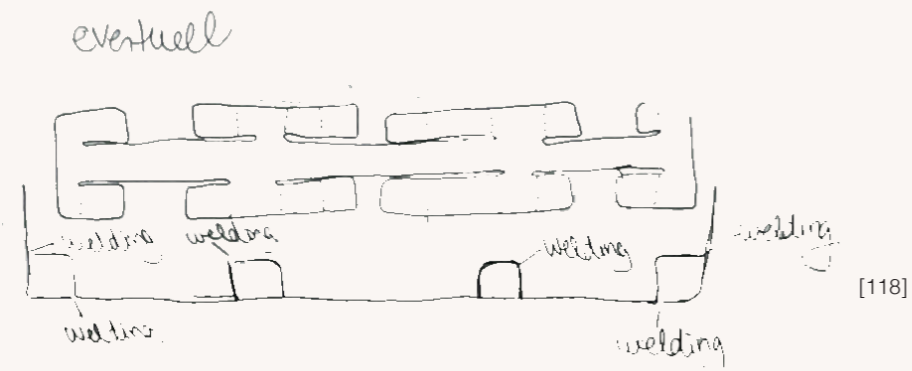
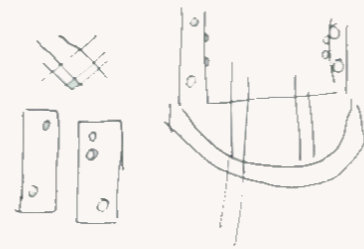
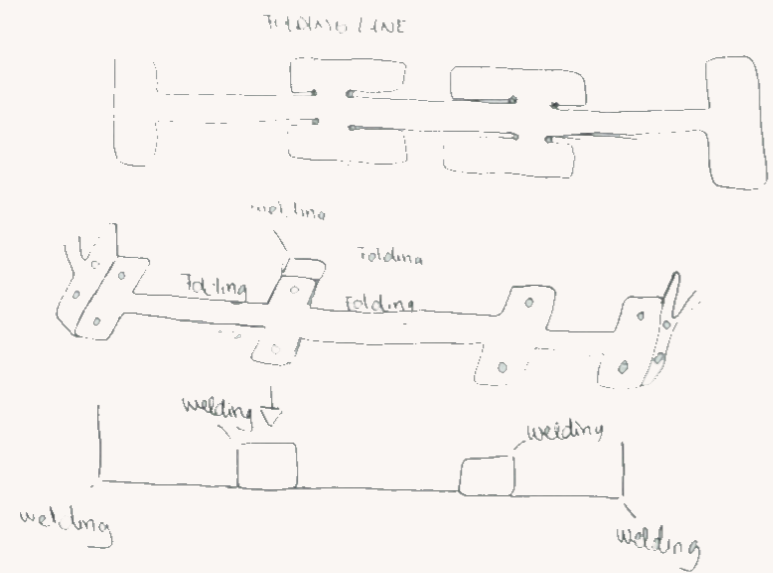
This fabric has been printed and the structure is in its building process.

# FORM

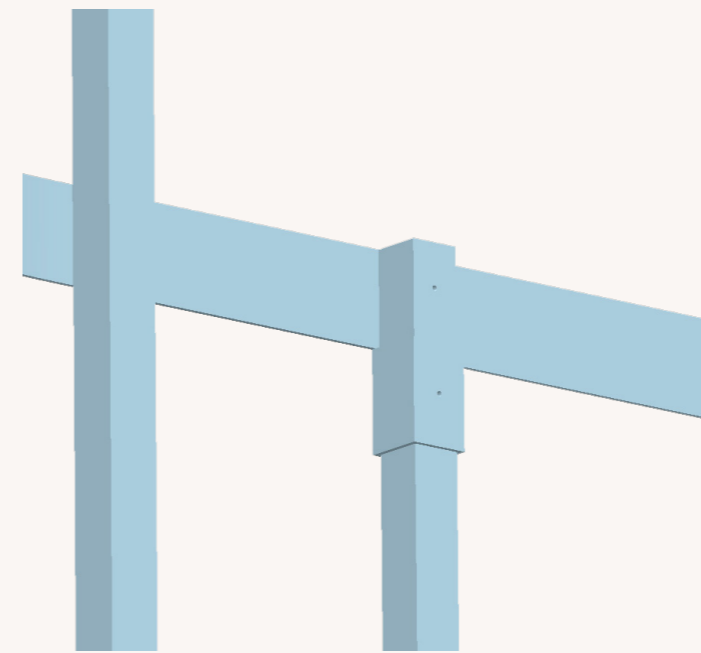


[116]

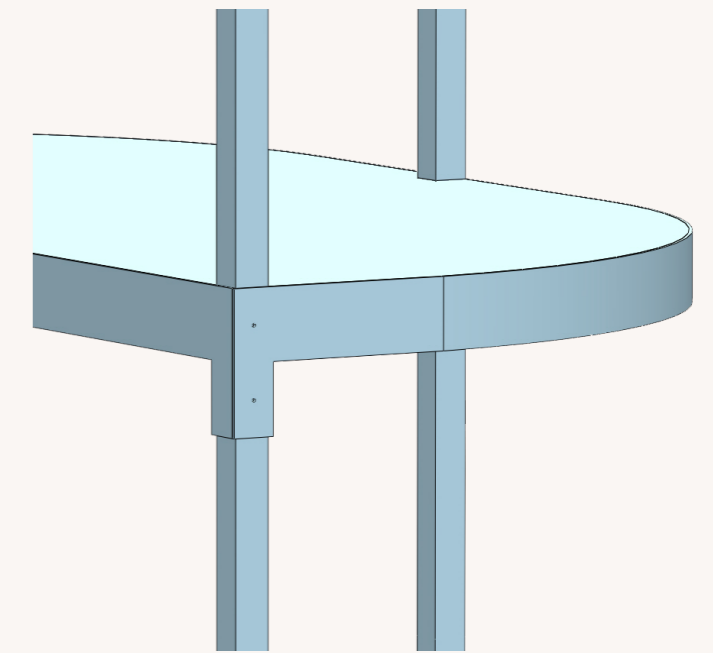
[117]



[118]

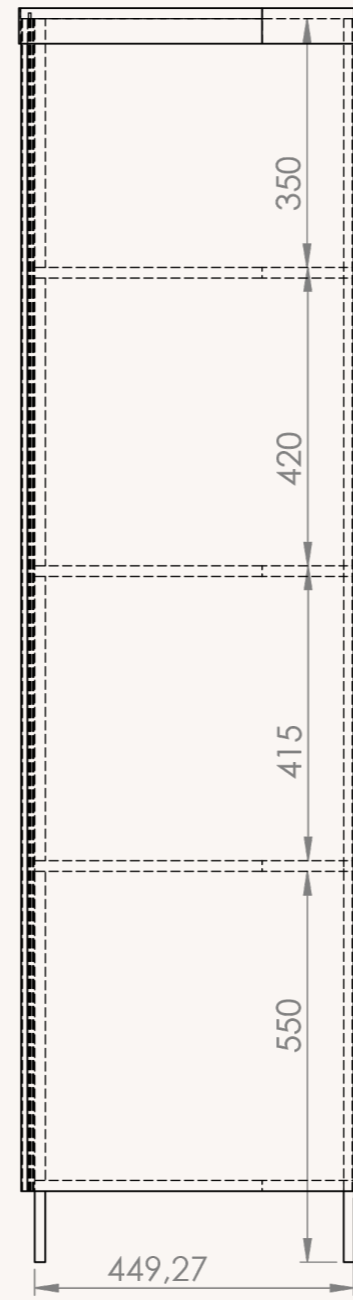
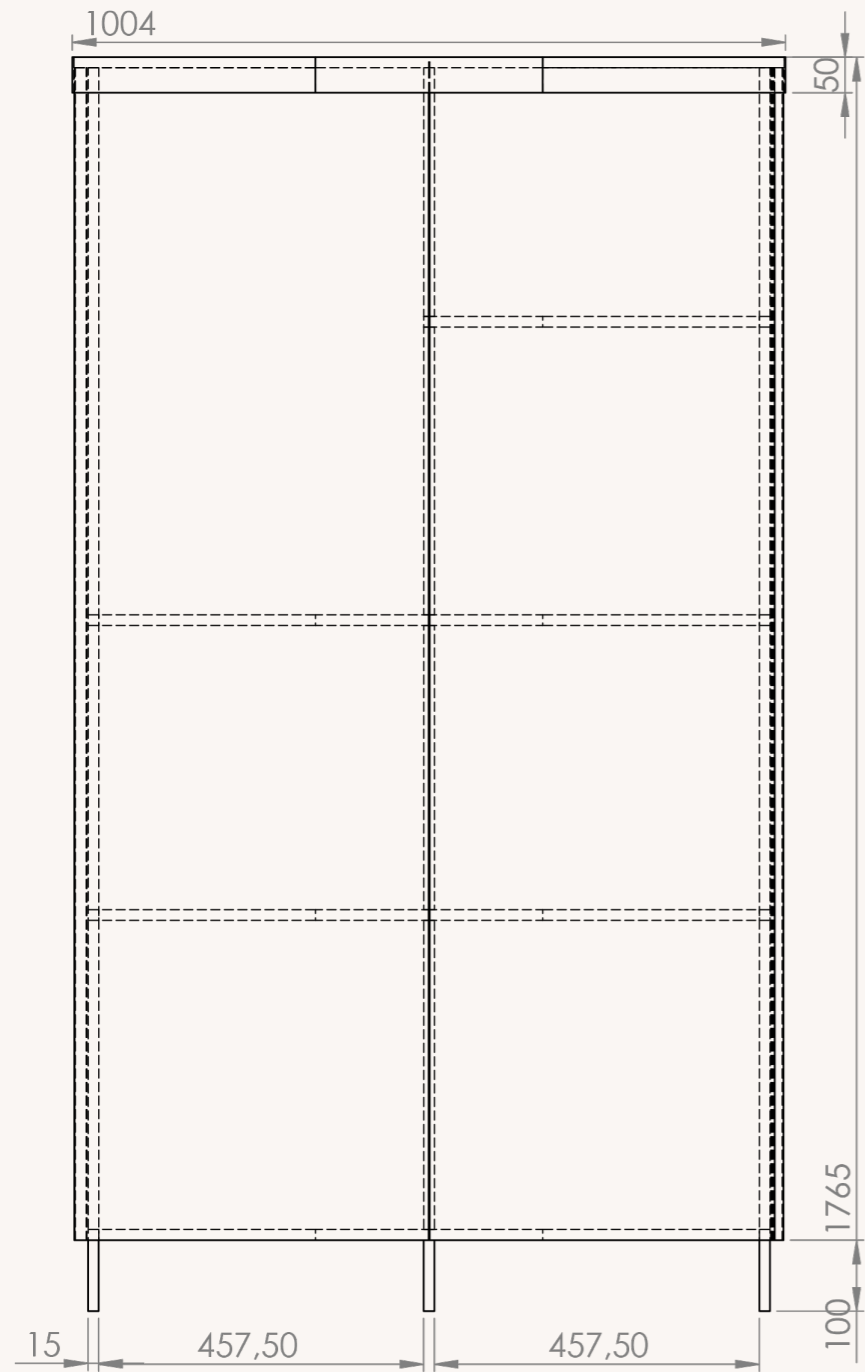


[119]

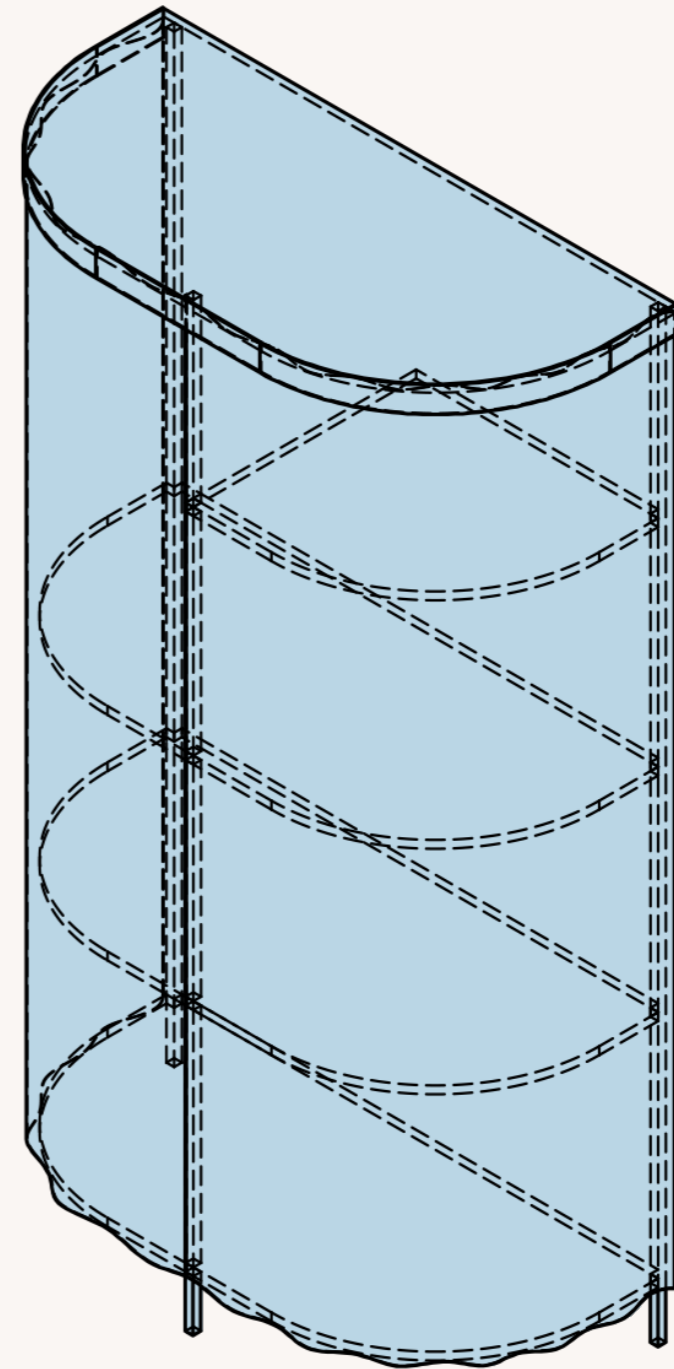


[120]

The metal borders in front of the shelves are laser-cut from one piece and bent. After the bent metal will be weld to the shelves.  
The shelves have four cutouts, in which the legs are pushed and screwed tight invisibly. The structure contains four shelves and three legs.



[121]

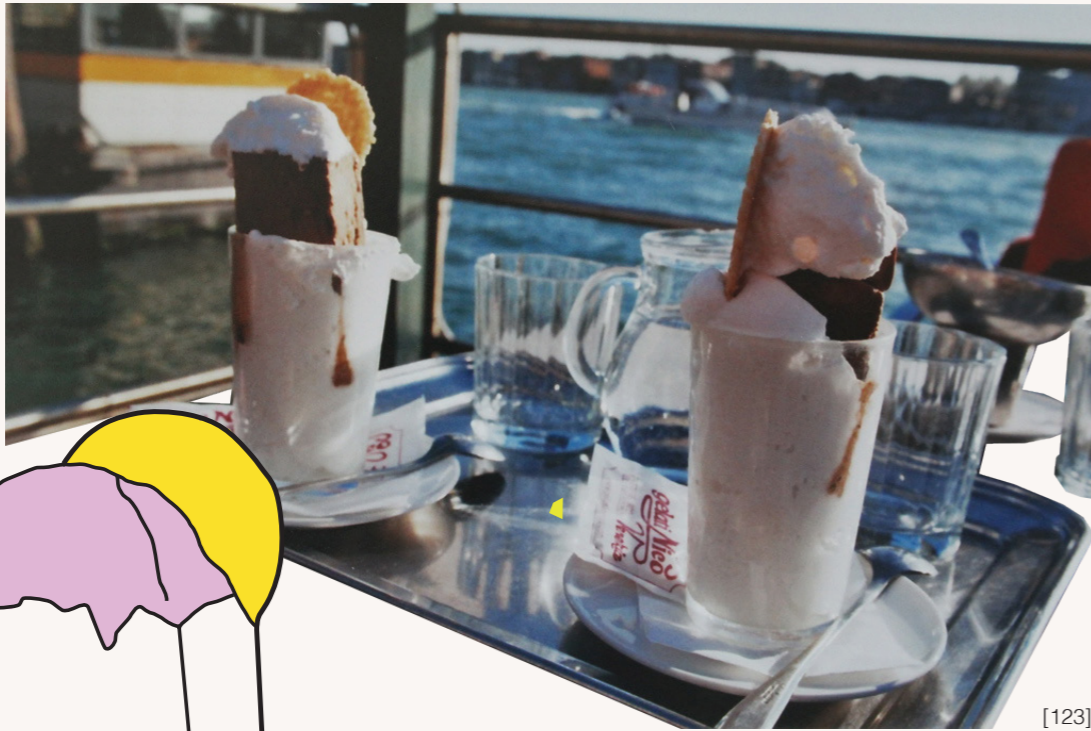


[122]



# ILLUSTRATION

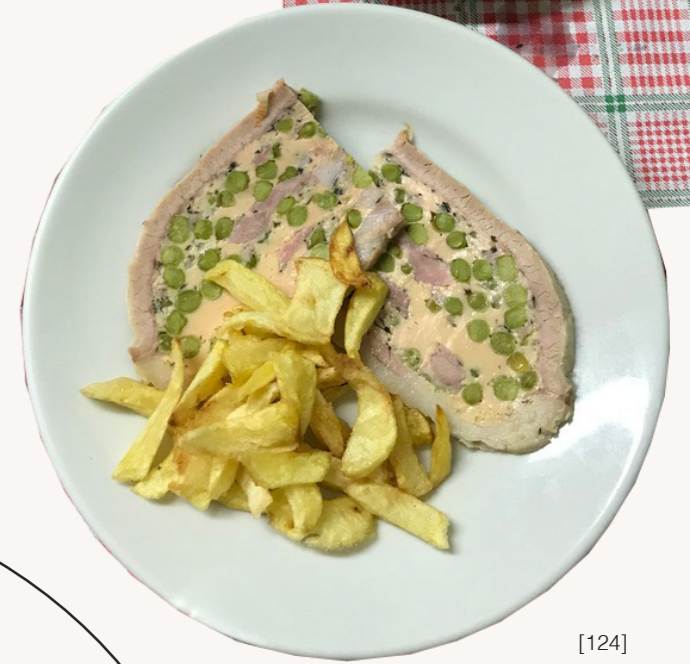
Sunday Ice  
Venezia, 2015



[123]



first dinner with Demetrio  
Genova, 2019



[124]





[125]

Oktoberfest  
Munic, 2015



holiday with Pille  
Cornwall, 2015



[126]



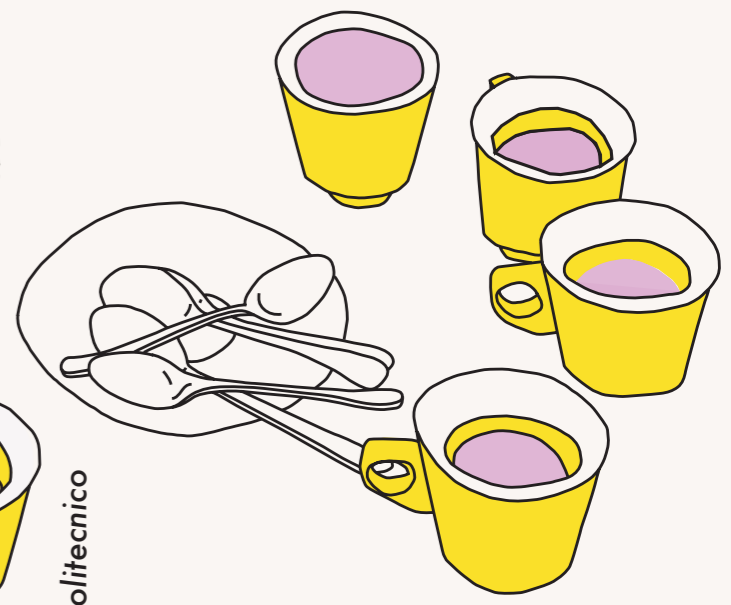
[127]

Victorian cookbook  
Hamburg, 2017



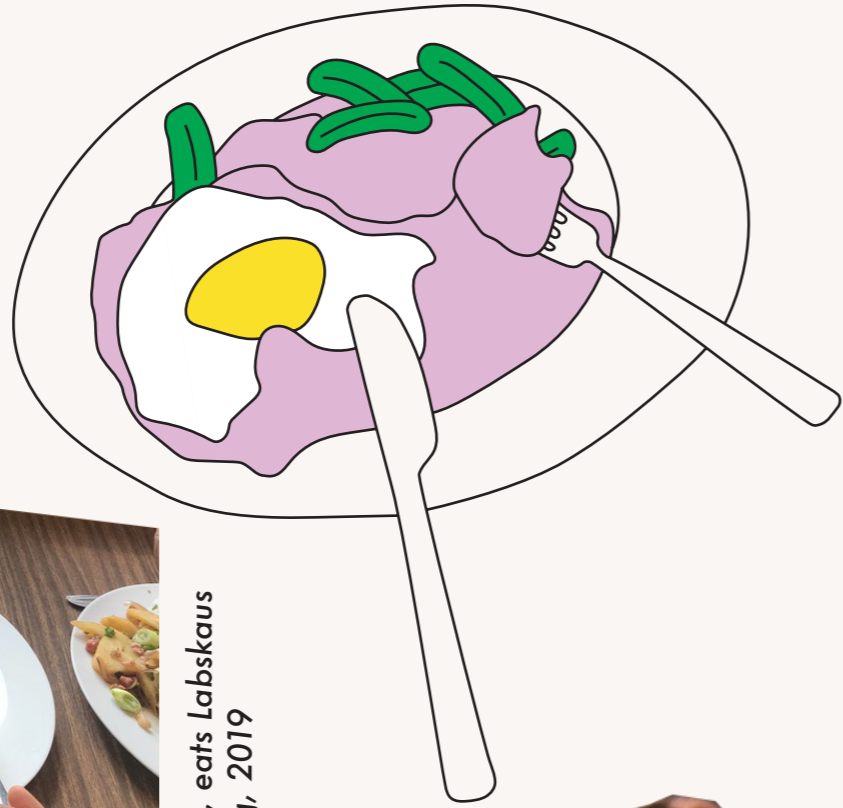
[128]

between classes at Politecnico  
Milano, 2019





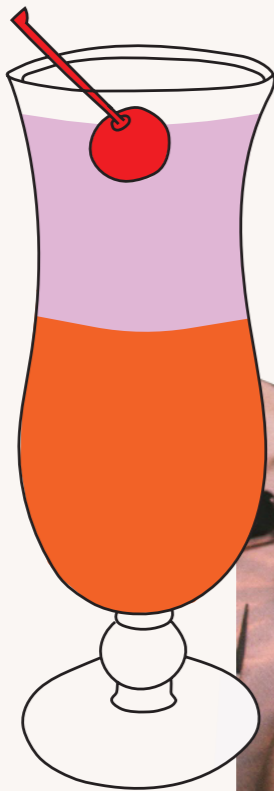
Mo visits, eats Labskaus  
Hamburg, 2019



[129]



Easter with Le  
South Africa, 2017



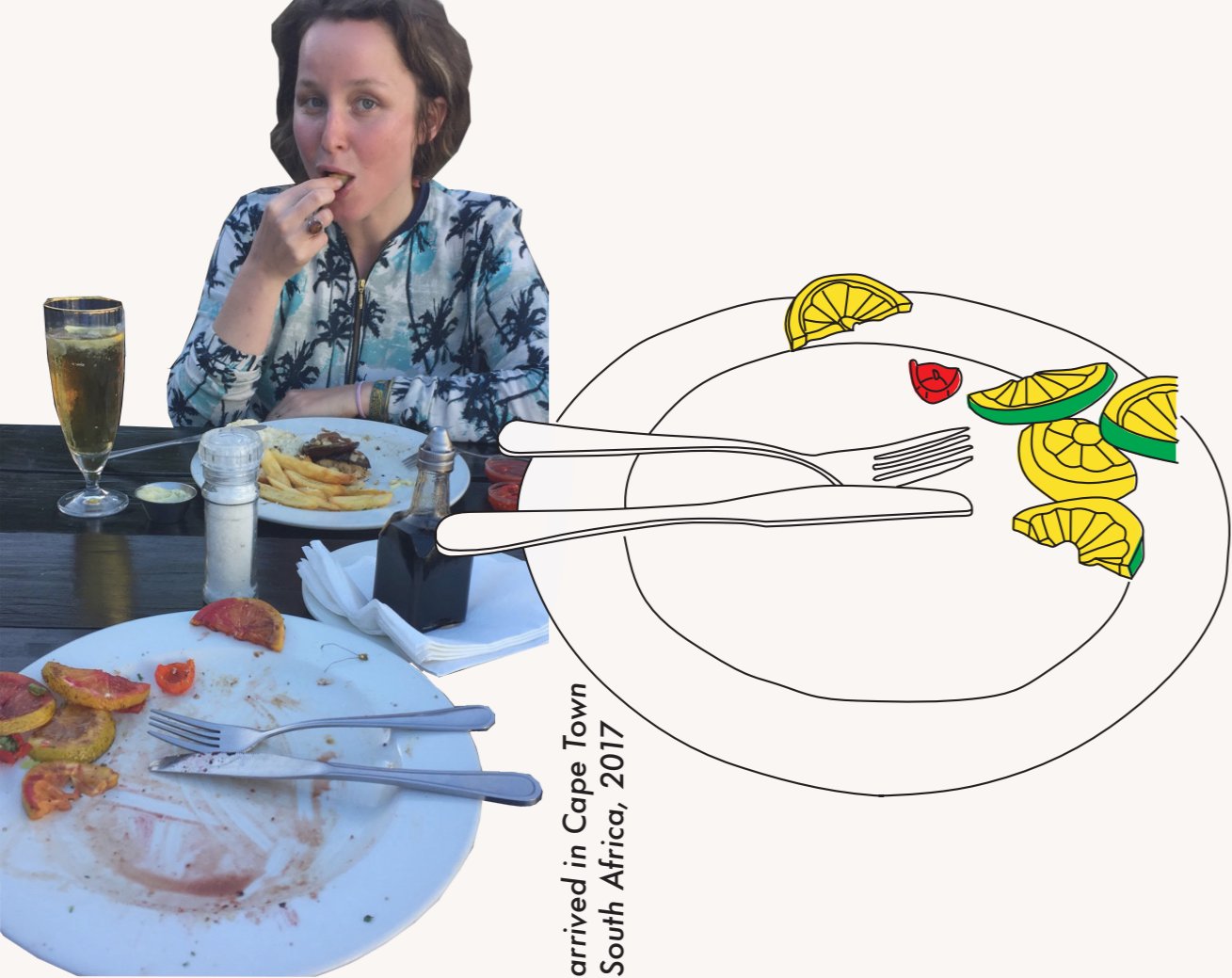
[130]



Paula  
Milano, 2019

[131]





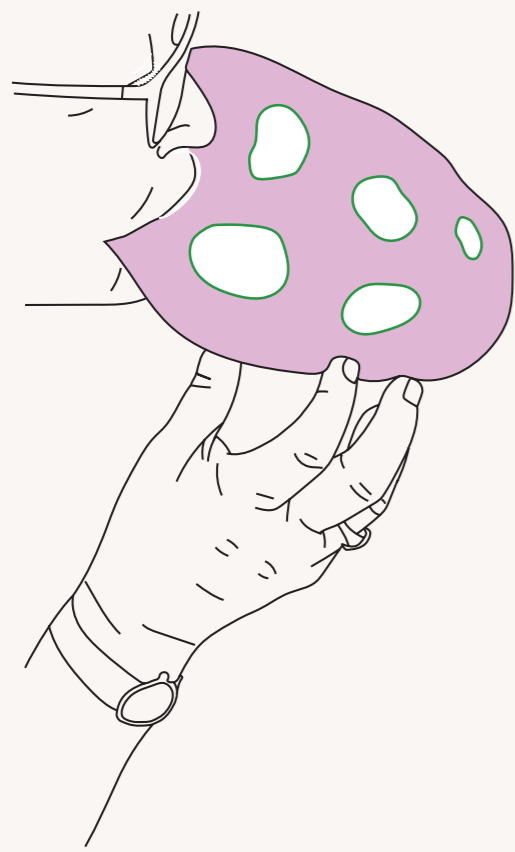
arrived in Cape Town  
South Africa, 2017

[132]



Bello e Wurstel  
Genova, 2020

[134]



Angi, Hannah and mousepoo  
Norway, 2019

[133]



farewell, off to Milano  
Hamburg, 2017

[135]



# PROTOTYPE 1:5

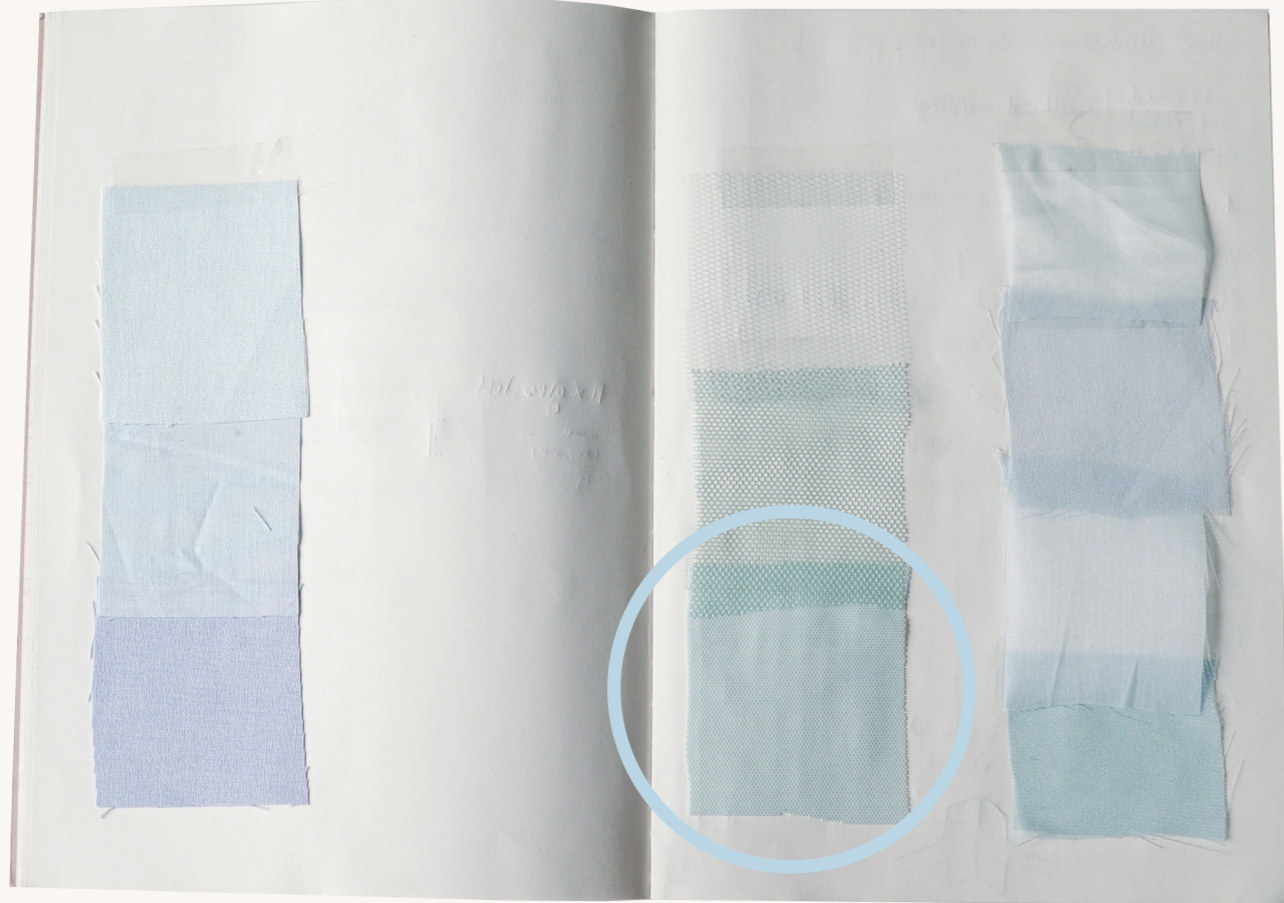


[136]



[137]

# FABRIC



[138]



[139]



[140]



[141]



[142]



[143]



[144]





[145]



[146]

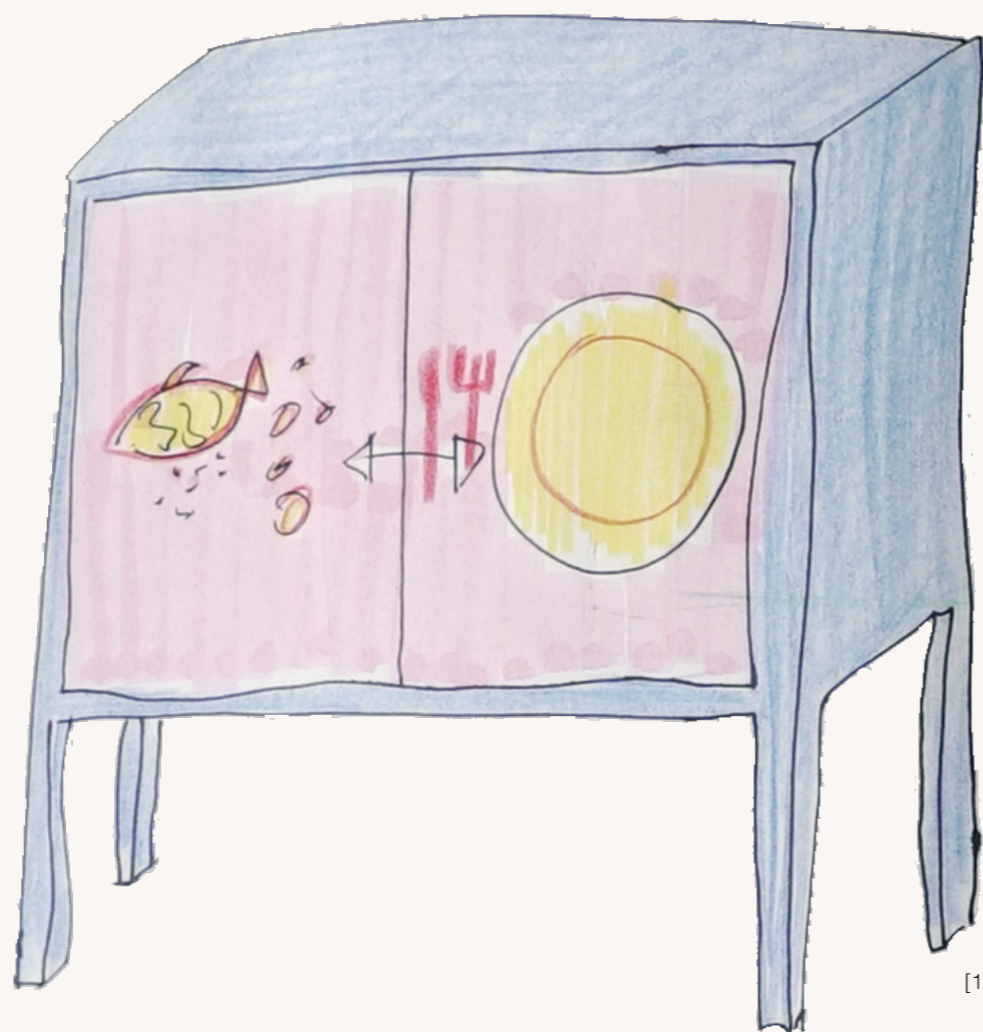


[148]



[147]

# VITRINE NO 3



[149]

Vitrine No3 has a square shape, is made of a metal structure which is powder-coated in light blue. In this design, the illustration is based on my favourite fish&chips plate, the first thing I eat, each time we return to England. The most vivid memory is the portion of fish&chips, in a cone of newspaper, bought by my parents each time I had to accompany them to an auction of antiquities.

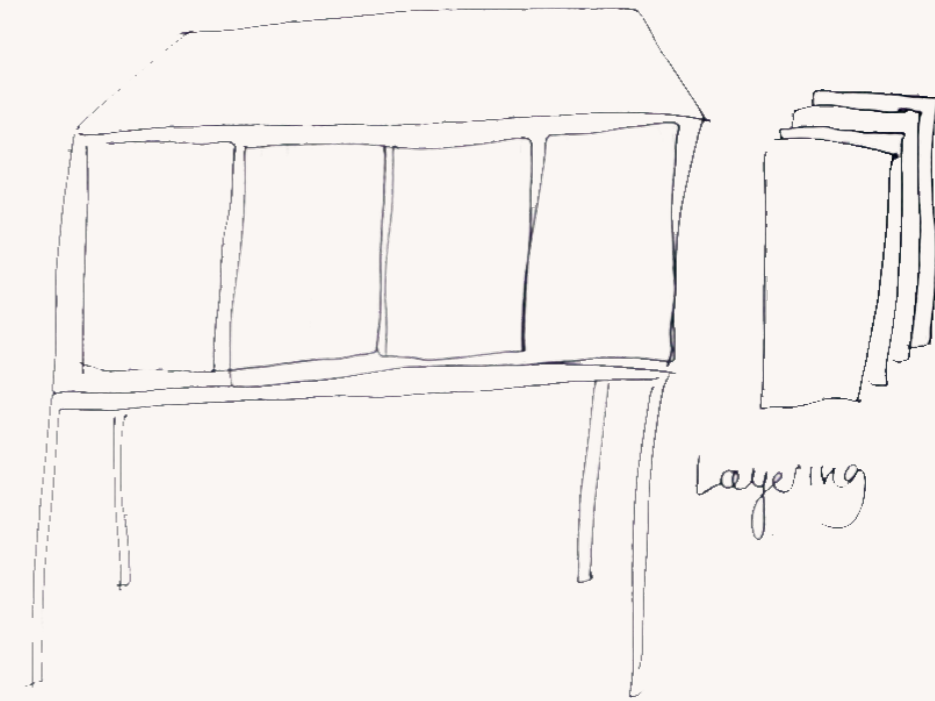
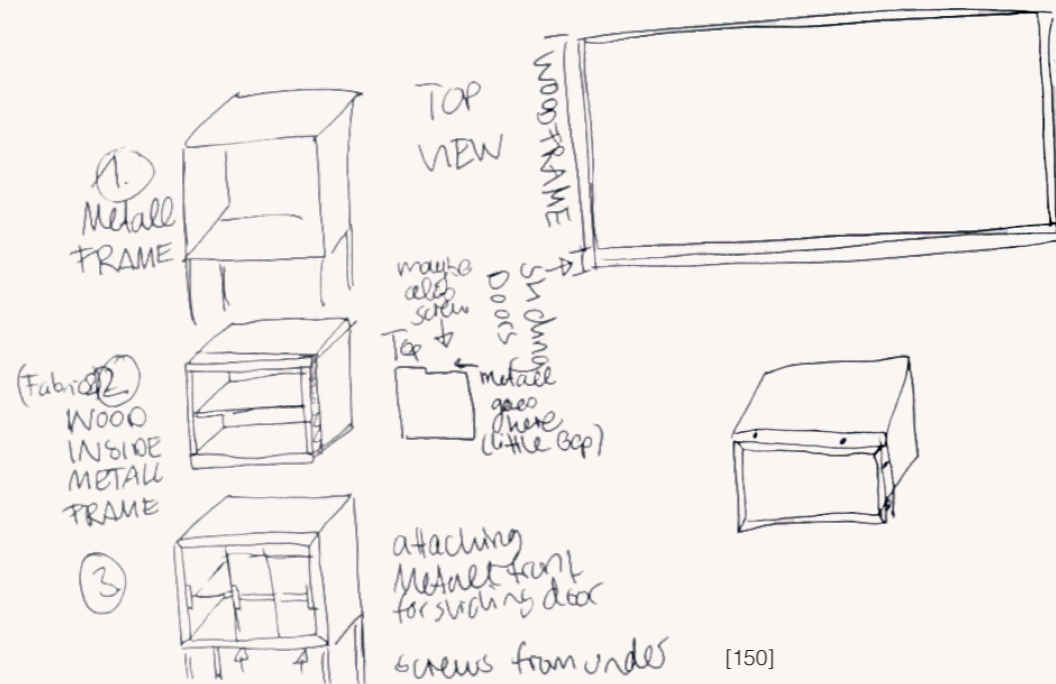
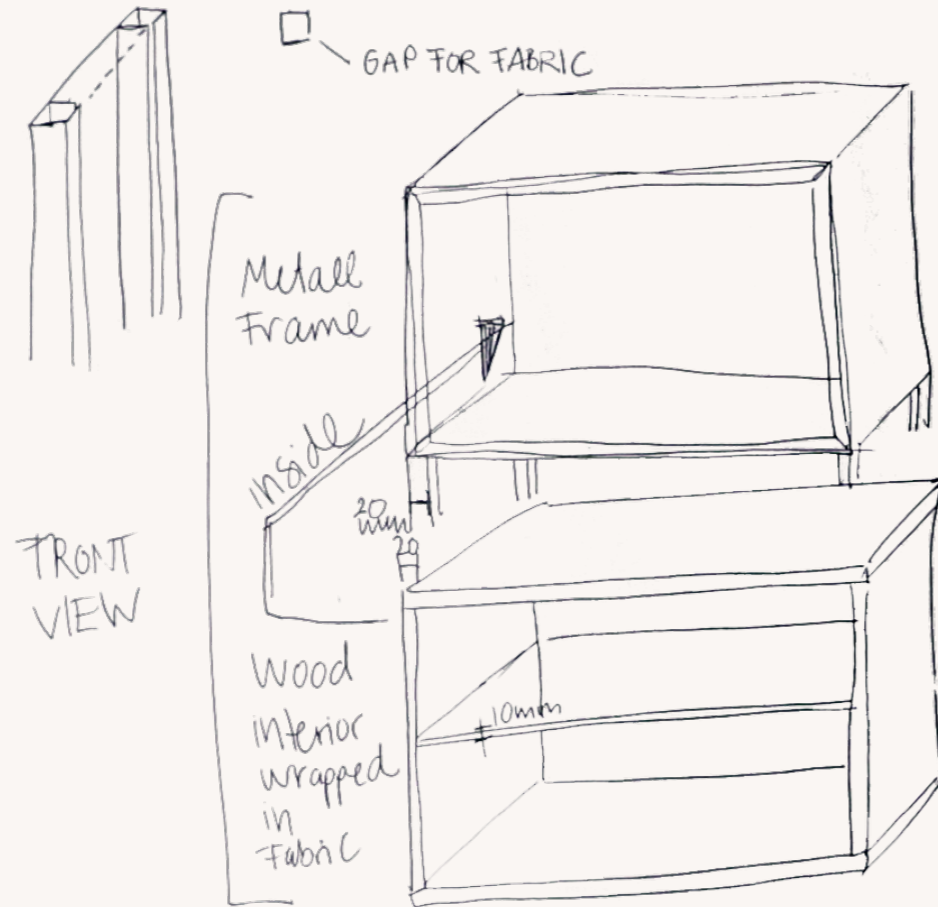
The drawings for this vitrine are:

- a portion of fish&chips
- a half eaten portion of fish&chips
- an empty plate with a knife and fork

According to how one opens the sliding doors, the drawings slide on top of each other, creating new scenarios and the impression of a full or an empty plate. The illustrations are cut by laser into the glass of the doors.

This vitrine still has to be built.

# FORM



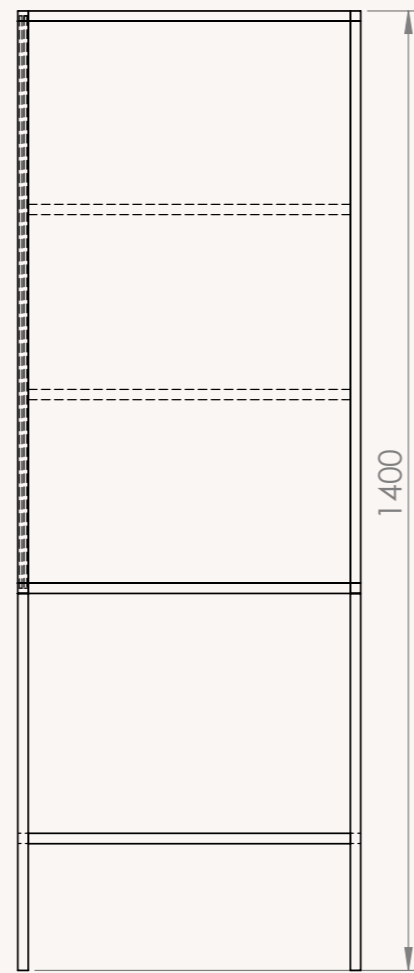
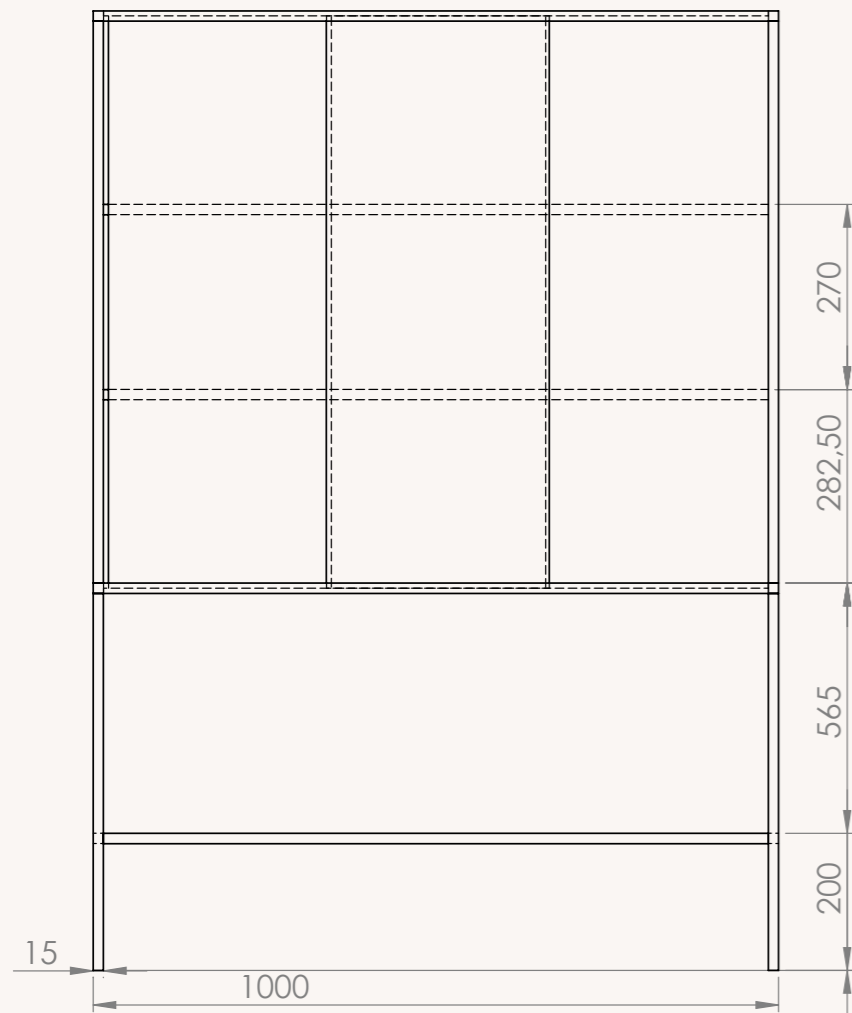
Which furniture?

- Vitrine / showing items (not hiding)
- something w/ storage
- clean on outside but fabric on the other side

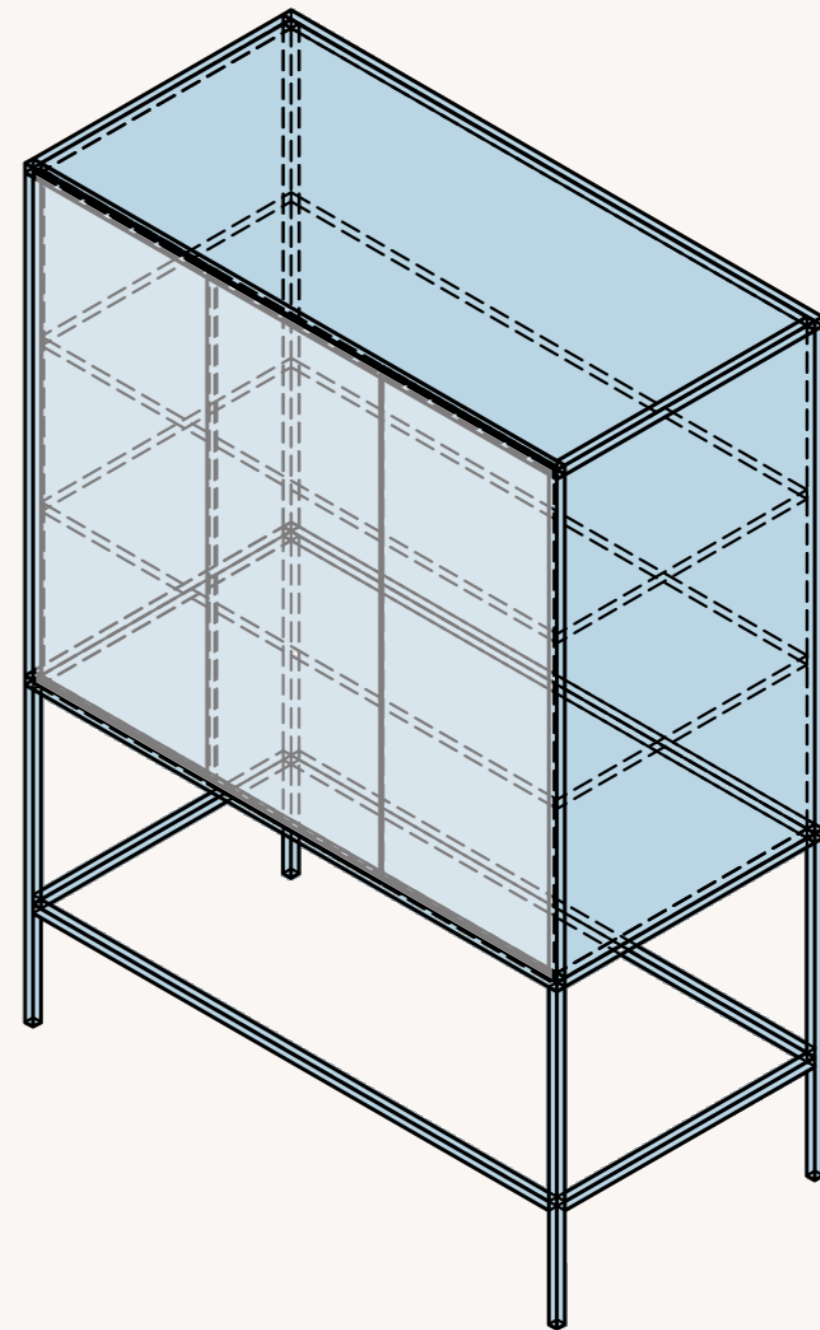


What do I appreciate about these moments at the table?

[151]

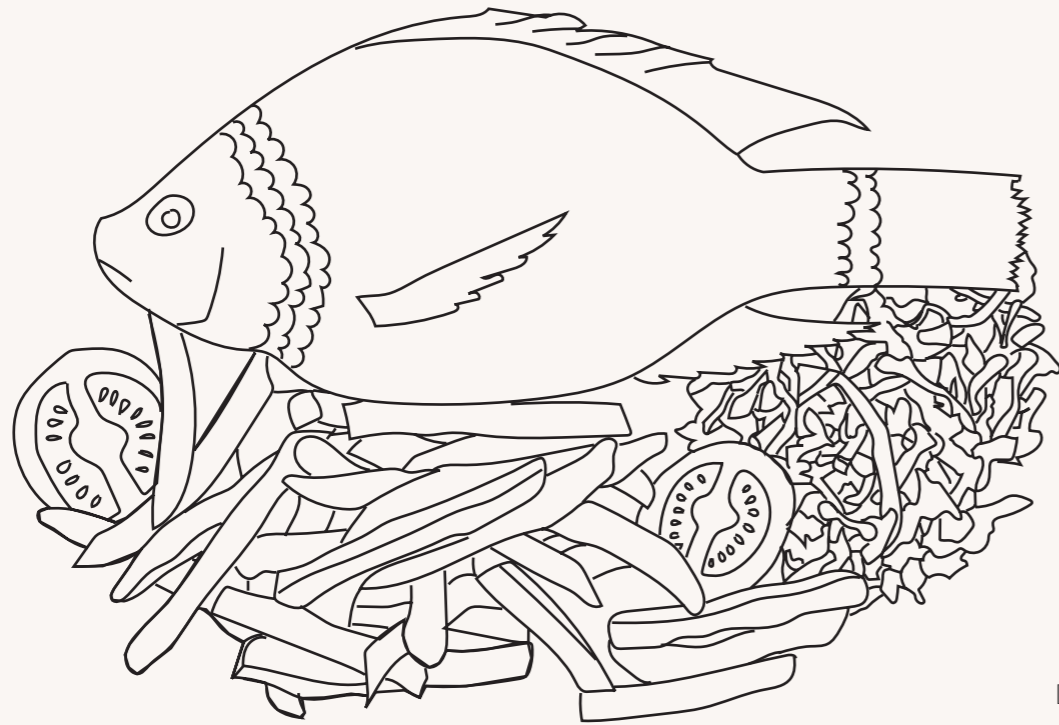


[152]

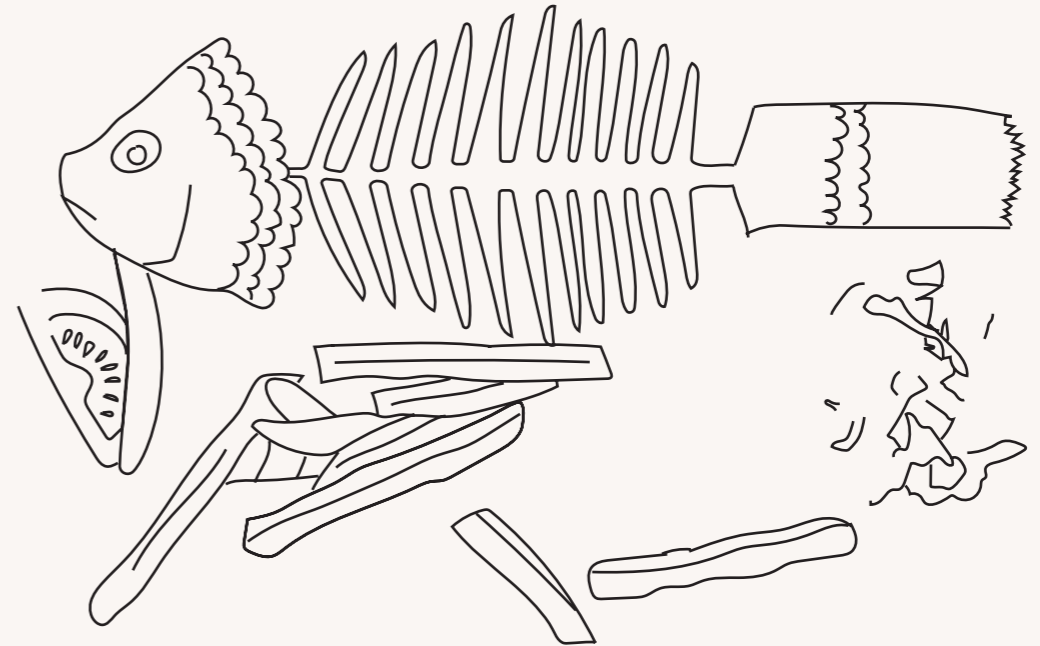


[153]

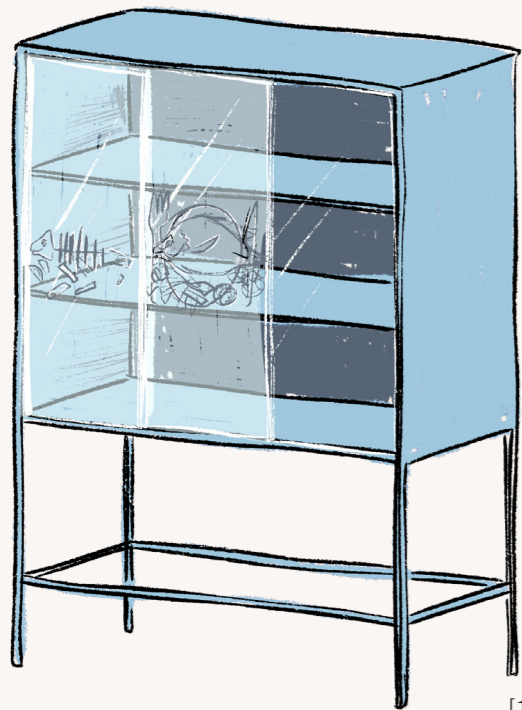
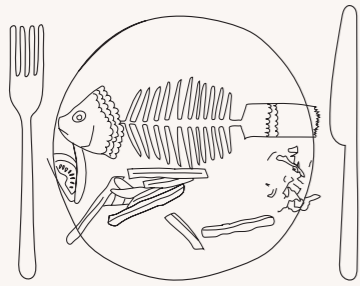
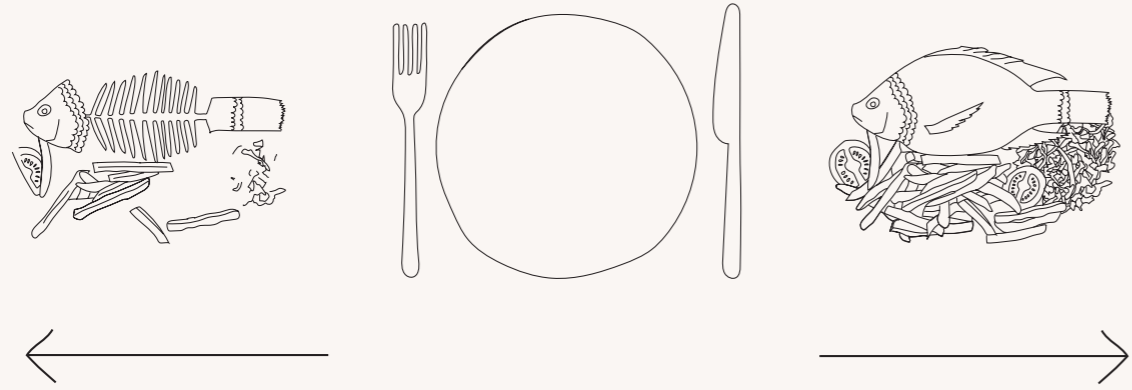
# ILLUSTRATION



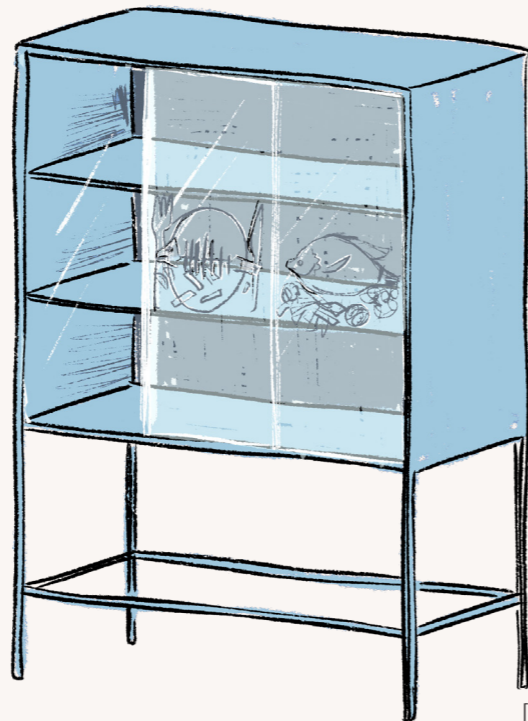
[154]



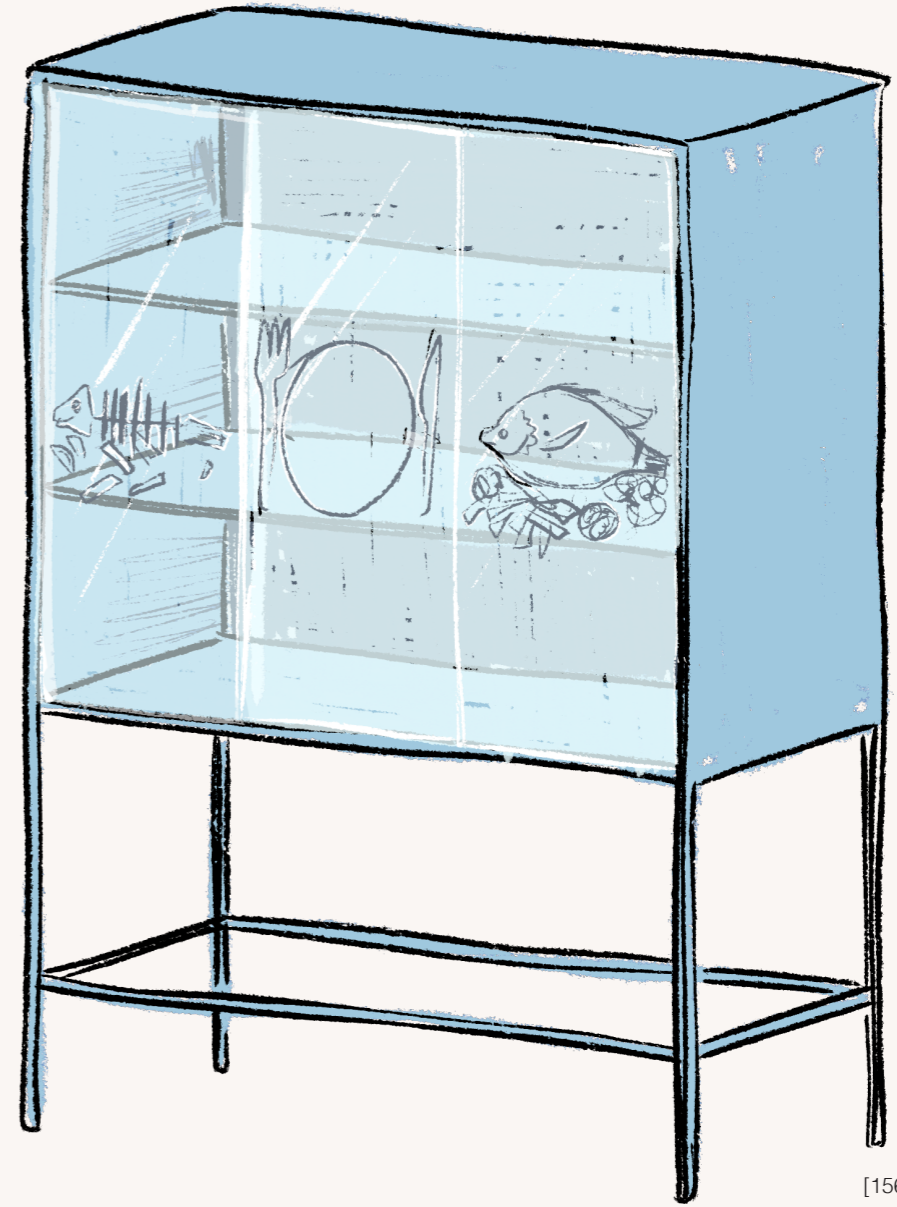
[155]



[155.1.]



[155.2.]



[156]

# FUTURE STEPS



[157]

Since the Covid19 lockdown caused delays and problems in the realisation of the vitrine trio, the goal is to finish all three as soon as possible.

Together with Lena Radtke, a friend and fashion designer with whom I studied at the University of Arts in Bremen/Germany, I share many of the abroad adventures i.e. half a year in Venice, Italy and an internship in Cape Town, South Africa.

We are planning collaborations, bringing together textile design and furniture as another symbiosis.

The first collaboration is planned to be at the end of this year of 2020, together with the artist Paula Erstmann. She is a genius in creating food, where no-one is expecting it. Her art corresponds with my view and perspective.

We come together, with Paula's food art, Lena's fashion design and my collection, in a mutual experience. We are planning events, integrating our different creative backgrounds, to bring together individuals, at a table full of opulent food, design, eating, and interaction. It is also an introduction to my first collection as a designer and the beginning of further future steps.

I am looking forward to a future in furniture design, founded on my first collection called *Riporelle Postmodern*.

# CONCLUSION



[158]

This thesis investigates the question of how *nostalgia and food as a symbiosis, can be translated into a three-dimensional object, connecting past and present.*

In order to answer this question, the first important step of this thesis was to take a close look on the meaning of nostalgia which not only is an ambivalent feeling of pleasure with a slight sadness of memories. I have analysed how experiences of our senses work as the *Proust Phenomenon* and connect us to the past and by this release, positive feelings. Nostalgia and its effect of triggering emotions, has lately been subject of many research papers and studies. This highlights the importance of nostalgia in the 21st century. The constant change of circumstances, rapidly evolving technology and the lack of transparency and information have led to an increase of uncertainty in our time. Nostalgia is not supposed to take one back to the “good old days” but rather to use those positive aspects of one’s memories and apply them to the presence. Nostalgia, therefore, can be seen as a mental balance of the fast digital world meeting the tranquillity of the past.

Food plays a significant role in nostalgic feelings, whether in Proust’s description of his *madeleine and tea ceremony* or personal past events and stories around food and table. When smelling food, the parts of the brain are activated, that give an instant response to where it was sensed before. It is therefore

a trigger for immediate flashbacks to specific memories. Many of our memories are connected to food since we are surrounded by it on a daily base. This allows easy access to the stored memories once eating a particular dish, discovering ingredients from the past or sweets in the supermarket that take one back to once childhood.

Thus memories and nostalgia transport entire stories through time.

In this thesis, the storytelling is the tool, leading to a connection of object and human: by this process, the object is personalised and thus becomes custom designed. The shape, colour, material and details are all based on a story of the designer’s past, serving and becoming part of the creation of an object that demonstrates the present but equally stimulates the past, evoking a similar corresponding effect in the observer.

The goal of this thesis is to highlight the importance of a design which is not made for mass production but developed through a personal process. The attention is to add meaning and value to the design of the furniture, which nowadays in the fast creation and consumption is often missed, creating a symbiosis of nostalgia and food from past to present.

*Riporelle Postmodern*, a trio of vitrines, is the implementation of in-depth analysis, research and personal experiences which result in a more sustainable and person-related design. The objects are produced locally while the design is based on the principals and philosophy of *Gastrosophy* and the *Slow-Movement*. It is an effort of forward-thinking, with the proven methods of craftsmanship in mind as well as the aim to be transparent in all steps from the design to the finished object. At last, *Riporelle Postmodern* not only connects to my personal memories, but I see it also as an invitation for others to fill the vitrines with their own personal memories.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY



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