

# À la table des artistes

## At the artist's table

19<sup>th</sup> Spring School / École de Printemps in Art History  
Reims (France), June 21-25, 2021



Mary Cassatt, *Le Thé*, vers 1880. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

Organized by the International Art History Training Network in Art History  
with the support of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris,  
and the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne

**Application deadline 26.02.2021**

The 19th Spring School/ École de Printemps (EdP) of the International Art History Training Network is organized by the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne from June 21 to 25, 2021. It will bring to the city (if conditions allow) around fifty students and teachers for a week of training in international research on the theme of art and food. It will also host two sessions from the 18th School ("Art & Text"), originally scheduled for Cambridge in May 2020.

With the evolving health situation in view, the meeting in Reims will be hybrid--virtual and live presentations—to maintain the international character of the EdP.

## Theme

From Paleolithic hunting scenes to the kitchen at Olafur Eliasson's studio, the history of art is traversed by representations of food. These are both iconographic (the representation of foods and drinks, from their production to their consumption) as well as poietic (metaphors of pictorial cuisine and creative drunkenness), anthropological (cooking between art and artefact, artistic and technical gestures), political, and social (contributions of art to food cultures and the



identifications they perform). These representations have the particularity of bringing into play transformations, following a cycle comprising the procurement, sharing, consumption, preservation and decomposition of food and drink.

Ivan Day, Reconstitution d'une table de banquet baroque (vers 1650) pour l'exposition *Feast and fast : the art of food in Europe, 1500-1800* au Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 26 novembre 2019 – 26 avril 2020.

Nature has been represented as a vast pantry, whether in the form of cultivated landscapes - the month of *September* in the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duke of Berry (c. 1450, Château de Chantilly) as well as *Le Vignoble green* by Vincent Van Gogh (1888, Otterlo, Kröller-Müller), or its riches (Bartolomeo Bimbi, *Pears*, 1699, Poggio a Caiano). In the genre of still life, which is largely dedicated to foodstuffs, arid monochrome tones of the *Still*

*Life with a Silverware Cup* by Pieter Claesz (1636, Mauritshuis) coexist with the opulent *Fruits and Rich Crockery on a Table* by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1640, Louvre). The supply of food resources, their circulation, and their exchange, imbue paintings as well as performances that engage with and reflect upon the human and animal condition. For example, *Butcher's Display* by Francisco de Goya (1808-1812) and Kim Waldron's *Before and After* photographs document the transformation of living animals into ready-to-eat meat (2010). The famous "omnivorous paradox," shared by the need for diversity and anxiety about the unknown, underlies images of dangers and fear of foods: fruits of the tree of knowledge, such as figs at the Duomo in Orvieto, and apples and grapes at the basilica in Vézelay; the cauldrons of witches from Pieter Bruegel to the queen in Walt Disney's *Snow White*.

Some gardens were designed only for supplying kitchens, while others mixed utility with pleasure. Whatever their status, gardens are contemporary representations of "nature," exhibiting what it produces and in its generative power. One example is the "formal" style of the vegetable garden designed by Jean-Baptiste de La Quintinie to furnish Louis XIV's table at Versailles; in addition to its nurturing function, its arrangement was as much an interpretation of the environment as it was an art of integrating into it. Cooking, in its multiple references to nature, can be considered a paradoxical form of mimesis, the appreciation of which brings together the full range of senses. This classic conception of cuisine has also given rise to its own forms of subversion, which, like the historical avant-gardes, sought less to please and flatter taste than to destabilize and / or renew it: the Futurists imagined an anti-gastronomy tinged with nationalism, and chefs have conquered the status of artist by breaking the iconic nature of dishes (Ferran Adrià) or by pushing the limits of the consumable (René Redzepi).





Gustave Courbet, *Une Après-dînée à Ornans*, 1849. Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts

Incorporation has been developed into a conceptual image, an imaginary that is nourished by cultural metaphors: the host represented as food for the soul, Courbet's stomach as a symbol of political fermentation, the devouring eyes of the landscaper for Guy de Maupassant. As for the excremental fate of food, it has been associated since antiquity with the genre of rhyparography (representations of distasteful or sordid subjects), which has continued to stimulate the verve of artists from Pieter Bruegel to Wim Delvoye.



Annibale Carracci, *Bean Eater*, 1583-84 Palazzo Colonna, Rom

Tables are associated with a vast material culture including decorative arts (fountains, dressers, tablecloths, crockery, etc.) and dedicated architectural spaces. Examples of the latter range from the Queen's Dairy in the park of the Château de Rambouillet (1785) to the integrated kitchens of the Cité Radieuse in Marseille, devised by Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand (1952). Design continues to be concerned with forms of food and the means of their consumption, and also with the conditions and experiences for which these are both agents (Germain Bourré's *Edible Surfaces*, on which mushrooms grow, 2017).

Finally, because the cycle of food transformation is regulated less by biological necessities than by socio-cultural mechanisms, its representations have always been the subject of moral concerns: excesses around dining, of wealth and of fasting, have been condemned as vanities of the modern era; pop art and hyperrealism have made the food industry one of the privileged emblems of commodification of the world. Contemporary art, in particular, has regularly moved away from representations that naturalize the food cycle to expose its ideologies; gender stereotypes especially are at the heart of both the aesthetic and political category of “foodporn.” The Palais de Tokyo, one of the principal institutional exhibition spaces dedicated to contemporary art in Paris, devotes one of the pages of its *Icono-Dico* to foods (<https://www.are.na/palais-de-tokyo/icono-dico-la-nourriture>).

For the past twenty years, food themes have echoed across our discipline in a series of *turns* (iconic, pragmatic, anthropological, material). These themes have fostered interests in objects that require both a visual and material approach, as well as attention to processes of making, ingesting, desire and identification. The development of studies favoring objects located at the crossroads, or at the limits of disciplines (gender studies, fat studies, environmental studies, animal studies), have also contributed to making food a subject for art history. Nutrition remains central to societal concerns with the preservation of ecosystems, overproduction, and unequal access to sustenance wished for by all. This is what was at stake with the *Green Guerillas*, an activist re-appropriation of urban space, initiated in 1973 by Liz Christy in New York, through the transformation of wasteland into gardens of flowers and vegetables. More recently, Michelangelo Pistoletto has made food one of the challenges of his *Third Paradise* project, which is working towards a more environmentally friendly future ([www.cittadellarte.it](http://www.cittadellarte.it)). But if sharing is the ideal basis for sociability at the table, inequalities are their reality. Exclusion can thereby be expressed in nutrition regimes and eccentric diets, such as those that participate in the aestheticization of marginality (from the bohemian of the nineteenth century living “without fire or place” to the drunkenness of the tramp in *Living Sculpture* by Gilbert & George, 1969). The field of food has also proved crucial when contemporary art intersects with identity politics (the *Nazi Milk* in General Idea's *Color Bar Lounge*, 1979).



Copy of Sosos's *Unswept Room*, detail. From Aquileia; first-century ce copy of second-century bce original. Mosaic; 2.39 × 2.07 m. Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale.



Finally, material constraints specific to food have represented a challenge for institutions responsible for the conservation and development of these artworks. Museums, such as the Alimentaryum in Vevey, and museums “of society” that devote a part of their activities to alimentary dimensions, including the Mucem in Marseille, have adopted different strategies which allow them to promote collections that bridge arts and techniques. Contemporary art museums, for their part, have found themselves confronted with objects as unstable as the chocolate and jam paintings by Andy Warhol (1978), or the meringue from the *Cakes and Landscapes* series by Dorothee Selz and Antoni Miralda (1969-1970). The case of Joseph Beuys’ *Wirtschaftswerte* (1980, Ghent, SMAK) generated debates on the advisability of replacing food on the shelves with fake products. Many situations have driven institutions to reassess the preservation and exhibition of artworks whose modalities of existence—whether of excess, or of lack—are subject to rapid decomposition. Without food, the table is reduced to an inert space with a display of beautiful objects.



Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974-1979. Brooklyn Museum, The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art

We therefore invite participants of this EdP to pursue a dynamic approach to art and food by confronting one or more of the transformations their relations initiate, supply, transform, represent, share, incorporate, consume, taste, preserve on one or more of the following themes:

- Landscape, garden and food resources
- Human condition, animal condition
- Alimentary work and production
- The genre of still life
- Sense and sensorium
- Cooking, representation, performance
- Material culture, decorative arts, design
- The table as a space of power and a political instrument
- Sensuality, pleasure, gluttony
- Food and Identities
- Food and humor
- Alimentary values and conventions at the table
- Heritage, monuments, conservation

## **In Practice**

The EdP will allow master's and doctoral students, as well as post-docs from various backgrounds and specializations to share their research, their approaches and their experiences within the framework of workshops which will also involve researchers at a more advanced stage of their careers. Participation in the EdP, with its international dimensions, complements training in art history. All candidates are invited to propose abstracts for papers, whatever the period, geographical area, or form of expression of their research. Each presentation, lasting 15 minutes, will be discussed in the context of a half-day thematic session with participants including art historians from the International Network of the EdP. Presence throughout the EdP is compulsory.

## **The Procedure and the Proposals**

The call is posted on the websites of the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne ([www.univ-reims.fr](http://www.univ-reims.fr)), of INHA ([www.inha.fr](http://www.inha.fr)), of RIFHA ([www.proartibus.org](http://www.proartibus.org)) and partner establishments. Young researchers (doctoral or post-doctoral) who wish to participate in the EdP will send an abstract for a paper (15 minutes), as well as a short cv that specifies knowledge of languages, to the following address: [edp2021@gmail.com](mailto:edp2021@gmail.com).

Abstracts may not exceed 2000 characters or 300 words and should be written in one of the four official languages of the Network: German, English, French, Italian. The proposal must include the candidate's email address, institutional affiliation and place of residence. The proposal and the cv must appear in a single document, the title of which will be worded as follows: "Proposal\_Last\_Name\_Firstname\_Institution" (eg Proposition\_Miron\_Chloe\_UdM). The subject line of the email should include the candidate's name and the country of the institution in which they are registered (eg Chloé Miron Canada).

The organizing team, together with representatives of each country of the Network, will establish a final program. The announcement of the selection will be released in March 2021.

Within two weeks of a proposal being accepted, participants must submit a translation of their abstract in one of the other official languages of the Network. One month before the start of the school, participants will send the full text of their paper, as well as their PowerPoint presentation.



INRAP, Tranchée du déterrement du Déjeuner sous l'herbe de Daniel Spoerri, Jouy-en-Josas, juin 2010. Cliché Denis Gliksman

## **Proposals to intervene as a respondent**

Involvement of students who have attended one of the previous EdPs may only apply to serve as a respondent. In this way, we encourage advanced doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers to participate in the EdP by leading the discussion that will conclude each session. Respondents will critically review the session, ask new questions, and open up the discussion in response to the interventions and by directions suggested by their own research.

Anyone wishing to participate in this EdP as a respondent is requested to send a cv and a short letter that highlights their skills and competences to the organizing team ([edp2021@gmail.com](mailto:edp2021@gmail.com)) before February 26, 2021. The letter must also emphasize the relevance of their research to the alimentary theme. Proposals should not exceed 2000 characters or 300 words and may be written in German, English, French, or Italian.

## **National correspondents**

Germany : Michael F. Zimmermann (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

Canada : Denis Ribouillault (Université de Montréal)

United States : Todd Porterfield (New York University) and Bronwen Wilson (UCLA)

France : Charlotte Guichard (ENS), Christian Joschke (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris) and Aurélie Petiot (université Paris Nanterre)

Italy : Alessandro Nigro (Università di Firenze)

Japan : Atsushi Miura (Université de Tokyo)

Switzerland : Jan Blanc

## **Steering committee**

Andrew Chen (Villa I Tatti, Florence), Frédérique Desbuissons (université de Reims), Lucie Grandjean (université Paris Nanterre), Frédéric Gugelot (université de Reims), Ségolène Le Men Men (université Paris Nanterre), Frédéric Piantoni (université de Reims), Bertrand Porot (université de Reims), Alice Thomine-Berrada (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts), Tony Verbicaro (université de Reims), Élodie Voillot-Blanchard (Archives départementales des Ardennes), Valérie Wampfler (université de Reims)

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(NB: the list of sources is intended to highlight more general orientations—panoramic, thematic, transdisciplinary, methodological—to the theme)

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