

# Arts, Linguistics, Literature and Language Research Journal

## NEW TEACHING PRACTICES: ART, FOOD AND PRODUCTION THE FOOD WORK INVADES THE CLASSROOM

---

*Lisa Minari Hargreaves*

University: Universidade de Brasília

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/3301600136212475>

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



**Abstract:** This paper proposes the construction of a dialogue between the universe of food and the artistic production as differentiated experience in art / education oriented toward the classroom. In this context, food production and artistic production exhibit unique characteristics that contribute both in the construction of socio-cultural identity and individual and collective development in an artistic production and a more comprehensive history of art. Given the new educational proposals, it is proposed, this “tasty” dialogue as generating ability thought to be interdisciplinary in art class.

**Keyword:** Art/education, Food Art, practice teaching in art.

## **THE POETICS OF FOOD: FOOD WORK**

Our starting point is the deconstruction of the “food mechanistic” idea where food is seen biologically as a mere fuel destined for man conceived as a machine. This theory, in addition to being restricted and simplistic, reduces the human-food relationship to a form of “food behavior”, where stimulus and response condition the human body to a biologically necessary process, but totally mechanical and absent from any aesthetic reflection historical or cultural.

Aiming at the need to expand the food experience, over time, a gastronomic practice was developed that combines foods with the purpose of creating edible compositions with a peculiar taste and look. The gastronomy points out, in its preparations, the cultural influence that each dish brings with it, revealing how the food is an integral part of the culture that produces it. In this context, individuals continue to improve their cooking techniques, giving the universe of food an increasingly important and comprehensive social role that also encompasses artistic

practice. Friero (1999: 93) emphasizes: “Gastronomy, publicly recognized as the ninth Art, is actually the first, in the opinion of disciples of Vatel, Carême and Escoffier. And that they are absolutely certain that the Culinary Art is the first among all others...”

If for Fisher (1973:89) the work of art promotes the association and circulation of ideas and experiences, for Bronowsky: (1984: 39) “The creative mind is one that seeks unexpected similarities.” And Morin (1979:129) adds, complementing “...in a random, infinite and multifactorial action” ), thus connecting the process engendered by the artwork to the creative possibility of the maker<sup>1</sup>.

According to Bachelar (1994:36): “In matter are the germs of life and the work of art.” This is the case of food that allows, at the same time, life (mechanistic function) and artistic production. The ingestion of the food material enables a double assimilative function of the work, which often points to a procedural similarity with other materials (mixing, cooking, etc.) but which hardly matches its fruitive processes (the food work allows, in most of the cases a bodily assimilation, most other productions allow a partially sensory enjoyment).

The use of food as a raw material in artistic production imposes certain conditions on the artist, since, as Francastel reminds us. (2000:329):

“The material that the artist informs not only resists but imposes some of its own qualities on it. The artist is not faced with a neutral, anonymous, inert matter. Moreover, he does not have a material proper to art: on the contrary, he uses the material common to all his contemporaries, both materially and through the real understanding of certain true or false laws, which govern its movements.”

---

1. These are Morin's words about the source of creativity. (Morin, 1979:129).

Food, rarely considered as a material possibility aimed at artistic production, reveals its accessibility through the dependence it establishes with the being (the need to feed determines the possibility of constant contact) proving to be extremely democratic, although its use in the field of art may suffer limitations due to social conditions and the specific interests of the individual. Grignaffini attributes to food the ability to create a unique discourse, inexorably moving away from a type of reductionist conception. For him, food has its own rhythm that interacts with different manipulation techniques, with other foods (often contrasting in texture, flavor, etc.) and with the spatial and temporal elements in which it is inserted. Therefore: "Why not the kitchen? What reasons are there for not being able to use the food material in an aesthetic if not ethical process?" (ONFRAY, 1999, p. 166) Thus, the possibility of using food as a raw material in the artistic production process, allows the elaboration of a type of food art that foresees the plastic or visual realization of two-dimensional or three-dimensional works, the result of a certain reflection on the part of the artist.

The same food that allowed the preparation of peculiar dishes made it possible, from the remotest times, to create artifacts belonging to the gastronomic and artistic universe. Renaissance sugar sculptures, baroque marzipan models, as well as Egyptian funerary statues of biscuit dough or Roman geometric breads reveal the "tasty" dialogue that is continually established between the artist and the cook, revealing how artistic production and gastronomic production often have common characteristics.

The work of food art distances itself from the simple edible artifact by presenting, among its ingredients, the contextual historical-cultural element (or its reconstitution in its extra-cultural context) aimed at intimate

reflection. His recipe, which contains (among the various "ingredients") the subjective and intentional act of the artist, is formulated based on the observation and tasting of everyday life and challenges the immobilized historicist thinking that foresees a history of art based on hierarchical institutionalization.

In order to try to understand a nutritional work, it was considered opportune to isolate its peculiar characteristics, such as ephemerality, a quality that (depending on the artist's treatment) can take on different meanings. Ephemerality, volatile poetry that reveals human and object fragility, becomes an integral part of the nutritional work that often explores it as a conceptual focus. It is not by chance that different artists (such as, for example, Cildo Meirelles, Artur Barrio and Sonja Alhauser) chose to use food (whether solid or liquid) as a possibility for creation. Its peculiar composition allows the visualization of material fainting, thus adding a reflexive possibility about temporal relativity and its consequences.

Another important characteristic that belongs to the food work is the political connotation that food acquires as a means of propaganda or political strategy. As Leonardo da Vinci pointed out in the 16th century, the productions that made up the banquet must please both the stomach and the gentleman who promoted the event and, in this power game, the eyes actively participated in influencing the way the delicacies were presented on the table. The modeling of food in artifacts had, in that context, the function of impressing the guests, thus exalting the power of the host. Since ancient times, therefore, food has been used as an important element for maintaining power and, if the great chefs, (guided by the powerful), have explored the power exercised by a carefully prepared food, some artists (starting with Marinetti) revealed that the banquet can become a democratic

discovery of different tastes and cultures.

If ephemerality constantly marks its “presence” in food production and the use of food, as a political instrument, acquires an important modeling function, the symbolic element has always accompanied the food universe. The symbolic food attribution made possible the ingestive apprehension, by the being, of their living space - through, for example, miniaturized cities modeled with edible material -. It also made possible the apprehension and symbolic hybridization of their extra-living or extra-cultural space through, for example, food production from other countries -. As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968:167) and Roland Barthes (1990:87) emphasized, food actively participates in the symbolization process. Whether in indigenous mythologies or in religious rituals, food acquires a meaning that goes beyond its materiality. In this context, food adds to its original meaning (and sometimes use) a second (and third, and fourth...) meaning, elaborated from a specific type of experience and context. Ingesting a food or a certain preparation is not a casual gesture: each swallowed mouthful reveals the importance of the apprehension process on the part of the human being. And food, often loaded with peculiar symbolism, enables the acquisition, by the consumer, not only of its nutritional powers, but also of its symbolic powers.

The last characteristic of the food work is the multi-sensory possibility that the edible work offers in its enjoyment/tasting. As Onfray (1999:170) states: “The five senses are, therefore, summoned in their entirety and neither partially requested nor raised by half; they are interrogated in a perfume, in a consistency, in a flavor, in a visual impression.” The edible work provides a more comprehensive sensory contact, sight, smell, touch, taste and (as in futuristic works) hearing are stimulated during contact with the edible

work, making the body a place of perception, ingestion, assimilation and recoding (after all, waste is a bodily “rereading” of the edible work).

Whether the foodstuff is used in a sculpture (Antoni), in a residual composition (Daniel Spoerri), in an edible house (Guixe), in an extra-cultural banquet (Movimento Antropofágico, Tiravanija) or as an element that composes or replaces the body (Giuseppe Arcimboldo, group AAA, Fluxus), foods transformed into food art demonstrate, at the same time, a peculiar didactic-educational, creative and persuasive capacity. If daily contact with food can lead to the danger of trivialization of food (food prepared/consumed solely as fuel), contact with the food productions elaborated by the artists allows for a type of alternative teaching reflection.

## **POETICS OF FOOD IN ART CLASS**

Currently, both the pedagogical trends aimed at the transcultural aspect and the guidelines that support the school curriculum are supported by the concept of interdisciplinarity between different areas of knowledge. Not only in the area of education, where there is constant exchange and collaboration between disciplines and life experiences, but also in the artistic area, where it is possible to increasingly perceive the use of materials, means, strategies from different areas and distinct. When conceiving and creating a work, it is important to think about the interdisciplinary idea of practical “amalgamation” (in the construction of an “object”) and theoretical (in the construction of a concept); aiming to stimulate a more comprehensive reflection in tune with new artistic trends and why not, gastronomic. Onfray (1995: 58) warns that there is no aesthetic work without a part of theory, in its etymological sense - contemplation - and that this is coated with an audacity that perhaps

reduces previous thinking, which it does not suppress.

This way, it is perceived that today in the classroom "... future teachers need to face practices that provoke the displacement of the rigid notions of reception/production of images, of the epistemology of power, of individual and collective identity, of subjectivity, of agency and understanding of daily life." (Belidson, 2008:8). In this context, it is essential to try to face the social need to think about different curricular, methodological and strategic possibilities, proposing, as a likely path, the appreciation of the daily experience, of the subjects, of their material and sensory exchanges inserted in the collective living experience and collaborative. Thus, it is essential to make the mode of knowledge more complex, which, in the words of Morin (2000:33) foresees a reform of thought that inevitably requires a reform of teaching.

The classroom as a space for action, hybrid and expanded, needs continually renewed thematic narratives, which point to an updated and dynamic disciplinary vision. The teaching of art at school needs, therefore, to adhere to new research possibilities that turn to expanded content poetized also in the daily experiences of the student. In the curricular guidelines of the Federal District (2010) it is emphasized that school contents need to reflect the meanings and cultural and social values that were and are built in the infinite experiential process of human interaction with the natural and social world. In this context, the contents of Art become ways to expand the recognition of the world of each student and art/educator.

The objects of significant appreciation proposed by the PCNs Arte (2005) also emphasize the importance of sensitive contact, on the part of the student, having the cultural object as a way to re-signify the experience itself. This way, contact with the food universe

would become an important space aimed at discovering everyday experiences. The same food that builds the body of the individual and his community (in a restricted or expanded sense) deconstructs and rebuilds common cultural elements on which his thinking is anchored. The movement of rupture and reconstitution practiced by the work of food art travels through the individual and social organism, dismembering itself into tiny particles, contaminating the being and its context, making it an endemic propagating cultural agent. If it is true that "we are what we eat" then "we also think about what we eat", "we feel what we eat". The interactive food force manifests its phenomenological power transiting through spaces, whether organic, mental or social.

Dewey referred to the acquisition of knowledge as the result of the reconstruction of human activity based on a process of reflection on the individual's experience that is continually rethought or reconstructed. This way, he based the tendency to prioritize experience as an important moment of transformation of the subject in constant movement. It is in this mobile space that the work of the art teacher is located, a performance that requires a continuous review of postures and points of view. Dealing with the proposal of new paradigms in art requires not only a constant theoretical update, but also the ability to rethink attitudes and practices in the classroom. Just as contemporary production proposes to the general public and the school public new concepts inherent to seeing, experiencing and being, the art teacher's action ends up being driven by the same possibilities.

The purpose of studying food art in the art class aims to significantly bring the student closer to both the food and the artistic universe, emphasizing the artistic/food production in different cultures, societies, times and

spaces where the artist moves comfortably from the studio to the kitchen perceived as an alchemical place always transformed and eternally transforming.

## THE HISTORY OF ART AND THE ARTIST THAT PASSES THROUGH THE KITCHEN

The affinities between cuisine and “official” artistic production are revealed in the words of Revel (1996:260): “The table and the tableware are paintings, the dining room is a setting, a banquet can become a theatrical performance.”, and dialogue with Onfray (1999:124): “The gastronomic issue is an aesthetic and philosophical issue: Cuisine is related to the fine arts and cultural practices of civilizations of all times. The kitchens of different historical periods represent us, as much as paintings, sonatas, sculptures, plays of theater or architecture.” In this context, it is interesting to note how the constant dialogue that artistic productions maintained with the food universe established an enriching interaction process, which contributed to the formation of the cultural heritage of the time.

In the first decades of the 20th century, Aby Warbur pointed to the need, during the course of artistic discovery, to turn to other areas of research, perceived as timeless territories – for him, the time of art is not the same as history – and interactive, thus weaving a network of connections that extrapolated the formalist view of his time, constituting a dialogical parallel space of its own, in which poetics had privileged moments of study. Thus, a “new” approach to the study of art and its history was discovered, a proposal woven from an intertwined and dense web of different information and experiences.

The food space, as well as the artistic one, has its own characteristics that “mix” with its context, thus enabling the construction of an aesthetic discourse that materializes in the

production of its time. The production of food objects (figurative food) thus becomes the *modus operandi* of an “edible aesthetic” that invades, at the same time, the gastronomic territory and the artistic field, marking a type of presence that is both nutritional and symbolic.

The portrayal of the early sixteenth-century art academies thus seems to reinforce the connection of *kitchen-studio*, hybrid space where the kitchen was related to the fine arts and cultural practices from different periods. Under this approach, the place of food production interacted with the place of artistic production par excellence (the studio), sharing the intimacy of the domestic environment and the adoption of both iconographic and gastronomic elements, thus establishing a deep relationship currently characterized as interdisciplinary.

The engraving by Agostino Veneziano, as well as that by Enea Vico from 1503, depicts a collecting territory inhabited by objects that re-present objects that can be experienced through graphic experimentation (as in the case of the academy) or digestible experimentation (as in the case of banquets). This kitchen/studio (or studio/kitchen) reveals itself as a hybrid temporal place, which, although full of apparently incongruous objects and references, acquires a “chaotic harmony”, in which artistic space and gastronomic space meet in the territory of sensitive experience of the imagery representation.

From this perspective, it is also important to remember the company of artists, headed by the Renaissance painter Andrea del Sarto, who made his brush, as well as his fork, an instrument of spatial construction in which both the canvas and the plate provided the constant experience of new landscapes. We refer, therefore, to the experiences of the renaissance artists’ fraternizations evoked in: *Delle vite dei piú eccellenti pittori, scultori*

and *architettori*, by Giorgio Vasari. The author describes the “joyful brigade of gentlemen called the: “*Compagnia del Paiuolo*” (Pan Company), which, headed by Andrea del Sarto, had fun making new ones *invenzioni* (*inventions*) so-called “works to eat”, such as a roast nut turned into a seamstress or an ox’s head turned into a hammer. For the author, “all were very good things” and that, for Taine (1992:101), they promoted among the masters “the same familiarity and the same fertile intimacy of the studio”.

Sandro Botticelli, Guazzetto, Andrea del Sarto, Filippo Lippi revealed (and suggest today to our art/educators), this way, an “extended possibility” of perceiving Renaissance production and the history of art itself: not only painting, sculpture or architecture, but also the banquet of the court and its art/food production. This way, the joyful fraternizations of Renaissance artists enriched the “official” artistic production, invading different territories and appropriating them, where brush and fork, *tavola* and *tavolozza* (Italian Renaissance pun between the words “table” and “palet”) coexisted interdisciplinary and revealed, in their “gastro-artistic production”, the incessant search for “different spaces of action”.

Under this approach Leonardo da Vinci, who worked at the court of Ludovico Sforza in Milan, organizing the amazing banquets, preparing different dishes and inventing culinary accessories still used today, emerged

as one of the promoters of what we now call the interdisciplinary modality<sup>2</sup>. In fact, if, on the one hand, he was the great researcher of the mechanics of bodies, on the other, he provided these same bodies with sensory pleasure through the manipulation of food. In the introduction of your *Codex Romanoff*, Barreiros (2002: 18) remembers that, in Verrocchio’s workshop, Leonardo da Vinci probably helped in the kitchen, where he developed skills that led him to work as a gastronome in some taverns. Later, he even opened an establishment with his friend Sandro Botticelli, which, in the author’s words, was, commercially speaking, a real failure.<sup>3</sup>

Another important moment in the history of food art concerns the futurist artist Marinetti. Passionate about gastronomic matters, Marinetti, in 1930, elaborated the manifesto of futuristic cuisine, where the rules of the new food system and the production of futuristic dishes, considered as true works of art, were stipulated. The interdisciplinary food vision is a feature strongly present in Marinetti’s manifesto. In addition to his physiological and political food concerns, the author revealed the need to provide the user with a constant multisensory experience. His manifesto described dishes capable of simultaneously awakening the five senses. For Marinetti, the unusual food compositions used to excite visual apprehension, the abolition of cutlery to stimulate the tactile sensation, the use of music to provide a listening experience,

2. It is not by chance that: “Art comes from the Sanskrit root ar, from where it passed to the Greek arthron, to the Latin ars, artis. It means ‘to join, to combine parts’, as seen in articulation (joint of bones) and arthritis (joint inflamed). It follows the artist, craftsman, craftsman.” (Casudo Camera, 1973:289).

3. I took the liberty of using the term “interdisciplinary modality” in the text to describe the interconnected activities proposed by Leonardo da Vinci. Even though it is a concept theoretically developed in contemporaneity, it seems to me adequate to describe Leonardo’s actions inserted in different fields of knowledge. A curious episode that took place at the Sforzas’ court reveals the interdisciplinary work of a Leonardo at the same time artist, confectioner and architect: “However, for sure, the most unusual wedding cake was made by Leonardo da Vinci, to celebrate the union of Beatriz d’Este and Ludovico Sforza, in 1491, in Milan. The cake was a replica of the groom’s palace. It was so big, people could move around and accommodate themselves inside it. Although its walls, benches and tables were edible, it could not be savored. Leonardo failed to foresee the hunger of Milan’s rats and insects that, the night before the wedding, attacked and devoured part of the cake. In an attempt to club the invaders to death, Leonardo’s assistants completed the damage. The wedding was postponed and Leonardo fired (Saldanha, 2011: 275).

the different smells able to stimulate the smell and the often contrasting flavours, elaborated with the precise intention of stimulating the taste, they formed a great and unique sensorial experience. According to Marinetti, by ingesting his food works, the spectator himself became a work of art, increasingly reducing the physical and symbolic space between the work and its audience. According to Onfray (1995: 171), therefore, "For all who practiced futuristic cuisine, the food eaten was less dietary than symbolic, less nutritious than a plastic grammar with an aesthetic content."

The experience proposed by Marinetti, although already experienced in other historical moments, became unique from the moment the artist decided to consciously offer it to the general public. The artist decreed that his dishes, in addition to providing a mechanistic function, would transform the spectator. The food dish became a work of art charged with transforming meaning, just as two decades before, by the will of the artist Marcel Duchamp, a urinal had become an important element of change in artistic production.

Currently, be it the food material used in a sculpture (Antoni), in a residual composition (Spoerri), in an edible house (Guixe), in an extra-cultural banquet (Movimento Antropofagico, Tiravanija) or as an element that composes or replaces the body (Giuseppe Arcimboldo, group AAA, Fluxus), food transformed into art and its history demonstrate, at the same time, a peculiar creative and persuasive capacity. If daily contact with food can lead to the danger of trivialization of food (food prepared/consumed solely as fuel for the machine body), contact with the food productions elaborated by the artists allows for a type of fundamental alternative reflection for the experience in classroom.

Silveira (2008, 91) points to the food brands that each child or teenager takes to the classroom and how eating carries the cultural traits of space-time. In this context, one could think of the study of a history of art that digests both the artistic and gastronomic experience, pointing to an interdisciplinary (and why not, transdisciplinary!) encounter that invites you to savor the food work and life of the artist who produced it as in a great and varied banquet of parallel narratives.

Thus, it was possible to perceive that the space that the teaching of art education inhabits is fundamentally constituted by different experiences. The pretension that permeates the countless ready-made answers that configure educational manuals and art history books often fail to satisfy the need to understand (before) and experience (after) the path outlined inside and outside the classroom. It becomes increasingly clear that the mobile territory of pedagogical action drives an irreverent and fearless posture, even if inserted in the institutional habitat. Just as new paradigmatic proposals permeate contemporary production, invading galleries and cultural spaces, new postures need to be considered within the scope of school performance. The connection between acting, research and artistic production becomes more alive than ever: why, then, not consider a formation that values the fusion between areas that are sometimes apparently disconnected?

The generative theme (Freire, 1996:59) poetized from the fusion between the food universe and the artistic universe, thus reveals to us a history of art and an artistic production updated in the edible experience of everyday life. This experience, which belongs to both the student and the artist, brings together and signifies artistic action as a poetic gesture that interprets food culture as a heritage to be preserved and valued in the classroom as well. In this context, the attempt to understand and



study a food work often turns into a journey that, at the same time, encompasses and extrapolates the limits of the human body and the landscape understood in its broadest sense. The comprehension of the work demands a “fluidized” reasoning in the sensations of the being, where gastric juices and thoughts merge in the same perceptive experience of

enjoyment. If man is what he eats, he is also what he thinks and teaches; From the kitchen to the classroom, the path is brief, in this process, the food work shortens the distance between mechanical and symbolic thinking, allowing the experiential expansion of the human being in all its scope.

---

4. According to the same author (2002: 19), “With the high prestige of meat in cities at the time, meals with lots of vegetables made by Leonardo, in which some leaflets were carefully placed on a plate, were not very successful among regular carnivores.”

## REFERENCES

- BACHELARD, Gaston *O direito de sonhar*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1994.
- BARTHES, Roland *O obvio e o obtuso*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1990.
- BRONOWSKY, Jordan. *A Experiência da criação*. Diógenes, Brasília, v.6, p. 35-41, jun.1984.
- Câmara Cascudo, Luis. *Civilização e Cultura*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympo editor, 1973.
- DIAS, Belidson. *Fundamentos para o curso de Professores em Artes Visuais: Diretrizes Nacionais, Parâmetros Regionais e Alicerces Trans-locais*. Brasília:UnB, 2008.
- FISHER, Edward. *A necessidade da arte*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar editores, 1973.
- FRANCASTEL, Pierre. *Arte e Técnica*. Lisboa: Edição Livros do Brasil, 2000.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia da autonomia. Saberes necessários à prática educativa*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.
- FRIERO, Elias. *Feijão, angu e couve, ensaios sobre a comida dos mineiros*. Belo Horizonte: Imprensa da UFMG, 1999.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *L'origine dès manières de table*. Paris: Plon, 1968.
- Ministério da Educação e Desporto, *Parâmetros curriculares Nacionais- Ensino Médio e fundamental*, Brasília, 2005
- MORIN, Edgar. *O enigma do homem*. Para uma nova Antropologia. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1979.
- ONFRAY, Michel. *A razão gulosa*. Filosofia do gosto. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1999.
- *A escultura de si*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1995.
- Secretaria de Estado de Educação do Distrito Federal. *Orientações curriculares –Ensino Fundamental*, 2010
- TAINÉ, Herbert. *Filosofia da arte na Itália*. São Paulo, Educ PUC Imaginário, 1992.
- Vasari, Giorgio. - *Delle vite de' piú eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori dedicato al serenissimo granduca di Toscano Ferdinando II*. Disponível em: <http://bepi1949.altervista.org/vasari/vasari00.htm>.