

Molecular Cuisine: The Politics of Taste (New York, 19 – 21 Oct 12)

School of Visual Arts, New York, Oct 19–21, 2012

Deadline: Jun 5, 2012

Suzanne Anker

Molecular Cuisine: The Politics of Taste
International Conference and Artists' Presentations

School of Visual Arts, 335 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011 USA

Conference organizers: Suzanne Anker & Sabine Flach

Molecular Cuisine: The Politics of Taste is an interdisciplinary conference focusing on desire's palette. Investigating the importance of taste from the perspectives of the culinary arts, sociology, art history and theory, anthropology, as well as the cognitive, material and biological sciences, our conference targets intersections between taste and value. While taste is the key concept in new cooking technologies, it also connects to our passions, predilections and taboos. Researchers from the natural as well as the cultural sphere ask the questions why we enjoy certain foods and not others, why we prefer certain styles and not others. Involving multiple disciplines which emphasize the senses, emotions and sensory assets, the concept of taste, which is traditionally one pertaining to the fine arts or humanities, develops a renewed relevance to current cultural debates.

The classic distinctions between the senses and aesthetics have currently been challenged by various disciplines. However, one of the most intriguing queries comes from aesthetics and its theories. Restaurants like the Danish Noma is world-famous for its distinctive aroma. At Documenta 12, the restaurant elBulli was hailed as a work of art and Ferran Adrià Acosta's gastronomy cocina de vanguardia was regarded as an artistic process. It is fruitful to analyze aesthetic categories such as taste and its pertinence to contemporary culture. Moreover, the significance of taste parallels the questioning of and as a substitute for social authorities, traditions and institutions which become full-fledged during the Enlightenment. Such concerns point to the priorities of individual responsibility to make value judgments.

The distinctiveness of taste goes well beyond the mere meaning of "objective" beauty. Rather, it must be shown that differing habits of taste in themselves generate coherent lifestyles. Besides the connection to the palate, the importance of taste lies in regard to judgments and sensibilities including moral and ethical assets. The divergence between an expert's taste and style, and a collective or private individual style must be re-analyzed under present conditions. This analysis will point to, in particular, an interdisciplinary subject, which finds its origins in the arts and its theo-

ries.

The multiple meanings of taste, encapsulated by sensory and perceptual capacities will be understood in symbolic terms. Taste, in the sense of Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) moves beyond the conventional idea of an aesthetic experience. Taste can be regarded as a key concept of humanism. With that approach, we will reexamine discourses such as David Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757) and Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790). Other significant topics include Pierre Bourdieu's sociological analyses, in *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (1979), as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of the "Oneiron" just to name a few.

We will investigate characteristics of taste circumscribed by variegated transglobal perspectives. Also we will address how taste interacts with gustatory and olfactory phenomena along with the senses of touch, and of significant interest, the sensations of temperature and pain. The biological aspects of the five qualities of taste: sweet, bitter, sour, salty and umami, are also noted as they intersect with vision and texture. Furthermore, we distinguish between the sensations of taste and the appraisal of taste by aesthetic, socio-political and religious stratas.

Other questions for discussion might be:

What is the relationship between the senses and sensory perception/deception?

How do collective and ideological formations of taste work?

What is the historical background of taste in art theoretical concepts?

What is the interplay among taste, indulgence and pleasure?

What is the relationship between taste and the fine arts?

What is "good taste" and/or "bad style"?

What is the difference between taste and affectation?

What is involved in the science of flavor?

How do we understand/perceive textures in food?

What are the "objects" of cooking? Ephemeral art?

What are the aesthetic implications of taste?

How do advances in "molecular gastronomy" alter the ways in which we perceive ingredients?

Scholars and artists interested in presenting are invited to send a proposal of 300 words and a CV, including MOST RECENT publications/exhibitions, to the following addresses: suzanne.anker@gmail.com; sflach@sva.edu

Reference:

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