

The Unclaimed Rights of Food Arts, essay

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When walking into a restaurant, great chefs consider the taste, regional and local ingredients, plating, season, flavors and textures. What they fail to consider and explore is the context of the food to it's site (to the scale, color, context, and full design of the site or restaurant), it's time in history, materiality of the food itself, or the boldness to search deeper concepts in the medium and context which they work in.

Food Arts has the right to claim what many other mediums already have- the right to explore the medium of food as an art form for *all* of its qualities.

Pastry arts is even further behind other food medium, it has not even begun to touch the surface. The examples and extreme popularity of delicate chocolate treats piped with small detailed flowers (reminiscent of the miniature paintings of the 1500's in France and England, with detailed painting the size of jewelry lockets), cakes with realism in sugared floral designs (reminiscent of the movie Marie Antoinette directed by Sophia Coppola), 'cute' designs of miniature outdoor scenes not typically seen on cakes, and large scale sugar sculptures of fantasy themes and imaginative scenes (as seen on the international sugar sculpture competitions airing on Food Network Challenges).

A definition of *art* in the book by John Berger 'Ways of Seeing' - based on paintings- "Art is a unique object." With the art movements and media since that was initially written a more updated and appropriate definition is 'art is unique experience created by the artist's intentions'. Unique- addressing issues with reproducible art. Experience- addressing the ephemeral nature of some media.

Art forms such as sculpture, painting and even photography have explored what the medium of each of those are in and of itself, and what the medium can really do- not what it can duplicate. These include the sculptures and installations by Jenny Holzer, Christo & Jeanne Claude, Richard Serra, Sol LeWitt; paintings by Agnes Martin; musical compositions by Philip Glass; dance performances by Trisha Brown; Happenings by Yves Klien, Yoko Ono; and photography of Rayographs by Man Ray which explore just writing with light- the literal

translation of photography. Artists have explored what original and unique qualities each medium has in pieces now reviewed in history books.

Food Arts has explored duplication of existing known artworks. (jelly belly Elvis; toast Elvis; sweet Jesus; butter last supper). Rarely has food arts explored spatial designs, large scale designs (1/8 acre or more), *site specific designs*, spaces designed to make a statement chosen *by* the artist. Since the 1980's there have been edible events and scenes designed, such as floral-vine gazebo scenes- admired in awe for their and beauty for the large structural feat achieved. And that is where the work ends- with one line, one awe uttered at the time and attention to the realistic duplicated details. The personality and boldness of the fine artist is sorely lacking.

Artists, by choice of our profession, through history have pushed the political boundaries, stretched the public's mind to consider new media, and broken the box on exploring what and how each medium can be used by artists to make the statements of their choice.

Where is food arts- stuck in which century? Clothing, though functional for protection is well known to use the medium to make loud statements with their artworks- and clearly is not always wearable. Landscape Architecture- though functional for flood mitigation and other landscape uses has artists such as Martha Schwartz exploring theories in a spatial artworks. Food Artists (though few appear to be true fine artists due to their lack of boldness with investigations of concepts) have been afraid to explore the medium of the items and materials which we use for daily function- the form, color, texture, scale, materiality, context have all but been ignored by chefs, food artists, and many artists.

Where, in history, we have seen times where bold artists have used their strength to make a change in the art world- this is the long awaited opportunity to do the same for food arts. Use of food for its form, its color, scale, scent, taste, texture, materiality, ephemeral-ness, all five sense, its spatial qualities to explore concepts which the art world holds of value is the unclaimed right food art has to it. Artists of all mediums are one of the last professions with the fearlessness to explore deep concepts in artworks. It is overdue for food arts to join with this spirit, catching up on decades of missed opportunities and events to give the public a taste of what this art form truly has to offer.