

GOOD FOOD

5 Creatives Mixing Food And Art In Delicious Ways

By Maxwell Williams

March 28, 2017

Food has been inextricably linked to art since ancient Egyptians painted food on the inside of tombs, believing that the depictions would turn edible in the afterlife. Still lifes were a craze amongst 16th century artists; Leonardo da Vinci was an early adopter, making watercolors of fruit around 1495. And who can forget Italian Renaissance painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, famous for creating portraits of people out of fruit and veggies—some of history’s first “conceptual paintings.”

Food/art became a contemporary line of investigation in the 1970s when artists Carol Goodden, Tina Girouard, and Gordon Matta-Clark opened FOOD, an art project in the form of a restaurant. The three would invite artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Rauschenberg to come cook at FOOD, with the meals often becoming more performative than sustentative. A few years later, in 1978, the Museum of Modern Art published Artists’ Cookbook, featuring recipes by the likes of Louise Bourgeois, Salvador Dalí, and Andy Warhol, a pop artist whose most famous work happens to be of a Campbell’s Soup can.

Artists will always use whatever materials are available to them and will comment on that which affects humans—which is why food satisfies as a medium to many. Here are five of the most notable food-art projects of the past few years:



Rikrit Tiravanija backstage at his 1993 endeavor, Hamburger Kunstverein in Hamburg. Photo courtesy Instagram user @albooks2000

Rirkrit Tiravanija, "Untitled (Free)," 1992

Rirkrit Tiravanija is something of a legend at this point—having won the Guggenheim Museum’s Hugo Boss Prize in 2004 and presenting exhibitions at MoMA, the Serpentine Gallery in London, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). But his breakout show came in the early '90s, when he kitted out downtown Manhattan art gallery 303 with a temporary kitchen and eating space, cooking Thai curry for anyone who came through the space. This side of Tiravanija’s work has been described as “relational aesthetics,” an art movement that focuses on the shared nature of experiencing art.

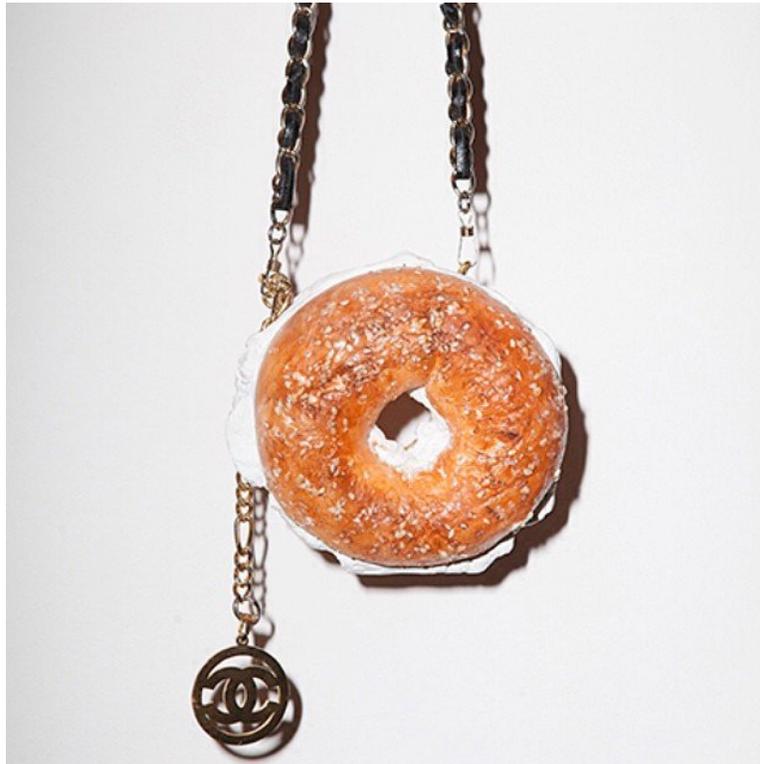


Photo courtesy Instagram user @vintageheirloom

Chloe Wise, "Bagel No. 5," 2014

Chloe Wise is something of an art-food dilettante. She’s made lush paintings of voluptuous women holding objects such as garlic, La Croix, and tomato paste. She’s made hyperrealistic sculptures of messy globs of saucy pasta. The main thing she’s known for though, is her “bread bags” series, a “collection” of hilarious bags made of various types of bread with high fashion logos affixed to them (e.g., English muffins with a Moschino logo, pancakes with a Chanel logo). One such piece, “Bagel No. 5,” caused a stir when actress India Menuez (Nocturnal Animals) wore it to a Chanel event, and the press and mistook it for a real Chanel bag.



Photo courtesy Instagram user @sutton

Jennifer Rubell, "Fecunditas," 2014

Jennifer Rubell comes from art royalty: her parents are Don and Mera Rubell, two of the world's most prominent art collectors. Each year at Art Basel Miami Beach, Jennifer hosts a breakfast at her parents' private museum, The Rubell Collection. But it's *Fecunditas*, which she presented at the Performa 09 performance art biennial in 2014, that stands as her most spectacular achievement. For Performa's official dinner—which means Rubell was serving a particularly plush crowd of people such as actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg, Chef Mario Batali, and performance artist Marina Abramović—Rubell created installations like deviled eggs arranged beneath hanging rubber chickens. When the chickens were hit with a stick, paprika would sprinkle out of them onto the eggs. And that was just the appetizer. Then came men in assless chaps serving the decadent main course of whole suckling pigs and pheasant with feathers. Dessert was a surprise: The tables that the meal was served on were stuffed with chocolates and the men took to sawing them open, the candies spilling out onto the elites.

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United Brothers, "Does this soup taste ambivalent?" at Paramount Ranch in Los Angeles, 2016 Photo by Maxwell Williams

United Brothers, "Does this soup taste ambivalent?," 2014

Ei Arakawa is a Fukushima-born artist who has shown in the Whitney Biennial and at the Tate Modern in London. After the Fukushima earthquake, he teamed up with his brother, a tanning salon owner, to create "Does this soup taste ambivalent?" Enlisting their mother as the cook, the Arakawas crafted a soup out of vegetables grown in the area affected by radiation caused by the nuclear plant meltdown. Hysteria ensued at the Frieze Art Fair in 2014. It was covered by everyone from Food & Wine to CNN, all asking, "Would you eat this radioactive soup?" But that was the point—the people of Fukushima are presented with food grown in the area, in their grocery stores—food that has been tested and approved by the Japanese Farmers' Association. Still, many people were turned off by the possibility of residual radiation and turned the Arakawas' soup down. (This writer, for the record, did eat the soup.)

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"Please Have Enough Acid in the Dish!" Photo courtesy Instagram user @mblosangeles

Sean Raspet, "Flavor," 2016

Sean Raspet's main media are the technology of scent and flavor, so it was only natural that he took a job as the flavorist for Soylent, the meal replacement drink start-up for which flavor has mostly taken a backseat. (Most people describe Soylent as tasting like pancake batter or the milk after you eat cereal, and Raspet's new flavors like Soylent Nectar aim to change those negative connotations.) When Los Angeles restaurateur Vinny Dotolo (Animal, Trois Mec) was tapped to curate an art show about food, called "Please Have Enough Acid in the Dish!" at M+B gallery in Hollywood, he asked Raspet to participate. Raspet presented jugs of his Soylent flavors and used the exhibition as a focus group, having viewers fill out forms as to which flavors they would purposefully drink.