



Panem Et Circenses





## **Panem Et Circenses :: art practice on and about food**

A genuine site-specific approach fused with an associative vocation are the founding elements of the research that underlies the aesthetic and formal choices of the art collective Panem Et Circenses' artistic practice.

Perfection in execution cannot be measured and defined in terms of execution; it implies those who perceive and enjoy the product that is executed. The cook prepares food for the consumer and the measure of the value of what is prepared is found in consumption. Mere perfection of execution, judged in its own terms in isolation, can probably be attained better by a machine than by human art. [...] Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be "loving"; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised. [...] The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works."

These words were penned by American philosopher John Dewey in his 1936 essay *Art as Experience*. Since then, greater attention has been placed on the relational aspects in contemporary public art, leading to the creation of participatory art forms: the audience (receiver) is engaged in the creative process and transformed from spectator into participant and, with his or her physical interaction, contributes in determining the form and value of the work itself. The artist, in turn, perceives his artwork in a completely new way. He involves the sensitivity, feelings, dreams and needs of his own referents and participants, as if creating a loving relationship that goes beyond its aesthetic or formal features. He actively engages in the encounter, allowing himself to be transformed by it and assumes "the attitude of the perceiver" within the active process. In other words, he is both appreciator and curious participant who is intimately connected to the dynamics of the creative process.

The "participatory practices" in the works of PEC are a central focus of its research and the active medium it uses to investigate. The collective team operates within the dimension of contemporary art practice where the artwork is the interactions that emerge from the active participation of people. As mentioned before, the people involved are no longer simply spectators; they become the agent with the artist in an open-ended, negotiable and profoundly contingent outcome. Artists like PEC who choose to follow this path, first ask themselves: what is required? They then use the tools that answer this question within the communities where they operate and proceed to envision hypotheses, poetic solutions and action devices capable of engaging and stimulating the participation of people in the artistic process.

With this framework in mind and as the art collective's name clearly indicates, PEC's works choose to focus attention on food as a place of significance and language, and as a fundamental relational device that considers the utility of shared analysis on ideas such as nutrition, enjoyment, resources, the earth, authenticity and imitation.

PEC's role mirrors that of the cook described by Dewey who measures the precision of its execution in terms of the quality of engagement with art and the quality of interaction generated by the experience. Defined as the value of social relations, it constitutes a third paradigm that complements utilitarian value and the value of exchange - based on traditional economic theory, providing alternative analyses of the strengths and normative foundations of human society. The French sociologist and economist, Alain Caillé elaborates this concept starting with a review of Marcel Mauss' famous study on the "gift". The gift, understood as a foundational cohesive practice and proposed as an alternative dynamic to economic models based on strictly utilitarian values and exchange of goods, produces relations that are reciprocated over time, allowing true exchange to take place, an exchange that is free and

voluntary, yet coherent and shared.

Food, articulated within the context of this paradigm as a relational device, is often associated to reflections on the theme of the gift in PEC's work. PEC compellingly binds comprehensive ethical considerations with the aesthetic qualities of its work: food is the gift. The subjects at both ends of the exchange are what we consider natural and what we consider human (or, better yet, cultural or social). In this sense, food functions as a medium by which allegiances are rebuilt – a theme underscored in all of PEC's participatory events.

To reclaim a bond with authenticity is not an invitation to a rhetorical revival of originality. On the contrary, it means searching for a significant relationship with nature in the present, with the aspects of nature which we are capable of accessing, understanding and including the conceptual perspectives and production dynamics we have concerning food.

One speaks in terms of conceptual ideas concerning food because food is clearly not a neutral subject-matter or an element that is simply transferred from the earth to our plates; it is a cultural product – an object constructed according to rules within a general economy on the basis of our relationship with reality, that is, with others, nature and the histories that originate in the past.

The actions of PEC constantly challenge the semantics of food, encouraging greater awareness and stimulating disclosure of the seductive dynamics associated with the incentive to consume food in the sphere of the market, as well as consciousness of the many levels of meaning, expectations and investments inherent in food – starting with our personal, direct experience of food – and, also in terms of disclosure, prompting retrieval and reception.

Invitations to greater awareness often rotate around the concept of threshold associated with the act of eating: eating as a moment of crossing the out/in threshold, allowing what is outside – in the world – to cross inside ourselves, crossing through our mouths and through expectations, cultural prejudices and thousands of filters that create a greater divide between us and nature.

The nature/culture dichotomy represents one side of the conceptual considerations underpinning the works of PEC. Culture – the artistic language, as well as the forms, rules and balances within it – faces the possibility of convening with nature once again, not as myth or normative ideal, but as a tangible place where the act of sinking our hands in the earth allows us to rediscover the rhythms and the abundant economy of nature.

Myth, however, is also ever-present in PEC's work; there is an emphasis on archaic themes that reverberates from the cultural (historical, poetic and legendary) matter inherent in food. By using the performance genre and placing dedicated care in the construction of situations (site-specific, time-specific and with established rules), PEC explores the world of ceremony, of magic ritual. These aspects are aesthetically meticulous and reflect a language that originates with the need to examine the issues surrounding relationships, bonds and intimacy.

Performative gestures are intrinsically magical (giving shape and form to the things of the imagination) – they attract attention, they engage us at an emotional level and they lift our spirits. A keen awareness of the expressive power of gesture and the power of evocation take their work beyond a forceful sense of revelation in sociological and political terms, to include metaphysical principles that are achieved through sensitivity, relations and intimacy.

The ability to feel empathy, as well as the capability to deeply perceive the sensitivities of others as a reflection of our own and the reciprocal trust that ensues, are fundamental aspects in PEC's work. Understanding the sensitivities of the people for, about or with an artistic event, action or installation is created, is fundamental in determining the success as a relational device and as an activator, or catalyst, of a system of consciousness, collaboration and generative processes. PEC demonstrates the ability to sustain a heightened sentimental tension with the people and places where they execute their artwork. At the same time, they know how to manage the global nature of their work using a refined, contemporary language that is aware of the existing discussion on themes they are highlighting within the broader context of the art system.

This balance of sensitivity, formal attention and aesthetic expression prevents PEC's work from falling into the pitfalls of being dubbed as populist or insincere (an explicit risk faced in public art, especially when the artwork avails itself of participatory practices to execute and articulate its form). Their relationship with the community in the place where their actions take place and the investigative con-

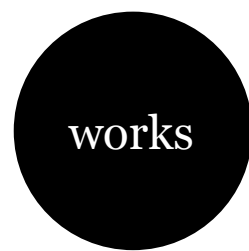
siderations of their artwork involve a time-consuming process, with outcomes that are never taken for granted. This approach to the relational process is undoubtedly something that defines their work within the concept of social utility of art wherein the artist serves the community with his or her own talent and individual analytical abilities, and activates unexpected community resources, enthusiasms and reconnections that are highly valuable to the development and wellbeing of the people within that community.

In conclusion, the collective Panem Et Circenses analyses food as a cultural medium – a sign endowed with a symbolic apparatus, having varying inflections in form, and possessing histories related to these forms. It is a medium that has been constructed as a means to communicate, using comprehensive grammar that has been functioning over the centuries as a binder and a vital connector between us and the world throughout our evolutionary process. Therefore, in essence, it is a relational device to which PEC dedicates the creative deactivation and constant re-activation of their artistic efforts.

Magic and relational economy are entwined in an investigative parable that PEC enriches – artwork after artwork – with new perspectives and new situations for reflection, without losing sight of the explicitly sentimental goal of its approach to art: to engage others and to be engaged, to refine understanding, to improve as individuals and as members of a community.

Silvia Petronici

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## EIN HUNGERKÜNSTLER (A Hunger Artist)

*Installation Title of the work: "1758. Perché non riuscivo a trovar il cibo che mi piacesse" (Because I couldn't find the food that I liked). 30 paper magazines with re-edited covers, laser print on glossy paper 250 gr.; 30 magazine-sized shelves; stencil; fine-point black gel pen; lighting with two neon T8 36w bulbs; two white, foamboard structures. Dimension 265 x 130 cm.*

*Installation Title of the work: "Il ricco buffet, preparato con cura" (The generous buffet prepared with care) Table dim. 180 x 90 cm; white tablecloths and red drapery; two black, wrought iron table top candle holders; 10 lit candles; 20 white ceramic plates; generous, flamboyant buffet; digital timer min. dim. 50 x 20 cm.; audio device with a reading by Arnaldo Foà of Kafka's short story "A Hunger Artist" from a 1979 Italian "Radio Tre" recording. At the exit of the room: 10 x 15 cm device/postcard on laguna parchment paper. 2016*

The installation is composed of four interconnected devices that function as the elements for the relational enjoyment of the entire work. Outside of the closed room, a performance artist welcomes participants in groups of 15. He gives them a single instruction and then knocks on the door to the room. Another performance artist, within, opens the door. The participants enter in single file and receive an empty plate which they must hold on tight, without ever letting go of it for the entire duration of the action (10 minutes, from the moment they enter the room). Exhibited in the room are: the work, 1758. Perché non riuscivo a trovar il cibo che mi piacesse and the installation Il ricco buffet, preparato con cura, a table laid out with a sumptuous buffet. The work is lit with neon lights from below; the buffet with table top candle holders. A digital timer counts down the time remaining from when the participants enter the room. Speakers transmit the short story reading on high volume. The performance artist in the room invites the participants to enjoy the wall installation while they await the arrival of other people to share the buffet with. Halfway through the experience, the performer repeats that they are awaiting other people for the buffet. When the time has expired, the performer draws the participants' attention with a whistle and asks them to return the plates to him; he then invites them to leave the room without having touched the food. As the participants exit the room, the other performer provides each participant with a postcard that reveals the mechanism and the reason why they were denied the food inside the room.

"Ein Hungerkünstler" is a work that confronts a very difficult and delicate subject: world hunger. It does so by employing a participatory installation and a relational action that places participants in an ideal situation to share an "empty plate" with those who suffer hunger. The conceptual element that sustains the entire action and connects the devices is the paradox. The work mounted on the wall is inspired by Kafka's story of the same name "Ein Hungerkünstler" which narrates the decline of a professional "hunger artist" whose fame as "the greatest faster of all time" quickly wanes with the arrival of new, fashionable attractions. On his deathbed, he refuses the admiration attributed to him during his lifetime, arguing that he did not deserve it since fasting had always been easy for him, and explaining that the reason he fasted was not due to determination and commitment to his artwork but rather simply a question of taste – because he could not find food to his liking. This grotesque and paradoxical conclusion is translated in the work mounted on the wall through the installation of 30 culinary magazines (all dated January 2016) that collect a total of 1758 recipes. Each magazine is deprived of their own, sparkling and colorful identity – thus becoming monotonous and insignificant in culinary terms (the new paradoxical meaning is provided by the quotations taken from the story and by the printed definitions on the new, white covers) and thereby reflecting the apathetic and listless demeanor of Kafka's fasting artist. The magazine as a medium was chosen as a symbol of a type of superficial entertainment – those who suffer hunger are excluded from this approach to food; in this action, the magazines are, in fact, potentially available for consultation and enjoyment by the participants, but it results extremely difficult while they hold the empty plate in their hands. Hence, the message is: "those who suffer hunger (those holding an empty plate in their hands) are denied the luxury of considering food as entertainment (they cannot browse through culinary magazines)."

From one paradox to another, stronger one. As we interpret it, world hunger possesses a paradoxical pattern. Hunger is not about the lack of food or resources; it's about the inability for a certain part of the population to have access to them, even when physical, concrete barriers are removed. This paradox is formally translated in "Ein Hungerkünstler" with the lavishly staged buffet that is theoretically and for all practical purposes available to the participants, but they are not allowed to enjoy it even though there are no physical obstacles hindering them from accessing the table; there is simply a custodian (the performance artist) who asks them to wait until others arrive. At the end of the action (marked by the timer – the only other object in the room aside from the two installations – similarly to the clock which, in Kafka's story, is the only object in the hunger artist's cage; this reflects how important the dimension time and the concept of waiting are to the Kafkaian character and to the participatory action) the participants are invited to exit the room and asked to hand back their empty plate without having eaten any food. Then, the second performer at the exit performs a fundamental gesture that conceptually closes the work: she gives each participant a postcard. The front side of the postcard reads: "we are waiting for other people" (words used inside the room to delay the action of eating the buffet); the backside has a number written on it (794 million) that indicates the number of people who suffer hunger and hold an empty plate in their hands each day – not simply for the 15 minutes duration of the action. At the end of the evening, the buffet, pristine and intact, is donated in its entirety to a charitable organization, contributing in part to alleviate the difficulties of those near us who suffer hunger.



video frame



## EUTOPOS (The good place)

*Site-specific installation. On the wall, work on paper measuring 390 x 130 cm: 500, 15.6 x 6.6 cm graphic prints on 90gr woodfree paper, 250 x 20 cm. anthracite grey pre-spaced adhesive. Surrounding space: 120 x 140 x 60 cm trade fair desk, two laptop computers, stereo headphones, video (duration 1'17"), 3 reports in paper form. Overall environmental dimensions. 2015*

This participatory installation is composed of two parts: a wall-mounted installation and a multimedia "question station, with a corner dedicated to maieutic dialogue. The question station is mobile and allows the two performance artists to maintain the focus of the event (workshop/conference) throughout and to accompany the flow of participants from one session to another.

The action consists in encouraging participants to watch a short video and to help them – following a guided session in maieutic dialogue – to formulate a question of meaning on the value, or values, of food. The participant writes his or her question on the back of a prepared "value ticket" that will replace one the "value tickets" placed on the wall.

The "mosaic of values" becomes a collector of questions of meaning.

Have I ever stopped to ask myself what it means for man to exercise his power over nature? Do I really know how much, globally and in terms of survival, it costs to produce food in the world? Where am "I" within this system? How do I fit in the equation? Am I capable of getting to the details, in depth? Am I really interested? The operation of questioning underlies and expresses itself through all learning structures and we experience the emotions associated with those questions; this process leads to our growth and develops our consciousness. It is important to extend the moment of contemplation that the act of questioning entails; the act of self-questioning encourages original observations and generates additional questions which can lead to a greater number of pathways to authentic thought or awareness. Thought is today rarely stimulated and considered at its richest, most original functions: to exercise doubt, to be perplexed, to question and to self-question, to personally experience the investigation process, the ensuing revelation and the wonder.

What do we ask ourselves when we talk about food?







video frame



## RISTORANTE AL FARO, DAL 1917. (lighthouse restaurant from 1917)

*Site-specific installation, the structure of an iron table, structure of an iron chair, sand-color enamel paint, digital print on acetate, fishing line, participatory performance on May 9, 2015 at 7:00-8:00 pm, overall environmental dimensions. 2015*

A table and chair are positioned against a white boundary wall on the left side of the lighthouse courtyard. The chair is placed in a way so that the participant faces the white wall. The menu – six transparent acetate sheets, tied together with fishing line – is laid on the table. The names of six dishes served at the Lighthouse Restaurant from 1917, with a brief reference and description written in an imaginary tale style, are printed on the menu. The menu is reproduced in two copies: one for the performance containing only the names and one reference to the six dishes; the second copy is complete with the six stories and will be left as part of the permanent installation.

During the performance, the two artists of the art collective Panem Et Circenses wear clothes that reflect the roles of maître d' and chef. The maître d' invites participants to sit at the table and choose one of the six dishes on the menu. Once they've made their choice, the chef moves to stand behind the participant whilst facing the white wall; whispering into the participant's ear, he narrates the imaginary story behind the dish that is connected to real elements and objects of the place which the artists have learned about or experienced during their residency. At the end of the story, the maître d' invites the participant to retell the story and to accept a token of appreciation in the form of food, as a symbol of the exchange.

The work originates from the observation that the hamlet of Bibione (100 km north of Venice) has developed from scratch in very recent years due to the ever-increasing demand of tourism and, therefore, does not possess a remote history concerning specific culinary traditions. The lighthouse is the oldest anthropic element in the area, built in 1917. In a place that possesses a particularly marked tradition in tourism, the shape of the restaurant (as mentioned in the title) perfectly blends into the existing landscape. The difference lies in the fact that it is an imaginary restaurant and what is listed on the menu are tales; the images and the imagination that are activated by a surreal installation context and by the literary contribution of the artists are offered as food at the Lighthouse Restaurant. The nutrition content in the dishes poetically offered by the artist cover these themes: the decline in the abundance of fish in the waters; the cultivation of traditional produce such as white asparagus; an appeal to conserve the natural balance of things when producing food itself; a request to protect the reciprocal relations among the species; and, finally, love for the earth as a Mother Earth, not simply as a territory for the expansion of human activity.







## IN SC' I-AA PORTA (On the threshold)

*Installation: painted double sign made of wood with the words "IN SC' I-AA PORTA", open door, light and table within the room. Round, white tablecloth with a blue, counterclockwise spiral drawing. 30, 3D statuettes molded in white nylon. Poster on the wall outside. Overall environmental dimensions, 2015. Participatory action (Saturday, April 25, 4:00–6:00 pm): a table for receiving "happiness food"; a white tablecloth with a blue, counterclockwise spiral drawing made by hand; 30, 3D statuettes printed in white nylon as a gift for participants. Overall environmental dimensions, 2015. Participatory action (Sunday, April 26, 1:30–3:00 pm): a table set with a "turtun" (a traditional Ligurian pie filled with vegetables, wild herbs, goat cheese and olives), a white tablecloth with a red, clockwise spiral drawing. 8, 3D statuettes molded in white nylon. Overall environmental dimensions, 2015.*

"IN SC' I-AA PORTA" involves a series of actions and a temporary installation. The temporary reopening of the Rivolte gate – a popular public establishment that had been closed for over twenty years on the ground floor of a condemned building that dominates the Rivolte di San Sebastiano (a vaulted alley in Sanremo) – coincides with the installation of: a large round table that is staged inside the place, a painted wooden sign that was built and decorated with members of the local community, extravagant lighting effects inside, and a poster that promotes the extraordinary reopening of the place. The name of the liminal and temporary establishment is "IN SC' I-AA PORTA" ("on the threshold" in the Sanremo dialect). This name was chosen to highlight the building's peculiarity as a boundary and passage, as well as the inclusion and exclusion of the entire building – and by extension the entire Pigna neighborhood – from the new city of Sanremo. The premises where the installation is installed is not accessible but can only be seen from the door-sill.

"IN SC' I-AA PORTA" also involves two participatory and co-authored art actions. The first is an action during which local community members take their "happiness food" to the door-sill in exchange for a 3D statuette created in collaboration with a local craftsman. The object blends an icon of the new Sanremo – Italian television host Mike Buongiorno – with a symbol of the old Sanremo – a pine cone, the historical center of La Pigna. The second action on the following day involves our gift to the local community: a dish that is common to this area but that on this occasion is brought from outside, from the countryside, and is a hybrid because it is prepared by outsiders (ourselves).

The themes investigated in "IN SC' I-AA PORTA" are the concepts of: threshold and margins – understood as a boundary and place of exchange; dialogue between an outside and an inside; spatial boundaries and margins that, in terms of human beings as a physical entity, are expressed by the feature of the mouth – the boundary, the door, the threshold of our body that separates our inner self (physical, cultural, intellectual and sentimental) from the world outside.

We engage these concepts by activating an exchange between the Pigna community and ourselves (outsiders) in a place representative of this passage – a liminal building – that, in particular, is a symbol of a political model that remains indifferent and removed from the real needs of its population. In contrast to this objective difficulty to relate with the audience and with those who should preserve rather than throw away, our invitation to bring celebrative and "happiness food" is a desire to focus on the power of relations, on the power of people that actively live in their community, and on the determination to take a pro-active stance towards shaping the future.

The action occurred on April 25 – an Italian holiday, a day of freedom, rebirth and re-appropriation. The "happiness food" not only represents the multitude of cultures within the Pigna community, it is a way to bring together these ideas; the decision to ask members of the Pigna community to prepare it was taken in order to reinforce their participation through an active assignment that is rewarded with a dual gesture of restitution: an exchange on the first day; an unconditional gift on the second day.







## Mæn-hiø

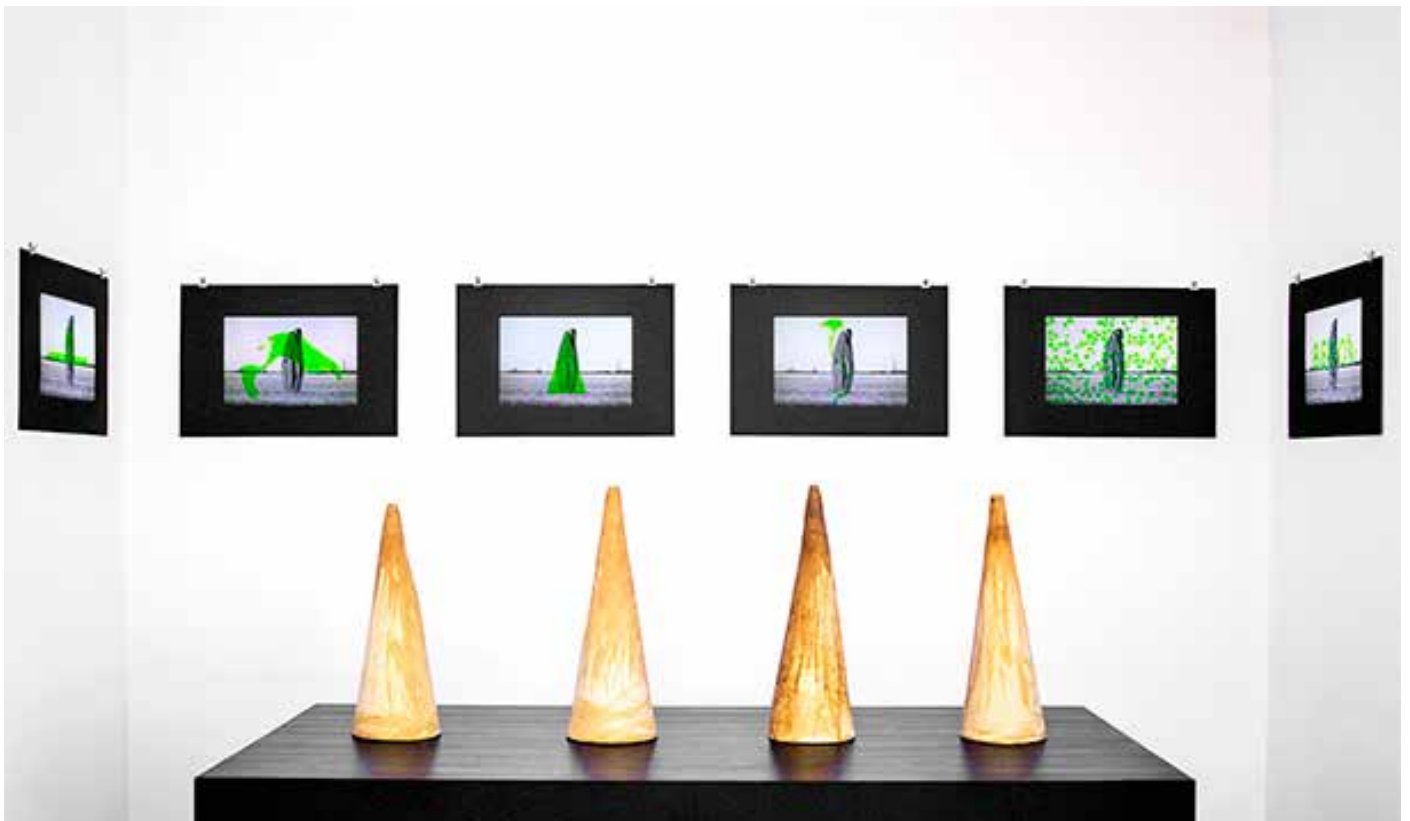
*Installation, 6 black/white photographic prints on woodfree paper with one-of-a-kind art interventions using green neon pastels, 20x30 cm each; 4 terracotta cones measuring 43 cm x 18 ø on a 70 x 150 x 93 cm table; 6 Wood lamps. Overall environmental dimensions. 2014 Performance, 1 terracotta cone contains a 1-kg-sized bread made with Einkorn flour (an ancient variety of wheat, single-grain flour), 1 old stone mallet, 1 dark-colored 80 x 80 cm bamboo mat, 1 - 8w cool white fluorescent lamp. Overall environmental dimensions. 2015*

The installation Mæn-hiø includes 6 photographic prints of the “Mæn-hiø, man is here” series. Each print has a special mark made by hand and is individually lit with a Wood lamp. The work also includes the artwork “Mæn-hiø, bread eaters” and 4 terracotta handmade cones that are used as containers for baking bread. A performance during which one of the cones is broken and the bread is offered in ritual fashion to the public completes the installation.

The epic of Gilgamesh, tells of a “wild man” who left his status as a savage the moment he learned of the existence of bread, something revealed to him by a woman – in fact, a prostitute (granting the female figure in this way both the role of guardian of food knowledge and that of custodian of sexuality). In The Iliad and The Odyssey, “bread eaters” are synonymous with “men”.

Bread symbolizes man's departure from the animal kingdom and the establishment of “civilization”. The conquest of this civilization is an integral step in the evolution of human society. Nomadic hunter-gatherer communities transformed into sedentary agricultural societies during the “Neolithic revolution”; they utilized and appropriated the land they lived in, in a more direct way than their predecessors. Human societies no longer adapted to the conditions imposed by the environment; they began modifying them, adapting nature for their own benefit, and changing the landscape itself through their actions and according to their personal needs.

It is in this cultural context that the first agrarian societies evolved the idea of a “civil man” who artificially created food itself – a food not existing in nature, and one that served precisely to mark the difference between NATURE and CULTURE. Agriculture is portrayed in the myths of the origins of farming as a violent act against Mother Earth, a blow struck by the plow, a world devastated by irrigation projects and works of rural organization: hence the fertility rituals whose purpose was, explicitly or implicitly, to expiate a sin committed against Mother Earth. Man is redeemed by the success of his agricultural endeavors; without this redress, the ravages of the Earth would be meaningless, thereby equating the act with mere violence and making the guilt unbearable. Menhirs appeared simultaneously with the evolution of sedentary societies, transforming space into place, thereby attributing meaning to the surrounding time and space; they are the product of man's knowledge and the result of a conscious determination to affirm his presence and mark his passage. They are “civil man's” first architectural sign. In terms of nourishment, bread is the menhir – what transforms food in cuisine: civil man is here and he marks the event with a long stone and makes bread. Mæn-hiø!







## PERMACOTTURA. TERRA. STUDY FOR A “COMPOST” COOKING

*Site-specific installation; yellow and black plastic tape; 4 plastic kits containing an instruction sheet, a vacuum-sealing bag, a portion of non-recyclable waste and one of organic waste. Fanzines in yellow, A5 format paper, active compost, plastic container for compost with color and scotch tape markings; overall environmental dimensions. 2014, Galleria Spiazzi, Venezia.*

The installation involves placing 4 identical kits in line with the 4 grounding connections in the courtyard outside of the gallery. The kit is marked with a grounding connection symbol and emphasized by the yellow and black tape that covers the plastic tube. The compost bin containing active compost is on the right side of the courtyard. Inside the gallery, on the door-sill of the glass door that leads to the courtyard, is a consultation station with a map of the kits, a fanzine and an open kit.

During this residency on site-specific and relational artwork, we researched the concept of margins. Through an awareness of the community garden and our acquaintance with Michele, who practices permaculture, we identified a privileged dimension for our investigation. Permacottura is the result of a need to experiment with trying to cook food using the sous-vide (under vacuum) method with the energy/heat that develops from a sheaf of compost – a method we had already used in other projects using a more traditional approach. This places the naturalness of compost in juxtaposition to the sous-vide method, a professional cooking method today part of a trendy and sophisticated culinary scene. The work is defined as experimental research given that, following a first theoretical analysis, we realized there could be a factor of risk for the food. This risk became an integral part of the investigation: it marks the margin, the boundary between raw and cooked – a reduced, liminal space that contains an immense dimension of value in the nature-culture duality. Ingesting food is more often a mechanical action. Rooted behavioral patterns drive our choices day by day in terms of what we eat and how we prepare our food, and the kind of heat used to cook it and transform it. This experiment aims to demonstrate that food risk is still present and changing. If we abandon our mechanical actions and reappropriate our horizontal animal nature, we can return to an unexplored world where ancient knowledge has been forgotten. This installation should be considered as the preliminary workings of a broader and more articulate work of art. Future microbiological analysis of the sous-compost mix will provide new directions for the project, with its ensuing implications and the formal realization of ideas into artwork.







## trEATticon

*Installations, participatory actions, published material, graphics. Overall environmental dimensions. 2013-2014, (galleria+)oltredimore, Bologna.*

Three different tables were displayed inside the gallery at six different times during a period of three months. Each installation reflected the specific articulation of a project design that involved a cycle of three action eating events (repeated in sets of two) and the production of dedicated graphic material. A self-made fanzine illustrates the entire project.

The audience was allowed to enter the installation room in groups and was only given partial information about their role in the event: they were only told that they would eat, but not what they would eat and, especially, how they would eat – in order to encourage participatory dynamics.

trEATticon is a unique research project in three acts that focuses on the action of “eating” as a cognitive approach to the world. It is an overview of evolution, a journey through the elements that make up edible substance – a crescendo of experimentation and epistemological study through the language of food.

trEATticon associates an element from classical doctrine, a particular approach to food, and a different intellectual age of man to each of the three acts. The elements of ancient Greek doctrine provided the most distinguishing overtones to each phase of the project. Earth, Water and Wind clearly define graphic elements, food choice, culinary preparation, colors and forms; Fire underscores the project itself in an ideal, perpetual and constant manner.

The approach to food focused on in each phase is strictly connected to the intellectual age associated with the act. The ages follow one another in natural order – from childhood to adolescence and to maturity. This is a work in progress. The universal and extensive nature of the concepts engaged implicates the unlikelihood of obtaining a single and definitive perspective on the matter. We intend to develop this project in other investigations and uses.

web: <http://cargocollective.com/treatticon>

The three acts are: Materia, Deleteria, Aetheria.



## trEATticon - opening

*Interactive edible installation. 50 x 50 cm exhibition pedestal, 2 rubber hammers, 2 chisels, chains, 50 x 50 cm gilt cardboard sheet, 5 kg chocolate triangular pyramid.*

The top of an exhibition pedestal is covered with a thin sheet of gilt cardboard and a 5kg chocolate tetrahedral pyramid sits on top. There are two hammers with rubber heads and two carpentry chisels that the audience can use to dig into the pyramid and eat it.

The shape of the tetrahedron is the Platonic solid that represents the element of Fire; Fire is the undercurrent theme in the entire trEATticon project. Offering the tetrahedral pyramid at the event's opening represents a baptism of sorts and a good omen for the project.





## Materia

*Edible installation and participatory action. 1 table dim. 120 X 240 cm., garden compost, pebbles, pieces of wood, brushwood, dried lotus leaves, fresh cabbage leaves, hand-carved stone container with lid, 24 balls of semirefractory clay, 24 balls of salt. Oven-baked whole potatoes cooked in clay, oven-baked whole artichokes cooked in salt, oven-baked red turnips cooked in salt, hard boiled eggs, oven-baked whole apples cooked in clay, edible sprouts, venison stew cooked at a low temperature. 1, 100x70 cm poster with a black and white digital print on fluorescent red/orange paper. Audio track with direct recording of the landscape sounds of the Amazon Forest at dawn. 1 Bimbi (Thermomix) machine, 1 kitchen oven. Overall environmental dimensions.*

The table is covered with garden compost and the pieces of brushwood, pebbles, pieces of wood and the leaves are placed on top. The semirefractory clay and salt “imitation” rocks with food inside are placed among these elements; the boiled eggs with shells unbroken are hidden among the dried leaves and the edible sprouts are placed on the cabbage leaves. Venison stew cooked at a low temperature is hidden inside the stone container. Acoustic sounds from the Amazon Forest at dawn permeate the environment.

Act I – “Materia” (matter) – is related to substance. Direct sensory perception instinctively guides “Materia”, where the line between “appearance” and “reality” is revealed by the use of hands and mouth. The stratagem of hiding food by camouflaging it among natural elements serves as a device that erases a participant’s familiarity and immediate recognition of food by removing known markers; hiding food among real, natural elements creates greater disorientation and puts the audience in an ideal situation similar to that experienced by early humans who had to confront the unknown every day, and decipher what edible products were at their disposal to ensure daily survival. Discovering a personal access to food and deciding whether or not to share the discovery, as well as the food itself, with others – thereby creating a community – or instead, isolating oneself with the knowledge and consuming it on one’s own, were both possible outcomes in this performance, as well as refusing any sort of social engagement and remaining a passive observer to the actions of the others. The age of man that corresponds to the approach expressed in “Materia” is childhood where cognitive learning games are played out, direct and unmediated by tools and codes, where the mouth is used to explore and extract sensory information from the surrounding world.





## Deleteria

*Installation and participatory action. 1 stainless steel table dim. 60 x 360 cm., 1 stainless steel table 120 x 60 cm, 12 stools, 12 melamine trays for tools dim. 35 x 24 cm , 12 stainless steel bowls ø 15 cm, 12 packaged, disposable sterile plastic forceps, 12 packaged, disposable sterile plastic scalpels, 12 stainless steel scissor forceps, 12 disposable sterile 50 ml syringes, 12 packaged, disposable sterile plastic mixing palettes, 12 Pyrex drinking glasses 12 coffee paper filters, 1 box of disposable nitrile gloves, 3 glass droppers, 3 plastic test tube racks, 24 glass test tubes 50 ml capacity, 36 glass gest tubes 100 ml capacity, 12 glass test tubes 150 ml capacity, 3 transparent plastic jars 400 ml capacity, 3 white plastic egg cartons, 24 packaged small, 10 x 14 cm transparent plastic trays, 3 long neck plastic bottles with dispensing tube cap 250 ml, 3 long neck plastic bottles with dispensing tube cap 100 ml, 3 graduated wide neck plastic bottles 100 ml, 3 graduated rectangular, wide neck plastic bottles 25 ml, 3 graduated rectangular, wide neck plastic bottles 50 ml. Dried flowers for tea, fruit gelatin, puffed rice, edible Atlantic seaweed, sprouts, chicory, her-ring scented oil, fig vinegar, vanilla scented oil, wasabi powder, vacuum-packed vegetable broth, dehydrated mix containing onion, fennel, breadcrumbs, cheese; dehydrated mix containing egg, breadcrumbs, lemon; mix of masa-la, curcuma and ginger powdered spices; fresh mackerel filets, mussels, potatoes, Swiss chard in Carta Fata cooking foil; dehydrated mix containing onion and garlic; dehydrated mix containing hot pepper, lemon, masala and celery; apple juice frozen concentrate; liquid mix containing strudel dough, cinnamon, raising, pine nuts, 1 kettle, 1 roll of paper towels, 1 Bimbi (Thermomix) machine, 1 kitchen oven. 1, 100x70 cm poster with a black and white digital print on fluorescent green paper. Overall environmental dimensions.*

The stainless steel table is covered with equipment common to chemical analyses laboratories. Each participant occupies one of the 12 stations that have been prepared. Following written and oral instructions they recombine the dehydrated food, using water to mix it. At the end of the activity, they can eat an actual meal.

Act II – “Deleteria” (deleterly) – seeks knowledge through perception mediated by tools or equipment. It goes beyond mere scientific research using a propositional and experimental model. The element that conducts “Deleteria” is Water. The intellectual age that mirrors the spirit of experimentation is adolescence – a time of instability and transformation. The name “Deleteria” hyperbolically recalls the meaning of the adjective “deleterious”, thereby emphasizing and ironic aspects of the transformation processes that food can endure when technology is involved and when sterile, scientific research favors final results over origins. In the case at hand, a focus on the quality of the raw materials makes an ideal connection with Act I; likewise, this intention highlights how the origins of a process (the raw materials, in the case of food and the kitchen) are always the determining factor for any subsequent development whatsoever.





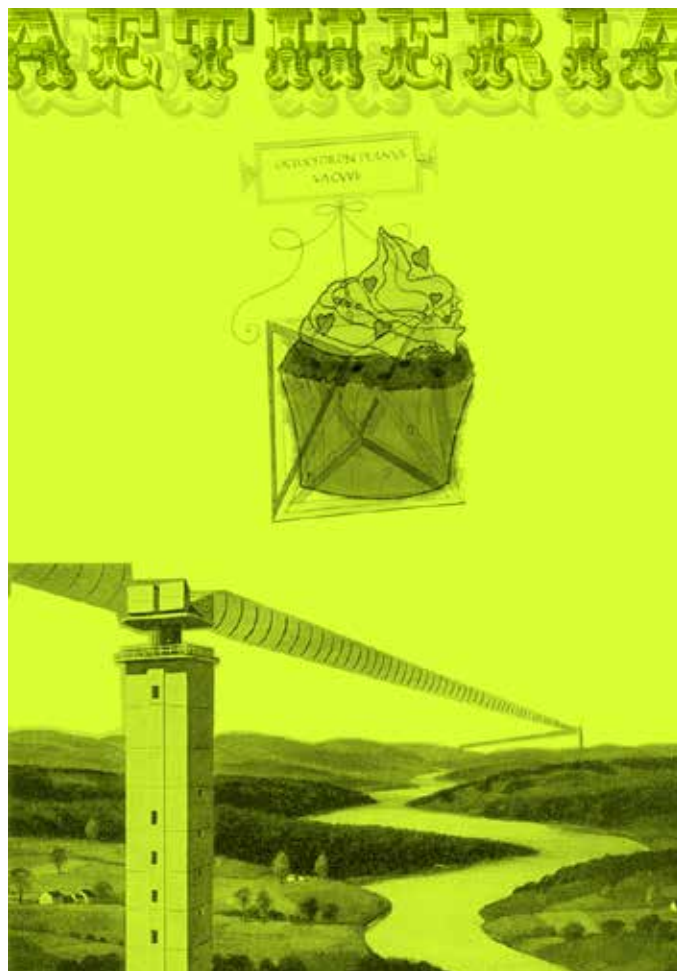


# Aetheria

*Installation and participatory action. 1 table 125 x 400 cm, 12 framed photographic reproductions 1:1 scale dim. 54 x 54 cm, white tablecloth, camera, projector, 20 mt direct drive cable, wall projection. 12 unframed, square mirrors dim. 20 x 20 cm, 12 white wooden framed mirrors dim. 26 x 26 cm, 12 drinking glasses, 10 packages of smarties and M&M's. Oysters, gin tonic froth in a seltzer siphon, pigeon reduction in a vaporizer, cube-shaped milk gelatin, golden peanuts, strawberries covered with isomalt sweetener. 6.5 kg pasta timbale, 1 Bimbi (Thermomix) machine, 1 kitchen oven, 1 handheld food smoker, 1 Arca serving tray dim. 60 x 120 cm. Overall environmental dimensions.*

The 12 framed photographic reproductions, on a 1:1 scale, are set on top of a table covered with a pristine white tablecloth. Each photograph depicts a beautifully laid out place setting seen from above with two distinguishing features: an I-phone to the left of the forks and an I-pad on top of the center plate. Guests are invited to take their place in front of the virtual place setting to enjoy a chic and insubstantial dinner. As we serve an impeccable dinner in formal terms, a video artist videotapes and simultaneously projects the guest's faces and reactions to the ephemeral dinner courses in real time.

Act III – Aetheria (ethereal) – conceptualizes cognition through the gaze and it focuses on the intellectual abstraction of food-as-image. Food-as-image is not metaphysical, simply a leap in the level of substance: matter becomes matter-as-image, where the food-object is suspended, de-materialized, stripped of its tangible qualities. The intellectual age associated with “Aetheria” is maturity. Its complex nature can lead to deviations that can create degenerate phenomenon such as Food Porn – favoring an exasperated approach to the aesthetical and perceptive qualities of food over more significant aspects such as quality raw materials, respect of the original qualities of products and the joy of preparing food. In an exchange of roles, the voyeur participant who is used to gruesomely watching food-as-image offered by the media on glossy magazines, on the internet or over the airwaves finds himself as the object of his very own voyeurism. The video artist records and simultaneously projects the expressions and reactions of participants as they accept ephemeral and insubstantial dishes with pompous-sounding names. The growing provocative crescendo resolves at the end with the final surprise dish: a macaroni pasta timbale – a dish that is a clear expression of popular culture and a far cry from the “aesthetics at all costs” culinary model, yet maintains a certain “porn” value in quantitative terms. The dish appeases hunger and removes any compliance or nervousness that might have been sorely borne or grudgingly concealed throughout the “dinner”.







## ARMOONICUM

*Installation, participatory performance. Wood table dim. 70 x 120 cm, 2 wood chairs, wood trunk with lid dim. 70 x 40 cm, 5 ceramic plates (imitations of traditional serving plates), white ceramic earthenware, electric cable and 15 watt incandescent light bulb, electric cable with 5 energy-efficient 11 watt light bulbs, audio track. 5 sweet and salty biscuits, 5 sweet and salty spreads. Overall environmental dimensions. 2013, Lanificio Conte, Schio (Vicenza).*

A 15 watt incandescent light bulb hangs above a table set in the center of a scarcely lit room that is marked off by a square “frame” made of white earthenware spread out on the floor. On the table, 5 different food “gifts” are placed on ceramic plates – copies of traditional serving plates. Two performers stand behind the table, awaiting participants to enter. The audience is invited to enter the space, one by one, and to sit in front of one of the performers. The performer changes depending on the participant’s gender in order to maintain a male-female/female-male duality; (the second performer disappears like a shadow behind the performer interacting with the participant). Following an intimate and instinctive assessment, the participant receives one of the “gifts” to eat on the instant. Everything takes place in silence with a background audiotape that reproduces a harmonic Om mixed with reverse sounds of the earthenware being broken.

Armoonicum closely dialogues with the work “Erosfilia” by the Penzo + Fiore art collective presented at the Ghisa Art Fusion exhibition which develops an ascending climax of tension and violence in the male/female relationship. The theme of conflict finds possible resolution in the action of “Armoonicum”, a participatory food performance that invites the audience to find a balance in the male/female relationship, in a playful manner. The happening uses food as a symbolic device to renew trust in each other – trust that plays a key role in the development of a harmonious male/female dualism. The gift of food is the agent of reconciliation, the matter that instills balance given its inherent nutritive power. The free and willing nature of this gesture, uncontaminated by personal gain, engenders a virtuous cycle of reciprocal exchange. By accepting the gift offered, the participant returns the favor with his or her trust. This reciprocity restores harmony.





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### exhibitions

2015 \ La Pigna in mostra \ group show \ curated by Pigna Mon Amour \ Sanremo  
2015 \ sense OF community #14 \ group show \ curated by Silvia Petronici Bibione  
2015 \ Maen-hir \ Setup Art Fair \ Bologna  
2014 \ sense OF community #11 \ group show \ curated by Silvia Petronici \ Galleria Spiazzi \ Venezia  
2013 – 2014 \ trEATticon \ Galleriapiù \ Bologna  
2013 \ Armoonicum \ group show \ curated by Metamorfosi Gallery \ Ghisa Art Fusion \ Lanificio Conte \ Schio  
2013 \ Autolinee PeC \ Setup \ Bologna  
2012 \ MCIYP \ curated by Barbara Fragona \ Buongiorno e Arrivederci – italian art festival \ Emerson Gallery \ Berlin

### artist in residence

2015 \ sense OF community #14 \ curated by Silvia Petronici \ Bibione  
2015 \ Social Soups \ curated by Maria Rebecca Ballestra e Rachela Abbate \ Sanremo  
2014 \ sense OF community #11 \ curated by Silvia Petronici \ Galleria Spiazzi \ Venezia

### awards

2015 \ recipient of a studio given by Municipality of Bologna as winner of Incredibol!  
2014 \ selected by Incredibol!, a project promoted by the Municipality of Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna Region, in order to support innovative professionals and businesses in the cultural and creative field