



EATING ARCHITECTURE

TYPOLOGIES OF FOOD AND SPACE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to investigate food and eating as a spiritual act and consider the spatial and performative aspects of eating in relation to architecture. In the first part of this essay we will be dealing with the idea of designing a space in relation to a preparation of a meal. We will discuss the ways in which shared meals are among the most perishable and preserved cultural artifacts. Ideas of memory, identity, ideology, conviviality and loss will be related to culture and setting, giving examples of how they bring architecture and food together. In the second part of the essay we will be using four typologies of buildings (household, restaurant, monastery, market) and looking to each one separately in order to see how does the space affect the performance of cooking and eating and what meaning does food have in each of these spaces. The relation of food and space is analyzed through both tradition and contemporary examples. The conclusion of the essay focuses on the globalization of the 21st century and the loss of identity due to the conflicting society and the debate between tradition and modernism.

I was very intrigued to read and find links between these two areas, which both interest me and at first seem not to be related. However these two worlds seem to share so many similar ideas and are based on the same ethos and ideology.

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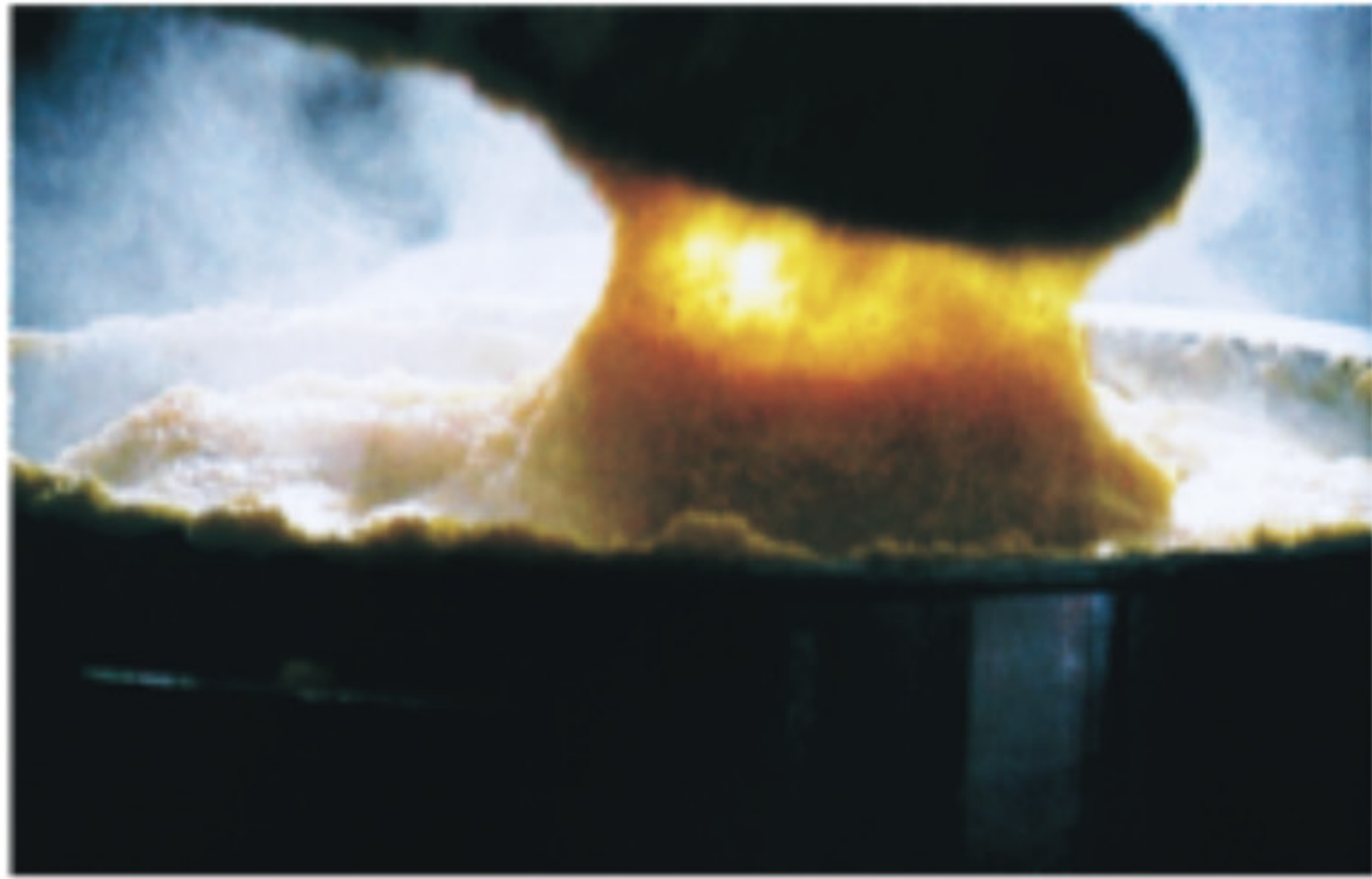
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ENTRÉE



I sketch vigorously for my next design project and my 0.35 rapidograph spills ink all over the piece of tracing paper leaving marks of ink splattered around the glass surface of the desk. I decide to have a break and go down to the kitchen to cook something to eat. I pour some olive oil into the pan and I gaze at the oil as it warms up and starts dancing in the pan while light passes through it forming bizarre shapes on its edges. And I question myself, what is it that makes food and architecture so similar? For me designing-architecture and cooking-food simply require a pinch of something that we all have in us, which might be difficult to project: soul.



IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY, CONVIVIALITY, MEMORY, LOSS

It would be a never-ending conversation trying to find relationships between the ritual of food and architecture, other rather obvious and other subliminal. For humans the act of eating and cooking has always been characterized by ritual and rules of food consumption has conducted a human behaviour informing architectural spaces and architectural spaces forming the cuisine and perception of taste. The sense of taste is indeed the underdog of the sense when experiencing architecture but how significant is it when food and space are perceived at the same time? The stimulation of both design and food can rise a series of questions that lead us to the presentation, either of fine dining or of a piece of architecture.

Shapes, forms, sizes, styles all form a web of an urban living when one gets a glimpse down, an even small, street of Manhattan. Being two of the three necessities of life, food and shelter underline their importance not only in our social life, but also an economic, cultural and functional aspect of our daily routine, both food and architecture being characterized as a “lofty art” but in the same time a “humble craft”¹.

From the twisted typology of hospitality, to the industrialization of the picnic both disciplines of architecture and cooking demonstrate strong ties between culture and place². Climate, typology, and place all constitute the climate of a place, which in turn determines the typology of buildings and differentiates the perspective of taste compared to other places. Thus, ingredients are being redefined based on the palate of people and location to achieve what people are seeking: pleasure. Michael Laisonis³ in his essay on “food and architecture” talks about the architecture of taste and how the blending of its elements create an appealing framework of flavour and texture. In the same time they can create controversy reacting upon their environment seeking eventually to provide comfort and pleasure.

¹ Lance Hosey, In the cause of architecture, “Food for thought” (online article). November 2003

² The very idea of culture may come from food, for linguists believe the first spoken words were about eating. Mam, the root of many terms meaning “mother,” “life,” and “good” in different languages, is a simple variation on “mmm,” an instinctive guttural sound expressing the pleasure of consumption. The root of culture, like cultivation, means “tilling,” developing the land.

³ Michael Laiskonis. “On food and Architecture” (workbook), February 2008

EATING SPACE

Gregg Lynn has found inspiration in baking by equating "folded" structures with folding batter. British architectural historian Peter Collins dubbed the influence of cuisine on architecture "the gastronomic analogy" and linked it to mechanical and biological analogies as fundamental paradigms of modern architectural theory⁴. After the 18th century and the first restaurants in Paris, the sense of taste took a broader significance as an aesthetic standard. But the combined ingredients and the formulation used is paramount for both architecture and cooking. The amount of ingredients used determines the texture, balance and harmony of a plate. The *taste*⁵. In architecture a series of techniques must be executed and the design principles must be placed for the structure and essence of the building to be experienced succesfully. Which is defined by the *order*.

TERITORIAL IDENTITY

“Vernacular houses commonly are shaped around eating habits and related social customs, such as the Chinese tradition of families dining together and the Japanese separation of the sexes during meals”⁶. The example of ancient Greeks and the use of the olive tree can reveal a new way of understanding social development. A single tree provided food and olive oil, a fruit for trading, wood for building and construction. Similarly with landscaping a building, using trees, rocks, water, the ambience of a plate is determined by the colors, position, structure and compilation of ingredients aiming to provide an experience, a memory and an identity. Combining a single element with others, all keeping their initial identity and qualities an architectural mille feuille is created which can be architecturally parallelized to the design of Herzog and de Meuron for the terrasses of Beirut in 2013, which acts upon its territory and reflects through its materials/ingredients⁷.

⁴ Michael Laiskonis. "On food and Architecture" (workbook), February 2008
⁵ Lance Hosey, In the cause of architecture, "Food for thought" (online article). November 2003
⁶ Robin Fox, "Food and Eating: An anthropological Perspective"(essay). Social Issues research Center, 2010.
⁷ Michael Laiskonis. "On food and Architecture" (workbook), February 2008

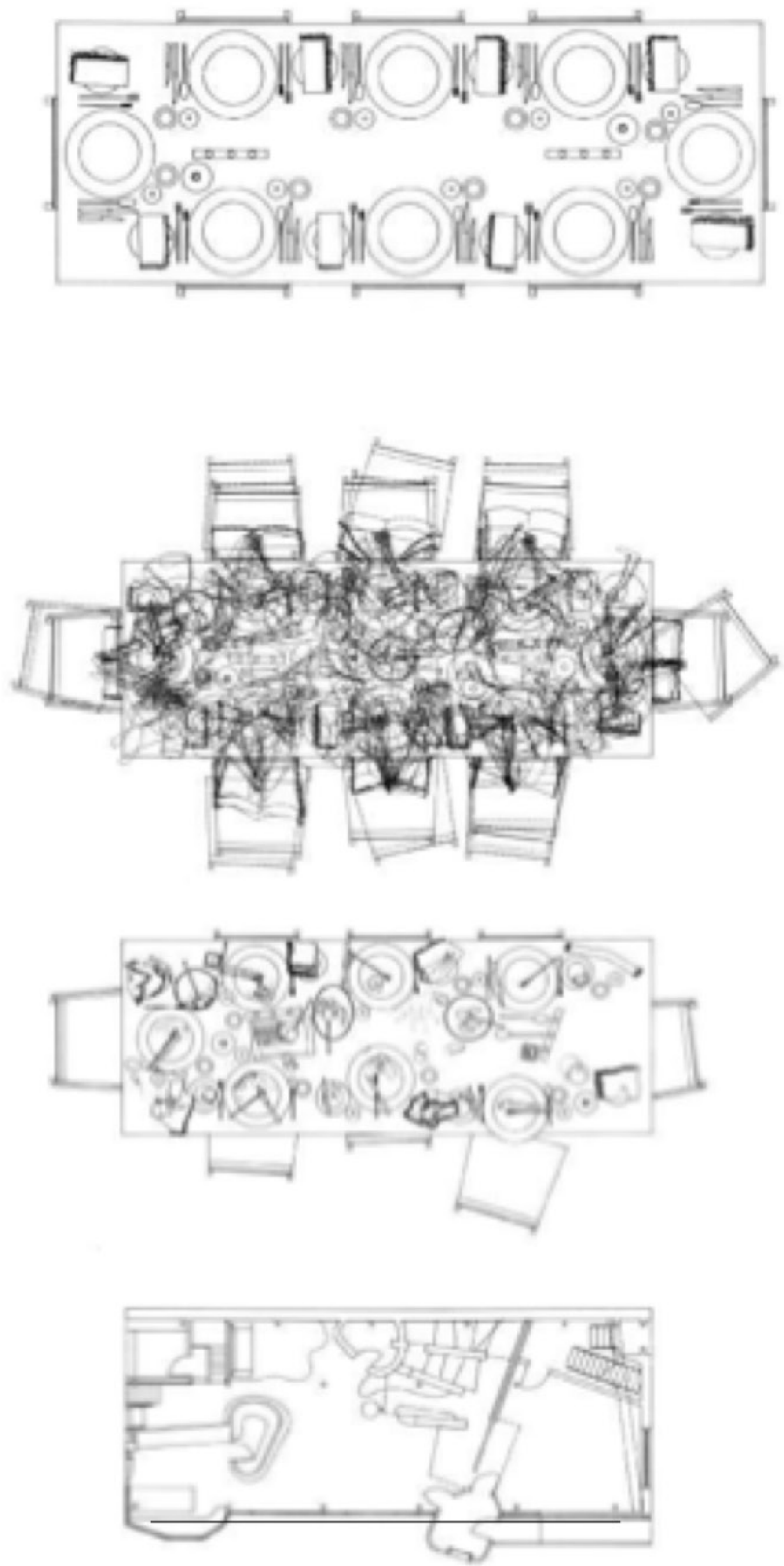


FIGURE 1

THE LAY OF THE TABLE

An architectural ordering of place, status, and function. A frozen moment of perfection. This is how architects see.

THE MEAL

Use begins to undermine the apparent stability of the architectural order. Traces of occupation in time. The recognition of life's disorder.

THE TRACE

The dirty tablecloth, witness of disorder. A palimpsest. This is the reality of domestic life.

THE LAY OF THE PLAN

The trace transformed into the plan of our house, Clutter filling the plan(e). domestic difficulties interrupting the order of the grid.

FROM ANCIENT GREEK HESTIA TO MODERN OPEN PLAN KITCHEN



FIGURE 2

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Frankfurter Küche (Frankfurt Kitchen). 1926-7. As illustrated in Das Neue Frankfurt 5 (1927); Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Frankfurt Kitchen from the Ginnheim-Höhenblick Housing Estate, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (reconstruction). 1926-27. Gift of Joan R. Brewster in memory of her Husband George W.W. Brewster, by exchange and the Architecture & Design Purchase Fund. Both on view at "Counter Space: Design and the Modern Kitchen."

When one thinks of a kitchen as a space in a house, immediately thoughts of colours, noises, movement, intoxicating smells, and heat coming out of the oven emerge. However in the modern household of the 21st century in western societies, kitchen⁸ seems to be the least visited space of the house. From the invention of the microwave to the ease of ready meals, kitchen design seems to develop into a futuresque Carte postal where it is only used in magazines.

Ancient Greek cuisine has been the influence of today's modern popular Mediterranean diets based on the triad of olive, wheat and wine. In ancient Greece, being an agricultural society, it was rich in fruit and vegetables such as figs, raisins, onions, olives, various fish and seafood, fresh dairy products, and meat for the richer people of the social hierarchy. A lot of the products were produced in the fields and brought back by the men to feed the family. Men and women ate separately and 'cutlery was not often used at table: Use of the fork was unknown; people ate with their fingers⁹. Knives were used to cut the meat. Spoons were used for soups and broths. Pieces of bread (ἀπομαγδαλία *apomagdalia*) could be used to spoon the food or as napkins, to wipe the fingers¹⁰.



Hestia (Vesta)

FIGURE 3

⁸ The English word "kitchen" comes from the Latin *coquere*, meaning to cook.
⁹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia."Ancient Greek cuisine", last revised January 2011.
¹⁰ *ibid*

HESTIA: the virgin goddess of the hearth

"Every home had a hearth that was dedicated to the goddess "Hestia". The Goddess Hestia intended that homes should be built from the center out, with the center being a hearth that contained her sacred flame."

-Goddess Gift by Sharon Turnbull, Ph.D. Hestia, Greek Goddess of Hearth and Home

Houses in ancient Greece were usually plain and simple having two or three rooms in poorer peoples houses and two storeys with an internal courtyards for richer people. Materials such as mud bricks, pottery tiles and holes in the walls for windows formed spaces and rooms for the different activities of the family. The kitchen was situated on the ground floor¹¹ and all houses had the nowadays-called cellar or storeroom with big jars, the amphorae and pithoi, in which they stored olive oil, wine and floor¹². The simplicity of the architectural space and basic furniture, having wooden chests and pegs, or rugs, was highly connected with the type of food and cuisine of ancient Greece.

“HESTIA was the virgin goddess of the hearth and the home. As the goddess of the family hearth she also presided over the cooking of bread and the preparation of the family meal¹³.” In Greek houses it was situated in the courtyard where it was the heart of the house. The kitchen were the meals were prepared was also the place were the family gathered to eat. The source of fire, the ‘hestia’ of the kitchen, was made out of clay or stone, and it was also a source of heat and light. Its position brought the members of the family to gather around it, which made the ritual of eating a social act. Later in time the heath was developed into the stove, first seen in Sweden, which radically changed the design of the kitchen and its function in the house¹⁴.

¹¹ It is noted that the kitchen in the 5th century BCE was designed as a separate part of the house which continued as a layout in ancient Rome.

¹² Sparkes, B.A. "The Greek Kitchen", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol.82, 1962 (1962), pp. 121–137

¹³ Hestia was also the goddess of the sacrificial flame and received a share of every sacrifice to the gods. The cooking of the communal feast of sacrificial meat was naturally a part of her domain.

¹⁴ Russian and Dutch homes in the sixteenth century raised the hearths and created a sleeping



FIGURE 4

Virgilio Forchiassin, Spazio Vivo (Living Space) Mobile Kitchen Unit. 1968. Manufactured by Snaidero. Gift of the manufacturer. On view at "Counter Space: Design and the Modern Kitchen."

platform around the fire. Some flat-topped Russian stoves also accommodated steam baths and drying laundry

THE UNFOLDING KITCHEN

The current exhibition in the museum of modern art in New York ("counter space: design and the modern kitchen")¹⁵ explores the 20th-century kitchen and its continual redesign reflects social, economic, and political change throughout the world. One could say that the later development of the open plan kitchen, now seen in many lofts in New York and Berlin is in a way a recycling of the Ancient Greek idea of 'hestia': of a space where people gather around and prepare the food and eat. In Frank Lloyd Wright's House Willey (1934) is one of the first examples where the 'kitchen object' was introduced. The re-integration of the kitchen and the living area went hand in hand with a change in the perception of cooking: increasingly, cooking was seen as a creative and sometimes social act instead of work, especially in upper social classes. Besides, many families also appreciated the trend towards open kitchens, as it made it easier for the parents to supervise the children while cooking¹⁶. However in the 21st century the open plan kitchen is used mostly as a way of impressing one's guest and has developed based on the new habits of busy people and frozen meals. This new trend started when cookbooks started being decorative ornaments on the tea table or on a shelf with multiple layers of dust.

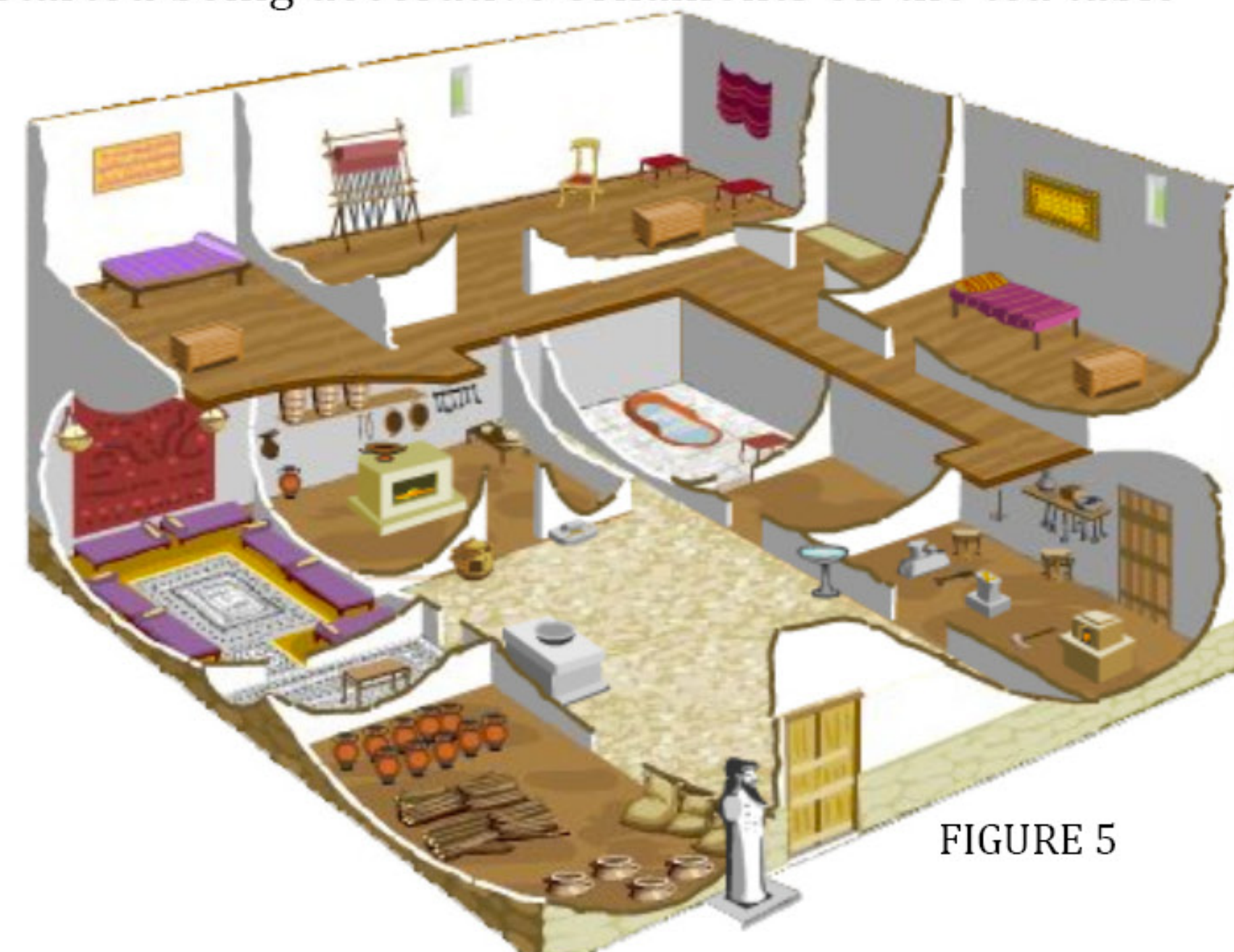


FIGURE 5

¹⁵ http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/09/06/100906crci_cinema_lane

¹⁶ Jamie Horwitz, Paulette Sinley, 2004. "Eating Architecture". London: The Mit Press

MONASTIC DIET: food for the soul

John Pawson's monastery of Novy Dvur represents the success of monastic architecture that accommodates the rituals of life- eating, sleeping, bathing, dressing- as it does the rituals of religion¹⁷. Monasteries, a bigger more communal house, more simple but still needing the feeling of confrontation, as it houses a number of monks and their spirituality. Despite the religion or time, monasteries are a good example of how food and eating is an everyday ritual that is reflected through the living space.

The so called, refectory, or dining room¹⁸ is the place where the communal meals were held and the monks silently ate one of the two meals, as ordered by the rule of St. Benedict. Refectories can vary in size but they always have big long tables and benches for the monks to sit. Monastic diet has soups, bread, olives, vegetables, cheese, fish and fruits. Monks lived lives of seclusion and deep spirituality, working the land and the gardens when not at prayer¹⁹. This provided them with all the basic ingredients they needed for their survival. In the functionalist view, religion provides meaning, identity, and structure within what Geertz has called "cultural systems"²⁰. Religion reflects the human desire for order, but it provides order because people believe it has its origins in the divine. Lévi-Strauss described food as a type of language that helps human beings express their basic perceptions of reality²¹.

¹⁷ John Pawson. 2003. Monastery of Novy Dvur. House and garden (uk). Available from <http://www.johnpawson.com/essays/monastery>

¹⁸ Is derived from the Latin *reficere*: to remake or restore, via [Late Latin refectorium](#), which means a place one goes to be restored. It can be found in monasteries, schools, and university halls.

¹⁹ Aquinata Bockmann, 2009. "Around the Monastic Table-RB 31-42: Growing in Mutual Service and Love". Liturgical Press

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Kursk Root Hermitage, 2010. "Monastery food" (online article) from http://www.kurskroot.com/monastery_food.html

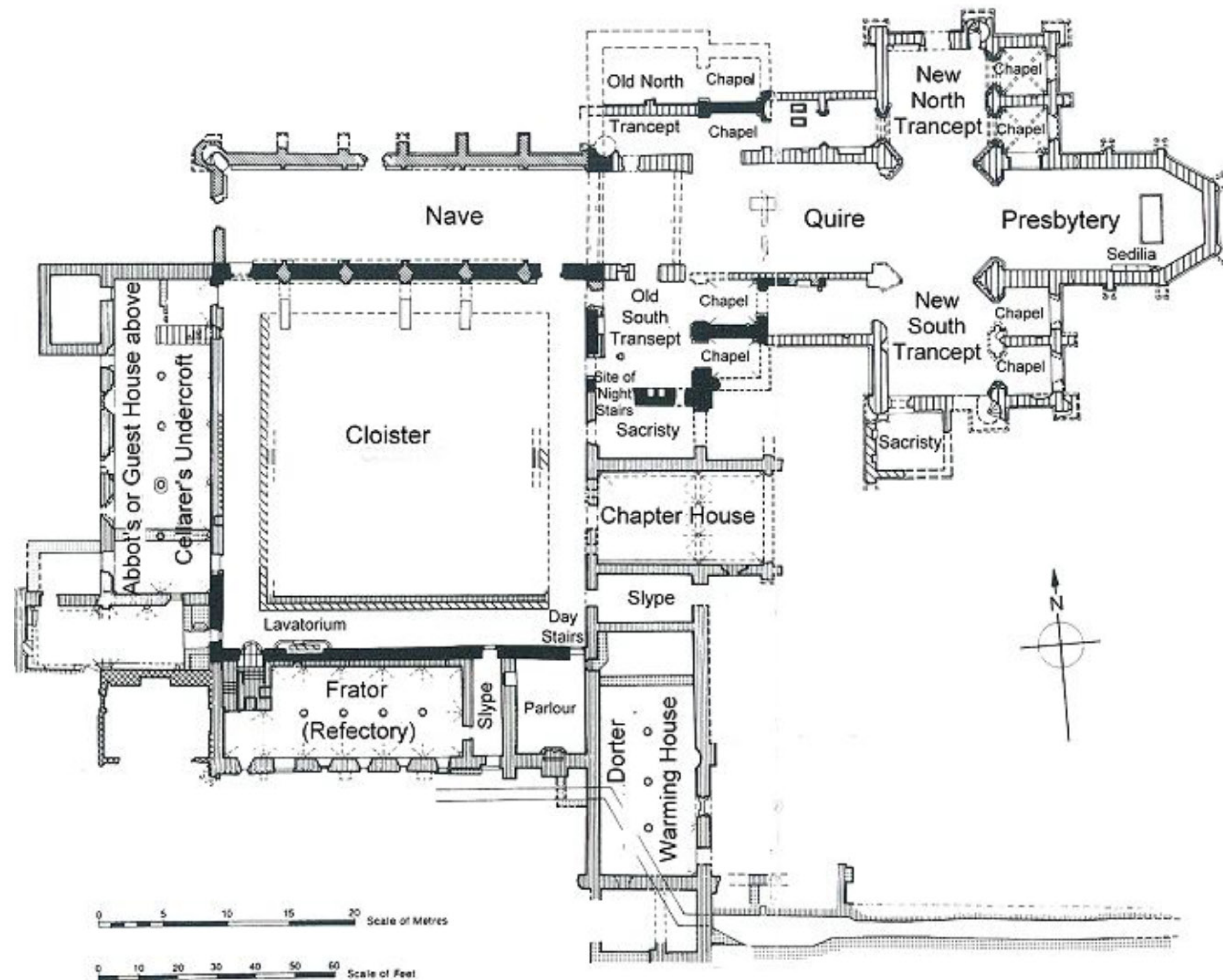


FIGURE 6

AROUND THE MONASTIC TABLE

In contrast to the loss of the importance of common meals in a family of today's society, which has become individual eating, in monastic life there is still this strong bond between the spirituality of food and religion. The controlled light coming through the small window-openings on the thick brick walls in the refectory inform the type of cuisine in the monk diet. In *"Around the Monastic Table: Growing in Mutual Service and Love"* by Aquinata Böckmann she establish the relationship between community and the discipline of eating²²-or fasting²³. The cells-dormitories- spread around the dining hall, where each monk sleeps and prays separated from others create a strong contrast between the public and private realm. Similar to the ancient Greek society we see the existence of having the production outside and the consumption inside turning the monastery into a self-sustainable community. The simple, straightforward, minimal and raw, if one could characterize it as, architecture of a monastery serves in the best way the poor in complexity but rich in taste food.

²² There are three degrees in eating food: temperance, sufficiency, and satiety. Temperance is when someone wants to eat some more food but abstains, rising from the table still somewhat hungry. Sufficiency is when someone eats what is needed and sufficient for normal body nourishment. Satiety is when someone eats more than enough food and is more than satisfied after the meal. (St. Gregory the Sinaite)

²³ Aquinata Bockmann, 2009. *'Around the Monastic Table-RB 31-42: Growing in Mutual Service and Love'*. Liturgical Press



FIGURE 7

SOUL KITCHEN

"The film opens as chef Zinos throws frozen fish and chips in the deep fryer, jamming to Quincy Jones in his dingy kitchen. A grungy, very hungry crowd waits outside. The camera zooms out to reveal the inside of a warehouse in the industrial quarter of Hamburg."



FIGURE 8

On the menu in Zinos's Hamburg restaurant: fish sticks, meatballs, orgies from the movie 'soul kitchen'.

The idea of eating out and making it a special event started being predominant after the industrial Revolution in France. Then came the restaurants, bistros, cafes, chains, critiques, and rankings making restaurants not only a gastronomic experience but also an architectural journey. The recent development of the restaurant as leisure²⁴ and an enjoyable act has become an everyday social habit but still is a way of celebrating a special moment: a birthday, a date, a promotion, a reunion. From the American steak houses, to the fish and chip stand on the Brighton port, and the Italian vineyard to Noma²⁵: the best restaurant in the world for 2011 in Copenhagen, they all provide a source of entertainment. But setting plays an important role too: it is not only about what you eat, but also where you eat it.

²⁴ In southeastern China, restaurants were already part of urban culture in the thirteenth century; Marco Polo was astonished by the lavish eating establishments he found in Hangzhou, where regional cuisines such as Szechwan and Honan were readily available.

²⁵ Noma, Strandgade 93, North Atlantic House Cultural Centre, 1401 Copenhagen K (0045 3296 3297; noma.dk).

IN THE DARK

‘Dans le noir?’ situated in 30-31 Clerkenwell Green EC1R 0DU London, can be an example of “a performance medium” as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has argued²⁶. A restaurant that introduces you to a world where sight is disabled and all your other senses are stimulated to the maximum. It is only then that food and space are perceived in a way that one can never imagine. The importance of the sense of sight underlined by Juhani Pallasmaa is reinvented and re-addressed now having to go through a journey of appreciation.

“On entrance I am greeted by Mr Takachi who instructs me to place my right hand on his right shoulder as he leads me into the restaurant which strips me of my sight within seconds. His blind eyes have now become my eyes which is an incredible switch from reality²⁷.”

The unexpected, the unusual. You get an understanding of space, size, distance. You feel the presence of people, their aura, their smell. Food becomes an adventure and taste replaces the eyes, becoming the eyes of the soul. The materiality of the spoon feels so different, so cold and suddenly one gets curious about his surroundings. Things that you would normally never care about become intriguing: the materiality of the wall, the temperature of the room, the height of the chair. This literal example is a playful way to experience oneself through food and space.

²⁶ She writes that “to perform is to do, to execute, to carry out to completion...all that governs the production, presentation, and disposal of food and their staging”.

²⁷ Emily Boyd (review), *Dans le Noir*, October 20 2010, from <http://www.danslenoir.com/london/files/press/iLoveMyGrub%2024%2009%2010.pdf>

TABLE SETTINGS: the pleasure of well situated eating

Similarly in Classic of Divinatio restaurant in Utrecht by Sluijmer & Van Leeuwen Architects (appendix 1) is located on the banks of the river using raw materials, brick and glass, gives a classic impression but with a very modern approach situating the serving area high in the cantilevering vitrines. It has been characterized as a fireplace with the addition of glass as an accent. The banquet rooms and view makes the experience relaxing but breathtaking at the same time which completely affects the way the food is processed. Again relating to culture and setting this restaurant in the Netherlands forms a gastronomic journey through the journey of the building and its assets. In an opposing point of view Gauchos Grill restaurant situated again in Utrecht is positioned in an underground catacomb with no views and no natural light. Still the setting also offers a breathtaking experience having the stone-brick arched ceiling folding above you reminding of a medieval period setting and together with the scent of grilled meat and humid stone it travels you back in time. Table settings are always present, but it's the way you set them that makes the 'journey' different and pleasurable.



FIGURE 9

Four table settings from Better Homes and gardens 1975. Order, position, setting and presentation all from a different approach and a different experience.

FILLING THE SHOPING BAG

*"I walk from Plaza Mayor in Madrid and when I turn right I face this wonderful iron-glass building sitting peacefully on the corner but people and colors burst from the inside. It could be nothing else but a market: the long-dormant **Mercado San Miguel**. I wonder around, observing the structure provided by old cast-iron pillars. By walking in a rush of smells, colors, light invite me in to this manifestation where the old market trade and sophisticated new age gourmet are harmoniously combined in this space."*



FIGURE 10

The origins of the market date back to the XIX century. The open air stalls were first attempted to be covered in 1835 to reduce the negative visual impact of all produce and commerce detritus on the square and surrounding streets²⁸²⁹. In the early 90's because of the industrialization and the development of modern times the market lost its impact and because of the pulse of supermarkets the market stopped being so fashionable and popular. After being reinvented and reinforced the new concept of the san Miguel market opened its doors in 2009³⁰. The new market instead of only selling raw food, like fish, meta, cheese, vegetables, now its also a place of gastronomy where one can walk around the 34 stalls and try some of the various cheeses, accompanying it with some wine.

²⁸ <http://hubpages.com/hub/Madrid-San-Miguel-Market>

²⁹ The final project by Dubé, started in 1911 and completed in 1915.

³⁰ <http://hubpages.com/hub/Madrid-San-Miguel-Market>

CULINARY MANIFESTATIONS

WHERE THE TRADITIONAL MARKET MEETS THE 21ST CENTURY

The market being a single floor space, with high ceiling surrounded by glass walls allow you to see both inside and out from the street in. Architecturally it does exactly what it should, nothing less nothing more. It frames the products of the market with its simple structure and elegant façade forming picturesque images from the exterior. The contrast of the iron pillars with the glass façade pose a magnificent visual modern touch, preserving the traits of the old market. This market shows in the best way how a space can make food the most pleasing event of a day. Even when the market is full it never feels too crowded having all the stalls spread around along the facades but having enough space to walk internally between the façade and the stalls. The design of the central space constitutes a number of high tables and stools where people can sit and enjoy the gastronomic diversity of Spain experiencing the “beauty of the original combined with the innovative design”.



FIGURE 11



FIGURE 12

Several floating markets (‘talaat naam’) in and around Bangkok offer a picture-postcard image of the traditional Thai way of life • Some of the major floating markets include Damnoen Saduak, Tha Kha, Bang Khu Wiang and Taling Chan • Is a daily riot of colours and noise • Is a very attractive place to see the old style and traditional way of selling and trading fruit and vegetables • Small wooden boats laden with fruits, flowers, vegetables and other produce from nearby orchards and communities make it a colourful and bustling scene • Monks on their early morning alms rounds collect villagers’ offerings by boat.

This modern market combining shopping and consumption has made markets a place where raw materials meet the transformation to gastronomic delicacies. Markets are also a meeting place, and especially in Spain, it is a social activity, an integral part of their daily routine. But from the market in Essex Street in New York, to the Tsukiji Fish market in Tokyo and the Djemaa el Fna market in Marrakech they all offer a journey through colors and flavors and a celebration of senses. In the end it is all about presentation, position, ingredients and circulation and that’s is where food meets architecture and vice versa. (Appendix 2)

DIGESTION: amouse-bouche

Judging in today's society both architecture and food can be addressed as art form, offering experiences, feelings, and reactions. And as studies in the different typologies of architecture eating is promoted as a social act, a way of bringing people closer, sharing, exchanging, nourishing. An act which in today's society we have lost and forgotten. But giant ice cream sundaes with five different scoops of ice cream, maraschino cherries, pecans, chocolate sauce, and whipped cream; sloppy joes with french fries and gravy; malted milk shakes and root beer floats; hot dogs with mustard, and ketchup, and relish burgers seem to be the future of food in the pre-constructed restaurants of the fastest growing franchise in Japan, know worldwide, McDonalds. However, in the same time the same society promotes an organic lifestyle and an ecological built environment. Thus the debate of the 21st century seems to be in heat and trying to balance between the two edges.

In addition the anthropological aspect between design and food is rather crucial and its multi relation can be seen from studies about farmers' markets and urban agriculture in Cuba, to Mies Van Der Rohe's design for a drive in restaurant and Salvador Dali's gastro aesthetics. (Appendix 3)



Appendix



1.



2.



3. Drive in restaurant in Los Angeles, 1949, by Loomis Dean. From Maryann Kornely and Jenny Hirschfeld, eds. *Moving: Il viaggio e il movimento nelle fotografie di LIFE* (Rome: contrasto, 1999)

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Illustration in pages 3, 6, 26 taken from the book *"Eating Architecture"* edited by Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Sinley.