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Corbusier's Kitchen

Within the exhibition design which emulates the 21st century home, there is no kitchen. Corbusier's reaction against ornamental, stylistically motivated design, could apply to the activities of the kitchen, by rethinking the production of food and it's function in everyday life.

Artisanal, the Art Deco of food

Le Corbusier even said of his own design intentions for the League of Nations building in relation to gastronomy of the 19th century: "This palace had one clear function: Handling work for the world's best benefit...[a building with a productive function,] working, hurrying, lucid and concise, precise..., just as a meal also has a clear function: to nourish the organism." Art Deco's production favored highly stylised decor over functionality. Artisanal might be considered the Art Deco of food in the

21st century--a craft which does not consider the implications its own production.

What is dystopic?

Corbusier's contribution to the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs--the original Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau--was intended as "a house for everybody" (the exposition's thematic prompt was "An Architect's House") while interpreting Nouveau as actually new, a modern perspective, a structural redesign. The minimal aesthetic was a result of industrialized sustainability, utilizing mass-produced modular components. Corbusier was a proponent of standardization, his vision for a mechanized home had been regarded as looking and seeming "dystopic." Similarly, thinking of food from a functional point of view is deemed dystopic, antithetical to ethically decorative titles such as organic, Farm-to-Table and artisanal, evolving in the branding of traditional food production. These solutions are unscalable, good for some with the branding of being for the greater good. Ethically decorative is a characteristic of a neglected fundamental design problem, outfitted with a niche stylistic solution.

In line with Corbusier's critique of the modern gastronomy discourse of the time, journalist and philosopher Jean-François Revel pointed to the thinking behind dominant food trends of the 20th century as "stereotypical schemes of thought" that echo what we might see today. He regarded such trends as "branding roughly all modern civilisation's signs of decay (from colonialism via bourgeois bad taste to the gentrification of the proletariat)" along with a suspicion of the complicated rules of classical cuisine. His critique finds the traditional understanding and cultivation of good taste as systemically dystopic.

While the Art Deco style aesthetically celebrated technology, was it an appropriate solution in times of austerity? No. The Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau proposed that through more scalable processes and considerations of practicality and efficiency, more people could enjoy what is artful or beautiful, and that everybody wanted to be comfortable in their surroundings, not just architects. Just as the appearance of decadence looks most sad during a depression, the dystopic landscape is one in which there is even greater disparity in experience between those who struggle to fulfill nutritional needs and those who can purchase a similarly limited meal but upscaled as expensive detox. This disparity is decorated with the ornate scattering of organic, gluten-free and artisanal labels featured on anything and everything as a reminder of this disparity. The outcome of viewing, defining and consuming our cultural taste under such stylistic ethos, produces an even more dystopic future.

The remark of "Dystopic" is often conjured when we feel we are being reduced to a mechanism. The focus on efficiency, pertaining to one's own body may remind us of our position in an overall economy--the economy of our body's production of energy and the economic ecosystem of food production. The idea that one's body might be an architecture of needs, is a reminder that we--more specifically our bodies--can be interpreted as an input-output system. Food goes in, energy more or less goes out. Within the ecosystem of food production in the present moment, the abundance of consumptive options provide us with the ability to feel individual, unique, and more so when

more of what we consume is one-of-a-kind and in a limited edition. A crooked tomato is unique--perhaps transferring some kind of uniqueness to our meal, making us more unique. The subconscious desire that we might live vicariously through this heirloom tomato paves the way for the desire for the sincerity implicit within an unattainable lifestyle of eating from our own backyard. We value the artisanal, the handmade, the unique heirloom object--labor and time presenting itself as a visible, tangible thing. There seemingly is no "me" in standardization.

Modular taste

Corbusier was a big proponent of modularity, that each component within an architectural scheme would act as a tool or mechanism. Standardized components such as the furnishings of the home could be moved around to create variations. Compositional variations allowed for individuality to be explored by addressing specific needs. The same idea can be applied to cultivation of taste.

So how can we develop tastes which are individual, in a direction away from decorative ethical concerns? Individuality is able to be explored when one can perceive, experience and develop tastes which are not stylistic but consider the attribute of one's taste receptors as being individual. This perspective is truly modern in that it considers the advancements in research about taste in relationship to the technical production of flavor as it exists today.

The future of flavor is non-mimetic or non-skeuomorphic. (not attempting to replicate the flavor of an already existing food object such as strawberry or chocolate) Art Nouveau, the predecessor to Art Deco, sought to mimic organic forms even when the modern tools of the day bore no relationship to natural life. This led to traditional shapes being formed of modern materials, through modern processes. This is representative of the state in which flavor is understood today. The infinite combinations in molecular structure which produces particular flavors, exceeds those that are found in nature. On a micro level, to think of molecules as modular--able to be utilized in numerous variations, yielding new flavors--is more representational of how flavor is constructed than a molecular composition based on a flavor found in nature or already existing food product. This approach is in parallel with Corbusier's new perspective on an overall structure as the guide for a resulting modern aesthetic.