

INTRODUCTION

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From the fanciful art of shifting scales to the logic of measurement promised by a teaspoon or an inch arises the secret architecture of food, or perhaps the secret food of architecture. This quiet apposition of form and substance, found in a plate of tomatoes more Pompeian red than any wall fragment, enunciates the central questions of this collection. What can be learned by examining the intersections of the preparation of meals and the production of space? What can be made from the conflation of aesthetic and sensory tastes in architectural design and what is disclosed by their dissociation? Such questions guide this work toward an architecture found in the gestures, artifacts, and recipes that belie any distinction between art and life. Rather than elaborating solely on the more facile comparison of “like an architect, so too the chef,” we propose that the rituals of dining, the design of meals, and the process of cookery form and inform a distinctly expressive architecture. Drawn from the meal, sited on the table, and constructed from both appetite and conversation, *Eating Architecture* collects together in one volume a series of essays

and images that interrogate the boundary between the culinary and design arts and linger over the sensational and inspirational properties of cookery.

This book insinuates itself into an architecture redolent with the aroma of dessert, say a lemon cake, followed by an unexpected line of poetry: “I have measured out my life with coffee spoons,” writes T. S. Eliot in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917). The rhythms that govern our daily cadences suggest the dreamy metamorphoses of cooking utensils into drafting equipment. How do we translate these moments into words about architecture? Luce Giard, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, asks:

How can one choose words that are true, natural, and vibrant enough to make felt the weight of the body, the joyfulness or weariness, the tenderness or irritation that takes hold of you in the face of this continually repeated task where the better the result (a stuffed chicken, a pear tart), the faster it is devoured, so that before a meal is completely over, one already has to think about the next.¹

This state of imaginative distraction that accompanies cooking or cleaning up after a meal may provoke bursts of intensive creativity—a sort of “euphoric idleness” that Flaubert once called “marinating.”² If sometimes we find our best ideas when washing dishes or chopping onions, then the trajectory of a habitual reach for that slightly burned slotted spoon, the rapid-fire choreography of stops and starts involved in the final preparations of a holiday meal, or the plastic modeling of dough into a basket crust also inspires design.

CULINARY FORMALISM

Someone seeking further evidence of culinary architecture might instead turn to the cookbook, an essential manual of home economics, subject to the rifling of stained fingers or the filing of family secrets. Filled with diagrams explaining the cuts of beef or how to arrange a proper place setting, the cookbook offers a quick insight as to what we hope our book will deliver. In *Eating Architecture* the improvisational hand that turns the pages of the cookbook or pours a cup of tea also traces the dimensions of architecture into a space that is part ritual, part circumstance, part theory, part lunch.

Consider the projects of Italian designer Aldo Rossi (1931–1997), who draws his architecture, at least in part, from a uniquely culinary dimension of analogous form. Inspired by what he terms *apparecchiare la tavola*—meaning “to set the table, to pre-

pare it, to arrange it”—his numerous drawings of concurrent scales and spaces blur the distinction between table settings and cities.³ In the “Coffee and Tea Piazza” that Rossi designed for Alessi he enclosed a coffeepot and teapot in a glass pavilion, as if these utilitarian objects conceal inhabitable rooms within a larger enclosure. The title of the project suggests that a serving tray may function as a small piazza, a comparison that Robert Venturi makes visible, in still another Alessi design, with his “Campidoglio Platter.” These shifts in position and scale transform cups and saucers into Lilliputian buildings that we move about on tabletop cities or render more abstractly onto nearby napkins.

Rossi’s description of entering the colossal statue of San Carlo at Arona inversely parallels the scale-shifting he experiences through the visual and physical consumption of objects on a table:

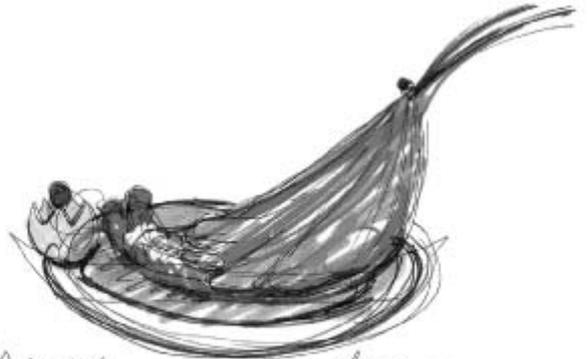
This first impression of the interior-exterior aspect has become clear more recently, at least as a problem: if I relate it to the coffeepots, it is also bound up with food and with the objects in which food is cooked; the true meaning of the manufacture of utensils and pots, which often, annoyingly, is obscured when they are accumulated and displayed in museums, is something that is continually present to us.⁴

Projecting ourselves inside the space of the statue or the coffeepot rather than simply gazing at these objects from behind a glass case opens up the tabletop or the kitchen counter into a delirious landscape of possibility.

Consider another urban moment defined by Frank O. Gehry’s signature fish, a built reference to the live carp that his grandmother stored in her bathtub before she prepared gefilte fish. The giant form rising next to the Vila Olímpica (1992) in Barcelona, Spain, or the Fishdance restaurant in Kobe, Japan (1986), serves as a hieroglyph for unlocking the raw or uncooked materiality of Gehry’s undulating curves. The titanium or stainless steel skins covering the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, or the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California, display the complex geometry of nonuniform, rational B-spline curves. While these forms may rely on the aeronautical computer application CATIA, they also evoke the preparatory motion of folding and creaming necessary to produce the sectional meringue of their curvature.



Biglie con ricotta e wurstel



Aragosta vellata alla Slezzy Dora



*Spaghetti al cartoccio
Frankie Toronto*



Lettere di pollo

1.1

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, drawings for a collaborative performance with Frank Gehry titled *Il corso del coltello* (*The Course of the Knife*).

Greg Lynn quite specifically develops these culinary techniques in his own practice of computer-generated form. He describes architectural folding as “the ability to integrate unrelated elements within a new continuous mixture.” According to Lynn,

Culinary theory has developed both a practical and precise definition for at least three types of mixtures. The first involves the manipulation of homogeneous elements; beating, whisking and whipping change the volume but not the nature of a liquid through agitation. The second method of incorporation mixes two or more disparate elements: chopping, dicing, grinding, grating, slicing, shredding, and mincing eviscerate elements into fragments. The first method agitates a single uniform ingredient, the second eviscerates disparate ingredients. Folding, creaming and blending mix smoothly multiple ingredients “through repeated gentle overturning without stirring or beating” in such a way that their individual characteristics are maintained. For instance, an egg and chocolate are folded together so that each is a distinct layer within a continuous mixture. Folding employs neither agitation nor evisceration but a supple layering.⁵

Lynn, Gehry, and Rossi remind us that a small perceptual shift—in scale, position, or process—can locate design strategies in uncanny proximity to the kitchen. In particular, Gehry’s fish and Lynn’s curvilinear forms disturb distinctions between animate and inanimate objects. These sculptural architectures appear frozen in parabolic jumps and liquid sine curves that simultaneously underscore their exanimate reality.

Gehry’s fish, then, serves as edible architecture, formal hieroglyph, memory trace, and performative medium. The trajectory of this culinary formalism extends to his 1985 collaboration with Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, titled *Il corso del coltello* (*The Course of the Knife*; figure 1.1). Artists and architect staged a performance on Venice’s Grand Canal that culminated in a public meal set in the Piazza San Marco—a scenography that evokes the opening scenes of Peter Greenaway’s 1987 film *The Belly of an Architect*, which took place in Rome’s Piazza del Panteon. Providing a direct precedent for *Il corso del coltello*, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s aesthetics of tactility and cannibalism of form likewise lead to an understanding that food might stand in for architecture and that architecture might be edible. Thus P. A. Saladin’s *Cubist Vegetable Patch*—“little cubes of celery from Verona fried and sprinkled with paprika” and “little cubes of fried carrot sprinkled with grated horseradish”—also

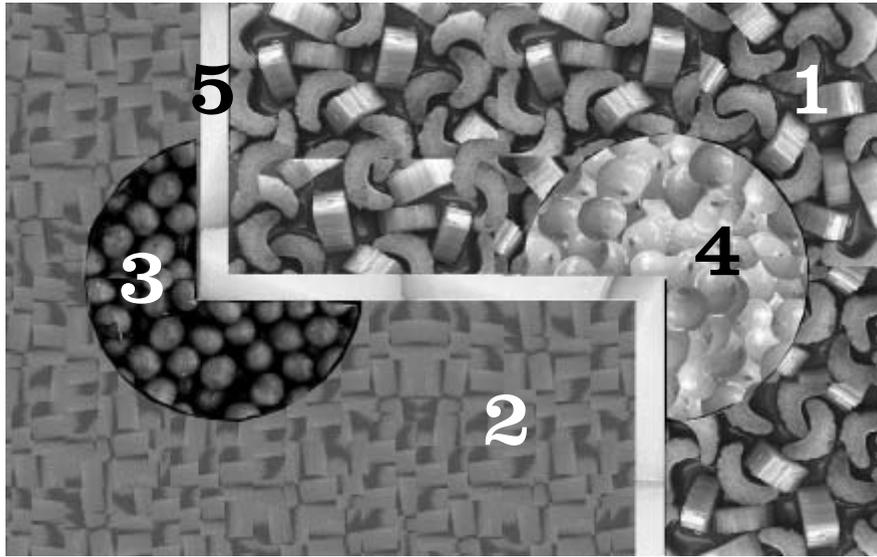
performs as the building blocks of miniature culinary structures, even imaginary cities (figure 1.2).⁶ In Gehry's Venice, full-scale objects of cookery—knife, radish, escarole—float past confectionery facades while a publication about this event includes recipes for dishes such as “lettere di pollo” and “calzone con pattini.” Gehry's work displays a deep awareness of and affinity with the conventions of formal analysis derived from studying *nature morte*, Cézanne, and cubism, while his Venice performance adds a twist of dada to the mélange.

As the artifacts and advocates of modern architecture report, still life painting and collage served as generative processes in the exploration of space. The former, also known as *nature morte*, allows artists and architects to study the oppositional play of overlapping geometry in an open field that draws from the table's order or composed disarray. The latter relies on the collection, distribution, and eventual reconstitution of the remainders of the day—newspaper clippings, chair caning, box labels, and so on—into an articulate spatial composition that might approximate the orchestrated disorder of a table after the meal has ended.

Where modern architects would look to painting as a means to interrogate composition and generate form, more recently postmodernists have looked to the text as a way to problematize this naïve teleology leading from the tabletop to the paraline drawing. Such a paradigm shift from object to text, one that questions the taste (aesthetics/connoisseurship), the hunger (body/libidinal systems), the ingredients (materiality/tectonics), and the recipes (history/theory) that go into the making of building, space, or landscape, nonetheless left us hungry. While critiques of the formally compelling but theoretically empty container of modern architecture gave way to methods of inquiry that sought to extract content at the expense of form, the theoretically compelling but formally empty site of contemporary theory has accomplished the opposite. Given such choices, the subject of cookery offers the possibility of comprehensive and intelligent study. An understanding of the form and space of cookery provides a site to rethink and reorder the material and metaphysical, empty and full, high and low, or dirty and clean into mutually inclusive investigative categories.

CULINARY PERFORMANCE

The intersection of food and architecture also finds expression in the performative spaces that the preparation and consumption of a meal imply. This is a process, from

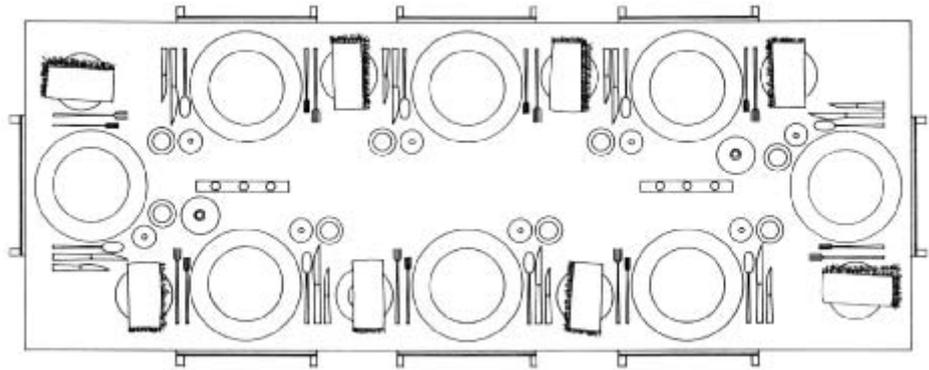


1.2

Cubist Vegetable Patch by Paulette Singley, after P. A. Saladin's description in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *The Futurist Cookbook*. (1) Little cubes of celery from Verona fried and sprinkled with paprika; (2) little cubes of fried carrot sprinkled with grated horseradish; (3) boiled peas; (4) little pickled onions from Ivrea sprinkled with chopped parsley; (5) little bars of Fontina cheese. N.B.: The cubes must not be larger than one cubic centimeter.

set table to abandoned disorder, that Sarah Wigglesworth quite literally drew into 9 Stock Orchard Street, a London terrace house based on the clinical mapping of a dinner party (figure 1.3).⁷ A chef's pyrotechnic juggling of knives at Benihana's chain of Japanese restaurants, cable television's food network, and numerous films about cooking and eating offer ample evidence to support Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's argument for "food as a performance medium." 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." According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, performance encompasses social practices—whether customs or laws, ritual or etiquette—and thus composes what Pierre Bourdieu calls the *habitus* of everyday life. When doing and behaving are displayed, when participants are invited to exercise discernment and appreciation, "food events move towards the theatrical," a convergence of taste as a sensory experience and taste as an aesthetic faculty.⁸ Like the table itself, food stages events, congregating and segregating people, and food becomes an architecture that inhabits the body.

Among the several vocations that Marcus Vitruvius Pollio recommends for the training of an architect in *De architectura*, cooking is not included and setting the table never enters the discussion. And yet, his discussion of the origins of architecture around fire certainly implicates the culinary arts in the production of space. On the

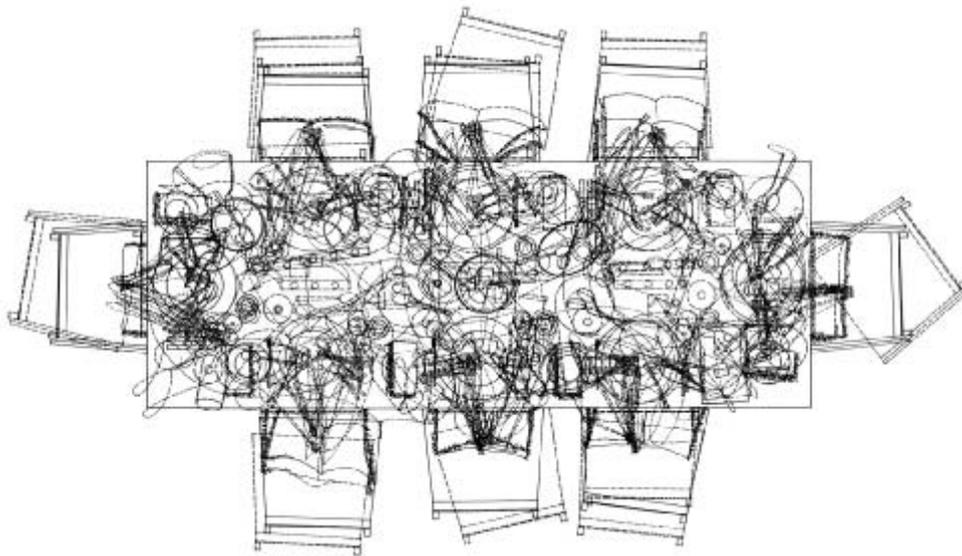


THE LAY OF THE TABLE

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

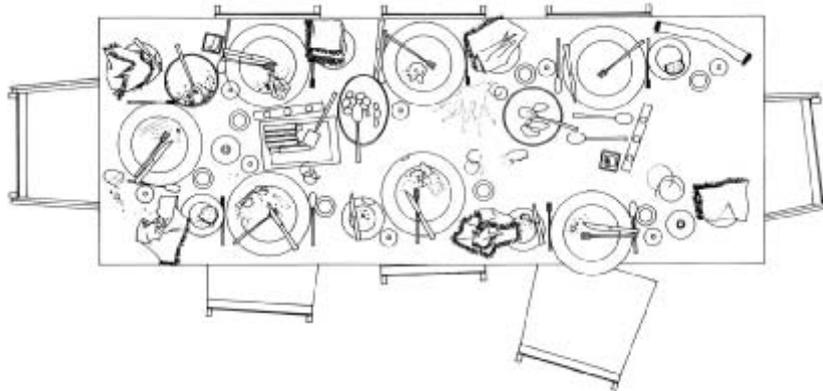
1.3

Sarah Wigglesworth Architects,
9 Stock Orchard Street, London.



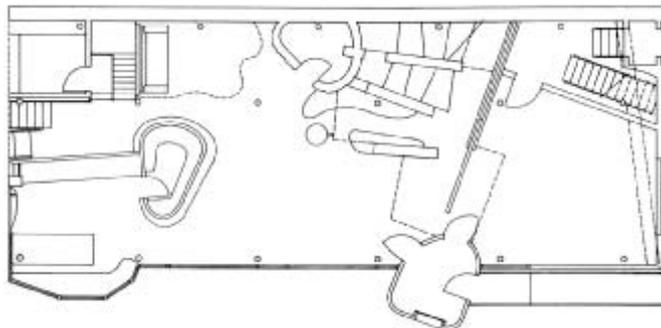
THE MEAL

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.

other hand, where Titus Petronius Arbiter will describe in *The Satyricon* a spectacular Roman banquet—featuring a sow stuffed with live quail—he does not consider the architecture of this space. If not precisely *De architectura* or *The Satyricon*, Marco Frascari’s essay “*Semiotica ab Edendo*, Taste in Architecture” (reprinted in this volume) stands as a foundational text in the history of architecture and food. Frascari turns to other sources, to “the etymological visions of Isidore of Seville,” in writing this history: “the ancients used the word *aedes* (i.e., dwelling), in reference to any edifice. Some think that this word was derived from a form of the term for ‘eating,’ *edendo*, citing by way of example a line from Plautus: ‘If I had invited you home (in *aedum*) for lunch.’ Hence we also have the word ‘edifice’ because originally a building was made for eating (*ad edendum factum*).”⁹

Even though Frascari cautions us that “Isidore’s interpretation is probably incorrect,” that “edibles and edifices are not the same, etymologically speaking,” the false etymologies nonetheless tempt us like dessert.¹⁰ In seeking out culinary architecture’s foundational moments, we also might turn to George Hersey’s troping of the origins of classical architecture in ritual practices. Hersey argues that the ancients saw “their temples as assemblages of materials, including food, used in sacrifice.”¹¹ Dalí had earlier offered a more intuitive observation about surrealism’s “cannibalism of objects,” famously writing that “beauty will either be edible or not at all.”¹²

In the years since Frascari’s 1986 publication of his essay in the *Journal of Architectural Education*, a substantial amount of interdisciplinary research has been devoted to the culinary arts. Indeed, a number of recent publications and exhibitions within the disciplines of art and culture interrogate the aesthetics, form, and content of cuisine, which is increasingly seen as a legitimate site for the discussion of aesthetics. The periodicals *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* and *Slow: The Magazine of the Slow Food Movement*, like *Copia*, the American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts in Napa, California, are examples of mounting interest—and a similarly rising level of sophistication among a broad reading and cooking public—in artisanal agriculture, culinary history, and regional cuisine, which has helped blur the distinctions between culinary arts and other forms of art and architecture.

Food has become not only a powerful cultural obsession but also an alternative art form, scholarly domain, and literary industry. Likewise, the growth of the food movement within the United States and beyond has confirmed cookery as a signifi-

cant subject for interdisciplinary research into the many dimensions of material culture that can be teased out of diverse architectures—both metaphorical and actual—through a panoply of theoretical positions and methodological approaches. Rather than dogmatically adhering to one theory or method, this collection of essays presents a mélange of approaches and scholarly positions. Studies of quotidian culture, for example, may merge with environmental psychology, landscape architecture with postcolonial politics, poststructuralism with conventional iconography, culinary arts with the history of science, or formalism with feminism, producing in this mix a cohesive set of diverse perspectives that adhere to each other through a singular and highly probative focus on architecture’s culinary dimensions.

CULINARY TOPOGRAPHY

Translating culinary practices into the design arts—as the aforementioned examples of architecture imply—might suggest that they be removed from their kitchen origins and repositioned in nondomestic contexts. But they could just as plausibly return to or remain in the domestic sphere. The exchange and transformation of generative practices in food and architecture may provide an insight into domestic space and, in turn, reflect social change that further validates this typically female domain. If the study of food implicates and questions the domestic sphere, then it also contaminates this ground even as it builds upon it.

As the architectural historian Elizabeth Cromley notes, at any given time, the conventions that constitute the relationships between cooking, storing, serving, eating, and disposing operate as a food axis in the social production of space.¹³ *Eating Architecture* elaborates on the inherent spatiality of all that goes into the preparation and consumption of meals while it simultaneously discusses the desiring mechanism of architecture within the realm of appetite. Within these two areas of investigation, we identify social and historical transformations as well as the formal and aesthetic implications of conflating food and architecture. These two emphases, which quite naturally betray our editorial biases and strengths, form the compass points that aid in navigating the topographical field we have constructed in our section divisions, leading from the sites of production to the space of consumption. We have thus organized this collection around a food axis similar to that which Cromley proffers, dividing the essays into a loose arrangement of four spaces that lead from the land-



1.4

Photomontage of Le Corbusier's culinary axis, composed by Paulette Singley. Commercial glassware and crockery from *The Decorative Art of Today; Still Life, Flask and Glasses* (1922); *Table Objects, Still Life* (1920); Bernhard Hoesli's diagram showing layers in painting (1968); axonometric drawings of Villa Stein from Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture*; Le Corbusier's drawing of Villa Stein; kitchen of Villa Stein with fish.

scape to the kitchen, to the table, and finally to the mouth. The four topoi parallel our section divisions: "Place Settings," "Philosophy in the Kitchen," "Table Rules," and "Embodied Taste."

We begin with "Place Settings," a group of essays that question the fundamental relationship between food and locale as it emerges both inside and outside the theoretical context of modernity. Each story problematizes the relation between culinary regionalism, colonialism, and the global economy of tourism. Next we turn to the site of thinking and making. "Philosophy in the Kitchen" is where the cleansing, cutting, and cooking of food form a routine that also doubles as a site for aesthetic experimentation. By drawing gastronomy out of the kitchen, the essays that follow shift the discussion toward the performative space of eating—a site that is inherently unstable, mutable, mobile, and memorable. "Table Rules" locates the intersections between food and architecture in the slow transformations of cultural practice and in the apparent speed with which artists and designers represent and fabricate these changes in their own highly personal formal language. Finally, the smelling, the tasting, the sighting, and ultimately the ingestion of food offer a rare opportunity to literally consume a work of art. Such "Embodied Taste" marshals all of the senses in an apprehension and absorption of the beautiful as well as the disgusting.

In addition to these essays, we are publishing a set of projects solicited in direct response to the question of the architectural recipe. This "Gallery of Recipes" derives from the irresistible temptation to propose an evolutionary sequence of design production—replete with all the positivist baggage that taints such an analysis—from Le Corbusier's *Table Objects, Still Life* to Bernhard Hoesli's diagram of this painting and then finally to a plan oblique drawing of the Villa Stein (figure 1.4). Such formalism proposes that Le Corbusier derived the shapes and figures of his architecture from his paintings of wine bottles, guitars, plates, and sundry objects placed on a tabletop. Indeed, one might hazard the assertion that for modern architecture and urbanism, the production of architecture moved from the tabletop—loaded with its scattered debris

of crockery and foodstuffs—to the canvas without ever having looked at the site. While this claim is something of a hyperbole, it serves well to describe the still life painting as an essential and generative interlocutor with the modern architect in the production of his or her spatial alchemy.

We thus have gathered together a series of essays and images that adapt the generative exercise of cooking and performative spaces of the food axis to the imperatives of contemporary architecture and its potential to engage the issues of identity, ideology, taste, conviviality, memory, and loss that cookery evokes. Based upon this *architecture à la carte*, we offer the parallels between the preparation of meals and the production of space.

NOTES

1. Luce Giard, "Gesture Sequences," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, by Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, vol. 2, *Living and Cooking*, ed. Luce Giard, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 199.
2. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (1990; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 28.
3. Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, trans. Lawrence Venuti (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 5.
4. *Ibid.*, 3.
5. Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple," in *Folding in Architecture*, [ed. Greg Lynn], special issue of *Architectural Design*, vol. 63, nos. 3–4 (London: Academy Editions, 1993), 8.
6. Saladin, quoted in F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, trans. Suzanne Brill, ed. Lesley Chamberlain (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, 1989), 155.
7. We are grateful to Dora Epstein for pointing us to the Wigglesworth project.
8. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium," *Performance Research* 4, no. 1 (spring 1999): 1–30; an earlier version is available at <<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/issues/food-pr6.htm>> (accessed March 2003).
9. Marco Frascari, "Semiotica ab Edendo, Taste in Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 40, no. 1 (1986); reprinted in this volume.
10. *Ibid.*, 194.
11. George L. Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 2.
12. Salvador Dalí, "Art Nouveau: Architecture's Terrifying and Edible Beauty," *Architectural Design*, nos. 2–3 (1978): 139.
13. Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Transforming the Food Axis: Houses, Tools, Modes of Analysis," *Material History Review*, no. 44 (fall 1996): 8–20.