

Post-Meal Pattern

By

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I love food. I have always loved to eat, but not in the way that I do now. I was a picky eater for most of my childhood. The only thing I remember liking eating was steak and potatoes, having the same palate as an old Irish man. I don't even remember what changed my appetite. Something in my eleven-year-old brain clicked, prompting me to start trying new foods, and suddenly I was introduced to a new world of tastes and flavors. Food is exciting for many different reasons. The specificity of flavors, textures, and the mixing of cultures in order to create an experience that has the ability to be forever ingrained in memory. Food can create bonds between people, but can also be a formative individual experience, creating lasting experiential memories.



*Display of project with accompanying prints.*

My senior project combines the visual representation of a finished meal with a wallpaper-like pattern which mimics domesticity and the comfort and familiarity of home. While my screenprints of crumpled wrappers stand well on their own, I am drawn to patterning them because when they are combined they create visual chaos of garbage and causes a viewer to step forward and examine what they are seeing. This patterning would be something seen in a domestic space, as to invoke the feeling of comfort, but it is juxtaposed by the subject matter being pieces of trash, something discarded and not ever really examined as art or having artistic elements. I am using the imagery of crumpled food wrappers to represent a completed and enjoyed meal. When I eat fast food it is an indulgent treat and I savor every bite of it until I am left with the inedible wrapper remnants. The end result of this meal, when I feel full is what remains with me. The visual representation of that feeling is not encapsulated by the physical representation of the burger—only the wrappers.



*Detail of Project*

I feel no shame or guilt in this indulgence, mainly because of the memories that this food carries with it. This particular brand of fast food – In-N-Out Burger—is a west coast exclusive. To me, it represents home, and the comforts that come along with it. It is the first thing I eat when I arrive back in California and the last thing I taste before stepping onto a plane leaving the state.

Whenever I take a bite I am flooded with the memories I have had or have parted with in between these inaugural meals. Even by just seeing the iconic palm trees, or the golden yellow arrow, my mouth begins to salivate and I can taste the burger.

Food is a powerful catalyst for memory. It occupies many facets of the senses and is therefore all the more powerful as a tool for recollection. The human mind has different types of memories and they are all stored differently. Sense memory is relating to your senses and how your brain perceives memories by sight, touch, taste, sound, and smell. These types of memories are only stored in the brain for less than a second and are more of an immediate response to something that has just happened (Mastin). However, if sense memory is only stored in the brain for such a short period of time, then how is it that we can remember so vividly a memory or association to our favorite childhood dish with nothing but a glance? This is because the area of the brain that is associated with smell, for example, is located closely to the hippocampus and amygdala—the parts of your brain that are connected to memory and emotion. (Mercola). The act of eating and *actually* enjoying a meal uses all of your senses. Making it no surprise that food



*Test pattern rendering for final repeating pattern*



*Final pattern rendering for final repeating pattern*



is such a powerful tool for evoking a specific memory. Sharing a meal with family and friends, or indulging in a comfort food after a rough day links the act of eating to an emotion, therefore making the memory even stronger.

As an artist, design and memory are often tied together for me. Mental images are presented to me in a very clear way when I think about foods or certain memories. I will often think back and have a very vivid image inside of my head, this could be reflective of what I saw when I experienced the memory, or an idealized picture of what was going on. In my own memories I am already designing how I would like things to be remembered, or at least how I would like them to look when I reflect upon them.

My work is greatly influenced by graphic design elements that I am exposed to in my everyday life. Whether it be digitally rendered images in Illustrator or Photoshop, or even in some works where all of my layers were drawn by hand, design is still one of the most prevalent elements in my work. Design is important to me because I want to have a clear expression of my work as an artist, and want people to resonate with and understand my art. As a printmaker, I am able to utilize my influences and design skills best through the medium of Silkscreen. I have the ability to create multi-layered prints to emulate a specific feeling or vision encapsulating how I feel about a subject. I am able to do this while



*Silkscreen of Breakfast Tacos (2016)*

taking very specific care in picking out colors, shapes and visual textures that I am able to play with in order to achieve a desired effect to my finished print.

Artists who work with food, whether indirectly - by using packaging design as principle reference, or directly - by creating food as a performative artistic statement have had a large impact on my work. Many of these artists reference food as a medium and a tool to address larger issues and ideas. For example, Andy Warhol's famous Campbell's soup can prints were a commentary on the "mass produced advertisements" of the time period. Warhol took popular imagery and appropriated it into his work, creating an iconic set of images that are still heavily referenced and re-appropriated to this day (MOMA).

While Warhol often produced images of mass market food packaging, there have been centuries of artists depicting food in its various states of its edibility. The historic mosaic "The Unswept Floor" by Sosos of Pergamon is a work that my senior project heavily reflects. Made in the second century, this mosaic was to be featured in the dining room or banquet hall where many large extravagant feasts were held. The debris pictured on the floor served to blend the discarded remnants from the dinner guests as part of the surroundings. The concept of this piece is to have it look as if a great feast had just happened and the guests were so ravenous that the food they ate went flying and ended up everywhere. The leftovers of the meal (chicken bones, lobster claws, nut shells, etc.) are rarely ever memorialized as a piece of art, since they are not seen as enticing or delicious since they are the inedible remains of the meal. (Vatican Museum).

Contemporary artists have taken historical works into account and created more immersive experiences revolving around food. Rirkit Tiravanija is a performance artist who is most known for his relational aesthetics artworks in which he uses food “to ignite a



*Silkscreen of Soft Serve (2017), Matzo Ball Soup (2017), Cheeses (2017), and Breakfast Sandwich (2017)*

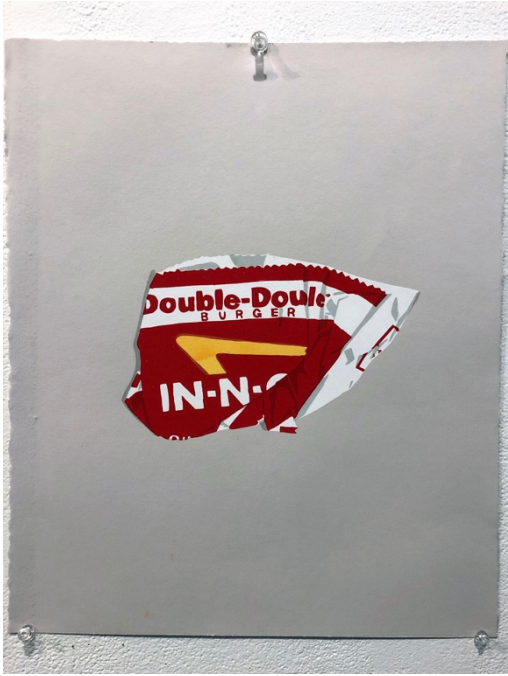
commonality” between museumgoers. With relational aesthetics, “the art itself is meant to spur social interaction” and as Tiravanija serves his dish of choice (curry, pad thai, or tea) to museumgoers, the public is encouraged to bond over their shared experience of eating the “art” in a gallery (Allen). The interactivity between the visitors is the true art piece; the social experience is what Tiravanija considers art. The aspect of food being the catalyst for conversation is an important part of its power as an artwork.

Risa Puno is another artist, working in sculpture and installation, whose work often employs cooking and food memories as central themes. Her piece *Oral History* is a fully functioning vending machine that dispenses lip balms of various flavors with an accompanying food memory (Mac and Cheese for Leslie, and Butter for Justin, to name a few). These lip balms are also packaged to resemble notable brands, so that they are easily identifiable not just in taste and smell, but also visually. This piece is one that directly references food and memory - just the smell and faint taste can be nostalgic for the one using the lip balm (Puno).

Works like Tiravanija and Puno's are incredibly powerful, and about more than just food. Their works are about the memories and associations that come along with food. Sharing with loved ones or strangers, and even the association of specific foods evoke strong and vivid memories that are easy to recall upon. Warhol's prints came to fruition because he was inspired by the monotony of having the same thing for lunch every day. The sensation of seeing the same can of soup mirrored his own eating habits. These pieces are meaningful in their ability to stimulate multiple senses at once. Most art only stimulates the viewer's visual senses, however, these artists add elements of taste and touch with their more communicative pieces. Tirvanija and Puno both allow viewers to participate in their works, whether it be discussing a bowl of soup with a fellow gallery goer, or reading a personal account of why a specific food means so much to someone, while Warhol's prints are able to trigger a memory or a feeling when seeing such recognizable food iconography.

When viewing my work, we are transported to the memory of the moment of finishing a meal and crumpling and discarding a food wrapper. It triggers memories of eating fast food and the feeling of the burger in their hands and the moments of the first and last bites. My work allows people to connect and bond over shared or similar memories that will start a conversation.





*Milkshake Cup (2018), silkscreen*



*Ketchup Packet (2018), silkscreen*



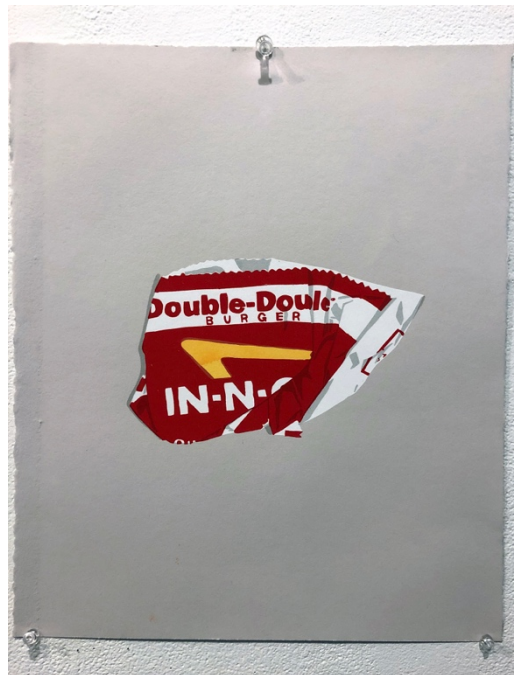
*Pair of Crumpled Wrappers (2018), silkscreen*



*Burger wrapper (2018), silkscreen*



*Cup (2018), silkscreen*



*Double Double (2018), silkscreen*

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