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Cover Photo: Ron Athey Image by Ann Summa. Courtesy of Athey

44. Eileen Wakefield, *Facebook*, 2012, accessed Sept. 15, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/eileen.wakefield.5>.

45. "'Existential Chickens,' includes some live projected media... Feel free to add Andrew Wakefield on Facebook (search for andrewwakefield@gmail.com) and Twitter (andrewwakefield)." From *Haunting Fragments*, "Director's Notes," 2012.

46. Facebook message to Andrew Wakefield, Mar. 8, 2012.

47. Several undergraduates wrote that they were curious if the performance was "based on a real story." Yet, anyone at the stage show who read the Director's Notes in the program would know that Andrew's story was fictional. Additionally, while I think the willingness to role-play in this fictional scenario was at least partially inspired by empathy, I have no audience responses that explicitly support this idea.

48. Annette Kuhn, *family secrets*, (New York: Verso, 1995), 164.

49. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 17.

50. Jade Huell, "Re: talkback," email to the author, Mar. 13, 2012.

51. Walter et al., 295.

52. Walter et al., 36.

53. Carroll and Landry, 343.

54. Bohn et al., 36.

55. Carroll and Landry, 348.

56. Moody, 40.

57. "Our Vision," *Intellitar*, 2009, accessed on Apr. 25, 2012, <http://www.intellitar.com/>.

58. "Who's on First" is a comedy routine that plays on words and names, made famous by William Abbott and Lou Costello. Costello asks for names of baseball players, and believes Abbot's answers are non-responsive, when the names of the players are in fact "Who," "What," and "I Don't Know." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sShMA85pv8M>.

59. "Conversation Logs," *Virtual Eternity*, Mar. 5, 2012, accessed Apr. 22, 2012, <http://www.virtualeternity.com/>.

60. Philip Auslander, "Live from Cyberspace, or, I was sitting at my computer this guy appeared he thought I was a bot," *PAJ70* 24.1 (2002), 20.

61. "Conversation Logs," *Virtual Eternity*, Mar. 11, 2012, accessed Apr. 22, 2012, <http://www.virtualeternity.com/>.

62. The talkback for *Haunting Fragments* was held in the HopKins Black Box, Louisiana State University, on March 12, 2012.

63. Brault and Naas, 8.

64. Karen J. Prager, *The Psychology of Intimacy* (New York: Guildford, 1995), 45.

65. Karen J. Prager, "Deep Intimate Connection: Self and Intimacy in Couple Relationships," in *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy*, eds. Debra J. Mashek and Arthur Aron (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 19.

66. Bruce Barton, "Intimacy," in *Mapping Intermediality*, 46.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Nibbelink and Merx, 176.

71. Mudd.

Critical Ingredients in a Free Lunch: Food and the Complex of Generosity in Relational Performance

by Laurie Beth Clark and Michael Peterson

In art as in life, we tend to associate food with generosity. In everyday life, we perform our generosity by cooking meals for our families, giving parties for our friends, volunteering at community kitchens or contributing baked goods to charity sales. Offering food or drink to guests on arrival can be said to be the signature gesture of hospitality. Perhaps because of this association, artists making "relational" performances often use food to initiate participation and signal a relation to participants that at least in part locates the artist in the role of host.

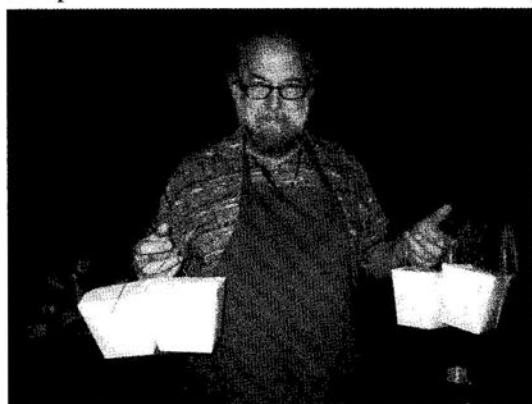
Relational performances refer to those in which the performance itself is located in—in fact made of—social interaction. For example, the performance projects we produce under the collaborative name *Spatula&Barcode* involve acting, image-making, documentation, and especially cooking, but we consider the work "itself" to comprise or take place in the interactions among our participants and ourselves. The loose assortment of artistic practices that might be termed "relational" are associated by many with the book *Relational Aesthetics* by Nicolas Bourriaud.¹ Performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson, in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, attends particularly to the ways in which many relational artists do good within an aesthetic frame and thus makes clear that generosity is a very appropriate topic indeed for analysis of relational performance.²

While confrontation was a stereotypical stance of modernist performance, relational projects are often presumed to be about—or even made of—generosity. Unsurprisingly, then, the use of food in relational performance is often presumed to be a signifier of generosity. The general assumption of the generosity of food-giving coupled with the general assumption about the stance of relational performance mean that food-based relational work can appear over-determined as generous. In this essay we

challenge the common assumption that eating together necessarily creates community, as this can narrow our critical understanding of relational work.

In her essay "Dance Criticism: Feminism, Theory and Choreography," Janet Wolff notes that dance is frequently and uncritically interpreted as a symbol of "freedom"; the extraordinary movements of dancers are framed as escaping ordinary human limitations. Drawing especially on examples from feminist and poststructuralist theory, Wolff argues that we should not allow "a romantic, pre-critical conception of dance to act as an illegitimate short cut to cultural analysis."³ So, too, we would like to take apart the easy equation of food with generosity. Our argument is that it is similarly reductive to equate food with generosity, and, moreover, that both shared food and generosity itself are socially and aesthetically more complex and interesting than they are often assumed to be.

Simple, direct, non-ironic generosity does feature prominently in some, even many, relational performances, and this is true of our own work. The first of our collaborative projects as Spatula&Barcode, for example, was called *Misadventure*. We had spent a year traveling around the world for research, and attending the Performance Studies international conference in Zagreb, Croatia, was the coda to our journey. The trip had crystallized for us how important performance studies was to us theoretically and how strongly we felt about the community of PS scholars and artists. *Misadventure* was a four-hour environmental episodic performance staged in a hall above the old Kino cinema in Zagreb, and it featured a soundtrack composed of music collected on our travels, theatrical homages to great



Richard Gough helps Spatula&Barcode serve take-out Chinese food during *Misadventure* (2009, Zagreb Croatia)

performances we had seen, fragments of academic and travel writing, and invited guest bits by friends whom we had encountered in the previous year of travel. It was part travelogue and part thinking-through of our experiences, but it was also a gift from us to our community, and the clearest expression of this was the food. We offered five different beverages throughout the night, from

coffee to Croatian brandy, and finally, in a reference to our having sampled Chinese food in each country we had visited on five continents, we shared Chinese takeout as the event wound down. Here food had symbolic value and connections to place and narrative, but it was primarily a gesture of hospitality. In this performance, there was in a sense such a thing as a free lunch.

Examples abound of relational projects that make similarly direct use of the association of food with generosity. The best known of these is a project by Rikrit Tiravanija. His *Untitled (Beauty)*, first performed in 1992, involves cooking Thai-style curry and serving it for lunch. But there are many others. Artist Lee Mingwei began hosting one-on-one dinners for *The Dining Project* in 1996 while still a graduate student at Yale. Artist and writer Dave Robbins has held dozens of *Ice Cream Socials* over the last twenty years. Alison Knowles made salads on multiple occasions as part of Fluxus performance events beginning in the 1960s, sometimes for as many as 300 guests. In *Waffles for an Opening*, (1991) Ben Kinmont distributed paper plate vouchers to guests at the White Columns gallery in New York that could be redeemed for breakfast in his home. In 1999 Guy Overfelt offered free beer at the Refusalon Gallery in San Francisco in partial homage to Tom Marioni's *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* (an ongoing work begun in the 1970s) but also playing on a tradition of free beer at summer rock concerts. At *Feast* in the University of Chicago's Smart Museum, Ana Prvacki served spoonfuls of jam to visitors as is traditionally done for guests arriving in one's home in Serbia.⁴

There are in fact so many such acts that sometimes it seems as though relationality as a performance form is defined precisely by the act of feeding the audience—turning viewers into eaters, privileging the stomach over the eyes. We might posit, in fact, that *the appearance of food within performance work is the precise moment at which the character of its relationality can be specified*.

A comparison with drama will allow us to refine this idea, for the *appearance* of food in dramatic presentation poses no challenge to any of a range of orthodox theatrical arrangements. The macaroons in *A Doll House*, or the meals ferried in and out of Arnold Wesker's *Kitchen* are contained within dramatic representation. On the other hand, the *exchange* of food with the audience, while not necessarily fatal to a dramatic context, distinctively alters the performance relation, anchoring the event in the real time and place of audience and actors' bodies, even if in some cases an overlay of fictionality can also be sustained.⁵ This effect might be discussed in Brechtian terms as a disruption of the fictional coherence that

Brecht saw as central to the bourgeois dramatic theatre (which, ironically for us, Brecht sometimes termed “culinary” theatre). Or this effect could be described as “post-dramatic theatre,” invoking a term popularized by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his book of that title, which describes a broad shift from the centrality of dramatic fiction to a focus on the theatrical event itself.⁶ In any event it appears that the moment at which food leaves the stage, crosses the fourth wall, and is fed to the audience is the moment at which theatre becomes (also) relational art.⁷ This theatrical comparison emphasizes that food’s *symbolic* value may be in fact less important than the *action* of food. Within relational work more broadly, this clues us to look for what food does (or what is done with food) more than what food might appear at first to *mean*.

Tellingly, food is often central for those who critique relational art in whole or in part, with the food-as-generosity trope working as logical foundation, rhetorical flourish, or both. In her ground-breaking call for relational work to be more “agonistic,” Claire Bishop refers several times to Tirivanija’s work, including *Untitled (Beauty)*, and then seems to reference it yet again in an almost casual aside in which she clarifies that she is *not* calling for work to be more simplistically political: “giving free curries to refugees.”⁸ Bishop’s leap implies that Tirivanija’s work cannot be improved merely by orienting its relationality towards politicized victims (instead of art-world audiences). The gesture of nourishing, however, seems cast here as emblematic of naïve do-goodism. The canard “curry for refugees” is a brief aside in a larger debate about the criticality of relational performance, and we would concede that some relational works probably are fatuously generous, lack a critical edge, and fail to challenge their audiences. To theatre scholars, the phrase might call to mind that discourse-shaping puritanism identified by Jonas Barish as a pervasive “anti-theatrical prejudice.”⁹ Like the suspicion of theatrical pleasure, the dismissal of nourishing art as ineffective or hypocritical can mean missing the point altogether.

Our purpose here is not to refute Bishop, whose analysis has continued to evolve.¹⁰ Rather, we are interested in the seeming power of that image and that phrase, with their appeal to some and concurrent ability to rankle others. We suggest that simply describing relational food performances as instances [or manifestations] of generosity misses their underlying complexity. To pursue this complexity, we can first note that food is not always used generously, either in everyday life or in art.

In religious contexts, food is often symbolic and important for its transformative potential. Church suppers or family holiday events can

include food preparation that is competitive and even factionalizing. Many members of wealthy societies have too many experiences of alienated food consumption, from feeling herded along in a cafeteria buffet to being patronized by personnel at some high-end restaurants. The growth of so-called “foodie” culture among the privileged has a strong component of nostalgia for “simpler” foodways that are seen as more authentically generous; for example, the recent trend in creating fancy versions of childhood comfort foods and the formerly disparaged cuts of meat that are now valued by “nose-to-tail” sophisticated eaters. There are assorted ethnic stereotypes of parents, often mothers, who express not just love but also passive-aggressive control through food.

Extreme examples of feeding that means the very opposite of generosity can be found in the use of diet control as a key element in cruel interrogation regimes, and in the use of force-feeding apparatus in combination with restraint chairs for prisoners on hunger strike, whether in Guantanamo Bay or in “supermax” prisons around the country. For a historical example, recall the force-feeding of Suffragettes on hunger strike, which enacted the very lack of citizen status that they were protesting; Christine Woodworth describes the force-feeding of actress and suffragette Kitty Marion as part of Marion’s performance of political activism.¹¹ These last examples should call attention to food as a key component of biopolitics; they imply that less overtly violent elements of our societies’ food policies, from agricultural legislation to food stamps to safety inspections, should not necessarily be viewed as essentially or even primarily generous social acts.¹²

Similarly, in performance art, there are examples of uses of food that are far from generous. At the farthest extreme, we would be hard pressed to call Chinese performance artist Zhu Yu generous for eating a fetus in a private performance in Shanghai in 2000; most perceived it as hostile and revolting.¹³ A number of visual artists, for example Chinese artist Gu Dexin in the East and British artist Damian Hirst in the West, have used rotting meat in installations to nauseate audience members. Canadian Jana Sterbak created a disturbing dress made of flank steak in *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic*. Much more theatrically, when Bobby Baker performs *Drawing on a Mother’s Experience*, she accompanies her painful life story with a white sheet onto which she throws food—roast beef, chutney, brandy, treacle, sugar, eggs, beer, flour, milk, currants, fish pie, and yogurt—before she rolls herself up in the sheet. This physicalization of trauma draws visceral attention to the myriad ways in which nourishment, both physical and emotional, can go awry. Other important performance

art examples come from the early work of Karen Finley, whose celebrated applications to her own body of chocolate, yams, and eggs, were far from evoking a generous relation to her audiences. Finley's hostility toward the addressee of many of her monologues paralleled her aggressive counter to the gaze of her audiences, and the function of food in those works in fact inverts the presumptive generosity of food in performance.

There are also more explicitly relational foodworks that directly problematize generosity or even set it up only to betray it. For example, in 2007, Megan Katz invited guests to her home for "Dinner Party" and prepared all the favorite foods identified by each participant, but when the meal was served only half of the guests were allowed to eat—and they were instructed to consume both their own favorite foods and those desired by the (non-eating) watchers. While such a project is predicated on the expectation of generosity, half the participants experienced deprivation and envy; the other half, while sated, felt awkward and embarrassed at the privilege foisted on them and the burden of standing in for those members of the world who eat far more than their fair share.¹⁴

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett reports the intense discomfort of guests at Barbara Smith's *Ritual Meal*, which alienated the eating process through medicalization.¹⁵ Smith's piece, in which food was framed by test tubes and other medical apparatus, can serve as a reminder that food might be a signifier for generosity or its inversion without establishing a relation of hospitality, or even that food might function formally and as a relatively abstract medium. Guests also reported feeling uncomfortable when Marina Abramovic and Ulay flagrantly refused to perform generously as hosts of their own birthday party. Guests for *Communist Body / Fascist Body* (Amsterdam, 1979) arrived at midnight to find the artists asleep. The table was laid with foods evocative of their two different originating nation states but all advice about how to proceed was withheld. Though the guests did partake liberally of the champagne and caviar, most reported that they did not feel either comfortable or welcomed with the presence of their hosts. As this performance makes clear, it is the performance of the host, rather than the presence of the food, that signals generosity.¹⁶

But let's not throw out the custard with the bain-marie. We are certainly not interested in banishing generosity from the utensil kit of relational performance. Rather, we are interested in looking at food for its generative capacity, which is to say its ability to mean more than "mere" generosity. Where we think that Bishop and others go wrong is not in noticing that relational art can be generous, but in apparently thinking it merely so.

Food in relational art can be politically engaged, educational,

historically informative, elaborative of cultural context, or evocative of both good and bad memories. Food can also entrap the participant in ethically or emotionally uncomfortable situations. As our examples below illustrate, this work may be alienating, demanding, revitalizing, stressful, frightening, threatening, passive-aggressive, or even just aggressive. In other words, while it is clear that food in relational art (and food as it appears in many artworks not clearly captured by the label of "relational") is often generous, if we jump too quickly to focus on that aspect we can miss the complicated generativity of the work. By "generative," we mean work that stimulates awareness of these multiple possibilities.

In the next section of this essay we suggest four different ways that relational artworks frequently go beyond the simply generous relation with which they have become identified and illustrate for each how food-based projects instantiate these relations. Such works may *implicate* existing social relations, *restore* damaged social situations through direct intervention, *occasion* new formations of relationality starting from food exchange, or *explore* the possibilities of human relations by setting long-term processes into motion. These approaches overlap and interpenetrate in most cases, but we offer examples chosen for the clear presence of these approaches.

One way that generous work can be generative is in revealing, often by enacting, the relations of power that underlie generosity. Both anthropologist Marcel Mauss and cultural critic Lewis Hyde make clear that in gift economies, gifting invokes reciprocity, and that gifting is never "merely" generous. Rather, there are contexts in which the bestowal of gifts is a demonstration of power and others in which accepting a gift implies an obligation or responsibility.¹⁷ Mary-Jane Jacob reminds us that "[t]his word—generosity—[...] has simultaneously well-intentioned and problematic connotations: positioned on two sides of a moral equation, each seemingly dependent on an uneven power relationship between parties."¹⁸ Numerous relational works contradict or hyper-perform these relations, while other transgressive giftings may seem to blaspheme against private property or social propriety. We could call these kinds of relational foodworks *implicating* or *implicative* in that they illustrate the pervasiveness of power, bureaucracy, or self-interest. In such works, one can read both the generous intentions of the artists and the beneficial outcomes for the community but it is important also to recognize these acts as political interventions.

For the twelfth edition of the massive arts event Documenta,¹⁹ Ai Wei Wei organized a project called *Fairy Tale*. He arranged for 1001 Chinese

citizens of diverse backgrounds to live in Kassel for long stretches of the show. While it was “generous” for the artist to transport, house and feed the participants, they also “worked” for their meals, functioning around Kassel as mobile signifiers of Chineseness and by implication questioning the demographics of this major cultural event. The sheer logistical complexity of the project also perhaps offered an invitation to consider the biopolitics of such festivals.

On a more intimate scale, audience members may feel they have received a gift when they pocket one or more of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's silver cellophane wrapped candies in *Untitled (Placebo)*, but this was never the artist's intention. In an interview he says, “There was no other consideration involved except I wanted to make art work that could disappear, that never existed....”²⁰ In order for this art work to exist, candies must be endlessly replenished by the gallery to maintain the precise rectangle that Gonzalez-Torres defined. Francis McIlveen astutely observes the paradox inherent in the obligation imposed on the owner of such a work to give it away in perpetuity. “If the buyer fails to do this, one could legitimately ask whether she or he continues to truly own the piece.”²¹

In another closely related work, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, Gonzales-Torres displayed 175 pounds of candy, this volume representing his partner Ross Laycock's ideal body weight. Engaging with the work as invited meant participating in shrinking this allegorical body in a way that paralleled Laycock's drastic weight-loss prior to his death from AIDS-related causes.

Mary Ellen Carroll's *Itinerant Gastronomy* projects are implicative in another sense. Carroll seeks to expose dialectical processes to guests who all have a reason to be in a particular place at a particular time with particular foods. For example, in *Open Outcry*, staged at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange during trading hours, she served a luncheon composed of foods being traded on the floor. By asking guests to put their mouths where their money is, Carroll focused attention on the policies and economies of commodities trading.

A second category, which we could call *restorative*, covers relational artworks that intervene directly into and remediate situations via a corrective, ameliorative action.

In *Flood: A Volunteer Network for Active Participation in Healthcare*, the group Haha established a hydroponic garden in a storefront in Chicago, distributing the vegetables to a group residence for people with HIV and AIDS. With support from the community, *Flood* became a horticultural laboratory producing medicinal herbs and vegetables and

yielding discussions about alternative medicine and community resources. According to Shane Aslan Selzer, “The project transformed an ‘art space’ into a place of action and education. The garden functioned practically for the community and metaphorically as a center for growth...”²² The collective Fallen Fruit seeks to intervene directly in community relations and alter not only perceptions but also behaviors when they map the public produce available in urban Los Angeles. The collective takes people on tours of places where trees overhang the boundaries of private property, making their fruits available to passersby. These tours provide literal opportunities for participants to collect produce as well as ideological opportunities to reconsider the boundaries of private ownership. While it is certainly probable that some of the trees' owners are surprised to learn that fruit growing beyond their fence line on trees planted within is actually in the public domain, many are pleased to share their bounty with neighbors, along with stories about fruit, family, and community. The fruit gathering provides “a lens through which to focus questions about how we occupy urban space; how we define boundaries between public and private; how we might use, neglect or redirect surplus; and how all those issues affect how we relate to each other.”²³ Moreover, the performance intervenes pragmatically in its community, harvesting that which would otherwise have gone to waste and using it to make jams and liquors, each with a distinct neighborhood *terroir*.

What we might call *occasioning* or *occasional* works use food, and especially the host-guest relation, as a context, a starting point, or even an excuse for exploring other dimensions of social relations.

Theaster Gates says evocatively of his project *Soul Food Pavilion*, which includes a series of specially designed meals based on traditional themes, “The dinners in some way give me an opportunity to leverage ritual and leverage space and to ask hard questions in ways that people don't normally talk about [...] with groups of people who don't normally get together [...] If someone says as part of dinner, ‘you have to talk about this topic,’ it gives us all an excuse to be more open, more transparent, more vulnerable than we might be normally.”²⁴ In the *Feast* catalogue, Gates describes a close link between this element of his own work and that of Michael Rakowitz, who converted a food truck into *Enemy Kitchen* to serve more than 1000 Iraqi meals throughout Chicago.²⁵ Both projects generated intense discussions between neighbors who might not otherwise know one another and both have lives that precede and exceed the framework of the *Feast* show. Both build on culinary elements of the artists' own childhoods even as they seek to intervene in some of

the conceptual frameworks of contemporary geo-politics. The projects operate by creating temporary alternative cultural spaces, and both artists prioritize emergence (what can happen during a work) over intention (what they imagined the work would accomplish). They differ, however, in one important regard. Whereas *Enemy Kitchen* plays up its mobility and causes new topographies to emerge as it navigates the city, *Soul Food Pavilion* invests in the life of one block in Chicago, the block where Gates lives and has been transforming once-vacant buildings since 2006.

Some relational food performance shows us that generosity, hospitality, etc., are not just implicated or contaminated by other interests, but are also complicated, multifaceted relations in and of themselves. For want of a better phrase, we might think of this kind of work as *exploratory*, in that it seeks to probe the meanings and possibilities of relationality, founded on generosity, in deep processes that go far beyond the sense of hospitality as a social nicety or generosity as a simple giving away of surplus wealth. These works may be socially and emotionally intense, and/or of long duration and commitment on the part of artists and other participants.

When Annie Lanzillotto spent two years occupying a vendor's stall in *The Arthur Avenue Retail Market Project*, she wanted to push herself to make work in the community where she was raised and which she had abandoned in the process of becoming an artist. She went to work with the "butchers, fishmongers, cheese purveyors, and fruit and vegetable merchants" in order, in her own words, to "make an opera in the market and to highlight the opera that is already there." As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes, "Lanzillotto's intervention involved recognizing, valuing, and bringing out the everyday life performances, the spontaneous arias, the disquisitions and demonstrations, the stories and the banter, the mentalities distinctive to this scene."²⁶ While the market offered Lanzillotto a very broad palette with which make art with unusual ingredients (as when a butcher performed a Valentine's Day aria while chopping and frying a veal heart), her interventions also helped to revitalize and revalue this historic New York food venue.

Our typology is not meant to be exclusive or exhaustive but rather generative in and of itself, allowing us to begin to articulate some of the many generative possibilities of generous performance. Moreover, these categories can and most often do overlap. For example, in *Interrupted Passages*, which "considers the meal as a site of political negotiation and cultural exchange," Julio Cesar Morales restaged the 1846 feast hosted by Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo during "the last eight hours that California was still part of Mexico."²⁷ While investigating the fraught role of the historical

host, who was also a hostage at the time, the work explores Morales' dual identities as Mexican and American, the complex mythology of the border region, and the multiple perspectives from which the events can be viewed. In addition to excavating historically local culinary traditions, Morales' project also emphasizes the ways that food serves "as a conduit, translator, mediator, and negotiator."²⁸

As Spatula&Barcode, we have made food-centric performances in the



Peterson and Clark in the Spatula&Barcode "lab."

United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Morocco. We have served coffee, tea, and wine in a cabaret setting, cooked dumplings made from invasive plants over a camp stove in the forest, and, as mentioned, arranged for Chinese food to be delivered to our audience in a Croatian theatre. We have, in fact, often used food-sharing to build an atmosphere of congeniality

and generosity, and this attitude "in part" defines our work. But while participants may "feel good" when they are fed, our actions have much more specific aims, and food in our pieces is most often used to direct attention or focus investigation, rather than "merely" to nourish our audiences. In one semi-private performance we explored varieties of "aesthetic relations" through thirty-two ways of eating melon, some of these cozy, some confrontational. In others, we use food politically to signify national or cultural identity and/or to draw attention to food politics.



Peterson and assistant Bradley Corso prepare for a series of aesthetic relations, each involving a melon dish, for *Melon (sic) Workshop* (2011, Madison, WI).

On Order (2011) was modeled on the Passover seder, a ritual dinner that involves

symbolic foods and obligatory prayers and storytelling. The Jewish holiday celebrates the ancient Israelites' escape from slavery into freedom. Even in its most conventional form, a seder is a highly interactive, symbolic matrix of food performances. In our version, we asked the dozen on-site participants in Wisconsin and one joining via Skype from Benin, to prepare new performances or presentations based on traditional seder components, both material and symbolic, including wine, bread, slavery, freedom, and renewal. The role of food in this performance was to anchor the event (to "occasion" it) and to inspire reflections—and sometimes to provide a break between episodes of rigorous scholarship. Participants described feeling that the stakes were higher for them in this work than in one that is "merely" generous because we asked something challenging: to prepare and perform personally and politically significant content.

In/of the city was part internet cyber-performance and part urban exploration. The show took place in 2011 in internet cafes in a dozen residential neighborhoods remote from the tourist district of Tangier, Morocco. It involved local, North African, and international participants attending a conference hosted by the International Center for Performance Studies. Our project used foods to spark conversational links between participants on opposite sides of the globe from one another. In this project, we made it possible for people with shared intellectual interests but who were spatially removed and previously unknown to one another to be eating the same things from the same utensils at the same time. Culturally representative foods (from Morocco, the Netherlands, and each of the participants' home countries) generated conversations about art, theatre, life, politics, scholarship, shopping, travelling and eating.

The beginning of *Red Eye Gravy*, which we created in collaboration with Lois Weaver for the annual conference of the American Society for Theater Research in Nashville in the Fall of 2012, might at first seem the



Over tea and pastries, conference organizer Khalid Amine chats from Tangier with Richard Gough in Wales as part of *in/of the City* (2011, Morocco).

epitome of uncritical generosity: we greeted conferees at registration with glasses of punch served from Michael's grandmother's punch bowl, spiking it on request with liberal amounts of Tennessee whiskey. But our goal in this performance was not only to infuse the conference with "southern" hospitality but as well to articulate a critique of hospitality itself. In addition to facilitating a gift exchange, sharing local travel tips, and serving biscuits and other treats, we also curated a series of public conversations about hospitality in relation to such topics as family, food, privilege, music, administration, and conferences themselves. We hosted each conversation along with one or two invited co-hosts and an evolving assortment of interested conference-goers who were invited both formally and informally as the event progressed.

We felt there was a conversation to be had—complicating hospitality—that could best be achieved by first enacting it. Put another way, food and drink *occasioned* conversations in which hospitality itself came under discussion.

Grim(m) Essen was commissioned to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the first publication of the Grimm brothers' fairy tales (2012). By focusing on the food in the stories, we allowed audience members who believed themselves to be thoroughly familiar with the tales to see them in a new way. The performance occurred over the course of a two-hour hike in a forest near Darmstadt, Germany. We served intermittent picnics of foods from the fairy tales, but audience members were required both to enact tableaux of the scenes the foods referenced and to help carry and serve the food. Most spectators could recall the lentils in "Cinderella" or



Attendee Jennifer Parker Starbuck responds to instructions in the invitation to *Red Eye Gravy*, arriving at the ASTR conference with a "hostess gift" of tea and lemon curd from her home city of London (2012, Nashville TN).

the bread crumbs and chicken bone in "Hansel and Gretel," but almost all had forgotten the field greens that set the story of "Rapunzel" in motion and may never have known about the hilarious use of butter to repair the road in "Katy and Freddy" or the haunting image of a woman covering herself in honey



Peterson and Clark at work developing an image from the story "All Fur" (*Allerleirauh*) in *Grim(m) Essen* (2012, Darmstadt,



In this scene from *Grim(m) Essen*, Clark and Peterson stage the inciting incident of the story *Rapunzel*, in which *Rapunzel's* father steals salad greens for *Rapunzel's* pregnant mother.

and feathers to become "Fitcher's Bird." The project drew attention to the underlying themes of the tales (benevolence, cowardice, loyalty, futility, etc.) as well as the pervasive hunger of the period in which they were devised and the immense labor of putting food on the table in those times. It also generated multiple recollections regarding the ways that food has figured in the family lives of the participants in times when it was scarce as well as when it was abundant. Older participants spoke often of food memories from the period immediately post-World War II.

We hope all of Spatula&Barcode's works contradict the pejorative characterization of food-based relational art as *nice*. While neither agonistic nor antagonistic, the works are demanding for participants, requiring that they prepare and perform

provocative content, travel to unfamiliar environments and communicate in unfamiliar ways, or realize the foreign within the familiar. These works enact the generative capacity of relational art without resorting to hostile or ungenerous strategies. People join us for these events because they sound like fun, and we try to never let them down; but we craft complex experiences in which we ask participants to take the work of play seriously. Social interaction broadly, and generosity specifically, are what the work is made of, but to focus only on the pleasures of interaction misses the work—the social, emotional and intellectual labor—required of all involved.

To sum up, our position is that to describe most relational artworks in terms of generosity is like describing most Dutch Master works as oil paintings, and presuming that



Three assistants (Barbara Kocsis, Sarah Runge, Maike Korber) rehearse the final image of *Grim(m) Essen*—eating a piece of the witch's house from "Hansel and Gretel."

relational foodworks are primarily or simplistically about generosity is to begin with a potentially critical misunderstanding. These examples of relational foodworks support the need for a more expansive understanding of generosity in all relational performances: what we call a *complex of generosity*. The complex has generosity not as its conclusion but as its initiation or even its structure; the meaning of any given complex of generosity (that is, of any work of art) is generated by interactions among its components, and in these relational examples, especially between participants. Generosity is often less a "meaning" of relational work than it is a method. It may be that most work we would call relational—certainly all the work Spatula&Barcode is interested in making—relies on the social relations of generosity and hospitality, if only as necessary points of departure. But at the same time as we would defend the value of generosity for its own sake, we would follow the anthropologists and ethicists in noting the far richer web of social relations contained even in a "free" lunch.

NOTES

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les Presses Du Réel, 1998). Among those who have made more extensive contributions to the analysis of relational art are visual arts theorists Claire Bishop ("Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," October [October 1, 2004]: 51–79 and *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* [London and New York: Verso, 2012]); Grant Kester (*Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. [University of California Press, 2004] and *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* [Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2011]); Ted Purves (ed. *What We Want Is Free: Generosity And Exchange In Recent Art*. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004]); and Tom Finkelpearl (*What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* [Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2013]).
2. Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* New York and London: Routledge, 2011.
3. Janet Wolff, "Dance Criticism: Feminism, Theory and Choreography," in *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, ed. Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1998), 246.
4. We are grateful to have found two significant synthetic works that collate many of the relevant projects with which we were familiar (and a few that were new to us). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's seminal essay "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" (*Performance Research* 4:1 [1999]:1–30) provides a wide ranging survey and analysis of multiple uses of food in art. The exhibition *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* at the Smart Museum in Chicago in 2012 resulted in a field-defining catalog that gathers not only descriptive documentation but important theoretical interventions. We appreciate the curators' willingness to share their catalog with us in advance of its publication. We are also grateful to a 2013 College Art Association panel, "Creative Kitchens," chaired by Silvia Bottinelli and Margherita D'Ayala Valva, for reactions to an early version of our argument.
5. We leave aside examples of commercial "environmental" performances, such as feeding "period" foods during dinner showings of theatrical jousting at medieval-themed attractions such as Medieval Times or the Excaliber hotel in Las Vegas; these commercial food exchanges ostensibly immerse the spectator more fully in the fantasy, but they do not produce an incongruity of food with drama as in the above examples. Moreover, at this and other dinner theatre events the food rarely traverses the performer / audience divide.
6. Hans-Thies Lehman, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).
7. The relationality of dramatic theatre is, of course, not simple binary choice between fully dramatic and fully "present" or post-dramatic. Rather, most dramatic theatre lies on a continuum of relations. However, only some theatrical performances become (metatheatrically) about their relationality. This was certainly our intent in shifting back and forth from actors to hosts in *Misadventure*. For an extended discussion of the historical permutations of food on stage, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's essay "Making Sense of Food in Performance: The Table and the Stage," 71–89, in *The Senses in Performance*, edited by Sally Banes and Andre Lepecki, New York and London: Routledge, 2006..
8. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 64.
9. Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

1985).

10. See Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012).
11. Christine Woodworth, "When Audiences Attack: The Manhandling of Actress and Activist Kitty Marion," *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference* 20: 109–121, 125. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press. (2012)
12. An effective overview of how this suspicious approach to food policy would frame a range of historical and contemporary questions can be found in a special issue of *Radical History Review*, especially in Daniel Bender and Jeffrey M. Pilchers' "Editors' introduction: radicalizing the history of food." *Radical History Review*, 2011, 2007, Vol.2011(110), p.1–7.
13. For an account of this performance and controversy, see Meiling Cheng, "Violent Capital: Zhu Yu on File," *TDR: The Drama Review* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 58–77
14. Katz initially developed the project because she was interested in the potential productivity of unfulfilled desire, rather than in generosity per se. No published criticism of this work exists; our sources are conversations with attendees and with the artist.
15. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Playing to the Senses."
16. The performance is well described in Stephanie Smith, *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*. (New York: New Press, 2013): 53–73.
17. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000) and Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 2007).
18. Mary Jane Jacob, "Reciprocal Generosity," in *What We Want Is Free: Generosity and Exchange In Recent Art*, ed. Ted Purves (Al: State University of New York Press, 2005), 3.
19. Documenta is one of the largest, best-known, and longest-standing international art exhibitions, and includes not only painting and sculpture but also performances, installations, film and video, panel discussions, publications, and other community events. The small city of Kassel, Germany, has been transformed by Documenta into a temporary capital of contemporary art every five years since its inception in 1955. The scope of this and similar international art expositions (such as the Venice Biennale) creates a unique cultural politics of inclusion/exclusion and impact on the local community and the global art market
20. Quoted in Ted Purves, ed., *What We Want Is Free: Generosity And Exchange In Recent Art* (State University of New York Press, 2004): 165..quoted in Purves, *What We Want Is Free*.
21. Francis McIlveen, "Exchange--The 'Other' Social Sculpture," in *What We Want Is Free: Generosity and Exchange In Recent Art*, ed. Ted Purves (Al: State University of New York Press, 2005), 178.
22. In Purves, *What We Want Is Free*, 118.
23. Stephanie Smith, *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* (New York: New Press, forthcoming), 191.
24. Ibid., 206.
25. Ibid.
26. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Playing to the Senses," 22.
27. Smith, *Feast*, 266, 286.
28. Ibid., 269.