

**Upsetting Stomachs and Systems:
The Relational Experience of Power in Food Art**

David Szanto, Icebox Studio

Simon Laroche, Concordia University

Abstract:

Food systems implicate complex entanglements among physical bodies, symbolic meaning, and patterns of interaction that can lead to the emergence and apparent stabilization of power relationships. Yet these dynamics—including the given knowledges and regimes of corporate, cultural, and institutional food—can also be understood as fluid and mutable. In addition to producing disempowering contexts for individual producers and eaters of food, food systems also comprise the potential for resistance, intervention, and hacking. This article probes these ideas through a research-creation-based, reflexive analysis of the authors' experiential artwork, *Orchestrer la perte/Perpetual Demotion (OLP/PD)*, an installation/performance involving robotic and digital technologies, human eaters and observers, edible matter and microbial life forms. Using as interpretive lenses Jean-Marie Schaeffer's understanding of aesthetic experience, Bruno Latour's interpretation of agential translation, and Raymond Boisvert and Lisa Heldke's fusion of hospitality and ethics, we reflect on and discuss several moments over the lifetime of OLP/PD. From these, we draw insights into the confederate and mutable nature of agency within food-system power relations. By paralleling experiential art with other performative and representational contexts of food, we aim to prompt others to imagine how food, humans, and power might be collectively reframed and refigured.

Keywords: food art; digital art; experiential art; power; agency; relationality
