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PerforMAN-cena (Performance-Meal)

"The Letter of Sagawa" by the Japanese writer Juro Kara that gave me the idea to create an edible sculpture. Kara was inspired by the letters that Issei Sagawa wrote to him from prison after killing -- for love -- a young Dutch artist and then devouring several parts of her body. This act of modern cannibalism occurred in Paris in 1981, and sparked an international scandal. Two years later Sagawa was declared not responsible for his act by the French judicial system.

I am also profoundly indebted to writers such as Apollinaire, the Marquis de Sade and George Bataille, who wrote of the erotic savoriness of the human body .

In am drawing on popular cultural references as well; the symbolism of the unusual panes de muerto (bread of the dead), the macabre banquets and the sugar skulls, that are all part of the Day of the Dead in Mexico; above all I was interested in the contemplation of horror that is so much a part of us as Mexicans, and that we inherited from both the indians and the Spaniards. During my adolescence, for example, I was fascinated by the macabre comics about Dr. Goyo Cardenas, a serial killer would rape and dismember his victims, and then cook them and serve them as tamales in his restaurant. The sweetness of death, which is the taste of life, is the hunger of our living death.

The painting of the Italian artist Giuseppe Arciboldo (1530-1593) was another important source of inspiration. Those magnificent portrait-plates made me think that at last I could consume a work with my eyes and palate. And so I began, in 1989, to create edible artworks; human heads made of transparent gelatin in a variety of tastes and colors, full of fruits and dramatically illuminated from below.

To digest a work literally speaking, is to make it your own. You savor it as it circulates like a sweet inside of you. Then you can expel it by shitting, living with art up to that precise moment, and thus better comprehending the most routine task of your existence.

Of course, my sculptures were dietetic and were "sculpturally-cooked" with electro-purified water, using the finest ingredients, chosen not only for their freshness but also for their shape, color and taste, which were fundamental aspects of the artwork's conceptualization.

It was not until 1992, when I saw the illustrations by Theodor De Bry for Americae Pars Tertia by Johanes Staden von Humber, (who recounts the tale of his capture by a cannibal tribe in Brazil) that I conceptualized my PerforMANcena.

The moment of political cynicism that we were living in my country,

modernity's shameless historical amnesia, and the new Free Trade Agreement (Play on words here between Comercio-business and Comer-se - to eat) gave my piece a new context.

I took advantage of the rituals of Catholic communion and those of Aztec sacrifice, and created a speech that was both political and religious, which I recited before a peach flavored, flesh colored corpse with a melon heart. The rancho existentialism of certain Mexican corridos, and the amorous lyrics of the ballads of the 50s, were blended together before the consumption of the cadaver of Ge-Latina America, in the era of the North American Cholesterol Free Trade Agreement, at the moment of this a-PRI-calypsis, at the end of the millenium.

Everyone eat and drink from him
for this body is the debt of blood
the blood of the cadaver
the one we see every day
that everyday of all Mexicans
The blood of our new and ethereal alliance
that will be runneth over by the free economic transit
and by all the governors
for the forgiveness of sins

César Martínez

Translated by Coco Fusco