



• Marc Bretillot's La grande-epicerie: réinterprétation du millefeuille

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Food for thought

Serial Eater exhibition shines a light on food design

By Sarah Schug

Have you ever wondered who made your chocolate bar or French fry look the way it does? Or who gave the Pringle chip its signature wave? Food designers are behind it all. Even star designer Philippe Starck, normally known for his elegant chairs, loudspeakers and boats, has designed Barilla pasta. But that's not all a food designer does, as an exhibition at CID Grand Hornu reveals.

"The exhibition is an attempt to define the term 'food design' and familiarise a wide audience with the topic," says Benjamin Stoz, a Belgian-born interior designer and curator of the intriguing show. "I want to make it clear that food design is something entirely different from creative cooking or decorating pretty cakes, as many might think." Serial Eater shines a light on a discipline that is only now emerging from

the shadows of its famous siblings such as furniture or fashion design – despite being part of the curriculum of design schools and playing a significant role at today's major design fairs.

Food design is having something of a moment. Eating has become much more than a mere necessity to survive, there's a culture of 'You are what you eat', and food

choices are being increasingly politicised. Today, food is not just a matter of taste, but an important piece in the climate change puzzle, as well as a means to improve people's health. "What kind of consumers are we? What impact do our eating habits have on the environment, and what should we possibly change? These are some of the questions today's food designers explore," Stoz says.

With drawings, videos and lots of mock-ups, *Serial Eater* – the title being a reference to the repetitive nature of eating – attempts to respond to these issues. The exhibition traces the history of food design, examines eating rituals and gives us a glimpse of how the future of food could look. "Personalised food will become a big trend," Stoz says. Accordingly, Japanese design collective Open Meals has thought up the Super Sushi, a system where the composition of the sushi you eat is determined by the results of a blood test, assembled to fit your nutritional needs and to compensate for potential vitamin deficiencies.

Another significant development is the rise of veganism. "It's not just a trend. People are becoming much more conscious of how animals are held and treated. Meat replacement products are increasingly popular. It's a big market," Stoz says. The exhibition spotlights research on in vitro meat, for instance – meat that has been produced in a laboratory from cell cultures, avoiding the slaughtering of animals. Next Nature Network, an interdisciplinary team



• Arvid Jense & Marie Caye's SAM: The Symbiotic Autonomous Machine

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• Digital Seasoning by Laila Snevele

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in Amsterdam, exhibits speculative recipes with lab-grown meat that might end up on your plate one day.

Food design, it is clear, tries to translate scientific research and technological innovation into the world of food while reflecting on our future and finding ways to improve it. British designer Susana Soares, addressing possible future food shortages, developed pasta made from insect flour, and Austrian designer Julia Schwarz created a pesto based on lichen, a fungus that grows on tree bark.

But not all the objects and ideas on view are socially or politically loaded: South Korean

designer Jinhyun Jeon presents her playful Sensory Dessert Spoon, for example, demonstrating that the texture and shape of cutlery can change our perception of taste.

"I hope it makes people examine and rethink their eating habits," Stoz says. Has curating the exhibition had an impact on his own culinary habit? "Indeed. I discovered algae as a food and I eat much less meat."

The exhibition runs until 29 November, with the participation of the executive master's in food design at Brussels fine art academy ARBA-ESA.

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