Making Time

Food Preservation and Ontological Design

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In *Chaos, Territory, Art* (2008) Liz Grosz observes that while the task of science is to measure the world and that of philosophy to 'think' it, creative practice renders it sense-able. Remembering that we think through the senses, with and on behalf of the vital force of the living body, disciplinary divisions lose clarity. Philosophy underpins the cultures of the designed world we have made and inherited, cultures that become the normative and ongoing conditions of everyday life. Art grasps these cultural conditions, remobilizes them, opens them to encounter. According to Grosz, art 'enables matter to become expressive, to not just satisfy but also to intensify – to resonate and become more than itself' (2008: 4).

The capacity for such transformative operations gives artistic practice a special importance in relation to conventions of everyday life that we might consider ripe for contestation. A cluster of these can be found in the prevailing food cultures of the contemporary western city, where food is mostly grown, packaged, portioned, transported, sold, stored and wasted, in abjectly unsustainable though thoroughly embedded ways.

The travelling open kitchen project Making Time (2010–present) intervenes in this food culture by creating a territory for another

kind of production and an embodied encounter with the thought of ontological design. Devised by interdisciplinary duo Makeshift (Tessa Zettel and Karl Khoe) for an exhibition of live art treating the gallery as 'test-site',[1] Making Time began as a real-time experiment in trading know-how between artists and visitors, linking people's knowledge and experiences of food preservation with the concept of sustainment within design philosophy. It has since been developed by Tessa Zettel and various collaborators into a mobile platform for circulating skills and ideas relating broadly to preservation, hosting participant-led workshops on practices like jam-making, pickling, drying and foraging, as well as conversations, jar swaps and other exchange events. These have occurred in locations as diverse as community gardens and neighbourhood kitchens, squats, activity centres, food markets and galleries, from Sydney and Berlin to northern Finland. The jars that are filled and sent out into the world carry hand-written text, which, like their contents, has been co-produced by participants in each setting.

Figure 1
Makeshift/Tessa Zettel. Making Time (Redfern). Performance Space, 'Matters of Life and Death'. Photograph by Matthew Venables. 2013.

Figure 2
Makeshift/Tessa Zettel. Making Time / Ajan Säilöntää' (Kuopio). ANTI Festival of Live Art, Finland. Photograph by Pekka Mäkinen. 2012.

In gathering, sharing, regenerating and amplifying intercultural and intergenerational practices of food preservation and kitchen craft, Making Time offers an intensive experience and living critique of the unsustainable and coercive temporalities of everyday food cultures, one which is literally consumed by present and future audiences of the work.

All design(ing), says Tony Fry, is design in time (2012: 112). While much design focuses on the production of objects as static and closed forms, ontological design understands 'the made' as a dynamic structure that goes on making; the things we design, design us via the relational complexity of material and immaterial conditions. Every deliberate act of making involves a dialectical move of unmaking; every act of creation an equivalent act of destruction. In the context of a world intent on masking those accompanying acts of destruction, which with increasing efficacy take away human and many other species' futures, these moves are named by Fry as *futuring* – the act of making time, and *defuturing* – that of negating time.

Futuring from an anthropocentric perspective aspires to extend (certain) human finitude, making our own time stretch a little further; though if we properly account for the various interconnected ecologies upon which our being depends, as demonstrated by the

critical actions of microbes in an ordinary jar of pickles, this becomes simply a question of scale. That jar might then say as much about our own uncomfortable relationship to mortality, both personal and planetary, as it does about the kinds of rich interspecies potentiality engendered by such a relational object. Further, design is ontological – it interpolates being in the process of making and unmaking. Says Fry, 'The way in which we make "things" and the way in which those things act, has a profound effect upon how we ourselves are made, and what we become' (1994: 136). This dialectical movement between making and unmaking, futuring and defuturing is at the core of 'sustainment' (Fry 2009), described as a continual project of ontological and cultural change whereby we collectively learn (how) to become otherwise.

In rendering the conceptual project of futuring as a sustaining food practice, Making Time interpolates the senses and makes sense-able and discursive an abstract idea. In this chapter we consider Making Time as both a philosophical proposition and material practice that enables reflection on the relationships between time, food and being, mediated by design in the modern world.

A New Refutation of Time

The Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges in his 1946 essay, 'A new refutation of time', writes:

> And yet, and yet [...] Denying temporal succession, denying the self, denying the astronomical universe, are apparent desperations and secret consolations. Our destiny [...] is not frightful by being unreal; it is frightful because it is irreversible and iron-clad. Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges. (1970: 269)

In this text, written just after the horror of the Second World War, Borges refers to the fear and inevitability of mortality. Now, the

refutation of time – *chronophobia* – is an embedded condition of contemporary western culture. Chronophobia is a term from philosopher Bernd Magnus describing a morbid fear of the duration or immensity of time, a loss of temporal bearing and the anxiety that results. We can see such anxiety playing out in the culture at large in the 50-billion-dollar-a-year cosmetics industry, which promises to resist or even wind back the disfiguring, entropic quality of time, in the memorialization of history as a finite and closed series of events, in the short-sighted ignorance and evasion of the realities of planetary change brought about by human actions, and as we shall see, in the food cultures that are the focus of this writing. Design acts as therapy for chronophobia, feeding our practices with more products, more environments, more infrastructure, more capacity to defy duration. *All design is design in time*: this is both a philosophical and political assertion. By specifying the normative conditions for 'comfort, cleanliness and convenience' in the words of Elizabeth Shove (2003) – design acts to hide, forget and delete time.

Unpacking the Fridge

Consider a prosaic urban food environment – the local supermarket, where the vast majority of Australians buy their food. This is, as anthropologist Eric Michaels (1990) observed from his bed in the infectious diseases ward of Brisbane Hospital, a species of site rich in contradiction. From the trolley-packed foyer to the brightly lit aisles of packages, endless rows of refrigerators, linoleum floors, lighting and air-conditioning, pop muzak, the floral-ethanol stink of cleaning products, checkout machines, plastic bags, signage, refrigerated trucks, car parks, stuffed bins and miscellanea spread further afield into streets, cars and homes, the supermarket brings together materials, images, resources and an aesthetic ambience that privileges presence and the illusion of permanence, and cuts away from consciousness the processes and earth-wrenching costs and inequities of making and unmaking.

Aristotle understood that the character of matter is revealed

through form (hylomorphism). In our extensively, intensively designed world, 'the most primordial role is not given to matter but to ideas' (Verbeek and Kockelkoren 1998: 30); it is the character of the idea that is given vital force through form.

Let us trace this assertion in relation to a 'fresh' supermarket purchase: an apple. It is ordinary now in the affluent west for an apple to be picked from a tree anywhere in the world, packed in foam and moved by refrigerated trucks or airplanes to cool storage for many months before being sold. Before it can wither and decompose, the apple is 'stopped' by refrigeration (and chemical treatment), allowing it to continue to conform to objective expectations, whilst the withering effects of time and the ecologically destructive impacts of refrigeration are concealed. This results in plenitude (as more apples make it to the supermarket), 'freshness' (recoded as cold crispness) and consistency of shape, colour and flavour (as the farmer, under pressure from monopoly buyers, will choose to grow only a variety that is pest-resistant, high-yielding and aesthetically homogenous), underpinned by expectations that are shaped (and reproduced) by the conditions of refrigeration that sustain flawless form at the expense of wholesomeness.

But refrigeration goes further than to snap-lock time and arrest the appearance of senescence. While the apple appears to be whole and sound, often waxed to 'enhance' the appearance of a healthy glow, this appearance conceals an inner corruption. It is without smell and often without taste, a form of sensory deprivation. Here is an aesthetic that belongs to industrial food. As Timothy Morton explains: 'aesthetics derives from perception, but the history of the aesthetic has been the story of how bodies, and especially non-visual sense organs, have been relegated and gradually forgotten, if not entirely erased' (2007: 165).

The apple is now a designed form, a standardized appearance that suppresses nature-as-becoming. Refrigeration slows ripening dramatically, but at the same time accelerates sensory decay. In eradicating the multisensory indices of time, refrigeration also puts out of practice the ability to glean information from smell. Smell thus departs as a design criterion; now fruit and vegetables come wrapped in

polyethylene with barcodes for efficiency and use-by dates to accommodate our sensory incapacities.

In time, the refrigerated apple will start to take on a unique set of properties derived from its adverse environmental conditions – a dull and slightly wrinkled surface with morbid blooms of discolouration, a grainy soft interior texture but without the healthy organic smell of rot.

In this scenario, we can see the refrigerator as a device of time management, order and control, but also a device of defuturing, generating waste and chaos. For every meal we make, the equivalent of another is wasted, in part because refrigerators act as sites of storage and forgetting. The current design regime over-specifies requirements – whether to serve aspiration or expectations of future growth – putting on offer more capacity than we could ever need and more disburdenment than is good for us, locking such excess up into specific forms and environments of everyday, modern life.

In Australia, a country whose food security is significantly challenged by climate change, we throw away 20 per cent of the food we buy each year and 47 per cent of municipal waste in landfill is food and green organic waste, which is a significant contributor of methane, a harmful greenhouse gas. Nutrient is thereby transformed into toxin by design.

The 'fridge' migrated from novelty to need in a relatively short period of time. Shove and Southerton (2000) call it a 'time machine' orchestrating patterns of food provisioning, domestic and industrial practice and allied technological devices. The fridge is also a device of unlearning. In its relatively short life, refrigeration has disburdened us of skills and knowledges associated with food preservation that once lived in practices and in conversations, skills and knowledges that we now need as we face and learn to adapt to a climate-changed future.

If the refrigerator were to be eliminated, many of us would be exposed in our designed ignorance of how to keep food or transform it into a keep-able state. If we were to actively design out the refrigerator, subject it to what Fry has called 'elimination design', or if it was

eliminated by less deliberate and more likely means such as a power failure, we would need to recover those practices, give them new life and disseminate them through modes of community initiation and social learning.

Preservation

Preservation, as a practice of maintaining the edibility of food through strategies like pickling, bottling, canning, salting, drying, curing and smoking, makes several interventions into the energy-intensive, wasteful scenario described above.

Figure 3
Tessa Zettel. Making Time (Berlin). Photograph by Tessa Zettel. 2012.

Preservation responds to the fact that freshness and ripeness are transitory moments in time that cannot be sustained indefinitely. However unlike refrigeration, preservation extends the useable life of the food into a 'long now', recovering nutrients that would otherwise be wasted and offering a form of convenience that is in distinct contrast to the defuturing offers of consumer culture. Preservation calls for sensitivity to phonological cycles so that food to be preserved is

captured within a certain window of time and is in fact transformed, often intensifying in taste and smell assisted by naturally occurring bacteria. The preserve intervenes in the process of organic decomposition in a way that requires practical knowledge but little energy and infrastructure, which makes it possible at a small community scale and with whatever materials are to hand. The act of preserving organic food calls for the sharing of knowledge, equipment and labour – fortifying the ethical structure of community. It is a practice that can be remembered, demonstrated, exchanged and tried for the first time. In these respects, preserving is an act of *making time*: it *futures* through the embodied act of making and its expression in the made.

Making Time: An Open Kitchen Project

Making Time is described as 'an experiment in non-institutional learning' and redirective practice (Making Time 2016). Fry (2009) posits redirective practice as that which seeks to deliberately mobilize existing (creative, energetic) momentum towards alternative directions. This requires an ability to reflectively interrogate what already exists – our physical, intellectual and emotional resources – and create opportunities for that potential to be realized otherwise.

As a knowledge-sharing infrastructure being perpetually rebuilt by those around and behind it, in relation to where it finds itself at any given time, Making Time enables participants to equip themselves for another culture of making, a food culture to come perhaps, as circumstances demand. It does this in a way that takes its own time, which must necessarily find room for failure and forgetting, for unlearning and unmaking. There is a strategy at work that involves gathering local contributors, ingredients and know-how, finding out what grows nearby spontaneously or in abundance at this time and what can be done with it, what bodies of knowledge have been overlooked or erased, what futuring means for a particular community or neighbourhood. Over the life of the project, Making Time has developed a rhythm, repeating itself in various iterations that are never quite finished, but always in progress and commencing anew. This

disposition applies to the form of the work – sometimes with mobile preserving cart, at others much more minimal, employing different modes of encounter in response to context – as much as to the recipes enacted within it, since no one is required to be an expert, least of all the artists and collaborators who might nonetheless have followed it from one place to the next.

Figure 4
Makeshift/Tessa Zettel. Making Time (Redfern). Performance Space, 'Matters of Life and Death'. Photograph by Matthew Venables, 2013.

The nomadic shape of the project makes tangible Fry's proposition of unsettlement, in which human communities displaced by climate change are confronted with the need to carry equipment and source materials and resources on the fly, without the security of the stockpile. Unsettlement presents new ontological conditions for the exchange, reuse and sharing of knowledge and materials. In performing these conditions, Making Time has adopted a particular charac-

ter and materiality; it accumulates experiences and information in the form of a library of books, notes and recipes, remnant jars with their written declarations, and online via a blog; a dialogue necessarily builds up between these moving objects or paraphernalia that takes advantage of its positioning both inside and outside the 'art world'. Inside it frames a territory for a practice that travels ahead of where the culture may currently be at, thereby demonstrating a culture to be. As an open platform for community exchange, it is collaborative and productive in a way that steps outside the limitations of the gallery, slipping in and out of the tacit rhythms of local economies and embodied practice.

Making Time can be understood as a form of 'commoning' in Gibson-Graham's terms. A commons is a property, a practice or a knowledge that is shared by a community; 'commoning' is the active identification, making and sharing of these commons. To the initial set of biophysical, cultural, social and knowledge commons enumerated by Gibson-Graham et al. (2013), we might add existing designed resources, infrastructure, environments, objects – all of which are open for redirection within the process of making time. Commoning seeks to clear a space for another way of doing, building on the 'already made' and creating opportunities for bartering, sharing and gifting. As such, it can antagonize a system that promotes the individualization of property or commodities and perpetrates monetary forms of exchange that have produced such dire inequities in the current monopoly food system.

Making Time wrests back the potential for more sustaining food cultures locked up in products like the fridge, whose coercive temporality and designing impetus as we have seen produces conditions that are both ecologically toxic and entirely normative.

In recovering practices of food preservation and kitchen craft that had their cultural moment before the fridge came into play, Making Time is a form of redirective practice that regenerates histories as much as prefiguring more sustaining futures. But in regenerating histories we need to recognize we are designing a world within the world

Figure 5
Tessa Zettel. Making Time (Woolloomooloo). NSW Visual Arts Fellowship Exhibition. Photograph by Tessa Zettel. 2014.

that we have already designed. The current interest in localism has more than a tinge of sentimentality about it that is important to resist or at least question. We need to design in and with the world we have, including its mess of existing temporalities and contradictory ideologies. In this world, every thing and site is, as Kiel Moe (2007) has argued, a 'mongrel' of local and global conditions. The water we use to grow organic food might contain contaminants; our backyard soil might come from chickens fed with genetically modified grain. It is impossible to immunize ourselves from the extensively and intensively designed world and the artificial ecologies that we have created, yet we can create opportunities for recovering the wasted and remaking the already made.

So the argument here is not that refrigeration and the food culture it helps hold in place need to be done away with entirely, but rather that we should understand how this culture designs us into a condition of dependency and ignorance, and divests us of community. If we used refrigeration more carefully, more cautiously, in tandem with preserving practices such as pickling, salting, smoking or drying, that call for more appropriate practices of harvest, food

acquisition, storage and reuse, as well as a nuance of sensory skill and proprioceptive capacity that has fallen out of practice, the technocentric momentum[2] imposed by refrigeration, which assumes the continuation of the current ecologically toxic food culture, might be loosened and displaced. The proposition is that in marking out a territory for such food techniques, practices and conversations to intensively flourish, Making Time becomes 'more than itself', opening up a space for other ontological possibilities to emerge.

Making Time as Cultural Practice

The following stories and recipes are shared to show how cultural knowledge can be regenerated and circulated via the experimental platform of a redirective project. Abby's account of the first two practices formed the epilogue to a conversation she led at Making Time (Redfern), a discursive pause between the fragrant handson dramas of Aunty Beryl's munthari berry and apple sauce, and Susie's pickled okra vs. Sarah's pickled gherkins. Each requires little in the way of infrastructure and can be done at home. They are offered here for your remaking.

Tomato Day is a traditional Italian food practice where a number of people come together and, in the space of a day, bottle peak-season tomatoes in the form of *passata* (fresh tomato sauce), to be meted out over the coming year. Tomato Day captures high summer and makes it available at any time. It honours and regenerates tradition, exercises skill and depends on an orchestration of shared responsibility. Tomato Day is an antidote to the downward spiral of careless unsustainability. Each complete bottle satisfyingly lined up at the end of the process is a small gift of time. Abby recalls working away covered in tomato sauce, the fruit acid biting into her hands, realizing it was the first time in a long time that she had spent a whole, unbroken day conversing with friends, traversing a wealth of topics and collectively progressing shared thinking, somehow enhanced by hands engaged in a practical, creative task. This is certainly something worth making time for.

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Endnotes

1 The exhibition entitled p4 (pilot), co-produced by Performance Space and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), was held at PICA as part of their Now Right Now! Season of Live Art, 18–21 November 2010.

2 See Fry (1999) on 'autonomic technocentricity' (Chapter 8).

EAT ME

BY ABBY MELLICK LOPES, TESSA ZETTEL

Tomato Passata

- Egg tomatoes – you will get twelve bottles per box.
- Slice tomatoes in half and turn inside out – squishing slightly (wear rubber gloves if your hands are sensitive to acid).
- Simmer tomatoes until red foam appears on the surface of the water and skins start to retract (don't add extra water).
- Drain tomatoes and carry over a bowl to the food mill.
- Pass tomatoes through food mill to separate seeds and skin from pulp.
- Using a funnel, put tomato pulp into bottles (can add basil, chilli or oregano for flavour).
- Using a brewer's capping device, cap bottles.
- Placing a towel in the boiler, boil bottles in water for one hour (time from when the water starts to boil).

The *passata* will keep for at least a year.

Abby's Portuguese mother-in-law grew up not much more than a half century ago in rural Portugal, with none of the convenience devices we have at our disposal today. Over an open fire, she learned to dry and cure meat so that it could be eaten over a long period of time. The curing combination of paprika, wine, garlic, salt, pepper, bay leaf, and olive oil is a powerful olfactory indicator of another world within which the concept of waste, such as we now know it, had little meaning.

Chorizo

Ingredients

Pork shoulder, no bone (Cut in small pieces or mince in manual machine)

Marinade

Paprika
Small amount of cumin
White pepper
Garlic (heaps)
Bay leaf
Salt (heaps)
White wine
Olive oil

- Leave for two days in fridge.
- Create sausage by funnelling mixture into pork intestines with your fingers.
- Tie with waxy string.
- Hang in open fire to dry for 24 hours or more (or over barbe- que).
- Store in olive oil in a box – for months.