What is Culinary Spatial Practice?

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Interior Architecture and Furniture Design

Abstract

This project explores the meeting between a culinary experience and interior of a space at the moment of dinner. Through essays – attempts – I focus on the movement of Nordic cuisine wondering how design can enhance the culinary experience of the eater. Through the act of translation, I wonder whether notions of seasonality, locality and emotivity can benefit design and capture the essence of a space. Balancing between critical theory, conceptual practice and personal sensibilities, this project serves to open a discussion on how we design culinary spaces of the present and eventually of the future.

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Introduction

Hella Jongerius
for Nymphenburg, 2004

A meal contains so much more than its ingredients, it contains sentiments of contentment, of feeling home and belonging and fascination for what is strange and new. It contains memories of what have have experienced and memories of what we do not know yet. A meal can be seen as a bearer of culture in its purest and densest form – for the good and for the bad, mirroring the contemporaneity. A meal and the way we eat is closely connected to the way we experience the world.

The evening dinner emerges as a focal point of cultural and social importance. Unlike breakfasts and lunches, which are often constrained by the rigours of daily schedules, dinners possess a unique fluidity. They begin at twilight and, and if one wishes, they can extend into the early hours – until breakfast.

Dinners have the notion of something ceremonial, an implicit invitation to partake in a shared experience that transcends mere sustenance. They are not just meals but rituals that foster a sense of community at the close of the day. The evening meal serves as a platform for the difficult conversations that demand more room than a lunch break can afford. Here, topics of significance find their voice, from personal dilemmas to global issues.

Historically, dinners have been at the heart of pivotal events. In certain cases, a dinner does not simply signify the end of a day, it can mark the end an era while making the guests aware of the transition with a blend of reflection and anticipation. Take for instance one of the world's most known dinners – the Last Supper. Jesus invites his disciples to dine together one last time, announcing his soon to come death – and thereby symbolising the dawn of a new time.

Alliances are forged, tempers ignite, and global politics shift—all over the course of a dinner. Consider also the Rothschild dinner party in December 1972, hosted by Baroness Marie-Hélène de Rothschild. It was not just a lavish feast with a surrealist theme but a gathering of influential minds, where conversations likely shaped the future of cultural and political landscapes. In this light, the evening meal is more than just a part of the day—it is a moment where history can pivot, and the future can be subtly, yet profoundly, influenced. The evening dinner, therefore, sits at an interesting border in time.

In this project, I focus on what it can mean in terms of interior architecture to create spaces for the ritual of dining. With the focus being put on the act of experiencing food, I wondered how personal sensitivities could be facilitated within a space and how the how the spatial experience could enhance the culinary experience. I was particularly interested in whether it would be possible to transpose values that we encounter within the world of cuisine to ways of working as an interior architect. As a designer I see myself as a facilitator, creating communication between objects, spaces and people. In this project it was to facilitate a dialogue between food and space. This is an act of translation between two realms.

What could culinary space entail? Looking for answers and possibilities, I approached culinary space from different scales – visible within the research and the result. I listened to farmers, spoke to chefs, artists and ceramicists, collected existing knowledge from writings of architects and theoreticians to continue building ideas on and conducted field studies from the perspective of being a guest.

Essays become my way of collecting ways to talk about the atmosphere of a space for dining. Through those descriptions I try to connect language used in culinary contexts with language used to describe architecture and spaces. The result is a collection of essays – attempts – with thoughts and observations exploring the relationship between space and food in the Northern Region, with focus on Norway.

Although this work engages with various theoretical concepts, its primary focus is on how these ideas apply to the practical field of interior architecture and design. Hence, the project is meant to be read and understood within the context of design practice, rather than purely as a theoretical exploration.

In this project, artistic research is used as a practical tool to build a foundation for design practice. It is a creative combination of research, translation and adaption to strengthen and refine the process of designing spaces for culinary experiences. The project uses a conceptual framework informed by critical theories and ideas to better understand design in the intersection of food and space.

My goal was not to create a technical and concrete guide on how to design spaces for Nordic Cuisine. Consequently, this work does not solve a space at a specific site. Moreover, exploring the spatial phenomena of kitchen or eating within the confinement of a home are deeply interested to me, however, I plan on exploring those in other future projects.

As of now, the collection is a process or a prototype – fluid and shapable, ready to be discussed, enriched with new perspectives, remodelled and improved. And that is exactly what I want it to be in this stage: a work that leads to a discussion on what culinary place is and what it can be, giving the reader a chance to reflect on their own encounters with spaces built around and for the experience of food. I believe that this artistic research can be of interest for various parties – those from the field of interior architecture, design and gastronomy and those that see space as an ingredient of a meal.

Fig. 1 One of the 17 tables at the Rothschild dinner party, 1972, artist unknown,
(https://www.messynessychic.com/2013/08/27/a-surrealist-parisian-dinner-party-chez-madame-rothschild-1972/)

Fig. 2 The Last Supper painted by Leonardo Da Vinci, photograph by Jean-Pierre Isbouts
(https://jpisbouts.medium.com/secrets-of-leonardos-last-supper-135dd2679ce2)

Background

Louise Campbell
for Royal Copenhagen, 2015

Background – Relation to Previous Work

***Sápmi Forever,* Bachelor project, 2022**
Sápmi Forever aims to celebrate Sámi culture from an outside perspective. A speculative transformation project in the former National Gallery in Oslo: How can design communicate between cultures? What can decolonialisation within interior architecture mean? Design focusing on culture in the background of ethnography, containing a journey through Northern Sápmi to meet Joar Nango, Regine Juhls and other artists, architects and activists resulting in a material palette consisting not only of physical materials but also of experiences and stories.

***All Eyes On Nybrua*, 2023**
Design focusing on what can be public space, democatic space and creative space. A project that points out gender discrimination within the architecture and design of public spaces – or as Jane Darke said, the "patriarchy written in stone". Not all public spaces are equally public. My approach wanted to highlight what a place would look like that is designed with equality in mind. I surveyed people of different genders and backgrounds to hear if they would walk underneath Nybrua at night. Using feminist critical design theory and psychogeography as well as the psychology of architecture to understand spaces of fear (the space underneath Nybrua) and reflect urbanist solutions for spaces that feel safer.

***Sleipnir*, 2021**
Designing the dining room of a restaurant in the former Veterinary school in Oslo, another transformation project. Looking back I realize that my focus then was on visual storytelling of the building's history. I explored the meeting between the architecture of the past and that of the future in the present – but I did not had no theoretical input on what it would feel like to dine there, how the space went together with the food.

Visualisation from *Sleipnir*

***Time and Space in Nordic Cuisine,* 2023**
The first steps of coming closer to working with the meeting between Nordic Cuisine and interior architecture. What would a dinner table look like if one would dine at KhiO?

***The Tactility of Taste,* 2023**
Approaching the meeting between Nordic cuisine and interior architecture for the first time through text and theory. Excerpt of Professor Theodor Barth's precisation about my essay: "Your case-studies of people who work with Nordic cuisine, in the spirit of the 12 chefs, are not fed by ideas, but by practices. So, you take Nordic cuisine a step onwards from where it is now. Which is also why I think I sense that the cycles, food sources and and dishes that you describe at the pace of the seasons, to me become a prism to look into the architecture." (Barth, 13.12.2023, paper correspondence)

Visualisation from *Studio 3, Time and Space in Nordic Cuisine*

Time and Space in Nordic Cuisine, 2023 – The first steps of coming closer to working with the meeting between Nordic Cuisine and interior architecture. What would a dinner table look like if one would dine at KhiO?

A love story in cutlery: Fork and Knife by Arne Korsmo, a former professor at SHKS. Spoon on the right by Grete Prytz, student at SHKS and later wife to Korsmo. Both sets produced by J. Tostrup, father of Grete Prytz.

Taking notes at Re-Naa. What a joy to recognize the plates from Odd Standard from earlier the day when I visited Tonje and Constance at their studio

Background – Conceptual Framework

I explore the meeting between a culinary experience and the interior of a space at the moment of a dinner. I wonder how design can enhance the culinary experience of the eaters. I wonder whether I can transpose the values of how produce is being approached within a cuisine movement into ways of designing an interior. I focus on the movement of Nordic cuisine. Following qualities make this movement interesting to me as a designer:

I. The focus on seasonality in combination with locality
II. The aim to capture the essence of the produce and preserve this essence from the moment it leaves the soil until it is plated
III. The curiosity about how traditional produce or methods can be adapted in new, experimental ways.

I wish to engage with the act of translation and its communication. How can I as a designer translate cultural values into ways of designing an interior? How can I spark a conversation about how we can design spaces to enhance the culinary experience?

What are the ideas that frame this quality?

To explore how one can capture the invisible essence of a space

To explore elements within preservation and fermentation food as a way to think about conservation and transformation within architecture

To explore the emotional aspects of dinner spaces

Background – Referential Framework

1. References of *experimental nature*:

1.1 Spora, Copenhagen
Spora is a "global food research center, grounded in experimentation" (Spora, n.d), founded in late 2023 by chef Rasmus Munk as "the natural evolution of the creative and disruptive universe at restaurant Alchemist in Copenhagen" (Spora, n.d). Since its opening in 2019, Alchemist has worked on research collaborations with universities and commercial partners, combining gastronomic expertise, scientific knowledge, and a deep well of creativity to pioneer new foods and technologies.

1.2 Oslo Matsymposium 2023: Universet er Lokalt
A symposium with the purpose to "democratise the conversation about food, across disciplines" (Matprisen, 2023), fostering a critical, reflective and inclusive dialogue on the future of food. Discussions and explorations on how the agriculture and food industrie can be reshaped through collaboration and public conversation. Meaningful talks and discussions by and with:
Dr. May Rosenthal Sloan, Heidi Bjerkan, Máret Rávndá Buljo, Bjørn Inge Melås, Sophia Efstathiou, Edona Arnesen, Else Skålvoll Thorenfeldt, Erika Barbieri, Magnus Thorvik, Alex Murray-Leslie

1.3 Das Symposium: "Esskulturwandel"
by *Die Gemeinschaft,* Berlin, 2023 with Billy Wagner from Nobelhart & Schmutzig Berlin thematising questions like "Do you know where your last dinner came from?"

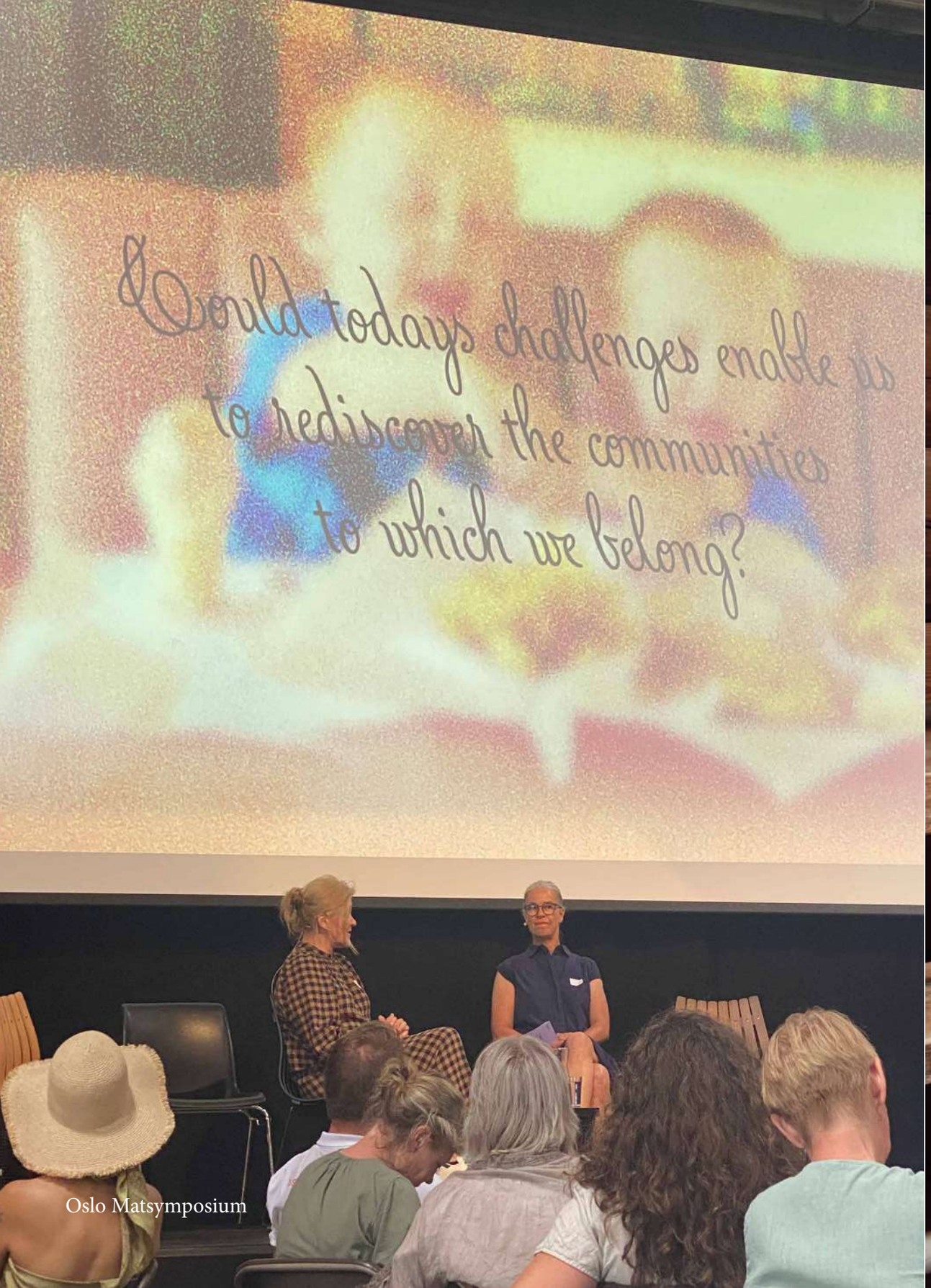
1.4 *Losæter*, Oslo
Bakehouse by Flatbread Society and Future Farmer Architects, 2016: A public place to meet around food from its beginning as a seed to its experience as a meal

1.5 MOLD Magazine

One of the most amazing, most inspiring, wonderful magazine that exists in this world. It comes as 6 printed issues discussing the future of food and culture through experimental and poetic essays and interviews. *MOLD* is critical theory in the intersection between science, design, art and food. Examples of great essays from Issue 5:

> *The Care of Seed – An Entangled Kinship* by Pelin Tan with artworks by *Moonsick Gang*
> An essay elaborating how seeds carry cultural history and generations of celebrations and traumas in their DNA.
> "They carry histories, heritage and methodologies, which intersect with human knowledge of the Earth and nature." (Tan, 2021)
>
> *Fermentation as Care* by Dr. Johnny Drain with art by Dante Carlos:
> An essay discussing the reciprocal care-giving between humans and microbes in the light of historical migration movements where the migrating people brought their microbial cultures (for instance yoghurt) to maintain an emotional connection to what used to be *home*. Drain beautifully states that "when we ferment, we build and design systems that centre care-giving as a practice." (Drain, 2021)

1.6 Paola Antonelli,
senior curator of architecture and design and Director of Research and Development at the Museum of Modern Art. Especially her statements in:
the *Art and Obsolescence* podcast episode, 20th September 2022, where she talks about her role as a designer and curator to be a "trusted guide". And *On Food and Education* for *The Common Table* arguing how "everybody is touched by food, so food is a perfect way to carry my message about design" (Antonelli, n.d.).



Oslo Matsymposium

Sagastuen, Norsk Folkemuseum, Oslo

Losæter

Esskulturwandel

2. References conveying a meeting *between practice and theory*:

2.1 *Ecologies of urban gardening*, 2022

An artistic research project and doctoral thesis at NTNU by Bjørn Inge Melås.

The project identified five key themes that emerged through the exploration of urban gardening, each offering insights into the practice and its broader implications. He describes how "urban gardening can transform a space and its people to become more diverse and related this to Guattari's term *heterogenesis* – the production of diversity, which is a counterforce to the capitalist homogenization of the world and the human subjectivity." (Melås, 2022, p. 515) The experience of urban gardening not only enriches the visual and sensory aspects of an urban space but also fosters a deeper connection between people and their environment. Moreover, the slow, deliberate process of building and nurturing soil contrasts sharply with the rapid, profit-driven pace of capitalist production, offering a critique of how time is valued and used in different economic systems. Melås collects thoughts and ideas on how urban gardening can be a place for meeting and connecting – on a physical spatial level and on a metaphorical level describing the coming together of design with ecological, social and political perspectives.

2.2 *Ein Kleines Haus*

(*Petite villa au bord du lac Léman*, 1923) by Le Corbusier, published as a book in 1954

The epilogue of the book, written by Guillemette Morel Journel and titled "The Life of a Famous Small House", emphasises Le Corbusier's role of being both designer and author of the small house. In 1954, Le Corbusier wished to dedicate one of his smallest books, "Une petite maison", to one of his smallest buildings. Over the years, the architect analysed the design development, the construction site, the function, and the spatial disposition of the house - and ultimately its "life".

Journel argues that Le Corbusier thus took on a reciprocal position, a *mise en abyme*, a self-referentiality between author (of the text) and designer (of the architecture). The author becomes an exegete, an interpreter, of the work of the designer – eventually mirroring himself in himself. "As both an exegete and theorist, the representations of his own buildings provided him with the opportunity to formulate and illustrate the various elements of his doctrine"(Journel, 2020).

2.3 *Everything is Architecture*

by Hans Hollein, 1968. In his work *Alles ist Architektur* (*Everything is Architecture*), Hans Hollein wrote something on the meaning of architecture, that I like to recall. To me these words show facettes of the intricate connection between theory and practice.

"Architektur ist kultisch, sie ist Mal, Symbol, Zeichen, Expression.
Architektur ist Kontrolle der Körperwärme – schützende Behausung.
Architektur ist Bestimmung – Festlegung – des Raumes, Umwelt.
Architektur ist Konditionierung eines psychologischen Zustandes."

"Architecture is cultic, it is mark, symbol, sign, expression.
Architecture is the control of body heat – protective dwelling.
Architecture is the determination/decision – definition – of space, environment.
Architecture is the conditioning of a psychological state."
– own translation

2.4 *The Eyes of the Skin*

by Juhani Pallasmaa, 1996, discussed in *Method*

2.5 *Thinking Architecture* and *Atmospheres*

by Peter Zumthor, both 2006, discussed in *Method*

2.6 *Om bygningskulturens transformation*

by Christoffer Harlang (Editor) and Albert Algreen-Petersen (Author and editor)

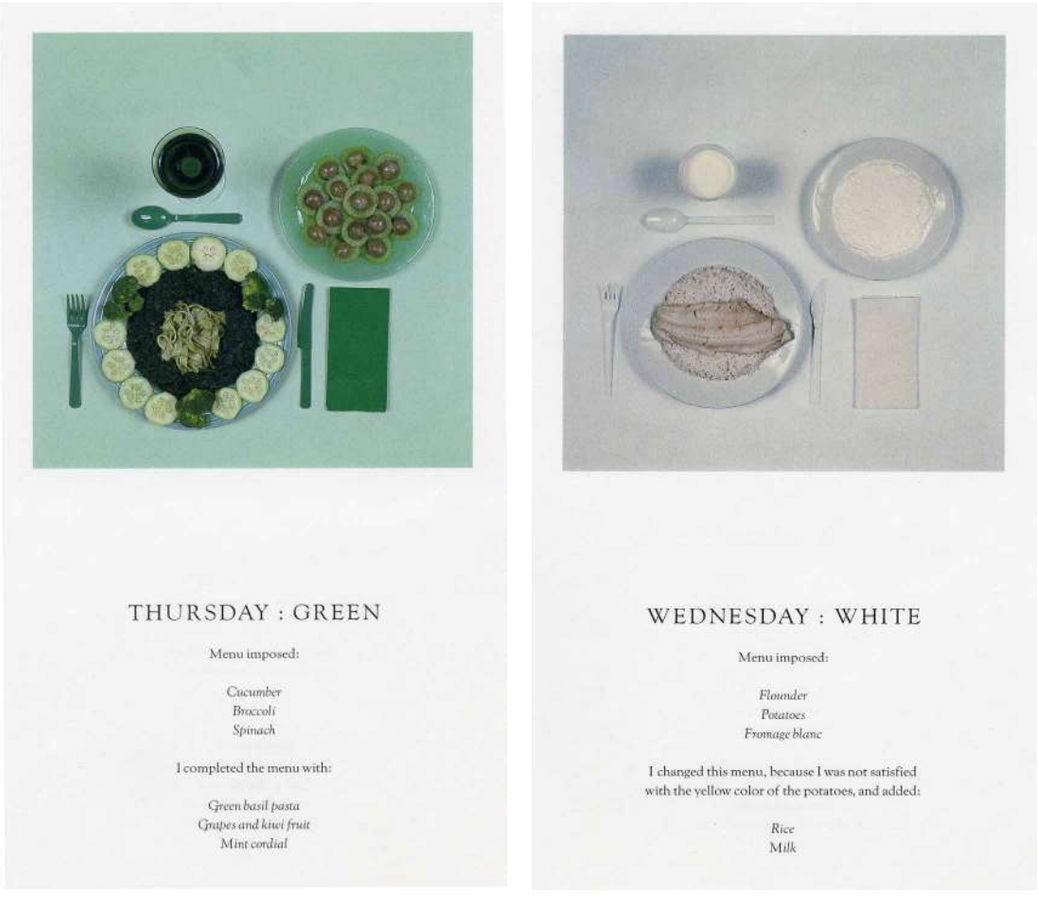
3. References conveying the *emotive aspects*:

3.1 Conversation with Jean Badovici and Eileen Gray
on emotionality, 1929

3.2 Sophie Calle
True Stories; Rachel, Monique...; Prenez Soin De Vous; Double Game, Le Régime Chromatique: Emotivity through story telling and book design

3.3 Sigri Sandberg – *Ro*
Description of how the connection of emotionality and locality

3.4 Gaston Bachelard – *The Poetics of Space*
Description of emotionality through daydreaming in space



Sophie Calle, Le Régime Chromatique
https://www.bagtazocollection.com/blog/2020/5/2/female-study-sophie-calle

4. References for works of *translation*:

4.1 Christian Norberg Schulz – *Genius Loci*
(and how his misinterpreted translation of Heidegger is a cautionary tale)

4.2 Ida Blom – *Houses to Die In*
Translating the art works of Bjarne Melgaard into a building

4.3 Anette Krogstad
Desiging a plating set showing the feelings connected to the shifting seasons in abstract images

4.4 Odd Standard
Constance Kristiansenand Tonje Sandberg – Translating values of Nordic cuisine into ceramic objects for eating

4.5 Sissel Wathne – Wathne Studio
Translating values of Nordic cuisine into ceramic objects for eating: explorations of using the waste of meals from restaurant *Credo* such as langoustine shells and reindeer bones to create the glaze for the plates used to serve these meals at the restaurant

4.6 Renaa
Translations through a meal: fieldstudy of taste and experienced space, interview with Sven Erik Renaa

4.7 *Noma*
by René Redzepi, early reflections on the beginning and creation of the movement Nordic cuisine and Noma as an experiment

4.8 *Noma 2.0*
by Mette Søberg, René Redzepi, Junichi Takahashi – A more matured way of looking at Nordic Cuisine, reflections on Nordic cuisine as an established culinary movement on global scale

4.9 The Noma Guide to Fermentation
by David Zilber, René Redzepi

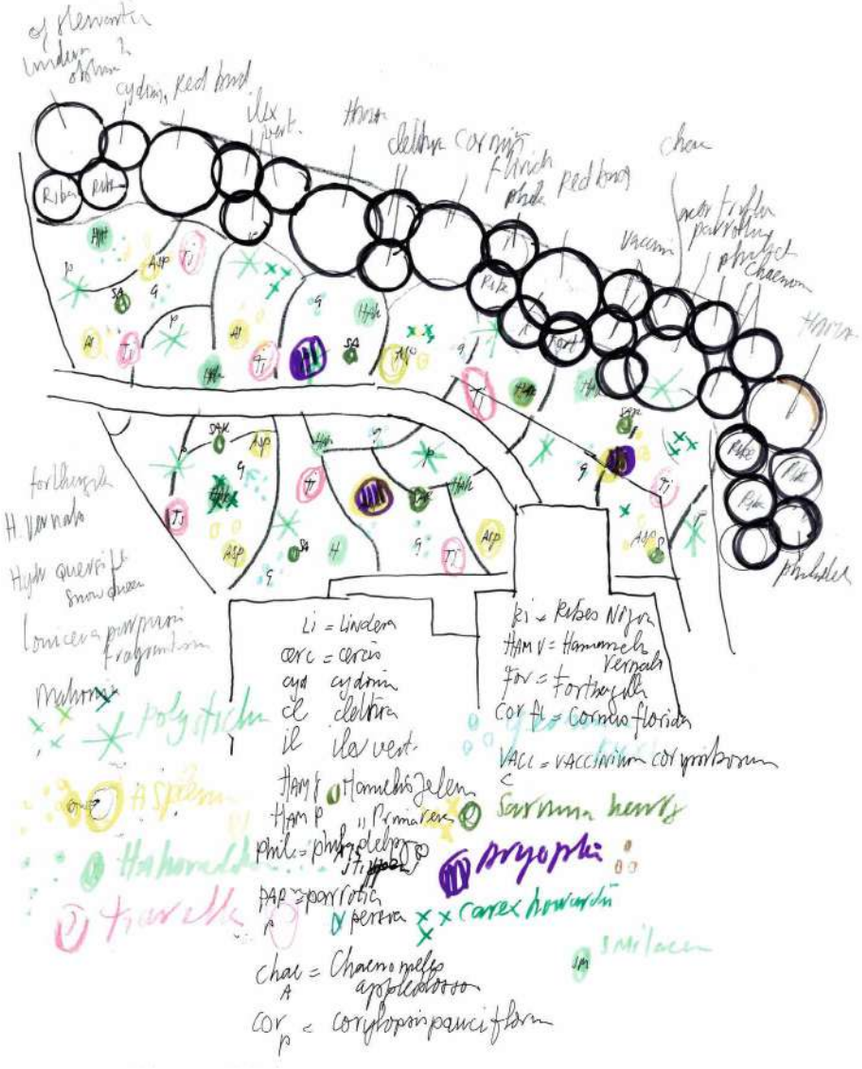
4.10 Magnus Nilsson
Fäviken: 4015 days, from beginning to end

4.11 *The Flavour Thesaurus*
by Niki Segnit

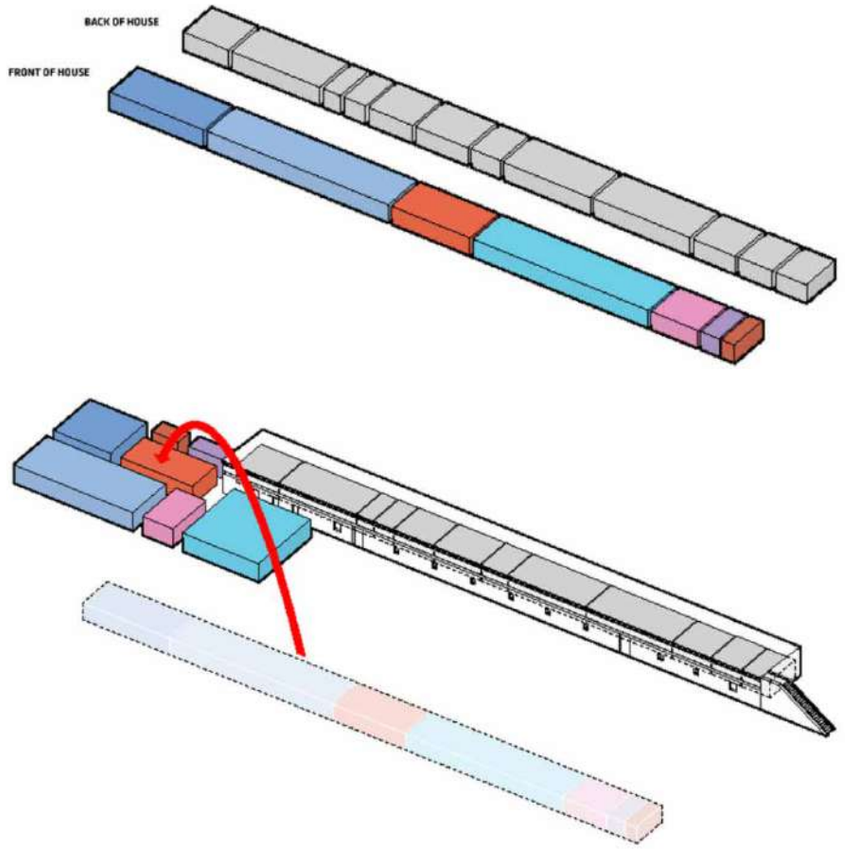
4.12 *Poetry is Growing In Our Garden*
by Anders Frederik Steen:

4.13 Piet Oudolf
Translation through gardens/ landscape architecture

Noma (4.8)
4.8.1 Conceptual reference

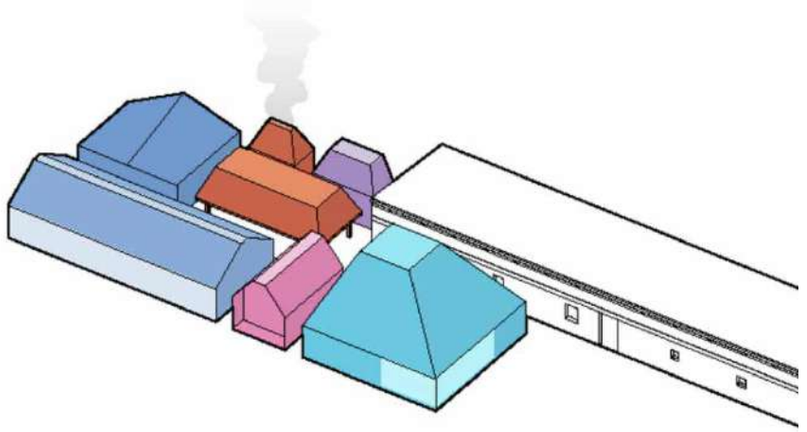


Piet Oudolf planning the periennial garden for Noma
https://www.houseandgarden.co.uk/article/piet-oudolf-garden-noma



Program:
Similarly to the "sæter", half of Noma's program - the front of house program that is the primary experience of the guests - is split into individual units by function.

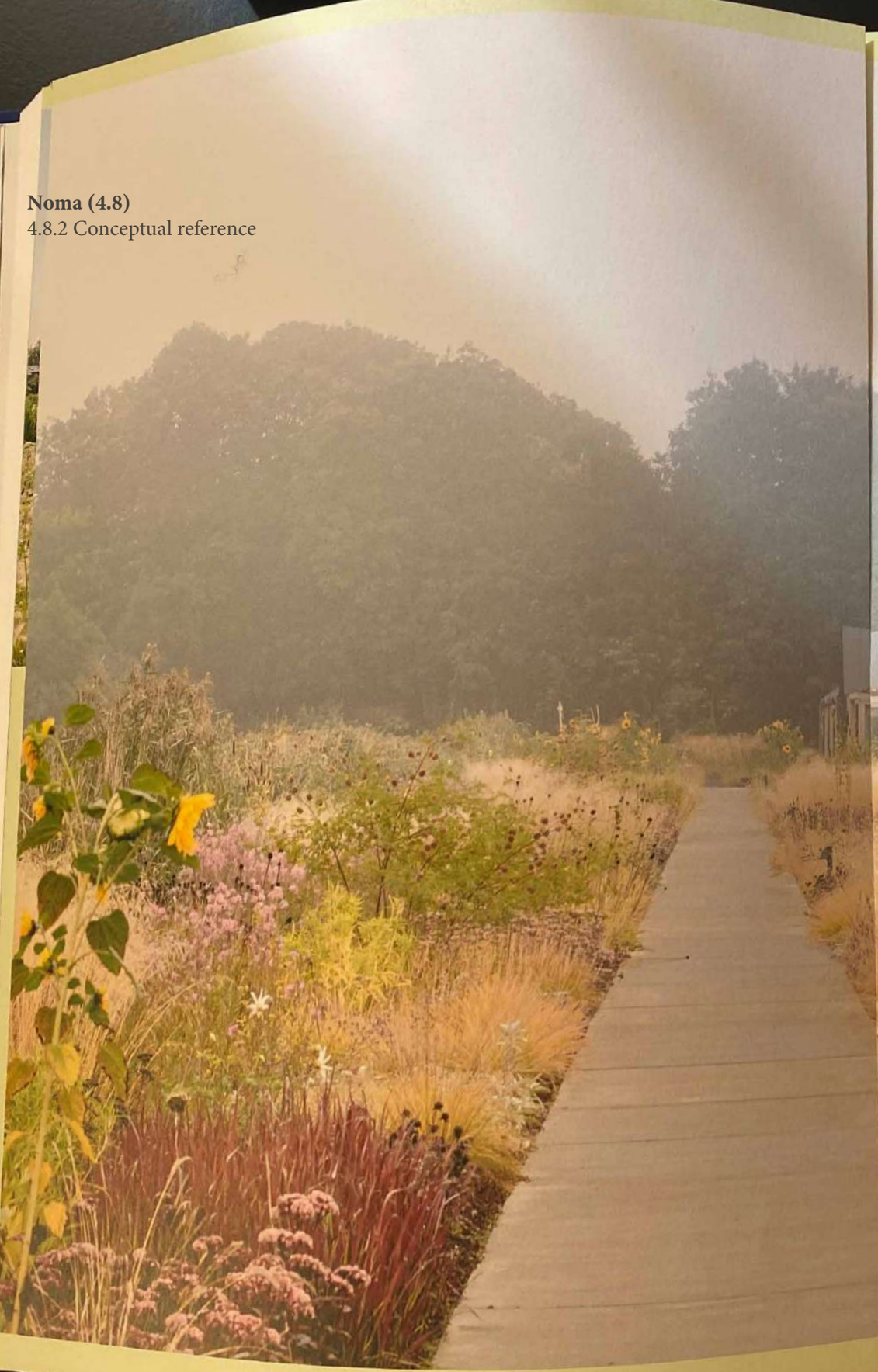
Front of house program:
The front of house program is arranged inside the allowed footprint at the south end of Sominedepotet in a strictly organized cluster of small buildings.

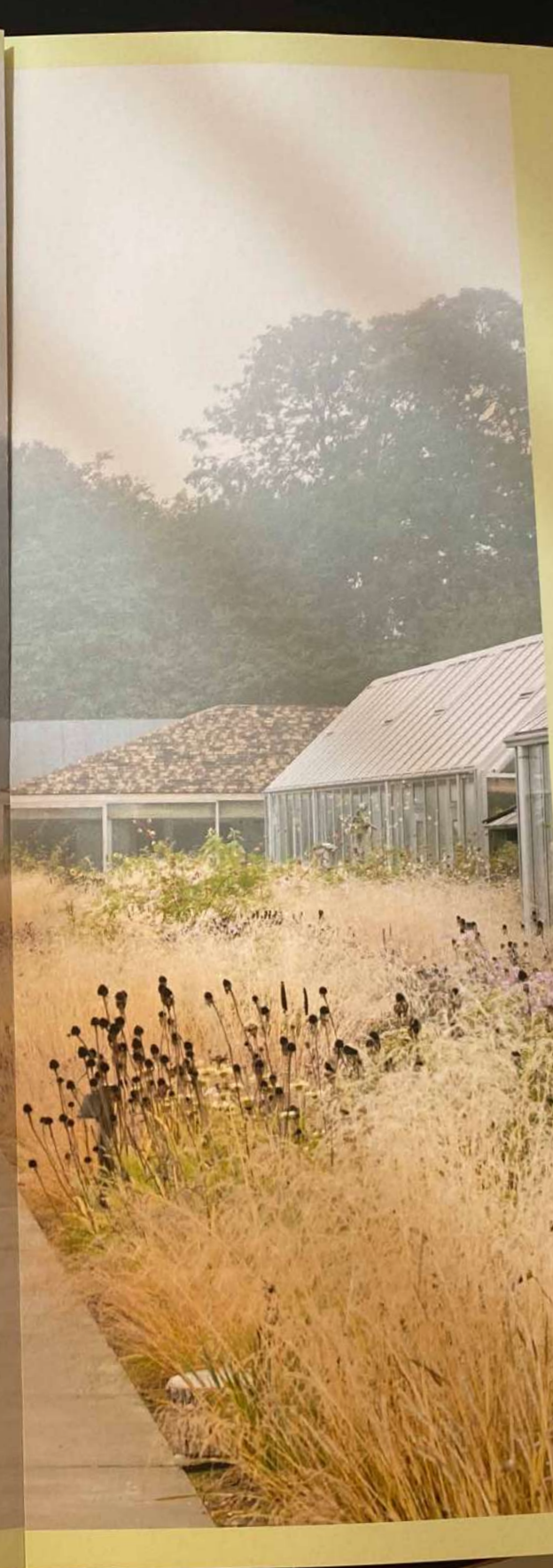


Village:
Each of the 7 small buildings including the Service Kitchen are designed according to its specific function and the desired views, light and atmosphere. Together they form a village insprired by a traditional sæter of different architectural experiences that accompany the gastronomic main course of the guests' visit at Noma.

Planning concept of NOMA 2.0 by BIG Architects, 2017
https://www.archdaily.com/902436/noma-big/5ba45ba8f197cc5b9300006d-noma-big-diagram?next_project=no

Noma (4.8)
4.8.2 Conceptual reference





were considered unworthy of gardens. My love of grasses might be a product of my childhood in the Netherlands, growing up on the edge of the dunes. There was only a fence separating my parents' house from a nature preserve.

Grasses became a way for me to create more spontaneity than I saw in the stiff, decorative gardens of the past with their clipped boxwood hedges. In combination with other plants, grasses can act like filters, breaking stronger colors and softening the overall palette. Grasses have more staying power and start flowering late. They bring sensual movement to a landscape.

More important, they remind you of the wild and where we come from.

They evoke the prairie and other untouched landscapes. It's a romantic idea. As our longing for those untouched spaces grows stronger because of our built-up environments and the loss of diversity, gardens have become more naturalistic.

I work in four dimensions. Even in the design stage, I have to have timing in mind. With every plant I choose, I have to know what it will do this summer, and the summer after, and maybe five years from now. And I have to consider its character. It's a bit like casting. When I start on a new project, I create a palette of plants that I think I can use. Then I start intuitively putting them on paper, considering their qualities as individuals and as team players. A plant might be beautiful on its own but not get along well with others. You can't have all prima donnas. But you can make the same plant a prima donna in one garden and a chorus member in another.

The menu at Noma is determined by the seasons: in the summer, food comes from the garden; in the autumn, from the forest; in the winter, from the sea. My perennial gardens make the seasons tangible by honoring the life cycle of plants. In traditional horticulture, if a plant was no longer in flower, you'd cut it back or pull it out of the earth and replace it with another. The aim was to maximize color and bloom for as long as the climate allowed. There was a constant in-and-out of plants, which required a lot of labor.

Planting for all seasons reconnects us with the natural process of transformation. Allowing a plant to grow and flower, to die and decay in full view, can remind us of our own mortality, like skulls in the still lifes of the old Dutch painters. But it also invites us to discover the beauty of structure, the sculptural intricacy of a seed head, the way a plant's skeleton appears etched against the sky. A tree without leaves is still beautiful. Besides, plant skeletons can animate a garden in winter, providing shelter for insects and seed for birds. A good skeleton can be as beautiful as a flower, and more personal.

My gardens are probably an expression of my inner self. I try to create a vision that moves people as it moves me. What's important to me is the depth of a visitor's experience. A good garden activates multiple layers of emotions, sensations, and thoughts.

I want people to feel more than they see.

Piet Oudolf's garden for Noma
Noma 2.0, pp. 114 -115

Nordic Cuisine as a Theoretical Framework

Birger Kaipiainen for Arabia, 1969

Nordic Kitchen Manifesto

Culinary experiences connect us locally in the terrestrial (Barth, 2024, personal correspondence). One of the cuisines in the world that embodies and values locality is Nordic Cuisine. Having followed it over the years, I can describe it as a movement focusing on geographical and emotional proximity of people, places and produce. Within this work, Nordic Cuisine marks a place of beginning.

This year, in 2024, the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto marks its 20th anniversary. Back in 2004 twelve chefs from the Nordic region signed an agreement on committing to redefining Nordic cuisine by emphasising locally sourced, seasonal ingredients and sustainable practices. The concept of Nordic cuisine – time and place, as one of the signatories, chef René Redzepi, rightly coined it – is simple, however, understanding and living by these principles is quite complex.

The Nordic Kitchen Manifesto contains ten statements that were signed by twelve chefs from all politically independent regions belonging to Scandinavia. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Åland and Finland hereby agreed to officially work together and build a culinary world with what the soil and the sea give them – fostering a deep connection between food, culture and nature. However, one of the reason Nordic cuisine became such a success lies in the fact that the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto was backed by a geopolitical intent from the start: Strengthening the trade connecting between countries of the Nordic region and thereby strengthen Norden as a region in a global context (Nordic Co-operation, n.d.).

I am not sure whether following information is relevant to understanding what the manifesto seeks to communicate, but as this was a project with a clear political intention, I think it is worth adding that all twelve parts who signed the contract were male and Inuit and Sámi culture were not officially part of this multi-national representation and agenda.

This kitchen manifesto became a way of approaching produce on a global base. In fact, the basic principles of the manifesto could actually be applied anywhere in the world. The concept goes beyond the postulation of country boarders.

1. To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate to our region.

2. To reflect the changes of the seasons in the meal we make.

3. To base our cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics are particularly in our climates, landscapes and waters.

4. To combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being.

5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers - and to spread the word about their underlying cultures.

6. To promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild.

7. To develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products.

8. To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.

9. To combine local self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products.

10. To join forces with consumer representatives, other cooking craftsmen, agriculture, fishing, food, retail and wholesales industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and authorities on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries.

The Nordic Kitchen Manifesto describes values and goals that were formulated for the world of gastronomy, but that I believe can be to some extend transposed to the world of design and architecture. I had began to explore possibilities of transposing the values in these statements in a past project, Studio 3 in the masters. I had tried to translate the kitchen manifesto into what could be seen as a more or less universal design manifesto – without getting to a solution I was content with. At that time, I tried to directly translate "produce" into "material" and "meal" into "space". I soon had to realise that there are different demands to food and building materials on an elementary level. In the MA project I returned to this task – now, enriched with knowledge from interviews with chefs and theory – able to meet the statements with a new and broader understanding.

In addition I asked Elisabeth Kress, one of the founders of the green Michelin-starred restaurant K2 in Stavanger, to outline what her key values and understanding of Nordic cuisine were. In a mail, she wrote back:

> *Rent*/ Simple – not overly explanatory or complicated.
>
> *Råvarefokusert*/ Ingredient-focused – using what naturally grows around us, requiring minimal human intervention.
>
> *Lokalt*/ Local – supporting local actors working under the same regulations as us. This allows for close collaboration and a circular economy in our counties. (Personal correspondence, 2023)

I believe that the first statement – *To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate to our region* – might need additional explanation regarding the use of the word "purity", especially after my introduction of the manifesto mentioning the absence of collaboration with indigenous communities. My concern was that "purity" can in fact be misguiding through its connotation. It is not to be read in a ideological or religious way.

A translation into a Scandinavian language might help. In Norwegian, the word "ren" is used in the context of Nordic cuisine, produce and the taste of it – an adjective that can be translated into the ordinary word "clean". When talking about "purity" regarding taste and produce, I interpret it – especially after a number of conversations I had with different Nordic chefs and designers – as "simple" in the most positive way of its meaning – "free from what is not essential".

What both words – pure and simple – seek to describe, can be understood as the essence of something. The essence of a produce, a meal or a region. Kress provided me with another possible way to interpret "purity" as "simple", intertwined with the importance of focusing produce connected to locality and proximity.

Therefore, in my task of transposing the values of Nordic cuisine to spatial qualities, I chose to interpret the notions of purity and simplicity as the act exposing essences. To work with what can be described as essences in architecture and thereby working with designing the experience of a space, touches on to the realm of phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's preface to his work "Phenomenology of Perception" is a way to explore the depth and intricacies of human experience. Even though his work is not exclusively about architecture, it provides crucial insights into the phenomenological approach that has significantly influenced architectural theory.

> "What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world." (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, preface)

Phenomenology in architecture, as I understand it, is a philosophical approach that aims to foreground the way a space feels and is experienced. It places emphasis on the immediate experience of a space through all our senses. It seeks to explore the human experience in the built environment, considering factors like materiality, light, texture, and spatial volumes that contribute to the subjective experience of architecture.

Christian Norberg-Schulz believed that understanding the essence of a place is what could be the path *Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. For him, it is the "spirit of the place", genius loci, that leads to finding and understanding architectural essence. "*Genius loci* is a Roman concept. According to ancient Roman belief every 'independent' being has its genius, its guardian spirit. This spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.18).

I recall the words René Redzepi, a man on mission to collect the tastes of the North, scribbled into his journal, midst in a snowstorm in Greenland: "it's about time and place and deconstructing habitats" (Skyum-Nielsen, 2004, p.14).

In fact, *place* seems to be what constitutes a meeting between cuisine and architecture. Following this thought, *place* could hereby become a key element to understanding culinary *space*. In other words, to understand and communicate culinary spaces, the notion of place is central. However, place has different roles and characteristics in cuisine and architecture.

Finding out what culinary spatial practice can entail, I asked myself what the relation between place and Nordic cuisine can mean. Connected to this question, I wondered in what ways we can find essences of place in Nordic cuisine – and whether that is something that could be explained through *genius loci*.

The direct relevance of this exploration to the field of interior architecture may appear abstract, but understanding how the notion of place is treated within Nordic cuisine is crucial. Place has a direct impact on space – for the way buildings and culture go together and find themselves together in a room. Gaining insight into the culinary context of place is essential for further exploring culinary spaces.

The Meaning of Place for Cuisine

The French have a term describing the essence found in a produce that is said to capture a sense of origin and connectedness to place: *goût du terroir*. The French word *terroir* is defined as the combined conditions offered by nature – soil and sun, wind and rain. "The *goût de terroir* (the taste of the earth, meant in the literal and not the pejorative sense) that typifies so many wines and foodstuffs is only the most immediate manifestation of this gastronomic specificity. On the metaphorical level, it inspires infinite possibilities of transformation and sublimation." (Weiss, 1998, p.26).

Author Allen S. Weiss closed the thought gap between cuisine and *genius loci* in his writings before. "The *genius loci* establishes the essence of cuisine" (Weiss, 1998, p.28). He explains that "Cuisine is a function of the *genius loci*, the spirit of the place. And one who says 'place' also says 'season', one who says 'earth' also says 'heaven'" (Weiss, 1998, p.26).

Cuisine – or simpler said – food is a manifestations of place in relation to time. Time and place incorporate the aspect of seasonality and locality which are key components of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto. And even though it might appear similar, I believe the relation from Nordic cuisine to place is different than *goût du terroir* – and thereby also slightly different to see in relation to *genius loci*. In French cuisine, the taste is directly connected to a region – for instance, the taste of the Provence – and thereby *genius loci*. *Goût du terroir* is *genius loci*. The produce tastes a certain way because it comes from a certain region with a certain spirit. One tastes the spirit of a place.

To be able to taste the difference in a produce based on the different soil it grew in is very subjective and depends on how experienced the eater is. To taste the soil and the water of a certain region is can be very personal and attached to an emotional and / or nostalgic relation to the region. However, that is what believers in *goût du terroir* claim is possible. And that is also why there exists the saying that regional kitchens do not travel as their taste is directly linked to a certain place.

Losæter, Oslo
A futuristic notion of place within cuisine?

Losæter, Oslo
An alternative notion of place within cuisine?

Nordic cuisine is an effort to communicate the essence of a produce (and its regionally Nordic origin – place) through a meal. The essence of Nordic cuisine lies in how a product can be prepared to protect its pure taste. And the purity of the taste is defined through freshness – which is in a practical sense related to the proximity to the origin. I believe that Nordic cuisine has a therefore more pragmatic approximation to place. Closeness and connectedness are necessary to behold freshness and purity of the produce – to behold its essence. The closer one is to where the produce comes from, the fresher it is, the purer its taste. Less travel time and logistics mean less impairment to the cells holding the fragile chemical balance which results in taste. Swedish chef Magnus Nilsson explains:

> "If you want to eat something truly exceptional, you almost always have to go to where it is produced, or at least pretty close. This is something unique to food in a globalised world, something that a lot of people have a hard time understanding. Perhaps it's hard to grasp because we are so used today to having all the information and most of the commodities we want at our fingertips all of the time, so why shouldn't this apply to food too? Well, it kind of does, if you settle for good or even great you can get pretty much what you want when you want and where you want it. But it just doesn't work if you are going for the exceptional." (Nilsson, 2020, p.72)

In short, while the French focus is on characteristics *terroir*, the Nordic focus is on characteristics of *produce*. Nevertheless, both result in a close connection between place and taste. However, drawing parallels between the concept of genius loci, viewed in the light of phenomenology, and cuisine can present potential pitfalls.

The Meaning of Place within *Genius Loci*

Christian Norberg-Schulz has written what can be described as the more prominent works trying to explain the essence of place for architecture. However, "his writings […] have attracted consistently high levels of critical attention over more than three decades.", introduces Rowan Wilken his paper on "The Critical Reception of Christian Norberg-Schulz's Writings on Heidegger and Place". Nevertheless of his provoking reception, architects, theorists and critics keep returning to his work.

What constitutes *place* for Norberg-Schulz? "A place is a space which has a distinct character." (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.5). Wilken elaborates that "place is thus understood by Norberg-Schulz to refer to 'the concrete manifestation of man's dwelling' and is constituted by material substance, shape, texture, and colour, all of which give 'character' or 'atmosphere'. It is through an understanding of all these factors—the 'total phenomenon' of a place and 'the meanings which are gathered by a place'—that an attentive reader of landscape is said to be able to arrive at an understanding of genius loci. In essence, Norberg-Schulz's argument is to repeat Alexander Pope's famous eighteenth-century exhortation to 'consult the genius of place in all'." (Wilken, 2014, p.343).

The Risks of Searching for Essence in the Notion of Locality

Genius loci comes with what Harriet Edquist describes as essentialist notions of national identity. Edquist is particularly troubled by this approach because it easily allows criticism, which she believes relies on fixed ideas of national identity, the "spirit of place", and the zeitgeist, to be used in creating myths that sustain authoritarian regimes. These regimes often leverage such myths to promote nationalism, which is a key factor in rallying people to engage in activities deemed politically beneficial. This indicates that such cultural and philosophical concepts can be exploited to support and legitimise authoritarian political agendas, promoting a unified national identity that aligns with the regime's objectives. (Wilken, 2014, p.347)

In his paper, Rowan Wilken points out how Edquist's sharply critical response to Norberg-Schulz's work is noteworthy because it aligns with a range of philosophical debates occurring at the same time about the concept of "community" and its associated problems. This means that Edquist's critique not only targets Norberg-Schulz's specific ideas but also reflects broader philosophical discussions about the nature, formation, and implications of communities.

Harriet Edquist, referencing the philosophers Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, explains that both were deeply concerned with the dangers associated with a concept of community centred around a singular identity. They were wary of the totalitarian tendencies that could arise from such notions, especially when community projects were linked to specific places. Their work highlighted the risks of defining community through a uniform identity, which could lead to exclusionary or authoritarian practices, emphasising the need to critically examine how communities are conceptualised and tied to place.

Harriet Edquist advises against relying on essentialist notions of national identity and genius loci because these ideas can be manipulated to create myths that sustain authoritarian regimes and promote nationalism. This criticism reflects broader philosophical debates, particularly those by Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, who warn about the dangers of defining communities through singular identities, which can lead to exclusionary or authoritarian practices. Instead, it is important to critically examine how communities are conceptualised and avoid linking them to rigid, place-based identities.

Within the Nordic kitchen manifesto one finds following statement that loosens up a potential rigid understanding of identity based on locality: *To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.* This perspective acknowledges the dynamic and evolving nature of culinary identity, allowing for a more inclusive and adaptive approach to tradition.

> "As the local food historian Howard Marshall notes, 'Like dialect and architecture, food traditions are a main component in the intricate and impulsive system that joins culture and geography into regional character.' In this sense, food and architecture are processes 'located' in the core of the individual as well as at the centre of communal culture. As such they incorporate as well as reflect an intrinsic territorial identity or character that is not fixed but can change over time." (Trabalzi, 2004, p.86)

Sigri Sandberg reflects over how culture is tied to places and places to culture. In her book "Ro" (a title that means both calmness and to row in Norwegian), she narrates her journey of attempting to row Sognefjorden in length.

A journey that takes her many months and is being divided into different attempts. She rows past places of her childhood and past places that she has no past memories of. I value her views on what constitutes the hidden essences of places. As an author and apple farmer on a farm in Sognefjorden that can only be reached by boat, her understanding of the relation between place and culture – and thereby indirectly also Nordic cuisine – is very interesting to me.

The traditional buildings dissappear beautifully and humbly into the landscape emphasising the strong notion of *place* here.

Visiting *Lyngheisenteret*, Bergen during a symposium on the future of Nordic wool. For dinner we were served sheep meat from the island and potatoes, June 2024

“Kva betyr det eigentleg å kome heim og å kome frå ein stad? Må det lukte barndom og kjøtkaker og stå nokon med skaut i døra og hynne på songar vi kan, når vi kjem dit? Eller er det noko meir ukontrollerbart, ein individuell miks av lukter og landskap og vêr og vind og folk og ting, kan hende hus. Legg vi for mykje i det? Legg eg for mykje i det? Kan hende er det fordi verda sjølv er så omskifteleg, at det blir så fundamentalt å legge meir vekt på røter enn på føter?” (Sandberg, 2022)

“What does it really mean to come home and to come from a place? Does it have to smell like childhood and meatballs and have someone with a scarf at the door humming songs we know when we get there? Or is it something more uncontrollable, an individual mix of smells and landscapes and weather and wind and people and things, perhaps houses? Are we putting too much into it? Am I putting too much into it? Perhaps it’s because the world itself is so changeable that it becomes so fundamental to place more weight on roots than on feet?” (own translation)

Sneaking modern objects into Folkemusum

The Risks of Trying to Rigidly Conserve a Place

The notion of remembering places of the past and feeling moved when revisiting brings us to another ethical framework of this project. The risk of designing with unreflected nostalgia.

> "Mennesker er eit flokkdyr, og felleskap kan konstruerast kring det meste: religion og mat og idrett og dyr og pust og politikk og natur og rørsle og idear og stader og slekt og ungar og land og gamle båtar og lengsler etter alt dette." (Sandberg, 2023, Kap.2)
>
> "People are herd animals, and a sense of community can be constructed around almost anything: religion and food and sports and animals and breathing and politics and nature and movement and ideas and places and family and children and countries and old boats and longings for all of this." (own translation), writes author and farmer Sigri Sandberg after rowing.

Norberg-Schulz is being critiqued for emphasising the notion of nostalgia through *genius loci* in his work. Critics argue that Norberg-Schulz's ideas are strongly traditional, nostalgic and romantic. His emphasis on traditional forms and old-world models is seen as a resistance to modern urbanism. This nostalgia is seen as ignoring contemporary realities and complexities. "For instance, despite Norberg- Schulz's own claim that 'to respect the genius loci does not mean to copy old models', his understanding of place and his vision for its (urban) revitalisation have been viewed by some critics as strongly traditional and nostalgic." (Wilken, 2014, p.345)

Norberg-Schulz's vision is rooted in a longing for the past and may prioritise preserving historical and cultural aspects over more contemporary or innovative approaches. This perspective suggests that his ideas might be seen as resistant to change, focusing on maintaining or restoring the historical character of urban spaces rather than embracing new developments. As Jivén and Larkham note in a 2003 article, "he promotes the traditional form of towns and buildings, which he sees as the basis for bringing about a deeper symbolic understanding of places". (Wilken, 2014, p.345)

Another critic, Linda Krause states that the writings of Norberg Schulz are "filled with a romantic nostalgia for medieval order, hierarchy, and unchallenged authority, they offer reassuring truths in an age of anxiety" (Wilken, 2014, p.351). Her critique can be seen in close connection to Edquist's statements on how a too rigid understanding of locality can lead to exclusionary or authoritarian practices.

While the nostalgic approach of Norberg-Schulz in emphasising the *genius loci* and traditional forms offers a deep connection to historical and cultural roots, it also carries the risk of fostering exclusionary or authoritarian tendencies by resisting modern urbanism and contemporary realities. This critique aligns with broader concerns about the need for a balanced perspective that embraces both the preservation of cultural heritage and the adaptation to evolving societal needs. Balancing these aspects becomes crucial to any design approach within interior architecture.

At the Oslo Food Symposium 2023, I was lucky to hear Dr. May Rosenthal speak in a panel discussion with curator Martin Braathen and designer Erika Barbieri. Dr. Rosenthal came with a very valuable thought on how to deal with nostalgia. She argued that despite the risk of looking back with rose tinted glasses and nostalgia to imagine the past, knowledge from the past must be valued. The past was to be viewed as a way of understanding the present and thinking of new roots into the future that are influenced by the best of what has existed – rather than fearing that kind of movement from an idealist past that has been (own notes and transcripts from the panel discussion in June 2023).

Traditional use of wood with *laftetеknikk*, Oslo

Bakehouse at Losæter with a construction in laminated wood, Oslo

Method

Hella Jongerius
for Nymphenburg, 2004

Between Practice and Theory

Working with design as means of communication, the division between what is theory and what is conceptual practice blurs. In Jane Rendell's Critique of Hilde Heynen's book *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*, Rendell mentions Heynen's exploration of the relationship between architectural design and critical theory, noting how navigating this can be "a tricky business". She emphasises that critical theory is in fact not the same as theory, unlike many architects believe it to be. Neither is critical theory a generalising narrative or an abstract set of thoughts (Rendell, 1999, p. 125).

According to Rendell, critical theory "has to be seen as a self-reflective form of practice in its own right, one that is both creative and speculative, that engages with the world and seeks to act to change things." (Rendell, 1999, pp. 125-126)

I have to be honest here and admit that I do not know whether this project partially categorises as critical theory – or rather the critical theoretical framework of a practice. Regardless, I don't believe that the category changes the aim of the project – to better the understanding of what the role of interior architecture can play for Nordic cuisine. I write as a designer to those that are interested in the meeting between interior architecture and food. And "what arises from Heynen's historical research (and I would agree with her) is that theory and practice are related in a complex dialogue, and that this dialogue can be understood only as it is played out over time" (Rendell, 1999, p. 126). My work holds no answers to navigate the line between critical theory and practice, but might provide glimpses of how they can meet during dinner.

Reading the words of Pallasmaa and Zumthor, their writing feels so hands-on, so pragmatical and so experienced (in the sense that what they write seems to be something they found out empirically through years of experiencing). Their way of describing ways to think about buildings and architecture was so tangible. Frankly, I felt that the writings of Pallasmaa and Zumthor had been exposed to reality, which gave their words such value. For me their form of writing became valuable advice.

In fact, it felt like a gift to read the experiences they shared. It felt like we, me the reader and them the author, took a long walk together, talking about architecture in a way, one would talk about an old friend. Especially Zumthor in "Thinking Architecture" uses such a warm way of narrating, starting with noticing details in houses of his child hood, houses and nooks and crooks the reader can relate to.

> I used to take hold of it when I went into my aunt's garden. That door handle still seems to me like a special sign of entry into a world of different moods and smells. I remember the sound of the gravel under my feet, the soft gleam of the waxed oak staircase, I can hear the heavy front door closing behind me as I walk along the dark corridor and enter the kitchen, the only really brightly lit room in the house.
> […]
> Everything about this kitchen was typical of a traditional kitchen. There was nothing special about it. But perhaps it was just the fact that it was so very much, so very naturally, a kitchen that has imprinted its memory indelibly on my mind. The atmosphere of this room is insolubly linked with my idea of a kitchen.
>
> Now I feel like going on and talking about the door handles which came after the handle on my aunt's garden gate, about the ground and the floors, about the soft asphalt warmed by the sun, about the paving stones covered with chestnut leaves in the autumn, and about all the doors which closed in such different ways, one replete and dignified, another with a thin, cheap clatter. others hard, implacable and intimidating. (Zumthor, Thinking Architecture, 2006, p. 9)

What makes this way of narrating so special to me, is that the descriptions – even though, or actually because – they are so concrete, are so easy to relate to. I do not need a picture of what his grandmother's kitchen looked like, I can relate to the description of the kitchen. I can understand the kitchen in my imagination. Zumthor's experience opens a window to my own experience.

In my imagination, in my attempt to imagine the kitchen, I comb my mind for similar impressions. What I find is the memory of visiting my family in Poland. They lived on the country side and had a farm and I remember looking for eggs in the garden as the chickens would sometimes lay the eggs in hidden spots in the garden, not in the chicken coop. I remember walking barefoot from the garden up the stairs into the house. I remember my great-aunt who used to put the eggs in a drawer. A drawer of the size one would usually expect to find cutlery in. And there would the eggs would loosely lay and there would be the sound of rolling eggs on wood when I opened and closed the drawer.

In my mind, I just narrated this memory to myself, I remembered it – happy, as it feels like forgetting won't happen as easy now. And through narrating it to myself, I feel like I have a conversation with Peter, even though he is not there. But for me, we are on a walk, a sandy path in an open forest maybe. Zumthor continues, "memories like these contain the deepest architectural experience that I know. They are the reservoirs of the architectural atmospheres and images that I explore in my work as an architect". And I agree and almost find myself nodding. "When I design a building, I frequently find myself sinking into old, half-forgotten memories, and then I try to recollect what the remembered architectural situation was really like, what it had meant to me at the time, and I try to think how it could help me now to revive that vibrant atmosphere pervaded by the simple presence of things, in which everything had its own specific place and form. And although I cannot trace any special forms, there is a hint of fullness and of richness which makes me think: this I have seen before." (Zumthor, 2006, p. 10), he carries on.

Of course, architectural description do not need to refer to childhood in order to be relatable, it is the description of ordinary, relatable experiences that become key to convey a sense of understanding. The reason I felt so connected to the writings of Zumthor and Pallasmaa is their ability to give value to even the most ordinary daily life interaction with a building. And that it was the most ordinary of those ordinary experiences that contain a sort of architectural essence which is of such interest for those that work with designing spaces. For example the touching of door handles.

> "The skin reads the texture, weight, density and temperature of matter. It is pleasurable to press a door handle shining from the hands of the thousands that have entered the door before us; the clean shimmer of ageless wear has turned into an image of welcome and hospitality. The door handle is the handshake of the building. The tactile sense connects us with time and tradition: through impressions of touch we shake the hands of countless generations.", writes Pallasmaa in Eyes of the Skin (Pallasmaa, 1996, p.40)

However, there is a difference in experiencing a space in life and through text. A well written description of how a space feels can provide a freedom of imagination, that a concrete situation in life can't. A text can give enough room to let the reader relate to the space and explore their own memories that help them relate in a pace they choose. The reader can daydream as long as they want between the lines.

Described Space

A built situation in life (to not say reality, since a descriptive text can be just as real), however, can set in motion all our senses – something that text can't. Suddenly one can feel the door handle, feel how much resistance it gives when pressing it down. One can touch the walls, the furniture, press cold steel buttons of an elevator that illuminate a little sign notifying that the touch has been received. Smell what the space is made of, whether it is the cold smell of stone, or old paint or the smell of the person that lives there. One can hear the footsteps on the ground, the way the wood bends and cracks or how the terrazzo ground echoes the sound of the leather and wood of a shoe heel against it. One can hear the sound of the surrounding life, whether its cars, insects, the leafs of trees, the breaks of the tram, the quiet sound of bikes. Or sometimes the absence of sound of the surrounding when standing on an upper floor in a building seemingly consisting only of steel and glass walls and windows that are sound proofed and one cannot open. And in desperation of hearing the surroundings one gets deafened by the minimal whirling of the air conditioning.

Ironically, through *reading* these examples one might have related just enough to them and made them feel real. In conclusion, descriptive writings have the ability to make known scenarios come to live in a way, that can be enough for the reader to understand – not enough for it to become a new experience for the reader, but, in fact, enough for the the reader to catch the drift.

Not every sort of description, however, has the talent to speak to the imagination of a reader. For instance, a very factual and technical description of space does not necessarily wake any memories for the reader. A space influenced by imagination gains personal meaning and significance. It's more than just its physical dimensions and properties. It's similar with recipes – the best recipes are those that convey the feeling of a dish even though feelings cannot be measured in grams, cups or millilitres. A good recipe leaves room for creativity. It isn't about getting a quarter of a teaspoon of salt right, it is more about understanding that different salts have different saltinesses and that it also depends on when you add it. And to not follow a recipe one must have an understanding of ingredients, techniques and taste that goes far beyond one dish. It takes knowledge and experience to break the rules correctly, as I discussed with artist and designer Anette Krogstad.

In his work, *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard emphasises the difference between an objective, measured understanding of space and a subjective, imagined one. When we imagine a space, it becomes more than just its physical attributes—it becomes a place filled with personal meaning, attraction, and a sense of safety. This imagined space has a unique power because it is intimately connected to our inner experiences and emotions.

> "Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect." (Bachelard, 1958, introduction, xxxvi)

The spaces of memory are rich in dream-like qualities and are difficult to describe accurately because doing so would strip them of their mysterious and intimate essence. These memories belong to the realm of poetry, which captures their depth and complexity, rather than straightforward prose, argues Bachelard. In other words, the essence of imaginative space is best expressed through poetry, which captures its depth and mystery, rather than through clear, analytical writing.

> "For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! […] For it belongs to the literature of depth, that is, to poetry, and not to the fluent type of literature that, in order to analyse intimacy" (Bachelard, 1958, p.13)

Moreover, a space is experienced emotionally and subjectively rather than being understood purely based on its physical characteristics. There is something so universal of having experienced a house as a visitor or guest in the childhood, how it feels stranger – different from home – yet somehow familiar. I can image that one has stronger memories of opening a drawer as a child than as an adult. An adult has likely opened too many drawers in their lifetime to care about the act. A child might open a drawer as part of a secret exploration, a playful mission to discover the content hidden in the darkest nook of a drawer. As an adult one maybe remembers more the times one didn't manage to open a drawer, often because it had one of these push-to-open constructions and refused to respond to an intuitive pull.

Imagining his childhood home, Bachelard describes how alive the memories of nooks and crooks are for him. In his imagination he walks down the hallway to the kitchen and opens a drawer. "I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odour, the odour of raisins drying on a wicker tray. The odour of raisins! It is an odour that is beyond description, one that takes a lot of imagination to smell." (Bachelard, 1958, p.13)

Descriptions can awake something within us, a memory that a we almost forgot we had. But are written descriptions enough for culinary experiences?

Descriptions of eating in writing can work very well to make a reader relate and understand – again not experience. One does of course not experience an intimate candle light dinner just by reading about it, however, through visual media, such as film, and own experiences, one has enough visual references to imagine the space for such romantic dinner.

However, it is more difficult with descriptions of taste. Descriptions of tastes that the reader is familiar with, might work very well as the reader has enough points of reference to relate. I believe (without having prove here) that most people in the world might relate to a description of some sort of tomato sauce. Tomatoes taste – depending on the sort and time of the year – fruity, salty, sour, sweet, leafy, floral – and in Northern regions of the world like Norway – sadly quite bland. Tomatoes are widely spread over the globe and nearly every culture (maybe not traditional indigenous cultures from the arctic or pacific ocean island cultures) have some kind of relation to food cooked with tomatoes. What varies strongly, however, are the spices used and the way the meal is being prepared and eaten – and with that, the spaces of eating. With other words, it is possible for very many to relate to the experience of eating cooked tomatoes as it tends to be a known taste.

More difficult is it to relate to the written description of an unknown taste. Suddenly, either author or reader – or in worst case both – have not enough personal reference points to relate to a description and thereby it can become impossible to relate and hence follow the conclusion. A non-relatable description does not necessarily add value to the reader's own experiences, it does not create a common understanding of the situation between author and reader. The reader might gain a way to describe an experience but will not be able to relate to it based on own experiences. The described won't become tangible to the reader.

How to make a taste tangible through words? In the culinary world, wine descriptions can be an example for that. How does one describe a wine in its distinct notes to somebody that does not have the chance to taste it? As an example, wine maker and wine writer, Anders Fredrik Steen uses metaphors to explain a taste to himself and the reader. He documents the taste in different stages of the fermentation of the grape juice in his diary, "I'm very happy with the length of the flavours in the juice; it has a very pronounced bitterness and notes that are almost sweet and floral all at the same time – like big red roses in the middle of the summer" (Steen, 2020, p. 451).

> "I always try to categorise for myself what I taste; I enjoy going into individual taste categories to discover, for example, what 'bitter' can be. […] Parsley and spinach are bitter. Dill is also bitter, at least little bit, but some herbs are much more aromatic; they have a different type of bitterness. Others are sweeter. Parsley has such a metallic tone; spinach does not, but when its cooked it can have a deep chocolate-like sweetness. Another example would be to compare beetroots, soy sauce, miso, and grapefruit. In theory, these are four bitter flavours, but they are also different variants. Soy is salty, grapefruit is very fruity and acidic, miso has another type of sweetness and a profound caramelised note, beetroots have this earthy, unripe, woody, bitter flavour. (Steen, 2020, pp. 111-113)

Through metaphors and comparisons Steen manages to provide himself and the reader relatable points of reference. As the reader, I do not experience the wine, but I am served a variety of reference points that I can relate to.

The risk with descriptions of culinary experiences is to be not relatable to the reader. The author must therefore provide reference point that make it possible for a reader to relate. This risk is something I had to consider when describing culinary space. I wanted the reader to be able to relate, I wanted them to be able to reflect my conclusion based on their own experience. I wanted there to be a common understanding of the topic. Only with the foundation of common understanding that space is an essential ingredient of a meal, a fruitful discussion can emerge.

Method – Finding my Ethical Framework

This is why I had to consider the ethical framework around the descriptions of culinary experiences I propose in this project. Even though, I use the ten statements of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto as both starting point and foundation for the translation process, many of my sources for more concrete and detailed understanding of Nordic Cuisines derive from books describing culinary experiences on the level of haute cuisine. Haute cuisine is not something that is because of its price accessible to a wide demographic – it is exclusive and excluding. However, one needs to differentiate between haute cuisine that is expensive for the sake of being expensive and cuisine being expensive because it is research and development based on local produce. The former tends to serve empty promises with far-travelled imported Wagyu beef topped with a gold leaf for no reason other than a price tag. The latter is expensive because it takes research and knowledge to map the culinary potential of a region and pay fair prices to local farmers and fishers. It is expensive because the guests help to finance the culinary research as well as the development of local culinary infrastructures.

> "That irritating luxury-by-default dogma - propelled by those uninitiated in what real quality means - also afflicts other traditionally expensive items like caviar or truffles. It's the perception of quality simply based on price. A lot of people would prefer a mediocre slice of foie gras, a spoonful of mushy borax-laden shitty caviar, or some limp slices of out-of-season truffle shipped from god-knows- where any

> day over the joys of a perfect carrot, grown with love and attention, harvested just for you at the very right moment and handled perfectly thereafter. On one hand, this is infuriating because it gets in the way of people learning about real quality of produce and craft. But on the other hand, if those misguided souls stick to their subpar luxury foods, there will be more exceptional carrots left for those of us who actually get what's important." (Nilsson, 2020, p.69)

Fäviken chef Magnus Nilsson criticises the common belief that expensive items are synonymous with high quality. He argues that this misconception leads people to choose mediocre luxury foods like foie gras, caviar, or truffles, simply because they are costly, rather than appreciating genuinely excellent produce like well-grown and perfectly harvested carrots. This mistaken belief obstructs people from understanding and valuing true quality in food, which Nilsson finds frustrating.

Another example of what culinary luxury means In an interview from 2018 later titled as "Caviar is Airport Food Now" (Repanich, 2018), Danish chefs David Zilber and René Redzepi explain the precision it takes to mirror the seasons in their cooking, illustrating their point with the example of mushrooms.

> *Because many people think luxury in restaurants is just putting a big scoop of caviar on something.*
> René Redzepi: But see, anybody can get caviar. It's going to sound weird, but it's only money. Luxury is about experiences that are unique and caviar isn't unique. You can get caviar at every single airport in the world. Caviar is airport food now.
>
> *What is luxury then?*
> René Redzepi: Try to get that one mushroom that's in season for three weeks of the year that only two foragers in Denmark can get. That's going to cost much, much less than caviar, but it's so much more incredibly luxurious. People don't see it because they always look toward money—that's what's supposed to make something special, right?
> David Zilber: It's not about dollar value. It's about the rarity or specialness of a thing that makes it luxurious.

Rarity of produce due to seasonality becomes a new way of expressing luxury within Nordic cuisine. A type of luxury that is not measured in money, but in knowledge. A knowledge describing the bridge between past and future – honouring the historical understanding of foraging and storing the produce over the winter as well as honouring modern science of mapping out local biodiversity and edible plants. I would very much like to underline this understanding of luxury as the careful combination of knowledge and encourage a conversation about what this can mean within interior architecture.

However, the essence of Nordic cuisine is not to be luxurious in a way that can be measured with money. It is about how one experiences the seasons in a certain place and how one can reflect on that with a simplicity that preserves the rawness of the essence. It can be as simple as the joy of finding a single ripe cloudberry on the mountain while your knees and feet are tired from a long day. It is the feeling of popping the cloudberry blobs between your tongue and palate. It is the preciousness of knowing that you have been so lucky to encounter this perfectly ripe berry that tastes like nothing else in the whole world. These notions touch on to human existence and culture on its simplest and purest form – and it is those notions I wish to translate – even if they remain invisible in the space.

With focus on the extraordinarity of landscape as the force that created the taste of the cloudberry

Placing My Work in the Field of Design

Design as Communication

In my understanding of the world, art and design (and for that sake also architecture) and culture are inseparably tied together. Culture describes the human way of being and living in community, art and design describe the human need of making and creating. And in that understanding design is not different from art. Without culture, there is no art and design – as well as there is no culture without art and design. At the same time, do design and art face different responsibilities and expectations. And while culture is expressed in art(s), design is a way to facilitate this notion.

To me, design is a way to communicate the being and the needs of culture.

In his book, "Design as Art" (1966), designer and writer Bruno Munari asks and answers what a designer is to him: "He is a planner with an aesthetic sense" (Munari, 1966, p.29). I try to ignore my frustration regarding the pronoun Munari uses to describe a designer – a frustration that also occurred so frequently when reading Gaston Bachelard that I had to put the book away numerable times – a frustration that leaves me so discontented I almost regret to have quoted him – a frustration that I conclude does not and should not have to be ignored. However, I decide to not discard Munari's train of thought from 1966 because of my personal irritation in 2024.

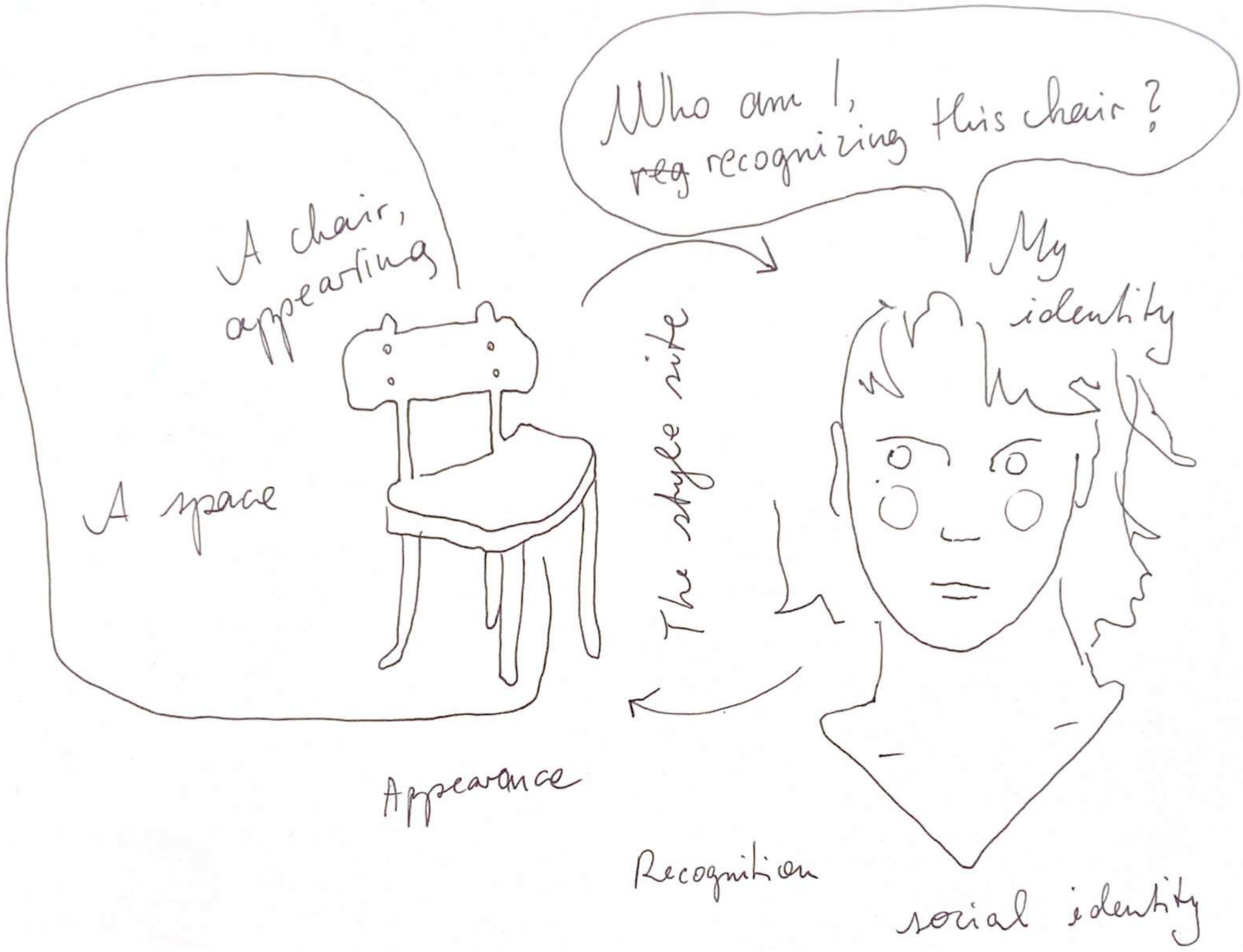
And in the same way societal values and systems change over time, so does what he means with "aesthetic sense". "In the early days of rationalism it used to be said the an object was beautiful in so far as it was functional, and only the most practical functions were taken into account. Various kinds of tool were used as evidence for this argument, such as surgical instruments. Today we do not think in terms of beauty but of formal coherence, and even the 'decorative' function of the object is thought of as a psychological element. For beauty in the abstract may be defined as what is called style, with the consequent need to force everything into a given style because it is new."
(Munari, 1966, p.30)

This suggests that in contemporary design and aesthetics, the focus has shifted from simply considering whether something is "beautiful" to considering whether it has "formal coherence." I interpret "formal coherence" as something that refers to how well the elements of a design fit together in a logical, harmonious way – how well the design elements align to create a unified whole.

Moreover, the "decorative" aspects of an object, which might have been seen purely as embellishments in the past, are now understood as playing a psychological role. This means that the decoration or aesthetic appeal of an object affects how people feel, perceive, or relate to the object on a deeper psychological level. Munari states, that in contemporary culture, style is sometimes seen as an abstract concept that dictates what is considered beautiful. He argues that this conception can lead to a superficial approach where designers feel compelled to adopt a particular style simply because it is trendy or new, rather than because it genuinely enhances the object's value or function.

The latter describes the abstract – again – irritation – and in a way also disappointment – I felt towards the design of many restaurants serving maybe not *haute* but at least *higher* cuisine. Why did everybody use the same chairs (either Hans Wegner's *Wishbone* or *Elbow Chair*)? Why do they all use the same beige and light warm greys and cream white colours with black accents? Why do most of these restaurants follow this "rustique-minimalist-Scandinavian" style no matter what building they are in? And why is so much of what has this "rustiqueness" *fake*? Why is everything played so *safe*? And what does it take to dare to design different and maybe weird and vulnerable – and thereby *original*?

In search of what style could be freed from being jammed into its traditional meaning, enters author, art historian, curator and critic Ina Blom. In her work "On the Style Site: Art, Sociality, and Media Culture", she explores the meeting between art history and art criticism.



Illustrating the idea of Blom's style site

She engages inter alia with the critique of the term "style" and its traditional use as a dominant interpretive framework in art historical research through examining contemporary art practices that are situational, performative, and site-specific, focusing more on the relationship between art and social collectives than on individual authorship or established artistic "schools".

She describes aesthetic actions that bring out "the contemporary 'question of style' itself as a social site. They are, in short, performances on the style site" (Blom, 2007, preface). Blom seeks to explore how these art practices can inform a new theoretical and critical approach to art history and criticism. However, she emphasises that her work is not meant to offer a comprehensive theory or history but rather to propose a method inspired by recent artworks' unique "forms of thinking".

Ina Blom introduces the concept of the style site in the context of contemporary art, where style is no longer just a formal attribute but a "social site" where art intersects with social identity, media, and cultural processes. She argues that "style" in this sense becomes a performative and dynamic process rather than a static or fixed quality. Blom writes, that style becomes a matter of process rather than essence, a way of engaging with the social machineries that produce subjectivity and life worlds (Blom, 2007, preface). This shifts the focus from style as an aesthetic characteristic to a more complex interaction between art, society, and technology, where style is intertwined with the production of social realities and identities.

"The question of style then has to be thought in relation to the forms of social identity that arise from processes of recognition. It is this relation – the interaction between appearance, recognition, and social identity – that should be understood as a site." (Blom, 2007, p.16)

Adapting Blom's notion of the "style site" to interior architecture involves rethinking how style functions within interior spaces, emphasising its role as a reflection of social identities and cultural processes. In my understanding and transposition, the term of "style", goes beyond the appearance of a space or an object. "Style" also describes the way this appearance is recognised by a visitor and how this recognition influences their sense of identity. In a way, style site emphasises a act of tacit communication.

Similarly, in their manifesto "Beyond the New", Hella Jongerius and Louise Schouwenberg state that "design is not about products. Design is about relationships. Good design can draw, almost invisibly, on different levels of meaning to communicate with users. It suggests a lack of imagination when those opportunities are not exploited to the fullest." (Jongerius & Schouwenberg, n.d.)

In navigating the evolving discourse on design, it becomes clear that style is no longer a mere matter of appearance but a complex, dynamic interaction between form, function, and social identity. Bruno Munari's reflections in "Design as Art" on the shifting focus from beauty to formal coherence reveal how design has become a process deeply intertwined with psychological and cultural elements, while also critiquing the superficiality that can arise when style is dictated by trends rather than genuine value. Similarly, through transposing Ina Blom's concept of the "style site" from art to design, one can expand the conversation – proposing that style is not just a formal attribute but a site of interaction where social identities are constructed and recognised through design. This perspective is also reflected in the manifest of Hella Jongerius and Louise Schouwenberg, who argue that design is fundamentally about relationships and communication, transcending mere product aesthetics.

To systematically record human cultures, one can use ethnography. It seeks to provide a detailed and descriptive account of a group's social behaviours, practices, and beliefs from an insider's perspective. By engaging closely with participants in their natural environments, ethnographers produce comprehensive descriptive works that uncover the intricate ways individuals and communities navigate their daily lives and interact within their cultural contexts (Merriam Webster, n.d). Ethnography as a method involves immersive research methods such as direct observation, participation, and in-depth interviews – as I did in this project. In interior architecture, ethnography can involve the study and systematic recording of how people interact with and experience space. It is a descriptive work with the aim to inform the interior architect in designing spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing and functional but also deeply resonant with the cultural contexts the space is designed for.

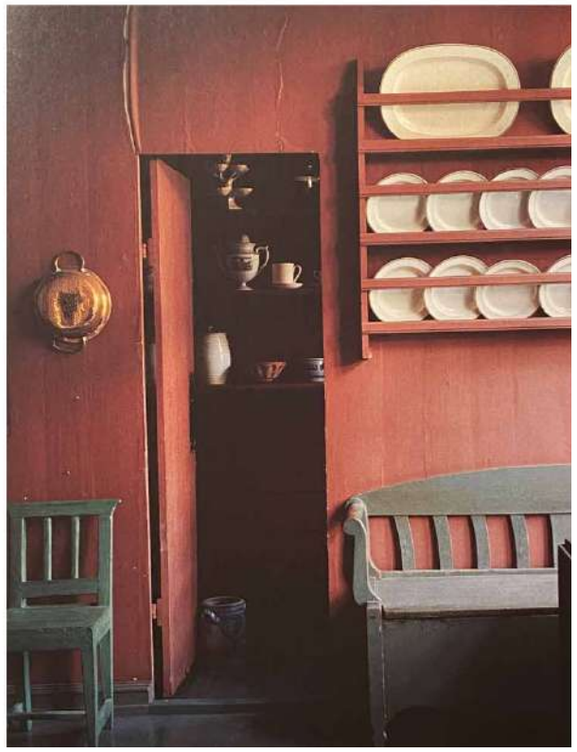
Experiments

Kazimir Malevich, 1923

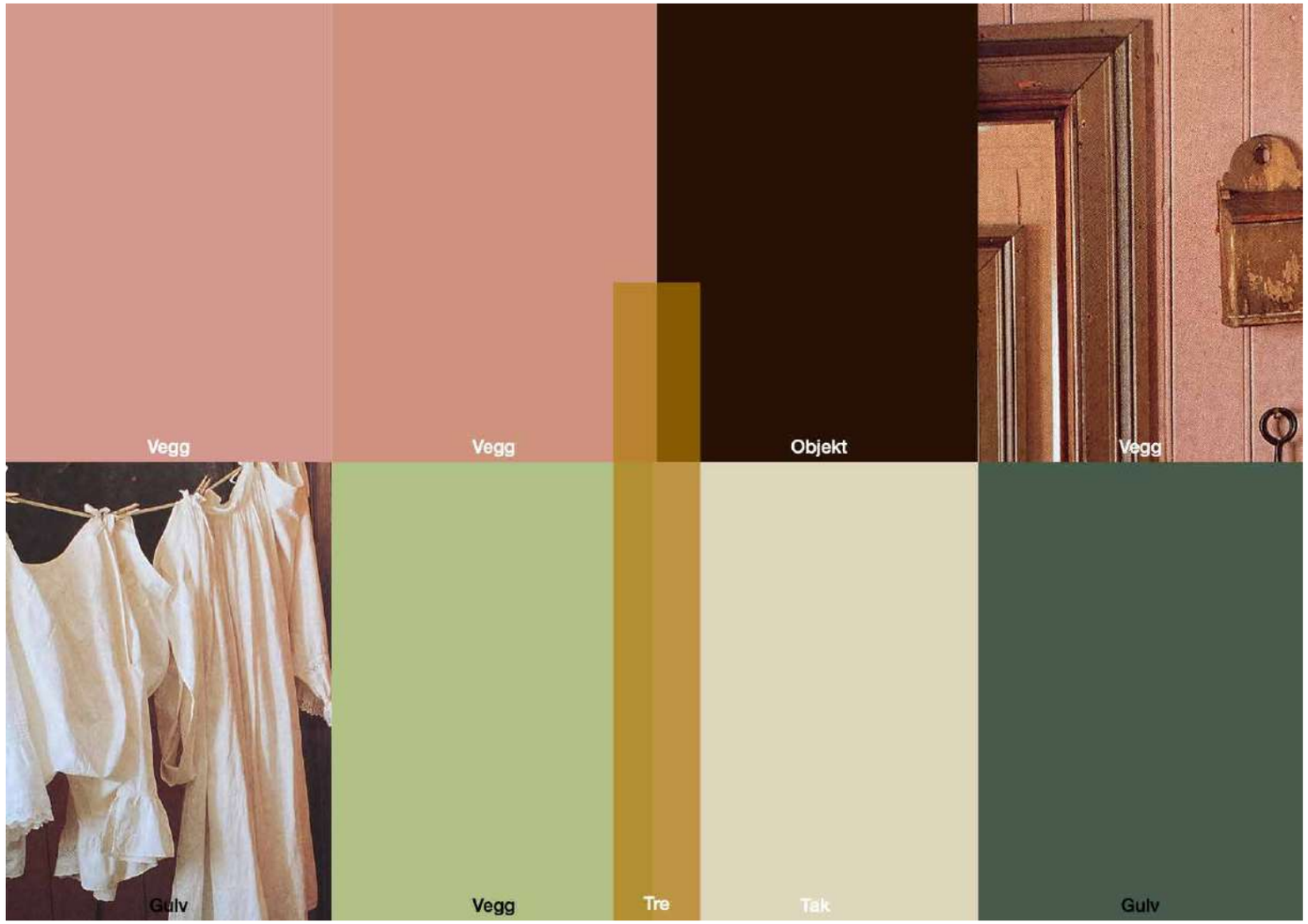
1. Experiments with Objects and Colours

Extracting Colour

I was trying to find the essence of a space — the non-physical spatial experience, the warmth, the intimacy, the moment.



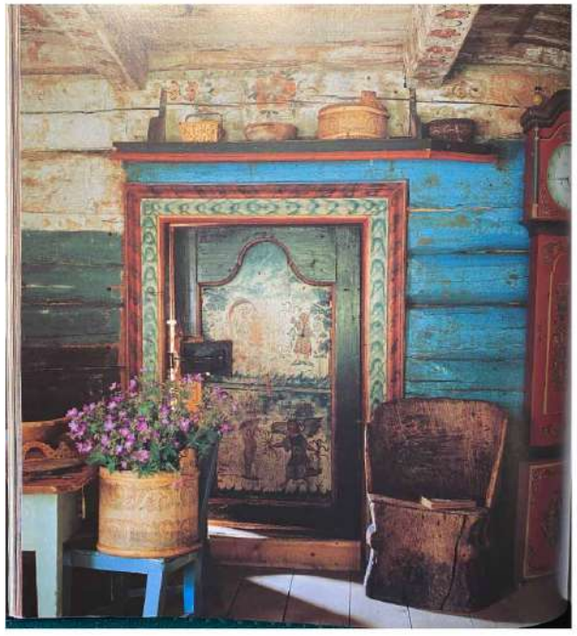
Dos Santos, S., Tangen, K., & Valebrokk, E. (1997). Frodig fortid : norske interiører fra 1600-, 1700- og 1800-tallet. Cappelen.



I believe that much of an essence of a room has to do with colour. Directly influencing our most dominant sense, the sense of seeing, colours make up an important part of the ay we conceive a space. This atmosphere, however, is part of something that goes beyond the physical framework of a space, it is part of the invisible, the emotional.

Dos Santos, S., Tangen, K., & Valebrokk, E. (1997). Frodig fortid : norske interiører fra 1600-, 1700- og 1800-tallet. Cappelen.

For this experiment, I found interiors from past centuries photographed by Sølvi Dos Santos from her book “Fargerik Fortid”. The colours were to be extracted manually and to be documented in colour palettes. Textures or objects which could not have been shown in a solid colour and were key for experiencing the the space could be added in images.



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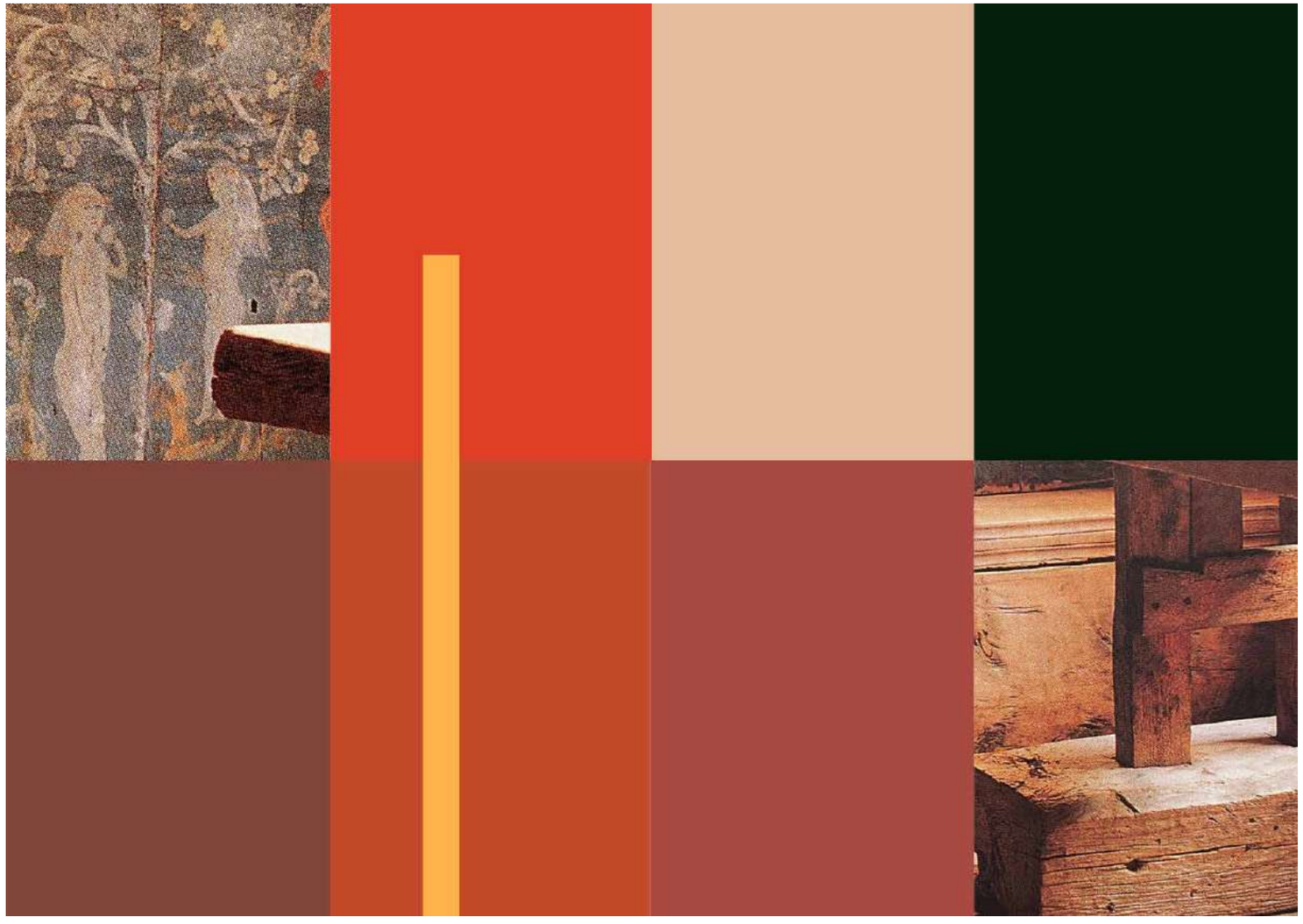
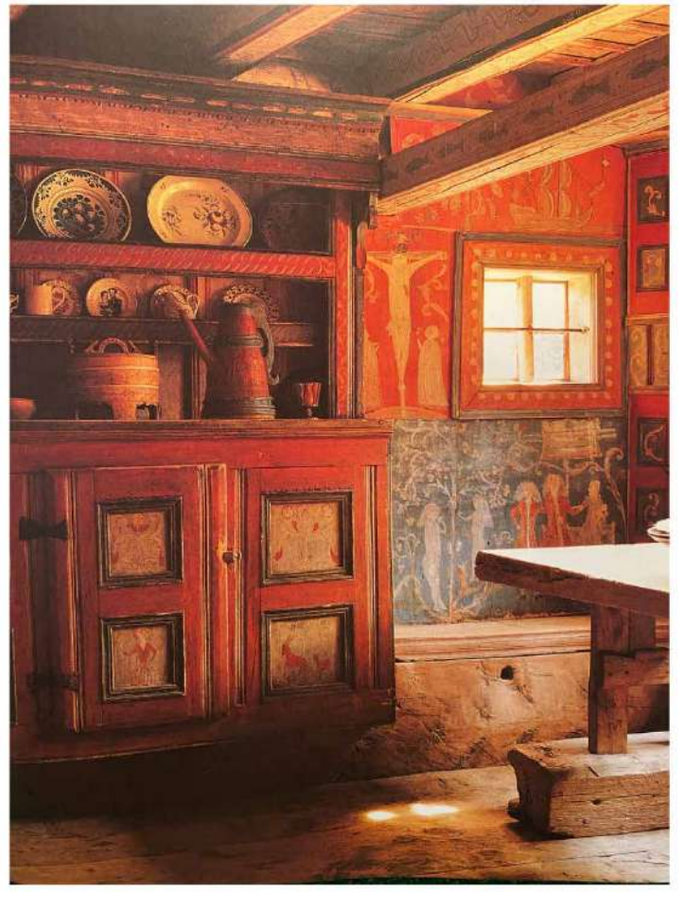
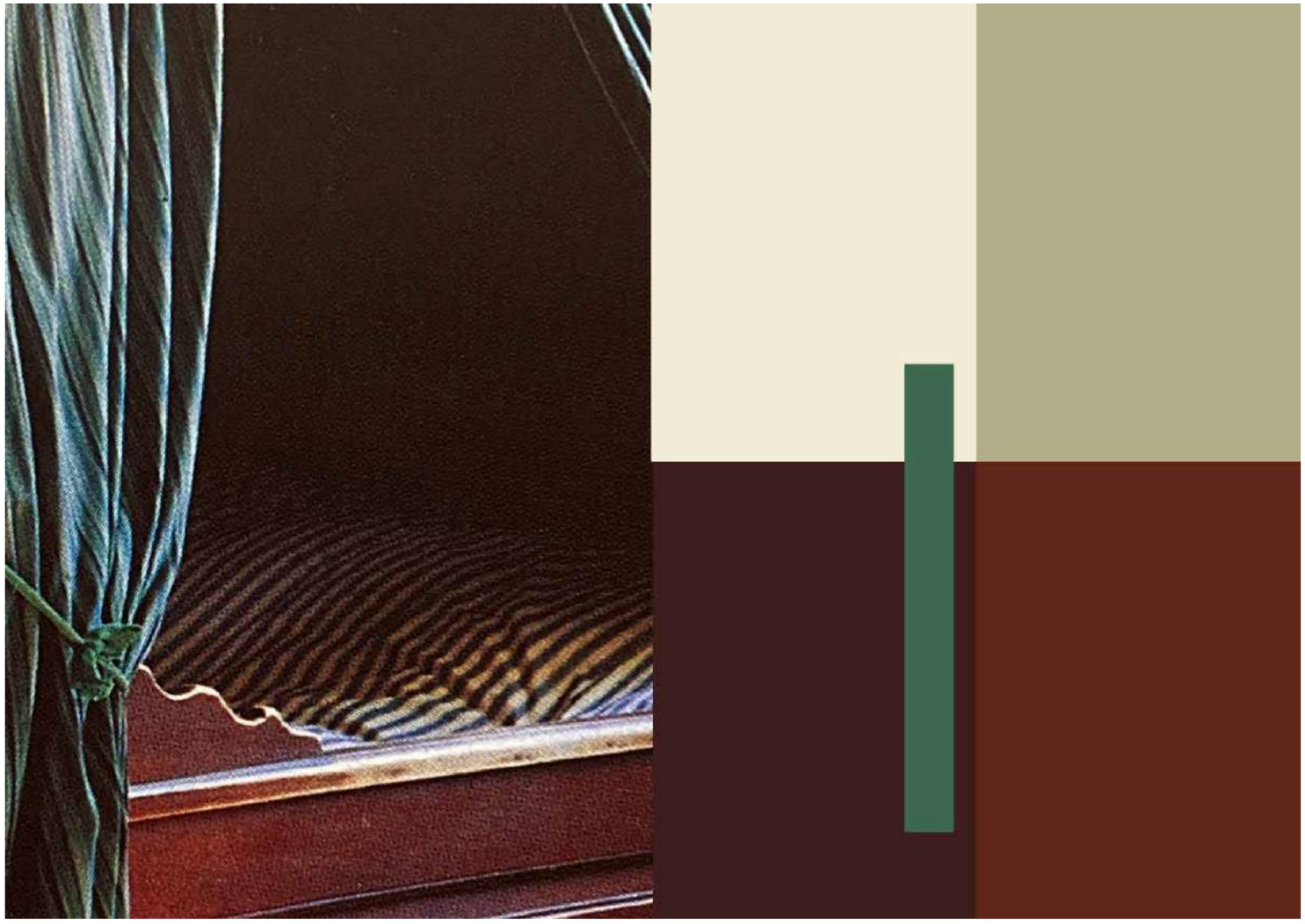
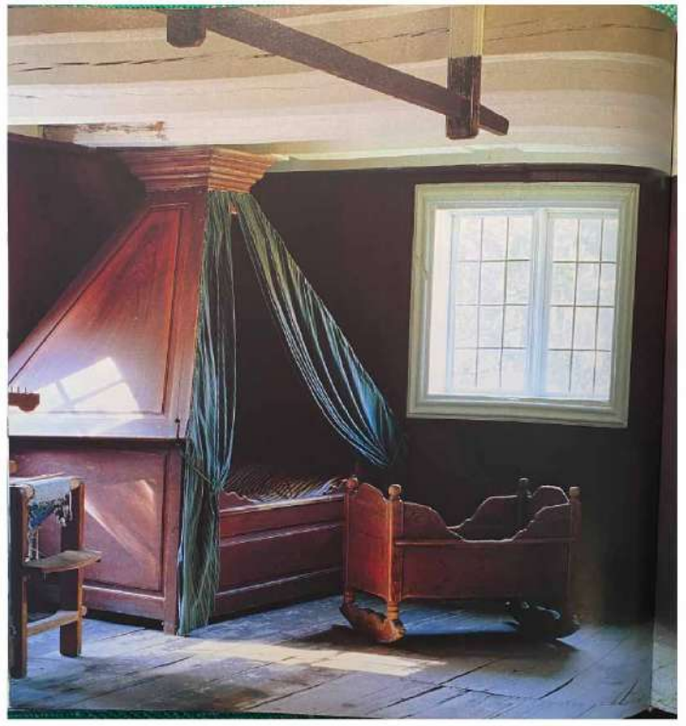


The colour palettes show had a greater range of colours than I had anticipated. They show a high contrast of light and dark colours as well as a juxtaposition of warm and cool hues. All colours found are made from organic pigments and most likely made in the same region as the space their are used in is located.



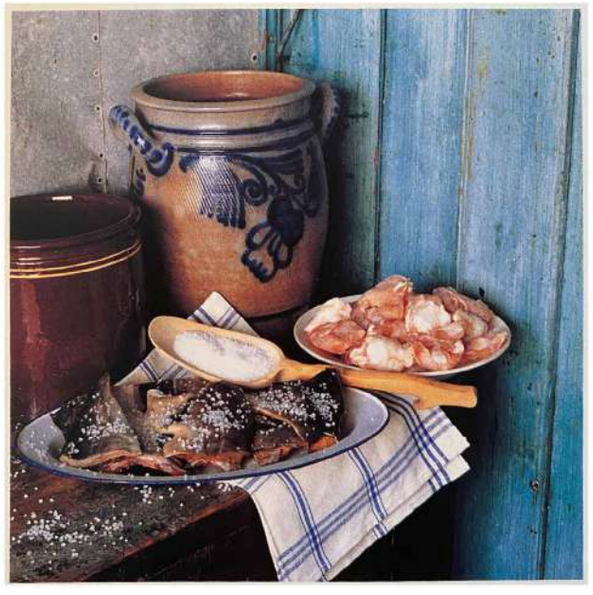
Dos Santos, S., Tangen, K., & Valebrokk, E. (1997). Frodig fortid : norske interiører fra 1600-, 1700- og 1800-tallet. Cappelen.





They carry a cultural heritage. Looking at a colour palette only, I am not able to recall the space in its details. I do not recall any shapes or objects by looking at the colours separately. I am left with a vague memory of a space I no longer can remember.

Dos Santos, S., Tangen, K., & Valebrokk, E. (1997). Frodig fortid : norske interiører fra 1600-, 1700- og 1800-tallet. Cappelen.



Dos Santos, S., Tangen, K., & Valebrokk, E. (1997). Frodig fortid : norske interiører fra 1600-, 1700- og 1800-tallet. Cappelen.

2. Experimenting with applying the extracted colours

I asked myself what would happen if I adapted the extracted colours into contemporary spaces. Would the atmospehere, the emotional follow? Would we remember where the colours once came from?

For this experiment I used an advertisement picture of Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs produced by Carl Hansen. The Y-chair as it is also called because of its back construction is one of the first models Wegner designed for Carl Hansen.

Advertised as " the ideal chair, capturing the essence of modern Danish design" (Carl Hansen & Søn, n.d.), this chair actually became what one associates to Nordic design chairs. Despite as being well known and well spread around dining tables in the North, I would not necessarily categorise it as a chair that many have access to owning. Requiring more than 100 steps to manufacture each Wishbone Chair, most of which are carried out by hand, the chair is a symbol of artisanship within furniture design. "The hand-woven seat alone takes a skilled craftsman about an hour to create, using approximately 120 meters of paper cord, the impressive durability, and stability of which make the chair both strong and long-lasting" (Carl Hansen & Søn, n.d.).

I won't further analyse the chair (even though that would be fun to do) because this experiment is not actually about the chair. The chair is merely a symbol for a known, well-crafted Nordic design object. An object that was crafted in 1949 but through smart advertisement and consequent re-adaption to temporary trends, gained the status of "timeless design". Thereby the wishbone chair never had to change its own appearance, only the appearance of its surroundings. Today, its surroundings tend to be staged in minimalist grey-beige and cream white tones on the glossy papers of lifestyle and interior magazines.

I did not follow the pattern of where in the rooms the colours had originally been used. That resulted in there not being an apparent connection between the "original" room and the adapted room. However, it turned out be a very subtile way of creating contrasts between past, present and future.

Moreover, I saw clearly how colour carries an atmosphere with it. The advertisement room and coloured room, are world apart from each other. Colours gave the very plain space a character, a certain playfulness, an intimacy, a joy. The room changes immensely depending on what colours are being used and what kind of space we connect with them.

3. Experiment with objects and their symbolic value

Here I wanted to explore the contrasts between old and new, handmade and machine made, unique and mass produced. I now dive into the world of objects. Will a space that clearly is from a past century be brought into the present by placing contemporary design objects in it?

I use a room that previously had been turned into a colour palette to now be turned into a contemporary living room. I try to imagine the personality of the people inhabitating the space and choose the furniture and objects accordingly. The objects did not feel out of place when placed in the room. I believe that I intuitively matched the symbolic values of the new objects to the old space.

A person who has a turquoise blue log-wall in times of earth-pigment wall colours, is a person who stands out and whose go-to reading chair might as well be the Terje Ekstrøm Extreme chair. It is a slight balance between standing out and fitting in, as the green Montana shelf might suggest. Classical in its construction, (as the log-wall) yet standing out through its colour. Stilistic simplifications of flower motifs are being taken up in the Marimekko textiles. The Vitra clock could not be a clearer chromatic parallel to the existing palette. Røros Tweed pillows and blanket symbolising Norwegian industrialised artisanship.

4. Experiments with a contemporary life object in a space of the past

Using photoshop only was not enough to explore the contrasts. I went to the Norwegian Folkmuseum with a backpack packed with contemporary design objects.

The plan was to sneak in objects, place them in different spatial situations and document them with pictures.

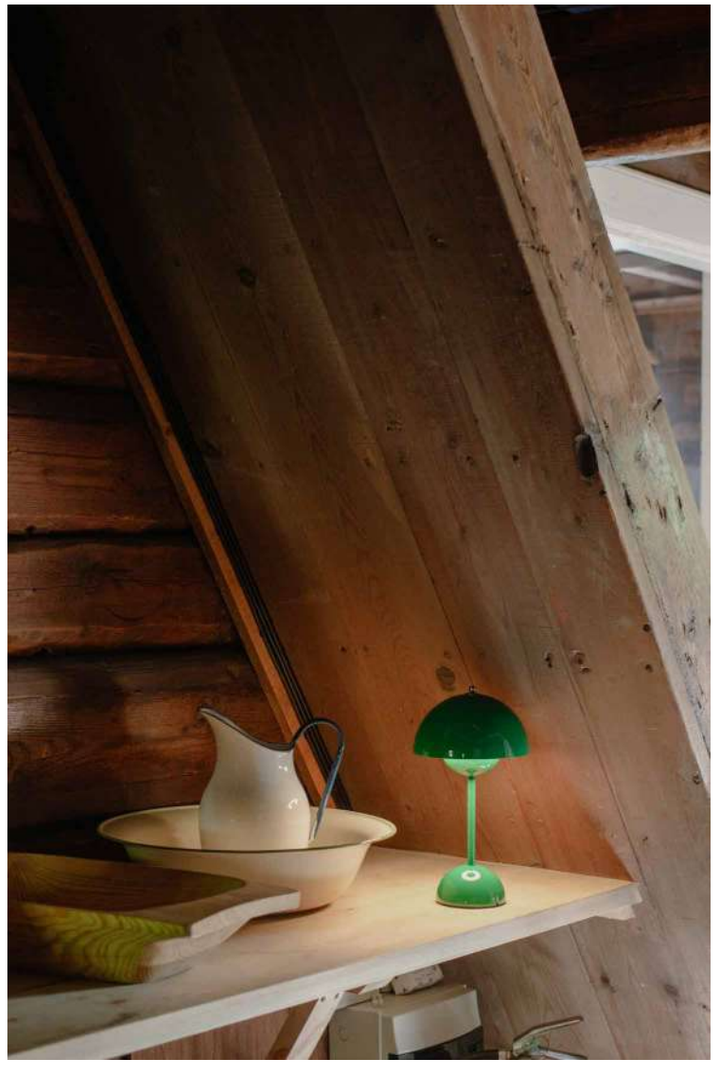
The objects brought were:

- A green Verner Panton Flowerpot lamp that was originally desgined in the late 1960s. The fact that it was rechargable and therefore portable, placed the design in the 2020s.

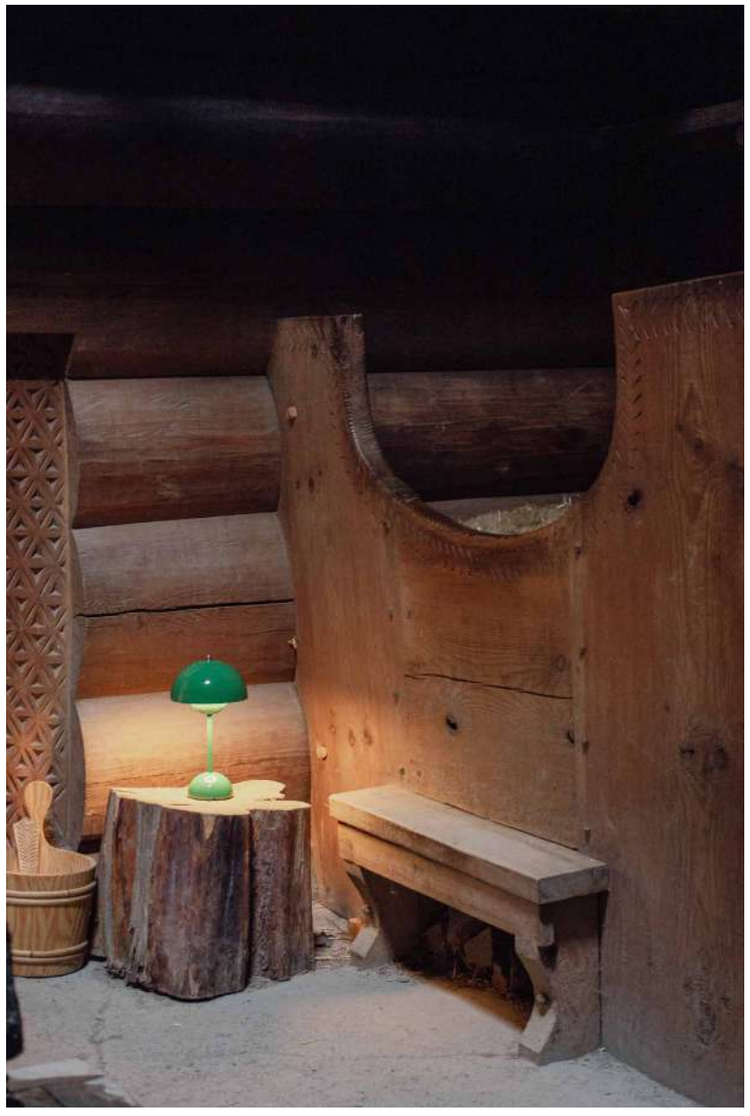
- A colourful wineopener shaped like a parrot designed by Alessandro Mendini for Alessi

- A Finnish enamel cup with a print of an artwork by Takashi Murakami, a Japanese pop artist

- A signed copy of Daido Moriyama's photography diary introducing an object of globalisation, neon-colours and explicit prints into 17th century Norwegian homes



Wouldn't I have known that the picture is taken in a folk museum, I would have placed this image into a Danish summerhouse



5. Experiment with a past life in a space of the present

How does the situation change when an object of past times intrude/complements/ enters a contemporary space?

Tool: Collages
Advertisements from the Italian edition of the magazine Architectural Digest, objects ornamented with rosepainting from Digitalt Museum

Process

Anette Krogstad, 2018

The Nordic Kitchen Manifesto

The aims of the New Nordic Kitchen are:

1. To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate to our region.
2. To reflect the changes of the seasons in the meal we make.
3. To base our cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics are particularly in our climates, lanscapes and waters.
4. To combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being.
5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers - and to spread the word about their underlying cultures.
6. To promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild.
7. To develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products.
8. To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.
9. To combine local self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products.
10. To join forces with consumer representatives, other cooking craftsmen, agriculture, fishing, food, retail and wholesales industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and authorities on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries.

1. *~~To express the locality, rawness, simplicity and ethics of material use of a certain region.~~*
2. *To reflcet the changes of the season in the way guests are being welcomed and hosted.*
3. *To use materials and crafts sourced produced in the region.*
4. *To combine the demand for good aestetics with the modern knowledge of sustainability.*
5. *To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers and to spread their word about their craft.*
6. *To promote work welfare and a production process that is respective towards the environment.*
7. *To develop potentially new applications for traditional Nordic design.*
8. *To combine the best in Nordic design and craft traditions with knowledge from abroad./ Use Nordic design with the impact of how it can be used*
9. *To combine local self-sufficiency and sharing of the created spaces.*
10. *To join forces interdisciplinary in order to benefit the Nordic countries.*

1. LOCALITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND SIMPLICITY OF THE MATERIALS USED FOR THE SPACE.
2. CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS
3. SOURCE AND PRODUCE LOCALLY
4. EMBRACE TRADITION & MODERN SKILLS
5. NURTURE NORDIC CRAFTS
6. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN THE PRODUCTION
7. EVOLVE NORDIC CRAFTS
8. CREATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH NORDIC DESIGN
9. SELF-SUFFICIENCY
10. WORK INTERDISCIPLINARY

Universell

1. CREATE DARING AND HONEST, EXCITING YET SIMPLE SPACES THAT REFLECT A REGION
2. EXPRESS THE CHANGING OF THE SEASONS
3. SOURCE AND PRODUCE LOCALLY
4. REMEMBER THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE
5. COMMUNICATE REGIONAL CULTURE
6. SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN THE PRODUCTION
7. ~~SEE~~ NORDIC CRAFT KNOWLEDGE IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT
8. EMBRACE CULTURAL EXCHANGE
9. ~~CIRCULARITY OF A SPACE~~ DESIGN
10. WORK INTERDISCIPLINARY WITH OTHERS

CIRCULAR DESIGN / DESIGN HOLISTICLY AND WITH MINIMUM WASTE

≠ material kan må vaere et geografisk eksempel

Library

Me as a non-Nordic

My taste as an interior architect is to know about the different actors and producers in the industry

1. Honouring the region
What does this region want to be known for
2. Reflecting the changes of the season
3. To use what is to be found in our climates, landscapes and waters
4. To combine tradition and technology
5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers (also otherthan Nordic craftsmanship)
6. Social and environmental sustainability
Design / build in ways that does not harm the Nordics
7. To find new ways of using materials found / sourced / used in the Nordics
8. To embrace ~~Nordic~~ c
To let other cultures have an impact of Nordic design
9. Local self-sufficiency but also sharing
10. Involve ~~other~~ people of other disciplines into the process, share forces

1. Design a space that is daring and honest, exciting yet simple and reflects the region } 1 SPLIT 2
2. Reflect the changes of ~~a~~ the seasons ~~with~~ in the way people use the space
3. Use what can be sourced in the climate
Use materials ~~that~~ whose characteristics are particular in the specific climate and ~~regs~~ landscape /urban scape
4. Create a complimenting ~~Combine traditional~~ coexistant between traditional crafts and ~~the~~ use of new technology contemporary
5. Promote regional producers and products
6. Design with social and enviromental and build sustainability in mind → HOLISTIC
7. To find new ways of using traditional craft from the region
8. Combine regional tradition with ways things are done other places → achieve diversity in Globalisation
Let those ways be ~~transformed~~ enriched by impulses from other places

"trygghet / risiko - balanse"
TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY

Where do I add
O emotional space ?
O Symbolic value of objects
O the intimacy, the moment the warmth, feeling of togetherness, the feeling of belonging
O cultural heritage

Weight of this list is very :
" region - tradition - sustainability "

I want it to be more cultural heritage
" emotional experience - ~~regional~~ tradition - sustainable "

Priority : ~~experience~~ I
linked to ~~tradition~~ Cultural heritage V
traditional craft objects
living
ways of living in the climate
the essence / soul of a region III
sustainable living (needed to keep all of the above in balance)

9. Keep parts of the ~~Share the~~ space open for the public
10. Work interdisciplinary with Artists, scientists, architects, landscape architects, biologist, the ~~neighbourhood, historians, etc~~

Visualisation of Process

Process reflection

My process has been similar to what ethnography in interior architecture can entail – a descriptive work based on conveying observations, interviews and fieldstudies. I have supplemented these findings with artistic research in visual experiments and writing.

A major breaking point in this project has been to understand what my book really was about. First when I had to critically reevaluate my project, I realised that all the sketches in texts were in their essence about the act of translation.

To reveal this essence I had to restructure both my thoughts and the structure of this project. I had to do what I describe as the simplicity in the translation.

By adding a more explanatory framework in the recent process, I hope to have created a context that betters the understanding of my work. Exploring the act of translation and the balance between theory and practice as a designer, also brought my attention to following: the elements of the personal and the professional.

This image of the signature squid dish at three-starred Michelin restaurant *Renaa* is out of focus. I wanted the memory to be stronger than the photograph.

Designing Between the Personal and the Professional

Everything around us – our built and natural surroundings – is somehow part of what can be categorised as design. During the field study of a dinner at restaurant Renaa in Stavanger, I wondered whether this visit belonged more to the realm of the personal and the professional. It was the professional that analysed the restaurant and interviewed chef Sven Erik Renaa – but it was the personal who cried when tasting the dish with squid. It was the professional that eyed the way of plating, the texture of the plate, the weight and form of the fork – but it was the personal that ate the meal and experienced the taste.

When the personal and the professional are united in one person – the designer – every design experience – becomes part of both realms. Consciously and unconscious, professional and personal. Thus can personal experiences become part of design – as it it impossible to separate the unconscious, the personal from the professional. The personal informs the professional.

For instance, the book contained a section with short descriptions on my personal sensibility regarding a certain material. Those pieces of writing do not aim to be informative, scientific or technical – what they convey is the emotive notion I carry with me as a designer. As of now, they belong to the realm of the personal. However, their state is not static, it can shift through my practice. Implementing these personal notions into future projects will with time and experience carry those notions into the realm of the professional. This process illustrates what it can mean to design intuitively.

Staying at Arcueil, the atelier house belonging to the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, I was confronted with a similar situation. As I was writing the essay "The Tactility of Taste", a piece where I would collect my thoughts on what a meeting between food and space can entail for the first time in a theoretical framework, I dedicated the stay to culinary experiences.

Again, it was the personal that informed the professional. Trying out small neighbourhood restaurants serving cuisine locavore, a farm-to-table type of experience, I became aware of what made Nordic cuisine special – the beauty and precision within the focus of seasonality. What does eating farm-to-table mean in a French urban context? From what I experienced, I understood that *goût du terroir* and Nordic cuisine were different in the aspect of seasonality. Because of the different climate, the harvesting seasons (yes, plural as one can harvest at different times of the year) in France capacitate a way wider time window than in the Nordics. While the season for a produce can be as short as one or two weeks in Norway, especially the south of France wouldn't see a reason to hurry. And if a produce is not in season in continental France, one still has access to wonderfully sweet clementines from Corse. With this approach – and kiwis marketed as French but coming from "Overseas France" – French cuisine is sometimes operating not too far from what can be experienced as an ongoing notion of past colonialism.

Here, the personal informed the professional that while local cuisines – French and Nordic – can come with risky (and unwanted!) notions of nationalism, the ways of getting ahold of produce can also remind of past colonialism. As these notions extend to political, social, ecological and economical realms, they also intersect with design and especially the sourcing of building materials. The professional must be aware of that.

Fresh pheasant and plastic roses on a market place in Belleville, Paris

Result

Unknown, 1661

Result

The project still results in a book. A book becomes a space for words to dwell. And in a way, as an interior architect, I designed the prototype of a space for these words to dwell in. I believe the book as an object is suitable for this project with regard to the state it is in now – a state of collecting thoughts, a state of creating a fundament, a state of creating a discussion. The texts can be understood as experiments in themselves, their outcome can be seen as sketches of my interpretation of artistic research. Therefore, the collection in the book contains the processes of thoughts, ideas and perspectives that I needed to go through, before I could start working practically with the meeting between space and food. Looking back at my project Sleipnir, where I designed the eating space of a restaurant in the former veterinary school in Oslo, I would have never been able to further develop my practice if not for this work of research in the MA.

Therefore, this project is not to be interpreted as a contribution to theory or critical theory, it is rather to be understood as a work of preparation, an artistic research for practice. The content of unfinished thoughts are meant to provoke questions and conversations that can eventually benefit the field of interior architecture.

Learning Outcomes

An insights, that started a learning process within me were Jane Rendell's explanation of critical theory and Ina Blom's idea behind *style-site*. Both of those concepts frame an element that has been interesting to me for many years: **design as communication**. Rendell defines critical theory "as a self-reflective form of practice in its own right, one that is both creative and speculative, that engages with the world and seeks to act to change things." (Rendell, 1999, pp. 125-126). This understanding suggests a communication between the designer themselves – self-reflective – and a communication with the rest of the world. Blom's concept of the *style-site* originally derives from art criticism, however adapting my understanding of it to the field of design, broadened my understanding of how the communicative aspect of design. The translation of Blom's idea suggests a silent dialogue between the object and the viewer/recipient, and emphasises its role in reflecting social identities and cultural processes. Both these ideas deriving from the field of theory have deepened my understanding of what design can entail.

This learning outcome would not have been possible without **the involvement of theory.** Through this process, I moved through and past a variety of perspectives on what theory in architecture and writing can be. I found that this project and my writings intersect with a variety of fields like critical theory, ficto-critical writing, critical design, reception theory and phenomenology. To me, all of these are new and my knowledge of them results from the feedback I received after the first attempt of this project. For that I am grateful, as I am not sure whether I had been able to find an entrance into this spectrum of critical writing on my own – especially outside the framework of school. In the last month, I stood in front of a new landscape of theory. At this point I am looking over it, trying to see the outlines of situations I can recognise in the landscape – as far as I can see. I see so many intriguing ideas that I'm eager to explore further, develop and translate into my work. I see so many new layers and connections that I wish to add. And I haven't even started to walk in this landscape yet! Therefore, this project serves as a foundation for my design practice, which I wish to keep developing and expanding and discussing.

Making the act of translation accessible to others through **writing down the process of translation** presented benefits that I had not anticipated. I realised how my way of thinking changes when I write down the thoughts and don't allow them to be faster than typing or handwriting. Slowing down the process, made facets of thoughts visible that I would not have found otherwise. Facets of translating "freshness" into the realm of design as an element of immediacy, closeness and connection. This translation result would have never emerged if I had not slowed down the thought process through writing. Maybe I would have never come beyond understanding it as "newness". The idea of *freshness* as an observation of closeness to the origin emerged through writing.

The act of translation resulted in something that informed the ethical framework I established for this project. Through the ethical framework, I learned that **design can communicate the notion of value without relying on traditional notions of luxury** tied to expensive materials and objects. A design can express preciousness through the way it conveys knowledge and understanding, much like how a simple carrot can be as highly regarded as caviar in Nordic cuisine.

Through translation, I learned to **create newness from what already exists**. In their manifesto "Beyond the New, A Search for Ideas in Design", Hella Jongerius and Louise Schouwenberg emphasise exactly this thought. They advocate for the value of continually revisiting and re-examining existing designs, materials, and forms. "There is value in continually re-examining what already exists, delving into the archives, poring over the classics" as "cultural and historical awareness are woven into the DNA of any worthwhile product." (Jongerius & Schouwenberg, n.d.). To me, translation has became a tool to find new perspectives and explore what already has been explored.

I learned that I have to be more aware of the presence of the reader. In this new attempt, I have tried to value the presence of the reader, to welcome them as a guest to my text as if I was a host and they'd come to my home. And I know I have a long way to go with writing in a way that puts the reader first. In the earlier attempt, I did not write with awareness of the reader, writing was just a collection of my own thoughts, a *monologue*.

And even though I used pronouns like “we” and “I”, to create liveliness, my texts were appeals – passionately stated monologues. I tried to break this pattern with slowing down my writing, changing the structure and putting up signposts. I tried to explain thoughts more elaborately, giving the reader time to think the thought while reading the sentence before I moved on to the next finding. These measures were taken in a genuine attempt to write in a way that could encourage a dialogue with the reader.

It was through a passage in the essay of Rowan Wilken that I understood “that textual production and reception is a dynamic, two-way process” (Wilken, 2014, p. 341) – something that I knew intuitively and tried to explain through an example of Peter Zumthor in *method*, but that I hadn’t found the words for. Wilken highlights a thought by Terry Eagleton illustrating how the presence of the reader is crucial to literary works. Eagleton argues that the reader is an essential but often overlooked participant in the creation of literary meaning. He asserts that without the reader, literary texts would not truly exist, as they are not merely physical objects on bookshelves but processes of signification that come to life only through the act of reading.

In other words, literature becomes meaningful only when it is read and interpreted by someone. “For literature to happen, the reader is quite as vital as the author”, states Eagleton (Wilken, 2014, p. 341). Referring to reception theory, Eagleton adds that readers are influenced by their social and historical contexts, which shape how they interpret texts. Therefore, the meaning of a literary work is not fixed but is instead co-created by the author and the reader, with the reader’s social and historical positioning playing a crucial role in this process.

In summary, I learned the importance of acknowledging the reader’s role in writing. By slowing down the speed of my thoughts in my writing process, restructuring my approach and creating clearer signposts, I aimed to transition from monologue to dialogue. This shift involved giving the reader time to engage with my ideas and recognising that the reader is just as important as the author.

Throughout this project, I moved **between the realm of the personal and the professional**. I learned that personal and professional experiences are inherently interconnected in the life of a designer. It is impossible to completely separate the personal from the professional because personal experiences inevitably influence the design work of the professional. I learned that there is a value in this integration. Through sensibilities and intuition, the personal realm informs and shapes the professional realm, contributing to a design that also communicates my own identity. My work and I stand in yet another possible constellation of Blom’s idea of the style site: a reciprocal dialogue between my work and me.

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The Object

Disclaimer

As my work belongs to the realm of design practice, I regard the book as an object.

The object will therefore also first be presented in its entirety and final design in the days before the oral exam. I therefore also ask of the reader to do a final evaluation of the book in its entirety first in connection with the oral exam. Nevertheless, I have chosen to supplement this project description with large parts of the book's textual contribution. This is because I believe that it will give you as a the reader of my project description a greater understanding of my work.

The Act of Translation

What Is Culinary Spatial Practice?

Introduction

Chapter 1 – On Expressing the Purity, Freshness and Simplicity

Purity
- The Materiality of Light
- A Dinner at Dawn
- The Materiality of Sound

Freshness
- The Scent of Spaces

On Simplicity
- The Complexity of Simplicity
- Anthropometric Scale

Concluding on purity, freshness and simplicity

Chapter 2 – Time and Place, Place and Time

Place
- An anecdote on eating salmon
- Place as a foundation of culture

Time
- To capture time
- Materiality and Melancholy
- Translating *time*
  - To Cultivate
  - To Harvest

Chapter 3 – On Transformations

- To Preserve

Organic Transformations

The Meaning of Butter for Architecture

More essays to come in the physical object

Introduction

Opening a dictionary, the act of translation is defined as the act, process, or instance of a rendering from one language into another as well as the product of such a rendering. Furthermore, a translation can change to a different substance, form, or appearance –becoming a conversion. A translation can also entail a transformation of coordinates in which the new axes are parallel to the old ones (Merriam Webster, n.d.). The word "translation" derives from the Latin word *translatio*, which is derived from the verb *transferre*. The Latin verb *transferre* is composed of two parts: *trans*-, meaning "across," and *ferre*, meaning "to carry" or "to bring." Thus, *translatio* originally meant "a carrying across" or "a transferring." This concept of carrying something across from one place to another evolved into the idea of transferring meaning from one realm to another (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.).

The act of translation involves transposing thoughts, ideas, and cultural nuances across different linguistic and cultural contexts. This process requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, including their idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and contextual meanings. This process often entails elements of cultural adaptation – translating on must consider the cultural background of both the original thought and its desired destination. This can involve adapting references, metaphors, and expressions so that they resonate with the new audience while preserving the original intent. In fact, the preservation of meaning can and sometimes must go beyond the literal words.

Translating one must strive to maintain the underlying meaning and consider the notions of emotionality and belonging that can be found only between the lines. Some might argue that the most powerful translations are those that capture the invisible essence of the original—though this is a risky endeavour. Sometimes the original contains ambiguities or multiple layers of meaning that need to be interpreted thoughtfully. The translator must decide how to render these complexities in a way that makes sense in the new context.

In essence, translation is an act of recreation, where the translator transposes thoughts, cultural contexts, and emotional nuances from one realm to another, crafting new perspectives from existing material. In this context, the starting point is the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto. While all ten statements in the manifesto hold significance for the culinary world, not all are equally relevant to the interior architecture context into which I aim to transpose them. This act of translation involves carefully curating a selection of statements that I find particularly valuable for creating an atmosphere conducive to the dining experience.

A. The aim to capture the essence of the produce and preserve this essence from the moment it leaves the soil until it is plated.

B. The focus on seasonality in combination with locality.

C. The curiosity about how traditional produce or methods can be adapted in new, experimental ways.

Asking myself what it can mean to translate culinary values into spatial, I begin the act of translation with delving into the meaning of purity, freshness and simplicity. Connecting these virtues to the terrestrial, I continue to translate how time and place – seasonality and locality – can be expressed in a space. Lastly, I explore meeting points between the past and the future through transformative design. Food contains what can be described as an element of emotivity – it contains the capacity of deeply moving someone – an element that must be considered within the act of translation. Together, these explorations can contribute to better understand how the essence of a culinary experience can be enhanced through interior architecture and design.

Chapter 1

On Expressing the Purity, Freshness and Simplicity

Purity

As formulated earlier in the background of this project, it takes a nuanced interpretation of the term "purity" from the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto, particularly in light of its potential misinterpretation as an ideological or religious element. Understood in its context of Scandinavian culture and language, it aligns with the notion of essential simplicity. However, as purity and simplicity are named as two different aspects in the Kitchen Manifesto, I cannot just translate the two notions as if they were same – similar, yes, but not same. In my understanding, purity describes the quality of character, while simplicity refers to an aesthetic quality.

Esben Holmboe Bang, the man behind Maaemo, a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Oslo, Norway, describes his work as a task of finding the fundamental qualities of each ingredient he uses. To find the essence of an ingredient, he seeks to understand and showcase the produce in its purest form. By doing so, he believes that it opens up a multitude of possibilities in terms of how that ingredient can be prepared and paired with others. Bang's approach reflects the idea that truly understanding an ingredient—knowing its essence—allows a chef to unlock its full potential, leading to new ways of using a produce in new contexts.

> "Jeg tenker på kamskjellet, og på hvordan jeg vil servere kamskjellet. Eller på gulroten, og på hva smaken av en gulrot er – og kan være. Mitt mål er å finne essensen av råvaren. Når du har funnet essensen av en råvare, er det som å åpne døren til en uendelig rikdom av kombinasjoner, metoder og smaker. Du får en forståelse av råvaren."
> Esben Holmboe Bang, Maaemo (Bang, 2017, p.62)

> I am thinking about the scallop, and how I will serve the scallop. Or about the carrot, and what the taste of a carrot is - and can be. My goal is to find the essence of the ingredient. When you have found the essence of an ingredient, it is like opening the door to an infinite wealth of combinations, methods, and flavours. You gain an understanding of the ingredient.
> – own translation

Purity as I understand it within Nordic cuisine is the importance of preserving the identity of a produce. Purity is the recognition of elements in the composition. However, I wonder how purity in its essential notion can be translated. Paralleling produce with material – how purity can refer to the fundamental qualities or "essence" of a material—those inherent characteristics that define it at its core? To come come to an understanding, one must recognise that even a single material can come in an abundance of variations. Zumthor draws attention to the dynamic and transformative nature of materials.

> "Materials react with one another and have their radiance, so that the material composition gives rise to something unique. Material is endless. Take a stone: you can saw it, grind it, drill into it, split it, or polish it - it will become a different thing each time. Then take tiny amounts of the same stone, or huge amounts, and it will turn into something else again. Then hold it up to the light - different again. There are a thousand different possibilities in one material alone." (Zumthor, Atmospheres, 2006, p.25)

He begins by highlighting that materials interact with one another and possess their own "radiance". This suggests that materials are not static; they have inherent qualities that can change depending on how they are combined with other materials or exposed to different conditions. "Material is endless" underscores the idea that materials offer a vast range of possibilities using the example of a stone. Further, he also points out that the quantity of material used (whether tiny amounts or large volumes) and the way it interacts with light can further alter its appearance and function. This variability shows that even within a single material, there are countless ways to explore its potential, each yielding a unique outcome.

While this perspective doesn't describe what the essence of a material is, it crucial to understand something about essence and thereby purity. What I understand, is that the notion of essence and purity come in a myriad facets – and each of these facets reflects that notion in a different situation. I understand, that what purity and essence describe is immensely site and situation specific. In that understanding, purity becomes a notion that can be transformed and utilised. And in combination with other notions emerging from Nordic cuisine, this understanding can offer endless opportunities for innovation and expression.

To fully explore the implications of this insight for materiality, it is essential to consider purity alongside other key concepts such as *freshness*, *simplicity*, *time* and *place*. Before delving deeper into how these thoughts can be expressed as spatial qualities, I want to illustrate this with examples: light as maybe the purest of all materials and sound as another facet of material purity.

Sunlight coming in through the logs of a shed from the middle ages at Folkemuseum Oslo

Mor, gi meg solen.

Mother, give me the sun,
writes Henrik Ibsen in his work *Gengangere* in 1881.

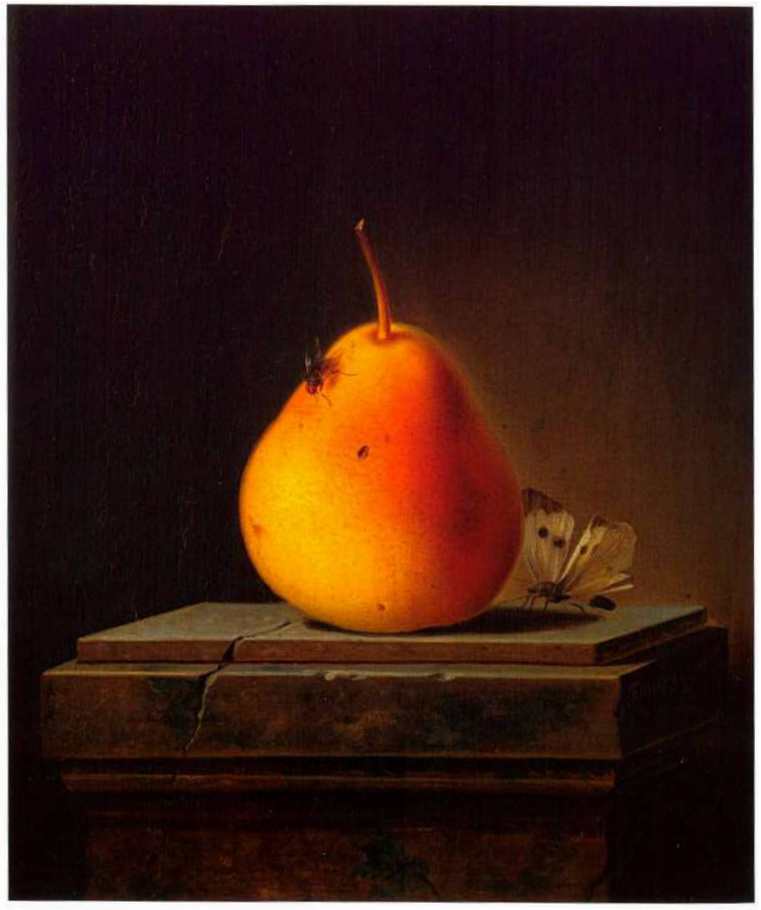
The Materiality of Light

For us on earth, the mother of all life and light is the sun. It is the reason we live and the reason we want to stay alive. Experiencing natural light is maybe the closest we come to catching a glimpse of eternal beauty – it truly reflects a notion of purity. In addition, natural light connects us to the universe. On earth, light reflects a place and the seasons. Light is different depending on where on earth one observes it and what position planet earth has in relation to the sun – thereby reflecting the seasons. Hence, light it connects place with time. Capturing sunlight pleasantly in a space is therefore maybe the essence of the work of architects and designers.

Photograph of the summer house in Western Norway by Nils Vik (Thorkildsen, 2014, p.100)

Who captures light must also capture shadow. Shadows remind us of the presence of light. I often reminisce about Jan Olav Jensen and Børre Skodvin explaining the thoughts behind their well-known Summer House at Storfjord. Jensen explained, that they added frosted glass for watching the shadows of the pine tree branches dance in the sun. That was when I learned that making a shadow visible is just as important as the view of which the shadow emerges.

"Pear with Insects", 1765 by Justus Juncker



(Sander, 2008, p. 348)

The last rays of the day are always the warmest. In summer evenings we get to bath in gold. What a joy if one was able to construct the same light that Renaissance painters saw in their still-life compositions. The warmth of the light caressing the beauteous fruit and bread and fish and meat. The richness, the juiciness, the freshness, the lust we get to experience through our eyes. The way the rays of light meet the meal, the way the background conveys intimacy through its darkness – a warm darkness. The darkness of a womb or of our palate.

"Fish on a Pewter Plate and Two Glasses", 1679 by Willem Van Aelst

(Sander, 2008, p. 317)

"Fruit, Pie, and Drinking Vessels", 1651
by Jan Davisz De Heem

(Sander, 2008, pp. 262-263)

A Dinner at Dawn

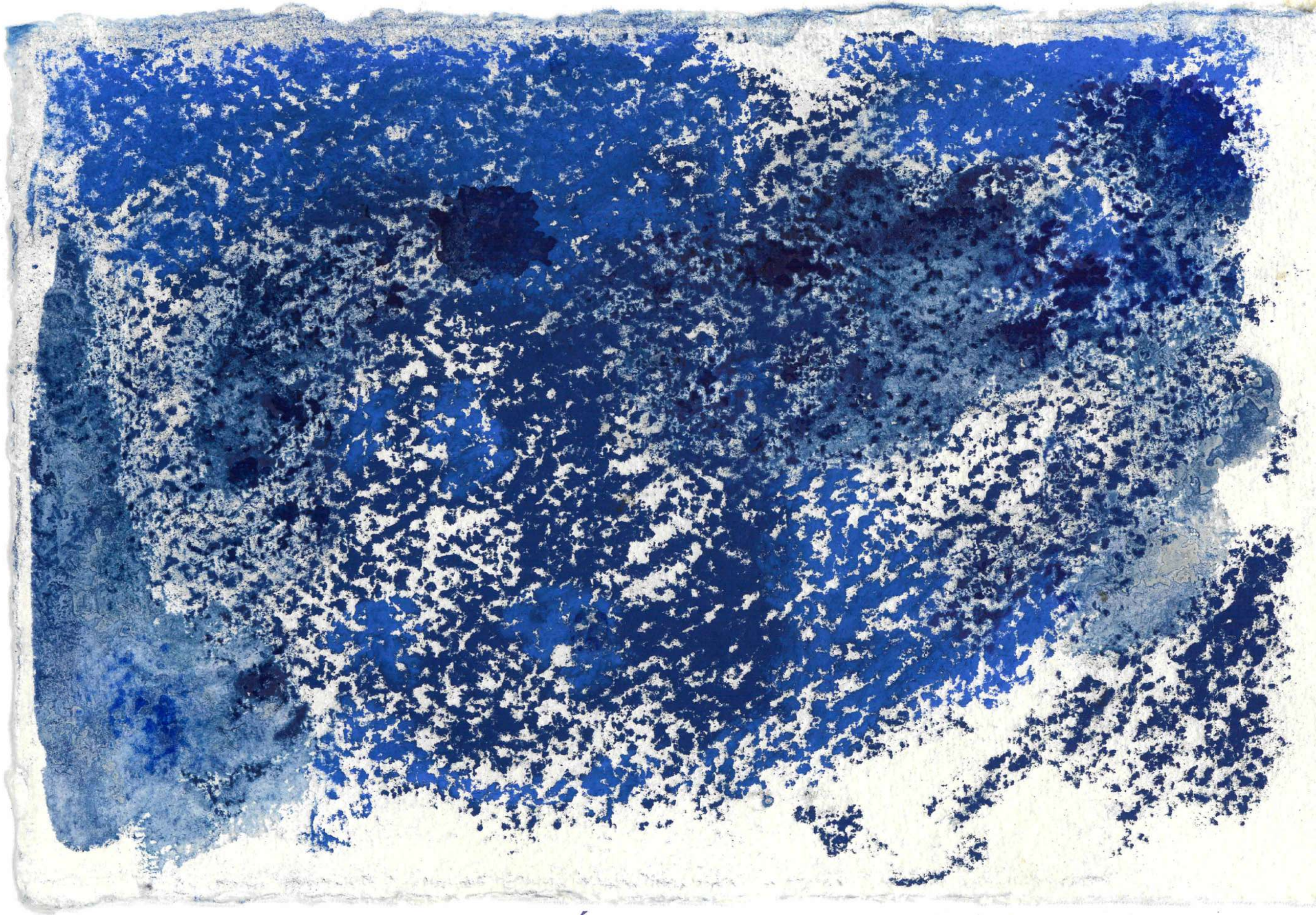
Dawn can be a moment of melancholy. Dawns feel different throughout the year, they change with the seasons. Seeing enough but not seeing too well, it's all a bit blurred during dawn. It's like the day is stretching itself and we want it to stretch a little but longer with each minute passing but we also have to accept that it's ending. Twilight.

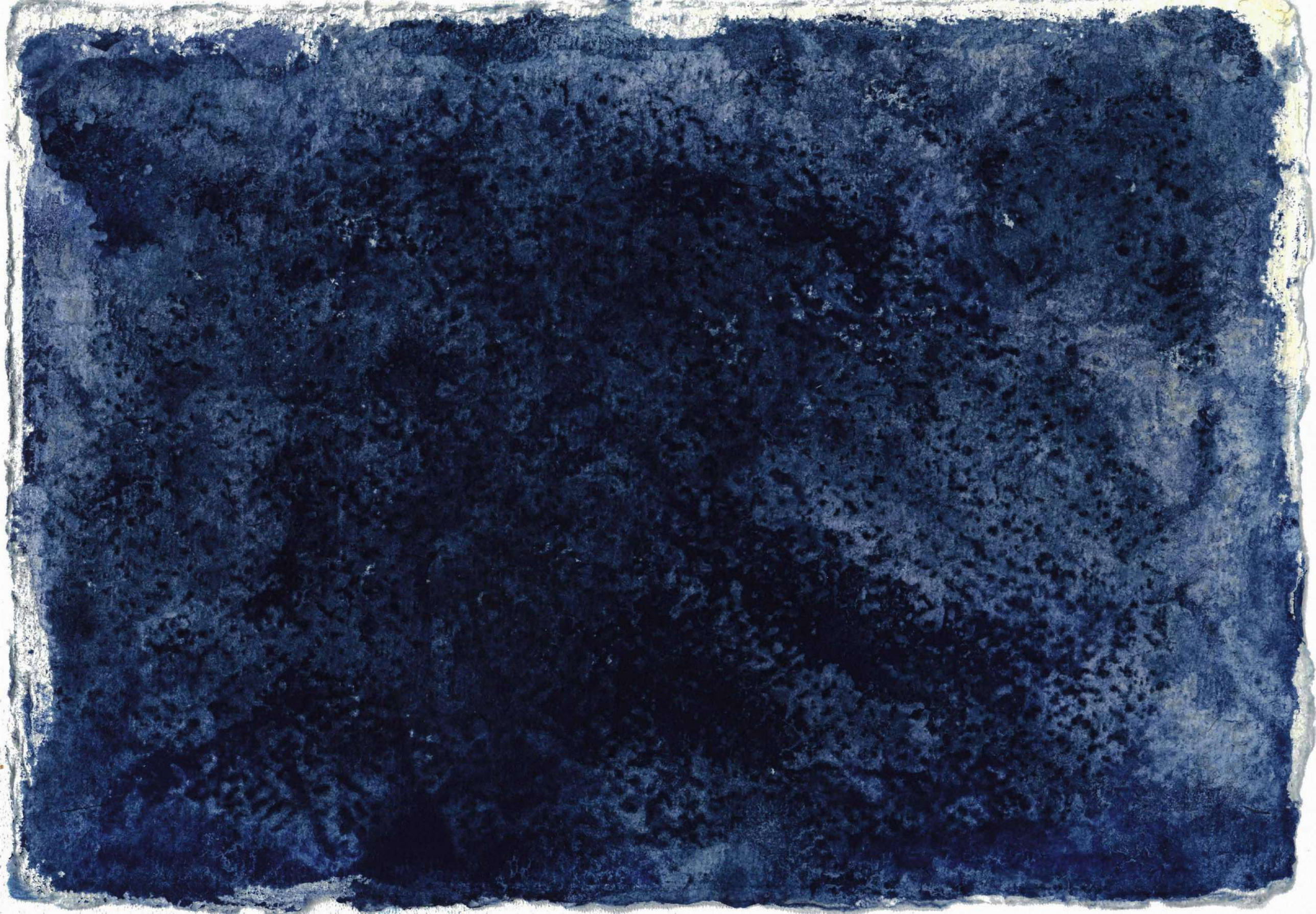
Being inside, dawn is the time where we light the first lights, when the natural light is not quite enough anymore. It is the awaiting when to light the first lights and how long one can go without. The less we see, the less we know, the more we feel. With our sense of sight rendered useless, we rely on our senses of hearing, smelling, touching and tasting.

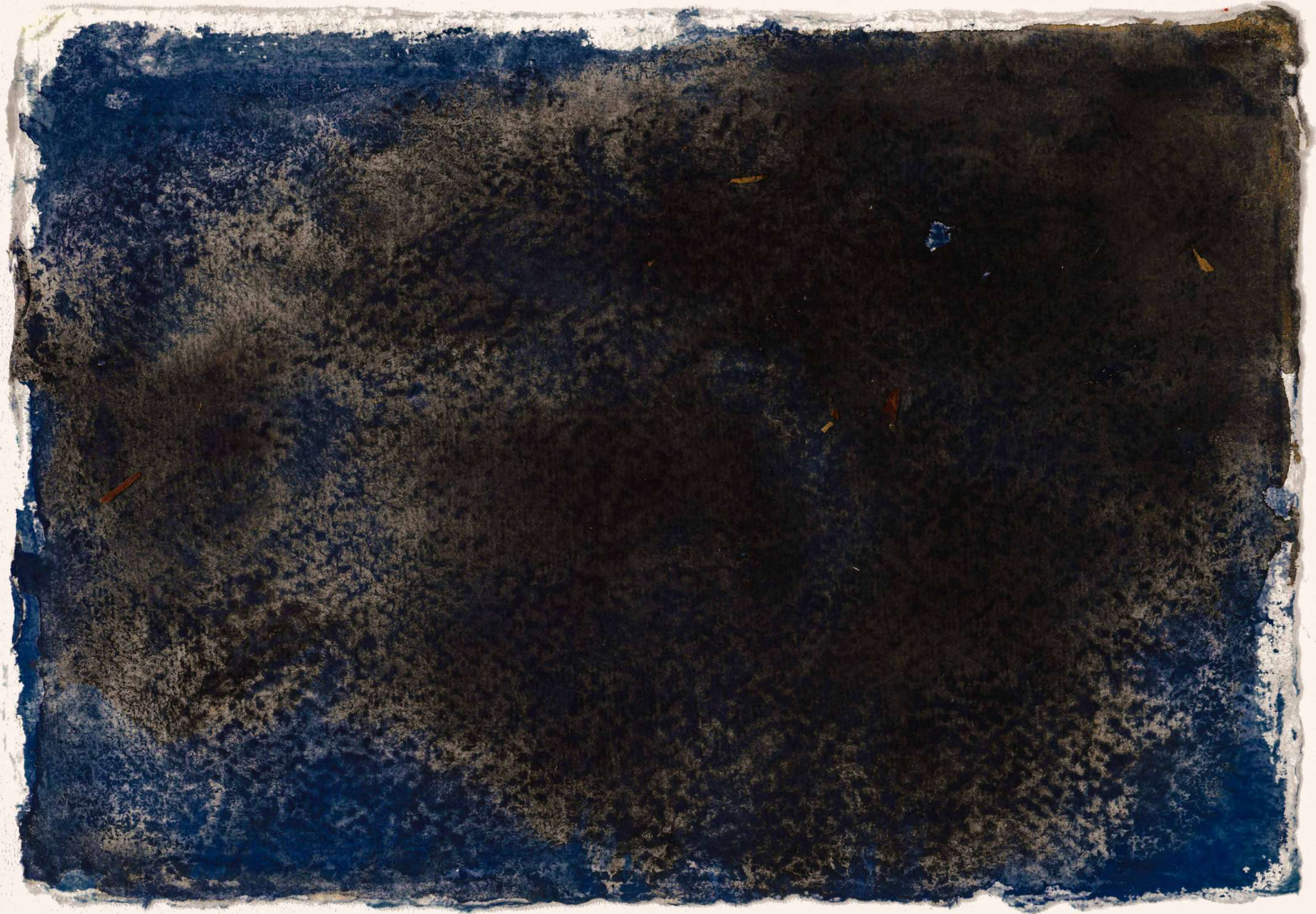
"In emotional states, sense stimuli seem to shift from the more refined senses towards the more archaic, from vision down to hearing, touch and smell, from light to shadow" (Pallasmaa, 1996, p.33). In the context of culinary spatial practice our goal is to strengthen the sense of tasting. Being in darkness or in dimmed light becomes a pleasant experience.

However, there is an importance of having a soft and slow transition between the last natural light and human-made light. You wouldn't want to rush the slow passing of the day. You wouldn't want to miss the last natural light painting the room blue through the windows. It is a warm blue that eats the other colours within the space and slowly turns into black. The night falls in with a beautiful gift: It gives us the blue hour before it reveals its shimmering black dress.

Experiencing darkness is maybe the closest we come to understanding eternity. Looking up into the pitch-black sky, wandering our gaze between the stars – that's where we find endlessness. Our black pupils expand, wanting to let as much light in as possible in order to better see the infinite darkness. Light and darkness are fundamental for our existence. Lightness and darkness are equally important.







> "Deep shadows and darkness are essential because they dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy."
> Juhani Pallasmaa (Pallasmaa, 1996, p.32)

With nightfall, colours change, a visual silence emerges. The moon and the stars become the lights that guide us through the night. Moonlight is indirect sun light. It is a dimmed reflection of a fragment of the sun. Moonlight is intimate, secretive, it is just enough but often too little. We are so fascinated by the rays that give us life that we try to recreate it, especially when a day has ended and the rays of the sun don't touch the retina in the back of our eyes anymore. We have learned to capture light to bring into the night. We miss the sun. We light candles or use artificial light sources.

"Meal With Egg by Candlelight", by Gottfried Von Wedig (Sander, 2008, p. 139)

"The eye reaches, but the ear receives",

concludes Pallasmaa after elaborating that "sight isolates, whereas sound incorporates; vision is directional, sound is omni-directional. The sense of sight implies exteriority, whereas sound creates an experience of interiority." (Pallasmaa, 1996, p.34)

The Materiality of Sound

Hearing the rain, the wind, the weather is important. I think there is a quality of being inside space but still being connected to the outside by either sound or light. However, when I ate at Re-naa, the space was secluded from the outside. Heavy, black woollen curtains became an untraversible border between inside and outside. They numbed all sharp sounds, the inside became soft and dark and intimate. Later I asked Sven Erik Renaa about the curtains, he smiled. He wanted to gather the guests inside the restaurant, around the open fireplace in the kitchen. He called them the winter-curtains. In spring-summer the wool would be replaced by a sheer black fabric that enables the guests to look outside towards the harbour. I understood now – by not seeing the outside, our gazes had have been directed towards the inside. We were all sitting in the kitchen, by the fireplace, being surrounded by soft mumbling and the smell of browned butter.

Hearing other people softly speaking – without understanding their words with clarity. The mere presence of their mumbling is enough. The sound of wine hitting the bottom of a glass and elegantly splashing up into a curve just to slide down the thin walls of the glass again and collect itself on the bottom in a refined round shape. The light and clear sound of cutlery, the sound of people sitting on leather chairs. The steps of waiters walking in patterns invisible to the guests. The sound of wooden heels with leather underneath on the wooden floor boards. A laughter from a guest two tables away. The sound of a new plate being put on a table. The sound of cutting the first bite of the dish. The sound of chefs working in the kitchen, the sizzling in a pan. The sound of a gas stove. The sound of a spoon going through the airy and creamy mousse. The sound of the linen napkin agains your mouth. The sound of acoustic intimacy of a space. The sound of the essence of things, sound as a facet of their *purity*

Freshness

How does one translate the "freshness" of produce into what could be a spatial quality? At first, it simply did not seem to be a relevant demand that a space had to be *fresh*. Freshness regarding food entails that the distance between the origin of a produce and the place it is being prepared and/or eaten is as minimal as possible. Ideally not much time passes between the produce being harvested, caught or slaughtered and then immediately prepared in the kitchen. In other words, this idea refers to the relation between agricultural origin and meal. *Freshness* is a way to communicate the proximity and connection between the two.

There are different scales of transposing this culinary thought into a spatial thought. These are possible interpretations of what relations *freshness* can communicate:

> The relation between a building and the materials used for its construction and furnishing.
> The relation between the origin of the objects used to furnish a space and the space.

Freshness can be seen as the quality that describes a connection between two –let's call them – situations. *Freshness* is becomes the quality of connection. Carrying on this thought, the connection that is described by *freshness* is about proximity. However, I believe that proximity does not have to be understood exclusively in a geographical sense. Can proximity describe an emotional bond? Can *freshness* describe an emotional connection?

> The relation of a space in a building to the building.
> The relation of objects in a space to the space.
> The relation the food to the object it is served on.

I wonder, whether these also are possible interpretations of what relations *freshness* can communicate. Because following these assumptions, *freshness* becomes a way to communicate connections through design.

Interior architecture offers the insights on how a space can be curated in a matter that the objects relate to each other and to the space, creating a narrative, a story telling. Part of this storytelling are materials and their sound, textures and their tactility, light, colours, volumes and objects – already bearing their symbolic value – their own essence. As part of a composition, these elements can through careful curating create a cohesive whole – a story. In this translation, *freshness* describes the communication between these elements.

However, a lesser used method in interior architecture to create connections and thereby *freshness* in the sense within a space can be through scent. In culinary situations however, scent is just as important as taste – and thereby crucial to consider. Scent plays a determining role in linking a situation to a memory as it is closely tied to the brain's limbic system, which is responsible for processing emotions and memories. When one encounters a particular scent, it can instantly evoke a vivid memory of a specific situation, often accompanied by the emotions one felt at that time. This strong connection between scent and memory is due to the direct pathway from the olfactory system to the brain's memory centres, making scents powerful triggers that can bring back detailed and emotionally rich recollections of past experiences.

Duften av en solbærbusk

"Når man lukter på et solbær, tenker man automatisk på hvor godt det ville vert å smake et modent solbær akkurat der og da. Men hva om vi fanger smaken av duften? Hvis duften gir oss lyst til a spise solbær - hva skjer da hvis vi lager en rett som bare smaker av duften? For meg er smaken av duften bedre enn selve bæret. Det dufter som det beste solbæret du aldri har smakt. Som en essens, ett destillat av en perfekt verden."
Esben Holmboe Bang (Bang, 2017, p.268)

The smell of a blackcurrant bush

"When you smell a blackcurrant, you automatically think about how good it would be to taste a ripe blackcurrant right then and there. But what if we capture the taste of the scent? If the scent makes us crave blackcurrants - what happens if we create a dish that only tastes like the scent? For me, the taste of the scent is better than the berry itself. It smells like the best blackcurrant you've never tasted. Like an essence, a distillation of a perfect world." (Translated with ChatGPT)

The Scent of Spaces

I find it difficult to write about scent within architecture. It is something that I seldomly thought over. Through writing this book I started thinking about scents in spaces more. It feels good to rediscover something that subconsciously existed the whole time. A scent is hard to remember with words, it's hard to describe. "Smell is so much about life and living", says Sissel Tolaas whose work consists of collecting and recreating scents (Sullivan, 2012). The interesting part with smell is, that it is one of the senses that we cannot control. We have more control over whether we decide to touch something, see something and to some extent we can decide what and what not to hear. Even taste is something we can decline, simply by not taking a bite. Smell is different, it exists, crawls through the slightest cracks into spaces and gives us no choice but to notice it.

A scent is best felt, a scent almost needs to be present to be remembered properly. Scents exist silently, but their presence becomes intertwined with our memories, consciously or unconsciously. "Every dwelling has its individual smell of home", Pallasmaa writes in his work The Eyes of the Skin (p. 37). Remembering a smell is something deeply intimate, deeply personal. He elaborates that "a particular smell makes us unknowingly re-enter a space that has been completely erased from the retinal memory; the nostrils awaken a forgotten image, and we are enticed to enter a vivid daydream. The nose makes the eyes remember." (Pallasmaa, 1996, pp. 37- 38)

"The nose makes the eyes remember" poetically describes how scent can cause visual memories to resurface, leading to a vivid daydream where the memory is relived with all its associated emotions and details. Subconsciously, scent is one of our first impressions of a space. The smell of something makes us linger between two worlds – the physical reality and the reality of our daydreaming. The scent of a space becomes the foundation of the culinary and spatial experience, it defines its identity. The scent of the space will subconsciously seep through the memories of the visitor – and become something that can be considered familiar. Over time, the scent will create a sense of belonging that deeply connects the visitor with the physical space.

Drinking “Fallen Pony” at Re-Naa. It smells sweet and mossy like a forest in spring-summer, but tastes completely different

A visual represenation of the smell and taste of “Fallen Pony”. Collage Work. Photograph of ponies by Sasha Eleger.

"A third bite and it is all over, perhaps three minutes after the first scallop was opened. The experience of the dish didn't start when we put the first bite between our lips, it started already when I smelled that puff of cool ocean from the raw, unopened scallop and everything that happened after that and until now was part of the sensory experience. The evening continues with a kind of warmth and immediacy that I have rarely experienced.

An absolutely perfect langoustine, almost translucent and raw, cut through the belly, all the way through but not quite. The cracked, but not cut, shell acting a bit as a hinge to hold the crustacean together like a book opened to page 100. The animal cooked, shell down, straight on the stovetop on a thin bed of fragrant hay. A barely noticeable tone of smoke emanates from a few blackening strands of grass, a waft of coumarin spreads in the kitchen. A smell that reminds me for a fleeting moment of warm summer days growing up and climbing around my grandfather's hayloft Bruno scoops it all up, hay and langoustines and love, and transfers it onto a plate using his hands. His hands are also the ones delivering it to the counter for us for us to eat only seconds after."

Magnus Nilsson (Nilsson, 2020, p.118)

Nilsson captures the essence of a meal beginning long before the first bite is taken, highlighting how the sensory experience is deeply tied to the aromas that evoke memories and emotions. As he describes the scent of the raw, unopened scallop, and the delicate smell of hay cooking with the langoustine, one can sense how the complexity of a culinary experience consist of the essence of simple elements. A scallop, a langoustine, some hay. Moreover, there is an immediacy to be found in the rhythm of this dinner – an immediacy that can be interpreted as an apposition of only essential elements – an apposition of *simplicity*.

Simplicity

Simplicity in Nordic cuisine relates to putting focus on the produce. This interpretation focuses on the essence of produce and meals, emphasising simplicity as "free from what is not essential." But how exactly is *simplicity* manifested in Nordic cuisine – and how this understanding contribute to design? And while *purity* describes the quality of produce and *freshness* communicates its connection its origin, *simplicity* describes a way of arranging those characteristics.

In this context, *simplicity* in Nordic cuisine is about distilling the essence of the ingredients and the dish down to its most fundamental qualities. It involves focusing on the core characteristics of the produce—its flavour, texture, and origin—and communicates these without unnecessary embellishments or distractions. The idea is to present food in a way that allows the natural qualities of the ingredients to shine through.

The Complexity of Simplicity

Simplicity relates to celebrating a produce for what it is, for instance also for calling a dish for what it is. Restaurants like Noma (DK) and Fäviken (SE) had and have a significant impact on communicating Nordic cuisine. They use names to describe their dishes that could not be simpler. In a way, especially those from Fäviken sometimes remind me of the titles of renaissance paintings documenting a still life composition. I do not mean to point this out in a way that it might be mistaken for over-romanticising or a sort of nostalgia, but as an observation that I found noteworthy. The titles given are so simple and pure and to me the comparison is of almost humorous nature.

"Still Life with Fruit, Flowers, Glasses and Lobster", c. 1660s, Jan Davidsz de Heem

"A leaf of something dying on the plate. With fish.", c. 2014, Magnus Nilsson

"Still life with dainties, rosemary, wine, jewels and a burning candle", 1607, Clara Peeters

"A little lump of very fresh cheese, one lavender petal from last summer", Magnus Nilsson

"Dishes with Oysters, Fruit, and Wine", c. 1620/ 1625, Osias Beert the Elder

"Still Life with Cheeses, Artichoke, and Cherries", 1612–1618, Clara Peeters

"Great Piece of Turf", 1503, Albrecht Dürer

"A piece of perfectly cooked vegetable served with Finnish fish eggs and very good cream", 2015, Magnus Nilsson

At Noma you can meet a dish called "Carrots and Buttermilk", which is despite its name elaborate enough to make one dearly struggle when trying to recreate the dish in its essence and beauty at home. The name leads the spotlight to the produce. It is enough in its simplicity, the produce speaks for itself. However, the guest becomes a witness to the precision, dedication and love that has been put into the produce when the dish is placed in front of them. Other names convey in their simplicity a reflection on the produce's connectedness within the habitat, for instance "Snails and Moss".

All of this to say, that *simplicity* is a way to present an essence. The emphasis lies on essence. Often, especially when adapted in interior architecture, *simplicity* is used as an excuse for bringing in a "minimalist style". Minimalism describes a style or technique (as in music, literature, or design) that is characterised by extreme spareness and simplicity (Merriam Webster, n.d.). And despite this similarity in definition, I want to point out that translating *simplicity* does not have to result in what is commonly (mis-) conceived as minimalism.

The translation *can* of course carry notions of minimalism, but I hereby want to emphasize, that it *does not have to* result in it. Without diving into what minimalism entails in art, design and architecture, I continue with what *simplicity* can entail.

The comparison between titles given to mostly Dutch paintings and dishes from Nordic cuisine aimed to reveal following thought. Even though the title and content embrace a sense of simplicity, the simplicity does not compromise the complexity of what is painted or how a dish tastes. Simplicity is the tool to present the essence in a way that the latter becomes clear – to the spectator, the eater and to the maker themselves. Simultaneously, the essence itself can be complex and layered with numerous meanings and backgrounds and far from being simple. For now, I remain with the question of how *simplicity* can be achieved with interior architecture.

As the notion of *simplicity* (un-)surprisingly reveals a certain complexity, I tried to divide possible manifestations of simplicity it into different layers – in the hope that those layers would gradually expose the notion of essence. Starting with an example of the Fäviken dish "A piece of perfectly cooked vegetable served with Finnish fish eggs and very good cream", I gradually manoeuvre into the realm of interior architecture.

I. The title – what can the eater expect?

II. The produce – what does the meal consist of and what is its origin?

III. The preparation and composition – what has been done to the produce since it was extracted?

IV. The taste – what does feel like to eat it?

I. "A piece of perfectly cooked vegetable served with Finnish fish eggs and very good cream"

II. A vegetable grown on the Fäviken farm in northern Sweden, fish eggs from Finland with an incomplete cure with a particularly rare exquisite taste, creamed milk from local cows

III. "A piece of just picked broccoli, perfectly steamed and placed alone on a hot plate. Presented in front of the eater just like that, steam still coming off it. A big spoonful of caviar plated in front of the guest from an iced bowl, to the front-right of the centre of the plate. A dash of the most wonderfully rich and grassy cream, poured from the centre of the plate towards the vegetable itself so that it would pool beautifully around it." (Nilsson, 2020, p. 201)

IV. "The umami hit and fatty richness from the fish eggs elevated the vegetable itself to new heights […] The lingering brassica bittersweetness and the finish of the caviar contrasted with the grassy freshness of the cream and left me wanting another bite, quickly." (Nilsson, 2020, p. 201)

Essentially, "three perfect products, all unseasoned and almost unaltered, plated distinctly separate and in a large enough quantity to allow them each to shine as a separate star. At the same time, eaten together, elevating each other." (Nilsson, 2020, p. 201)

What does this mean in spatial terms now? I believe there are numerous alternatives to transpose *title – produce – preparation – taste.* This is the structure I have chosen.

The name of the space or restaurant
What does the name relate to and what does it describe?
What are the anticipations to the space?

Materiality
What materials and objects appear in the space?
Where do they come from and what is their story?
How do they relate to their surroundings – the building and the place?

The transformation and composition of the space
What is its structure and rhythm?
How does the the interior reflect on the past of building, link it to the presence and secure its cultural future?
How is the space composed now as opposed to how it used to be?

The taste of the space
What does it feel like to enter the space?
What does it feel like to spend time there?
What memories stay when leaving the space?

In spatial terms it did not feel convincing to present these layers as a hierarchy as a space is holistically experienced as a simultaneous combination of these layers. Name, materiality, structure and feeling all contribute to what is eventually experienced as the identity of a space – or as its essence. The relation of these layers to each other can be described as a heterarchy. Heterarchy is a system of organisation where elements are unranked or possess the potential to be ranked in multiple ways. Unlike a hierarchy, a heterarchy allows for a more flexible and distributed form of decision-making. In a heterarchical system, power or influence can shift depending on the situation or context, allowing different elements to take precedence as needed. *Simplicity* becomes to tool to present this interdependent essences – this heterarchy – as a whole.

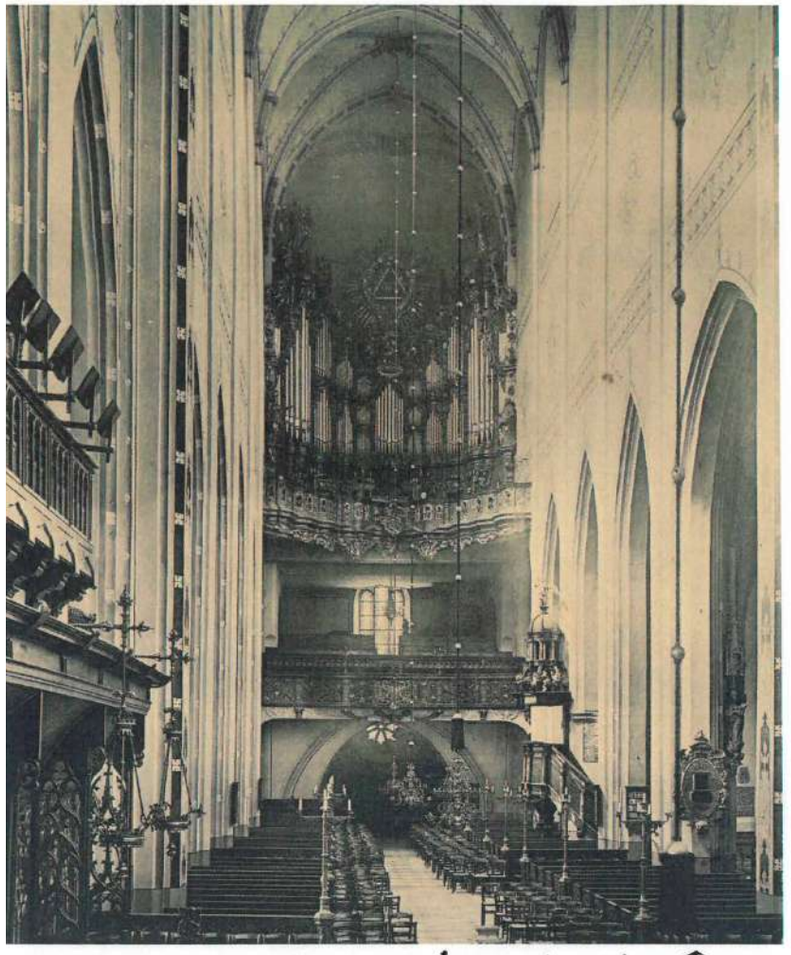
In summary, simplicity in Nordic cuisine is presenting the process of distilling the essence of a dish to highlight its most fundamental qualities. This approach allows the true nature of each ingredient to shine through, unburdened by embellishments. *Simplicity* is thus not about minimalism in the conventional sense, but about clarity and focus—about presenting what is essential in a way that reveals its depth and complexity.

To me this raises another question – the question of simplicity of the very volume of space. Can *simplicity* also be applied to how we consider the scale and proportion of spaces in interior architecture? An organic approach to this question is the concept of anthropometry. Anthropometry, deriving from the Greek words ἄνθρωπος, meaning "human", and μέτρον, meaning "measure", is the scientific study of the measurements and proportions of the human body adapted to different fields. Anthropometric scale in architecture serves to describe how much volume is needed for one person to use the space in the intended way, often resulting in a space, that feels "just right", not too big and not too small. A concept, that can be well paralleled with the idea of *simplicity* as "free from what is not essential".

Anthropometric Scale

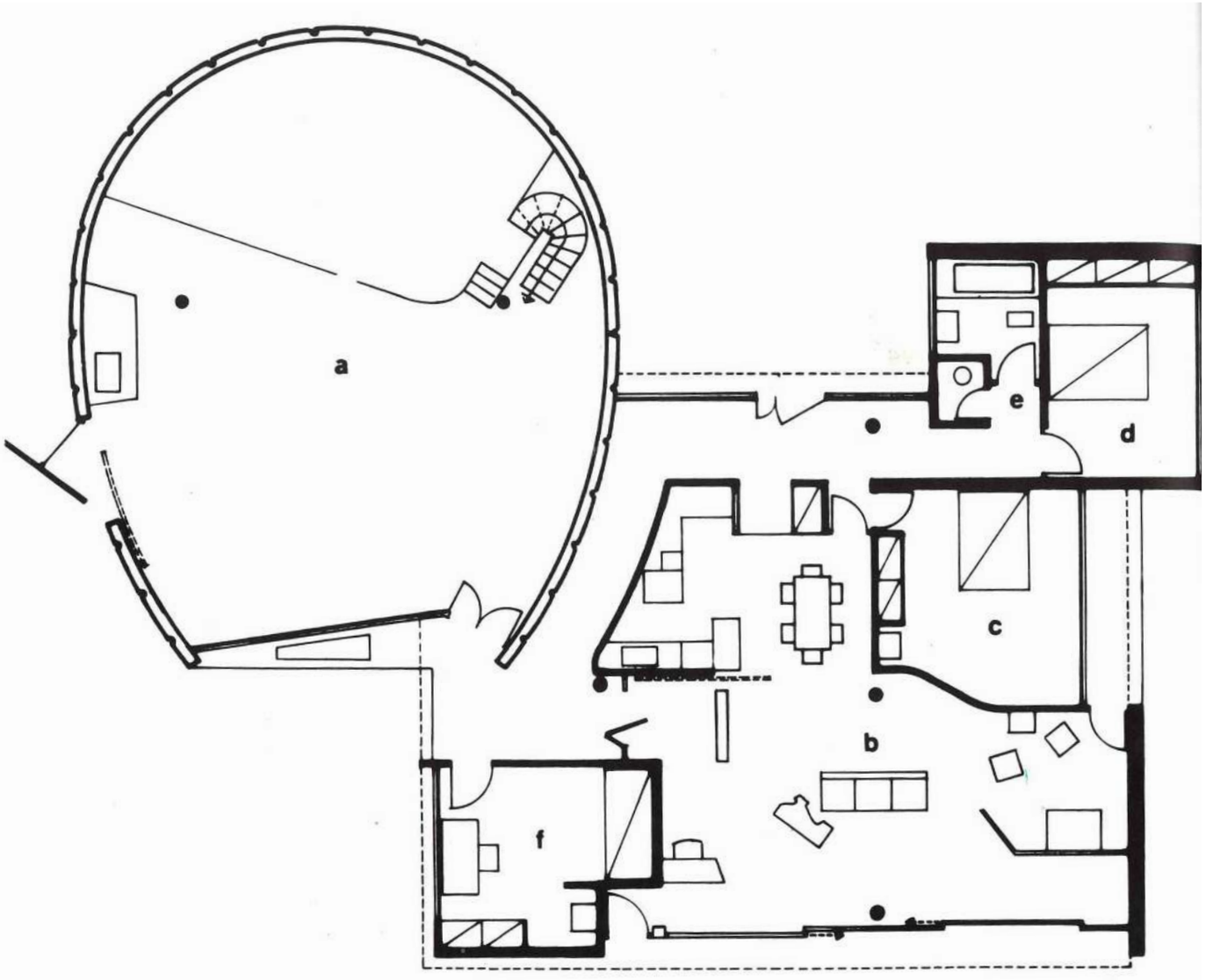
There is a notion of belonging and independence that one can feel both within oneself and physically in a space that is adapted to the scale of a human body. It is often a place where the scale makes one feel included in the building – it feels a bit as if the space gave you a pat on the shoulder and said "you matter to me". Just for the fun of it – the opposite would maybe be a catholic church with a forty-five metre ceiling hight that makes its visitor feel small and helpless and like one of many sheep in the herd of the catholic God. However – I am sure, one finds a beautiful example of anthropometry within the structure, scale and placement of church benches which are always surprisingly perfectly adapted to fitting just the right amount of people into the space – creating a feeling of community without feeling cramped.

The main thought of using the concept of anthropometry in a space is to create a volume that is just right in size – not too high and wide and overwhelming and not too low and narrow and cramped. It is about finding a balance and working with volumes in an essential way. The volume thereby becomes an answer to what is considered the essence of the space. However, essence is not something static and as previously established, it quite site-specific. How much space does a human need to enjoy their own presence, togetherness and food? How much space does origin, identity and experience take? The answer will be different from space to space, situation to situation. Following examples attempt to elaborate how design can communicate simplicity through volumes in different situations.



BAZYLIKA ŚW. ELŻBIETY, Wrocław

I used to go here with my Mother and my Grandmother



A Studio for Two Sculptors, 1934, designed by Eileen Gray (Adam, 1987, p. 290)

Studio for Two Sculptors, 1934
Floor plan: a. Studio
b. Living room,
c. Bedroom,
d. Bedroom,
e. Bathroom,
f. Kitchen

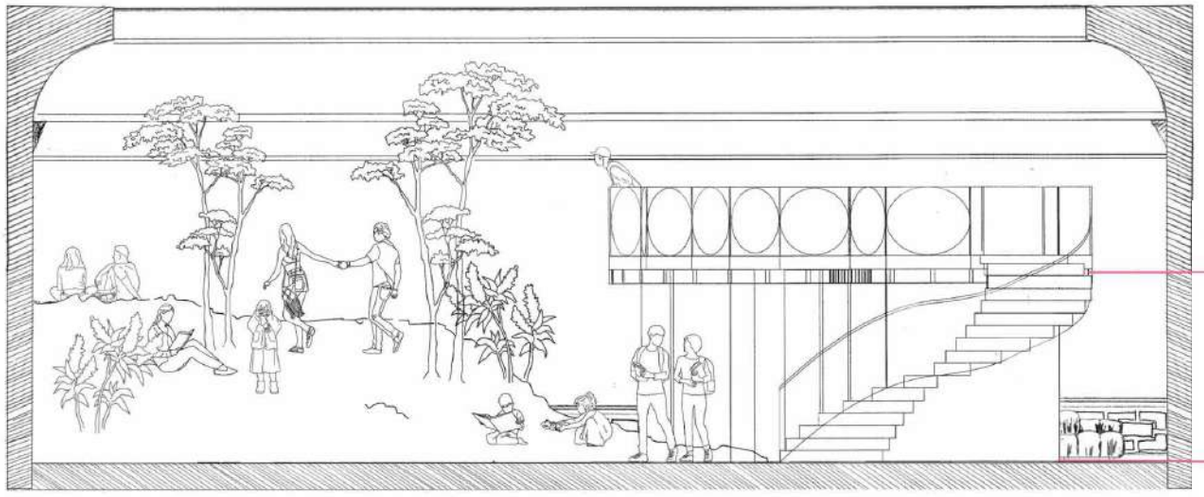
1
Eileen Gray is a master of creating anthropometric spaces. To me her houses are just the right balance of roomy and snug. She understands that anthropometry is not just a fixed number that can be calculated, but that it takes a solid understanding of the feeling of a space to determine its anthropometric size. In fact, in her spaces I can see, that anthropometry is not just about the space our bodies take up, but also about the space of our feelings. See in the plan drawing how the studio is of a size that can house her thoughts to float in the room.

2
Design studio Odd Standard created an object that explains the thought – a plate called "passe". "Passe is exactly what the name tells you; just right! In Norwegian, that is. Just the right size, just the right shape, just the right feeling. And at the same time a touch passé, with its slightly old-fashioned appearance! The centre part has a smooth and even curve and it stacks like a beauty. The diameter of PASSE is approximately 15 cm and the height 5 cm. The centre part measures around 10,5 cm in diameter and 3 cm in depth. The inside is glazed, the backside unglazed and polished." (ODD Standard, n.d.)

3
When I think of space that is well calculated and meaningful I somehow think of Omakase – of how a chef carefully determines bodily space. Omakase is a way of eating on a fundament of trust. When the chef serves you puffer fish sashimi you have to be ready to trust them with your life. If you agree you will receive a bite of fish meat that around the size of your tongue. During a sushi omakase the chef carefully arranges bites that fit the inside of your mouth just right. Throughout the evening the chef measures the space of your hunger. They will determine how many bites it takes to fill the space of your stomach in a way that makes you fell just right –without being left too full or still a tiny bit hungry. Omakase describes the inner space that needs to be filled for you to be content.

4
In an earlier work called "Sápmi Forever", anthropometric scale became a way for me to introduce a sense of equality into the space. It was a transformation project and a decolonial approach within interior architecture that took physically but fictionally place in the former National Gallery in Oslo. National institutions such as the National Gallery rejected Sámi identity and history based on restrictive rules for what they could and wanted to exhibit. I wanted to design a space that celebrates Sámi culture and forces the former National Gallery to take accountability for what has been. The project was based on conversations with artists, duojárat, architects, researchers, activists and children from Sápmi, among them legend Joar Nango. The concept was based on collaboration, the whole point was that I, a non-Sámi designer should not design a space that aims for Sámi presence. But I wanted to do my best with deep research and a field study where I drove 1500km through Northern Sápmi to collect experiences and voices to gain an understanding of how value that colonial structures stole can be returned.

The transformation took place in the Christian Langaard Hall of the National Gallery, one of the most prestigious rooms in the museum – with elaborate oak floors, mahogany paneling, a sweetly salmon coloured silk tapestry and skylights. However, the feeling of being small while standing beneath the 6 metre high ceilings did not benefit the experience I wanted to give people. I wanted to take away the symbolical predominance of the Norwegian state, manifested in prestigious out-of-human-scale proportions. Somehow the room had to become more human-scaled, the ceiling had to come down, or the people had to come up to the ceiling. The latter is something I admire about Sámi architecture: All spaces are within reach. You have control over the space because your hands reach to the ceiling. You can fix it on your own. You are independent. By creating a pavilion with accessible rooftop, I wanted to achieve exactly this. Suddenly the Langaard hall would not seem so tall and and dominating. Suddenly you are not looking up anymore to the cornice where it said Christian Langaard Gave in golden letters. Instead, you stand on eye hight with it. It is a matter of perspective.



Sápmi Forever, Josephine Sassu

Section of a goahti/ gamme by Kirsti Knudsen, NTNU Universitetsbibliotek: Oppmåling av gammer og telt i Kautokeino, https://www.ntnu.no/blogger/ub-spesialsamlinger/tag/gamme/

Concluding on purity, freshness and simplicity

Concluding, I remain with following notions on expressing *purity*, *freshness* and *simplicity*:

Purity describes the quality, the character of a space,
Freshness communicates the relational closeness within and towards a space,
Simplicity is a means to compose a space in the way its character becomes clearest visible.

All three of these elements are ways of communicating existing essence through design. These understandings mark the core of what culinary spatial practice can entail for designing for Nordic cuisine. However, a core can only be truly appreciated when put in a context. Therefore, in the next chapter, I proceed with exploring its relation to the notions of *time* and *place*.

"And when I build something in the landscape, it is important to me to make sure my building materials match the historically grown substance of the landscape. The physical substance of what is built has to resonate with the physical substance of the area. I observe in myself a conspicuous sensitivity to the relationship of place, material and construction.

Material and construction have to relate to the place, and sometimes even come from it. Otherwise I have the feeling that the landscape does not accept the new building. For example, if a house with external wall insulation and a synthetic topcoat is placed in the landscape, it hurts me to see how shabby the surfaces look in the light of the sun."

Peter Zumthor (Zumthor, 2006, pp. 99-100)

Chapter 2

Time and Place, Place and Time

Place

“Hva er smaken av Norge? Det er ett av de store spørsmålene vi forsøker å svare på i kjøkkenet på Maaemo hver eneste dag. Og det finnes et utall svar. Ett av dem, har jeg tenkt, kommer når man ser landet pa avstand, fra luften. Når du kommer høyt opp forsvinner veier og hus, etter hvert også motorveier, landsbyer og jorder. Til slutt ser du knapt mer enn dette: En lang kystlinje, og grønn skog. Det er dette som er utgangspunktet for retten med navn ‘Sjøkreps og gran’. Det er en rett som består av tilsynelatende to smaker som ikke har noe med hverandre å gjøre, men for meg utgjør de en slags essens av Norge. Retten fungerer som et slags satellittbilde av Norge. Retten fanger essensen av hva landet og folkene som bor her er laget av.”
Esben Holmboe Bang (Bang, p.148)

“What is the taste of Norway? That’s one of the big questions we try to answer in the kitchen at Maaemo every single day. And there are countless answers. One of them, I’ve thought, comes when you see the country from a distance, from the air. When you ascend, roads and houses disappear, eventually motorways, villages, and fields too. In the end, you barely see more than this: A long coastline, and green forests. This is the starting point for the dish called ‘Langoustine and spruce.’ It’s a dish that consists of seemingly two flavours that have nothing to do with each other, but for me, they constitute a kind of essence of Norway. The dish functions as a sort of satellite image of Norway. It captures the essence of what the country and the people who live here are made of.” (own translation)

As established previously, the concept of *place* plays a crucial role in shaping the essence of cuisine, as seen in the French notion of *goût du terroir* – according to which, the connection between place and taste is so strong that one can, metaphorically speaking, "taste" the spirit of a place, *genius loci*, in the food itself.

On the other hand, Nordic cuisine offers a different, yet complementary, approach to the relationship between place and cuisine. Rather than focusing solely on the characteristics of the region, Nordic cuisine emphasises the *purity* and *freshness* of produce, highlighting the importance of proximity to the source. The closer one is to where the produce is harvested, the more meaningful the connection between place and produce becomes.

Thus, while both French and Nordic culinary traditions underscore the significance of place, they do so in distinct ways—*goût du terroir* ties flavour directly to regional characteristics, whereas Nordic cuisine characterises place as the immediate notion of culture – or *culture* is the *freshness of place*. In the following, I want to express the influence of *place* with an anecdote on eating salmon.

An anecdote on eating salmon

One feels a different connection to a salmon one caught in a river (what rare luck!) than to a salmon bought in a store, cleanly vacuum-packed in rectangular pieces. As imaginary fishers for wild salmons, we have to study the fish. We need to know that it will return from the sea to the place it hatched from an egg many years ago. We need to understand the journey it has to its birth-waters and admire its strength when it swims with strong fin-strokes upriver and even up waterfalls. Most importantly, we are thankful and grateful for the one salmon we got to catch and eat. We acknowledge its aliveness even after its death.

On the contrary, we know much less about the salmon we buy in the store. About how its DNA was human-made in a lab to prefer being lazy instead of curious and having a mouth shaped to fit an industrially standardised pellet containing its food and antibiotics (Sætre, 2022). We know even less about the fish when it gets cut by big machines that have no sentiment when cutting living beings into rectangular pieces. Sometimes the machine gets ahold of the fish in a wrong angle and it will massacre it into – in fact – non rectangular pieces. Rectangular enough or not, when the pieces are being sent to Asia to be vacuum-packed there in order to push the profits to a greater extent, we barely recognise what has once been a fish that has suddenly travelled further than many of us in our lifetime. The final product is not a fish, "ceci n'est pas un poisson" – in the same manner as Magritte proclaimed that what we saw was not a pipe. The fish is not alive for us – it never was.

During this short but dramatic art-historical discourse, we have managed to discard the plastic packaging the pink rectangle came in, which was annoyingly dripping with its orange liquid that formed sometime in the defrosting period. We place the rectangle on a pre-warmed frying pan, it sizzles on the oil. A little bit of salt, and later – to not burn it – a little grind of pepper. Maybe a little crushed garlic clove to flavour the oil. Maybe some of that parsley that is on the brink of dying on our kitchen counter. We eat the rectangular, filled and content, we now slowly but surely forget about it. We never managed to establish an emotional connection to it, it has always been only a rectangular piece of protein in a shade of pink which was pre-determined by a code in the *Salma-Fan*.

Once, I brought a frozen, vacuum packed piece of rectangular fish to eat on a hiking trip. It felt ingenious to start the trip with a frozen piece of fish and let it defrost while I hiked, having perfectly defrosted when I sat up camp in the evening. I fried it in butter, with garlic cloves and mushrooms on the side on the camping stove until the silver skin had become golden and crisp. I remember the contentment when I finally ate it, it tasted good after a long day of hiking. I did not think much of it on the hike. Only later, when I looked at the picture I had taken of the perfectly fried fillets, did I realise how absurd it was – It was so absurd to have brought the rectangular piece of meat on yet another journey, and satirically eating it not too far away from rivers where its genetically different wild companions were swimming up to their birth-waters. Why was the fish so strictly rectangular? It was not supposed to be this perfectly rectangular! It did not make sense (surely, in a rational economic understanding in the context of food design in the recent decades, it made perfect sense – but not in the irrational, emotional way). The more I thought of its shape, the more it disgusted me – one is not supposed to eat geometrical rectangles when immersed in a harsh and organic surrounding called nature.

My work deals mostly with elaborate food that is being eaten in less elaborate space and how we can change that. However, in this very moment, I had experienced the opposite – in this very moment, it was the food that was wrong for the *place* – not the other way.

The more geometric the prepairing of a meal becomes, the wronger it feels.

Place as a foundation of culture

All in all, *place* serves as the foundation of culture—encompassing both human culture and the natural culture of the environment. Being closer to the origin of produce not only deepens one's connection to human traditions but also increases the likelihood of experiencing the micro-organism cultures that thrive in the surrounding ecosystem. These micro-organisms, including bacteria, fungi, and other microscopic life forms contribute to the taste of a meal – especially when the micro-organisms collaborate in the fermentation of produce (more on the act of fermentation in the next chapter). This proximity could contribute to between the surroundings, its inhabitants, and the traditions that celebrate this connection. *Place* becomes the stage for culture and for meetings of cultures of different scales.

I therefor wonder whether using the word *habitat* instead of terroir, would contribute to highlight the aliveness of the land and of *place* itself. In the context of an ecosystem, a habitat refers to the specific environment or space where a particular organism or community of organisms lives. It includes both biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) factors. Each habitat supports a unique set of species adapted to its specific conditions, creating a complex web of interactions within an ecosystem. Habitat hereby becomes the nurturing mother of culture.

In cities, the built environment, including architecture, infrastructure, public spaces and private corners, forms what could be called the foundation of the *urban habitat*. These structures create their own nature, their own character, different from city to city. And can be deconstructed and analysed in similar matters as biologists do to understand natural habitats.

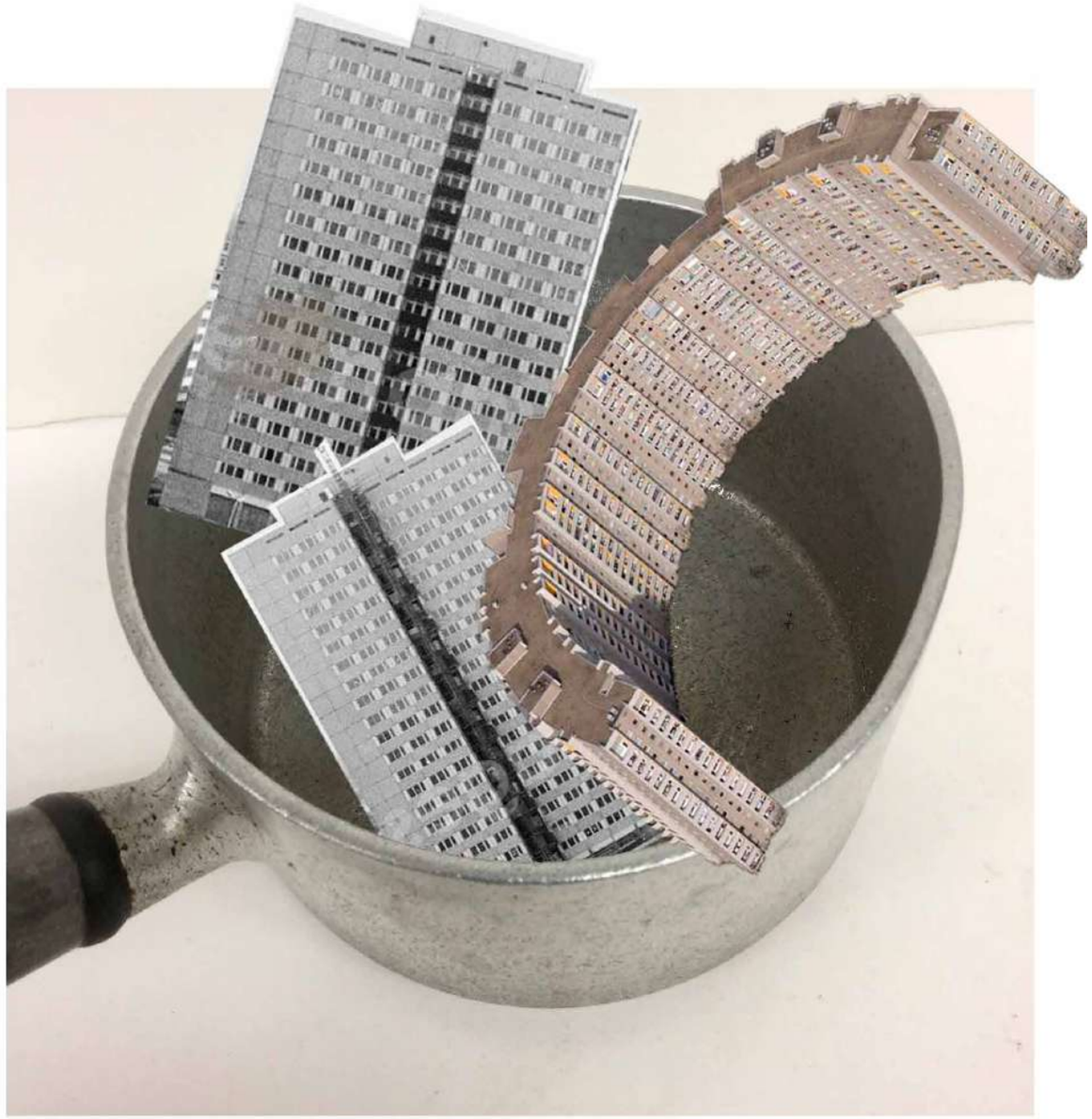
My thoughts return to a conversation with Anette Krogstad, the artist and designer who made the plating objects for renowned restaurant Noma. In her studio, she shared memories of a restaurant called *Pjoltergeist* that used to live in the lower floor of an apartment building in Tøyen, a district in Oslo. *Pjoltergeist* had something unconventional, something seriously striking, something unforgettable that not many restaurants are capable of. The reason I take up *Pjoltergeist*, is that I believe it must have had a connection to the surrounding, to the neighbourhood, that was truly alive. It was part of its habitat, it reflected it and interacted with it and thereby brought out the essence of the place.

It must have truly been place as the immediacy of culture. She said that one never knew what to expect there and suppose that the space carried this very notion of excitement in its essence.

Sadly, I have not experienced *Pjoltergeist* myself, I was in a way late to the party. All I can do now is look through old images that visitors uploaded on google maps and try to imagine how it felt – through the eyes of a distant spectator. There is something warm in looking through pictures on google maps taken with the camera of an smart phone when smart phones didn't have cameras that work well in low light yet. There is something cozy in looking through blurry, dark pictures, taken for the sake of the personal memory. Often the pictures don't even depict the food, just a plate or a bowl, carefully scraped for the last bit of its delicious content. The plates are of the type one has with 19, living in a flatshare and all the plates and glasses one owns are found somewhere, not bought. Each with of them with their own personality and notches and impossible to stable on top of each other in the shelf. Personally, I think those plates paired with the solidly extraordinary wine choices, is brilliant humour.

The problem is – and that is when it hit me – a great culinary space is about the immediacy, the aliveness of experience. Culinary space and the feeling of it cannot be reproduced visually through images. It is an experience of all senses, it has to be felt, heard, smelled and tasted to be understood. It is the act of experiencing that brings and keeps the space alive. Moreover, identity lies within the people and the culture, not within the notion of *place* alone.

While the essence of identity is rooted in the people and culture that make a space come alive, it is also through culinary practices that this aliveness is expressed. Nordic cuisine aims to create the illusion of a living environment being served on a plate. It is about understanding and "deconstructing habitats" (Redzepi, 2015, p.14). This understanding sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the relation between *place – cuisine – space – design* in the context of *time*.



"They wouldn't get it, it's about deconstructing habitats. *René Redzepi* said that! And this is urban habitat", I mumble while adding yet another prefabricated piece of Gropiusstadt into the pot.

east berlin for lunch

Time

"Things that have been cooked with leaves decomposing under the snow for one winter

In a grove of birch trees, walking around one spring morning, after the snow was gone but before the grass had started to grow, I smelled something that I smell every year at this moment. It was the smell of decayed organic matter becoming new life again in the great carbon cycle.[...] In the years after that, every spring we collected and dried bags of leaf mould from that grove of birch trees and kept it in store for the rest of the year. It really became my go-to seasoning when looking for that earthy tone wherever we wanted it."

Magnus Nilsson (Nilsson, 2021, p.201)

To capture time

Materials can be a tool to capture *time*. Space can act as a time capsule which translates through its materiality. However, some materials reflect time clearer than others. Some materials adorn themselves beautifully with the traces of use and time, they adorn themselves with traces of care – they capture the life of a space.

Materials tell a story, their patina reminds us of the past, their physical presence underneath our fingertips substantiates the present moment and their signs of care give us a feeling of reassurance for the future.

In the same matter as a chef tries to perfect a dish and its appearance, there is undoubtedly the need for spatial perfection within fine dining. However, the common believe that the perfection is achieved by flawlessness, by newness, irritates me. What is wrong with signs of use, signs of age, signs of care? It's the small tactile pleasures in finding a piece that has been fixed carefully. It gives the material a certain warmth and value. Patina becomes a tactile pleasure. Growing patina takes time and patience. One can of course control the process as much as humanly possible, but the true beauty often lies in the traces of fate – which we have no control over.

Materials are a way of communicating – and through design materials can communicate what lies beyond their physical qualities. The choice of material opens possibilities of making a meaningful statements of social, political and/or nature. Materials is a strong and especially tactile way to say something, to position oneself in the debate of today's consumerism.

A beautifully ornamented door wearing traces of many hundred years. Folkemuseum, Oslo

Materiality and Melancholy

"I am convinced that a good building must be capable of absorbing the traces of human life and thus of taking on a specific richness. Naturally, in this context I think of the patina of age on materials, of innumerable small scratches on surfaces, of varnish that has grown dull and brittle, and of edges polished by use. But when I close my eyes and try to forget both these physical traces and my own first associations, what remains is a different impression, a deeper feeling a consciousness of time passing and an awareness of the human lives that have been acted out in these places and rooms and charged them with a special aura. At these moments, architecture's aesthetic and practical values, stylistic and historical significance are of secondary importance. What matters now is only this feeling of deep melancholy. Architecture is exposed to life. If its body is sensitive enough, it can assume a quality that bears witness to the reality of past life."

Peter Zumthor (Zumthor, Thinking Architecture, 2006, pp. 25-26)

Translating *time*

Time is a fundamental element that shapes and pushes the relationship between food and culture onwards. In cuisine, time can be investigated in various scales — from the natural cycle of seasons giving a rhythm to the human cycle of cultivating, harvesting, conserving and composting, to the time one spends eating dinner. Time, as expressed through the seasons, becomes the driving force behind the cultivation and harvest of produce, influencing not just what is available, but also how it is prepared, preserved and cherished – and eaten.

Halvar Ellingsen, chef at Kvitnes Gård in Northern Norway, centres his culinary practice around the natural rhythms of the land. At Kvitnes, cultivating, harvesting, conserving, and composting are fundamental and structure-giving principles that guide the rhythm of the restaurant and the dinners (Kvitnes, n.d.). Seeing that a cyclical rhythm is the natural force behind what can be conceived as the essence of produce, I wonder whether interior architecture could give the guests a glimpse of this rhythm. How can space tell the story of cultivating, harvesting, conserving and composting?

To Cultivate

The word "cultivate" comes from the Latin verb *culturare*, which itself derives from *cultus*, the past participle of *colere*, meaning "to till, tend, or care for." This root word colere also gives rise to another closely related – "culture". The connection between these words highlights a central understanding – the connection of *time* to *place* to *people*, celebrated through *culture* and *care*.

"Culture" itself originally referred to the cultivation of land but later evolved to describe the cultivation of the mind, manners, arts and also design. And as the most traditional use of "cultivate" refers to the preparing and using land for growing crops, the essential notions of care is expressed in the relation between people and land. "To cultivate" in a cultural sense means to develop or refine intellectual and artistic pursuits, contributing to growth – which is to me the notion I want to reveal through design.

The act of cultivating can therefore result in different ways to form a way of understanding and practicing design. However, at the heart of whichever idea, the notion of *care* must be present. Caring for the place, the building, the space, walls, the way they meet the ground, the doors and their handles, the windows and how it feels to open them, the chairs and the tables, the way the light shines on them, caring for the plate, the spoon, the knife, the fork, the little vase with flowers. But most of all – caring for the people that the space is designed for. And that is the crucial notion to understand from the idea of cultivating: To design with care and attention.

On a different layer, the act of cultivating describes how a space is connected to a place. To cultivate in design therefore can also mean respecting the context in which a space or object exists – whether this context is urban or rural, old or new, global or local. This includes considering the cultural, social, historical and environmental aspects of a place, ensuring that the design respects the connection between people and place.

Those understandings are tied to the underlying concept of time within cultivation. Time in following translation is proposed as the meeting of past and future. Since "culture" and "cultivate" share the same root, cultivating design also involves the idea of preserving culture while at the same time thinking towards the future. The act of cultivation can therefor be understood as using design to explore the past and bringing what already exists into a new context – the future. Essentially, to me, that is a manifestation of design as care.

To wake up from yet another dream about kale.

Work by friend and collegue Herman Breda Enkerud, “Du våkner fra enda en drøm om kål” from his book “Du har ingen makt i denne situasjonen” (you have no power in this situation), 2023.

Beautiful kale at Losæter, Oslo

To Harvest

The Nordic regions experience long, harsh winters and short, summers where suddenly everything happens at once. Traditionally, harvesting was crucial cultural event symbolising survival and celebration. Because of the incredibly short period that one can celebrate the sudden abundance of sunlight, flowers, vegetables, fruits and berries, harvesting in the Nordic context also emphasises the importance of preserving food. What is harvested must often be preserved—through methods like drying, fermenting, or pickling—to ensure a supply of food during the winter months. One can say, that this preservation process is as much a part of the harvest as the gathering itself.

The harvest describes the window of time where produce is mature enough but not too mature. It is a window of time that must be carefully observed and understood and once everything seems to align – it requires immediate action. Translating these findings into design, I want to focus on two qualities emerging within the act of harvesting: The needed *observation* to determine the right moment of action and the *feeling* when the conditions align and everything seems to be just right.

The Sámi people, indigenous to North Europe, follow a unique tradition of dividing the year into eight seasons, rooted in their profound comprehension of habitat and season that rests within their culture. Each season marks a changing in the landscape and activities of practical and spiritual quality. The names and customs associated with these seasons differ based on the specific region in Sápmi, considering variations in language and seasonal practices. After I learned about this way of seeing time, I started to apply it within my own experience of season and space. Following are my observations from my experiences in Oslo.

Spring-summer is a love letter to life, it is the anticipation of the abundance of summer and an anticipation comes often with even greater joy than what is being anticipated. The space is full of energy and every guests who visits immerses in it. The space is daring, it is like going for a swim when the joy to be able to swim again is so great that one forgets the water is still cold from the winter. Windows are being slightly opened to hear the flowers bloom and the birds sing. Cool wind blows into the space but hearing the spring is worth it. The space still provides warmth and comfort through materials, just like we still have to wear woolen sweaters in the spring summer evenings.

During summer, the space opens up as far as it can and encourages the guests to sense the soft smell in the warm evening breezes. The air vibrates from all the insects flying busy from flower to flower. Evenings seem to never end, the sun never sets. Just like day and night are blurred, the space now blurs the lines between outside and inside. Elements from outside are invited in, the warm wind, the tickling rays of the sun. Flowers and fresh produce create the feeling of a garden inside, there is so plenty of it all. The space is spontaneous in summer. It is as fruity as it is briny.

Summer-autumn reflects a melancholic joy. Fruity becomes earthy. Materials that give warmth are introduced to the guests. Wool and comfort for those who wish to the warm long nights would continue, even though it almost is too cold to sit outside now. Others have accepted the end of summer and seek the inside of a space. The space is silent while it takes farewell with the summer, keeping only a few souvenirs for memory. Lights are dimmed to give the guests the chance to part with the natural light. The space marks the ending of summer by slowly secluding itself and gradually getting ready for the long winter.

In autumn the forests birth mushrooms and the apple trees carry their dark red treasures, new scents, new sounds, new images, new colours. Trees change their colours and their leaves can be admired one last time before they fall. All the green disappears, slowly. The space takes now its final farewell from the summer. Memories of sitting outside are being caramelised while sitting warm and comfortably on the inside of the space. The space reflects the calmness and and encourages contemplation. It's not gloomy or heavy, like a Nordic winter; autumn is bright and stormy.

Autumn-winter might be darker than the winter. Without the snow, the darkness came quickly and seems so heavy and persistent. Everything seem to get so unbearably cold in the anticipation of winter. Storms tumble through everything that happened over the past year before they make it all fall into place one last time.

In the winter, the space is enclosed and becomes a shelter from the cold and grey monotony. Guests are seated in a space of warmth and comfort, reflected in the materials. Outside, ice cold winds are whistling through little cracks and snowflakes are covering the everything under their heavy white blanket. The sounds are dimmed, the light is dimmed. The weighty darkness is being embraced, not fought against. Remnants from autumn remind the guests of summer that now seems so far away. The space takes care of its visitors, it becomes a sanctuary of collectedness and togetherness.

Winter-spring starts silently and not knowing whether it is starting or if it is just hope, the space slowly shifts again. Sun rays seem to reach the inside again, trees and shrubs are showing their first buds, so green and purple and vulnerable. The changes are still so fragile. The floral vulnerability is reflected in the space. Materials are light and transparent, cold but warm up through touch. Some branches with buds are being brought into the warmth inside so they can bloom for us. Just like snowdrops and crocuses, the space too awakens from under its snow blanket. Lighter and fresher colours are being introduced as the snow melts and drips from all edges.

Spring is the evidence of the new start, life is now firmly exploding. Every bud wants to bloom, every plant pushes its leaves out towards the sun and everything is being born everywhere. The space reflects this tingling joy. It opens up again, it introduces fresh produce, tart colours and textures that are al dente. It now is grassy, refreshing and blooming. There is a tartness to the space, it tingles, it excites with a new *freshness* and *purity*.

Chapter 3

On Transformations

To Preserve

The act of preservation can be seen as standing at the intersection of two dimensions of time — what was and what will be. It is a convergence of the past and the future, meeting in the space of the present. This meeting point is critical, as it determines whether there will be a future.

As I began to say – the act of harvesting is closely followed with the act of preserving the abundance of crops. Preserving refers to the act of maintaining something in its state, protecting it from decay or damage. The word “preserve” comes from the Latin word praeservare, which is a combination of prefix “prae-” meaning “before” or “in advance” and “servare” meaning “to keep, guard, or protect.” Thus, praeservare originally meant “to keep in advance” or “to guard beforehand”.

Around the world, different cultures have developed various techniques to preserve food, each beautifully adapted to specific climates. In fact, most existing food preserving techniques go beyond the mere aim of being able to store the produce. Over thousands of years, techniques have been refined that add taste and nutritional value over time while at the same time preserving the produce. In the light of this translation project, I have become particularly interested in the technique of fermentation – preservation through change. I find this notion incredibly fascinating as it conveys the positivity of change, that everything is ever-changing – illustrating that preservation does not succeed through stagnation. The beauty lies in adapting this understanding: time stand still.

Language is an example of evolving change! A language must adapt and evolve with time to secure its future.

Traditions must be able to change as society changes with time – when traditions stagnate, they are left behind in the past and lose their meaning.

Buildings! Buildings must also be able to change over time – their function and composition must be transformable. Otherwise, they loose relevance and must be torn down, or become museums – allowing only the past to dwell within them.

Fermentation is a reflection on time passing, not a way to make time stand still.

What materials do we build in to pay homage to the cultural heritage of a of a space? What materials do we build in to establish the cultural future of a space?

2024

The Meaning of Butter for Architecture

Josephine Sassu

In Oslo, butter is something we find in a colourful plastic container with a plastic lid in the cooled disk of a supermarket. Some butters come wrapped in silver foil which is covered in a colourful print and pictures of buttercups in the sun. Stocked on top of each other in the cooled shelves, we stand there, facing a few hundred little packages, averagely containing 250g of different buttery products. No one has really time to even read the names of all packages, the presented choices are too overwhelming. Our eyes are trained to quickly scan the cooled shelves and find the colour combination of our go-to butter. Some are yellow and green, others yellow and red and some are golden and green and some are white and red – and then there are those that aren't butter at all but pretend to be according to their placement in the cooled shelves. Swedish chef Magnus Nilsson describes the cultural hearitage and meaning of butter in his reflection work *Fäviken: 4015 Days, Beginning to End.*

Fig. 1

A Norwegian wooden butter box engraved with the date 1838, part of Sætersgårds collection.

Fig. 2

Butter box produced between 1960 and 1975 in Norway.

Fig. 3

A modern time butter box, 2024.

Fig. 1: https://digitaltmuseum.no/021027791000/oskje
Fig. 2: https://digitaltmuseum.no/011022545898/smorboks-med-lokk
Fig. 3: https://oda.com/no/products/125-tine-ekte-smor/

"In Scandinavia, butter was originally used as a way of making the most out of the short summer's enormous abundance. Butter is one of the nicest ways of preparing milk for storage, which is basically what it is, even though people tend to forget that today, and regard it as something produced all year round just because it is good for cooking with.
[...]
In Sweden, butter was so valuable as a trade commodity that you could even pay your taxes with it, and along with cheese it was also many farmers' only way to get any cash income into the household. Typically the butter was made in the chalet near the summer pasture by first skimming the cream from the top of the milk (the skimmed milk later becoming gammelost), then storing it in wooden vessels for a few days until enough was obtained to churn it. During this time the cream would have fermented from the abundance of microbes in the pores of the wood and in the atmosphere in the stone cellar where it was kept. The cream was then churned in a wooden churner, washed and salted heavily. In this form it would keep in the cellar for a very long time. In the restaurant we have kept butter for up to a year. It becomes more and more rancid and powerful in terms of aroma the older it gets, but it doesn't become inedible as quickly as you might think."

Nilsson, M. (2020). Fäviken: 4015 Days, Beginning to End. Phaidon Press Ltd. p.306

Fig. 4

Photograph of a Norwegian butter house, referenced in a book about Ålesund in 1948. Butter would be arranged in beautiful shapes for celebrations to show respect to the guests and one's own social status.

Fig. 4: https://digitaltmuseum.no/021017004752/motiv-av-smor-stopt-i-ei-tradisjonell-smorform

However, the difference between modern mainstream butter and butter of the past goes far beyond the packaging. It is the cows themselves that had been redesigned. The new age cows are called Norsk Rødt Fe, lovingly referred to as NRF within the industry. Instead of only giving a couple of hundred litres of milk (and for most of the year none) like the old local breeds did, NRF gives up to 10.000 litres of milk every year – making it quite evident for the dairy industry which cows to breed and keep. From the 1960s, NRFs had become the dominating milk cow breed in all of Norway (Vangen, 2023). This change affected the way we saw land and the way we built in the landscape.

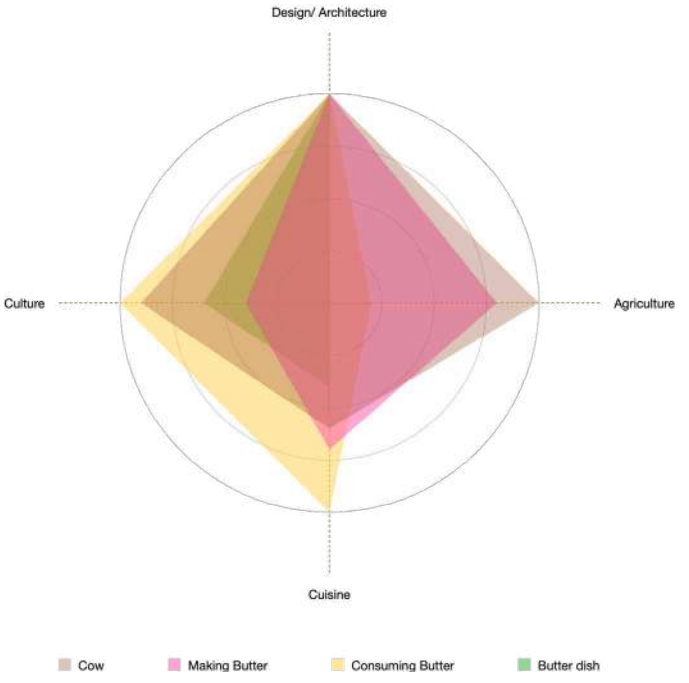
Fig. 5

Photograph of a modern dairy factory in Jæren, Norway

Fig. 5: https://www.tine.no/om-tine/meieriene/ost-og-smor/tine-meieriet-jaeren

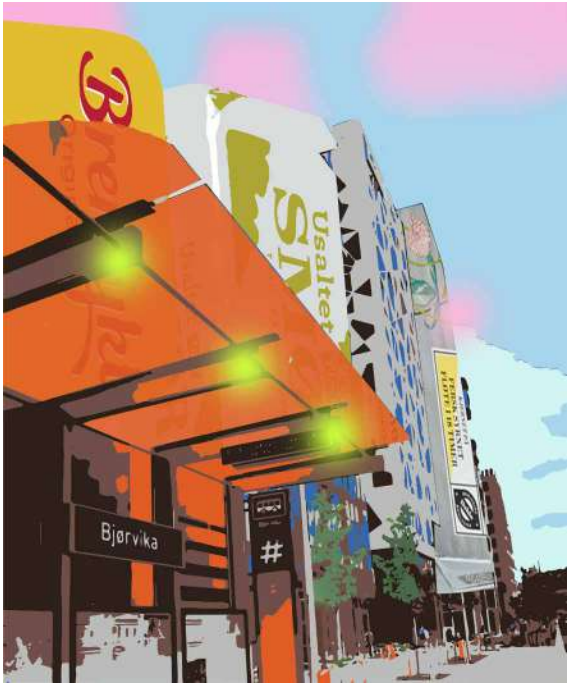
On being critical

This is not to discard modernity and the way processes take place nowadays. Neither do I want to convince you to stomp heavy cream to butter with wooden tools in the evening and use the remaining butter milk to bake breakfast pastries (even though I really like the utopic notion of having communal cows and making home-made butter). Contexts of the past were more local, not global. Nevertheless, my work does not aim to compare needs and methods from the past with contemporary needs and methods. When talking about the simplicity of life in the past, one will nearly always taste a note of criticality towards modern consumerism. And even though there might be a tone of nostalgia swinging in the words of the author, things were not necessarily better before. Life was not as harmonious as the rose-painting ornamentations we find on butter boxes from a century ago. The way we live now is an answer to wanting life to be easier after the first and second world war famines. It is an answer to wanting to know how far we can get with exploring technology and to wanting to live as carelessly as we can in the confinement of our apartment after working 9-5.



A diagram visualising how cows, making butter, consuming butter and butter dishes are connected through design throughout the realms of culture, cuisine and agriculture.

Our world consists of happenings touching onto different realms. On top of that, can each realm be seen through different lenses that can be of social, ecological, economical or other quality. Whatever fields we divide the world into, do not exist in isolation, in fact, they exist in the context and presence of each other. It is impossible to see where one realm ends and another one starts. And it is impossible to place a happening into clearly one of them without acknowledging its impact on other areas. Shortly said: everything is connected and everything influences something. In this thought we are mostly moving through the realm of culture, agriculture, cuisine and architecture/design. Design is the omnipresent structure that connects them. Sometimes design makes it easier to understand the connection between product, culture and origin and sometimes the task of design is to hide what connects them. Design is a way to communicate – power, a lifestyle, a belief, a way of doing something.



The buildings of Barcode, Oslo (so ironic actually), wanting to be so modern and unique and representing a new future while to me they are just way too tall glass facades that have nothing to do with what people need in reality. They try to be so different, yet they are all so same in their being, so cold and so average – and so culture-eradicating. I feel the same about butter in the cooling shelves at the supermarket.

Butter gives us the possibility to reflect. It leads our gaze towards what has been and why. It allows us to encounter choices of form and material with a deeper understanding. Food and architecture shape our lives more than we maybe want to acknowledge. Culinary and spatial factors define how we feel in our surroundings and how we feel inside our bodies. We become what we eat – and we also become our surroundings. Does the future we want to live in consist of standardised pre-fabricated solutions? Imagine your life if you never were to experience something outside the average, the mediocre. It would result in an unbearable feeling of numbness. If we never experienced a truly exciting taste or a truly exciting space, we simply would not know how to imagine it either. We can only ever really imagine what we have experienced ourselves – with all our senses. It is the tangibility of experiencing something extraordinary, that makes it possible to survive within the average.

True joy does not lie packaged in a super market shelf as one of many hundred tidily stacked plastic boxes containing a different type of same. We do not want to live our lives between buildings and spaces that are average. In that averageness lies a the sentiment on having given up.

True joy lies in daring something that is different and feels like it takes courage to do. We only get to feel a sense of accomplishment if what we wanted to achieve felt scary in the start.

Culinary spatial practice is about desiring the extraordinary. Extraordinarily good butter and extraordinarily exciting spaces.