Introduction

In contemporary culture, the ritual of eating goes beyond the physical act of tasting. It takes place through a series of interactions with electronic devices, particularly mobile phones, which increasingly frame and filter our interactions with food. The screen's transition from "intruder" to "collaborator" has altered the ritual itself. To date, my research has focused on how the mobile phone, as a collaborator in the eating ritual, affects our processes of tasting and experiencing food. The screen has changed eating from an embodied, private act to a performative, networked gesture. In my project, I used a side-by-side visual format to contrast the illusory appearance of food enhanced by digital filters with the harsh reality of spoilt and cold food. The dining table became a stage, and the food served as props. Emilie Baltz's Lickestra project provided another avenue for investigation: using technology to influence and modulate the senses while also reimagining this modulation as a means of connection.

Analysis

The core of the Lickestra project struck me as radical and straightforward, combining installation art, performance, and sensory design in its execution. The designers invited participants to lick an ice cream with sensors, which triggered different basslines and tones with each lick. The ingredient choice was particularly appropriate—ice cream naturally evokes the desire to lick. It encourages people to "play with" food instead of just "consume" it. This prompted me to think about using humour to counter the often solemn atmosphere surrounding technology and screens. In stark contrast to Lickestra, the imagery and text I used in my project leaned towards "serious parody" or "detached revelation". My aim was not to entertain audiences with parodic data, but to elicit reflection on their own ritualistic behaviours. However, I believe Lickestra's approach resonates with audiences because of its inviting tone. This levity does not diminish the gravity of the situation; rather, it lowers the barrier to entry, allowing for greater participation. It serves as a "experiential" critique, or playful subversion. After all, nobody wants to be "told" to reflect. While seriousness is powerful, it can also create distance.

From a narrative perspective, Lickestra's performance resembles a linear, progressive sequence—involving preparation, direction, execution, and conclusion—and is inherently non-reproducible. In contrast, my juxtaposed images capture "frozen" moments. I began contemplating how to make this narrative process more complete, as I couldn't allow the data conflicts between the pre- and post-filter food images to remain unresolved. Beyond the conventional approach of dividing it into multiple parts, is there a more potent narrative that could evoke a similar emotional arc in the audience – curiosity, experimentation, collaboration, surprise, and achievement? This leans towards a design that amplifies sensory experience.

In fact, we both see eating as a ritual. She criticises the individualisation of dining and the growing numbness of the senses, whereas I criticise its alienation from digital media tools. Yet, fundamentally, her work appears to fully

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embrace the coexistence of the sensory and physical, with technology serving as a tool to amplify this experience. However, I see electronic devices as an intrusive, intervening force that disrupts the relationship between person and food, distorting certain "fantasies" about sustenance. Here are some of the differences. Naturally, Baltz's work provides me with a fresh perspective: a call to rethink design as a participatory, sensual, and critically pleasurable experience.

Moving forward with my work

In my context, electronic devices are: directive, mediating, distancing, symbolic, and obscuring.

Both Lickestra's and my work are based on observations of behavioural patterns. Lickestra uses sound to amplify these systems, whether literal or metaphorical, and make them externally manifest. In contrast, I am more interested in how these same systems influence and shape our five senses. This gives me a new perspective: could I turn "digital interference" into a perceptible experience? Maybe turn "like counts" into a repetitive, jarring noise, or "screen editing time" into an unsettling texture? Baltz transformed ritual into a meticulously planned framework. This makes me wonder: could I go beyond simply criticising this alienated ritual and actively design a "counter-ritual" to resist or repair the phenomenon?

Our works both explore ritual and repetition. However, previous feedback indicated that the numerous sets of repetitive images I created were not entirely "essential". I now understand this point of view, because in works such as Baltz's, the repetition of the act of licking creates an experience that is both performative and cumulative. My goal, however, was to highlight a "argument". Once the viewer understands my logic, the subsequent sets simply reinforce the previous viewpoint rather than providing new experiences. I should incorporate multiple concepts I want to express rather than simply "stacking" examples. After all, excessive repetition reduces impact. Obviously, if I were to shift the subsequent development to a sociological study or archival-style work, multiple sets would be justified. The difficulty lies in creating new meaning (the argument). As a result, repetition loses its emphasis and becomes "surveying" and "categorising". This, too, offers an intriguing direction.

Summary

Emilie Baltz's Lickestra represents a design style that combines critique and

performance, intimacy and interface. It opens up new possibilities for my research. What I'm now talking about is our pursuit of social capital and symbolic value in the digital realm at the expense of the sensory attributes and immediate gustatory pleasures of food in real life. Finally, it prompts me to consider a more fundamental question: when our daily rituals are orchestrated by interfaces and algorithms, what natural, primal connections are lost? Design may involve less critique and reflection and more diagnosis, remediation, and revelation.

References

Baltz, E. (2014) *Lickestra*. Available at: https://emiliebaltz.com/experiments/lickestra/ (Accessed: 14 October 2025).