In the subsequent study following Unit 2, I began by investigating how electronic devices disrupt the unease inherent in dining rituals. From "TV dinners" in the past to "mobile phones first" today, technology seeks to cut off our sensory engagement and disrupt the rhythm of eating. However, through triangulation, I realised that my work does not seek to completely eliminate technology's influence on us. Rather, this new "cultural condition" has re-orchestrated our sensory experience within the ritual of eating. Within the urban context profoundly shaped by digital capitalism and internet culture, this model perpetuates the inherent "performative" and "social" dimensions of human rituals. It changes the weighting of sensory experiences, the length of rituals, and the intimacy between people. The natural, primal connection to food is fading as symbolic meanings and virtual intimacy emerge... The question I'm currently investigating is this: in the ritual of eating in East Asia's digital age, as food's "use value" is increasingly replaced by its "symbolic value," what genuine sensory and social connections are we losing? As a graphic communication designer, how can visual practice reveal this shift in value and cost?

First of all, The process of triangular positioning was critical in clarifying my position. I located my coordinates between "sensory amplification" and "sensory deprivation" by cross-referencing Emilie Baltz's Lickestra with "TV dinners". On the one hand, Lickestra demonstrated technology's potential as an ideal sensory amplifier, prompting me to question why mainstream applications tend to prioritise "control" and "deprivation" over "connection" and "amplification". This is due to underlying socioeconomic and capitalist structures. On the other hand, the historical case of "TV dinners" reflects an era in which authentic social interaction and sensory substance were sacrificed in favour of efficiency and entertainment. In my upcoming studio practice, I believe the goal should be to make technological changes more visible rather than to remove technology from the ritual of eating. So, how can people, food imagery, and interactive experiences become tangible? Previously, in my pursuit of visual universality and legibility, I risked removing those warm, unquantifiable dining experiences from my designs. In retrospect, my design tools became "numb and detached" instruments—a mistake. I must reconsider defining pleasure and humour as my primary design principles. Overall, this is an effective strategy that has helped me understand how to connect with audiences and lead them to reflect.

Second, in his book Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities, Beng-Huat Chua contends that within rapidly changing modern Asian cities, the inherent

factors that once defined identity - such as family, class, and place of birth - are becoming increasingly blurred. Instead, people are turning to consumption to choose, construct, and declare "who I am". Whether it's "food photography," "face culture," or "check-ins," these behaviours all contribute to a carefully crafted personal brand that communicates taste, class, and lifestyle. Food gains "symbolic value" in digital culture because it carries the cultural impetus of identity construction. Thus, what we consume is never the food itself; rather, we engage in a performance about our self-identity through its "symbolic value". To articulate my position, I should demonstrate the shift in value from "shared eating" to "shared viewing" by anchoring the "cost" to a specific sense of cultural loss.

Explorations in my work

I found Henry Franks' three rules for creating humour in objects in his project "Humour in Design" particularly intriguing: 1. Being in an unusual location. 2. Acting in an unusual way 3. Being the wrong size (Franks, H. 2015). Through displacement, incongruity, and exaggeration, we can reconsider the "misplaced" relationship of technology encroaching on the dining table. In my practice, I used multiple juxtapositions to present digitally enhanced food imagery, which served as a symbol of social capital. I also used overlooked physical realities to express the loss of utilitarian value. To highlight the unique East Asian urban cultural context, Chapter Two delves into banquet ritual protocols and emotional exchanges, demonstrating how electronic devices are reshaping traditional "face" culture and relational networks. Finally, I created an inviting interactive segment using deliberate "abnormality" and "displacement". An AR scanning experience allows audiences to see how technology is reshaping food rituals.

In short, while electronic devices have led us to place a higher value on the "symbolic significance" of food rituals over certain sensory experiences, it is undeniable that they have reshaped contemporary urban eating practices across East Asia, ushering in a new identity-forming mechanism. This reconfiguration preserves the East Asian cultural essence of social interaction through dining while also instilling contemporary identity with new meaning through entirely new mediating forms.

References

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