

The Camera Eats First:

*We can eat with our eyes but can we taste, hear, smell
and touch with them?*

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I declare that this **critical cultures research project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: Dianne Denton

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dianne Denton'.

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Table of Contents:

1. List of Illustrations.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Haptic Visuality of Food Through Moving Image.....	6
3. Impact of Sound on Food Content.....	17
4. Food Porn, Seducing our Senses.....	23
5. Conclusion.....	28
Bibliography.....	31

List of Illustrations:

<i>Figure 1 - Chocolat (2000) Opening of the scene, women preparing dinner in the kitchen</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 2 - Chocolat (2000): Chocolate being melted and spread on a marble slab...</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Figure 3 - Chocolat (2000): The Count engorging on the chocolates in the front window display.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Figure 4 - Chocolat (2000): Close-up of melted chocolate being stirred.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Figure 5 - Chocolat (2000): The lobsters being cooked.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Figure 6 - Chocolat (2000): Chocolate fish (above) and soup (below).....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Figure 7 - Nigella: At My Table (2017) Nigella Lawson eating her brownie.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Figure 8 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson touching her dish.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Figure 9 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson spreading mixture.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Figure 10 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson spiralizing potatoes....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Figure 11 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson splashing vegetables with Vermouth.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Figure 12 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Close-up of vegetables being splashed with Vermouth.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Figure 13 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Judge tasting Soma's dish..</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Figure 14 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): The judges tasting Soma's dish.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Figure 15 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Soup and sea image.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Figure 16 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Panel of judges reviewing Soma's dish.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Figure 17 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): The judges describing the dish.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Figure 18 - CHEESE PIZZA MUKBANG EATING SOUNDS ASMR (2021): Pizza eating sequence.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 19 - CHEESE PIZZA MUKBANG EATING SOUNDS ASMR (2021): Slice of pizza being dipped in sauce and drinking from a glass of cola.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 20 - ASMR CHICKEN NUGGETS MUKBANG (McDonald's, Burger King & Wendy's) No Talking Zach Choi ASMR (2019): Chicken nugget eating sequence..</i>	<i>18</i>

<i>Figure 21 - ASMR CHICKEN NUGGETS MUKBANG (McDonald's, Burger King & Wendy's) No Talking Zach Choi ASMR (2019): Zach Choi sipping from his bottle of sprite.....</i>	19
<i>Figure 22 - Django Unchained (2012) Beer drinking sequence.....</i>	20
<i>Figure 23 - Inglourious Basterds (2009): Eating sequence.....</i>	20
<i>Figure 24 - The weird and wonderful world of ASMR (2022): 'Made in France' interview.....</i>	21
<i>Figure 25 - Judy Rose Bower (2023) Members of the public interacting with the exhibition (credit Ed Reeve).....</i>	22
<i>Figure 26 - Judy Rose Bower (2023) Work by Tobius Bradford 'Feeling/immeasurable thirst', 2021 (credit Ed Reeve).....</i>	22
<i>Figure 27 - Marks & Spencer (2004): Close-ups of the pudding.....</i>	24
<i>Figure 28 - Marks & Spencer (2004): Close-ups of the pudding on the fork.....</i>	24
<i>Figure 29 - Chocolate pudding without background.....</i>	25
<i>Figure 30 - Chocolate pudding (with pink background).....</i>	26
<i>Figure 31 - (Jones, 2019) Homemade sushi platter (credit Debbie Jones).....</i>	27
<i>Figure 32 - (Simon, 2022) Customers eating in the 'Dans le Noir' restaurant in London (credit Annie Simon).....</i>	28

1. Introduction:

Never in the history of humanity have we been exposed to this amount of imagery. Every day we are bombarded with countless food-related visuals via commercials on our phones, social media, movies, TV shows, and content promotion networks such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. We process these images of food through our senses. The senses have been essential to human evolution and development from the beginning of humanity. They enable us to gather and preserve new information that is essential to our continued existence on our planet (Biederman and Vessel, 2006, p.247-253). In this research essay I will examine how, specifically in connection to food, the external senses alter and interact differently when consuming different kinds of media.

There are five different external senses which are sight, sound, smell, touch and taste (Bradford and Harvey, 2022, n.p). Although all these senses function independently, many studies have been carried out on how they are connected. For instance, there is a strong connection between sight and hearing, as demonstrated by the McGurk effect: a perceptual phenomenon much like synesthesia that shows how hearing and vision interact while interpreting speech (Nath and Beauchamp, 2012, p.781-787). This phenomenon occurs when the auditory and visual components of two sounds are combined, giving the impression of a third sound. A person may be more likely to experience the McGurk effect if they are receiving strong visual information but poor aural information.

Another well-known example of how the senses interact is the relationship between smell and taste. A strong, unpleasant smell will affect how the body interprets the flavour of otherwise pleasant food. It is hard to totally separate the perceptions of smell and taste since the throat physically connects the nose and mouth (Martin, 2013, p. 50-77). While all the external senses work together, touch would be considered the most independent sense as it does not have an obvious direct cooperation with any of the other senses (Fulkerson, 2014, p. 5). I will be exploring in the following essay how this can change via different forms of moving images.

Although all five external senses - sight, smell, sound, taste and touch are crucial in human development, vision is considered the most important. We perceive up to 80 percent of all impressions by means of our sight (Rosenblum cited in Hurt 2012). According to Dr. John Medina, author of 'Brain Rules' (2014), vision is the most important sense. He argues that vision dominates and shapes all other senses, influencing learning and memory as well as how an individual perceives their surroundings. As our vision influences our perception of the world more than other senses, it usually prevails when information from different senses is in conflict (Medina, 2014, n.p).

Although vision is often considered a necessity for survival it is also a vessel that enables humans to appreciate the arts; painting, sculpture, literature, music, theatre, architecture and cinema. The arts aid in global understanding. They are a crucial component of culture because it gives people a better knowledge of their emotions, raises self-awareness, and makes it possible for them to be receptive to new ideas and experiences.

In this research essay, I will first focus on film and moving imagery and the ways in which it stimulates the senses through food. People interpret film mainly through sight and sound which evokes the other senses. In *The Skin of Film* (2000), Laura U. Marks shows how image allows viewers to experience cinema as a physical and multisensory embodiment of culture, not just as a visual representation of experience. She also explores the term 'haptic visuality', a phrase she uses to explain how vision can become tactile as if one were touching a film with their eyes evoking memory (Marks, 2000, p.333). This research essay will explore the two sides to her theory, one of materiality and one of subjectivity.

Following on from *Haptic Cinema*, I will be delving into the world of ASMR which stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response - a sound, touch, or movement-induced feeling of euphoria or deep relaxation, sometimes accompanied by a tingling in the body (Poerio et al, 2018, n.p).

I will be looking into ASMR eating - more commonly known as 'mukbang', a term derived from Korea. It involves seeing and hearing other people bite, chew, and slurp various meals in order to experience a tingling sensation in your head, neck, and spine (Kim, 2020, n.p). ASMR falls into two categories: intentional and unintentional. Intentional media is purposefully produced by "ASMRtists" to trigger ASMR in listeners and viewers.

Unintentional media is material produced for unrelated purposes, frequently before 2007 when the phenomena first came to light, but which some people find to be successful in inducing ASMR (Dawson et al., 2019, n.p). I will outline intentional ASMR using two examples from two popular ASMRtists; ASMERIEATS and Zach Choi ASMR. I will then explore unintentional ASMR used in film describing two food scenes from two Quentin Tarantino classics *Django Unchained* (2012) and *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). I will also be exploring the effect ASMR has on the brain and the senses by outlining a study that explores the links between ASMR and synesthesia (Barratt & Davis, 2015, n.p) a perceptual disorder that resembles ASMR in some ways where consistent sensory associations do take place (Palmeri et al, 2006, n.p). I will discuss ASMR within the art world and its future. I will also be exploring ASMR in the physical space at the exhibition 'Weird Sensation Feels Good: The World of ASMR' held at The Design Museum London.

Finally, I will be looking into the popular term 'foodporn', a glamorised depiction of cooking or eating in visual media such as commercials, social media, blogs, and cookery shows. Similar to glamour or pornographic photography, food porn often takes the form of food photography with styling that portrays food provocatively (Probyn, 1999, n.p).

The term was first used in an article by Alexander Cockburn published in December 1977 in *The New York Review of Books*, in which Cockburn wrote, "True gastro-porn heightens the excitement and also the sense of the unattainable by proffering coloured photographs of various completed recipes"(Cockburn, 1997, n.p)

I will be looking into how Marks and Spencer have taken certain principles and techniques from pornography to create a new subgenre of food advertisement and how this affects the senses. I will finally discuss how food pornography has evolved into an art form.

In summary, I want to learn and investigate how our perception of food changes through different forms of media, how it affects our brains and the senses and how I could apply this knowledge to the presentation of my art.

2. Haptic Visuality of Food Through Moving Image:

In this section, I will be discussing Laura U. Mark's theory of Haptic Visuality (Marks, 2000, p.333). As previously mentioned this is the name given to a visuality that mimics the tactile sense of touch by evoking physical memories of taste, touch, and smell. It explains the newly discovered ways that intercultural cinema engages the viewer bodily to convey cultural experience and memory. I will outline this through the representation of food in film, TV and animation. Marks offers the following as examples of haptic visuality in moving images; depicting people having sensory experiences, such as smelling, tasting, and touching, zooming in on the surfaces of things, altering the camera's focus point, scratching the film, obscuring pictures, explicit and implicit exposure, using grains and merging film and video image formats (Marks, 2000 p.339). Hence the physicality of haptics is not just about utilising the camera as a fingertip, nose, or mouth, but also about making the visual material tangible.

In the film *Chocolat* (2000), directed by Lasse Hallström, a woman and her young daughter open a chocolate shop in a rural French village, upending the village's strict moral code. The film is centred around chocolate and the intricate production that goes into it. In one of the final scenes, the woman prepares a feast for a dinner party. The scene shows the preparation that goes into making the dinner while also simultaneously cutting to sequences of the local Count engorging in her chocolates on the shop's front window display.



Figure 1- Chocolat (2000) Opening of the scene, women preparing dinner in the kitchen.

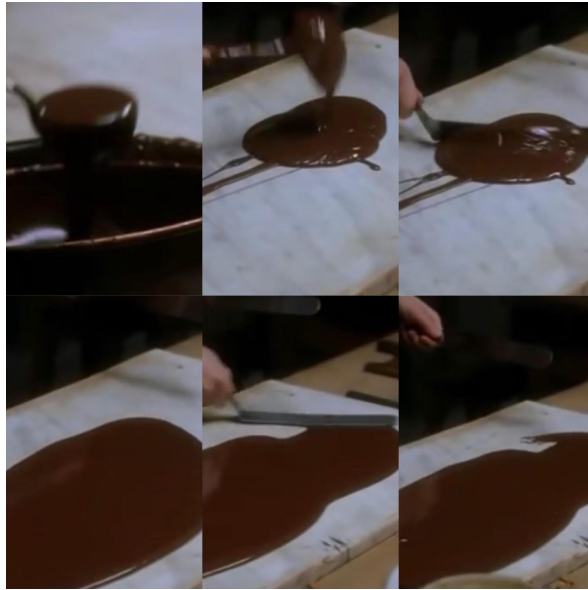


Figure 2 - Chocolat (2000): Chocolate being melted and spread on a marble slab.

Figure 1 depicts the beginning of the scene with the woman preparing dinner in her kitchen. It initially focuses on her but as it zooms in, it refocuses on her friend helping her to prepare the supper. This zooming and refocusing effect can also be seen in Figure 2 which shows freshly melted chocolate placed and spread on a marble slab. The camera initially focuses on the ladle scooping the chocolate but then refocuses on the splattering and spreading of the melted chocolate on the marble slab.



Figure 3 - Chocolat (2000): The Count engorging on the chocolates in the front window display.



Figure 4 - Chocolat (2000): Close-up of melted chocolate being stirred.

Figure 3 depicts the Count giving in to his temptations in the shop window. He has broken in to destroy the chocolate display but a bit of chocolate lands in his mouth and after tasting it he engorges on the rest of the display. The camera zooms in on his mouth and then his eyes as he realises his newfound love for chocolate then back out on his intense and fast-paced consuming. In Figure 4 the camera pans along the surface of the chocolate and zooms in along the skin of it while it's being stirred.



Figure 5 - Chocolat (2000): The lobsters being cooked.



Figure 6 - Chocolat (2000): Chocolate fish (above) and soup (below).

In Figure 5 the use of obscuring images is shown. The woman is cooking and seasoning lobster while the steam rises from the pot. All that can be seen for a few seconds is the steam-filled room. It is almost like a mesh or a grain has been overlaid on top of the images. In Figure 6 we can see the use of under and overexposure in this scene. The top image of the chocolate fish is underexposed and the bottom image of the soup is overexposed.



Figure 7- Nigella: At My Table (2017) Nigella Lawson eating her brownie.



Figure 8 - Nigella: *At My Table* (2017): Nigella Lawson touching her dish.

‘The Table’ (2017) is a television cooking series where famous chef Nigella Lawson cooks her favourite recipes and then presents them to family and friends at a dinner party. The figures shown are all taken from her first episode of the series. The show contains such haptic visuals as people having sensory experiences with the food, tasting, smelling and touching. Figure 7 depicts Nigella tasting and enjoying one of her homemade brownies. Figure 8 depicts her touching the food whilst describing it “it’s tender and soft but just set on the surface”. This draws in the audience and gives them a richer sensory experience.



Figure 9 - Nigella: *At My Table* (2017): Nigella Lawson spreading mixture.



Figure 10 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson spiralizing potatoes.

Figure 9 shows Nigella spreading the meringue mixture on top of the jam. The camera zooms in along the mixture being spread and the visuals become blurred. This gives the shot a tactile visual feel. Our eyes have to work much harder because of the blurred imagery, which enhances the visual sensory experience. Figure 10 depicts potatoes getting placed and cut in a spiralizer. This scene varies in focus, with points switching from the potato getting spiralized and Nigella operating the machine. The camera zooms in on the potato and then back out when Nigella comes into the shot. The camera also varies in angles giving a different perspective to each shot which is depicted in the last image of Figure 10 from the perspective of Nigella Lawson.



Figure 11 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Nigella Lawson splashing vegetables with Vermouth.



Figure 12 - Nigella: At My Table (2017): Close-up of vegetables being splashed with Vermouth.

Figures 11 and 12 also show the varying focus points in the show. The background in many of the shots is blurred and the spring onions and peas, the bottle of vermouth and the hands sprinkling the dill are all in focus. This draws our eyes to concentrate on the ingredients. The warm, blurry background with an abundance of lights generates an overexposed variety of images. The camera switches between her hands adding ingredients to the dish and a close-up of the vegetables.

Like Chocolat, Nigella Lawson provides plenty of haptic visuals in her cooking show. Unlike Chocolat, Lawson provides a haptic narrative within her show. She describes exactly what she is doing while she is cooking which adds to the sensory experience. She uses adjectives such as “scatter, splosh and torn up” as seen in figure 11. This sensual language paired with these intimate close-ups creates a variety of rich haptic visual scenes.

Lastly, I will outline the haptic visuals in ‘Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma’ (2015), a Japanese manga series created by Shun Saeki and Yto Tsukuda. The animated series is about teenager Soma Yukihira, an aspiring chef who enrolls in a prestigious culinary school where pupils compete in culinary challenges. The show is centred around food and uses a lot of the characteristics of haptic visuality within it.

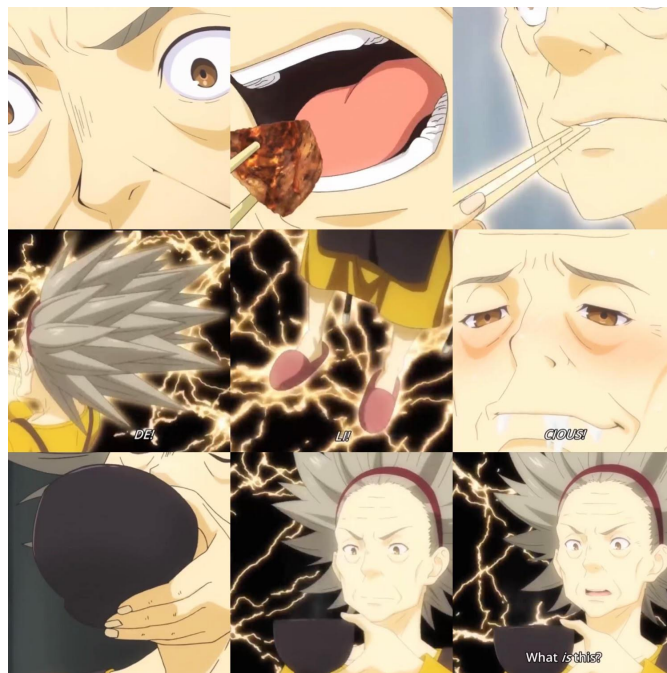


Figure 13 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Judge tasting Soma's dish.



Figure 14 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): The judges tasting Soma's dish.

The show has a dramatic and exaggerated quality to it and this can be seen in the reactions of the characters during the food tastings. At the end of each episode, a different judge tastes Soma's cooking. An example of them tasting the food can be seen in Figures 13 and 14. Their exaggerated reactions to tasting the food add to the haptic visuality of the scene. In figure 13 lightning comes out from the woman's body as a metaphor for the dish's electric and zingy taste. Figure 14 depicts multiple people tasting one of Soma's dishes. It shows them almost inhaling the food they're consuming so quickly.



Figure 15 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Soup and sea image.

Figure 15 depicts merging imagery, another characteristic of haptic visuality within the show. The waves crashing at sea are used as a visual metaphor for the flavours of the soup washing over the tongue. The images appear simultaneously on the screen at a low opacity. The overall effect gives the viewer an out-of-body experience.



Figure 16 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): Panel of judges reviewing Soma's dish.



Figure 17 - Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma (2015): The judges describing the dish.

Figure 16 and 17 display different layout and editing techniques used in the show. In figure 16 we can see the reactions of the judges tasting the food, the collage displays all their reactions simultaneously and then cuts to an additional collage a few seconds later with them all in an animated child bouncing around the dish that they are tasting to express the light fluffiness of the rice. In figure 17 we can see that the usual backgrounds are swapped in with a picture of the dish that they are describing. The background does not move but the person describing it remains animated. The blending of picture and image produces a very tactile and immersive experience overall.

Overall, there are traits of haptic visuality that can be applied to many different kinds of genres of moving images. However, food-related movies, TV shows, and animations are very haptically visual. Food is a subject that requires close-ups, merging of image formats, explicit and implicit exposure, narration and especially people smelling, tasting and touching it. Food is a universal experience that evokes strong emotions and sensory reactions in viewers.

3. Impact of Sound on Food Content:

In this section, I will explore food within ASMR and its place in the moving image world, how it evokes our senses and the effects it has on its viewers. As previously outlined ASMR is a term for a tingling, static-like, or goosebump sensation brought on by particular triggering auditory or visual inputs, it falls into two categories: intentional and unintentional (Dawson et al., 2019, n.p). I will now outline intentional ASMR by two famous ASMRtists ASMeRI Eats and Zach Choi ASMR.



Figure 18 - CHEESE PIZZA | MUKBANG | EATING SOUNDS | ASMR (2021):
Pizza eating sequence.



Figure 19 - CHEESE PIZZA | MUKBANG | EATING SOUNDS | ASMR (2021):
Slice of pizza being dipped in sauce and drinking from a glass of cola.

Figure 18 shows YouTuber ‘ASMeRI Eats’ slowly eating an excessively cheesy pizza. The video lasts just over 8 minutes and shows her eating the pizza from start to finish. There is a lot of repetition of noises and visuals throughout the video. She is seen frequently picking up the pizza, slowly taking a bite out of it, letting the cheese from the pizza stretch while she holds the slice and then finishing off the rest of the slice. She additionally dips the slices into a dip to add lubricant and also slurps from a glass of cola as seen in figure 19. The video does not have any dialogue but the mic is placed quite close to her mouth I was able to hear her chewing, loud breathing and slurping. The entire video is very intimate and makes you feel as if you are tasting the pizza as well.



Figure 20 - ASMR CHICKEN NUGGETS MUKBANG (McDonald's, Burger King & Wendy's) No Talking | Zach Choi ASMR (2019): Chicken nugget eating sequence.



Fig 21 - ASMR CHICKEN NUGGETS MUKBANG (McDonald's, Burger King & Wendy's) No Talking | Zach Choi ASMR (2019): Zach Choi sipping from his bottle of sprite.

Additionally in Zach Choi's ASMR chicken nugget video in figure 20, we can also see a repetition of eating. The video lasts 11 minutes and 27 seconds and it shows him eating 30 chicken nuggets from start to finish. He picks up a nugget one by one, holds it up and dips it into one of 6 sauces and eats it. Every so often he took a few nuggets and ate them in one go. He also additionally takes breaks to sip from a water bottle filled with sprite as seen in figure 21. His video also has no dialogue but is accompanied by intense sounds of eating, slurping and chewing.

Both videos are extremely intimate and invite the viewer in, making them feel like it is just you and the person eating. They both have dark backgrounds and both the person and the food is centred in the shot. The repetitive actions combined with the stimulating, tingling sounds of chewing provide a rich sensory experience as we watch. Similarly, the characteristics of these ASMR/Mukbang videos can be seen unintentionally in the film, particularly in Quentin Tarantino's work.



Figure 22 - Django Unchained (2012) Beer drinking sequence.



Figure 23 - Inglourious Basterds (2009): Eating sequence.

Figures 22 and 23 are scenes from *Django Unchained* (2012) (fig 22) and *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) (fig 23). In both scenes similar to Mukbangs the food is introduced at the start. Both show repetition of eating, fig 22 shows repetitive drinking and slurping in the scene and fig 23 shows repetitive eating and chewing in the scene. Although there is a dialogue in both scenes there is a pause for chewing and slurping with no accompanied background noise. The sounds of eating are intensified in both scenes and add a sensory quality to the films. The film makes you feel as if you are eating with them which gives this intimate quality that is also seen in ASMR.



Figure 24 - *The weird and wonderful world of ASMR* (2022): 'Made in France' interview.

Interestingly ASMRtists are now borrowing the techniques of cinema to use in their videos. In the BBC documentary *The weird and wonderful world of ASMR* (2022), popular ASMRtist 'Made in France' explains how his videos take ASMR one step further. He produces cinematic videos on YouTube with a high level of production value almost equivalent to what you may see in a movie:

"I think people like this content because it's kind of a new genre that involves the viewers directly in the story. So it's kind of a passive video game where you are, where the viewer is the main character. This is what I like to do. Lots of close-ups that take time to appreciate the nice sounds. This is some stuff you already find in traditional movies. (..) I think we can imagine lots of ways to incorporate ASMR in movies. What I imagine is more like the whole film is a traditional script-based movie with ASMR-inducing treatment (..) ASMR is the essence of the movie"

ASMR can cause certain people to experience and combine multiple senses, (Barratt & Davis, 2015, n.p). Similarly in Synesthesia, as outlined previously is a perceptual disorder that resembles ASMR in some ways, consistent sensory associations do take place. Synesthetes perceive secondary sensations to particular sensory stimuli that are otherwise unrelated. People who have synesthesia, for example, might taste a certain flavour when they hear a certain sound or see colour images when looking at numbers or characters (Palmeri et al, 2006, n.p). The same perceptual or cognitive inputs frequently and automatically trigger the same abnormal sensory response in both synesthesia and ASMR (e.g., synesthetic

photisms or ASMR tingles. Additionally, these situations are linked to altered patterns of functional connectivity between different brain areas, raising the possibility that there is a neurological basis for these experiences. In a study carried out by Barratt and Davis (2015), 5.9% of ASMR participants reported having synesthetic experiences in their survey, pointing to a potential overlap between the two phenomena, (Barratt & Davis, 2015, n.p).

Recently ASMR has been lifted out of the screen and into the physical space in the exhibition ‘WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD: The World of ASMR’ at the Design Museum London. The exhibition, the first of its kind, is an interactive space created by Judy Rose Bower. With microphones, brushes, and other things, individuals can produce their own sounds and ASMR experiences. The exhibition explores ASMR as an art form and displays the creators behind ASMR also known as ASMRtists (WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD: The World of ASMR, 2023). The exhibition has had great success so far with features in British Vogue and the BBC.



Figure 25 - Judy Rose Bower (2023) Members of the public interacting with the exhibition (credit Ed Reeve).

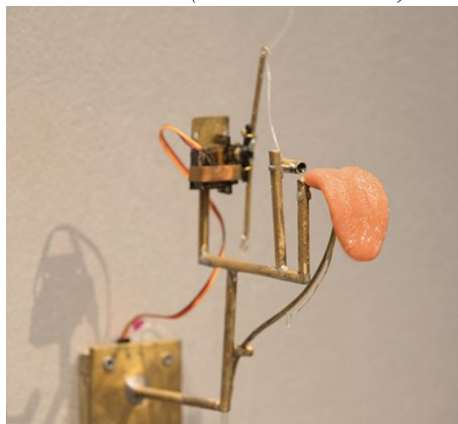


Figure 26 - Judy Rose Bower (2023) Work by Tobius Bradford 'Feeling/immeasurable thirst', 2021 (credit Ed Reeve).

The success of this exhibition has led me to think about employing the characteristics of ASMR in my own artworks. If I were to present my work in a sensory-infused way with lots of repetition and distinct sounds could it possibly make the artwork more successful and increase engagement with viewers?

A very successful ASMRtist that goes by the name 'Gibi' said in the same interview as mentioned above with the BBC "I would definitely consider ASMR an artform just like I consider any other filmmaking or content creation an artform. I think when you're doing anything creative, there is a lot of original scripting that goes into my work, a lot of thought process, the pre-production is by far the longest part of my video creation." (*The weird and wonderful world of ASMR*, 2022)

4. Food Porn, Seducing our Senses.

In this section, I will discuss 'foodporn' as it's portrayed in advertising and marketing. I will outline the techniques that advertisers have used in porn production and how these techniques trigger and combine the senses which result in a heightened engagement with its audience. In addition, I'll explore how foodporn relates to the art world and what aesthetic strategies are used to produce effective artwork.

Foodporn, as described previously, is a glamorised visual depiction of cooking or eating that can be found in commercials, blogs, cooking shows, and other visual media. Foodporn can be categorised into two things: food that has been artistically displayed in a way that resembles how porn would be presented, or food that has been given special focus in any way that makes viewers drool and lust after it as if it were porn (Probyn, 1999, n.p). Various clichés of real porn are used by the camera operators, including the "pornographic gaze": extreme close-ups with shallow depth of field, deliberate cropping and lighting, soft focus, and even shapes and arrangements that vaguely resemble anatomy (McDonnell, 2016, p.239-265). The fact that the perfect food shown in commercials will be unobtainable to most people further enhances the porn appeal (Goldstein & McBride, 2010, p.38-46). In the Harper's Bazaar piece "Debbie Does Salad: The Food Network at the Frontiers of Pornography", Frederick Kaufman and a former insider of the pornography industry Barbara Nitke, analyse how the food industry stole visual tactics from the pornography industry. The majority of Kaufman's paper focuses on how the "pornographic gaze," or camera methods and viewing habits, have been interwoven

into the visual presentation of food. He describes how certain filming methods from the pornography industry, like "swooping" over food, and presentation customs, like repetition, have been completely absorbed by Food Television. The article categorises this into five areas: framing, orientation, zoom, fetish and imperfection and depth of field (Kaufman & Nitke, 2005, n.p).

A prime example of a company that has its food products marketed in a pornographic manner is Marks & Spencers. From 2005 to 2019, Marks and Spencers boosted sales with their "This is not just food.." campaign, a series of slow-motion close-ups of molten deserts and pasta drizzled in a sauce accompanied by a slow, soft-spoken, sultry voiceover. It was a long-running and highly-successful campaign, boosting sales of the brand's melting middle chocolate pudding by 3500% in 2005. (Vizard, 2019, n.p)



Figure 27 - Marks & Spencer (2004): Close-ups of the pudding.



Figure 28 - Marks & Spencer (2004): Close-ups of the pudding on the fork.

In figure 28 we can see that the pudding takes up almost the entire frame. There is nothing else accompanying it like a plate, napkin or packaging and the pudding itself is undressed. In terms of orientation, the pudding is at the viewer's eye level and is always in the centre of every shot. In figure 29 the fork is angled towards the viewer and then rotates slowly away to give a glimpse of the inside of the pudding. The entire advert is zoomed in closely on the subject creating a sensual gaze on the pudding. This allows the viewer to experience the pudding more intimately, almost smelling and tasting it. Towards the end of the advert shown in figure one, we can see the pudding and melted ice cream about to fall off the fork and out of frame, this aids us in experiencing the physicality of the pudding. The short depth of field and artistic lighting are skillfully used to draw our attention in an intimate, sexual way that only requests that we concentrate on the pudding itself.



Figure 29 - Chocolate pudding without background.



Figure 30 - Chocolate pudding (with pink background).

In order to test this, I took away the black background from figures 30 and 31 to see if it had the same effect. I even added a pink background to figure 31, and the pudding lost its appeal and failed to have the same effects as it had with the dark background and creative lighting. I could no longer envision the smell or taste of the pudding.

These days, a dish's aesthetic appeal is equally as significant as, if not more so its actual taste or flavour. This can be seen across social media platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok with more than 293 million results for the hashtag "food porn" on Instagram and more than 24.2 billion views on Tik Tok as of the 25th of January 2023. According to Dr. Rachel Herz, the author of "Why You Eat What You Eat," which explores the wide range of sensory, psychological and social factors that influence our experiences with food, dopamine and other brain chemicals are activated in the same way by viewing food in pictures or movies as when we see food in person. Additionally, she claims that our biology, particularly a part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens linked with pleasure and reward, is what drives our attraction to delicious-looking food (Herz, 2018, p.6). Similarly, the brain releases feel-good hormones like dopamine when people watch porn (Daubney, 2013, n.p). According to researchers at MIT, a set of neurons in the

visual cortex, the region of the brain that interprets information from the eyes, were discovered to light up when images of attractive food appeared. (Trafton, 2022, n.p)

Some people would argue that food pornography doesn't qualify as art. A common misconception about food as art is that it cannot convey one's self or tell a story. Raymond Boisvert and Lisa Heldke propose that we should consider the possibility of food as a consummatory art in their book 'Philosophers At Table' (Boisvert & Heldke, 2016, n.p). Contrary to popular thinking, I believe that food pornography may be seen as art and contains a lot of expression.



Figure 31- (Jones, 2019) *Homemade sushi platter* (credit Debbie Jones).

Figure 31 shows a platter of sushi in strong contrast and saturation with purposely and cleanly arranged straight rows that could convey not just something delectable but also refinement, harmony and elegance.

Elizabeth Entenman offers advice on food photos in her blog post titled "How To Get The Most Likes For Your Food Instagram Posts," many of which enhance the visual appeal of the images. Entenman notes that your photographs' sharpness, contrast, colour balance, and saturation are very impactful. Her article also includes sections on lighting, angle, and photo retouching. Entenman recommends using natural lighting or if that is not available using backlighting with a candle or phone torch. For the angle, she recommends the best results are photos taken from the top down or straight on as it is the most aesthetically appealing. She advises utilising the Adobe software Lightroom to play with the focus by centering your meal and gently blurring the background, as well as to experiment with contrast, colour balance, saturation, sharpness, highlights and shadows (Zhang et al., 2020, n.p).

Likewise in the book ‘Plate to Pixel: Digital Food styling and Photography’ written by Helene Dujardin, a full-time food photographer, she outlines the same characteristics for photographing food as Entenman “knowing some basic photographic principles allows you to access a world of light and artistic interpretation.. to play with and enjoy, modify and create - in a way that matters to you and your audience” (Dujardin, 2011, p.1-10).

The article and the book convey the idea that food porn is a way for us to share our work in the hope that others will appreciate it. Art is frequently considered to be something valued for its originality, aesthetic traits, and identity and is regarded as the expression of human creativity and imagination. Many of these characteristics are present in food, and food porn in particular, and they give the photographer and creator freedom of expression.

5. Conclusion:

It's not surprising that the overall enjoyment that food elicits is significantly influenced by the aesthetic appeal. Every time we see images of food, whether it's on the side of a product package, in a cookbook, on television, in film, or on social media, our senses are stimulated. Spence et al (2016) proposed that "visual hunger", which is defined as a natural impulse to look at food, may have evolved as a coping mechanism. Since it was likely to come before ingestion, our brains developed a ‘taste’ for viewing food. (Spence et al, 2016, p.53-63). Before being able to taste food, the brain uses other senses to make a decision of whether to eat or not, and this survival instinct is what modern food imagery takes advantage of. All of the senses are important when gathering information on the food we are consuming, or planning to consume.



Figure 32 - (Simon, 2022) Customers eating in the ‘Dans le Noir’ restaurant in London (credit Annie Simon).

This topic reminds me of a restaurant called ‘Dans le Noir’ in London. The restaurant itself has no lighting and is completely pitch black inside to simulate a dining experience from a visually impaired person’s perspective. The waiters who were all visually impaired accompanied me to my seat and I was served a three-course meal in the dark. At the end of the meal, I was asked to fill out a questionnaire in the reception area which asked what I thought the meal was. After the survey was filled out by everyone at my table it was announced that none of us was correct. What I thought was lamb was actually beef. This was really surprising to me as I thought my sense of taste would be able to work independently without vision. This made me realise not only the importance of my sense of vision but also its ability to coordinate with my other senses.

It was Apicius, a 1st Century Roman gourmand, who came up with the phrase “We eat first with our eyes” and that adage still holds true today but are we also able to taste, hear, smell and touch with them (Delwiche, 2012, p.502-504)? From my research, it seems we are in some sense able to touch with them through haptic visuality. In this essay, I explored food scenes in film, TV and anime and found evidence of haptic visuality in each. Although we do not technically taste with our eyes, vision certainly influences the perception of taste. Mukbang and ASMR content uses sound to enhance our perception of the food the creators are eating. Their use of chewing, slurping and making loud audible sounds close to a mic paired with visuals of them consuming the food makes for a more immersive sensory experience. When viewing ASMR/Mukbang videos I felt as if I was consuming through watching them. I was not the only one who felt this as 5.9% of participants in an ASMR study conducted by Barratt and Davis (2015) reported having synesthetic experiences.

ASMR content production has many similarities to foodporn, which this essay explored through examples in advertising and social media. Foodporn has been shown to be prevalent in Marks & Spencer's advertising, with slowed, erotic shots of chocolate puddings oozing sauce in dim lighting accompanied by a seductive narration. This is similar to the characteristics of ASMR as both have the food as the centrepiece and have the imagery of it being taken apart with great fixation. The mouth-watering crunches and textures heard in ASMR videos and the sultry

description of food slowly described in the M&S advert show viewers yet another way to enjoy food: through sound.

However, the valuable research and knowledge that I have gained from this research essay are actually in the techniques and characteristics that I have learned in haptic visuality, ASMR and food pornography. There are many links between creating ASMR, food pornography and haptic visuals. Haptic visuality requires depicting people having sensory experiences likewise with ASMR. ASMR and food pornography both heavily rely on sound, both producing intimate noises to entice the viewer. All of them require strong sensory visuals.

Purposeful sensory editing techniques can create impactful, memorable moments, as seen in my examples of 'Inglourious Basterds', 'Django', and 'Chocolat', using unintentional ASMR, Marks & Spencers adverts and in the ASMR exhibition at the Design Museum London. Moving forward from this research essay, I hope to display my artworks and art installations in a different way than I usually do. Instead of displaying my illustrations on a white wall, I am going to use a dark background. I am going to have my illustrations positioned in the centre of people's eyelines and I am going to experiment with implementing sound into my artwork. I will also experiment with presenting my work in a moving image format and also present the process behind creating these artworks in a calming, sensory way. I hope that using these techniques will increase engagement with my work. As an artist and illustrator, it is crucial for me to present my work in a pleasing manner in order to reach my audience. By displaying and designing my artwork using the editing techniques covered above for ASMR, foodporn photography and haptic visuality, I can capitalise on more of the senses to provide a more stimulating experience for the viewer.

I believe there is a gap in the literature to continue studying this phenomenon in greater detail and to focus not only on the impact of stimulating one sense but how the senses respond to stimuli in tandem. To answer the question of whether we can hear, smell, taste and touch with our eyes, the short answer is yes. Through researching the essay I have found that this is the case through the medium of moving imagery.

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