

Food and Design Final Project
Professor: Yael Raviv
Niina Lobbestael
uusi kuu "new moon"
Finding beauty and hope in the stillness

Food and design have been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember. Most weekends, I eagerly await what I can curate from the local market to create nourishing and memorable meals with friends or for ingredients needed for a healthy cooking class at work. Being at a market, wherever I am in the world, always keeps me inspired by the natural beauty and design that I see in food. I love brightly colored produce, the artistry of cooking, growing and the presentation of food on a table. The natural colors, textures, shapes, aromas and flavors found naturally in the edible world of produce and plants and other foods have a way of awaking my senses, arousing my curiosity and feeding my mind, body and spirit.

As I sat in front of my computer to consider the topic of food and design, I found my mind racing with many thoughts but, I struggled to find a specific topic to explore more deeply. I felt creatively blocked and yet tasked to come up with something clever and interesting. In this paper I will discuss my creative process, artists and designers that inspired my creativity, and my *uusi kuu* "new moon", using food as an art medium project.

For context I am exploring my creative process while in quarantine in Italy. The normal busyness of my day to day life has come to a screeching halt. I have begun to really enjoy the quietness of the city that seems to allow me to notice so much more with my eyes and other senses beyond sound. It is as if without the noise I can see and experience things clearer. I am cooking more than I ever have, and I have planted a beautiful garden on my balcony. I often water and check the progress of my garden several times a day. I am amazed by the beauty I see in nature, the tiny seedlings breaking through the soil, drops of dew that kiss the tips of my chive plant, the ability to enjoy the delicious harvest of lettuce greens that I have grown from seed. Although I have always enjoyed food and cooking, in this moment in time I seem to be experiencing something special, something new a deeper appreciation for food and its nature beauty. From this place I began my day in front of my computer trying to connect to creative food design ideas, and unfortunately this was not very successful. When I would step away from my computer and onto my balcony to admire my small food garden my thoughts began to flow. Recent creativity research published in May 2020 reported that participants who spent time in nature saw a 27% increase in their creativity enhancement. (1) Research also conducted at the University on Taiwan in 2018 found that students who were involved with a horticulture therapy program also had increased creativity and improvements in their positive emotions. (2) Armed with this research and seeking ways to ignite my own creativity, I began to spend more time in my garden. On one

particular day I began to notice the creative enhancement inspired by my small balcony garden and I was inspired to create an art piece using egg shells. I had been collecting egg shells as a soil amendment. As I began to sketch my ideas my creative thoughts began to flow with more ease. My hands moved with confidence across my page as my *uusi kuu* "new moon" egg project was born.

The artists and design elements that have influenced my creativity firstly come by connecting to my Finnish cultural background and appreciation of the clean lines of Nordic design. I grew up in Canada with a Finnish mother and simple clean design was always an important focus in our home. The use of wood and natural fibers are common elements in Finnish design. (3) I have been inspired by the Finnish designer Elizabeth Salonen who recently exhibited her project entitled "Discarded". Her project seeks to open up the conversation about waste and packaging. Her design work brings beauty and curiosity to the conversation on our over use of plastic. (5) When I came across her project I could immediately see the link and benefit of using art as a tool to communicate a message about food. The food designer Marije Vogelzang has also been a huge influence on my creativity. Marije has been involved with many food design projects around the world. She often calls herself an eating designer instead of a food designer because she uses food in very simple and artistic ways or performances where food is used as a tool to connect to and inspire conversations about cultural, social or emotional issues. (6) From our class discussion I was inspired by the work of Magus Nilsson of Favikenn in Sweden and Rene Redzepi of Noma in Denmark. Both chefs emphasize the beauty of nature and food, and they use food as a tool to tell a story about foraging where natural beauty meets contemporary clean design. I haven't had the opportunity to visit Noma yet but, certainly hope to one day soon. One look at the photographs of the design choices in the restaurant space of Noma and my heart skips a beat. The beautiful natural wood choices in the dining room look so warm and inviting and has elements of familiarity to me. I also fell in love with the art work choices in the restaurant. On one wall dried octopus, fish skeletons and other underwater creatures are simply and artistically hung on a wall. These amazing sea creatures found in nature are designed perfectly and contribute to such a beautiful and simple art piece. The last design element that is important to mention is the inspiration and influence I have received from the style of Japanese Wabi Sabi design. Wabi is the Japanese principle of restraint, freshness and novelty and Sabi the complementary principle of beauty found in things that are aged or imperfect. Together both of these elements Wabi and Sabi allow contemporary clean lines to meet the inspiration of the perfectly imperfect found in nature. (4)

My *uusi kuu* project started with two large pieces of pine plywood. I chose pine because pine is a common wood used in Finland and is easily available here in Italy. I first treated the wood with a varnish to help bring the

woodgrains to life. Drawing from my inspiration of simple contemporary design, I started with a large circle that I painted with white acrylic paint. I washed and dried hundreds of egg shells in the sun. As I worked on delicately adhering the egg shells to the painted surface one by one I found myself slowing down and connecting to the beauty and uniqueness of each egg shell. Somehow each shell looked perfect to me. From the varied speckled brown outer shell to the smooth white inner shell, each piece of shell fit into the design I had in mind. After a couple days working on this project the story behind my art piece began to expand and develop clarity. Although I had begun my project with the intention of using food as a design element in art, I wasn't clear of the deeper meaning beyond the use of food as a material. With each strategic placement of the egg shells on my art piece I became more in tuned with the beauty and perfection of the natural design of an egg. The cracks, color, and texture of each egg were slightly different yet perfect exactly as they were. One of the stories that this art piece began to highlight for me is that when we discuss food and design I connect most to the thoughts and ideas that our food is perfectly designed by nature. The immaculate perfection and imperfections, the cracks, the varied sizes of different fruits, vegetables and eggs are truly perfect as they are.

This art project can be used as communication tool to begin a conversation with students or other observers about the beauty of natural food design. It can support conversations in designing menus, diets, and food ways that focus on highlighting foods in its natural form. When we open up conversations about food in its natural form, we also invite the opportunity to have deeper conversations about where our food comes from? what type of agricultural practices are being used? and are these practices designed to support fruits, vegetables and animals to grow in a natural way? The use of contemporary modern elements in this design communicates that I am not suggesting that raw food alone is the only way to enjoy the natural beauty and flavor of food but rather we need to seek harmony with technology and modern food practices that are clean and sustainable to fully enjoy the natural perfection and beauty found in the natural food world.

As I completed my art project a new layer of its meaning came began to evolve for me. As I stood back to admire the hours to work that I had dedicated to this project I noticed that it resembled a moon. Uusi kuu is the Finnish word for new moon. The spiritual meaning of a new moon is symbolic of birth and new beginnings. Unlike the symbolic meaning of a full moon that is often symbolic of energy, power and looking into the future, a new moon is about the calm, renewing the going inside and getting still, the allowing to simply be. The choice of using eggs for this project is also symbolic of birth, hope and change. Uusi kuu got its name because of the physical appearance of this art piece as well as the symbolic time and meaning in which it was created. Being in Italy during Covid 19 quarantine

has given me and so many people in the rest of the world time to pause and go inside to connect with ourselves, it has been a time of calm reflection and hope. I have had moments that I have certainly experienced a range of emotions from, fear, grief, loneliness to joy and peace. What has become clear to me during this time, is that the moments that peace, calm, creativity and joy are fully accessible to me are when I am creating art, or enjoying the perfect, imperfect beauty of nature. Whether I experience nature on a hike, at the market, growing on my balcony or roasting in the oven, this moment in time has allowed me to slow down and truly be amazed by the tiniest seeds and beauty of life.

Food and design art projects such as *Elizabeth Salonen's "Discarded"*, *Marije Vogelzang's "Colour Food"* and my *"uusi kuu" project* support the notion that art can be a creative and effective tool to begin conversations about food, design and sustainability. Uusi Kuu highlights that the use of food as an art medium can provide a unique sensorial experience as well as provides a level of familiarity and connection for all observes. We all need to eat to sustain our lives, but food has so much more riches than providing us only sustenance. Food has the ability to connect us to culture, language, love, hope and inner peace. The use of food as an art medium is something I am excited to continue to explore. Connecting people to the stories that food can tell us in art, can allow us to begin to slow down and pay attention to natural art all around us. With this art tool we can begin to have more hopeful conversations about the possibilities for renewal, creative inspiration and change in our world's current way of eating and producing food.

References Journals

- 1) Yu, C.-P. (Simon) and Hsieh, H. (2020) 'Beyond restorative benefits: Evaluating the effect of forest therapy on creativity', *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 51. doi: 10.1016/j.ufug.2020.126670.
- 2) YII-NII LIN and CHIU, Y.-H. C. (2020) 'Applying Integrated Horticultural Therapy and Aromatherapy to Assist Undergraduates in Ta Iwan', *College Student Journal*, 54(1), pp. 8–12. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com.unisg.clas.cineca.it/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=142782712&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 29 May 2020).
- 3) Daishi SAKAGUCHI *et al.* (2016) 'Evaluation Structure of Finnish Design Professionals and Laymen on Interior Wood for Living Space', *日本建築学会計画系論文集*, 81(730), p. 2635. doi: 10.3130/aija.81.2635.
- 4) Abercrombie, S. (2001) 'Wabi Sabi: A New Look at Japanese Design', *Interior Design*. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com.unisg.clas.cineca.it/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.78791300&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 29 May 2020).

Websites

- 5) <https://mottoform.com>
- 6) <https://marijevogelzang.nl>

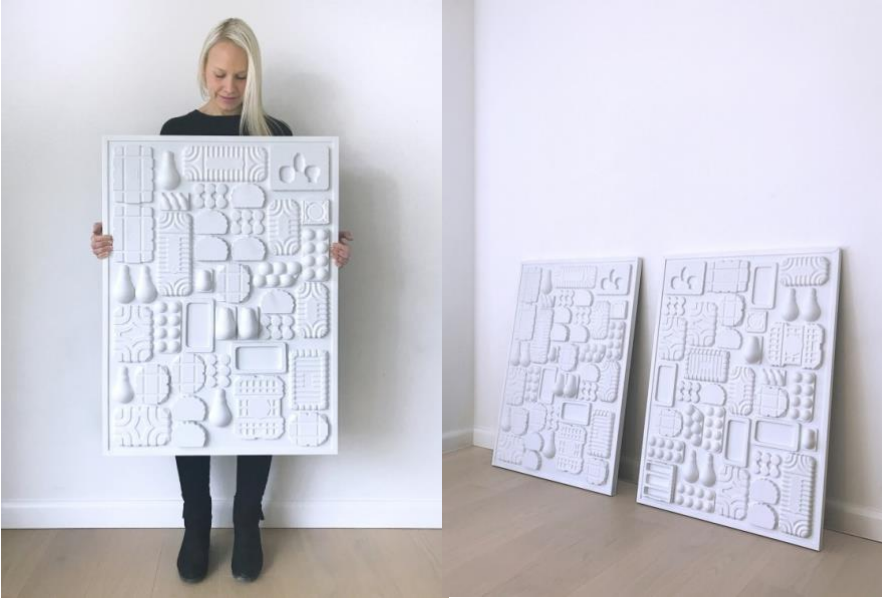
Creative of inspiration



Noma, Restaurant Copenhagen Denmark



Food Designer, Marije Vogelzang



Product Designer, *Elizabeth Salonen "Discarded"*



Wabi Sabi, Japanese design elements

uusi kuu "new moon"

