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Antoni Arola

“To delve into the universe of food, transcend known forms and enjoy their cross or long sections is to discover inconceivable layers for finding new concepts”

Antoni Arola studied at Eina School of Design, Barcelona, in 1984 began his career in the Lievore and Pensi studio, and later AD Associate Designers. In 1994 he founded Estudi Arola. His projects touch lighting, furniture, perfume bottles, interior design and exhibitions. He combines his professional career with teaching, workshops and artistic experimentation. His work has been shown in solo and group in Barcelona, Madrid, Milan, London, Mexico, New York or Tokyo. Silver Delta Award in 1999 and 2001, National Design Award 2003.

Photographs: Adriana Comparetto - Antoni Arola

Eating with Our Eyes

Contemplation isn't exactly inactivity, but rather exercise.
 JOSÉ FERRATER MORA, Diccionari de Filosofia

I must confess that I'm an amateur chef. I like cooking; I like it, I find it relaxing and, above all, I enjoy eating and sharing food. I must also confess that, in a sense, I envy chefs, because the raw material with which they work is extraordinary and endless: they work with living matter! The range of raw materials used by designers is much more limited (wood, stone, metal, plastic, glass, etc.), but the main difference is that all these materials are lifeless. So, it is a change to see this raw material through the eyes of a designer, which is something I often do: broadening my scope, I am continually surprised by the 'formal' richness of nature. To delve into the universe of food, transcend known forms and enjoy their cross or long sections is to discover inconceivable layers for finding new concepts, and when we choose to change scale (magnified by glasses) this implies detecting the nuances we miss at first glance. The habit of seeing all these forms on a daily basis makes us rub our eyes and take another glance, to try and find a different meaning and learn to look at a tomato as if we had never seen one before. To observe from a different angle, in a new way.

It is often said that Japanese cuisine delights the eyes, not the palate, but I would go further to say that it is an object to be meditated upon. JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI, In praise of shadows

When we observe natural elements we don't simply enjoy the beauty and infinite complexity they express but also, from their seeming chaos, we learn the existence of 'harmonic laws'. If, by observing them, we are able to (re)cognise and assimilate them, they will provide us with the grounds and the structure we need to interpret and, in the best of cases, apply these laws (modestly) to our 'human' projects.

Man is the only creature who has the ability to look, admire, play, combine and make metaphors with natural elements. Indeed, quite often, much of the structure of the creative discourse of architects, photographers, artists and chefs lies precisely in the combination of these natural elements.

In all cultures, food understood as a tradition becomes another form of art. Like other realms, contemporary cuisine has evolved remarkably towards complex, refined and more creative expressions suggesting new ways of looking, eating and conceptualising the culinary act as a sort of *haute couture*.

Beauty is a manifestation of secret natural laws, which otherwise would have been hidden from us forever. JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Designing is an exercise in selection and bold synthesis of that which we have assimilated through observation. The great masters are those who have managed to take this synthesis back to nature, both in formal and in symbolic terms.

In my personal exploration of the creative process, as in my everyday life, I have always spontaneously surrounded myself with both natural elements and weird objects, forming strange alliances that help me understand the world and interpret the essence of beauty and utility.

I find it difficult to unravel the process, the inner threads that transform reality and make creation possible. Over the years I have come to realise that a certain amount of intuition and trust are involved, although in my case observation is perhaps the sharpest tool.

The most beautiful book, the most fortunate painting, the most profound work aren't those that affirm but rather those that suggest. Indeed, it is only possible to convey an artistic feeling through suggestion, which favours a personal and long-lasting reconstruction ... Thus, art's greatest mystery lies in its promotion of the universal message of life. This feeling is never obviously experienced; only by recognising the deep roots shared by all men we may easily arrive at each individual human being. LOUIS CATTIAUX



