

**GORGING ART**  
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Sculptures, paintings, and installations have constituted art for centuries. Now – slowly – food is becoming an art. Consumption, mastication and digestion of art, are no longer confined to kitchen tables or restaurants, but also come to galleries. From an everyday chore, making food becomes something elevated, creative, unique; it moves from the private area to the public sphere.

Dorota Koczanowicz describes and analyses in her notices such transformations. She devours, not only with her eyes, artists' menus. She recalls past times and tells stories that were not mentioned in the past. She believes that the mission of food studies "is to unravel what food means to interpret human existence"<sup>1</sup> and so she does in *Pozycja smaku*.

Koczanowicz follows Dewey's path, noticing the significance of an ordinary experience, which becomes extraordinary within the frames of human aesthetics. Food becomes art instead of energy supply: suddenly, a bowl of soup is not just a soup, but an artistic experience. A cook becomes a chef and contestant of edible art challenges, while a consumer becomes a food critic.

The philosophical discourse opens slowly to taste, which becomes an aesthetic experience. Philosophy starts noticing the things necessary for the body to live. With this thought, the idea of body awareness comes up: Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics.

An activity becomes the yardstick of the truth. However, the evaluation of food, as Koczanowicz argues, is not a straightforward endeavor. A feed of calories is one thing, admiration of the design of the dish is another, and the performative demonstration of food is yet another one.

Matters concerning food belong to two, theoretically

separate zones: the private and the public. Koczanowicz refers to feminists' authorities, contrasting a grandmothers' home kitchen with sophisticated restaurant cooking. In the grandmothers' kitchen, it was felt and dedicated to sharing that played the primary role, whereas in the restaurants, it is tasting and visual experience that plays the central part. Nutrition was important in-home cooking; in a restaurant, hunger is secondary: socializing and unusual and an unexpected culinary experience bears more significance.

Entertainingly and interestingly, Koczanowicz shows what restaurants were in the past and what they are now. The understanding of changes over the decades, the evolution from a substitution of the home kitchen where only women cooked to what restaurants have become now: exclusive, aesthetically sophisticated shrines of food.

Shusterman proposes to accept eating as an art of self-tasting<sup>2</sup>, but he does not recognize cooking as an act of art, yet. Separation of cooking from eating creates a dissonance. If the unfinished painting is a piece of art, are semi-boiled potatoes not? Does food suddenly turn into art when it becomes a dish? Or should it be understood as an art of tasting, regardless of what we taste? A kitchen is a special place, not as a physical space, but as a place to teach our body new skills. With this concept, Koczanowicz touches upon feminism, recalling the separation of the public from the private. It is within the latter, as Shusterman argues, where the body learns and memorizes. Placing the body in the center of considerations allows for an alternative perception of the world. Somaesthetics admires the body and reflects on human feelings. That is why eating is such an important experience.

Koczanowicz compares Shusterman's somaesthetics with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Considering somaesthetics as positive, broadly understood corporal philosophical transformation, she confronts it with the habitus, which positions humans in a rigid construct of the social structure. Briefly, the habitus is an assembling

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<sup>1</sup> D. Koczanowicz, *Pozycja smaku. Jedzenie w granicach sztuki (Positioning Taste: Eating within the Realm of Art)* Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, Warsaw 2018

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<sup>2</sup> R. Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Cambridge University Press, 2008

of skills and competencies acquired by an individual: it does not institute sustaining rules.

According to Bourdieu, analyzing and expressing schemes which an individual acquired could be an invention of controlled improvisation.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, positioning an individual in the social structure results from a lack of possibility of the invention of different behavior scenarios. The human being paints a picture of the world and prepares to react to encountered situations. Bourdieu believes that comprehensive unraveling of the habitus is impossible, because it is positioned at the unconscious level of perception and, as a result, impossible to verbalize.

Shusterman's concept enables improvements and the discovery of new resources of self-consciousness. As per *Pozycja smaku*, Shusterman's concept is much closer to the cultural meaning of eating as a process of creating art, also understood as a historical snapshot of the society at a given time.

An advantage of *Pozycja smaku* is its openness to literature and broadly understood art. The chapter dedicated to the films: *Babette's Feast* and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* shows admiration for the cinema, which influenced many viewers. The accessibility of films in a "video on demand" era from streaming services allows for referring to celebrated works. Koczanowicz equalizes popular movies with sculptures, paintings and installation art.

Koczanowicz does not overlook the culture that changes human behaviors or creates new norms and values in society. Food is both a merging and dividing point for individuals and communities. Considering culinary culture as a building factor for internal relations within societies is interesting.

The author peeks into plates of prominent philosophers and shows how important food was for them. Some of them celebrated meals, considering them as the

most important task of the day and arranged gatherings (Kant), or, on the contrary, ignored them, limiting food to the bare minimum. A successful and tasteful culinary trip is an interesting experience. The discovery of food preferences of favorite philosophers and their eating habits are not only interesting as such but also demonstrate the impact of food on their creations. The understanding of the context enables a better understanding of their ideas.

Besides, we are invited to a fascinating journey through examples from literature about the attraction of food, taste, and, what is often related, travels. Examples of culinary trips are particularly remarkable. For ages, food was relatively monotonous, based on locally sourced ingredients where seasons dictated taste. Owing to the ease of traveling now, its accessibility and increasing mobility of individuals' tastes from different corners of the world blend together. It is more possible now to taste the food of other cultures and societies. The increase in accessibility shapes interesting food styles. It was historically accepted that eating local food means fraternization with the local place and its inhabitants. Food, considered as an intimate and individual act, becomes a source of rich experience. Eating local food allows for a better understanding of places, people and culture. At the same time, however, the author does not elaborate too much on the fact that foodies taking culinary trips are often fed with the vision they are chasing. Visiting exotic countries, they experience what was crafted for them, prepared for what meets the expectations of the exotic.

Food also provides relief. The scent of the home is often connected with a favorite dish. New aromas of travel may irritate; the scent of the home is comforting.

The author of *Pozycja smaku* takes us on a journey to search for an "authentic taste" that is the Grail of contemporary culture. She notices two contradictions in this term: firstly, authenticity is closely related to history, which evolves every day; secondly, culture has become a product for sale. Koczanowicz also mentions the pressure on authenticity – something that a foodie is looking

<sup>3</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Sentiment of Honor in Kabyle Society. In Honour and Shame The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany, trans. P. Sherrard, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

for. The demand for authenticity is contradictory to uniqueness. The author proposes a solution as “an aware [conscious?], active shaping of experience”.<sup>4</sup>

Koczanowicz recalls a contemporary artist, Rirkit Tiravanija, for whom preparation of food and common eating are acts of art. The author names this ‘contextual cooking,’ which relates to local culture, a contemporary time, with the use of local ingredients, for which food miles count in single figures.

*Pozycja smaku* is a perfect place to present Eat Art. Daniel Spoerri, an artist, demonstrated already in the 1960s how the physiological taste might be combined with an aesthetic taste. The author participated in a dinner in Stuttgart, dedicated to Spoerri. The touch of the logic of meals presented to the special table, the combination of the basic function of eating with aesthetic consideration, creates Eat Art.

Koczanowicz declared to have desired to demonstrate the complexity of cooking and common

eating in a cultural context. Notable is that *Pozycja smaku* attempts to demonstrate eating as an art that is accessible here and now, for everybody. Individual experiences resulting from aesthetics or somaesthetics are also important. There is no gradation of evaluation; instead there is an individual and subjective assessment. It does not happen in a vacuum. The cultural and social context mentioned above is one of the more impactful factors on the quality and mode of a cultural experience.

*Pozycja smaku* is an important work in Poland. As a scientific approach to food and eating, food studies are at their infancy stage in the Polish humanities. Mass feeding is something very different from the spiritual fest. Both kinds of food are necessary. The former lets us notice the latter. The trust that art can be tasty encourages experimentation in our own kitchen. Journeys through history, literature, paintings, sculptures and performative arts allow for a broader look at food as art.

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<sup>4</sup> D. Koczanowicz, *Pozycja smaku. Jedzenie w granicach sztuki (Positioning Taste: Eating within the Realm of Art)*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, Warsaw 2018, p. 24.