QUICK & EASY RECIPES FOR DISASTER

By
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To Mom,

whose copy of *Joy of Cooking* is always
at the ready on the kitchen counter;

And Dad,

who let me play *Doom* on his computer
when I was way too young.
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In one way or another, this is all your faults. Thank you so much.
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Abstract

Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster, is a hybrid media installation involving Internet and augmented reality components that produce randomly generated impossible recipes, in both textual and 'cooked' 3D model form. Participants in the installation view the food online as a typical recipe blog post, and as a 3D model tracked and projected onto a plate. The conceptual circuit of the piece is completed by the gesture of the participant who consumes the food by taking a 'food pic' of it and sharing it to social media. Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster is an aesthetic system that attempts to put into practice the conceptual apparatus of electracy and to understand the nature of the experience of social media and the Internet.

Electracy is one of the central organizing theoretical principles behind my work, which Gregory Ulmer defines and invents in his book Avatar Emergency. Electracy is the conceptual apparatus that mediates access to digital media. Ulmer pulls together disparate theories and philosophies which I apply to my project, from Paul Virilio's theory
of the “general accident” to Paolo Virno’s “common places” of language. Ulmer applies these theories to the electrate apparatus. Finally, I take Kant’s connection between taste and his philosophy of reflective judgment as a point of departure for exploring the tropic figure of food in relation to digital media networks and related consumption practices.
Chapter 1

Disaster

In Avatar Emergency, Gregory Ulmer takes up the task of inventing the conceptual apparatus that mediates access to digital media, which he calls electracy. As Ulmer argues, “electracy is to digital media as literacy is to alphabetic writing” (Ulmer xv). To accomplish this task, Ulmer pulls together various theoretical strings that at first may seem unrelated, but which harmonize when united in their shared context. I begin with his discussion of Paul Virilio’s “general accident”, the accident that is a consequence of the invention and proliferation of global communication technologies, just as derailments are a consequence of the invention of the locomotive (Virilio 10). The accident is conceived as the “negative potentiality inherent in every technological system” (Crosthwaite 17). The railway metaphor is apt because if one is to use the train to move persons or things at great speed, it becomes impossible to fully extricate those people and goods from the threat of being involved in a railway accident. Similarly, if the world is sensorially mediated by global communications technologies, it becomes impossible to conceive of the world in a non-mediated way. Expressed most brutally, looking at a screen precludes looking at one’s immediate surroundings, despite the extended awareness afforded by communication and computation technologies. The vast majority of global events are experienced by the vast majority of people only in a highly mediated sense, whether through mass or social media. The “general accident” is thus the generalized mediation of global events, the speed and manipulation of which eliminates the possibility of a democratic public sphere. The threat of this accident is the impetus that animates both Ulmer and myself in our undertakings. How can this disaster be averted?
While Virilio treats technology as a threat to be distrusted, others take advantage of what they see as its potential, whether for profit or for social good. In a talk given at the 2013 XOXO Festival titled “A Journey on the Information Superhighway”, Evan Williams, co-founder of various blogging and social media sites such as Twitter and Medium, describes ‘the democratization of knowledge’ as a core idea of the Internet, and by extension social media. Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Facebook, describes the mission of his company and social media app in terms of ‘openness’ and ‘transparency’ (Vogelstein). In response, social media has largely been theorized in relation to its ability to act as a support for these goals and values. The optimistic form of this way of thinking social media is exemplified by writers and thinkers like Clay Shirky, Nicholas Carr and Mark Zuckerberg (Fuchs “Googology: Google and Ideology”). Zuckerberg in particular provides a concrete example of the future practical applications of this ideology when he describes eventual developments that will allow direct experience sharing through a kind of technologically mediated telepathy (Davies). A core assumption of this theoretical interface is that experience is something that can be quantified and separated from the embodied context, tying the ideal of ‘openness’ to a positivist ideology. So-called ‘experience sharing’ presumes it must be possible to sufficiently approximate the phenomenon of experience so as to transmit it between consciousnesses. On this techno-optimistic side of things, a technological deterministic approach treats technology as necessarily ‘rational’ and as a continuation of the Enlightenment project. What could be more enlightening than writing directly on the soul of another, without the messy ambiguities or interpretive noise of earlier communication technologies like writing?
On the opposite side of this same coin, others see the effects of the Internet and social media on democracy and the public sphere as ambiguous if not outright detrimental. Regardless, these technologies are still considered in relation to their ability to augment a strictly literate conceptual apparatus. Geert Lovink expresses the spirit of this position succinctly: “Social media as we know them right now are not discursive machines. The Internet in general might be, in theory, but the current social media architectures do not facilitate extensive exchanges” (Lovink and Ryan). The implication is that network communication technologies have the potential to enhance democracy as such, but are currently designed in such a way, or are too controlled by private and government interests, to be able to contribute positively to the development of a literate, discursive public sphere. Instead, these technologies are used to generate empty spectacle and opaque surveillance, a technological dystopia.

As an alternative to these opposing dystopian and utopian approaches, Ulmer suggests that we instead treat the threat of disaster as indication that we should take seriously the challenge of the technical equipment and invent the conceptual practices and skill sets necessary to use it. This is the motivating question of electracy. Electracy refers to exactly that apparatus, that combination of technical equipment with conceptual practices which affords thinking and decision-making in the now-time of dromosphere. As a guide to this process of invention, we can look to literacy. Just as literacy provided a practice for an Aristotelian metaphysics of the written word, electracy must provide a practice appropriate to an image metaphysics. We can understand image metaphysics by analogy: where the metaphysics of literacy operates on ratios of subject-object and true-false, electracy operates on affect, desire, a ratio of attraction-repulsion.
The thrust of Virilio’s warning is the impending dissolution of the public sphere, the disappearance of the possibility of considered discourse which is a precondition of a democratic society. The Internet collapses time and space into “now”, a condition he calls dromosphere (Virilio 89). In partial antidote to this, Ulmer refers to Paolo Virno who positions the “common places” of language as a site of Marx’s “general intellect”, a collective intelligence that subverts the alienation of capitalism. Virno’s “common places” are drawn from the Aristotelian topoi koinoi, “the skeletal structure” of logical discourse, including the opposition of opposites, the category of reciprocity, the relation of quantities, and others. It is to the “common places” that the multitude must turn in the alienated condition of capitalism, where the “special places” or topoi idioi, the particular and learned ways of thought of specific communities, have dissolved (Virno 37). Ulmer updates this for an electrate context, conducting the commons of language (Aristotle’s topics) to the commonplaces of pop culture – tropes. Tropes are part of the speed mechanism of electrcy which make it useful in the dromosphere.

The race course holds three sites and moments of danger and opportunity: the starting line, the turn (bend), and the finish line. Here is the entire map (chorography) of concept avatar. The charioteer stands in for any pilot (Arjuna in his chariot with Krishna), with the vocabulary of navigation, cybernauts, cybernetics helping translate practical reason into flash reason … The crisis opportunity happens in the turn. Such is the event addressed in the Allegory of Prudence: to map the turn in the dromos of becoming. Narrative and argument both provide training maps institutionalized within the historical apparati of orality
and literacy. These designs are too slow, and must be gathered into a trope (turn) in electracy. (Ulmer 88)

Trope is the updated decision-making unit in an image metaphysics. Trope in image metaphysics is figuration, where one things stands in "as" something else (as opposed to the "is" of literate metaphysics); trope is a "turn" of phrase. The permanent crisis state requires this update because the institutional training invented through orality and literacy do not afford the speed required to act in this condition (dromos). Electracy continues the epochal system introduced by Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan. Ong describes in detail the contrasts in thought and expression between oral and literate cultures. Orality is the apparatus of thought and expression available to cultures where writing and print technologies are unfamiliar, where literacy is that apparatus as it has been transformed in the context of writing and print (Ong 7 and 14). McLuhan shows how technical innovations transform thought, not just containing it or acting as a material substrate, but operating on it as a set of affordances for the ways in which ideas can be conceptualized (McLuhan 23). Crucially, electracy does not replace, but instead supplements practices of literacy, just as literacy supplements orality. People did not stop speaking once writing became common, but instead changed the way they spoke to reflect their changed relationship with the expression and transmission of thought. Similarly, the introduction of electronic media does not mean the end of language, but a further transformation of it. They each build upon the other, providing affordances that the others lack. Electracy describes a conceptual apparatus, which implies both practice and equipment. The equipment of electracy is the technical component that allows the practice to be undergone. What does this equipment look like?
Tropes, commonplaces and commons gain some concrete practicality by way of Ulmer's reading of Immanuel Kant's description of reflective judgment.

The judgment of 'beauty' assumes the existence of some 'common-sense' forming a community of persons sharing not any specific 'taste', but the capacity to experience beauty ... To convey the immediate and spontaneous certainty of reflective feeling, Kant associated it with the sense of taste. (Ulmer 21-22)

Taste is the experience of the operation of the attraction-repulsion ratio that forms the logic of electracy. Michel Serres describes how taste and language are two tongues of the human organism (Serres 153). The mouth is the organ of judgment, of reasoning. Sapience and sapidity both stem from the same Latin root: sapere, which means first to taste and second to have wisdom. The tongue of language speaks and performs analysis, while the tasting tongue senses and so receives. The tasting tongue is capable of receiving and so has access to the aesthetic. For these reasons, the sense of taste forms the concrete basis with which we can undergo electracy. Ulmer uses concept avatar as a term for the practice of undergoing electracy, which is a process of consultation with disaster. With orality we speak and listen, with literacy we read and write. With electracy we work in the aesthetic: we make and sense (receive). The relevance of the technical equipment is that computation and global communication technologies make possible the manipulation and dissemination of the aesthetic in a way not possible before, opening up the practice of electracy similar to how the printing press opened up literacy. We are here beginning to feel out an opportunity for an aesthetic system which deploys an electrate trope to think communication technologies in a way that can overcome the
disaster of the “general accident.” The tropic commonplace of ‘food pics’ and recipe blogs will stand in “as” the mediated condition of the world.

Chapter 2

Ingredients

Food is one of the tropes of the Internet. As the New York Times reports, sharing photos of food, whether cooked at home or bought at a trendy restaurant “is a growing phenomenon” (Murphy). A cursory search on the social photo sharing web application Instagram for the “food” hashtag returns tens of millions of results (Figure 1). Sharing pictures of food on the Internet is a common practice. In addition to sharing photos, many use the Internet to share and find recipes. Searching for “recipes” on the popular social bookmarking web application Pinterest generates an effectively endless scroll of enticing dishes and desserts. Aesthetically, food transcends trope and becomes a major genre of Internet content.

The prominence of foods, their production, and their dissemination via the World Wide Web has become and integral part of the software infrastructure that underlies it – the .recipes top-level domain launched in 2014 and as of this writing, .food has made it through a legal battle over the rights to its management and will join the ranks of TLDs.

Figure 1: Results of a search for ‘#food’ on Instagram, showing post counts.
soon (ICANN 2013; ICANN 2014). This is to say nothing of “cookies” and “bytes”, “baking” and “rendering” and “reducing”, all terms shared between the computer and culinary sciences. It is apparent that food, as a cultural artifact, has a privileged place among the uses and communications of the Internet and computation in general. What is it about food, or what are the cultural conditions surrounding it, that make it so powerful and persistent in this mediated context?

This connection between food and the Internet may at first seem puzzling. After all, food is experienced through its flavor, aroma, and texture. What can be gained from the mediation of this multi-sensory substance via the Internet, which as a medium is predicated on sight and sound almost exclusively? In his essay *Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*, Roland Barthes constructs a linguistic framework in which we might begin to think the relation between food and the Internet.

For what is food? It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior. Information about food must be gathered wherever it can be found: by direct observation in the economy, in techniques, usages, and advertising; and by indirect observation in the mental life of a given society. (Ulmer 29)

Food is more than its material substance in itself, but consists of the media, culture and social contexts in which it appears and is consumed. The experience of food transcends the specific materiality of foods themselves. So to consume food we do not
necessarily have to eat it – that is just one modality of a multimodality that constitutes the category of food. Advertisements don't sell the steak but the sizzle. The Internet allows food as a cultural signifier to be, shared, liked, favorited, hearted and tweeted. In this way, the Internet is a site of hyperconsumption, augmenting the capacities of food to be experienced on a myriad of dimensions. Food, as a category that includes the digital, imagistic and textual abstractions of what we might call food's nutritional dimension, goes hand in hand with the Internet, demonstrating the network's capability in communicating aesthetic, affective information. Taste, as an aesthetic concept is oriented toward the judgment of food, and so the experience of food plays out on the attraction-repulsion axis of image metaphysics. Social media demonstrates its technical potential as an equipment for the electrate apparatus.

**Preparation**

The abstraction of food as digital files and information allows the networked experience of food to enter into the spectrum of food consumption. Our inquiry would be incomplete however without considering that consumption implies preparation. Food gains its powers of social and cultural signification in relation to how it is or is not cooked, prepared, transported, stored and served. Food may be consumed raw, from the earth, as fruit plucked by chance from a thicket, or it may be consumed as a result of millions of dollars in advertising, industrial and logistical infrastructure. The experience of food is not dependent solely on its material or the mediation of that material, but also the social, cultural, economic and logistical systems that interact with it. We can generally refer to this category of food experience as 'preparation'.
Just as the consumption of food occurs on a spectrum of abstraction and mediation, so does its preparation. The consumption and preparation of food is always mediated. One can plant tomato seeds and grow them in a garden, but where did the seeds come from? Even if they didn't come in a package from the Lowe's garden section, even if the DNA sequences stored in the gametes that joined to create the seed weren't engineered and owned by an agri-business corporation, if the seeds were gathered from a plant, that plant is the result of hundreds of years of selective breeding and human cultivation. Similarly but to a much greater extent, supermarkets, restaurants, bodegas and food trucks mediate and abstract the preparation of food.

Social media and the Internet enter into this media system by distribution of recipes (or '.recipes'). The process of preparation is abstracted to a genre of writing and photography, shared and liked by the hybrid technical and cultural processes of the web. The food we make and the way we make it is in part the result of algorithms that decide what recipe shows up when and where, when we search for 'recipes' on Pinterest. The recipes themselves describe a kind of algorithm – a set of procedures – for transforming raw ingredients into food as a cultural signifier. Data is food and algorithms are us. To paraphrase Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson, food (data) is interpreted. Food (data)
needs to be imagined as food to exist and function as such. Foods (data) are always already “cooked” and never “raw” (Gitelman and Jackson 2).

Today’s recipe is a cultural technology used to reproduce a particular dish at various places and future moments. As a technology, it is a participant in the constantly transforming technical ecosystem created by human societies, their desires, and their technical affordances. Viewed within the framework of orality, literacy and electracy, the history of the recipe can be read as a microcosm of the transformational interaction between thought and the technical apparatuses used to express it. The general idea of the recipe, a pattern or set of instructions that describes the rendering of food from raw ingredients, is instantiated in all three of our conceptual apparatuses, but it is represented differently in each. The earliest existing written recipes originate in modern day Egypt and Iraq. On the wall of Senet’s tomb, near the present city of Luxor, hieroglyphics dating from the Middle Kingdom instruct how to make a kind of unleavened flatbread. Significantly, this recipe so recorded was not intended as reference for living Egyptians to learn how to make bread, but was intended to carry over the practices of life into the afterlife (Sitwell “Ancient Egyptian bread”). The oral tradition of breadmaking is made as concrete as the other goods stored in the tomb.

Over a thousand years later, we have The Life of Luxury, written by the Sicilian Archestratus, who was likely a contemporary of Aristotle. The book contains what we would recognize today as recipes, but similar to the hieroglyphics on the wall of Senet’s tomb, this piece of literature was not meant as a reference for the ancient Greek chef. It was written in classical Greek hexameter, and it fits more in the genre of parody and poetics than recipe. It would have likely been read aloud during a symposium, the after-
dinner drinking session, in place of more “serious” literature which would have normally been read. That does not mean it was not meant to instruct however – it was a sincere text of recommendations on what ingredients to use and how to use them to produce the ideal meal for the upper classes of ancient Greek society. Practical cookbooks did exist in Archestratus’ day, but they have not survived to the present as they were not considered literature, and therefore were not considered worth preserving. (Wilkins and Hill 12).

Moving ahead to the 20th century, the abstraction of industrial food manufacturing moves the cookbook into the electrate sphere. Recipes moved from the book to the back of boxes and cans. Advertisers of companies like General Mills (via the Betty Crocker brand) and Campbell begin selling inspirational recipes along with their processed and packaged industrial foods. The instructions were meant to demonstrate not only the convenience of the foods, but to encourage individuality and expression in their use, to counteract the stigma of the industrial innovation as impersonal and unnatural. With the mundane problem of making a basic tomato soup or a chocolate cake layer abstracted away by condensed, canned soups and boxed instant cake mix, the modern homemaker was free to fill in the newly absent physical labor with the affective kind. A single cake layer was now only the first step, to be followed by imaginative glazes, frostings, stacks and arrangements (Shapiro 74-80).

The recipe’s modernist shift onto an expanded aesthetic plane, made possible by industrialization, is perhaps most evident in the Tomasso Marinetti’s The Futurist Cookbook. The book was a syncretic project, bringing together science, technology and art to illustrate a way of cooking and eating that was totally divorced from the past, celebrating the youth, speed and lightness of the modern age. It shares some similarity
with the ancient Greek cookbooks in that it intended to improve the physiology of the reader, largely in Marinetti's case by banning pasta from the diet. Marinetti saw pasta as the symbol of Italy's nostalgic, heavy, slow past. Rather than dull the senses, Marinetti proposed dishes that would electrify them all at once. Among proposed multi-sensory dishes that needed to be eaten while listening to a persistent drumroll, or while rubbing sandpaper, or with mouthfulls alternated with vigorous blasts on a trumpet, Marinetti hoped for pills and nourishing radio waves that could replace meals altogether for the man of the future (Sitwell "Drumroll of colonial fish").

Chapter 3

Chance

Food, as a general category that includes its mediation, preparation and cultural signification has emerged as our tropic figure, ripe for recontextualizing. It's qualities are competent to the task of acting as metaphor and relay to the affective and aesthetic dimensions of Internet and social media. How can we mobilize or arrange the technical equipment available in a conceptual practice of electracy to make the conductive leap? We receive the ready-made system from Duchamp by way of Ulmer: the bachelor machine. The operation of the bachelor machine is "randomized selection and remotivation", a practice that puts the artist in the role of spectator, exemplified by Duchamp's ready-mades (Ulmer 46). Art making becomes an act of reflective judgment (taste). Derrida points out the relationship between Fall (avatar descent), Zufall (accident), and Einfall (inspiration) (Derrida 348). If it is in the relation between things that meaning arises, then the combination of the unexpected is a practice of ideation. Randomness is
never without meaning and is in fact the operation of logic in *electracy*, and the point of departure in flash reason.

I apply the conjunction of food and random selection as discursive operation in *electracy* in a random recipe generator titled *Recipeater*. I gathered lists of ingredients of various categories (vegetables, meats, breads, cheeses, spices...), as well as lists of kitchen implements (ovens, tongs, meat cleavers, rice cookers...) and verbs related to cooking (heat, slice, melt, saute, fry...) together into a JSON file, a machine-readable text format. I then wrote a program that takes a group of ingredients from this list and combines them with various implements and actions and writes the resulting algorithm into a poem that matches the genre form of the recipe (Appendix A).

Where *The Futurist Cookbook* represents the recipe brought to its modern, industrial extreme, *Recipeater* brings recipes to their algorithmic, technocapitalist extreme. Ingredients are flattened to bytes in a database, queried, selected and recombined into new arrangements and permutations at the speed of light. The material clangor of the machine has been abstracted away; now food comes from the cloud, like manna from heaven.

I’m not the first to apply computation to the composition of a recipe. IBM has recently and famously made a large step in this field with the application of the Watson supercomputing technology platform to the problem. They describe the result as “Cognitive cooking” with “Chef Watson”. Watson is billed as “technology platform that uses natural language processing and machine learning to reveal insights from large amounts of unstructured data” (“What is IBM Watson?”). Underlying this statement is an
assumption of the rawness of data ("unstructured data"). Watson assumes that there are hidden, objective facts waiting to be uncovered and put to use, lying dormant in the piles of images, videos sounds and text that are recorded and stored in computational media. Chef Watson applies these techniques to the kitchen. Provided a list of ingredients lying latent in a refrigerator or pantry, it computes an ideal way to combine these ingredients into a delicious meal (Hamblin et al.). By contrast, Recipeater specifically works empty of intention, destructing preexisting understandings of what food is and is not. Random chance itself is significant in this case in its obtrusive arbitrariness. Novel combinations of incongruent ingredients, implements and procedures dance together, like “the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella” (Lautrémont 177).

Interface

Figure 3: Installation detail of Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster, by Thomas Storey (2016)
Generating recipes in a combinatorial bachelor machine appropriates the preparation of food and that process's spectrum of abstraction as a tropic figure of the operation of *electracy* as a logic of inspiration and invention, but it leaves something to be desired: consumption. After all, what is the point of the millions, billions of possible recipes implied by the algorithmic operation upon the database, if no one ever gets a taste? In what way can this impossible, abstracted food be consumed? We require technical equipment that mediates between the edge and center of the representation so as to allow consummation of the meal. We require an interface.

EntréAR is the interface that allows for consumption. It is an augmented reality app which in the gallery installation is running on a tablet handled by the participant. The app takes the textual recipes and performs them, algorithmically, digitally, abstractly, producing a 3D model of the proposed dish implied by a recipe. Although the processes undergone are gesturally based on their nominal models (the “chop” process breaks a model into cuboid chunks, for example), they are inherently limited by the edges of the data-model abstraction of the base ingredients. The model is then projected into the space of the gallery, mapped to a plate printed with an image used as a orienting device for natural feature tracking (a technique used for ‘marker-less’ machine vision). So, the app literally acts as the mediator between the viewer (or perhaps participant) and the textual form of the recipes generated by Recipeater. The participant then consumes the food by taking a photo of it and sharing it to social media channels such as Instagram. EntréAR plays on the “interface as window” conception of the AR camera, as transparent window onto a hidden reality, or portal to a fantastic unreality, by confusing and obfuscating the visual field. This is distinct from the ways other artists have used
augmented reality in the past, such as Mark Skawrek’s tactical media artworks like arOCCUPY (2011) (Figure 3). Skwarek’s work depends on the transparency of the interface, reading it as a window onto a more real truth, through the opaque, reflective surface of corporate power.

In comparison, EntréAR acts not as window but simply reiterates itself, its own mediation. There is no material food present at the table to annotate or interrogate. On the other hand, it also does not visualize a virtual world beyond or behind the real. It becomes what Alex Galloway calls an unworkable interface – one that is incoherent within itself, unstable (Galloway 38). It is aware of its betweenness, its alongsidedness.
Unlike Galloway’s examples of Rockwell and MAD however, EntréAR both enacts the interface and believes in it. Clearly there is no material food on the plate that the tablet stands in front of, mediating. It believes in the interface insofar as it does not betray anxiety about it. With the object of mediation removed, there is only the process of mediation itself to be objectified. The interface stands on its own and is enacted, not bypassed and invisible but plainly opaque, giving itself to the viewer in an act of disclosive withdrawal. The food recedes such that the interface can emerge in a figure-ground reversal.

The 3D ingredients that are processed and presented in mediation are composed from actual groceries scanned by way of photogrammetry. This 3D scanning technique involves taking a number of photographs from all angles around an object, and then
reconstructing the three dimensional shape of the object in digital space using triangulation. If a particular part of the surface of an object can be identified uniquely in at least three images, the relative transformation of the camera used to take those images as well as the location of that part of the object can be determined. The system of capture reinforces the objectified betweenness of interface. It is in the mediation between camera and object, literally along the edges of projection, the imagined spatial distance between virtual objects, that the scene is reconstructed. The ingredients used in the recipes performed by EntréAR are 'born digital' as it were.

The complete installation, titled *Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster*, which involves EntréAR, and Recipeater playing out in the gallery space, bears comparison to Gordon Matta-Clark's *FOOD*, the artist-run SoHo restaurant (Figure 4). In some aspects, *Quick &
Easy Recipes for Disaster is a remediation of Matta-Clark’s urban intervention. FOOD was distinctive for its innovative menu and interior design, both of which reflected its artistic investigation into the form, material, and mediation of food as it was in the milieu of the New York restaurant of the early 1970s. Matta-Clark and guest artists like Donald Judd, Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage designed meals that probed the boundaries of what is and is not food, transcending the instrumentality of the meal. Recipeater takes that one step further, erasing the lingering phantom of the intention of the artist from its arbitrarily composed recipes. Just as Matta-Clark laid bare the process of preparation behind the restaurant dish at FOOD with its open-plan kitchen that was visible from the dining area, I make the process of mediation of food visible by short-circuiting the loop from food object to image object.

Figure 7: Untitled (Free/Still) (1992/1995/2007/2011-) by Rirkrit Tiravanija
It should also be acknowledged that *Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster* bears a significant debt to the practices of relational aesthetics, as described by Nicolas Bourriaud and as prototyped (most relevantly to my work at least) by artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija. My installation certainly benefits from a contextualization in Bourriaud's terms as a social interstice (Bourriaud 16). It takes the tropes and conventions of the mediated, teleesthetic technocapitalist world and reconfigures them into an exaggerated scene. It is a game, in Bourriaud's sense that it is an open-ended encounter, but this is the point of divergence between my work and one more paradigmatic of relational aesthetics like Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free/Still)* (1992/1995/2007/2011-) (Figure 7). Where Tiravanija creates opportunities for direct relationships and interactions between human participants, I am more interested in an interaction between the human and the interface, and vice versa. I take up the challenge posed by the digital technical apparatus by inviting it to the table, acknowledging its role in the aesthetic production of food as a general aesthetic category.

The installation and décor of *Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster* features two primary zones – a dining room, and a waiting area/living room. The furniture chosen is stark white, and geometric, referencing the blank rectilinear space of the gallery, as well as the document object model (DOM) of rendered HTML documents that spatially and visually constitute the social media interface. The plates and table are square, in reference to the (until recently) enforced square aspect ratio of images on Instagram, as well as the square dimensions of image textures in OpenGL rendering. All image textures when using the ubiquitous open source graphics library must be of uniform dimensions that are multiples of two. (256x256, 512x512, 1024x1024, etc.) So the plate becomes not
only the physical support for the food, but takes on the aspect (ratio) of the media
abstraction of food in social media. These components add together to stir together the
social, coded spaces of the mediation of food – the prototypical restaurant, the home
kitchen, and the social media channels in which food is shared. The installation space is
all of these and none of them. The performance of the space furthers this goal by mixing
the tropes of restaurant culture – the participants ‘order’ their food – with those of
Internet mediated home cooking – the food served at the restaurant is made according to
recipes shared on an automated recipe blog, shown on a television screen in the
installation.

*Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster* traces the outlines of an allegorization of what
McKenzie Wark calls the “vectoral” (Wark 2). For Wark, elaborating on Virilio, the vector is
the path or trajectory along which goods and information can flow. The vectoral refers to
a condition where the thing as such recedes from view in exchange for the emergence of
the flow of the thing, the vector. This is essentially a reinscribing of Virilio’s model of
mediation. This disclosive withdrawal of the thing in favor of the vector is made possible
by the computational telecommunications technologies that constitute the web and
social media. The vectoral describes a general condition that is allegorized by the
microcosm of the absence of the food object in *Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster*. It
achieves what Marinetti hypothesized, removing food from the scene entirely, vanishing
and leaving behind only the trace of its vector, a nourishing radio wave.

With our interface established, the participant can now consume the food – by
taking a photo of it and sharing it to social media. The mediated experience is put back
into circulation with the algorithmic, emergent sublime of the Internet. The physical
consumption of food is repressed in favor of its mediated counterpart, foregrounding how social media acts as prosthesis of desire. Social media allows for hyperconsumption, an overflow and transcendence of food as object of desire in itself. The food, in the process of mediation, along the edges of the network, grows and becomes more than itself, reproduced, doubled, instantiated, multiplied, recursively factorialized.

*Quick & Easy Recipes for Disaster* is an attempt to put into practice the aesthetic logic of *electracy*, to question what it is to understand and think with the mediation of social media and the Internet. The interconnected algorithmic processes build and perform a space that demonstrates the inventive aesthetic capacities of art as an electrate apparatus.
References


Appendix A: Sample Recipe from *Recipeater*

**Separated Furmaggitt di Montevecchia with Parboiled Strained Yogurt**

- 3 m Capridor
- 1 tbsp Buffalo Wing Rub
- 11 m herbs and spice
- 17 fl oz hardtack
- 21 mm finch
- 16 dl turtle
- 6 mm baguette
- 11 pt scallops
- 1 dl Sargnon
- 11 pt Furmaggitt di Montevecchia
- 11 gal brioche
- 17 m shallot
- 12 pt tendon
- 13 g Mango pickle
- 20 oz All American Dry Rub
- 3 m lime
- 6 oz lime
- 35 mm Sooth (chutney)
- 15 qt cat
- 9 dl Thayiru
- 5 tsp balut
- 4 g octopus
- 5 ml finch
- 8 pt rye
- 6 pt liver
- 6 fl oz dove
- 1 tsp strained yogurt
- 8 gill chicken
- 11 tbsp boule
- 3 in sweetbread

In a rice cooker, open and wrap the furmaggitt di montevecchia using a pie bird, and a chef’s knife. Replace and prepare the strained yogurt and herbs and spice with a pastry brush into a hot plate. Using a cheesecloth, lift the sooth (chutney). With a lame, glaze the turtle and brioche...
into a sandwich toaster. In a tabun oven, remove and gut the octopus and capridor with a fish scaler, a pie bird, and an egg separator. Using a biscuit press, brown the capridor in a big green egg. Drain, chop, and separate the furmaggitt di montevecchia using a nutmeg grater, and a cheese knife into a tabun oven until ethnic. Insert the finch, finch, and herbs and spice with a meat thermometer, and a peel. Parboil and drop the strained yogurt.
Biographical Sketch

Thomas R Storey is an artist and programmer from Texas. He received a BS in Visualization Science from Texas A&M University in 2013 and completed his MFA in Art & Technology at the University of Florida in 2016. Utilizing computational materials and techniques, his work explores the gaps, voids and intersections between culture, human experience and the technological systems that societies build and inhabit. He has exhibited his work at Babycastles Gallery in New York, the Mark Moore Gallery, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, among others. He lives in Gainesville, FL, and his website can be found at http://thomasrstorey.net