

ALL YOU CAN EAT

Painting Installation by Carlos Barahona Possollo

Of all our senses, taste is probably the one through which we establish the most intimate relationship with the world. We realize what things taste of when, in a primordial communion, we introduce them into our mouths. We make what we taste our own, either through simple exploration, or by swallowing and digesting it so that it becomes an integral part of ourselves. Our need to feed and the predatory way in which we are forced to do so, have dominated our evolution for hundreds of millions of years. We daily partake in this blessed or cursed alchemical ceremony of ingesting something which is alien to us to make it our very own.

The mouth and particularly the tongue is the organ in which the process begins and in which it is most stimulating. A whole universe of expectations is transformed when we finally taste what we had only observed through sight and touch. It may work in concurrence with touch; it may, indeed, be a visceral form of touch which generates complete interpenetration and develops a particularly strong network of connections which are bound to our own physiology. The mouth, the second embryological opening to develop in humans, is a magical place. Through it we attempt to control foods by chewing and are made most vulnerable to their effects on our body or on our mind. It is an area of tension between the self and the other.

The mouth is intrinsically linked to sex. A place of strife and interaction where pleasure is given and received. The word "satisfaction" resumes the mouth's fundamental role: satisfaction of one's appetite, be it hunger or libido. It is striking that such a rich and complex organ is so exposed and that we constantly open it to the world to kiss, to speak, to eat, or to sigh. It is an organ of total promiscuity that we use for everything, simultaneously allowing us to communicate and to devour, to kiss and to bite. It combines both the eternal principles: Pleasure-Eros, that of the soft, wet and fluid tongue and Death-Thanatos of the threatening, mineral teeth. It is no surprise that we are ashamed of showing our tongue: we know it is a sexual organ.

My installation project focuses on the seven tastes which are traditionally detected by the tongue: sour, bitter, sweet, salty, pungent (spicy hot), metallic and umami. Each of these principles is enacted by a group of intimately intertwined figures that explore one another in various ways. I want to stress the connection of the mouth and the tongue with sex and its role as an organ which is primarily centred on pleasure. Hence the figuration of the genital anatomy which actively appears in the scenes. My aim is to reflect on the total continuity between all things linked to libido, the universal principle which unfolds and materialises in ever-changing ways to each of us. Based on the theory that our lives are immersed in a vast ocean of libido, from which emancipation is extremely difficult and would entail the risk of annihilation, I have tried to explore a few erotic variations of the extraordinary experiences our mouths can bring us.

This group of paintings is protected by the sacred symbolism of the number 7. Although profane and pagan in appearance, it aims to be a hymn to the mystery of life which constrains us to existing in flesh while perceiving the spirit, in a stark contradiction which is the core issue of our condition. In a way, these paintings are examples of vanitas because they evidence how we are kept captive by things material that act as aprioristic limitations in which the miracle of transcendence is revealed.

The title All You can Eat indicates unrestraint and excess. These are the uncertain boundaries beyond which one incurs in Hubris (the infringement of limits which will unleash Nemesis or punishment), in a permanent contrast with the principle of guilt which in varying degrees torments us all through the lasting bonds to the norms of the culture we grew up in.

British art critic Cefyn Embling-Evans, upon viewing these seven paintings, coined a new conceptual category to classify them: Renaissance Porn, which combines various formal contents in a way I particularly like.