

## Ephemeral Bodies

### Corpos Efêmeros

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#### Abstract

In the area of bromatology, this article presents an overview process of developing work for a practice-based research in Fine Arts. The practice-related method presented here is being developed through practice, through research, and through reflection. My research into creative practice, specifically by means of an experimentation approach will aim to explore how food is body by examining the physical properties of food. Additionally, how food is docile by utilizing visual ethnography and artistic application to demonstrate the breakage of how our subtle masochistic language is repetitively embedded within the translation process. In which, re-defines our intimacy to food, while questioning the identity of food-bodies as protest-bodies in the art of artistic expression.

#### Resumo

Na área da bromatologia, este artigo apresenta uma visão geral do processo de desenvolvimento do trabalho para uma pesquisa baseada na prática em Belas Artes. O método relacionado à prática aqui apresentado está sendo desenvolvido por meio da prática, da pesquisa e da reflexão. Minha pesquisa em prática criativa, especificamente por meio de uma abordagem de experimentação, terá como objetivo explorar como o alimento é corpo, examinando as propriedades físicas dos alimentos. Além disso, como os corpos alimentares são dóceis ao utilizar etnografia visual e implementação artística para demonstrar a quebra de como nossa linguagem masoquista sutil é repetidamente incorporada ao processo de tradução. No qual, redefine nossa intimidade com a comida, ao questionar a identidade dos corpos-alimentos como corpos-protesto na arte da expressão artística.

#### Introduction

Although at this current state this article only illustrates questionable speculations, images and works in the making to address my higher cognitive process. The research will aim to investigate and examine food as subject, our interaction to food, while questioning food as material when used for artistic expression. To feed and enhance the research, it will be developed through an experimental approach, accompanied by using images, literary analysis and reflection in art practice. In the early stage of investigation, an abundance of questions pertaining to food came to rise. How is food a body and docile? And if food is body, what are the similarities between food-bodies and our body? What is the correlation between how food-bodies are controlled, manipulated, transformed,

disciplined and exploited within different environments versus the relationship to the way we transform our body? Though my stance is, food is body as it is docile, where does it stand in regards to female embodiment? Using food-bodies as protest-bodies, does it celebrate the female experience rather than, critic? If so, where does food stand in regards to our intimacy when used as artistic expression? Does food- bodies as an aesthetic encourage food waste? These questions continue to circle through air while delving into language, the properties of food, and our intimacy to food. A literacy book, *Granta: Comer e beber* (eat and drink) touches on individual personal experiences, and views our interaction with food differently by stating, "we are slaves to food; voluntary slaves that's right. We have our lives organized around food rituals" (Marques, 2017, p.7-8).

The key word is voluntary; therefore, slaved is owned by another or law as property. When one is “voluntary slaved” to food, the choice is guaranteed. When we have the choice to consume, how much to consume, where to consume and with whom; all represent principles that imply power. For that reason, we are not slaves to food. Food is slaved on how we have masticated the bodies by conforming them, and altering their identity into significant forms to not only enhance visual properties, but taste.

### Development

The influence in inspecting and understanding an artist's work of art through image and visual ethnography, has led to concepts, questions and hypothesis.

Exemplifications can be seen throughout the development section. One example is seen in *Lick and Lather* where two replica bodies (chocolate and soap) are taken and translated into a total of 14 self-portrait busts. These 14 food-bodies that are embedded with other food-bodies are continuously repetitively translated through her use of hands, (rubbing in circular motion) and mouth (licking and biting) as a tool to cast away her self-image. This performative alteration process of taking and adding information defines a very important moment. Self-destructing her image by ingesting a bust of her image, questions the day-to-day basis on our interaction with food once it begins the translation process. The artists' self-image proceeds to transition into informal food-bodies in which, become nearly unrecognizable (Fig. 1.1). These informal busts seen in *Lick and Lather* appear to take form through memory. In where a mark of her touch, and a lick or bite led to investigate what if word-objects were edible? What does that make us? How would that transform us within? Is there a difference between ingesting a word-object versus utilizing the tools that pertain to its function?

Speech and taste all dwell in the same space. The black hole, the organ in where bits and pieces are chewed, and broken down to enable an easy swallow. These objects currently in the making (Fig. 1.2) are constructed from flour, oil, water and salt. The symbolism in each ingredient from the word “virgin” in olive oil to the whiteness in flour questions the essence of purity in these objects in regards to its function. While the act in creating these objects through rolling, molding and baking, it touches on an intimate aspect of a child's transition from breast milk to becoming familiar with

the object. As the clay, is one of the fundamental principles in coming closer to the object. Consuming and being embedded with each object rather than, becoming a physical extension of our body questions how these word-bodies are not only docile, but we too become docile. We become autonomous questioning how we obstruct the function; for therefore, we become the function. How does that re-define us as consumers? A consumer intimacy towards food touches, and questions the relationship of performance and effect on the bodies during the modification (when interacting with tools) process versus the act of mastication. Through the idea of the word masochism to masticate, a meaning and relationship began to take form.

Mastication is not only by mouth, but it's the way we swallow and absorb information. It is the process and the methods used to combine food-bodies into one essential nourished meal. It is the way a feminist artist uses food as material and humor to advocate her political stance. It is the way the food industry and restaurants control, and alter the body to market a perceived taste. It is the way food stylists discipline the body to appeal one's eye; resulting the body to become waste. It is the way we use significant tools to mask food-bodies through aesthetic properties (form, texture, and decoration). Mastication is a subtle form of masochism. For both words share a correlation between desire, pleasure, performance, and what is visible versus what is invisible.

Just as *Lick and Lather* portray a memory, a mark, in which identifies where the artist has masticated and touched the body; through experimentation, these word-bodies were too displaying memory. Therefore, it illustrated how time and method can be an emotional state. The process of heating these word-objects displayed an imprint; some are identified with a golden brown while others are darker. These shades of darkness shown at the point of a blade, a rim or the surface of the object indicates a feeling of where the body has endured “agony.” But mostly importantly, it is an indication of where we have touched the object in order to masticate food. What other visual similarities between methods or a mark our body experiences, in relationship to how food-bodies react within time. What is the difference between a scab to a scar, or a peel to the skin. For example, through the art of deterioration within time an imprint of the mold is revealed on bread, and how closely related it is

to a bruise that is marked on one's skin. Mold in relationship to a bruise is much more than a metaphor. It is a correlation between the constant growth, to the ongoing feeling and memory that is embedded within the skin.

Through the idea of memory, and what a mark means and symbolizes, to the way we masticate the body. I began to establish this correspondence between process and forms to food-bodies in relation to prehistoric art (Fig. 1.3). Neolithic stamp seals with significant patterns; as they were used as pendants that elaborated one's identity, to Aztec body clay stamps (Fig. 1.4) that were a form to adorn any part of the body. These different examples of applying a mark, transforming ones own body made me question how we decorate our food. We disguise food from what it genuinely is by conforming and concealing them to take shape by modifying them into something completely different. The relationship between using a body stamp, to the similar function and language embedded in the object is seen within a cookie press (Fig.1.5). A press, a force to apply or take away information. As cookie press, is a way for food to become more appealing.

However, the patterns seem to mimic Chumash rock mandalas, as scholars have agreed it connected with religion and astronomy (Fig.1.6). Now, what does that say about the objects we design for these food-bodies? Are we aware of such forms and methods?

From an imprint on food, to word-objects and to the way we transform the body. In this section, JIN hyun Jeon takes a different approach when it comes to memory and masticating the body. Her objects are much identical to a child's tool; in which, enhances ones taste, through shape and materiality. These little bumps on the inner and outer part of the spoon become another form of tongue, or remembrance and feel of the mothers breast (Fig.1.7). The object gives certain food shape through the way her texture is depicted within the dessert spoon. Where as her Lolly series, (Fig. 1.8) takes on an organic and sexual form to satisfy the mouth. The aesthetics in her dessert spoon form questions not only to enhance taste while we indulge, but it's as if the body and the taste of the body is being stimulated all at once. What if we can actually give informed food-bodies form, and enhance the food and our tongue at the same time? However, in a way where not texture, but

movement is incorporated? (Fig.1.9) What if we had the choice when to, and when not to stimulate the body? What would the outcome be, and what would that say about us as masticators if it was used as a social experiment? What if the idea of a mark or memory can actually be embedded within the object? By, combine artificial intelligence in a spoon, fork or knife that indicates the temperature of the body, time, where the body touched the object, and the number of gestures we take when consuming one nourished meal? (Fig.1.10) What would that tool consist of? How would it work? These are questions with examples of how different functions are being intertwined to pleasing the mouth, to enhancing the taste; while, demonstrating a pleasurable and subtle masochistic performance. The combination of forms in JIN hyun Jeon's work made me become more aware of the similarities in function, shape and identity of the objects we use on our bodies, in relationship to the tools we utilize to indulge food (Fig.1.11). Although the forms of each object are similar, the question stands: in cosmetic science and technology, what are the differences and similarities in language to how our body reacts and transforms, in relationship to how food is translated when specific objects are in use?

The intertwine of similarities when it comes to objects and their functions in relationship to food-bodies, and our body can be seen, "*In Ritual Meal*". Although her usage of objects is different to JIN hyun Jeon, Barbara T. Smith's performance of surgical instruments used on food made the sight of food become body. Her black and white video presents her guests with painted faces sitting for 6 hours eating course after course. Raw chicken liver to be cooked in boiling red wine that symbolized blood, alongside plasma bottles filled to the brim with creamy fruit puree. Bottles like these were frequently used in hospitals to carry blood, milk or lymph. They represent capsules to protect, in which acquire symbolic meaning of bodily existence (Fig.1.12).

The language and environment the artist creates gave the viewer a sense of bodily fluids and body parts through her incredible use of food. Each guest possessed surgical tools that were required to employ, to prepare, and consume the corpse. In which, re-connects the viewer back to the application of food utensils. It is a gathering that not only presents a ceremony of overpowering a body, but a gathering of were bodies consume bodies.

The different tools from surgical instruments to plasma bottles made me question, how would we view food-as-body without color, without smell, and without any indication it is food; but simply stemming from the shape of the body and how it is presented. The awareness of food is either by word of mouth or conformed to eat such. The unawareness of not knowing it is food questions the forms in relationship to one's own body. In doing so, (Fig. 1.13) a project in process, I started breaking down food into shapes; separating the ingredients and simply viewing them as forms. For each country and traditional dish, different food-bodies came to rise. There were indications of vessels, capsules, masking, and veneer bodies. The word protection, and concealment signify how these distinct bodies, we have disciplined and transformed all serve to become a function; to either hide or protect other food like substance. The question stands, why have we disciplined food to look this way? Why create protective food-bodies to protect other bodies? Is it because, we have an impulse within us to obstruct an enclosed capsule? Psychologically, do we take pleasure in doing so?

**Veneer bodies:** are disguised bodies that are transformed and used to "cover" other bodies with decorative layers.

**Masking bodies:** Not visually seen in food, but are food-bodies that are transformed and used to conceal other food like substance to satisfy ones taste (herbs, spices, salt, gelatin, sugar, etc.).

**Capsule bodies:** a food-body that is contained from view, or when speaking on anatomy; a tough sheath or membrane that encloses an organ or other structure in the body, such as a kidney or synovial joint.

**Vessel bodies:** a hollow food-body, that is used to hold other food substance in which, makes it easier for consumption.

When thinking about the meaning, and appearance of forms within food and its relationship to our body, Jennifer Coates' paintings illustrate that her application of paint and enlargement depictions of food transforms the artwork into representations of bodily substance. Thru her caption, only then does our way of thinking reconnect us to reality, and visualize her work of art to obtain a representation of food. However, a lot of her depiction of forms, including the *Everything Bagel* (Fig.1.14) illustrates a luminous whiteness depicted within the body in the way it creates a

halo outlining the form; in which, not only give the shape, but the body purpose. The body is split down the middle to mimicking the same shape in "images of Yoni carved stone found in Israel eight thousand years ago, in which, is thought to conform to fertility or female genitalia worship" (Samet,2017)(Fig.1.15).

We begin to see the same shape in the Luwian hieroglyphs; in which, symbolizes god (Fig.1.16). The food that we indulge embody information; where not only have symbolic meaning, but its quite ritualistic as it becomes embedded within us. We conform food to become something else through historical forms, masked with creative combinations of taste (masking bodies: sugar, spices, herbs) to decorative layers of other food substance (veneer bodies).

Conforming food to act a certain way or adopt a fixed shape, made me reference back to Neolithic art and Egyptian hieroglyphs. In the process, by analyzing pasta forms thru drawing, (Fig.1.17) we have conformed them to obtain a type of language; in where its relationship to the shape not only correlates to its identity, but to our figure. While some of these bodies mimic other forms, they become their own set of alphabetical system. The repetition of significant configurations of pasta to Egyptian hieroglyphs (Fig.1.18) is seen in anchellini to the eye pupil, armonie to the eyebrow, orzo to the mouth, and midolline to a piece of flesh. We begin to ingest these shapes not knowing that they are indications of how our body was identified 3500 years ago. But yet, the shapes recognized in pasta, to our previous discussion on stamp seals connects to the forms seen in entoptic phenomenon (Fig.1.19). As the term entoptic comes from the Greek 'within vision'. As 'within' is represented in the nervous system, for these shapes come from between the eyes. While these visions are an altered state of mind, what does it signify when these formations are in the mist of being processed, prepared and ready to be presented as a meal?

By cross-examining the language in forms, texture, objects, and our intimacy with food; how is it seen within the art of artistic expression.

Transforming and disciplining the body to satisfy ones eye within food styling, to using food-bodies as protest-bodies

for political purposes, questions can an image be masticated? Some of Sarah Lucas' most famous works, including two sunny-side eggs as a representation of her breasts questions, where does the body stand in relationship to feminist art? She encouraged women to throw and shatter 1,000 eggs to a white wall within the New Museum Gallery, in New York City. The image of throwing and shattering eggs doesn't stop at 1,000, but increases to 3,000 eggs in total where this piece was re-staged in Berlin and Mexico (Fig.1.20). In this picture, we aren't examining Sarah Lucas, nor are we analyzing the individuals who participated in that entertaining performance. At this moment, we are looking at the eggs; not as an idea of femininity or a symbol of fertility, but in the concept of it being a "protest-body." When looking at the word shatter, what it signifies to the sound and impact it creates on a wall, you begin to question are food-bodies considered protest-bodies if waste is being encouraged?

A concerning organization, PETA wrote a letter to Sarah Lucas stating, "...a true feminist would not support industries in which sexual abuse and exploitation are rampant and female animal bodies are exploited so painfully and miserably (Allen, 2018)." What about the other life forms that we exploit on a daily? Isn't modifying our consumable bodies exploitation? Aren't the excesses of consumption, to the decision of what is rubbish, to what is fresh an act of exploitation? Isn't choosing or deciding when the body is unwanted or unusable a demonstration of exploitation? And isn't exploitation, a subtle form of masochism? This question of food-bodies as protest-bodies come into play when viewing Stephanie Sarley's intimate videos, of her using her hands to rub and caress the body (Fig.1.21). Her "videos are basically about personifying and empowering vaginas through humor and absurdity, and the acceptance of female sexuality at large (Lefebvre 2016)." But, what happens when the use of food-bodies as protest-bodies isn't viewed or understood outside the practice? (Fig.1.22) Are they still considered protest-bodies, or is it a hit and miss? And, what would a ecofeminist say in relationship to Sarley's and Lucas' performative art? There's a play between irony and humor, and the question behind who is the masochist; the viewer or the artist? Is it the viewer that takes pleasure in watching and advocates the artist's creativity? Or, is it the artist that takes part in implementing the body for advocacy?

While Sarley and Lucas show examples of food-bodies exploited to benefit advocacy, the manipulation of food-bodies within food styling is seen in Beth and Charlotte's creative photographs (Fig.1.23). Control is established through their work, as they approach the body in various ways; slicing in half and exposing the inside. One part of the body is disposable, while the other is combined along side with other food substance to offer the viewer an insight into what lies beneath the exterior layer. The word to expose, slice and inside redefines what food-gaze means. These bodies are positioned in front of the camera, where they are manipulated to increase profit. People love examining pictures of food, as it is one way to not only interact with the brand, but visually towards the body.

While most consider no harm in using food for artistic expression, Mansour Ourasanah pursues a different approach as he creates an innovative kitchen appliance; Lepsis to fight waste by using grasshoppers as food (Fig.1.24). Mind you, this device was created in 2013, which endure 7 years to this day. Even though it is not yet in the market, what impact will this device have on our society besides an idea brought to life? Will we really stop eating our way, and conform to consuming grasshoppers? Perhaps not, as it is identified through Twitter's artificial intelligent ChefBot. ChefBot represents a tool that reduces food waste by inspiring the consumer to make the most of what's at present in one kitchen. However, the question of "freshness," to "is this food on your planet?" and "Chefbot's system cannot compute that" is brought up when I decided to present three ingredients: grasshoppers, tomato and rice (Fig.1.25). A meal that Mansour Ourasanah would agree with, but seems to be denied within society. What does that state about consumers, in relationship to excessive consumption? In regards to waste being a global issue, will this conduce food-bodies to become more modified and alternated?

## Conclusion

In closing, as the analysis continues by working through what I currently have, to questioning my process, it is certain that I stand my position to define what is body and recontextualize what is food. In doing so, my investigation is to re-evaluate language, the properties of food, our intimacy to food, and the tools and methods in preparing our consumable bodies. Through these means, it will

touch on the relationship between food and our body. The unawareness of conforming food-body identity. The relationship and effect between the use of tools for food-bodies versus our body. And, the issues of power when using food as artistic expression. With that being said, it will be carried through practice, through research, and through reflection.

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**Fig. 1.1.** Janine Antoni. (1993). *Lick and Lather* [Sculptures] Retrieved from <http://www.JanineAntoni.net> on 09/20/2020.



Fig.1.2 Tania Sousa, *Untitled: 5out of 120*, 2020, flour, olive oil, salt. Size Varies. Photo: Author.

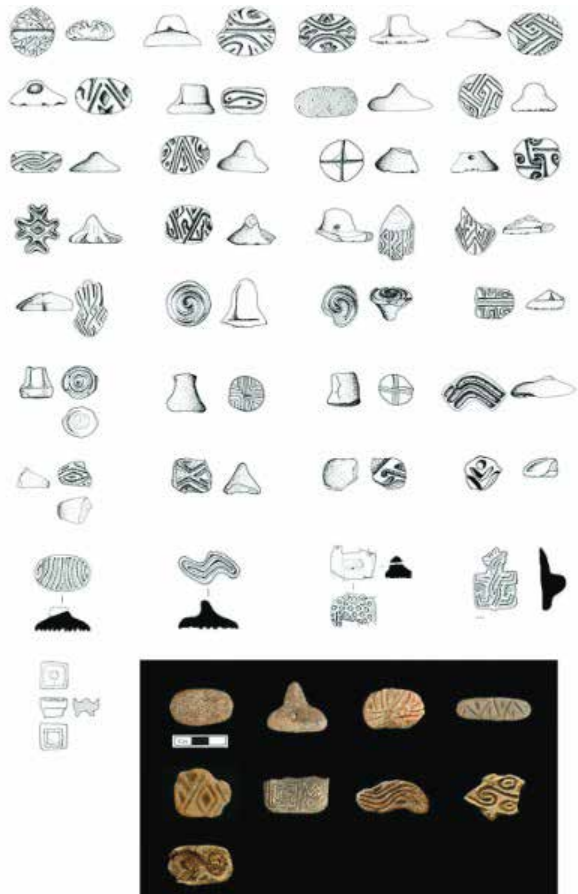


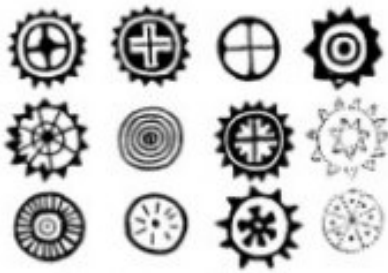
Fig.1.3 Ali Turkcan, 1997. Stamp Seal In Catalhoyuk Archive reports. Retrieved from [http://www.catalhoyuk.com/archive\\_reports/1997/ar97\\_18.html](http://www.catalhoyuk.com/archive_reports/1997/ar97_18.html) on 11/06/2020.



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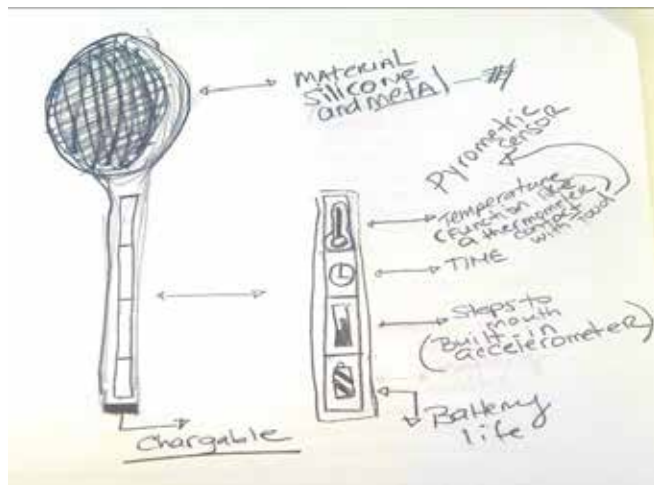
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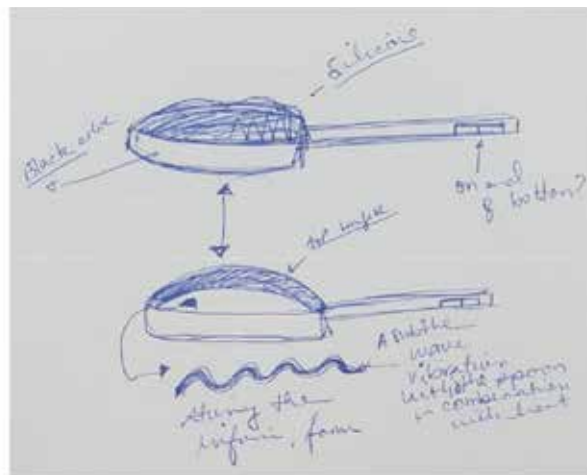
**Fig.1.7** JIN hyun Jeon, (2018) *AEIOU VII, Series. INNER Bumps 2.0* [Sculpture]. Retrieved from <http://www.Jjhyun.com> on 09/23/2020.



**Fig.1.8** JIN hyun Jeon, (2016) *AEIOU, Lolly* [Sculpture]. Retrieved from <http://www.Jjhyun.com> on 9/23/2020.



**Fig.1.9** Tania Sousa, *Drawing: possible design*, 2020. Photo: Author. Relationship between movement to enhance taste of body(ies). Sound incorporated within the object (sizzle, crackle, stirring) to intensify the experience of eating.



**Fig.1.10** Tania Sousa, *Drawing: possible design*, 2020. Photo: Author. Indication of temperature, time, gestures to mouth, chargeable with detachable heads (spoon fork or knife).



Fig. 1.11 Tania Sousa, Visual Ethnography, *Tools: Similarities between food-bodies and our body*, 2020, Photo: Author.



Fig.1.12 Barbara T. Smith, (1969). *Ritual Meal* [Still images from Video] 01:00-01:17 Retrieved from <http://www.Vimeo.com/101572292> on 09/28/2020



Fig.1.13 Tania Sousa. *Untitled* [Sculpture in Process], corn starch, silicone, latex, 2020, Photo: Author.



**Fig. 1.14** Jennifer Coates, (2015) *Everything Bagel* [Painting]. Retrieved from <http://www.jenniferlcoates.com/#/2015/> on 09/25/2020



**Fig. 1.15** Mark Miller, (2015, February 11). 8,000-year-old fertility stone works found in Israel linked to ancestor cult. Ancient Origins. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/8000-year-old-fertility-stone-works-found-israel-cult-020211> on 09/25/2020



**Fig. 1.17** Tania Sousa. *Study: Pasta Drawings*, 2020.



**Fig. 1.16** Luwian Scripts. (2017, October 11). Luwian Studies. Retrieved from <https://luwianstudies.org/luwian-scripts/> on 09/25/2020

D21		Mouth	Phon. r. Ideo. for r "mouth"
D12		Eye pupil	Det. for d3f "pupil of eye"
D13		Eyebrow	1/8 heqat measure of grain.
F51		Piece of flesh	Phono. is, ist, w3 Det. h' "flesh," iwf "meat."

Fig. 1.18 Gardiner's Sign List - C. Anthropomorphic Deities. (2013). Egyptian Hieroglyphs. Retrieved from <http://www.egyptianhieroglyphs.net/gardiners-sign-list/parts-of-the-human-body/> on 11/06/2020

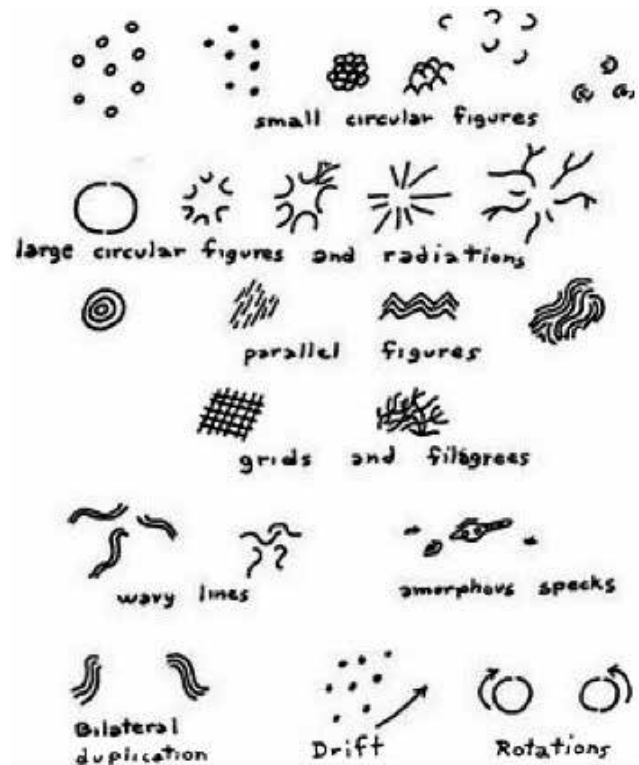


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**Fig.1.22** Sarley, Stephanie [@Stephanie\_Sarley].(2017,11 2) Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BBGhEbhpCpG/> on 09/25/2020



**Fig.1.23** Beth Galton, Charlotte Omnes. *Cut Food* [Photography] Retrieved from <https://www.bethgaltonfineart.com/cut-food> on 09/25/2020



**Fig.1.24** Vilcek Prizewinner Spotlight: Mansour Oursanah. (2020, September 10). Vilcek Foundation. Retrieved from <https://vilcek.org/news/vilcek-prizewinner-spotlight-mansour-ourasanah/> on 09/23/2020



**Fig.1.25** Sousa, Tania [@Tania95699831].(2020, 10 4). Retrieved from <http://www.twitter.com/Tania95699831/status/1316465074110967809>