Embodied aesthetic movements during mealtime –

a provocative method for design innovation of culinary utensils

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Introduction

In 2010, the project MER was funded by The Knowledge (KK) foundation. Lars Eriksson, associate professor in applied aesthetics and creative events at Grythyttan Örebro University, initiated the project MER which focuses on the way people move and interact in the environment around the meal.

This project has conducted a number of studies about the meeting between utensils, food and the guest in motion, creating the culinary experience. The poster presents a summary of a provocative method applied in all of the different studies.

Partners

Cutlery manufacturer Gense Inc., restaurants owners, designers, teachers, colleagues and design students at Beckmans, Konstfack and Grythyttan Academy.

Methods

A provocative approach was developed questioning culinary norms by replacing cutlery with unusual tools / utensils.

Tools / utensils: Examples of the utensils are pliers, glass prism, plastic blade, fountain pen, candle stick ring, cork screw etc.

Materials: The food/dishes were prepared with a particular utensil in mind, adapting the haptic properties of the food to the shape and material of the tool. Examples of the materials were, apple sauce, vanilla cream, powdered chocolate milk, pie etc.

Labs: Aesthetic & Sensoric labs were set up to study how different conditions affect the way people interacted with the provocative utensils. Both labs focused on haptic movements around the utensils and the prepared dishes.

The Aesthetic labs placed the utensils and food in a laboratory environment with little social interaction. Each participant sat in a separate booth and were asked to use all the utensils for all the dishes.

One study used the results and insight from the Aesthetic labs to study how provocative qualities of the utensil. It also encouraged discussion about developing innovative restaurant concepts which would give very different meal experiences with greater interaction and playfulness during the experience.

The questionnaire and films showed that provocative utensils both frustrated and enabled activities during the meal experience.

In the Aesthetic labs, the participants were asked to use all the utensils with all the dishes. The results show that frustration increased since some dishes were very difficult to eat. These frustrating experiences were, however, valuable in developing insight into what to avoid in designing new utensils.

In the Sensoric labs the participants could more freely use the utensils as they wished. This developed a more creative atmosphere that inspired conversation about improving on the provocative qualities of the utensil. It also encouraged discussion about developing innovative restaurant concepts which would give very different meal experiences with greater interaction and playfulness during the experience.

Applying an aesthetic provocative method had an overall effect of sharpening concentration and evoking the curiosity of the participants in both aesthetic labs and sensoric labs. The questionnaires were in general more carefully filled in when provocative utensils were used.

Results

Pliers /as alternative to fork and knife

Plastic tool for mixing and spreading glue

Glass prism

Candle stick ring

Fountain pen tip

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