



*Good Taste*

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**Representations of food**

**An exhibition organized by members of the Fellowship program at  
The Toledo Museum of Art**

**December 16 - January 27, 1974**

**SCHOOL OF DESIGN LOBBY  
THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART**

**TOLEDO, OHIO**



Above: STELA OF SISENBU (No. 2)

Cover: Abraham van Beyeren, STILL LIFE (No. 4)

"What one relishes, nourishes."

Benjamin Franklin  
Poor Richard's Almanack

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, artists have chosen from but a small number of universal themes. We find that among them, the subject of food is one which has been treated continually. The basic life processes of gathering, preparing, and consuming food are mirrored and transformed in art. As one of life's basic necessities and greatest pleasures, food serves as a visual metaphor for life and creation. The present exhibition, which does not presume to be comprehensive, is a selective gathering of artists' representation of food, in various media, from ancient to contemporary cultures.

As early as Middle Kingdom Egypt, representations of food appear as a central motif on offering tables and tomb murals. Carved in low relief and often painted, these simple still lifes, once sanctified by the priests, helped to assure the sustenance of the soul in the world beyond (Nos. 2, 3). The depiction of the use of bread and wine in Egyptian ritual reappears in a symbolic context in religious iconography of the Old and New Testament. Scenes such as the Hospitality of Abraham, the Israelites Gathering Manna in the Desert, the Supper at Emmaus, Belshazzar's Feast, and the Last Supper are only a few of the important examples of such imagery.

However, food has not always been considered in such mystical terms. Attempting to appeal to the sensibility of the middle class patron, the Dutch seventeenth century painters focused on the rich sensuality of form, color and texture. This approach crystallized in the still lifes of van Beyeren (No. 4), Claesz and

de Heem, fine examples of which are in The Toledo Museum of Art. Yet some representations of the still life retain symbolism. Witness the inclusion of bees, beetles, ants, and butterflies in the apparently lush Still Life with Lobster by de Heem. These subtle details, which signal the decay of the fruit, further suggest the transitory nature of life - vanitas. At this time, we find not only the emergence of the still life, but also an interest in the related scenes of eating, as found in van Ostade's The Breakfast, and allegorical depictions centered on the subject of food, such as Saenredam's Autumn, (Nos. 20, 23).

The painters of the eighteenth century built upon the rich still life tradition established by the Dutch. The popularity and importance of this genre is manifest in the numerous still lifes of French painters such as Chardin, Oudry, and their contemporary Vallayer-Coster. In colonial America too, the aesthetic of the still life gained importance through the work of the brothers Peale. In the Raphaelle Peale Still Life in the collection of The Toledo Museum of Art, the superb simplicity of the arrangement of the objects lends special significance to the commonplace.

The austerity of these still lifes does not necessarily reflect the gastronomic habits of the times. Indeed, in France, by the eighteenth century, the cuisine française had perfected its culinary delights and cooking had become an art in its own right. The visual appeal of the repast was extended by the serving pieces, many of which were decorated with representations of food and related motifs (Nos. 11, 26, 28). On another level, food became a vehicle for social comment as evidenced by the satirical genre of Daumier's Un Banquet

d'Hippophages (No. 8) and in the more incisive statement about excess in the John Bull pitcher (No. 16).

Aesthetic principles rather than social commentary were the concern which would dominate the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the painting of uncomplicated still life objects, artists could more easily concentrate on the definition of formal problems. The monumental importance which Cezanne gave to the still life was to influence subsequent generations of painters, most notably the Cubists. Furthermore, still life elements appear in the cerebral landscapes of the Surrealists; here, food placed in an anomalous context assumes mythic proportions.

The contemporary artist turns instead to images drawn from the environment of a popular culture. Johns' ale can is heir to Cezanne's apple in the iconography of food (No. 13).

While for Johns the painterly manipulation of the object by the artist remains of central concern, the impersonal technique of the Pop artist places the emphasis on the object itself. In a mass media culture, food and its packages play the role of new social icon. The lettrism of Indiana is a logical extension of the emblematic nature of the Pop object (No. 12). Yet contemporary depiction of food is not without its sensual aspects. The Pears of Peter Dechar and Jim Dine's Vegetables give new expression to the qualities of form, texture, and color, elements of primal concern to the seventeenth century painter (Nos. 9, 10). The contemporary artists' use of food imagery reflects an interest which has been sustained by artists for nearly four thousand years.

## CATALOGUE

1. Anonymous (Byzantine)  
THE OLD TESTAMENT TRINITY, c. 1000 A.D.  
tempera on panel, tondo 6 5/8" diameter  
Gift of E. D. Libbey, A.C. No. 48.73
2. Anonymous (Egyptian)  
STELA OF SISENBU, c. 1991-1600 B.C.  
polychromed limestone, 21 1/2" x 12 1/4"  
Gift of E. D. Libbey, Acc. No. 06.23
3. Anonymous (Egyptian)  
TABLE OF OFFERINGS OF SENWOSRET,  
c. 2466 B.C.  
limestone, 18 1/2" x 14 1/3" x 3"  
Gift of E. D. Libbey, Acc. No. 25.526
4. van Beyeren, Abraham (Dutch)  
STILL LIFE WITH WINE GLASS, 17 century  
oil on panel, 14 1/4" x 13 1/4"  
Gift of E. D. Libbey, Acc. No. 50.247
5. Currier and Ives (American)  
FRUIT AND FLOWER PIECE, 1863  
lithograph, 11" x 15 1/2"  
Courtesy: Van Straaten Gallery, Chicago
6. Dali, Salvadore (Spanish)  
LES DINERS DE GALA, 1973  
illustrated book  
Felicie Inc., Publisher  
Courtesy: Felicie Inc., New York City

7. Daumier, Honore (French)  
L'AMATEUR DE MELLONS, 1846  
lithograph, 10 1/4" x 9 1/4"  
Given in Memory of G. V. D. Hutton,  
Acc. No. 66.140
8. Daumier, Honore (French)  
UN BANQUET D'HIPPOPHANGES, 1865  
lithograph, 8 7/8" x 9"  
Acc. No. 12.1139
9. Dechar, Peter (American)  
PEARS, 1968  
oil on canvas, 36" x 52"  
Courtesy: Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corp.
10. Dine, Jim (American)  
VEGETABLES, 1969  
lithograph and collage, 16 1/2" x 18 15/16"  
Courtesy: Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit
11. Harker Taylor Company (American)  
HOUND HANDLED JUG, c. 1847-1851  
earthenware, 10 1/4" high  
Gift of Mrs. H. Duckworth, Acct. No. 70.406
12. Indiana, Robert (American)  
USA 66 from DECADE, 1964  
serigraph, 32" x 39"  
Courtesy: Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit
13. Johns, Jasper (American)  
DECOY, 1971  
lithograph, 41" x 29"  
Courtesy: Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit



14. Lichtenstein, Roy (American)  
SODA AND SANDWICH, 1962  
serigraph on plexiblass, 20" x 24"  
Courtesy: J. L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit
15. Meissen (German)  
BACCHUS FIGURE GROUP, 1858-1864  
polychrome porcelain, h. 11 1/8"  
Gift of F. S. Libbey, Acc. No. 534.700
16. Newcastle-on-Tyne (English)  
PITCHER, JOHN BULL AS A GLUTTON, c. 1810  
earthenware, 7" high  
Gift of Mrs. H. Duckworth, Acc. No. 70,241
17. Oldenburg, Claes (American)  
BAKED POTATO STUDIES, 1971  
lithograph, 15" x 18"  
Courtesy: Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit
18. Oldenburg, Claes (American)  
PIECE OF WEDDING CAKE, 1966  
plaster  
Courtesy: Ellie Schellhammer,  
Cambridge, Mass.
19. Oldenburg, Claes (American)  
STORE DAYS, 1967  
illustrated book  
Something Else Press, Inc.  
Courtesy: Peter Frank, New York City
20. van Ostade, Adriaen (Dutch)  
THE BREAKFAST, 1664  
etching, 7 7/8" x 10 1/16"  
Gift of C. B. Spitzer, Acc. No. 29.46



Above: Jim Dine, VEGETABLES (No. 10)

21. Rosenquist, James (American)  
COLD SPAGHETTI POSTCARD, 1968  
lithograph, 22" x 26 3/4"  
Courtesy: Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit
22. Ruscha, Edward (American)  
CRACKERS, 1970  
illustrated book  
Wittenborn Press  
Courtesy: Peter Frank, New York City

23. Saenredam, Jan (Dutch)  
AUTUMN (From THE FOUR SEASONS), 1601  
engraving, 8 7/8" x 6 5/6"  
Acc. No. 64.38
24. Spoerri, Daniel (French)  
ANECDOTED TOPOGRAPHY OF CHANCE, 1970  
illustrated book  
Something Else Press, Inc.  
Courtesy: Peter Frank, New York City
25. Spoerri, Daniel (French)  
THE MYTHOLOGICAL TRAVELS..., 1970  
illustrated book  
Something Else Press, Inc.  
Courtesy: Peter Frank, New York City
26. Staffordshire (English)  
CREAMER IN THE FORM OF A PINEAPPLE,  
c. 1750  
earthenware, 3 3/4" high  
Gift of Mrs. H. Duckworth, Acc. No. 70.298
27. Staffordshire (English)  
PITCHER, c. 1800  
earthenware, 5 1/4" high  
Gift of Mrs. H. Duckworth, Acc. No. 70.169
28. Staffordshire (English)  
PLATE from TEA SERVICE, c. 1810-1820  
New Hall soft paste porcelain  
Gift of Mrs. H. Duckworth,  
Acc. Nos. 70.346-384

29. Striewski, Ted (American)  
EGGSCAPE, 1970  
mixed media, 19" x 24"  
Courtesy: J. L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit
30. Thiebaud, Wayne (American)  
BIG SUCKERS, 1971  
aquatint, 22" x 24"  
Courtesy: J. L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit
31. Vasulka, Woody and Steina (American)  
GOLDEN VOYAGE, 1973  
color videotape, duration: 28 minutes  
Courtesy: the Artists
32. Warhol, Andy (American)  
CHICKEN DUMPLING SOUP, 1965  
lithograph, 35" x 23"  
Courtesy: J. L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit
33. Yamura-Toyomari (Japanese)  
HORNED ORANGES, 20 century  
wood block, 9 1/2" x 14"  
Gift of H. D. Bennett, Acc. No. 39.295
- Fredenthal, Michael (American)  
ANOTHER WORM IN THE BIG APPLE, 1972  
silver and mixed media, 5" high  
Courtesy: the Artist

Members of the  
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