

THE SENSATIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL AFFECTS OF FOOD ILLUSTRATIONS

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Keywords

Food illustration, food pedagogies, arts-based methods, sensational, affect

In 2017 I participated in the annual Inktober drawing project. Inktober, devised in 2009 by illustrator Jake Parker is a global, month-long challenge project, similar to others that require people to perform a daily task for a month to raise money, awareness, complete a goal, or just to have fun. Inktober is a design challenge to create an ink-based illustration for each day during the month of October. Participants can follow the daily suggestions provided on the [Inktober website](#)

¹ or they can create their own list. Inktober images are commonly shared using hashtags on social media platforms such as Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook, and Snapchat.

I created an ink illustration of a raw food each day. I curated a collection of food images that are easily recognisable at different scales (from a tiny emoji, to a poster print), and that would be recognisable across cultures who might use a particular raw food in different ways. I drew each raw food illustration on a plain white background, isolated from any context so that the images can be used as graphic identifiers in these various contexts.

A small sample of the collection constitute this visual essay into food pedagogies and the senses. The images included in the visual essay show how arts-based research is an affective and 'sensational' (Springgay, 2011) methodology that I use here to experience and learn about food through a focus on its visual form, character and essence. My aim was how to create an illustration that effectively 'captures' the essentiality of the food and translates that affectively to an audience.

Choosing which raw foods to include in the collection required me to explore, search and investigate food items including some that I had never seen before, let alone tasted. My first criteria for selection was whether the food looked visually interesting in terms of its shape and colour. I also thought about foods that I had an affective relationship to, such as foods that reminded me of my home, foods I'd eaten in my childhood, foods I had discovered recently.

Establishing the selection criteria within the pressured conditions of having to produce an illustration each day for a month initiated a rich pedagogical connection to global fruits, vegetables, and herbs undirected by the pathologizing discourses of what are 'good' or 'healthy' foods. The choices were directed by the potential of the food to have affective and sensational impact on me, through the recalling of memories, a curiosity for more information on the food, the aesthetic pleasure of its form, and its physical appearance and colour.

I shared the Inktober food illustrations daily via social media (Instagram and Facebook). The public reaction to the images each day are interesting to think about in relation to this special issue of *Locale*. The illustrations became pedagogical prompts for people to share sense-based stories about the foods through a focus on smells, taste, texture, as well as availability, cultural connection and more.

This art project, that studied the form and aesthetic of raw foods became pedagogically and sensorially important. Pedagogically I saw that the reasons for the daily selections were not simply about the aesthetic or graphic appeal of the food; assembling a diverse collection of foods, creating the image and sharing it daily on social media taught me about what were

common or prized foods in different parts of the world, their significance to different cultural practices, festivals, and dishes, and as special or everyday foods.

The enthusiastic reactions to each of the daily postings also taught me that a key way that people connect to foods is through its sensational qualities: through smell, taste, the times/places/occasions it is eaten, and who cooks/serves it. Sensationally, the project exposed to me how my food images visually articulated the valorisations of different foods, established through the connections between food and culture, identity, socio-economic factors. For example, some foods, such the durian, fiddlehead ferns, and taro, prompted mixed comments on Facebook and Instagram. Some commented about its strangeness due to its strong smell or unusual taste, that this 'strange' was food eaten on holiday in an 'exotic' location while others declared it a comfort/familiar food that is readily available and eaten often.

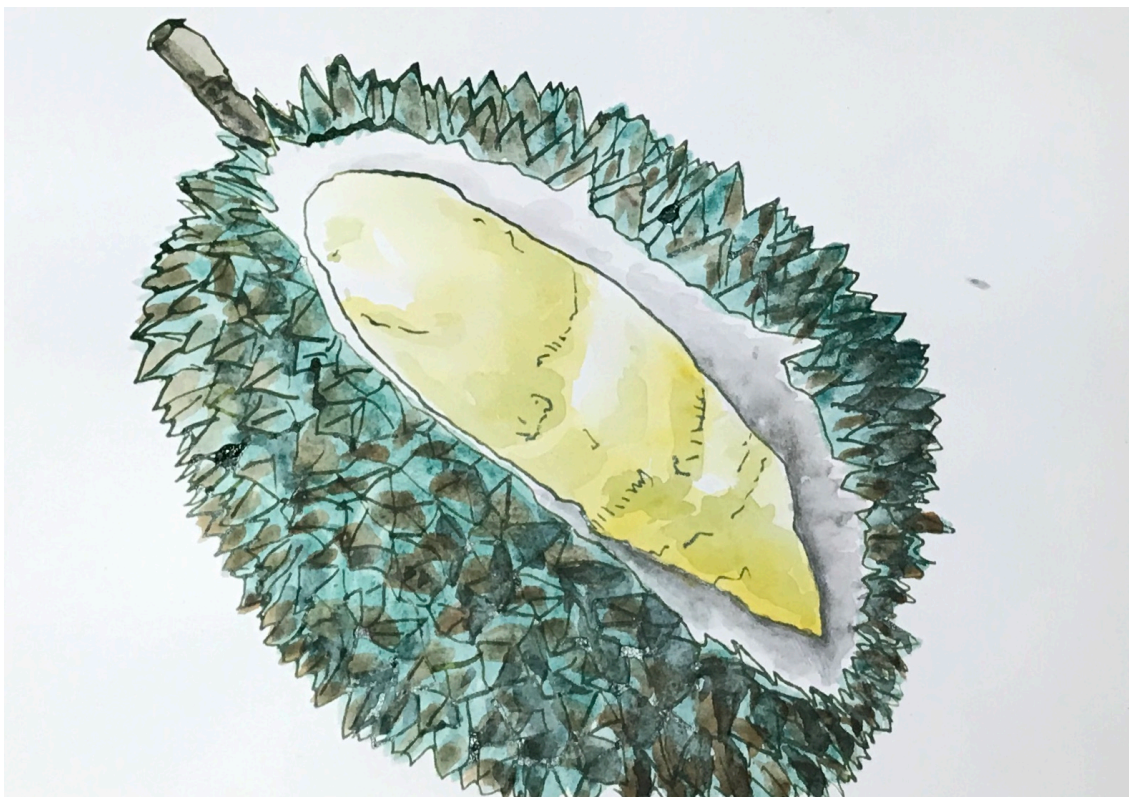
This small-scale project was a potent pedagogical, sensational foray into the affective power of images to spark conversations about raw foods. The second phase of the project focuses on fast/convenience foods and this, too, will continue to pedagogically and sensorially affect ideas about what we eat.

Questions

1. As you look through the food images what are the direct sensations (smell, taste, texture, sound), and what are the valorisations (where it is eaten, who eats it, what dishes) that come to mind about that food?
2. Do any of the images contain foods you are familiar with? What do you know about that food? Does the image prompt you to find out more about it? What details are you interested to find out about especially?



Bok choy. Pencil and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.



Durian. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.

Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies

Number 7, 2018



Quandong. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.

Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies

Number 7, 2018



Lillipilli. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.



Peggy nuts. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight

Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies

Number 7, 2018



Dried noodles. Watercolour, pencil and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.

Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies

Number 7, 2018



Fried chicken. Watercolour and ink on paper. Artist: Linda Knight.

Biography

Dr Linda Knight is in the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Linda is co-leader of the QUT Literacies, Language, Texts and Technologies Research Group. Linda uses critical arts methodologies and practices in speculative research. Her projects include: using inefficient mapping of (play)spaces to examine human/non-human/inhuman urban citizenships and the ethics of urban sites; conventions of Artificial Intelligence and coding and issues of algorithmic diversity; and drawing as a non-representational methodology. Linda is a founding member of #FEAS—Feminist Educators Against Sexism, an arts activist collective that uses irreverence, comedy and arts interventions to research workplace sexism.

Linda has published extensively on arts-based research and is co-editor of *Arts-Research-Education: connections and directions* (2018) with Springer. Linda has an international profile as an artist and has exhibited in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, and Europe.

Endnotes

¹ Online at <https://inktober.com/>

References

Springgay, S (2011) ‘“The Chinatown Foray” as sensational pedagogy’, *Curriculum Inquiry* v41n5, 636-656 DOI: 10.2307/41342468

Postscript

The full list of Linda’s food images can be found on Linda’s RedBubble page, online at:
<https://www.redbubble.com/people/lindaknight>