

Millswiss©

„Millie“

[mil-ee]

Machine Of Assimilation

Text Intro

„All enjoyment, all taking in and assimilation, is eating, or rather: eating is nothing other than assimilation.“

Jacques Derrida, e-flux, 2009

Our perception of eating is drifting farther and farther away from the notion of assimilation. Through a gradual cultural devaluation of eating, with food being increasingly delivered, processed, gulped in, thrown away, and gulped in again, we merely consume food rather than eat food the way we should. Consequently, we are no longer aware of who we share our food with and by whom our food is created.

More importantly, we are not aware of what we eat. Swissmill as one of our anonymous cooks precisely hinders us to gain more awareness on our conception of food. By learning about our food, we can discover that eating always involves both the eater and the eaten. And by that, nobody is creating food, rather it is a benevolent negotiation between living organisms.

Millswiss© as a project aims to reconnect us to the very essence of eating, by proposing spaces that enable us to assimilate towards the eaten. A switch of domains takes place, as in Millswiss© we are the eaten. By establishing this new culinary relationship, Millswiss© wants us to reconsider our personal position towards eating and help us define how we can eat better.

Text Extended

The market share and production volumes render clear the importance of Swissmill within Switzerland's food industry. As a national leader in the processing of grain, Swissmill has established a clear-cut network in order to generate constant flows of things and an even larger flow of money. These flows materialize in a well-defined, complex flow of production, of post-humanistic processes which are enabled by a plethora of grain processing machines. With 1000 machines working in synchronicity, the mass ornament of post-fordistic production hiding behind the intangible walls of Swissmill is able to transform even larger amounts of different crops into a considerable collection of flour products on the daily. However, in conceptual terms, the different items of Swissmill merge into one singular product: The commodity flour.

By furthering this conceptual framework, Swissmill is not merely a material container of machines, but an immaterial container of commodification, operated by faceless beings. Its looming shadow therefore contributes to the contemporary canon of issues around food.

Taking a closer look towards the development of grain, the last 200 years drastically shaped the raw material itself. From landrace varieties over the application of selective breeding, to the grain we harvest now, which is defined by the Green Revolution movement with its introduction of fertilizers, GMOs and pesticides, our chase for higher yields results in the evident depletion of biodiversity.

The depletion of diversity is an act further applicable to the nourishment of the singular body as well. According to Foucault's notion of biopolitics, the desire of governing bodies to control societal health defines our relationship with food. Precisely this desire resulted in the advent of the nutrient-deficient White Toast. In Socio-Economical terms, the prevailing food system is one of unjust, as described by Engel's Law, with rich people on average spending only 2% of their income on nutritious food whilst the poor have to spend 30% on malnutritious counterparts. Between the idea of food justice and food consumerism, the mediation of food narratives also presents a clear winner. Coca Cola spends ten times the amount on marketing in comparison to the World Health Organization.

Reverting back to the grain itself, a conceptual parallel can be drawn: In order to produce white flour, the starchy endosperm of the grain is separated from its bran, stripping it from its richness of nutrients. Resembling the endosperm, Swissmill is able to fill us but does not nourish us. The grain thus needs to be restored.

To derive from Derrida's idea of eating as assimilation, we need to redefine our relationships around food. Our perception of eating today is shifting farther and farther away from the notion of reciprocity whilst eating. With services like Uber Eats and deliveroo, one can eat a pizza alone, without ever seeing the process and people entangled with the making of, as even the waiter is usually a faceless person, totally absorbed by the exploitation of low wage labor. We no longer experience assimilation between the self and the other whilst eating.

Swissmill as of now is one of our anonymous cooks. Swissmill projects linearity, It is a faceless entity, an enigma, that somehow has the capacity to feed a bunch of us each morning with bread. However, this anonymity takes away the assimilation idea of eating. We do not assimilate to our cooks any longer.

As described by Lévi-Strauss, cooking marks the transition from nature to culture, by means of which the human state can be defined in accordance with all its attributes. In mythological thought, the cooking of food is, in effect, a form of mediation between nature and society, between life and death, and between heaven and earth.

Merging the ideas of Lévi-Strauss with those of Derrida, the shift of domains is consequently introduced to the assimilation concept: Millswiss© switches the domain of us humans with the domain of the grain. Precisely the way how the grain is molded in order to fit to the concepts of us humans by means of acts of culture, Millswiss© aims to axially revert back to us humans. Whilst mirroring the rational procedures that we put the grain through, Millswiss© conducts a spatial experience that deliberately brings forward an adherence to nature in the form of intensified bodily experiences. As eaters, we now assimilate towards the eaten not by understanding the idea of the eaten but rather by actively immersing ourselves in the particular experiences of the eaten. Millswiss© finally aims to bring the cooked closer to the raw, to put it simply, us closer to our food with the goal to better our food relationship.

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