



5 MINUTES IN
THE TRANSIT
LOUNGE
WITH MARIJE
VOGELZANG



We are what we eat

ACCORDING TO MARIJE VOGELZANG, FOOD IS DESIGNED BY NATURE. SHE DESIGNS FROM THE VERB “TO EAT”.
MEET THE WORLD’S FIRST EATING-DESIGNER

WORDS | GISELLE WHITEAKER

What inspired you to work with food?

When I was a student there was no such thing as designing with food. I studied design in Eindhoven and I tried to find the material that I could express myself in best. Eventually I started working with food because it's nice you can eat it, and it's fascinating that it's ephemeral and that I make a design you will consequently put in your body. Now I see that food is connected to everything in the world. The world is shaped according to what we choose to eat every day. That food is connected to emotions and memories. Food can glue people together but it can also make a separation. Food gives us meaning and nourishment but it can also make us ill. It is the most rich, and most important material in the world.

Is eating design different from food design?

When I started there were no others I could look to, so people started telling me I was a food designer. I think food is already perfectly designed by nature so I'd rather say I am an eating designer since I'm a designer inspired by the verb 'eat'.

Why does eating need to be designed?

It doesn't always need to be designed. I don't always like design. Especially if design means “to give shape”. What I am interested in is design thinking. This means that clever ideas

or solutions are applied to the act of eating. We might still eat the same food as before but in a different setting or in a different way or with different people. Or perhaps the problem of food waste is tackled or the knowledge of ecological footprint is communicated.

How do you differ from a trained chef?

I'm not a chef. I collaborate with chefs. Food is not only happening in restaurants. I like to work with farmers, with mothers on how to get their kids eating vegetables, with hospitals, and I like to look at food memories, for example. All of these things are outside of the field of the chef. Designers can be the bridge between scientists, farmers, mothers and markets.

Do you feel a social responsibility to educate people about food?

Absolutely. People who have easy access to food seem to not value [it] as much as they should. This leads to waste. Many people have forgotten how to cook, what real food is and to understand quality. At the other side you see poor people eating rubbish food. It's cheaper to buy food full of cheap fat and sugar than fresh produce. So you need to educate people, but also governments and food companies.

Is there a growing interest in food design?

Yes, and it's a very good thing. We need more

creative minds working on food-related issues. Designers working with food bring more respect for food and hopefully will help solve the bigger problems considering biodiversity, safe water, clean and lively oceans, food waste, food education, packaging, etcetera. So many things need attention.

Which of your projects has had the biggest impact on you?

I think that must be the EAT LOVE Budapest project I did with gypsy women. I was touched by this project because you could see the women becoming very powerful – normally the gypsies receive charity or pity. But now they were giving something, which was food, love and their stories. Also this project started to stir up the political debate in a more humane way.

Your projects are transient. How does that make you feel?

I am very happy that my designs don't last. I'd rather not add to the mountain of waste my fellow designers make in this world. The eating of my project is part of the design, part of the experience.

“You are what you eat.” True?

I think that you are what you absorb. So not only by eating but also by sound, sight, touch and intellectual input. 🍴