

Ornamenta 2024: Unexpected smokey cherry tastes

Imagine it is 27 degrees, you are walking at a buzzy crossing in a small town in the North of the Black Forest, craving for something refreshing and you decide to enter a high end jewellery shop.

On the floor is a fancy golden carpet, on top of that are tables and chairs to sit down to talk over the watch or wedding ring you are looking for. It awakens a feeling of the jewellery tradition in Pforzheim. A city where to this day, about 70% of the turnover of the German jewellery industry is generated. You are invited to walk up the stairs and there you find a subtle temporary intervention of two artists who are not from this region, but offer an experience reflecting on the region. A dark reddish-purple colored drink from their installation is offered.

Sometimes we need other people to offer us something to get for a moment lost in a color. It is like they offered me some tasty liquid paint. This color feels alive, the rich, deep red hue, maroon color fills the jewellery shop. Deciding as a visitor to take a sip, we become part of their work and their research. In their style of writing and presenting the work they bring a feeling of respect to the past, but at the same time it does give a shout of change. By standing there, listening, and agreeing to take a sip, it is not just a sip. In Dutch people sometimes say “Hap, Slik, Weg”, which I see as a reason for many challenges we are facing in our societies, it translates to: “Bite, Swallow, Gone”. By taking a sip, taking the time to taste, to swallow, I sense it is an active choice of becoming part of their work. It makes me wonder “What do we swallow as a society?”.

It is the first smokey cold drink I ever tasted. If I close my eyes, it awakens visions of orchards filled with cherry blossoms and then seeing cherries slowly growing and changing color. Often when I walk into a new installation I take the reference of the Danish group, Sisters Hope and their way of describing to explore the Sensuous Society. Gry Worre Hallberg wrote a PhD about: Sensuous Society – Carving the path towards a sustainable future through aesthetic inhabitation stimulating ecologic connectedness.

I have a background in International Relations, but after working in that field I realized how slowly the senses are killed in many “professional” working fields. That was the reason I started a new foundation on the border area, still focussing on bringing international collaborations to life, but then through the senses. In 2021, I started a foundation on the border in the middle between Nijmegen(7.6KM) and Kleve(18.5KM), in a building which used to be German before 1945 and became Dutch. This location invites becoming aware of how a geographical location shapes our thoughts, decisions

and viewpoints. From this perspective I joined Ornamenta 2024, to hear more about collaborations of the Dutch and German makers and curators.

The project that caught my taste buds is known as *Shelving Seasons: A Series of Tasting Events with Liquid Black Forest Cake*. As a starting point they took for their research a cake, by offering a minimalist version: a cherry drink. Since, I'm working often as a duo with my partner as well, I'm eager to learn from how other makers make decisions who collaborate intensively as a duo. Next to their work, I spoke with other makers at Ornamenta who share that the diverse life as an artist and joining international art festivals is only possible because of working together as a duo.

For "Shelving Seasons" Suzanne and Philipp shared refreshing stories about old industries in the area of Schwarzwald, the food traditions and the roots of jewellery making in the region. Their story invites me to research the biological, historical and social aspects of an ecosystem. Suzanne uses edible storytelling to address our relationship to the land we inhabit. By delving into the historical and geographical roots of food, she unveils the stories behind what nourishes us. Philipp delves into the realms of food, microbes, smells, and taste to craft multifaceted experiences that reconnect us with the ground we stand on. By meeting them, I for sure experienced they both developed a unique skill of delving into complexities. On the website the work describes the following text and after having talked with the makers, I realize one of the hard parts is how to summarize the broad experiences, decisions and research that has been done for someone who scrolls through the website or for the audience that just comes in for 20 min and leaves again.

"Moist chocolate layers cradle kirsch-kissed cherries, kept together by pillows of whipped cream. The Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte is the embodiment of decadence. "Shelving Seasons" is a series of twenty-minute tasting events exploring a new and liquid form of the regional Black Forest cake. Making local cuisine great for critical cosmopolitans again. During the tasting events (first come, first serve), taking place at a high-end jewellery store Juwelier Leicht in the city center of Pforzheim, small groups of visitors are welcomed to try out the liquid cakes from a custom-made cool box crafted from wool and mycelium; contemporizing traditional ecological knowledge. The event by food designers Philipp Kolmann and Suzanne Bernhardt advocates for a shift for retailers and bakeries: moving away from a culture of abundance and embracing seasonality, local preparation methods, and nearby ingredient sourcing. Instead they develop an even more contemporary product using overlooked but high-quality food materials such as cherry pits. The result is a newly made seasonal commodity: the black forest cake in the form of a cocktail, with a longer shelf life than any fresh cake."

It awakens all kind of questions:

What is the shelf life of a product?

Should we eat products the whole year round?

What is the right time to eat according to the seasons?

How many times a year would people have eaten this cake in the past?

How often is this cake now eaten?

How did all the versions taste that Suzan and Philipp tried out for their research?

Was this cake only for the rich people?

When did they harvest the cherries?

Where is the orchard of the cherries and who takes care of it?

How to make use of a waste stream?

How to make liquor from cherry pits?

How was ice used in the past?

How is the aluminum industry working in Schwarzwald for the cherry drink?

How are ice cubes now made in Schwarzwald?

How come the water is clean and filtered through natural processes in Schwarzwald?

This mix of new questions, stories and facts are for me the added value to visit art festivals in regions I would otherwise never come. They took the whole cherry as a material to work with, the flesh of the fruit but also the pit. A fascinating fact they shared with the visitors was: "Don't bite on a cherry pit, If you take too many it can be toxic because of the chemical amygdalin" I will not reveal all the hidden mysterious of this work, for that you might have to take the train, the bus, the car to let the taste buds off your tongue be enlightened with taste and new knowledge. I can recommend bringing or renting a bike in the area of the Black Forest. I took mine from the Netherlands, which contributed to reaching various locations since they are widely spread. The bike lanes are comfortable. The curators of the festival facilitated collaborations between local shops, museums, industries together with artists from Germany itself and with other European countries. The team consisted of Katharina Wahl, Willem Schenk and Jules van den Langenberg. Because of the intensive collaborations the designers and artists were invited for, I felt that the whole festival carried a welcoming and open atmosphere where a lot of new relations were developed.

We will never be able to hear the full complex research that makers did to develop a work. We can just receive a glimpse of the maker's touch and look at how their eyes twinkle of secrets as in a dense forest. I will never be able to oversee the complexity of the ecosystem of the Black Forest, known as a place full of shadows and trees. After stepping out of the jewellery store, it did leave an imprint of an edginess between the futuristic gesture of the makers and the conventional tradition of a jewellery store. This

uncomfortability brought up valuable thoughts since the curators made a decisive choice for this combination. The contrast of something lasting as jewellery with a drink that is gone for one second. What is nourishing us?

If I now think about the Black Forest, I will cherish this deep dark red drop of the smoky cherry drink, falling on my tongue, with my taste buds experiencing sour and sweet at the same time. With a cold ice cube, made of naturally filtered spring water from the lakes in the Black Forest. Plus the strong smell and burning sensation of the cherry pit liqueur. The makers gifted the audience a true jewel, existing out of immaterial stories they tell and how they transformed something from the past into something nourishing suiting to the time we live in now. I somehow hope that in the future our food production will go hand in hand with healthy ecosystems and that the products we eat will be functioning as jewels of our societies. This project is perhaps a glimpse into that future. If you are open to it, there are endless sensuous learning experiences to discover in all the locations. For now, I will say goodbye to all the wonders of Ornamenta, this temporary festival was for me as an exploration of a more sensuous society.