

Too Good to be True

by
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in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis presents a portrait of cultural diversity filtered through a lens of memory, experience and architecture. What does diversity look like? Where do we experience diversity? How unrestrained is our experience of it? Although cultural identity is tied to both personal experience and memory, Toronto's experience of diversity has evolved with the growth of the city.

Consequently, Toronto's cultural diversity is today experienced through a limited and problematic architectural and marketing-based framework. These frameworks make ethnicity more accessible, but also limit our experience of it. I propose to release these limitations by highlighting the frameworks within which we view our various ethnicities. These are 1) the marketing of ethnic products to consumers (specifically Loblaw's *Presidents Choice*, *No Name* and *Memories Of...* products) and 2) architectural uniformity.

I examine these issues by recounting personal experiences with my family in South Western Ontario; by conducting a typological study of Toronto's storefront restaurants – a portrait of a city which expands on the representation of industrial landscapes made by Bernd and Hilla Becher and the study of social types made by August Sander; and through my own experience of the street food and outdoor markets of Thailand.

However, to highlight such constraints did not seem enough. So I created a white, unmarked model of a typical Toronto restaurant façade (formerly a shop front.) This *tabula rasa* suggests the possibility for an alternative strategy by showing the limitations of the channels through which we are forcing cultural diversity. The blank shop front model brings us back to a starting point from which cultural diversity can be reconsidered.

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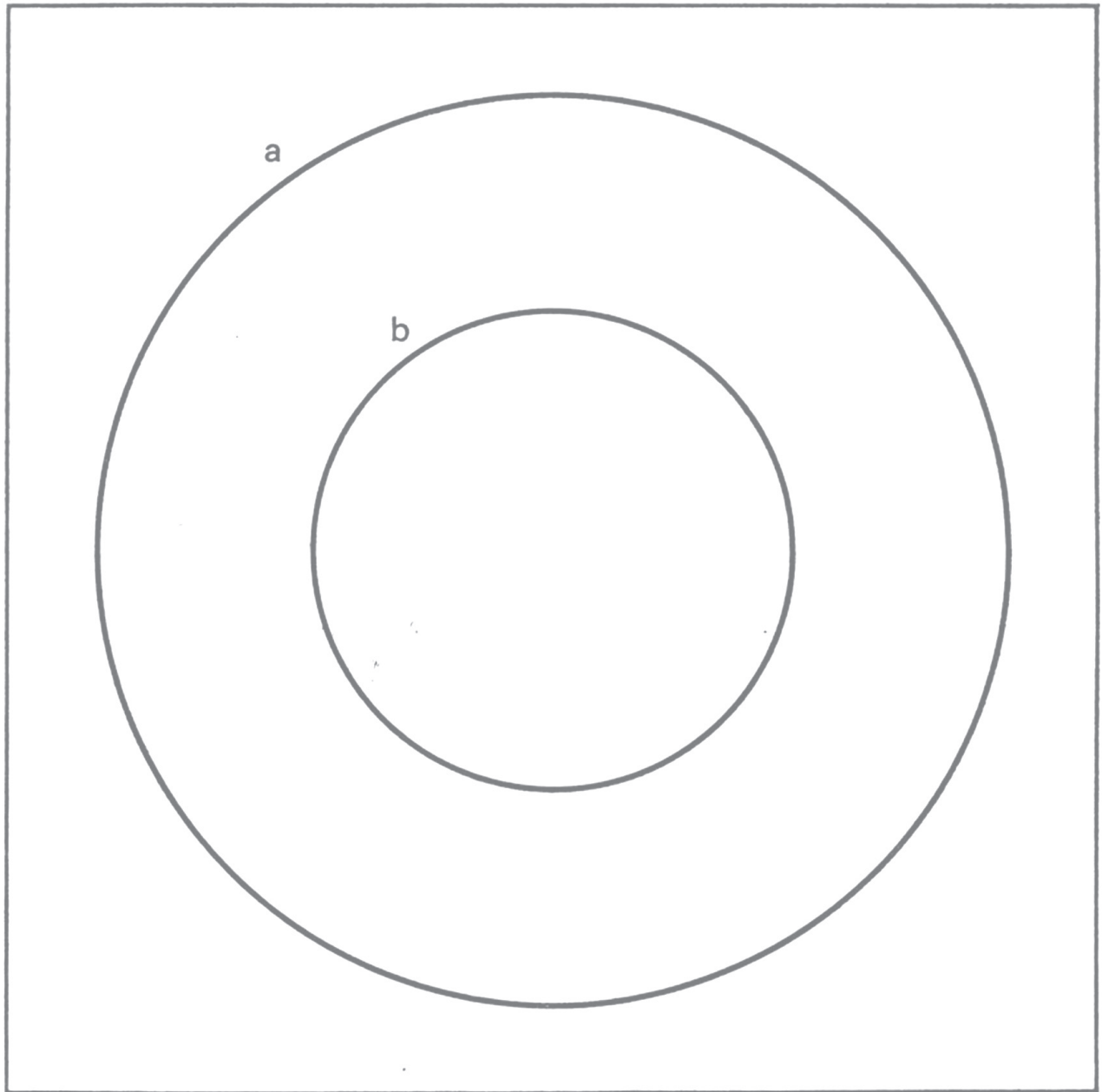


Figure 01.001: The Social Universe (a) share drinks; (b) share meals too

One

Sunday Dinner: A Story

"Bless and sanctify a portion of this food and this nourishment ..." – I look up, I always look up, not up to the heavens, but at the shy faces of my family parked around the table, framing empty plates. It is here, in the brief moment when everyone else is distracted, that I share the only smile to be had with my sister. Straining to look left, a brainy, wry, and cynical smile develops; she rocks her head back and forth, like a bell – "... son, holy ghost ... our bodies and souls, in Christ's name, Amen!" – DONG!

And there it was in a flash - Sundays at church until we were sixteen. My brother Kevin walked out first, no longer looking the part, Sarah and I stopped going two years later. Perhaps it was church, or it could have been the Sunday lunches that followed. Without fail we had a soup, usually a package of Lipton chicken noodle soup mixed with Campbell's cream of chicken or celery or, when Dad was cooking, a package of dust that would turn into a cream of potato or leek broth. There were always crackers from the Tupperware container; Ritz, stale Triscuits, crunchy wheat biscuits, and in later years, round glossy rice crackers. The crackers either ended up in our soup, or stacked with cheese. White and orange marbled cheddar, white cheddar on its own, or a spiced Ontario Havarti, and always in long bars on a wood and slate cheeseboard. Shivers would run up and down my spine when a knife was used to cut and separate the cheese. Dessert was two cookies from a Tupperware box, and a piece of fruit. The meal was well rehearsed; the soup saucepan was the only dish that would not go into the dishwasher. Tupperware lids were placed back on the cracker and cookie containers, and the table was deserted. Not going to church, sleeping in, often meant skipping lunch.

Choir, Christmas plays, collection, and the most Presbyterian communions I've ever attended.

Church was a three-minute drive or an eight-minute walk through the mall. This grace, the one that Dad always recites, is doubly meaningless to us. Apparently he is an excellent public speaker, and has the firmest handshake on the eastern seaboard.

Grace is late, a hesitant and awkward afterthought, a final hurdle to stomach. With big open hungry eyes I look to my brother for relief. If he can sit and not give away being as hungry as I am, then this is something I too will have to do.

Without this blessing Dad would have little else to say, conversation isn't his strong point. Grace is always said before the first trip back to the kitchen for a poor forgotten dish, tucked away, still keeping warm.

"The BEANS – hurry!" clucks Granny.

"Oh Jill", my father always sighs. While Mom is away I'll explain the seating arrangement.

To my right is Granny, our family's celebrated matriarch. She – Christine – is a neatly composed, symmetrical tower. Down from the meridian of her sunken eyes surrounded in delicate folds and petals of skin, hang pearls, golden chains, a figure skating medal, soft pillows of freckled flesh, ending at the tips her slender ringed fingers, beached on the fine white wash of table linens. Warm and delicate knuckles just visible off the edge of the table support her elbows.

I sit on a stool; I switched out of the chair an hour ago. The stool belongs to the piano beside me; it has been present at the dinner table for as long as I have. It took part in meals where every seat in the house was occupied, when the table stretched out into the hall, and over into the sunroom. Those meals seemed to last for days. The thing I always liked about this stool was not its lack of support, but that I could elevate myself – carefully choosing the most comfortable eye level for conversation; convenient, as I have spent my

entire life as the youngest, and a good part as the shortest. Today, I have set it low, so that my eyes are in line with Granny's. I feel like a kid again.

Opposite Granny at the far end of the table, my dad sits in the chair formerly occupied by Poppa, his father-in-law and my grandfather. An uncomfortable seat, rigid and firm, I sit in it when I am hosting dinner there. None of us can live up to Poppa. Dad's only complaint is that it is too tall for him, too tall for most of us. Sitting on the chair, Dad's napkin is spread across his lap like an apron. He's ready. "Let's get this show on the road!"

The door from the kitchen retreats and rocks back and forth, back – as my mother flips through, fanning the steaming dish of soggy beans. The plate of beans is squeezed in beside the basket of buns, and the jointless bone of ham. Mom slips back into her chair in a well-rehearsed motion. She sits across from me, I see her through the flicker of a candle drowned out by artificial light. Beside her, Kevin sits tallest, warm and patient, and beside him his sits girlfriend Missy, the shortest by a foot, and even more patient.

To my left, Sarah commands the other end of the table. I move the beans and place them just off from the tines of my fork and near her glass; the dish is just warm and now correctly placed, I consider it an offering. Oh, how this puts her on edge.

And so it begins, with a realignment of food on the plate. "Beans anyone?" Sarah triumphs. A cacophony of sound erupts. This is the sort of sound that can only be interrupted by the chinking of a glass, or sudden accident. "So ... We're pregnant!" – Just kidding, Mom.

I single out and select the plumpest cut of succulent pink flesh and haul it into the white porcelain clearing of my plate with just two teasing tines. Playfully, I maneuver the ham into position. From beyond the horizon of the plate, the long sharp neon lines of knife emerge. The knife feels heavy and full in my palm, a special tool reserved for these delicate occasions; it reveals the flesh neatly parted into two corresponding shapes. With fork and knife working quickly in tandem, I arrange these two halves so that one rests gently on top of the other, a triumphant decisive kill. Again with the attack of my fork, both pieces of flesh are bound – a little juice. With my knife I usher other pieces of food within range, adding to the pillage, two slivers of potato in a grey creamy sauce. For amusement, I rest a soggy short bean atop the layering of flesh and tuber bonded with a spread of mustard and secure it with the full force of my shimmering trap.

I cannot yet feel the texture, wet with salty juices, or breathe in the moist steam. It's fading warmth is a distant pleasure, held at bay by table manners and gilded cutlery. There beyond the mountain of meat lie other plates of destruction. In this shared feast, food is tailored to suit our appetites, like little battles in the same war. For me, the vegetable is ornate decoration, a single pea would suffice. This is the taste of family.

Sarah, to my left, is enjoying a very different kind of meal. She eats with my brother's girlfriend in a foreign land at the other end of the table, over there with the beans. She eats only vegetables. My father is held prisoner on either side, a tenuous supply line is fed down the middle of the table to him: seconds? Kevin sits on the line, and presides



Figure 01.002: Granny (Christine Charles)

over the division of the table. Today, he has decided to enjoy his food with the rest of us; this is a special meal for him too. Sarah and Missy have conspired to enjoy *President's Choice* Veggii Pad Thai, the sort that comes from a waxy black freezer box and takes only 10 minutes to heat up in the microwave, the sort of mush that Granny can't quite comprehend. I can't comprehend why they don't eat from the black plastic warming trays supplied. Sarah, being the only girl in the family, found her sisters in high school. They all stopped shaving, stopped eating meat, and together they fought off the boys. This was her identity, unique and quite separate from the family. We have been trying to win her back ever since. For a brief phase she was a pescatarian, which was a small concession. At family meals she now finds company and conversation in my brother's girlfriend, the seventh guest. But without her the table is unbalanced.

Within the warm folds of my cheek the soggy deluge and rejected seed from the truncated bean is not appreciated. It has a diluting effect, separating the flavors. In the next mouthful there will be no bean. I return the knife and rest my fork just over the edge of my plate. Today it was worth the drive.

"Mmmm, what do you think granny?"

"Dee – lic – ious" she mouths out between chews, a little drip on her chin. This is why I sit with her.

The meat made available for such occasions has been dwindling over the years. There are just seconds, it is hardly a feast. Although my

mother protests at my inquiries, many days later, when I continue to press her, she looks it up in her records, and indeed, the amount of meat purchased, divided by the number of people feeding, results in a meat per person ration that shows a consistent pattern of decline. This is the language of my family. I think there is a zero point, ten to fifteen years off when this will all collapse on itself, and she will retire.

My mother has always kept lists, whether of meals, Christmas or birthday presents. She boasts of having painstakingly recorded every dollar she and my father have spent since they were married. It is as if she is prepared to do it all again, better the second time around, and this is her middle class survival manual.

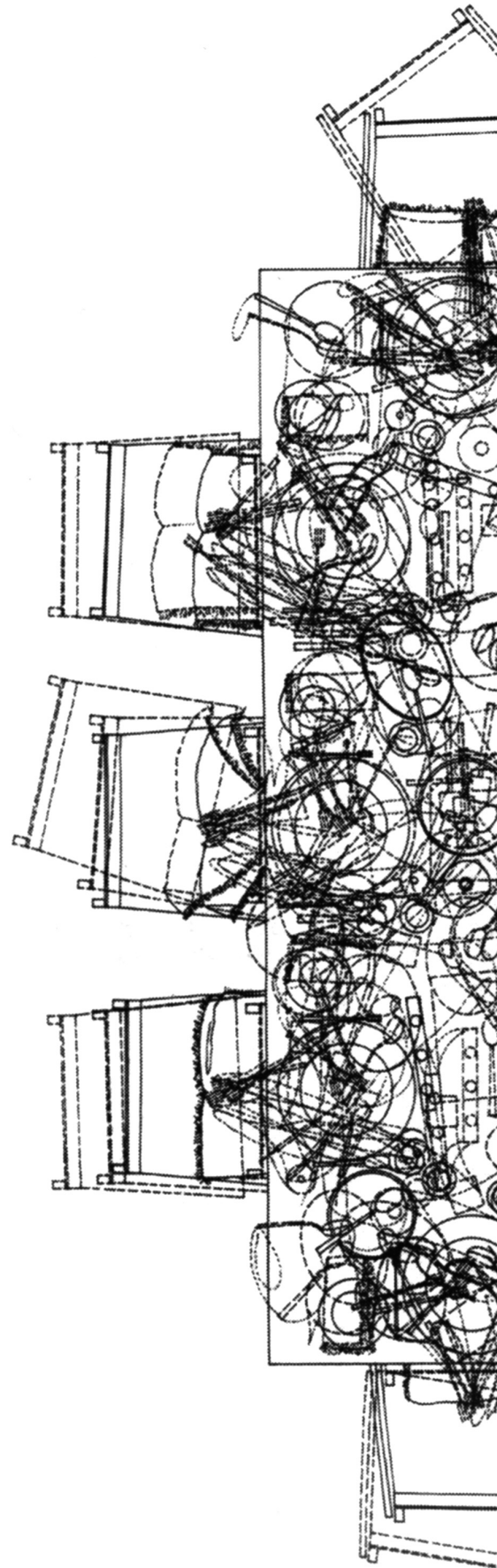
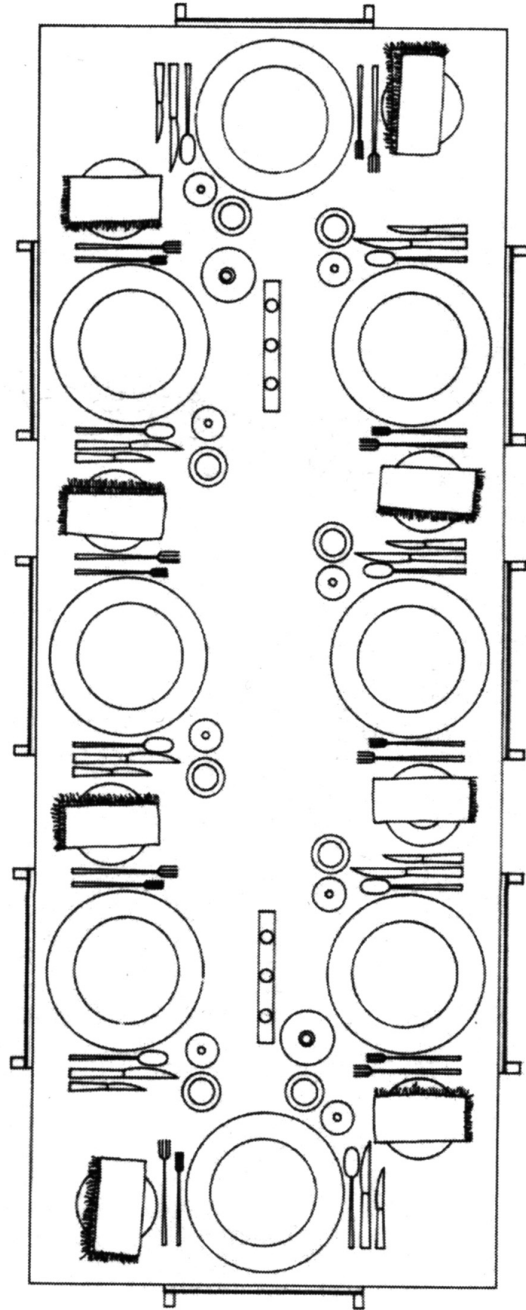
The meal we just enjoyed was originally prepared years ago. Cooking times and quantities were recorded and carefully scrutinized in advance; there was nothing I could do to help, save for showing up at the appropriate time and pressing play. There is no longer joy in preparation, just the mechanical task of putting food on the table, the mechanical taste of putting it in our mouths.

"Ohhhhh Granny, can I try your ring on?"

Suddenly, my sister cuts across me, nearly severing granny's fingers. I don't believe in desert, it's the meal that fills me up. This is where I usually leave the table; this is when the serious feast begins, not for food, but for Granny's belongings after she's gone. Granny kindly obliges. "I'll have to get it resized," she says. "Ohhhh to have this one, and the one you've given to mom" Sarah begins

her feast. How lucky she feels now to be the only girl. This could pay off. "You should give mom the grandfather clock too, I have nowhere to put it just yet". Even before the plates are cleared, and the candle is extinguished, the looting has begun. Kevin and Missy retreat, their life together is now elsewhere. My father waits for his coffee, and Mom and I clear the plates. "How about I cook next time?" I ask. She has seen me host twenty or thirty people, friends packed together around the table, days of cooking. She seem reluctant. But it is not about the food.

Following Pages – Figure 01.003: The Lay of the Table



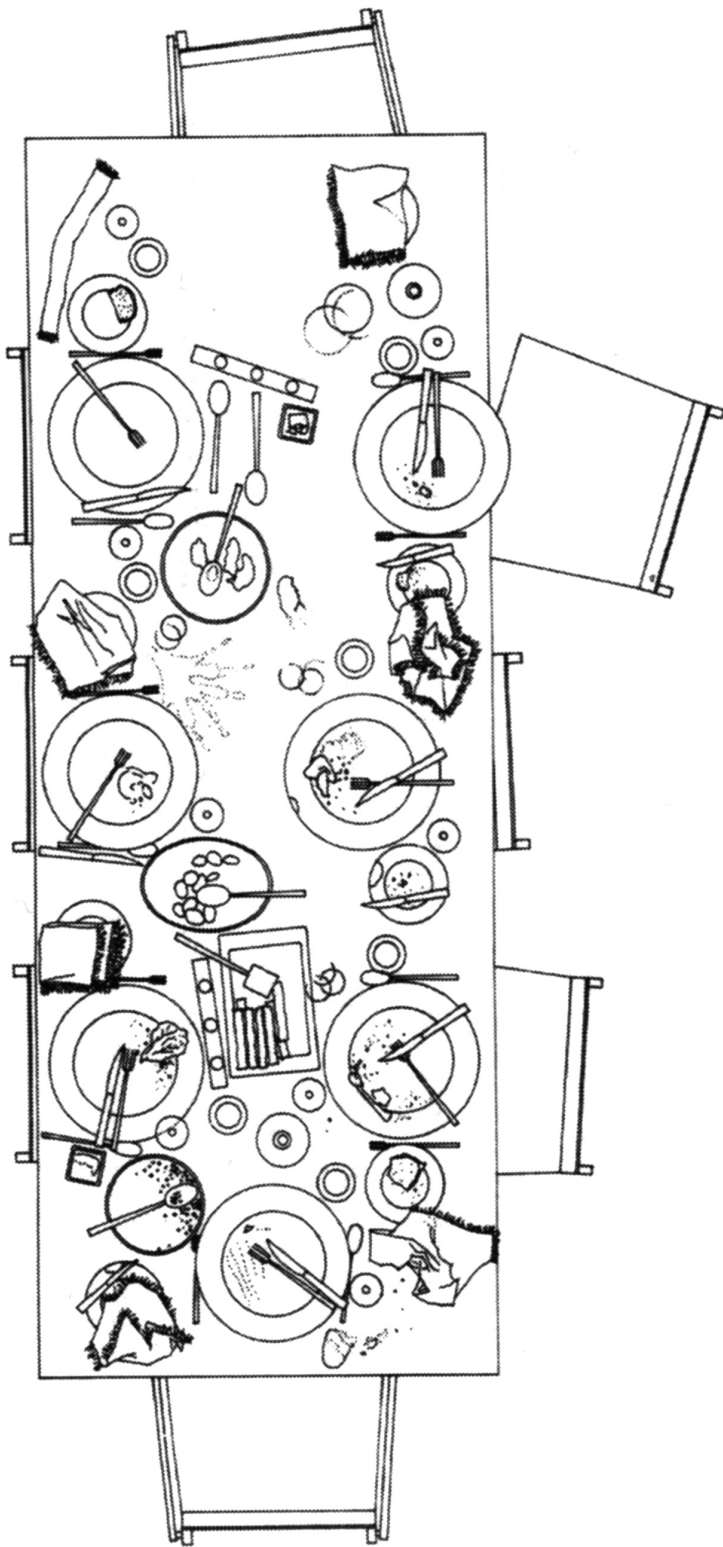
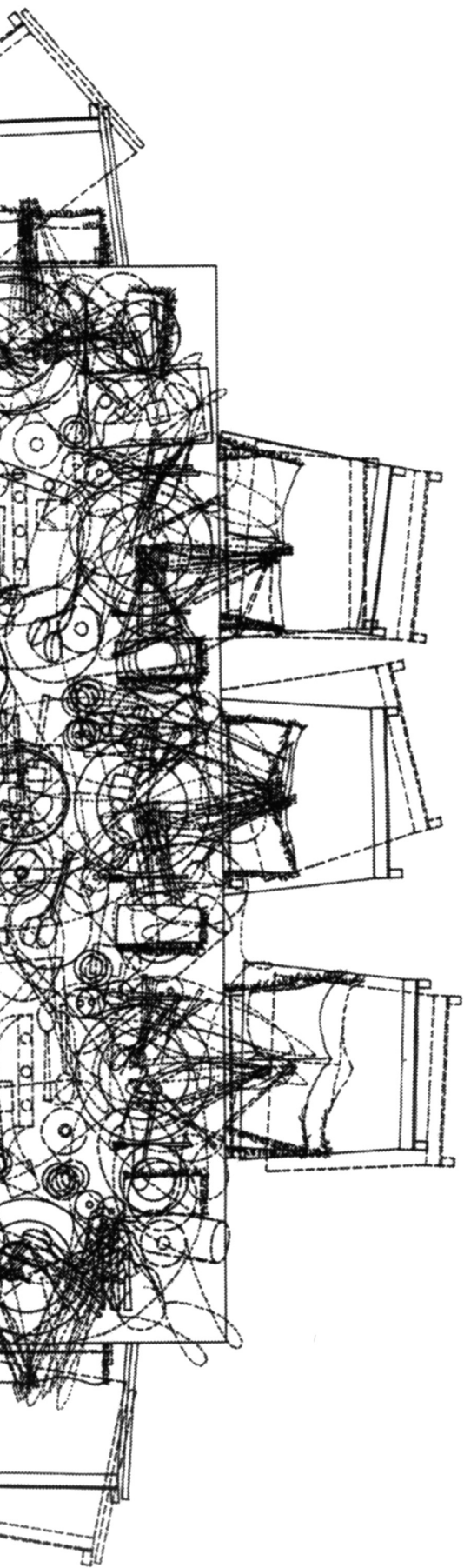




Figure 02.001: NO NAME Products at NO FRILLS

Two

Too Good to Be True

Loblaws famous in-house brand *President's Choice* was created in the 1980s by branding consultant Don Watt and made famous by Dave Nichol, then president of Loblaw International Merchants. Designed to represent the best products in a number of food categories, the *President's Choice* Decadent Chocolate Chip Cookie, for instance, implied that Nichol had tested every comparable cookie on the market and deemed this one the best¹. (Figure 02.002) *Too Good to be True*, a catchphrase used to describe a group of products featured in the in-house publication *The Insider's Report*, is at once a flattering reflection of my discerning tastes and an expression of my cunning hunting skills. It conspicuously announces my burgeoning social status, alludes to a well-stocked pantry and health conscious attitude, and attests also to a sophisticated sense of irony. *President's Choice* products arrived on the scene and immediately demanded attention with their packaging: glossy, larger than life portrayals of food, airbrushed to perfection, complete with alluring fictional histories.

How did we get here? The early pioneering of this re-branding strategy came about in 1978, when Don Watt & Associates was hired by Galen Weston to reinvigorate the Loblaws brand. Watt began the *NO NAME / NO FRILLS* branding and retail strategy that introduced the first sixteen *NO NAME* products: Bleach, fabric softener, liquid detergent, baby shampoo, apple and tomato juice, raspberry and strawberry jam, white vinegar, powdered skim milk, ground coffee, tea bags, garbage bags, powdered detergent, toilet paper, serviettes, and my family's favorite - *NO NAME* Peanut Butter (Figure 03.002), all of which debuted in uniform, easily recognizable yellow and black packaging.

With the provocative suggestion that removing a brand label could allow for lower prices, these were the opening shots in a war between national and in-house brands for market dominance, and the first assault on the mythological and symbolic legacy of the foods we consume. *NO NAME*

products wanted to be seen as a fresh alternative to the old way of buying in bulk. Yellow is the most offensive color to the human eye, and the stylish, easy to read Helvetica font shouted out from the shelves. In its first offering, *NO NAME* products could be found competing in all the major categories of the supermarket inventory, staples found in every Canadian home. *NO NAME* toyed with brand loyalty, trusted quality, and family favorites. It replaced them with bold and abstract new promises such as "value for money," "performance," and "reliability" – cars, appliances, and now food.

Gone were any romantic historical references on a designer label; the trusted (now not to be trusted) brand of your mother, even the legacy or nostalgia implied by a country of origin, none of this mattered anymore - we were told.

NO NAME products were clearly distinguishable from competing products at the level of the brand, but they were of the same type. So many food experiences forced through a yellow and black sieve. Together they made a collection of products, a family of complimentary and related goods, like a nativity scene, a matching set of luggage, or 6 seasons of DVDs. They were collectables – how far would any individual consumer go to collect the whole set? The answer is not clear, but what is evident is that any *NO NAME* product had the capacity to initiate the consumer into this new circle of goods. Once you had purchased one yellow product, be it peanut putter, aluminum foil, or diapers, you were in. As long as the product did not disappoint, there was no reason why one wouldn't continue to buy yellow.

Existing behind this new uniform veneer of yellow plastic were the social cycles of candle-lit birthdays, summer barbecues, new babies, the elderly, the sharing of family recipes and secret ingredients. The success of the *NO NAME* brand ushered in a new shopping experience, erasing all memories attached to the brand names used by generations of women. *NO NAME* replaced

memories with savings.

As a result, stores became more casual and all unnecessary decorations and designs were pared back to the bare shelf (Figure 02.001). Loblaw's and Watt then went on to develop a never-before seen class of retail supermarket, in which empty boxes were piled up front, shelves were taller and longer and vegetables were displayed atop palletized stands. The new supermarket was christened *NO FRILLS* and it stocked 70 percent *NO NAME* products, ready for business just when the recession of 1985 hit.

For a time, my own family subscribed to the *NO NAME / NO FRILLS* ideology. To this day, a socio-archeological expedition into my family's chest freezers will discover a load of bright yellow plastic tubs beneath a fuzzy dusting of freezer burn. The original *NO NAME* contents were consumed long ago, their memories long forgotten. These containers now hold the most recent batch of chili (dating from the late 80s), spaghetti or apple sauce (from 1994 and 1999 respectively), or other foods frozen in a perpetual cryogenic state. In this way the economy of *NO NAME* has accumulated some cultural baggage – a memory shared with my siblings and friends. In fact, anyone from Southwestern Ontario living in the 1970s in a middle-class neighbourhood will instantly recognize these yellow containers. Choosing *NO NAME* marked you as someone who prized value for money, who would do away with brand name advertising for the sake of taste.

Following the success of these *NO NAME* products came *President's Choice*, and the success of a salesman - Dave Nichol, the front-man, innovator, spokes model, taste-tester, and ultimate arbiter of good taste, leading the way for his buying (eating) public. Designed by Watt, *The Insider's Report*, a garishly illustrated weekly in-store food tabloid, allowed Dave to keep us informed and up to date with his life, his travels, and the latest trends in food. He marched us through the buying seasons, enriching and extending our palates until

we all began to graduate from the *NO NAME* family and out of the 90s recession, trading up to the *President's Choice* family of foods, which provided us with a host of exotic new ingredients, flavours, and products from around the globe, with accompanying recipes. How else would anyone know how to fully appreciate and exploit the Walnut Oil he brought us back from California, or understand the cultural origins of 'Texmati' rice², or the technical achievement that was the PC Decadent Chocolate Double Fudge Christmas Crackle Ice Cream?

The Insider's Report was a propaganda machine that we all fell for. It announced exciting new products every week, the most successful of which – the Decadent Chocolate Chip Cookie – has gone down in industry history as “The Ultimate Retail Weapon” (Figure 02.002). But Dave's greatest achievement came in the summer of 1989, when he sought to convert the conservative taste buds of his customer. “Aware of the Growing Popularity of Thai restaurants in Canada...” claimed the report. Dave Nichol responded with two sauces: the first was named “Memories of Szechwan Spicy Peanut Satay Sauce,” and the second “Memories of Thailand Fiery Chili Pepper Sauce.” Both sauces were modeled after sauces he had actually tasted in Thailand, while he stole the name of the latter from a fancy Chinese-fusion restaurant in London, England—Ken Lo's *Memories of China*³. Introduced in the June issue of *Insider's Report*, Dave, ever concerned about our delicate and discerning palates, reassured us one last time: “We've toned down the traditional Thai ‘heat’ just a bit.”

The runaway success of the Thai and Peanut sauces brought about a flood of other exotic internationally-themed sauces. By the mid 1990s, as if recovering from amnesia, there was a Niagara of “Memories.”

“Memories of ... ”:

Gilroy Creamy Roasted Garlic Sauce
Sonoma Sundried Dried Tomato Sauce



Figure 02.002: *The Ultimate Retail Weapon*

Jaipur Curry and Passion Fruit Sauce
 Montego Bay Jerk Marinade
 Fuji Shiitake Mushroom Sauce
 Canton Plum Sauce
 Winnipeg Cream Cheese
 Savannah Hot Red Pepper Jelly
 Hong Kong Spicy Black Bean and Garlic Sauce
 Cedar Springs Sage-and-Onion Stuffing
 Sardinia Pasta Sauce
 Ancient Damascus Sauce
 San Francisco Lemon Ginger Sauce
 Napoli Pasta Sauce
 Lyon raisin mustard sauce
 Reggiano and Cheddar Cheese Sauces
 Kobe 2-Minute Marinade
 Dad's Grill, Maple, Apple & Beer Sauce



Figure 02.003: Dave Nichol with Georgie-Girl

Loblaws [re] produced hundreds of “Memories of...” sauces and food products in all, and on their 10th anniversary, published a cookbook to help us use them.

Dave acquired cult status in many circles, and helped me, as a young college student excused from my mother’s table, gain my first few extra pounds and taught me the delicate art of how to woo girls (who were often vegetarians). Sure, we had our ups and downs: the impossible-to-find instant sell-out success of Dave Nichol Beer, the poor quality PC Taco Kit. But we, his buying public, stood by him. In April 1992, when Dave’s beloved French bulldog Georgie-Girl was put to sleep, (figure 02.003), the Insider’s Report cover was given over to a full colour tribute and coupons for dog food. **Memories of Georgie Girl.**

1 Anne Kingston give a thorough and detailed history of Dave Nichol in her the book - “The Edible Man : Dave Nichol, President’s Choice & the making of popular taste”. Toronto: MacFarlane Walter & Ross, 1994. Additional information on the history of Loblaws and No Frills can also be found at www.loblaws.ca

2 Over 30 years old, Texmati is a cross between basmati and the american long grane rice, the first Basmati to be successfully grown in North America.

3 Ken Lo founded “Ken Lo’s Memories of China” resturant and Chinese Cooking School in Kensinton in London UK. It is a high end and tasefull resturant, with an extensive menu of ‘westernized’ chinese dishes.





Three Two Photographs

One afternoon, I passed by a Loblaws store. I went in, walked to the international foods section, and bought all of the bottles of *PC* “Memories Of...” sauces. I bought the whole set. Returning home, I emptied my fridge (and cleaned it), then arranged the fifteen bottles in a double row on the middle shelf, and took a photo. (Figure 03.001) Here, and available in every grocery store, is a sort of DIY international food fair.

Strangely, these were not my memories. They were someone else’s, or better, what someone would expect. ‘*PC* Expectations of...’ I have been to France, through most of Europe, and parts of Asia. I have spent a considerable amount of time in my mother’s kitchen but these sauces did not look like, or taste like my memories. My mother’s kitchen was not a neat arrangement of peppers and onions on a country harvest table. Her kitchen was quite different. Her kitchen was alphabetically arranged spices, endless Russian doll stacks of Tupperware, lids, and pots and pans. It was two fridges, old dresser drawers full of non-perishables, shelves of food, and two chest freezers full of reused *NO NAME* containers. After a phone call and a long car ride, I took possession of these containers and I took a second photograph (Figure 03.002).

Smooth and Homogenized.

Both of these photographs describe Toronto. Toronto is the table of the world, encompassing hundreds of cuisines, operating to deliver a distinctive flavour of ethnicity, an essence, a ‘Memory’. At the same time, Toronto’s memories are shaped by a repetitive urban fabric of reusable containers.



Previous Pages – Figure 03.001: *PC* Memories Of Sauces
Facing – Figure 03.002: *NO NAME* Smooth and Homogonized
Following Pages – Figure 04.001 Chinatown Festival, Spadina Ave.,
looking south 2006







Four

Recording A City

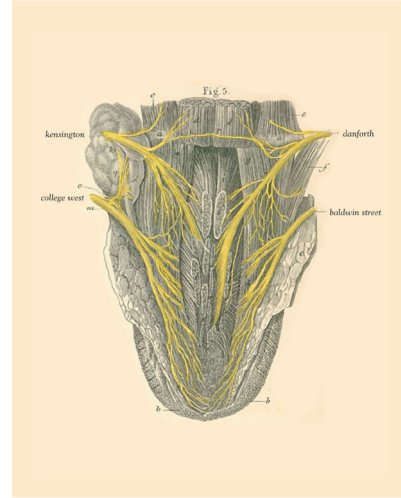
In the early spring of 2005, I began mapping the tastes of Toronto. Toronto is a city that prides itself on offering thousands of traditional, ethnic, ethnic-themed, ethnic mash-up and ethnic inspired restaurants. Toronto affords the opportunity to sample all of the tastes of the world.

I assembled my early ideas into a short pithy and provocative proposal, which I titled "Metro Tastes: Taste and Taboo in Toronto" (Figure 04.002). I was proposing to map Toronto's ethnic, and more recently ethnic-themed neighbourhoods, and further, the associated restaurants and foods that are to be found by any adventurous inter-city tourist to the far corners of the city.

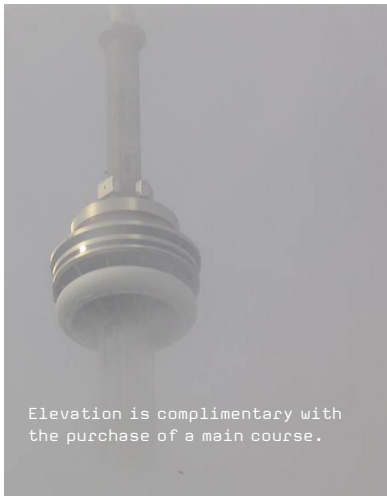
To me, Toronto is a city that, despite its claims to diversity, celebrates the 'normal' in its everyday urban life. I was attracted to the way these different ethnicities engaged the urban matrix of normality and appeared under the great multicultural banner.

As a diverse city, Toronto¹ is unique when compared to other cities of its size, with over 200 distinct ethnic populations, 140 languages and dialects, and even more second-generation cross-pollination. Toronto's ethnic neighbourhoods: Little Italy on College Street, Corso Italia on St. Clair, Greektown on the Danforth, pan-Asian offerings in the downtown Chinatown at the intersection of Spadina and Dundas (one of six Toronto Chinatowns), and the Indian Bazaar on Gerrard are all urban culinary destinations branded by ethnicity.

Toronto's urban ethnic brands are further reinforced by local business associations who promote neighbourhood interests and who style the urban streetscape. Street signs, lampposts, benches, street furniture, and seasonal celebratory decorations further reinforce the branding theme. At various times throughout the year (summer mainly) streets are closed and made pedestrian. (figure 04.001). Food stalls and ethnic-themed venues and stages populate the streets. Some are festivals with food; others are more overtly directed at our stomachs – Taste of the Danforth, Taste of Little Italy, Masala Mendi Massi (*MMM*) on Gerrard



"Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, aggressively promoted the idea of a national culture constituted by its cultural pluralism. He argued that: "Uniformity is neither desirable nor possible in a country the size of Canada. We should not even be able to agree upon the kind of Canadian to choose as a model, let alone persuade most people to emulate it." artist Ken Lum



"The issue of taste emerges as an important element only when there is enough to eat, when the effects of hunger and problems of supply and distribution have been overcome."
Marsden, S. (1982) All Manners of Food.

"Social groups develop standards of taste, and they stand as themselves vary and have different force. All societies have food preferences and taboos - the Jews and bacon, the British and insects, the Chinese and dairy products."

"Christmas dinner runs through a whole sequence of natural and highly processed foods, using different cooking methods which symbolize some sort of social unity and a proper stance towards nature and social life... Food encodes social arrangements such as hierarchy, exclusion and social boundaries, so that drinks may be shared with relative strangers, but meals are seen as family affairs, so one crosses a social boundary if one receives an invitation to eat."
Mary Douglas

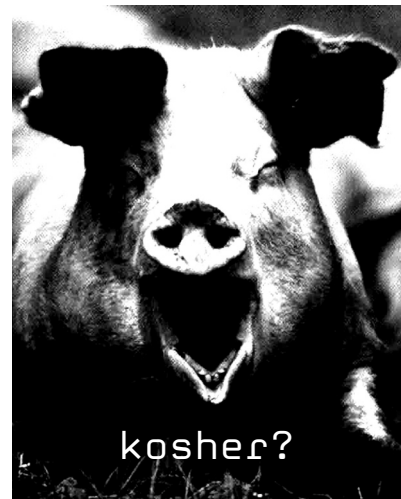


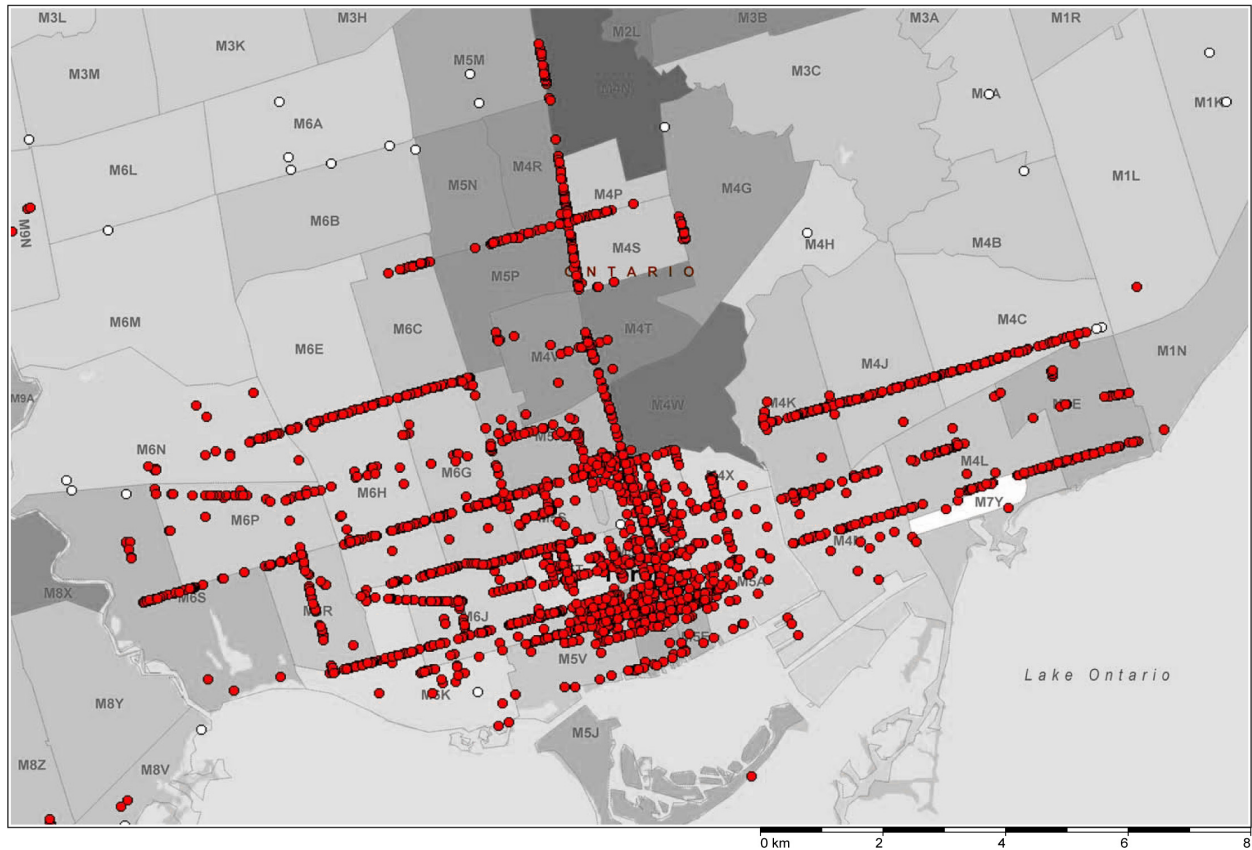
Mary Douglas believes that food can be treated as a code, and the message that it encodes are messages about social events and about social relations like hierarchy inclusion and exclusion boundaries and transaction across boundaries.

Proposition

To create an inventory of toronto's cultural identities.
To map territories and supply networks.
To access toronto's cultural and social codes, starting with our stomachs.

TASTE: response to chemical stimulation that enables an organism to detect flavors. In man and most vertebrate animals, taste is produced by the stimulation by various substances of the taste buds on the mucous membrane of the tongue. A taste bud consists of about 20 long, slender cells; a tiny hair projects from each cell to the surface of the tongue through a tiny pore. The taste cells contain the endings of nerve fibers that convey impulses to the taste center in the brain. Only four fundamental tastes, or combinations of these, can be detected by the buds: sweet, sour, salt, and bitter. Only the buds most sensitive to salty flavor are scattered evenly over the tongue. Sweet-sensitive taste buds are concentrated on the tip of the tongue, sour/bitter are detected at the sides of the tongue, and bitter/bitter at the back. The close relationship of taste to smell gives the impression that a greater variety of tastes exists. This is also why an impairment of smell, as during a cold, may impair the feeling that the sense of taste is diminished.





Street. This is all in addition to the numerous weekly food markets that appear in parking lots and parks across the city.

While ethnic neighbourhoods are easy to spot, I wanted a baseline resource from which to build from. I stumbled upon a curious source. In January 2001, the City of Toronto launched its DineSafe program. The first of its kind in Canada, this program required all food retailers to post colour coded signs that display the results of the most recent health inspection (Figure 04.004). Green-pass, Yellow-conditional, and Red-fail for a violation, requiring that the premises be closed until the problem is fixed.

The DineSafe website² had over 28,000 entries divided into 4 main subgroups (with subcategories); Food Processors (6), Food Retailers (10), Food Storage Distributors (2), and Public Food Service (11). I extracted the information from the website and organized it in Microsoft Excel. Once I had the

data organized and could isolate the addresses, I fed this information into Microsoft MapPoint, a crude program that displayed 2001 Canada Census Data overtop the DineSafe records. (Figure 04.003). With it, I was able to generate maps that highlight the location of each DineSafe entry. While not interesting in themselves, the maps did confirm one thing. The figure produced by the hundreds of little red dots produced a sort of Ideogram of the city of Toronto. The density of dots, inscribed on the major urban streets trace the major thoroughfares of Yonge Street, Eglinton, St. Clair, Bloor, College, Dundas, and Queen. The map is a less detailed version of the TTC's own map of service.

This map was useful in that it did not highlight unique neighbourhoods. There is an almost continuous flow from one neighbourhood into the next, interrupted as Toronto is by deep ravines. As an underlay, the city is relatively constant and there is a predictable 'normal' state. It is very different

Above - 04.003: The red dots locate restaurants as identified and listed on the city's DINESAFE website. These dots are overlaid on a map of the city where residential household incomes from the 2001 national census are indicated as a grey tone from dark-high income, to light-low income by postal code.



from the post card image of Toronto, or photographs of the skyline. I wondered where the diversity was.

One afternoon I took a short walk west on Queen Street with my camera. I started to take portraits of every restaurant facade. It was immediately clear that this was worth exploring further. Japanese sushi, Indian curries, American Southwestern Tex-Mex, Caribbean Jerk, Italian-American pizza, Thai, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, it was all there in the signage and window displays of the restaurants.

The photographs I began taking contained the upper signage of the restaurants. The text was strong, and the window displays and menus at eye level were clear. Unfortunately, most of the lower facade and features of the interiors were masked. Cars, streetcars, baby buggies and pedestrians obscured the full reading of the facade. I found myself waiting, as I often do, for the frame to clear and the scene become static. Perhaps it is the architect, the artist, or the introvert in me.

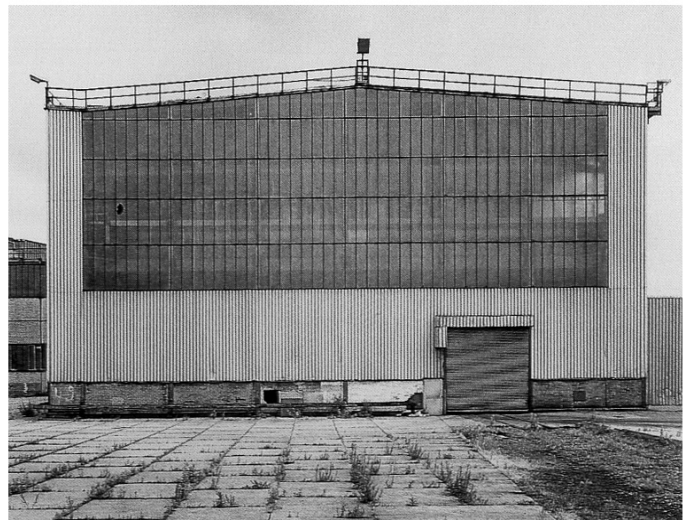
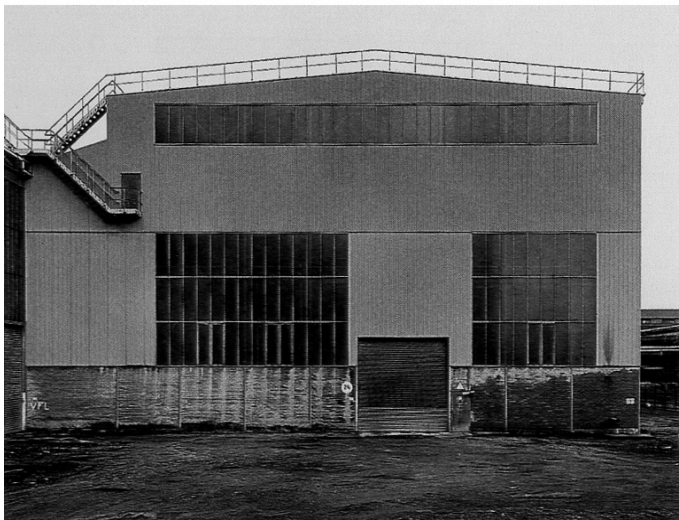
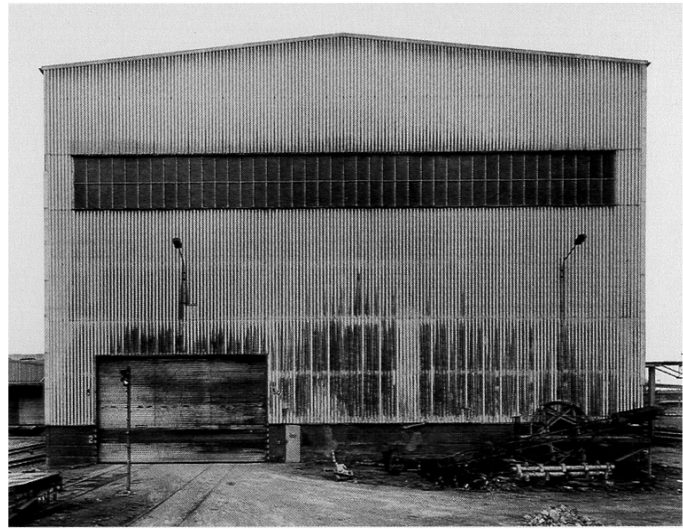
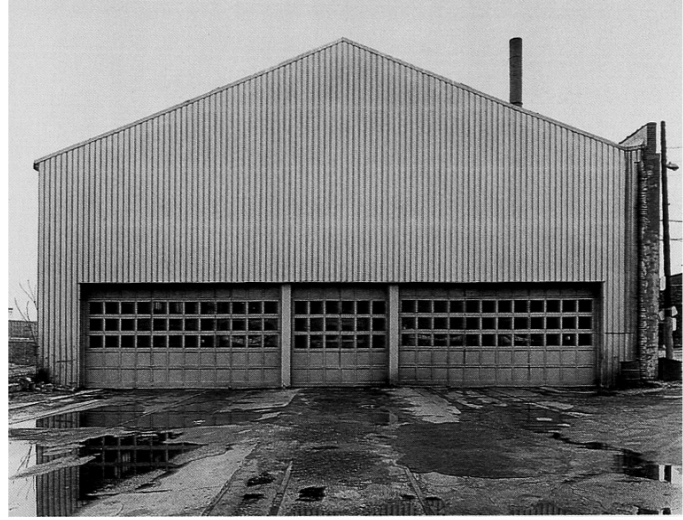
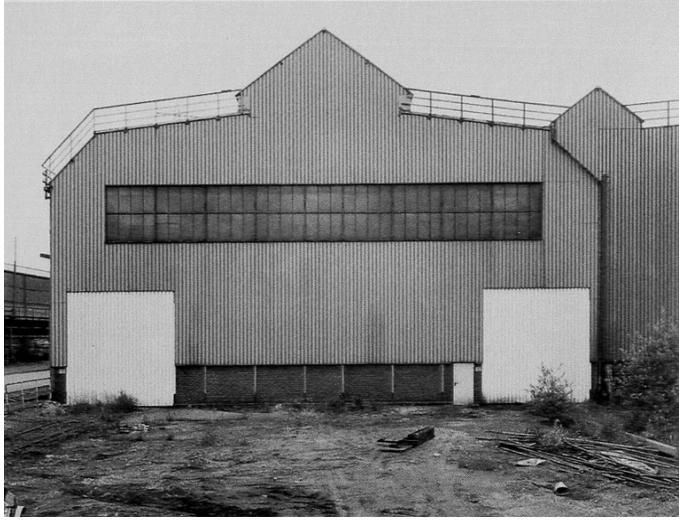
The next morning I woke up at 5 am, before the sun, when the city is calm and the streets are empty. There are few cars driving on the road, even fewer people, and for the most part on-street parking is not allowed until 9am. In the early morning I could quickly walk a street, cross where I needed to, and take photographs from the middle of the street. I could get the photos I wanted in my own time. This proved to be the best time to photograph large numbers of restaurants.

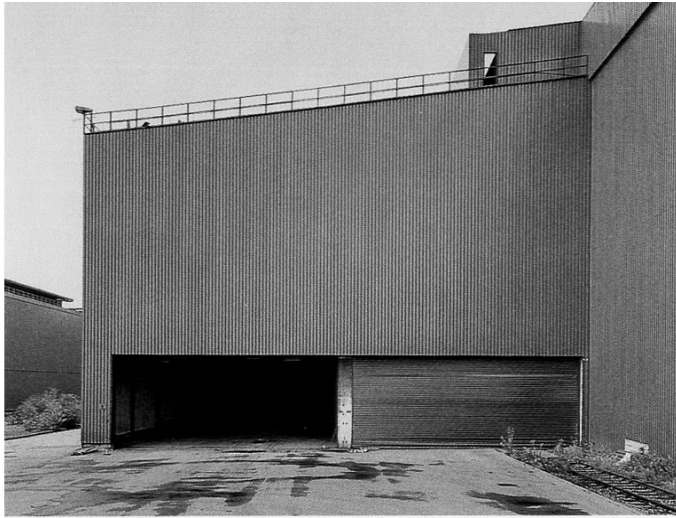
Working in the early morning meant that most restaurants were closed. Like an empty stage with the working lights turned on, I was able to frame the facades and record the essentials: the type, the expressions, the presentation, the scale and ambition of the enterprise, and subtle details of character. Without vehicle or pedestrian traffic these were honest and unglamorous photographs. The building shell and the restaurant as 'object' were revealed in greater detail.

Photographing restaurants in the early morning, first by foot, then by bicycle, then by car revealed a vast and empty city. I began to see the restaurants as building blocks of the city's urban environment.

I did not record how the restaurants function as social venues – places where people come to eat, to celebrate, connect with friends, and then leave. Nor did I record how the restaurants function as economic engines that sustain families or provide jobs for people. I did consider staging a series of photographs with staff lined up in rows in front of the restaurant, like old photographs taken of factory workers in front of the plant, but I would only have been able to make a few of these photographs.

As building blocks of the city, I was attracted to the repetition and similarity of the restaurants. A sameness that stood in contrast to the alleged variety, or diversity of their culinary offerings.



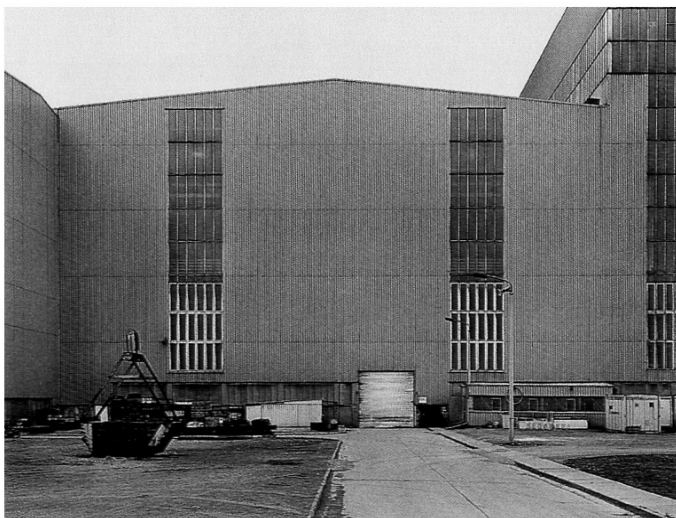


Five Precedent

As I walked the streets of Toronto, photographing the restaurants of the city one by one, I was acutely aware of the immediate contemporary reference for my work - the serial documentary photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher. Their documentary style of photography - when thought of as following in the traditions of August Sander and Eugene Atget - form the background and bookends for my photographs. All three collections of work can be understood more as typological studies; the photographic editing of society, and less as artful photography. (Although in the Becher's case I would argue that their conscious aesthetic style and serial presentation are, in fact, artful.)

Since the early fifties, the Bechers¹ have dedicated themselves completely to documentary photography, first in their native Germany, then in Europe, and finally America. Their stringent body of work records the individual objects of industrial architecture: the head frames, gasometers, water towers, cooling towers, blast furnaces, lime kilns, and grain elevators. These are structures and industrial installations whose sole purpose is the extraction, mechanical and chemical transformation and storage of raw materials (Figure 05.001). The finished products of steel and energy are not the subjects of their work. Rigorously composed and shot, their photographs, now numbering in the thousands, are always taken from the same frontal perspective, always in the same light conditions, and always seemingly artificial; void of context and evidence of life. The Bechers were interested in the generic and anonymous, in the way things were the same but not identical.

I knew that, whether I liked it or not, the work of the Bechers provided a context to my own photographic work. My ambition was similar, but not identical - to systematically record generic objects. In my case, I was recording



Facing - Figure 05.001: *Industrial Facades*, Bernd and Hilla Becker

shop front-type restaurants in Toronto, and, like the Bechers, who documented the types of industrial architecture and infrastructure that had provided the base materials of the modern city, my interest was in the foundation architecture upon which exoticism had been cast. In contrast to the pre-condition of our industrialized and constructed environments in the Becher's work, my photographs seek to document the places of consumption that define the post-modern city; urban dine-in and take away restaurants offering world cuisine, daily specials, and functioning in the everyday lives of modern, urban Torontonians.

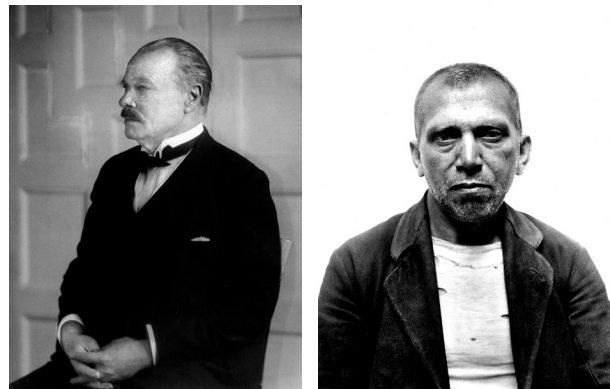
As a rule, the Bechers photograph all objects from the front, or in rare cases at a corner, and always from an elevated camera position. The mechanics of their images (depth of field, exposure, focal length) and the equipment used are all subjective decisions. Their subjects are always shot against a dull grey sky in diffuse light to highlight the details; they change nothing about the images. Their photographic technique and resulting 'style' produces an incredibly strict consistency throughout their work.

Without thinking, I also adopted a set of rules when photographing. I stood a set distance from the façades, used a fixed focal length, and always photographed straight on. I was able to achieve consistent lighting by always photographing in the same hours of the day, under similar skies, and further achieved uniformity by processing the colour images to black and white. Like the Bechers, I have changed nothing in the photographs. Yet my technique also differs from theirs.

One major difference is scale. In their work, structures of different actual heights are always presented as equal (Figure 05.002: Water Towers). And therefore any consistency of a human or vegetative scale is suppressed and the resulting collection of images is disorientating. In my photographs and image processing, I have deliberately included elements of context, the baseline of curb and sidewalk, street furnishings,



Figure 05.002: Water Towers, Bernd and Hilla Becher



Above Left – Figure 05.003: The Duke, August Sanders

Above Right - Figure 05.004: Inmate at an Asylum, August Sanders

restaurant signage and beyond, along with any menus, advertisements, or reviews taped to the doors and windows. I have only deviated from the consistent framing of the façade when the restaurant is exceptionally wide, (double-wides), or when signage or other significant features project beyond the first storey and a half.

The Bechers routinely display images side by side, which are separated by oceans and decades as they photographed throughout their 40 years of work. Although they appear to be frozen in time, or at the very least abandoned, this reading is inaccurate, and perhaps deliberately misleading. Most of the industrial installations were still in use at the time the photographs are taken, and some have even yet to be commissioned for use. Their photographic technique and presentation style masked all narrative or emotional readings. My images are, by contrast, limited to one city, taken over two summers and are situated deliberately in a human context which allows for a greater reading of the character of the city. At the very least they highlight a social landscape over an industrial one.

Free to pick and choose their subjects, the Bechers traveled extensively to find the best ones. They have created the “impression of working with as much objectivity and neutrality as possible”². I did not give myself the freedom to pick and choose. I set out to document every restaurant in the city of Toronto, and record the complete series³.

Beyond the obvious stylistic similarities between my photographs and the Becher’s, the ambition of my work to record every restaurant façade is perhaps more closely aligned with the photographs of August Sander⁴.

Working in 1920s in post World War 1 Cologne, Sander’s great photographic project, entitled *Man of the 20th Century*, was no less than a visual record of the different types, occupations, social classes and family structures of his era. (Figures 05.003 The Duke, and 05.004 Inmate at an Asylum). Sander began by photographing the petit-bourgeoisie, and early in his work began to

identify a number of archetypes, or typologies.

Like the typological work of the Bechers, his individual images alone were quite powerful, however the true expression of the image only emerges when it is placed alongside others. This method allows for an almost scientific comparative study and sets out to establish classifications.

Sander’s images were organized in a portfolio of archetypes. Seven main groupings (“The Farmers”, “The Craftsmen”, “The Women”, “The Artist”, “The Estates”, “The Metropolis”, and the “Outcasts”) around 45 portfolios, each containing 12 images. This collection totaled more than 600 images, and Sander’s greater archive is of over 30,000 negatives.

In “Little History of Photography” (1931), Walter Benjamin describes Sander’s photography as playing a revolutionary role akin to psychoanalysis, by making what he calls an “optical unconscious” accessible to consciousness, thus further extending our knowledge of the world. Of Sander’s portraits, Benjamin wrote:

“Sudden shifts of power such are now overdue in our society can make the ability to read facial types a matter of vital importance. Whether one is of the Left or the Right, one will have to get used to being looked at in terms of one’s provenance. And one will have to look at others the same way. Sander’s work is more than a picture book. It is a training manual”⁵.

A training manual for multicultural cities.

In my own photographs, I have resisted assembling similar portfolios by type. While my photographs could be broken down into further sub-classification, I prefer to read the images in their entirety rather than focus on type, architecture, nationality, or ingredient. In this way, I prefer the serial reading of the Becher’s work and the establishment of the restaurant as a typology. While Sander’s technique was less rigorous, and

certainly more causal, his images like those of the Becher's, become more powerful when placed along side others.

Sander had an empathetic eye for human expression, and photographed his subjects without props or elaborate staging. These were individual portraits of German people that together offer a greater portrait of German society. Always, there is someone looking at the camera. I find a similarity between Sander's portraits, his faces looking into the camera, and the consciously outward facing, frontage and signage of the restaurant that can be read as an expression of some voice.

I am taking portraits of individual restaurants, but when placed together, they become a portrait of a city.

Beyond the Becher's rigorous documentation of industry, and Sander's social encyclopedia of

pre-Nazi Germany, there is also the body of work produced by Eugene Atget⁶, who, fumbling around at dawn with large equipment, photographed melancholy and sadness on the ever-changing streets of early 20th century Paris. (Figure 05.005)

Less systematic, and not organized by type, his photographs were sometimes taken straight on, and at other times off to one side. Some are singularly focused on a shop and group of individuals, and others incorporate whole streetscapes with surrounding buildings crowding the frame. Atget allowed himself fewer formal restrictions, yet was able to create a photographic survey of the historic visual culture of Paris's buildings and members of his surrounding social class.

In Atget I recognize something in myself which the Beckers and Sander are explicitly not: the errant flaneur.

1 For information on the Bechers is consulted [Typologies, Cruel and Tender](#),

2 *ibid*.

3 I began photographing in the early spring of 2005, and worked through that summer, and again into 2006. From various anecdotal sources, I understand there to be some 15,000 restaurants in the 'city'. Unfortunately the boundaries of the 'city' are not fixed and I stopped photographing by 2007. I did not capture every restaurant, however within the core, and those street roughly bounded by Lawrence Ave in the north, Jane Street in the West, and Woodbine in the East. The only restaurants omitted were extensive chain eateries (Pizza Pizza, Macdonald's, Subway), intensely generic and repetitive sites, which present the same menu and face throughout the city. Also not included are the private restaurants,

dining halls, and social clubs that provide meals for the social elite, and whose addresses and brands are not displayed on the street. The restaurants that I did photograph are individual and unique, and cannot be grouped by corporate brand, or conglomerate outfit. I cannot fully defend my self-imposed lack of freedom to choose one façade over another. I do have favorites, and preferences, however I just wanted all of them, to collect the whole set.

4 For information on August Sander I consulted [August Sander, Cruel and Tender](#)

5 Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography", in Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Michael W. Jennings, ed., 4 vols. (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003, vol. 2, 520

6 For information on Eugene Atget I consulted [Paris : Eugene Atget 1857-1927](#)



Above – Figure 05,005: A Shop in Paris 1911 (25 rue Charlemagne 4^e arr.) by Eugene Atget, 1911.



Figure o6.001: The Anywhere Bistro and Patio, Toronto

Tonality & Technique

I used the availability of morning light to my advantage. Day after day, when the sky on the horizon was clear, I was able to photograph.

The diffuse light at this hour of the morning evenly illuminates the façade; any shadow or highlight is shallow and crosses the image at a near horizontal. Depth is suppressed and a consistency is achieved on both sides of the street. If it were possible to photograph throughout the day, a magical day when the city is empty, the changing angle of the sun and cast shadows would add unique character to the facades as the shadows track the movement of the sun. This was something I was hoping to avoid.

As I began reviewing large sets of images, I found that the character of light changes quickly and dramatically in the first few hours of the day. Like a sunset but in reverse. Also day-to-day, the character of the sunrise would change depending on the cloud cover. Some days were orange and yellow, other days were grey and blue. I was using a digital camera, shooting mostly RAW images, which allowed me the greatest control over the colour temperature and white balance. On the computer I could adjust the colour photographs, however after several tries to even out the hues, I decided to process all of the images to black and white. By subtly adjusting the contribution of the RED GREEN and BLUE within the images I was able to correct for the colour of the sun, and achieve greater consistency across the set of images. Like the CCD sensor that captures the visual image data in digital cameras, the human eye also contains RGB receptors. By adjusting the RGB values I was also able to control the contrast of the image and highlight the signage, window graphics, and surface textures. This was a subjective judgment on my part. Each image was compared to the ideal image somewhere in my head. Most of the images are processed to be heavy red or heavy green. Yellow is used extensively in both main signage and applied vinyl lettering on the front windows. I used dodge

and burn techniques early on to further highlight what appeared on the surface of the glass, and to highlight faint images from behind the glass, but I later abandoned the technique as the volume of images began to daily overtake that which was possible to process.

With this black and white process, I was able to highlight the subtle details of each façade, setting the individual character of each one against the ever growing and relentless consistency of the images.

The colour, contrast, and saturation were all adjusted, and I did correct for lens distortions, as an architectural photographer would, to correct the lines of perspective. Each image has been centered and cropped. I did not change or alter the proportions of the buildings, omit details or remove people. Some of the larger facades, those in the double wide series, were stitched together, two photographs assembled side by side into one image. Those photographs have been cut and overlapped to achieve a single image. Often the buildings on the opposite side of the street prevented me from standing back any farther to get the full double-width into one frame.

All of the photographs are taken straight on. I would adjust my position right or left a few steps to try and mask my own reflection behind a window mullion or sign. Some days I am clearly better at it than others. I included the first lane of traffic, the curb and sidewalk in the lower ¼ of the frame. The upper windows and second floor details are in the top ¼ of the frame; leaving the middle two center ¼s for the restaurant sign and façade. (Figure 06.002)

I did not try and capture a continuous streetscape, bridging the gaps between restaurants and providing a full inventory of all shop fronts and addresses. My one attempt involved a video camera on a tripod extended up through the sunroof of a car as I drove in the center lane of Bloor Street, from the 427 highway all the way to the Scarborough bluffs. That technique was better

served for documenting the relentlessly banal and consistent suburban landscape of Toronto – the home to so many new immigrants. There are two shots of about 20 minutes each. The first is a dizzying drive around the courts and cul-de-sacs near highway 400 and highway 7. The second is more orderly march of houses under construction on the opposite side of the 400.

While ethnic-themed neighbourhoods live on today, the monoculture of their restaurants has given way to the smorgasbord of ethnic restaurant types that are repeated throughout the city. Little Italy still holds true as a destination, but slowly the French bistro, Thai, Lebanese, and Sushi restaurants have crept in and succeeded in offering the full spectrum of Toronto's most popular kitchens. I would hope, that with the increased interest and attention paid to food, that Little Italy might once again thrive and that regional cuisines from all over Italy would take over from the world buffet.

Facing Page – Figure 06.002: Illustration showing the steps involved in creating each image. *top* the raw images as shot by the camera, *middle* the process of alignment and correction, and *lower the* conversion to a greyscale image



The Typological Study

In the early 1900s, the pioneering photographer William James began extensively recording the City of Toronto “in all its complexities and contradictions”¹. Over three decades, he amassed a collection of some 10,000 images, now housed as a special collection in the City of Toronto Archives. James photographed the city, its citizens, and the rapid expansion of the significant public works of the day as well as the workers, who were participants in this great civic endeavor. James’s work also included a series of photographs taken in 1929 of every urban street corner the length of Yonge Street, from the shore of Lake Ontario up into farmland north of the city, at Lawrence Avenue. (Figures 07.002 and 07.003).

Like Atget, James was an observer, a witness to change whose photographs have historical significance, they document what we have since lost. Both photographers record the day-to-day life of a vibrant and changing city, though for Atget, it was with sympathy for what was being lost, and for James it was with enthusiasm for what was being created. My photographs depict a moment in time, and may eventually be viewed from a privileged vantage point somewhere in the future. But my work is more comparable to the work of Sander, whose portraits of individuals create a catalogue of all possible types of people. My photographs too are portraits, portraits of culture in the city, ethnic cuisine dressed down.

The uniformity in format is necessary in order to emphasize the diversity, multi-multi variety, and variation of each image. Diversity, as cultural state, brings together cultures, races and people into a panoramic classification. The cultural mosaic.

The subtle shifts in form and style, set into almost uniformly repetitive shopfronts, provides the greatest vantage point from which to view the particularistic multiculturalism at work, the presentation of a foreign national cuisine, set of against one another, and the constant background and template of Toronto’s grid.

The photographs are not arranged by street, nor are they set out by cuisine, ethnicity, price or quality. This is not a guide to eating out in the city. This set of images (Figures 08.001 – 08.392) is arranged in four sections.

First is a series of 12 photographs that best represent the typical urban form of Toronto’s restaurants. This establishes the baseline type, the shop-front. Second is the bulk of the collection arranged in columns of four, which through their repetition, highlight the subtle variations in orientation and expression. Third, are the street corners, unique restaurants at the beginning or end of a block. The fourth and last selection is the double-wides, restaurants which over time have expanded to consume two shop-fronts.

Facing Above - Figure 07.001: the first Loblaws Store at 511 Yonge Street opened in 1919, photographed by William James.

Facing Bottom Left - Figure 07.002: SW Corner of Edward St. and Yonge St., 1929?

Facing Bottom Right - Figure 07.003: NW Corner of St. Clair Ave. and Yonge St., 1929?

¹ Christopher Hume’s introduction to [William James’ Toronto Views](#), page 10.





Figures 08.001 | 08.002





Figures 08.003 | 08.004









Figures 08.007 | 08.008



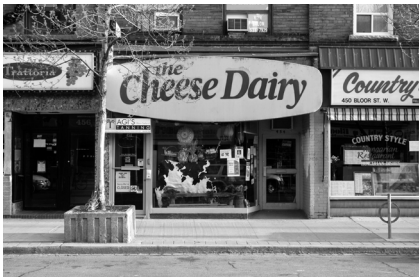


Figures 08.009 | 08.010

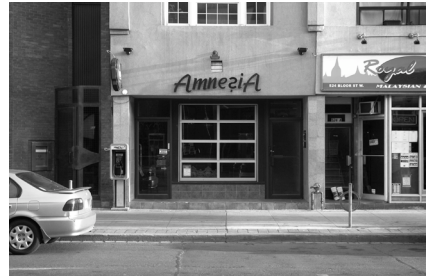
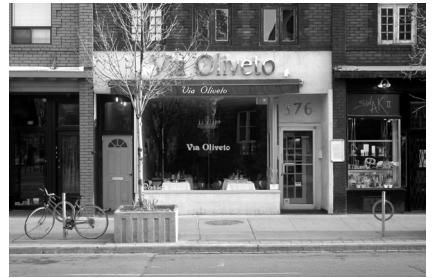


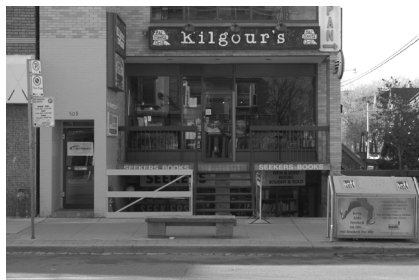
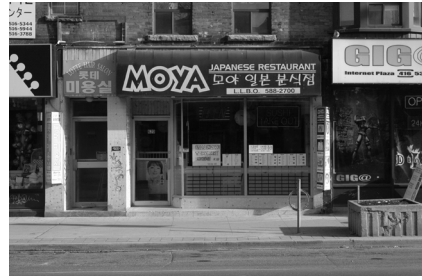




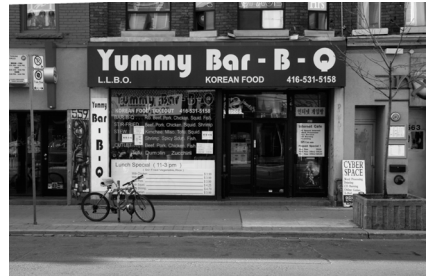
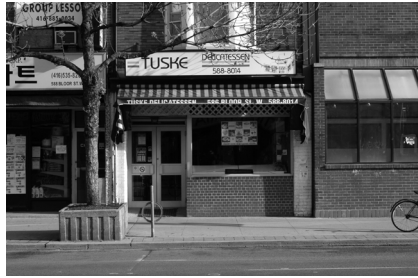


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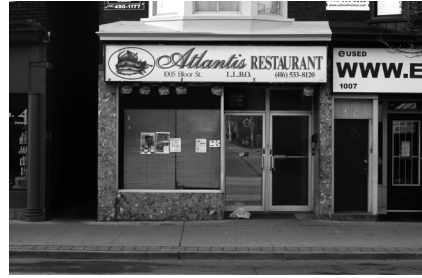
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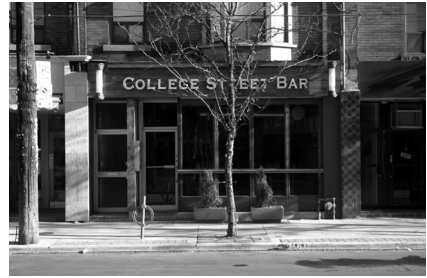
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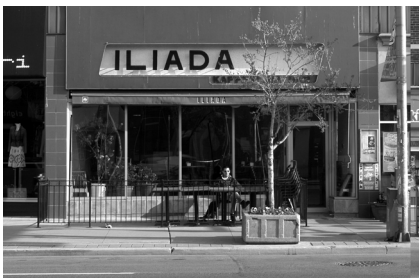
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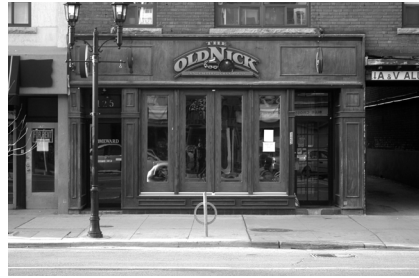
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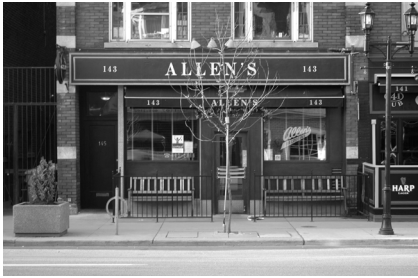


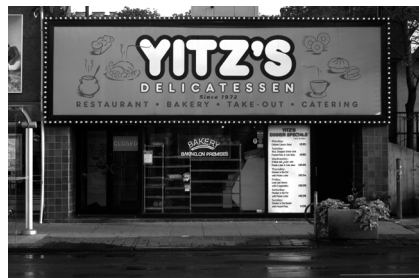
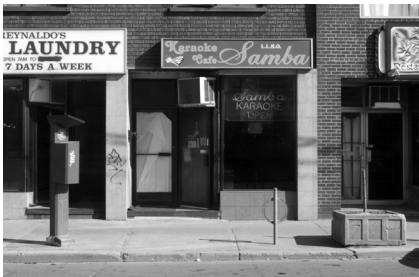
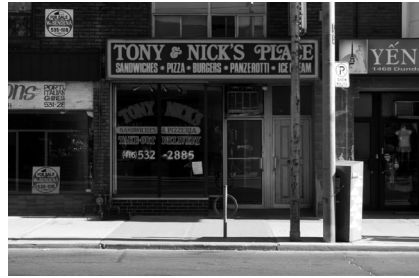
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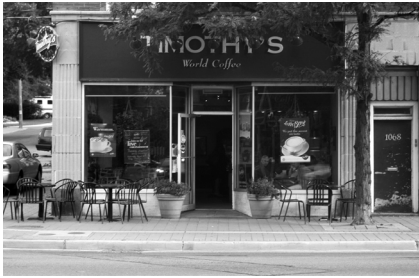
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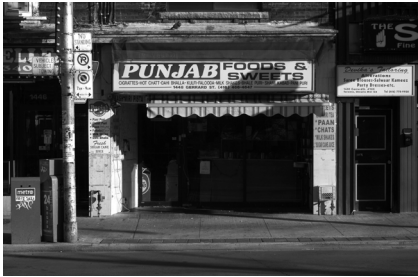
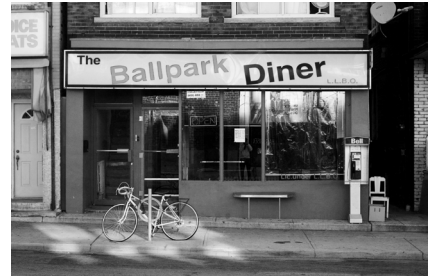


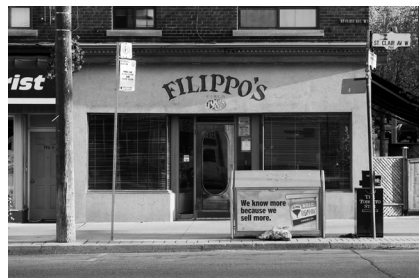
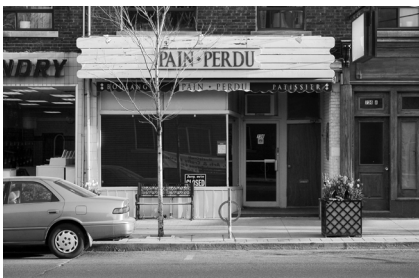
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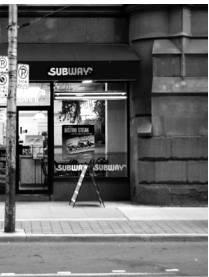
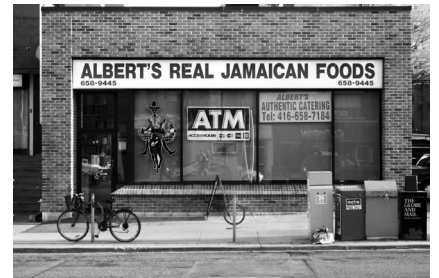


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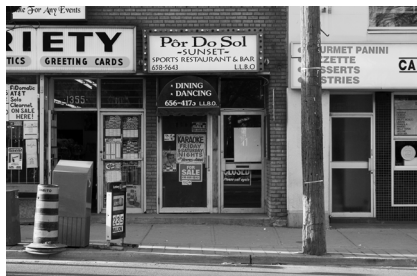


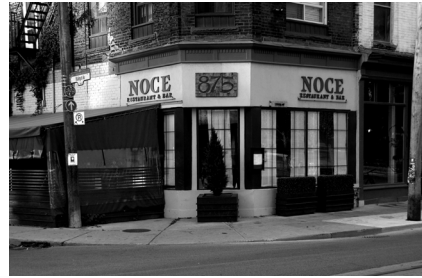
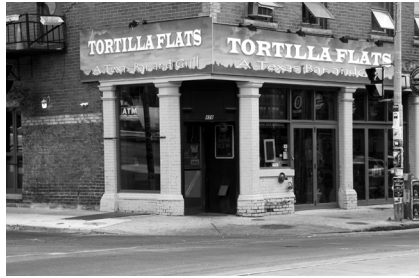
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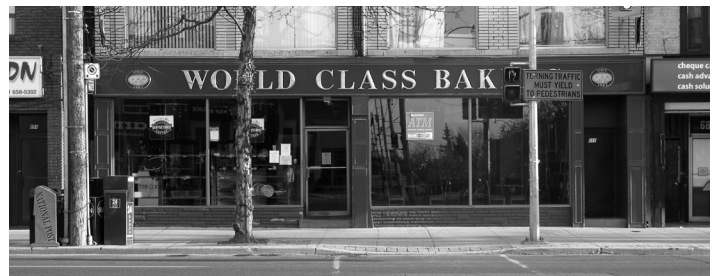
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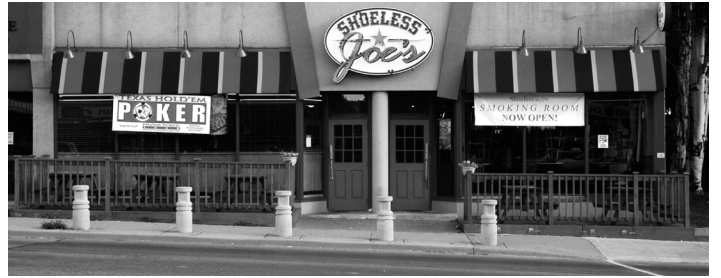


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SOUVENIRS DE[®] THAÏLANDE 350 mL
**SAUCE TRÈS PIQUANTE
 AUX PIMENTS DU CHILI**

Nutrition Facts
Valeur nutritive

Per 2 tbsp (30 mL)
 pour 2 c. à soupe (30 mL)

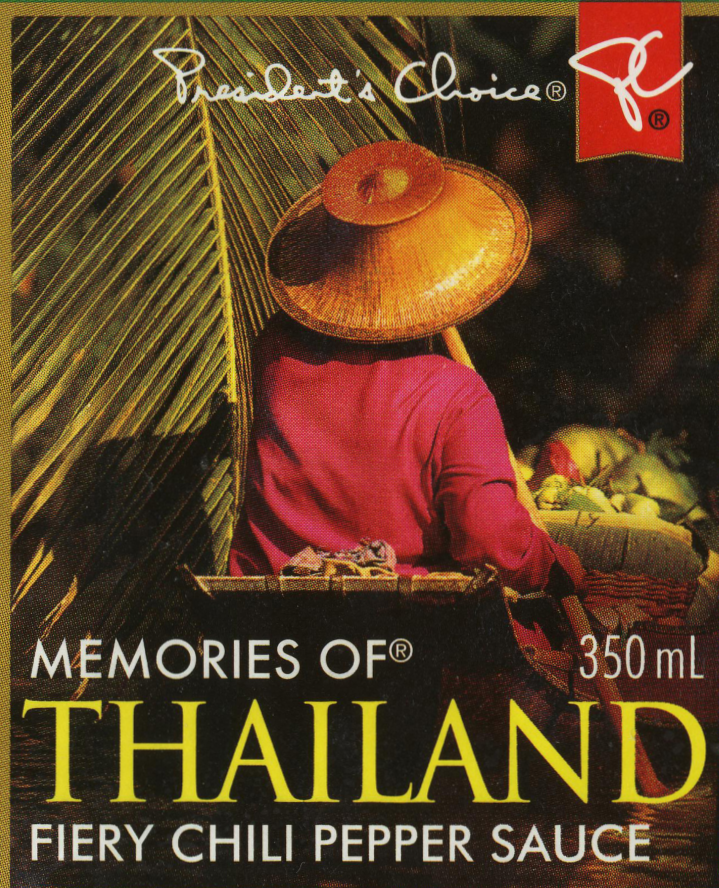
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 100	
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Sodium / Sodium 600 mg	25 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 24 g	8 %
Sugars / Sucres 20 g	
Protein / Protéines 0 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	2 %

Not a significant source of saturates, trans, cholesterol, fibre, vitamin C, calcium or iron.
 Source négligeable de saturés, trans, cholestérol, fibres, vitamine C, calcium et fer.

**REFRIGERATE AFTER OPENING.
 RÉFRIGÉRER UNE FOIS OUVERT.**

Figure 09,001: *President's Choice* "Memories of Thailand Fiery Chili Pepper Sauce" product label

President's Choice®



MEMORIES OF® 350 mL
THAILAND
FIERY CHILI PEPPER SAUCE

**AN AUTHENTIC SWEET AND SPICY THAI SAUCE, PERFECT FOR DIPPING CHICKEN, SPRING ROLLS AND SHRIMP.
UNE SAUCE THAÏLANDAISE AUTHENTIQUE, À LA FOIS SUCRÉE ET PIQUANTE, IDÉALE COMME TREMPETTE POUR LE POULET, LES ROULEAUX PRINTANIER ET LES CREVETTES.**

INGREDIENTS: SUGAR, WATER, HOT CHILI PEPPERS, WHITE VINEGAR, MODIFIED CORN STARCH, SALT, GARLIC, DEHYDRATED GARLIC, SPICES, ACETIC ACID, CITRIC ACID, CALCIUM CHLORIDE.

INGRÉDIENTS : SUCRE, EAU, PIMENTS DU CHILI FORTS, VINAIGRE BLANC, AMIDON DE MAÏS MODIFIÉ, SEL, AIL, AIL DÉSHYDRATÉ, ÉPICES, ACIDE ACÉTIQUE, ACIDE CITRIQUE, CHLORURE DE CALCIUM.

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**HOT
PIQUANTE**



**NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVOURS OR COLOURS
SANS ARÔMES NI COLORANTS ARTIFICIELS**



0 60383 09786 8



Above - Figure 09.002: port side, Damnoen Suduak 2008
Opposite - Figure 09.003: starboard side, Damnoen Suduak 2008



Reading Labels

Like the Michelin Guide or Fodor's Travel, Loblaw's *PC Sauces* feature iconic cover images employed as signs. Instantly recognizable for their ethnicity, or as an exotic destination, these images will offend neither the adventurous housewife nor the world traveler.

PC "Memories of Thailand Fiery Chili Pepper Sauce" was one of the first two sauces introduced in 1989 by Dave Nichol and Loblaw's. The image on the green foil paper appears on either side of the short wide-mouthed bottle, first with the name printed in English, then again in French. (Figure 15.001) It is the image of a woman wearing a traditional woven reed sun hat, paddling a small fruit-laden wooden boat, passing close to a droopy palm branch. The image is postcard perfect, depicting either a staged version of the old floating markets in Bangkok or the remaining present-day markets at Damnoen Saduak (figures 08.002 and 08.003) in the western province of Ratchaburi. Either way, the floating markets no longer function in the daily lives of Thais and are set up to operate as safe, institutionalized tourist destinations.

The sauce itself is sweet and syrupy. The 'traditional Thai heat' described by Dave Nichol and the 'fire' implied by the name would hardly register on the Scoville scale¹. The sauce has a bright flavour to compliment floating ruby and orange chili flakes, but fails to induce, for me, a Madeleine moment. Its closest flavour reference is the pan-Asian dipping sauce that accompanies any deep fried or fresh spring roll ordered as an appetizer in Chinatown, Scarborough, Mississauga or anywhere else in the westernized world. This sauce and flavour is not unique to Thailand. It is a memory created with sugar, white vinegar, and corn starch, a tripartite common to all processed dressings, fillings, spreads and dipping sauces that do not require xanthan gum to emulsify oil and water. Despite the chilies and garlic in the sauce, the starch and gum added to all of the *PC* memories as thickening agents are an obvious nod to Western standards of spice, flavour, and viscosity. Missing

from this fabricated sauce is the key ingredient of all great Thai food, used not for thickening, bulk, or preserving, but for that deep rich and pungent flavour, however subtle, that separates mock from authentic – fish sauce. Originating in China and made from small salted and fermented fish, it takes just a drop of this stuff to impart a deep and rich salty flavour that sounds a background note, a quiet baritone drone that sets the stage for other flavours to enter.

An enigmatically smiling Thai woman is represented on the main graphic panel of the only other Thai President's Choice Memories of...sauce, *PC* "Memories of Bangkok Spicy Soya Sesame Sauce" (Figure 09.006). She is holding an ornate umbrella, wearing a golden headpiece, too much makeup, and is lit with harsh studio lighting. She is awash in the familiar yellow colour – the royal colour of his majesty Phumiphon Adunyadet, King of Thailand. It is a pleasing ethnic image, the frozen smile of hospitality and generosity. Not the typical sly subtle and mysterious grin, but a glossy lipped and toothy smile.

The name Bangkok means "village of hog plum". It is in fact the name of the small village where the capital was founded. In Thai, the ceremonial city name is extraordinarily long: *Krung Thep Maha Nakorn Amorn Ratanakosindra Mahindrayudhya Mahadilokpop Nopratana Rajdhani Burirom Udom Rajanivet Mahastran Amorn Pimarn Avatarn Satit Sakkatuttiya Vishnukarm Prasit*. This translates as 'City of Angels, the Great City, the Residence of the Emerald Buddha, the Impregnable City of the God Indra, the Grand Capital of the World Endowed with Nine Precious Gems, the Happy City, Abounding in Grand Palaces that Resemble the Heavenly Abode of the Incarnate God, a City Dedicated to Indra, Built by Vishnu'. Mercifully, the name is usually abbreviated to Krung Thep (City of Angels)

Described as "a tangy, spicy sauce, perfect for marinating and basting beef and chicken, or as a bold, rich tasting dressing for salads," Memories of



Figure 09.004: Woman in a Boat, Damnoen Saduak 2008



Figure 09.005: detail of Figure 09.001

Following Pages – Figure 09.006: *President's Choice* Memories of Bangkok spicy soya sesame sauce label

Bangkok is an all-purpose sauce, to be used hot or cold. The sauce, made of sesame and soy, is a safe blend of Asian ingredients, most of which are commonly found in Chinese and Japanese sushi restaurants. This is a pan-Asian blended sauce. While sesame and soy are used sparingly in a few Thai dishes, they are rarely used in combination. Sesame is exclusively used as a desert ingredient. I've tried this sauce with beef, chicken, and as a salad dressing. It is a sharp acidic flavour, full of vinegar, which aids in marinating meats. It works as a marinade, however as a salad dressing it falls flat. For those so inclined, this sauce would have a place in the kitchen, but its connection to Bangkok should be dropped. Perhaps this is why this sauce quietly disappeared from store shelves 2007. Perhaps it was an underperforming product, a political coup, or just an ambiguous sauce that did not live up to the promise of the more successful *PC* Shrimp Phad Thai, Thai Mango Chicken, Thai Green Curry Shrimp or the *NO NAME* Thai Chicken frozen entrées.

I have spent over three months travelling in Thailand, from 2005 to 2008, sampling the country's many regional tastes and flavours. In culinary terms, the country breaks down into four distinct kitchens: The North, the Northeast, the central plains around Bangkok and Southern Thailand. The North, the most important, is centered on Thailand's cultural capital of Chiang Mai, a mountainous region flavoured with influences from Myanmar, India, Laos and China. Here, elephants are trained for 5 years before they begin work in agriculture. It is where Khao Neow, a sweet sticky rice is steamed (not boiled as in the south) and prepared dishes often feature a mince of beetles as a flavour base. My favorite northern dish is Khao Soi, a smooth and subtle coconut based yellow curry soup with thin smooth egg noodles and (typically) Gai - chicken, (Khao Soi Gai.) The dish is probably an amalgam of Burmese/Shan and Chinese-Muslim cooking styles. The word khao soi, which doesn't really mean anything in Thai, probably comes from



Nutrition Facts
Valeur nutritive

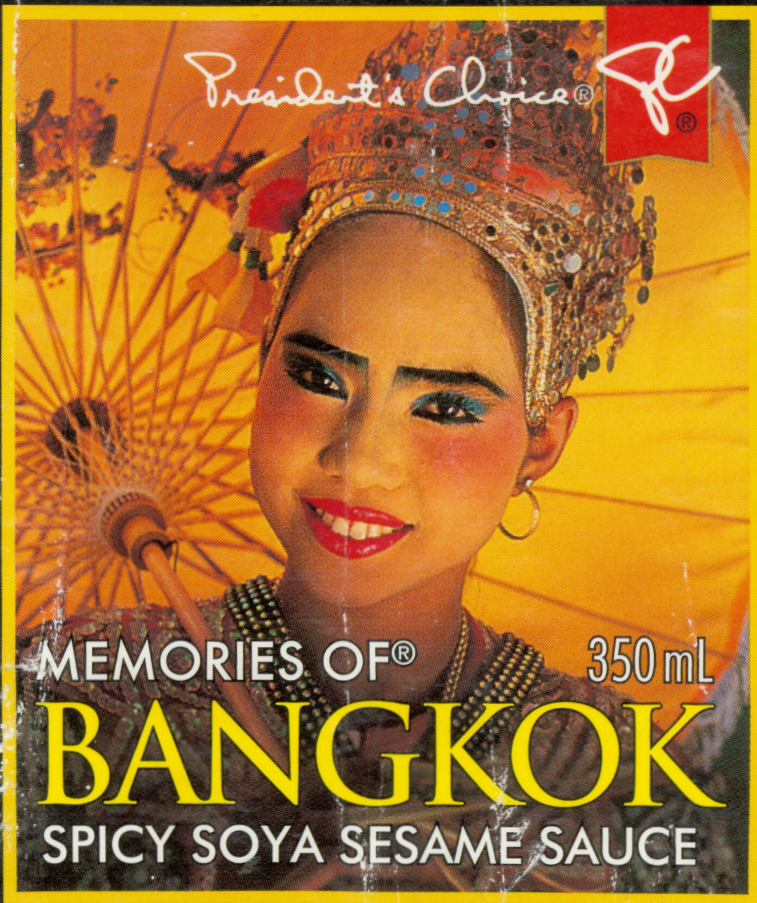
Per 1 tbsp (15 mL)
 pour 1 c. à soupe (15 mL)

Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 30	
Fat / Lipides 1 g	2 %
Sodium / Sodium 160 mg	7 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 5 g	2 %
Sugars / Sucres 4 g	
Protein / Protéines 0 g	
Iron / Fer	2 %

Not a significant source of saturates, trans, cholesterol, fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C or calcium.

Source négligeable de saturés, trans, cholestérol, fibres, vitamine A, vitamine C et calcium.

**REFRIGERATE AFTER OPENING.
 RÉFRIGÉRER UNE FOIS OUVERT.**



A TANGY, SPICY SAUCE, PERFECT FOR MARINATING AND BASTING BEEF AND CHICKEN, OR AS A BOLD, RICH-TASTING DRESSING FOR SALADS.

UNE SAUCE AIGRE ET PIQUANTE, IDÉALE POUR MARINER ET POUR BADIGEONNER LE BŒUF ET LE POULET OU COMME VINAIGRETTE SAVOUREUSE ET RELEVÉE.

INGREDIENTS: RICE WINE VINEGAR, SUGAR, SOY SAUCE (WATER, WHEAT, SOYBEANS, SALT), CANOLA OIL, GINGER, DEHYDRATED GARLIC, SESAME OIL, SPICE, XANTHAN GUM.

INGRÉDIENTS : VINAIGRE DE VIN DE RIZ, SUCRE, SAUCE SOYA (EAU, BLÉ, FÈVES DE SOYA, SEL), HUILE DE CANOLA, GINGEMBRE, AIL DÉSHYDRATÉ, HUILE DE SÉSAME, ÉPICES, GOMME XANTHANE.

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Figure 08.008: *Hoi Tod Chao Lae Thong Lor* ("Fried Seafood with Egg - Thong Lor"), one of Bangkok best Phad Thai restaurants near the Thong Lor BTS Station

the Burmese khauk-hswe, which means simply “noodles”. Unlike most Thai noodle dishes, the broth is made with coconut milk, a popular ingredient in Burma kitchens. It seems likely that the Cin Haw - Muslim Chinese traders from Yunnan brought khauk-hswe to Thailand, and added the spices they were so fond of. Regardless of its origins, or whether made with chicken or beef – it is one of northern Thailand’s vernacular dishes, served hot, and sprinkled with roasted beetles. There are many Thai restaurants in Toronto that list Khao Soi (also Kao Soy), however none are based on a yellow coconut broth.

The central plains around Bangkok is home to Phad Thai, and is where I had the best example of this dish that I have ever tasted. *Hoi Tod Chao Lae Thong Lor* (Fried Seafood with Egg Thong Lor) is said to be the-best pad thai in Bangkok, and the varied customers sitting down to eat, or lined up to take food away attest to that. The simplicity of ingredients is something that can be achieved in Canada, or elsewhere in the world. Here the phad thai noodles, garlic shoots, and bean sprouts are fried and served enclosed in an envelope of egg, topped with grilled shrimp heads, with eyes and legs still attached. Best enjoyed with a generous sprinkling of crushed chilies, fish sauce, and a dash of palm sugar, there is no need for a sweet tamarind and sugar gravy smothering soft noodles, rubber chicken and bland tofu, all drizzled with a squeeze of lime. (Figure 09.008 pad thai) And this excellent dish is found in a shack, set up in an alley leading away from the street to a flower shop, (Figure 09.007) near the Thong Lor BTS station in central Bangkok.

Soi food, which means street food, is where you experience how Thai food is meant to taste, with fresh local ingredients, simply made. It is the inexpensive food sold on the streets and sidewalks of urban Thailand, mainly enjoyed by locals. Meals are quickly prepared, inexpensive, fresh and carried off in plastic bags (Figures 09.009, 09.010, 09.011) or enjoyed al fresco, dining at the curb. The wide



Figure 09.008: Authentic Shrimp Pad Thai in an egg pillow at *Hoi Tod Chao Lae Thong Lor*



Figure 09.009: Take-away soi food on the street of Bangkok



Above - Figure 09.010: soi food take-away in Bangkok

Facing - Figure 09.011: soi food dinning at the curb in Bangkok



varieties of dishes are remarkably simple, efficiently prepared, and quickly served. Rich soups, fried fish, curries with rice, salads, grilled chicken and pork, insects on a stick or not, fried meat on a stick, meat balls – just walk to the end of the block and back and you will have seen them all.

Across fiercely defended territories and frontages, food carts and modified motorcycle sidecars or push carts set up shop. An array of colorful thin translucent plastic tables, chairs, serving bowls and dishes are set out so as to completely obstruct the already treacherously impassable sidewalks. I am told that many vendors operate without a license, telephone, and not surprisingly - English. Lonely uniformed porters, doormen, security guards, and hordes of workers in conservative office attire leave their air-conditioned environments to surround and feed on a selection of dishes at the curb.

At a cost of as low as 10 Baht, and never more than 40, the food is incredibly good value, though it's easy to overlook as too cheap to bother if you are operating in a foreign currency. Portions are small, but given the heat and the average size of a Thai it is understandable. Soup is served up efficiently - Choose your noodles: egg, rice, or ramen style, then meat, barbeque pork, chicken, or on occasion a selection of sausages. Then a broth, a rich broth of beef marrow, and sweet broths flavoured with tamarind or palm sugar. Fresh fruits are served with a long wooden skewer to snack on – spiral cut pineapple (cut to remove the barbs), mangos when they are in season, bags of halved strawberries, ruby watermelon and sour unripe papaya.

I have been to what remains of the old floating markets in Bangkok, and to the larger out of town destination markets at Damnoen Saduak where tourists can sample all manner of Thai dishes, sweets, fruits, and other preparations while floating the clogged canals of damp souvenirs and kitsch. (Figure 09.013). An aquatic version of soi food, it is a harrowing experience as your boat is skillfully skewered into the 8 lanes of 2-way traffic. The





Above - Figure 09.012: soi food set up in front of a store, called No Name, in Bangkok
Following Pages - Figure 09.013: the floating markets at Damnoen Saduak







main canals are pure spectacle – idling engines, dirty dishes, camera lenses, faces everywhere, reflected in lapping dirty green water. The banks step up and away from the waters edge, where boats are held stationary three or four deep on each side. An aquatic amphitheatre. In the middle is gridlock as large and small boats jostle one another, some full of Europeans, others with only a shaded couple. The boats move at the speed of blood clotting. Food is the main attraction here and it is as luxurious as it is novel to be served and fed. Exotic fruits, drinks, meats and sausages, sweet fluffy coconut desserts, and dumplings served in carefully folded boat-shaped banana leaves. Boats are fitted with large flat grills for frying; burners topped with huge simmering pots of broth, or water for noodles, and charcoal barbecues for meat and satays. There is a hierarchy to the arrangements of the boats, with the more complex and substantial dishes closest to the shore, and the lesser dishes prepared out towards the center of the canal where boats are filled with farang, which has two meanings in Thai. It is a local fruit, tart and green, and also describes white – often sunburned - tourists.

The real culinary draw at the markets, for those brave enough, is *kũay tī̃aw reua néua thúk yàng*, or Boat Noodle Soup. (Figure 09.014) I have had versions of this infamous dish a few times in

Bangkok, which was part of a necessary warm up phase. This is a soup that one has to wade into. Made traditionally with pork's blood, beef blood is often substituted. The defining characteristic of this soup is the broth - It is a deep, bodily funk, full of exotic mystery and notes of sex. Blanched stringy egg noodles are added, and the bowl is scattered with beef, beef balls, crispy pig skin (scratching or crackling), and a selection of other unrecognizable offal. The bowl is further balanced and spiked with a sprinkle of palm sugar and freshly cut chilies before the first spoonful of dirty broth reaches your stomach. For some it is a right of passage, for others, it is a pause, a moment where the swirl and buzz of the market disappears and one is transported deep into the swamps and coconut groves—knee deep in the rich black soil from which the vegetables are grown.

Boat Noodle Soup is a cultural experience that transports you to an imagined Thailand, a dream. It is almost a memory, but a memory determined by the authenticity of the ingredients. The synthetic flavours of PC sauces, by contrast, are engineered to a North American palate, and so are only able to transport their consumers back to the memories of suburban Chinese buffets circa 1975.

Facing - Figure 09.014: Boat Noodles at Damnoen Saduak
Following Pages – Figure 10.001: Thai Bangkok Restaurant,
authentic thai cuising in the snow.

¹ The Scoville Heat Unit SHU is used to describe the hotness of chili peppers, or more specifically, capsaicin the compound that produces the heat sensation. Starting at zero (bell peppers) and rising to over 15,000,000 (pure capsaicin). A Thai chili is rated at 50,000-100,000 SHU. RCMP grade pepper spray is rated at 2,000,000-5,000,000 SHU.



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412

OPEN
THRU
11:30

Thai Sea Food

A window display for a Thai restaurant. The window is decorated with white string lights and a white mesh net. A menu board is visible, showing 12 different Thai dishes. The text 'Thai Sea Food' is written in a cursive font across the top of the window. Above the window, the words 'OPEN THRU 11:30' are visible. To the left of the window, the number '412' is posted on the wall.

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416

A storefront for Oceanic Commercial Inc. The entrance is a doorway with a white tiled surround. To the right of the entrance is a window display showing various clothing items. A bicycle is parked outside the window. The number '416' is visible on the wall to the right of the entrance. The sign above the entrance reads 'OCEANIC COMMERCIAL Inc. Jewellery & Fashion IMPORTER - WHOLESALERS - DISTRIBUTORS 596-8303 FAX 596-1859 596-3883'. There is also a '416' sign on the wall to the right of the entrance.

Thai Food : A Story

Ivory Thailand, on the edge of the downtown Toronto business district, sits adjacent to many new condominium developments. It serves locals with dinner, take-out and manages a busy business lunch.

81 Church Street is in fact the former location of Young Thailand, Canada's first Thai restaurant. 81 Church is now a new Thai set-up with new owner, new plates and dishes, new menu, and a newish décor. This is Ivory Thai. A simple blue awning that shades each window, with a new name. Just inside, there is a standing card informing us that the buffet is no longer on offer.

Of all Thai restaurant names, Ivory is not one I would have expected. Elephants are revered in Thailand, but are also the focus of much unwanted international attention. As grass-fed tractors working in the fields, they are often ill-treated, and as show animals and sloppy tourist transport they are often abused. Ivory in the western world can no longer be transported across international borders, and is now a taboo material.

The Ivory is large, cavernous like a hotel restaurant, generous enough to offer windows on three sides. The kitchen, bar, buffet, and toilets form the fourth wall. There are several seating areas, divided by a low wooden screen. As the restaurant fills up, each chamber comes to life. Two friends and I sit lonely for the first half of our meal before the surrounding tables nearest to the door fill up.

There is carpet throughout. It's a short dense pile with a repeating leaf motif in receding shades that will mask and obscure any stain that it should come across. Everything appears to have been considered. The dark veneer tables have a hollow sound. There are images, reliefs, and statues of the Buddha, carved wooden privacy screens, comfortable chairs upholstered in deep red brocade with a golden elephant repeat pattern. There are ornate window treatments and valences. Although it has the expected Thai decor, it is missing the scent of fried food, cigarette smoke and sweat of the restaurants in Thailand. It is dark

outside, so the room reflects back into itself. I'm sure during the day there is a greater contrast between the street thoroughfare and the focused attention inside.

The table is set South East Asian style. Knives are left off the table and one shovels food with the fork held in the left hand onto the spoon held in the right in a sort of lateral backhand motion. It takes a little while to get used to, but on my first trip to Thailand I embraced this method of feeding myself. I can pile more into the open face of a spoon than onto the back of tall fork tines as my grandmother does. The drinks menu is extensive. 25 wines, including some from Ontario, the usual selection of domestic and imported beer, Singha from Thailand (via Quebec) and a list of basic mixed drink preparations. What appears to be a big selling feature are the \$8 martinis. Right up front in the menu, arranged in four thematic columns – these island-inspired drinks are celebrated every Monday to Friday from 4 – 7pm. This is the sort of restaurant that must look pretty lonely on Tuesday night but gets heavily served on a Thursday as the drinking week ramps up. There are a few lunch specials mentioned, and with free Wifi – who could resist curries, cocktails, and crackberries.

The main food menu is causal, nothing exotic, and nothing too elaborate. The Thai names of dishes have been largely omitted and the repetitive soups and curry options are neatly stacked up under chicken, shrimp, pork and fish sections. It reads like any other Western menu and suggests a chronology of how to enjoy a meal. Curiously, in Thailand, meals have no courses. Centered on rice, all of the of the dishes should be on the table at once and it is not uncommon to put down your bowl of soup to eat a curry or a salad, and then take up the soup again.

The grilled Atlantic salmon (drizzled with Ivory Sauce) and the October Curry–pumpkin, red curry and beef–seem out of place. Thailand does have a small feisty bluntnose salmon native to its waters. It is rare, but salmon does appear from time to

time in Thai dishes. This ivory sauce however, sounds like a chef's creation. I regret not trying it. Pumpkin is also common in Thai cuisine but the word October here refers to the North American harvest season.

The menu has the usual exotic south-east Asian icons: graphic chili ratings, yellow stars for favorites, green leaves for vegetarian options, and a few that are new to me – an acorn warns of nuts and a small fried egg indicates egg dishes. I am relieved to see that the Ivory's Pad Thai does contain both egg and nuts. The menu selection is wide, it covers most compass points with dishes 'inspired' by the North, the Northeast and Chiang Mai.

The menu does a good job of mentioning a few of Thailand's regional cuisines. Legendary, amazing and renowned dishes are on offer, and the chef Yupin Chatradit has taken the liberty of attempting a few signature fusion dishes.

The meal opens with an impressive looking appetizer platter. Squeaky chicken satays, and the same tofu spring roll found everywhere are up first with a sweet-sour Thai dipping sauce. There are two other curious pan Asian creations on offer: something called an Ivory basket, which is a fried brown cup of brown beef, and brown seasoning with a green coriander leaf on top. It has a satisfying crunch, the fried cup compressing the fatty juices out of the beef filling just before the whole thing unfolds in my mouth, revealing subtle seasoning. The final appetizers, fried golden pockets of dough, are a similar texture experience; a crisp exterior and soft fatty seasoned interior. Unfortunately, they are just deep-fried pork wontons, similar to those in my freezer at home. I steam them up Sunday mornings when I'm hung over and call it Dim Sum.

The next dish to arrive is the lemongrass chicken salad (salad referring to a mix of tossed ingredients and not the lettuce content.) The ground chicken pieces and woody rings of lemongrass are reminiscent of the complex textures often found in Thai dishes. There are

shrimp, slivers of fresh chilies, red onion and sweet red peppers. I am disappointed by the segments of lime. Lime juice, lime leaves, lime pulp, even shavings of lime zest are all key ingredients—not decoration—in a Thai kitchen. A full lime segment sits off to one side of most dishes, but the sectional tooth shaped chunk of lime (rind, flesh, and pulp) is better suited to a harsh summer patio margarita than this ancient northern Thai salad.

The green curry chicken comes without the frozen green peas usually found in North American Thai restaurants, and the chef has managed to find a ready supply of Thai eggplant, a firm and sweet fruit with tiny seeds and a fleshy skin. When eaten raw, it has a fresh, fruit-like texture, nothing like the flavourless and bitter purple eggplants we get from Mexico. The curry is rich but suffers from an abundance of bamboo shoots, too much chicken, and is so watery that it quickly deflates the mound of jasmine rice I have ready on my plate. In Southeast Asia, meat is very expensive, and here the fine cuts of chicken are generously portioned. There is too much protein, too many filler vegetables disguised as splashes of colour and not enough throat-grabbing, deep and mysterious spices, ground together with dried pickled and fermented ingredients. It is not uncommon for a Thai dish to include more than 20 ingredients. At its best, Thai food is a paradox of robust and shrieking flavours reassembled to produce a balanced spectrum of flavours all in one dish. Thai cuisine has a sophisticated and subtle elegance that makes it one of the great kitchens of the world.

Unfortunately, my favorite dish, Kao Soi, the smooth and subtle coconut-based yellow curry with smooth egg noodles and Gai (chicken), is a

disaster. What we are served at the Ivory has a red curry base, wavy Chinese-style egg noodles and broad sponges of chicken, all garnished with sweet red peppers. The dish is confusing, and a mockery. Kao Soi Gai is a magical dish, unique in Thai Cuisine. When I ask the owner about it, she agrees that this version is not authentic. “That yellow curry” I was referring to “is what we eat at home”. Owner Ha Voisin She is from Chiang Mai region, and she knows what it is supposed to taste like.

Another dish that comes highly recommended is labeled “Two Friends.” A ‘melon’ that grows in Chiang Mai is combined and heated together with asparagus from the central Bangkok region to produce a lackluster dish: mountain girl meets central boy. The decorative jagged-edged carrot medallions are a foil. They have more flavour (and colour) than the fleshy ‘melon’ (also known as a Thai cucumber.) The short shafts of asparagus seem utterly lost without their tips.

Remarkably, the Two Friends arrives first as only one friend. The asparagus has been left out and when we ask after it our server responds in a way I have seen so often in Thailand: The Thais have a very special and reassuring way of saying yes, they say it with their eyes, and the corner of their mouths and it means everything but yes. In my experience they rarely express regret, and will verbally agree to anything. They seem to feed off our apologetic retreats, and walk away cunningly victorious. It is clear that our server is not willing to take the dish back to the kitchen. Fortunately, one of my dinner companions is brave enough to hold up the dish and express deep concern for the missing friend – “But where is the asparagus, the melon and asparagus are friends.”

Now that we have her full attention, I also ask

if we may sample the great four seasonings of Thai cuisine:

- 1 PRIK PON – flaked or crushed chilies (prik) for heat
- 2 NAMTAAN – normal granulated white sugar for sweet
- 3 NAM SOM PRIK – sliced chilies (prik) in vinegar (nam som) gives a sour flavour
- 4 NAM BLAA – is fish sauce for a salt flavour

At its best, Thai food is characterized by a delicate balance of these four flavours—spicy, sweet, sour and salty, and a broad spectrum of spice with vibrant high notes and deep undertones.

At Ivory Thailand, the condiments arrive disappointingly as watery sauces. The Nam som prik is pleasingly authentic (to be used sparingly), but the sweet oyster sauce, a soy chili sauce, and bright red sarrachi sauce are pan-Asian substitutions more familiar to a Western palate. After trying a few of the sauce variations, I am too full to go on, leaving me wishing for a platter of expertly carved pineapple and watermelon.

As we emerge into the snowy evening, I realize that this is one of dozens of restaurants serving mild, watered-down versions of authentic Thai food in Toronto, no different than the one at the end of my street. Thai food with a Canadian accent.



The White Model

In Toronto's shopfront restaurants, the signage, interior, and most importantly the food are signs of individualism. The architecture – specifically, the front window – is at a remove from the operation of the kitchen, where all manner of exotic dishes are concocted. The windows are often underused, or used to display menus, signage, or customers – actively enjoying the cuisine. The only exceptions, of course, are some Chinese restaurants in which pork and duck are displayed for all passersby to see. As I walked the streets photographing the same restaurant type over and over, the unavoidable monotony of the architecture separated itself in my mind from the individual establishments.

From memory one evening, I constructed a quick rugged maquette of a typical Toronto restaurant façade, made from folded, dented and stained produce cartons from my local NO FRILLS. Then I re-constructed it as a white cardboard model, which I photographed. (Figure 11.002) When viewed amongst the façade images (Figure 08.001 – 08.392), this one was void of ethnicity, the individuality of each enterprise, and reduced the establishment to its bones, allowing me to see it anew. The impact of this blank model can be related to the work of British artist Rachel Whiteread.

I discovered Whiteread's work in 2001 while living in London, UK although her success had been confirmed years earlier, when she won the 1993 Turner Prize with her controversial public sculpture, House. (Figure 11.001) House was her largest and most ambitious work to date – a complete and intact, raw concrete interior casting of a modest 3-storey Victorian terrace in Bow, East London. The original house was the last remaining house on the block to be demolished, making way for a new park. Standing silently for nearly 3 months, House attracted unprecedented media attention, public disdain, and critical acclaim.

It was as if area residents noticed, for the first time, their surroundings.

House, without a roof over its head, was presented as a concrete modernist pile, a piece of petrified social history, a waste of money. What all the outcries confirmed, though, was that by casting its absence, Whiteread made 193 Grove Road unavoidably present.

Facing – Figure 11.001: House 1993, Rachel Whiteread.
Following Pages – Figure 11.002 The White Model





Conculsion

A city needs to manage its cultural diversity. It's not simple, and it's a challenge to try to find where this diversity exists, and what forms it attaches to.

I have presented a number of personal perspectives: My own experience of family meals and *President's Choice* products; my travels around the 'authentic' markets of Thailand; and my travels around the storefront cityscape of Toronto, which is filled with an assortment of ethnic restaurants, all presented within the same architectural language.

It was my attempt to come closer to some understanding of how exotic cultures are processed in Toronto. In my research, I discovered a break in connection between how exotic cuisine was marketed to my family (white, middle-class Canadians), how it is presented to us in the city of Toronto (in uniform shopfront restaurants) and my experience of Thai cuisine on the streets and in the markets of Thailand.

The frameworks through which we view ethnicity in Toronto makes it more accessible for inhabitants of the city, but also limits the possibilities for an authentic experience.

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