

**Re:mains - Art jewellery paired with ambiguous eating implements as a means to explore interoceptive sensory perception**

COLLEY, Rachael <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5185-1150>>

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## ***Re:mains***

Art jewellery paired with ambiguous eating implements as a means to  
explore interoceptive sensory perception

*Rachael Colley, Sheffield Hallam University*

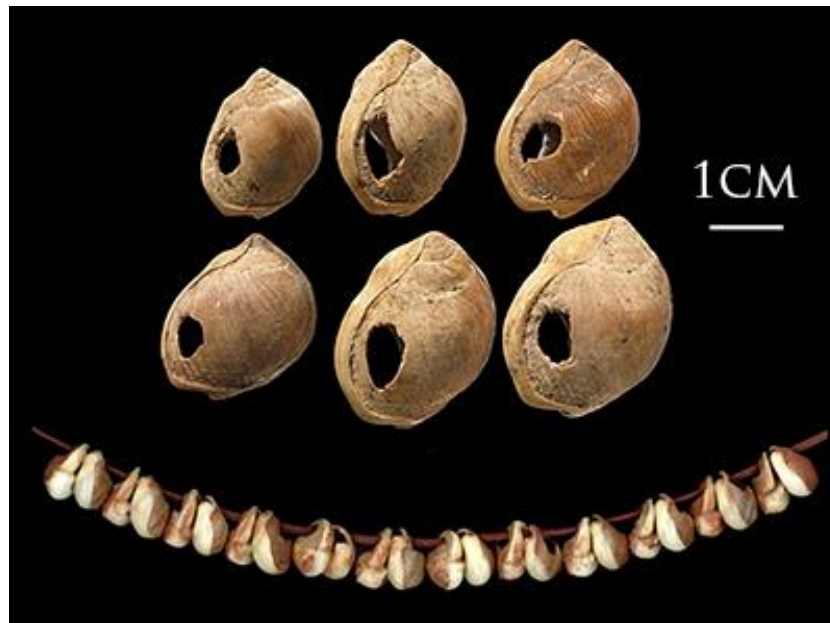
### **Abstract**

*Like fashion, food is a powerful, far-reaching language that both reinforces and transcends class boundaries and enables more fluid cross-cultural communication. As materials, food-stuffs, and more specifically food waste, awaken the senses, with the more visceral of these dining remains tending to initiate instinctive 'gut' reactions from those experiencing them. Although there are several artists who explore alternative eating artefacts in the context of an experimental dining experience, such as Kaye Winwood and Nuala Clooney, few have combined this with the wearing of art jewellery. Hindle's Strange Pleasures study (conducted in 2014) uncovered possibilities for public interaction and 'play' at the hands of the wearer, stating that 'the art jewellery that they explore during the study points to how the wearing of adornments can constitute a leisure experience that is one of freedom and play' (Hindle, Colley, Boulwood, 2016, p.310). As a result of this study, I have been exploring ways in which to more playfully promote and exhibit my jewellery alongside a developing complementary collection of ambiguous eating implements, to enable an immersive and experiential food-based presentation to the public that more directly questions body boundary and activates the participants interoceptive senses (internal bodily sensations). Through practice-led research I bring together jewellery - created predominantly using food waste - and ambiguous artefacts for eating, inviting diners to wear these visceral jewellery pieces whilst consuming food with alternative dining tools in an attempt to highlight interoceptive sensory perception.*

**Keywords:** art jewellery; food waste as jewellery; dining remains; immersive presentation; interoceptive sensory perception; body boundary

## Art jewellery paired with ambiguous eating implements

Like fashion, food is a powerful, far-reaching language that both reinforces and transcends class boundaries and enables more fluid cross-cultural communication. As materials, food-stuffs, and more specifically food waste, awaken the senses, with the more visceral of these dining remains tending to initiate instinctive 'gut' reactions from those experiencing them.



**Figure 1:** 110,000-year-old shell beads of *Nassarius kraussianus* from Blombos Cave, via Wikimedia

As the above historic find evidences, some of the earliest forms of jewellery discovered suggest the re-purposing of food waste, placing these organic materials onto as well as into the body. Ingold states that,

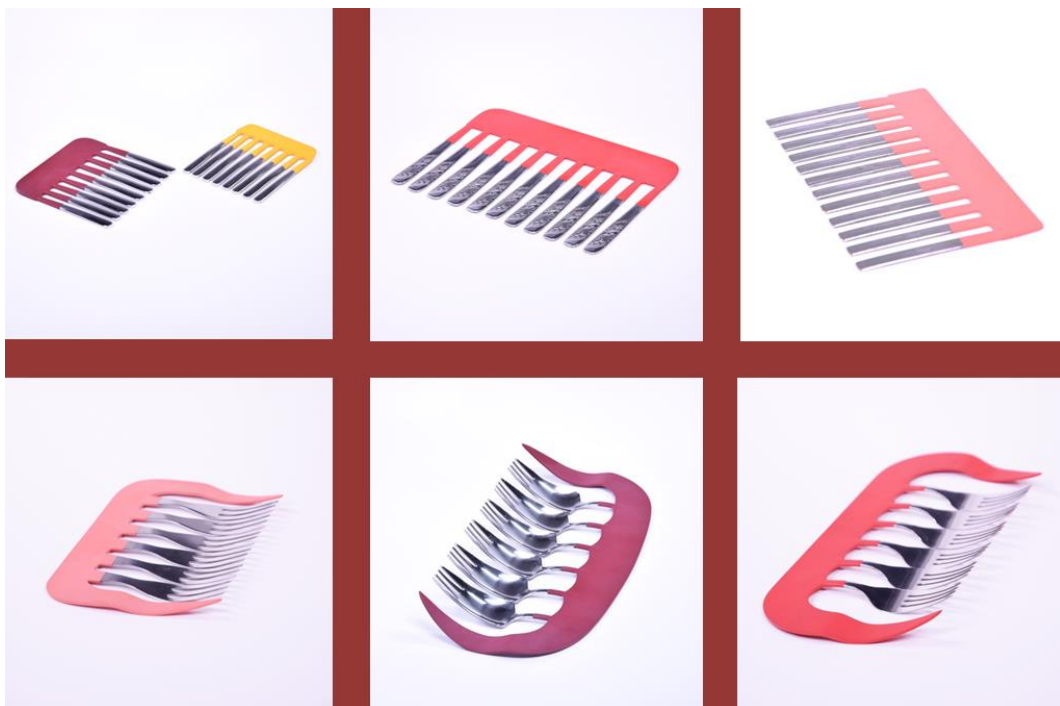
*“In the art of enquiry, the conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, the fluxes and flows of the materials with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them.”* (2013, p.6)

He intimates the fluid physical nature of the making process, something I keenly explore in my work, an example of which you can see overleaf, with decorative surfaces produced using discarded apple peel. The art jewellery I create is predominantly formed from food waste, such as fruit stones and peel.



**Figure 2:** *Vanitas I & II* (brooches), 2017, Rachael Colley

Alongside my jewellery, I also create a complimentary range of ambiguous implements for eating, such as the *Cutlery Comb* and *for-K-andle* pieces, which are made by re-purposing cutlery from Sheffield industries to form more unusual eating tools that often make the act of consuming more challenging for the user, slowing them down and inviting them to more readily focus on their eating experience.



**Figure 3:** *Cutlery Combs and for-K-andle's*, *Ambiguous Implements* collection, 2019, Rachael Colley

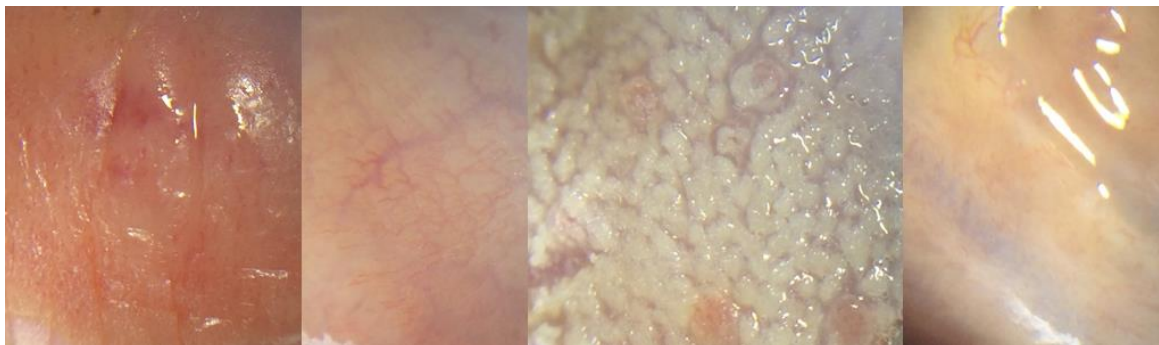
Although there are many artists who create experimental dining experiences and explore the use of alternative eating artefacts, such as *Steinbeisser*, *AVM Curiosities* and *Kaye Winwood* (in collaboration with artist Nuala Clooney and others), few have combined this with the wearing of art jewellery. From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 my *Cutlery Comb* and *for-K-andle* pieces will feature in a new edition of Steinbeisser's *Experimental Gastronomy* events in Amsterdam, where they will be used to serve a locally sourced vegan menu created by world-renowned Michelin starred chef Andre Chiang.

### **Interoceptive sensory perception**

Sarah Garfinkel, professor of neuroscience and psychiatry at the University of Sussex states,

*"When considering the senses, we tend to think of sight and sound, taste, touch and smell. However, these are classified as exteroceptive senses, that is, they tell us something about the outside world. In contrast, interoception is a sense that informs us about our internal bodily sensations, such as the pounding of our heart, the flutter of butterflies in our stomach or feelings of hunger."* (2019, p.1)

My work is generally inspired by my own body, the physical awareness and analysis of my internal organs through the development of interoceptive senses, especially in relation to processes around food and eating. I suffer from auto-immune diseases, one of which is systemic sclerosis, which places limitations on my lifestyle and inhibits various forms of social interaction, mainly revolving around consuming food due to poor oesophagus function and chronic acid reflux.



**Figure 4:** *Lips, mouth, tongue*, 2017, Rachael Colley

My collections of jewellery and objects aim to communicate sensory aspects of my experience, encouraging the wearer or user to reflect on and analyse their own bodily experiences. Some pieces are realised in the form of visceral, externally wearable organs, usually created by moulding food-dyed discarded veg-tan leather (scarred or marked hides) over fruit stone food waste. Much of my jewellery is dried, cracked, fleshy, spotted, peeling, porous, decaying and breaking, thus mimicking my internal bodily sensations.



**Figure 5:** *Tongues* (brooches and neckpiece), 2017-19; *Re:mains* (brooches), 2019; *Sha-green* (brooch), 2019; Rachael Colley

The ambiguous eating implements also serve to communicate these feelings, mainly by disrupting their original function, making eating more awkward and slower than it would usually be. Engagement with these alternative eating tools encourages the user to pay closer attention to their eating experience, analysing it in greater depth.

Quoting from Mary Capello's book *Swallow*, "*We are reminded of our mouths, the part of our bodies where there is the most going on, our most visible and vulnerable of orifices, the seat of so much that is essential to our staying alive*" (2011, p.8). Also from which Gastroenterologist Dr Peter J Kahrilas reminds us that,

*"Swallowing is an extremely primitive behaviour, so basic to our existence that we barely take note of it"; however, "it becomes clear that there are significant gaps in our understanding of many of the steps, and what seems on the surface a simple action is actually one of almost unlimited complexity."* (2011, p.17)

My art jewellery, when paired with ambiguous eating implements aims to highlight introceptive senses surrounding those eating actions, like swallowing, that we tend to take for granted during the process of consuming food. The artefacts pose the question: can the wearing of jewellery created from food waste, alongside the use of ambiguous eating implements help to awaken our introceptive senses and encourage us to become more aware of our internal bodily functions?

I aimed to address this question by considering Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1999, p.3) suggestion that "*a series of dissociations*" are key in interrupting and diverting our normalised eating experience. I suggest that food can perform to the "*sensory modalities unique to it*" through the introduction of a series of jewellery and object-based physical dissociations.

### ***Re:mains* exhibition and interactive events**

Hindle's Strange Pleasures study (conducted in 2014) uncovered possibilities for public interaction and 'play' at the hands of the wearer, stating that "*the art jewellery that they explore during the study points to how the wearing of adornments can constitute a leisure experience that is one of freedom and play*" (Hindle, Colley, Boulwood, 2016, p.310). As a result of this study, I have been exploring ways in which to more playfully promote and exhibit my jewellery alongside a developing complementary collection of ambiguous eating implements. The aim being to enable an immersive and experiential food-based presentation to the public that more



directly questions body boundary and aims to reframe the act of eating, reawakening the participant's bodily sensations and activating their interoceptive senses.

From 16<sup>th</sup> of February to the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019 I held my first solo show titled *Re:mains* at Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery, Sheffield Hallam University. The gallery space is accessible to the public and houses the art school's café, which I was keen to monopolise on, as this presented the chance to show my work alongside the more 'ordinary' food that's regularly consumed during the working day's lunch and tea breaks. Previous to this my work has been exhibited or used to serve food in what might be termed 'grander' settings, such as at Cutlers Hall in London as part of the UCL's Institute of Making's *Cutlery Design Challenge*; at an event specially designed and curated by *FEAST* journal editor Laura Mansfield to celebrate the opening of a new collection at Touchstones Rochdale and as part of collaborative venture *BY|WITH|BY* with artist Nuala Clooney, where we held interventions at the *In Dialogue* Symposium at Nottingham Contemporary and during the *20:20 Visions* Association for Contemporary Jewellery conference, Sheffield Hallam University.





**Figure 6:** *Cutlery Design Challenge*, Cutlers Hall, London, 2016; meal event at the opening of the *Valeria Napoleone Collection*, Touchstones Rochdale, 2016; *BY|WITH|BY Ambiguous Implements* interventions, *In Dialogue* symposium, Nottingham Contemporary, 2016 and *20:20 Visions*, ACJ Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, 2017

The opportunity to exhibit at Sheffield Institute of Arts presented me with the possibility, for the first time, to bring together my jewellery and tools for eating, inviting diners to wear these visceral jewellery pieces whilst consuming their lunch with their choice of ambiguous implement at a series of interactive dining events. Although the participants' were predominantly students and colleagues, there were several members of the public who also signed-up to join these events. Each participant was invited to complete a questionnaire, reflecting on their experience and I also, with their permission, documented their interactions through photography and film. I was pleased to gather a range of qualitative research from 32 participants during the 8 interactive events I staged in the gallery over the four-week exhibition period. Because many of the students and colleagues who attended were already aware of my research and its aims, I have chosen to focus on and analyse the responses given by members of the public.



**Figure 7:** *Re:mains* interactive events, 2019

Several participants' commented that firstly selecting a piece of jewellery to wear *"was kind of like putting (on) a uniform, preparing to get immersed in participation/interacting with the eating implements"*. The wearables *"helped to create interest and to begin contemplating the event"* and to *"get in the zone"*; they

"created a sense of ceremony" and also reminded one participant of *"playing as a child"*. However, based on the information gathered through observation and discussion, the jewellery selected by the participants may or may not have had much of an effect beyond initiating the experience. A participant reflected, *"Once eating though (the) jewellery aspect (became) less noticeable."* This is a disappointing response; however, it may be that the adornment could become more relevant if it more directly corresponds with the type and nature of the food that is being consumed by the wearer; as you can see overleaf with the *Tongue* collection, created by moulding leather around mango stones to form uncanny, visceral, externally wearable muscles.



**Figure 8:** *Tongues* (brooches and neckpiece), 2018, Rachael Colley

In several cases, the wearables were being used, forming a key part of the participants' experience. For example, there are wipe-clean silicone bibs, printed fabric napkins and some of the ambiguous implements can also be worn or attached to the body in some way when they are not being used. Some of the pieces are more noticeable than others, being worn on the hand or wrist; others are constructed using fragrant materials, such as orange peel, which, when raised to the mouth/nose, can have an impact on the food being consumed. The wide range of wearables made available for participants to choose from may also impact on and affect the findings.



**Figure 9:** *Re:mains* interactive events, 2019

Often, it appeared to be the ambiguous eating implements that had more of an impact during these events, as they tended to present the more immediate challenge to each participant - one stating that they *"felt challenged, but in a good way"*, reflecting that *"it slowed down my process"*. Another participant commented, *"Eating is such a regular event, I've never begun to contemplate anything about it."* They selected a fork-function model (shown below) and attempted to eat carrot cake with it, reflecting on her reasons for this selection as because *"it was familiar yet different"*, questioning *"had it lost its functionality completely or not?"*



**Figure 10:** *Collapsed - Praying - Screwed*, fork-function models, 2019

Wearables and implements were selected by the participants on a first-come-first-served basis. In several cases swaps were negotiated amongst participants, with general conversation directed towards how they could/would function in relation to the food-stuffs they'd selected to consume. The sense of overcoming the challenge these artefacts present was fairly palpable during each event and seemed to override the jewellery somewhat and becoming the main focus of the experience for the majority of participants, in some cases creating a form of friendly competition.

## Conclusion

I'm pleased that the participants' response to using the ambiguous eating implements has been positive. One participant reflected that,

*"Using an implement of choice made eating a very individual experience, unlike the uniform experience of eating that uniform utensils inspire. (The) social aspect and the conversation created by the utensils made the experience extra enjoyable. (It's) not often you contemplate an 'ordinary' or regular ritual."*

Overall, it seems that the ambiguous implements generally overpower the effects of the jewellery. However, this may also be due to that fact that some members of the public were not so adventurous or bold in their choices, selecting to adorn themselves with some of the more reserved wearables.

In future, I aim to develop a new, defined collection that seeks to address these aspects, creating a sensory series which more readily links to the act of consuming and the type of food being consumed. I will also continue collaborating with others to produce a diverse range of events in an attempt to continue to explore the nature of interoceptive sensory perception through the pairing of art jewellery and ambiguous eating implements.

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